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THE HIDDEN SIDE OF  
CHRISTIAN FESTIVALS





# THE HIDDEN SIDE OF CHRISTIAN FESTIVALS

BY

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## FOREWORD

These notes on the Church's Year were originally intended to be a chapter in the first volume of this series, *The Science of the Sacraments*. It was found, however, that that book was already becoming unwieldy, and that there was more to be said about the ecclesiastical year than could be compressed into a single chapter; so it seemed best to devote a separate volume to its consideration. This has also made it possible to add to it a few miscellaneous addresses on points of importance.

The book is to a large extent the reproduction of a series of sermons given for the instruction of a congregation to whose members the ideas contained in it were novel. Amid much pressure of work along other lines I have not had leisure to weld these into a continuous treatise; and as it is not probable that in this incarnation I shall have that leisure, and as other congregations desire information on these subjects, it seems best to let the sermons go forth with but little correction or addition. Occasional repetitions and colloquialisms will no doubt be found in the book, therefore; but I hope that it may nevertheless be not without some value to students of liberal Christianity, and indeed of religion in general.

C.W.L.



# Part 1

## THE FESTIVALS





## INTRODUCTION

### THE CHURCH'S YEAR

God has a plan for man, and that plan is evolution. We have come forth from Him, and to Him we are to return. The oriental philosophers tell us that we are on the *nivritti marga*, or path of return, and a modern poet puts the same idea in other words: "All the aim of life is just climbing back to God." Christ's Church exists solely to help mankind in this process, and she has many ingenious methods of offering that help. One of them is the arrangement of the ecclesiastical year, which differs somewhat from that of civil life.

Broadly speaking, it divides itself into two parts, the first of which is devoted to setting before us dramatically the various stages of the path we have to tread, and the second to the practical application of what has been taught. Through both parts are scattered various festivals, each of which is intended to remind us of some point which it is useful for us to remember, and to call upon us to make a special effort in connection with it; and to make this easier, extra outpourings of force from the higher world are arranged for such occasions. As it is put in our Liturgy: "The first portion of the Church's year, from Advent to Whitsuntide, is devoted to the commemoration of the various scenes in the Mystery-Drama of the life of the Christ, which in itself is typical of the life of every Christian, as Origen pointed out."

There are four principal stages in that progress. Those who have studied these things from another point of view know that in oriental religions those four stages are called the four great Initiations. These appear in Christianity also, but the terms are different. The first of them is symbolized by the Birth of the Christ—that first great Initiation which is the birth of the man into the great White Brotherhood, which is always called in the gospels the kingdom of heaven. We cannot understand those gospels, we cannot make coherent or reasonable sense out of them, if we take the kingdom of heaven to mean the heaven-world after death. If we understand that the kingdom of heaven is a great living community, we shall see why it is difficult for the rich man to enter into it; we shall see how all the promises made about it are literally accurate; otherwise they make no sense at all.

In that first Initiation also the birth of the Christ-Principle takes place in the man, for the Monad and the ego—the spirit and the soul, to use the Christian terms—become one for a wonderful moment.

The second of those great stages is symbolized by the Baptism of our Lord. We must not confuse this with the baptism which brings every child into the Church of Christ. It is that of which John the Baptist spoke when he said: "I indeed baptize you with water, but He that cometh after me shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with Fire." There is an outpouring from the Initiator to the candidate at that second great ceremony which has indeed all the appearance of a baptism of fire.

The Transfiguration is the representation of the third of these great Initiations, for in that truly the Monad, the spirit, transfigures the soul, and the soul in its turn transfigures the body down here—the personality, as we often call it. All these are wonderfully apt illustrations. When we come to the fourth, we find what many people think a truly terrible Initiation, though surely it is also one of the greatest glory; for then the candidate suffers what is imaged by the Crucifixion, though if he passes the test successfully it is always followed by the victory of the Resurrection.

If we read the account of the life of any mystic who has passed through that wonderful stage we shall notice how closely these events follow one another, and how truly the Christian story mirrors them. We shall see that there is usually some small earthly triumph like that of the Christ on Palm Sunday, and after that there is always the combination of enemies to disgrace the candidate; there is always the misunderstanding and the contumely thrown upon him, and then after all that comes the great and glorious resurrection out of that suffering into life eternal—eternal as regards this world at any rate, for the man who has taken that step need never again be reborn here on earth.

Then after that comes the fifth step—the last of all, that which takes the man out of humanity and makes him a superman. That is aptly symbolized by the Ascension from earth to heaven, and the downpouring of the Holy Spirit comes upon him and upon others in consequence of that his ascent—all truly as it is mirrored in the gospel story.

There is an immense amount of detail into which I cannot pretend to go now; but it will be seen that the symbolical interpretation is at least coherent, reasonable and defensible. There is no argument against it, whereas the contention that the account is historical can be overthrown at every point; therefore those who pin their faith to that historical idea must shut their eyes to a vast amount of what they cannot but know to be the truth, whereas those who are prepared to accept the higher and inner meaning will find that their faith is founded upon a rock.

In drawing up the calendar for the Liberal Catholic Church we have ventured upon a slight rearrangement of some of the minor festivals in order to bring forth this inner meaning somewhat more clearly. At Christmas, with all the world, we celebrate the Birth of the Christ. There is no special festival appointed in the ordinary Catholic calendar as an anniversary of the Baptism of our Lord, though many have celebrated it along with the Epiphany. We therefore have ventured to set apart another day for this celebration, somewhat later than the Epiphany; and because the Transfiguration (symbolizing the third Initiation) comes out of its due place when kept on the 6th August, we have also transferred that, and we keep it between the Baptism (which represents the second Initiation) and Easter (which represents the fourth). So once more these four stages will be restored in our calendar to a coherent whole, and put in the right order.

There is no tradition in the Church as to the actual anniversary of either the Baptism or the

Transfiguration. The custom of celebrating the latter on the 6th August was introduced at a comparatively late date; I think the first time we find it mentioned is in the year 850 A.D., and even then it seems to have been only locally observed. It was not until the year 1456 that its extension to the universal Church was decreed in commemoration of a great victory gained over the Turks on that day. So as the original date is not known, we have not, I think, committed any great breach of propriety in putting these celebrations in their true order, so that the symbolism shall be clear to our brethren.

Many of the events described as having happened in the last life of the Christ are commemorated on the days when they are actually supposed to have occurred, although on this subject there has been in ecclesiastical history considerable difference of opinion. The great group of festivals whose dates are determined by that of Easter fall on different days of the month in different years; but they are all decided with reference to the Paschal full moon, just as the old Jewish Passover used to be.

The other group of festivals, being dependent upon Christmas, have fixed dates—the Annunciation on March 25th, Christmas Day itself, the festival of the Epiphany twelve days later, and the Presentation of Christ in the temple, which is commonly called Candlemas Day. There is little reason to suppose that any of these dates are historically correct, but they are arranged to be consistent one with another.

## CHAPTER I

### ADVENT

With us, as with the Churches of Rome and of England, Advent Sunday is what may be called the ecclesiastical New Year's Day. The Holy Eastern Church (the Church of Greece and of Russia) observes the same custom, but she clings to the unrevised calendar, and so she begins all her commemorations twelve days later than we do.

The first great feast of the Church's year is that of the Birth of the Christ, which corresponds to, and teaches us of, the first of the great Initiations. But the Church in her wisdom has ordered that for each of her greater festivals there shall be a certain time of preparation, and consequently before the feast of Christmas we have the season of Advent—which has indeed a double aspect, but its first is that of a time of preparation for the due celebration of Christmas.

It is not a mere fashion of speech to say that we ought during the season of Advent to be making ourselves ready for that festival. Christmas is not only a birthday, not only a commemoration of the nativity of our Lord; it is also a time of the special outpouring of spiritual force. Such great festivals as Easter and Christmas, in the rejoicing connected with which we all join so eagerly when they come round, are definitely occasions for what is commonly called the shedding of grace from on high; and in order that we may be able to avail ourselves to the full of such an outpouring, it is well that we

should take advantage of the season of adjustment. We receive more if we prepare ourselves properly; so we should accustom ourselves during Advent to think daily of the Coming of the Lord, and of the Initiation which it typifies.

The four Sundays in Advent are devoted by the mystics of the Inner School of Christianity to the contemplation of the four qualifications for the first Initiation—Discrimination, Desirelessness, Good Conduct and Love; but no trace of that arrangement remains in the modern Church services, unless it be the old custom of substituting rose for violet as the colour for the third Sunday. As is explained in our Liturgy (and more fully in the first book of this series, *The Science of the Sacraments*) the Church utilizes different rates of vibration, which show themselves to our eyes as colours, to assist in impressing upon her members the various lessons to be learnt successively in the course of her year. In the preparation-periods (Advent, Lent and the vigils of Saints' Days) the colour chosen as most helpful is purple, because of its actinic, piercing and cleansing properties. Approximately in the middle of Advent and of Lent we find a Sunday on which rose is prescribed; and for this various reasons have been suggested. Through certain curious misunderstandings these preparatory periods came to be considered as penitential and sorrowful, and it was supposed that the rose-coloured Sunday was introduced as a kind of mitigation of grief—a momentary relief in the midst of austerities. A truer theory is that, as the one efficient motive for our attempt at self-purification is our love for God, this dramatic change of colour in the midst of the season is

intended to remind us of that deep and true affection which must underlie and permeate every effort that we make, if there is to be any hope of its permanent success. At least this much remains of the joyousness which should characterize the whole season; for it is not by fruitlessly mourning over our sins, but by earnestly resolving to forsake them, that we can fit ourselves to make the best use of the glorious festival which is approaching.

The Church Catholic has always recognized the dual nature of the Advent season—that it is a preparation for the next Coming of the Christ, as well as for the celebration of His birth in His last life on earth. The Churches of Rome and England speak of that second Coming, and adjure their people to be ready for it; and yet there is a vast amount of serious misunderstanding about it. In the Christian scriptures it is entangled with the idea of the end of the world, so that people who look for the second Coming of the Christ generally think of it as also the end of all the order that they know, and so most of them fear it. In the sermons and hymns connected with the Coming there still lingers a flavour of fearful anticipation of an awful descent from the physical sky, accompanied by appalling meteorological phenomena. The general attitude is far too much that expressed in some of the Advent hymns which such people sing:

The ungodly, filled with guilty fears,  
Behold his wrath prevailing;  
In woe they rise, but all their tears  
And sighs are unavailing.

And they talk of them as “deeply wailing,” “in deep abasement bending,” and so on. Now it should



be very clearly understood that all this sort of thing is not only silly, but definitely wicked and blasphemous; and the men who teach such a horrible misrepresentation of true Christian doctrine undertake a very serious responsibility, for surely to slander our heavenly Father and to degrade His children's conception of Him is a crime of no small magnitude. There is of course nothing whatever of that sort among true mystics, who have always known that God is Love, and have never feared any manifestation of His Presence, for they know that whether they see Him or not He is always with them even unto the end of the age.

All fear of God comes from a misunderstanding. The Coming of Christ is indeed connected with an end; it is not the end of the world, but the end of an age or dispensation. The Greek word is *aion*, which is the same as *æon* in English; and just as Christ said two thousand years ago that the dispensation of the Jewish law had come to an end—because He had come to found a new dispensation, that of the gospel—so will the gospel dispensation come to an end when He comes again and founds yet another. He will give the same great teaching; the teaching *must* be the same, for there is only one Truth, though perhaps it may be put a little more clearly for us now, because we know a little more. It will be promulgated in some fresh dress, perhaps, with some beauty of expression which will be exactly suited to us in this present day; there will be some statement of it which will appeal to a large number of people.

It will certainly be the same, because it has appeared in all the existing faiths. They have differed

much in their method of presenting it, but they all agree absolutely in the life which they ask their followers to live. We find considerable difference between the external teachings of Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Muhammadanism; but if we examine the good men of any one of those religions and enquire into their daily practice, we shall find that they are all leading precisely the same life—that they all agree as to the virtues a good man must possess, and they all agree as to the evils he must avoid. They all tell us that a man must be charitable, truthful, kindly, honourable, helpful to the poor; they all tell us that a man who is hard and grasping and cruel, a man who is untruthful and dishonourable, is making no progress and has no chance of success until he changes his ways. As practical people we must recognize that the things of real importance in any religion are not the vague metaphysical speculations on matters of which no one can really know anything for certain, for these can have no influence upon our conduct; the important things are the precepts which affect our daily lives, which make us this kind of man or that kind of man in our relations with our fellow-men. Those precepts are the same in all existing religions; they will be the same in the new teaching, whatever it may be.

Perhaps we may go a little further than that in predicting what He will teach, because there are some other avenues of information open to us. One of these is the study of the previous teachings which He has given. Students will remember that before this World-Teacher took up the office it was held by the Lord Gautama, Whom men call the Buddha. His

especial title was the Lord of Wisdom. He gave many teachings, but they all centred round the idea that knowledge meant salvation—that the evils of the world came from ignorance, and that through ignorance men were led into desire, and by that into all kinds of sins and sorrows; but that if the ignorance of man was dispelled, and he came into possession of perfect knowledge, he would thereby come to the perfect life, and to the perfect attitude towards all men and all circumstances, and so would escape from the wheel of birth and death.

Our present World-Teacher bears the name Maitreya, which means kindness or compassion, and just as the Lord Buddha was called the Lord of Wisdom, so is the Lord Maitreya called the Lord of Love or of Compassion. The great central truth which He will emphasize is that the evils of the world come from the lack of love and brotherliness—that if man will learn to love and to adopt the brotherly attitude, all evil will pass away and the golden age will dawn upon us. Not immediately—we cannot hope for that; but at least men will begin to see for themselves, and to understand how much more is to be gained along that line than the other. We may see how prominently that doctrine came forward in His previous lives.

Twice He has appeared—as Krishna in the Indian plains, and as Christ amid the hills of Palestine. In the incarnation as Krishna the great feature was always love; the child Krishna drew round Him people who felt for him the deepest, the most intense affection. Even now the religion which He founded perpetuates itself in the most touching devotion, the most wonderful attraction to the child Krishna. All

over the south of India many millions of followers still worship Him, and it is of the essence of their worship to feel for him the deepest affection—a devotion more touching, more intense, I think, than any that I have seen even in the monastic communities of Christianity.

Again in His birth in Palestine, love was the central feature of His teaching. He said: "This new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another as I have loved you." He asked that His disciples might all be one in Him even as He was one with the Father. His closest disciple, St. John, insisted most strongly upon the same idea: "He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love." St. John lived to a great age (over a hundred), and when in the days of extreme old age and feebleness he could no longer deliver long sermons, as he was carried about in a chair among the younger people, his word to them always was: "Little children, love one another." So we have some evidence from the two previous births of the great World-Teacher that the central idea of love will dominate His utterances now.

In a certain little book called *At the Feet of the Master* we have some teaching given to a young Indian pupil (whom I knew well) by one of the Masters of the Wisdom who is Himself a disciple of the World-Teacher. Its especial object is to set forth in the simplest possible form the qualifications required for Initiation. There is no mystery as to those qualifications, for they are given in books belonging to various religions, and are well known to all who make a study of such subjects. In these different presentations, however, there is room for

considerable variety, both in the method of teaching and in the translation of some of the technical terms employed. In this little book to which I have referred we get the presentation of those qualifications by one who is so close a follower of the World-Teacher that we may feel sure that it is practically *His* presentation. That book clearly does not contain the whole of what He will teach, but we may certainly take it that there is nothing in it of which He disapproves. In reading it we cannot fail to be struck by the fact that it is most strongly permeated with this same spirit of love. The final qualification, the intense desire for union with the Supreme, is given in that book as Love, on the ground that the Supreme with Whom the man wishes to be one is Himself Love; and therefore he who wishes to join with Him must first develop that love within himself. I strongly recommend that little book to the notice of every member of our Church; it will be found in many ways a most useful manual, for it shows us clearly in how many ways our present methods of life fall far short of that high ideal of love.

In reading the Christian bible we should, I think, remember that its language is largely symbolical. I do not mean to say that all the writers knew exactly what it meant. I do not think they did. I think they also were in many cases deceived, because they put into the mouth of the Christ words which represent Him as expecting to come back quite shortly. Again and again He is made to state: "There are many standing here who will not pass away until I come again," whereas we know that two thousand years have passed since then.

That idea of the destruction of the world is a mistake. It may be said: "All the Christian world takes it literally; how do we know that it is a mistake?" In this Liberal Catholic Church we worship and we follow the living Christ. Not a Christ of two thousand years ago only, but a Christ Who lives and inspires His Church now; in this day also He has His prophets who know and declare His Will, and those who know have told us that He will come again even as He has said, and that that Coming will be soon now, as we count earthly time. It will indeed begin a new era for those who are willing to receive it. It will be a great change, but it will be a mental and a moral change. He spoke, in that previous visit of His, of the signs which should foretell His second Coming. If we read what is written, we shall see that the great war has been one of those signs; and we can also see that much will be possible in the way of reconstruction after it which would not have been practicable before. Let it be clearly in our minds that He comes not to destroy the world, but to teach us, even as He came before. He comes to reign indeed, but He comes to reign in our hearts, for His kingdom is not of this world.

How shall we prepare ourselves then for this His Coming? Chiefly by unselfishness and by service to others for Him and in His Name. The virtues of devotion, of steadfastness and of gentleness need developing in us all, as is stated clearly by the Order of the Star in the East, a Society which exists to prepare the way for His second Coming, to help us to fit ourselves to receive Him, and so far as may be to help to make others ready as well.

This time, as indeed He is said to have foretold, there will be many who will not heed, many who will be wrapped up in business and in pleasure. He quotes the legendary story of Noah, that men were going on with their work and their play and paying no attention to the prophecies, and the flood came suddenly and destroyed them all. This is the legend of the sinking of Atlantis—a historical fact, though it did not occur exactly as described in the traditions. Christ is reported to have said that just as it was then, so it will be when the Son of Man shall come again. The people will be fully occupied with their business and pleasure, and not thinking in the least of Him, and so they will not know Him; they will not identify Him or recognize Him. We at least must be wiser than that, we who are trying to study the inner meaning of all these things; we must make ourselves ready to receive Him; and for those who will so prepare themselves, be sure that a wonderful and a glorious time will come.

We hardly realize, perhaps, how stupendous is the privilege of being born at this time, of having been able to take part (for we all have taken part in one way or another, I hope and believe) in the great war of right against wrong, which has so recently drawn to a close; and even more than that, we who live now may hope to see the second Coming of the Christ among us. And think what that should mean to us, if we recognize Him.

For He Whom now we trust in  
Shall then be seen and known,  
And they who know and serve Him  
Shall have Him for their own.

They shall know the truth and the truth shall make them free, for in His service there is perfect freedom. And He has told us that whosoever does service unto one of the least of His brethren, does it unto Him. That must be our preparation.

For us who know the nearness of His Coming, Advent is a time not of fear, but of joyous recollection and of still more joyous anticipation. Our attitude is well expressed in the ancient hymn:

Rejoice! rejoice! Emmanuel  
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

At the season of Advent we should have much in our minds the necessity of the quality of discrimination in making ready for our own Initiation, and also for the Coming of the Lord. It would be useful for us to think carefully how that great quality can be displayed in our efforts to spread the knowledge of that near Coming—how in our work of preparation we can display the wisdom of the serpent as well as the harmlessness of the dove. With these thoughts in our minds “well may we rejoice and sing,” as our hymn tells us, for “we are waiting with a hope that cannot fail.” Brethren, the Coming of the Lord draweth nigh; yea, it is even at the doors. Already the dawn is lightening; soon shall be the rising of the sun.

Coming! in the opening East  
Herald brightness slowly swells;  
Coming! O my glorious Priest,  
Hear we not Thy golden bells?



## CHAPTER II

### CHRISTMAS

Christmas is one of the greatest of the festivals of the Church; it is perhaps surpassed only by Easter, for on *this* day we celebrate the birth of the Sun-God, as on *that* day we celebrate His victory over the powers of darkness. Christianity, like all the other religions, was founded in the northern hemisphere, and consequently its festivals all fall at inappropriate times so far as the southern hemisphere is concerned. The rebirth of the Sun-God after the eclipse of winter was celebrated on the first day which was definitely longer both in the morning and in the evening, immediately after the winter solstice, the point at which the earth turns in its circuit round the sun, and begins to pass away from him instead of drawing towards him. In the same way the victory of the Sun-God over the powers of darkness was celebrated as soon as the equinox had passed—as soon as the day was definitely longer than the night. These festivals of the Sun-God had been kept for thousands of years before the birth of Jesus, so that it was quite natural for the early Church to adopt their dates for its celebrations.

The actual date of the birth of Jesus is not known, but from various indications it seems probable that it was some time in the spring. The 25th of December was, however, selected fairly early in ecclesiastical history, because it coincided with that great Sun-festival, and it was naturally convenient to

take advantage of what was already a public holiday. Those who do not recognize the symbolical meaning of the life of the Christ naturally suppose all these ecclesiastical commemorations to be *merely* historical; but we, who are trying to delve a little deeper into the truths of nature, shall none the less find it interesting to look for other and deeper significations as well.

What are the points of which the great Christmas celebration reminds the Liberal Catholic? It seems to me that there are no less than seven of these points, and I will try to explain them one by one.

1. We must certainly not ignore the historic aspect of the day, even though we know that it is not an actual anniversary. In precisely the same manner, it is agreed that a certain convenient day shall be celebrated each year as the birthday of King George, although it may not be the anniversary of his coming into the world in this incarnation; but it would be both foolish and improper to decline to observe it on that account. Unquestionably, therefore, we are called upon on Christmas Day to look back to that descent of the great disciple Jesus, and to thank him for it, and for all that has since come to the world in consequence of it. It was he who lent his body to the Great Teacher in order that He might come and found His religion and preach His gospel upon earth.

That may seem a new and strange idea to some, but it is one quite commonly understood by those who grasp the facts of reincarnation—those who know something of the might and the power and the dignity of the Great One Whom we call the World-

Teacher. We know that it would not be economy for Him, it would not be a good use of His stupendous power, that He should occupy a human body through all the period of its birth and growth, the earlier stages of its life. Therefore one of His disciples takes charge of all that for Him, and He steps into the full-grown and fully-prepared body when He is ready to do so, and uses it for the purpose for which alone He takes it over. For He Himself lives habitually upon a plane far higher, and carries on there a work so magnificent, so beyond our conception, that it is little use for us to try to grasp it, except in the merest outline.

In this particular case an advanced disciple of the Lord Christ took birth in the year 105 B.C. among the descendants of King David, as a son of Joseph and Mary; and to him was given the name of Jesus. He remained in charge of that body until it was about thirty years of age, and then handed it over to the Christ, Who occupied it for the three years of His earthly ministry. The disciple Jesus was reborn as Apollonius of Tyana just about the date usually assigned to the beginning of the Christian era; and a thousand years later he appeared as the great teacher Ramanujacharya, who left so deep an impression upon Indian thought. In due course he received the reward of his self-sacrifice, and attained the Asekha Initiation, thereby becoming one of the Masters of the Wisdom. We reverence Him now, therefore, no longer as the disciple, but the Master Jesus.

Therefore it is well that we should sing our Christmas hymns and carols, and perpetuate the beautiful traditions which have gathered round the

birth of the Master Jesus. We do not necessarily thereby assert our belief in their historical accuracy; for indeed the same lovely legends hang round other births of the World-Teacher, and it is perhaps difficult to suppose that they were literally true on all these various occasions. But we certainly need not doubt that each such birth is a great occasion, and is attended with unusual phenomena upon higher planes, which may have been seen by some at least of those who were at that period living in physical bodies.

2. We call to mind upon this occasion the descent of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity into matter; and, just as in the smaller cycle we owe deep thankfulness to our great World-Teacher for His descent into a human body in order to help and to guide us, so should we also feel profound gratitude to the great Solar Deity Himself for that willing limitation of His power and His glory which has brought us into existence.

There are many in the world who might say that they feel *no* gratitude for having been brought into existence—that life is to them more sorrow than joy, and if they could have been consulted they would have preferred not to be. But any who speak thus are thinking only of the very little that they see and know of the great cycle of life; they know nothing whatever of the glory that lies before us; they have realized nothing of the mighty plan of which they are an infinitesimal part. Those of us who are happy enough to know a little of that glorious design cannot but be filled with vivid though humble admiration for it; for we see beyond our present

inefficiency to the wonder and the beauty of the future. We realize something of the splendid scheme in which His marvellous love is manifested, and when we catch even a glimpse of that, we cannot but feel strongly moved and full of gratitude that we should have been permitted so wondrous a privilege as that of taking a part, however small, in the glory and the perfection that is to be. Let us show that gratitude, then, by endeavouring to comprehend His manifestation so far as we may, and intelligently to co-operate with it.

3. Yet again, as we have already said, Christmas Day reminds us of that first of the great Initiations, of which it is a symbol in the carefully arranged syllabus of the Church's Year. We should think, then, what this first Initiation means for us—how it is indeed a second birth—a birth into the great White Brotherhood. During the preparatory season of Advent we have been considering the qualifications needed for it; now we should contemplate the thing itself and its results. We should realize how one who has taken that step has become safe for ever, and therefore may truly look upon the great World-Teacher as his Saviour—though not indeed from the mediæval myth of everlasting torture. There is no such thing as that in nature, and there never has been; the whole thing is a frightful bogey which men have allowed to grow up and to terrify them. There is no eternal damnation to be saved from; the world needs a saviour from such a horrible idea, but not from the fact, because it is not a fact at all. Such a delusion is part of the error and the ignorance which causes all the trouble and all the suffering which we see around us. Verily is

the World-Teacher a Saviour, not only for the Initiate, but for all of us; for it is His instruction which saves us from our own error and ignorance, and therefore from much of sorrow and of suffering, which are the necessary consequences of that ignorance.

Not only should we look forward to the time when this wonderful Initiation shall be ours, but we should also make this an occasion of grateful rejoicing that for some it has already come. We thank God for His saints—for the elevation which they have given to humanity, not only by the encouragement of the example which they set before us, but by the actual uplift to the whole which each one of them has given in his own attainment. This uplift is a reality, by no means to be despised or forgotten; humanity is a brotherhood, little as most men recognize that fact, and the unity is so real that whenever one man attains, all the rest are definitely helped and raised by that attainment. So that should be another aspect of our Christmas joy.

I know that it comes as a shock to many good and earnest Christians to be told that the gospel story is not history, but truly myth. When one says that, people think at once: "You are taking away from us our Jesus, our Saviour. You are denying His historic existence." We are not denying that at all, but we do hold that the gospel history as it is now written is not, and furthermore was never intended to be, an actual account of the life of that great World-Teacher, the Christ. We know but little of His true life-story. It seems certain that some parts of it were interwoven into this myth; it seems certain that some at least of the sayings

which in the gospels are credited to the Lord Christ were really spoken by Him. But it is a matter of equal certainty that some of the others were not; and it is also plain to anyone who understands the subject, and has read something of comparative religion, that the whole account is cast in that allegorical form intentionally—that it represents not the life-history of any one man, but the spiritual history of every true follower of the Christ. It is obviously not a history, but a drama—a collection of episodes, arranged as though for presentation on a stage.

This idea, which seems so new to many, is not really new at all. It was quite manifest to the greatest of the Church Fathers. It is strange only to us, and it is strange because we inherit a great deal of the darkness of the Middle Ages. In these days we can no longer give blind faith to something which our reason shows us to be an impossibility. We need to comprehend what this beautiful story means, and it is quite easy to follow that. Origen, the greatest of the early Christian writers, explains the thing most lucidly. He says that there were in his time (and there certainly are now) two kinds of Christians. There were those whom he called the believers in “somatic” Christianity, which means bodily or physical Christianity. He makes it perfectly clear that by that expression he means those who believe in the story as a story, and he says of their doctrine: “What better could you have for the instruction of the masses?” But he makes it abundantly evident that the spiritual Christian holds an altogether higher form of Christianity, in which he understands the inner meaning of all these allegories. Christ in each of His parables is represented to

have told a story which had within it two inner meanings. First there was the purely physical tale for children, which described (for example) how the sower went forth to sow; secondly there was an intellectual explanation, whereby the seed is the word of God, the sower is the preacher, and the different sorts of ground are the different kinds of hearts on which it falls. Thirdly, there is always an inner and a still more spiritual signification which is not given out, which in this particular case is the pouring out of the divine life in many planes and into many worlds.

Origen holds that, just as the words of the Christ bear an inner interpretation, so does the whole narrative of the Christ bear an inner interpretation, that can be seen only if we study its similarity to the other presentations of the same great allegory. He insists that all this takes place not in the fleeting world of shadows, but in the eternal counsels of the Most High. He says that so long as we understand the universal truths which are revealed by the story, the story itself is of no importance. Its meaning is clear, it describes the progress which lies before every Christian man. People who study these matters deeply are sometimes disturbed to find the close resemblance which exists between the Christian legend and those of other Saviours long before—pagan Christs, as Robertson calls Them in his book on the subject. It is true that all the details of the life of the Christ are to be paralleled by anecdotes of other Teachers Who were unquestionably far older in time than He, so that either we must accept the idea of a wholesale plagiarism by the Christian writers from those earlier authors,



or else we must suppose that all of them are trying to set forth the same great truth, but are setting it forth each in his own way. That explanation is not without confirmation even in the existing scriptures, for St. Paul himself is made to say in how many ways, and at how many different times revelations have been made. He writes to the Hebrews: "God Who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto our fathers by the prophets" (meaning not those few local Jewish prophets, but all the great *prophetai*, the great teachers of the world) "hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son."

We want to get our people to take a more rational view of religion than many of our fellow Christians take to-day. They are unfortunately obsessed with the idea that Christianity is the only religion, and that all the others are just a set of heathen superstitions. That is a most illiterate and ignorant attitude to take, and it shows that they know nothing whatever of these other religions. That should not be so. Religious people should take an interest in *all* presentations of religion. It happens (it is not a mere happening, for it is a matter of our destiny and our deserts) that we have been born into this race, and into a country where the recognized religion is Christianity. That is not a mere chance. We were born there because we deserved to be; because the best opportunity for us is to come into this particular set of environments; but other people in every way as good as ourselves, and as far advanced as ourselves, are born into quite a different environment, and we must try to realize that to them their religion is

just as natural as ours is to us. We probably cannot imagine that we could have been born into any other religion, just as a man feels that he never could have taken birth as a woman, or a woman as a man. But that is of course mere illusion; the soul has neither sex nor race, and we take these different births according to what is best for our development.

All religions alike are statements of the same great truth, and each of those religions has a special variant or facet of that truth to present to us. There is the religion of Hinduism, a religion at present professed by three hundred millions of people, and professed by their ancestors (for one must be born into this religion in order to belong to it) back through long periods of high civilization—a civilization that was already at its height when our forefathers, the ancient Britons, were running about naked in the woods and painting themselves blue. Their religion has for its greatest feature the idea of duty—*dharma*, they call it. Their one remedy for every ill is: “Let a man do his duty; each man is born in a particular place with a particular duty to do, let him do it”; and they dwell very greatly on the immanence of God. In Ancient Egypt another mighty civilization was running its course at the same time. The great central point of its religion was what we should now call science—that is to say the mastery of nature by knowing all about it; and the Egyptians laid the foundation of a great deal of our modern science. The very name by which they called their country, *Khem*, gave the name to our science of chemistry.

In ancient Persia they had another great religion, Zoroastrianism. It has sometimes been called sun-worship, but we must not be misled by a popular title of that sort, for no one ever worshipped the sun as such, but the sun as a manifestation of the great power behind it. Their chief idea was purity. They wished above all things else to emphasize purity in thought and word and act. Coming further down the stream of time there was the religion of Greece, the main point of which was beauty. The endeavour of the Greeks was to impress upon people beauty in their lives, beauty in their surroundings, in everything they had about them; beauty of character as well as of form and colour. Then came Rome with *its* great religion, enforcing the idea of law and discipline, insisting always upon duty to the community—a very fine idea. Then there was the teaching of the Buddha; in His great religion He also preaches the law, but not quite in the same sense. When He speaks of the law He means not man-made law at all, but the order of nature, and He says that all the mistakes which men make come from their ignorance. If they will only study the divine scheme and live accordingly, all will go well.

Then comes our religion of Christianity; its great central idea is self-sacrifice—the thought that the greatest among us shall be he who serveth best. You know the highest title of a bishop is *Servus servorum Dei*, “Servant of the servants of God.” That is the great point that Christianity has to emphasize. All these religions come at different times, each when its particular quality is most needed in the world. Surely any one can see that

that is a far grander conception than the orthodox theory that all these other religions are feeble or evil superstitions, and that the only people who can be saved are those who happen to come into touch with the Christian faith. This latter seems a strange and ridiculous idea, but it is of a piece with the self-conceit which made men think that this tiny planet is the centre of the universe; that this particular little speck of mud is the hub of creation, and that all these tremendous stars and suns are circling round it; that God Himself came down to live and die upon it in order that its comparatively insignificant population might be saved, and that all the other populations of those far more magnificent worlds are left to take care of themselves.

No one need be in the least distressed to find the same truths taught in other religions. It is what we should expect, as soon as we get rid of this amazing exclusive idea that we are the only people who ever heard the truth—that of all the countless millions of men who have ever lived on earth, the few generations from the time of Jesus are the only men to whom God thought it worth while to make any revelation of Himself at all. If we can put aside that astounding unreasonableness we shall realize that there have been many presentations of the truth, which are all alike in many respects, though each is put in the way most suitable for the people at the time. Therefore, instead of being alarmed at these likenesses, let us welcome them; let us compare all the different accounts, and so learn from them more of the truth that lies behind them all.

We need never fear that we shall lose anything by understanding the inner meaning of the gospel

story; on the contrary we shall gain much. In this Liberal Catholic Church we lay no injunction upon men as to what they shall believe. We put before them the Creed as worthy of study, and we say to them that they may interpret it literally, if they like. That is their affair. Or they may take the higher symbolical interpretation which we offer them if they prefer it. Whatever they may elect to believe, there can be no harm at least in their knowing the inner meaning, so that they may have it before their minds, in order that if they hear the historical theory overthrown by argument, they may understand that there is another and more spiritual interpretation to which exception cannot be taken. We shall keep our feasts better, and not worse, if we have a fuller and clearer understanding of all that they mean. By all means let those who wish to do so hold to the physical record; but let them remember also that behind that earthly story there is always a heavenly meaning. We may think of it as existing *for the sake of* the heavenly meaning if we like, which is what I myself believe as regarding it. Or we may accept it as having actually taken place, and suppose that this inner and beautiful explanation has been invented to fit it. It does not matter. It is for each man alone to decide what form of faith he will hold with regard to all this, so long as he understands the high, spiritual, glorious meaning, and so long as he tries to live up to all that it involves.

4. Through the Advent season the Church looks forward to the next Coming of our Lord; at Christmas that expectation culminates, and her celebration

is one of gratitude not only for His last Coming, but also for favours yet to come. We cannot but think of that greater Christmas when He shall again appear among us on the physical plane in a body that can be seen of all. For He Himself, the very same Great One Who took the body of Jesus two thousand years ago, is ready soon to come again, and to bless the world once more with His teaching and His help, as He blessed it before. The voice which spake as never man spake will speak again in the ears of men now living, and at no great distance of time from the present day. Those of us who hold that belief are naturally eager to do what we can to prepare ourselves and others for His Coming, and to try to spread the news of it in the outer world.

It is not for us to criticize, or even to marvel at, the arrangements made when last He came to earth; but it can hardly be unseemly for us to note that little was then done (perhaps little *could* be done) in the way of preparation in the outer world. There seems to have been a general expectation of the coming of some Great One, as there is now; but there was only one John the Baptist, so far as we know. This time the conditions in the world are in every way so different that preparation may be usefully attempted on a somewhat wider scale, and every one who, having examined the evidence, sees reason to expect the near Coming of the Lord should do what he can to prepare His way and make His paths straight.

The idea of the second Coming of Christ takes on a different aspect when we realize that the world is steadily evolving and that the Christ is a mighty

Official Who is in charge of its religious thought, and either comes Himself or sends one of His pupils as a teacher whenever He thinks that such a visit will help it in its evolution. I know how strange that idea must seem to many people who have been brought up in the belief that there is only one religion in the world—that there are a few heathen superstitions somewhere or other in far-off corners of the earth, but that our only duty with regard to them is to try to convert the poor heathen from the error of their ways, and to give them the truth which has been revealed to us alone. I suppose it has never occurred to some people that it would be rather strange that we, of all the people in all ages, alone should have a monopoly of the truth. There have been mighty sages, great saints, magnificent thinkers, who had not this truth, which has been given exclusively to a small handful of us. They apparently had not these advantages, and they seem to have done remarkably well without them. Surely it is more reasonable to believe that there are many great religions in the world, and that they are all equally paths which lead up the same great mountain of truth.

I mean that all the great religions come from the same central source; that this World-Teacher and His Department are responsible for all of them. I do not say that He is responsible for the vagaries of the individual believer. Men have corrupted and distorted His teaching; that is true of every religion. That these faiths as originally founded are all statements of the same eternal truth, we can see for ourselves, if we will take the trouble to study comparative religion. Unfortunately we inherit the

ignorance of the period called the dark ages in Europe—a time in which few people seem to have known anything worth knowing; and as far as religious matters are concerned, many people have not tried yet to come up out of that darkness. We do realize that to practise the so-called science of the Middle Ages would be ridiculous. We know a great deal more now; we know that to live according to the hygiene of the Middle Ages would lay us open to awful epidemics; but most people have not realized that the religion of the Middle Ages was equally defective in its statement. Our mediæval ancestors did not understand Christianity; they took it in the narrowest and most bigoted way, whereas it is capable of an interpretation more useful, wider and more tolerant in every way. And that is the interpretation we try to put upon it to-day.

In one of the Indian Scriptures, the World-Teacher is represented as saying that whenever the world falls into great sorrow and misery, whenever it seems that unbelief and evil are triumphant, then He comes to present the eternal truth in some new way which shall to some extent take the place of His previous statements, which have been distorted. This may seem strange to some, but let us take it for the moment and think of it—that all these various presentations differ because they are offered to different people at different ages of the world, at different stages of the progress of human thought. Let us grasp that idea, and we shall see that no one of them can be expected to be eternal—that, on the contrary, everyone of them must in time become more or less corrupted, more or less distorted; and therefore, just because it is cor-



rupted, unsuited for the needs of the world. The world is advancing, and a new presentation from time to time is an absolute necessity. What was appropriate for people two thousand years ago cannot be fully suited for us in the present day. A vast deal more is known on many subjects than was known then, and any statement of truth that was fitted for people then will need considerable revision and addition before it can be made suitable for us. On the other hand, a presentation of the truth such as would now be absolutely suitable for us, would have been insanity, would have been utterly inappropriate, at that time. It may well be that it is thought that a restatement of the same great truths would be beneficial and helpful.

We can see if we look around us that our churches are not being attended by the people as a whole. We hear that in the Middle Ages everyone took part in the devotional spirit of the time, but most assuredly that is not so now. Not a tenth part of the population of any so-called Christian country takes part in its religious observances; I suppose the proportion is probably much less than that. That does mean (and it is no use trying to avoid the issue) that the religion as now stated has lost its hold on the bulk of the population. When that is the case, one way of dealing with the difficulty might well be a restatement; we should call it, perhaps, a new religion. That is not a good phrase, because it implies much more than the mere restatement of the same truths.

The truths of religion are eternal truths; they may be distorted; they may be misrepresented—they certainly have been; but the fundamental basis

of all the religions represents eternal verity, which cannot be changed, though it may be more fully stated; it may be put in some new way, which may appeal to the modern spirit. But the great facts are the same. I do not mean that we must believe in any particular name, or in any particular ceremony, but in the real basic facts that in order to progress a man must be a good man, that he must live a high and pure and noble life, that he must practise the virtues which every religion in the world without exception recommends to him—charity, nobility, self-control, temperance, patience, and love.

I have already referred to the weird entanglement of the teaching of the Christ with unscientific ideas about the end of the world. It is curious to see how ready the ignorant still are to create bugbears for themselves. There was an announcement in the newspapers only a few months ago that the end of the world might be expected on a certain day, because the planets were in a certain position. It is absolutely amazing that sane people could be induced to believe such nonsense. The planets have been in a similar position many thousands of times, and it has not been the end of this world or of any other. Men do not seem to understand how insignificant is the combined weight of those planets in comparison with the weight of the sun; they might about as sensibly expect that a cart could be upset because a fly settled on the rim of the wheel. Popular ignorance is a very strange thing. We make our children's lives a burden to them with what is miscalled education, and yet this is the practical result of it all.

Men sometimes say, "The second Coming of the Christ has been known, and people have been looking forward to it for a long time; why should we be specially preparing for it now?" There are many reasons for that—some of them external reasons, and some which are much more private and intimate. There is a new race developing in the world. We ought to know something about that here in Australasia, because this is one of the countries in which this new race is showing itself. If we look round us we shall see that there are still many people who are distinctively English or Scotch or Irish, who belong to the old races; but we shall also see many, especially among the children and young people, who do not belong to any of these; we shall see a new race springing up which is not English, or Scotch, or Irish, but Australian.

In America there are even more people in proportion who do not belong to any of the races which go to make up that great nation, but are distinctly men with new qualities and recognizably new physical appearance. It is an intellectual race; it is a strong-willed race; the study of it is wonderfully interesting. Now all through history wherever a new race has arisen there has been a new religion to fit it. It is probable that there will be a new religion to fit this race, and if it is to do good it must arise tolerably soon.

We are a great civilization—at least we think ourselves so—and yet there is a vast amount of misery in the world; we are badly in need of some sort of change. There is unrest everywhere; it would seem that the system on which we have been relying for some centuries is breaking down all

round us. Something new is wanted; new developments are turning up in all directions. The spread of science is wonderful; the advance in knowledge within recent years is very great—in chemistry, in mechanics, in everything. There is a new time coming. The old civilization has done its work, and we want, we must have, something new.

There is an expectation of the Coming of the Christ all over the world. All these religions of which I spoke, so far as they are active, are expecting Him. The Hindus look forward to the Kalki Avatara; the Buddhists to-day are awaiting the Lord Maitreya, which is their name for the great World-Teacher Whom we call the Christ. Among the Muhammadans, when a pretender started up not long ago in Africa, he gained an immense following because he proclaimed himself to be the Imam Mahdi, the Saviour for whom they wait. He was not, but many believed it. In Zoroastrianism there is also a tradition of a great One Who is to come. Among ourselves there are the Seventh-Day Adventists and other similar societies; and we have in our midst the Order of the Star in the East, which is trying to prepare its members (and also outsiders) for the near Coming of the World-Teacher.

Why is there such a wide expectation of the Coming of the Lord? We who study the inner side of things know that it is the reflection in the minds of men of the knowledge of greater Beings, the knowledge of Adepts and Angels. They know that the Christ is coming soon, and Their knowledge is in the mental atmosphere; it communicates itself to our mental bodies by sympathetic vibration, and it

gives us this great expectation. It is the reflection of the thoughts of the higher Beings Who know.

Assuredly the need of the world is great. None can deny that; and we may remember in a scripture which is older than any of ours, the World-Teacher is represented as saying: "When evil triumphs, then I come to help." It is not that we do not know what we ought to do. We know the principles of right and wrong as well as anyone, but we do not apply them. It is not new truth that we want, but new inspiration to practise the old truth. There is a great desire to help among many people. That is one of the signs of the times; but they do not know how to begin. Each tries his own little panacea, and perhaps it succeeds a little, but on the whole it fails. They will welcome the idea of one who knows, and who can teach.

Some of us have been studying this thing, and similar things, for many years. I myself have been working at this inner side of things under definite instruction for thirty-seven years, and on my own account twenty years before that. Some of us in the course of such study have been led to the feet of those Great Ones who *do* know about these things, those who are in charge of the world's evolution; therefore we can with confidence repeat that which we hear from them, that the Coming of the Lord draweth nigh, that it will not be long now, as we measure earthly time, before He shall appear amongst us. We cannot pretend to tell to a year or two, because what is told to us is always to this effect: "When the earth is ready by your exertions, I shall come;" and it must be soon, because the need is so great. That, of course, is no proof to

others. So far as they know, we may be dreaming; we may be altogether in error in what we think; but I would suggest that at least we give direct testimony, which is comparatively rare in religious matters, and so what we say constitutes a piece of evidence that ought to be taken into account.

Look round the world and see how wide-spread is the expectation; see how great is the need; see the new race waiting for the religion which shall fit it as it grows up. There are plenty of indications to enable us to understand that this Advent is not far away.\* Although what we see and know for ourselves is no proof to any one else, we do our duty at any rate in announcing the Coming.

Let us then make as determined an effort as we can to get ready for the Christ; let us try to purify ourselves, try to make ourselves what we wish to be if He is to come; and let us help to prepare His way. Long ago, when He came in Judæa, there was one John the Baptist. Let us, everyone of us according to his power and opportunity, be John the Baptists. This time let Him come not with one herald only; let there be thousands of us trying to prepare the way of the Lord and to make His paths straight. For when the world is ready He will come. So let us join in the work of the Order of the Star in the East or of the Liberal Catholic Church; let each work in his own way for a better time, a time of brotherhood and love, for that is what the Christ will preach to us when He comes. Let us cultivate brotherhood and love in order that we may be ready to receive Him, in order that we may profit by what He has to tell us, and to offer

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\* See *A World Expectant*, by A. E. Wodehouse.

our hearts, our hands, our speech, to help Him in the work He is to do.

5. We must not forget that there is another aspect of the Coming of the Christ—the coming within the heart of each individual, the development of the Christ-principle within us. A great and glorious mystery underlies all this—the wonderful, and yet most intimate, connection between the Second Person of the Ever-Blessed Trinity and the great World-Teacher, and in turn the link joining both of These to that Christ-principle within man to which we often give the name of intuition. Yet indeed it means much more than intuition; it means the wisdom that *knows*, not by process of reasoning but by utter inner certainty. That development must come to every man. That Christ-principle is in every one of us; it can be awakened—it is being awakened among us even now, and as it unfolds we realize the true brotherhood of man, because we realize the Fatherhood of God. We come to know that our separate consciousness is nothing but an illusion—that we are one in Him. First, one with all who know Him and love Him; and then secondly, by a still greater extension, with all the world, whether as yet they know it or not. To touch that wonderful consciousness, to realize the Christ within us, is not so impossible, for it is being done even now by some. Gleams of its glory sometimes manifest themselves; flashes of wonderful peace and uplifting, so that at least for a few moments we *know*. And those of us to whom these glimpses have come can never forget them; however much afterwards doubt and uncertainty, sorrow and even despair may overwhelm us, *we have known*, and

therefore inside we still know, and that certainty nothing can shake.

True, most who touch that glory for a moment touch it unconsciously, not knowing what it is, not realizing the intensity of its splendour, not seeing whither it would lead them. They know that they have moments of ecstasy, moments in which the love of God reaches them in a way which they never imagined before, a greater intensity of bliss which touches them, which is far beyond all earthly things. But as we progress that certainty will come oftener and more fully, and will remain with us longer, until at last that higher consciousness will be ours in perpetuity—Christ in us and we in Him. For there are those who set themselves deliberately to gain this glory and this splendour, who endeavour to deal with it scientifically, and so to let knowledge grow more and more until they consciously enter into the glory and the fullness of the Christ Himself, realizing the God in man, because they themselves are consciously part of that God. That is the birth of Christ within the heart of man, and assuredly it is a very real thing. Truly in that sense we may say that Christ is the Saviour of the World, for it is through that experience only that man can attain that which God means him to attain.

To develop oneself intentionally as described above is the shortest and the most direct route to such awakening. I do not say it is the only route. One can gain that elevation by intense intellectual absorption, by long-continued hard work and the practice of virtue. But the shortest, the most direct method of attaining the highest rapidly is the deliberate awakening of the Christ within the human



heart. For this and for its glorious possibility we also give thanks at the holy season of Christmas.

How shall we know whether we are on the way to this glorious consummation? What can we do to bring nearer that supreme bliss? If Christ is to be born within our hearts, we must be living the life of the Christ; we must show forth His spirit to those around us. And the Christ-spirit is first of all love and brotherhood. The man in whom it is developing will assuredly exhibit love, kindness, tolerance, comprehension—a general growth all round, an increase of the quality which for want of a better word we often call *bigness*. We speak of a man as great when he is of wide tolerance, of open heart, great in his character; and just those qualities are the result of the unfolding of this Christ-principle.

They show themselves in daily life in various ways; prominently in that the man begins to take the best view of people and of things instead of the worst, that he makes a practice of putting the best construction possible upon the words and actions of his fellow-men instead of (as I am afraid we so often do) the worst possible. We shall find that constantly when we think of the actions of a man, we attribute them to some weakness or defect in him; we assign to him a motive of some sort. If we were in a position (most of us are not) to get behind the thought of that man, and find out really why he did or said a certain thing, we should find that our attribution of motive was in most cases absolutely incorrect and unjust, that his reason for doing what he did was much more creditable than we were ready to suppose, and that

he had some thought in his mind which never even occurred to us. This assigning of a motive is a habit; we all find ourselves doing it, until by steady practice and care we learn *not* to do it, but to attribute to another nothing but the highest and the best thoughts. In doing that we may sometimes be deceived, but it is better a thousand times to form a wrong estimate in that direction, than once to do a man the injustice of attributing to him a lower motive and a lower plane of thought than that which is really his. A man in whom this wondrous unfoldment is beginning abandons all unnecessary criticism, and learns to see the good in everything, even when it needs a little search to find it, when it is not as obvious as the more objectionable characteristics.

Another infallible sign of the growth of the Christ-principle in a man is unselfishness, for that is the key to all, the central virtue which gives birth to all the others.

We can see at once what a change it would make in the world if feelings of that kind were widely spread. How different everything would be if each man thought first of others—if each man were willing to take the wider and more tolerant view, and to attribute the best possible motives instead of always evil ones! Perhaps we cannot hope that any large number of people will attain to that level just at present, for it would obviously need the evolution of thousands of years; yet there is a factor coming into the case for which a large allowance will have to be made by those who try to forecast the future; and that is the actual physical coming of the Christ, the World-Teacher, to be among us and help

us once more. We cannot tell to what extent His presence may affect the people. An influence so tremendous as His; the persuasive power of the voice that spake as never man spake; the facts that His teaching will be simultaneously reported all over the world, and that He Himself will probably visit all the countries of the world in succession; all these considerations show us that here is a factor whose influence is incalculable. He may well precipitate the time when an unselfish attitude will become far more general than it now seems reasonable to hope.

It may be that the world in general is not so far as we think from that higher and grander attitude. It is undoubtedly full of bitter selfishness and unreason, as may be clearly seen from the prevalence of strikes, struggles and disorder everywhere. Most of the words and deeds of the average man are selfish; and yet that average man—a perfectly ordinary specimen—has again and again been found capable in a great emergency of suddenly rising to heights of heroism of which we might have supposed him to be quite incapable. A man, apparently just like his fellows, a rough and common sort of man, will deliberately sacrifice his life to save a comrade. That shows that there are the seeds of right feeling in every man, and that, given the right power applied at the right time and in the right way, the ordinary man may be raised to great heights.

In the great war thousands of men came forward voluntarily to risk their lives, to fight for an ideal, for the maintenance of a treaty, because our country's word was pledged. Those who fought had nothing to do with the pledging of that word, but

they were willing to devote themselves to the uttermost to redeem their country's guarantee. That has a hopeful side; that is a good augury for the future; for the man who is willing to give his life for an ideal now may very likely be willing to spend his life in following an ideal when he comes back in another incarnation. So the world at large may be more ready than we think to respond to the mighty influence which the great Teacher brings.

Few can form any conception of what that influence will be. Only those who have come into contact with some of the great Adepts can estimate the power of the Master of Masters; and even they can only faintly adumbrate the tremendous radiation of love and of strength which will come from that mighty Personality. It may well be that in His presence what would otherwise be hopeless and impossible may be found to be easy of achievement; it may be that under that marvellous influence men will wake up and bring their common sense to bear upon the various problems which come before them. There is nothing too great to hope from such a power as that.

All this separateness is an illusion; we are one in Christ; and to know and realize that fully is to awaken the Christ within us. Remember how it is written in the scripture: "Christ in you, the hope of glory." It is precisely the presence of that Christ-principle within us that brings the hope of glory to every human soul. Without that we should be lost indeed; that is the true Christ, belief in Whom is necessary for salvation—not salvation from a mythical hell, but from the wheel of ever-recurring birth and death.

To escape from that wheel is to avoid the broad and easy road that leads to death (and birth and death and birth over and over again) and to take the narrow and more difficult path which leads to the kingdom of heaven, where death is a ridiculous impossibility—where life, and the increase of life and power and love, and all that that means, constitute the only possible future before the sons of men. The way of escape lies in this development.

Though Christ a thousand times in Bethlehem be born,  
But not within thyself, thy soul shall be forlorn.

6. All great festivals have another aspect, and this one has it among the rest—perhaps even this has it pre-eminently. They are all special channels of force—occasions upon which a greater outpouring of divine power takes place—greater, I mean, than in ordinary times. Let not this thought seem strange to us; let us not imagine it as a limitation of God's Omnipotence. For God Himself works by means, and takes advantage of opportunities; and this wondrous creation of His is so utterly one in Him, so mystically inter-related, that as the stars move through their courses there are certain times when certain energies are more readily available than at others—when the bridges are clear, the channels are open; and Christmas is such a time. These special occasions, these great festivals, are *not* mere commemorations; they indicate definite actions on the part of the Living Christ Who is the Head of His Church. All the members of the Church are members of Christ, and are definitely linked to Him through baptism and through confirmation, and still more through the most holy Sacrament of His Love; so they are always to some extent under His in-

fluence. But He has ordained certain methods for the pouring down of His influence upon His Church, and the greatest of all is the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. Therefore there are special times and special conditions under which the outpouring is more definitely available. Always, everyone of us is in link with the Christ, and yet we all know that we are more closely linked with Him—that the link is more alive, is more vivid—when we come to His Church, when we kneel before His very Presence in the Bread and Wine which He has chosen to be His vehicle, through which He represents Himself to our outward senses.

Just in the same way as that is a more intimate Presence than the Presence which is always with us, so have we an extraordinary outpouring of power at certain times and seasons. There is definitely a greater, a more universally assimilable outpouring on such days as Christmas, Easter, the Ascension, Whitsunday, Trinity Sunday; each of these has its own special character. Such a day as this great Feast of Christmas is a real opportunity for each one of us, for there is a stronger and more definite outflow of divine power then, just because the whole world is more prepared to receive it.

It is well for the student to cast aside old preconceptions and prejudices and make a determined effort to understand the principle which underlies the whole of this question of the effusion of helpful force from higher planes. That principle is simple and scientific, but most people have to rearrange their thought upon religious matters before they can grasp it. Stupendous as is the force available for the spiritual helping of man, it is nevertheless

an absolute and immutable law that it shall never be wasted—that it shall be used to the best advantage. This holds good at all levels. In the most wonderful Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist we have the privilege of calling in great Angels to help, and the central point of the whole ceremony, the Consecration, is the act of our Lord Himself through the Angel of the Presence; yet the whole of this tremendous outpouring is made dependent upon our initiative. It is the fact that a priest is ready to celebrate which gives the opportunity, which sets all this marvellous celestial machinery in motion, which makes it (if we may say so with the deepest reverence) “worth while” for our Lord and for His Angels to do this particular thing in this particular way. The Lord Christ is a great official of the Hierarchy, and as such He is always pouring out those wonderful forces at His own high level.

It is an axiom that the highest work which any one can do is especially and essentially the work appointed for him. For example, those of us who can work in the astral world spend our nights in trying to do the work of invisible helpers, to help people in sorrow and suffering. We want to do whatever we can. Unquestionably one of our Masters or one of the great saints could do far more in such work than any of us can do, and yet he would not do it, because he can do a hundred-fold more effective work on higher planes, and the fact that he can do that work marks him out for it, so that for him to do this lower work would be a waste of force.

If a man takes the trouble to qualify himself to do research work in connection with a great univer-

sity, it would obviously be a waste of his force to set him to reap a field or mend a road, even though he would probably do it better and more intelligently than the people to whom that work is usually assigned; but it is obviously best for the community as a whole that each man should be doing his highest work.

That holds good all the way through. For the World-Teacher, Who can wield powers beyond those of any other of the Masters or saints, it would be a waste of time to do the work which they are habitually doing, because He can do something far grander still. Therefore it is best that each Master and saint should do the work he can do, and that above him the World-Teacher should be doing His best work, and down here we should be doing such work as at our level we can do. There is only one point of view that the Great Ones hold with regard to work, and that is that the greatest possible amount of it shall be done under the most economical conditions, so that the power may go further.

The Lord would not turn aside from the higher work He is doing, in order to do anything that we can do, unless it were made profitable from the point of view of the progress of the whole that He should do that. If the world is to be helped, certain work must be done at the lower levels as well as at the higher. For Him to *force* His power through from above into the world below would mean a great outlay of His energy, and economically the result produced would not be "worth His while," if we may venture to put it so. He could do far more with the same amount of force at the higher level; but if we provide the channels for Him, it is



“worth His while” to do the work through us, because a little force from above can do a great deal down here if the channel is provided for it.

When the congregation of a church provides the love, devotion and enthusiasm with which the wonderful eucharistic edifice can be built, it is worth the while of the great Angels to come down and help, because the material is already given. It would *not* be worth their while, so closely are these things balanced, if they had to provide the material on the lower plane, for that would be to them a great trouble, because a descent into physical matter would be necessary; it would not be an economical use of their power. But when we provide the material, it is “worth their while” to intensify it; after they have raised and intensified it, it then becomes “worth the while” of the Christ to make a tremendous outpouring of His power; but it would not be economical for Him to do this unless these conditions had been provided.

What I have written above about the eucharistic service is equally true of the special outpouring of divine energy at these great festivals. On the higher level the divine force is ever streaming forth and doing its appointed work; when men are to an unusual degree ready to take advantage of it, it becomes “worth while” to transmute a large amount of this force that it may be applicable to the lower level. So once more the initiative is left with us; when we provide the conditions, advantage is at once taken of them.

The sun is always shining, but he is not always visible to us on earth, because earth-made clouds get in the way and shut him out. Just so the divine

Christ is always pouring forth, but we sometimes make our own clouds, which get in the way and prevent that divine power from influencing our lives for the time. That is not the fault of the Christ, but our fault. And so in His lovingkindness—because there are so many of His people who are not yet able to touch these higher planes, far above all earthly clouds, where the sunlight of His Presence is always vivid—He has arranged times when it shall be easier for men to draw closer to Him. If we but knew it, we are all close to Him always, but still we feel it more at certain times than at others.

When any one man is in a condition of great love, great devotion, great happiness, he sends up what is very literally a spire of devotion, and that breaks through into the higher planes, and there comes down upon that man a response of love and blessing commensurate with his own feeling. Some people might say, not understanding: "But why should not such an outpouring come always?" Because he is not always ready to receive it. I suppose that it might have been so arranged in nature that the sun should be strong enough to lick up and drive away any possible cloud. I do not know that it would have been a good thing for agriculture if that had been so; at any rate, that is not the plan upon which the world is working. The clouds do not keep back the whole of the life, the strength, that is being poured out by the sun; they keep back just a part of it, and a larger part of his light, but not the force which keeps his worlds alive; and the same is true of his great prototype, the Lord Himself. When a man breaks through his self-made clouds he is able to receive this downpouring

of divine blessing; otherwise he would not be able to receive it, it would have to be forced upon him, and that is not God's way of dealing with man. He never forces Himself upon us. There is very good reason for that; it would not help our evolution if He did. That is the law, and if we want to receive His grace we must lay ourselves open to its influence. An individual can do that to some extent; but when thousands upon thousands of people all combine to do it, we see at once how great an opportunity there is for this downpouring of what we must call Grace, Strength, Power and Love, which is always streaming forth.

Christmas is a time when that opportunity is near and vivid; but the extent to which we can avail ourselves of it depends upon several factors. First, and most of all, it depends upon how far the Christmas spirit has entered our hearts. If we are filled with the peace and goodwill of Christmas, the goodwill of the Christ Himself can reach our hearts.

It depends also upon how far we have used the season of Advent as a special time of preparation. There are certain virtues which we should have tried to cultivate within us, certain vices we should have repressed; if this has been done, we are the more ready to take advantage of this great seasonal outpouring of definite power. Be sure that this power is a real thing. What we sometimes call the grace of God is just as definite and as real a force as electricity or steam; but it is dealing with higher matter. To say that is not to materialize a spiritual conception; it is rather an effort to bring a great truth down to our comprehension, to make it clear and real to us. We are material creatures; we still

have bodies; not only the physical body which all see, but the emotional body and the mental body. But all of those are material. There is a spirit which lies behind it all—a spirit which none can see, which none can touch; but that is far above us yet, and when we can realize it perfectly, we shall be hid with Christ in God. But now, and in the meantime, we live in bodies; and it is through and by means of these bodies that we must be affected. Therefore the Christ Himself pours down influence veiled in material forms in order that it may help us. Otherwise it would pass above us and beyond us, and to us would be as though it were not. And so He sets apart certain times such as Christmas in which this outpouring may descend to the lower level and more readily influence us; He sets apart certain places—such as His churches—in which we may be more readily, more easily reached.

