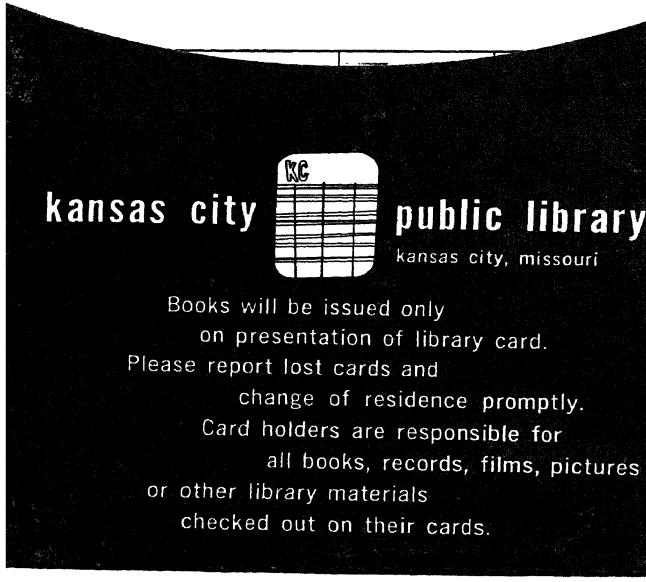


THE GOOD WAYS

By the Author

THE GOOD WAYS

THE SWORD AND THE SPIRIT

THE GOOD WAYS

New Revised Edition

DELIGHT ANSLEY

Decorations by Robert Hallock

THOMAS Y. CROWELL COMPANY

New York

Designed by Robert Hallock

Manufactured in the United States of America by the Vail-Ballou Press, Binghamton, New York

Library of Congress Catalog Card No. 59-14674

Fourth Printing
(First Printing of Revised Edition)

To My Mother
and to the Memory
of My Father

Preface

THIS BOOK grew out of a series of discussions and assembly programs on various forms of religion, and their place in the world, held at a preparatory school in Pennsylvania. As librarian of the school, I helped in arranging and presenting the material. Young people are interested in religion, and the intelligence and understanding shown by the students made the teachers think that something of this kind should be written. We hope that other young people and their elders may find it worth reading, and that it will lead them to further thought and study.

It is not intended as a complete survey of all forms of religion, and it is not meant for profound scholars. It is only an introduction to a fascinating subject, a simple account of the origin and history of the most important religions of the world. I have tried to tell something about the men who were responsible for these religions, and to

explain the most significant points of their belief and teaching. It is interesting to compare one religion with others, and to discover their differences and the many points on which they agree.

We must realize that distant countries, which were only spots on the map a few years ago, are full of people more or less like ourselves. The more we know of what these people think and believe, the easier it will be to understand them. And the more we see of other forms of religion, the less we are likely to think that ours is the only way.

In writing this book I have tried to keep from being influenced by my own religion, Quakerism. If any offense has been given to any other form of belief, none was intended.

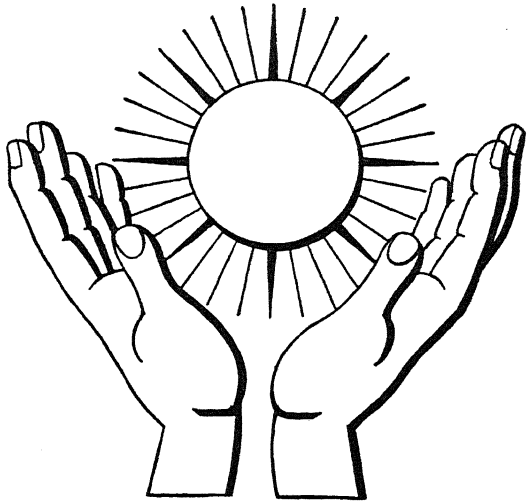
I want to thank Charles C. Johnson, who first suggested that the book should be written, and my other friends, Dr. Blanche Norton, Mrs. Bernhard Ostrolenk, P. Alston Waring, Frederick Waring, and George Nakashima, for their advice and encouragement.

If anyone learns half as much from reading this book as I have from writing it, it will have served its purpose.

Contents

Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.

JEREMIAH 6:16



1

The Old Paths

What is a man,
If his chief good and market of his time
Be but to sleep and feed? A beast, no more.
Sure, He that made us with such large discourse,
Looking before and after, gave us not
That capability and god-like reason
To fust in us unused.

HAMLET

CHAPTER ONE

The Old Paths

RELIGIONS may be compared to a series of roads on which human beings are traveling. Our road is not the only one. There are others, starting from different places and going through different territory, but they all lead toward the same goal. What the goal is we cannot see, but we know it is a good place. Perhaps the travelers on each of the roads think that theirs is the best way, but there are many crossroads connecting one highway with another, so that no road is entirely independent of the rest. There are side roads too, abandoned and overgrown with weeds and brambles. If we follow one of these roads we may find that it leads to a deserted ruin, but even from the ruin we can learn something of the people who once lived there. They were human like ourselves, and they too once thought that their road was the best way to the place we

are all seeking. The study of religion is an attempt to follow our own road and to explore the crossroads leading to the others. It may help us to understand the other travelers.

No savage tribe is without some form of religion, and the most civilized people cannot do without it, for it is an essential part of human life. What is religion? Someone said that there are ten thousand definitions of religion, but if we want to know what any other word means we look in the dictionary, and the definition in the Merriam-Webster *New International Dictionary* is as good as any other: [1]

"Religion . . . the outward act or form by which men indicate their recognition of the existence of a god or of gods having power over their destiny, to whom obedience, service, and honor are due; the feeling or expression of human love, fear, or awe of some superhuman and overruling power, whether by profession of belief, by observance of rites and ceremonies, or by the conduct of life."

According to this definition, religion may be shown in three ways; by belief, by formal worship, and by standards of conduct. All three of these ways were known almost as soon as the human brain became different from the brain of an animal.

[1] By permission. From *Webster's New International Dictionary*, copyright 1909, 1913, 1923, 1927, 1930, by G. & C. Merriam Company.

The earliest men who lived in the world are known to us only from the remains which time cannot destroy; bones, chips of stone, broken tools and weapons. We can learn much from these accidental leavings, but they are not our only source of knowledge. Even in the modern world, some primitive tribes are still living, mentally at least, in the Stone Age, and scientists can study them. There are many kinds of savages, behaving and thinking in many different ways, but certain ideas and customs appear so often in primitive cultures that they seem to be definite stages in the growth of the human understanding.

It is sometimes said that man invented God. That sounds clever, but it does not tell the whole truth, just as one could not tell the whole truth by saying that man invented electricity. Man discovered electricity and learned how to use it, but the force was there all the time whether he knew it or not. Man is, as far as we know, the only animal who ever felt the need for God or tried to understand him.

Does God exist only in the human mind? How else could he reach us except through our minds, and how could his influence be shown better than by human thoughts, feelings, and actions? The visible world cannot reach us except through our eyes, which receive images

and transmit them to the brain. Much of our brain is exactly like the brain of an animal. Like animals, we move, eat, sleep, satisfy the needs of our bodies, and react to sensations of pain, anger, fear, comfort, or discomfort. But there are parts of the human brain that are distinctly human, that make human beings think and feel and behave in human ways. The functions of certain parts of the brain are not yet understood, and the full understanding of them may lead us to grow still more human.

Primitive man was surrounded by forces he did not understand. He had only the simplest form of clothing and shelter, so he was at the mercy of the weather. He knew heat and cold, snow and rain, day and night, but he did not know what caused them, nor did he understand sickness and death. He thought these things must be governed by spirits, and he imagined that these spirits were near him always, that the sun and moon were alive, and that animals and even trees and stones had a life not unlike his own. This early stage of belief is called animism, from the Latin word *anima,* meaning "soul."

Often, especially in hot climates, he thought of the sun as the most powerful of all spirits. As man learned to gather the fruits of the earth and found that he could help them to grow, he usually thought of the earth as a mother, the source of all life. As religion grew, there was

usually one spirit more powerful than the others, a father or mother of all the spirits.

One cannot say when spirits become gods, but the belief in a god or gods implies some form of worship. In a very early stage of his development man conceived the idea that if the spirits had a life like his own they might be influenced by things that he could do. He might offer a gift to a spirit, or try by some words or actions to escape from its anger or to keep its good will. This was the earliest form of worship, and most of the later forms were only developments of the same idea.

Primitive man was often afraid, but worship did not come only from fear of the anger of the gods. It might come from love, from gratitude for good things received, faith that such blessings would continue, and reverence for the power that gave them. One should never be ashamed of faith and reverence; one ought rather to be ashamed of the lack of them, for it is such feelings that make men different from animals.

In any primitive group there are some men who know more than others and are willing to take the initiative. When these men are interested in religion they become magicians, medicine men, or priests. Magic is the earliest attempt to control the forces of nature. It is altogether useless, it cannot possibly work, but sometimes it may

seem to work. If a magician wants rain he may sprinkle water on the ground and shake his thunder rattle. If he keeps it up long enough the rain will come; it always does sooner or later. If he wants to cure a sick person he may put on a hideous mask and dance and shout to drive the evil spirits away. The sick man may get well. In fact, the attentions of the medicine man may encourage him so that he will get well sooner than if he had been left alone. If the rain does not come in time, or if the sick man dies, a clever medicine man can always think of some explanation. The rain-god was angry with some wicked person in the tribe, or the sick man did not have enough faith.

While magic itself is entirely mistaken and foolish, it leads to two very important things. The magician who teaches his people to perform a ceremony together has given them a sense of companionship, of uniting for the expression of their faith, which is the great strength of organized and formal religion. Also, the magician's curiosity about the forces of nature, and his efforts to understand and control them, build the foundations of science.

Anyone who wants to see primitive worship in action should visit the Indians in New Mexico. Their ceremonies are not performed to entertain the tourists; they are done with perfect reverence and dignity, though everyone en-

joys them; and visitors are welcome as long as they behave properly and do not try to take pictures. The green-corn dances, held in late July and early August, are among the most important and the easiest for visitors to see. The Catholic missionaries deserve a great deal of credit for their work among the Indians. Instead of telling the Indians that the old gods were all wrong and must be forgotten, the missionaries let them keep the old religion and added something new, so that the Indians now have a satisfying blend of paganism and Christianity.

At the beginning of the green-corn ceremony they all go to mass, then the statue of the patron saint is carried around the village in a joyful procession. First come the Catholic priests, then the Indian priests, who are dignified old men almost naked, painted gray and black, with their hair full of ashes and dried corn. They represent the spirits of the dead watching over the living. Then come the dancers—men, women, and children, gaily dressed and painted; then all the rest of the villagers in their best clothes, honoring the occasion by shooting firecrackers and blank cartridges. After the procession, the statue of the saint is placed in a shrine in the center of the village, and the dance begins.

The dancers are divided into two groups. One carries on the dance for an hour or more, then the other takes

its place, and those who are not dancing go into the shrine and pray. The dancers wear eagle feathers from the people of the air, fur moccasins from the people of the earth, and shell necklaces from the people of the water. The only music is a drum and a chorus of old men who keep up a droning chant. The Indian priests direct the dance and perform an elaborate pantomime ballet of their own, representing the growth of the corn and the coming of the rain for which they pray. The dance goes on continuously until sunset, and it is usually followed by a deluge of rain. Of course that is the rainy season in the mountains, but the Indians are not quite sure that the rain would come without the help of the saint or the thunderbirds, they do not care which.

Many primitive religions recognize a mysterious and awe-inspiring power, invisible, but dwelling in all created things. This power is called by many names, but anthropologists usually give it the Polynesian name "mana." The conception of mana is the first step toward the understanding of the universal God, which every one of the great religions has interpreted in its own way.

According to the primitive belief, mana is everywhere, but some places or things have a special quality of mana. Certain hills, springs, or caves become holy places, where men can see visions or receive some form of supernatural

insight and power. As religion develops into higher stages, temples may be built in those holy places, and gods may be worshiped there.

Animals often seem to possess a valuable share of mana, which men can acquire for themselves by the ceremonial killing and eating of an animal. So a group of men might try to gain the strength of a bull, the swiftness of a deer, or the courage of a lion. Such customs may have been the earliest form of the ceremonial meal, the breaking of bread together, which has grown to be a significant part of many religions.

Another development of this ritual killing is that a part of the animal, or all of it, came to be regarded as a sacrifice to a god. Primitive man tries to appease the wrath of the gods, or to win their favor, by giving them something. The gift may be flowers, fruit, or grain, or it may be the life of an animal or a human being. Human sacrifice has occurred among primitive people in many parts of the world, though it is not by any means universal. Traces of it are found in religions which have progressed into much higher forms.

Abraham, at the command of God, was ready to sacrifice his only son Isaac, the beloved child of his old age. He was told at the last minute that his intention of obeying the command was in itself an acceptable offering. For

the actual sacrifice the ram in the thicket would do as well. This story tells in symbolic form a great discovery in religion. Many times the Old Testament prophets said that the best sacrifice was a heart ready to obey the will of God.

How did the idea of human sacrifice originate? Perhaps in some such way as this. A man died and was buried, and the grass was richer and greener over his grave. Could it be possible, then, that death had made the grass grow, and that someone must die in order that life could go on forever? Many times, in many places, a tribe would decide that, for the good of them all, one must die. Often the sacrifice was the best person they had, a brave, handsome young man, or a beautiful and innocent girl. Only the best was good enough for the gods.

Then slowly but with surprising similarity, among people so widely separated that they could not possibly have influenced one another, there grew the idea that a god himself must suffer and die for the good of mankind. Being a god, he would rise from the dead, only to die and be born again. This belief was undoubtedly suggested by the changing seasons and the green plants which seem to die every winter and come to life again the following spring. When primitive men learned to do even the simplest kind of farming, this yearly cycle of birth and

death was so important to them that nearly all of them celebrated it with ceremonies which passed into later and less primitive religions. The history and significance of this belief in the corn-spirit, the god who must die and be born again, are told in one of the world's most famous books, *The Golden Bough,* by Sir James Frazer.

The idea of death as a continuation of life brings us to another essential part of religion, the belief in immortality. No one can possibly know what happens after death, whether it is another life or a dreamless sleep, but the hope of another life is nearly as old as the human race. This hope is clearly shown in the graves of early men of the Stone Age. A body was not simply thrown away, it was carefully buried in a conventional posture, often with its knees drawn up, the position in which a baby comes into the world. Beside the body were placed ornaments, weapons, and dishes of food. What can this mean except that the dead man was being prepared for a new life?

Primitive man knew that he had a soul. He might think that it was connected with the breath, which keeps the body alive and ceases at the moment of death, or he might imagine it as a shadow or spirit that can sometimes be separated from the body, for instance in sleep.

We still have a certain amount of superstition connected

with dreams, but to primitive man they were highly mysterious and significant. A man lies asleep for a few hours, and his spirit goes through enough adventures to last for a lifetime. He dreams of other people. Have their spirits left their bodies too, and are they dreaming of him?

When a man dies, his spirit leaves the body forever, but it may not go far away. Perhaps it needs food and comfort as a living person does. If the friends and relatives do not show proper respect for the dead man and provide for his needs, the spirit may turn into a restless, malicious ghost, looking for a chance to come back into a living body. A common primitive explanation of insanity or peculiar behavior was that a person had been "possessed" by an evil spirit. We still say, "I don't know what came over me," or, "What possessed you?"

Offerings to the dead, and care of their bodies, came from love as well as from fear. The living remembered the dead and loved them. They wanted to be sure that the dead were comfortable and happy in their new home. Stones were sometimes piled on a grave to keep wild animals from digging it up, or a mound of earth was heaped over it, and so began the custom of building tombs and monuments. The care of the dead became more important in Egypt than it ever has been anywhere else, but every religion has burial ceremonies and customs, and

ways of showing respect for the dead. Ancestor worship has been highly important in China, and it occurs in many other parts of the world, sometimes in quite beautiful forms. Many illustrations could be given, but one from our own country will be enough.

The Arikara Indians of Nebraska had great admiration for the cedar tree, which was so useful to them that they called it their grandmother. Early in the spring, when the ice went out of the Missouri River, they decorated a cedar tree with the first flowers of spring, the blue pasque flowers which they called prairie smoke, and on the tree they tied the worn-out moccasins of their children. They threw the tree into the river and let it float down to the place which had once been their home. The spirits who still haunted that place would see the tree and be glad that their descendants remembered them, and that the little children were still running and playing and wearing out their moccasins.

Primitive man had a soul, and he had something else peculiar to mankind, even though he might not be able to give it a name. It was the ability to distinguish right from wrong, which has been called the conscience or the inner light. No animals show any sign of a conscience, except possibly dogs, who are closer to human beings than to other animals. A dog who has broken some rule may

show every sign of humility and repentance. He knows he has done wrong because his master tells him so. Man knows he has done wrong because his conscience tells him so. He can remember the results of his actions in the past and think of what they are likely to be in the future.

In the definition quoted at the beginning of this chapter, the third way in which religion can be shown is by the conduct of life. This is not always regarded as a part of religion; some histories of religion do not even mention it in their early chapters, but every religion is likely to contain certain rules for human conduct and to imply the responsibility of man to his fellow men and to God. Judaism could hardly exist without the Ten Commandments, or Christianity without the Sermon on the Mount.

In a highly civilized society some people grow sentimental over the free life of the "noble savage," especially if they have never met any savages, but all anthropologists know that savages are more bound by tradition and custom than civilized people. They think that everything must be done as it always has been; that is why they are still savages. Civilized people are not afraid to try new things. A savage's life is full of what are called taboos. He must not do this, he must not say that, he must not eat or touch any of these things, or something dreadful will happen to him. Taboos may seem unreasonable and absurd

to anyone who is not bound by them, but they represent one stage in man's understanding of the importance of his own actions.

Man does not live alone. Everything he does and says has some effect on other people, for good or evil. This is as true in the complicated modern world as it was in the very beginning of human life.

How did the consciousness of responsibility begin? The most reasonable explanation is that it began with the family, which is a human invention. Animals are perfectly able and devoted mothers as long as their young need to be fed, but afterward they lose all interest in them. Animal fathers rarely pay any attention to their children, and young animals do not feel obliged to care for their old parents or to keep on good terms with their brothers and sisters. Only human beings know that such things are necessary. As human life becomes more complicated, the responsibility extends to larger groups: the tribe, the town, the nation. In our own lifetime we have begun to realize that our responsibility includes the whole world.

Human beings always have rules to tell them what must be done and what must not, however different these rules may be. To use the simplest possible illustration, a child who slaps another child and takes away his toy is not behaving like a savage. Savages know much better

than that. He is behaving like an animal, and when he learns to think like a human being he will know that such behavior does not pay, because the other child will use the first opportunity to slap him and take away his toy. Every religion puts this knowledge into some form. The words with which we are most familiar are found in the seventh chapter of the Gospel of Matthew: "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them."

From the three ways in which primitive man showed his religion—belief, worship, and conduct—all the great religions of the world, living and dead, have grown. We may say that religion appears in two forms, external and internal. External religion looks outward at the mysteries of nature, trying to understand and control them, while internal religion looks inward at the human mystery which is called the mind, the heart, or the soul. Often the two forms are combined; sometimes a religion emphasizes one or the other. The ancient Greeks carried external religion, the worship of nature, as far as it could go, and Judaism is altogether an internal religion, through which the soul of man reaches toward the spirit of God. The Hebrews were fully aware of nature, but they dismissed every aspect of it with the simple explanation, God made it. Christianity is also an internal religion, but it owes some-

thing to other forms of belief and worship, and Christians need not be ashamed of what they can learn from travelers on the other roads to God.

We say that some people are civilized and that others are uncivilized, but no one can say exactly what the difference is. Whatever it may be, it is less important than the difference between human beings and animals. Civilized people live together in large groups, dependent on one another and conscious of their responsibility to one another. Civilization implies a development of the arts, of commerce, of law and government, and of religion, but all these things began among very primitive men. Civilized people should learn to control their crude natural impulses in order to live together in peace and harmony, but they do many things that savages would be ashamed of. For example, a cannibal might be puzzled by "civilized" warfare, in which men kill other men whom they have no desire to eat.

Egypt, Greece, and other countries are known as great civilizations, but we can never set a definite time when the people of these countries began to be civilized. The growth of the mind and spirit is a gradual process, and the most tremendous changes come about so slowly that they are hardly noticed from one generation to another. We have no reason to think that this growth has stopped.

Human beings are, at least in their own opinion, the highest form of animal life. Their history shows what they have done in the past, and they should be capable of doing better in the future. Religion is what the human race, savage or civilized, has made of it; and, if we know something of what it has been, perhaps we shall have a better understanding of what it may grow to be.

2

The Road from Egypt

The world subsists in thy hand,
Even as thou hast made them.
When thou hast risen they live,
When thou settest they die;
For thou art length of life of thyself,
Men live through thee.

IKHNATON'S HYMN TO THE SUN

CHAPTER TWO

The Road from Egypt

EGYPT was the first country to develop an enduring civilization. What the Egyptians did was done for the first time in the history of the world. They could not borrow other people's ideas and discoveries; they could not learn from other men's experience because, as far as they knew, there had never been any other civilized men.

How did Egypt begin? Arnold J. Toynbee's great book, *A Study of History,* made us familiar with the idea that a new civilization, a new development in the world's history, begins with a successful response to a challenge. Egypt is a perfect illustration of this theory.

Long before there was any history, when most of Europe was covered with ice from the glaciers, the country that is now the Sahara Desert was a pleasant place, with forests and grassy plains, and streams fed by abun-

dant rain. People could live comfortably there, in the simple ways of the Stone Age. Men could find plenty of small animals to kill with crude weapons or to catch in traps, and women could add to the food supply by gathering fruit and nuts, or by digging roots from the ground with sticks.

When the glaciers began to melt, the climate of that part of the world became hotter and drier. The grass withered, the water holes dried up, and the animals moved away. So the people had to make some change in their way of life. Of course this took many thousands of years, and we have no written records of that time, but from the traces that those primitive men left behind them we can read the story.

Some of the people moved south into the jungles of central Africa, where they found a country like the one they had left. There they could go on living in the old easy way, and there the descendants of those people are still living. They have never been anything but savages because life was too easy for them.

Others stayed where they were, even after the Sahara had become a desert. They adapted themselves to living there, but it took all their time and energy to keep from dying of hunger and thirst. They are still living there,

but they have contributed nothing to the development of civilization because their lives are too hard.

There was a third group of primitive men who found the right answer. They did not know it at the time; perhaps we never know what the right answer is, but we do the best we can and see what happens. They went down into the marshes along the great River Nile. Probably they went there because so many of the animals they liked to hunt were there.

But then a great change came into their lives; they became farmers. They learned to drain the marshes and to take advantage of the great flood that comes down the Nile every year, leaving a deposit of rich soil to fertilize the fields. They learned to store the river water in canals and reservoirs; in fact, they invented irrigation.

The life of a farmer is altogether different from that of a wandering hunter. A farmer must live in one place to tend his crops, so he needs a permanent house, and as time goes on he takes pride in the appearance of his house, and he fills it with things that he thinks are useful or beautiful. That is the beginning of the arts.