Any man, anywhere, may touch the Christ-Spirit just in so far as the soul within him (which is the real man) is attuned to that Christ-Spirit. But the specially consecrated, specially magnetized places which are set apart for His service make that work easier, for their influence is intended to bring us into a condition in which we can receive that help from on high. We have only to think it over with common sense and with reason, and we shall see that that must be so. A church is one of the places set apart for His service; Christmas is one of those occasions on which it is easier for all to draw nigh to Him.

Let us try to realize, then, that Christmas Day is a personal opportunity for each one of us; that we are not merely repeating an old formula when we

sing: "Unto *us* a Child is born; unto *us* a Son is given." There is actually a definite outpouring of that divine force for each member of His Church, and the extent to which we can partake of it, the amount that we may gain from it, is limited only by our power to receive. Christ is unlimited, and His power overshines the whole world. What we each can gain from this is our affair; it is in our own hands. Let us open our hearts to the spirit of the Christ-Child, to the spirit of Christmas, and that Christ-Child will fill our hearts with His joy and His peace.

In addition to this, we must not lose sight of the fact that the preparation is made not by ourselves alone on the physical plane, for on all great festivals vaster crowds of Angels gather round our altars, and the outpouring is assuredly greater in consequence. Each Sunday Angels cluster round every celebration, for a certain section of that glorious Order has taken it as its specific task to dispense this force in connection with the Christian Church; but on such days as Christmas, Easter, Ascension Day or Pentecost, not only that section is in action, but for the moment almost all their Angel brethren concentrate themselves on this special branch of the work. Naturally that is true not of the Christian religion only, but of other religions as well; for example, on the great Wesak Festival of the Buddhists it may be said that almost the entire heavenly host is temporarily concentrated upon work in connection with that. So it will be seen that there is reason for the insistence of our Church on the importance of observing the ecclesiastical seasons, and reason also for the special request made

in the prayer-book of the Church of England that all its people shall communicate at least three times every year, of which Easter shall be one.

7. Finally, there is an aspect of Christmas as a season of rejoicing, apart from its religious side—if anything connected with it can ever be apart from that. This is the aspect which is so prominent in the works of Charles Dickens, who paints it always as the feast of good fellowship. The English-speaking world owes much to Dickens for the lessons he taught about Christmas.

It is a time of peace to men of goodwill, and surely at that time we all try to be men of goodwill; and it is remarkable how nearly a great many people succeed. It is a wonderful thing, this Christmas spirit, this real feeling of brotherhood that is spread abroad on that day. There is a greater goodwill, a greater kindness and comradeship, a truer brotherhood on Christmas Day than all the rest of the year. It should not be for Christmas only, of course; we should have that feeling always; but since we are overwhelmed by the noise and tumult of the world, since we cannot yet all of us feel that noble Christmas heartiness all the while, it is at least a good thing that there should be one day when all the world agrees to feel it, when every man tries to come as near as he can to the brotherhood which ought to exist all the year round. Assuredly it is well, too, that we should endeavour to impart our joy to others—that a goodly custom should have sprung up whereby on Christmas Day the poor and the needy are helped towards the realization of the great brotherhood of humanity, for our Christmas joy can be perfect only in so far as we share it with

others less fortunately circumstanced than ourselves.

So let Christmas enter into our hearts and into our souls, and let us try, everyone of us, to feel then what the Angels sang so long ago—first “glory to God in the highest,” and then no less “peace on earth and goodwill to all men.”

## CHAPTER III

### NEW YEAR'S DAY

There is no especial reason why January 1st should be chosen as the beginning of a year, but it is the day usually adopted by all the nations who have inherited the great Roman civilization. The Hindus and Buddhists choose quite a different day; and, in fact, one day may be taken just as well as another, because the earth is steadily moving in its orbit round the sun all the time, and in the endless line of that ellipse there is no reason to choose one point as a beginning more than any other—unless it were perhaps the aphelion, the point at which the earth, having reached its greatest distance from the sun, turns and begins its approach.

New Year's Day is not, strictly speaking, an ecclesiastical festival; for us in the Church Advent Sunday is the beginning of our year, and January 1st is merely what is called the octave of Christmas, for we do not commemorate the alleged circumcision. The outpouring of force in connection with some of our festivals is so great that we find that it cannot be adequately dealt with, and that full advantage cannot be taken of it, in one day; and so the Church has adopted the plan of devoting a week to such feasts. She carries on the celebration until the eighth day, which is called the octave, and any day during that week is described as within the octave.

In mediæval times all business stopped for each of the great ecclesiastical festivals, and the day was given up entirely to observing it in what was con-



sidered a proper manner. There are still a few countries in the world where this is done, but they are hardly in the forefront as far as material wealth and modern progress are concerned. Most nations are far too hurried, too material, too breathless in the excitement of the mad race after wealth, to stop their whole machinery at irregular intervals in this way; but they have grudgingly admitted the necessity of a weekly pause in their activities, which in Christian lands comes on Sunday; and it is often only on that day that people have leisure to attend a religious service. The plan of continuing the celebration of an important day for a week ensures that at least one Sunday shall occur within the sphere of its influence, so that an opportunity of sharing to some extent in its special downpouring shall be offered to every member of the Church. So on New Year's Day our thoughts are still turned to the great festival of Christmas, and all that it means to us.

Nevertheless, the Church is always ready to take up any occasion in civil life in which her people are rightly and innocently interested, and to give it her blessing. Therefore, on the first day of a new year we gather together in the house of God to pay Him worship, and to take part in the great Sacrament which He has ordained. Surely there is no better way to begin the new year than this. I know well that many people in our great cities have to work hard, that holidays are comparatively rare for them, and that when they get one they need rest, change and fresh air; yet for all that, I think they do well who gather in church to begin the new year by dedicating it to our Lord. It is well to spare a little time from our enjoyment in order that we may come

before Him and express our thankfulness for the past, our confidence for the future.

Most people who think at all seriously of the new year regard it as an occasion for the making of good resolutions—for a sort of mental and moral stock-taking; they look back upon their resolves at the beginning of the previous year, and usually have to note with regret that there has been a certain gap between promise and performance. Such contemplation is no doubt salutary; but it is useless to waste time in vain lamentation or repentance. Note the error by all means, but do not worry over it; one of our great Masters has said that the only repentance which is worth anything at all is the resolve not to do it again.

In making our resolutions for the new year we as Liberal Catholics (and therefore, I hope, earnest students of the divine plan) must inevitably fix our eyes upon the final goal that is set before us. We all know that it is our duty to progress; we know that we are intended to grow better as we grow older. There is a mighty scheme of evolution of which we are a part. We all came forth from God, and to God we must all return. People sometimes wonder why, if that be so, all this striving for development is necessary; if we were divine in the beginning, can we be more than divine at the end? Is there any real progress? There is, for we came forth from God, as it were, a nebosity; we came forth from Him mere sparks—albeit divine sparks; we have to return to Him as great and glorious lights, as veritable suns radiating His glory on all around us, shedding help and blessing on those who come in our way. We go back again to the same

God from Whom we came forth, but we return to Him at an infinitely higher level.

If we could imagine (it may be true for anything we know) any scheme by which each cell in our body could personally evolve and become a man—become the soul of a man—we should not say that in attaining humanity that cell had made no progress, because it had been a human cell to start with. We should feel that it had made the most astounding, the most enormous progress. That is only an analogy, and a rough one; but there is a certain amount of truth in it, for there is quite that much of difference between what we have been and what we shall be, and we may well have been cells in some divine garment in some embodiment or manifestation.

To Him we must return verily as gods ourselves. The object of the whole of this strange and mighty evolution was expressed by the Gnostics in this way: "God," they said, "is Love; but love itself cannot be made perfect unless there are those upon whom it can be lavished, and by whom it may be returned; therefore God Himself can express Himself more fully, more perfectly, when we rise to the Divine, when He can pour out the splendid flood of His love upon us, and we in our smaller way can definitely, clearly return it."

Our progress is a necessity to the perfection of the evolution of this great system of which we form a part; therefore we ought definitely to be making some advancement both in knowledge and in character each year as it goes by. Most of us are business people, and our time is fully occupied; but we must not for a moment think that because of that

there is no opportunity for us to evolve. In the course of that business we are constantly meeting various people, and our attitude towards them is of the greatest importance. We can treat them well, kindly, gently and good-naturedly, or we can treat them otherwise—carelessly, selfishly, without due regard to their rights and feelings. It is certain that as we do one or the other, so shall we ourselves improve or deteriorate, as the case may be. It is in daily life that we have the greatest opportunity of changing our character. Many a man has confessed to me that he has a bad temper, regretting it, but regarding it apparently as a fact in nature which he could not alter. He seemed to think of it as some kind of dangerous animal which he had to keep and make the best he could of it. No doubt there are men who have a bad temper, who are readily irritable; but that is not because it is natural to man to have a bad temper, but because in their case the astral or emotional body likes excitement and disturbance, and is quite willing to take it in that way. That astral body has a life of its own, and for its own purposes it eggs the man on to irritability. Not that it is malignant, and wants to harm him; it is doubtful whether it even knows of his existence; but because it desires to stir up its surroundings in order that it may have the pleasurable excitement of rapid and stormy vibrations. If we find that we are irritable, it means that in past lives we have yielded ourselves to this emotion; we have not stood strongly against it and realized that it was our business to control it. It is never too late to change, however; because in other lives we did not quite understand our power to dominate the emotion, the

thing has a certain hold (perhaps a very strong hold) on us; but there is no reason why we should not at once begin to try to grip it.

We shall have to do it some time or other, for until we have done so we can never attain that which God means us to attain. If we have cultivated a certain habit (a bad habit, perhaps) for the last twenty thousand years or so during several past lives, it will take some time to break that habit, because of the impetus behind it. Yet we should go to work at it at once. We may fail; we may fall a hundred times, but we should remember that there is exactly the same reason for getting up and going on at the end of the hundredth failure as there was at the beginning. Since the reason remains exactly the same, as sensible people we must get up and go on. It is useless to sit down and say that we have tried so many times, and we cannot do it. We *have* to do it; others have done it, and so can we; it is simply a question of determination and perseverance.

Let me explain why it is certain that we can succeed in the end. However much force a habit has generated, it *must* be a finite amount of force. Though it has had a long time in which to gain that strength, it cannot have gained an infinite amount. What we have to fight, therefore, is a certain definite amount of force. We do not know how much of it remains; there may still be a good deal left, or our efforts to conquer it may have so far reduced it that we may be on the very brink of success. We are in the position of a person trying to dig his way out of prison—he never knows at what moment the last stroke of his pick may open out the way for

him and give him the promise of freedom, but he knows that that moment must come if he goes on long enough. This conquest of evil is perfectly possible. It can be done, and it will be done. It is only a question of how long we are going to let it take us.

What resolutions then shall we set before ourselves for the new year? It seems a suggestive fact that, as I have already said, New Year's Day is the octave of Christmas; so *one* resolution might well be that we will try to carry on through the whole of the year the Christmas spirit.

If during Christmas we have been more kindly, more ready to help, more friendly, more ready to see the best and not the worst in everything, let us go on taking the same attitude all the year around. Let us have the same feelings, the same uplifting, the same realization. I think it often seems to us that we are quite willing to be brotherly, but that other men will not meet us half-way. If we find that so, it does not alter *our* duty; it takes two people to make a quarrel, so we should continue our brotherly feeling; if the other poor man does not understand and return it, that is exclusively his business. It is unfortunate for him, but really it does not harm us, as we shall see if we only think clearly about it.

We should always remember that no harm can come to us except from ourselves. Other people may say offensive things to us or about us; they may attack us in various ways; but, after all, that need not make any difference to our feelings unless we like to let it. What are words? Only vibrations of the air. If we never heard of what the other man

has said, we should not be in the least disturbed about it; but because we happen to hear of it, we excite ourselves unduly and feel offended and hurt. Think of the facts as they really are. Somebody slanders you; he has acted the devil's part, for the devil is the accuser of the brethren; he has spewed forth his drop of venom, and done his filthy little best to poison God's sweet air; but if you hear nothing of it you go serenely on your way; his despicable crime leaves you entirely unaffected. But if you hear of the falsehood you are disturbed. The villain has done no more now than he had before, when you were quite at ease; the change is in yourself, and the mistake you have made is that you allow yourself to mind—to remember and to brood over a foul thing which should be forgotten.

The Lord Buddha taught that Right Memory is one of the steps of the Noble Eightfold Path which leads to bliss. Each of these steps has many interpretations at different levels of thought; but of this one the straightforward meaning is that we should know what to remember and what to forget. The theory is that one should be able to control one's memory—to remember that which is pleasant and useful, and to forget that which is useless and undesirable. Really to forget; to let it be just as though the wicked libel had never been spoken, or as though we had never heard it. That is a hard thing to do—not because the real self, the soul, wishes to remember such an abomination, but because the astral body, one of the vehicles we are supposed to have controlled, likes a little excitement and tries to keep a stormy atmosphere. We must recognize that fact, look down calmly on that restive vehicle, and say:

“No, I shall not allow you to upset my arrangements. I intend to keep the New Year as free from your little interferences as I can. I decline to be annoyed because an ignorant man has made atrocious and foolish statements.” Ignorant men are always making foolish statements all the world over, and it does not matter in the least—except to them, for it makes exceedingly evil karma for them.

Let us make this New Year one long Christmas, so that the Christ may truly be born in our hearts, so that we may never again feel un-Christlike. That is a high ideal to set before us, and of course sometimes we shall forget. But let us go on again and persevere until we can do it. It is supposed to be a characteristic of our race that we stick doggedly to anything we have undertaken until we carry it through. Let us show that character in religion as well as in the battle-field, in sport, and in commerce. Let us show it in the real life that lies behind, as well as in that of the outer world.

Through the year which is opening before us let us earnestly try to take everything in the happiest and kindest spirit—to have no quarrels, to take no offence, to make it a year of true brotherliness. The majority of people in the present day live in an atmosphere of perpetual misunderstanding of others, because they are always attributing motives to people for what they do and say. It is a great mistake to go through life supposing that all those round us are constantly thinking of *us*, and that everything which they do or say is definitely calculated in some way with relation to us. The fact is quite different; each person is usually looking upon his surroundings from his



*own* point of view, and his thoughts, words and actions are likely to be, if not exactly selfish, at any rate self-centred. Wherefore, in attributing motives to him, we often do him grievous wrong; and we do it because of the fact that we have cultivated the discriminating mind at the expense of the sympathizing and synthesizing sense, the intuitive wisdom. The discriminating intellect is a fine thing in its way, and I am not suggesting that we have too much of it, or should fail to develop it; but we often miscalculate its scope, and so exaggerate its value that we leave no room for faculties unquestionably higher.

Let us then make it our rule to watch for points of agreement rather than of disagreement, to look for pearls rather than for flaws; to try to find in our brethren qualities which we like, rather than to overemphasize those which we happen to dislike. Let us make each year a year of fraternity, of sympathy and of mutual understanding, for in doing that we shall go far towards ensuring that it shall be a happy year, not only for ourselves, but for others around us.

There seems even more than the usual need for such resolutions at this period of the world's history. Four New Years have recently passed in which we felt but little joy, for we were in the throes of a great world-war, and there was not much to encourage our firm faith that all in the end must be well. There were those of us who knew what the end would be, but to those who did not know the outlook must often have seemed dark and uncertain. Suddenly, dramatically, came the end of that strife; that alone is something for which we may well be thankful, and when we see what happened, then

we surely have good reason not only for thankfulness to our Lord, but for confidence in Him that the future also shall go well; that though sometimes dark clouds may rise, yet the sunlight of His glory will in the end always triumph over them, and progress will be made, because that is His will, and in the long run His will is done on earth even as it is in heaven. So we have good reason to look forward with confidence and with happiness.

Yet remember, if a glorious victory was won, if we received in that way great encouragement, a serious responsibility was thereby thrown upon us. There is to-day an unequalled opportunity for rearrangement in many different ways. These years immediately before us begin a new age—an age, I hope, in which men will learn to be less petty and less selfish, to take a wider view, to act not for self alone (nor even for that magnified self which is called a union, a body of people all belonging to one trade or one business) but for the community as a whole; not for one class or party, but for all.

Much of the success of that future, much of the extent to which men take this opportunity that comes before us, will depend upon the way in which we think and speak and act. Perhaps few of us have any direct influence; that is in the hands of politicians and party leaders. But those people, after all, are chosen by us among others. We have something to say in the matter, and we can use our influence, not only by vote but by word and by deed, by persuasion and by example. We can learn unselfishness for ourselves, and the very fact that we live it (so far as we can) as well as preach it, will give our words great weight with those

around us. Every one of us has someone who looks up to him or to her—someone who takes note of what he or she says or does. Whatever influence we have, let us most certainly try during these years of reconstruction to use it on the side of brotherhood, to use it for mutual understanding and mutual esteem.

There are thousands of different points of view; there are people whose ideas, on almost any subject of which we can think, are quite different from our own. The natural instinct of humanity seems to be to distrust such people and to dislike them; and with the ignorant and the uneducated such a feeling of mistrust and dislike often absolutely increases into hate. Thus arises the horrible thing we call class-consciousness, when one class is set in mad, indiscriminating prejudice against another class. We cannot doubt that there has been reason in the past for one class to distrust the other; history shows it. Each has been selfish, each has worked only for itself. Let us try how far it may be possible now to co-operate, and to induce others to work towards co-operation.

The system of disunion, the system of perpetual quarrelling and misunderstanding and suspicion has been tried through centuries, and it has not been a conspicuous success. Let us try now the plan of trusting one another a little more—of giving every man credit for the good intention which we know that we ourselves have. Every man means well on the whole; he thinks first of himself certainly—though often it is of the wife and the children as well as himself—but if facts are put before him he is usually willing to act sensibly and reasonably. In many cases the facts are *not* put before him; he

gets only a distortion of the truth, and because of that he acquires a strong conviction that everyone is setting his hand against him, or is trying to put upon him in some way or other, and the result is that out of all this confusion, suspicion and hatred are born, and agreement becomes almost impossible.

Let us strive, so far as we can, towards unity and mutual progress. If only men understood one another there would be few differences of this savage nature. Of course, as now, there would be plenty of differences of *opinion*, but not differences leading to distrust. A great Frenchman once said: "Tout comprendre, c'est tout pardonner." "To understand all is to forgive all." We see a man doing something which to us seems very dreadful, utterly improper, dangerous perhaps to ourselves or to others. If we understood exactly *why* that man did that thing, if we could see the action as he sees it, we might not in the least agree with him, but at least we should understand him, and we should forgive him. It is because we will not take the trouble to understand one another that so much suffering comes in this world. If each one would try to put himself in the other man's place, as indeed a brother should do, then we should be able to make allowance. We might still differ from him, but we should meet and discuss matters with him in a totally different spirit--in a spirit which would make compromise possible; in a spirit which would enable us to arrive at some understanding, to have some mutual comprehension, so that we could live together as brothers, not as ravenous animals trying to tear one another.

Let that be one of our New Year thoughts—brotherly love and mutual comprehension. Let us try to understand; then we shall be able to forgive, and often to help. There is a story told in one of the old Jewish books that Abraham once, when camping in the desert, was accosted late at night by an old man who asked him for shelter and food. Of course he at once received him, as men do in those primitive countries, but when they came to sit down to meat, the stranger declined to join with him in his little grace, his little thanksgiving to God; and Abraham, rising angrily, drove the man forth without food or rest, saying that he would not have in his tent one who disbelieved in God. But that same night God came in a vision to Abraham, and said: "Where is the stranger whom I sent to be your guest?" And Abraham replied in confusion: "Lord, he believed not in Thee; he refused to give thanks; so I drove him out into the night." But God said: "I have borne with that man for seventy years; couldest not thou bear with him for one night?" God bears with us all, because He understands us all. We cannot understand as He does as yet, but at least we can try; and be very sure that the nearer we come to understanding and making allowance, the nearer we come to Him and to His Spirit.

So let each new year which opens before us be one of brotherly love and of mutual understanding. Let us learn to co-operate with other people, and we shall already have achieved a long step on the way to the final unity. Only in that way can we hope for truly happy New Years; not years without any sorrow, without any passing cloud, for that

cannot be, nor indeed would such perhaps be truly happy years for us; but years in which we shall draw ever nearer to God, Who gives us these opportunities.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE EPIPHANY

This Feast of the Epiphany is one of the most picturesque in the Christian year. It is in the description of the event commemorated by it that the words first occur which are so well-known to us all: "We have seen His Star in the East and are come to worship Him." The story is but briefly told in the gospel; we hear simply that there came Wise Men from the East to Jerusalem asking where that child was to be born who was to be the King of the Jews. Since the Jewish prophets had selected for the birth of the Messiah the town of Bethlehem, the Wise Men were directed to go there; and it is said that on the way the Star, which had led them from their distant homes, again appeared to them and indicated the stable-cave in which the child Jesus was lying. And so these Wise Men went in and worshipped the Child, and offered to Him gold and frankincense and myrrh. But meantime Herod, who for the moment held the position of king of the Jews, was somewhat disturbed to hear of another claimant to that office; and so when the Wise Men did not return to describe their adventures, he sent down soldiers to Bethlehem, and tried to ensure the removal of his prospective rival by killing all the children under the age of two. Meantime the Wise Men had been warned in a dream to avoid him, and in the same way Joseph and Mary had been warned to remove the Child out of his reach.

This story, so simply told in the gospel, becomes far more gorgeous, though perhaps less credible, in ancient ecclesiastical tradition. The word "Magi" or Wise Men means what we should now call students of the inner side of things, and this would certainly in those days have included astrology; so in that way their extreme interest in an unusual star is readily explained. According to the tradition these were not merely men of learning, but kings, each ruling in his own country. The legend is not precise as to the location of the countries; but the names of the three kings are given as Melchior, Balthasar and Gaspar, and it is the universal tradition that the third was a black man—a negro from Africa. The suggestion seems to be that Melchior and Balthasar were rulers of Arabian states; but however that may be, it is stated that each king in his own place saw this strange new Star, and decided to set out upon a journey to see what it might mean.

According to this legend it was only as they approached Jerusalem, each with his own retinue, that the three kings met; and it is suggested that the arrival of these parties, all in warlike array, created much doubt and excitement, and that Herod sent out an embassy, as they drew near the city, to ask their intentions. Then, so says the story, having received the answer to their question, the three kings went together to Bethlehem with only a few personal attendants, leaving their greater retinues encamped near Jerusalem; and each of them carried many costly gifts to offer to the new-born King. But when they reached the cave and saw the little Child, it is said that they were so tremendously



impressed by the magnetism which they felt, that they were altogether overcome with awe, and instead of offering the great store of gifts which they had brought, each took from his attendant whatever came nearest to hand, laid it at the Child's feet and retired with precipitation. And so it happened that Melchior presented a golden cup—fabled, naturally enough, to have been preserved by the Blessed Virgin Mary and used by the Christ Himself at the foundation of the Holy Eucharist—while Balthasar offered a golden box containing rare incense, and Gaspar a curiously-chased flask containing myrrh.

The Church has always mystically interpreted these gifts, saying that the gold showed that the Child was a King, that the offering of incense denoted His Godhead, and that the myrrh, being one of the spices especially used for sepulture, was a kind of prophecy in symbol of the death which He was presently to die. The legend puts a strange interpretation on the remark in the gospel narrative that the three kings returned to their country by another way; for it is said that the Star appeared to them at the exact moment of the birth of Jesus, and yet that they arrived at Bethlehem only twelve days later. That is explained by the statement that their way was in some manner miraculously smoothed for them, and that when after their visit they undertook to return, they found that their journey occupied many days longer than they had taken in coming. Each, so the old story tells us, was profoundly and permanently affected by what he had seen; they all agreed together to resign their respective kingdoms, and to devote themselves entirely to the religious life. The legend makes

them travel together through many countries of the then known world, and they are supposed eventually to have died at the city of Cologne, where their tomb is still shown.

What foundation there may be for this strange old story it is impossible now to say; but at least it has something of antique beauty, and it is not without interest for us to know how this day was regarded in the Middle Ages. We cannot guarantee it as history, but as a symbol it is unexceptionable; for those who are the true Wise Men, those who are the true kings among the souls of men, always recognize a great Teacher when He comes; they know Him and they come and worship Him, and they offer all that they have, to help Him in the work which He comes to do.

Whether they were kings or not, it is at least certain that the Wise Men were not Jews; and so this day has always been regarded by the Church as the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles—the first symbol appearing in the life of the Child Jesus to show that His mission was not to His own people alone, but to the world at large. The World-Teacher justified His title and His position even thus in the very beginning of His life there in Judæa; and we can well understand that that may have been necessary. For I suppose there was never a more exclusive race than the Jews; and since He Who was born was of the seed of David, from which they hoped, many of them, that their promised Messiah would come, they would have claimed to keep Him entirely for themselves, had there not been a clear and decided indication that He came not for them only, but for

the world. He never hesitated Himself to say that later on in His life, but it is at least significant and beautiful that it should thus have been indicated at its beginning—that those who were not Jews should share in His worship even so early in His life as this.

Unfortunately Christianity has inherited a great deal from the Jews. They are a wonderful race. I should be the last to seek to depreciate them and their general influence in the world in any way whatever, but the Jew of to-day is not by any means the same man as the Jew of the time of the Christ. That race, like all other races in the world, has risen from a primitive beginning to its present state of civilization. Every nation has done that; we ourselves, the English race, are in the habit of thinking ourselves at least as good as any other, but we, too, began at quite a low level. Our ancestors were not a highly evolved race; no doubt they had their own advantages and peculiarities, but they were certainly not advanced. Other races mingled with them to make this strange mixture which we now call English. Along with this Keltic race came the Saxons, the Angles, the Jutes from the mainland, but none of them were highly civilized. We hear of them roasting oxen whole and tearing them to pieces with their hands, and drinking mightily therewith. They were not a race of which to be proud. They had certain barbaric virtues; they were brave beyond all doubt; and it is said that they treated women well when they were not slaves. Into that Anglo-Saxon Keltic mixture came the Norman race, and that was somewhat more civilized before it joined the rest; but

still if we read any romance of mediæval times, we shall find that there was much to be desired in the culture of our country.

That is the way with every race in the world. The great Roman race that was so justly proud of itself arose from a small Latin tribe; so we need not hesitate to admit that the same was true of the Jews. The Jews in their early days were distinctly a barbarous tribe. We have only to read their scriptures, which contain their history, to see that. We shall find them committing terrible crimes, wholesale massacres, numerous blood-sacrifices—all sorts of horrible things were done by them, and according to their account approved by their deity, which shows that they were dealing with a tribal god, and not a great deity at all.

Certain characteristics of the Jews were intensely stamped upon them, and that idea of being a chosen people of God was one of the strongest. That is one of the things which the Christians have inherited from them, and it has been decidedly unfortunate. If we could only have accepted the Christ as the Founder of His religion and not gone back into Judaism, but taken His teachings, we should have done much better all through the ages. We should then have put aside all those ideas of a jealous God, a cruel God, a God who persecuted people to the third or fourth generation if they happened to do something which did not please Him. Christ spoke very differently; He taught us of a loving Father, and prayed that we should all be one in Him even as He was one with the Father; He did not talk of jealousy and cruelty and horror.

The Jews were intensely self-centred and thought that there was no salvation outside their own body. The evangelists sometimes put words into Christ's mouth which seem as narrow as their own ideas, for remember they also were mostly Jews. We do not know so much about Luke, but we know that Matthew, Mark and John were Jews at any rate. The speech about taking the children's bread and casting it to dogs is hardly what a World-Saviour would have said. But we can see the true attitude of the Christ peeping out in various ways, even in what is attributed to Him in the gospel. Remember how He says: "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold"—not Jews at all, not people following Him in that incarnation—"but them also will I bring, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd." Many times He spoke of all mankind, and not of the Jews only.

Christianity as a whole has not taken the teaching of Christ as He gave it; Christianity, as it exists to-day, is much more the work of St. Paul than the work of Jesus. That may sound rather strange in the ears of many, but not, I am sure, to those who have really studied the matter. All the complicated theology, all the difficult questions that they have argued about so much in Church Councils, all those can be traced to St. Paul. It was not the sayings of the Christ that made the mystery and the trouble; He taught a perfectly straightforward religion, and what He said, if we took that by itself, would not justify a great deal of what we find in theology at the present day.

It is not for us to say that St. Paul was wrong in the line that he took. But at least where he

appears to differ from what the Christ said, it is open to us to follow the teaching of the Christ rather than that of St. Paul. The latter, however, was not born in the Holy Land, but at Tarsus, and he was a Roman citizen by family right, so he was not so thoroughly imbued with the Jewish tradition as St. Peter. We find them sometimes debating acrimoniously (not to say quarrelling) about various points as to whether the Jewish laws should be enforced upon all the Christian converts. The more conservative among the apostles were gradually driven from that position, and they had to let in outsiders, and to acknowledge that the teaching of Christ was intended for all; but they came to that only by slow degrees.

In Christianity we have still a strong touch of that old Jewish idea. We do not make it a question of nationality now. We do not venture to say that only English people can be saved, or only French, or only Italians; but many are still apt to suppose that only Christians can be saved, and they base that silly idea upon one or two texts which they misread. It is said more than once that only through the Name of Christ can men be saved; that men must come through Him. He Himself is represented to have said: "No man cometh to the Father but by me." But these people do not understand that the great Christ-idea is a complex thing, and that it does not always mean the Teacher Christ Jesus (the Christ using the body of the disciple Jesus), but sometimes the still greater Christ, the Son of God, the Second Person of the Ever-blessed Trinity.

It is absolutely true that a man may become one with the Almighty Father only by first becoming one with the Christ within the human heart, for Christ in you is the hope of glory, and there is no other hope of glory for anyone but to arouse, to awaken, the Christ-principle within himself, to become one with that, and through that to rise to the great Father of all. Certainly through Christ alone can man escape from the round of birth and death, and reach the level where he is one with God Himself. That is most true, but it does not mean, as is often supposed, that his worship must be addressed to God only through the name of the exoteric Jesus Christ.

Men do not always understand that in those old days the *name* was the *power*; to call rightly upon the *name* of any Deity was to invoke the power of that Deity, and so it was through the power of the Christ within that a man could reach the highest, and through that alone. It did not mean that he must walk along this particular earthly path, and label himself a Christian. We use the word "Christ"; a Frenchman or an Italian would pronounce that name differently. Do you suppose that he would be any the further from salvation because he so pronounced that name? Do you suppose that because he called God by some other title, God would refuse to answer? Would you refuse to answer the appeal of your little child because he could not pronounce your name? Hardly. Then why should we think of God as so much worse than ourselves? All true devotion comes to God by whatever name people call Him. Some call Him *le bon Dieu*, some say Shiva, some Brahma or Allah, some call Him

Ahuramazda. What does it matter? The prayers that are said will reach God; the name that is employed is but a form of words. It is a great pity that we have inherited this idea that we as Christians (not a nation, this time, but a religion) are those chosen to be saved—that all the rest are outsiders left at the best to the uncovenanted mercies of God. That is a form of expression which means that the person using it is very doubtful whether they will find any mercy at all.

There is no need to take that uncharitable attitude. Even St. Paul, who was supposed to be so rigid, was not so bigoted as many modern Christians are. This is shown by the special formula (I am not now speaking of Church history, but rather of the result of clairvoyant investigation) with which he prefaced his epistles. It remains to us now in only one of them, the Epistle to the Hebrews, and all commentators and biblical students are quite sure that that is the one epistle which St. Paul did *not* write! He began it with a rather remarkable phrase. "God, Who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto our fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son." There are two or three points to be noted there. We must cast aside the illusion, if it still persists with any of us, that Christ spoke English; He did not. He spoke what is called the *Koine*, the dialect of Greek spoken by the common people; not Aramaic, though He must also have known that, but this dialect, somewhat broken-down, as compared with the classical Greek. Only recently they have found a large number of new manuscripts in that dialect. Until then the New Testament was



thought to be the only book written in it, but now we know that it was the common language of a vast number of people. Of course He used the idioms of the time, and we must ascertain the exact meaning of the words, and not blindly follow those who, before it was known that this was the common language, twisted His words to fit preconceived dogmas.

“God hath spoken by the prophets” has been taken to refer only to the Jewish prophets, those lugubrious gentlemen who were always inveighing against the Jews. Possibly those poor Jews deserved all the dreadful things that were said of them, but at any rate it does not make pleasant or helpful reading in the present day. There are magnificent passages in the Old Testament, but there are also passages which later editors might have omitted without any serious loss. The word *prophetai* in Greek does not mean only what we now mean by prophets. Anyone who speaks forth or preaches is called a prophet. When the soldiers said in mockery to the Christ, “Prophecy,” they did not ask Him to foretell future events; they meant “Give us a speech.” The verb from which it is derived means to speak out aloud as well as to foretell the future; so *prophetai* is equivalent to preachers and nothing more. St. Paul undoubtedly meant: “God in times past has spoken to our ancestors in many ways and at many different times by other preachers, and now in these days He has spoken unto us by His Son”—by One Who is a special manifestation of the divine power. Those preachers by whom God had spoken in the past were the Lord Buddha, Vyasa, Zoroaster, Thoth, Orpheus—all the great men who

had founded religions. They, too, were all manifestations of the same mighty Teacher; they too were messengers of God, at those other times and to those to whom they were sent.

Mankind differs, happily; it would be a poor world if we were all alike. In successive stages of evolution, and in various countries, men have differed very widely. To each of those types and classes of men appropriate religions have been preached, each by its own preacher; but all religions point to the same rule. They all teach to men exactly the same life. They differ in the names that they apply to things; but we must learn that names are external labels and do not matter. All alike tell us that the good man is the unselfish, the charitable, the kindly, the gentle; all alike tell us that offences against others, murder, stealing, outrages of any sort upon another are the most terrible crimes. Their teaching is identical, but they put it in a different form according to what is most needed at the time. And so even St. Paul tells us that God has spoken many times to our fathers, who assuredly were Gentiles and not Jews, and now in these last days He has spoken to us through this special manifestation which we call His Son.

Christianity is one of the great paths up the mountain of light at the summit of which sits God Himself. It is one of the paths, but only one, and if we have a number of people all round the base of the mountain, the shortest path to the top for each man is the path which opens before him. It would be foolish to have the idea that we must go and drag a man all round the base of the mountain in order to make him walk up our particular path.

Our efforts to convert people from other religions and modes of worship are unnecessary and presumptuous. The effort to bring to the knowledge of God people who are ignorant of His ways is a grand and noble action; that we should by deed as well as by word preach our belief that there is a God, and that to live as He would have men live is the only sure way to comfort and peace—that is a noble work; but to try to convert a man who is already good along his own line in order to make him good along ours is not a sensible thing to do.

If members of other religions acted as many of our people do, and tried to make us worship as they do, we should say: "What is the use of this? We have our own ways of worship; why should we leave them to take up this other?" Can we not see that they might say exactly the same to us? It is all the result of this mad idea that our way is the only way, that our presentation is the best possible presentation. It may be the best for us; but why cannot we realize that the presentation which the same God has put before them may be the best for them? It was God and none other that decreed that these men should be born as Buddhists and Hindus, while He gave to us Christian bodies. How comes it that we are here and they there? It is by the great law which is the expression of God's will. So let each man be fully persuaded in his own mind; but let each man go his own way, and not try to interfere with those of others. All paths lead to the top, so long as the same good life is led.

It does not matter in what words a man expresses his belief, assuredly he shall attain. That is the great lesson, I think, of this manifestation of Christ

to the Gentiles; the Gentiles merely meaning foreigners, those who are not Jews. Let us then realize strongly that there are many ways; that it is not for us to say that one way is better than the other. No doubt it seems so to us, but it is not necessarily so for the other man; and that is true not only of the great religions, but even of sects as well.

There are three hundred Christian sects and more. They are all from God. We see the advantages of our particular method, because we have constantly experienced its help. We of the Liberal Catholic Church, for instance, partake of the Holy Sacrament and feel the splendid outpouring of love and strength that we receive in this way, and we think: "No one who does not take this or feel this can get on nearly so well in religion." That is true for ourselves; but we must try to realize that many of these other people may stand on a different line, and what appeals so strongly to us may not appeal to a Methodist, for example. Let each man go his own way; let us by all means recommend ours to him, since we find it so beautiful, but in thus recommending it we must always be utterly charitable inside as well as outside. We must not only say in words: "I think your plan is probably as good as mine, but it differs"; we must really *feel* inside ourselves that every man has his own way, and it is not for us to take him out of his way and put him into another. We must not have the slightest feeling that he is not quite up to our level, which I think we are a little apt to feel if we are not careful. Each man can be helped on his own line; Jew or Gentile, what matters it? High Church,

Low Church, we are all trying to serve God each in his own way, and that is what we have to learn. We have all sorts of beautiful feelings within us; let us give the other man credit for having the same in his own way. So shall we all, through our recognition of the Fatherhood of God, come to feel as true brothers to all our fellowmen, and that is the great end and aim of it all, that we may be one in Christ, whatever we may call Him, as He is one with the Father.

We know that the Star in the East, whose shining we celebrate at the Epiphany, has been taken as its standard and symbol by a world-wide Society called the Order of the Star in the East, to which I have already referred—an Order which especially asks those who join it to devote themselves to the endeavour to fit themselves for the second Coming of the Christ, that they may know Him when He comes and be ready to offer Him service. This Order was not founded actually upon this festival, but five days later, on January 11th; but on this anniversary we may well bear it in mind. The business of its members is also to try, so far as may be, to prepare others too, to induce some people at least in the midst of all the turmoil and confusion of the world to pay attention to this second Coming, which we hold will not be long delayed. Therefore it is indeed well that we should think of it. Those of us who are keenly interested may well join this Order which exists to prepare His way. It has branches in every country in the world; it publishes many pamphlets and books, a list of which can be obtained from its Headquarters, 314 Regent Street, London, W. But whether we join it or not,

at any rate let us think clearly and definitely of what we shall do when He shall come.

Let us take to heart the lesson of the Star. All through Advent we were preparing ourselves worthily to celebrate the birth of the Christ-Child, and this culminated at Christmas, when we thought of all that that birth has meant to us, and expressed our devoutest thankfulness for it in all its various significations. Now this great festival, which comes just twelve days later, is intended to indicate to us the translation of all that joy into action. We have prepared for the Coming: we have celebrated it; now what have we to do with regard to it? How can we share this joy with our fellowmen? The three kings were the first Christian preachers; the first to go forth and proclaim to the world the birth of the new-born King—King not of provinces and of armies, but of the hearts and souls of men. The legend tells us that they gave up all in order to preach His Coming. We, in these days, are not called upon to make so great a sacrifice, yet surely all the more should we devote whatever time and energy we can spare to trying to spread the good news. Let no mere worldly business, no worldly work or ambition come between us and the Lord Who shall come suddenly to His Temple. Let us be ready to recognize Him and follow Him, even as did the Wise Men of old, and let us offer to Him most heartily and thoroughly the gold of our love, the frankincense of our worship, and the myrrh of our self-sacrifice. So shall we repeat those gifts of old at a higher and a spiritual level; so will the Star shine not in vain for those of us who have qualified themselves to recognize His Coming.

It may be very soon, so it would be unwise to delay our preparation. There were many before who knew nothing of His Coming; all the great kings of the earth, all the rich men, all the most intellectual people of Greece, of Rome and of Egypt paid no attention to Him at all. His immediate followers, if we are to believe the story, were a few poor fishermen, and others like them, but none of any distinction, none of great learning, none of high position. Shall that be the same this time? We do not know, but at least let us put ourselves in the attitude in which we shall recognize Him. Before, there was one forerunner to proclaim His Coming; this time there should be many thousands of us who try to prepare the way of the Lord and make His paths straight. There surely can be no nobler message than that; there can be nothing more beautiful for us to put before the world.

It has sometimes been objected: "Suppose after all we should be misleading people; suppose He should decide not to come as yet." Well, even then, have you done any harm by trying to prepare people for His Coming? If it should be that, for some reason known only in the counsels of the Most High, He should postpone His Coming, to have prepared ourselves to receive Him is still a great and noble work. We shall be better and not worse for having tried to put ourselves in the attitude of receptivity to that mighty influence, and no harm can possibly be done by such preparation; whereas if He should come and find us unready, should we ever cease to regret it through all the centuries yet to come?

He Himself said that before He came again there would be much confusion and much trouble in the world—that many should run to and fro, and that there should be false Christs rising up everywhere. So it may well be that there will be many who do not recognize and follow Him when He shall come. Indeed, it is certain that there will be some who in His own name will refuse to listen to Him. They will say: “Christ came once two thousand years ago; we follow the teaching which He gave us then. We cannot be led aside from that by any other teaching.” And so in His own name, and out of a certain kind of loyalty to Him, they will fail to recognize Him when He shall come again.

Let that not be so with us. As the Star arose in the sky, and led those three kings to Bethlehem, so is there a Star which shines before all who will see it even now, though it be no longer a physical phenomenon. If that Star were truly visible in the sky two thousand years ago, millions must have seen it, but only three understood and followed it. There is no information given in the story as to whether they alone were favoured by that sight. We cannot say; but at least it is sure that, for all those whose inner eyes are opened, there are clear indications now of the near Coming of the same great World-Teacher once more. We might truly say, as He is reported to have said when He addressed the Jews: “There be many standing here who shall not taste death until they see the Lord Christ.” Whether He really said that or not we cannot say; it seems improbable, for surely He must have known. But now, at least, the signs are clear; now it seems that the time is drawing near. Let



us be ready for it; let us be prepared to receive that greater Epiphany of the Christ. Let us be among those Wise Men who have watched for His Coming, who recognize Him when He does come and are prepared to lay at His feet the gifts of their love and devotion and service. We have indeed a gospel to preach, just as truly as the Wise Men of old. Let us see to it that we do not lose the wonderful opportunity that has been offered to us—that we do not fall short in the performance of an obvious duty.

It is not for me to prescribe what each shall do; each man will do what he can in his own way. But at least let each one see to it that he is definitely doing *something*. There are many ways in which work may be done for the Star, but this much is clear, that whatever else we may be able to do for it in the way of active work, we at least owe it this duty—that we should *live* for it. We who preach the Star to others must assuredly show forth its influence in our daily life, its wisdom, its strength, its joy, its peace, its freedom and its lovingkindness.\* We who love the Star should ourselves be as stars to help to illumine the world in which we move; we must try, each according to his capacity, to shine and to show forth in purity, in gentleness, and in steadfastness the light that is within us. So this day is linked with those that have preceded it, for we cannot better show forth the glory of the Star than by perpetuating, all through the year that lies before us, the very attitude of kindness and brotherliness upon which we have already resolved. On the day of the Star let its glory shine about us,

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\* See *Starlight*, by C. W. Leadbeater

and let us ever remember that it is with it, as with all other good things—that only in the proportion in which we can share it with our fellows shall we receive its fullest blessing.

## CHAPTER V

### THE BAPTISM OF OUR LORD

We have chosen January 15th for the celebration of the Baptism of our Lord. It is not that we know it in any way to be the anniversary of that occasion, for the Church has lost the exact date, so far as we are aware. The gospel account of that Baptism tells us that Jesus Himself came to His forerunner, John the Baptist, and asked for this rite to be administered to Him. John not unnaturally objected in his humility, and said: "I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me?" That is to say: "Thou art much greater and more highly developed than I, why dost Thou want to be baptized by me?" And Jesus said: "Suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." And so He accepted the sacrament. What He meant evidently was: "This is a mark of a certain stage. In this birth of mine I also must fulfil the law—the normal course of all those who try to reach the higher levels—and therefore I, though I be in truth beyond all this, in the outer world must fulfil all righteousness. I must pass through all these stages just as anyone else." Just so, if the greatest of saints came back to earth and was reborn, would he pass through all the sacraments of the Church, through baptism and confirmation, though he might be far beyond what they ordinarily mean or symbolize to us.

So Jesus passed through this, and therefore as a perfect example showed us that we also should pass

through all the prescribed rites, no matter whether we feel ourselves to be beyond what they can give. It is easy for a man to deceive himself; there have been those who have said: "I do not need any outer sacrament; I can receive no benefit from such things." It may be so, for we all know that any man may draw near to the Christ at any level without an intermediary. It is possible; it has been done, though rarely; and perhaps it is not well rashly to decide that we can dispense with all help. We may be great saints in disguise, but it is better to be on the safe side.

Make no mistake as to this; any man, at any stage, who turns his thought towards the Christ, or sends an aspiration to Him, will unquestionably call forth a response, and will be the better for his effort. But the same expenditure of force will bring a far greater return if it be expended along the channel already prepared by Christ for His people and designated by His Church for our use. It is much easier to walk along a carefully levelled road than to force one's way through the entanglements of a pathless jungle; and when the road is already there, lovingly provided for that especial purpose, why should one be so ungracious as to refuse to walk in it?

If we follow the teaching and the rites of the Church, be very sure that they will do great good to us, however advanced we may feel ourselves to be inwardly. For the greater a man is the more he can receive from the sacraments and the rites of Holy Church. So we may well follow the example of the Christ: "Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." It is an apt and beautiful symbol.

It is well that we should think sometimes of the path of development that lies before us. We should note the different steps and what is required of those who would take them, and frequently examine ourselves and see in what way, and to what extent, we fall short now of that which is required, because although we may still be at some distance from such spiritual possibilities as these, at least we ought to be trying to qualify ourselves for this which lies before each one of us. A man may say humbly: "I am not a great saint; I am very far from that. I have all sorts of faults and failings." No doubt; for we all have. But God does not tie us down to a limited time. We must not think of this one little life as all that is given to us. If so, it would indeed be a mockery to say to us: "Be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect." How can we be? We know how far we fall short of it; how can we carry out that command? Yet would that command have been given if it had been impossible for us? It is *not* impossible, precisely because we have before us plenty of time for our efforts. Never a moment to waste, but such time as we need we shall have. If we do not succeed in this life, we shall come back again and again until we do succeed, exactly as a child goes to school day after day, and in between the days of work he goes home and takes off the clothing he has worn for his school-life, and goes to bed and rests. Just so we take off the robe of flesh—this physical body—and live in the spiritual body. And then presently we come out of that stage of rest, and come back yet again and assume the garment of earthly life—the physical body.

That was well known in the time of Christ. We read that He said to His disciples: "Whom do men say that I am?" And they answered Him: "Some say that Thou art the prophet Elias (Elijah): some say Thou art Jeremiah or one of the prophets." And then He explained to them that John the Baptist was Elijah, so He could not be he. He said to them: "If ye will receive it, Elias has already come." And then He asked whom *they* took Him to be, and Peter gave the reply: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God." So it is clear that He knew, and those to whom He spoke knew, that it was possible for people to come back again in other bodies. Also He was asked, when they brought to Him a man who was born blind: "Who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" How could a man have sinned and been born blind as a punishment for it, unless the sin had been committed in some former life? They clearly grasped the doctrine of reincarnation, but because that doctrine has since been dropped aside, a great deal in the scripture and in the Creed appears unintelligible to people. We must try to recover this ancient doctrine and to apprehend all that follows from it. The faith may have been once for all delivered to the saints, but it does not follow that it was fully understood by them. Many advancements have been made in knowledge of all kinds since then; perchance in religion also we may come to comprehend much better what has been said than some of them did.

So let us observe these different festivals. Let us try not merely to follow these things as anniversaries, but to remember the symbolism and under-

stand it; and when we have learnt the lesson which it has to teach, let us try to live according to that lesson. If we are some day to attain these great stages we must live now so as to fit ourselves day by day for this drawing nearer and nearer to the Christlike state of mind which alone will enable us to live the life which the Christ would have us live.

We must recognize from the beginning that the requirements of the spiritual life are high, and that no man can hope to follow his Leader up this mighty ladder of evolution unless he is indeed willing to devote himself, spirit, soul and body with all his strength to Him. It is not necessary that he should retire altogether from the world. That has been a common error. The demands of the higher spiritual development are so great that a man may well be pardoned if he feels that he should devote every moment of his lifetime to them, and in the past that has been done to a great extent. In older civilizations and in earlier religions men almost always commenced the pursuit of the really higher life by becoming hermits or monks. A man gave up the world altogether; he consigned himself to an existence of absolute poverty, absolute chastity and self-control, and lived altogether in the higher meditation. Sometimes there was a slight modification of that. In the Buddhist religion a man who becomes a monk does not necessarily devote the whole of his life to contemplation, but he does emphatically devote it wholly to doing good. All through the earlier history of Christianity we find that many of its saints did exactly the same thing. Either they became hermits or they entered some monastery, so that

their surroundings might make it comparatively easy for them to live wholly for the spirit.

For us in these days a harder task is set. The great keynote of our spiritual lives is to be of service. The highest service of God is to serve Him in the person of our fellowmen; and in order that we may devote ourselves to that service it is necessary that we should remain in the world, even though we may not be *of* the world in the sense that worldly matters bulk most largely for us. We must not therefore feel ourselves superior to the monk or the hermit of old. It is not true to say that one who passed altogether out of the ordinary business life of the world thought only of himself and his own development. Such men help greatly in the elevation of the spiritual tone of the world as a whole. There are many people wholly given up to business and to pleasure; in order to balance that, it is surely well that among the human race there should be some who give up all their strength to the higher life of meditation, and we must not for a moment think that these men of old were necessarily selfish in doing that. They were flooding the world with a higher type of spiritual thought and devotional feeling than would have been possible in those days for ordinary men engaged in business. We should not at all think of those people as doing nothing; but, as I have said, a harder task is put before us—that we should remain in the world and still develop that higher spiritual nature as much as we might have done if we had retired altogether from ordinary life.

Some may object: “But that is impracticable; how can we be so much stronger spiritually than



were those great men of old?" The reason is that we, some of us, *are* those great men of old, come back again in other bodies to carry our development in the following of our Lord Christ a little further than we carried it before. If some of us succeeded, in that older civilization, in living the spiritual life apart from the world, the strength that we gained then will help us now to try to live the spiritual life *in* the world. We can still flood that world with higher thought and with the noblest devotional feeling, but we can have also the inestimable advantage of being among our fellowmen and therefore bringing a more direct influence to bear upon them. Again some may think: "That is all very well for a preacher or a lecturer; no doubt he sheds out a certain amount of influence, but what can we do? We live quite ordinary lives; we have to earn our living, and we have to keep our wives and families; how can *we* shed an influence abroad?"

Every human being is doing so, all the time; whether he knows it or whether he never thinks of it, he is nevertheless affecting the lives of all those about him, and not only by what he says or does; every thought that he thinks affects other minds around him, every word that he utters may be so arranged as to carry a good feeling with it. A man cannot be always preaching; but all his thoughts, his words and his deeds should be such as to shed a holy and Christlike influence on those about him. That is the essence of the spiritual life; that is what everyone of us, at his level and in his degree, should be doing.

To attain to the level of the first great Initiation a man must dominate his body by means of his soul; he must so arrange that all his feelings are in harmony with the highest feeling. When the second of the great steps comes the same process is carried a stage farther, and in the second Initiation, of which this Baptism of our Lord is the symbol, the man's mind, and not only his feeling, is brought into tune with the Christ-mind. The latter is still infinitely above it, of course, for we are only men, and very frail and human, while He rises above humanity as a Superman; but nevertheless our thoughts should lie along the line of His thoughts. Just as the man who is beginning to tread the Path says: "In these circumstances what would the Christ have done? let me do the same," so the man who has passed that second stage should watch his thought every moment and say to himself: "What would the Christ have thought in such a case as this? How would this thing have envisaged itself to Him?"

The same great thought exists in our religion as in all the older faiths. All religions are as coloured lenses through which shines the same bright light; they are all statements of the same great truth; therefore whatever is found philosophically stated in those older faiths is to be found also represented in this, the latest of the great religions. Because we are Christians we need not necessarily be ignorant, although it is quite true that in the early days of the Church most of the Christians were drawn from unlearned people, and a vast heritage of misunderstanding has come down to us from those times of ignorance. It is for us now to add to our faith

virtue, and to virtue knowledge, as St. Peter put it, so that while we hold the same old faith, we may hold it far more intelligently than did our forefathers, because we know now what it symbolizes; so instead of taking statements as literally historic which on the face of them are incredible, we realize their meaning in this mighty myth of progress, and therefore we learn from them instead of forcing ourselves to accept them without comprehension.

Never again will a great leader of the Church say: *Credo quia impossibile*, which means: "I believe it because it is impossible." When we find a statement which on the face of it looks incredible, we say: "What is the meaning of this? For it must have a meaning, and it must have a place, or we should not find it in this our faith." It would have been well if the early Church Fathers in the Christian religion had followed the example of the great Council of the religious Fathers of the Buddhist religion. When those men met to formulate doctrine after the death of the Buddha, finding many curious statements and distortions of His sayings put before them, their decision was: "Nothing whatever which is not in accordance with reason and common sense *can* be the teaching of the Buddha." I wish the Christian Fathers had adopted that same line of thought; it would have saved us much trouble.

Only those who have seen one of the great Initiations can say how good is the symbolism which the Church has adopted for them. The first does distinctly symbolize a birth; the Master Who is acting as Initiator expands His aura, His higher vehicles, and absolutely enfolds within Himself the pupil,

and the pupil comes forth from that contact a new man in many ways, so it may truly be described as a birth. In the second Initiation there is a down-pouring of force from on high which is aptly symbolized by a baptism—a tremendous rush of power down from the Initiator upon the Initiated. It is a veritable baptism of the Holy Ghost and of fire, as the Christ described it; it is a fiery flood which is poured down, and it has undoubtedly the appearance of a stream of living light. If we realize the symbolical meaning of all these things we shall understand that they make a coherent sequence, and that each year the Church in this way sets before us the path we have to tread, in the hope that contemplating it we shall learn to understand it, and that we shall then develop within ourselves the requirements which are needed for each of these great steps.

There is no mystery about these requirements; they are given in many of our books. I myself made a list of them at the end of my little book *Invisible Helpers*. I use there the Oriental terms, but we find the same stages in the Christian teaching under the names of Conversion, Purification, Illumination, and Perfection. Perfection corresponds to what is called in the East the Arhat Initiation. St. Paul is reported to have said: "We speak wisdom to them that are perfect"—a remark which does not sound particularly intelligent if we take the word in its ordinary signification, but is luminous and clear when we know that "perfect" is a technical word for a certain degree in the Christian Mysteries. The meaning is simply "We speak of the secrets of the higher degree only to those who have taken

that degree." The more that we can develop of these qualifications now, the easier will be our task when the great time comes for us, and the sooner will that time come. Therefore we should already be laying a foundation even for the very highest of the steps of the Path. We should already be familiar with what we have to do in the unfolding of our inner powers, and we should be trying in our small way to do it. We should try with all our hearts, with all our minds, with all our strength.

Not that we can immediately succeed, because it is a work of a long time. This evolution of man has continued slowly and surely through thousands and thousands of years in the past. Now it is beginning to quicken, because the goal is coming in sight—because now we are beginning to move intelligently in the right direction, instead of being merely swept hither and thither by all kinds of cross currents. Evolution is moving all the time, and whether we take an intelligent part in it or not, we are being steadily carried onward and upward. But as soon as we begin to understand and to swim for ourselves instead of drifting with the tide, our progress becomes much more rapid, and we can cooperate with comprehension in the mighty work which God is doing for us. So it is worth our while to try to understand all these stages.

The first Initiation is chiefly concerned with the conquering of the idea of separateness and the establishment of the man on a firm basis; the second Initiation deals largely with the development of his mental and psychic powers and faculties. The actual effect of this Initiation is an enormous expansion of the mental body. How much of that can

act down here in the physical brain of the man is quite another matter. It takes many years for the full effect of that Initiation to show itself in the lower life, and it is a time of considerable strain, and even of danger for the man if he is not very careful to keep his vibrations pure and high and noble. That also is symbolized in the gospel drama, for immediately after receiving this Baptism, the Christ retires for forty days into the desert to strengthen and develop Himself—to adjust the lower vehicles to what has been done with the higher ones.

Forty days may suffice for a Christ, but for most of us forty years would be nearer the mark. Less than that perhaps, but not very much less will it take us to adapt ourselves perfectly to the development; but the work must be done. Some will not (or possibly cannot) adjust themselves, and those people break. To safeguard ourselves against that disaster we must learn at an earlier stage to keep our thoughts on a pure, high level, to be persistent always in well-doing, to have the one unselfish object of helping the world always before us, and not to let ourselves be diverted from it by any sort of prejudice, or by any sort of personal feeling or weakness in any way. So shall our advance proceed smoothly and steadily, and we shall progress as we are meant to do.

Every step of the path brings its own difficulties and its own especial strain; but every step of the path also brings its own enormous accession of strength to the soul—to the ego, the true man. Progress is always gradual, particularly at this stage of which we are speaking now. But if the man

succeeds, that which is so beautifully put before us in the Epistle for the festival of the Baptism of our Lord becomes true of him. The Spirit of the Lord rests upon him, because he is drawn up to a higher level; he is now more in harmony with that Spirit, and is a better channel for it. So the Spirit rests upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might—of great wisdom, but also of great power; the Spirit of knowledge and of reverence to the Lord. Those are the characteristics which should be showing forth through the man when he reaches that level. It is said of him: "He shall not judge after the sight of his eyes" (that is, after mere outer appearance), "neither reprove after the hearing of his ears" (that is, he shall not take anything on hearsay), "but with righteousness shall He judge the poor, and reprove with equity for" (that is, on behalf of) "the meek of the earth."

You will notice what great stress is laid there upon justice, gentleness, tolerance. All those are the characteristics of the man who is making progress, the man who is trying to bring his mind into harmony with the mind of the Christ. We are told in another place in our scripture: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus," and that is what the man should be doing at this stage of his Baptism with Fire. Both the Christ and John the Baptist used that expression, the Baptism of the Holy Ghost and of Fire, showing it to be really a technical phrase in the Mysteries, referring to the tremendous downpouring of divine force which comes at that second Initiation to the man who is fortunate enough to reach it.

Chief among his characteristics, then, should be righteousness, faith, fairness, and, above all, gentlemanliness. A great poet said of the Christ that He was the first true gentleman who ever lived. All these things should be the characteristics of our development on the path. It is said of the Initiate that he shall neither hurt nor destroy in all the holy mountain of that higher progress. There shall be no hurt, no power or fear or even possibility of hurting the feelings or the reputation of others. Most carefully, most skilfully will the man who is drawing thus near to higher things order his action, his speech and his thought, so that no harm shall be done by any of these to any living creature. In the Hindu Scripture we find the teaching that *ahimsa* or perfect harmlessness is the great characteristic of the developed man; harmlessness not only on the physical plane, but on the emotional and mental as well—that the man shall be incapable of harm, not only that he shall be careful not to harm. He should have reached the stage at which he can do only good to his fellowmen; and the reason why he can do only good is given in the concluding words of the Epistle—that the man is “full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.” It is said there that the earth shall be so filled. It will be a long time yet before all mankind stands at such a level as that, before absolutely the whole earth shall be recognizably filled with the glory of the Lord. In truth it is filled with that glory even now if we can only see it; but what is indicated is a condition when all men upon earth will realize it, when His will shall be done on earth, even as it is in heaven.



We are far from that; yet perhaps we may not be so far from it as we sometimes think. We are only just at the end of the most awful war in the history of the world, and though that actual war is over and justice has triumphed, there is an immense amount of social unrest all over the world, and we have not arrived at a millennium yet. Great changes have come, and are in process of coming; surely there will be on the whole a great movement towards good. There may be an intermediate time which will be very unpleasant, while things are still settling down. It is the interval of readjustment, the trough between two waves of evolution, but out of it all, we hope and believe, will come something grander than we have yet seen. Whether the best will be made out of it depends upon us, as well as upon other people. A man may think, "I am not a person of any importance. I have a vote certainly, but it is only one out of millions." That is not the point. It is true that the actual government of a country is in the hands of its politicians, but any kind of constitution, any arrangement will work well if the hearts of the people are right, and if they have loving brotherly feeling one towards another; and no constitution, however excellent, will work satisfactorily if these feelings and conditions are absent. So everyone of us has a share in this future—everyone of us can distinctly help in his own circle to make it possible for the great changes to come smoothly, if he will follow such teaching as is here given to us by the Church.

That is why we should be educating and training ourselves to take due part in the life that lies before us all. This spiritual development, which

sometimes seems rather far away and in the clouds, is not really far from us at all, because we gain these heights step by step, and we must be developing all these qualities in ourselves day by day in order that we may the sooner reach the highest, so that through us the whole world can be helped. Those who are clairvoyant, those who can see, know as a fact how closely the world is knit together. The rest must take it largely on evidence, though there is surely plenty of evidence even for those who cannot see. No man liveth to himself, not for a moment; always he is influencing other people by his thought, his feelings, as well as by what he does and what he is. Every man has a share in the world's work, and every man must take it. And if you who draw nearer to the Christ will follow the Christ in your thoughts and words and works, then shall the world all the sooner be ready to worship at His Feet and to follow Him whither He would lead it, when (so soon) He comes among us once more.

Even now at our present stage we may have this much share in this second Initiation—that we may try to develop our minds; we may try to understand our religion intelligently. Let that then be for you the lesson of this festival. We must be able to give a reason for the faith that is in us. We must try to understand what is meant by the teachings of our religion. All religions are the same, in that all alike teach us that the path of holiness is the only way to reach final perfection; but our especial line in Christianity is to try to develop ourselves by means of service to others,

realizing the truth of the words which the Christ Himself uttered: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these My little ones, ye have done it unto Me."

## CHAPTER VI

### THE TRANSFIGURATION

The story of the Transfiguration is that the Christ took the three disciples who were nearest to Him in thought and mind up to Mount Tabor and then was transfigured before them. He showed Himself to them as the radiant *augoeides*—as the ego in his causal body. And there stood two typical people beside Him, men who to the Jews represented the two sides of their religion—the law-giving side, the side of Moses, who wrote the Pentateuch, and that of Elias, who was the first and greatest, they considered, of their prophets—their great preachers. These two men appeared and stood talking with Him, just as materializations might appear to-day; and then they were surrounded by a luminous cloud from which came a voice which is supposed to have been that of God the Father, saying: “This is my beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him.” A similar phenomenon is alleged to have happened at the Baptism of Christ; and as it is said that the Holy Ghost simultaneously showed Himself in the shape of a dove, that Baptism is often spoken of as the only occasion on which the Three Persons of the Trinity were seen together. Some have thought that all Three also appeared at the Transfiguration, suggesting that the luminous cloud was in this case a manifestation of the Third Person. The story tells us that when the cloud dissipated, only Jesus in His ordinary appearance as man was to be seen.

When we read of the Christ as taking His chosen disciples (those who were nearest to Him, who had therefore the opportunity of the most rapid advancement, whether they took advantage of it or not) and leading them up into a mountain alone, those who are used to Oriental symbology begin to see at once along what lines our thoughts are being directed. The mountain is neither Tabor nor Hermon in that inner plane; it is the Mount of Initiation—the Mount to which in the Collect for the festival of the Transfiguration we pray that we may all come, as indeed we must; and to climb that holy Mount is indeed to be transfigured.

Note the description which is given of our Lord and of those who attended upon Him. It says that He was transfigured before them, and that His raiment was white and glistering, and shone like the snow. That at once suggests the *augoeides*—the glorified man; and that is the real man, the ego. The physical body down here at the best glows but very faintly; the astral is of course brighter; the mental brighter still. But at the level of the causal body, man indeed looks like a great Angel, for that is the body which passes on from life to life. In it nothing which is evil can possibly be stored, because that is the law of Nature.

That causal body, which is the vehicle of the soul, is permanent from the time we leave the animal kingdom until the time that we become supermen, reaching something outside ordinary humanity. It is built of matter so fine that it will not respond to those grosser vibrations which always indicate what down here we call evil. A man may have plenty of these in his lower vehicles; he may feel

evil, he may think evil, but the evil cannot harm the soul within, though it does delay him in his progress.

Suppose we find a well-developed selfishness in the man down here, characterized perhaps by pride and irritability. If we are able to look at his astral body, we shall see clear marks there of these undesirable qualities—the dull, dirty brown of selfishness, the strong orange of pride and the dull red of anger. If we are able to examine the mental body we shall still see the same thing; the colours are already much lighter and finer there, but still they are the same colours. But if we look at his causal body, just where these colours were so prominent in the lower vehicle we shall find simply an empty space. What then is the matter with that man? Why is he selfish? Why is he proud? Why is he angry? Because he has not yet built into himself the contrary virtues. When he has built into himself unselfishness, that will appear in his causal body, and then if we examine the lower bodies we shall see the same vivid colour reproduced there. But so long as selfishness is showing in the lower vehicles, that clearly indicates that unselfishness has not been developed in the higher. If he shows anger in the lower, then patience is not unfolded fully in the soul. If he shows pride in the lower, humility and right judgment are not yet evolved as soul qualities. Most happily and fortunately for us, all the good that we may develop within ourselves registers itself permanently; the evil that appears cannot register itself at all. True, we bring it over from another life, but that is because we bring over the permanent atom of each of the lower planes. The soul cannot record it, and con-

sequently every vibration in the direction of good is a step permanently taken; every slip backward is by the law of Nature a temporary thing. This is indeed fortunate, because otherwise in our earlier struggles in savage lives we should assuredly have built into ourselves so much evil that it might have taken us many lives, perhaps even æons, to straighten out again.

That vision of the glorified body has often been seen. We read stories in the traditions of the Church of saints displaying for a time the appearance of great Angels. We may see such things often in our Church services if we have eyes to see. We pray in our Benediction Service that Christ shall open His eyes in us in order that we may see these wonderful things, these splendid shining forms.

That Transfiguration lies before every one of us. It is for us so to live that that splendour, that glory which dwells within each of us even now shall be able to show itself forth. Christ said to His people: "Ye are gods; ye are all the children of the most High." He did not say "You will be gods some time"; not "You shall be," but "You *are*." You are here and now divine; the spirit in you is a spark of the divine Spirit. You have only to let it show forth and you have won that for which you are sent here; "you have wrought the purpose through of that which made you man," as another great Teacher has said.

So this festival conveys to us the lesson that every one of us is capable of that Transfiguration; that it will in time come inevitably to every one of us, and that we must bear that great fact in mind

and so live that we may show forth in our outward lives the glory of the Christ Who dwells in us.

An interesting feature of the symbolism is that which brings the commemoration of Christ's Presentation in His Father's Temple just towards the end of the week devoted to celebrating the Transfiguration. According to the Jewish law every first-born son was holy to the Lord, and was definitely devoted to Him as His priest. I am afraid that they had inherited the idea from a much lower condition of civilization in which the first-born son was offered as a sacrifice; but that does not appear even at the time of the writing of the bible. There it is only said that he was holy to the Lord, and that the father and mother therefore had to buy him back from the Lord by offering something else instead of him. They were to offer a lamb, but a lamb (though not very costly) being still beyond the means of some, they were allowed to offer two pigeons instead, and we read in the New Testament how the Blessed Virgin, taking the two pigeons and the young child, went to present Him in the Temple, and to present herself also for purification from the unequalled nobility of motherhood.

It is a strange idea that the greatest function in the world for woman is one from which it is necessary for her afterwards to be purified. But that idea runs through many religions. It is strong in Hinduism; a trace of it appears in the Anglican and Roman Churches in the curious service called the Churching of Women. In the Liberal Catholic Church we have dropped the custom, because we do not think that a woman needs purification after fulfilling the highest and noblest office open to



humanity—the provision of a vehicle for an evolving ego. But still that was the law in Judæa, and according to that law, forty days after the birth of Jesus the Blessed Virgin brought her child to present Him to the Lord. The story tells us that Simeon happened to be in the Temple at the time, and in his thankfulness for having seen the promised Messiah he gave us the *Nunc Dimittis*, that beautiful canticle which we still use to this day: “Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word. For mine eyes have seen Thy Salvation which was prepared before the face of all people, to be a Light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of Thy people Israel.”

That is the outer story; whether it be true or not, I do not know. But turn to its symbology; what does it mean? As I pointed out before, all this symbology has at least two meanings, and sometimes more. It indicates the stages in the life of the Initiate, but also the stages of the descent of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity into matter—a great system of cosmogony, which is given in some form in every religion. Unfortunately, instead of taking our own system from the Creed, most Christians have preferred to accept that of the Jews, enshrined in the first two chapters of the book of Genesis, which is far less clear than that given in the Gnostic teaching of the Christian religion.

This third Initiation carries with it a certain privilege which is symbolized in this offering in the Temple. At that step man is changed all the way through. The ego, the soul of the man is changed, because it is brought into closer touch with the

Monad, the mighty divine spark which is in every one of us—or rather hovers over every one of us, Gradually we have to come into touch with it and learn to express it, that we also may be gods, as Christ said to His people. Then the personality in turn, the man we know down here, is transfigured at that Initiation, because it is brought into so much closer touch with the soul behind. So the operation is well symbolized as a Transfiguration. But at that particular step not only does the man in that way come face to face with his Father Who is in heaven (that is to say, with the God which is within us), but also he comes face to face with the outer manifestation of that great Father. He comes into touch with the Representative here in this world of what we often call the Solar Deity. There is a great Hierarchy governing the world and directing it. The world is not left to itself; there are “Just Men made perfect” Who hold certain definite offices in the inner and spiritual Government of the world, just as Ministers of the Crown hold definite offices in our outer Government here on the physical plane.

There is, then, a spiritual King—a Leader of evolution for each planet. We refer to Him in that last Benediction, when we speak of Him as the One Initiator, the great Head of all the Saints belonging to this earth. Now it is in the Name of that spiritual King that all Initiations are given—all degrees are conferred, as we should put it in more physical language—though in all the earlier stages some one acts for Him as a deputy, His special permission being given for each occasion. But the man who is so fortunate as to reach this third stage

comes face to face with that spiritual King Himself, for it is the rule that immediately after this step the neophyte must be presented to Him. Indeed, in some special cases He Himself takes charge of the Initiation and confers it instead of having it conferred through a deputy.

That is why in connection with the feast of the Transfiguration comes the feast of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, His presentation directly to His Father, because that is what is symbolized when we are taking it all to mean the Mystery-Drama of the progress of man. The man who has been transfigured is brought into the presence of the Representative of His Father in heaven. That is a secondary meaning lying behind the fact that he is presented to his own Monad, which is truly his Father in heaven, the God within us.

I mentioned just now that this Mystery-Drama symbolizes not only the progress of man, but also the progress of the whole world. In Neo-Platonism and the Greek philosophies they speak constantly of the microcosm and the macrocosm. *Cosmos* is the world or universe; *micro* and *macro* mean little and big respectively. So we have the small world, the world of man himself, and we have the greater world, which is in this case the solar system. The evolution of man and that of the solar system have certain points in common which are of great interest to the student, because if we understand one of them, through that we may understand the other, making certain allowances for difference of planes. The Church's year indicates all these things, though of course it is only one of many systems of presentation. They appear even more clearly in some

of the older religions—in Buddhism, in Hinduism, in Zoroastrianism; but the early Church Fathers were most anxious to assert that their religion fell in no way behind the others. “If you have Mysteries” they said to those with whom they argued, “which explain to you all these wonderful things, we also have Mysteries which explain just the same things to us.” But unfortunately in that long period of the dark ages, when most things were forgotten which were worth remembering, they contrived to lose all the inner meaning of these wonderful allegories, and so consequently they are left suspended in air with only a physical story.

If we are thinking of cosmogony (that is, of the making of the solar system) then the Annunciation represents the sending out of the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity. It was the Holy Ghost which descended on the Virgin Mary; and that typifies that First Outpouring of which we have read in other books where these facts are presented more in the Oriental form. The Holy Spirit broods over the face of the waters, which is only another way of saying that that First Outpouring descends into, hovers over and penetrates the virgin seas of matter, which are typified in the Greek system by the Blessed Virgin Mary, whose Latin name *Maria* is the plural of *mare*, the sea; so that her very name implies a symbology so patent that we can scarcely speak of it as veiled at all.

The whole thing is a vast and beautiful allegory, in which that first descent is symbolized by the Annunciation, and a long time after that (the way having been slowly prepared within the womb of matter by that Third Aspect which we call God the

Holy Ghost) the Second Aspect, God the Son, descends into matter, and Christ is born as on Christmas Day. That is the Second Outpouring. But that fructification of matter, that vivifying of it, takes time; and so in the allegory it shows its result forty days after the birth in the festival of the purification of the great seas of matter, which means their vivifying and their elevation by the presence in them, the blossoming out through them, of this Second great Aspect.

This result appears when the new-born Christ is presented to the Father—that is, when the Third Outpouring (which comes from the First Aspect, the First Person of the Blessed Trinity) comes upon it; and that perfected purification of matter is typified by the Presentation of the Christ in His Temple to His Father. That is the presentation of the wine in the Cup of the Holy Grail, the presentation (within the cup of his causal body) of the ego which all through this long course of evolution has been prepared. Then flashes down the ray of the First Person from above, so that the ego is connected with the Monad, and the Christ is presented to His Father within the Temple of His causal body.

On the festival of the Presentation we begin our service in violet, to indicate the process of purification, because that is the colour which bears the purifying vibrations; but when the Christ comes into His Temple (which is symbolized by the carrying in of the Host, the vehicle, the *vahan*, of the Christ) we change our frontal and vestments to white to receive Him, and we light all the candles

which have given to this festival the name of Candlemas Day, because Christ is the Light of the world.

It is interesting to note that in the Church, precisely as in Freemasonry, a magnificent and stately ritual has been handed down through the centuries, with the most meticulous care that none of its highly significant details should be changed in the slightest degree. It is certain that in both cases those who so loyally fulfilled their charge had no conception of the real meaning of the ceremonies whose integrity they so carefully guarded; but as a result of their faithful service we are now able to interpret exactly the information which the original founders of these systems intended to convey to their followers.

## CHAPTER VII

### LENT

#### OUR ATTITUDE TOWARDS LENT

The word Lent means spring, for in the northern hemisphere, where the Christian faith began, Lent is necessarily always observed in that season of the year, as it is the time of preparation for the Easter festival, the date of which is determined by the vernal equinox. This period of preparation is intended to last for forty days, and as it has been made a penitential season it was felt that the Sundays, which are always joyous in commemoration of the Resurrection, could not be included; so that the first day of Lent, commonly called Ash Wednesday, is actually forty-six days before Easter. That curious name was given to the day because of a quaint mediæval custom of smearing ashes on the forehead on that occasion as a token of sorrow for sin—a custom derived from the ancient Jews. Even now in churches of the Roman obedience the sanctified palm-branches which have been preserved since Palm Sunday of the previous year are burnt on Ash Wednesday, and the priest, dipping his thumb into the ashes, makes a cross therewith on the forehead of each member of his congregation before beginning the Mass. We have not adopted this custom in our Liberal Catholic Church, as it is not in harmony with our attitude in these matters.

The present idea of observing the forty days of Lent was unknown in the early Church. It began with a celebration of forty hours—not forty days.

It was calculated that the Christ—or rather His body—lay in the sepulchre about forty hours, and it was thought by many earnest Christians that it was a meet and fitting thing to observe that time during which the body of our Lord was untenanted as a time of fasting. Fasting then probably meant absolutely going without food; but when the idea came to be extended to forty days, in harmony with the alleged forty days' fasting in the wilderness, naturally it began to be quite a different thing, and merely to be an abstinence from certain kinds of food, or from eating as fully as at other seasons. In the present day, it usually means abstinence from flesh meat, but even as to that there are many dispensations.

Furthermore, the fast was observed in varying degrees. For a long time the first, middle and last weeks were kept as a fast, but not the intervening period, so that the whole thing has not behind it any strong apostolic or early sanction, but is simply one of the customs which have grown up in the Church. It has come to be regarded as a time of self-examination and of sorrow for sin. In our Liberal Catholic Church we take a somewhat different attitude with regard to all this. We do not regard this season as a time of mourning, but as a time of preparation for the mighty feast of Easter, and we know that we cannot celebrate that great feast properly and obtain from it the benefit which the Church means us to obtain, unless we have carefully prepared ourselves as we are directed to do during this season. It is not to be a time for mourning for sin, but it is to be a time of endeavouring to shake ourselves free from sin. Assuredly we re-



gret our sins and we wish to become perfect, but we feel (because we know something scientifically about the power and the effect of thought) that it is advisable not to dwell upon sins and to mourn over them, but simply to make a strong short resolve not to do that particular thing again, and then put the thought aside. As a great Master once said: "The only repentance which is in the least worth while is the resolve not to do it again." That is true; that is common sense; and that is the saner and better way, we think, to look at these matters.

With regard to physical fasting, we leave all our people absolutely free to practise it if they wish, but we do not recommend it as having any virtue in itself. Asceticism *per se* is of no value whatever. The old idea about it (I am going back now to pre-Christian times, although I think the influence of the theory subsisted into the Christian period too) was that the gods were jealous of the good fortune or happiness of men, and that the man who voluntarily made himself unhappy thereby escaped something of this jealousy, and prevented them from visiting him with some evil or punishment to remind him of their existence and their power. Then it came to be thought that the mortification of the body, the abstinence from pleasure of all kinds, was in itself pleasing to God. You find that idea permeating Christianity very strongly in the early days, and all through the Middle Ages—that austerities and tortures of various kinds were in themselves good things. It is quite certain that in themselves they are *not* good things. In a much older scripture than any of ours, God speaks of those "who torture Me, dwelling in their bodies," realizing that

they also are part of God, and that suffering inflicted for suffering's sake is not pleasing to Him in any way. Another theory was that by inflicting pain upon themselves, they escaped (by anticipating it) somewhat of the punishment which would otherwise fall upon them. They felt that they had done all sorts of wicked things, the result of which must be suffering in some form, and thought that if they punished themselves here they would perhaps escape punishment by God hereafter.

All that is, of course, quite foreign to a sane and common-sense way of looking at things. That we live under a mighty and utterly just law of cause and effect no one who studies nature can doubt, but "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." That is to say, in the ordinary course of nature each man will receive according to what he has done whether it be bad or good, and there is no escape from that. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap."

Therefore we do not think that there is any special merit in going without food. There are those who think far too highly of food and of drink; there are gluttons, there are wine-bibbers, there are drunkards, and for such people certainly it is well not only in Lent, but at all times, to call a halt, and to be sane and wise about their eating and drinking, as about everything else. Perhaps many people eat and drink more than they need; but that is another matter. I am doubtful as to the use and efficacy of fasting, especially in these days. It may have had its use in mediæval times, when people lived a much more leisurely life, and had nothing particular to

do. They were in the habit of eating much coarse food; we constantly read of an ox being roasted on an occasion of festivity; so perhaps it did them no harm to fast; it may even have been beneficial. But in these days we live under high pressure and great nervous strain, and abstinence from food is not likely to be useful to us.

What I wish to make clearly understood is that we do not hold that any kind of self-mortification is pleasing to God as such. The one thing that is pleasing to Him is that if we have made mistakes, if we have sinned (as we all have) we should make a real earnest endeavour not to do it again. We need not waste our time and force being sorry about it, but we should make a strong resolve to avoid that weakness for the future. Even if we fall a thousand times, we must get up again the thousandth time and go on. There is just the same reason for trying again after our thousandth failure as there was after our first.

Yet another point: Many people in old days felt that by fasting they might gain spiritual powers and visions. We know that people who are dying of starvation frequently have visions of different kinds. Undoubtedly when the physical body is failing, the astral and the other higher bodies come into more prominence; so to starve oneself to the verge of death might be one method of developing higher faculties; but it is entirely the wrong way, because to have such faculty in any form in which it is really useful, the possessor must be in perfect health. All the clairvoyance that has ever been taught to me has required perfect physical health and perfect balance as pre-requisites, and to culti-

vate these seems to me the best and safest way to the attainment of the higher faculties. To get oneself into an unhealthy and pathological condition is never the right way to any true advancement.

I have no sympathy with most of the hymns which are generally used in Lent. They are often full of blood and misery and cringing, and of hints about eternal damnation. To say:

Once more the solemn season calls,  
A holy fast to keep;  
And now within the temple walls  
Both priest and people weep.

Or

Mercy, good Lord, mercy I ask  
This is my humble prayer;  
For mercy, Lord, in all my suit,  
O let Thy mercy spare.

seems to me not only ridiculous, but nauseating. If people would only realize how tiresome this sort of thing must be to the Deity, they would perhaps be less sycophantic.

It may have come in our way to try to tame an animal; if it has been badly treated it shrinks, and cannot be persuaded to come near. If the creature would only come at once, the friendly human could show his good will; but it shrinks and will not approach him, and enormous patience is needed. But why should we take that attitude with regard to a Loving Father? That is exactly the position which these blasphemous hymns take all through. They are full of cries for mercy, begging Him just to wait a moment before He destroys His children for ever! Think how *you* would like to have a child in that attitude towards you, and perhaps you will

begin to see just a little how much unnecessary trouble we give to the God and Father of us all. If we would only trust Him, so much more could be done; and our progress would be so much more rapid.

I very strongly disapprove of all this cringing, terror and fear; it may have been appropriate in the regime of the savage and bloodthirsty Jewish Jehovah, but it is quite out of place in the religion established by Christ, Who came to preach a Loving Father. Why cannot we forget the misinterpretations of the Jewish race and trust our own Leader, Who tells us that God is Love, Whose one desire for us is that we should be one with Him, even as He is one with the Father? "Perfect love casteth out fear."

So the hymns sung during Lent in our Church should be those that suggest to us what to do, and tell us the attitude in which we should put ourselves so as to get the greatest benefit from what is to come. The idea of fasting as pleasing to God or gaining higher spirituality is, I myself think, a mistaken notion; but if anyone feels that he wishes to fast, let him worship God in his own way if he will; we have no objection, but we do not advise it. Our whole attitude is different in all these things; we consider that God, Who gave us our intellect and common sense, expects us to use that common sense in religion as in daily life.

The idea of self-examination is good and necessary. But with that, too, we must be sane and careful, otherwise it will degenerate into morbid self-introspection, and we shall spend all our time in picking the machinery to pieces instead of going

on and doing the work. We are here in order to serve God, and we can do Him best service when we are ourselves perfect instruments in His hands. Therefore it is our business when we know of weak points in our armour to endeavour to strengthen them; it is our business to examine ourselves to the extent of seeing in what way we fall short, and to make a determined endeavour not to fall short in that way again. It is a good thing that a certain season of the year should be set apart for that; not that we should not always be on the watch against weaknesses and failings, but that it is especially needed now, because Lent is a preparation for the great festival of Easter.

On that occasion comes the greatest outpouring of divine power during the whole of our Christian year. In order to take advantage of it, in order to make the best use of it, we must certainly prepare ourselves, and so this season of Lent is arranged in order that we should, as it were, take stock of ourselves. Having discovered our weak points, let us go to work with a will and cure them, for only when we have conquered those weaknesses shall we be able fully to observe the great feast of Easter as it should be observed, and to gain from it all that we ought to gain. A great writer has said: "Any man may make a mistake, but the man who makes the same mistake twice is a fool." All of us make these mistakes—all without exception, however good we may be, however hard we may try; because we are still human beings and not yet great saints. Often we make them over and over again, day after day. Now it would be foolish to be cast down about that and to regard it as evidence of

horrible depravity. The extravagant language which is often applied in cases of this sort is entirely out of place; it is misleading, and it is dishonouring both to man and God. We are far from perfect, and quite certainly mistakes we shall make for a long time yet, but of course it is our business to try to make as few as possible. The perfection of the soul in man is like the slow growth of a great tree—it is something not to be attained in a moment, a day, a month, a year; it may take many lives such as we are living now before we reach it.

Since we all make errors, it would be natural that we should be gentle, charitable, ready to excuse when we see similar mistakes in others. Unfortunately that is not our habit. There are certain special reasons why such allowance is difficult for us—the principal one being that under God's mighty law man is evolving slowly, and the present stage of his evolution is the development of what is called the lower mind, the discriminating faculty in man; we are learning to discriminate between things by the differences between them. That is why we are getting such a development of the intellect in science and in other ways in this particular stage of the world's history. Our idea of criticism is to pounce upon the flaws in anything. That is quite wrong, because "criticism" comes from the Greek word *kritein*, which means to judge, so that "critical" really has the same signification as judicial, but we do not use it so. With us it means as a rule finding fault, because we are at that stage when that is the natural thing for us to do. The critical faculty is being trained in us; all the more then is it neces-

sary that we should not misuse it, that we should be on our guard not to criticize too readily. We cannot help seeing the mistakes that other people make; I wish we were as quick to see our own; but at any rate it is most assuredly our duty to be critical in the true sense (that is to say, judicial) and to withhold any decision with regard to what another man does or says until we know all about it, and we have all the evidence before us.

It is not the custom of the world, but it ought to be our custom, and we must try to make it so. We must learn not to impute motives to other people. One who happens to have developed the faculty of clairvoyance gets many surprises in different directions, and one of them is that he sees that the reasons for which people do things are hardly ever the reasons that he would previously have attributed to them. About nine times out of ten we are quite wrong when we proceed to attribute a motive to some other person for something that he does. He has all sorts of considerations in his mind that are unknown to us, and therefore we do him gross injustice in many cases simply because of our ignorance.

That being so, surely it would be wise, it would be dignified (to say nothing of its being kind) that we should suspend our judgment and say as little as possible where we cannot approve. If one has to pronounce judgment, one would say: "I do not approve of such and such a thing that this man does or that he has said, but I have no doubt that he has his own reasons for the line he is taking, and it is not for me to condemn him. I do not know



what his difficulties or his temptations may be, and in any case it is not my business to judge him."

We have to judge with a clearness like crystal with regard to the things which we ourselves do or say. Truly there also we have not always all the facts before us; but we are bound to decide and act upon such facts as do come before us, and it is our duty to choose what is right, so far as we can see it. We should, however, always remember with humility that what we think best may not be the abstract right at all, and we may well take to heart the advice given by the celebrated Dr. South: "By all means follow thy conscience; yet take heed thy conscience is not the conscience of a fool." We must stand by what we feel to be right, yet we must always be willing to listen and to learn. Above all, we must try to understand that other people also have consciences, and are trying to do right, though they may not at all agree with us. Hundreds and hundreds of people whom we may have misjudged are just as keenly anxious to do the right thing as we are ourselves. It is wrong that we should make up our minds about what we do not understand, and assign to them some unworthy motive when the real truth is that we know nothing at all about the matter.

St. Peter is said to have remarked: "He that would fain see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile." So it is best to talk as little as we can about other people unless we have something good to say. Watch for what is good and praise it—the reason for doing so being that when we speak and think about another person, the force of our thought acts upon

that person. If a man has done a good thing, and we think of it as a good thing and are glad that he did it, our good thought plays upon him and strengthens that virtue, and encourages him to act well again. If a man has made a mistake and we think evil of him for it, we thereby intensify that evil. The evil thought from us plays upon him, and if he has really made that mistake we make him more liable to repeat it. We are acting the part of a tempter to that man, simply by our thought.

Those who have not read about these things do not know of the immense mass of evidence of the action of thought upon the lives of others. Let him who doubts it study for himself. I have spent forty years in the study of such matters, and I can tell you that the force of thought is a very real and powerful thing; and if you could see how it acts you would be very careful what you think of others.

The beautiful collect which we use every day throughout Lent is worthy of attention. "Prevent us, O Lord, in all our doings with Thy most gracious favour." I suppose that more than half, probably three-fourths of the people who hear those words do not know what they mean. That word *prevent* has come in these later days to have a meaning quite different from that which it had at the time of the so-called Reformation, when this collect was translated from the Latin. Many of us know enough Latin to be aware that *venio* means *I come*, and that *pre* is *before*. To prevent therefore is to come before. We can see that a man can come before another for various reasons. He could come before him to get in his way and to stop him from doing something, which is our modern meaning for the

word prevent. We can also see that a man might come before another in order to prepare his way, to make it easy for him. That is the mediæval signification of the word prevent, and that is what it means in this collect when we say: "Prevent us, O Lord, in all our doings." Go before us in all our doings during this season of Lent with Thy most gracious favour, so that under the influence of that benign favour those doings may be what Thou wouldst have them to be—such as may deserve the favour and not such as would be shamed thereby. That is the meaning of those words, and that is precisely the idea. "May God be with us through all this time of Lent so that our feet shall not stray from the path, so that our words and our thoughts shall not offend."

God is indeed with us always. so perhaps we may add another shade of meaning and say: "May we during this period of Lent realize that God is with us and so may He (using for the moment the other sense of the word) prevent us from evil, may He go before us that no evil may happen to us." Then we add the request: "Further us with Thy continual help." We ask not only that the thought of Him shall go before us all the way, so that we may do no evil, but also that we may be furthered, pushed along, assisted by His continual help so that we may actively do good. The first wish is passive, that we shall do no evil; the second is positive, that we must definitely try to do good all through this season.

Then we give our reason: "May this be done that in all our works, begun, continued and ended in Thee, we may glorify Thy holy Name." There our

collect ends. The Latin original goes a little further and adds yet another petition, "And finally by Thy mercy attain everlasting life." We omit that because we know it to be unnecessary. Every one of us will finally attain everlasting life; every one of us will reach the glorious consummation which God destines for all humanity. When men speak of Christ as the Saviour of the world, and proceed to say that He will save about one person in a million (which is about the ordinary computation) they are casting grave dishonour upon Him. If Christ be the Saviour of the world—and we very fully admit it (not that He saves it from imaginary damnation, but that He saves it from error and ignorance by leading it into all truth)—then it is of the *whole* world and of every creature in it. There is none that can fail, none that can set his will against that mighty will of God which we call evolution. And so we do not need to pray that "finally by His mercy we may attain everlasting life."

All that comes to us is by His grace and by His loving kindness, which is perhaps the true meaning of that word mercy. We are ever ready to acknowledge that, but we need not insult Him by asking Him to do that which in His eternal counsels He has already determined. Let us remember that collect, and its reminder of the Presence of God with us all the time, before and during our action and after it; so that all our works whatever they are, whether they are good or bad, are begun, continued and ended in Him. Remembering that, we cannot do works which are not good works, but shall unceasingly endeavour to rise to the level of this wondrous benefit, this eternal overshadowing Presence

of the Deity. Yet overshadowing, though it implies protection, seems hardly the right word there, for it is above all things an *enlightening* Presence of the glory of God that shines upon every action and every thought. If we can but remember this throughout the season of Lent, how glorious will Easter be for us, how truly shall we prepare ourselves for it! This great festival will indeed be an epoch in the life of each one of us if we can only carry out the spirit of the Lenten Collect throughout the forty days. God is with us all the time; we need only remember it; He stands ever behind His people. If that thought dwells in our minds through Lent, Easter shall be for us a season of unimaginable glory, happiness and spiritual health.

The whole of the services in Lent are aimed at helping us in the work of curing our defects. The very colour of violet which the Church uses is not chosen at random; it is selected because of the piercing and purifying character of its vibrations. In earlier times the whole of the building was hung with the colour of the day, and not only the altar and officiants. It was the idea that in an atmosphere permeated with violet light this work of purification would be found somewhat easier.

All these things are scientific if we understand them; but the meaning of this ritual has been forgotten, and it is taken to be merely a sort of ordinance of the Church, and few know or care why it was ordered. There is a real reason for it, and there are books on such subjects for those who care for them. Symbolically this period indicates the fourth of the great stages of man's development; for Lent

is all part of the preparation for the right celebration of that great Initiation at Easter. That is the symbolical meaning of it; but it has a practical and every-day application to our lives as well.

#### THE SUNDAYS IN LENT

In the Collect, Epistle and Gospel of the First Sunday in Lent, the necessity for self-examination is emphasized.

The writer of the epistle says, "Examine yourselves whether you be in the faith." It is one of the many misunderstandings that have crept into Christianity during the ages which leads us to take that word "faith" in quite a wrong way. It has degenerated into a purely mechanical thing—the idea of a faith in the birth of Christ at a certain time, faith that He is the Saviour of the world and that we have only to cling to those two facts in order to come through somehow. That is not in the least what was meant by faith in the early days of the Church. Faith is certainly a strong belief, but it is a belief which has reason behind it. We accept certain things because they seem to us to be reasonable, because they seem to us to be the most probable hypothesis where we cannot have absolute certainty. But our faith must be based on reason, and it must be such a faith as will lead us to act according to it. It is no use pretending to believe a thing when all the time we act as though we did not believe it. Our faith in connection with these higher matters should be as absolutely definite a thing as our faith on the physical plane that boiling water will scald us or that a red-hot bar will burn us. We believe those things, and we believe them strongly

enough to keep our hands out of the boiling water and away from the red-hot bar. That is a faith that is worth something, but a faith that is merely up in the air and does not lead to any results is a very poor thing indeed; I do not think it is worth calling a faith.

Now when the writer of that epistle says: "See that you are in the faith," one thing that he means quite clearly is: "See that your faith is the Christian teaching, and that it is reasonable common sense." There is certainly a vast amount of utter vagueness in religion, as well as a great deal of illusion and superstition. People have certain beliefs and they cling to them without any reason. They may be shown quite plainly that there is no real reason for this belief which they hold, but they cannot get over it; in some way it is ingrained in them and there it sticks. Now most of those superstitions (I think I may even say all of them) are derogatory to the glory and love of God. The appalling superstition of an everlasting hell, for example, has done perhaps more harm in the world than any other single idea. It is absolutely baseless; it is superstition in the very clearest definition of the word. One meaning given in the dictionary for superstition is that it is a false and foolish belief. If ever in this world there was a false and foolish belief it is this belief in the existence of hell. It comes largely from ignorance, from the mistranslation of certain words and from misconception as to what our Lord meant when He made certain statements, yet it still influences the thoughts of millions. If there be any of us who have a lingering fragment of that superstition, let them

read Samuel Cox's book, *Salvator Mundi*. They may take it as absolutely reliable, for the man was a good scholar; and then they will see exactly what the Christ did mean when He spoke certain words which have been twisted into that horrible doctrine of hell.

Religion has so often been entirely up in the air, not only unpractical, but non-physical and incomprehensible. People employ a quantity of intellectual counters, and they juggle with them and set one in opposition to another and move them about; yet not one of them has a solid fact behind it. That is where we have so often gone wrong, and that is why religion has lost its hold among thinking people, because they feel that the things which are discussed in the average religion are not facts; they have no actual bases. We must keep our feet on the bed-rock of fact, however far we may carry our speculations into the realm of metaphysics. If we have not this bed-rock of fact, the whole thing is baseless and hopeless.

*Faith* is one of these terms which are really only intellectual counters. People talk about having faith, and they cannot define it with any accuracy or certainty. What they mean, if they do mean anything, is faith in the fact that Christ died on the cross. He did not die on the cross, for the dates are wrong, and at the time when the body of Jesus was put to death the Romans had not occupied Jerusalem, and so the Roman punishment of crucifixion was not practised. The whole thing is a beautiful myth, a Mystery-Drama which has been degraded and twisted into a physical life story, and the people who have



done that have cramped themselves hopelessly, so that it is exceedingly difficult now to get them to understand the higher and more beautiful meaning.

Another intellectual counter is the word *salvation*. People talk about that and juggle with the idea, and if one tries to pin them down to facts they generally seem to mean salvation from a totally imaginary hell. There is no foundation for the doctrine of hell, and so there is no need to be saved from it. The whole idea is a most regrettable and disastrous misunderstanding. Some of them say to us: "Have you got salvation"? or as they put it: "Are you saved"? What is a sensible person to answer? One can only say, "In the sense in which you are using the word I do not recognize it at all. It has no meaning; but if you say: 'Are we saved from our own error and ignorance?' I reply that we are in process of being saved by the knowledge which we acquire as we draw nearer to the Christ in the course of our evolution." "Have you found Jesus?" shrieks some hysterical enthusiast in the street. What reply can be given? We know probably a great deal more about our Lord Jesus than the person who asks the silly question; and he is quite incapable of grasping the truth. Yet the enquiry is well intentioned; the poor thing really does believe that he is in possession of some fact that we do not know, and that our possession of it would secure our happiness hereafter. It is a weird theory, unthinkable to anyone who *can* think. But there it is; people use these words about faith and being saved, but they do not attach any defensible idea to them. Their idea is one

which can be knocked to pieces in two minutes of argument.

*Sin* is another word with which people juggle. They talk about original sin; they say that a little baby comes into the world cursed for ever because Adam ate an apple which Eve is said to have handed to him. No one has ever tried to verify that story, but they make the most appalling sentence depend upon it. The whole thing is baseless; when we come to look for a foundation it is all floating in the air; it means nothing at all. Belief in such nonsense is not *faith*; it is absolutely irrational; it is mere stupidity.

This idea of sin has been erected into a frightful bugbear, a sort of awful curse from which it is only with incredible difficulty that men can escape at all. There is no such thing in this world. We are all evolving, and some of us, I freely admit, are evolving slowly; in the process of that slow evolution we make mistakes, we do things we should not do. We may call those mistakes sin if we like. It is a word I avoid, because it has such horrible connotations. Then further we are told that we should have the conviction of sin and feel that we are worms and not men, all of which is really dishonouring to God, though it is done in the name of religion. When we make a bad mistake and look back and recognize it, we do feel rather small, and realize that we ought to have known a great deal better than that. It is quite salutary for us to think so for a moment because it may help us not to make the same mistake again, but the idea of erecting that mistake into a frightful nightmare, by labelling it as a deadly sin and

saying we must be convicted of it, is not only useless but is also hypocrisy. No one who is normal ever does feel that he is hopelessly evil; if he does he is very much in error and in need of help and encouragement from someone who knows better. The Christ is within everyone of us, sinners though we may be, and that Christ in us is our hope of glory, and it is by means of that, and through that, that we shall rise out of this condition of error which we call sin into a condition of righteousness where such slips are rare.

People talk about the forgiveness of sin, and make a fetish of it. The theory of the forgiveness of sin commonly held appears to be something like wiping writing off a slate. We have done wrong; we have only to say we are sorry and believe in Jesus, and it is all rubbed out. I am not going to say that I wish it could be done as easily as that; because, if it were, the laws of the universe would be upset. There is an absolute law of cause and effect, and no one can do wrong without suffering the consequences of that wrong, without having to atone for it in the sense of making up for it as far as he can. The truth underlying absolution is not that our sin is forgiven, but that the distortion which is produced by putting ourselves wrong can be straightened out and put right for us.

Did you ever think how weird is the doctrine of the forgiveness of sins as commonly held? The person asks God to forgive him, and expects that He will do so. Suppose he did not ask God? The suggestion is that He would bear a grudge against the man. Is that a thing we have any right to say against our loving Father? We should not hold a

grudge against a tiny child because he did not ask us to forgive him. We could not be so wicked as that. We should probably say: "Poor little fellow; I daresay he is sorry by this time, I hope he will not do it again." And we should try to arrange things so that he would not. The idea of God holding a grudge against us and needing to be asked to forgive us is an outrage on the Fatherhood of God.

Then people talk about "the fear of God," and that is a very sad thing. The whole idea of the fear of God is a horror which should be cast out. Have we not been told to love God and that God is love; that perfect love casteth out fear? When people talk about a God-fearing man they are probably thinking of various texts in the bible in which the Greek word *theosebeia* is translated *fear of God*. The true meaning is deep reverence for God. There is a text: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Substituting reverence for fear, I entirely agree with that; unless we know something of God, unless we feel reverence for Him we are far from being wise, but to say we should *fear* the loving Father is an outrage; it is a wrong use of the term. Christ taught us that God is a loving Father; I think we may accept His statement.

In the same way "the grace of God" is distorted. They are nearer to facts there, but if we try to treat their notions scientifically people rise in their wrath and say that we are blaspheming, that we are materializing the idea. The grace of God is a mighty spiritual power in the same definite sense that physical forces are powers, but it works in finer matter. It is a measurable force, a force of which more or less can be poured out upon us. It has not

been the fashion to be scientific about religion, but it is necessary that we should be scientific; it is time that we examined ourselves as to our faith and tried to know what we believe and why, and on what we base our belief. We are called upon to obey and follow our Lord the Christ, but it is not because of any fear of Him or of the consequences if we did not follow; it is the love of Christ which constraineth us, as we are told in the Epistle for the first Sunday in Lent. It is because of our love and gratitude to Him that we must follow Him, that we must strain every nerve to make ourselves like Him. That is our reason—not fear but love.

On the other Sundays in Lent we take up some of the different mistakes we often make—the mistake of evil thinking and evil speaking, the mistake of gossiping, the mistake of pride. So let us take the Lenten idea to our hearts, let us examine ourselves and put right whatever we can find that is wrong; so shall we be able fully to enjoy and benefit by that mighty outpouring of the Resurrection—so shall we be able to enjoy a happy Easter in the true sense of the old greeting for Easter Day; so shall Christ rise within our hearts as well as in the outer world.

#### REFRESHMENT SUNDAY.

The Fourth Sunday in Lent is usually called Refreshment Sunday—a name which was given to it in the Middle Ages for two reasons. First, because it is the middle point of Lent—*la mi-carême* as they call it in French—and therefore it was the custom to allow a certain amelioration of the rigours of the fast. Another reason for the name was the

gospel appointed for this day—the gospel which tells the story of the feeding of the five thousand men with five barley loaves and two small fishes. Whether that story is historically accurate or not does not concern us in the least. The thing is not an impossibility; it has been done in India by professors of quite another faith. It is simply a question of materialization—of the multiplying of matter. It may have happened in Palestine; whether it did or not I do not know, nor is it really of any importance. At any rate, it is a beautiful symbol of the way in which Christ does feed His people with living bread of which, however little there seems to be, there is yet enough for all.

The Fourth Sunday in Lent is one of the two days in the year on which the lovely rose-coloured vestments are worn, to give us the atmosphere of that tender and all-embracing love which must be the central quality underlying all our preparation for the reception of divine grace. Many people who do not understand, who have not taken the trouble to study, or in whose way it has not come to study, are disposed to cavil at the arrangement of the Church, at the vestments which its ministers wear, at the sequence of its year and of its services, and so on. They do not realize that there is a science of all these things, and that every one of them is calculated to produce a definite effect. They should not, however, make the mistake of regarding everyone as of the same disposition as themselves. It is not without reason that violet is used during Lent, and white at Easter. As I have already said, it is all part of a scheme; it is a question of rates of vibration, and of the influence which it is desired

to radiate. Some are far more sensitive than others to all these things; there are those who are impatient of them, but there are also those upon whom all these influences play with effect, and so they find that the services of the Church help them. They fit in wonderfully with their moods, and they uplift them. It is exactly what they are calculated to do.

In these days of the development of the lower mind our feelings are somewhat in abeyance. In the Middle Ages, when people were not developing the lower mind in the same way, their feelings were much more prominent, and they sensed such influences more. Whether we individually feel these things or not, there are thousands who do, and it is ridiculous that men who do not understand a particular line should condemn others who comprehend it and find it helpful. We cannot all travel by the same road; some go one way and some another, and these paths to God are like so many languages in which we can express the same thing in various ways. It may be our way to express ourselves by devotion; it may be another man's way to express the highest and best of himself by profound thought, by the development of wisdom. Yet another may develop himself best by outer work, by activity. All these are paths, and they all lead to God. Why should a man who has found one of them, revile others who are not doing exactly what he is doing, but are going some other way? God inspires all these, and God receives them all into Himself, and it matters little by which of the paths men draw near to Him so long as they do approach Him.

The Sundays towards the end of the period of Lent have each a name of their own. The fifth Sunday is called Passion Sunday, and there is for it a special and beautiful Roman Office Hymn, *Vexilla Regis prodeunt*, "The Royal banners forward go, the Cross shines forth in mystic glow." For those who hold what the great doctor Origen called the somatic view of Christianity, the celebration of Lent is steadily darkening towards its terrible close. The week following that fifth Sunday is called Passion Week, and then we come to Palm Sunday, which is the Sunday next before Easter, and after that comes the Holy Week in which occur Maundy Thursday and Good Friday.

#### HOLY WEEK

In the Liberal Catholic Church we lay no obligation whatever upon any member of the congregation in the matter of belief; all are perfectly free to take any of the old stories just as they choose—literally or symbolically; that does not matter in the least to us, the clergy, though we have quite definite opinions of our own. People attend church to be helped, and we try through the sacraments which the Christ has ordained to give the help required. What they believe is their affair and not ours, and that is the only basis of perfect freedom of thought. That the Liberal Catholic Church gives to all her members without stint and without question.

Our Christian brothers in other branches of the Church make this period of the Passion and the Resurrection the commemoration of terrible physical sufferings; and they read the detailed story of those sufferings of the Christ, dwelling upon their grue-



some details in order to rouse in their people feelings of pity, devotion and gratitude to the Christ Who bore so much for them. We know through clairvoyant investigation that these events are not historical, and that therefore all through the ages a vast amount of the deepest sympathy and pity has been lavished upon a dream—upon something that, as it is generally understood, did not happen at all, for the body of the disciple Jesus was killed by stoning, and not by crucifixion. Whether on the whole that story has done more harm than good, it is not so easy for us to say. I cannot but feel it to have been responsible for a vast amount of harm; but on the other hand I see that the legend was in its way a noble legend, and that many may have been helped and benefited thereby.

Yet surely the truth is nobler and far more beautiful, for all of this is a splendid piece of allegory. The suffering, the cross, the passion, the death, the burial, the resurrection—all of these are symbols of what happens at the fourth of the great Initiations, that of the Arhat. I do not in the least deny, I do not wish for a moment to minimize, the suffering and the crucifixion that come as part of that great step; not physical suffering truly, but none the less real and terrible. But when we understand what it means we shall regard that suffering from a very different point of view. It is true enough, it is terrible enough, and it will come to every one of us just as it came in His time to the Christ Himself. Remember what our hymn tells us:

And on the Holy Cross Christ hangeth but in vain,  
Unless within our hearts it be set up again.

But surely we should look at that just as our soldiers looked at the ghastliness of the great war. It would be difficult for us to exaggerate, or even to imagine, the horrors through which men had to go there on the battle-front; yet they did not emphasize those horrors; they took them as coming in the day's work, as part of a terrible duty that had to be done. They thought always of the end for which they were fighting—the deliverance of the world from the incarnated hosts of evil, the peace, the happiness, the freedom which were to be gained by that fight. So when we look forward (as well we may, as indeed we are intended to do) through this period of the celebration of the Passion to the great Initiation through which one day we shall have to pass like all others, while we know of the suffering, surely we too shall count it as joy in view of the glory and splendour and power which it will bring us, the power to help, the strength to forward evolution. It is for the sake of that that we dare it, that we meet it. It is not for us to whine over the personal sufferings or to exaggerate the horrors, but rather to look at it from the point of view of the good of the world.

Surely in that way we shall gain more from the contemplation of the thought of the Passion and the Crucifixion. Not that they are one whit less real to us when we take the spiritual interpretation, for we know that whether in that incarnation of the Christ the death and the resurrection took place literally in Palestine or not, they do take place in the life of every Christian man, and it is that which concerns us—not the particular happening in time, but the perpetual passing of developed humanity through these different stages. These things are

facts; they do occur in human evolution, ordained by the unsearchable wisdom of God; so it is well that we should dwell upon them not from the point of view of horror and suffering, but as remembering the glory that lies behind and the inner meaning of it all.

I remember being taught as a child what was believed to be the sequence of events commemorated in that Holy Week which is the culmination and conclusion of Lent. It was explained that the popular excitement and acclamation of Palm Sunday was the direct and immediate result of the raising of Lazarus on the previous day. It seemed to me (and still seems) that the exigencies of the story require a somewhat longer interval between those two events; but perhaps that is only another instance of the characteristic which is so prominent in the Mystery-Drama of the gospels—that the whole presentation is not that of a continuous narrative, but of a number of separate scenes intended to be acted. At any rate those of us who know anything of the nature of oriental races can readily understand the commotion and the enthusiasm which would be aroused by the resurrection of Lazarus; we can imagine how people from the neighbouring villages would eagerly crowd into Bethany and wait about for the chance of seeing Jesus or Lazarus.

Just so they were all waiting to see Him on that Sunday morning when He started to go into the town, and the moment He appeared they all began to cheer. They crowded round Him, they made a sort of rough procession to escort Him; they tore great palm-leaves from the trees and waved them before Him; and as soon as the idea occurred to them that He was a great saint, a great prophet, they took off

their outer garments and threw them down in His path—not only to do honour to Him, but to have the garments blessed by the touch of the feet of the Great One, or even the feet of the ass upon which He rode. To us this seems a strange, exaggerated action, but it is quite natural to an oriental. Of course we must not think of our ugly modern clothing, but of the loose flowing robes of the East—the shawl-like outer cloth which is thrown round the shoulders. I have seen the very same thing done before a Muhammadan saint who had the reputation of being unusually holy; and on at least two occasions the same quaint honour has been paid to me when I delivered some lecture which specially appealed to the religious enthusiasm of an Eastern audience.

So Jesus rode on His way, the centre of a noisy, gesticulating crowd. Naturally people came running from all sides, asking what was happening; and when they were told: "This is Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth, Who raised Lazarus from the dead," they joined the procession, and shouted with the rest. The Jews had always the reputation of being a turbulent and riotous people, and when their authorities saw this huge, excited crowd approaching the city they became alarmed and ordered out their soldiers, fearing the beginning of a revolution. And even when they were reassured for the moment, their minds were still disturbed, and they consulted together as to what should be done with Jesus. They felt that He was becoming altogether too popular, that He had far too great an influence with the people—an influence which might easily be used (and indeed had

to some extent already been used) in opposition to theirs, so that they feared the overthrow of their authority. They felt, too, that any one who upset the decent conventions of ordinary life by such a revolutionary innovation as raising a dead man to life was a dangerous person, who needed instant repression lest He should still further disturb the calm current of respectability which had floated them into positions of wealth and power. So they plotted for His removal by the simple process of judicial murder.

His disorderly but enthusiastic little procession reached the city, and He wended His way to the synagogue and began to talk to the people, as was His wont. He seems to have spent much time in this way during Monday and Tuesday; in fact, nearly half of His recorded utterances are said to have been delivered on those two days. He was something of a popular hero, not only through what He had done in the matter of Lazarus, but because of His fearless and scathing denunciations of the party in power; so the authorities were afraid to effect His arrest openly, lest they should provoke a rescue by the mob. They seem to have felt it necessary to act quickly, as huge crowds of excitable and perfervid pilgrims were daily pouring into the city in preparation for the great annual feast of the Pass-over; so they allowed it to be understood that they were willing to pay a good price to anybody who would arrange a convenient opportunity for His secret and expeditious capture. This aroused the cupidity of Judas Iscariot, who was the treasurer of the tiny peripatetic community, and he earned for himself the contempt and loathing of countless

millions by offering to betray his Master into the hands of that unsavoury administration. This piece of rascality was concocted on the Wednesday, and we used to be told that it was because of the shame brought on humanity by that atrocious action that the Church of England orders its lugubrious litany to be recited on that day each week—on Wednesday in horror of the betrayal of the Christ, and on Friday because of His death. Why that most dreary of lucubrations should also be assigned to Sunday was not explained, unless on the theory that it was only on that day that a sufficient number of people could be depressed by its weird jumble of servility and gloom.

Thursday is always regarded and celebrated as the day of the institution of the Holy Eucharist, although many students consider that, when one takes into account the various happenings mentioned in the story, it must have been after midnight when that institution took place, and so really Good Friday morning. Certainly according to Jewish calculations it must have been Friday, for the Hebrew reckoned his days from sunset to sunset. I have explained in a previous volume of this series (*The Science of the Sacraments*) that the marvellous change which is produced in the sacred Elements by the act of consecration can be achieved only between the hours of midnight and noon—a fact which tells in favour of the ancient tradition which places the institution after midnight. However that may be, Thursday is commonly associated with the Holy Sacrament, so that if a church has only one week-night service, it is usually on that day.

The name Maundy Thursday is a corruption of the Latin *mandatum*, which is the first word of the special antiphon of the day. It means "commandment" and refers not only to the new commandment "that we love one another," but also to the order first given on that day two thousand years ago: "Do this in remembrance of Me."

According to the gospel story many events are crowded into that fateful night between the Thursday and the Friday—the visit to the Garden of Gethsemane, the actual betrayal (what was commemorated on Wednesday was the *plot* for the betrayal) the arraignment before the Sanhedrim, before Pilate and before Herod, and the final condemnation. Of course as an attempt at a history of actual happenings it is manifestly impossible, but we must never forget that the writers had no such intention in their minds, and would probably have stood aghast if they could have foreseen the astounding yet almost universal misinterpretation which awaited their literary efforts. On the other hand, if any touch of prevision came to them, they would confidently rely on this obvious impossibility to prevent so strange a mistake. If these stories had not from the days of our childhood been surrounded for us by a kind of glamour of sacrosanctity, we should never have taken them for history; and when once the idea that they are the scenes of a religious Mystery-Drama is fully understood, it explains everything so clearly that one cannot doubt its truth.

The evangelists disagree somewhat as to exact hours, as well they may; but their story is that Jesus died some time on Friday, and that His body was buried that same evening in a rock tomb by

Joseph of Arimathea. It lay there all through Saturday, but was raised therefrom very early on the Sunday morning—directly after midnight, according to one tradition of the Church. This gives the body about thirty hours in the tomb, thus just satisfying the requirements of the statement that “on the third day He rose from the dead,” but by no means fulfilling the prophecy that the Son of Man should be for three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. Other traditions extend the time in the grave to forty hours, as has already been said.

“Which things are an allegory,” and a remarkably accurate allegory. I have explained that the whole drama is intended to put before us a vivid presentation of the progress of the Initiate, and that its stages indicate the great Initiations which are, as it were, milestones on that mighty journey of the human soul. The events attributed to the Holy Week and to Easter symbolize the fourth of these steps, and indeed closely follow its essential characteristics. Those who have passed through that trial are bound by vows of secrecy as to detail, just as is a Masonic neophyte; but they violate no pledge when they tell us that this gospel story follows its broad outline with considerable fidelity. The candidate seems always to meet with a certain amount of earthly triumph and recognition, and he takes advantage of that to do what he can in the way of teaching and helping others, that being the duty laid upon him. His endeavours stir up envy, hatred and violent opposition, and among those who have received help from him there is always found one who will turn upon him with treachery, bear false



witness against him, traduce his fair fame and misrepresent his actions. Shame and obloquy of all sorts are heaped upon him, and though modern laws do not permit physical crucifixion, the amazing spite and bitter vindictiveness of his persecutors show how gladly they would revive the fires of Smithfield if their furious malignity were not restrained by the advance of civilization.

Ruysbroek, the Flemish mystic of the fourteenth century, writes of such candidates: "Sometimes these unhappy ones are deprived of the good things of earth, of their friends and relations, and are deserted by all creatures; their holiness is mistrusted and despised, men put a bad construction upon all the works of their life, and they are rejected and disdained by all those who surround them; and sometimes they are afflicted by divers diseases." And another great mystic, Madame Blavatsky, writes even more forcibly and truly: "Where do we find in history that messenger, grand or humble, Initiate or neophyte, who, when he was made the bearer of some hitherto concealed truth, was not crucified and rent to shreds by the dogs of envy, malice and ignorance? Such is the terrible occult law; and he who does not feel in himself the heart of a lion to scorn the savage barking, and the soul of a dove to forgive the poor ignorant fools, let him give up the Sacred Science." (*The Secret Doctrine*, iii, 90.)

When the outburst of insanity has culminated, there comes a period of peace and obscurity, and then (if the candidate has borne the trial satisfactorily) he attains the step for which he has so long been striving, and the success which crowns his efforts is so much greater than he has ever dreamed,

that it is indeed a resurrection into a nobler life and a higher world. But the poor ignorant persecutors never know that.

The compilers of the gospels evidently knew the Egyptian form of the fourth Initiation, for many of its details emerge in their presentation of it. The introduction of the cross itself is part of the Egyptian symbolism, for it was never a Jewish method of execution, and at the real date of the death of the body of Jesus the Romans had not yet annexed Palestine. The "preaching to the spirits in prison" on Saturday also points to the plan adopted on the banks of the Nile; but all this belongs rather to the doctrinal explanation which I hope to give in a later volume of this series.

#### THE SERVICES IN HOLY WEEK

Owing to the lamentable materialization of the sublime allegory into physical history, the Church services for Holy Week early took on a gloomy tinge, and presently became so dismal and depressing that the name "Divine Service" could no longer in any sense be applied to them. The Roman ceremonies are very complicated and elaborate, and show distinct traces of the pre-Christian worship of the Sun-God. The Church of England has carefully eliminated all the picturesqueness of the traditional rites, and left us nothing but a series of long and inexpressibly wearisome readings. Some of her more ritualistic churches, however, have ventured to go a little beyond the dreary prescriptions of her prayer-book and have introduced the old office of Tenebræ. They have also invented a new liturgical item to commemorate the three hours from twelve to three

on Good Friday during which Jesus is supposed to have hung upon the cross. This usually consists of the recitation of the seven Words or sayings to which He is represented to have given utterance at that time, each being followed by a short address and the singing of a litany.

*Palm Sunday*

In the Liberal Catholic Church we have perpetuated such of the ancient ceremonies as we can conscientiously use, while omitting those which lack any rational meaning or historical justification. The temporary triumph of Palm Sunday was an actual occurrence in the life of Jesus, and also represents a definite fact in the experience of every Initiate, so we follow the traditional rites for that day, beginning our chief service with the Blessing of the Palms. Leaves or branches of the date palm (or if it is unobtainable, of some other plant resembling it as closely as possible) in sufficient number to provide one for each member of the congregation, are laid upon a side table in the chancel and covered with a white or purple veil. The procession enters the church as usual, and when the chancel is reached the palm-branches are uncovered, and blessed by the priest, who sprinkles them with holy water and censes them. They are then distributed to the clergy, choir and people, and a branch is tied with violet ribbon to the top of the processional cross. Where congregations are large and palm-branches difficult to obtain, it has sometimes been the custom to make small crosses out of the leaflets of the palm, and distribute those among the people.

The procession is now formed in the chancel, and moves down the nave and out at the west door, every member of it carrying his palm. The hymn sung at this point is usually "Hosanna! loud hosannas the little children sang." When the procession has passed out into the porch the church-door is closed, two cantors being usually left inside to direct the singing of the congregation. The people within now turn to the west and sing the opening verse of the traditional Palm Sunday hymn, "All glory, laud and honour," which was composed for this service in the year 810 by Theodulf, Bishop of Orleans. This verse is repeated by those outside the door. The two cantors and the congregation then sing the next verse, "Thou art the King of Israel," and wait while the refrain (which is the same as the first verse) is sung by those without. The hymn is continued in the same way, each of the verses being sung inside the church, while the refrain always replies from outside; but in the refrain after the last verse all join. When that is finished the crucifer knocks at the door with the lower end of the staff of the processional cross; it is immediately opened by the cantors, and the procession enters with its palms, singing some appropriate hymn. The Holy Eucharist then begins and proceeds as usual. The people carry home their branches or crosses of palm, and preserve them until the following year.

A curious little mistake is sometimes made in this quaint old ritual in the Roman Church, the cross-bearer kicking at the door instead of knocking with the staff of the processional cross. This arose from a mistranslation by Dale of the directions given in the monumental work of Baldeschi, *col suo piede*

being interpreted as referring to the foot of the man instead of the foot of the cross.

There are no especial ceremonies on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of Holy Week. The Roman Church recites the office called *Tenebrae* on Wednesday night—and indeed on the nights of Thursday and Friday as well. The chief feature of this service (from which its name is taken) is that during its performance all the lights in the church are gradually extinguished until only one candle is left, which is then hidden behind the altar. In the darkness a great crash is made to signify the overthrow of nature at the death of its Great Architect, then the lighted candle is produced and shown again for a moment, and the congregation all rise and depart in silence. A weird service, and not particularly useful, so far as we can see; therefore we have omitted it.

#### *Maundy Thursday*

For the same reason we do not perpetuate the ceremony of the washing of the feet of thirteen poor men on Maundy Thursday. Among us that day is kept as one of festal splendour in honour of the institution of the Holy Eucharist, and at the High Celebration we carry the Blessed Sacrament round the church in procession, just as at Benediction. Three additional large Hosts are consecrated at this celebration and reserved for subsequent use. In the evening a ciborium containing these three Hosts is carried out in solemn procession. These Hosts, together with some particles for the possible need of the sick, should be reserved in a tabernacle in the sacristy or some other convenient place out of the church. Two of these Hosts are required for the

Eucharist of the Presanctified on Good Friday and Holy Saturday respectively, and the third is to be placed in the tabernacle on the high altar before the first Celebration on Easter Day, or on the Saturday evening if the first Vespers of Easter and Benediction be celebrated.

After the evening service on Maundy Thursday the altar is stripped of flowers, cloths and frontal, the tabernacle is left open and empty, and the altar cross is again veiled in violet—as indeed it has been all through the Holy Week, except that the veil was changed to white for Maundy Thursday. On that day the bishop in his cathedral consecrates the holy oils to be used during the succeeding year.

### *Good Friday*

On Good Friday the altar is covered with a plain linen cloth and violet frontal, but otherwise is unadorned. No candles are lighted. The service begins with the Asperges in either the long or short form (but omitting the collect for the Angel). The Collects, Epistle and Gospel follow on immediately. After the Gospel follows the sermon if there is one; and immediately after that follows the ancient service of reverence to the cross. The altar cross is placed in the centre of the altar and unveiled; and as the veil is taken off the people kneel. The officiant and any other clergy and acolytes approach the altar from the further end of the chancel by three stages, and at the end of each stage they all genuflect simultaneously. At the first genuflection the priest chants the words, "Holy art Thou, O God," which are repeated by the congregation. At the second genuflection he chants, "Holy art Thou, O

Mighty One," and again the people repeat what he says. At the third genuflection the words are, "Holy art Thou, O Immortal One; pour out Thy love upon us." And again the people reply in the same words. This is one of the most ancient of the ceremonies, and as it is performed even to-day in the Roman Church the old form is preserved; for the priest speaks his sentences in Greek, while the congregation answer him in Latin. Considering, however, the impossibility of getting the average man of to-day to pronounce these words correctly, we have thought it desirable to translate the versicles into English.