When groups of people live together permanently they cannot be as independent as wandering hunters who are free to pick up and move if they quarrel with their neigh-

bors. They have to make rules for living together, and to decide what the individual must do for the good of the group. This is the beginning of law and government.

A farmer works hard, but his work is quiet and he has time to think. Even modern farmers are likely to have plenty of independent ideas. The Egyptian farmers of the Stone Age thought a great deal about the world they knew, about the seasons, the sky, and the earth, about life and death. How did these things begin, and why did they go on? That was the beginning of their religion.

James Henry Breasted was a great scholar who gave most of his life to studying ancient Egypt and writing books to tell how fascinating it was. At the beginning of one of his best books, *The Dawn of Conscience,* he tells the story of a black stone in the British Museum. It was large and round; the modern Egyptians had used it for a millstone to grind their grain. A hole had been bored through the middle, and the surface was so worn that in a few years all the writing on the stone would have disappeared. It was stored in a dark place in the museum, so Mr. Breasted had to reflect light from a window with a mirror while he studied it.

The inscription said that a certain king who lived in the eighth century B.C. had ordered this copy to be made of a very ancient writing. From the form of the characters

and the words that were used, the scholars could tell that the writing was very ancient indeed, going back to about 3400 years before the birth of Christ. The pyramids were new then; it was only a little while after the Egyptians had come out of the Stone Age and learned to work with metals.

This ancient writing that had been preserved so carefully was a religious drama used in the temple at Memphis. It told how one god had made the world by the thoughts of his heart (or, as we would say, his mind) and the words of his tongue. It said that the spirit of god lived in all mankind and in all creatures. Later it told of the judgment that waits for all men: "Life is given to the peaceful and death to the criminal."

So even at that time men had an organized worship of a god and a definite idea of his character. They also had a clear idea of the difference between right and wrong. They knew that a good man was a peaceful man, who did his duty and lived on good terms with his neighbors.

The Egyptians had an immense number of gods. In early times each tribe or village had its own gods, and as the villages became united into provinces and then into an empire, all the old gods were brought together. Often the same god was called by different names. No one cared how many gods there were; it was just as well to have

as many as possible since one never knew which of them might turn out to be helpful.

Many of the gods were imagined as looking somewhat like animals—hawks, bulls, cats, apes, crocodiles, and other creatures. Perhaps in the beginning the animals themselves were worshiped. It may be that the early Egyptians, like the American Indians, adopted animals as totems of tribes or clans. They may have called themselves the hawk people, the crocodile people, and so forth.

When Egypt had grown to be an empire, the principal god, honored above all others, was the sun-god called Re (pronounced "Ray"). It is natural for people who live in a hot, dry climate to think of the sun as the most powerful of all things. Sometimes they compared the sky to a sea, with the sun and the moon sailing across it like boats, but usually they imagined Re as a great hawk or falcon who flew across the sky every day. His symbol was the disk of the sun with wings at the sides, almost exactly like the emblem of our Air Force.

While the great temples and public ceremonies paid special honor to Re, another god was really nearer to the hearts of the people. This was Osiris, who represented the other great natural force in the life of Egypt, the River Nile. Sometimes he was imagined as the river itself, at other times as the growing plants which owed their life

to the river, and often as the living spirit that continued through all the seasons, apparently dying in the dry weather and coming to life again with the overflow of the river.

The significant thing about Osiris was that he died and was brought back to life by his son Horus and his wife Isis, the Queen of Heaven. Of course such a god could understand human beings and their troubles. He was not only the spirit of eternal life but the protector of the dead.

Osiris was the first of the many gods who died and were born again. These gods are found, as we have said, in almost all religions which have developed in places where the climate shows a definite change from winter to spring, or from a dry season to a rainy one. As the green plants have within them the spirit of life, even when they seem to be dead, so the god rises again, and man has the hope that he too, when he dies, may waken to a new life.

The most peculiar thing about the Egyptians was their state of mind about death. It is sometimes said that they were in love with death, but this is not true. What they loved was life; they wanted as much of it as possible, and they wanted to keep it as long as they could. They disliked the idea of death so much that they would never, if they could help it, say that a man was dead. He had

made the voyage, he had gone to join the blessed ones, he had wakened to eternal happiness. Many modern people have the same feeling; they prefer to say that someone has "passed on" or "passed away," or even that a pet animal has been "put to sleep."

The Egyptians thought of the soul as a separate thing in the form of a bird, which left the body when a person died and could be put back into the body and kept there indefinitely by certain offerings and ceremonies. As long as these were properly attended to, the dead person would live happily in the other world beyond the setting sun.

If the soul lived in the other world it must have some kind of body, which looked exactly like the living person, and yet it sometimes came back to the body it had used on earth. We cannot understand this, perhaps the Egyptians themselves could not, but at any rate the body had to be carefully preserved and surrounded by an impressive tomb full of beautiful and valuable things. There were several ways of making bodies into mummies, cheap or expensive, depending on the wealth of the dead person's family. Of course the tomb and its furnishings were as costly as could be afforded, and the more offerings and ceremonies a man could pay for, the happier his future life would be.

One can imagine that if every important person who

died had to be honored in this elaborate way *forever,* the day would come when no living person had time or money to do anything but honor the dead. But long before such an absurd thing happened, the customs were changed by another human invention, common sense.

From studying the old records and seeing how the style changed, we can almost hear those people say, "Why should we give a hundred loaves of bread a day to this king's tomb, and another hundred to his father's tomb, and another hundred to his grandfather's? Couldn't we present the same loaves at all three tombs, with the proper ceremonies? Then perhaps we could give them away or sell them. After all, why wouldn't pictures and images do as well as the real things?"

Such a line of reasoning, worked out gradually through hundreds of years, would account for the wonderfully detailed and accurate decorations which have lasted until our own time, making the Egyptians far more real to us than any other ancient people. From these decorations we know how they dressed, how their work was done, what kind of houses they lived in, what they liked to eat, what games they played, and what stories they told. Any large museum has some of these pictures and images. The Metropolitan Museum in New York has a remarkable collection of them. There is a series of little rooms like

dollhouses, with figures of people about six inches high: a butcher shop with different cuts of meat being prepared, a bakery with loaves of bread fresh from the ovens, a stable full of animals, and several little boats in which the king can sail, perhaps listening to a concert while his secretary looks after the day's work.

Interesting as these figures are to us, they were far more important to the people who made them. They made it possible for many more people to hope for an eternal life. Naturally the style and variety of the decorations depended on how much one could afford to pay. A rich nobleman or a king could live in luxury in the next world, as he had before, while ordinary men could not expect so much, but almost anyone could afford a few pictures or images of things that he particularly needed or enjoyed. Even the poor slaves whose pictures adorned the king's tomb could hope to go on living and serving their master. Perhaps in the early times the slaves were killed in the master's tomb; such things have happened elsewhere, but the Egyptians soon found that this was not necessary.

In the course of time they developed the idea that happiness in the next world depended on honor and virtue in this life. They said that every soul must pass through the judgment of the gods, and every heart must be weighed in the balance. If a modern artist designs a figure repre-

senting Justice, he always shows her holding a pair of scales, exactly like those in which the Egyptians believed that their hearts would be balanced against the weight of a feather.

To pass through this judgment, a man had to repeat a series of prayers and charms to convince the gods that he was good. He would say, in effect, "I fulfilled all my obligations to my family. I never killed anyone, or stole anything, or cheated, or lied, or took another man's wife. I was a righteous man."

Since everyone used the same prayers, the gods might have been suspicious if nobody had ever done anything wrong, but apparently this did not worry them.

These prayers and charms form what we call The Book of the Dead. They were written on rolls of papyrus, or painted on coffins, or carved on the walls of tombs. They could be long and elaborate or brief and simple. Like everything else, it depended on how much a man could pay.

Such a religion, carried on for thousands of years by a group of conservative priests who used every possible means to increase their wealth and power, was sure to degenerate into a set of meaningless forms and ceremonies. Intelligent people wanted something better.

About the year 2500 B.C. Egypt seemed to be in a hopeless condition. The empire had broken up into small

states, always fighting each other, and selfishness and dishonesty in the government were taken for granted. Religion offered no help, for the priests were as greedy and hypocritical as anyone else. The Egyptians reacted to this situation exactly as human beings always have, and we can find records to tell us how much their feelings were like those of modern people.

Some of them thought, "It's terrible, but what can I do? I might as well have fun while I'm alive." This state of mind is perfectly expressed in a poem called "The Song of the Harp Player," which might have been written by Omar Khayyám or by a pessimistic modern poet. It must have been popular, because several copies of it have been found. The Harp Player looks out over the ruins of the ancient tombs and thinks of the proud kings who built them, who were so sure that their names would live forever: [1]

Behold the places thereof;
Their walls are dismantled,
Their places are no more,
As if they had never been.

None cometh from thence
That he may tell us how they fare;

[1] From *The Dawn of Conscience* by J. H. Breasted (Charles Scribner's Sons).

That he may tell us of their fortunes,
That he may content our heart,
Until we too depart
To the place whither they have gone.

Encourage thy heart to forget it,
Making it pleasant for thee to follow thy desire
While thou livest. . . .

Celebrate the glad day,
Be not weary therein.
Lo, no man taketh his goods with him.
Yea, none returneth again that is gone thither.

But there were some men who reacted differently. They said, as such people still do, "Don't sit there complaining —let's do something! Maybe we can't do much, but we can try." These men of old Egypt, like modern reformers, thought first of cleaning up the government, of throwing out the rascals and finding some decent people who would rule the country honestly. They wrote a great deal about the duties of rulers to their subjects, and about justice, which should be the same for all men, rich or poor.

A popular story of that time, often quoted, told of a poor peasant who was robbed of his donkeys by the trickery of a greedy official. The peasant had a chance to plead his case before the prime minister, and most of the story

was devoted to his eloquent plea for justice. Of course the sympathy of the storyteller was with the peasant, and the happy ending came when he won his case and the wicked official was punished.

Some of the social reformers looked for the coming of a great king, like the Messiah, who would bring a glorious new life to their country. The reformers did not work and dream in vain, for the government was improved, kings began to feel a new sense of responsibility, and Egypt lived for another two thousand years.

About the year 1375 B.C. there came a religious revolution, the first appearance of monotheism, which is the belief in one god. It was originated by a king called Ikhnaton. His name had been Amenhotep IV; this means "Satisfying to Amen," who was the same as the sun-god Re. He took the name of Ikhnaton, "Aton is satisfied," from the name of his new god. Aton was also a sun-god, but with this important difference. He was the *only* god, the wise creator and loving father of the whole world. No one before that time had thought of a god ruling anywhere except in Egypt. Aton was represented as the disk of the sun, sending out rays that ended in human hands, as if the sun were caressing the earth and giving life to all its creatures. Ikhnaton and his followers were filled with a sense of the beauty and wonder and joy of life.

Artists of that time wakened to a new appreciation of nature, and their work shows much more grace and freedom than anything that had been done before. Sculptors had learned to make very lifelike and expressive portraits; we know that Ikhnaton had a long, sensitive, dreaming face, and that his wife Nefertiti was one of the most beautiful women who ever lived.

The new religion seemed so true and exciting to Ikhnaton that he wanted everyone to adopt it. Perhaps he was too enthusiastic and too dictatorial. How could the priests of the old religion help being angry at this threat to their power and wealth? And how bewildered the ordinary people must have been when they were told to forget the old gods.

"Is there only one god?" they would think. "What will become of us if we cannot pray to all the gods that have protected us from the beginning of time? What shall we do without our beloved Osiris, the protector of our dead, the god who dies and is born for us? The king says we must not worship the old gods, but will they understand? Will they not be angry and destroy us?"

We do not know how Ikhnaton died; perhaps he was murdered. After his death his enemies did their best to get rid of everything that reminded them of him. They broke his statues, covered up his inscriptions, and de-

stroyed his records. But broken things can be put together, hidden things can be found, and buried things can come to light in unexpected ways.

Anyone who was old enough to notice anything in 1922 remembers the discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamen. Newspapers were full of pictures and stories about it. Egyptian clothes, jewelry, and decorations were the latest style. Popular songs and vaudeville jokes needed only to mention "King Tut" in order to get a laugh from people who had never thought of Egypt before.

Only scholars realized how important the discovery was. The tomb of Tutankhamen was the only Egyptian royal tomb ever discovered in its original condition. All the others had been opened and robbed long before modern archeologists found them.

This tomb had been preserved by accident. When later tombs were being carved from the rocky surface of the cliff above it, a great pile of stone chips and dust had fallen down and buried it. No one at that time cared enough about Tutankhamen to uncover his tomb, and in a few years it was completely forgotten. But when it was discovered more than three thousand years later, all the glory and splendor and joy of Ikhnaton's time was shown as it had never been before, and the life of the buried king was revealed as a human tragedy.

Ikhnaton and his beautiful queen had no sons. One of their three daughters married Tutankhaton, the son of a court official. He was only a little boy at the time, not more than eleven years old, but he was honored as a king. When Ikhnaton died, the priests and noblemen who had hated his new religion had the boy king entirely in their power. When they destroyed all traces of the worship of Aton, the boy's name, which had meant "living image of Aton" was changed to Tutankhamen, in honor of the god Amen.

The boy did not live long; he was only eighteen when he died. While none of the priests and officers of his court really cared about him, there must have been some friends of his father-in-law left, who were determined to do for the dead king what they had not been able, or had not dared, to do for the living boy. So they gave him a splendid funeral, and filled his tomb with the richest furniture, statues, decorations, and jewels that they could find.

One of the most beautiful things in the tomb was a chair covered with sheets of gold, its back ornamented with a design worked out in silver and precious stones, showing the young king sitting comfortably in a chair, with his girl queen anointing his collar with perfume from a little jar in her hand. How different this is from the stiff, formal portraits of the older times. In the background is

Ikhnaton's symbol of the sun, reaching out its kind hands to bless all living things.

And so, by a strange chance, the beauty that the priests tried to destroy has come to us almost unchanged, while the destroyers are forgotten.

Officially, Ikhnaton's religion was a failure. The old gods were worshiped in the old way until Egypt crumbled into ruins as a colony of the Roman Empire. But more and more, as time went on, intelligent people came to think of god as a living spirit and to look for ways of reaching him by direct prayer from the human heart.

While Egypt was flourishing and dying, a little tribe called the Hebrews lived not far away. Sometimes the Hebrews came to Egypt as traders, sometimes they were held as slaves. The Egyptians cared no more about them than we care about the Eskimos, but the Hebrews were a thinking people. They could read the works of the Egyptian social reformers, and they could see the beginning of the belief in one god, not for one tribe only, but for all the world. The seed that Ikhnaton had planted was ready to grow.

3

The Road from Jerusalem

I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

EXODUS 20:2–3

CHAPTER THREE

The Road from Jerusalem

In Asia Minor, between the Caucasus Mountains and the Arabian Desert, is a narrow strip of land sometimes called the Fertile Crescent. It is more or less in the form of a half circle, from the Mediterranean Sea to the Persian Gulf. The modern countries of Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Israel lie within this crescent. While the desert to the south of it is perfectly dry, the mountains on the northern side bring a little rain to the crescent. Trees can live there and at certain times of the year grass and other crops can grow.

Ever since the beginning of human history, wandering tribes from the desert have come into the Fertile Crescent, looking for grass to feed their animals. Among these wanderers were the Hebrews. They were a small tribe and,

while they gradually became civilized, they never built great cities or ruled an empire. In ancient times they had no arts or sciences to compare with those of other nations. Their home was always a poor little country which the great empires fought over. And yet this little tribe gave the world a precious gift that has lasted longer than any of the empires, the belief in one god. Ikhnaton's attempt to introduce this belief in Egypt failed because he tried to force it on his unwilling subjects, but the Hebrew religion was a genuine growth from the hearts of the people.

We do not know exactly where the Hebrews came from, or when their religion began. Our best source of information about them is the Bible; it was our only source until modern scholars learned to read other ancient forms of writing. When we study Christianity we shall learn more about the New Testament, but now let us consider only the Old Testament. This remarkable collection of books, sacred to both Christians and Jews, was written by many men over a long period of time. It contains histories, legends, poetry, laws, sermons, hymns, proverbs, a census report (in the Book of Numbers), two novels (Ruth and Esther), and an oriental love song (the Song of Solomon).

A great deal of its influence over the English-speaking

world comes from the fact that the King James translation, made by a group of scholars in Shakespeare's time, is one of the treasures of English literature. For more than three hundred years our ideas have been formed by it, and it is such a vital part of our written and spoken language that we cannot imagine being without it. We can hardly read a newspaper without coming upon some Biblical quotation such as "the handwriting on the wall," "the skin of our teeth," "an idol with feet of clay," or "a voice crying in the wilderness."

While some of the Old Testament is hard for modern readers to understand, the wonder is that so much of it is still living and true. We are all familiar with the stories told in the book of Genesis: the creation of the world, Adam and Eve, Noah and his Ark, the Tower of Babel, and the dramatic human stories of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. They belong to our modern civilized world as much as they belonged to the Hebrew shepherds three thousand years ago. The Psalms can still bring us comfort and inspiration, and the writings of the prophets have given us our fundamental ideals of justice for men and nations.

When the Hebrews were a primitive people they imagined a primitive God, easily moved to anger, punishing children for the sins of their fathers, and demanding

absolute obedience even to the point of ordering a father to sacrifice his only child. He was strictly a local God, from whom one could escape by going to another place, and a God of one tribe, caring nothing for the rest of humanity. In the Old Testament we can trace the growth of the idea of God from this crude beginning to the time when men could think of him as the loving and merciful father of all mankind, whose kingdom was within the human heart.

The early Hebrews thought very little about life after death. For them, a good life brought its own reward, and a bad life its own punishment, in this world. They had strict laws about diet and cleanliness, most of them really necessary to health in a hot climate. They had a well-organized formal worship consisting of prayers, hymns, and sacrifices, but they believed that the service most pleasing to God was a pure heart and an upright life. No other god at this time expected any such moral standards among his followers.

Another distinctive quality of the Hebrew God was that he never had been imagined in any visible form. Other ancient religions pictured their gods and goddesses as men and women, or as animals, or as strange creatures half animal and half human. The Hebrews were strictly forbidden to make any picture or statue of their God. He

was a spirit, to be worshiped through the human spirit. Of course he created the world; the heavens declared his glory and all creatures praised him, but he was primarily a God not of nature but of mankind.

The history of the Hebrews from ancient times to the present day has been a series of struggles and misfortunes. From the Bible and from other ancient records we know that many of them went to Egypt in Joseph's time to escape from a famine and that they remained there in slavery until Moses led them back to their old home. They had to fight for their country against the Canaanites who lived there, and at last under David and Solomon they became a formidable nation.

After the death of Solomon they divided into two kingdoms, Israel in the north and Judah in the south. Both of these kingdoms were conquered by the more powerful and warlike men of Babylonia, and the Hebrews were driven into exile. Long afterward some of them returned and rebuilt their holy city of Jerusalem, but they were always under the domination of some foreign power. Greeks, Romans, Turks, Arabs, and British fought over Palestine and ruled it for centuries. Many Hebrews—or, as they are now called, Jews—wandered into every country of the world. They found new homes and new loyalties; sometimes they were prosperous but more often they

suffered terrible persecution. Always in their minds they kept a dream of returning to their own country, but this dream was never fully realized until 1948, when the state of Israel became an independent nation.

It is interesting to note that the ancient Hebrew language, which was no longer in common use in the time of Jesus, was revived and modernized at the beginning of the twentieth century as an international language for the Jews of many nations who came to live in Palestine. Hebrew had always been kept as a language for religious ceremonies, the same as Latin in the Catholic Church. It is now the official language of Israel. No other dead language has ever been successfully revived.

All the wanderings and sufferings of the Jews have strengthened and purified their religion. Men appreciate and understand their ideals much better when they are in danger of losing them. When the Jews had no other source of pride or hope, they turned to their religion, which has always held them together wherever they may be.

To the early Hebrews, one of the most dangerous evils was idol worship. They were surrounded by hostile tribes, most of whom had developed their primitive nature religions into forms which the Hebrews considered shocking and cruel. The Ten Commandments absolutely forbid the

worship of strange gods, and the prophets often denounced it, but it was a great temptation. The God of the Hebrews was invisible and austere, while the worship of idols, connected with the fertility of the soil and with human love, was lavish, colorful, and emotionally exciting. No wonder the young Hebrews kept turning to it, especially when the idol worshipers seemed to have more joy in life and more material prosperity than the Hebrews ever had. And yet the God of the Hebrews was stronger in the end. He still lives, and the idols and their worshipers have returned to dust.

The Babylonian civilization had almost no influence on the Hebrews except as something to be feared and avoided. The Babylonians seem much less real to us than the Egyptians because they left so few things that have survived until our own time. Babylonia lies at the eastern end of the Fertile Crescent, in the valleys of the two rivers, Tigris and Euphrates, which flow into the Persian Gulf. This country is now called Iraq. The ancient conquerors of the region, Sumerians, Assyrians, and Chaldeans, were important people in their own time; they were hardly aware that the Hebrews existed.

They built almost entirely with sun-dried bricks, which we call adobe in our own Southwest, and their cities soon crumbled into shapeless mounds of earth. They wrote on

clay tablets, many of which have been found and read by modern scholars. Most of the tablets are business records and legal documents, but some of them give information about religious matters.

The Babylonians had many gods and goddesses; the most interesting one was Ishtar, the earth-goddess, whose lover Tammuz died and was born again every year like the Egyptian Osiris. They told stories of a strong man like the Hebrew Samson and the Greek Hercules, and of a great flood that destroyed the whole world except for one man who built a boat and saved himself and his family. Babylonian priests thought they could read the future in the stars, and they developed a surprisingly accurate science of astronomy, as well as the imitation science of astrology.

The Hebrews had some contact with the Persians, whom they admired because the Persian king Cyrus conquered Babylonia and set them free to return to their homeland. The Persian prophet Zoroaster, who lived some time in the sixth century B.C., imagined life as a struggle between the powers of light, symbolized by the god Ahura Mazda, and the powers of darkness, led by the evil spirit Ahriman. This was probably the origin of the conflict between God and Satan, sometimes mentioned in the Bible, which became so important in Christian theology,

although the Jews never thought much about it. Zoroaster also brought forth the idea of the last judgment, when all human beings would appear together and be rewarded or punished for their deeds.

By far the most important foreign influence in Hebrew religion came from Egypt. The Hebrews have always had great respect for learning and wisdom, and they were deeply impressed by the ancient Egyptian civilization. The religion of Ikhnaton interested them because it was so much like their own. Egyptian writings on religion had a noticeable effect on the Hebrew literary style. The Egyptians often compared their god to a shepherd watching his flock or a father caring for his children, and they said that the life of a good man was like a fruitful tree planted beside a river. The Biblical phrase, "the Sun of Righteousness risen with healing in his wings," may have been suggested by the winged sun-symbol of Re. The twenty-second chapter of the Book of Proverbs is almost an exact copy of the maxims of an Egyptian philosopher. There is a striking resemblance between Ikhnaton's Hymn [1] to the Sun and the 104th Psalm, as these quotations will show. Of course both are translations, but the similarity of ideas and the choice of words can hardly be a mere coincidence.

[1] From *The Dawn of Conscience* by J. H. Breasted (Charles Scribner's Sons).

IKHNATON'S HYMN

When thou settest in the western horizon of the sky
The earth is in darkness like death . . .
Every lion cometh forth from his den,
All serpents, they sting.
Darkness broods, the world is in silence.
He that made them resteth in his horizon.
Bright is the earth when thou risest in the horizon . . .
Men waken and stand upon their feet
When thou hast raised them up . . .
Then in all the world they do their work.
How manifold are thy works!
They are hidden before men.
O sole God, beside whom there is no other,
Thou didst create the earth according to thy heart.
The world subsists in thy hand
Even as thou hast made them.
When thou hast risen they live,
When thou settest they die;
For thou art length of life of thyself,
Men live through thee.

104TH PSALM

Thou makest darkness, and it is night,
Wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth.
The young lions roar after their prey
And seek their meat from God.
The sun ariseth, they gather themselves together
And lay them down in their dens.
Man goeth forth to his work
And to his labor until the evening.
O Lord, how manifold are thy works!
In wisdom hast thou made them all;
The earth is full of thy riches.
These wait all upon thee,
That thou mayest give them their meat in due season;
That thou givest them they gather.
Thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good;
Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled;
Thou takest away their breath, they die
And return to their dust.

The real makers of the Hebrew religion were the prophets. In the modern sense of the word, prophecy usually means foretelling the future, but the real meaning of the word is "one who speaks for another." The Hebrew prophets spoke for God. A prophet might combine the qualities of a religious leader, a crusading politician, a poet, and an influential news commentator. He could give advice on ordinary practical matters, as Samuel helped Saul to find his lost donkeys, or he could break the power of a king, as Elijah destroyed Ahab. Wherever there was injustice, indifference, or cruelty, a prophet would speak out boldly and people would listen. Prophets such as Amos and Hosea had great influence in changing the angry and jealous God of the early times into the God of love, mercy, and forgiveness. The writings of the prophets make up a large part of the Old Testament, and the greatest of these prophetic books is called Isaiah.

It is now generally agreed that the book of Isaiah was written by two men, with a long interval of time between them. Some scholars see evidence of a third author. The first thirty-nine chapters were written when the Hebrews were in great danger. The northern kingdom of Israel had been conquered by the Babylonians and its people led away as captives. The southern kingdom of Judah looked

forward to the same fate. Isaiah called upon his people to forget their selfish concerns, to purify their hearts, and to work together and save their country. For a while it seemed as if this might be done, but Judah also was conquered.

The second part of the book, beginning with chapter forty, was written during the captivity in Babylon. In the King James translation, the fortieth chapter of Isaiah is one of the greatest achievements of English literature. We all know parts of it as the text of Handel's oratorio, *The Messiah,* but we should read it carefully and think of what it meant to those poor, helpless, exiled people. It revived the hope that they might soon return to their home, but it did more; it told them that by their suffering they had been strengthened and purified until at last they were ready to bring before all the world the great gift of their faith.

All through the book of Isaiah runs the theme of the coming of the Messiah, the great king for whom they had waited so long. He was not to be a warlike leader but a humble man, enlightened by suffering as they themselves had been.

"He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him

not. . . . But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed."

This, then, was the Messiah, the chosen messenger of God. He would come quietly, not like a king, but his message would be heard by the whole world.

"Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee because of the Lord thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel, for he hath glorified thee."

Christians believe that this prophecy foretells the coming of Christ. Jews say that the Messiah has not yet come, that the Messianic Age will not begin until all nations have learned to live together in brotherhood, justice, and peace. This time has never come, perhaps it never will come, but they are doing all they can to encourage every good thought and action that may bring it nearer.

The fundamental difference between Judaism and Christianity is that Jews do not believe in the divinity of Jesus. They say that no man ever was divine, except in the sense that everyone has within his soul a share of the divine spirit. They find Christianity confusing, because of the Trinity, the Virgin Mary, and the saints. Nothing should stand between man and God, they say. Only God is to be worshiped. Liberal Jews consider Jesus a great

teacher, like Buddha. They read the New Testament as literature and compare its religious teaching with their own, but it has no part in their worship.

The Jews believe in immortality, but they do not claim to know what happens to the soul after death, and they have no definite ideas of heaven and hell. They say that human beings are essentially good, and that everyone, with the help of God, can distinguish between right and wrong. Goodness is its own reward, and evil its own punishment.

The basis of Judaism is the law, contained in the first five books of the Old Testament, which Jews call the Torah, and in a supplementary collection, the Talmud. The law concerns not only religious matters but every detail of life: cleanliness, food, family duties and responsibilities, the conduct of business, loyalty to one's country, the obligations of charity—in short, every aspect of the relationship of human beings to one another and to God. Even the most orthodox Jews admit that some of these laws, made for a primitive people in ancient times, do not apply to modern life. No one would think, for example, of sacrificing animals or of stoning people to death for committing adultery. But the essential principles of the law remain unchanged.

Modern Judaism is divided into three branches, Ortho-

dox, Conservative, and Reform. Orthodox Jews preserve the old rituals, keep all the traditional festivals, and obey as many of the old laws as possible. Reform Jews have discarded many laws and traditions, and they take great interest in modern problems, but they have kept the spirit of their religion. The Conservative branch, as its name implies, takes a position between the other two.

How this division came without any definite split or rebellion will be understood if we know that the Jews have no central governing body to dictate their policies and practices. Each congregation manages its own affairs and may be as liberal or as conservative as its members wish. Representatives of many congregations meet for conferences, and they all unite in charitable work, which is an important part of their religion. The Jews have no formal written creed, but they agree on fundamental principles.

The Reform movement in Judaism is quite recent. It began as a part of the desire for freedom that was felt in so many ways in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. For many generations the Jews of Europe had been persecuted, segregated, and driven to think of themselves as a nation apart from all others, but now they could claim their share of freedom. Several of their leaders, especially Moses Mendelssohn, urged them to come out of

their mental isolation, to overcome their prejudice against Christians, and to try, by their own words and actions, to overcome the prejudice of Christians against them.

Modern Reform Jews have so much in common with liberal Christians that the two can work together in many ways. Reform Jews often attend Christian services, particularly those of Unitarians and Quakers. Christians are welcome to attend any Jewish service. The Jews have never sent out missionaries or tried to win converts, but a member of another religion may join a Reform congregation if he wishes to do so.

Orthodox Jews are very particular about keeping the Sabbath, which is of course a Jewish invention. The division of time into periods of seven days, with one day set apart for rest and worship, was puzzling and amusing to the Greeks and Romans who came in contact with the Jews. From sundown on Friday until sundown on Saturday, Orthodox Jews are forbidden to do any work, to ride in any kind of conveyance, or to handle money. Conservative and Reform Jews are not nearly so strict about the Sabbath; some Reform congregations even hold services on Sunday, which is more convenient for those who live and work among Christians.

The Jewish places of worship, called synagogues or temples, are not considered sacred in themselves, they

are only meeting places. In Orthodox synagogues, men and women sit separately, and women take very little part, but they are active in the Conservative and Reform branches.

The services in a synagogue are not very different from those in a Christian church. The leader of a congregation is called a rabbi, which means a teacher. He reads from the Old Testament, leads the prayers, and preaches the sermon. Music is an important part of the service. Based on old traditional themes, it is music of a high artistic quality and very impressive. In Orthodox synagogues a choir of men and boys is led by a cantor, who sings the leading part of the service. The singing is unaccompanied, for they must not play musical instruments on the Sabbath. Reform congregations have a mixed choir with soloists and an organ.

Financial support comes from contributions and membership fees, which are sometimes paid by buying seats for the holy days. A few Reform congregations take up a collection during the service, but most of them prefer not to, and the Orthodox Jews must not handle money on the Sabbath.

Jews have no form of baptism, but the circumcision of babies is a religious ceremony symbolic of the covenant between man and God. When boys reach the age of

adolescence they are received into the faith in a confirmation ceremony called bar mizvah, an important occasion for any family. In Reform congregations girls are also confirmed.

One of the principal Jewish holidays is the Passover, commemorating the Exodus from Egypt, which comes at about the same time as the Christian Easter. An important feature of this holiday is the family ritual called the Seder, a ceremonial meal at which the son of the household asks a set of questions, and the father answers, telling the story of the Exodus and explaining the significance of the meal.

The Jewish New Year comes in September or October. The first ten days of the year, ending with the Day of Atonement, are solemn days devoted to prayer, repentance for sins, and the resolve to do better in the coming year.

Another important holiday is the Feast of Tabernacles, a harvest celebration in which food is set out in little arbors symbolizing the tents in which the Hebrews lived in the wilderness.

Chanukah, the Feast of Lights, commemorates the restoration of the temple in Jerusalem in the time of the Maccabees, 165 B.C. It comes in December, and it has grown important in recent years because Jewish children enjoy it as their Christian friends enjoy Christmas. In

some American schools and churches the two holidays are celebrated together.

The new state of Israel, the realization of an ancient dream, attracted thousands of settlers, mostly refugees from persecution in Europe. Many American Jews, who were safe and comfortable in their own homes, did not care to live in Israel, but they supported it generously. The pioneers of modern Israel endured hardship and poverty as their ancestors had in the flight from Egypt. Their faith and hope sustained them as they built a new country on the old foundations. Before many years had passed, Israel became what it had been thousands of years before, a little nation surrounded by more or less hostile neighbors, but its young people proved to be hard workers and brave fighters. They knew that their land was worth defending, and that the good work they did was the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy, "the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose."

4

The Road from Greece

Beloved Pan, and all ye other gods who haunt this place, give me beauty in the inward soul; and may the outward and inward man be at one. May I reckon the wise to be the wealthy, and may I have such a quantity of gold as a temperate man and he only can bear and carry.

PRAYER OF SOCRATES, FROM PLATO'S PHAEDRUS

CHAPTER FOUR

The Road from Greece

NATURE was friendly to the ancient Greeks. Their climate was so mild that they spent most of their time outdoors. Their soil was fertile enough to make a living from without too much trouble. Their mountains were not too high to be climbed, and their forests were open and pleasant. The sea, full of little islands and bays, was not particularly dangerous; even small, primitive boats could easily be rowed or sailed along the coast, or from one island to another.

The Greek religion, which became the purest and highest form of nature worship, took this friendliness of nature for granted. For the Greeks, the world was full of spirits, more or less like human beings, capable of mischief, but on the whole good neighbors and companions of mankind. Every tree was the home of a dryad, every

little stream and spring had its nymph, and the sea was the home of the Nereids, who danced on the waves in the sun. The forests and mountains were full of little hairy creatures, such as satyrs, whose master was the great god Pan, with his goatlike feet and his reedy pipe that made the animals dance. When sheep and goats in a pasture suddenly began to run for no reason at all, the shepherds would say, "They have seen Pan, they are in a panic."

All religions give some account of the creation of the world; the Greek version was something like this. In the beginning there was Chaos, when the earth was without form and void, as the Bible says. This Chaos divided into two parts, which became the sky-god Uranus and the earth-goddess Gaea, from whose name we derive such words as geology, geography, and geometry. Uranus and Gaea were united by Love, and from their union the world was made. The first rulers of the world were a race of giants called Titans, children of Uranus and Gaea. Their descendants, led by Zeus, rebelled against them and won control of the world. These descendants of the Titans were the great gods who lived on Mount Olympus.

It was generally agreed that men and animals had been made by two of the Titans, Prometheus (the one who thinks beforehand) and Epimetheus (the one who thinks

afterward). The first men lived in a happy state of primitive ignorance, like Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, free from work, trouble, and disease, until Prometheus, anxious to improve them, stole fire from Olympus and taught them to use it. The Olympian gods were so angry at losing their precious secret of fire that they chained Prometheus to a mountain where vultures tore at his body until long afterward when Hercules set him free.

Epimetheus was punished in a more subtle way. The gods created a beautiful woman, called Pandora (the all-gifted), endowed with every talent and charm, and sent her to earth to be Epimetheus' wife. She carried a box which she had been strictly forbidden to open, but of course she opened it, letting loose all the troubles and diseases that have tormented mankind ever since. So Eve was not the only woman whose curiosity brought trouble into the world.

The Greeks also said that at one time the human race became so wicked that the gods punished them by sending a great flood, which drowned everyone in the world except for one good man, Deucalion, and his wife Pyrrha. These two people climbed to the top of Mount Parnassus, and after the flood subsided they asked the gods what they should do. The answer came, "Cast the bones of your mother behind you."

They puzzled over this until they remembered that the earth was their mother and the stones might be called her bones. So they threw stones over their shoulders, and Deucalion's stones turned into men, while Pyrrha's stones became women.

The resemblance between this flood story, the Babylonian myth, and the story of Noah in the Bible does not necessarily mean that the stories were borrowed by one religion from another. In the countries around the Mediterranean Sea earthquakes are fairly common, and there might have been several times when an earthquake turned a river out of its course or made the sea break through in an unexpected place. Any human beings who survived such a calamity would naturally think that they were the only ones left alive, and their story would not grow less wonderful by being repeated.

The lives of the gods, and the adventures of people who lived close to them in early times, were told in a series of charming myths which modern children read as they read fairy tales. We all remember King Midas with the Golden Touch, Bellerophon and his wonderful winged horse Pegasus, the adventures of Hercules, Jason's quest for the Golden Fleece, the Trojan War, and the wanderings of Odysseus.

Until recent times the basis of education was the study

of the Greek classics, and so many books were written in this tradition that we often speak Greek or quote from Greek literature without knowing it. Many English words are taken directly from Greek, especially words dealing with science or inventions. Telephone, photograph, thermometer, microscope, psychology, atom—look up these words in the dictionary. We still compare a beautiful woman who makes trouble to Helen of Troy, we still call an adventurous journey an Odyssey or a treacherous scheme a Trojan Horse. When we tantalize someone we do not always remember Tantalus, who was punished by having food and drink always just out of reach; and we often call a rich man a plutocrat without thinking of his connection with Pluto, the Roman name for Hades, the god of riches, who was also ruler of the underworld.

The Roman religion was very similar to that of the Greeks, but it had a few interesting differences. The great gods of Rome were so much like the Olympians that the Romans had no difficulty in identifying Jupiter with Zeus, Juno with Hera, Venus with Aphrodite, and so on. There were several lesser gods of the woods and fields, whose worship was carried on independently. The household gods, Lares and Penates, were important to every home, and the Romans had a great deal of family pride, which led to certain forms of ancestor worship. They were also

very superstitious about lucky or unlucky days, numbers, and signs. They developed a system of reading the future by studying the organs of sacrificed animals. No important project could be undertaken unless the signs were favorable. It is odd to think how often the fate of the Roman Empire depended on the liver of a sheep.

The Romans formed their religion by their own character, or rather by their ideal of what that character should be. Since they were less imaginative than the Greeks, they did not invent new myths, although their poets loved to retell the old ones. The Romans carefully preserved old traditions, and they were extremely conscientious about performing old ceremonies with strict attention to every detail, even when they no longer believed in the god whom they honored.

To the Romans, religion represented order, tradition, and duty; to the Greeks, it was a happy exercise of the imagination and an excuse for a festival. Let us look at the Greek religion as a religion and see what it did for its followers and what it failed to do.

The gods and goddesses of Olympus were like human beings; they were anthropomorphic, if one must use a large scientific word. They were larger and more beautiful than human beings, they had supernatural powers, and they were immortal; in fact they did everything that

people would like to do if they could. But they had plenty of human failings; they quarreled among themselves, they deceived each other, husbands were unfaithful, and wives were jealous. They played favorites among mankind and took sides in human quarrels. Sometimes one god would order a man to do something for which another god would punish him.

They behaved scandalously with mortal women, but this may be explained if we remember that every tribe wanted to prove its descent from a god, and every town liked to claim that it had been founded by a godlike hero. The easiest way to do this was to tell how one of the gods had loved a mortal woman and how the child born of this love affair became the ancestor of the tribe or the founder of the city.

Of course gods like this could not be taken as models for human behavior. How could the gods expect people to behave better than they did themselves? But in spite of these faults, the Greeks loved their gods, and they were sure that the gods loved them. The intimate, personal connection between gods and men was emphasized by the fact that so much of the worship was a family affair. Every home had its altar and statues of the gods for daily ceremonies. Beside the door stood a small four-sided pillar called a herma, bearing a head of Hermes, god of

travelers, to bless all who went out and came in. Even the kitchen fire was sacred to a goddess, Hestia, whom the Romans called Vesta. On a modern Greek restaurant in any American city you may see a word that looks like *Estiatorion*. This means Hestia place, or cooking place.

There were many public festivals, with processions, dances, and games which everyone could enjoy. The Greeks had no powerful and wealthy priesthood like the one in Egypt; the church did not exist except as a part of the state. Temples were built with public funds, though some economical people objected to spending so much money in that way. Of course there were priests and priestesses, but the leader of the state took the principal part in religious ceremonies as an official duty.

Besides the great gods of Olympus, many others were worshiped. Some of these had been borrowed from other countries, and some may have been survivals of older religions. Pan was one of these; so was Dionysus, god of wine. Demeter, the earth-mother, was close to the hearts of all who depended on the earth for their livelihood. When her daughter Persephone had to leave the earth for a season and go to her home in the underworld, all nature mourned for her; and, when she returned, the flowers bloomed again. Another version of the same theme was the story of Adonis, the beloved of Aphrodite, who

was killed by a wild boar and restored to life for a part of each year. The Greek women kept a yearly festival of mourning for his death and joy for his resurrection. Here again is the idea of the continuing life of the earth and of the god who must die and be born again. There were many similar beliefs in Greece and Rome, usually dealing with a goddess who mourned for her child or her lover and rejoiced when he came back to life.

The gods were honored by sacrifices, offerings of wine, olive oil, and other things, but especially burnt offerings of meat. These sacrifices were really necessary; the gods expected them. They answered the prayers of those who offered sacrifices regularly and ignored or punished those who did not. This could work both ways; a man might say to a god, "If you won't answer my prayer you can't have any more sacrifices." As Socrates said, prayer meant asking favors from the gods, and sacrifice meant giving presents to them, so religion was really a science of giving and asking.

What did this religion lack? It was altogether an *external* religion, looking outward at the mysteries of nature. It did not look inward at all. The communion of the soul with God, and the responsibility of the human conscience to God, which we think of as the very essence of religion, were left out. Among all these gods and god-

desses, there was no central power, no final authority, to which one could turn for comfort and guidance. Zeus was the chief of the Olympian gods, not because he was better than the others, but because he was more powerful. The gods did not ask for any high moral standards among their worshipers; they only wanted respect, and plenty of sacrifices.

The Greeks never had a great religious leader like Jesus or Buddha. They had no group of men like the Hebrew prophets to strengthen and purify their religion. They had no sacred book like the Bible to guide them and to explain what their religion meant. They knew that if they disobeyed the will of the gods they would be punished, but there were very many gods, and their will was extremely changeable and indefinite. The Hebrews never were in doubt as to whether they were obeying God or not, for they had his laws and commandments to show them the way, but the Greeks could only guess what their gods wanted or what they might do.

They guessed in a number of ways: by interpreting dreams, by watching the flight of birds and the behavior of animals, by trying to find a hidden message in any odd thing they heard or saw.

Another way of finding out the will of the gods was by consulting oracles. An oracle was a shrine, perhaps in

a cave or a grove of trees, where anyone could go and ask for advice. A farmer might ask why his crop had failed, or a general might come to find out the best time to begin a war. Whatever the question was, the priest, or more often the priestess, would fall into a trance or a frenzy and deliver an answer from the god. The answer was usually in the form of a rhyme or riddle which could be interpreted in several different ways, so it was hard to prove whether the oracle had been wrong or right.

The Greeks believed in the immortality of the soul, but their idea of life after death was not encouraging. They said that very good people or great heroes might have eternal happiness in the Elysian Fields, while very wicked people would be eternally punished in Tartarus, but the great majority who had not been remarkable for virtue or wickedness would become pale, dim shades drifting through a monotonous existence in the underworld ruled by Hades, whom the Romans called Pluto. They could not have even this much if their funeral ceremonies had not been performed properly; then they became fretful ghosts, tormenting living people until they could be laid to rest. The Greeks said that it was better to be the most miserable creature alive than to be a shade, but they did not brood over such things. They enjoyed this world, and the less said about the next one the better.

As they became more civilized and thoughtful, they wanted to believe in a more satisfying life after death, and this desire was expressed in the mysteries which became so popular. The most famous of these mysteries was at Eleusis, near Athens. Those who saw the mysteries were bound by a solemn oath never to tell what they had seen, so we do not know exactly what the ceremony was like. It had to do with Demeter, the earth-mother, her daughter Persephone, and Dionysus, the god of wine and of the fruits of the earth. There was apparently some representation of a sacred marriage, a death, and a new birth or resurrection. Whatever it was, it gave those who saw it a new understanding of the meaning of life and a greater hope of immortality. The end of the ceremony was a joyful procession to the sea.

Herodotus, in his history of Greece, tells a story which he believed to be true, of the time when Xerxes, king of Persia, was making his great effort to conquer Greece. A Lacedaemonian, Demaratus, and an Athenian, Dicaeus, in the Persian army, were sent as spies to see what was happening in Athens. They found the city deserted; all the able-bodied men were in the army, and everyone else had gone away for safety. As the two spies walked away from the city across the plain between Eleusis and the sea, Dicaeus remembered that this was the day when the mys-

teries were celebrated. What would the gods think, he wondered. Would they be angry because their people had deserted them? Suddenly he saw, coming down the road from the temple, a great cloud of dust, that might have been raised by hundreds of marching feet. As the cloud drew nearer, both men heard coming from it the sound of music; flutes and cymbals, and voices singing the hymn of the mysteries. The cloud swept by them, down to the sea, then it rose and sailed across the bay to the place where the Greek ships were anchored.

While Dicaeus stood watching the cloud out of sight, his companion asked, "What does it mean?"

"We will say nothing about this," Dicaeus replied. "The gods have not forgotten."

Next day they fought the great battle of Salamis, when the Persian navy was so utterly defeated that it never dared to fight the Greeks again.

The worship of the gods, with the help of the oracles and the mysteries, was enough to satisfy most people. Their religion appealed to the imagination and the sense of beauty, and they felt at home with their gods. But there were some who wanted more. In the fifth century B.C., when Greek civilization was at its height, there was a stirring in the minds of intelligent men, a questioning, a search for a higher conception of god.

We find something of this in Euripides, the most human of all the Greek dramatists. Greek drama began with the ritual of the chorus in the worship of Dionysus. At first the chorus sang all together, then the leader began to act out the story, and in time more solo parts were added until the drama took its classic form. Except in comedies, Greek dramatists never wrote about the problems of real people in their own time. (How interesting it would be for us if they had!) The author would take a well-known myth, interpret it in his own poetic language, and examine it from a psychological point of view. Why did the characters behave as they did? How did they feel, and what did they think?