After this the hymn "Take up thy cross" is sung, and towards the end of it the candles are lighted on the altar and the cross is moved back to its accustomed place. A procession is now formed which goes out to fetch the Host, and returns to the high altar with lights and incense, the celebrant bearing the Host in a ciborium. The Host is placed on the corporal, and wine and water are poured into the chalice, but without the usual prayers. The priest censes the offerings on the altar in the usual way and resumes the Eucharist at the *Orate Fratres*, using only two short prayers; he then elevates the Host, breaks it over the chalice, and drops in a particle as usual, but in silence. He then recites the prayer "O Thou Who in this adorable Sacrament," and himself communicates as usual. Immediately after this he concludes the service with the Post-Communion prayer, and the altar cloth is then removed.

This curiously shortened form is called in the Roman Church the Mass of the Presanctified. It is

used in that Church and in ours on Good Friday and Holy Saturday only, but in the Eastern Church a similar form is enjoined for all the days in Lent except Saturdays and Sundays. The traditional offices of Good Friday and Holy Saturday are protracted by the reading of long passages from the Old Testament; but the whole of that is omitted in our services. Our attitude towards the events which these days are supposed to commemorate is so different from that of the other Churches that the form of service which they prescribe is entirely unsuited for us. Good Friday, however, offers an excellent opportunity for the priest to explain to his people whatever he knows with regard to the great Initiation which the Church here symbolizes for us. This is in one way the last of the purely human Initiations. There follows yet one, the Fifth—that of the Asekha, which means “The man who has no more to learn” (that is, with regard to our planetary chain)—and that is symbolized in the Christian system by the Ascension and the descent of the Holy Ghost on Whitsunday. But that Initiation takes the man out of humanity and makes him a superman, so it may be said that that which we are now celebrating—the Arhat—is the last of the purely human Initiations.

The question is often asked why there should be so much trouble and suffering associated with it. It is part of our teaching that no suffering can ever come to any man unless he has deserved it—that there is a mighty law of cause and effect in obedience to which comes suffering or joy, as the case may be. Therefore the man who is about to wind up his affairs as a human being, and pass into an altogether



higher state, must clear off before he goes any arrears of karma, as they call it in India—any debt outstanding as the result of his actions. A certain amount of that result remains until the very end of his human career, and then it comes upon him at this time—the time at which he is taking that final step. We are all generating causes all the while—every day, every moment, by our thoughts, our words, our actions, we are setting something in motion. Inevitably it all reacts upon us, whether it be good or whether it be evil. The man who has reached the level of that higher Initiation is little likely to be making much evil karma, because already he stands far above the average in spiritual development. Necessarily, therefore, most of the karma he makes will unquestionably be good, but since he is still a human being, some of it will still be evil, although the proportion may be small. Now although this karma is a natural law and works just as absolutely as the laws of physical nature down here, yet it is also administered by officials who are appointed to supervise its application, and there are cases in which they interfere with what otherwise would be the direct action of the force. They can never lessen the payment to be made by one iota; that which a man sets in motion will return to him. The officials cannot decrease it, but they can delay or hasten its action, and they do that according as they think that it will be for the good of the man. We can see that in the earlier stages of man's development, when he is still a savage, when he is the prey of violent passions of all sorts, he would naturally make a great deal of evil karma, and if it all came down on him at once there would be no

progress; he would be crushed to the earth; therefore in all those early stages of his growth it is retarded. But when the man begins to have sufficient good karma to offset it, gradually the unpleasant karma is released, and what may be called his fate or destiny for a life is really the amount of that karma which is cut off and given to him to work out in that life. So a certain amount remains even to the end; but it must then be cleared up.

That is what happens at this Arhat Initiation. If we want an example of how such things work out, we have only to read the autobiography of Mrs. Besant, and we shall see how suffering is heaped upon one who is about to attain. There are many other instances. Quotations from Madame Blavatsky and Ruysbroek show us that for many centuries the idea has been quite well understood by people undertaking this higher life. They know that they must clear off whatever remains of their debt to the divine law, and they are willing to face all the trouble and the pain involved in doing so, for the sake of the power they will then gain to do good to other people.

But we in daily life, who are far from attaining such an Initiation, find that we have a certain amount of sorrow and trouble converging upon us. That also is the result of what we have done in past lives. There is a curious text which says, "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth." In the old days I never knew what that meant, and it is not common sense as it is usually understood. The reality behind it is this: If a man does exceptionally well in life, if he clears off all the early karma that is apportioned to him, sometimes the Lords of Karma

will give him a little more. They will, to all appearances, repay him for being a good man by giving him some exceptional sorrow and trouble; but the reason is that they think him worthy, think him strong enough to pay off a little more of his debt, and so to draw nearer to the time when he will be free from it all. Therefore it is a compliment that the Lords of Karma should heap additional suffering on him; they are giving him the sorrow of two lives in one, and thus saving him time; they are decreasing by one the number of lives that lie before him, and drawing him that much nearer to his freedom.

But we in daily life have another task before us; we have to try to develop ourselves for the future. That is what is meant by what is said in the Gospel for Good Friday: "If any man will not take up his cross and follow Me, he cannot be My disciple." That means that every man must take hold of his lower nature and subdue it. It is exceedingly good for the man—the soul—but it is extremely unpleasant for the lower nature which is being subdued; yet it is an absolute necessity, and because down here these lower vehicles are so unamenable, it does come to taking up a definite cross and bearing a definite amount of inconvenience. Any one who has a bad habit will find that there is no little suffering involved in suppressing it. If a person has been in the habit of taking drugs, it is a terrible fight for him to conquer the habit. It is no less a fight to conquer a bad temper, to conquer laziness, to conquer the habit of constant criticism and carping. All these things are definite crosses, but we must take up our cross and carry it, or we cannot be the

Christ's true disciples. So until we have got rid of our failings a certain amount of sorrow and suffering is inevitable in daily life for those of us who are trying to get on.

But do not think that the sorrow and suffering are pleasing to the Deity. That is the horrible delusion that ran through mediaeval ideas on this subject—the thought that to fast, to torture the body in some way, was actually pleasing to God. It is *not* pleasing to God. There is an older scripture than any of ours which is much wiser than that, for there the Logos is represented as saying to His people: "Some, being ignorant, torture Me, dwelling in their bodies"; because all life is the divine life, and those who torture the body are through it reacting upon the God within. Asceticism of that kind is not in itself useful, and is often harmful. It is never a good thing to torture the body, but it is necessary to learn to control all our vehicles, the physical, the astral, the mental; and the doing of that is very often tiresome and troublesome. Consequently it does amount to taking up a cross, and not being ashamed to face it. It has to be done. If there is sorrow, trouble, pain, we have brought that upon ourselves by allowing the bad habits to grow in the past. We must face the suffering and live it down. That is the real Good Friday lesson—that the cross we take up in imitation of Christ is the conquest of the lower nature. It is not a thing to do lightly; it is a serious undertaking; if we will not face it in this life, that only means that the bad habits will grow stronger, and therefore we shall have more sorrow to conquer in some future life. Therefore it is only wisdom and

common sense to take these matters in hand now. This is the occasion on which the Church reminds us of that. Let us find out our weak points and conquer them; that is the real meaning of the story of Good Friday. If we do that we shall also understand and enter into and realize the glory of the resurrection, the freedom from that slavery, from the evil habit, the coming up into the higher life which we commemorate on Easter Sunday.

It does not matter to what extent the story in the gospel is historical; these events probably did not occur as described in that life in Palestine, but it is quite certain that our Lord, however long ago, has passed through every stage which we have to go through. In all things He has been tempted as we are; in all things He is our Example and our Leader. He does not ask us to go through anything which He Himself has not endured before. So it is well that we shall have our eyes open, that we should understand that we are not making mistakes through materializing and degrading the whole of this beautiful allegory.

Therefore, on this day the priest might well speak to his people of the necessity of self-sacrifice in the religious life, and of the conquest of the lower nature by the higher. If an evening service be said upon Good Friday it should be Complin, as neither Vespers nor Benediction is permissible.

### *Holy Saturday*

The ancient services of Holy Saturday are quaint and complicated, and many of them originated long before the foundation of Christianity. The procuring of the new fire, for example, may be traced back

to the very earliest Zoroastrian times—not only to the preaching of the last Zoroaster, some fifteen hundred years before Christ, but much farther back still to the time of the first of his long line of predecessors. The rubric in our liturgy prescribes that at a convenient time before the service fire is kindled outside the church. It is desirable that the tinder from which this fire is ignited should be lighted from the sun by means of a lens, but if this is not possible, flint and steel should be used. The altar is covered with a plain linen cloth and violet frontal, but otherwise unadorned. No candles are yet lighted. The service begins with the Asperges. Then a procession is formed, which moves to the door of the church. The glowing embers are now placed in an appropriate vessel, such as an open thurible, and the priest blesses the new fire. Charcoal for burning the incense is now lighted from the new fire and placed in another thurible, and a specially prepared triple candle is lighted from the new fire and blessed. The procession returns, the deacon (vested in a white dalmatic) bearing the triple candle which was lighted from the new fire. As the procession passes up the church four genuflections are simultaneously made by all who take part in it; and at each of these the deacon raises the triple candle on high and sings, “Christ is our Light,” to which the people respond, “May His Light shine in our hearts.” When they reach the altar he recites the *Munda Cor Meum*, and the celebrant makes the usual response, after which the deacon reads as a gospel the first twelve verses of that according to St. John,

A great candle standing in a high candlestick at the corner of the space on the gospel side of the altar has previously been prepared. The deacon now attaches to this candle five grains of incense, and the priest especially blesses it. The deacon then lights it and the altar candles from his triple candle, and an appropriate collect is recited. The deacon then resumes the violet dalmatic.

This great candle is called the Paschal candle, and is lighted at all celebrations of the Holy Eucharist and at Vespers, from Easter Day until the Feast of the Ascension, when it is solemnly extinguished after the Gospel. It reappears on Whitsun Eve (but without its candlestick) at the ceremony of the blessing of the font, in churches where that is performed.

It is the custom of the Roman Church to consecrate on this day the water that will be used for baptisms during the forthcoming year; and if there be any fit subjects, it is considered desirable that one or more baptisms should take place at this point. We also adopt this traditional observance, if there is a candidate for baptism; though we have preferred to consecrate water especially for baptism on each occasion when it is required. If the water is blessed now, the priest lowers the base of the triple candle into the water and makes with it the sign of the cross thrice. After this the Mass of the Presanctified follows, just as on the previous day.

In ancient times the people spent the night of Holy Saturday in prayer and watching, and it was often during the night that the water in the font was blessed and that catechumens were baptized in readiness to share in the celebration of the Resur-

rection at dawn. In preparation for all this, long discourses and scripture readings were given for the edification of the faithful. During the Middle Ages a tendency to anticipate liturgical events came increasingly and irresistibly into evidence, and now the Roman Church celebrates the Mass of the Resurrection as well as the blessing of the new fire and of the font on the Saturday morning. We in the Liberal Catholic rite have reverted to the older and surely sounder usage of not celebrating the Mass of the Resurrection until Easter morning. The service of Vespers on Saturday is, of course, that of Easter itself, and consequently is in every way as grand as it can be made.



## CHAPTER VIII

### EASTER

The festivals of the Church are divided into several classes according to their importance. As I have already explained, all the greater festivals have what is called an octave; that is to say, they are celebrated over the whole week and the eighth day is practically a repetition of the feast. Easter is the very greatest of them all—so great that its celebration lasts even longer, and in its honour we keep the great forty days, running on until the time of the Ascension; and during that period we burn the special Paschal candle for an indication that this is all part of the most splendid festival of the Christian year.

The word Easter is derived from *Eostre*, which is the name of the Anglo-Saxon goddess of Spring; there is a further derivation beyond that, because Eostre is only another form of Ishtar, Ashtaroth or Astarte, the Queen of Heaven, and even that in turn, if we go far enough back, comes from the Sanskrit *Us*, which means light; the word from which springs the title *Ushas*, the dawn maidens of the Vedas. So fundamentally Easter is the great festival of light—of the rising again of the Light of the World.

All the symbology of our evolution centres round the fountain and origin of that evolution—the Solar Deity, Who in the Greek philosophy was called the *Logos* of our system. *Logos* means “Word”; it is the Greek term used in the well-known and most beautiful text: “In the beginning was the Word,

and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Let us try to understand a little of what these words meant to their writer. Modern Christian belief has become largely material and non-philosophical, chiefly, as I have stated, because of its most unfortunate and persistent confusion of the very personal Jewish tribal deity Jehovah with the Supreme First Cause of all. Those who hold to that illogical confusion think of God as a Father, but a savage and tyrannical Father, jealous and cruel beyond all earthly experience, capriciously creating one man healthy and another full of fell disease from his very birth, throwing one man at birth into the lap of affluence and another into grinding poverty, and capable of casting either or both of these men into everlasting torture after death if they will not do violence to the intellect with which He has endowed them by pretending to believe certain incredible stories.

It is indeed most true that no man can comprehend God; but we can at least form a more intelligent conception of Him than this, and the first step towards such a conception is to recognize that He has many manifestations. Of the Absolute, the Infinite, the All-embracing, we can at our present stage know nothing, except that He is; we can say nothing that is not a limitation, and therefore inaccurate. But in Him are innumerable universes; in each universe millions of solar systems. Each solar system is the expression of a mighty Being Whom we call the Solar Deity, the Logos, the Word or expression of that infinite God. This Solar Deity is *to His system* all that men mean by the title God. He permeates it; there is nothing in it which is not

He; it is the manifestation of Him in such matter as we can see. Yet He exists above it and outside it as well, living a stupendous life of His own among His Peers. As is said in a scripture older than ours: "Having permeated this whole universe with one fragment of Myself, I remain."

Out of Himself this Solar Deity has called this mighty system into being. We who are in it are evolving fragments of His Life, sparks of His divine Fire; from Him we all have come; into Him we shall all return. He pours Himself down into matter, and thus suffers very truly an eclipse, a crucifixion, a death, and then rises again out of that matter in order that we, humanity, may be. The whole life of the solar system comes from Him, and therefore those who wish to fulfil that which He has indicated for us, those who wish to become wise, to become Initiates, must follow in His footsteps and develop as He has developed. All the ancient religions have taken up these ideas and have woven them into beautiful symbols, differing according to the religion, the race, and the people; and that very same symbolism, which indicates and describes the life of the Initiate in terms of the life of the Sun God, exists here in our Christian Church, and is shown in the course of our Christian Year.

The first half of that year (from Advent and Christmas up to Trinity Sunday) is as it were the active, eventful part of the solar life; and then the next six months are devoted to practising and preserving what we have learnt, so we pass into the comparatively calm waters of the Sundays after Trinity, when all goes on quite quietly with only occasional great festivals, none of which are con-

nected with the life-story of the Christ, which is also the life of the Sun-God. In all religions alike the Sun-God is always born in midwinter, directly after the shortest day, born at midnight of the 24th of December when the constellation Virgo is on the horizon. Hence it is said that He is born from the Virgin; and yet after the birth, when the sun has risen into the heavens, Virgo still remains the immaculate and heavenly Virgin. We see there a sidelight upon the story of the Immaculate Conception which appears not only in our religion but in many other older faiths.

The Sun-God is reborn, because the shortest day in the northern latitude is past; for months the days have been growing steadily shorter, as though He were being vanquished by the powers of darkness; but now this decrease is conquered, and He begins to reassert His powers, and the night slowly yields before Him. He has still to pass through the storms and tribulations of winter; and that is why the early life of the Sun-God in all religions is always surrounded by trouble and sorrow and difficulty. Krishna suffered much from persecution and had to be hidden among the cowherds as a child, because the king sought His life; the Lord Jesus was assailed by Herod, who attempted to kill Him; in all the stories of the Christ-life in any religion we find the same thread running through. Osiris Himself, thousands of years before, was cut to pieces and destroyed by Set, and only after that He was gathered together and rose again. In Ancient Egypt the people mourned over the death of Osiris, just as some Christians now mourn over the death of the Christ on Good Friday, and they rejoiced in

the great festival of the assembling together, the gathering together of that which had been separated, just as we now rejoice at Easter. Those old religions taught the same truths which we teach now; truth is one, although it is many-sided, and the presentations in those old days were not at all unlike the presentations put before us now.

Great are the storms and tribulations of winter, but the Sun-God survives them all, and His strength is steadily growing as the days lengthen towards the vernal equinox. At that equinox, as the name implies, day and night are exactly equal all over the world; and after it the sun crosses the line, so that in the northern hemisphere the days grow steadily longer, and the victory of the Sun-God over night is assured. He rises triumphantly over the line and ascends in the heavens, ripening the corn and the grape, pouring His Life into them to make their substance, and through them giving Himself to His worshippers.

Every one of us will have in turn to undergo the suffering symbolized by the cross; every one of us must learn how to give himself up utterly for others; but also for every one of us is the glory of Easter, the Resurrection, the victory, the triumph over matter.

That still remains ever and gloriously true. The victory which man gains over the lower nature is something which must be achieved in the life of every Christian man. There must come in his life a point at which he finally triumphs over the lower matter and rises out of the darkness of sin and ignorance into the light of wisdom and the higher, purer life. So Easter is not only the commemora-

tion of something in the far-distant past; it is a real day of celebration and of thankfulness for the victory which man has gained, is gaining, and will gain all through the ages over that which is lower, that which is less developed. In everyone of us there is the divine spark. The Christ said: "Ye are gods, ye are all the children of the Most High." In every one of us that divine spark is the true man, and that spark manifests himself in lower planes in the soul of man, the ego; and that in turn puts down to still lower levels the personality, which is what we know as the self down here. We are only a tiny fragment of a fragment of the magnificent reality. That which we see ourselves to be down here is as it were the seed of the future glory, but each one of us is also a soul; more than that, each is a spirit—the divine spark, slowly, slowly unveiling itself, slowly developing the qualities through which it can show itself, so that man may know it for what it is. At present the spark burns low; at present we are but at the beginning of the higher part of our evolution. We have won a great victory already in that we are here as men, we whose life has passed through all the lower stages, the kingdoms of the mineral, the vegetable, the animal, in ages long gone by. We have reached humanity, we have joined with the Father and have developed the soul; but that soul in its turn must grow and expand. Just as the personality has to become one with that soul, so has that soul in turn to become one with the divine spark which it represents, and then later still the divine spark sweeps back into the flame of which it is a part, and God is all in all.

Every stage of that progress is a victory; every stage of that progress is very truly a resurrection, a rising from the lower to the higher. The life of the Christ is a type of the life of every one of His followers. As I have said, we, too, must pass through those stages, those steps, those Initiations through which the Christ passed. We must suffer with Him all the sorrow and the pain of this past week, a veritable crucifixion of all that seems to the man worth having; but he who endures to the end, he who passes through that test as he should, for him the glory of Easter is to be also revealed, he also will gain the victory which makes him more than man, which raises him to the level of the Christ Spirit. That victory is for every one of us, and when we thank God for the Easter festival, we are thanking Him for that magnificent possibility, and also for the fact that there are many even now who have realized that. It is true that we see but few of them, for those who rise to such a height do pass somewhat away from the ordinary life of men, and necessarily must do so. Their aims are so different from those of most of us as yet, that their whole life must be different too. It is indeed difficult for them when their lot is still cast in the busy world. There are those who, having gained that rank, still need for the helping of others to work here on earth, but their life is one of tremendous strain, of very great trial in many ways. It cannot be a life of happiness in the ordinary sense of the word, although it is one of spiritual and interior happiness always, because there is a joy that nothing earthly can touch. No trouble, no pain, no suffering down here can affect the union with God which such men have

attained; and so even though their life down here must be ever one of strain and stress and struggle, yet the glory is so far greater that no words can ever express it—that this trifling affliction, which is but for a moment, weighs for them as nothing beside the far more exceeding weight of glory.

It is then that possibility for which we thank God, and as I have said, we thank Him also for the fact that there be many who have attained this, thereby showing us that it is possible for all of us. I fear that sometimes when the example of the great saints and the mighty Angels is held up before us it all seems to us unreachable, impossible. We feel perhaps: "Yes, it is all very well when one gets to that height; but what of us who seem so many miles away, so many ages behind?" Yet all who can see the higher levels, all who can see the steps of the ladder of life above us and below us, agree in telling us that they see men standing on every one of those steps, and that those who are now so far above us that in their knowledge and power they seem to us like gods, tell us that no long time ago they stood where we stand, and that we, if we persevere, shall beyond all possibility of doubt or question stand presently where they stand now.

"If Christ be risen, then shall we also rise" was the argument of old, and indeed that is true, and true in many different ways; in no way more than in regard to this symbol of which I speak.

Because He has conquered evil, because He has risen above matter, others have been able to follow Him and to do the same great deed; and because they have done it, we shall do it also. Easter is a magnificent reality to every one of us, just as it was



to Him. At Christmas we sing not only the commemoration of the victory of the birth of the Christ (even in one of its many symbolical forms); but we also sing a personal possibility. It was no figure of speech when we said: "Unto *us* a child is born, unto *us* a Son is given." The possibility is for us, for every one of us, and we should feel that with the glory of the resurrection at Easter, the mighty triumph of good over ill is an absolute and actual reality for each individual. Not a thing which is far away out of reach, that may or may not reflect its glory upon us, but a real definite step which each individual here and elsewhere will take in the future, a real thing which we can put before us with the certainty that we can gain it.

Some will gain it comparatively quickly; some will be slower in their rising; that is within *our* power. We may hasten or we may delay our journey to that glorious goal, but we cannot throw ourselves out of the path for ever. We cannot prevent our final victory of attainment, whatever we may do. There are men who are what we call wicked, which means that they have strayed far away from the direct path to God. They are wicked because they are foolish and ignorant, because they do not understand; but however far they may stray from the great path they will return to it, for that is what God meant for them from the beginning. They may turn their backs on the light; they may delay their progress, but the pressure of that definite Will will bring them back to the path sooner or later, and they who now are ignorant must learn the truth of God. They who sit in darkness, upon them shall the light shine; they who feel themselves at

present in the Garden of Gethsemane, they who feel themselves to be suffering a veritable crucifixion—for them also and inevitably shall come the glory of the Easter victory, the utter final triumph of good over ill.

In His Resurrection is the earnest of our own. Because the Logos Himself has entered matter, has triumphed, and has risen from it; because the Christ, the great World-Teacher, has passed through that experience also, it is certain for every one of us that, when our time comes to endure that suffering and that crucifixion, it will lead us, as it led Him, to the higher glory of the resurrection and to final triumph—a triumph which is final because it is based on knowledge. The Initiate *knows* that wherein he believes; and matter can never again conquer him who has learnt that all, matter and spirit alike, is equally part of God, and is equally included in the divine plan which leads us to this glorious victory. For the victory is to become one with Him—one with Him Who is All in All. Therefore is it an eternal victory; therefore is it forever; therefore can there be no doubt and no hesitation, because when we are one with Him we *know*. Then shall we be like Him, because we see Him as He is; because we really know, therefore we cannot fall back.

We may or may not regard the bible allegory which is read to us at Easter as representing a historical occurrence on the physical plane; our people are entirely free to believe or disbelieve; but most of us hold that it embodies in symbolical form a great and mighty truth. Therefore is Easter for us a glorious festival; therefore we celebrate it in every

way we can. Therefore have we a true joy in exchanging with one another the traditional Easter greeting. For just as on Christmas Day we wish one another a happy Christmas, so when the early Christians met one another on Easter Day one said to the other: "The Lord hath arisen," and the reply, was: "He is risen indeed." Not from an earthly grave, but from the grave of matter; risen in truth and in splendid reality—risen for evermore. So in his victory we triumph too, and in the joy of the Lord His Church rejoices also.

## CHAPTER IX

### ASCENSION DAY

Four of the festivals of the Christian Church have always been recognized as the greatest—Christmas, Easter, the Ascension Day and Whitsun-day. Three of these have been accepted by the outer world as public holidays; but that has not happened to the same extent in the case of the Ascension Day, probably because it falls so near to Whitsun-day—only ten days before it—and the latter, being a Sunday, is more convenient for popular observance. Ascension Day, however, is one of those which our Roman brethren call holy days of obligation, upon which all true members of the Church are supposed to join in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, and if possible communicate. The original reason for that requirement is that each of these great feasts has its own special type of force, which is outpoured upon it, and the Church wishes that her people should have the advantage of all these different streams of grace, in order that their characters may be properly rounded out and evenly developed.

Regarded from the point of view of the life of the Christ this is quite one of the greatest of the festivals. There is an old monastic hymn which rather beautifully emphasizes this, explaining that though we are full of joy at Christmas when the Angels come down and sing the birth of the Infant King, in all that joy there cannot but be some thought of the weary life, containing much of suffering, misunderstanding and persecution, which lay

before that Holy Child. And even at the greatest festival of all—the triumph over death at Easter—the Lord's life on earth is not yet finished; there still remains work for Him to do in the teaching of His people. But when we reach the Day of the Ascension all earthly labours are over, for this is the final triumph, when Christ takes His place for ever at the right hand of the Father. Assuredly from the point of view of the Church this should be, and according to our Liturgy it is, one of the greatest of the festivals.

From the inner point of view also it is a day of deep meaning and importance, for the Ascension and Whitsun-day taken together typify the fifth Initiation, that of the Adept. In that the man rises from earth to heaven, and for the first time definitely steps outside ordinary humanity. In the Arhat stage, which comes before this, he is already free from some of the restrictions of common human life, for he has so far worked out his karma that he is no longer compelled to reincarnate on the physical plane, though he usually does so in order to help others; and that immunity from lower necessities is symbolized in the narrative by the nature of Christ's resurrection-body, which passes through closed doors, and appears and disappears at will. But in this fifth Initiation he reaches the goal which is set before humanity in this chain of worlds. With the fifth Initiation He also achieves union with a certain aspect of the Third Person of the great Solar Logos; and one of the effects of this is typified by the downpouring of the Holy Spirit upon Whitsun-day, to which we shall make further reference a little later.

We are not on this day celebrating the attainment of that level by any one man only. We can of course look back to the time when the Great World-Teacher Himself took this step, but that was far back in the night of time, in the mists of pre-historic periods; we are really celebrating the great fact that for us also is possible this transcending of humanity—this ascension from earth to higher realms; and so we pray in the words of the old collect of the Church that since our Lord Christ has thus ascended into heaven we may also in heart and mind thither ascend, and with Him continually dwell. Of course those who take the literal view of the gospel suppose that to mean that they will rest for ever amid clouds of glory in the presence of the physical body of the Christ. We should raise our thought a little higher than that and understand that to dwell for ever with Christ is to be truly united with Him in consciousness, so that whatever work we may afterwards choose to take up for the benefit of this or any other humanity, wherever we may go in the whole solar system, we shall never lose that consciousness of His intimate unity with us.

And so very truly we shall rise with Him and with Him continually dwell; that will be true of all of us. May that time come soon, that in His Name and for His sake and by means of our unity with Him we may be able to spread to others the glorious gospel which He has taught, and the spiritual power which He pours forth through that gospel.

## CHAPTER X

### WHITSUN-DAY

Whitsun-day is the last of what have been called the four great festivals of the Christian Year; and although in the Liberal Catholic Church we put in many cases a different interpretation on them, all these great festivals have their meaning for us, just as they have for other branches of the Church.

Whitsun-day is commonly supposed to be merely a commemoration of the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the apostles ten days after the Ascension of our Lord into heaven. I do not know whether that happened exactly as it is stated or not. Many people have disputed it on what seem to be good grounds, but the point for us to understand, about this as about the other festivals, is what Origen, the greatest of the Church Fathers, said with regard to the gospel story. He did not in the least deny that all these events happened in Judæa, but he said that what happened once in Palestine is of no consequence to us; the fact of importance is that all these events are symbols of spiritual facts, which occur in the life of every Christian man.

This descent of the Holy Spirit is the symbol of a great reality which takes place in the life of the initiated disciple. The man who has reached Adeptship enters a higher Kingdom, and becomes more than man; and for that reason He was represented as rising clear away from earth into heaven. The descent of the Holy Ghost in connection with it is intended to symbolize the wonderfully intimate and mysterious union between the Adept and the Deity through the Monad of that Adept, and the

outpouring of spiritual force which thereby comes upon the world through him—a glorious mystery which we cannot fully grasp yet.

We must therefore understand this festival as the celebration of the union of God and man, and of the consequent descent of the Holy Spirit upon the world. I do not question that some such event may have occurred in connection with the life of Jesus, but its importance to us is the fact that it happens in the course of the Initiate life, and that it will therefore one day happen to every one of us. The very name of the day indicates that, although a mistaken derivation is given to it by many people. It is often said that Whitsun-day is a corruption of White Sunday, and that it was so called because on that day candidates robed in white were presented for baptism. That is not the true derivation, for Whitsun is really a corruption of an old Anglo-Saxon word *Pfingsten*, which means the Holy Ghost. Therefore it should be pronounced with the accent on the first syllable, and it is to help our people to remember that pronunciation that I am carefully spelling it with a hyphen.

It may be noticed that the Holy Ghost occupies a curious position, if we may venture reverently to say so, in the older prayer books and services. The Athanasian Creed tells us, very truly, that in the Trinity none is afore or after other, none is greater or less than another, but that They are all co-equal and co-eternal; yet we may notice that while in the Roman and Anglican liturgies there are many prayers to God the Father and to God the Son, there are almost none to God the Holy Ghost. Also there are very few churches dedicated to the Holy



Ghost. In the Hindu religion it would seem that a similar curious occlusion has arisen, but with regard to the First Aspect instead of the Third; for I am told that in all India there is only one temple dedicated to Brahma, though there are thousands to Vishnu and Shiva.

The reason for this is that there has been a great deal of misunderstanding with regard to the place of the Third Person of the Ever-blessed Trinity. We read often of Him as being sent by Christ, as if He were, if we may say so with reverence, a mere influence to be poured out. This is not true. He is a Person of the Trinity, as great as the Others, for all are equal. Remember that the Trinity is a mystery; it will remain a mystery whatsoever any of us may say or think about it. For it is far above, out of our reach; but something of what it means to us we may comprehend; it is right and proper that we should try to understand what we can of it.

All religions have a Trinity, but they differ to some extent in the way in which they make up that Trinity—the point of view from which they look at it. The Trinity of the older religions was nearly always Father, Mother, Son; for example, in Ancient Egypt it was Osiris, Isis and Horus. The Hindu Trinity is the Creator, the Preserver and the Destroyer; but the maternal side is brought in by each of them having what is called a *shakti* or power which is always regarded as feminine. The Zoroastrian Trinity has almost the modern idea of spirit, matter and the active force generated by their interaction—Ormuzd, Ahriman (who afterwards came to be regarded as the devil, but was originally part of

the Trinity) and Mithra, who took the place of the Son. So although that is not exactly Father, Mother, Son, it is yet eternal spirit, eternal matter and the active force coming from them—Mithra the Son. The Christian Trinity is not quite either of those; it has the Father, the Son, alone-born from Him, and the Holy Ghost proceeding from both. In the Christian Trinity there is no feminine element at all—nothing which can be taken as representing matter alone. Various attributes properly belonging to that line of thought have been given in that symbolism to God the Holy Ghost, and it would seem as though He represents several different features, or is perhaps a kind of combination of several lines of thought or symbolism.

The nearest that we can get in history to the Christian presentation of the Trinity as Father, Son and Holy Ghost is the philosophical conception of the Three Aspects of the Logos. There is no feminine in either, and they do very closely correspond. The feminine aspect is brought in as the mother-matter or root of matter which in Hinduism is called *Mulaprakriti*, which however is not part of the Trinity, just as in the Christian system the Blessed Virgin stands outside the Trinity, but nevertheless is intimately connected with Its Persons—represented, for example, in a well-known hymn as Mother, Daughter, Spouse of God. Mother of God as Christ (not the eternal Christ, alone-born of the Father, but the secondary Christ as man); daughter of God on the theory that she was immaculately conceived by Anna her mother, and then spouse of the Holy Ghost in the immaculate conception of the Christ. But to try to apply this elaborate cosmic

symbolism to the noble Jewish lady who was the mother of Jesus materializes the whole conception, and indeed makes it ridiculous.

The Christian Trinity represents three stages of emanation, and they to some extent agree with and are the prototypes of the division into Power, Wisdom, and Intelligence, because God the Father is the Creator of all; the *atma* or spirit in man is an expression of Him, verily a part of Him; while God the Son is the Wisdom by Whom all things were made. God the Father is the Creator, but He creates through the Son; the power is exercised through the Son, the Wisdom. Then we have the Third Aspect, the Holy Ghost, which corresponds with the idea of *manas* or intelligence in man, just as *buddhi* or intuition corresponds with the Wisdom, and *atma* or spirit with the Light or Power beyond.

The Christian conception of the Holy Ghost includes the oriental idea of the Light of the Logos—the Arm coming forth from the Father and the Son by which to a large extent the Divine Work is done down here; not, however, in any sense a mere instrument or messenger, as an Angel might be, but a veritable Arm; the Activity Aspect of the Blessed Trinity, when we look at the Three Persons as Will, Wisdom and Activity. It may be of use to attempt to illustrate this by a diagram; for though this cannot of course explain so stupendous a mystery, it may aid our thought in its excursion into these unfamiliar regions. The problem is so complex that it is not wise to despise any assistance in keeping its many sides simultaneously before the mind.

No. of Planes	World or Plane	Names of Human Principles	Relationship of Principles.	
			Human	Divine
7	Divine			
6	Monad	Monad		
5	Spiritual	<i>Triple Spirit functioning in Spiritual Body</i>		
4	Intuitional	<i>Intuition functioning in Intuitional Body</i>		
3	Higher Mental	<i>Intelligence functioning in Causal Body</i>	(The Ego is 2,567 manifested in the Causal Body)	
	Lower Mental	<i>Intelligence functioning in Mental Body</i>		
2	Astral or Emotional	<i>Emotional Nature functioning in Astral Body</i>		
1	Physical	<i>Waking Consciousness functioning in Physical Body</i>		

## DIAGRAM: THE HOLY TRINITY

In this diagram an attempt has been made to show the relationship of the Persons of the Holy Trinity. Let no one think that we are irreverent or presumptuous in making such an attempt. We are fully aware, we have the most absolute and overwhelming conviction, that the Great Architect of the Universe infinitely transcends our feeble human thought, and that any endeavour to picture even the lowest of His myriad manifestations must inevitably fall short of the truth in many ways. Yet we have found that reverent effort to understand the method of His working is undoubtedly of help to us in our studies, for it clears up for us many conceptions which have before seemed nebulous, and enables us to speak with certainty where before we were merely guessing. Such effort cannot be ill-directed, for the further we press inward and upward in our search the more profound becomes our sense of His infinity and His glory. His power, like His peace, passes man's understanding; yet to try to comprehend and to realize is surely beneficial to us, since it deepens our reverence for Him.

This diagram is of course in no sense a picture, any more than a table of altitudes represents a chain of mighty snow-clad mountains, or a chart of light-vibrations reveals the glories of a sunset. We can never hope to picture the Logos in earth's dull pigments or within the cramping limitations of three-dimensional space, but it is possible to indicate to some extent the relationship existing between the Three Persons in Whom He manifests.

In our diagram the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost are represented as already descended into our system of interpenetrating worlds and as manifesting Themselves in the seventh, sixth and fifth worlds respectively. We do not know in what Form or Manifestation the Logos exists outside the limits of these worlds. All that can be said with certainty is that when His life appears in the highest world of the solar system it pours down in three mighty streams, giving rise to the Triple Spirit of the Logos in manifestation. (A, B and C in the diagram.) A does not descend below

that level, and is called the Father in Christian philosophy. The Second Person of the Holy Trinity is called into being by the action of the will of the Father, working without intermediary. Hence the Second Person is spoken of as *only-begotten* (or, more exactly in the sense of the original Greek, *alone-born*), since He was created from one divine Principle and not from a syzygy or pair, and so this emanation differs from all other and later processes of generation. It will be noted that the Second Person is represented as dual, and as D does not descend below the level of the sixth world He is called the Son. This duality has always been clearly recognized by religions, but in modern Christianity the two poles or aspects are expressed only as divinity and humanity.

The procession or emanation of the Holy Ghost (F) was an ancient source of theological controversy, and indeed was put forward as the ostensible reason for the separation of the Greek and Roman Churches. In a very real sense both the disputing parties were right. Since the manifestation of the Father takes place in the seventh world, and that of the Holy Ghost in the fifth, it is evident that, if the latter comes forth from the former, it can do so only by passing through the intermediate sixth world, in which is the manifestation of the Son. It is not that the Holy Ghost descends from the manifested Person of the Father (A) through the manifested Person of the Son (D) (which descent would be represented by the diagonal line connecting A, D and F); such an idea would indicate a confusion of the functions of the separate Persons or Aspects, and the Greek Church was right in resisting it. The truth is that the Holy Ghost descends from C in the seventh world, through E in the sixth, to become the manifested Holy Spirit F in the fifth; and so in this sense the Roman Church was right in inserting the word *filioque*.

The symbols used to designate the Three Persons—the dot within a circle for the First, the bar dividing a circle for the Second, and a cross within a circle for the Third—are of extreme antiquity.

The relationship of the principles in man is shown by reproducing a portion of Diagram 21 in *The Science of the Sacraments*, and the reader is referred to that book for a

detailed explanation. It will be seen from this diagram that the old text which tells us that man is made in the image of God is wonderfully and beautifully true—not, as was ignorantly supposed, of the body or outer form of the man, but of the real inner man, the soul. Just as Three Aspects of the Divine are seen upon the seventh plane, so the Divine Spark of the spirit in man is seen to be triple in its appearance on plane five. In both cases the second Aspect is able to descend one plane lower, and to clothe itself in the matter of that world; in both cases the Third Aspect is able to descend two planes and repeat the process. So in both cases there is a Trinity in Unity, separate in its manifestations, yet one in the reality behind. Indeed, incomprehensible though the statement may be, it is in reality true that the principles in man, which we call spirit, intuition and intelligence, are not merely correspondences, not merely even reflections or rays of the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity, but are somehow themselves in very truth expressions of these glorious Beings. “In Him we live and move and have our being.”

The Three Persons are fundamentally and on the highest level all absolutely co-equal and co-eternal; but when They descend into manifestation (as in the creation of a solar system) it may be said that the Third Person comes down further into matter than the others, and so appears to be nearer to us, and in that sense temporarily lower. The First Person remains at the original level; the Second steps down one level and manifests Himself there; the Third descends two levels to the plane we call the spiritual, and manifests Himself in the highest stage of that spiritual plane. Here we see one illustration of the fact which is symbolized by the statement that the Christ has two natures—God and Man, because He exists as perfect God on that higher level, and yet also exists one stage lower in manifestation. In the same sense the Holy Spirit has three stages, one above the other. Yet again the diagram illustrates the much-disputed question of the procession of the Holy Ghost from the Father and the Son. Both the contradictory statements are true, for He does proceed entirely from the Father; but He proceeds through that second level which is especially the field of manifestation of the Son, and so comes both from the Father and from the Son. In Him the two lines meet—the perpendicular of the triangle and its hypotenuse; so both the statements are true.

He was the first to act in the making of the system, and so it is said that the Spirit of God brooded over the face of the waters of space. He pours His life into them and creates matter as we know it. He is still manifesting before us even now, and that in two ways. First, He is still within



the earth making new elements; the last that we have so far discovered is uranium, but He is still making new and heavier elements. He manifests Himself also among us in the wondrous force that we call *prana* or vitality; that life is His life; so we have on the physical plane a manifestation of Him in what are called the vitality globules. (See *Man Visible and Invisible* and *The Hidden Side of Things*.) It is matter vivified by Him that is used by the Second Person when He in turn dips down into matter in the Second great Outpouring, and so it is said mystically that Christ takes form not from the *Maria* or seas of virgin matter only, but from the Holy Ghost and the Virgin Mary. But the treatment of that matter belongs to our third volume.

The downward point of the triangle in the diagram indicates the lowest point of the descent into matter, inconceivably high though even that must be in comparison with our own consciousness. Thus this manifestation of the Holy Ghost is in that sense the Aspect of Divinity which is nearest to us, and consequently through Him the work is done. It is He Whom we invoke at Confirmation and at Ordination; and through Him come all blessing and sanctifying power, whether it be in the consecration of churches, of holy water, or of the congregation. As the nearest point of the manifestation of Deity (the expression is terribly materialistic, and yet perhaps less misleading than any other) He is the first with which man can be united when he has risen to be something more than man.

In the course of his evolution man has now reached what is called the *nivritti marga*, the path of return, and so he is drawing himself steadily upwards to-

wards God from Whom he came—towards the Logos of Whom he is a part. When he has reached Adeptship he may be said to pass away from earth to the heavenly regions, as symbolized by the Ascension; and having thus drawn away from ordinary manhood and become a superman, he also becomes one with God—at first with that lowest manifestation of Him, which yet is so supremely high—with God the Holy Ghost. And having become one with that mighty manifestation he immediately pours himself down upon his friends and pupils in tongues as of fire. It is part of the Asekha Initiation to become one with the Logos at that level. Later on he rises to another stage and becomes one with the Christ Aspect. But even so we must remember that it is only within this set of planes, whereas the Logos Himself in His splendour is outside time and space; and presently we must become one with Him there also; so there is an infinity of evolution still before us.

The altar-frontal and all the vestments on Whit-sun-day are red, by order of the Universal Church; and it is commonly supposed to be so in honour of the Fire which in the gospel story came down and rested on the heads of the apostles. Fire is the symbol of the Holy Spirit, and He is constantly described as the Breath of God, the Fire of Love, because He is that tremendous power which is best expressed in our words as Fire or Light. The ecclesiastical red, when it is the right tint, stands for courage, bravery and power, and so most truly images for us His most prominent characteristic. This has been somewhat obscured by an unsatisfactory translation of His principal title, "The Paraclete." It has been the custom to render this by

the English word Comforter, thus relegating the chief action of the Holy Spirit to times of sorrow and suffering. The derivation of the word is from the verb *parakaleo*, which means to cheer on, to encourage; so the best English equivalent of the Greek word *Parakletos* is the Encourager or Strengthenener. And this is precisely the true function of God the Holy Ghost with regard to man; poured upon us at Confirmation, He dwells ever within our hearts as a constant stimulus in the direction of all that is good, ever ready to hearten and to fortify us whenever we call upon His latent power. The Church of England commemorates Him on this one festival only; but we have added six other days for special devotion to Him—the Sunday before Advent, the three Sundays before Lent, and two of the Sundays after Trinity.

In certain parts of the Church the Ascension and the festival of the Holy Ghost were celebrated on the same day, showing that it was recognized that the union of the Adept with the Holy Spirit is simultaneous with his attainment of the higher spheres, even though the outpouring with which he is thereby enabled to baptize his followers comes upon them a few days later.

## CHAPTER XI

### TRINITY SUNDAY

The celebration on this day of the doctrine of the Most Holy Trinity fitly and appropriately concludes this first half of the Christian Year, and at the same time leads us on into the second. Actually it is the octave of Whitsun-day, and a Roman authority remarks: "Since it was after the first great Pentecost that the doctrine of the Trinity was proclaimed to the world, the feast becomingly follows that of Pentecost." The Church of Rome in one way gives less importance to the day than we, for she labels all the Sundays through the rest of the ecclesiastical year up to Advent as Sundays after Pentecost (of which Trinity Sunday is the first), whereas we follow the practice of the Church of England in calling them Sundays after Trinity.

It is only very lately that the transcendent importance of this day has been recognized by our Roman brethren. In the early Church no special Office or day was assigned to the Holy Trinity, as all days alike were considered to be devoted to such service. An Office of the Holy Trinity was composed about the year 910 by Bishop Stephen of Liège, and we find it recorded that it was in some places used on this day. Pope Alexander II seems in 1061 to have refused a request that he should decree a universal feast in honour of the Trinity, as it was already daily celebrated in the constant recitation of the *Gloria Patri*. It was not until 1316 that Pope John XXII ordered the entire Church to observe the present

festival, and even then he made it only what is called a double of the second class, which it remained until in our own day Pope Pius X raised it to primary dignity on July 24, 1911.

The doctrine of the Trinity has been variously formulated and sadly misunderstood, and those who misunderstand it frequently stigmatize it as incomprehensible and incredible; yet it represents a great and fundamental truth. Here is a statement of it culled from the pages of *The Catholic Encyclopedia*: "The Trinity is the term employed to signify the central doctrine of the Christian religion—the truth that in the unity of the Godhead there are Three Persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, these Three Persons being truly distinct one from another. Thus, in the words of the Athanasian Creed, the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God; and yet there are not three gods, but one God. In this Trinity of Persons the Son is begotten of the Father by an eternal generation, and the Holy Spirit proceeds by an eternal procession from the Father and the Son. Yet, notwithstanding this difference as to origin, the Persons are co-eternal and co-equal; all alike are uncreated and omnipotent."

There is no direct statement of this doctrine in the scripture; for it seems to be universally agreed among commentators that the passage from I John v, 7: "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one," is a late interpolation. Late or early, it states a profound truth, but we can hardly adduce it as evidence. The stories of the Baptism and the Transfiguration of our Lord have

been taken to include the manifestation of the Three Persons simultaneously; but, though when we already know the doctrine we can weave it in deftly and appropriately as an explanation, it would perhaps be a straining of the words to deduce the doctrine from the narrative. The command to go and baptize all nations in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost is the clearest direct reference, for the mention of the Three Persons in this manner implies Their equality, while the use of the word "Name" instead of "Names" shows that all Three are One God.

As we have already seen, the thought of the Trinity has appeared in some form or other in all the great religions of the world, though the Aspects or Persons are not always arranged in the same order. In Hinduism it is taught that there is one Absolute Unmanifested without qualities, but that the Manifested Supreme Lord *with* qualities always shows Himself as a Trinity. Its Persons are called Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva—sometimes defined as the Creator, the Preserver, and the Destroyer or Liberator, and sometimes as Existence, Consciousness and Bliss; and They are said to be represented in the human spirit by Will, Cognition and Activity. There is no feminine principle here—nothing directly representing matter; but each of these Persons has a *shakti* or power which is practically His feminine aspect; and there is also the conception, as I have stated, of *Mulaprakriti*, the primitive mother-matter, not part of the Trinity, but very intimately connected with it, just as is the Blessed Virgin in our Christian system. Again, in the esotericism of the Vedantins, *Daiviprakriti*, the Light manifested

through Ishvara, the Logos, is at one and the same time the Mother and also the Daughter of the Logos.

In the Zoroastrian religion—to add a few details not mentioned before—the presentation is given as Existence, Wisdom and Bliss, and the names are Ahuramazda, Asha and Vohumano. The first title, Ahuramazda (sometimes contracted to Ormuzd) is often used for the whole, just as is the Christian word Father. *Ahura* is interpreted as “He Who is,” while *Maz* means “great,” and *Da* “to know.” *Ahura* is often taken as the lifegiver, and *Mazda* as the great knower or thinker, and the scriptures state that Ahura is threefold before all others. In this system the twin forces of involution and evolution are named Spenta-Angra. Ahuramazda, Mithra and Ahriman also appear as a Trinity; but in other passages Ahriman is the personification of evil. Possibly in the Trinity he may be the representative of matter, which often comes to be regarded as evil; if this be the case we have here one of the Trinities of Father, Mother and Son, like that of Osiris, Isis and Horus in ancient Egypt, or of Odin, Freya and Thor among the Scandinavians.

In the Kabala of the Jews we find a similar presentation. Ainsoph the One manifests as Kether the Crown, the Bliss Aspect of Deity, and the root of the will in man; also as Binah, Intelligence, the Consciousness Aspect, the root of Cognition in man; and as Chokma, the Universal Mind, the Existence Aspect, the root of Activity in man. The very name of God in the Old Testament, which was the scripture of the Jews, implies the Trinity. The first verse of the bible begins: “In the beginning God

created the heaven and the earth." The word used for God is *Elohim*, and that word is plural. In Hebrew, as in many other ancient languages, there are three numbers, singular, dual and plural; and it is significant that that word is not singular and not dual, but plural; therefore they recognized at least a threefold God. Rabbi Simeon ben Jochai writes: "In *Elohim* are three degrees, and each degree by itself alone; and yet notwithstanding they are all one, and joined together in One, and cannot be divided from each other." There we have the doctrine of the Trinity many centuries before Christ. The Assyrians and Phœnicians believed in a Trinity; Anu, Ea and Bel were their names. Lao-Tse, the great Chinese philosopher, taught that Tao, the eternal reason, produced One; One produced Two; Two produced Three, and the Three produced all things. Orpheus, the great Greek Teacher, told his disciples that all things were made by One Godhead in three Names, and that this God is all. Philo Judæus also constantly speaks of God as a Trinity in Unity.

The ancient Mexicans and Peruvians recognized a three-fold Deity—Three Persons with one heart and one will. The Druids worshipped a Triple God. Taulac, Fan, and Mollac. I have already mentioned that the Scandinavians had a different kind of Trinity, the Father, Mother and Son, Odin, Freya, and Thor, corresponding to Osiris, Isis, and Horus in Egypt. It has been supposed that the Christian teaching was derived in that respect from that of Egypt, because in some of the early Christian documents the function assigned to the Holy Spirit is that of the divine Mother. For example, in the



apocryphal gospel of the Hebrews we find that Christ is made to speak of "My Mother the Holy Spirit." The Ophites represented the Holy Spirit as the first woman, the mother of all living. And it is on record that in the reign of Trajan, one Alcibides brought to Rome a manuscript in which the Holy Ghost is described as feminine.

In Northern Buddhism we hear of the Trinity of Amitabha, Avalokiteshvara, and Manjushri. In Southern Buddhism the idea of a Deity has entirely disappeared, but a sort of echo or reflection of it persists in the constant mention of Buddha, Dharma, Sangha.

The fact is that Manifestation is always a triplicity. God shows Himself in three aspects, in three fundamental modes, as three essential qualities, as discharging three primary functions. So difficult is it to explain these that the very words which I have just used are heretical according to one of the Councils of the Church, for it was decided that it was not right to say that the Three Persons of the Trinity are merely Three Aspects. Yet we must use human words when we are speaking of these divine mysteries, and to speak of them as Aspects is perhaps as near the fact as we can come. We can understand in a very much smaller way how a man may have different aspects. The same man may be husband, father, master in relation to his wife, his children, his servants, and yet he is one and the same man. In somewhat the same way as that, God is the Creator, the Preserver and the Liberator, and yet always one and the same God. Father of our spirits, Protector of our lives, Source of our activities, and yet our innermost Self; a mystery, but

nevertheless an eternal truth. Those who develop clairvoyant faculty cannot indeed see God, for no man hath seen God at any time in His fullness; but they *can* see three streams of force coming down from above, and they can follow the action of these streams; so that if they were not taught this doctrine of the Trinity they would have to assume it, or something very like it, to account for what they unquestionably see.

We may know something of God by His reflection in man, for we remember that God made man in His own image. That does not mean, as some have thought, that the physical body of man bears resemblance to some supposed body of God; but it does mean that man—not his body, but himself, the spirit, the soul—is in the likeness of God, threefold in aspect and in action,—even as God is threefold. It will be seen that an attempt has been made in our diagram to indicate this.

The finest sermon that has ever been written on this doctrine of the Trinity is the Athanasian Creed. That is a document given to us alike in the prayer-books of the Roman Church and of the Anglican Church, and if we read it and study it carefully we shall see that it is beautifully and literally true in most of its statements. Many people have condemned it, but only because they did not understand it. That is very often the secret of the rabid condemnation and criticism which is so common in the world; we do not understand, and so we condemn, which is silly. Especially ought we to be careful of anything like rash condemnation when we are dealing with these higher matters which none can fully comprehend.

I readily admit that this dogma is too high for us to grasp, because it belongs to what we call the higher planes. It needs the full divine consciousness to understand that which is divine. Everyone of us has that divine consciousness, but it is as yet but very partially unfolded. The whole of the path which lies before us is the path of the unfolding of the divine within ourselves, and when that development is ended we shall know even as now we are known; but until that time it is inevitable that, when we deal with higher levels like this, all that we say must be imperfect, must be inaccurate, because our understanding of those higher levels is as yet utterly insufficient. But at least we can see something of what is meant. The facts are to some extent verifiable. We do see that in the world we have force (spirit, if we like to call it so), matter and phenomena. Think of a jewel for example. There is in it a force which has made the matter take that particular type of form; there is the matter which has been moulded by the force, and there is the stone, the phenomenon, the result of the moulding of the matter. We find this everywhere. If we examine the qualities of matter, we shall find that they are three—inertia, motion, and rhythm—three qualities everywhere in everything. All manifestation takes that form—the active, the passive, and the result of their interaction; the Father, the Mother, and the Word or expression.

In the Christian Trinity we have not that group of Father, Mother, and Son; the Father and Mother are merged together in the first Person of the Trinity. ("Father-Mother spin a web," as another scripture tells us.) The Substance there is combined with,

merged in the Father; the Offspring, the Word or Expression, is called the Son; while the Potency which proceeds from the former through the latter, and denotes Deity in the dynamic or active (as distinguished from the static or passive) mode is called the Holy Spirit, and makes the Third Person, and so it is sometimes called the Light of the Logos, or the Arm of the Lord.

When we speak of God our meaning is perhaps a little more precise than that of the ordinary Christian. He holds a belief in a God Who is omnipresent, omniscient, Who is far away beyond all possible spheres, and includes all within Himself, and yet he often regards that God from a very limited and personal point of view. The Jews (and influenced by them, most unfortunately, the early Christians) regarded Him as a cruel God, as an angry and jealous God. We are gradually rising out of all this, but even yet people hold Him to be strangely limited, and regard Him as being able to break His own laws in answer to their request. Also they regard Him as not knowing what is best for them unless they explain it to Him; they seem to think He needs to have His attention attracted to the fact that so-and-so is in ill-health and they want him to get well; they think that their particular and private sins need to be forgiven. They are constantly bringing all sorts of little personal and private matters to His attention, and telling Him what to do about them. That comes from the fact that they are confounding several quite different ideas, so that the conception of God in the mind of the average uneducated Christian is a bundle of nebulous contradictions.

We have already seen that the mighty Solar Logos represents to us all that we mean by the title God. Out of Himself He has called this wondrous system into being. Through it He manifests Himself in such matter as we can see, yet at the same time He exists above it and outside it. At what stupendous elevation His full consciousness abides we know not, nor can we know its true nature as it shows itself there. But when He puts Himself down into such conditions as are within our reach, His manifestation is ever threefold, and that is why all religions image Him as a Trinity. Three, yet fundamentally One; Three Persons, yet one God showing Himself in those three Aspects. Three to us, looking at Them from below, because Their functions are different; one to Him, because He knows Them to be but facets of Himself. So the Trinity with which we are concerning ourselves is the Trinity of the Solar Logos.

No words that we can use can accurately represent the relation one to another of these Aspects or Persons. Both those words are defective in expression. Person is derived from the Latin *persona*, from *sona*, sound, and *per*, through—the mask *through* which the *sound* passes. It was the mask worn by the Roman actor; instead of having himself painted and prepared to represent a particular character, the actor in Roman plays just fitted a mask over his face. Often the same man had to take several parts in the one play, and to represent those different characters he would put on a mask appropriate to each and change his clothes to correspond. That mask was called the *persona*; and thus the word came to mean the character he was represent-

ing at the time. So we speak of the Trinity as being three Persons; but neither the word Person nor Aspect is wholly satisfactory. We cannot expect to understand exactly so great a mystery, but we can see quite enough to show that we have here not a ridiculous idea, but a great and basic truth; and as we understand something of the meaning of the Trinity, above and below (in the unknown and unseen worlds, and in the worlds down here which we think we know) what was before merely a hard unintelligible dogma becomes a living and most illuminative truth. Only by the existence of the Trinity in man is human evolution intelligible, for we see how man evolves first the life of the intellect, and then the life of the Christ. On that fact mysticism is based, and our sure hope that we shall know God. Thus have the Saints taught, and as we tread the Path they show, we find that their testimony is true.

## CHAPTER XII

### CORPUS CHRISTI

*Corpus Christi* means the body of Christ, and this is the day set apart for the especial celebration of the Blessed Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist—a day upon which we express our gratitude to our dear Lord for providing us with this wondrous means of grace. As we have already seen, the Sacrament was founded on Maundy Thursday; but as that day comes in the midst of Holy Week, when the Church is occupied in following the last events of her gospel drama to its culmination in the Crucifixion and Resurrection, it seems to have been felt in the Middle Ages that due justice could not then be done to a feast so great and glorious as that of the Blessed Sacrament should be. They have in the Roman Church a system of the transference of festivals when they fall inconveniently; if, for example, some Saint's Day should come within the octave of Easter, it would be altogether ignored at the time, but they would keep it on the first free day after the Easter festivities were over. It is not exactly that which is done in the case of Maundy Thursday, for that is duly kept by a high festal celebration in the morning, though it is not possible to give it the octave which is assuredly its due. But as soon as that part of the Church's year which is symbolical of the course of Initiation is over, and we are free to devote our thought to other matters without breaking its sequence, the question of the postponed full celebration of the founding of the

most holy Sacrament is taken up again, and the first Thursday after Trinity Sunday is devoted to it. We in the Liberal Catholic Church are enthusiastically in favour of any observance which will help to bring home to our people the glory, the dignity and the usefulness of this greatest of the sacraments, so we most gladly keep this day in addition to Maundy Thursday.

I suppose that most Christians look upon the Holy Eucharist as an act of worship and as a means of obtaining benefit. It is both of these, but it is also much more; and I think that in celebrating this great festival in its honour we should try to understand what it is, what it means to us, what it can do for us, and what we can do by its means. It is:

1. A symbol to remind us of the descent of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity into matter, and also of the sacrifice of the World-Teacher.

2. A ready and beautiful means of thanks and worship.

3. A channel of help and stimulus for those who are present, more especially if they communicate.

4. An opportunity of work for God and for His world.

This last of its aspects is but little understood, so I wish especially to emphasize it. There has been a vast amount of amazingly acrid controversy with regard to this great and wonderful subject. I suppose, perhaps, as much theological hatred has centred round the various opinions as to what the Blessed Sacrament really is as about any subject in the whole range of theology, and that is saying a good deal. There has been a vast amount of



argument as to what is meant by the Real Presence of the Christ, what is meant by the great doctrine of Transubstantiation, and whether that or the alternative of Consubstantiation is to be taken as the true belief. It is difficult for us in these days to understand why there should have been such intensity of feeling about it. There may well be different opinions, but why because of those opinions men should hate, anathematize and persecute one another, is incomprehensible and amazing; but it has been so all through the history of the Church. It is most unfortunate; but at least we may hope that gradually the world is evolving, and that we are now a little more liberal, a little more ready to allow that truth is a many-sided thing, that it has many facets, and that it is rarely that any one man grasps the whole of the truth upon any of these great and involved esoteric subjects.

For those who possess the inner sight—the sight which sees a little more than the physical eyes can see—there is no question as to the fact of Transubstantiation; what it means at levels higher than any that we can see is still unknown to us; but what it is that happens, so far as we *are* able to see it, is clear and unmistakable.

I think we might save ourselves a certain amount of trouble and heart-burning if we realized exactly what the words mean with which we are dealing. Transubstantiation means the passing of the substance into some other condition altogether. *Trans* signifies across. It therefore means a change of substance, but then what is substance? That, I think, is where there has been so serious a mistake. There is the bread; there is the wine and the water.

These are placed upon the altar, and people think of *them* as substance, because we are in the habit of using the word substance to indicate material, or something like that; but that is not the original signification of the word at all, nor was it the meaning in the mind of those Fathers of the Church who many centuries ago argued so vigorously about these things. If we think of *sub* and *stans*, the two Latin words from which our word comes, we shall see that it means "that which stands underneath or behind anything"—that is to say, the reality of the thing. It especially is *not* the outward appearance or material of the thing; it is the reality of it.

So the Church tells us that in regard to this sacrament we have to consider what is called the substance and what are called the accidents. The accidents are the outer forms taken—the bread, in this case, and the wine; the substance is the reality that lies behind those things.

Those of us who have been studying the science of the inner life are quite aware of the fact that every object here on the physical plane has counterparts in subtler forms of matter. Students have made certain divisions of that matter; they speak of the next type of matter above the physical by the name of astral or starry, because it is generally bright or shining in appearance. The next above that is the mental, because it is of that type that the mind in man is made. I do not, of course, mean the brain; I mean the *mind*, because that mind also is material, although people generally are quite vague about such things. Those who really study this inner side of nature come to see clearly a great many things which are generally

left vague in men's thought, and among others they see that the mind of man is definitely not the man himself, but an instrument which the man uses. It is a material instrument, although the matter of which it is built is much finer than that with which we generally meet down here. Every physical object has a counterpart in the astral world, and also in the mental world and in other worlds above that, reaching away up to the Divinity Who permeates all—indeed, Who is all, for there is nothing which is not God in some form or other. The very matter (the dead matter as some call it) which surrounds us is a manifestation of God, just as much as we ourselves are, only in a different way, and at a different level.