One of the most famous myths is the story of Orestes, son of Agamemnon. While Agamemnon was fighting in the Trojan War, his wife Clytemnestra took a lover, and when her husband returned she and her lover killed him. The god Apollo commanded Orestes to avenge this crime by killing the two murderers. Orestes was in the same position as Hamlet, without any of Hamlet's doubt as to whether the call for revenge came from a good power or an evil one. He killed his mother and her lover, but then a dreadful punishment fell upon him. He was pursued and driven mad by the Furies, horrible flying creatures

who lived on human blood. At last he won the forgiveness of the gods and returned to a normal life.

When Euripides retold this story he dared to ask, why did it happen? How could a god order a man to commit a sin? If it was not a sin, why should it be punished? Could the gods be unjust? Was it fate that led to the tragedy, and was fate stronger than the gods? He could ask these questions, but he could not answer them.

A great deal of this questioning and searching came from the philosophers, especially from Socrates and Plato. They did not want a new religion, they did not offer their theories as possible changes in the old one, they did not say that the myths were not true; they only said that this could not be the whole truth, there must be something more. They worked gradually toward a belief that above and beyond the gods there must be one great moving force, a "first cause," a single power of divine law. They might call this power Zeus, for lack of another name, but it had little in common with the Olympian Zeus, who was only a glorified man.

Socrates and Plato thought a great deal about the human soul and its relation to the divine power. They believed in transmigration; that is, they thought that one soul might live many lives in different bodies, growing

higher or lower according to the way each life was lived. They spoke of the crude animal nature in man and of the spiritual nature that longs for communion with God. In one of Plato's dialogues the human mind is compared to a charioteer driving two horses, one beautiful, swift, and obedient, the other ugly, ill natured, and unmanageable. The good horse tries to obey his master, but the bad horse rears and plunges and almost drags all of them to destruction. But the man, the human mind, can tame and control the unruly beast and make both horses carry him to the object of his desire.

It is hard to separate the philosophy of Socrates from that of Plato because of the way in which they have come down to us. Socrates was a plain, little, bald-headed man, a stone-carver. How he earned a living by his trade is a mystery, for he spent nearly all his time walking about the streets, visiting his friends, and talking. Many young men liked to follow him and hear what he had to say, and one of them, Plato, wrote down the conversations in the form of dialogues. Perhaps he put some of his own ideas into these dialogues; no one could write accurate reports of such long and complicated conversations. Plato founded a school where science and philosophy were taught in informal discussions while the students walked about the garden or sat under the trees. The writings of

Plato have been studied by scholars ever since, and many of his ideas have passed into Christian theology.

Socrates was not interested in converting other people to his opinions. He wanted to find out the truth, and he did this by asking questions. He liked to get hold of a pompous man who was sure he knew all the answers, or of a muddle-headed youth fascinated by a new idea. Then he would begin asking questions in the most innocent and respectful way, until the other man was trapped in such a mass of contradictions that he didn't know whether he was coming or going.

According to Socrates, the human mind was capable of finding out the will of God, that is, of distinguishing between right and wrong, and choosing the good way of life. He believed that he had a spirit within him, a daemon, which told him what to do. Therefore, the most valuable thing in the world was wisdom, and the most dangerous thing was stupidity. Not ignorance, which could be overcome, but dullness of mind and the lack of desire for improvement. No human being could acquire perfect wisdom any more than he could reach perfect beauty or perfect goodness, but he could spend his life in the search for these things.

In one of the dialogues Socrates compared mankind to a group of prisoners who have spent their lives chained

in a cave where they can see nothing but shadows of the world outside. A wonderful procession is going by, but they see only the shadows, they hear only echoes of voices and music. Socrates said that if one of the prisoners should get out of the cave it would be a great mistake for him to go back and tell the others what he had seen. They would neither believe nor understand. More than four hundred years after Socrates died, the human race learned that the man who gets out of the cave ought to go back, even if the others do not believe him, even if they crucify him on a hill between two thieves.

The world owes a great deal to Socrates, but his greatest gift was himself; his lovable personality, his pure life dedicated to the pursuit of wisdom, and his heroic death.

In order to understand why Socrates died, one must know something about the Greek idea of a state. The Greek states were very small, for they centered around one city, and a city of five thousand people was considered too big for convenience. All men who were qualified as citizens had to live near enough so that they could come to the city whenever they were sent for, to vote, to serve on juries, and to do their share of military service. Because they all had so much to do with governing the state and making its laws, they were united as modern citizens never can be. The state was theirs, and they were the

state. Anyone who disagreed with the majority was dangerous or foolish. The worship of the gods was so closely connected with the state that any danger to one affected the other.

Socrates was accused of corrupting the minds of young men by teaching them to think for themselves and to question the gods. He denied that he had any bad intentions, but he was found guilty and sentenced to die by drinking poison. While he was in prison a friend offered him a chance to escape, but he refused. He said that the laws of the state had protected him all his life, and that now, if they said he must die for the good of the state, he had no right to disobey them.

Most of Plato's dialogues are so long and complicated that only scholars can appreciate them, but everyone who wants to know how far religion can go, or to gain respect for the human race, should read the dialogue called Phaedo, at least the beginning and the end of it, in Benjamin Jowett's beautiful translation. It is an eyewitness account of the last day of Socrates' life, told by Phaedo to a friend who could not be there.

A group of Socrates' friends, knowing that he was to die that day, went to visit him in prison. He received them calmly and kindly, and led their minds away from their sorrow by drawing them into a discussion of pain and

pleasure, of life and death, of immortality and the many mansions of the soul. At the end he said:

"Wherefore, Simmias, seeing all these things, what ought not we to do that we may obtain virtue and wisdom in this life? Fair is the prize, and the hope great!

"A man of sense ought not to say, nor will I be very confident, that the description which I have given of the soul and her mansions is exactly true. But I do say that, inasmuch as the soul is shown to be immortal, he may venture to think, not improperly or unworthily, that something of the kind is true. The venture is a glorious one, and he ought to comfort himself with words like these, which is the reason why I lengthen out the tale. Wherefore, I say, let a man be of good cheer about his soul, who having cast away the pleasures and ornaments of the body as alien to him and working harm rather than good, has sought after the pleasures of knowledge, and has arrayed the soul, not in some foreign attire, but in her own proper jewels, temperance, and justice, and courage, and nobility, and truth—in these adorned she is ready to go on her journey to the world below, when her hour comes."

Then he took leave of his friends, thanked the jailer for his kindness, and calmly drank the poison. No human being ever rose to greater heights than this, and no litera-

ture ever written is more moving than the account of his death.

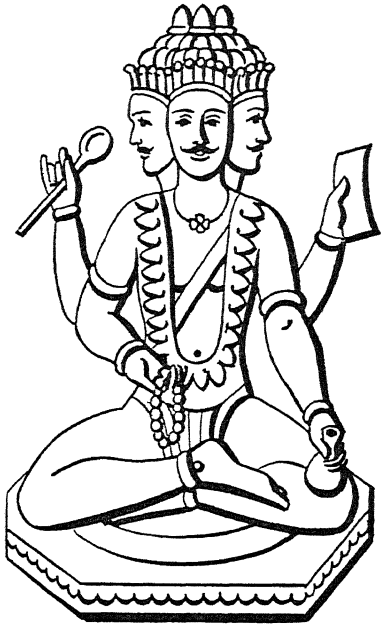
Another Greek philosopher who had a great influence in later times was Aristotle, a pupil of Plato and a teacher of Alexander the Great. This remarkable man studied and taught every possible branch of human knowledge, from the anatomy of whales to the proper way to write tragedies. When he was dealing with something that he could learn from observation he was perfectly accurate, but his astronomy was a mixture of science, religion, philosophy, and imagination. He said that the universe was a series of transparent hollow spheres, one inside the other, which governed the motion of the sun, the moon, the stars, and the planets. The more he studied this system the more complicated it grew, until finally he thought there must be fifty-five of these spheres. The earth was in the center, of course, and the outermost sphere was moved by the mind of God.

Aristotle was highly respected among Christians, Moslems, and Jews. His works formed the foundation of learning all during the Middle Ages and for some time afterward. It was natural that his idea of the universe should be accepted by Christian theologians as the basis for their conception of heaven and hell.

After the time of Aristotle, the Greeks went on discussing philosophy, but many of their arguments were pointless and futile. In a way, Greek civilization talked itself to death.

Students of religion will find in the seventeenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles an interesting account of Paul's sermon to the Athenians, who "spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell or to hear some new thing." He began by saying that he had seen their altar inscribed, "To the Unknown God," and he proceeded to tell them about his new God. "For in him we live and move and have our being, as certain also of your own poets have said." He made few converts at that time, but several of his listeners said, "We will hear thee again of this matter."

They did. The old gods had had their day, and it was time for them to make way for something better.



5

The Road from India

He who beareth no ill-will to any being, friendly and compassionate, without attachment and egoism, balanced in pleasure and pain, and forgiving, ever content with the self-controlled, resolute, with mind and reason dedicated to me, he, my devotee, is dear to me.

THE BHAGAVAD-GITA

CHAPTER FIVE

The Road from India

HINDUISM is the living faith of more than 320 million people. It is said to be not so much a religion as a state of mind and a way of life, and it includes everything from primitive idol worship to the purest abstract philosophy, from exaggerated respect for animals to utter disregard for human suffering. Apparently everyone, no matter how civilized he may be, can find what he wants in Hinduism.

To understand in a general way how this religion came to be what it is, we must begin with the earliest known event in Indian history. A tribe of fair-skinned people called Aryans came into India from the north. We do not know when this happened, for people who make history are not always able to write it.

The Aryans spoke a language of the Indo-European

family, to which most of the languages of Europe belong, including Greek, Latin, French, German, and English. According to the generally accepted theory, a group of tribes speaking similar languages lived on the steppes which are now a part of Russia. Several of these tribes wandered away from their homes, perhaps because of a change in climate. Some settled in various parts of Europe, and others moved eastward into Persia and India. The Aryans did not sweep into India as a conquering army. Like the Hebrews in the Fertile Crescent, they were simply roaming about looking for grass.

The early Aryans were a primitive people somewhat like the Indian tribes in America before the white men came. They knew how to care for sheep, cattle, and especially horses. The people of the grassy steppes seem to have been the first horsemen. The earliest Egyptians and Babylonians had no horses, and the Old Testament rarely mentions them except as strange, terrible creatures used in war. When the ancient Greeks first saw men on horseback they apparently thought that the horse and its rider were one animal, which they called a centaur.

The religion of the Aryans was a highly developed form of nature worship in which some of the principal deities were Indra, the sky-god; Agni, the god of fire; and Varuna, the guardian of right and justice. The chief

god was the sky-father, Dyaus Pitar, whose name suggests the Greek Zeus Pater and the Roman Jupiter. These deities, and many others, were honored at first in simple family ceremonies led by the father and mother of the household. After a time the worship was directed by priests who became very powerful and highly respected.

The first written records of religion in India are the Vedas, a series of books containing prayers and hymns to the gods, and charms to bring health and good fortune. We do not know how old the Vedas are, but it seems probable that they were composed before 1000 B.C. The word "Veda" means "wisdom"; it comes from the same root as our words "wisdom" and "wit." The oldest and most important of these books is the Rig-Veda, which is filled with a healthy sense of the beauty and harmony of nature and with a vague wonder concerning the mystery of life.

Who verily knows and who can here declare it, whence it was born and whence comes this creation?
The gods are later than the world's production. Who knows then whence it first came into being?
He, the first origin of this creation, whether he formed it all or did not form it,
Whose eye controls this world in highest heaven, he verily knows it, or perhaps he knows not.

The Aryans' legend of the creation of the world was that in the beginning the sea produced a great egg which divided to form earth and heaven. They told of the first man and woman, Yama and Yami, and of a great flood in which one man was saved by building a boat according to the advice of a miraculous fish.

When the Aryans came to India they found there a dark people called Dravidians. They were even more primitive than the Aryans and naturally they were looked upon as an inferior race. We know nothing about their life before the Aryans came, and we cannot tell how much of the Hindu religion belonged originally to them and how much was brought by the Aryans.

We can be quite certain that the Aryans invented one thing which became an essential part of the Hindu religion and a dominating force in Hindu life—the caste system. The Hindu word for caste, "varna," means "color," and the system evidently began as an effort by the Aryans to keep their race from being contaminated by the dark Dravidians. It did no such thing, as anyone can tell from the fact that all Hindus are more or less dark, but it created a permanent division between social classes.

The highest caste were the Brahmans, or priests, who had become the most important of all men. Then came the Kshatriyas who were rulers and warriors. The Vaisyas,

the third caste, were farmers and merchants; the Sudras, the fourth, were common laborers. All the castes were divided into many subcastes, carefully separated.

The caste system forbids marriage between men and women of different castes, and it lays down strict rules as to what kind of work a man may do and what contact, if any, he may have with members of other castes. Every detail of life is governed by such rules and, until the system could be modified, no social progress was possible. Many educated Hindus disregard some of the caste laws, but few would think of marrying outside their own caste. Almost every reformer, from Buddha's time until the present day, has attacked the caste system, but it seems indestructible.

In modern times not all Brahmans are priests. Many of them have become landowners, teachers, and government officials, but they are still the highest aristocracy of India. Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of the country, was a Brahman. The Kshatriyas have been particularly active in politics and war, while the Vaisyas are still mostly farmers and tradesmen. Many members of both these castes are well educated and some have become prosperous and public-spirited men.

Below all the castes was a huge mass of Untouchables, who were probably members of the inferior race originally.

They had no human rights, they could not touch a member of one of the castes, or handle any food that their superiors were to eat. Even the shadow of an Untouchable falling on another man might carry contamination. The separation of the Untouchables has been abolished by law, and modern Hindus are learning to accept these wretched people as their fellow creatures.

One product of the caste system seems particularly strange to outsiders—the custom of child marriage. Since it was so important to preserve the purity of the caste and the unity of the family, parents wanted to be sure that their son's wife was perfectly faithful. The best way to do this was to marry the son to a little girl too young to have known any other man.

Happy marriages do occur in India, and many Hindu parents take great care to find suitable husbands or wives for their children, but the system appears to us hopelessly wrong. It seems so to many educated and progressive Hindus, who have been trying for a long time to change it, but the old custom is still too strong to be broken.

If we are shocked by the pitiful condition of Hindu women, let us remember what they may think of us. Our women have to earn their own living and find husbands for themselves, which they do very badly, as our high rate of divorce indicates. Some of them do not marry

until they are thirty or forty, and some never marry at all!

As a religion, Hinduism has developed gradually, not from the teaching of any one prophet but from the slow growth of human understanding. Its three great gods are Brahma, the supreme creator of all things, Siva or Shiva, the destroyer, and Vishnu, the preserver of life.

Brahma is seldom honored by formal worship, and only a few temples are dedicated to him, but to intelligent and educated Hindus he is the essence of life. He is not imagined in human form or in a distant heaven; he represents the universal divine law which every religion discovers sooner or later. All other gods are only names and symbols for a part of the great power. The human soul is also a part of it, and every good thought and action is an attempt to reach harmony with the soul of the universe.

Siva is commonly worshiped, not only as the destroyer, but as the bringer of life. The Hindus think of death as a natural and normal part of the cycle of existence, like birth. In some of their temples Siva and his wife or wives are represented by statues which seem grotesque and even shocking to outsiders who do not understand them.

Vishnu is the most human of the three gods because he visited the earth in several forms and went through a series of fantastic adventures. It is said that he will come

again to punish the wicked and reward the good, which reminds us vaguely of the Messiah and the day of judgment.

Under the name of Krishna he appears in the most famous sacred book of India, the Bhagavad-Gita, or the Lord's Song, written about the time of the birth of Jesus. This epic poem begins with the story of a young prince, ready for a great battle, who suddenly wonders why the struggle is necessary and why all these men must die. He speaks of this feeling to his charioteer, who is really Krishna in disguise, and Krishna tells him not to grieve over human suffering, for only the soul of the world, Brahma, is eternal. Then Krishna explains how a man, by upright living and love of his fellow creatures, can win peace with the soul of God. This continues, in the translation of Annie Besant: [1]

"Fearlessness, cleanness of life, steadfastness in the Yoga of wisdom, alms-giving, self-restraint and sacrifice and study of the scriptures, austerity and straightforwardness, harmlessness, truth, absence of wrath, renunciation, peacefulness, absence of crookedness, compassion to living beings, uncovetousness, mildness, modesty, absence of fickleness, vigor, forgiveness, fortitude, purity, absence

[1] Published by The Theosophical Press, Wheaton, Illinois.

of envy and pride—these are his who is born with the divine properties."

While the faith of Hinduism and its methods of worship are so different from our own, we can see from this catalogue of virtues that the Hindu conception of righteousness is based on the same human laws that govern the conduct of life in all religions.

The majority of Hindus are poor and ignorant. Like most people anywhere, they are too busy with their daily cares and struggles to spend much time in philosophical speculation. The idea of one vast impersonal creative force like Brahma is too remote and abstract for an ordinary mind to grasp. Smaller gods, nearer to humanity, are easier to understand and more comforting to worship. In Hinduism as in other religions, the outward forms and symbols of worship become more important for some people than the inward truth.

India has always been full of gods; almost every village has one of its own, perhaps nothing more than a stone or a tree. The worship of these obscure little gods has never been touched by any philosophy.

One of the most interesting Hindu philosophers was Mahavira Jnatiputra of Jina. He lived in the sixth century B.C., a little before the time of Buddha. He began

his life as a wealthy young prince, and suddenly he gave up all worldly pleasures for a life of meditation and self-denial. He believed that no gods were necessary, and that man himself could win salvation through the power of the mind and the discipline of the body. His religion was open to all, regardless of caste. He insisted that no living thing should be destroyed, for all life was sacred. His message was not understood in his time. How could one speak of the vanity of worldly desire to poor, miserable people who spent their lives in an apparently hopeless battle with starvation?

After his death this man, who had preached a religion without a god, became a god himself. His statue was worshiped in beautiful temples, and when one statue was not enough, other figures of gods and goddesses were added. His followers, the Jains, are still fairly numerous, but they seem to remember only one point of his teaching. They refuse to kill anything, even insects, rats, or poisonous snakes, and they give a great deal of time to caring for sick animals. How much harder it is to follow a great teacher than to worship a god!

The idea of Brahma as the living soul of the universe, of which every soul is a small part, connects Hinduism with other great religions, but the Hindus have interpreted this idea in a way that is peculiarly their own. Per-

haps the climate of India had something to do with this; we all know how hard it is to be cheerful and energetic through a long siege of hot weather. Philosophers asked themselves, "What does life mean? What is the use of it all?" They came to regard worldly happiness as an illusion and life itself as a burden. How, they wondered, could the human soul escape from pain and weariness and find peace in union with the divine soul of all things, which was the only reality?

From this state of mind came two closely related ideas which form the basis of Hindu philosophy. The first is the transmigration of souls. According to this belief, every soul goes through many lives, perhaps beginning as a plant, then becoming an insect, then a mouse or a bird, and finally a man. If the man does not live well, his soul may be reborn in some lower form of life.

This idea accounts for the belief in the sacredness of all life, and the understanding and companionship between human beings and animals, which is one of the most attractive features of Hindu life. Indian folklore is full of charming stories of friendship, helpfulness, and good humor in which men and animals appear as equals.

It also accounts for the respect paid to certain animals, especially to cows, which are obviously connected with milk, one of the sustaining foods of life, and to monkeys,

which are so nearly human. Visitors to India are often amused to find a temple, which ought to be a solemn place of worship, swarming with monkeys, or to see cows wandering at large through a busy street. No Hindu would think of interfering with these creatures or of treating them disrespectfully.

The second idea, which grew out of the belief in transmigration, is called karma, which really means "deeds." Karma is the sum of all deeds, good and evil, done by the soul in all the lives through which it has passed. This accumulation of deeds is regarded as an evil thing, a burden which the soul must bear, an endlessly turning wheel which keeps the soul from rising to nirvana. This is the Hindu word for the perfect peace and joy of unity with the divine soul. In another religion it might be called heaven or paradise.

According to Hindu philosophy, a man's life on earth moves through four stages as he learns what he really wants. At first, when he is young, he wants pleasure. There is nothing wrong with this, but as he grows more mature it does not satisfy him. When he marries and raises a family, he wants worldly success and the approval of his neighbors. He gives his energy to the pursuit of wealth or personal honor, and he wins or loses in the struggle; but even if he wins, something is lacking. He

reaches the third stage when he becomes aware of his responsibility to others, and he finds satisfaction in the willing performance of his duty to mankind. The fourth stage, which is characteristically Hindu, is the desire to be set free from human limitations and to search for nirvana.

In the attempt to reach this liberation of the soul, the Hindus have developed a system of physical and mental discipline called yoga. There are several forms of yoga, suited to various temperaments and ways of life. The highest and most difficult form is a complicated regime of exercises and meditation intended to give perfect control of body and mind.

Another form is the search for knowledge through philosophic contemplation and withdrawal from the distractions of worldly life. This is not confined to Hinduism; it is found in several other religions, including Christianity. The Stoic philosophers of Greece and Rome tried to find personal salvation through denial of selfish desire and indifference to suffering. To many people of modern times, withdrawing from life means neglect of human duties, and indifference to one's own suffering implies a lack of sympathy with the suffering of others.

The hard-working, practical people of India know perfectly well that if everyone sought to liberate himself by

withdrawing from the world and doing nothing at all, the human race would cease to exist. For such people, who must earn a living, other forms of yoga are possible. One form attempts to reach the goal by showing love of God in the performance of religious duties, with the understanding that all rituals and symbols are only expressions of this love. Another yoga is based on work—not the Western idea of "getting things done" as an end in itself, but doing the daily tasks well and faithfully for the sake of love.

Some aspects of yoga in its simpler forms, as well as a general understanding of Hindu philosophy, have been brought to Europe and America by Hindu scholars. Hindus are not missionaries, but they are glad to teach anyone who shows a sincere interest in their ideas. One important teacher in the nineteenth century was Ramakrishna, founder of the Vedanta Society which maintains branches in several American cities.

Hinduism does not emphasize the rights of the individual, but it has produced several organized movements for social and religious reform. Two of these, Brahmo Samaj and Arya Samaj, are attempts to transform Hinduism into the spiritual worship of one god and to break the power of such ancient traditions as caste discrimination and child marriage.

Changing forms of worship are less important than the example of heroic lives. In modern times many Hindu reformers have risked their fortunes and even faced death for the sake of freedom and justice. Most of these people have been impressed by the teachings and the personality of Jesus, but few of them have wanted to become Christians. Orthodox Christian theology is as incomprehensible to them as Hinduism is to the rest of the world.

The most famous Hindu of the twentieth century, who will be remembered as one of the world's great leaders, was Mohandas Gandhi. The name Mahatma, by which he is known, means "Great Soul," and few men in the world's history have deserved that name so well. He belonged to the humble Vaisya caste of farmers and shopkeepers, but he gave himself an education and became a lawyer. He was practicing law in South Africa when the racial discrimination which he found there made him realize that he must give the rest of his life to improving the condition of his own people.

He worked for two great purposes, the abolition of the Untouchables as a class and the independence of India, and he lived to see at least the beginning of the fulfilment of both these dreams. He did not want to lead an armed rebellion against the English. He taught his people the

method of passive resistance, and he encouraged them to be self-sufficient by developing their home industries in such simple ways as spinning, weaving, and making salt from sea water. He and his followers were often imprisoned and persecuted, but their courage would not die, and the little withered man in the white loincloth, sitting cross-legged beside his spinning wheel, became a symbol of hope and freedom for all the world. Toward the end of his life, when he went into a period of fasting as a protest against injustice, the British Empire was helpless before him. When he died from the bullet of an assassin, even unimaginative Americans compared that tragedy to the crucifixion of Jesus.

Gandhi's successor as leader of India was a cultured aristocrat, Jawaharlal Nehru, who had broken the tradition of his Brahman caste by his sympathy with the lower classes. He worked with Gandhi for years and he spent some time in prison. Under his guidance the people of India, who might have been satisfied to worship their beloved Mahatma as a god, learned to remember his teachings and to translate them into action in meeting the problems of a new country.

6

The Road of Buddha

All that we are is the result of what we have thought: it is founded on our thoughts, it is made up of our thoughts. If a man speaks or acts with a pure thought, happiness follows him, like a shadow that never leaves him.

THE DHAMMAPADA

CHAPTER SIX

The Road of Buddha

BUDDHISM grew out of Hinduism as Christianity grew out of Judaism. The personality of Buddha and the triumphant common sense of his teaching make it the most attractive of all the Oriental religions, and its history gives an interesting example of what can happen to a religion which would rather worship its founder than try to understand him.

Siddhartha Gautama, who came to be known as Buddha, the Enlightened One, was born about 560 B.C. How strange it is that in the same century Mahavira and Buddha in India, Confucius and Lao-tzu in China, Zoroaster in Persia, and the great prophets of the Hebrews were all searching for a better way of life. Socrates and Plato came only a little later.

Gautama belonged to the Kshatriya caste of rulers and

warriors. His father was a rajah, and in his youth Gautama enjoyed all the luxuries that wealth and social position could give him. According to the legend, a holy man once told his father that the young man's life would be changed when he saw an old man, a sick man, a dead man, and a beggar. The father tried to protect his son from these reminders of the disagreeable side of life; but Gautama did see them, and he resolved to leave his home. This is only another way of saying that Gautama, like many others in his time, became conscious that not even wealth can save a man from old age, sorrow, and death. Of course he was born and bred in the Hindu tradition which teaches that life itself is a burden, and that the soul must pass through many lives before it can gain the peace of nirvana.

In his thirtieth year he determined to escape from his vain and futile existence and to find the true way of peace and salvation. The old story says that he looked at a room full of lovely women with whom his father had tried to entertain him. As they lay asleep they were no more seductive than so many lifeless bodies. Poor creatures, they too would grow old and suffer and die. He looked at his beautiful and devoted wife, sleeping with their new-born son in her arms. He had never loved them so well, but he knew that he must leave them.

All alone he left the palace and walked down the hot, dusty road. He exchanged clothes with a beggar, and wandered on until he found a little group of holy hermits. He joined these men, and for a while he listened to their learned discussions of the meaning of life and of the proper way to liberate the soul. Soon he realized that this was not the true way for him. These men were wise, and they were honestly trying to find the heart of the infinite mystery, but their endless arguments had shut them away from reality.

He left the community of holy men, taking five of them with him, and for a long time he tried another way. To free his soul from worldly desire, he lived with such perfect austerity and self-denial that he became hardly more than a living skeleton. When he was almost dying of starvation he saw that this, too, was the wrong way. The desire for no desire might grow to be a form of intemperance that could dominate a man's life as thoroughly as the most selfish pursuit of pleasure.

What should he do? What other way could there be? His body was weakened by fasting, and his spirit too was failing. He could see no light anywhere, as he sat in meditation under a huge tree.

Then suddenly in a flash of inspiration he saw the way clear before him. He sat there filled with wonder and

peace and joy, thinking out every detail of what he understood and what he must do. After this revelation he became Buddha, the Enlightened One, and the tree where he sat is called the Bo-tree, the tree of enlightenment.

One aspect of Buddha's revelation made him different from the other mystics of his time. He knew that this enlightenment was not for him alone, that he must share it with all men of all castes, no matter how poor or ignorant they might be. His way was to be found, not in lonely contemplation, but in love, understanding, and service. He must not torture his body; he must live with sensible moderation in order to carry on his work.

The gospel of Buddha is based on four great truths. The first truth is that all human beings must suffer. Birth is painful, life is full of pain and sorrow. We grow old in pain, and in pain we die. No life is without pleasure, but pleasure soon fades away.

The second truth goes deeper into the cause of unhappiness. We suffer because we do not accept pain and sorrow as inevitable. We wear out our lives in vain longing for things that we have not, and no one can have everything. Unhappiness comes from unfulfilled desire—for success, for love, for beauty, for health, for youth that never dies.

Third, suffering can be ended when we set ourselves free from this craving for what we cannot have.

The fourth great truth tells how the human soul has in itself the power to gain freedom from desire, to live well in this world, and to reach the peace of nirvana, by following the Eightfold Path of wisdom, kindness, moderation, and self-control.

With the first three truths any Hindu would agree, but the fourth was Buddha's own contribution. Socrates, a hundred years later, would have understood it perfectly.

The divisions of the Eightfold Path as described by Buddha were these:

Right belief, that is, acceptance of Buddha's way and understanding of one's own nature, with its lower self which is full of passion and desire, and its higher self which can control the lower one and find expression in acts of unselfish love.

Right aspiration, away from worldly pleasure and toward kindness and good will for all living things.

Right speech, free from vain chatter, angry words, lies, and slander.

Right action, which includes all the principles of the conduct of life according to the best human standards—not to kill anything, or to steal, or to covet another's pos-

sessions, but to keep one's self morally clean and free from self-indulgence.

Right livelihood, earning one's living by good and useful work, not by anything dishonest or harmful to others.

Right effort, avoiding mental laziness and concentrating one's energy on the search for truth.

Right thoughts, directed toward discipline and control of mind and body.

Right meditation, looking forward with a pure and free spirit to the peace of nirvana.

Where were the old Hindu gods in Buddha's scheme of things? They could be anywhere or nowhere. He hardly ever mentioned them; they were only names for various qualities or aspects of the eternal divine power. Where was the formal religion of worship, prayer, and sacrifice? There was no need for it if every human soul had within itself the power to win salvation. Buddha was not interested in metaphysical speculation about the nature of the universe and the ultimate fate of the soul. These questions, he said, were not edifying.

This radical departure from the established religion was revolutionary enough, but even more startling to the Hindus of Buddha's time was the notion that anyone, regardless of caste, might be noble. The important thing was not who a man was but what he did.

"A man does not become a Brahmana by his plaited hair, by his family, or by birth; in whom there is truth and righteousness, he is blessed, he is a Brahmana."

Buddha not only ignored the caste system; he turned the light of common sense on another belief which no devout Hindu had ever questioned. He did not think that a man could attain holiness by neglecting all human concerns and torturing his body.

"A life given to pleasures, devoted to pleasures and lusts; this is degrading, sensual, vulgar, ignoble, and profitless. And a life given to mortifications; this is painful, ignoble, and profitless."

No wonder the five holy men who had shared Buddha's experiment in starvation were shocked when he revealed his message to them. But they soon agreed with him, and they followed him when he began to preach.

They camped in a wooded park near Benares, and before long others joined them to hear the words of Buddha. Sixty disciples were trained, and in the dry season they all set out to preach the new gospel.

Buddha's world was ready to hear him. While his revelation seemed original, it must have expressed thoughts that had been stirring in the human mind, like seeds sprouting underground, reaching toward the light. His words found a much more responsive audience than the

somewhat similar teachings of Mahavira a generation before. Perhaps times had changed, and no doubt Buddha was a more appealing person and a more able teacher than Mahavira had been.

Like Mohammed, he was a practical mystic with a talent for organization, but he had none of Mohammed's faults of character, and he was entirely free from personal ambition. Like Paul, he loved to travel, to preach, and to keep in contact with his followers. As he trudged along the roads of India with his shaven head, his begging bowl, and his ragged yellow robe, he must have been as familiar and lovable to the people of his time as Gandhi was in the same country, centuries later.

He established an order of monks, and, after some persuading, an order of nuns, with rules so similar to those of the Christian orders that the early Christian missionaries among the Buddhists wondered who had been there before them.

During the dry season the monks wandered about the country preaching. Since they had no worldly possessions, they had to beg for food. In the rainy season they retired to their monasteries for study and meditation. Buddha realized that not everyone could be a monk or a nun. Someone had to do the work of the world, and the human

race had to be carried on by marriage and the care of the family. But anyone could live a good life, and anyone could acquire merit by contributing to the support of the monks.

When Buddha had been preaching for several years, he met his wife, who had never ceased to love him. In her own home she had tried to live as he did, eating only the simplest food and sleeping on a mat on the floor. He received her kindly, and praised her unselfish love, but he could not return to her. He found a place for her among his nuns, and his son became a monk.

The stories told of Buddha and his disciples are surprisingly like those that we associate with Jesus. Buddha, like Jesus, had been tempted by an evil spirit while he was fasting in the wilderness. Like Jesus, he offered his teaching to the humble and the ignorant, and he was not afraid to associate with sinners. He, too, was followed by the blind, the crippled, and the afflicted, begging for his help.

One of his disciples met a woman at a well, as Jesus met the woman of Samaria, and asked her for water. She would not give it to him, for she belonged to a low caste, and he ought not to associate with her. He said that it made no difference who her family was. "To him in whom love dwells, the whole world is but one family."

Many of Buddha's words might have come from the New Testament. Jesus spoke of a house built upon a rock, and Buddha put it in this way:

"As rain breaks through an ill-thatched house, passion will break through an unreflecting mind. As rain does not break through a well-thatched house, passion will not break through a well-reflecting mind."

Jesus advised his followers to return good for evil. Buddha said:

"Do not speak harshly to anyone; those who are spoken to will answer thee in the same way. Angry speech is painful: blows for blows will touch thee."

"Let a man overcome anger by love, let him overcome evil by good; let him overcome the greedy by liberality, and the liar by truth."

And how familiar these proverbs are in a slightly different form:

"One's own self conquered is better than all other people."

"Even though a speech be a thousand words, but made up of senseless talk, one word of sense is better, which if a man hears, he becomes quiet."

"That which one desireth not for oneself, do not do unto others."

Buddha did not regard himself as a divine being. He

was an "enlightened one," but there had been many other "enlightened ones," and there would be more. He did not establish any form of worship, and he had no creed, unless the Eightfold Path could be called a creed.

He lived to be eighty years old, and before he died he gave his disciples full instructions as to how their work should be carried on. His last words were, "Work out your own salvation."

Buddhism continued to grow after his death. Many of its converts were poor and humble, but some belonged to the wealthy and intellectual classes.

A king named Chandragupta, who lived at the same time as Alexander the Great, became an enthusiastic Buddhist. He may have been attracted to the religion at first for rather selfish reasons. Although he was a king, his caste, the Kshatriyas, ranked below the priestly Brahmans; and Buddhism, with its disregard of caste, would make him the equal of any Brahman.

He may not have been a great man, but his grandson, Asoka, has been called one of the world's noblest rulers. Asoka, who lived about three hundred years after Buddha, ruled nearly all of India, not by force, but by wisdom, justice, and kindness. He encouraged Buddhism in all his territory, and he sent missionaries to every part of the world that he knew.

But the religion spread by Asoka and those who came later was not the religion of Buddha. An unfortunate change had come, a change that has come to other religions before and since. It is extremely difficult, perhaps impossible, to have a purely mental religion, which depends on the intelligence and character of the individual. As long as human beings are human, they need some definite object of worship, some central figure around which to build a form of ritual and belief. This was especially true in India, where men had always depended on so many gods.

Buddha had become a god. His statue was worshiped in elaborate temples, and the facts of his simple human life were hidden by fantastic legends. One had only to believe in him in order to be a Buddhist.

Of course he was not an ordinary human being. He had existed from the beginning of time, and because of his desire to save mankind from sin and misery he had lived on the earth in other incarnations, as many as twenty-four of them, before the life in which he was known as Buddha. He would come again, five thousand years after his death, to save this wicked world from its final destruction.

He had been born of an immaculate conception in which his own spirit descended from heaven and entered

his mother's womb. His birth had been attended by angels. The first words he spoke were full of divine wisdom, and when he took his first step the sacred lotus bloomed under his feet. When he grew older he had a supernatural horse eighteen cubits high, which any fairy-tale hero would have enjoyed. Miracles followed him all his life; his enlightenment under the Bo-tree was accompanied by a display of colored lights and a rain of flowers from heaven.

These legends continued to grow, and in the countries where Buddhism was carried by missionaries it adapted itself to the beliefs and forms of worship that were already there. The teachings of Buddha were not forgotten, and many good people still tried to follow the Eightfold Path, but the words he spoke, like the facts of his life, were hidden.

The sacred literature of Buddhism is so immense and so complicated that the most profound scholars do not agree on how it should all be classified and interpreted. Some books have never been translated from the dialects in which they were written, and some have never been printed.

The earliest and most intelligible of the Buddhist scriptures have the odd name of Tripitakas, or Three Baskets. They are a set of rules for monks and nuns, a

collection of Buddha's sayings, and a philosophical commentary.

The exact nature of Buddha in his various existences, the quality of his relationship with the infinite soul of the universe, and many other questions which Buddha himself dismissed with a smile because they were "not edifying," have been the subjects of endless discussion. Not even Christian theology is so confusing. No wonder the ordinary Buddhist is satisfied to let the monks tell him about the teachings of Buddha and to acquire merit for himself by contributing to the support of monasteries.

Buddhism could not hold India; it was gradually absorbed into the vast confusion of Hinduism. When the Moslems came, about the year 1000 A.D., Indian Buddhism was dying, and it is now almost extinct.

In its present form, Buddhism consists of two main divisions which are sometimes compared to rafts or boats carrying travelers across a river. Hinayana, the lesser vehicle, has room for only a select few, while Mahayana, the greater vehicle, carries everyone who wants to travel toward a better world.

Hinayana, which its followers prefer to call Theravada or the Way of the Elders, is said to be nearer to the actual teachings of Buddha than any other form. It is common in Ceylon, Burma, Thailand, and Cambodia. Hinayana

is centered around monasteries in which highly cultivated monks live apart from worldly cares. These monks are highly honored for their devotion to the purity of old traditions.

Mahayana Buddhism, the predominant faith of China, Japan, and Korea, is a religion for ordinary people who have to live in this world. It emphasizes Buddha's willingness to share his enlightenment with others. According to Mahayana doctrines, many divine beings called bodhisattvas are born into the world filled with desire to lead mankind along the way to salvation. Through righteous living and unselfish conduct, anyone may hope to be reborn as a bodhisattva, and almost everyone has some chance of attaining the peace of nirvana. There are many sects and divisions of Mahayana, each one adapted to the character of the people who follow it.

The Buddhism of Tibet, a form of Mahayana which contains remnants of primitive magic and nature worship, is dominated by monks called lamas. Their leader, the Dalai Lama, has powers similar to those of the Pope. When a Dalai Lama dies, his spirit is believed to be reborn in a child whom the lamas can recognize by certain mystical signs.

Buddhism was not welcomed in China at first, for the Chinese were a realistic people, more interested in this

world than in the next. They could not appreciate a form of holiness which would drive a man to renounce all obligations to his family, since their own life was so largely dominated by family affection and responsibility. But the philosophy of Lao-tzu, as we shall see in the next chapter, had prepared their minds for the similar teachings of Buddha, and the religion as it was presented to them offered a spiritual satisfaction which they had never obtained from the practical common sense of Confucius.

Mahayana Buddhism came into Japan from Korea, and it flourished there because it brought a new and comforting doctrine, the love of Buddha the Saviour and the hope of a future life. The old Shinto religion of emperor worship never interfered with it; one could easily be a Buddhist and a Shintoist at the same time.

Modern Japanese Buddhists have borrowed a number of ideas from Christian missionaries and they are energetic preachers and teachers. In fact, they are now missionaries themselves, for they have produced the most significant development in modern Buddhism, the sect called Zen.

This word is the Japanese version of the Chinese *ch'an*, meaning "meditation." According to old traditions, the *ch'an* form of Buddhism was brought to China some time after 500 A.D. by an Indian missionary named Bodhidharma. He believed in the search for enlightenment by

meditation, not by blind obedience to the sacred books. He said, "The scriptures are only a finger that points to the moon of enlightenment. When one can see the moon, there is no more use for the finger."

He did not win many followers at first, but his philosophy was carried on in several schools, and it was introduced in Japan about the year 1200. Zen Buddhists were mostly intellectual people with cultivated tastes. They did not try to make their religion popular, but it grew steadily. It attracted little attention outside Japan until after the Second World War, but it has become one of the largest and most interesting religious movements in the modern world. In Europe and America many philosophers, psychologists, artists, and writers are taking a serious interest in Zen, and restless young people are studying it to find a possible answer for their own problems.

The essential purpose of Zen is self-enlightenment through meditation, work, and service to mankind. In monasteries where the religion is taught, the students sit together for hours in silent meditation, but they also do their share of the day's work by cooking, cleaning, or gardening. In discussions with their teachers they are trained to avoid using conventionally pious words and phrases. They must not take any statement for granted and they must not use a word without knowing exactly

what it means. (Buddha would have liked this, for he said that faith without reason was only superstition.) The students ponder for days over strange riddling statements or paradoxes which cannot be solved by ordinary common sense. They are outspokenly critical of one another, and they often laugh, but they are fundamentally serious in trying to set themselves free from the tyranny of words and traditions.

When a Zen Buddhist attains enlightenment, an awakening of the mind to the wonder of life and a sense of unity with all created things, this is not the end for him. He is expected to use his enlightenment for the good of humanity, perhaps in teaching, social service, or some form of art. Zen monks have contributed a great deal to Japanese culture by their skill in music, painting, poetry, and the typically Japanese arts of flower arrangement and landscape gardening. The graceful courtesy of their meals is reflected in the tea-drinking ceremony which every well-bred Japanese girl learns from her mother.

In countries where Zen Buddhism is popular, men who do not expect to become monks often spend a few months or a year in monasteries, as Christians sometimes go to religious retreats. They do this to honor their religion and to give themselves a fresh outlook on their own lives.

At one time, not many years ago, anyone might have said that Buddhism was so conservative that it had little to offer in the modern world, but this is no longer true. The revival which began after the Second World War has made it an international religion with a strong practical interest in schools, cultural programs, and social welfare. In 1956, all the Buddhist countries of Asia joined in celebrating the twenty-five-hundredth anniversary of the passing of Buddha from this earth.

What has this to do with the problems of American life? It teaches the value of the free, inquiring spirit, the lessons that may be learned from the past, the satisfaction of good work, and the duty of service to others. Perhaps in this way Buddha may help us to work out our own salvation.

7

The Road from China

Chung-Kung asked about perfect virtue. The Master said, "It is, when you go abroad, to behave to every one as if you were receiving a great guest; to employ the people as if you were assisting at a great sacrifice; not to do to others as you would not wish done to yourself; to have no murmuring against you in the country, and none in the family."

THE ANALECTS OF CONFUCIUS

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Road from China

CHINA has been called the oldest living civilization. India may be as old, but it has lived through many changes, while China has developed in its own way. It was growing when Egypt and Babylon were young, but ancient Egypt is in ruins and Babylon is a heap of dust. It flourished before Athens and Rome were built. When the ancient Britons were painting themselves blue and living in holes in the ground, the Chinese lived in comfortable, well-furnished houses, dressed in silk, made excellent pottery, and understood the use of sundials and umbrellas.

And yet, for many centuries, the new civilizations of the West regarded China as one of the most backward nations on earth. The Chinese neither had nor wanted any contact with other countries until it was forced upon them. They persisted in following their own way, and

China often seemed to be on the verge of collapse, but it always recovered. Why have the Chinese been so conservative and so indestructible? Perhaps we can find some answer by studying the two religions native to China, Taoism and Confucianism.

Chinese religion was developed from two elements found in the most primitive forms of worship—the duty of honoring the spirits of the dead, and the desire to understand the mystery of nature.

Ancestor worship seems to have existed in China from the beginning of time, and its form was so firmly established that no religion had any effect on it. All religions, primitive or civilized, have some way of showing respect for the dead, but the Chinese way was different from any of the others.

The Egyptians tried, with elaborate tombs and costly offerings, to assure their dead of a continued existence in some faraway land of eternal happiness. The Chinese did not think of departed souls living in a distant heaven, and no Chinese could imagine the possibility of his honorable ancestors going to hell. Many primitive religions are haunted by fear of unhappy or malicious ghosts, but the Chinese seem never to have had any such idea. They believed that the dead remained close to the living, at least for several generations. The dead were glad to be

remembered, they were interested in their descendants, and they wanted to be helpful and friendly.

Chinese families kept the memorial tablets of their ancestors in the best room of the house or in small private temples. These tablets were the center of family worship. Candles were lighted before them, incense was burned, and offerings of flowers and food were presented. The ceremonies took place twice a month, as well as on the birthday of an ancestor or on the anniversary of his death. Family reunions were held on the last day of the year, when all relatives gathered together and special ceremonies were performed to welcome the spirits of the dead.

Each family worshiped its own ancestors, and since the emperor was believed to be descended from the sun-god and the earth-goddess, he offered annual sacrifices to these deities. Until 1912, when the last emperor was deposed, the sacrifices were performed every year with lavish and impressive pageantry.

No one knows whether ancestor worship made the family the basic unit of Chinese society, or whether the worship grew as an expression of the family loyalty which the Chinese placed among the highest virtues. Obedience to parents was the first duty, even for married people with families of their own. This led to a rather extreme respect for old age. Old things, old ways, and old ideas were best.

Old people were highly honored for their wisdom, no matter how foolish they had been all their lives. How could such a country be anything but conservative?

The second element in Chinese religion, the explanation of the laws of nature, also took a distinctive form. Chinese scriptures say that the world is controlled by two vital principles, yang and yin. Yang is the male force and yin the female. Yang is light, heat, motion, and action. Yin is darkness, coolness, quietness, and rest. The sky is yang, the earth is yin. These forces are found in all created things and in the human soul. Everyone has an earthly soul full of low passion and desire, and a heavenly soul of higher and purer qualities. After death, the earthly part slowly decays and is absorbed into yin, while the heavenly soul returns to yang from which it came.

Good spirits come from yang and evil spirits from yin. The world is full of evil spirits capable of bringing bad luck and sickness, but they are not too terrifying, and they can be frightened away by gongs and other loud noises. (The Chinese invented gunpowder, but they used it only for firecrackers to frighten evil spirits.)