We may reasonably think of that which stands behind the bread and the wine—their counterpart on higher levels—as the substance, the reality of the thing. If one who possesses the inner sight looks at a piece of bread or the wine in a cup, he sees behind it its counterpart in higher matter, which is called the *substance* of the bread and wine. It has always been held by the Church that at the moment of the consecration there comes a great change over the bread and the wine, and yet we see them there before us obviously the same as before. The doctrine of Transubstantiation as it is ordinarily taught in the Roman Church implies, I think, so far as I am able to understand it, that after the consecration the appearance of the bread and wine is an illusion. That is to say, our physical eyes see bread and wine, but in reality those things are no longer bread and wine. That is true in one sense, but not quite in that way. It is true that the

reality behind that bread, that which made it bread, and distinguished it from any other edible, is changed; but the physical manifestation is *not* changed, and is exactly what it was before. Therefore we are *not* under an illusion when we look at that piece of bread, and say: "That is still bread." Of course it is, on the physical plane; but the other side of it, the counterparts (and those, remember, are the substance which really makes it bread) have been changed.

Let me describe what a clairvoyant sees when he watches the consecration of the Host. It was that very thing (many years ago now) which first attracted my attention to this side of the sacramental service. Having myself, after many years of exceedingly hard work, succeeded in developing these higher senses of which I have spoken, I went to church (which I had not done for many years, having been far away from all such things in foreign lands, and engaged in this other inner work), and being now able to see, I at once perceived what I had never seen before, although I had felt it sometimes; and that was the real change which *does* take place. There at one moment lies the wafer, with a connection running up behind it, up into the very Deity Himself, far up beyond anything that clairvoyance can see; but it is the line, the substance, of ordinary bread. There is a certain line or set of lines (we might perhaps image them as wires), a set of lines of communication going up through the higher planes which is identifiable as that belonging to bread. The priest says over that wafer the word of power: "This is My Body." The physical wafer remains there unchanged, but the line of connection

behind is changed; in a moment that bundle of wires is swept to one side, and its place is taken by a line of living fire coming down from the Christ Himself. And so that which was before a manifestation on the physical plane of the line of communication which makes and means bread, is now a direct manifestation and vehicle of the Christ Himself. A line of living fire (which has been well described as looking like a flash of lightning standing still) connects that wafer with the Christ, and though it remains bread in its accident and on the outer plane, it is visible to the clairvoyant eye no longer as real bread at the higher level, but as instinct with the life of the Christ; and that is why it is called the body of Christ. It is not the body of physical flesh which He wore two thousand years ago in Galilee and in Judæa; but it is really and just as absolutely a body, a vehicle of the Christ, a manifestation of Him on the physical plane, as ever that body was long ago in Palestine, so it is absolutely true to say: "This is My Body." The *substans* is the Christ, although the physical accident is still a wafer; but now it is a consecrated wafer.

Just the same thing takes place with the consecration of the wine and water in the chalice. In that case the line differs in colour and in certain other ways, because these are manifestations of the two sides and two natures of Christ; but they are both of them quite truly vehicles of Him. They do represent the actual Presence of the Christ Who lived in Palestine, though they certainly are not the flesh which He then wore. I know that this statement would be deemed inaccurate by many theologians, but I am dealing with the observed facts of the case,

and not with pious speculations. That being so, we begin perhaps to see what a wonderful thing this Sacrament is. We come into the direct Presence of the Christ Himself, however little many may be aware of it; we just as truly come into His Presence as though we had met Him in that body of old. We are just as literally standing before the Christ as we might have done if we had lived in Jerusalem two thousand years ago. Not only may we stand in His presence and worship Him through that, but we may actually go further and receive Him into ourselves.

It is a common misconception among the ignorant to imagine that Catholics *worship* the bread and the wine. Suppose we had lived in Galilee or in Jerusalem at that time when He was on earth, and had met the Christ and fallen at His feet and worshipped Him, would it have been the physical body that we were adoring, or would it have been the Christ, who lived in that body? Of course it would have been the Christ Whom we venerated; but the sight of the physical body would make it much easier for many people, would bring Him much nearer to their thought than when they worship Him as someone far away in heaven. Exactly the same is true of the manifestation in this His glorious Sacrament. It is not the wafer that we worship, it is not the wine which we adore; it is the Christ Who manifests Himself to physical sight through that wine and that wafer. To speak of such veneration as idolatry is the height of folly. It would be a person of incredible ignorance who would adore the outer manifestation. It is the reality behind which we worship; but the outer manifestation

makes that reality easier to grasp, to understand, to reach. Our prayers, our thoughts, our aspirations, are forces which we pour out; and although we call them spiritual forces, they are liable to the laws of nature, just as any other force is; so that if there is a channel provided for them, they flow more readily and more definitely, just as electricity flows along a wire. The same vibrations would not flow in the same way without the wire; certainly we have another set of vibrations which flow without wires, by means of which we have wireless telegraphy, but that is another matter. The ordinary electric vibrations need the wire, and flow more readily along it.

It is just the same with our outpouring of force; we can worship better, our aspirations will rise better, if there is a channel along which they can go, and that is one thing which Christ provides for us in this His most holy Sacrament. We can take Him into ourselves; think what that must mean. That holy Host, which is in very truth a manifestation of the Christ, is radiating out in all directions like a sun. We take that into us and that tremendous radiation of spiritual power is within us. It is radiating through the whole of our being, through not only our physical body, but our higher vehicles, and from and through us it is radiating upon all those near to us. For some hours after we have taken that Sacrament, we are ourselves very truly spiritual suns. Let us see to it that we never forget that—that we bear in mind that grace which has come to us, so that we shall do nothing unworthy of the Christ Whom we bear within us. For truly those who have communicated are Christophers, like

St. Christopher who bore the Christ; they are Christ-bearers in very truth; and let him be clean who bears the Christ.

So we draw this wonderful thing into us, and its tremendous vibrations are acting upon us all the time. We have our own vibrations; our physical bodies have certain undulations common to them; so have our emotional vehicles, so have our mental vehicles. All these have their regular rates, but here among them, when we take this most holy Sacrament, there comes an enormously higher and stronger set of oscillations. They will act upon ours, and they will tune them up; they will bring them—not yet indeed to the Christ level (would that that could be so!); but at least they will raise them very much from what they were before, and for the time we are greatly elevated and developed. But our own vibrations have been going on within us for years and years, and so have the almost irresistible power of habit; and in the end they overpower these other more glorious oscillations, which slowly die down as gradually the sacred Element disintegrates within us, as does all other food; but meantime these higher undulations have been operating upon ours, and have most assuredly left their mark.

How much they can do for us depends very largely upon our attitude. If we are receptive, if we try to lay ourselves open to that holy influence, every communion is a definite step on our upward path. If we are careless and forgetful, if the thoughts of the world, of business and pleasure, come sweeping in upon us and overpower us—I do not say that we shall *not* be influenced, but we shall be less influenced than we should otherwise have been. And so we



see that what Christ can do for us depends on what we are prepared and willing and ready to let Him do. He stands always there; He knocks; as He said Himself, He stands at the door of the human heart and knocks, and He waits for admittance; but He never forces His way in. It is for us to receive, and He is always ready to give—is indeed always giving, if we will but be always in a state to receive.

Let us try, therefore, to realize what this great and wonderful Sacrament means; then we shall understand why a great festival is kept in honour of it and in gratitude for it. Then we shall truly join in the celebration of *Corpus Christi*, the body of Christ, because we shall know something at least of what is meant by that body of Christ, and how in His great lovingkindness and goodness He has provided for us this easy means of drawing near to Him, and of becoming one with Him.

Evidently there is much for us to gain in taking part in this sublime service; yet even that is not the principal object of the ceremony. It offers us an opportunity not only of personal advancement but of altruistic work. We become a channel for His mighty force, not primarily for ourselves, but in order that we may help the progress of our fellow-men. This wonderful outpouring of divine power has been made possible by a skilfully arranged co-operation. First, the priest blew a kind of gigantic bubble at the *Asperges*, because the Angel of the Eucharist desired to erect a thought-form inside which the divine force could be stored, might accumulate until it could be directed and used. But to do this the Angel must have a field already puri-

fied from worldly thought, and this the priest makes for him; and he must have material for his structure, and that is provided for him by our outpouring of devotion and affection during the service. So the great eucharistic edifice is gradually built by the Angel; and inside that edifice the priest (by the second censing) makes a kind of insulated chamber or casket round the sacred elements, cutting them off from the rest of the church, just as he had temporarily cut off the church from the world outside. Within that innermost casket the priest begins a sort of tube which is the actual channel for the force; and inside that tube takes place the change at the moment of consecration of which I have already written.

The Christ Himself pours out the power; in order that He may do that easily and with the least exertion, leaving the greatest possible amount of the force to be used for its real purpose, the Angel of the Presence by the actual transubstantiation makes the line of fire along which He can pour it. The priest, however, by pushing up his tube and so preparing a channel has made it possible for the Angel to do that. There are many electrical experiments which must be performed in a vacuum; and in that case it is of course necessary to make the vacuum first. So in this case the tube must be made before that especial line of communication can be inserted in it. But the priest could not make that tube unless he had first made a properly isolated casket from which to push upwards, and so he has performed the isolation of the elements. The people have assisted the priest, and have supplied the material for the edifice through which the force is

distributed when it has been poured down. Thus we see that all have taken their due part in the somewhat complicated process which produces so magnificent a result.

This process is followed in detail in the first volume of this series, *The Science of the Sacraments*, in which will be found many illustrations and diagrams intended to help in making its action comprehensible. It is important that our students should grasp this idea that all the greater divine services are meant primarily to benefit the world at large, and are for those who take part in them first of all an opportunity for useful work and only secondarily a means of grace.

We are now at the end of the first division of the Church's year. We have followed the great Mystery-Drama of Initiation as typified by the life of the Christ from its inception to its close; we have celebrated the glorious mystery of the Holy Trinity and the wondrous Sacrament of the Love of Christ. Now we come to that second half of the year which is devoted mainly to putting into practice the lessons that we have learnt, to pouring out upon our brethren the power which we have developed within ourselves. To help us in our efforts by making them more precise and definite, we have in that later part of the year assigned to each Sunday some special intent which it seemed to us desirable to emphasize, composing or adapting a collect and selecting an epistle and a gospel more or less appropriate to that subject. Towards the end of this book some addresses enlarging upon a few of these intents will be given; but I should like first to comment upon certain festivals which we find that the Church has

prescribed, not directly connected with the Mystery-Drama, but nevertheless of considerable importance. Among them will be found several feasts of our Lady, the Blessed Virgin Mary, of the holy Angels and of various saints. We will begin with the feasts of the Blessed Virgin.

## CHAPTER XIII

### FEASTS OF OUR LADY

There is a vast amount of misconception connected with the subject of our Lady, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and also a great deal of ignorant prejudice about it. The Roman and Greek Churches hold her name in deep reverence, although many of their members know but little of the real meaning of the beautiful and poetic symbolism connected with that name. The Church of England has curtailed somewhat the reverence paid to her, while those Christians who do not belong to her communion usually hold that it is idolatrous to worship a woman—an attitude of mind which is merely the result of narrowness and ignorance.

If we want really to understand the truth in these matters, we must begin by freeing our minds altogether from prejudice; and the first point to realize is that no one ever *has* worshipped a woman (or a man either) in the sense in which the rabid protestant means the word. He is incapable of comprehending—he does not want to comprehend—the Catholic attitude towards our Lady or the saints. We who are students, however, must adopt a fairer position than that. Let us quote from *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (article *Worship*) what may be taken as an approved and authoritative statement of the Roman view on the subject:

“There are several degrees of worship; if it is addressed directly to God, it is superior, absolute, supreme worship, or worship of adoration, or, ac-

ording to the consecrated theological term, a worship of *latria*.\* This sovereign worship is due to God alone; addressed to a creature it would become idolatry.

“When worship is addressed only indirectly to God—that is, when its object is the veneration of martyrs, of angels, or of saints, it is a subordinate worship dependent on the first, and relative, in so far as it honours the creatures of God for their peculiar relations with Him; it is designated by theologians as the worship of *dulia*,† a term denoting servitude, and implying, when used to signify our worship of distinguished servants of God, that their service to Him is their title to our veneration.

“As the Blessed Virgin has a separate and absolutely supereminent rank among the saints, the worship paid to her is called *hyperdulia*. In accordance with these principles it will readily be understood that a certain worship may be offered even to inanimate objects, such as the relics of a martyr, the cross of Christ, the crown of thorns, or even the statue or picture of a saint. There is here no confusion or danger of idolatry, for this worship is subordinate or dependent. The relic of the saint is venerated because of the link which united it with the person who is adored or venerated; while the statue or picture is regarded as having a conventional relation to a person who has a right to our homage—as being a symbol which reminds us of that person.”

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\*This word is an amphibrach. Accentuate the second syllable, pronouncing it exactly like the English word “try.”

†Again an amphibrach. Accentuate the second syllable, pronouncing it like the English “lie.” The first syllable is pronounced like the English word “do.”

That seems to me to make the whole matter admirably clear, and to present a correct and defensible attitude. Much confusion has arisen from the translation of those three Greek words, with their delicate shades of meaning, by the one English word *worship*. I suggest that among ourselves and in our literature we make the distinction clearer by translating only *latreia*‡ as worship; *douleia* might be rendered as reverence or veneration, and *hyperdouleia* as deep reverence. But the point for us to bear in mind is that no instructed person has ever anywhere or at any time confused such worship or reverence as may duly and properly be offered to all great and holy beings with that higher worship which may be given to God alone. Let there be no mistake about that fact.

Much nonsense has been talked about idolatry, chiefly by people who are too anxious to force their own beliefs upon others to have either time or inclination to try to understand the point of view of wiser and more tolerant thinkers. If they knew enough of etymology to be aware that the word idol means an image or representation, they might perhaps ask themselves of *what* this thing is an image, and whether it is not that reality behind which these much-maligned savages are worshipping, instead of the wood and stone about which they prate so glibly. The image, the picture, the cross, the *lingam* of the Saivite, the sacred book of the Sikh—all these things are symbols; not in themselves objects of worship, but revered by those who understand, precisely because they are intended to remind us of some aspect

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‡Here the true Greek spelling is given; the *Encyclopedia* uses the mediæval Latin.

of God, and to turn our thoughts to Him. In India these aspects are called by many different names, and the missionary makes haste to revile the Hindu as a polytheist; yet the coolie who works in his garden could tell him that there is but one God, and that all these are but aspects of Him, lines of approach to Him, divided and materialized in order to bring infinity a little nearer to the grasp of our very finite minds.

The bloodthirsty elemental Jehovah whom the Jews worshipped at an early and undeveloped period of their history as a nation was always clamouring for exclusive devotion: "Thou shalt have none other gods but me." He openly acknowledged himself as jealous, revengeful and unjust, visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children, and generally behaving like a savage oriental despot of the worst type. He is obviously a mere tribal deity, one amongst many, nervously anxious lest any of his unfortunate followers should desert him, and transfer to one of his rivals part of the horrible tribute of the blood of rams and oxen which his obscene appetite demanded. How different from this revolting entity is the loving Father of Whom the Christ tells us, the one true God Who said through another of His manifestations: "All true worship comes to Me, through whatsoever name it may be offered"; and again: "By whatsoever path men approach Me, along that path do I meet them; for the paths by which men come from every side are Mine."

There is nothing but God; and for whomsoever we feel reverence, adoration, love, it is to the God within that person, the God manifesting through him (however partially) that that reverence, adora-



tion or love is offered. "Many sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also will I bring, and they shall hear My voice, and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd."

Having thus endeavoured to rise above the miasma of ignorance and bigotry into the purer air of justice and comprehension, let us in that spirit approach the consideration of the beautiful and wonderful manifestation of the divine power and love which is enshrined within the name of our Lady, the Blessed Virgin Mary.

I do not think that anyone with our western education finds it easy to understand the wealth of symbolism which is used in oriental religions; and people forget that Christianity is an oriental religion, just as much as Buddhism, Hinduism or Zoroastrianism. The Christ took a Jewish body—an oriental body; and those to whom He spoke had the oriental methods of thought, and not ours at all. They have a wonderful and most elaborate method of symbolism in all these religions, and they take great delight in their symbols; they weave them in and out and combine them, and treat them beautifully in poetry and in art. But our tendency is towards what we call practicality, and we are apt to materialize all these ideas, and often greatly degrade them in consequence.

Let us never forget that our religion comes from the East, and that if we want to understand it, we must look at it first of all as an oriental would look at it, and not apply our modern scientific theories until we are able to see how they fit in. They can be made to fit in, but unless we know how, we are likely to make shipwreck of the whole

thing, and we run a serious risk of assuming that the people who hold the allegory know nothing at all and are hopelessly wrong. They are not wrong at all. Those beautiful old myths convey the meaning, without necessarily putting the cold scientific facts before those who have not developed their minds sufficiently to grasp them in that form. That was well understood in the early Church.

There is always much more behind these beautiful and poetical thoughts of the men of old than most people believe. It is foolish to be filled with ignorant prejudice; it is better by far to try to understand. Whatever in religion anywhere has been beautiful and helpful to man has always behind it a real truth. It is for us to disinter that truth; it is for us to clear away the crust of the ages and to let the truth shine forth.

That is true with regard to this beautiful glyph of the Blessed Virgin Mary. There are three separate ideas involved in our thought of her—ideas which have been confused, degraded, materialized, until in the form in which the story is now held, it has become impossible for any thinking man. But that is not so if we analyse it and understand its real meaning.

The three ideas are:

1. The Mother of the disciple Jesus; what she was and what she afterwards became.
2. The sea of virgin matter, the Great Deep, the waters over the face of which the Spirit of God moved.
3. The feminine Aspect of the Deity.

Let us consider these three ideas separately.

## THE MOTHER OF JESUS

It must be understood that the disciple Jesus was born precisely as other men are born. The story of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin, of her overshadowing by the Holy Ghost, and of the Virgin Birth—all that group of ideas refers to the myth, to the symbol; it has a real meaning and a beautiful interpretation, as I shall presently try to show, but it is not concerned with the physical body of the disciple Jesus. The mother of that physical body was a Jewish lady of noble birth, but, if tradition is to be believed, of no great wealth. We need not think of Joseph (who, remember, was also of the seed of David) as a carpenter, because that is part of the symbolism, and not of the history. In that symbolism Joseph is the guardian of the Blessed Virgin—of the soul in man. He represents the mind; and because the mind is not the creator of the soul, but only its furnisher and its decorator, Joseph is not a mason, like the Great Architect of the Universe, but a carpenter. We need not think of our Lord as working in a carpenter's shop; that is simply an instance of the confusion and materialization introduced by those who do not understand the symbolism.

The mother of Jesus, then, was a noblewoman of Judæa, a descendant of the royal house of David. Truly she who was chosen for so high an honour must have been pure and true and of flawless character—a great saint; for none but such could have given birth to so pure, so wonderful, so glorious a body. A saintly and a godly life she led; one of terrible suffering, yet with wondrous consolations. We

know but little of its details; we glimpse it only occasionally in the scant contemporary narrative; but it was a life which it will do us good to image to ourselves, an example for which we may well thank God. It carried her far along the upward path—far enough to make possible a curious and beautiful later development, which I must now explain.

Students of the inner life know that when man has reached the end of the purely human part of his evolution—when the next step will lift him into a kingdom as definitely above humanity as man is above the animal kingdom—several lines of growth lie open before him, and it is left to him to choose which he will take. Occasionally, too, there are conditions under which this choice may be to some extent anticipated. This is not the place to discuss the alternatives; let it suffice here to say that one of the possibilities is to become a great Angel or messenger of God—to join the *deva* evolution, as an Indian would put it. And this was the line which our Blessed Lady chose, when she reached the level at which a human birth was no longer necessary for her.

Vast numbers of Angels have never been human, because their evolution has come along another line, but there are Angels who have been men, who at a certain stage of this development have chosen to follow the Angel line; and a very glorious, magnificent and helpful line it is. So she, who two thousand years ago bore the body of Jesus in order that it might later on be taken by the Christ, is now a mighty Spirit.

Much beautiful enthusiasm and devotion has all through the centuries been poured out at her feet;

thousands upon thousands of monks and nuns, thousands upon thousands of suffering men and women, have come before her and poured out their sorrows and have prayed to her that she in turn would present their petitions to her Son. This last prayer is a misconception, because He Who is the Eternal Son of God and at the same time the Christ within every one of us, needs none to intercede with Him for us. He knows before we speak far better than we what is best for us. We are in Him, and through Him were we made, and without Him was not anything made which was made, neither we nor the smallest speck of dust in all the universe.

Closer is He than breathing, nearer than hands and feet.

One does not pray to great Angels for intercession if one understands, because one knows that He in Whom all Angels live and move and have their being, is already doing for everyone of us the very best that can be done. But just as one may ask help from a human friend in the flesh—as, for example, one may ask of him the encouragement of his thought—so may one ask aid from the same human friend when he has cast aside his robe of flesh; and in the same way one may ask the same kind of help from these great Spirits at their higher level.

There is nothing unreasonable or unscientific in this. I myself have often had letters from people who know that I have studied these matters, telling me that at such-and-such a time they would be going through some difficulty—a surgical operation perhaps, or some other specially trying experience—and asking me to think of them at that moment, and to send them helpful thought. Naturally I

always do it. And as I know there can be no effect without a cause, and in exactly the same way there can be no due cause which does not produce its effect, I know that if I (or if any of you) take the trouble to fix our thought upon any one in sorrow or difficulty, and try to send him helpful ideas, try to put before him something which will strengthen him in his troubles, we may be perfectly sure that that thought-force does produce its effect, that it goes and reacts upon the person. To what extent it will help him depends on his receptivity, upon the strength of the thought, and upon various other circumstances; but that *some* effect will be produced we may be absolutely sure. And so when we send a request for kindly, helpful, strengthening thought to one of these great ones—whether it be a saint now in the flesh, or one who has laid aside that flesh, or one of the great Angels—assuredly that help will come to us, and will strengthen us.

That is the case with our Blessed Lady; yet there are those who would have us believe that all that splendid good feeling, all that love and uttermost devotion, have run to waste and been useless. Incredible as it appears to us who are used to wider and saner thought, I really think that in their curious ignorance the more rabid enemies of the Church actually believe this. They even go further still, and say that it is wicked and blasphemous for a man to feel that love and devotion towards her! It sounds like madness, but I am afraid it is true that there are such people. Of course the truth is that *no* devotion, *no* love, *no* good feeling has ever been wrong, to whomsoever it has been sent. It may sometimes have been wrongly

directed. Devotion and affection have often been lavished on unworthy objects, but it has not been a *wrong* act on the part of the lavisher—only a lack of discrimination; always it has been good for *him* that he should pour himself out in love, and develop his soul thereby.

Remember that if we love any person, it is the God within that person that we are loving; the God within us recognizes the God within him; deep calleth unto deep, and the recognition of the Godhead is bliss. The lover often sees in the beloved qualities which no one else can discern; but those good qualities *are* there in latency, because the Spirit of God is within every one of us; and the earnest belief and strong affection of the lover tend to call those latent qualities into manifestation. He who idealizes another tends to make that other what he thinks him to be.

Could we suppose then that all the wonderful and beautiful devotion addressed to our Lady has been wasted? Any man who thinks so must understand the divine economy very poorly. No true and holy feeling has ever been wasted since time began, or ever will be; for God, Who knows us all so well, arranges that the least touch of devotion, the least feeling of comprehension, the least thought of worship, shall always be received, shall always work out to its fullest possibility, and shall always bring its response from Him. In this case in His loving-kindness He has appointed the Mother of Jesus as a mighty Angel to receive those prayers—to be a channel for them, to accept that devotion, and to forward it to Him. Therefore the reverence offered to her, and the love poured out at her feet have

never for one moment been wasted; they have brought their result, they have done their work.

If we try to understand it, we shall see how very far grander is that reality than the barren conception that all high thought, all worship, all praise not directed through a particular Name must inevitably go astray. Why should God limit Himself by our mistakes as to names? He looks at the heart, not at the words. The words are conditioned by outer circumstances—by the birthplace of the speaker, for example. We are Christians because we happen to be born in England, or America, or some other Christian land; not because we have examined and compared all religions, and deliberately chosen Christianity. We are Christians because it was the faith amidst which we found ourselves, and so we accepted it. Did it ever occur to you that if we had been born as natives of India we should have been Hindus or Muhammadans just as naturally, and should have poured out our devotion to God under the name of Shiva, Krishna, Allah, instead of the name of Christ? If we had been born in Ceylon or Burma we should have been ardent Buddhists. What do these local considerations matter to God? It is under His law of perfect justice, under His scheme of evolution, that one of His creatures is born in England and another in India or Ceylon, according to his needs and his deserts. When devotion is poured out by any man, God receives it through the channel which He has appointed for that man, and so everyone alike is satisfied and justice is done. It would be a gross and a glaring injustice if any honest devotion should be thrown aside or rejected. Never has the least mite



of it been rejected. God's ways are other than ours, and His grasp of these things is wider and greater than ours. As Faber wrote:

For we make His love too narrow  
By false limits of our own,  
And we magnify His strictness  
With a zeal He will not own.

The stories that we hear about our Blessed Lady may well have a basis of fact. We hear of her appearing in various places to various people—to Joan of Arc, for example. It is exceedingly probable that she did—that this great Angel did so show herself or himself (for there is nothing that we can call sex at such a height as that). There is no antecedent improbability in this, and it is most unlikely that all the people who testify to these apparitions were deluded or hypnotized, or under some strange error. All students know that earnest thought upon any subject produces strong thought-forms, which are very near the edge of visibility; many thousands of such thought-forms have been made of our Lady, and she has never failed to respond, and most thoroughly and effectually to fill them. It is certain that out of all these some would under favourable circumstances become physically visible; and even when they remain astral, sensitive people are often able to see them. The terrible and unexampled strain and stress of the war made many people sensitive to psychic impressions who were never so before. Thus it happens that we hear many stories of apparitions just now, and visions or manifestations of our Blessed Lady take a prominent place among them.

It is said, too, that wonderful cures have been produced at Lourdes and other places by faith in her. Probably they have. There is nothing in the least unscientific, there is nothing outside reason and common sense in supposing that. We know perfectly well that a strong downpouring of mesmeric force will produce certain cures; we have no knowledge as to the limit of such power, but it is well to remember that all these things have truth behind them.

#### THE VIRGIN MATTER

God in the Absolute is eternally One; but God in manifestation is twain—life and substance, spirit and matter, or, as science would say, force and matter. When Christ, alone-born\* of the Father, springs forth from His bosom, and looks back upon that which remains, He sees as it were a veil thrown over it—a veil to which the philosophers of ancient India gave the name of *Mulaprakriti*, the root of matter; not matter as we know it, but the potential essence of matter; not space, but the *within* of space; that from which all proceeds, the containing element of Deity, of which space is a manifestation.

But that veil of matter also is God; it is just as much part of God as is the Spirit which acts upon it. The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters of space; but the waters of space are divine in their making just as much as the spirit that moves upon them, because there is nothing but God anywhere. This is the original substance underlying that whereof all things are made. That in

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\* See *The Science of the Sacraments*, p. 16.

ancient philosophy is the Great Deep, and then, because it surrounds and contains all things, so is it the heavenly wisdom which encircles and embraces all. For that in speech the philosophers used always the feminine pronoun; they speak of that Great Deep—of the eternal wisdom—as “she.” She is thus the soul, macrocosmic and microcosmic, for what is true above is also true below.

These ideas are somewhat complex and foreign to our modern thought, but if we want to understand an oriental religion we must give ourselves the trouble to grasp this oriental way of looking at things. And so we realize how it is that she, this other aspect of the Deity, is spoken of as Mother, Daughter and Spouse of God. Daughter, because she also comes forth from the same Eternal Father; Spouse, because through the action of the Holy Ghost upon the virgin matter the birth of the Christ into the world takes place; Mother, because through matter alone is that evolution possible which brings the Christ-spirit to birth in man. But this subject belongs rather to our future theological volume, in which we shall try to explain it more fully.

Above and beyond the Solar Trinity of which we usually think there is the First Trinity of all, formed when out of what seems to us nothing there came the First Manifestation. For in that First and highest of all Trinities God the Father is the Absolute—what we may with all reverence call the Static Mode of the Deity. From that leaps forth the Christ, the Second Aspect truly of the Godhead and yet the First Manifestation, for God the Father is “seen of none.”

Then through the interaction of the Deity in His next Aspect—that of the Holy Ghost, Who represents the Dynamic Mode of the Deity (Will in action)—from that essence, that root of all matter, come all the worlds and all the further manifestations at lower levels, of whatever kind they may be, including even the Holy Trinity of our own solar system.

The Mother-Aspect of Deity thus manifests as the æther of space—not the ether which conveys vibrations of light to our eyes, for that is a physical thing; but the æther of space, which in occult chemistry we call *koilon*,\* without which no evolution could be, and yet it is virgin and unaffected after all the evolution has passed.

Into that *koilon* or finer æther, the Christ, the energizing Logos or Word of God, breathes the breath of life, and in breathing it He makes those bubbles of which all that we call matter is built (because matter is not the *koilon*, but the *absence* of *koilon*); and so when He draws in that mighty Breath the bubbles cease to be. The æther is absolutely unchanged; it is as it was before—virgin—after the birth of matter from it; it is quite unstirred by all that has happened; and because of this our Lady is hailed as immaculate.

She is thus the essence of the great sea of matter, and so she is symbolized as Aphrodite, the Sea-Queen, and as Mary, the Star of the Sea, and in pictures she is always dressed in the blue of the sea and of the sky. Because it is only by means of our passage through matter that we evolve, she is also to us Isis the Initiator, the Virgin Mother

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\* See *Occult Chemistry*, by Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater, p. 110

of whom the Christ in us is born, the causal body, the soul in man, the Mother of God in Whom the divine Spirit unfolds itself within us, for the symbol of the womb is the same as the Cup of the Holy Grail. She is represented as Eve, descending into matter and generation; as Mary Magdalene while in unnatural union with matter, and then when she rises clear of matter, once more as Mary the Queen of heaven, assumed into life eternal.

While we are in the lower stage of our evolution, and subject to the dominion of matter, she is to us truly the Mater Dolorosa—the sorrowful Mother, or the Mother of Sorrows, because all our sorrows and troubles come to us through our contact with matter; but as soon as we conquer matter, so soon as for us the triangle can never again be obscured by the square, then she is for us our Lady of Victory, the glory of the Church triumphant, the woman clothed with the sun, and having the moon under her feet, and around her head a crown of twelve stars.

If we look at it along this line of symbolism, the doctrine of the final drawing up of the root of matter into the Absolute, so that God may be all in all, is what is typified by the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The great festivals of the Church are all meant to show us stage by stage what it is that happens in the work of the Great Architect of the Universe, in the evolution of the cosmos as well as in the development of man. In studying these mysteries we must never forget the rule of the philosophers of old: "As above, so below." So that whatever we see taking place in that mighty world-evolution we shall also find repeated at his

far lower level in the growth of man; and conversely, if we are able to study the methods of the unfoldment of the God in man down here, we shall find that study of invaluable assistance in helping us towards a comprehension of that infinitely more glorious development which is God's will for the universe as a whole. And, learning thus, we must not fail to put the lesson into practice. As a poet has written:

I must become Queen Mary,  
And birth to God must give,  
If I in heavenly blessedness  
For evermore would live.

Note also, for the better understanding of the symbolism, that Christ the Spirit, being deific in nature, ascends by His own power and volition, even as of His own will He sprang forth in the beginning from the bosom of the Father; but Mary the soul is assumed, drawn up by the will of Him Who is at the same time her Father and her Son; for the first Adam (said St. Paul) was made a living soul, but the last Adam, the Christ, is Himself a quickening or life-giving Spirit. So in following Adam, who typifies the mind, all die; but in Christ all are made **alive**.

#### THE FEMININE ASPECT OF THE DEITY.

We must realize also that our highest conception of Deity combines all that is best of the characteristics of the two sexes. God, containing everything within Himself, cannot be spoken of as exclusively male or female. He cannot but have many aspects, and in this Christian religion there has been a great tendency to forget that cardinal fact of manifold manifestation. In the perfection of the Godhead all

that is most beautiful, all that is most glorious in human character is shown forth. In that character we have two sets of qualities, some of which we attach in our thought chiefly to the male or the more positive side of man, and others which we attach more generally in our thought to the feminine side. For example, strength, wisdom, scientific direction, and that destroying power which is symbolized in the Hindu religion by Shiva—all that we usually regard as masculine. But love, beauty, gentleness, harmony, tenderness, we consider as more especially feminine. Yet all these characteristics are equally envisaged for us in the Deity, and it is natural that men should have separated those two aspects of Him, and should have thought of Him as Father-Mother. In all the great religions of the world until quite recently those two aspects have been brought out; so that their followers recognized not only gods but also goddesses. In India we have Parvati, Uma, Sarasvati; in Greece we had Hera, Aphrodite, Demeter, Pallas Athena; in Egypt, Isis and Nephthys; in China, Kwan-yin; in Rome, Juno, Venus, Minerva, Ceres, Diana. In yet other religions we find Astarte or Ashtaroth, the queen of heaven. Images of Isis with the Infant Horus in her arms are exactly like those of the Blessed Virgin carrying the infant Jesus; indeed, it is said that the old Egyptian statues are still in use in several Christian churches to-day.

Ignorant Christians accuse those old religions of polytheism—of the worship of many gods. That is simply a misunderstanding of what is meant. All instructed people have always known that there is but one God; but they have also known that that

One God manifests Himself in divers manners, and in every respect as much and as fully through the feminine as through the masculine body—through what is called the negative side of life as well as through the positive.

We who have been brought up in the Christian ideas sometimes find it a little difficult to realize that we have narrowed down the teaching of the Christ so much that in many cases what we now hold is only a travesty of what He originally taught. We have been brought up, as far as religion goes, non-philosophically. We have never learnt to appreciate the value of comparative religion and comparative mythology. Those who have been studying it for many years find that it throws a flood of light on many points which are otherwise incomprehensible. We see that if all be God, and if there be nothing but God, then matter is God as well as spirit, and there is a feminine and a passive side or aspect to the Deity as well as a masculine side, and yet that God is One, and there is no duplication of any sort in Him.

All that is, is God; but we may see Him through many differently coloured glasses and from many different points of view. We may see Him as the mighty Spirit informing all things; but those things which are informed—those forms—they are no less God, for there is nothing but God. And so we see what we may call the feminine side of the Godhead; and just as the masculine side of the Deity has many manifestations, so has the feminine side many manifestations. So in those earlier days there were many gods and goddesses, each representing an aspect, and the gods had their priests,



and the goddesses their priestesses, who took just as important a part in religion as did the priests. But in the last great religions, Christianity and Muhammadanism (both coming forth from Judaism, which ignored the feminine side), the World-Teacher has not chosen to make that division prominent; therefore in Christianity and in Muhammadanism we have the priest only, and the forces which are poured down through the services of the Church, although they include all the qualities, are yet so arranged, so directed, as to run through the male form only.

In Ancient Egypt we divided those forces, because that was the will of the World-Teacher when He founded the Egyptian religion, so some of them ran through the manifestation of Osiris, and some through the manifestation of Isis. Therefore some of them were administered by the priests of Amen-Ra the Sun-God, and others by the priestesses of Isis. And Isis was in every way as deeply honoured, and considered as high in every respect as any of the male aspects. She was the great beneficent goddess and mother, whose influence and love pervaded all heaven and earth

It is time that we learnt to understand the symbolism of the Church—learnt to see how many-sided it is, so that each idea which is put before us calls up a host of useful and elevating thoughts, and not one only. Reference has already been made to that other line of symbols in which the different stages in the earth-life of the Christ typify the four great Initiations, and His Ascension represents the fifth. Into that line also the story of our Lady enters, for in it her Nativity represents the first appearance of matter in connection with the ego

at his individualization, while the Annunciation stands for what is commonly called conversion, that first penetration of the soul by the Holy Spirit which turns the man in the right direction, and makes the birth of the Christ within him a necessary result, when the long gestation period shall be over. In the same scheme the Assumption means the full and final drawing up of the ego or soul into the monad.

If we take the other form of the symbology, that which refers to the descent of the Christ into matter as His birth, her Nativity is the formation of *Mula-prakriti* by the leaping forth of the Second Person, as before mentioned, while the Annunciation is the First Descent of the Holy Ghost into matter. The Holy Spirit descends and overshadows the *maria*, the seas of virgin matter; the Spirit of God moved over the face of the deep, and so the Annunciation is that First Descent which in other phaseology we call the First Outpouring, which brings the chemical elements into existence. But only after a long period of gestation is the matter prepared for the Second Outpouring which comes from the Second Person of the Trinity, and Christ is born in matter, as on Christmas Day. Later still comes the Third Outpouring, when each man individually receives into himself the divine spark, the Monad, and so the soul or ego in man is born. But that is at a much later stage.

In older faiths there were several presentations of the Feminine Aspect. For the Romans, Venus typified it as love, Minerva as wisdom, Ceres as the earth-mother, Bellona as the defender. Our Lady does not exactly correspond to any of these, or rather

perhaps, she includes several of them raised to a higher plane of thought. The nearest approximation in antiquity to our conception of her is probably the figure of Kwan-yin, the Mother of Mercy and Knowledge, in Northern Buddhism, as promulgated in China and Tibet. Our Lady is essentially Mary the Mother, the type of love, devotion and pity; the heavenly wisdom indeed, but most of all *Consolatrix Afflictorum*, the consoler, comforter, helper of all who are in trouble, sorrow, need, sickness or any other adversity. For not only is she a channel through which love and devotion pass to Christ, her Son and King, but she is in turn a channel for the outpouring of His love in response.

So that, both from the point of view of symbolism and from that of fact, we have good reason to keep the festivals of our blessed Lady, and to rejoice in and be thankful for the wisdom and the love that have provided for us this line of approach—thankful to Christ Who gives this, and to our Lady through whom it is given. So we too can join in the world-wide chorus of praise, and repeat the words of the Angel Gabriel: "Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women."

Ave Maria! thou whose name  
All but adoring love may claim,  
Yet may we reach thy shrine;  
For He, thy Son, our Leader, vows  
To crown all lowly, lofty brows  
With love and joy like thine.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE FESTIVAL OF THE ANGELS

#### THE HIGHER ANGELS

The festival of the holy Angels is usually called Michaelmas Day, after St. Michael, the great Chief of the Angels; but really we celebrate on that occasion not only that glorious Prince, but the whole angelic Host; we thank and praise God for them and for all the wonderful help which they give to us. There is a great deal of misunderstanding about the holy Angels. The idea of them is so beautiful, so poetical, that people often think of it as if it were only poetry. They talk about these great and glorious beings somewhat in the same way as they speak about fairy legends. It is all very beautiful, but it is not quite real to them.

Nothing could be further from the truth than any such idea as that. The radiant glory of the holy Angels is far more real, and not less, than the things of this physical plane. I suppose that sounds strange, overstrained, even half-ridiculous; but it is not so at all. These things of the physical plane which we touch and feel are real enough to us now, while we live among them; but we have only to raise our consciousness just a little into a higher world, and at once all this gross reality is real no longer, but is airier than the fabric of a dream, and we understand then that the things which are seen here on the physical plane are rightly described as temporal, but the things which are unseen down here are far more nearly eternal. Those are the realities, and not

these. The spirit is the real thing, not this body. The body is perfectly real while it lasts, but that is only for a few years; the spirit is a divine spark, and lives for ever.

So the holy Angels are in no way less real than you and I. If we are to institute comparisons between mere vehicles, theirs are much more real and more lasting than ours. Everything which is material had a beginning and will have an end; but that which rises far above the merely physical lasts indefinitely longer, and is infinitely more glorious. If we wish to understand these higher things, we must first of all get that idea well into our heads, that the higher we can raise our consciousness the nearer we get to the true reality. There is One only Who is eternal beyond all eternity, and that is God alone; but these His grander, brighter, nobler creatures are far longer-lived, far more vivid, than the consciousness which we have down here; so we must try to understand something of this great Angel kingdom.

Anyone who has studied the discoveries of modern science knows that there is a definite line of evolution coming up through the different kingdoms of nature. The mineral kingdom is generally accounted the lowest; some students know that there are others preceding even that in evolution, but we need not go into that matter at the moment. The mineral kingdom gradually leads up to the beginnings of the vegetable kingdom, and in the same way the vegetable kingdom also leads up to the beginnings of the animal kingdom. There are intermediate organisms which it is difficult to assign with certainty to either kingdom. In their earlier stages it is often impos-

sible to distinguish the vegetable from the lower animal, and in the same way there are organisms hovering on the edge of vegetable life which are almost mineral; so these kingdoms form a steadily-rising sequence.

Man is usually classified as being at the head of the animal kingdom; but in our studies of the inner life we count him, for certain good reasons, as a separate kingdom. The qualifications in various ways which he possesses differentiate him from even the highest of the animal kingdom, though from the animal there is a steady progress up to the human. There is no break in this system of evolution, and so from the very lowest life we can lead up to our own life. Are we then the end of everything? Is there no life as much higher than ours as ours is higher than the animal, as the animal is higher than the mineral? Investigation shows us that there is a life higher than ours—that there is a kingdom above the human kingdom in precisely the same way as the human is above the animal, and the animal above the vegetable—a kingdom higher in evolution than our own.

In English we call it the Angel kingdom. The philosophers of that wonderful country, India, have studied these things for thousands of years before any of us did, because their civilization is very much older than our own. They know all about that higher kingdom, and they give to its members the name of Devas. *Deva* is a Sanskrit word from which is derived our word "divine." It is connected with all which is high and God-like. The Devas are the Shining Ones—a very natural name for men who can see them to give to them, because all this higher

world is to our world as light is to darkness. If by chance we become able for a moment to see something of the matter of that higher world, to us it appears as light, and if from that higher world we look down into the matter of this, we see it as comparative darkness. We must realize that the Angel kingdom is in every way as real as our own, or as the animal kingdom which is below our own. Men may think: "We can see the animals; why can we not see the Angels? The animals belong to a lower kingdom than we, but they can see us; if they can see something belonging to a higher kingdom, why cannot we?"

First of all, we *can*. There are a great many men who *have* seen members of the Angelic kingdom, although the lowest matter to which they descend is higher than this of our physical world. There are many stages and varieties of matter even down here; we have the solid, the liquid, the gaseous. Sir William Crookes spoke of radiant matter—matter which he thought of as in a fourth state, higher than the gaseous. There is matter which eludes our senses, not because it is in any sense unreal or even immaterial, but because our senses are imperfect, and reach only a small part of what we know to exist. For example, we can see solid matter, and liquid matter also unless it is perfectly clear; but we can rarely see gas, or anything in a gaseous condition. There are some gases, like chlorine, which we can see by their colour, but usually we are aware of gas in another way, by scent or by our feeling when breathing it. That which is higher than gas is still more beyond our physical senses, but we should be making a vital mistake—vital, that is, to the compre-

hension of things—if we suppose it to be unreal. These Angels have bodies, and those bodies are built of matter as ours are; only they happen to be built of higher matter, answering only to higher vibrations. But we also have within ourselves a body of finer matter, a higher vehicle which can be cultivated, and its senses developed, just as the physical senses of a man can be developed to a much greater degree of fineness than most of us possess.

I remember once visiting the astronomer in charge at one of our great universities. He showed me a number of photographs, and he said to me: "You see in that photograph of a spectrum of a star six lighter lines." I looked at that photograph, but I could not distinguish them, and presently I mustered up courage to say so to the great man. "Of course not," he replied, "I forgot; it took me two years to learn to see them." I had the photographs in my hands, but my eyes were uncultivated for this finer sight, so that I could not see what to his trained eye was clearly visible. So even our physical senses vary greatly according to whether they are educated or not. The senses of our higher body can also be trained to see things belonging to these higher worlds. People sometimes catch a glimpse of them when they are in an exalted condition, or in deep vision. We read, for example, that the great saints had visions of Angels. We must not suppose that these men were mere hysterical dreamers; the fact is that their higher consciousness was for the moment opened, so that they saw what under normal conditions would have remained invisible to them. We should try to realize then that the Angels are a great and glorious reality, and that they are close



about us all the time; and yet, though belief in their existence is to be found in every religion (it is certainly very prominent in the Catholic Faith, though perhaps in the later sects of Christianity it has been allowed to fall somewhat into the background) little is really known about them.

I suppose that most people, when they think of Angels, regard them as a host of glorious Spirits, human in form, though usually bearing huge wings on their shoulders, who spend their time either in perpetual adoration before the Throne of God, or in travelling on errands for Him, mostly connected with the progress of the human race, or the rescue of individuals from positions of misery or danger. There is no particular exception to be taken to that point of view, and it is well enough for the general public who are not interested in exact detail. But there is a good deal more than that which may be known with regard to this wonderful order of beings; and it is perhaps as well that intelligent members of the Liberal Catholic Church should be somewhat more precise in their knowledge of this subject.

Though the Angelic kingdom is next above the human, it is not necessarily the next stage in our evolution. Just as not all the creatures which are classified as belonging to the animal kingdom will eventually become human, so not by any means all human beings will ever join the great kingdom of the holy Angels. All who are now human will one day reach the end, the summit of human development, and will become super-human; but there are many other lines of evolution into which man may

pass other than this of the angelic host. (See *Invisible Helpers*, chap. xvii.)

This great Angelic kingdom has its own races, its varied degrees of development, its different lines of evolution, just as is the case with every other kingdom in nature. There are Angels who do not stand higher in evolution than some of the best of men; and there are others whose splendour seems to us to include all that we can image of Divinity. We have no space in such a book as this to attempt a detailed account, but we may note that the wording of our Liturgy recalls to us at every eucharistic service a ninefold classification which has been widely accepted in the early Christian Church—that which divides them into Angels, Archangels, Cherubim, Seraphim, Thrones, Dominations, Princedoms, Virtues and Powers. The Jewish arrangement, which has also largely been adopted in the Christian Church, divides them into seven great types, corresponding to the Rays. Even the names of those Great Ones Who stand at the head of each of these seven types are given to us in ancient writings, where they appear as Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, Uriel, Chamuel, Jophiel, and Zadkiel.

In the nine-fold classification two other types are added which are cosmic—that is to say, they extend beyond the limits of our chain of worlds, perhaps even beyond our solar system. To each of these types different characteristics are assigned, and in each of these great Orders of Angels there are many levels. We divide our human kingdom into various races—the Aryan, the Mongolian, the Semitic and so on; but we all recognize that in each of these races there are highly developed people and people of comparatively

low development. There are kings and princes and nobility and also there are peasants; but they are all of the same race. Just in the same way in the Orders of the Angels there are the great leaders, and there are others who are not so highly developed; for the lower levels of the various Orders have astral bodies, and are still subject to the influence of desire. It is true that evil of intention is no longer possible for any of the angelic host, but there are many who in intellect and general advancement are but little beyond ourselves.

Among the Buddhists and the Hindus we find a great four-fold grouping which is certainly readily distinguishable in the case of those Angels who come most into contact with humanity. These different classifications are by no means mutually exclusive, but may well refer to different parts or tribes in so vast a kingdom, or even to the same divisions looked at from a different point of view. We shall have, however, but a very truncated and partial idea of this glorious kingdom if we think of its members as always occupied either in fruitlessly praising the Deity or in running errands connected with the human race. The Angels are a manifestation of the Divine Life at a certain high stage of its evolution, and they are primarily concerned, just as we are, with the business of that evolution. They are living their own lives, and those lives are a far more splendid epiphany of Deity than are most of ours. No doubt they often praise God, as we ourselves do in our churches; but just as we try mainly to show forth our love to God by living in the world as He would have us live, so do they at their superior level show best their

love and devotion to Him by carrying out to their utmost that work which He has given them to do.

It would be foolish of us to think of that work as in any way specially concerned with us, though, no doubt, such a thought is flattering to our pride, and fits in readily with the self-centredness of humanity as a whole. We shall perhaps arrive at a more rational understanding if we think of our own attitude towards the kingdoms below us—the animal and the vegetable. We do not spend the whole of our lives in thinking how we can do good to these lower kingdoms or help on their evolution; the average man is far more concerned in thinking how he can make these lower creatures serve *him*, and how much in one way or other he can make out of them. Our relations with wild animals are, in fact, of the most horrible description; and they may well be excused if they regard us not as angels but as devils.

Of course it would be quite unthinkable that the angelic kingdom should endeavour in any such way to exploit *us* (though dead men sometimes do); but we may well suppose that it is, on the whole, content to go the way of its own evolution without interfering unnecessarily with ours. There are no doubt, individual cases of interference; sometimes an Angel sees a man in trouble or difficulty in which he thinks that he can give some help, and he promptly gives it, as we should to a wild animal.

Such occasions, however, must always be rare; for we must remember that the average Angel even of the less exalted type is, as compared with the average man, much in the position that a College professor would be with regard to a little child in the baby or

primer class. The professor is there for the helping of students; but the child in the primer class must develop to a great extent, and learn a great deal from other teachers before he will be able to take advantage of the help that the professor can best give. Under exceptional circumstances that professor might help the child through a sum or a reading lesson; but we can all see that the work of education as a whole is better done when the professor attends to his own business, and leaves the tiny child to acquire his learning through the channels especially appointed for him at his level.

At a later stage that primer-class child will no doubt come into touch with the professor and learn much from him; and in precisely the same way, when humanity has evolved much further along its path it will come into far closer relation with these great angelic hosts, and such contiguity will be greatly to its advantage. Something of the method of that close union may be read by those who wish in the book *Man, Whence, How and Whither*, in which it is described how in a future, not far distant, great Angels will take a visible and leading part in the Church services of those days, and will gather together the devotion of the members of the congregation and pour it upwards in a mighty fountain to the feet of the Solar Deity Himself. They will also act as the recipients and distributors of the tremendous spiritual influence or grace which He in response outpours upon these devotees.

They are doing work of that nature even now, though somewhat less obviously. I have already mentioned that all the devotion and all the love which have been outpoured through many centuries

at the feet of the Blessed Virgin Mary are gathered up by her, now that she is a great Angel, and forwarded to the Solar Deity, Who very surely accepts and responds. In the first volume of this series, *The Science of the Sacraments*, I have explained something of the wondrous part which the Angels play in the greatest of our Church services. Thousands upon thousands of earnest Christians have for the last twenty centuries been deriving the fullest spiritual help and upliftment from the Holy Eucharist without knowing that they owe the possibility of that most glorious service to the assistance so gladly and patiently given by the holy Angels to an uncomprehending world. They come then because they can arrange for us a certain kind of service which without them we could not achieve, and because they know that when a man attends such a service and joins heartily in praise and worship, he is in an impressionable attitude, and can be reached and touched; good can be done to him and power poured forth upon him.

When a man enters the church, he comes into the presence of our Lord enthroned upon His altar; and just because of that fact he also comes into the presence of a great host of adoring Angels. How much they can do for him depends upon the extent to which he opens his heart to their influence, and upon his physical, moral and mental condition. Some of us feel such influences easily and keenly, because we have sharpened our senses in that particular direction; others become aware of them only vaguely and uncertainly; but increasing numbers of people are becoming conscious of them. Man is growing by slow degrees to

be the kind of creature that Angels can help, and as he advances further into their sphere he will be more cognizant of their gracious response and interest.

We have an unequalled opportunity to try to see them, or at least to sense their presence for ourselves, because although I think all Christians are more or less vaguely aware that the Angels attend upon certain services of the Church in order to help, we have the advantage of a little more definite information than is usually given. We may know exactly at what point these great ones arrive, and therefore we may be watching for them, and I should strongly advise that we should all of us make it a practice to try to be aware of such presences. There is a vast amount of help and strength and comfort to be obtained from them, and if we know at what time they may be expected we are readily able to attune our minds to obtain that benefit. The presence of the Angels should not be for us vague, uncertain or hypothetical; we should make up our minds that it is a perfectly definite reality, and although we may not all actually be able to see it, any more than we can see an electric current, yet it is just as real as an electric current, and its effects may be appreciated by those who are capable of sensing them.

Great hosts of Angels attend the celebration of the Eucharist. Why? Most of them because they enjoy the wonderful vibrations which are radiated forth from the consecrated Host. They also enjoy the vibrations of devotion and love which we send up in our adoration, and they come to bathe in this not only because they enjoy it, but because they

know it to be good for them, to be of great advantage to their evolution. But besides those there are other and greater Angels who come in order to take a definite part in the work. The Holy Eucharist is not celebrated for our sake, however much benefit we may derive from it. We come not in order to receive, but chiefly in order to give. We come because this is the method which Christ has ordained for the radiation of spiritual force abroad upon His world, and we come here to help in this distribution of divine energy. Incidentally we get a great deal for ourselves, but that is not our main object.

The Angels come—those greater ones—in order to make all this possible for us. At the end of the Asperges we ask that God shall send His Angel to help us and be with us. In answer to that call comes the Angel of the Eucharist who builds the edifice out of our devotion and our feeling, and out of the energy that is thrown out by the musical part of the service. Greater than he are the Angels who come when we send out the call for them just before the Sanctus—when the priest or the bishop, having called upon us to lift up our hearts and to give thanks unto God, proceeds further to say that with the holy Angels (enumerating the different kinds) we take our part. That is the traditional call to them and the very melody to which we sing, “Lift up your hearts,” “We lift them up unto the Lord” is almost two thousand years old, if not quite. It goes back to the very earliest ages in which such music was used in the Church.

They come and take part in the service; the work which they do, when the celebrant tells them for whom we wish to offer this service, was explained in



the previous volume. The Directing Angel, the Angel of the First Ray, apportions to the different representatives of the other Rays the block of force which they shall take away and apply to the object named. We have some objects which are always enumerated—George our King, our Presiding Bishop, our bishops, clergy and laity—and each of these definitely receives something. Of course we must not think for a moment that it is only we who have such privileges. In all Christian Churches where the link of the apostolic succession has been made, the same arrangement exists; indeed we must not think of it as confined to Christianity at all. All religions exist for the helping of the world, and in almost all of them some provision is made for the reception and distribution of spiritual force. This work of the Angels is made easier when the congregation understands what is being done and assists intelligently by thought. Therefore we should make it our business to know and to comprehend, so that we may help the Angels in the work which they have to do.

These glorious Spirits are of so many different kinds that it is scarcely feasible to attempt any description of them. Many of them are of human form, though usually of far more than human stature. Their colours, their radiance, their iridescence are wonderful beyond all words; they look upon us with glorious starry eyes, filled with eternal peace. In them the aura is so much larger, so far more magnificent than with us, that from a distance often they appear mere spheres of flashing light. I have never seen them with wings; indeed, I think that the wings worn by the angels of art and of poetry

must always be symbolical of their various powers, as they so evidently are in some of the scriptural descriptions. This supposition is further borne out by the fact that even in the biblical story, when the Angel of the Lord comes to visit His people (such as Abraham, Peter and others) he is usually taken for a man, which would hardly be possible if he wore a pair of gigantic wings.

The aura of the great Angel is far more extensive and flexible than ours; he expresses himself simultaneously in thought-forms of marvellously beautiful shapes, in coruscations of glorious colour and in a wealth of loveliest music. For him a smile of greeting would be a wondrous brightening of colour and a rush of harmonious sound; a speech delivered by one of these valiant Sons of God would be a magnificent oratorio; a conversation between two great Angels would be like a mighty fugue, in which *motif* answered to *motif*, echoing in bewildering cataracts of harmony, accompanied by kaleidoscopic changes of glowing hues, and scintillations of rainbow light. There are Angels who live in and express themselves by what to us are perfumes and fragrances—though to use such words seems to degrade, to materialize the exquisite emanations in which they revel so joyously.

There are always Angels hovering round the Reserved Host, but when the more vivid glow begins at the Elevation or Benediction we see a curious and most beautiful addition to the company, for a number of very small Angels circle about it. Most members of the angelic host are at least of ordinary human size, and many of them are much greater than men; but here is a tribe of tiny cherubs

quite like some of those painted by Titian or Michael Angelo, except that I have never seen any of them with wings. They are small and wonderfully perfect creatures—not at all unlike certain classes of nature-spirits, except that they are far more radiant and undoubtedly angelic in type; child-like and yet somehow very, very old. They give an impression of eternal shining which it is impossible to put into words; they are like birds of paradise in the splendour of their colour, beings of living light; and they wheel or hover in an attitude of adoration, twining in and out as they move, making a kind of hollow sphere about the Host—a sphere perhaps twenty feet in diameter. I do not think that any of them come so low as to have an astral body; most of them can be distinguished only by the sight of the causal body, which of course means that their densest vehicle is built of matter belonging to the mental world. They are of great value in the service, for they reflect and transmute some of the mighty forces employed, and call out great volumes of others; so a swirl of indescribable activity is always going on within and around their sphere.

There is also another kind of these tiny creatures to whom the title of Angel is less appropriate. They are equally graceful and beautiful in their way, but in reality they belong to the kingdom of the elves or nature spirits. They do not *express* themselves by means of perfumes, but they live by and on such emanations, and so are always to be found where fragrance is being disseminated. There are many varieties, some feeding upon coarse and loathsome odours, and others only upon those which are delicate and refined. Among them are a few types

which are especially attracted by the smell of incense, and are always to be found where it is burnt. When the priest censens the altar and thus creates a magnetic field, he encloses within it a number of these delightful little elves, and they absorb a great deal of the energy which is accumulated there, and become valuable agents in its distribution at the proper time.

The Greek word *aggelos* means a messenger; but sometimes in our Scripture the English word "angel" is used in quite a different sense, where to our thinking the word "spirit" would perhaps be more appropriate. An instance occurs in the Gospel for St. Michael's Day, when the Christ is reported as saying of the pure in heart who have turned away from evil and become as little children, that "in heaven their angels do always behold the face of My Father Who is in heaven." Here, if He is correctly reported, He can only be speaking of the spirit in the man, which because of the man's purity is able to recognize its unity with the Great Spirit, and thus ever to behold the face of its Father.

We must also hold in affectionate remembrance the great class of thought-angels, of whom so many are specially connected with the services of the Church. The greatest of all of these is the mighty Angel of the Presence, who comes every time the Holy Eucharist is celebrated, and consummates for us that tremendous sacrifice; for when, fulfilling the duties of his holy office, the priest pronounces the words of power, that Angel flashes forth, and by his touch of fire performs that wondrous transmutation which is at the same time the greatest of all miracles and the most natural, touching and intimate expression of the

Divine Love. He is in very truth a thought-form of the Lord Christ Himself, a projection of that wondrous Consciousness.

There is no greater joy for His holy Angels than to follow the lightning of that thought, and to bathe in that river of life, that ineffable outpouring of spiritual influence. And so it comes that at every Eucharist, at every Benediction Service, the congregation is far more numerous than we can see with physical eyes; and when we celebrate these holy mysteries, the squadrons of the heavenly host gather about us here and now. Another manifestation of the power of the thought-angel occurs in connection with the Sacrament of Baptism. The priest makes a sort of cuirass of light before and behind the infant; and when in this way the thought-form is built, the power from on high pours down into it, and the priest then carefully seals it. This thought-form, thus ensouled by the outpouring of divine power, becomes a veritable guardian angel for the child, and greatly assists the ego in gaining control of his new vehicles.

But it is not only by the powers from on high that these helpful thought-forms can be made. At an infinitely lower level we ourselves can, and do, constantly make useful thought-forms which are, to all intents and purposes, guardian angels for those to whom they are sent. Whenever we pour out a strong thought of love, we thereby manufacture a form which is projected towards the person of whom we have thought. A constant succession of such thoughts will surround our friends with a veritable cloud of helpful influence; and such a cloud almost always attracts the attention of some passing Angel,

who will then interest himself in its distribution and application to the needs of the person concerned.

This is only one of many ways in which even the lower orders of the angelic hosts are ready to assist us as soon as we show ourselves worthy of such assistance—or (which is perhaps the same thing in other words) as soon as we are capable of receiving it. In connection with our earth the Angels fill many and varied positions. I have written elsewhere of those who inhabit and guard a certain sacred mountain in Ireland;\* there are many other similarly guarded spots in various parts of the world, and at such points the Angel hosts are very near for those who have eyes to see or hearts to feel. We are familiar with the idea expressed in our hymn: "All nature is to God a glorious garment rare;" but perhaps it has not yet occurred to us that every glorious landscape is itself the garment of an Angel, who is part of God. Those who comprehend the message of nature, those who are truly in sympathy with her, will understand this wondrous truth; in ancient Greece they knew it well, but in these later days men have become very material, and few are those who can truly feel and see.