The good spirits are stronger than the evil ones; perhaps they even send the evil ones to keep men behaving

properly, "to put the fear of God into them," as we sometimes say. The Chinese never had anything like the pessimism of the Hindus, who regarded life as an inevitable burden of sorrow and pain. The majority of the Chinese were wretchedly poor and they suffered terribly from famines, floods, and wars, but they remained in love with life. If trouble came, they put up with it and hoped for the best.

The Chinese never had enough of some things, but they always had plenty of time. According to the Hebrew story of the creation, the world was made in six days, less than six thousand years ago. The Chinese legend says that the first man, Pan-Ku, took eighteen thousand years to create the world, and finished it ninety-six million years ago.

Besides the spirits there were many gods, large and small. There were nature gods of all kinds, and special personal gods of such things as medicine, literature, farming, pottery kilns, walls, and doors. These smaller gods were not eternal; old ones could be discarded and new ones added according to circumstances.

The Chinese say that all gods and spirits, all nature and all human beings, and even the vital principles of yang and yin, are governed by one great power called Tao. This

word is usually translated in English as "the Way," but it may also mean "Order," "Law," "Nature," or "Word." The Chinese translation of the first sentence of the Gospel of John is: "In the beginning was the Tao, and the Tao was with God, and the Tao was God." So we see that this is the Chinese word for the divine law, the soul of the world, which the Hindus call Brahma. The Greek philosophers knew that it existed, though they could not give it a name. The Hebrews call it Jehovah, and the Christians call it God.

Taoism as a religion was founded by a man known as Lao-tzu. This was not his real name, but a title meaning "Old Philosopher." He was born about 604 B.C., that is, a generation or two before Buddha. We know almost nothing about his life, except for one account that gives him some kind of miraculous birth. He was a librarian and a keeper of records for an unimportant king, and he became famous for his wisdom, though he does not seem to have been very active as a teacher. He can hardly be called a religious leader, for he was not interested in the gods. What he wanted was to find a human way of life corresponding to the divine law.

According to his philosophy, human beings can find happiness and peace of mind only if their lives are in

harmony with Tao. The mind must be set free from all passion and desire in order that the divine spirit may enter. Buddha would have agreed with him there, but Buddha, like Socrates, thought that ignorance was dangerous, while Lao-tzu declared that the mind must be set free even from wisdom. Perhaps he meant the same thing that Jesus meant when he advised men to become as little children, forgetting all their old opinions and prejudices.

How does a man behave when his soul is in harmony with the divine spirit? The three highest virtues, the three treasures as Lao-tzu called them, are love of mankind, moderation, and humility. Do not push yourself forward or strive to be important, he said. Let nature take its course, for you are a part of nature. Water is gentle and weak, content to stay in its own place, but it can wear away stones.

Here are the rules of a good life, according to Lao-tzu, as they are translated by Ch'u Ta-kao:

In dwelling, think it a good place to live;
In feeling, make the heart deep;
In friendship, keep on good terms with men;
In words, have confidence;
In ruling, abide by good order;

In business, take things easy;
In motion, make use of the opportunity.
Since there is no contention, there is no blame.

When Lao-tzu was very old he became disgusted with the worldliness and corruption of the court, and he decided to leave it. The keeper of the gate stopped him, saying that he ought to leave a record of his wisdom for the benefit of others. He sat down and wrote a short book, containing not more than five thousand characters, giving the substance of all his belief. Then the Old Philosopher walked out of the gate alone, and no one ever saw him again.

His book is called *Tao Tê Ching,* which may be translated as "The Book of the Way of Virtue." In simple words which can be easily understood even by modern people with a completely different outlook on life, he tells of the nature of Tao, the eternal mystery which lives in the heart of man:

Without going out of the door
One can know the whole world;
Without peeping out of the window
One can see the Tao of heaven.
The further one travels
The less one knows.

He describes the character of the man who lives in harmony with Tao:

The sage has no self to call his own;
He makes the self of the people his self.
To the good I act with goodness;
To the bad I also act with goodness:
Thus goodness is attained.
To the faithful I act with faith;
To the faithless I also act with faith:
Thus faith is attained.

He advised the use of arms only when it could not be avoided, and he thought that the best ruler would be one who did not interfere too much with his people, but let Tao take its course.

Lao-tzu's little book came to be regarded as a source of supernatural wisdom. Those who were unable to understand its simple message thought that it must contain some secret magic. They searched it for hidden meanings, for hints that would lead to the discovery of the Fortunate Isles or the elixir of life. Sometimes these researches were encouraged by emperors.

Taoism became a mixture of superstition, fairy tales, magic, astrology, and quackery, although a few serious

Taoists tried to find the Way by meditation and breathing exercises. How Lao-tzu would have scorned it! But somehow it appealed to the imagination of the Chinese, and they turned to it for help in their troubles.

The wisdom of Lao-tzu has not been lost. All educated Chinese know and admire the little book, and consciously or unconsciously they try to act in harmony with the law of nature which is the law of God.

It may be said that Taoism represented fantasy and mysticism to the Chinese, Confucianism expressed their intelligence, and Buddhism gave them spiritual satisfaction, so the three religions existed together in harmony.

Lao-tzu was an old man, and perhaps not in a very good temper, when he was visited by an enthusiastic young teacher named K'ung Fu-tzu, whom we call Confucius. The young man respectfully asked for information about the sages of ancient times, but Lao-tzu said, in effect, "Those men are all dead and buried, why bother with them?"

Confucius asked how he might obtain knowledge of Tao, and the Old Philosopher said, "If you do not understand it, how can I tell you?"

When Confucius went back to his pupils he said, "I have seen a dragon!"

Like Lao-tzu, Confucius was not in the conventional

sense a religious leader. He disliked the supernatural, and he took little notice of the gods, although he said that worship was a part of man's social duty. His religion was expressed in a deep concern for human welfare and a lively interest in human conduct.

He was born in 551 B.C. His father was an old man when, in order to keep his family from becoming extinct, he took a second wife, a young woman who became the mother of Confucius. A legend says that the birth of the child was accompanied by heavenly music, and that wise men came to pay their respects to one who would be wiser than they.

Confucius was only a child when his father died, and he had to make his own way in the world. He became a famous teacher while he was still young, which was unusual in a country where age was so highly respected.

He took a small government position, and he did his work so well that before long he became the highest official of the province. Under his leadership the government became a perfect Utopia, according to the account that was written later. Corruption, poverty, and crime were unknown, and everyone behaved with the most perfect propriety.

After a few years he lost his position through the trickery of the ruler of another province. All the rest of

his life he tried to find some other state which would welcome his services, but he never found one, and he died lonely and bitter, feeling that his life had been a failure.

He continued teaching as long as he lived, and he had a large and enthusiastic following. He taught as Socrates did, by walking about and talking; his school was wherever he happened to be.

He lived when China was going through a time of troubles. Governments were extremely corrupt and power belonged to anyone who could take it. Old traditions and standards of conduct were in danger of being forgotten.

To preserve the heritage of his people, Confucius and his disciples collected and edited the sacred classics, in the form in which they are still known. The study of these classics became the basis of formal education. Until the fall of the last emperor, anyone who wanted a government position had to prove his knowledge of them by passing a very difficult examination.

Confucius also made a profound study of human ideals and behavior. He wanted to discover the rules by which a man could live. He believed that human beings were naturally good, but he did not expect them to be perfect. In his opinion it was best to have rules that men could live up to, rather than to set impossibly high standards

which would only discourage those who tried to reach them.

He studied the duties and responsibilities of rulers and subjects, of fathers and sons, of husbands and wives, of elder and younger brothers, and of friends. His general rule was the one which so many others have found: "What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others."

After his death his conversations with his pupils were recorded in a book called the *Analects,* that is, the collection. These *Analects* and the sacred classics which Confucius edited may be called the Chinese Bible.

In their form and subject matter the *Analects* remind us of Plato's *Dialogues,* though they are more disconnected. Confucius and his pupils discussed education, music, good manners, upright conduct, and the philosophy of government. Their notion of an ideal state has several points in common with Plato's Republic. They said that rulers should be carefully educated for their position, and that government existed for the sake of those who were governed. They believed in low taxes, generous public relief, disarmament, and something not unlike the United Nations. The ideal of Confucius was the Golden Mean, the attitude of sensible moderation which sees both sides of a question and never becomes fanatical—exactly

what the Greeks meant by their famous motto, "Nothing in excess."

There was no real disagreement between Confucius and Lao-tzu. Both were trying to bring the human soul into harmony with the divine law, but they were traveling toward the same goal from different points. Lao-tzu thought that the harmony of the soul should come first, and then good actions would follow, while Confucius believed that only through good actions could the harmony be found or expressed.

The pupils of both men kept up a mild philosophical feud for several hundred years. Confucians criticized Taoists for their quietism which made a virtue of doing nothing, while Taoists ridiculed Confucians for their insistence on education, which gave them the idea that they knew everything. Lao-tzu believed in returning good for evil, but Confucius, always practical, said that good should be met with good, and evil with justice.

Confucius did not try to reform an old religion, which was all that Jesus and Buddha expected to do, and he certainly did not found a new one as Mohammed did. He only strengthened and preserved the old traditions, but the official religion of China bore his name, and the Chinese philosophy of the good way of life was based on his teachings.

A few hundred years after his death, the emperors began offering sacrifices to his spirit, and he received more honors as time went on, until he was declared the equal of the gods. At one time his statues were worshiped in temples, but later the statues were replaced by memorial tablets in honor of Confucius and other scholars. One famous temple at Nanking, dedicated shortly before the Second World War, contained portraits of Galileo, Newton, Pasteur, and Benjamin Franklin.

In the early years of the Chinese republic, the old forms of religion were somewhat neglected by people who were eager to learn from other countries. But when the Japanese attacked China, old traditions became a source of strength, so that many young men and women were more Chinese than their parents.

When the Communists rose to power they tried to discourage the old religion and even to break down the family loyalty which had been the foundation of Chinese life. How well they succeeded, no one outside of China can tell.

Chinese people in other countries keep their religion alive. Scholars study the old scriptures, and families meet to honor their ancestors. In many American cities a visitor can share the excitement and gaiety of the Chinese New Year, when friendly dragons parade through the streets

accompanied by the noise of drums, gongs, and firecrackers.

The Chinese who live in exile are comforted by the thought that China has always seemed indestructible. They hope that it will survive its latest trial, and that somehow it will find its way back to the old Confucian ideal of government which derives its just powers from the consent of the governed.

The religion of Japan is closely connected with that of China, and the two nations have many things in common. Ancestor worship and the belief in the divine descent of the emperor have been important in both countries. The Japanese acquired Buddhism from China by way of Korea, and they have been strongly influenced by the philosophy of Confucius and Lao-tzu.

Their own religion, Shintoism, has developed from primitive nature worship in its own way, with almost no influence from other countries. Shinto is a borrowed Chinese word meaning "the Way of the Gods." The Japanese name for it, *Kami-no-Michi,* may be translated in the same way, but *kami* does not mean "gods" in our sense of the word. It represents the mana idea found in many primitive religions, which we have already discussed. *Kami* is a mysterious supernatural force which may be found in any extraordinary person or thing, a quality

inspiring wonder, reverence, and awe. The gods are *kami,* but a mountain, the sea, or a great tree may also be *kami.* Dangerous or terrifying things are *kami,* such as thunderstorms, earthquakes, wild animals, or even formidable machines. A man is *kami,* not because of his superior virtue, but because of the awe-inspiring power that sets him apart from ordinary men, and of course the emperor is particularly *kami.*

In China each family worshiped its own ancestors, and the emperor, who was descended from the sun-god and the earth-goddess, was the only one who had a right to worship these deities.

According to the Shinto belief, the Japanese islands and their people were created by the gods before any other country existed, so that all Japanese were of divine descent, belonging to one family, of which the emperor was the head.

Shinto worship was carried on in the home, in simple family shrines, as well as in public ceremonies honoring the emperor. The worship of the emperor was not always an important part of Shinto, but it was revived in the latter part of the nineteenth century by political leaders who wanted to increase their own power and to counteract the influences of Christianity and western civilization.

Japanese emperors have been no more remarkable for

virtue and intelligence than some of the rulers of other countries, and for several hundred years they had so little power that most people hardly knew they existed. State Shinto revived the old belief that the emperor was a direct descendant of the sun-goddess, and that the Japanese were a divine race destined to rule the world. This doctrine was taught in schools and spread by organized publicity, and attendance at state Shinto ceremonies was the duty of every citizen.

This religion was accepted without any question by the Japanese, whose ancient code of honor makes loyalty to leaders the highest of all virtues, and counts the life of an individual as nothing at all compared with the welfare of the state.

No nation is without patriotism, and most countries have thought at some time or other that God had a special interest in them. National pride is as human as personal self-respect, but it can be horribly dangerous when it is perverted. The sense of loyalty and the religion of patriotism led the Japanese into a disastrous attempt to conquer the world.

The same loyalty made them submit, almost without a struggle, to the American occupation after the war. The Americans did not interfere with Shintoism as a personal religion, but they abolished the worship of the emperor,

and the Japanese gave it up quite easily. What they really thought we cannot tell, but the emperor and his family seemed rather relieved than otherwise by their transformation into human beings.

After the war many Japanese, perhaps disillusioned by the failure of state Shintoism, turned to other religions. Some became leaders in the revival of Buddhism, and others found hope and comfort in Christianity.

History never stands still, and nations which have been enemies find that they can work together and share the responsibility of a troubled world. Soon after the end of the war, the Japanese did one thing of which any nation might have been proud. On the spot where the first atomic bomb fell in Hiroshima, a shrine was built in memory of the victims and dedicated to the hope that their sacrifice had not been in vain.

8

The Road from Mecca

There is no God but Allah, and Mohammed is his prophet.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Road from Mecca

THREE of the world's great religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, are based on the belief in one God. Of these, Islam is the youngest. There are, in round numbers, 420 million Moslems in the world, as compared with 835 million Christians and only 11 million Jews. Islam has so much in common with the other two religions, and differs from them in so many ways, that it is well worth studying.

Mohammed, the founder of Islam, was an Arab, born in Mecca about A.D. 570. The Arabs of his time were a primitive people. They had no religion except the worship of idols, based on primitive nature worship. Like the early Hebrews, they were wanderers in the desert, not farmers, and so they did not worship the fertility of the earth. They had no belief in a god of vegetation, who died and

was born again. Wells and springs were holy to them, for in the desert water is more valuable than food.

They were active, quarrelsome, independent people, not at all intellectual, but fond of hearing and reciting poems full of romantic adventure. They had no organized government. They were divided into tribes, and all members of a tribe were bound to protect one another. If any man was killed or wronged by a member of another tribe, his own people would unite to punish the tribe of the criminal. This led to the many blood feuds or tribal wars. While most Arabs lived in the desert, they had a few fairly large towns, of which Mecca was the most important.

Long before Mohammed was born, Mecca had become a holy place because it contained a wonderful Black Stone which had fallen from heaven—that is, a meteorite. This stone, about six inches high and eight inches wide, was set in the wall of a square temple called the Kaaba, or cube. It was believed to have miraculous power to bring health and good fortune, and the markings on its surface were interpreted as messages from heaven. The Kaaba itself was full of holy images and relics. Many pilgrims came to kiss the sacred stone and to see the images. The citizens of Mecca earned their living mostly by catering to pilgrims and by guiding (or robbing) caravans.

There was much travel between Mecca and Jerusalem,

and the legend of the founding of Mecca shows how closely the Jews and the Arabs were associated. According to the Bible story, Abraham's slave girl Hagar and her little son Ishmael were driven into the wilderness by the jealousy of Abraham's wife Sarah. The Arabs said that when Hagar was almost dying of thirst, she found a well and made her home near it, and that Ishmael became the ancestor of the Arabs. The holy well, Zemzem, is still visited by pilgrims to Mecca.

Mohammed was born after his father's death, and his mother died a few years later, so he was brought up by his grandfather and his uncle. He belonged to an important tribe, and he was treated kindly enough, but he was always a poor relation. In his early manhood he became a steward or business manager for a wealthy widow named Khadija. When he was about twenty-five years old he married her. She was forty at the time, but they loved each other dearly, and they were happy together as long as she lived.

After his marriage he did not have to work so hard or to worry about being poor, and he had time to think. He was an intelligent man, although, like most people of his time, he had no formal education. He had made several journeys with caravans, and travelers were always passing through Mecca, so he had plenty of chances to talk with

Jews and Christians, and to hear of the Persian religion of Zoroaster. He may have met with the small sect of hanifs, who were trying, by prayer and meditation, to submit their lives to one God.

Why could not his people have a religion of their own? He must have brooded over this question for years. Sometimes he went out into the desert and stayed alone for days, thinking and praying. At last, when he was about forty years old, he had a vision. He thought that the angel Gabriel appeared to him and said, "Read." He answered, "I cannot read." The angel held him so tightly that he could hardly breathe, and said again, "Read. Read in the name of the Lord who has created man from a clot of blood. Read, and the Lord is most bounteous."

He was greatly troubled by this vision, but his wife comforted him, and soon other visions and revelations came. He was told what he must say to his people.

In the name of the merciful and compassionate God,
Say, He is God alone! God the Eternal!
He begets not and is not begotten,
Nor is there like unto him any one.

Like the Hebrew prophets, Mohammed spoke for God. His teaching was simple and clear. There was no God but

Allah. Men must give up their idols and pray to him alone. They must forget their blood feuds and live together as brothers in the faith, for Allah had created them all. Certain things they were forbidden to do. They must never kill their baby girls, as some of them had done when they wanted only boys. They must not drink any alcoholic liquor. They must not waste their time and money in gambling, which had been one of their bad habits. They must be charitable to the poor. Like the Jews, they were forbidden to eat pork, a wise rule in a hot country with no refrigeration. They must bathe regularly, for Mohammed himself was very clean, and he hated dirt. But above all, they must never forget to pray and to affirm their belief in the one God.

Mohammed said that there had been other prophets before him, of whom the most important were Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. He believed that Jesus had been born of a virgin and had performed many miracles, but he had not really died on the cross. It was impossible that anything so degrading could have happened to a great prophet. A spirit had taken his place, he had risen to heaven, and he would return to earth on the day of judgment, when he would become one of the leaders of the new Kingdom of God.

The judgment day was a vital part of Mohammed's

religion, as it was in the religion of Persia. He described hell as a place of fire and torment, and paradise was imagined in the most realistic detail, full of all things which the desert people had wanted in this world. There would be gardens in paradise, and cool streams. The weather would never be too hot or too cold. There the good and faithful would lie on soft carpets, eating delicious food, drinking wine, and enjoying the love of beautiful women. That was a paradise for men; what became of good women was not so definite, for women were not considered important.

Unlike Jesus, Buddha, and Confucius, Mohammed was not building from the foundation of a religion already established. He thought of his revelations as entirely new, and he would never admit that his religion owed anything to any other, though it is hard to see how he could have denied the obvious relationship to Judaism and to the religion of the Persians.

The revelations and teachings of Mohammed are preserved in the Koran, the sacred book of his religion. The name Koran means "recited." A great many of its passages contain such words as "recite," "say," or "tell," for they were commands from the angel. Part of the Koran is said to have been dictated by Mohammed himself, and part of it was written soon after his death by people who remem-

bered him. Since the chapters are arranged, not in chronological order, but according to their length, they do not tell a connected story. The short verses, which were probably the earliest and most significant revelations, come at the end. It is full of strange figures of speech and allusions that may have been perfectly clear to Mohammed's people, but later scholars have found it a puzzling book. In a good translation, some parts of it compare favorably with the Old Testament.

Moslems believe that the Koran is the source of all wisdom. Some of them have said that it was the only necessary book; if another book agreed with the Koran it was useless, and if it did not agree it was blasphemy. Learning and repeating passages from the Koran is an important part of the education of Moslem boys; until recently it was the only education they had. The book itself is even more sacred to Moslems than the Bible is to Christians, and the classical Arabic in which it is written is the international language of Islam, as Latin is used in all countries by the Catholic Church.

The religion of Mohammed is called Islam, meaning "submission." The word Moslem means "one who submits," or dedicates his life and thought to the will of God. The basic principles of Islam are five duties, five things which a man must do.

1. He must repeat, with full conviction and understanding, "There is no God but Allah, and Mohammed is his prophet."

2. He must pray five times a day, facing toward Mecca.

3. He must contribute generously to charity.

4. During the month of Ramadan, he must fast from sunrise to sunset. Invalids, soldiers, and a few others are excused from this duty.

5. If possible, at least once in his life he must go on a pilgrimage to Mecca.

Charity to the poor is well organized and generously supported, for all Moslems look upon one another as brothers, and they take their responsibilities seriously. They are usually hospitable to strangers, but their laws, like some of the most primitive laws of the Hebrews, make a distinction between what must be done to one's own people and what may be done to outsiders. This can be understood if we remember the conditions under which those laws were made. A tribe living in a desert looks upon a stranger as a suspicious character. "Why did he leave his own tribe, and what does he want here?" they say. "We can't take care of him, we have hardly enough for ourselves. Who knows what he may do, or when he will go away, after stealing whatever he wants? If you give him anything, be sure he pays for it."

Mohammed has received a good deal of criticism; and he did, especially toward the end of his life, some things which are hard to reconcile with our idea of a spiritual leader. But there can be no doubt that at first he was a genuine mystic who had complete faith in his revelations from heaven, and that he was a man of high principles, anxious to show his people the way to a better religion than they had ever had before.

We must remember that he never claimed to be anything but a man. Like the Jews, he believed that nothing on earth was to be worshiped. Only God was divine, and nothing should come between man and God. His followers might easily have worshiped him, even in his lifetime, but he would not allow this. No stories were told of anything supernatural in connection with his birth. He never performed a miracle, and he died peacefully in bed, without any wonderful signs from heaven. Some legends and myths have developed in the course of time, but they are not essential to the faith of Islam.

We have no picture or statue of Mohammed because his people, like the Jews, were forbidden to worship images, and they carried this prohibition so far that they would not make a likeness of any living thing, even a plant or an animal. But we know how he looked, for we have descriptions written by those who knew him. He was not

a large man, but he must have been very impressive, with strong features, a full beard, burning dark eyes, and a peculiar walk which looked as if he were always going down a hill. He was usually quiet, but he enjoyed company. He was kind and sympathetic, especially to widows and orphans, for he remembered his lonely boyhood. Children loved him, and it is said that no one was ever afraid of him. He lived simply, and even when rich offerings were brought to him he never kept anything for himself.

When he began to preach, most of his neighbors were indifferent or openly hostile. They did not want any religion that might interfere with their profitable business of entertaining pilgrims. At first only his wife believed in him, and ten years after his first vision he had few other followers. Then he met a group of men from Medina who pledged themselves to support him if he would join them. Soon afterward he discovered a plot against his life, so he escaped from Mecca and went to Medina. This flight, for which the Arabic word is "Hegira," was the beginning of his success as a leader of the faith, and from it the Moslem calendar is dated. The flight took place A.D. 622, so 1960 is the year 1380 of the Hegira. The Moslem year is not quite the same length as ours because the months are measured by the phases of the moon instead of by the sun.

Mohammed lived ten years after the Hegira, and dur-

ing this time a change came over his personality. His wife Khadija, whose faith and understanding had sustained him through his early trials, died before he left Mecca, and he was never the same without her. He took several other wives, but none of them could ever fill her place, although one, Ayesha, was very dear to him.

As he grew more powerful he became ambitious, intolerant, sometimes tricky, and occasionally ill tempered and cruel. If he wanted to do something that did not seem quite honest, he could always manage a special revelation to justify it. For example, when he needed money to support his followers, he directed a series of raids on caravans, even in the months of pilgrimage when travelers had always been protected. He explained that it was perfectly proper to steal from infidels for the good of the cause.

In the last years of his life he was no longer a solitary mystic, sharing his faith with a few who loved him, but the dictatorial leader of a warlike state. It may be that this power and responsibility, so foreign to his early training, coming so late in life, brought out his worst qualities, and yet he did nothing contrary to the moral standards of his time and his people. "In the name of Allah, the merciful, the compassionate," much blood has been shed, but can Christians say that nothing unworthy of their God has ever been done in his name?

At first Mohammed thought of his religion as a universal brotherhood of all true believers in one God. He sent letters to all the rulers of his part of the world, urging them to join him, but he received no satisfactory answers. The Christians were too involved in their own theological disputes to pay much attention to him. The Jews were sympathetic at first, for his religion was so much like their own that it seemed as if the two might be combined. There was a flourishing colony of Jews at Medina, and for a while they were friendly to Mohammed, but he became rather highhanded in his dealings with them, and they rebelled. Then he drove them away, confiscated their property, and ordered a terrible massacre in which at least six hundred of them were killed.

Mohammed returned to Mecca in triumph eight years after he had fled for his life. The citizens of Mecca were ready to accept his religion when he decided that the city should continue to be a holy place. Pilgrims might visit the Kaaba, kiss the Black Stone, and drink from the sacred well, but the idols must go, and everything must be done in the name of Allah. So the pilgrimage to Mecca is still the great event in the life of any Moslem. There men from every part of the world where the religion is known meet and worship as brothers.

The conventional Moslem greeting is "salaam," which,

like the Hebrew "shalom," means "peace," but Islam has never been a peaceful religion. Warriors are highly honored, and it is believed that those who die in battle will go straight to paradise. Moslems also believe that every man's fate is decided beforehand; if he is not fated to die in battle, nothing can kill him. These two beliefs gave them the reckless courage which made them so formidable as soldiers.

Before Mohammed died, in 632, he had made plans for the conquest of the world, and after his death these plans were carried on with remarkable success. The Moslems did not often try to "convert by the sword." They were generally tolerant of other religions, but they made conquered people pay such heavy tribute that most of them preferred to enter Islam.

From the beginning, Moslems have been active and successful missionaries. Many tribes and nations in eastern Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Pacific Islands have welcomed Islam because of its simplicity, which makes it easy for anyone to understand, and because of its doctrines of universal brotherhood, the importance of the individual, the promise of immortality, and the possibility of direct communion between man and God.

Only a hundred years after Mohammed's death his followers had swept across North Africa, conquered Spain,

and pushed into the center of France as far as Tours. There they were defeated in 732 by an able Christian leader called Charles Martel, or Charles the Hammer. If he had lost that battle we might all be Moslems today. The Moors held parts of Spain for centuries afterward; they were not completely driven out until the year 1492.

Most of our histories of the Middle Ages were written from a Christian point of view, and of course the medieval Christians thought of the Moors and Saracens as cruel heathens who had seized the Holy Sepulcher. Yet the crusaders admired the bravery of their enemies, and we have several romantic stories of the exchange of chivalrous courtesy between Saladin and Richard Coeur de Lion. An unprejudiced historian might see the crusades as a struggle between two great religions for the domination of the world.

In the Middle Ages Moslems were as civilized as Christians, more so in some ways. Travel and contact with other nations had educated them. They now realized that the Koran was not the only source of wisdom, for they could read translations of Aristotle and Plato. In science they went far ahead of the Christians of their time. Our words "algebra" and "chemistry" are derived from the Arabic, and many stars still have Arabic names, such as "Aldebaran." We must not forget the Arabic numerals,

which were adopted all over Europe because they were so much more convenient than the Roman system. Imagine trying to multiply MDCLXIV by XCVIII!

The Moorish palaces, some of which can still be seen in Spain, were much pleasanter and cleaner than the castles of northern Europe. Bathing was a religious duty in Islam at a time when most Christians considered it a form of worldly vanity.

Moslems were forbidden to make pictures or likenesses of any living thing, but they loved decoration and their technical skill was highly developed, so they made beautiful and complicated abstract designs in textiles, pottery, metals, and other materials. Their handiwork was widely sold all over the civilized world, and they became prosperous as manufacturers and traders. Under the leadership of Harun al-Rashid, the caliph who is mentioned in *The Arabian Nights,* Bagdad became one of the richest and most beautiful cities of the world.

Since the Moslems rose so quickly to a high stage of civilization, why did they not continue their progress? There are several answers to this question. They were independent people with no talent for organizing and administering a government. They conquered a vast amount of territory, but they could not hold the loyalty of a conquered people as the Romans could. In Spain, for example,

the Moslem rulers soon began to quarrel among themselves, and the Spaniards took advantage of every dispute to win back a little of their own country.

Then, as the Christians became more powerful and more united, they developed warfare until strategy and coordination become more important than courage in single combat, and the Moslems lost their military superiority.

In the eleventh century, about the time of the Norman conquest of England, the Arabs were conquered by the Seljuk Turks, a savage and ignorant people who became the rulers of Islam. They had no interest in the arts and sciences, so the great civilization faded away. The Seljuk Turks remained a formidable power in the Near East for many years, but they did little to make the world a better or more interesting place in which to live. Their harshness and cruelty gave all Moslems a bad reputation which many of them did not deserve.

The greatest weakness of Islam was its lack of unity. Mohammed never made any provision for appointing his successor, and after his death his followers split into two factions over the question of who should be the leader of the faith. The majority, known as Sunnites, thought that the leader should be elected, while the smaller faction, the

Shiites, insisted that only a descendant of the prophet could be the leader. Mohammed had no sons who lived beyond childhood, but his daughter Fatima had married his adopted son Ali, and their descendants were looked upon as the logical successors of the prophet. A minor branch of the Shiites still recognizes one of these descendants as its leader. He is called the Aga Khan, and his family is often mentioned in our newspapers, but seldom in connection with any spiritual leadership.

The Sunnites had a series of caliphs (successors) who were regarded as Commanders of the Faithful, leaders of the church as well as of the state. Islam was not so completely united under the caliph as medieval Christianity was under the Pope, and rebellions and holy wars often occurred. The caliphate was finally abolished in 1924, but some Moslems have thought that it should be revived.

Both Sunnites and Shiites divided into a number of sects; Islam is as complicated as Christianity in that way. These divisions did not come from any fundamental differences of belief but from varying interpretations or from personal disagreements. Some mystical sects such as the Sufis have tried to find a more spiritual and philosophical approach to God than the conventional worship. An intellectual revival has made some progress in Egypt, centering

around the University of Cairo. Intelligent Moslems in many countries are interested in studying other religions and in discovering a deeper significance in their own.

Islam, with all its faults, is undoubtedly one of the greatest religions. It has remained clean, simple, and direct, and it has given many millions of people a far better life than they ever would have had without it. It makes no impossible demands of perfection. As Mohammed said, "God desires for you what is easy, and desires not for you what is difficult." The five duties—belief, prayer, fasting, charity, and pilgrimage—are not too hard.

One does not need even a mosque or any other formal meeting place in order to observe them, though a mosque is an important part of any Moslem community. It is always open for private worship, and public services are held on Friday, with prayers, a reading from the Koran, and chanted responses. The service is reverent and dignified, with no elaborate ceremony and no music. Moslems have a rosary for their prayers, with beads representing the ninety-nine names of God: the Merciful, the Patient, the Innermost, and so forth.

Five times in every twenty-four hours, a man climbs to the top of the mosque and cries: "Allah is great. I bear witness that there is no God but Allah. I bear witness that Mohammed is the apostle of Allah. Come to prayers,

come to salvation. Allah is great. There is no God but Allah."

Moslem prayers rarely ask for anything; they are expressions of faith and adoration. The most common prayer, taken from the opening chapter of the Koran, is as follows:

"In the name of Allah, the merciful, the compassionate. Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds, the merciful, the compassionate, the ruler of the judgment day. Thee we serve, and thee we ask for aid. Guide us in the right path, the path of those to whom thou art gracious, not of those with whom thou art wroth, nor of those who err."

For some time Moslems have been conscious of their religion as a union of many nations. They feel that Christianity has failed to prevent war and discord, and that Islam has a great deal to offer. While some leaders look forward to a time when all Islam can unite under one governing body, they feel that at present they should work to strengthen the independent Moslem countries and to protect the rights of Moslems where they form a religious minority. They are strongly opposed to Communism, for they have always insisted on the rights of the individual.

In Turkey after World War I, the government of Kemal Atatürk introduced many reforms, separated the church from the state, and started the country on the way

to becoming a progressive and cooperative member of the family of nations.

One of the greatest achievements in Turkey was a strong feminist movement which made a remarkable change in the condition of women. Mohammed's laws had given women more rights and more security than they had ever had before. But the early Moslems had such a low opinion of the intelligence and character of women that they believed the only way a man could be sure that his wife was faithful was to keep her closely veiled and hidden from all other men. A man was allowed to have four wives, but many had only one, not so much from moral scruples as for the sake of economy. Of course genuine love and happy marriage were possible under these conditions; the Prophet's own first marriage set a good example. Some women may have liked to be protected, and they may have felt sorry for the free women of other countries whose husbands did not take proper care of them. But the seclusion of women does not belong to the modern world, and now that it is disappearing no one would care to bring it back.

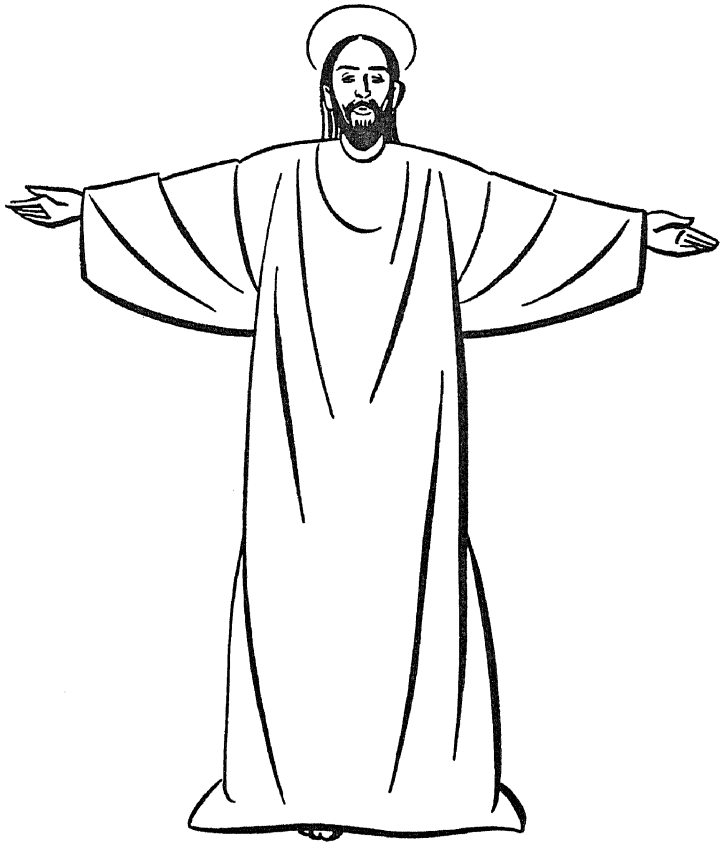
Moslems have been active in India since the year 1000. The Mogul emperors, who ruled India in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, were Moslems. Hinduism, the most complicated religion in the world, has little in common with Islam, the simplest of all religions. The two

have never met except in the doctrine of the Sikhs, which is an attempt to combine both of them with the teachings of Buddha. Many converts to Islam came from the lowest caste and from the Untouchables, who had nothing to lose and everything to gain from a religion which recognized them as human beings.

Indian Moslems were aware of their difficult position as a minority and they won independence in 1947 when Pakistan and India became separate countries. Since many Moslems lived in territory ruled by Hindus, and many Hindus lived in Moslem states, the migration of uprooted, bewildered people into the countries that were to be their own was far more complicated than the Exodus of the Hebrews from Egypt. Years of strife and trouble followed, and it may be a long time before the two nations learn to live together in friendship, but their history is only beginning.

Another difficult situation was created when the Arabs had to make room for the Jews in Israel. Moslems had lived in that country for centuries and naturally they regarded the Jews as aliens and intruders. The division of the territory might have been settled peacefully by the use of intelligence and good will according to the principles of Judaism and Islam, but the problems of the Middle East were political rather than religious.

The most important contribution of Islam to the modern world is its emphasis on human rights. Moslems do not think of these rights as an ideal for the distant future or a beautiful theory that will never work. They say that all Moslems are brothers, regardless of race or nationality, and they behave as if they meant it. Islam is growing rapidly in Africa and the Far East. Underprivileged people in remote places have gained a new feeling of responsibility and of companionship with other Moslems throughout the world. For such people, Mohammed's dream of world brotherhood may come true.



9

The Road of Jesus

Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

MATTHEW 25:40

CHAPTER NINE

The Road of Jesus

IT IS hard for Christians to think of their religion as only one of the ways to God. To them it seems the best way, some of them still think it is the only way. In the words of the old missionary hymn:

Can we whose souls are lighted
With wisdom from on high,
Can we to men benighted
The lamp of life deny?

Anyone who has read so far in this book must have learned that other religions claim their share of "wisdom from on high" and look upon outsiders as more or less "benighted." If Christianity cannot stand comparison with other religions, "Then is our preaching vain, and your

faith is also vain," as Paul says, "and we are of all men most miserable."

Christianity has given to the world the teachings of Jesus and the example of his life and the lives of others who have been inspired by him. These are infinitely precious gifts.

Our knowledge of the life and teaching of Jesus and of the work of his disciples comes from the New Testament. The four gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, give slightly different stories of the life of Jesus. The Acts of the Apostles is a record of the work of Paul and other early Christians. The epistles are letters from Paul and a few others to newly formed congregations, explaining Christian doctrine and giving advice on the conduct of life. The Revelation of Saint John the Divine is a mystical vision of the day of judgment. The New Testament was collected in its present form, and officially approved by the church, in the latter part of the fourth century.

The gospels were not written in the form in which we know them for a long time after the death of Jesus. They were copied many times, often by men who were tempted to insert their own ideas and interpretations. It is generally agreed that Mark is the oldest gospel. Originally it seems to have been written by someone who remembered Jesus and who could talk with others who had known him.

Matthew is chiefly interested in preserving as much as possible of the actual teaching of Jesus in the form of sermons and parables. Luke tells a human story full of personal details, while John, the latest of the Gospels, gives an interpretation of the spiritual significance of the life of Jesus.

"Christ" is a Greek word meaning "the anointed one." It is often used in speaking of the divine being, the Son of God. When we think of the founder of Christianity we usually give him the name by which he was known in his lifetime, Jesus of Nazareth.

He was a carpenter, the son of Joseph and Mary, a descendant of the ancient family of King David. Luke tells the story, so familiar and dear to all Christians, of the birth in the manger, announced by angels to the shepherds who came to see their Saviour. Matthew tells of the wise men from the east, guided by the star. Mark and John give no account of the birth of Jesus or of the visit of the angel to Mary, telling her of the coming of her son.

In spite of these miracles, Jesus lived quietly at home with his parents and brothers and sisters. Almost nothing is known of his life until his thirtieth year, when he was baptized by his cousin, a wandering prophet known as John the Baptist.

John's eloquence and his impressive manner had

brought him a large following, who were ready to acknowledge him as the Messiah, the king for whom the Jews had waited so long. He insisted that he was not the Messiah, but only a messenger, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord."

This meeting with the prophet must have awakened Jesus to a consciousness of his mission, for he retired into the desert for a period of meditation, and soon afterward he began to preach.

Like all other Jews, he had always heard of the hope for the Messiah, and John's preaching had made the fulfillment of this hope seem near at hand. But Jesus never wanted to be a military or political leader; he had no desire to build a powerful nation or to organize a rebellion against the domination of Rome. Neither did he have any intention of founding a new religion. He never thought of himself as anything but a Jew. Like the prophets of the Old Testament, he wanted to lift and clarify and extend the faith in which he lived.

Judaism in the time of Jesus was dominated by two factions, the Pharisees and the Sadducees. They disagreed violently with each other on some questions of doctrine, but they agreed that the most important things in the world were strict observance of religious ceremonies and absolute obedience to the ancient law. They insisted on

keeping themselves free from contact with other religions, because of course only Jews obeyed the law; and, since they themselves were most particular about the law, they knew that they were better than anyone else. Such people could not help being narrow minded, conservative, and self-satisfied. The law by this time had grown so complicated that only a scholar, after a lifetime of study, could understand it, and ignorance was no excuse for disobedience.

Jesus spoke to the poor who could not afford costly offerings, to the humble who had no feeling of their own importance, and to the ignorant who could never hope to understand all of the law. He made them feel that religion belonged to them as well as to the wealthy and learned, for every human being, rich or poor, Jew or Gentile, had within him a share of the holy spirit of God. "The Kingdom of God is within you."

He did not want to destroy the law, but he wanted to save it from becoming the exclusive property of the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and to make it intelligible to ordinary men and women. Often he would say, "Ye have heard it said by men of olden time . . . but I say unto you . . ."

His God, the living presence within the human soul, was a God of love. Human love, expressed in kindness,

understanding, forgiveness, and charity, came from God. It was not enough to love those who loved you; even strangers and enemies could be loved. God loved the whole world, and he could forgive those who made mistakes in trying to do his will, as the father forgave the Prodigal Son.

"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in Heaven is perfect."

Jesus asked difficult things of those who wished to follow him. His advice to the rich young man was, "Sell all and give to the poor." To the woman taken in adultery he said, "Go and sin no more." He told the conservative old Pharisee Nicodemus that he must be born again, and keep his mind as free and open as that of a little child. To obey these commands might mean a complete change in the thoughts and habits of a lifetime, but Jesus had full confidence that such things could be done through the power of God.

Innumerable books have been written and sermons have been preached, trying to explain and interpret the teachings of Jesus, but anyone who can read may find them for himself in the Sermon on the Mount, in chapters 5 to 7 of the Gospel of Matthew. If those teachings were fully understood and practiced, the Kingdom of God would come on earth.

The Greek philosophers, even the best of them, had

sought wisdom and virtue and knowledge for themselves alone. Jesus believed that anyone who had these things ought to share them. What is life good for except to be shared and given? "He that saveth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."

No wonder the Pharisees and Sadducees were alarmed by the popularity of Jesus. Who is this carpenter from Nazareth, they asked, and why does he think he knows more about God than we do? He never consulted us, and he speaks of us in the most disrespectful manner. He keeps company with worldly people, sinners, and Gentiles. They say that the sick and the blind and the lame are healed by the spell of his personality. We never heard of such things. He even breaks the Sabbath! How dangerous it is that such a man should live!

When Jesus went to Jerusalem for the last time, to celebrate the Passover, he knew that he might be going to his death, but he was ready to die if God willed it so, and there were certain things he must do and say. He drove the money-changers from the temple. He spoke out bravely, denouncing the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, and he gave inspired answers to those who attempted to trick him into some irreverence or treason.

He and his disciples met for the ceremonial meal of the Passover, and he told them to continue meeting to-

gether and breaking bread in memory of him, which Christians have done ever since.

Jesus was betrayed by one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot. He was arrested and brought before the Sanhedrin, the Jewish ecclesiastical court. The Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, saw no harm in Jesus, but he did not like to interfere with the local religion, and the Sanhedrin insisted that Jesus must die for his blasphemy in pretending to be the Messiah. He was crucified, the shameful death of a common criminal, between two thieves. One of his devoted followers claimed the body of Jesus and laid it in the tomb he had prepared for himself.

It must be clearly understood that Judaism did not kill Jesus. He was a victim of the self-satisfied intolerance that can take away the life of any religion.

Think of what the crucifixion meant to the disciples. Their master, whose whole life had been an expression of love and mercy, had been killed by anger and hatred. All his teaching, and all their own faith and labor, had been in vain. They may have hoped that at the last moment he would reveal himself as the Son of God, and that the heavens would rain fire upon his enemies. But now it was over, and their last hope was gone. They hid in fear of their lives, not even daring to admit that they had known him.

The four gospels give slightly different accounts of who went to the tomb on the third day after the crucifixion, and what they found there. Undoubtedly the disciples believed that Jesus had risen from the dead, that they had seen him and talked with him, and that he had ascended before their eyes into heaven.

Christianity is based on belief in the resurrection of Jesus. Even those who cannot accept the story literally must regard the effect of this belief on the disciples—and its influence on their lives and the lives of those who followed them—as a genuine miracle.

The disciples came out of their hiding places, organized their followers, and boldly proclaimed their faith. They were not afraid of persecution or even of death, for they knew that the spirit of Jesus was with them always, even to the end of the world.

The first Christians lived in small communities, sharing all their possessions, practicing the forgiveness and charity their master had taught them. They expected that the world would end very soon, so no earthly activity was worth beginning. At first only Jews could be Christians, and they might have remained an obscure and peaceful sect among the Jews if it had not been for Saul of Tarsus, who was later known as Paul.

Christianity as the world came to know it owes a great

deal to Paul. He was a Jew, brought up in the orthodox tradition, and at first he hated and persecuted the Christians. Then, while on a journey to Damascus, he saw a vision of Jesus, who said, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks" (meaning that he was like a horse who rebels against the spur he must obey).

After a brief period of mental and spiritual confusion, Paul became an ardent Christian, as energetic in spreading the faith as he had been in suppressing it. He had a genius for organization, and he must have been a brilliant speaker. His epistles are full of noble thought and poetic expression.

To Jesus, faith had meant belief in the living presence of God. To Paul, it meant faith in Christ, the Son of God, who had died for the sins of the world and risen into heaven, where all who held this faith might hope to join him.

Paul had a way of beginning a sermon with some familiar point on which all his audience could agree, and leading them into new ideas apparently by the processes of their own minds. He connected Christianity with philosophies and practices that were known to his listeners.

The world was ready for Christianity when it came. The Romans had long ago ceased to take their religion seriously, though its outward forms were faithfully ob-

served. They were perfectly tolerant of all the other religions found in their colonies as long as everyone kept up the official state worship of the Roman emperor as a god. The Jews would not and could not worship any god except their own, but the Romans were lenient with them to avoid trouble.

Philosophers, under Greek influence, were speculating about the nature of God, in ways that had nothing to do with pagan mythology.