#### THE LOWER ANGELS

The class of Angel who ensouls a landscape, a wood or moor, though by no means so highly developed as some of those of whom I have already spoken, is yet in certain ways a type further removed from humanity and less easy for us to comprehend. Our knowledge of this mighty kingdom next above our own is as yet imperfect in so many respects that we cannot even say what stages of evolution lie either behind or before this most interesting division

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\**The Hidden Side of Things*, vol. i, p. 136.

of the heavenly host; we do not know how a particular Angel is appointed to take charge of this spot or of that; nor are we certain by whom or on what principle the limits of his jurisdiction are defined.

This at least we know—that this wondrous and majestic universe is part of the manifestation of the Deity on the physical plane; and yet at the same time each planet is the body of a great planetary Angel, who lives his life in it and expresses himself through it as we do through our bodies, though we can have but little idea of the methods or possibilities of such life. We know only that to him the spherical form is absolutely the perfect form, that to breast the ether in his splendid onward sweep is in some way the keenest of all joys, that all the beauty and vividness and vibrant happiness of all the thousand forms of life in the world are but a partial expression of his bliss. The life of his world is part of him, just as he in turn is part of the Solar Deity Himself. This Angel of the Earth is a great intelligence, and in many ways he manifests through us who are a part of him. Music, for example, is one of his faculties, so that when we play or sing we are helping him to express himself, and thus giving pleasure to him; for music, as I have said before, is a sort of entity or congeries of entities, and when we use it we are bringing into play another side of Nature, an additional set of forces, and associating with us some of the Music-Angels.

Most of us have as yet no conscious contact with the great Earth-Angel, though it is by no means impossible that that may be one of the glories lying before us in the future. When life was simpler and

more natural, men drew nearer to a comprehension of him; at least they became aware of some of his thought-forms, and half-materialized them; and they definitely attained companionship with some of the wood or river spirits who bear to him the same relationship that he in turn bears to the Solar Deity. They differ much as men do; some are of exalted type, earnest workers in the cause of evolution, while others are by no means incapable of manifesting personal desire and other quite ordinary human characteristics; but their life is so radically different from ours that we are in no position even to attempt anything in the nature of criticism of their actions.

They animate or ensoul or brood over (all these expressions are applicable, yet none is fully satisfactory) a section of the earth's surface—sometimes an extensive landscape or a great forest, sometimes only a field, a spinney or a garden. Some seem comparatively indifferent to this physical garment of theirs; others are keenly alive to anything which affects it in the slightest degree. Some obviously dislike all human intrusion, and even take steps to prevent it; others welcome certain friends, but adopt a reserved attitude towards mankind in general. Those who ensoul beautiful views very definitely appreciate and enjoy the admiration of the artistic; and almost all show great surprise and delight when they meet a human being who can see them, and understand them and converse with them. Though the higher orders of the Angels reach far beyond any level that the bulk of humanity has yet attained or even imagined, these lower orders are, as I have said, not unlike developed men; and indeed it is often by no means easy at the first glance to distinguish



between the lower members of the angelic kingdom and the most advanced of the nature-spirits.

The nature-spirits stand in relation to the Angels just as the animal kingdom stands in relation to the human, and the dividing line between the two is individualization, in the one case as in the other; but a much higher development of intelligence and reasoning power is gained before individualization in the case of the less material evolution, and thus it happens that we frequently encounter the phenomenon of etheric or astral entities fully equal to man in intelligence and resourcefulness, but without any special ethical feeling or sense of responsibility.

These more tenuous beings constitute a line of evolution parallel to our own, and consequently every stage with which we are familiar in physical life is represented among them, from the amorphous protozoon, in which consciousness is dawning, to the great Archangel who directs a vast department of terrestrial activity. The number of types is all but infinite—a fact that accounts for the wide difference between the reports of casual observers. For the existence of these non-human entities is widely known in the world, and numbers of people have seen them; indeed, it was only the ignorant scepticism of the last century that introduced disbelief in their reality.

In old Greek stories we read frequently of encounters between human beings and these minor powers of nature, and these latter are sometimes represented as materializing temporary physical bodies, always in human form, and assuming parental responsibilities. Modern scepticism scoffs at such legends, but there are many facts in Nature

which lie outside our very limited experience. There were plenty of instances in classical days; and it is unwise to decide that, because a thing does not happen in our crassly materialistic civilization, it can never have occurred under more natural and picturesque conditions. It is unsafe as well as presumptuous to pronounce the bombastic formula: "What I know not is not knowledge."

Perhaps I shall best attain my object if I describe two experiences of my own with these Lords of the wood and field; in the first case with one who was decidedly on the angelic side of the dividing line, and in the second case with some highly developed nature-spirits. Once upon a time my friends carried me off for a day in the open air—a day to be spent in a tract of country which, though not far from a great city, is left in its wild and primitive condition as a National Reserve for the enjoyment of the people. On Saturday and Sunday it is often quite crowded, but during the rest of the week it is a delightful umbrageous solitude. In the centre of it is a wooded valley through which runs a river; and as soon as we entered that valley the sensitive members of our party at once became conscious of a brooding influence, by no means unpleasant, but distinctly unusual. Tracing this to its source, we found the whole valley to be under the care of an Angel who has decided views as to what he intends to make of it, and is showing laudable determination and unwearied patience in achieving his ends. He regards the place as a sacred charge, and aims at so magnetizing it that it shall produce an effect upon every sensitive person who passes through it. He has stretched a web of etheric matter from crest

to crest, to isolate his valley from the outer world; and inside it he endeavours to keep up something like a higher moral temperature, much as we preserve a higher physical temperature in the palm-house at Kew.

His theory is that people visit the great Park at a time of relaxation, when their minds are free from the strain of business, and that they are therefore less imprisoned within the shell of selfishness, and more open to the higher influences. He argues that if he thus catches men at the favourable moment, the gentle yet steady upward pressure, which his atmosphere is applying all the while as they saunter along his valley or row on his river, must produce some effect—an effect which will of course increase in direct ratio to the impressibility of those who are subjected to it, but can hardly be entirely absent except in the most hardened cases. This aura of his is already instantly perceptible to a psychic, but he considers his work yet scarcely begun, and is enthusiastic as to the condition he hopes to be able to induce by fifty or a hundred years of strenuous labour and concentration.

It was of intense interest to us to observe the methods which he had been employing in his preparation, and the success which he has so far achieved; it may not however prove easy to explain a line of activity so remote from ordinary human conception. It is comprehensible that every living creature, every fox, rabbit or weasel is a fragment of the divine life in manifestation, and (though not yet individualized and capable of reincarnation) is *during its physical existence* just as much a soul, a separate consciousness, as any one of us. We must

extend this idea to include the smaller forms of animal life, and the trees and bushes of our wood. But each of these lives is naturally independent and self-centred, moving in its own way, so that such force as they radiate flows indifferently in all directions, and its various streams probably cancel one another. By his steady pressure the Angel of the Valley has changed all this; without in any way coercing or interfering with his trees and his animals he has brought them gradually to be capable of a certain co-operation, or amenable to a common influence. Normally each creature thinks and acts for itself just as before; but at any moment, when the Angel wishes it, he can send out a stream to which all the lives instantly adapt themselves; they lie parallel like reeds combed out by a current, and all the force of the valley is at his disposal, acting as a unit. He spoke sadly, almost impatiently, of the type of human being who visited his valley in crowds on Sundays, declaring that although they professed to belong to a higher kingdom, they were of less actual use to him in the generation of energy than the very rabbits under their feet.

It happened that one of our party was a bishop, wearing a pectoral cross, which is a highly-magnetized jewel containing gems specially linked with the Heads of the Seven Rays—an object of immense value as a centre for the distribution of force for the helping of men. In this the Angel was keenly interested, asking to be allowed to examine it closely. He fully understood its object and its power; and when, later in the day, another member of the party encountered him alone, he enquired whether it would be possible that a similar arrange-

ment of magnetized and linked gems could be procured for him, explaining in how many ways it would be of assistance to him in his work. Of course we very gladly agreed to provide what he wished; there was no difficulty in doing so, for the merest speck of the appropriate jewel is sufficient to make the necessary radiating centre, so that the total cost of such a talisman is only a few shillings. As soon as it was prepared, a deputation visited his valley once more to present it to him; he was greatly pleased, and requested us to bury it in the ground for him in a central spot which he selected with great care, being especially particular as to what trees grew in the immediate neighbourhood. When this was done, he called together a large number of the higher types of nature-spirits (probably superintendents under him) and held a beautiful little dedication ceremony, in which they were put *en rapport* with the amulet, and its use was fully explained to them. The jewels were caused to glow until they were surrounded by a great globe of living light; and each spirit in turn came and bathed himself in that splendour until he was thoroughly permeated with it, charged with it as though he were a battery.

The Angel was quite disproportionately grateful for this small service which we rendered him, and for our strong interest in his work. We were naturally anxious to find other ways of helping him, but it was not easy to see what else we could do. Presently, however, we discovered a method by which we could be of great use to him, and give him really valuable assistance in his work—assistance which, if continued by our successors, will very materially shorten the time required to get his valley

into the condition which he desires. That method is to allot to him a portion of the outpouring of divine force which is evoked at the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. We found that when this was done he was immensely strengthened and encouraged, and the influx of this entirely different type of energy seemed actually to inspire him with new ideas in connection with his work. Where the mighty magic of the eucharistic service is understood, a list is kept of the people most in need of help, and of the objects to which this spiritual force can most usefully be devoted. The most efficient aid which we can give to our friend, the Angel of the Valley, is to include him in our list; that is now done, so he is receiving a daily dole of divine grace which redoubles his power for good, and incidentally has the effect of drawing us into closer relation with him.

Here surely is an instance of the giving of mutual help, of co-operation between two evolutions, which is interesting not only in itself, but as a forecasting of the future; a suggestion of the wider possibilities which may dawn upon the world when we understand God's plan a little better.

The other experience to which I have referred took place in India. India is a very wonderful country; and even the most unlearned there possess information which we in the West are only now beginning gradually to acquire. Many Indians know from observation that any great old tree possesses a strong temporary individuality, capable on occasion of exteriorizing itself into human form; they know also that where a grove of such trees has been undisturbed for many years there is usually a much greater entity of a quite different type, of whom

they speak as the presiding Angel or deity of the grove—probably what is called a *kâmadeva*. They would tell us that such a being rules over the less developed tree-spirits (though usually without interfering with them in any way), and receives from them such worship as they are capable of giving. He is also quite willing to absorb any devotion offered to him by human beings; he even sometimes tries to appropriate what is not especially intended for him.

As illustrating this I remember a most interesting spectacle of which I was personally a witness. European readers may perhaps not be aware that in India it is customary to have long performances of a character unknown to the West in modern days, though perhaps not entirely unparalleled in mediæval times—performances half-musical, half-conversational—distinctly religious in their intention, yet not without homely touches of wit and quaint topical allusions. Some well known religious story is recited, with rigid adherence to the traditional incidents, but with plenty of room for the talent of the performer to manifest itself in the dress in which he clothes it, in the local allusions and songs which he works into his entertainment. For it is half an entertainment and half a religious function; members of the audience are deeply affected, and indeed frequently pass into a condition of intense and half-abstracted devotion which is almost a trance, and seem for the time unimpressible by external affairs. Such a performance (it is called in the south of India a *harikatha*) often lasts for four or five hours—sometimes even all night, I am told; and those who attend seem

capable of enjoying a sort of orgy of devotion for quite an indefinite period.

Looked at by a clairvoyant, a ceremony of this sort veils itself in rolling clouds of blue, intermingled sometimes with other unexpected colours; but it naturally differs completely from a definite act or offering of devotion aimed at a particular deity. Perhaps it is that very difference, that vagueness and lack of direction, which offers his opportunity to the local deity; for in the case to which I am referring there *was* in attendance an entity of no mean power, the ruler of a neighbouring grove, who sat on the roof of the building and absorbed those clouds of devotion as a sponge sucks up water.

This "ruler of the wood" had materialized into human form, gigantic but well-proportioned, and rather feminine than masculine in appearance; his (or her) body was obviously normally astral, but had drawn into itself for the occasion so much of etheric matter that it was only just barely beyond the limit of ordinary physical sight; I think it must have been perceptible to anyone even slightly sensitive. If the form was human, the expression assuredly was not; it was weird and incalculably strange; no single feature was noticeably unhuman, yet the effect of the whole was removed by unthinkable spaces from sane everyday life. One felt oneself rapt away from the twentieth century after Christ into the twentieth century before Him, into the unfamiliar and the uncanny, the incomprehensible—perhaps even the terrible. Not that the wood-queen was ill-disposed; on the contrary, she wore an expression of almost fatuous satisfaction, which somehow irresistibly suggested the purring of



a cat; yet she was remote with the remoteness of another dimension from the humanity whose emanations she absorbed with an enjoyment which seemed somehow glutinous. So far as was perceptible, she gave nothing in return for all that she absorbed, but more and more as the entertainment went on she overshadowed the performer, strengthening him yet possessing him, until even in outward appearance he grew strangely, awfully, like her, and one wonders how it was that the audience did not notice the change that came over him and the unnatural tension in the atmosphere.

Another entity of similar type was present—an entity just as unmistakably but indefinitely male as the former was female; a creature of less power than the lady, and apparently not on the best of terms with her—distinctly jealous of her at any rate, and desirous to deflect some or all of the devotion in his own direction. Without actually moving he contrived to give a strong impression of an endeavour to oust her—of trying to shoulder her away, just as one small boy might try to push another in some childish game. He was entirely unsuccessful, for the lady had attached herself to the gathering like a limpet to a rock, and was not to be dispossessed.

Earnest students of these subjects, quite outside our own ranks, are becoming familiar with the idea that our world has a vast population normally unseen by us—a population of angels and nature-spirits. Signs are not wanting that the long reign of obscurantism is at last passing, and that contemptuous denial is being replaced by intelligent enquiry with regard to such matters; and among

such signs it seems to me that three recently-published books are specially noteworthy.

The first of these is *The Fairy Faith in Celtic Countries*, by Dr. W. Y. Evans Wentz. This is a remarkable and in many respects an epoch-making book, for it is the first attempt to treat rationally and worthily at least one section of the world-wide belief in nature-spirits. Just twenty years earlier Mr. Hartland published his *Science of Fairy Tales*, but though he wrote sympathetically on the subject, and avowed his dissatisfaction with the theory then current that all fairy stories were traditions of the remnants of earlier races, he stopped short of any definite suggestion as to the real ground of a belief so universal. Dr. Wentz goes much further; he has spent much time in personally collecting testimony as to the living fairy faith in Scotland, Ireland, Wales, the Isle of Man, Cornwall and Brittany, and as a result of his investigations he proclaims that:

(1) Fairyland exists as a supernormal state of consciousness into which men and women may enter temporarily in dreams, trances, or in various ecstatic conditions: or for an indefinite period at death.

(2) Fairies exist, because in all essentials they appear to be the same as the intelligent forces now recognized by psychical researchers.

The fact that Dr. Wentz is a man of science and learning is attested by the University degrees which he has taken in three countries; and it is gratifying to find that a man of such standing has the courage to defy the cheap sneers of the ignorant, and to state so clearly the result of his investigations. He is to be congratulated alike on his patient industry, his perspicacity and his valour; one can-

not say to what extent he is prepared to accept clairvoyant testimony, but at least it may possibly interest him to hear that many of us are well acquainted with his fairyland under the name of the astral world, and that even already we know a good deal about some of the many nations of his fairies, though we more often call them nature-spirits.

There are some points on which he is not fully in accord with our own results, but we may venture to think that, if he continues his enquiries in the same fearless spirit, he will approximate more and more nearly to our conclusions. He has not yet arrived at a clear distinction between the etheric and the astral; and perhaps he (or more probably those whom he interrogated) may not always fully distinguish between the actions of nature-spirits and those of dead men. For example, in dealing with early Irish history, he regards the Tuatha-de-Danaan as fairies, whereas our researches show them to have been a race of men closely allied to the ancient Greeks. But it is quite true that, because of their splendid appearance and greater knowledge, they were considered as semi-divine beings, and the traditions of them are now in the minds of the peasantry inextricably intermingled with those of the fairies.

He speaks quite plainly and with evident sympathy of the Celtic doctrines of rebirth and of the other world, which, as he expounds them, are simply reincarnation and the astral life, exactly as we hold them; and he declares that these ideas "accord thoroughly in their essentials with modern science." The following passage from p. 514 in his book shows

that he shares with us yet another of the most precious items of knowledge which our study has brought to us:

An integral part of the Celtic esoteric theory of evolution is, that there have been human races like the present human race who in past aeons of time have evolved completely out of the human plane of conscious existence into the divine plane of conscious existence. Hence the gods are beings which once were men, and the actual race of men will in time become gods. Man now stands related to the divine and invisible world in precisely the same manner that the brute stands related to the human race. To the gods, man is a being in a lower kingdom of evolution. According to the complete Celtic belief, the gods can and do enter the human world for the specific purposes of teaching men how to advance more rapidly towards the higher kingdom. In other words, all the Great Teachers (such as Jesus, Buddha, Zoroaster, and many others, in different ages and among various races, whose teachings are extant), are, according to a belief yet held by educated and mystical Celts, divine beings who in inconceivably past ages were men but who are now gods, able at will to incarnate into our world, in order to emphasize the need which exists in nature, by virtue of the working of evolutionary laws (to which they themselves are still subject), for man to look forward, and so strive to reach divinity, rather than to look backward in evolution and thereby fall into mere animalism.

All students of the inner side of things will thank Dr. Wentz for the care with which he has made and recorded a most valuable series of investigations.

It is to him indirectly that we owe the second book of our trilogy, *Lore of Proserpine*, for its author (Mr. Maurice Hewlett, who is a novelist of repute) confesses that it was only after reading the work to which we have just referred that he was inspired to add his modicum of personal testimony to that which Dr. Wentz has so laboriously collected. The direct testimony confines itself to some five or six

definite encounters, though the suggestion is conveyed that there have been many others entirely satisfactory to the author, but less capable of description.

He speaks of a fairy boy whom he saw in a wood, of a dryad, and of some other forms to which he gives the name of oreads. These seem all to have resembled humanity in size and general appearance, yet to have had about them some distinctively non-human quality. I have seen hundreds of nature-spirits to which his descriptions would apply, yet he seems to have had one experience that has never yet fallen to my lot, for he records that he saw a fairy behaving cruelly to an animal, whereas all those that I have encountered have appeared to be on the most friendly terms with the wild denizens of the flood and field. Apart from the above instances, he gives some account of several cases in which he believes that nature-spirits inhabited human bodies—an event which certainly does sometimes occur, perhaps more frequently than we have hitherto suspected. The most remarkable story in the book is called "Quidnunc," and perhaps one may be pardoned for feeling some uncertainty as to whether Mr. Hewlett wishes us to take it seriously; it describes what purports to be a very inappropriate incarnation of Mercury, the messenger of the old Greek gods.

In a final chapter our author tries to formulate a theory which shall include all these experiences, and comes in some points very near the truth. He says:

There is a chain of Being of whose top alike and bottom we know nothing at all. What we do know is that our own is a link in it, and we cannot generally—can only fitfully and rarely—have intercourse with any other. . . . Of this chain of Being, then, of which our order is a member, the fairy

world is another, and more subtle member, subtler in the right sense of the word because it is not burdened with a material envelope. Like man, like the wind, like the rose, it has spirit; but unlike any of the lower orders (of which man is one) it has no sensible wrappings unless deliberately it consents to inhabit one.

With all that we can agree; but on some minor points we are less certain. Mr. Hewlett seems to hold that all fairies have sex, and reproduce their species as we do, while we should think that to be true only of a few of the lower etheric varieties. There are still other points upon which he speculates, probably rightly; but we have not as yet sufficient evidence to make positive statements about them. He evidently holds that the classical deities of ancient Greece still exist, and may be reached. He understands that a river, a hill, an oak-tree, a rose-bush may be under certain circumstances an actual entity, wherein we are fully with him; and he believes that such an entity may sometimes materialize in human form, and actually enter into the closest relations with men and women.

It seems probable that the entities which I saw at that Indian festival were of the same type as some of those described by Mr. Hewlett. However that may be, his book will have its use in familiarizing a wide circle of readers with the idea of the reality of faery.

The third book of the set is *A Prisoner in Fairyland*, by Mr. Algernon Blackwood. When we open a book by that author we know that a treat lies before us, and if on inspection we find that children figure prominently among the characters, we know that it will be a *great* treat, for Mr. Blackwood's children are always charming creations. *A Prisoner*

in *Fairyland* offers us children—delightful children; perhaps none quite so utterly lovable as Nixie in *The Education of Uncle Paul*, but still young people who soon bind themselves to us by cords of affection. Once more fairyland is the astral world, into which all the characters pass when they fall asleep—or nearly all, for some are so entangled in worldly cares that they cannot be pulled out of their physical bodies, but actually stick in the process and slip back again! But though this story deals with fairyland we hear nothing of the fairies, except a few who are personified dreams of childhood—the Dustman, the Tramp, the Woman of the Haystack; nor do we even encounter the hosts of the dead. We are invited to concentrate our attention entirely upon the living human inhabitants of the astral world, and the work which they do as invisible helpers.

For the stream of Divine Love pours down ever as the Starlight, and such of it as is not immediately used is stored up in a Star-Cave, and all the helpers come flying there at night to fetch it and distribute it where it is needed, among the sick, the sorrowful, the suffering. The whole book is a fantasia upon this theme—a delicate fantasy such as Mr. Blackwood so well knows how to weave, and all his characters are fantasts too. They live in a world which is and yet is not the world that we know—a world enwrapped in a web of starlight, palpitant with mystery and sympathy, with omnipresent life and love.

There is no story in the ordinary sense of the word—no plot, no climax; yet the book is permeated with the idea that thoughts are things, that because of the mighty power and wide-spreading influence

of thought it is the duty of every one to think beauty and helpfulness, and to pour it out with clear intent upon those whom we know to need it. Some are so shut in by a shell of sordid care that it is hard to find a way into their hearts; yet such a shell may be penetrated if there is in it even one tiny channel of love. We read of one who was in the bondage of squalid anxieties, yet could be touched and helped through her love for her flowers.

This is by no means a book for all, yet to those who understand it will appeal very strongly. It takes its place with the books already mentioned—signs of the times, all three of them, showing that popular interest is turning towards the non-material side of life, and is gradually beginning to realize its transcendent importance. I recommend them all to our students.

There are Angels, too, presiding over countries and races, brooding over them, to some extent ensouling them, ready to take a close interest in them and advise them if the people of the country or race will but make themselves responsive. If there ever comes a time when those who govern a country are wise enough to desire the advice of its guardian Angel, and developed enough to consult with him, they may profit greatly by his assistance.

The world seems far from such a time as yet, but we can help to bring it nearer by adopting an intelligent attitude towards the whole question, and keeping an open mind. The worst thing that can happen to us is to become prejudiced and hidebound, so that we are unable to receive new ideas, and to widen out in harmony with the development of the moral, the mental, the physical world about us. We



must move with the times, and in order to do so we must open ourselves out. All kinds of beautiful possibilities exist; we have not known of them hitherto, but that is surely no reason why we may not learn about them and take advantage of them now. We must be open to all good influences, but we must never forget the advice of the apostle to try the spirits, whether they be of God. We must not accept as gospel everything which we hear from some unseen source; we must test and judge carefully, using our reason and common sense at every point, remembering that it is just as unwise to reject without examination as to accept without examination. But the first step of all is to recognize the possibility of a wider and higher life, and learn to vibrate in response to it.

I have mentioned but few of the numerous angelic activities; but I think that even this short account will be enough to show us that we have indeed great reason to glorify God for their ministry, to observe their festival with vivid enthusiasm, and to feel their splendour as an ever-present reality, enfolding us like the sunlight, ever drawing our thoughts and our hearts upwards towards Him Who is the King of Angels as well as of men.

## CHAPTER XV

### FESTIVALS OF THE SAINTS

#### OUR ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE SAINTS

We have a number of festivals in the Christian year which are intended to remind us of great people who have gone before. Just as in the outer world it is the custom to keep the birthday of His Majesty the King, and of various members of the royal family, so in the Church is it the custom to keep the birthday of the Princes of the Church—the great saints who have stood out in her ranks as especially noble examples, who are great heroes and leaders, whom we are all proud to follow; but in the case of the saint we celebrate not as a rule his birthday on the physical plane, but what some might call the day of his death—his birthday into a higher life. In the calendar of the Roman Church we find a vast host of saints, often one or even two or three for every day in the year. The reason for that is easy to see. In any particular part of the world its own leaders take great prominence. It is the same in every-day life. We celebrate the birthday of His Majesty King George, but in other countries they keep the birthday of *their* rulers, who are to them more important than our ruler, and just in the same way we find a large number of local saints, people who did good work in their time and in their place, but are really not of world-wide importance.

We find that the observance of the days of such an enormous number of saints makes the Roman services cumbrous and complicated; and when the

people were of purely local renown it hardly seems worth while. If we look at the list of saints we shall come upon dozens of whom we have never heard before. I know that is the case with me, and perhaps I have studied ecclesiastical history more than many people. These saints evoke no particular enthusiasm in me, because I do not know them. In the Liberal Catholic Church we have thought it well not to adopt numbers of saints about whom we have no information, more especially as we find it difficult to trace many of them historically. Some are purely legendary, and while we are not averse to celebrating a legend if it is a good legend and has some foundation, it seems hardly worth while to perpetuate stories which we know to be historically inaccurate.

In our psychic investigations we found little trace of the twelve apostles of the Christ. It is true that He had apostles, but we do not find twelve who stand out conspicuously, and the names given in the gospel story do not appear at all prominently. Most of them were not apparently people of great importance. I remember we thought in our earliest investigations that at least St. Peter must prove to be a man and a great leader, but we were checked by the discovery that the head of every Church of every country was always called its Peter. It was used then not as a name, but as a title. *Petros* is a rock, and the head of each Church was called its Peter, the rock on which it was built. There may of course have been a first and greater Peter, but we were not successful in our attempt to identify him. There were also some indications which suggested that the twelve may have been a personification of the twelve signs of the Zodiac. For all

these reasons we in the Liberal Catholic Church have decided not to perpetuate all of the earlier saints, but we have chosen those whose celebration offers us something tangible or useful, something that it is well for us to know.

A saint is by the definition a holy man, for the word is derived from the Latin *sanctus*, holy. In the Gospel for All Saints' Day we are told what we are to understand by that. That gospel contains the account of what is commonly called the last judgment, and though the popular theory of that event is so distorted as to be an absurd travesty of the truth, there is nevertheless a lesson to be learnt from it. Those whom the King put on His right hand in that story were those who had fed the hungry, who had given drink to the thirsty, who had clothed the naked, who had visited those who were sick and in prison. This account is according to the gospel spoken by the Christ Himself, who is to be the judge on that occasion and therefore presumably must know something of the procedure; and He very specially mentions those people as the saints, but does not attach that name to any man because of his belief in this doctrine or that. He does not say a word about what these people believed or what they did not believe; He says only: "Those who have done such things to one of the least of these My little ones, have done them unto Me." Those are the true holy men—those are the saints. What they believe is of no importance whatever; it is what they *do* that counts. They may be Hindus, Buddhists, Zoroastrians, Muhammadans; if they do these things they pass the examination, and are saints. So we see what kind of men and women we must be if

we are to follow in the footsteps of these holy ones whom we commemorate.

A great deal is said in the Roman branch of the Church about the intercession of the saints. They are asked to pray God for us that our sins may be forgiven, and that we may be helped in various ways. On the other hand, in other branches of Christ's Church we find that very prayer to the saints regarded as a dangerous superstition, for the ignorant say that Catholics allow the saints to get between them and God. A curious expression, because it is obviously true that the saints *are* in development between ordinary men and God. The saints are higher than we, and certainly infinitely lower than the Deity of our solar system. They do stand between us, but why it should be considered wicked or dangerous to ask for any help they can give I have never been able to see. We of the Liberal Catholic Church do not ask for intercession on the part of anyone, because we know that God is a loving Father and that He is all the time doing for all of us the very best that can be done at the stage where we happen to be at the moment. We do not need anyone to pray Him to do that for us. What we need is to try to make ourselves more worthy of the help which He is all the time pouring out upon us, so that we may be the more susceptible to it, and better able to profit by it. That is our side of the bargain, that we should try to live as He has told us to live; that we should try so to live as one day ourselves to reach this very sainthood of which we are thinking.

Is there then any use in praying to the saints, if we do not want them to pray for us? They can do

a great deal, no doubt; but they also, like the God whom they serve, are already doing what they can; we may be very sure of that. A great deal of the misunderstanding which has surrounded the question of sainthood comes from the forgetting of the great fact of reincarnation. The idea all through the Middle Ages was certainly that the saint, having left earth, had passed away into heaven, and so was close at hand to plead with God, as a kind of friend at court. Many of our hymns voice that idea: "There they stand in heavenly glory," etc. That is quite true, but it does not mean that they are in some special place, some heaven set apart from the rest of God's evolution. The great saint has raised himself into a position where he does walk in the light and the glory of God's countenance, whether he be what we call alive or what we call dead, because it is the man himself, the ego, the soul of him which knows and enjoys all that glory and beauty. Thus what is said in our hymns is true, if only we understand it symbolically, as it should be understood. We must avoid the idea that the saints are all living together somewhere as a great community round the feet of God; God is everywhere, and those who draw nearest to Him are those who serve Him best, not merely by verbal worship of Him, but by action in His service in spirit and in truth. Many of the saints to whom people pray are incarnated here on earth, and some of them walk among us now. Nevertheless, they as souls receive the outpouring of love and devotion which is given to them, and it is certainly helpful to them, not only by its direct action, but also because of the response which every such outrush

of love and devotion calls forth from them. To out-pour in response is part of their evolution; and much good is also unquestionably done to those pious souls who by their love evoke this blessing from the saints.

Some of us may not have been accustomed to such an idea as that, and so it may not appeal to us; but the fact that a particular idea does not attract us is no proof that it may not be helpful to other people of different type. Many ideas that have been put forward in the name of religion may not especially appeal to us; but why should we condemn them if they are useful to some other servant of God? Why should he not take them and make use of them? We cannot expect to cast the whole world in our own mould; it would be a very dull place if we could! There must be all kinds of people in it, and each of these kinds of people must have its own way. They have already their own enjoyments; they have their own work, which they can do better than we could do it probably, whereas if they tried to do our work they might find themselves rather helpless. Can we not see that they must have their own way of approaching God also, and that the path which seems so straight to our eyes may not appear by any means the most direct to them because they are starting from a different point? As we have so often said, to try to force people to take our view is exactly like drawing a man away from one side of the mountain where he stands, and saying: "You must not start from your own place; you must come round to my side of the mountain, and start afresh." The man might rea-

sonably reply: "That may be the best way for you, but it is obviously not so for me."

It is exactly the same in religious matters, and that is why it is so foolish to try to convert a Hindu, a Buddhist, a Zoroastrian, a Muhammadan to Christianity. A mission to African savages may have its utility, for it brings mental, moral and hygienic advancement to its converts, and Christianity is certainly an advance from fetish worship, but foreign missions to civilized races are nothing but a waste of time, money and effort in an endeavour to improve upon the divine arrangements. It is not by chance, but by the will of God, that one man is born a Buddhist, another a Hindu, and another a Christian; God puts each man in the environment which he has deserved, which gives the best available opportunity to develop the qualities which he most needs. It is no business of ours to interfere with that arrangement; and if we do so by telling a person that he can attain the goal which God intends him to reach only by abandoning the path which God has chosen for him and following our prescription instead, we are making a false, foolish and presumptuous statement. Sometimes a man, having carefully studied various religions, elects to change from one to another; he has of course an incontestable right to do this, and it may quite possibly be of benefit to him, for he may have absorbed all that he can along one line, but may be able usefully to supplement his information or experience by adventuring in another direction. Because of that we should always be ready to explain our belief and our reason for holding it, when any one



asks us to do so; but we have no right whatever to try to force it upon him.

That is one reason why in this Church we leave our people free as to what they should believe. We tell them quite plainly: "Here are certain ways which for us are the best and shortest; they may not be so for you, but probably they are, since you are drawn here to this kind of worship; probably you will do well to follow the lines which we put before you; but that is a minor point. Take what path you will, but take *some* path; get to work and climb. There are many paths which lead to the mountain-head, and when you get there it does not matter by which path you have come. Do not make the mistake of limiting everything. Ingersoll once said that an honest God is the noblest work of man, parodying the other statement that an honest man is the noblest work of God. Some may be trying to make an honest God, but others are making in their minds a very petty, parochial, bigoted God, and that is a thing which can hardly be pleasing to Him—to see Himself credited with our narrowness and our prejudices. At any rate it is an error. He has no such narrowness, no such purblind limitations. Many things which seem strange to us are yet in His eyes part of an ordered progress, for He sees the whole and we see only one little corner; and we are apt to think that some other part is wrong if it does not agree with our little corner. The saint is the man who goes to work to help other people, and we do not help them by trying to force them along our own line. Never make the mistake of condemning them because they do not follow ours."

There are many kinds of saints in life, and some of them may have looked by no means saintly to their contemporaries who did not understand. The higher we rise the more shall we be able to see of the path along which others are going. So we may leave it to them; it is their own business how they rise. If it be possible for us to put the idea of rising before those who as yet have not thought of it, that is always good; but we should never try to force them to follow our particular line. Let us remember what is said in one of our collects; let us so endeavour to follow the example of the great ones that we also may reach that which they have attained. Not a place in a heaven confined to one particular and perhaps rather wearisome line of enjoyment, but a position of greater power which can be used for greater good.

It has been said, and very truly, that God wants people to be more than merely good. Good of course they must be, because unless they are they cannot be trusted to use their power rightly, but God does not want an army of pious weaklings. He wants great spiritual powers who will work for Him and with Him. Remember the remark of St. Clement of Alexandria: "Purity is a negative virtue, valuable chiefly as a condition of insight." We must have some power and some strength to offer in His service; and sometimes the earlier manifestations of power are not altogether desirable. We sometimes read in the biographies of the strong men of the world—the men who have done its work—that they were decidedly wilful and unruly as children. They were possessed even then of a great deal of power, and it is perhaps difficult for a child to show power

without running counter to the prejudices of the people round him, and so he gets a bad reputation. Many who are now considered great saints have had among their contemporaries the reputation of being anything but saints, just because they were showing in some injudicious way the power that was in them. Still, it is better to have some strength, even if one shows it in a wrong way, than to have none at all; let us learn to follow these blessed saints in all virtuous and godly living, so that at last we may come to that condition of unspeakable joy in which our angels, our higher selves, shall always behold the face of our Father Who is in heaven.

#### PATRON SAINTS

What is a patron saint, and why should a church have one? A patron saint is an especially selected channel. The Christian religion is one of the religions of the Second Ray, that of which Christ is especially the Head. So to call a church Christ-church does not in any way distinguish it; it is simply one of the many thousands of churches belonging to our Lord, because all Christian churches are necessarily churches of Christ. To speak of the Church of the Holy Spirit is not in any way distinctive. That does not say anything as to our special channel at a lower level, because the grace of God is poured upon *all* churches, just in so far as they are able to receive it.

Not that we need channels in order to reach God. We must not be under any misapprehension about that; to every man upon this earth and in all other worlds God Himself is "closer than breathing, nearer than hands and feet," as the great poet puts

it. We are all of us fragments of God Himself, sparks of that divine fire, and so assuredly we need no link in that sense with the Deity; but if force is to be poured down upon us from above for our use as a church, it *must* come down through intermediate levels and by various routes. When we give a name to our church, when we choose a patron saint for it, we are simply selecting a channel at that distinctly lower level—our *principal* channel, because of course there are many ways through which the grace of God comes down upon every church and every gathering of people who are met together in His name. We choose a name for our church; do not forget that a name is a power. When we begin our service in the Name of the Blessed Trinity, truly we claim that our bishops and our priests act in His Name, but also we mean much more than that. We declare that they act in His *power*, that any power they have is power delegated from Him—that it is by the power of the Christ that the priest can consecrate the Host, that the priest or the bishop can bless, that he can convey grace and help to God's people in many different ways.

So to give a name is not merely to attach a label; it distinctly indicates that we invoke that particular saint, and ask that we may approach through him as a channel. That does not mean that we ask him to intercede for us; that is what you would be told in the great Roman Church—that the patron saint was a special intercessor, always reminding God of those who entrust their business to his care. But that is not so. Everyone of us is near to God, as I have said. It is true that the great saint is nearer, in the sense that he has realized

his nearness, that he has opened within himself higher faculties. We have, everyone of us, many sheaths or vehicles. This physical body that we so often think of as "I," is only the lowest and the coarsest of the vehicles, the furthest away from the reality. Inside that we have what St. Paul called a spiritual body; still a body, remember, not spirit; but a spiritual body—a body of much finer matter. Students divide that body into two parts, the emotional or astral body and the mental body, but those both taken together are probably what St. Paul meant when he spoke of our spiritual body. "There is a natural body and there is a spiritual body," he says; and in other places he speaks of man as body, soul and spirit.

Students often call this threefold division the monad, the ego and the personality. The spirit is the divine spark in man, the soul is the individual sheathing of that monad or spark, brought down to a lower level; and that individual sheathing or soul goes on from life to life in the long chain of earthly lives, taking upon it a succession of personalities; and this has been the case with our patron saint as well as with us. At any one of these levels and through any one of these vehicles we may come into touch with the divine, because God manifests Himself at all levels. We come into touch with our Lord here on the physical plane when we come to the Sacrament of His altar; but we may come into touch with Him through our emotions, when we can raise our consciousness out of the mere physical into the emotional body. We may come into touch with Him through our mind, if that mind be pure enough and high enough, and

if the soul within it be so far developed that it can use that mind as a vehicle; and so by degrees we can rise to the level of the soul itself, and be conscious through it. The soul is the ego in the causal body, and at that level also we can contact the divine. But it is only the few among us who are free from the physical fetters.

The great saint rises beyond all that, and at higher levels still he becomes one with the Deity. The higher the level we can reach, the more nearly and the more really do we come into contact with the Deity, and with the Christ Who is His Representative and part of Him. That is the difference between the great saint and ourselves, that he reaches far higher up in his contact with the Deity. He is one with Him, and so are we; but we are one at the circumference of the circle—one with God through His outer garment. The great saint, the Master, draws near to the heart of that circle. To reach that heart and to become one with God fully and at the highest level—that is the goal that we set before ourselves, all alike. That the Buddhists call the attainment of Nirvana, or perhaps Mahaparanirvana, the highest state that lies beyond that unthinkable condition of bliss.

We do not want a saint to pray for us. We do not think it necessary that any, however high, should call us to the notice of God, because we know full well that we also, however humble, are part of Him; we know that God is already doing for us all that it is possible for Him to do at the level where we now stand. He needs no reminder; He needs no intercessor to speak with Him for us. He knows far more than any intercessor could know, and He

is ever near to us. It is not that that we want from our patron saint; we ask merely that he should act for us as a channel. Wherever he may be we can reach him; he may be again in incarnation. He may have a physical body such as you and I have, though his would naturally be far higher, far purer, far better than ours; or his consciousness may be on any one of the many planes or worlds that extend about us. But wheresoever he is, our thought can reach him, our earnest aspiration can reach him, our love can reach him.

When it does so reach him, what do we want him to do for us? To call a church by his name makes a real link with him; it attracts his attention, and he then takes it as a medium for his work and his force. He is, if we may venture to say so, glad that someone, some church, some body of people should appeal to him in order that he may be the channel for them. Because, again, if we may very humbly venture to say so, the great Ones Themselves make further progress in so far as They are able to help, in so far as They are able to be the channel for others. And so what we ask from our patron saint is his kindly thought, sometimes, perhaps, his inspiration—yes, and sometimes actually his advice, for remember that he is a great living power, that he can be reached, and that our thought can be laid beside his, so that through the thought which he puts into our minds we can know what is his opinion on certain subjects. There are those who can meet him face to face on his own higher levels, and can ask whatever we want to ask from him.

That is what we gain from him, and we owe him most emphatically our gratitude and our love for that which he has already done for us. We do not worship any saint; nobody does worship any saint. That is one of the many weird misconceptions which arise from ignorance, the almost invincible ignorance of the man who knows nothing about theology and nothing about these higher levels, but is nevertheless filled with the craziest prejudice against everything he does not understand. Ask any Roman priest or bishop or well-instructed layman whether he worships a saint, and he will say to you: "If you like to mistranslate the word in that way, yes; but if you mean the same worship we give to God, then most emphatically no." Our language is poor in this respect, and we have not the proper words; I have already written of the super-reverence due to Our Lady, of the reverence paid to the saints, and of the absolute worship, the desire to become one with Him which is offered to God alone, and in the nature of things could never be offered to anyone else.

Therefore it is not worship that we offer to our patron saint, but we recognize his kindly help, and we are grateful for it. We recognize that he stands on one of the great Rays, and on his Day we specially decorate the shrine of that Ray in honour of him. So what we feel to him is love and gratitude. Let us all join therefore in blessing God for the help that our patron saint has given us, and for the noble example he has set before us.



## CHAPTER XVI

### BRIEF NOTES UPON SOME OF THE SAINTS

#### ST. ALBAN

St. Alban is the patron saint of several of our churches. He was very closely associated with our country of England, with the Church and with Freemasonry, and played an important part in all of them. He was a man of noble Roman family, born at the town of Verulam, in England, which is now after him called St. Albans. Verulam was at that time the capital of Roman England, though it is now but a small place.

Not many details are known of his life. The most prominent force in it was a life-long friend of his called Amphibalus, a monk of Carleon, in Wales, though, I think, a Frenchman by birth. Those two were unusually close friends, and Amphibalus undoubtedly exercised a great influence over Alban, or Albanus, as his name was in Latin. They went together to Rome as young men. Alban was not then a Christian; he followed the ordinary religion of the time, but Amphibalus was a monk, and it was undoubtedly due to Alban's association with Amphibalus that he later became a Christian. Alban joined the Roman army, and achieved considerable distinction in it. He served in Rome for some seven years at any rate, perhaps longer than that. It was in Rome that he learnt his Freemasonry, and also became proficient in the Mithraic mysteries which were closely associated with it in those days.

After this time in Rome he returned to his birth-place in England, and was appointed governor of the fortress there. He also held the position of "the master of the works," whatever that may have meant; he certainly superintended the repairs and the general work in the fortress at Verulam, and he was at the same time the Imperial Paymaster. The story goes that the workmen were treated as slaves and wretchedly paid, but that St. Alban introduced Freemasonry and changed all that, securing for them better wages and greatly improved conditions generally. Freemasons will have heard of the Watson manuscript of 1687. In that a good deal is said about St. Alban's work for the Craft, and it is especially mentioned that he brought from France certain ancient charges which are practically identical with those in use at the present time.

He became a Christian through the influence and example of Amphibalus, and he was martyred in the great persecution of the Emperor Diocletian, which began in the year 303, because he sheltered Amphibalus and refused to give him up. I have myself visited the place of that martyrdom—a rounded hill outside the town of St. Albans. The story of the Roman Church is that a spring arose magically to slake the thirst of the martyr. The spring is certainly there, but I cannot guarantee its origin. Offa, King of Mercia, built a great abbey in the year 795 over the shrine which was erected for St. Alban. His disciples embalmed his body, and it may still be seen in the Abbey; the head is visible through a broken part of the shrine.

Soon after that he had another important incarnation; he was born in Constantinople in the year

411, and received the name of Proclus—the name which in after life he was destined to make famous. He was one of the last great exponents of Neoplatonism—of that great philosophy of which we hear so much at the time of Christ, and a little later. His influence overshadowed to a great extent the mediæval Christian Church. After that there is a gap, as to which at present we know nothing. We find him reborn in the year 1211, and in that life he was Roger Bacon, a Franciscan friar, who was a reformer both of the theology and science of his day. He was a great experimentalist, and he invented gunpowder, but for that I do not know whether we should be grateful to him or not. In the process of his invention he seriously injured himself, which gives us a glimpse of the kind of man he was—a daring experimentalist and scientist, as exact as at that period a man could be.

In 1375 came his birth as Christian Rosenkreutz. That was also a birth of considerable importance, for in it he founded the secret society of the Rosicrucians—a society which has not really died out, although it is supposed to have done so. Various organizations claim its name and some of its teachings; the original society still remains, but it is absolutely secret. Meantime we have the knowledge of the Rosicrucians, but in a somewhat different form, in what is called Theosophy, and also in Freemasonry, though in the latter it is veiled in allegory.

It is stated by Mrs. Besant that he again took birth some fifty years later, or a little more than that, as John Hunyadi, an eminent Hungarian soldier and leader. I have not seen anything myself of that life, but we are told that about 1500 he had

a life as the monk Robertus somewhere in middle Europe. We know practically nothing about that, as to what he did or in what way he distinguished himself.

After that comes one of the greatest of his births, for in the year 1561 he was born as Francis Bacon. Of Francis Bacon in history we hear little that is true and a great deal that is false. The facts of the case are gradually becoming known, largely by means of a cypher story which he wrote secretly in the works which he published. It appears from that that he was the son of no less a person than Queen Elizabeth, who married Sir Robert Dudley, afterward the Earl of Leicester, when they were both prisoners in the Tower. Such a marriage as that was not legal, but at a later time it was legalized, so there is no doubt that he was Francis the King, as he calls himself in the cypher, and that he should have been King of England instead of James I. There were various reasons why he bound himself by a pledge to his mother not to let the fact of his birth be known. The whole story is written in his cypher, and a considerable literature on the subject has been published by the Baconian Society, which takes up the study of his life, and shows that he was the real author of the plays which he chose to attribute to Shakespeare. There is a good book on the subject entitled *The Eldest Son of Queen Elizabeth* published here in Sydney, written by a Mrs. Nicholls, in which we find many of the arguments and proofs adduced.

In his youth he went to Paris, and he got into connection there with a certain body of literary men,

who, because they were seven, called themselves the Pleiades. These men, who were deep students of philology, had practically recreated the French language. They found it a chaotic mixture of barbarous jargons; they put it together and made it into a noble language. Bacon was at once impressed with the great necessity of doing the same thing for English, and when he returned to England after some years in Paris, he set to work to reconstitute the English language. He shows us what it was before his time, and he constructed, out of the various dialects then spoken, English as we know it to-day. That he did largely by writing the plays attributed to Shakespeare, and also (perhaps chiefly) by editing the Authorized Version of the Bible, which was then being translated by a committee of forty-eight under the direction of King James I. Bacon, being Chancellor, kept himself in the background, but he superintended and edited the whole volume, so that absolutely the same style and the same type of language runs all through it, although the original is written by a large number of different authors in Hebrew and Greek, and although there were forty-eight nominal translators. We may note the difference if we compare King James' translation with the Revised Version, which is also the result of the work of a committee of people; in the latter we can clearly see the differences of style in the various parts. There must have been close supervision over the Authorized Version, and the supervisor was Bacon. He wrote many other books also; altogether a vast amount of literature was put forth by him.

A century later we are told that he took birth as Ivan Rakoczy, a prince of Transylvania. We find him mentioned in the encyclopædias, but not much information is given. He still uses that name sometimes; I have myself seen and photographed one of his signatures. After that considerable mystery surrounds his movements. He seems to have travelled about Europe, and he turns up at intervals, but we have little definite information about him. He was the Comte de St. Germain at the time of the French Revolution. He also appears to have disguised himself as Baron Hompesch, who was the last of the Knights of St. John of Malta, the man who arranged the transfer of the island of Malta to the English. This saint and teacher still lives, and his present body has no appearance of great age. I myself met him physically in Rome in 1901, and had a long conversation with him.

He is the Prince Adept at the head of the Seventh Ray, which is now beginning to rule the world in the place of the Sixth Ray, whose characteristic was devotion—degenerating into rather blind and unintelligent manifestations sometimes in the Middle Ages, I am afraid. Naturally he is deeply interested both in the work of the Church and in Freemasonry—cults which are in reality two expressions of the same eternal truth, though they are popularly supposed to be diametrically opposed. We have much for which to thank him now in this present day, as well as for those earlier achievements of his—the magnificent gift of the English language, the introduction of Freemasonry into England, and the moulding of Christian mediæval metaphysical and philosophical thought.

## ST. GEORGE

St. George is the patron saint of England. There is considerable doubt as to his history. He is usually spoken of as of Cappadocia, yet it seems he was born in Lydda in Palestine. That is where his family lived; that is where he was buried and where his shrine is shown to-day. That shrine was certainly accepted as his tomb in Crusading days, because we read again and again of Crusaders as making a pilgrimage to that shrine. He was born of a noble Christian family, and he entered the Roman army and served with distinction under the Emperor Diocletian.

The Emperor Diocletian is said at one time to have persecuted the Christians. The stories of the so-called Christian persecutions have been so enormously exaggerated and misrepresented that clairvoyant investigators have learnt to regard them with a good deal of incredulity. So far as our investigations have gone we have found again and again that Christians suffered not because of their religion but rather because of the political opinions which many of them held, much in the same way as Jews have been indiscriminately persecuted in Russia. In fact the early Christians seem to have been regarded as the anarchists, the Bolsheviks of that period, and when they came into conflict with the Government it was not on account of their faith, for the Romans were a most tolerant people, believing little themselves, and caring still less what others believed. It was usually on account of their refusal to show the ordinary respect to the Emperor.

There were certain little ceremonies which were at that time considered as part of the ordinary amenities

of daily life—little acts of courtesy showing friendly remembrance of the Emperor and loyalty to him, corresponding exactly to drinking the health of the King at the head of every list of toasts, and rising when the National Anthem is sung at the end of every entertainment. It was the custom then that whenever a man was about to drink a cup of wine, he should first pour out a few drops upon the floor as a libation to the gods in honour of the Emperor. The idea behind the action was that a tiny offering of kindly thought was made to the Deity on behalf of the Emperor—a little prayer that he might be strengthened and helped in the onerous work that was laid upon him. With exactly the same object it was also the custom each morning and each evening to throw a pinch of incense on to the fire which was ever burning on the domestic altar, accompanying it with a word of aspiration for the Emperor's health and prosperity.

These little observances seem harmless enough; but the early Christian was often rather a cantankerous and pharisaical person, and it appears to have been one of his unpleasing habits to refuse these trifling courtesies on the plea that they were idolatrous, and ascribed divine honours to the Emperor. These customs had come down through thousands of years. They had been observed in Chaldæa, in Babylonia, in Assyria, and many other countries, and no one had thought them harmful. If the early Christians felt these things to be wrong, if it was against their conscience to throw that pinch of incense into the fire, then they were right to die sooner than do it; but it seems rather an unnecessary thing for which to die. It is a matter of conscience, and no man can



decide for another. So far as I can see, if I had been living on earth in those days, I should have been quite willing to show the same courtesy to Cæsar that millions of other people have shown to their respective sovereigns all through the ages, without the least thought of infringing upon the honour of any sensible deity. But these early Christians would not do it.

Naturally people who thought it their duty to make themselves objectionable in that particular way were quite likely to be roughly handled and suspected of disloyalty, much as a man who refused to drink the health of the King or to stand when the National Anthem was being played would probably be suspected among ourselves. One can understand that a man who is a rigid teetotaler might even go so far as to decline to drink the health of the King. One can even to a certain extent respect the consistency of such a man, though one might not in the least agree with him and would consider him lacking in discrimination and sense of proportion. I myself, though a life-long total abstainer, should certainly not refuse, though I should prefer to drink the health in water if it were obtainable. It seems to me a far less evil to take a microscopic quantity of alcohol into my system (an action from which no one suffers but myself) than to arouse in the minds of the people around me the indignation which they might quite justifiably feel if they had reason to suspect me of disloyalty. It would be a case of "avoiding the very appearance of evil." I think the ancient martyrs often immolated themselves unnecessarily for matters as small as that. Probably something of that sort was the reason of

the feeling against the Christians as a rule, for the Romans were great sticklers for law, order and custom, and expected everyone to conform to what was thought best for the community as a whole.

We have also to remember that many of these early Christians in their misguided enthusiasm *wished* to be martyred, and were prepared to go to any lengths to gratify their desire. If we read the life of St. Francis of Assisi, we shall find that a number of people connected with him (although I do not think he was responsible for their foolishness) resolved to get themselves martyred at any cost. They went to Morocco, and ran after the carriage of the Emir in the open streets, shouting insults at him as a heathen. The Emir very naturally supposed them to be insane, and was at first good-humouredly tolerant of their rudeness, but as they persisted and became more and more abusive, he eventually imprisoned and executed them. They considered themselves great and glorious martyrs; looking back upon the incident with impartial eyes, we can regard them only as ill-mannered fanatics who intruded where they were not wanted, and were quite justifiably suppressed. Myself I have not the slightest sympathy for that kind of martyr!

There was one of these so-called persecutions of the Christians under Diocletian, and the story is that St. George, who stood high in the Roman army, ventured to protest and to rebuke the Emperor. It is not a safe thing to rebuke an absolute Emperor, and Diocletian promptly banished him and seems to have felt rather hurt about it.

St. George considered apparently that his faith required him to make a demonstration, so even when

banished to Asia Minor he continued to adopt an aggressive attitude; he finally got himself into some open trouble and was put to death in Nicomedia. There is some doubt about the historical details, but the year 303 is usually given as the date of his death. An earlier year is preferred by some students, and there appears to have been some confusion between him and an Aryan bishop of the same name. There seems no reason to doubt that St. George was a historical person, but as to the story which represents all that most of us know about him, the tale of his slaying the dragon, there is considerable uncertainty. This at least stands out as a fact, that very near Lydda is the traditional place where the sea-monster who came to attack the maiden Andromeda was slain by Perseus. Many historians have thought that because these two legends were attached to the same place they gradually became confused, and the Christians took the feat of the Greek hero Perseus and attributed it to St. George. That is not improbable. It might quite easily have happened so, because there is no doubt that in many cases stories, which existed centuries before the life of Christ, reappear in early Christianity, attributed to Christian heroes instead of to those of the earlier days. All history in those days was much more fluidic, much less certain than now, so I do not think we need be in any way shocked if the story should prove to be one of the old myths carried on to the present day. Of course we can find for it various symbolical meanings, and perhaps that is the wise way to deal with it, because short of elaborate clairvoyant investigation there

can be no certainty that the thing took place as it is usually believed.

The idea of a dragon is commonly supposed to be quite mythical, but there are considerations in favour of the occasional appearance of such creatures. We know that in the earlier days of the earth there were great flying reptiles, and it is not impossible that single specimens may have survived into what we may call historical periods. There is a story going about that some prehistoric monsters still survive in central Africa. I believe they are looking for a brontosaurus there at the present day. There may be a foundation for some of the numerous dragon stories, but whether in this particular case Perseus or St. George was the slayer I do not pretend to say. At any rate tradition has indissolubly associated St. George and his dragon, and he has now become a kind of symbol. He was in earlier days the patron saint of Genoa in Italy; he was not adopted as the patron saint of England until the reign of King Edward III, but since then his cross has been the banner of England, and he has been invoked as our patron saint, though it is difficult to see why he was elevated to that honour. It would have been in some ways more natural if we had adopted the first English Martyr, St. Alban, who was also a great soldier of the Roman army; but St. George has been chosen, and no one thinks of changing that now. However, it does not matter whether St. George did or did not do anything in particular to entitle him to the position of patron saint of a great Empire. I presume that he must have done something to earn that good karma. Unquestionably to have been so appointed means that

a great many people make thought-forms of him and pour their aspiration and devotion through him to a very considerable extent. It is exceedingly good for him as well as for us, for we may say that a patron saint, whether it be of a church or an individual or a nation, is a channel through which we send up our stream of devotion and affection to the Divine. Then back through him flows the stream of grace and blessing to us. Therefore, it is a good thing for the patron saint, as well as for the country, the church or the person. Thus the patron saint is a link, a chosen link with higher planes. Any country whose rulers were wise enough to get into touch with the two lines of direction which exist on higher planes might unquestionably gain a certain amount of help and advice in that way. We speak always of the two sides of the government of the world, one being the directing of the physical world done by the Manu of the Root Race, Who guides the Race in its migrations, and moulds its development in various ways. He is the Spiritual King and Ruler of the Race. The other side is that of the Spiritual Teacher of the race. There are physical representatives for these two lines, and there is also the guardian Angel of a race. All the beautiful legends of guardian angels and race-spirits are not merely childish stories. There are facts behind them, and we shall find that these realities produce a definite effect down here on planes that we can reach and realize and understand. Behind each race stands a patron saint, if it has selected one, and an Angel Guardian (a deva, as they call it in India—a shining one); and each of these two has his depart-

ment, and between them they take charge of the two sides of the development of the race. If the race knows of such things, and is willing to be guided and directed, then it gets very much more from these great officials. If it does not know, it gets less; but anyhow they are there and they exercise such influence as they can.

Probably we have all heard some of the strange stories of the appearance of St. George at the head of the English troops in France during the recent war, and have wondered whether any credence can be attached to them. They are quite circumstantial, and the doubt cast upon them seems to have arisen mainly because a story was written before the appearance in which his name was mentioned. Yet there is a great deal of evidence that some interference of some sort did occur there in France at a very critical period of the war and that someone not of the physical plane did encourage the troops and led them on to victory. The English called him St. George—that would be the first idea that would occur to them; the French called him St. Michael or St. Denys, and in other parts of the field they saw also their great heroine, Joan of Arc.

There is evidence for all these apparitions. I personally have no doubt that there were interferences from the inner world, but whether St. George or St. Michael or Joan of Arc had anything to do with them I do not know. Dead people of both nations would certainly wish to help; great military leaders of the past still in touch with the earth may have wished to interfere, and if they were able to show themselves it is fairly certain that they would be taken for some of the saints.

They may even have intentionally taken the forms of such saints in order to recommend themselves to the people, because, owing to the foolish modern attitude towards apparitions of all sorts, people are more liable to be frightened than helped by anything unusual, whereas all the French Catholics would welcome the appearance of a saint and would not be in the least afraid of him. It may well be that the traditional form of some of these saints may have been taken by some who wished to help.

Those who belong to the Liberal Catholic Church should try to understand the real meaning of all such occurrences. We must not be obsessed with the absurd Calvinistic prejudice that there can be no truth whatever in anything that is said about the saints. When we look more deeply into the facts of the case we shall see that all these beautiful old legends have their part to play—that they have all helped the human race and that there is no reason why we, who have advanced a little further in knowledge and understand more fully what they mean, should therefore look down upon those who believed them once in a more literal fashion. It will be indeed well for us if we are able to get through these channels as much help as our more ignorant forefathers obtained.

#### ST. PATRICK

Just as St. George is the patron saint of England, so is the holy St. Patrick the patron saint of Ireland. There is again some uncertainty as to the exact date and place of his birth, but we are able to say from clairvoyant investigation that there really was such a person—that the theory that he

is merely a mythological character is without foundation. He is a real historical person, and he did convert a great part of Ireland to the Christian faith.

The date of his birth seems to have been about the year 387, though some put it a little earlier than that. Two places claim the honour of being his birthplace—Kilpatrick, near Dumbarton in Scotland, and a village near Boulogne in France. On the whole the balance of evidence seems to be in favour of Boulogne. In any case it is certain that he was of Roman descent and that he was born in a Keltic country, whether it be Normandy or Scotland. His father was a man of good family, spoken of as the Deacon Galphurnius. Whether he ever attained any higher level in the Church than deacon we do not know. His mother was named Conchessa, and she was either a sister or a near relative of St. Martin of Tours, about whom we have all heard the celebrated story of his cutting his cloak in two (when he had nothing else to offer) and giving half of it to a beggar. Whichever was the place of his birth, the youthful Patrick lived near the sea-coast, and in a raid of Irish pirates he was captured and carried off as a slave at the age of fifteen. He was sold in Ireland to a certain Druid priest named Milchu, and he stayed with him, acting as a shepherd, for some five years. In that time he learnt the Irish tongue, which differs somewhat from the dialect spoken in Scotland or in Brittany, though all these are variants of the Gaelic language.

At the end of those five years some vision led him to make an attempt to escape, and the attempt was successful. He contrived with great trouble



and many privations to reach the sea-shore, to get on board a ship, and eventually to reach his home. He devoted himself earnestly to the religious life, and was for some considerable time in a monastery at Tours under St. Martin. It is said that there came to him a vision or a dream, in which he saw the youths with whom as children he had associated in Ireland calling to him to come and teach them the truth, and that apparently intensified an idea which had long been in his mind that he would like to go back again to Ireland, where he had been enslaved, and try to teach the people Christianity. It is not certain that there had been no Christianity before that in Ireland; there is a tradition, at any rate, of an earlier spreading of the faith in the south of that country. The pope of that period, Celestine, received this young man Patrick, and after some years of preparation gave him a commission to go and preach the faith in Ireland. He was not immediately appointed, because Palladius had already applied for and received that work. But Palladius seems not to have been successful. He landed in a part of the country where the people were not prepared to receive him, and became discouraged.