Rome was full of foreign cults known as mysteries, based on the longing for assurance of immortality. The mysteries all involved some form of purification and initiation, often by a sort of baptism and a ceremonial breaking of bread. Then came the revelation of a secret which symbolized death and resurrection. The most important mysteries were those of Isis, the Egyptian Queen of Heaven, whose husband Osiris died and was born again; of the Oriental Cybele, the Great Mother, who revealed the mystery in the death and resurrection of her lover Attis; and of the Persian god Mithras, whose followers were redeemed from sin by baptism in the blood of a sacrificed bull.

To men and women who were familiar with these mysteries, there was nothing strange in the resurrection of the Son of God. It was much easier to believe in Christ

than to obey the teachings of Jesus, with their confident demand for purity, unselfishness, and devotion; but the teachings were, as they still are, the foundation and strength of Christianity.

The Christians would not have been a serious threat to the power of Rome if the Romans had not had a strong objection to secret societies and private meetings which might be centers of subversive activity. Even such a harmless and useful thing as a volunteer fire company was suspected. From the Roman point of view, the Christians were dangerous. They met in secret for ceremonies which were said to be immoral and disgusting. They openly defied the state religion of emperor worship, and they created disturbances by airing their views in public. They were often blamed for riots and fires, as Hitler blamed the Jews for such things. Sometimes they suffered cruel persecutions, which only served to strengthen their faith.

Religion changes history, and history changes religion. In order to understand how Christianity came to be what it is, and how it won its place in the world, we must look at the history of Europe.

When Christianity was being born, the Roman Empire was dying, as other empires have died, because it had conquered more territory than it could hold. Barbarians were coming near to the heart of the empire, sometimes

as armed bands of raiders, often as peaceful settlers who began to take an active part in the government and the army. Old-fashioned Romans must have said, "It's terrible how these foreigners are getting in everywhere."

To manage the eastern end of the empire, a second capital was established at Byzantium (later called Constantinople, and now known as Istanbul). The city of Rome was weakened, and in 410 the Goths, led by Alaric, simply walked in and took it. To the Romans this seemed like the end of the world. All their power, built up through the centuries, was gone forever. Their old gods were dead. They had no pride, no hope, nothing on which to build their lives.

Then, in the darkest of the Dark Ages, a Christian named Augustine, bishop of Hippo in North Africa, wrote a book called *The City of God*. He began by denying that the Christians were responsible for the fall of Rome, as some people had said they were. Rome did not fall because it had forsaken the old gods. Many times the gods had failed to save their worshipers, and Augustine gave many arguments to prove that their influence was evil rather than good. Rome fell because of its own weakness, stupidity, and self-indulgence. The hope of mankind was the City, or Kingdom, of God. This was not only in heaven but on earth, in the hearts of those who had good

will and courage and intelligence to work for it. And the best way to work for it was through the church. This book had great influence in drawing people to Christianity, in strengthening the church, and in uniting the sects which had been separated by disputes on creeds and doctrines.

The first converts to Christianity had been mostly poor and wretched people; slaves, prisoners, exiles driven from their homes by war. They had never shared in the glory of Rome, and now that Rome was dead they were better off than their masters, for they had a sense of unity and of the worth of the individual, an incentive to be brave and kind and unselfish, and a confident belief in immortality. The only spiritual life left in Rome belonged to them. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."

The church did not remain long in the hands of the meek. Ambitious men found in it an opportunity to develop their talents for organization and administration. Intelligent people were drawn to it because it offered the only possible chance for the use of their minds. Rome was the natural center of Christianity in Europe, and the bishop of Rome became the Pope, the head of the Christian church.

The Christianity of eastern Europe, with its headquarters in Constantinople, continued as the Greek Ortho-

dox Church. This church has preserved its old beliefs and rituals until our own time, but it has taken little part in mental development and social progress.

The Christians of Rome became active missionaries in all parts of northern and western Europe. The tribes who lived there, the ancestors of modern Europeans and Americans, were by this time quite advanced barbarians, with a strict code of morals and some idea of a federation of tribes which might be called a government. Their religion had never progressed beyond nature worship.

The Celtic tribes of Gaul and Britain had a complicated form of mysticism under the leadership of priests called Druids. Human sacrifice was common among them. They worshiped in sacred groves, and it may have been they who set up the great blocks of stone in circles and other patterns, which can still be seen in France and England.

The Germans had a collection of myths and hero stories not unlike those of the Greeks, but less poetic and more full of violent action. Since their climate was cold and gloomy, their most powerful gods represented storms and thunder, and their greatest evils were cold and darkness. They too had a god who died, the beautiful Balder, who was treacherously murdered, though he could return to the earth for a little while each year.

Modern Anglo-Saxons do not owe much to their bar-

baric ancestors. Approximately half of the English language is derived from Latin or from languages related to it. The Germanic legends have become fairly well known as the plots of Wagner's operas, and four days of the week, Tiu's Day, Woden's Day, Thor's Day, and Freya's Day, are named for the gods of our forefathers, but our civilization, our learning, and our religion have come from other sources.

The barbarians of Europe welcomed Christianity because it was the first thing that had ever appealed to their intelligence or to any but the crudest emotions. One chieftain, when he was told of the crucifixion, fairly roared with indignation, "If I had been there with my men, it never would have happened!"

In the early days of Christianity, many men sought for personal holiness by shutting themselves away from this wicked world, neglecting all human concerns and interests, and concentrating on their own souls. These men were greatly admired, as holy men of the same type are admired in other religions. In the Middle Ages such men were gathered together in brotherhoods, and monasteries were built where they could live free from worldly distractions, spending their days in prayer and meditation, and preserving the little learning that had survived the collapse of Roman civilization.

In the year 1182 a man was born who found a way of life more directly inspired by the teaching of Jesus. He is known to us as Saint Francis of Assisi. After spending his youth in the conventional pursuit of pleasure, he gave away all his possessions and devoted his life to the loving service of mankind. Unlike most of the serious-minded people of his time, he did not think of this world as a dreary prison which one must endure while waiting for happiness in heaven. He loved Nature as the old Greeks had loved it. He spoke of Brother Sun and Sister Moon, of Brother Fire and Sister Water. He is said to have converted a savage wolf that terrorized a mountain village, and to have preached a sermon to a flock of birds, telling them to thank the Creator who had given them their gifts of beauty and flight and song. He gathered a group of men about him who were willing to take vows of poverty and obedience, and to continue the work he had begun. The Franciscan Order has carried on this work ever since.

Jesus might have been puzzled by some of the beliefs and ceremonies that had grown up around his simple teaching, and he might not have had much sympathy with the kind of holiness which ran away from the world, but he surely would have liked Saint Francis. The life of Saint Francis, and the lives of others like him who have

been directly inspired by the example of Jesus, are lights on the road of Christianity.

All through the Middle Ages, people hardly thought of themselves as belonging to nations, as being French or German or English. Under the feudal system, peasants were the subjects of a landowner; they gave their work in return for his protection. The landowners were subjects of more important noblemen, who protected them in return for their services. Noblemen were all subjects of the king, but they did not always obey him. Sometimes they made him obey them, as the English barons did when they forced King John to sign the Magna Carta. Above all—kings and noblemen and peasants—was the authority of the church. The king was no more free than the poorest man, in fact he was less free because his actions were more conspicuous.

For example, in 1076 Henry IV, ruler of what was still called, for some reason, the Holy Roman Empire, offended the Pope, who threatened him with excommunication. The emperor was so alarmed by this threat that he crossed the Alps in the middle of winter and hurried to the castle of Canossa where the Pope was living. There he stood barefooted in the snow for three days, begging forgiveness.

If we know that such things were possible we can

understand the death of Joan of Arc. She had saved her country, she was almost worshiped, but the church said she was a heretic because she claimed to receive direct revelations from her "voices," which were sometimes contrary to the commands of the church. Heresy was the most dangerous thing in the world. If she could act according to her own revelations, any number of wicked and foolish people might be encouraged to make their own rules. So she must die, and no one dared to save her. The miserable little king was worried because he owed his crown to a heretic. Twenty-five years after her death she was declared innocent, and she is now a saint.

If all Christians were like Saint Francis, there would never be any need for reform in the church, but the Medieval church, like the Roman Empire, was too big. No organization can hold absolute power so long without attracting men who want power and wealth for themselves.

The Protestant Reformation grew out of that wakening of the human mind which is called the Renaissance, or rebirth. The name Renaissance is given to the period from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries, but it is hard to say when a spiritual revolution begins or what causes it. From a practical point of view one might say that it began with the development of trade and business in Italy. This

brought a great deal of money to a class of people who had never had it before. The wealthy merchants could afford to build new houses, very different from the gloomy castles of the Middle Ages. They could buy beautiful things, and they took time to enjoy them. Artists and craftsmen were encouraged by this new market for their work.

The wealthy men of the Renaissance did what many people do now; they collected antiques, and their antiques were the remains of the Greek and Roman civilizations. Medieval people had despised the old statues as heathen idols, but the men of the Renaissance saw that these things were beautiful, and they wanted to know more about the men who made them. Old manuscripts were discovered and studied. Scientists, fascinated by the learning of the ancient Greeks, found inspiration to continue their own work.

In the Middle Ages the type of person who had been most admired was the holy man, who cared nothing for the vanities of this wicked world. The great figures of the Renaissance were active, versatile men who learned everything they could, practiced any form of art or science that appealed to them, and enjoyed life thoroughly.

Life in the Middle Ages had been shadowed by fear. People were afraid of their neighbors, of the anger of the church, of witches and devils, of death and hell. Now

they were not so much afraid, because they were safer and more comfortable. Travel was more common, and foreigners were less alarming when one came to know them. New inventions made life easier, and in 1454 came one of the greatest inventions of all time.

Johann Gutenberg, experimenting with his little blocks of movable type, may not have thought of them as anything but a handy device to help him do more work in less time, but the world was never the same afterward. In Victor Hugo's *Notre Dame,* a priest, with a newly printed book in his hand, looks out at the cathedral and says, "The one will kill the other."

The book did not kill the church, it brought new life into it. All through the Middle Ages learning had been the exclusive property of the church. Our words "clergyman," "clerical," and "clerk," as well as the family name "Clarke," are derived from the Latin *clericus,* meaning "priest" or "scholar." Only a priest could be a scholar. Many kings had never learned to read. Now the book was open, anyone could read for himself, and form his own opinions about what he read. Latin had always been the language of scholars and of the church, but now the Bible was translated into the common languages of everyday speech. A new outlook on life was open to all who wanted it.

Of course, when large numbers of people begin thinking for themselves, some of their ideas will be ill-considered, foolish, and useless. Many of the new sects that were formed in the Protestant Reformation have disappeared because they have no longer any reason for existence, and many of the surviving ones have forgotten what the differences were that separated them from the others.

Protestants and Catholics persecuted each other, and Protestants fought among themselves for variations of opinion that seem utterly trivial after a few hundred years. A rebellion against tyranny often becomes another tyranny. The Puritans, who rebelled against the Church of England and came to the American colonies for religious freedom, had no intention of giving that freedom to anyone who disagreed with them.

Among Protestants in our own time there is a strong desire for unity, and representatives of all sects often meet together to discuss their common interests.

The Reformation was really helpful to the Catholic Church. With the loss of its power came a new sense of spiritual responsibility, and the church became what it still is, a tremendous force for good in the world, a bond of unity and a source of comfort and inspiration for all who share its faith.

If you had to explain to a member of another religion

exactly what Christianity is and how it differs from other forms of belief in one God, what could you say? There are so many forms of worship, from the beautiful ceremony and symbolism of High Mass in a cathedral to the absolute plainness and informality of a Quaker Meeting. There are so many variations of belief; the Fundamentalists say that Christianity has no foundation unless every word of the Bible is literally true, while Unitarians and Quakers say that the Bible is a precious record of the development of the idea of God but that it is only a part of the "continuing revelation" of the spirit of God to man.

The essential difference between Christianity and other religions is that Christians believe God was revealed to man through Jesus Christ. Surely they would all agree on this point, whether they believe that he represents God's nearest approach to man or man's nearest approach to God. This difference of opinion may not seem particularly important, but many good people have died for one view or the other.

The Moslems and Jews cannot understand why Christ is necessary; they say that nothing should come between man and God. Christians find it easier to understand the will of God when it is expressed in human terms and brought to earth, as Jesus brought it, in the form of human love and kindness and service.

Intelligent people of other faiths are often attracted by the teachings of Jesus, but they cannot accept Christianity because its theology puzzles them. Theology really means the science of God or of religion, but its methods are anything but scientific. Christianity became involved in theology at a very early stage in its development. As we know, even the earliest gospel was written long after the death of Jesus. He himself left no record of his teaching, nor did any of his disciples write down his words. Under the influence of Paul and those who followed him, belief in the divine nature of Christ became exceedingly important, and every aspect of that divine nature was examined by scholars and philosophers. Their arguments, imperfectly understood, became topics of everyday conversation in the Dark Ages while Christianity was growing.

Exactly what was meant by the Trinity? Was the Son actually of one substance with the Father? Had he existed from the beginning of time? And what about the Holy Ghost? Such questions led to personal quarrels, political feuds, and violent persecution. Since Jesus had never said anything about them, they could not be settled by going back to the original source.

The Christians' idea of the universe was based on the philosophy of Aristotle, and their notions of Satan and hell and the day of judgment may have come indirectly

from Persia. Undoubtedly Christianity absorbed several beliefs and forms of worship from other religions. None of these things are directly concerned with the teachings of Jesus, and they are the puzzling part of the religion to some Christians as well as to outsiders.

It was natural to honor Mary, the mother of Jesus, and those who had been used to the worship of ancient mother-goddesses transferred their adoration to her as the Queen of Heaven and the protector of mankind, nearer to them than God because of her humanity.

The saints, those heroic men and women who lived and died for their faith, were also honored. In many countries local heroes became saints, so that Irish saints are typically Irish, French saints are French, and Mexican saints are Mexican.

We always tend to see the divine spirit in our own image. Italian artists painted the Holy Family as Italians, and the Dutch painted them as Dutch types of beauty. Chinese Christians have represented the Virgin Mary as a Chinese goddess, and some Negro churches are decorated with pictures of black saints and angels. A mission church in northern Canada has a picture of Mary dressed in ermine, surrounded by Arctic animals and Eskimo dogs, while fur-coated wise men offer the gifts that an Eskimo would consider most precious.

All these aspects of Christian belief have been enriched

by the legends and symbolism that many generations have found beautiful and true. Even those whose minds are satisfied by simple forms of worship find an emotional appeal in the traditions.

The worth of Christianity is shown by the lives of those it has inspired; Father Damien among the lepers, John Woolman courteously reasoning with the southern slaveowners, Albert Schweitzer devoting his life to helping the savages in Africa, and many others known and unknown.

Christians know the faults of their own religion. It has too many sects, some of which have been narrow minded and slow to recognize changes in the world. It has not been free from intolerance and fanaticism, any more than other religions have been.

But when disagreements and divisions become confusing, one can always go back to the source, to the living root from which all the branches have grown. It is still there as it has been from the beginning, and as it always will be.

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength," and "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

10

Where Are We Going?

Teach me, my God and King,
In all things Thee to see,
And what I do in anything
To do it as for Thee.

GEORGE HERBERT

CHAPTER TEN

Where Are We Going?

WHAT have we learned from our glimpses of the many roads to God? At first we may have thought of how different they are, but the more we see of them the more we realize how much they have in common. Some of the roads go back to the old paths of the savage, and some have branched off from an old road when a new vision pointed to a better way. But the country through which they travel is much the same, they all lead toward the same goal, and many of them meet with the same difficulties.

What are some of these difficulties? We have seen that a religion of many gods may lead to confusion because it has no controlling power to bring it into harmony, no direct way of communication with the human spirit. Practically all living religions have overcome that difficulty by discovering the one guiding power, the divine law,

the soul of the world. They may call it Brahma, Tao, Allah, Jehovah, or God; philosophers call it the Absolute. These are all names for the same thing, as far as the human mind is able to comprehend it—the goal to which all the roads are leading. All religion is an attempt to reach this Absolute. It is still far beyond our understanding, but as Socrates said, "Fair is the prize, and the hope great!"

Perhaps the greatest obstacle to the union of the human mind with the divine power is man's tendency to misunderstand those rare souls who see beyond this world into the mystery that is God. Like the prisoners in the cave in Plato's fable, we do not believe the one who comes back. Of course a mystic, who sees what others cannot see, is not an ordinary man. We should admire such a man, we should honor and love him, but above all we should listen to him. And yet how easy it is to see the divine miracle, not in the words of the man, but in the man himself. The mystic wants to show other men the way, but it is such a hard way that sometimes they do not even try to follow it. They tell each other how wonderful he was, they worship the memory of him, and when the memory fades they have nothing but the worship, for they have forgotten what he had to say—unless, of course, he leaves his message behind him in a form to which men can turn when they feel in danger of forgetting.

All religions have their own troubles. Buddhism lost the Eightfold Path of its master in a jungle of philosophical speculation and miraculous legends. Taoism forgot the clear message of the Old Philosopher in a search for the hidden meaning of his book. For a time it seemed as if Judaism, by concentrating on the letter of the law, might be in danger of forgetting the spirit. In Hinduism, the multitude of gods has kept most people from seeing the reality of the universal power. Islam, which places God infinitely above man, has perhaps discouraged some from trying to find his spirit in themselves. Christianity has been confused by theology and divided by sectarianism.

A purely mental religion, in which the individual mind by its own power finds union with God, cannot exist. If it could, there would be no need for organized religions or for any definite creeds or rituals. Men meet for worship in temples and churches and synagogues because they need guidance and because they want to feel that they are not alone in their search for God.

Because the great mystery of God is so hard to understand, men have tried to reach up to it through smaller mysteries and miracles. In early times, when the laws of nature were not understood, miracles were an essential part of religion. An earthquake or an eclipse coming at

an impressive time was regarded as a miracle. A God who took a personal interest in his worshipers could easily provide miracles for their benefit if he were asked.

Wonderful stories clustered around great men. It was easier to believe them than to understand how the man himself could have been so much better and wiser than other men. These stories were the tribute of love and faith, and if they created more love and faith they served their purpose. Through them, men could reach an understanding of the greater miracle of the life and teaching of the real man.

Our knowledge of the laws of nature is still incomplete. We take things for granted that would have been miracles a hundred years ago, such as electric lights, airplanes, and telephones. We know more about the laws of the physical universe than we do about the powers of the mind and its influence on the minds of others. Until we have full understanding of the laws of nature, as we probably never shall, how can we say what is a miracle and what is not?

One thing is certain; the human mind is capable of tremendous growth. It improves so slowly that sometimes we wonder whether it has improved at all. But let us remember that all the good in the world, as well as all the evil, has been done by human beings.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, anyone

might have said that war was a natural and necessary way of settling differences of opinion. It was taken for granted, and so were other forms of injustice and cruelty which horrify us now. Those things still exist, but we are doing what we can to overcome them, and this may be all the progress that can be expected in one lifetime. In our search for peace and justice we may look back over the old paths, the good ways which others have followed. We find that every religion, in meeting its own problems, discovered some truths which could be applied to personal relationships and to the government of the world.

All over the world men and women of all faiths are becoming interested in religion in the widest sense of the word. This has very little to do with going to church, and it is not particularly concerned with miracles. It is not the religion of wartime, when men in pain and danger go back to the God of their tradition as a hurt child calls for its mother.

The religion of our time is an understanding of the common purpose of all religions. In spite of the differences in their beginnings, in spite of the variations caused by the character of the people who made them and the history of the world in which they have developed, all forms of religion are the attempt of mankind to reach harmony with God.

Considering the fact that the great religions grew in widely separated places, among people who could not possibly have heard of one another, it may seem strange that they agree so perfectly on how this harmony with God can be reached. And yet it is not strange, for human beings can find no better way of reaching God than by the power of human goodness.

All religions know that the human soul is a part of the divine soul. They know also that human beings are not altogether divine, for the animal nature still exists. There are good and evil powers in man, and some religions imagine a continual struggle between the powers of light and the powers of darkness. But the good power is stronger, for human beings are naturally good. This must be true; if it were not, evil would be normal rather than abnormal. We can see this even in our everyday lives. We expect to meet with honesty and kindness and courtesy, and when we do not find them we are shocked. If we believed that normal people were all stupid, selfish, greedy, and cruel, we would be surprised by goodness.

The definition of goodness and righteousness is practically the same in all religions. Honor and loyalty and fair dealing, kindness and love in the family, generosity to those less fortunate, respect for the lives and property of others, and a sense of responsibility for one's actions to

man and to God—what other basis for morality could there be? In a primitive society the sense of responsibility is limited to the small group to which a man belongs, and to the God of his own tribe. Civilization has made "one world" and religion has discovered "one God."

The laws governing the conduct of life were not invented by any religion. They are human laws, and we have them because we are human beings instead of animals. Since mankind is a part of nature, human laws may be called a form of the law of nature, which is the law of God.

It is possible to live a good life in any form of religion. An atheist, who rejects all creeds and forms of worship, is no more likely to go about murdering, stealing, cheating, and committing adultery than is the most pious churchgoer. As long as he lives in this world he is bound by its laws.

Savages discovered these laws, civilization has only elaborated and confirmed them. Religion has enriched them with the ideal of "a little more." The law says, "Do not injure your neighbor." Religion says, "Love him." The law says, "Do not interfere with his property." Religion says, "Share with him." "Do this!" says the law, and religion adds, "Do it willingly."

Buddha saw that peace and salvation could be found

through fulfillment of human duties and love of mankind. Confucius said that harmony with universal law might be reached through unselfishness and upright conduct. Jesus said, "The Kingdom of God is within you." To those of us who are still prisoners in the cave of the world, this is still the only way.

A medieval legend tells of Saint Christopher, a giant who in his youth resolved to give his great strength, his only gift, to the service of the greatest king in the world. After a long and disappointing search among earthly kings, he was told that the greatest king was Christ, who would come to him if he served his fellow men. At last he won his reward by carrying the Christ child and his burden, the sin of the world.

"What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

We can follow this way while we search for a better one. We may be thankful that we are capable of growth, and that our minds are free.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

Mentor Religious Classics: THE SONG OF GOD, BHAGAVAD-GITA; THE WAY OF LIFE, LAO-TZU; THE SAYINGS OF CONFUCIUS; THE TEACHINGS OF THE COMPASSIONATE BUDDHA; THE UPANISHADS; THE LIVING TALMUD; THE GLORIOUS KORAN.

Other Mentor Books: MOHAMMEDANISM, by H. A. R. Gibb; MYTHOLOGY, by Edith Hamilton; THE RELIGIONS OF MAN, by Huston Smith.

Gaius Glenn Atkins: PROCESSION OF THE GODS. Harper & Brothers.

Mary Ellen Chase: THE BIBLE AND THE COMMON READER. The Macmillan Company.

Edith Hamilton: SPOKESMEN FOR GOD; WITNESS TO THE TRUTH. W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.

Kenneth William Morgan, editor: PATH OF THE BUDDHA; RELIGION OF THE HINDUS; ISLAM: THE STRAIGHT PATH. The Ronald Press Co.

Milton Steinberg: BASIC JUDAISM. Harcourt, Brace and Co.

WORLD BIBLE: Viking Press.

INDEX