St. Patrick was consecrated as bishop, and sent forth to preach the faith in Ireland. He landed there in the year 432, and though not well received at first, he contrived to make his way, and eventually travelled over the whole of the country. Many stories are told in connection with his travels all over Ireland. He appears to have been a man of indefatigable industry. It is recorded that he consecrated no less than three hundred and sixty-five

churches in different parts of the country, and he is said with his own hands to have baptized twelve thousand converts during that period. He met with varied reception, but he seems to have been an exceedingly skilful and politic preacher of the faith. He invariably began, wherever he went, by converting the chief and his family, and the rest followed the lead given by the most important man of the district. Where some local king or chief would not receive him, he moved on to some other place, but came back again and again until practically the chief yielded to him. He has left us some writings; one of them, at any rate, many of you know—the Confession of St. Patrick, as it is called—a kind of creed in which he emphasizes strongly the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. When first he was asked how Three could yet be One, he stooped and plucked a leaf of the shamrock and held it up before the people, saying: “Here at least is an example that there may be three and yet one.” A crude illustration, but nevertheless a striking one for the people to whom he was preaching, to whom the whole idea was new. And that is why the shamrock was adopted as the national symbol of Ireland, as it remains even to this day.

He lived to a great age. There is a little difference of opinion, but it seems fairly certain that he reached the age of a hundred and six, for he died in the year 493 at a place called Saul, near Downpatrick in Ireland. His remains were still shown there up to the time of the Reformation, when I fancy the relics were lost.

## ST. MARK

As is the case with so many of these bible heroes, we do not know much about St. Mark. We are told that he was the cousin of Barnabas, a character of whom we read a good deal in the Acts of the Apostles, and it is also the tradition that he was a nephew of St. Peter. It seems at any rate certain that his mother, Mary, was a woman of considerable distinction in Jerusalem, and that at her house the early Christians used to hold meetings for quite a long time. St. Mark founded the Church at Alexandria, and that is perhaps one reason why he came forward so prominently and is credited with the writing of a gospel. It is as usual not at all certain that he had anything to do with the gospel which is attributed to him. These gospels were written in the city of Alexandria, a good deal later than the date usually assigned to them, and it is very natural that one which is supposed to be the earliest should be attributed to one of the Founders of the Church, who is spoken of as the interpreter of St. Peter. He is reported by tradition to have written his gospel in Rome from Peter's dictation. That is not likely, but it is believed by the highest critics that St. Mark's is the earliest of the gospels, with the exception of the alleged Hebrew original of St. Matthew, about which very little is known because there are no copies extant. St. Mark's symbol is a lion, and those who have had the privilege of visiting his city, Venice, will remember that the great cathedral there is dedicated to him, and in the piazza in front of it is the Lion of St. Mark, set upon a tall column.

## CHAPTER XVII

### ALL SAINTS' DAY

The festival of All Saints has always seemed to me to be one of the most beautiful in the Christian Year. All through that year we are at intervals celebrating the birthdays of the great ones of the Church, just as in private life we celebrate the birthdays of our friends. The only difference is that in the ecclesiastical calendar we generally celebrate a saint's birthday not into this physical life, but into the wider life of the higher sphere; that is to say, we keep what is commonly called the date of his death. We do this not only out of our affection for him, but in order to recall to ourselves the noble example which he has set us. We thank God for the example of the saint, and for the glorious encouragement of his success. But that is not all; there is yet something more, and it is precisely that something more which is often so sadly misunderstood. I have already pointed out that among many who call themselves Christians the idea of the intercession of the saints seems to arouse an amazing amount of incomprehensible anger and prejudice. With extraordinary irascibility they clamour that it is wicked of us to ask help of the saints, and furthermore ridiculous to expect it. It has always seemed to me that this is a matter in which we should use our common sense; if this help is to be had, it must be part of God's scheme and under His providence, for He works through means and by intermediaries, so why should it be wicked or ridiculous to avail

ourselves of it? Let us consider what are the facts of the case.

Any great religious teacher is a centre of inspiration and of active help. Take, for example, one whom many of us know and love—Mrs. Annie Besant. Many of us are deeply thankful to her for the teaching given in her books, which has changed the whole aspect of life for thousands of men and women; but we are also profoundly grateful to her for her inspiration and her example, as well as in many cases for direct personal advice received from her. When she casts off her physical body—and may that day be far distant!—will that inspiration and example be any less real? We frequently send her thoughts of devoted love now, and we are unquestionably uplifted by the answer which we receive; will that be any less then? Man does not change at death, so assuredly one whom we have known as so full of love, of strength and of helpfulness in this world will be equally full of those characteristics even without a physical body. For in these matters we are dealing with the ego, and the ego does not die.

Some people, while agreeing at once that such a power of response would remain quite unchanged during astral life, have yet questioned whether it might not be hindered by the limitations of the heaven-world. It should be remembered that for the developed man—the saint—these limitations no longer exist. The ordinary man is entangled by them only because his mental body is as yet imperfectly evolved; one whose mental body is in full activity moves as freely on the mental plane as most of us do on the astral. And in any case such limita-

tions are only those of the personality. Whatever powers the ego possesses, he possesses permanently, and he can use them quite irrespective of the condition of his lower vehicles. No doubt every one of us is at this moment figuring in the heaven-world of several departed friends, although in physical consciousness we know nothing whatever about it. Each of these departed friends makes his own thought-image of the man he loves, and that very love constitutes an appeal to the ego of the loved one, which is never left without response. The ego, awakened by that affectionate touch, at once pours himself out and fills that thought-form; but it is no part of his business to impress that action of his either upon his own physical brain (if he happens to have one at the moment) or upon that of the object of his affection. The ego is certainly capable of filling a thousand devachanic images at once.

The saints of old may now be reborn, and may be working nobly in another personality. Indeed, I personally know many who are doing so; for example, St. Bernard of Clairvaux, St. Francis of Assisi, and St. Antony of Padua are all of them at present in incarnation and working energetically for the very same ideals which they pursued so nobly under those historic names. The present personalities may know little or nothing of their work as saints, but the egos are as active as ever. What we know to be true in these and other cases must certainly also be true in thousands of cases of which we do not know. Appeals to such developed egos unquestionably do evoke friendly and helpful response from them. We do not ask their intercession,

because such an idea as that is based upon an unworthy conception of God—a suggestion that He needs to be propitiated or appeased; but we do ask their blessing and their friendly thought. I, as bishop, give God's blessing at the end of each service, or whenever I am asked to exercise my office; do you suppose that I shall be less willing or less able to give it when I drop this physical body? And surely what I can do, and shall be glad to do, these far greater people can do also.

Do we begin to see now what is meant by the doctrine of the Communion of the Saints? Do we not see now how truly that which is gained by one is gained for all who are ready to share it? Why should we deny the fact of the Communion of the Saints, and why should we reject its advantages? When we ourselves in turn become saints, shall we not be glad to help our fellow-men? Then why should not they be equally willing to do what they can? Let us accept willingly such help as God's scheme provides for us; let us thank God for all good people, and gladly receive whatever they can give.

On All Saints' Day we celebrate the vast host of holy men who have not been sufficiently conspicuous to have a special day assigned to them—who have lived beautiful and helpful lives which, though undoubtedly recognized by God, did not attract the attention of those officials of the Church who were charged with the duty of recommending men for canonization. There must be many thousands of these unknown heroes of the faith—yea, of *all* faiths—who are just as worthy of our gratitude and our recognition as those whose names have been pre-

served through the ages. So we devote this day to their memory.

One of the minor difficulties which we meet in carrying on the practical work of the Liberal Catholic Church is that of finding suitable hymns—hymns which we can sing with all our hearts, really meaning every word which they put into our mouths. Our difficulties are chiefly concerned with the unworthy attitude adopted towards the Deity, and with the mistaken theory of vicarious atonement; but we are also compelled to reject many beautiful old hymns because of the grossly materialistic view which they take of the future condition of our people in higher worlds.

It would be difficult to sing without a sense of unreality such a verse as:

There is the throne of David;  
And there from care released  
The shout of them that triumph  
And the song of them that feast.

The implication that the same personality will remain for ever in an imagined heaven is of course unfounded, because we know that in due time that personality will come to an end, and the ego will reincarnate. But we shall find it quite possible to sing a great many of those beautiful old hymns when we realize that their expressions are meant to be taken as symbolical; for it is perfectly true that the open sight of God and the unimaginable glory of His perpetual presence are ever-living facts for the highly developed ego—true most of all of course for the Monad; but true of the ego also when it becomes one with that Monad and is a perfect expression of it at its level. And so, when we think of



the saints as for ever in the presence, we must understand that they are not confined to a particular spot, but that wherever they may be and on whatsoever plane they may be functioning "their Angels do always behold the face of our Father who is in heaven"; the true Self on its own plane is always consciously in the direct presence of the Deity.

There is no special place, for we are all in that presence here and now; it is only that we have not yet learnt, as the saint has, to be fully conscious of it. Even the saint may have that consciousness but rarely and imperfectly in his physical brain; but in his causal body he has it always. Therefore it is true to say of the holy saints:

Now they reign in heavenly glory,  
Now they walk in golden light;  
Now they drink as from a river  
Holy bliss and infinite.

The feebleness and insufficiency of all these symbolical expressions must not blind us to the infinitely glorious truth of the Communion of the Saints.

Be very sure that as the Christ Himself exists, as the Hierarchy of His holy Angels exists, so also exists the Great White Brotherhood, the Communion of the Saints. Well may we thank God at this great festival for the example, the encouragement and the help of these glorious ones; may we so follow them in all virtuous and godly living that to us also may soon come the ineffable happiness of being conscious channels of His eternal love.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### ALL SOULS' DAY

It seems natural that, along with the thankfulness to God for His holy saints not especially named, we should also think of those other dead who perhaps can hardly yet claim the honour of sainthood—our own dead, those whom we have known and loved and perhaps, alas! in many cases have mourned. So it comes that the next day after All Saints is set apart for the celebration of All Souls, of all the mighty host of the dead, especially with a view to remembering those who have passed away during the year since the last of these celebrations.

It has become the custom that on this day members of congregations should send in to the priest-in-charge the names of all those in whom they are personally interested, who have passed away during the year, in order that those names may be specially mentioned at the Altar, and that they may take part in the outpouring of grace which accompanies the celebration of the Holy Eucharist.

It is important that we should understand exactly what that grace is, and exactly what good it does to the dead. It is natural, it is only human nature, that we should desire to pray for the dead. I know that a certain section of Christians (perhaps not a large, but a very noisy section) consider such prayer for the dead to be wrong. They have somehow succeeded in persuading themselves that there is no such thing as progress, and that when a man dies, that is to all intents and purposes the end of

him; his fate is then settled for ever. It is no use praying for him; it is even supposed to be wicked to pray for him! That is an illusion born of ignorance. Far wiser would it be to follow the teaching of the Church and of her Lord, and to realize that there is no death, but only a life of continuous evolution, and that at any point in that life (whether it be the part of it which is spent down here in a physical body or that which is spent in another world in a subtle body) the man can be reached by thought and by love and can be helped just as much in one stage of that eternal progress as in another.

Before, then, we can understand what good we can do to the dead we must think for a little of the state of the dead. Unfortunately the Christianized part of the world has for some centuries lain under the illusion that nothing can be certainly known with regard to states after death. The idea seems to be that the Church may have some teaching on that subject; there may be some speculations; there may be pious beliefs, but nothing can be definitely known. That is absolutely untrue. It is possible to know all about the state of the dead; it is possible to explore and to investigate that higher part of the world precisely as countries hitherto unknown may be explored on the physical plane. How do we obtain information about the South Pole and the North Pole, or about the interior of Africa? Men learn the conditions under which it is possible for them to penetrate to these remote regions, and to bring back news from there. It is equally possible for the man still in the physical body to penetrate to these other higher regions and come back and give his report.

That has been done many hundreds of times, and we now know about this other world (though in reality it is not another world, but only a part of this) as clearly, as definitely as we know about the less visited parts of the earth, and there is just as much evidence for the existence of that spiritual world as for any of the little known parts of the physical plane. In fact there is more, for only one or two people have penetrated to those remote regions, whereas many scores of people have brought back recollections from the world of those whom we foolishly call the dead. The dead laugh us to scorn for using such a word; they maintain always that they are *more* living than they were, and not less, now that they have got rid of the physical body which was so heavy a veil, so great an obstacle in the way of real knowledge of the facts of life. What then is the state of the dead? There is a large literature on the subject, to which I must refer those who desire a detailed answer to that question. My own book, *The Other Side of Death*, gives much information, but new volumes are constantly being published. I can give only an outline here.

To understand even that outline, we must first fix in our minds some fundamental ideas. I want it quite clearly understood that in putting forward these ideas I am not offering them as mere pious beliefs or as probabilities, nor am I speaking from hearsay. I am explaining facts which I myself personally know by repeated investigation and experiment. Furthermore any man who is willing to take the trouble may convince himself of these great central truths by verifying them at first hand. The

first of these great principles is the utter overwhelming certainty of God's love. Another is the absolute continuity of life—the immortality of man; and yet another is the reasonableness and justice of the whole scheme of evolution. The scriptural axiom that all things work together for good is a matter not of belief, but of knowledge, to those who have really studied these subjects.

The very air around us is charged with so many and such serious misconceptions about death that it is almost impossible for us to escape their influence, unless we put ourselves especially on our guard against them. One of the worst of these is the idea that after death men are either rewarded or punished for what they have done during physical life. This is absolutely not so—not so in any sense whatever; though it is true that, because the life is continuous, its later conditions after death *do* depend upon its earlier conditions before death, just in the same way as the life of the adult depends to a considerable extent upon the previous part of that same life, as it was spent during childhood and youth. It might be thought that, after all, this comes to much the same thing; but that is not so. Let us take an example from school-life to help us to understand. If a boy works well, he receives perhaps a medal or a prize; if he works badly, if he acts foolishly, he receives a certain number of bad marks, or perhaps has an imposition to write out. These, you will observe, are rewards and punishments, but they are in no sense *results*. They have no actual connection with what the boy has done or not done; they express only the master's opinion of him. On the other hand, the *result* of good work is that the

boy knows more, and is therefore more capable of learning; while the result of laziness is ignorance, and lack of power to understand future lessons. The true result is not imposed from without, but is inherent, natural, inevitable. So is it exactly with the life after death. This death is a change through which all men must pass. They may be well or ill-equipped to profit by it, according to the way in which they have lived this previous stage which we call physical life.

Again, our tendency is to regard this life after death from the point of view of the survivors, not of the dead man. Let us take yet another example from school life. Suppose we have two comrades at a school strongly attached to each other, and suppose that in due course one of them passes on into college life. We can see at once how selfish it would be if the younger boy thought only: "I have lost my friend; he should have stayed here at school for my sake." Obviously no boy would think that; he would be more likely to think: "He is continuing his studies and development; I shall presently follow him, but he will certainly not return to me." And if he were especially affectionate and helpful, he might also think: "Can I help him in any way? Can I do anything that will be useful to him in his new surroundings? Yes; I can write to him, I can show him that I have not forgotten him, I can send him my love, and try to encourage him in every possible way."

These analogies hold good; keeping them in mind, let us try to grasp a few leading facts about our dead. First of all they are more keenly alive than we. They are not far away in some unknown imagin-

ary heaven or hell; they are very near us still. They are not changed suddenly either into angels or into demons; they are precisely and exactly what they were before they slipped off the vehicle of flesh, that outer coat which we call the physical body. They are themselves just as they were before. Their love remains the same; nay, it is greater than ever before, because there is less to clog its expression. Their knowledge or their ignorance is just what it was before. They have indeed opportunities of learning a great deal. So have we down here on the physical plane, but we do not always take advantage of our opportunities. It is just the same with the dead. There is no one to compel them to learn; so some of them make little advancement, while others acquire a vast amount of information. It is well for them to know, because knowledge is power, but not all the dead are wise, any more than all the living. Let it be quite clear then, that their life is the same as our life except for the fact that they have no longer a physical body.

Let us ask ourselves what difference it would make to us if we had not these physical bodies; then we shall realize exactly what is the condition of the dead. We can see that it would not be by any means the same to all of us. Some of us live very much in our physical bodies; some of us think chiefly about the things which appertain to those bodies, such as comfort, enjoyment, pleasant sensations, good food and drink, and so on. Some think a great deal of what the physical body brings to them, but there are other people who are comparatively indifferent to these matters, whose joys are all joys of the intellect or of the higher emotions.

The great artist or the great musician almost forgets his physical body, and often neglects it, just because he is swept away out of it into the higher and subtler vehicles.

When that artist dies he will not change. If the physical body has been little to him while he had it, it will mean but little to him that he has dropped it, and he will continue to live the same life, the life of art or of music. The man of that other type, who has lived mainly in relation to his physical body down here, will find himself distinctly at a loss when he has dropped it. He will have to evoke for himself a new set of interests; otherwise life without the body would seem to him dull and uninteresting. These considerations operate all the time; so when we think of someone who has passed away, we have only to try to image to ourselves how much difference it would make to that man if he had not his physical body, and we shall have a very fair idea of the condition in which he finds himself.

There is another side to all that which must not be forgotten. The physical body is the cause of much of our trouble and worry; nearly all our work, the daily work at which we have to slave, has to be done because we have a physical body, because we must provide it (and other physical bodies round us) with food and clothing and shelter. Without the physical body the man is utterly free, and perhaps for the first time in his life he does only those things which he wants to do. Most of us spend our lives in doing things we would rather not do if we were not compelled. There is no such compulsion for the dead man. Being absolutely free, he may therefore be gloriously happy. On the



other hand, if his life down here has been a purely material life, he may be somewhat bored; he may find the whole thing uninteresting. I suppose many an uneducated man attending a church service would not know in the least what was being done. The music would be over his head; if he could not read he would not be able to follow the liturgy; the whole thing would weary him. Yet those who can understand and can follow know that there is a vast amount to be gained out of such services; that they offer us not only a means of grace for ourselves, but the means of helping others by the force which is poured out. Yet the ignorant man would know nothing about that; he would find the whole thing monotonous, wearisome. It is just the same with the dead.

All this being so, how can we help them? Not by our physical actions, because they have no longer physical bodies. What have they still in common with us? They have the subtle body, which St. Paul called the spiritual body. We divide it as students into two parts, the astral body and the mental body. Those the dead man still has, and we have them in common with him. If we are to help him, then, it must be not by our physical acts, but by the acts of these higher vehicles. What can we do with them that will help?

One thing that I am afraid many of us have done is to mourn the dead whom we have loved. That is the very worst thing that we can do for the dead man. I do not wish for one moment to seem unsympathetic, but if we are not afraid to face facts, we must admit that to mourn is after all selfish. What are we mourning about? That

he whom we love has passed into a higher and fuller life, that he stands more nearly in the presence of God, that the opportunities opening before him are far grander than they were before? Surely that would be a strange thing about which to mourn!

If we come to think of it, we are mourning because we think we have lost him. That is an illusion; we have *not* lost him. All we have lost is the power of seeing him. He is still there, he is still near us, as much within reach as he ever was, but not within reach of our physical eyes. The moment we fall asleep each night our physical eyes are no longer of any use to us; we have passed away from the world in which these senses operate; we are using the astral body, and we are therefore using its senses; and to these senses the dead man is as obvious as the living man was to our physical sight. We may be under the delusion, while we are what we call awake (but what he calls asleep) that we have lost the dead man. When we have waked up to his world, when we have put aside temporarily the clog of the physical body, we stand side by side with him and talk to him exactly as before. We may think down here that we have lost him; he never for one moment thinks that he has lost us, because he holds that higher consciousness continually. He sees us fade away from him when we wake up (or down as he would call it); we fade away from him then, but he knows that we shall come back into his world after a few hours. It is just as when we see a man lie down to sleep for a few hours; we do not mourn because he has left us; we know that he will presently wake up rested and will be with us as before.

To mourn for our dead friend is the worst thing we can do for him, because when we allow the mournful feeling to come over us, we surround ourselves with a cloud of depression. A clairvoyant would see it around us as a dark mist. To our dead friend that mist is something that he can not only see, but that he can feel acutely. He feels the depression, it reacts upon him, and it does him harm, because it holds him back in his onward progress. We must forget ourselves; I know very well how hard it is, but we *must* be unselfish; we must forget ourselves and our presumed loss, and we must think only of our friend and of his great gain. So when we think of him we will not mourn. What can we do but mourn? We can do something infinitely nobler; we can love. Let us pour out our love upon him whenever we think of him; let us think of him as living still; let us think of how we loved him in the past, and how we love him more and more now as time goes on. That, too, he will feel, and to that he will respond. Then we are helping our brother, we are surrounding him with sunlight which will call out all the best that is in him, which will help his evolution, and make his onward path easier. That is what we have to do.

Shall we pray for the dead? Yes, if you will; but even then do not misunderstand. Though many have foolishly thought it wrong to pray for the dead, it is not in the least so; but if we are to take the words in their ordinary meaning, it does perhaps show a little ignorance. If by prayer we mean that we are going to ask God to help them or bless them, or remember them, then we may as well save ourselves the trouble, because God knows far more than

we know about what they need and God is watching the evolution of every one of His creatures every moment. We are within His Consciousness, wherever we are, and He Who is Lord of the living and the dead does not lose sight of a person who draws nearer to Him. For that is what it is—to cast aside the physical body is to draw the consciousness a little nearer to God, not further away. So He does not need our prayers to remind Him.

What then is prayer? Prayer is a strong and earnest wish; and that is a power. Such a thought is a great reality; it sends out a stream of force, as is well known to all who have investigated the subject. There is a science of all these things, just as there is a science of chemistry or of geology, and these matters can be investigated and tested. All that has been done, not once, but hundreds of times. There is no reason why people should remain ignorant of the results of that investigation. One would think that people wished to mourn, that they wished to be miserable, so obstinately do they decline to accept the truth when it is laid before them. Some cannot believe that it is the truth. One would like to say to them: "If your intuition is not yet sufficiently developed to guide you in such matters, at least let your intellect guide you. There are books by the hundred on this subject; read them. If you will, and if you must, investigate for yourself." I did so; forty or fifty years ago I devoted a vast amount of time to first-hand inquiry into this matter of life after death, and because I did so I am able to speak quite definitely about these things now. I know these things to be so. He who finds it difficult to accept that testimony should study the sub-

ject for himself, and he will eventually come to the same conviction. A man is quite right to desire a firm foundation for faith on so important a matter; it is of the very greatest importance, for whatever else may happen to us, this at least is certain—that every one of us must die. Surely we ought to know all we can about this state beyond death, even if it were only for our own safety and happiness, and far more because those whom we love pass behind this veil, and the more we know the more we can help them.

We may be absolutely sure that every thought of ours reaches those whom we call the dead, and that if we send out an earnest and loving wish for them, that loving wish is a definite power which will reach them and affect them. We do not need to evoke the power of God. In God's power we live and move and have our being. There is nothing which is outside of Him. He has made laws for the world, and under those laws every cause produces an effect. Our strong loving thought is a cause and will assuredly produce its effect. It must produce it. We may see it or not; that does not matter, but it *must* produce an effect—otherwise the whole of the universe has lost its law-abiding character.

The dead indeed see us, but (except during our sleep) not exactly as they used to do; they do not observe our physical actions, but they are thoroughly cognizant of all our feelings and of all such thoughts as are in any way connected with the lower personal self. That is why it is of such supreme importance that we should never allow ourselves to be filled with depression or despair, because if we made that mistake, we should inevitably infect them with feelings

of the same description—the very last thing we should desire to do in the case of those whom we love dearly.

What then can we give to them? What shall we wish for them? The ancient prayer of the Church Catholic shows us this most beautifully and effectively. The antiphon for the dead runs: “Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let light perpetual shine upon them.” This is not to be taken as meaning that life in the astral world is necessarily indolent—quite the contrary; but it does mean that we desire for them perfect rest from the worries and troubles of this physical world, so that they may lay themselves open more fully and completely to the influence of that glorious divine light which is ever shining upon all His creatures. For His love pours out like the sunlight; it is for us and for them to see that we open our hearts to its beneficent influence.

The greatest help of all that you can give to your dead is to remember them before the altar of God—to send in their names to be laid before Him at the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. I have explained in *The Science of the Sacraments* that to every name mentioned at the altar the Directing Angel assigns a definite portion of the mighty outpouring of divine force which descends at the Consecration. What will that force do for the dead man? That is at the discretion of the messenger Angel who bears it. He knows better than we what is wanted, but it will undoubtedly be applied to the calming, the strengthening, the uplifting of the man. Some dead people may still be in a condition of unconsciousness. Then if that unconsciousness is in

any way prejudicial, if it would be better for the man to be aroused, the Angel would use that power to arouse him. If the Angel sees that the rest is doing him good, the force would be stored up within his aura, to pour itself out upon him in any way that may seem best, so soon as he rises out of that condition of unconsciousness and wakes up into his new life.

Whatever may be the condition of the dead man, the force we send will reach him and will be used for his good. None need doubt that, for we have seen thousands of cases, and we know of what we speak. Any one may study the matter, and verify our statement. Our dead are often very near to us, but the veil between us is at its thinnest on such an occasion as All Souls' Day, for the very fact that so many people are simultaneously thinking along the same line opens the channels more widely, and calls the attention of a vast number of the dead who would otherwise be pursuing their own affairs.

One family we dwell in Him,  
One Church, above, beneath,  
Though now divided by the stream,  
The narrow stream, of death.

We are all brethren, we can all help one another; we can aid them, as they can aid us, by kindly thought and loving memory. Let us then not neglect the special opportunity given to us by the Church on All Souls' Day to draw closer the bonds between the seen and the unseen.





## Part 2

SOME DAYS OF SPECIAL INTENT



## CHAPTER XIX

### THE FAITH OF OUR FATHERS

The Liberal Catholic Church asks no profession of faith from its members. We who are its clergy regard ourselves as stewards of Christ's Mysteries, as distributors of His gifts to His people; and we consider it our duty to administer them to all who reverently desire them, without exacting some particular form of belief as a qualification. We think that what a man believes is his own business, not ours. When we apply to a doctor for a tonic, he does not enquire to what political party or religious denomination we belong; we go to him with a definite object, and he at once puts his special knowledge and skill at our disposal. Christ has ordained certain sacraments as aids to those of His followers who feel that they need help in treading the upward path; we who have taken up the work of bishops and priests are simply His almoners—part of His machinery of distribution.

But the fact that we have no desire to interfere with anyone's faith by no means implies that we have no belief of our own. We leave men absolutely free to put whatever interpretation they choose upon creeds, rituals or scriptures, because we think that every man must use his own intelligence in deciding upon such matters; but we are perfectly willing to tell our congregations what interpretation we ourselves accept, and to share with them such information as we possess. We do not care to dispute or to argue, because discussions on religious

subjects are so often both useless and unedifying, and tend to degenerate into a mere acrimonious wrangle; but we are ready to expound our views to any one who desires to know them.

We are not in the least shirking any of the issues involved, nor are we taking refuge in vague generalities; we have a clear and coherent faith, which we believe to be consonant with reason and common sense, and to represent the original teaching of the Christ. We hold it to be the true Faith of our Fathers—of those of our fathers who were able to grasp the magnificent simplicity of that teaching; and we think it would be well for Christians to get back to that, instead of superimposing upon it all sorts of unnecessary and laboriously-invented complications which have no basis in fact. This faith is not binding upon either the priests or the people of the Liberal Catholic Church; it is that which I individually hold, and I think that it is shared to a large extent by my colleagues.

What then is this great truth which I am to put before you? It is on the one hand so vast, so illimitable, that the wisest of philosophers may spend his life in its study, and on the other so simple that a child can understand it.

Its first tenet is that there is a God, and that He is good. God is Light, and in Him is no darkness at all. He is Love, Wisdom, Strength, Beauty and Justice. He is all the highest that we can conceive, and infinitely more than that. That is the root and foundation of our system, and one who wishes to comprehend it must never for a moment forget that, or allow his faith in it to be shaken.

Secondly, man is himself divine in essence—a spark of God's own Fire. Therefore he is immortal, and his eventual return to the Divinity whence he came is in all cases an absolute certainty, no matter how far from the upward path of evolution he may have wandered. This path of evolution is long, and what we commonly call a man's life is in reality only one day in his true life as a soul. His gradual growth takes place under a law of absolute justice—perhaps better stated as an unchangeable law of cause and effect; so that nothing whatever can come to any man unless he has deserved it, and everything that happens to a man (whether it be sorrow or joy) is on the one hand the direct result of his own action in the past, and on the other an opportunity by means of which he can deliberately mould his future.

There is no such thing as hell; there is no wrath of God to fear; all that is a silly and blasphemous nightmare, begotten by the diseased imagination of ignorant and cruel fanatics. Therefore salvation in the ordinary sense of the word is unnecessary, for there is nothing for man to be saved from except his own error and his own ignorance. There is no death; there is an endless and steadily progressive life for all, and those whom we call the righteous and the wicked are souls at different stages of that ladder of life. Savages and selfish people are just young souls—naughty children who, under the discipline of life, will learn better as they grow older. That learning better and growing better is the object of the whole scheme, and the time occupied in this growth may be lengthened or shortened ac-

ording to the diligence with which we apply ourselves to learning the necessary lessons and developing the requisite qualities.

The goal set before us is a high one: Be ye perfect, as your Father in Heaven is perfect. We are an incalculable distance from that goal as yet; but our feet are definitely set upon the path which leads to it, and we see men both above and below us on every step of that path, so that our future way lies clear before us, however long it may take us to tread it. Those who stand above us, those great Saints and Masters of the Wisdom, who seem to us as gods in the splendour of their knowledge and power and love, one and all tell us that, no long time ago, they stood where we stand now, and that if we will but persevere as they persevered, we shall in due time shine even as they.

Christ is our Saviour, not in the sense that His physical death delivers us from a non-existent hell, but that the teaching which He has left us lightens our darkness and saves us from error. He is our Pilot, guiding us aright; our Leader and Example, after Whom we should pattern our lives. We must think of Him, not as a memory of two thousand years ago, but as a mighty living King Who stands very near to everyone of us, flooding His Church with life and strength through the channels which He has provided. His sacraments are the means of help which He has arranged for *us*; but we must never forget that He has other sheep, who are not of this fold, and that He said long ago in another Manifestation: "By whatsoever path a man approaches Me, upon that path do I meet him;

for the paths by which men come from every side are Mine.”

Sometimes men say to us: “This that you say is beautiful; but how do you know it?” Our faith is founded on common sense, on observation and on reason. It is the truth which lies behind all the religions alike—the truth which the great World-Teacher, the Christ, has always taught whenever He came down to help the world. It is the only theory which accounts rationally for the observed facts of life, which solves the many problems of our existence, and enables us to answer the various questions with which every thinking man finds himself faced sooner or later. Those who have climbed higher than we on the vast ladder of evolution—the great Saints and Sages of whom I have spoken—affirm its truth and offer us instruction in it; but even on their testimony we have not accepted it blindly. The scheme is a coherent whole, and though parts of it belong to higher worlds far beyond the present reach of any of us, other parts are well within our powers of observation.

Man possesses a spiritual body as well as a physical body, as St. Paul has told us; and it is quite possible for him to cultivate the powers of that spiritual body, and thereby to extend enormously the field of his observation. There are some of us who have done this—have devoted many years of their lives to such development and such study; and at every point, as they unfolded new faculties within themselves, they have found stronger and stronger confirmation of the glorious teaching which has been given to them. So they have good reason to accept the scheme as

a whole, for the lower part which they can see implies and requires that higher part which is as yet beyond them. Their experience is no proof to *you*, though their statements are evidence which you would be foolish to ignore; but it is always open to you to do as they have done, and try to unfold your own spiritual faculties, that you may know the truth for yourselves at first hand. Meantime you will be wise to examine this faith, and see whether it does not commend itself to you at least as the most probable hypothesis yet put forward.

It may further be asked how we can reconcile our faith with the ancient creeds and scriptures. We believe that we offer the only intelligible explanation of the Creed, taking it, as we do, as a symbolical statement of the existence and work of the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity. This is a subject far too vast to be treated in this chapter, but books have been written upon it to which those who desire further information may be referred.\*

In the scriptures also we find many passages of which we can suggest a far more beautiful and rational interpretation than that ordinarily adopted; but I readily admit that, for my own part, I am entirely out of harmony with the attitude of the average Christian towards the bible. He describes it as God's Word, because he has been told that it is so, but he is unable to produce the slightest evidence for so amazing an assertion; he founds his religious beliefs upon certain texts which he selects from it, utterly ignoring other passages which teach quite an opposite doctrine. Many Christians are so

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\* See *The Credo of Christendom*, by Dr. A. Kingsford; *Esoteric Christianity*, by Annie Besant; *The Christian Creed*, by C. W. Leadbeater,



curiously constituted mentally that they cannot hear the truth on this matter without becoming furious; but we of the Liberal Catholic Church must not be afraid to face facts.

The Old Testament is clearly a Jewish scripture, and not Christian, and the tribal deity of whom it tells us has no affinity with the loving Father as preached by the Christ. It has been conclusively proved that most of its books were really not written by the authors to whom they are attributed; and indeed, the same may be said of most of the books of the New Testament also. No one who has deeply studied those books can successfully maintain their historicity; and those who understand comparative mythology will readily see that we have in the four gospels, not the story of a life, but an allegory, a Mystery-Drama of a type not uncommon in antiquity. When this is once understood, all the incidents fall into order, and much that was previously incredible or unaccountable is seen to be perfectly natural. If these things are so (and there is no doubt about it) why should we be afraid to acknowledge them?

It is open to any of our members to cling to the more physical interpretation if he prefers it, for it matters little what we believe, but very much what we do. But I think that to most of us the higher and more spiritual meaning will appeal, for in taking it we shall find the glorious old Faith of our Fathers welcoming and explaining the latest scientific developments, and presenting us with a coherent, rational and most beautiful scheme of unending progress. When once we see it, and grasp

it so far as we can at our stage, what enthusiasm it arouses, what devotion and love it calls forth! Well may we sing: "Faith of our Fathers, holy Faith! we will be true to thee till death." Yes, and beyond death to life again, and through many lives and deaths; for our faith is faith in a God of Love, and whithersoever His Will may send us, it can never be outside the boundary of that mighty Love which fills eternity.

## CHAPTER XX

### OUR ATTITUDE TOWARDS LIFE

I am emphatically of opinion that a correct attitude towards life is of far greater importance than any particular shade of religious belief; yet it is true that without some reasonable belief this attitude cannot be attained. A right attitude is in truth the very first thing which the student needs, yet it is usually the last which he gains; for it is not to be acquired by reading about it, not to be learnt like a lesson; it is something into which a man slowly grows as a result of his study, and, still more, of his efforts to put that study into practice.

What he needs to set before himself is not so much any one form of religion, but rather the philosophy which underlies all religions—the actual fundamental truth about God and man and the relation between them. This truth is in reality a philosophy, a religion and a science; a philosophy, because it gives us an intelligible and satisfactory theory of the constitution and reason of the universe; a religion, because it speaks to us of God, of His relation to man, and of His will with regard to our progress; a science, because it propounds its teachings not as mere abstract theories, but as deductions drawn from facts which have been repeatedly observed.

We of the Liberal Catholic Church look through the exoteric wording of our Creed to its esoteric signification, and we find that inner meaning to be

identical with the basic truth of which I have written. So if we really understand and appreciate our religion, I think it should affect its votaries very differently from other faiths. Most Western people are used to a religion which is absolutely divorced from practice—which has no connection with daily life; for with the exception, perhaps, of a small number of people belonging to monastic orders, no one makes any attempt really to carry out the teachings of the Christ. It is the custom to consider that any one who goes to Church regularly, who gives a certain amount in charity, and lives on the whole a kindly and helpful life, is actuated by religious motives, and is doing all that can be expected of a follower of the Teacher of Palestine.

Yet if we face facts instead of hiding ourselves behind conventions, it will be found that the people who do these things do them chiefly because of their own kindliness of disposition, and not with special reference to any religious commands; and, furthermore, they are by no means prepared to follow out the real instructions attributed to the Christ. He is supposed to have said:

Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink, nor yet for your body what ye shall put on. Take no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Judge not, that ye be not judged. Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also, and if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. Sell all that thou hast and give to the poor; and come and follow me. If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters, he cannot be my disciple.

Christians will tell you that such commands are unsuited to the spirit of the present day, and are

not intended to be followed literally; it has even been said that if they were followed literally they would be provocative of harm rather than good. Perhaps in our present highly artificial condition of society that may be true; but that does not alter the fact that it is useless for men to pretend to be followers of the Christ, if they are not prepared to put into practice the instructions which He is said to have given. Not even those who profess to follow Him most closely make any sort of attempt to bring these instructions down into daily life; it would obviously be extremely inconvenient for them to do so.

I do not guarantee that these instructions were actually given by the Christ. If they were, our common sense shows us that they were addressed not to the world at large, but only to those immediate disciples who desired to give up the world and devote their whole lives to the propagation of Christ's teachings in precisely the way in which it was then (and is now) the custom that religion should be preached in Eastern lands—by men vowed to a life of poverty and chastity. There is at all times a wide difference between the directions given to such peripatetic instructors (who were distinguished as "the disciples" or "the twelve") and the teaching intended for the general public. A world in which *everyone* lives as a mendicant friar is obviously impracticable, and I am not for a moment suggesting it. My argument is only that if the orthodox profess to accept those words as divinely inspired, if they really regard them as a command from their Leader to themselves, a certain sense of unreality is produced by the fact that they

do not make the slightest effort to put them into practice.

The same thing is true, though to a much less extent, of the other religions. All the great faiths of the world give the same ethical teaching to their devotees; and if only each man would really follow the teaching of his religion, no matter what that religion may be, we should have something like a millennium at once and without further trouble. There are fortunately many good people in the world—many people of average goodness, that is—but only very few who really obey to the full their own religious teachings. It may be asked why this is so. The reason seems to be that none of these people *really* believe what they profess to believe. They think of these religious statements as something to which they are expected to give a formal assent on Sundays, but not at all as actual rules of life to be put into practice every day and all day long.

In this it will be perceived that religious belief stands in an absolutely different category from what may be called scientific belief, or belief which is based upon actual knowledge. A man who has a scientific fact before him knows that he can depend upon that fact, and therefore he acts accordingly; if he has dealt with a thing experimentally he knows exactly what to do with it, and no one can persuade him to act against the experience which he has thus gained. A man knows that fire will burn him; he is always careful to remember that fact. He knows that water will always run downhill; therefore he never acts as though he expected it to run up. Yet a man may hold the most exalted religious sentiments, and yet act in daily life in direct contradic-

tion to them. Obviously this can only be because the sentiments are merely superficial, and he does not really believe in them at all.

There should be this great difference between the way in which an earnest Liberal Catholic student takes his system of philosophy and the way in which the ordinary religionist takes his religion—that the student accepts the teachings given to him only in so far as he really believes them, and therefore he obviously acts accordingly. If it be found that he does *not* act accordingly, then the same remorseless logic applies—he does not truly believe them at all. This then is the secret of our attitude towards life; it is (or it should be) the attitude of those who really believe what many others only profess to believe—of those who believe it so thoroughly that in daily life they act as though it were true.

One may take up a series of rules, live according to them for a time, and then get tired of them and decide to abandon them; but that is possible only when they are not laws of nature, but just arbitrary rules voluntarily accepted. So a man may accept a religion; and presently drop it again; but to accept the divine wisdom really and fully is to open one's eyes to a set of new truths, to acquire an amount of additional information which it is impossible afterwards to ignore. A man who has known and grasped these truths can never unlearn them—can never fall back into the position of one who does not know them; it is just as impossible as it would be for the man to grow back into the child again. Therefore one who has once attained the joyous attitude cannot lose it again; he may frequently fail to live up to its standards, but he

will always know that he has so failed, and will perpetually strive after a more perfect success. When once we have seen the sun we can never thereafter deny that it exists, even though for the time it may be veiled from us; and in the same way a man who has once realized the truth of God, and has had all his life expanded and coloured by it, can never fall back into orthodoxy or materialism.

How is this attitude to be obtained? There is no way but to make our philosophy real in our lives, to become permeated by the philosophical feeling and way of looking at everything. Take the ideas expressed in our Liturgy on p. 292, in the Act of Faith, which we recite in the office of Prime:

We believe that God is Love, and Power and Truth and Light; that perfect justice rules the world; that all His sons shall one day reach His Feet, however far they stray. We hold the Fatherhood of God, the Brotherhood of man; we know that we do serve Him best when best we serve our brother man. So shall His blessing rest on us, and peace for evermore.

Merely to hold these as a pious belief would mean little; but the man who is quite sure about them, who feels deep down within him that they are true, knows that by means of them he has an absolutely secure basis, that through them he can obtain all good things if only he works steadily to get them.

See how many other facts at once follow from this certainty. If God is good, then all things are tending towards an end which is good for all; therefore any person who allows himself to be made miserable by any events that happen does not yet grasp the reality of this truth. A man who allows himself to be distressed or depressed does not really



believe that God is good; the evanescent sorrow or suffering is more real to him than the great truth which lies behind. I know quite well that it is not always easy to see that all things are working together for good, but that is because we see them only partially, and do not understand how they fit into the great Plan. We do not deny the existence of evil; but we assert that all which is really evil is man-made, and arises directly as the result of the breaking of the divine law. Therefore the Liberal Catholic attitude includes perfect calm; for a man who knows that all must be well cannot worry.

Though all is tending towards a glorious end, it is by no means yet attained; and therefore, when we see manifold wrong and suffering around us, we must do all we can to make things right—to let the underlying right manifest itself; but if, in spite of all our efforts, things cannot be brought to go well, that is at least not our fault. God leaves a certain amount of free-will to man, and therefore man can misuse it; and a certain proportion of men always do so. If things will not go as well as they should, there is sure to be some good reason why for the present that is so, for we know with absolute certainty that they must finally come right. Why therefore should we worry about it? One who worries is not a true philosopher, for this habit sends out evil vibrations which do much harm to others, and no student of the Wisdom will willingly harm any living thing. Also he cannot but feel that the man who worries is distrusting God—showing a want of faith in His power and in His love. His attitude must be one of the uttermost confidence.

Again it follows that if God is good and is the loving Father of humanity, men must also be brothers. But if we hold this truth of the brotherhood of man it is impossible for us to continue to act selfishly, for if a man realizes that he is no longer a separated being, he can no longer be selfish. Some of our members say with regard to these matters:

“Intellectually we believe all this to be so, because the teaching of Divine Wisdom seems to us to be by far the most satisfactory hypothesis to account for all that we see in the world; but we have not the absolute certainty in these matters which can come only from actual knowledge; and so sometimes our feelings overpower us, and we seem to lose hold for a time of the fundamental truths.”

I sympathize entirely with those who have these feelings; I have acknowledged that some of us have a great advantage, those who have had direct experience, who by the use of higher faculties have seen overwhelming proof of the truth of these great statements. I know very well how great is the difference between our absolute certainty and even the strongest conviction arrived at by mere reason. But if a man will start with this theory as a hypothesis, he will find that all that happens fits into it and is explained by it, and he will encounter a number of corroborative circumstances—each is perhaps small in itself, but cumulatively they are of very great force—until his conviction gradually expands and deepens into certainty.

A man who declines to accept some such theory as this will constantly find facts which to him are inexplicable—facts which will not fit into his scheme.

If, for example, a man denies the existence of the astral world and of the life after death, he finds himself without any rational explanation of a great number of well-authenticated phenomena and of all sorts of small happenings in everyday life. He has to ignore these things or to attribute them (against all reason and common sense) to hallucination; while a man who understands the facts of the case can fit them in quite easily into the outline already in his mind. He may not understand in every detail how the results are produced, but he sees at once that they are in agreement with what he already knows, and they are not in any way unnatural to him.

Thus, without being himself clairvoyant, he may accumulate a great deal of evidence of the existence of higher planes. Indeed, his position in comparison with that of the sceptic is like that of the first believers in the heliocentric theory as opposed to those who believed in the flat and stationary earth. Those who held to the latter idea became more and more confused as they acquired additional information; the more they learned of the movements of the different planets and stars, the more hopeless the confusion became; whereas when once the fundamental fact of the earth's movements had been realized, everything straightway fell into its place and was seen to be part of a coherent and comprehensible whole. Every additional fragment of evidence is not merely an *addition* to the strength of the proof as a whole, but actually a *multiplication* of it.

All the theories of man about the Deity may be classified under three heads: either He is indifferent to us; or He is actively hostile to us, and needs to

be propitiated; or He is full of love and goodwill towards us. If God be indifferent to us, if He has brought us into existence for a mere whim, or if we have grown fortuitously as the result of the blind working of natural laws, it is to us to all intents and purposes as though there were no God at all.

This belief has obviously no coherent theory of the universe to offer us—no plan, and consequently no hope of any final end which shall justify or account for our existence. There have been many in the past who have held this comfortless belief, and it is even possible that there are some who hold it now. It seems inconceivable that anyone could *desire* to hold it, but some may imagine themselves forced to do so by what they consider the lack of sufficient evidence to the contrary. The philosophical student knows that such evidence to the contrary exists, and exists in overwhelming quantity; but as much of it depends upon clairvoyant investigation, the man who wishes to examine it must satisfy himself as to the possibility of clairvoyance.

The second theory—that God is capricious or hostile to man—has been very widely held. Man images God as the highest that he can conceive; but the highest that he can conceive is often only a glorified and intensified edition of himself. Consequently when nations are in the rough and boisterous and fighting stage which accompanies the earlier steps of their development, they usually provide themselves with a god who is a man of war and will fight for them against their enemies. Such a god is commonly regarded as capable of anger and of great cruelty, and therefore he needs propitiation to pre-

vent him from letting his angry passions loose upon his unfortunate devotees.

All religions which offer any type of sacrifice to God belong to this category, because in all cases the idea underlying the sacrifice is either that by this offering the deity may be pleased and induced to do in return for it some kindness which he would not otherwise have done, or else that by this offering he is bought off from doing some evil which he otherwise would do. The Jewish Yahweh was obviously a deity of this type, and the pernicious influence of this idea of propitiation has been allowed to extend itself into Christianity, and is responsible for the amazing and indeed blasphemous distortion of the beautiful and inspiring story of the descent of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity into matter.

Thus those who do not understand the real meaning of their Creed are driven to the untenable position that God in one form sacrifices Himself to propitiate God in another form, in order to prevent Him from the perpetration of atrocious cruelties upon His creatures; and even this tremendous and incredible sacrifice is represented to be so far from effective that only an inappreciable fraction of humanity is after all rescued by it. The utter impossibility of so monstrous a theory escapes the notice of those who think they believe it; but that is only because they have never ventured really to face it, but take its statement for granted as part of a theological system which is supposed to lie absolutely outside of the region of ordinary reason and common sense. This second form of belief usually involves a theory of the universe as existing for a certain end, but as constructed in a man-

ner so faulty that it fails almost entirely in its original intention, and secures the lasting happiness of only a small proportion of its inhabitants—and even that on the remarkable assumption that they are somehow enabled to forget the appalling fate which overtakes the great mass of humanity.

The third theory—that God is love, and that the whole of His mighty universe is moving steadily onward to an appointed end of conscious unity with Him—is the only one which can be accepted by the philosophical student. The boundless love of the Deity is the very foundation of Liberal Catholic belief. No sacrifices, no offerings, no prayers, can be necessary to the God who is the loving Father of all His people, and is already doing for them far more than they could ask, far more than they can conceive. All that we can offer Him in return is our love and our service; and our love is the very manifestation of God within us, so that the only action on our part which can be thought of as pleasing to Him is that which more and more allows the indwelling God to manifest Himself through us. This seems to me the greatest of all the truths—the truth upon which all else depends.

When a man is thoroughly permeated with the utter certainty of eternal love and absolute justice, from that, as the basic fact, he will find all the other facts in nature gradually coming into line and taking their proper place. Trouble of some sort comes to every man; and because of that, man is sometimes tempted to believe that all cannot be well—that there must be a failure somewhere and somehow in the working of the divine scheme. Such an error is natural; but it is an error nevertheless, and the man who makes it is in the position of the African chief

who refused to believe that water could ever become solid, because he had never seen an example of that phenomenon.

To the average student this certainty comes only as the result of the intellectual conviction that it must be so—that the evidence in its favour is stronger than that which is offered against it. The clairvoyant has the enormous advantage of being able to see on higher planes much more definite evidence of the trend of the great forces which are playing through and round humanity. Seeing physical life only, a man obtains a distorted view, and if he is by nature hypochondriacal he may contrive to take and to maintain a pessimistic view of life; but one who can see beyond the physical plane is thereby enabled to estimate things more nearly at their real value, to get them into perspective, and to see their relative proportions. So in the strength of that higher knowledge he is able to say with certainty that he *knows* that the great forces which surround us are tending finally to good. Much which is temporarily evil arises, and must necessarily arise, from the giving of even a small amount of free will to man. But all evil is only partial and temporary, and its effects are all swept along in the mighty stream of evolution, just as the little eddies and whirlpools on the surface of a roaring torrent are nevertheless swept onward in its course towards the sea.

When a man is thoroughly convinced that this is the universal law, he is able to estimate at their true value the small apparent divergences from it with which he meets in daily life. His own troubles and difficulties loom large to him because of their

proximity, but his knowledge of the Divine Wisdom enables him to rise above them and to look down upon them from the higher standpoint, so that he can see their true proportion. He in no way fails to sympathize with an individual who is temporarily suffering; yet he cannot be overwhelmed by sadness, because he sees beyond the suffering to its result, beyond the sorrow to the goal of eternal joy. All troubles are to him necessarily evanescent, like the discomforts of a journey. They are no doubt real and annoying while they last, but the man faces them precisely because he desires to reach the end of the journey. For the true philosopher therefore depression is an impossibility; he regards it not only as a weakness, but as a crime, because (as we said before) he knows that it infects those around him, and holds them back in their progress on the upward path.

He knows it to be both inutile and foolish to grumble at what happens to him, however unpleasant it may be. It could not happen to him unless he had deserved it, and consequently he regards it as the paying of a debt which must be cleared out of the way before further progress can be made. He does not grumble at the deficiencies and weaknesses which he finds within himself, because he knows that it is he and none other who has made himself what he is, and that it is he and none other who can change himself to what he would be. He believes that he has all eternity in front of him in which to conquer his difficulties, and therefore he knows with absolute certainty that these difficulties *will* be conquered, however insurmountable they may appear from his present point of view.



He knows that any evil which he has done in the past must after all have been finite in its extent, and consequently its results must be finite also; whereas he himself is a living force of infinite possibility, able to draw without stint from the Divinity of which he is an expression. His attitude is then one of perfect trust and of perfect philosophy, and the object of his life is to become to the fullest extent of his capacity a co-worker with God Himself. In playing that part he cannot but be a happy man, because he feels himself at one with the Deity, Who is happiness. If he can but realize that all nature is the garment of God, he will be able to see in it His hidden beauty and glory.

All this may be his, but only on condition that he really lives his creed, that he allows it to permeate him and to inspire him. We have been told in ancient scripture that he who wishes to tread the Path must become that Path himself, which means that the treading of it must become so absolutely natural to him that he can do no other. A man may be intellectually convinced of the truth of our teaching although he knows that in many ways he falls short of its full realization; but the man who is able to live it obtains far more than the intellectual conviction; by his own experience there grows up within him a living certainty and knowledge of its truth which can never be shaken. They that do the will of the Father which is in Heaven, they shall know of the doctrine, whether it be true; only by living the life of the child of God is the true Wisdom of God attained, and only through that Wisdom can we reach and maintain the truly divine attitude of limitless love to all beings.

## CHAPTER XXI

### THE GREATEST OF THESE

Christ is the Lord of Love, and if we are in earnest in our wish to follow Him, we must be distinguished from men of the outer world by this characteristic above all others. It was said of the early members of the Church: "See how these Christians love one another"; can this truly be said of us to-day? I think we must try to understand what love really is; we all talk about it freely enough, but there are few outside the Inner Circle of those who stand close round our Masters who can be said really to know what it is. What passes in the outer world by that name is usually only a faint and sullied reflection of love. It is often grasping and selfish; it is intermingled with all kinds of desires and other emotions, such as jealousy and pride; it is not the genuine feeling at all; we who know that God is Love ought to be capable of something higher than that.

We must not make the mistake, as beginners not infrequently do, of thinking that those who try to follow the Path of Holiness should have no emotions; assuredly we must have emotions, but we must be careful that they are only those that we definitely choose to have. We must not let our astral bodies formulate emotions for themselves and then run away with us, and sweep us off our feet with them; that is all wrong. But to say we should have *no* emotions would be to make of us monsters instead of men: to make, perhaps, intellectual giants, but

beings utterly incapable of sympathy, and therefore useless for the Masters' work.

If we look at the illustrations in a book which I published many years ago, *Man Visible and Invisible*, we shall see that the astral body of the savage, and even that of the ordinary man, are examples of what the astral body ought not to be; they show it formulating its own emotions (some of them distinctly bad), sweeping away the ego from his path, and acting entirely without his control. If we examine the drawing of the astral body of the developed man we see that it is an exact mirror of his mental body, which means that he has emotions, profound and beautiful emotions, *but* he has those which he allows himself to have, and no others. The astral body has become a reflection of the mental; it is a servant instead of a master; and the astral body, like fire and some other things, is a very good servant but a very bad master.

The moment we allow it to take control it spoils everything; but it is an absolutely necessary vehicle for our work, and when under perfect control, it can enable us to reach much which without it we could not reach. The astral body corresponds to and is a mirror of the buddhic vehicle; and as the buddhic vehicle is not yet developed in most of us, it is only through the astral body that we can obtain touch with the buddhic plane—not through the mind. Through the mind we can know a little of the ego, the soul; by meditation the lower mind can come into contact with the higher mind; but it is through the nobler emotions only that we can touch that still higher vehicle. Therefore we need to feel emotions, but we must strictly curb those emotions; we must

see that they are of the right kind, and that *only* those which are helpful are allowed to play through us.

So is it with love, the key-note of which is, as Christ absolutely insisted, that we must forget ourselves in that which we love. That ought not to be difficult; but apparently it is. There are many who seem unable to do it; and yet, if the feeling be only strong enough, the result must follow. This question is one of those with which every one of us will be faced in the future. When the Lord comes, His gospel will be a gospel of love. He Himself is known as the Lord of Love, of Compassion, of Kindness; that that is one of the features which must be most prominent in His teaching is stated in Mr. Jinarajadasa's wonderful little book, *What we shall Teach*; we find it laid down there very clearly; and we should remember that Mr. Jinarajadasa is one of those who is on the special line of the World-Teacher, and therefore closely linked with Him. He says there:

There is a power that makes for strength, and it is love; in many forms it grows in men's hearts, but with each appearance it brings strength—strength to transmute cruelty into sacrifice, lust into worship, pride into devotion; this love brings. This is the first truth that you and I will teach, in His name.

There is a power that makes all things new, and it is Beauty that is Joy. Love, and you shall see the Beautiful; worship, and you shall be one with Him; serve, and you shall be His Anointed for the salvation of your fellow-men. This is the second truth that you and I will teach, in His name.

There is a power that unifies all, and it is sacrifice. Through action that is sacrifice comes life to love that is strength and to beauty that is joy. This is the way for all

to tread, the path the One Lover has made for His Beloved. This is the third truth that you and I will teach, in His name.

Now these words are not only beautiful but they are profoundly true; that is precisely what we must do, if we are to take part in the future which is opening before us. All the modes of thought, all the methods, and all the ideas that come naturally to us, are of the past; we must learn to live in and for the future; the future which the Lord will make when He shall come; and this Love is the key-note of that future. It is no new teaching; He gave it when He was on earth before; He gave it as Shri Krishna; He gave it as the Christ; and His disciple St. John, following in His steps, preached this also.

St. Paul has given what is perhaps one of the best definitions of Love in the thirteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians. We can do no better than take that chapter and read it, and see how far our conception of Love agrees with that of that great Apostle and Initiate. "Love," he said, "suffereth long and is kind." That is to say, it bears all for the sake of him whom it loves; it never thinks of anything that can be done for the loved one as a trouble or a worry or a difficulty. "It suffereth long." He says in another place: "It beareth all things; believeth all things; hopeth all things." So from the loved one, it bears all, whatever may come. Of him it believes the noblest and the best always, and hopes for the grandest and most magnificent. So it devotes itself wholly and solely to the object of its love; it never thinks of itself at all. "Love seeketh not her own"; it does not even ask for that which well might

be expected; for it thinks nothing of itself, but only of the beloved.

That is a beautiful conception—all must see that; but I suppose many people in the outer world would think of it as an impossibility. Perhaps it is a counsel of perfection, it is utopian; the outside world would say that there is no one who feels like that. Yet wait, you who are striving upwards, wait till you enter into the Inner Arcanum, and you will find that there *are* those who feel just like that. The love of our Masters is love such as that; and when in the far future we are able to see the consciousness of the great Lord of Love Himself, we shall find that He loves His world in exactly that way, caring nothing what it thinks of Him, thinking only of what can be done for it. It is wonderful, it is glorious, but it is true; this attitude can be reached by men, and it has been reached by men; therefore *we* can reach it, every one of us. I do not say that we can do it at once—that we can cast aside all our old habits in a moment; we *can* cast them off, but they will come back again and again, because we have established a sort of evil momentum; we have created ruts in which our thought moves, and it is not easy to pull it away out of those in a moment. It is not easy to change ourselves, because our habits in these matters are not those of this life only; they have existed for thousands of years, and a habit we have been forming for twenty thousand years takes some changing; but it must be done, and therefore we had better set about it at once; the sooner we begin the better.

When Love is strong enough, we may see that attitude even now. We have all heard of the most won-

derful self-sacrificing actions performed by those who truly love—by a mother for her child, by a husband for a wife, or a wife for a husband. There are wonderful instances of splendid heroism that seem superhuman; but, after all, those who do these things are men like ourselves, and if they can do them, surely we can do them too. It is only a matter of shaking oneself free from the old fetters and trying to understand, and that is not so difficult after all. All that St. Paul says—beautiful as it is, glorious as it is, well worth reading as it is—every word of it is already in the heart of any person who really deeply loves. He forgets, he must forget, himself; he can think only of the object of his love; and that being so all the rest follows. All these other qualifications which St. Paul mentions come, if the love be true and pure. It is useless to say that at our present level we cannot have such a thing; we can and we must.

Of all the qualifications for Initiation this is the greatest, for it includes all the rest. St. Paul ends his chapter, “And now abideth Faith, Hope, Love, these three; but the greatest of these is Love,” and this is the new gospel. The old one—I mean that of the previous World-Teacher—was the gospel of Wisdom; if ignorance could be dispelled, He said, if man could only know and understand, then evil would be gone. That is perfectly, absolutely true; but this presentation is also true, and this is the proclamation of the present day—that when men live as brothers, when they put aside their lack of love, their suspicion and their lack of comprehension, their woodenness and their stupidity, the whole world will be different. When men have learned to trust

one another, to live together by common-sense arrangement, instead of every one having to be restricted by law from doing this and doing that, the one great Law of Love will be restriction enough for every man.

It will be a long time before all the world can come to that stage; but it will be longer still if somebody does not begin, and we are precisely the very people whose business it is to be setting that example, for we are awaiting the coming of the Lord of Love. If we are to be His helpers, His disciples, perhaps even His apostles when He comes, we must be studying His method already—what we know of it—and this at least we know of it, that Love will be its central feature. We can accustom ourselves to that central feature, we can begin to live the life which He will expect us to live, and most certainly the more we live it now, the more we shall prepare ourselves to be His helpers when He comes. If we can permeate ourselves with His spirit beforehand, that will be an enormous advantage to us in acting as the channels of His grace and His power when He comes. Until then the most we can do is to practise all these virtues, and to try in that way to make ourselves ready.

We must put away all unworthy ideas; it is an insult to the glorious name of Love to use it for the sort of emotion with which many of us are familiar; it is not the right word at all. The real thing is spiritual, truly, beyond the comprehension of many, but glorious beyond all that words can tell. Let us reach, if we can, the buddhic consciousness; let us try to touch it even for a moment; we shall have



to experience it when we reach the period of Initiation. Happy for us if we can attain it before, and so save on that mighty occasion some trouble to those who are in charge.

Let us enter, if we can, into some stage of this higher consciousness; it will be a revelation to us, something we can never forget. The world will never again be the same to us when once we have seen that. Such experience is not for all of us yet, because it means a stupendous effort—an effort for which few are yet ready. It has been made by some, but only at considerable risk and with considerable strain. I have seen a strong man faint in the making of an unsuccessful effort to attain that union; yet there are others to whom it comes naturally and easily. It will come to all of us at one stage or other—most likely first in our meditation some time. It may be by a definite effort, it may be simply in the course of the evolution of our power of meditation that it will come to us, but come it will, and then we shall know.

Until then we must simply imagine to ourselves this higher love; but let us get as near to it as we can; let us determine, at least, that not even the tiniest tainting speck of selfishness shall remain in our emotion, that we will live only for the object of our love. Let us pour out our love upon our Masters; there indeed there can be no selfishness, for we cannot be wondering what They feel for us, or what They can do for us; we know that beforehand. We know that when the pupil is ready the Master is ready also, and that Their love is as wide as the sea. The only limitations and difficulties are those

which we make ourselves; there is no difficulty on Their side, no limitation to Their power of affection.

St. Paul says: "Love envieth not." It is rare to find that sort of love, the love which envieth not, which vaunteth not itself, which is not puffed up; those are among his definitions. However splendid may be the achievement of one whom we love, we feel only the purest pleasure in it, never the least touch of envy; and if in some way we can do something which the loved one cannot, we do not boast about it, we are not puffed up about it; we think only of his feelings, and never of ours. It is all so simple if we always keep in mind the key-note of unselfishness; but failing that key-note everything goes wrong; that is inevitable.

"It is not easily provoked," he says, "and it thinketh no evil." There is a great deal in that. It is not easily provoked; we know how difficult it is to live through all the little strains of ordinary life, and not to be annoyed; it is almost impossible for the average man. Even for the more developed it is very hard, and that for many reasons. First, as I have said, we have a habit of irritability which we have been industriously cultivating for many thousands of years; that has to be conquered. Secondly, we are living in an age of great nervous strain, such as the world has never known before until now; consequently our nerves are all out of tune, most especially those of us who have to live in big cities, and so it is exceedingly difficult to preserve an even balance all the way through; still, we must try. It is, I admit, an almost superhuman thing to expect, but at least we must try. We are attempting what no one else has essayed; all who have

striven to live the spiritual life, as we wish to do, have begun by retiring from the world—by living in the jungle, becoming hermits, or living in a monastery among monks, so that they may either be free from all other vibrations, or surrounded by vibrations which shall be entirely harmonious. We are, so far as I know, the first people who have made an attempt to lead this higher life without in any sense retiring from the world; living in the midst of it—in the midst of what may be called a very aggravated form of it.

It is true there have been great cities in times of old; Rome was grand and glorious; Babylon was a huge city; the City of the Golden Gate in Atlantis was enormous also; but at least there was not the pressure then that there is now. I have looked back, in the course of clairvoyant investigation of various sorts, at a large number of the older civilizations; some of them were far from good, some of them were distinctly evil, for there was much of unpleasant magic: some on the other hand were magnificent, and were our own equals in most respects; but at any rate there never was one of them (that I have seen) where we had so terrible a hurry and pressure as we have now. It all comes from our new methods of communication, from our railways and our steamers, our electric telegraphs and daily papers; all these things tend towards hurry.

All that has its good side; it is teaching us to crowd into a short time a vast amount of concentrated work, and to manage many different things at once; it is not without its benefit; but in the meantime it is wrecking the health and the constitutions of many people; and it distinctly makes all

spiritual progress much harder. It does develop mentality and intellectual power, but it makes anything in the nature of meditation or union with God much more difficult, because the very essence of those things is that one should be quiet, that one should be able to abstract oneself from the world and concentrate on higher things. Meditation can be done; to some extent many are doing it—though without much success in many cases, I know. We need not wonder at our lack of success in meditation—at the fact that other thoughts thrust themselves in, and that it seems to us almost impossible to carry out our meditation perfectly. Let us remember that *if* we succeed under these conditions, we have made a great step—for we are proof against most difficulties that will come in our way. A man who has proved himself successful in meditation under convenient circumstances, away in a cave or a jungle, might well be thrown off his balance if he had to live in a great city; so if we can do our work perfectly under such conditions, we have secured our footing on that pathway of advancement.

What we are trying is a hard thing; but it assuredly can be done, and if done, it gains much more for us than the following of the easier way would gain. It is one of our difficulties that our nerves are all strung up by this great rush and activity round us. Some of us may think that they do not take part in it; unfortunately we cannot help doing so to a certain extent; if we are living in the midst of it we must feel it. The vibrations of a million men are all around us; those must be a powerful factor, and we, as individuals, setting ourselves against such a current as that, shall have a heavy piece of work

in keeping ourselves steady. It can be done, for it has been done; but to reach this state of which the apostle speaks—the condition incapable of provocation—is always difficult; and it is doubly, trebly difficult under these present circumstances. Nevertheless we have to attain to it. As we progress along the Path we have to gain something far higher than that along the same line; the last fetter but one which the Arhat casts off before he attains Adeptship is the possibility of being disturbed by anything whatever. I must say I always look at that condition with a certain amount of mild envy! But when it is attained there is only one more fetter to be cast off—that of ignorance. To be *perfectly* free from irritability brings us near to the highest, and of course that is still far in the future, but in the meantime we must try to do what we can to follow St. Paul's advice, and aspire to the love which is not easily provoked and thinketh no evil.

Of course it thinks no evil: how should one think any evil of a loved one? "It rejoiceth not in evil, but rejoiceth in truth." It is popularly said that love is blind: I suppose there is such a love; but I know there is a later stage which is preternaturally keen—which expects far more than the ordinary in the way of achievement and of behaviour from the object of love—which sets a high standard just because of the love it bears—a love which is quite the reverse of blind. Perhaps this is a reaction from the other. The perfect love will be neither of these; it will have passed beyond them both, and it will judge of everything just as it is, without fear and without favour, knowing well that nothing whatever

that the loved one could do would change or alienate the love.

This feeling of love does not depend upon the character of the person loved at all; if we love a person, we love him, and whatever he may do will not affect our love. It may cause us pain if he does evil, because we love him; it may cause us sorrow and suffering; but it cannot affect our love. That again is a thing which people do not seem to understand. "How can I love a person who has treated me in such and such a way?" they say. Do not you see that his treatment has nothing to do with it? True love is not between personality and personality; it is between ego and ego—perhaps between Monad and Monad: how do we know? We know so little yet of those stupendous heights; but at least we see that it is absolutely independent of what is done by the loved one.

Such love can be felt by man; I know that myself, because I have seen it; because we see it in the Great Ones and we see it in Their disciples. A beautiful and a wonderful thing it is to see. This kind of love, it is said, "never faileth." This is St. Paul's final characterization of it; it never faileth, whatever happens; whatever is done, it is still the same, the one unchangeable thing in this changeable world. Changeless, because love is God. "He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love." It is by this fact, says an apostle again, that "we know that we have passed from death into life, because we love." Not only is it a most important factor in life—it is life itself. It is the life of God in man, for God is love.

We do not perhaps think of all that that means; if we love, God dwelleth in us and His love is perfected in us. That is an idea that I should like to be ever with us, and never to be forgotten—that if we are happy enough to feel the true, the glorious love, it is not *we* who love, but God who loveth in us. It is the life of the Logos Himself; and in the proportion in which that life pulsates through us, in that proportion may we pour it out as love to our fellow-men. Again, it is said in the scripture: “He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?” If we wish to show forth the power of God, we can do it only by absorbing into ourselves the love of God, and pouring it out again upon all these others. We must be His almoners in this greatest of all charities, the pouring out of His love; to realize that, and to do it, is the birth of the Christ within us; we can make no better resolve than to carry that thought with us wherever we may go, and to show that because we love God, and because we are thankful to Him, we pour forth in our daily lives that love for our brothers which is the mark of our unity with Him.

## CHAPTER XXII

### DISCERNMENT

Discernment has always been recognized in all religions as a matter of great importance for one who wishes to make progress on the path towards God. In the great Indian religions it is called Discrimination, and there also it is put as the first of the requirements, because unless a man possesses a certain amount of discrimination to begin with he will not know what things he ought to do, he will not know the life which he ought to live. It is this faculty of discrimination that leads us all to adopt what we may call, perhaps, the religious attitude. I do not in the least mean by that that the people who choose that line will necessarily come to church; that is largely a question of their training and of their needs. Those who may be called the religious of the world are, I think, those who recognize that God has a plan for man, and that that plan is evolution. Those who realize that, those who know it, make an effort to live in accordance with that plan. They are definitely on God's side, so to speak. There are in reality, from the higher point of view, just two kinds of people in the world—the people who know, and the people who do not know; those who know that there is a plan, and those who do not yet realize that fact at all. It does not matter in the least which of the many religions of the world those people profess. Those of us who are trying to understand the truth of things must realize that the form of religion which a man happens to pro-



fess is a question of the country and surroundings in which he was born, and nothing more than that. You are Christian because you were born in what is called a Christian country. If you had been born in India, you would with the same enthusiasm and devotion have been Hindus. If you had been born in a Buddhist country, you would have been followers of the Lord Buddha with just the same devotion and just the same goodness of heart in every way.

To possess a religious faculty—a religious turn of mind that leads one in that direction—simply means to be a person who wishes to follow the right. What is to each of us the form of the right which he shall follow depends, as I have said, upon where he happens to be born; and that is no accident, but a matter of what we call his karma. That is to say, it depends upon his desert in previous lives and what is best for his progress at the moment. Most people find it difficult to conceive of themselves as having been born in any other religion, or in any other race. It seems strange and incredible to them that they could have been born in one of the dark-skinned races of the world, for example, and yet everyone quite certainly has been at some time in the past, and it is by no means improbable that they may be so born in the future.

The conditions into which a man deserves to be born include, among other things, not only the race, but the religion which will come his way; and it really does not matter which one of them it is, so long as he has the feeling, the knowledge, which enables him to think, to speak, to act for the right. There are many truly religiously-minded people who

do not follow any of these faiths which we have mentioned. Many a man who is a Freethinker, an unbeliever, is just as truly a follower of God as any of us could be, though he follows Him along a different line. He is developing at the moment a different part of his nature; but all those who understand that there is a God, that there is right and there is wrong, all those are on the right road, and the name by which they call their God does not matter in the least. We think of God as Father, Son and Holy Ghost, and we speak of God the Son as the Christ. If we lived in India we should hear the same idea of a Trinity, but the Second Person would be called Vishnu, or sometimes Krishna or Rama in His various Manifestations. But it does not make the slightest difference. "All true worship comes to Me through whatsoever channel it may be poured forth." And if you be a Muhammadan and call God by the name of Allah—as I have remarked before—that is no more than if, being a Frenchman, you call Him *Le bon Dieu*, the good God. Allah is the Muhammadan word for God, and the fact that in one case it indicates a difference of language, and in another a difference of religion, has nothing to do with the case. All true worship, all real devotion, all good feeling is received by the one great God. Who is alike the Father of us all. That is one of the things in which we must learn discrimination. May I emphasize again that we should not fall into the old illusion, in which unhappily so many of us have been brought up from childhood, that ours is the only path that leads to God, and that all others are following error, are following mistaken ideas, and will land no one knows where. All that is

nonsense; there are many paths to God. You have been born here, so this is a way for you; but a man born in another place will have his own way which is just as good.

The whole point is that we should know enough to stand on God's side. Many people standing on His side do not want to come to church. They do not feel impressed in that way. So long as they follow God, it is not necessary that they should follow in our way. Many in other branches of the Christian Church would tell you that to go to church is necessary to salvation; that to receive certain sacraments is an absolute necessity. We do not think so. All these things are given to us as helps, and as they are put before us by the Christ Himself it seems wise to take advantage of them. That much is true, but to say that a man would be cast out, that he would be lost because he did not use them would be a blasphemy against the holy Father of us all. None will ever be cast out by Him, whatever they may do or however far they may stray. They cannot lose themselves finally, but of course it is true that they can make their path to Him slower, longer, more tedious, more difficult than it need be; that is what the people commonly called the wicked are doing, but that is all they can do. They cannot cast themselves out, because the will of God, as we have said, is evolution; but they have not yet developed sufficient discrimination to show them what things are worth following and what are not worth following. Vast numbers of people, very good people in their way, have not seen that yet, and so they are still running after money, wealth, power—advantages for themselves only; because they have

not yet seen that all mankind in reality is one, and therefore nothing which is gained by one man for himself alone at the cost of others can ever be really for his good, because it is not for the good of all.

Discrimination is necessary, that we may see what we ought to follow. As they would put it in India, we learn to follow the real and not the unreal. The most beautiful commentary that I have ever seen on this question of discrimination is contained in a book called *At the Feet of the Master*, written by an Indian boy of about thirteen years of age. I have seen no presentation of it so clear, so beautiful as in that little book. It is well worth your fullest study, I can assure you. That book tells us that discrimination has to be shown in all sorts of ways, not only in first of all choosing the path we shall follow, but while we are on that path, every day to the end of it we have to use our discrimination to judge between the right and wrong, to see what is important and what is unimportant, what is useful and what is useless, what is true and what is false. Most of all, perhaps, what is selfish and what is unselfish.

We talk much about right and wrong, and I think those great words are often much misused. Few things can be said definitely to be wrong or right. The great majority of things that come before us are expedient or inexpedient, desirable or undesirable. Right and wrong are very strong words indeed—words which we ought to use only when we are absolutely certain of what we are doing. So many people will tell us that this or that is wrong, when all that they mean is that it is contrary to their

ideas and their conventions. There are thousands of people who would tell you that it is wrong to go for a walk or to read any but the most serious books on Sunday. That is the sort of thing to which such words as right and wrong should not be applied. It is contrary to the ideas of certain small sections of the people that this should be done, and so for those people it is better not to do it, but there is no reason why they should limit the rest of us by that idea. We might take it as a definition, I think, of right and wrong that that is right which helps on God's plan of evolution, and that is quite definitely wrong which interferes with that plan in any way. Anything whatever which injures a fellow-man or holds him back on his path—that thing is definitely wrong; but short of that it is a word I should use with great circumspection.

I can certainly tell you of many things which I should think most undesirable. Take the great question of the drinking of alcohol. To say that is wrong seems to me assuming much more than we have any right to assume; I should emphatically say that it is a most undesirable thing; it is a thing I would not do myself, because I consider its influence evil; but it is not for me to lay down that as the law of God. I say that its effects are undesirable, therefore *for me* it would be wrong. Even that is a strong word; for me it is simply a thing I would not do; but to say that it is wrong means surely that it is wrong for all. In speech, as in many other things, we must learn discrimination; we must be careful how we use such strong words as right and wrong.

The main thing, I think, that leads us to undesirable actions is the fact that we have not yet proper control of our bodies, our vehicles. We have this physical body, we have an emotional or astral body, we have also a mental body; all these things are our vehicles, and we ought to use them for our own purposes to help the soul, to whom they all belong. We ought to use them to further our advancement and to serve others; but half the time people do not do that; they confuse themselves with their bodies, and let those bodies manage them, which is precisely the same thing as it would be if one were riding a horse and should let the horse go wherever it would—let it run away and take its rider where he did not intend to go. Under those circumstances the horse would be of little use to the man. If men would only believe it, the physical body is just an animal. It is not the man; it is just an animal belonging to him, and he should treat it in the same way as he would treat an animal that is serving him. He should take care of it, he should feed it on the proper food; he should be careful to keep it perfectly clean and in good health; but the very reason for his association with that animal (just as in the case of the horse) is that by its means he may be able to do things that he could not do without it.

By means of the horse he can get quickly from one place to another; it will draw his goods for him; it will help him in various ways, and that is why he keeps it. But if the horse declines absolutely to do anything he wants and insists on having its own way all the time, he will soon say: "Why should I be at the trouble of keeping this creature which is

useless to me?" The same thing is true of the physical body.

The man is a soul, and he keeps this body because it is of use to him in his evolution; and that is the only use it is to him. If it is *not* doing any good for him in that way, he would be better without it, for nearly all trouble comes to him through the body, and without it he as a soul would be free from all that.

We have to learn to control our bodies. The physical body is often lazy; it wants to do this and that on its own account; it has all sorts of undesirable wishes. Each time that such a wish arises just think: "Is it *I* who want this thing? No, it is not I; it is my body that wants it. Is it well that I should give it this thing?" Perhaps in some cases it is, but in many cases it is not. Therefore in this, too, we must use discrimination.

The emotional body has all kinds of wishes of its own. It wants excitement; it wants a great stir and flurry, and it does not care at all what kind it is, because the excitement produced by intense anger is just as good for it as the feeling produced by intense affection or devotion. To the astral body it is just the same what the excitement is so long as there are violent vibrations; but it is not at all the same for the real man, the soul. Therefore we must use our discrimination here also; let the astral body have the excitement of affection, of devotion, of the earnest effort to do the best we can (though that is perhaps more mental). Let it have all such vibrations, but do not let it have those of the excitement that comes from anger, hatred and jealousy; these latter vibrations are no more useful for it than

those of the good emotion would be, and they are very bad for the soul. Therefore we must control that body; we must have some discrimination.

It is the same with the mind. It has its own little wishes apart from ours. If we set ourselves to think on some difficult problem, all kinds of wandering thoughts come into our minds. The mind is glad to have that distraction; it likes the constant change. We do not want that, so we pull our minds back. There again we must use our discrimination. We must take care what sort of thoughts we let the mind think. So long as it gets vibration out of them, it is all the same to the mind whether they are horrible thoughts or good thoughts, but it is not at all the same to us. So we must not let our mind control us; we must not let our horse run away with us; we must show once more our discrimination.

The mental body chiefly likes pride. It wants to stir us up to think that we are better than anybody else, and even when we develop spiritually, it will try to make us think that in that way we are better than other people, that we are nobler, more religious. Another opportunity, obviously, for the use of discrimination.

Then there is the question of relative importance and unimportance. Do we realize that most of the trouble and difficulty in the world, most of the quarrels and most of the hatreds are stirred up about things that do not matter in the least—things that are absolutely, utterly unimportant? What somebody said about us, or what we fancy someone is thinking about us. It is never important what anyone thinks or says. We live according to our own



conscience before God; it matters nothing to us what somebody else says about us. These unimportant thoughts, because they are unduly magnified, are allowed to do us a vast amount of harm. Again discrimination is needed. Let us use reason and common sense to realize what things are important and what things are unimportant. Constantly people take offence at something done or said, and so a vast amount of unnecessary trouble arises. Do not make a fuss about little things; think first whether it is worth while making trouble over the matter. Remember that peace and quietness, and a friendly and kindly feeling between people, are ten times more important than the observance of certain tiny outward rules. In nine cases out of ten in which trouble is made, the keeping of the peace is far more important than the matter about which a difficulty arises. Let us remember that, and take care that we at least are not the people to confuse the unimportant with the important.

Remember too the discrimination between the true and the false. Let us see to it that we think truly and speak truly of our fellow-men, and in order that we may do that, let us never impute motives. We do not know a man's reason for doing this or that. Nine times out of ten it is something we should never have thought of, yet people gaily impute motives to others, never realizing that they are diligently spreading falsehood all round them. Never speak unless you know, and even then it is generally best to keep quiet. So let us take care that our discrimination keeps us in the middle path, and shows us that we are not to speak, not to think, untruly or hastily of anyone.

Then again, to discriminate between selfishness and unselfishness. Selfishness is a subtle, insidious thing. It crops up again and again in life when we think we have disposed of it. The power of discernment is badly needed there. Remember the remark attributed to Christ in the gospel: "Ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time?" Which meant to say: "Here I, the great World-Teacher, have come down among you, and yet you do not see it; the question as to whether it is going to rain or not you can judge; why cannot you perceive a far more important thing?" That same World-Teacher is coming again to us. Take care that we desecrate the signs of the times, and do not let us be caught unwatchful.

Time fails me to tell in how many ways this discrimination can be used; all the time we must try to discover good in everything and in everybody. There is nothing which is not God, and His light is gleaming through everyone of our fellow-creatures, even though in some cases the spark burns dim and is buried almost out of sight. God is there in everyone, and all the beauty in all the world is the divine beauty. Let us learn these things, and because we behold God in all, we shall be able to help all to draw nearer to God and to realize Him better.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### WISDOM

Wisdom is of vast importance to the Church. In times past there has been a great deal of opposition between the Christian Church and modern science. All through the Middle Ages we find the Church setting herself in opposition to anything in the nature of new discovery, and even last century there was the most bitter hostility on the part of the Churches both of Rome and England to the doctrine of evolution—to Darwin's new theories and discoveries. We all remember the historic case of Galileo, who was forced by the Church to recant his great discovery of the motion of the earth. We know how in order to save his life he was obliged publicly to proclaim that the earth did *not* move, although even then he muttered under his breath *E pur se muove*, "But nevertheless it does move."

Such a state of affairs as that was a shame and a disgrace; a Church which adopted such an obscurantist policy as that, which set herself in opposition to the truth, whatever that truth may be, was certainly not fulfilling her functions as she should have done. It is difficult for us now to understand how the Church could have taken that attitude. Perhaps there may have been two reasons for it. I am afraid we must admit that one of them was that the Church was the great teaching body of the time, and that she was jealous of any kind of interference with that position. Perhaps it is difficult for us now to realize how things must have seemed to the mediæval church-

man as well as to the common people of that time. All knowledge was in the possession of the monks. They were for a long time in European history the only people who could read and write. The great knights and nobles were often quite illiterate men, judging by our standards of the present day (just as great Zulu chieftains are illiterate) though valiant leaders and exceedingly good people in their own way and along their own line. Even the very Kings signed their names with great difficulty and considerable illegibility, as we may see by examining old documents such as our own Magna Charta. Many such papers bear signatures of which the average schoolboy would be ashamed.

All knowledge being in the hands of the Church, she was very intolerant of anybody else who advanced any pretensions in that direction. She adopted much the same attitude as some scientific people of the present day: "What I know not, is not worth knowing." Political considerations also had sway, for unfortunately even then the great Roman Church was beginning to dabble in politics. That she has done so ever since has been her curse and her condemnation. Beyond question any Church which interferes in matters of that sort is dropping her spiritual heritage and forgetting the work which her Lord gave her to do, which is not connected with politics, but with the helping of the world.

Another reason which may have conduced to that curious position was that churchmen took two or three texts and twisted them to mean a contradiction of the general spirit even of the bible. In the Liberal Catholic Church we do not attach so much importance to the verdict of the bible on any given

point as do some other religious bodies, because we recognize that it is but one of many volumes of the sacred lore, but one of many scriptures; and that all of them alike, while they contain much that is noble and true and beautiful, also contain many statements reflecting the average knowledge of the period when they were written, and consequently by no means stating the absolute facts about everything. As Bret Harte puts it, "They did not know everything down in Judæa." They certainly had not one-tenth of the information which we in the present day have on certain points; we do know more than they did, and it would indeed be a shame upon us if we did not. Those books were written two thousand years ago, and the world has not stood still during that period. I know that there is a statement that the wisdom of this world is foolishness to God, and I can see what that means—that the attitude of this world towards all such questions as money-making and worldly prosperity is often foolishness before God, but most emphatically it does not at all mean that it is not a good thing to have wisdom. The Christ is alleged to have said that God has hidden certain secret things from the wise and prudent, and has revealed them unto babes. That is not a disparagement of wisdom, but of the people who turned such wisdom as they possessed in the wrong direction, and used it selfishly instead of unselfishly.

But if there be a text or two that can be twisted to tell against the possession of knowledge and wisdom, I can quote you a hundred from the same book exalting it. Remember how we are given in one case as a good wish for a young man: "The

Lord give thee wisdom and understanding.” David, who was not particularly wise in many ways, is alleged to have said: “Give me understanding and I shall keep Thy law.” And Solomon, said to have been the wisest man among the Jews, emphatically remarked that they who despise wisdom and instruction are fools. “Happy is the man who getteth understanding.” And in another place: “Get wisdom, get understanding, and forget it not.” “Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get wisdom, and with all thy getting get understanding.” “The knowledge of the holy is understanding, the excellence of knowledge is that wisdom giveth life to them that have it.” Those are just a few texts taken at random; others will be found in the Psalm of Wisdom on p. 271 in our Liturgy; but even these are enough to show that the bible cannot be quoted as in favour of ignorance. St. Peter said to his people: “Add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge”—a very necessary qualification; and St. Paul wrote: “We teach wisdom to them that are perfect”—a technical term of the Mysteries.

We read in the gospel that Jesus Himself was full of wisdom, and that He increased in wisdom and stature. The world is evolving slowly—very slowly, I admit, but still it is evolving; and many things which were secret when these scriptures were written are known more fully now. Few people knew anything then; the rest just believed. There are only a few now who know fully, but still the general level of knowledge is much higher now than it was then, and therefore more people are now *ready* to know. There is a certain danger in putting the fruits of advanced wisdom before people who are

quite unfitted for them. We have had recently a striking example of that. There are all sorts of wonderful secrets in nature—secrets of chemistry, secrets of electricity, secrets of all kinds which are at present unknown to us, but will undoubtedly be discovered by man. That practically means that man is allowed to discover them, that they are entrusted to him as time goes on; but their reception so far has not been encouraging. The greatest use that has been made of the new knowledge in science and in chemistry has been that men have thereby tried to destroy one another more efficiently and with greater horror. Science has been swept into the vortex of the great war. It remains to be seen, now that it is over, whether science will also be used for the purposes of peace. It certainly can be; I hope that it will.

Men are not yet ready to have unlimited power put in their hands, because the great majority of men are not yet unselfish; they have not yet wisdom enough to be trusted with the lower knowledge. But at least more people are ready to know, to understand, now than ever before.

That is one reason for our existence as a Church. We, the Liberal Catholic Church, exist in order that we may explain to those who are ready to accept it a little more than has hitherto been explained of the great facts which underlie nature. A little more we may know now about God and man and about the relationship between them, and there is no reason whatever for any of us ever to fear knowledge. There is no doubt that the mediæval Church feared knowledge; it feared those discoveries which would overthrow its authority, overthrow the blind

faith which people reposed in it. But in this Church we have no fear of any knowledge or any discovery. On the contrary we welcome it, for the more we can know of the wonderful works of God, the greater will be our love and our reverence towards Him. Not knowledge but ignorance is the thing to be feared. Ignorance is the thing from which we need to be saved.

What is this wisdom we are to acquire? There is a saying in the bible (mistranslated as usual) which I have already quoted: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." I do not remember at the moment the Hebrew word which is here rendered fear of the Lord, but the Greek equivalent is *theosebeia*. We could twist it to mean fear, but it is intended to signify *deep reverence*, for the word *sebomai* is simply "I worship." Deep reverence for God is the beginning of wisdom. That statement is perfectly true. The man who is flippant and scornful, and does not acknowledge anything greater or wiser than himself, has embarked on a course of error which leads but to confusion; for "reverence for that which is worthy of reverence" may well be called the beginning of wisdom. For wisdom is to know God, so far as the mere mortal may know Him; to know Him to be Love and Light, to know that in Him is no darkness at all, that we never need call on Him to have mercy on us, presupposing thereby that if we did *not* ask Him He would do something very much the reverse, which amounts to crediting Him with our own passions and imperfections—a thing which we have no right to do. It is wisdom to know something, so far as we may, of His plan, to



adapt ourselves to it so far as we can, to take advantage of what He offers to us—of the help and blessing of all kinds which He holds out to man, if man will take it. The very sacraments which we administer, what are they but offers from God, opportunities given by Him for us to make more rapid progress, to draw nearer to Him?

If we can understand something of His plan and try to adapt ourselves to it, we shall be growing towards that perfect wisdom which is Himself. We must learn that there are many ways to Him, and many ways of looking on Him, and that all of them have in them some aspect of the truth, except those which credit Him with human errors and faults—jealousy, anger, revenge, hatred. These we know to be shameful qualities, even in ourselves. How then dare we attribute such feelings, such thoughts to God? It is wisdom for us to try to understand, to recognize that we ourselves are but at the beginning of all this, and that we cannot hope to know everything, but yet that certain broad principles are established. We may cling to these and we may without fear reason from them. Wisdom will utterly do away with narrowness and exclusiveness; that is one of the most important ways in which it will help us along our path, for He Himself has said: "If you know the truth, the truth shall make you free." Any Church worthy of the name should be a veritable *Santa Sophia*, a Church of the heavenly wisdom, so that through it men may gradually draw nearer and nearer to the comprehension of Him Who is Himself Wisdom, Strength and Beauty, Truth and Love.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### SELF-DEDICATION

One of the intentions set before us in our Liturgy is self-dedication—the idea that we may so dedicate and devote our lives to God's service that we may be true and faithful members of His holy Church, and may live as He desires that we should live. How must we set to work to do that? For the conditions of civilization now are very different from those when the command was given. Remember how the Christ answered a young man who came to Him, and asked: "What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" First the Christ told him to begin by keeping the commandments, to keep all the rules which have been given for holy living. And the young man replied that he had kept those from his youth up, or at least he had tried to keep them; and he asked what more he could do. Then Christ said in effect: "If you want to rise to something higher than that, if you want to go further still, then go and sell all you have, give the money to the poor and come and follow Me." And we are told that the young man went away sorrowful, because he had great possessions. I think that all through Church history that young man has been treated very unfairly, because the usual tendency is to assume that he would not give up his wealth for the sake of Christ. We have no right to assume that; a rich man has many duties as well as his wealth. It is not a question only of pleasure; he may well have been so situated that

he could not give up everything and become a wandering preacher, a follower of the Christ. It is not possible for all of us to do that. There are those of us who are able to cast aside all hope of worldly advancement because we have no one depending upon us, and we can devote ourselves wholly to the religious life in some form or other. But the great majority of us have our living to earn, and however willing and earnest and anxious we may be, we cannot give up the whole of our time to religious work in the ordinary sense of the word.

What then are we to do, and how are we to take this idea of self-dedication? It is perfectly possible for us all to embrace it and to live the Christly life, if we will only take all our duties as duties to be done for Him; if we will do them all in His Name as well as we can, we shall be serving Him just as really, though not so pleasantly for ourselves, as if we were able to give up everything to what is commonly called a life of good works. Remember what George Herbert said three hundred years ago:

Who sweeps a room as for His laws,  
Makes that and the action fine.

If we do all our duties in His Name, and make it an offering to Him that we do them as well and as perfectly as we can, we are doing the best we can to dedicate ourselves to Him. It is not only a question of work to be done; it is a question of the attitude we hold, the feelings that we permit, and the thoughts that we allow in ourselves. If we want to live for Christ, we must live like Christ as nearly as we can; and if we cannot, as He did, give all our time to altruistic work, at least we can go about doing good, and that is what was said about Him.

Wherever we are, and with whomsoever we come into contact, we can make it our business to see that our influence shall be a good influence and never an evil one; to do that is to dedicate our lives to Christ.

Assuredly we must keep the commandments, but that does not necessarily refer to the ten commandments of Moses, which are a very imperfect code of morality in ever so many ways. Far nobler is that which our Master the Christ Himself gave us when He said: "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. This is the first and great commandment, and the second is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." That is a far grander statement than that made through Moses thousands of years before, when a distinctly tribal deity, one among others, is made to represent himself as jealous lest worship should be diverted from him and given to those others—a conception no doubt fit for the Jewish tribes at that early stage of their history, but certainly not the finest idea of God which can be put before us.

The world is evolving, because it is God's will that it shall evolve, and we know more about a great many things than the Jews of three or four thousand years ago knew; so it is right and fitting that God's commandments should be put before us in another guise. More and more of His glorious truth is being unfolded to us; in every other branch of life but religion we should at once admit that we know a great deal more than did those people thousands of years ago. And in religion also we must be able to understand more than they, and assuredly we do understand the spiritual meaning of a great many

things which in those early days were taken as merely material and mechanical instructions. The world is advancing but slowly, otherwise we should not have needed that awful war; but even that, terrible as it has been, awful as its consequences have been, is a step in advance, for more good than evil will come from it all in the end. We may be sure of that, if we acknowledge that God rules the world and that all is moving towards a grand consummation in the future. There is plenty of evidence of that fact in other ways; so even if we encounter one particular case in which we are not yet able to see it, it would be foolish for us to assume that all the other indications are therefore wrong. We shall understand it all one day.

How then can we here and now dedicate our lives to Christ? We must not think of the Christ only as historical—only of a Christ who lived and died two thousand years ago; we must remember that there is a living Christ Who can and will inspire us now, Who stands behind His Church—yes, and behind all the world as well, for all the world is but an extension of His Church, though it may not know it yet. And He is always ready to help, inspire and strengthen any person whatever who will lay himself open to that help. The living Christ is our nearest friend, because He can come so much nearer to us than any one else can come; He can be so much more to us than any one else can be. Never let us forget the living Christ Who inspires us all through life.

How can we approach Him? . How can we draw nearer to Him? By making ourselves more like Him; by living, as far as we can, as He lived; by

adopting His attitude towards others. What was that? We read in an epistle: "Even Christ pleased not Himself." Let every man of us, then, forget himself and go to work to try to be useful for Christ's sake to others. In so doing we are putting ourselves into the Christlike attitude; that is what Christ did; He lived not for Himself, not for His own honour and glory and fame at all, but absolutely for others. He descended, He limited His glory, He sacrificed Himself wholly for others. That is what we, too, must try to do; and do not let us misunderstand that word *sacrifice*. Many think that to sacrifice means always to give up; they are forgetting the meaning of the word. *Sacer* in Latin means holy, and *facere* is to make. To sacrifice anything is to make it holy unto the Lord. We can sacrifice our lives to Him without suffering the death of a martyr; if we make our lives holy unto the Lord, we are sacrificing them in the best and the truest sense.

Perhaps it may involve a little of the other kind of sacrifice as well. We may find that it is necessary to give up some of our lower desires, some of the things that not we, but our lower nature, would like. It is worth while, for we are souls; indeed, we are even more than that, for the soul itself is only a partial manifestation of the spirit. We are sparks of the divine life; in everyone of us there is the Christ which is our hope of glory, and so to give up anything which you see would be harmful to you as a spirit is hardly worth calling a sacrifice, even though it be something which is dear to the lower self.

This may sound impracticable to some, because they have allowed their religion to become too much a merely historical religion. It is considered by many people that that which saves a man is his belief that Christ lived and died in Judæa a couple of thousand years ago. They accept that just in the same way as they accept the other fact that Julius Cæsar landed in Britain 55 B.C., and I really believe that the one fact does them about as much good as the other, if they do not make it a practical factor in their lives, and do not realize that the Christ Who took a body two thousand years ago is a living and mighty power behind His Church to-day.

One who travels and lives in Eastern countries, as I have done, has food for rather unpleasant thought sometimes when he looks round him at the people whom he may in his childhood have been taught to call the heathen, because he cannot but see (I am thinking mainly at the moment of India) that those people round him are intensely religious people, and furthermore that their idea of religion is not precisely that in which he himself has been brought up. I am not dwelling for the moment upon the fact that it is a *different* religion; that seems to me of very little importance; what I mean is that to them religion is a living actual thing which permeates their lives every day and all day long. If we can ever become intimate enough with a Brahman really to see his daily life, we shall find that there is not a single action he does, from the time he gets up in the morning to the time he goes to sleep, which is not a religious action, which is not stamped with his religion. When he rises from his bed, a

religious thought is put into his mind; when he bathes there is a thought of a similar nature in connection with that; whether he eats or drinks, or whatever he does, every one of his actions is accompanied by a religious thought. I grant you that sometimes all that becomes merely formal, because there is a deal of human nature in India, as well as elsewhere. There is certainly that danger of formality; but the prominent fact stands out that these people are religious not once a week on Sunday but all the year round, every day and every minute of the day. That strikes us as strange, because we have not been used to it. There are many of us, I hope and believe, who keep religious thought at the back of their minds always, but they are a small minority. I am afraid that the great majority of our people do not keep their religion always at the back of their minds but relegate it to stated times and days, even though it may to some extent influence their lives.

Because of that it seems to many occidentals somehow improper, indecent even, that the oriental should put religion forward always, as he does; it seems like making it too common, and the European is apt to think that it must be hypocritical. Yet that is precisely what was intended for all of us; if we look into the fundamentals of our own religion we shall find that it was meant for us in Christianity, just as much as for the Brahman in Hinduism. All the little outer details to which he has to attend every moment are not laid down for us, because this is a later religion and its great Founder hoped that it might be sufficient to say to His Christian followers: "Keep the great truths always in your mind;



never forget your Father which is in heaven." I am afraid we have often disappointed Him; I am afraid we have tended to forget the mighty truths which lie behind far too often; and so an Eastern religion often astonishes us because of its intense vitality.

In the face of that, it seems to me amazing conceit on our part to send missionaries to try to convert such people. I feel that we should first try to bring our own lives fully into harmony with the teaching of the Christ; for the strange idea that only through one Name and along one line can God be approached is peculiar to us. I have had an unpleasant shock once or twice in that way when travelling in the East. I say, perhaps, to some earnest Christian missionary: "How good all these people around us are, how charitable, how kindly; what splendid lives they are living; cannot they be saved?" The answer depends upon the missionary. I have had from a prelate of the Roman Church the emphatic statement that he thought they had just as good a chance of salvation as he had. But there are very few who would say that, and often the missionary has replied: "We must trust in the uncovenanted mercies of God for them, but I am afraid their chances are very poor." Then I have turned to the so-called heathen and said: "Look at these Christians; they are living good lives; do you not think that they also will attain Nirvana?" (That is the phrase used among the Buddhists for the final consummation, equivalent to the "going to heaven" of the more ignorant among the Christians.) The reply was given with the greatest astonishment: "Attain Nirvana! Of course they will! Why

should they not?" "But," I said, "they do not believe as you do." The Buddhist monk replied: "What does that matter? They are trying their best to carry out the teachings of the Lord Buddha, although they never heard of Him; and surely that is just as good."

We see at once the difference in the attitude, and certainly the heathen showed to greater advantage than the Christian; but only because the Christian had misunderstood, because he did not realize the worth and glory of the Master's teaching, Who said: "Other sheep I have, who are not of this fold"; Who, when He spoke of what is called the day of judgment, and told His disciples what questions will be asked of those who come before Him, to decide whether they are to go to the right hand or the left, unaccountably forgot to ask whether they believed in Him, or even had ever heard of Him, but enquired instead: "Have you fed the hungry, have you clothed the naked, have you visited the sick and those in prison?" And if the answer is "Yes," then comes the swift decision: "Go to my right hand, well-beloved of my Father." What the man has believed is not the question; that does not seem to matter at all; the result entirely depends upon what he has done.

That gives us some indication of the way in which we may dedicate ourselves to Christ. Let us try to live in the broad open-air, in the glorious sunlight of God. Let us try to understand the teaching of the Christ, and live as He lived, in charity with all. Let us not stop to think about ourselves. We have not time for wounded feelings; we have not time to hate our brother because of something that he is sup-

posed to have said or done. Our one business is to be so occupied with trying to do him good that we have not time to think about what he may have thought or said about us. Perhaps he may have said something he should not; suppose he did; after all, if we think of it, that does not hurt us in the least. A man speaks; what is it? A vibration of the air, a sound. If we had never heard of it, it would not have troubled us at all; but because we *have* heard of it we stir ourselves up and become annoyed and angry. Is that the other man's fault? What he did would not have hurt us in the least unless we happened to know of it, and because we know of it we stir up trouble for ourselves. That is not common sense, and it is not the teaching of the Christ. Let us live with Him and for Him, and dedicate ourselves to Him in that way; for His sake let us help these our brethren, because they also are His children; and if they do not know that, if they are wandering away from Him, all the more do they need the help which He through us can give them if we have no time for petty personal feelings.

We read in an epistle that we must be like-minded one towards another. We must keep the even tenour of our thought, and we must feel towards people and treat people as we should like them to feel towards us and to treat us. So often we are just to one person because we like him, and unjust to another because we happen not to like him; all alike are our brothers, for God is the Father of all; that is the lesson which Christ tries to impress upon us over and over again. Therefore let us do nothing that we cannot offer to Him as a sacrifice, nothing that we cannot make holy, nothing

that we cannot do in His Name. To live thus is to dedicate ourselves to the service of the Christ; and that we can all do, however busy we may be, however troubled we may be; we can try to adopt the Christ-like attitude towards all those round us, so that the world shall be better and happier in that little corner where we live, because we have lived in it as followers of the Christ, for His sake and in His Name.

## CHAPTER XXV

### PERSEVERANCE

Perseverance is one of the most necessary of the qualities which we have to develop, and it must be admitted that it is also one of the most difficult. We have all heard or read of the great martyrs, and we all honour them for the wonderful victories that they have gained for the faith; and perhaps we have sometimes wondered whether we could have done and suffered what they did—whether we could have faced death so undauntedly for Christ's most holy Name. I hope we could; I believe we could. We are quite ordinary people, most of us; by no means great saints as yet, though we hope to be so some day. Yet quite ordinary people sometimes respond magnificently to the extraordinary demand of some sudden emergency. We have had abundant examples of that in the recent war; again and again men who in every-day life were in no way distinguishable from their fellows have blossomed out into splendid heroism when opportunity offered. What they did for King and country I hope we should be willing to do for the sake of Christ if the necessity arose; we should be swept away by a flood of enthusiasm which would render us for the time careless of suffering and danger; we should be buoyed up by the consciousness that we were playing the principal part in a great drama, and bearing witness for our faith before a vast multitude. To die for Him, to give up one's life, seems the greatest thing of all; and the martyr was often carried through it in a kind of ecstasy.

St. Augustine once remarked: "Many there be who will die for Christ, but few there be who will live

for Him." The obvious reason is that the latter is much the harder task, for it demands this virtue of perseverance which we are considering. Martyrdom is one tremendous effort, but the steady work goes on for many years. We are not called upon, most of us, to *sacrifice* our lives for Him, but to *devote* our lives to Him, day by day making ourselves gradually more like Him, doing that which He has told us; and that is a hard thing to do. Each week we come to our church, we join in our service, we feel the splendour, the beauty, the glory of it all, and the nearness of the Christ in His Sacrament, and no doubt for the time we feel that for His sake and in His Name we would do anything. But then we go back to daily life, and gradually the height and heat of our enthusiasm wane somewhat; we live through the sordid details of everyday life, and find them monotonous and irritating. People are irritating too, sometimes, and circumstances are wearing; the daily life is so wearisome; yet duty lies that way. To remember all through it, all the time, that we must be living for Him is no light task; to do that for a whole life-time is a greater feat than to throw a life away in a moment for Him. And yet that is precisely what we are sent here to do.

This that we call a life is only one day in our real life; we have many such lives, and each of them is just like one stage in a long journey. We have to spend it in learning certain lessons. We are told: "Be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect"—a hopeless undertaking if we were confined to seventy years of life; and furthermore nobody ever has even that seventy years of life in which to do it; for all through the early part of

our life we are learning how to deal with things on the physical plane, while towards the end of our life the body is not so strong. In truth we have only a few years of each incarnation for real work and learning. We are all well-intentioned, but we have probably often been careless and inefficient, and have not kept up to the level which we know in our hearts to be within our power. How are we to attain perfection? The idea would be ridiculous if there were no other life but this; but if we can have as much time as we need, if we can go on with the work life after life, it is no longer ridiculous to say that we shall at last attain perfection.

So we have to do this very thing which we have said is so difficult to do. That is our duty; we are here to co-operate in God's great plan, and the first step in that is to make ourselves fit to help in it, because if we are to be fellow-workers together with God we must have within us something of the power and love and sympathy of God. So we have to develop ourselves, and we have to do the right thing as we see it, day after day, hour after hour, year after year, however slow and monotonous it may seem to be; and that is why perseverance is so important to us.

It is easy enough when things are going well and smoothly; but there is hardly a day in which something does not happen to annoy us or to trouble us. If we get through a day without any difficulties, we may consider ourselves fortunate. We ought not to let these things worry us; we know that; but as a matter of fact they often do, and it is our business to face facts. We must get ourselves into such a condition that we automatically resist that impulse

to feel annoyed, however natural it may seem, however great the provocation may be.

Think once more of those who went to the war for us; think of the awful, the perfectly appalling conditions through which those men went, and yet retained their steadiness. How was it done? First, by incessant preparation and drill. I take it that it is practically impossible that a man under those terrible conditions should feel no fear at all. He would be scarcely human if he did not; but the glory of it is that, feeling the fear, these men yet behaved as though they did not feel it. How was that? The whole thing had been made a matter of routine. The soldier is drilled over and over again until when he hears a certain word of command he obeys without thinking. The whole object of that ceaseless drill of the soldier is that when he is under abnormal conditions, when he is inside wholly terrified, he will still obey those orders, because he is used to obey; he will do it automatically.

In just the same way we have to reach a stage where unselfish effort is automatic. In the beginning self-preservation must naturally be the first idea to come up in a soldier's mind, just as it would in any of us; but the soldier has learned to conquer that, because he knows he is there for another and an unselfish purpose. He might be caught unawares, he might not have time to think; but he has been drilled until his movements are automatic; he does the right thing automatically, and presently he recovers his grasp of things, and then comes a sort of second wind, bringing the higher thought: "It does not matter about the danger for me; I have a certain thing to do. I must hold this place,



I must carry out this order, whatever it may happen to be.”

That is what *we* have to do; we have to practise this business of unselfishness, of thinking first of other people and working for them, until it is automatic with us. When we have got as far as that, we shall find that many things which hitherto have troubled and upset us, now trouble us no more. We must act as a doctor does. A doctor goes perfectly coolly into the most appalling dangers: danger of infection, of blood poisoning, danger of all kinds from which a man might well shrink with horror; yet so ingrained in the doctor is the idea of saving life, the idea that all suffering that comes before him—however loathsome, however dangerous it is—is yet a case with which he has to deal, a case which it is his business to save, that he never thinks of hesitating.

Every person we meet is an opportunity, an opportunity for us to see if we can help him in some way or other. We can imagine how little a doctor cares what a patient says to him in his delirium; the man may be insulting, he may be filthy, he may be everything that is unpleasant; but to the doctor he is merely a case—a case which it is his duty to help. That must be our attitude. Never mind that the people to be helped are frequently not all that they ought to be; that fact does not excuse *our* being what we ought not to be; it does not excuse us for losing our temper and being annoyed. Let us go on and do our work in regard to them; and our work is to be sweet and gentle and kindly, and to watch everywhere for an opportunity to help.

We need to keep up our enthusiasm; we need to restore our strength of feeling; that is one of the

reasons for which we go to church. That is the method which Christ Himself has appointed for the helping of his people. He raises their emotions; He uplifts them, He gives to them His very Self in the most holy Sacrament. Why? Truly to help them along their road in life, but far more to help them to help others; to keep them up to the level where they can radiate love and enthusiasm, and so be really of use to others. That is why we should not miss church services if we can help it. Blessed are those to whom comes the opportunity of daily communion with their Lord; their lives ought to show the result of that daily communion. They ought to differ from those who have not such an advantage. The Christ is alleged to have said: "Take up your cross and follow Me." What does He mean by that? "Take up your trouble, your difficulty, whatever it is." We may have irritability as our cross, we may have sundry and various little difficulties; never mind, let us take them up and follow Him. We need not deny the existence of our cross, or refuse to face it; let us take it up boldly and follow Him. Live as He has lived, and then at the end we shall attain freedom and safety from all these troubles; we shall achieve that at which we are aiming. We shall gain that life with Him which is the real expression of Him. Take up your cross and follow Him; that cross becomes a rosy cross of light, and presently it is surmounted by the crown, the crown of glory that fadeth not away. But for that we need perseverance, and we need strength to carry it day by day, yea, though it be through a long life, that we may never turn aside from following Him.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### GOOD WORKS

There has been a good deal of misunderstanding in various sections of the Christian Church with regard to the necessity of active work. There is a large section of Christianity whose teachers tell us that we have only to believe and we shall be saved, as they call it. They usually attach a very unfortunate connotation to that word saved, for they make it mean saved from an everlasting hell—an idea which is an utter impossibility and a blasphemy against God our loving Father. There never is, there never was, there never could be, the slightest danger of any human being encountering so awful a fate as that. It is true that suffering always follows upon evil, but that suffering is always educative and never punitive. We have to learn how we should live; but there are plenty of opportunities of learning that. There have been in all religions and in all ages of the world Teachers to tell people how they ought to live, but the less evolved souls are often unable or unwilling to adopt that teaching, because it usually imposes upon them a good deal of self-control and self-restraint of their lower passions and feelings, which they do not like. They are not sure, deep down within themselves, that the teaching is true; consequently they make mistakes, they commit what is called sin, they do things which should not be done, and under the inevitable law of cause and effect evil brings suffering to them sooner or later. That suffering may sometimes be

terrible. Eternal of course it could never be, because no man's action is eternal, and an infinite result cannot flow from a finite cause; but it is true that a man may save himself from a great deal of trouble and sorrow if he is willing to use his common sense and to live in accordance with the great scheme which God has laid out for us.

To be saved means really to be on the right side when a certain division of the human race takes place in the future—a division about which there has been the most astonishing misunderstanding; it has been described as the separation between the sheep and the goats, the saved and the lost. There cannot be any such idea as "the lost" in the whole of God's world, because God intends us all to evolve; and evolve we most certainly shall. There is no question about that; the question is whether we shall choose to go quietly and willingly along the path of evolution, or whether we shall give ourselves and other people a great deal of trouble by moving restively and resisting the divine guidance.

That is the only meaning of salvation—that a man is sure to come out on the right side in that future judgment or decision—a judgment which is not in the least a condemnation of him, but simply a decision as to whether he is or is not ready to go on in the higher and more evolved world. If he is not, he drops out and goes on with the next wave of evolution. There is no question of eternal loss; it is like the case of a child at school who is not up to the level of his standard, and is therefore unable to go on to a higher class with his comrades, but has to wait and do the same year's work over again. That is all that is meant by

being condemned. The best translation would be that a decision is made against the man—a decision that he is not strong enough to go on.

It is written: "Believe and you shall be saved." We quite agree, but it must be an efficient belief—a belief that leads us somewhere, that makes us do something—for we have the authority of the bible for the statement that faith without works is dead. We cannot pretend that a man truly believes something if he acts as though that thing were not so; in that case it is clear that he does *not* fully believe. When we talk about belief, we do not mean a vague suspicion that a thing may be so; we mean an absolute certainty of it—just the same certainty as we have that fire will burn us, a certainty which makes us take particularly good care not to put our hands in the fire, and not to take hold of something which is red-hot. It is not because we expect God to punish us if we do, but because we know, as the inevitable result of His law, that if we take hold of something which is too hot we shall suffer by the too rapid transmission of heat from that object to our hands. It is not a question of punishment; it is all a matter of common sense and obedience to law. If that fact can be got into our heads, we shall save ourselves much trouble.

If faith is to save us from unpleasant consequences, it must be a faith which leads to action. Christ remarked that not everyone who called Him "Lord" would necessarily attain the goal. "Why call ye Me Lord, Lord," He asks, "and do not the things that I say?" He demands some proof that we recognize Him as the Lord, the Teacher. He says: "Do the things that I tell you; it is useless to profess belief

if you do not show your belief in definite work." Lip-service does not count at all in cases of this sort. There are plenty of instances of that. In the bible the most striking of all is one I have often quoted before—the account which the Lord Himself gives of this so-called day of judgment, of the day when He will decide who is fit to go on to that higher level which He describes as the kingdom of heaven. It is not a place in space, a place where men will for ever sit upon clouds, carrying harps and singing. Heaven is a state of consciousness, a state into which we can pass only when we have sufficiently developed ourselves to be able to enter into it and enjoy it.

So He says of the higher states which lie in front of men: "You who are fit for them, come; ye who are sufficiently blessed of My Father" (which means those in whom the Third Outpouring is sufficiently unfolded) "come and inherit this fuller life. The rest of you cannot yet do that, because you are not fit for it. Depart from Me, for you still work iniquity; come up for examination again when you are better prepared." To *feel* good is not sufficient. A man must *do* good if he wishes to succeed; to feel good and happy is at least always better than to feel miserable, but it is not enough that a man should be self-satisfied. He must definitely *do good*.

How can we define the doing of good works? At least it always means helping others in some way; it is not only charity, not only the distribution of goods to the poor, however grand and noble a thing that may be. There are varieties of good works which are necessary to the man who wishes to make real progress. The good work specially put before us in the epistle of St. Paul to the Ephesians is

that we should show love. And there is a collect which prays: "That we, loving Thee above all things, may continually be given to all good works." Truly we must feel love to God, but our love to God must show itself in love for our fellow-men—in love for God in man, because God, the divine spark, is in everyone, and when we love a human being, it is the God in him that we love. When we love we idealize; we think of the person as grander far in many ways than others can see him. But we are not idealizing him one whit beyond his potentiality. It is in that human being to be just as fine, just as good in every way as we think him to be. Perhaps there is not yet sufficient development in that soul to show forth the whole of that possibility all the time; but the divine power and the divine goodness are there, and if we idealize the man, we are simply looking ahead a little to what he will be, rather than confining ourselves to what he is at the moment.

So that is a good work that we must do if we are to fulfil His command. We must love God, and we must show our love in kindly action towards our fellow-men. Besides the external good works (to which the name of charity is commonly given) we must always do the interior good work which was put before us in the epistle, which tells us that we must walk worthy of our vocation. We who have come to the light have a singular advantage, but every such advantage brings us a greater responsibility. If we know a little more of the truth of Christ than others know, then we have a greater responsibility. To whom much is given, from him much shall be expected; so if we know more, we must show it by living a life higher and nearer to the Christ than

that which is lived by the man who as yet is ignorant. We have learnt not merely that we may know in the abstract, not merely that we may have in our minds so much of knowledge; but that we may put that knowledge into practice, that we may live as Christ would have us live.

The words of that epistle are admirable; we cannot think of them too often, or follow too closely their direction that we should show our love by forbearing one another in love, and keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. Why is it that unity is so emphatically eulogized? Because that is the particular piece of progress which is put before us; that is the great step that we all ought to be trying to take. We come forth from God, and God is one; the One has become many; there has been a vast divergence, in order that those Who represent the One, that Mighty One, may bring back into Him the fruit of many different experiences, so that there may be a greater fullness, a more perfect fruit of evolution. But having become many in order that we may develop into strong and powerful centres, we have now to learn to become one again, because He from Whom we came and to Whom we are to return, is one God—in Three Persons, truly, and manifesting through many glorious Spirits, through all kinds of different forms—the human form among others—but yet fundamentally One; so to realize Him, and to gain strength and power from Him, we must draw nearer and nearer to unity ourselves.

So we are told to strive for that unity. It is the most important thing put before us, and yet one of the most difficult. Constantly we are squabbling



and bickering among ourselves because we differ; and how little are the things about which we squabble, how unimportant when we come to think of it. People will make a great fuss and a great deal of trouble to get exactly their own way in some quite small matter, though it does not matter in the least really whether they succeed or not. What *does* matter a thousand times more is to keep the unity, the sense of love and harmony; and not to break up that sense for the sake of some small thing which is a matter of no importance at all. The higher life, the heavenly life, the life of the Christ is always a life of unity, and the nearer we come to a definite unity among ourselves, the nearer we shall come to Him, Who prayed to His Father that we might all be one in Him, even as He is one with the Father.

Let us then add to the outer good work in the world (which I am sure all are doing or trying to do as best they can) that inner good work of gaining and maintaining unity with our brethren. Christianity ought to be a real bond. Our hand given to a fellow-Christian should be a sure pledge of real brotherhood to him. We should always stand ready to help him in his need, and assuredly we should defend his good name in his absence just as we would in his presence. All these things we should do if our brotherhood is true, so that men may say of us, as they used to say in the ages of the primitive Church: "See how these Christians love one another." That was the mark of the Christian in those early days, when they were few. Would that it were equally the mark of the Christian in these days, when they are comparatively many. "Sirs, ye are brethren; then let brotherly love continue."

## CHAPTER XXVII

### GOD AS LIGHT

The sun has been taken throughout the ages as the symbol of the Deity. Many people have talked a great deal of nonsense about sun-worshippers, and have spoken of them as idolaters. The whole idea of what we mean by an idolater is entirely foreign to any of those Oriental religions. I doubt very much whether there has ever been such a thing as an idolater in this world. Many of the more extreme protestants among the Christians accuse their brethren of idolatry because they use the crucifix, because they have images of Our Lady and of various saints, but I think that not the most ignorant of peasants among Catholics ever supposed those pieces of wood and stone to *be* the saints. They have understood them to be symbols of them—representations of them to shew us, so far as can be done, what manner of people these great Ones were, and to arouse interest and reverence for them. No one has ever *worshipped* any image; they have taken images always as symbols of that which lies behind.

So, surely, with the sun. The Parsees, the Zoroastrians have been called sun-worshippers, but if we ask a Zoroastrian he tells us at once: "Of course it is not the sun we worship; that is the physical representation of a mighty Spirit, a divine Power behind; it is that and that alone which we worship."

The sun is a very fit and beautiful symbol of the Deity. Think how he pours forth light for ever; how the sun is always shining. It is said in our

scripture that God makes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends His rain on the just and on the unjust; He pours His sunshine upon all without any difference or strength, and that great light of His is *always* shining. We find half our day, half our twenty-four hours dark; but that is because we are in our own shadow, not because the sun is not shining. Sometimes there are clouds and storms, but, as I have said before, those also are earth-born, and the sun shines on for ever. We have only to rise above the earthly clouds, or to pass out of the shadow of the earth, and we find our sun eternal. So it is a fine symbol of the divine Power, and it is very true that in Him there is no darkness at all.

The light always remains pure. Man cannot soil or influence that light. If an outpouring of water passes through a pipe which is foul, it becomes dirty water. If the sun shines through a dirty pane the light is not foul; it remains the same light, and even if we use coloured glass we do not change the light; it means only that that kind of glass will let through only a part and not the whole of it. Yet even so, think how lovely that is; we can distinguish the especial beauty of that part the better because for the moment the other parts are kept aside, away from our view. We must sometimes see less than the whole, in order that we may know what splendour, what beauty is included in that whole.

Wonderful as that light is, we poor human beings may actually help it, so to speak, in its work. We can reflect this glorious sunlight into dark corners which otherwise it could not penetrate; for the light moves only in straight lines, so by purely human

means, by mirrors and by reflectors, we can send light to those from whom otherwise it would be hidden. Men hide themselves in caves and shelters and cellars into which the divine sunlight itself cannot penetrate; but we can reflect it into those places, and so, poor and small as we are and comparatively of no account, we can yet help that mighty divine Power to make itself manifest to men who otherwise would not see it, to whom its awful purity would make no appeal. By reflecting it, by giving perhaps only part of it, and reflecting only one colour of it, we can make it visible to those who otherwise would not see.

There is another thing also which we should remember. We spend much of our lives in what is called artificial light, but those who know anything of science are aware that there is in reality no such thing as artificial light, for all light is only transmuted sunlight. We burn our coal, we make our power; what is coal but the plants of long ago that have stored up light in the form of energy which they drew in millions of years ago, and now they give out again? All light is only a form of energy, and all energy in this system comes from the sun, just as all life comes from Him Who stands behind the sun, the Solar Logos or Deity.

We see in how many ways this symbol of God as Light is really beautiful, really something that is well worth careful consideration. We, therefore, if we would be fellow-workers together with God, which is surely the greatest honour and the greatest blessing that can come to mortal man, must also be lights, however comparatively feeble our light may be. "Let the lower lights be burning," for the

lower lights have their own work to do—work which the greater lights cannot do without some entire change of their nature and their power; so everyone has his work to do; he must be a light. God is not only the external light and the glory of the universe; He is the indwelling light—the light within us. So let our light swell and grow until it becomes one with the infinite Light.

St. John, in his First Epistle General, speaks clearly as to the effect of that Light. "If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and yet we walk in darkness, the truth is not in us." We may tell for ourselves at once whether we are opening our hearts to the divine Light, because if that be the case we shall be *in* the light, as He is in the light. If we suffer from clouds of depression, if our attitude is pessimistic, if we feel ourselves overwhelmed by what happens to us, then we are *not* yet in the glorious sunlight of His life; then we must come out of these caves of darkness, these man-made shelters that hide us from God's glorious sunlight; come out and walk with Him in the light. "These things have I written unto you that your joy may be full." Joy is the test of true belief. It is the good and faithful servant who enters into the joy of his Lord; but remember what the joy of the Lord is. It is no vague heaven of feasting and of singing; for what is it that Christ our Lord does? All the while He pours Himself out in sacrifice for us; it was for us men and for our salvation that He descended into matter, and was born of the Holy Ghost and the Virgin Mary. Those who enter into the joy of the Lord must take part in the work of the Lord, for it is that work that is His joy. In

the Greek religion the Logos is symbolized under the name of Bacchus; the infant Bacchus has His play-things, and through His play the worlds come into being. The list of His toys is of extreme interest, for we find Him using dice which are the five platonian solids, a top which is the whirling atom, a ball which represents the earth, and a mirror which is the symbol of the astral light. It is these with which He plays, into which He descends, and the joy of the Lord is the joy of sacrifice. So it is into that joy of sacrifice that all of us must try to enter; but so long as we think of that sacrifice as suffering, we have *not* entered into the true joy of the Lord. When sacrifice is the only way of living that is possible for us, when that is our truest and our greatest joy, then indeed are we one with Him; then we walk in the light, as He is in the light.

The epistle of St. John, in which is to be found the passage upon which I have been commenting, has an especial characteristic which is worthy of our careful attention because it presents a close analogy to our own position at the present day, and shows that the witness of the Church comes down through the ages, and that we tell you to-day exactly what the apostle told his people two thousand years ago. Notice the decided stand which St. John takes. He says quite clearly: "You must understand that I am talking about what I myself have seen and know. I speak to you of the things which mine eyes have seen and my hands have handled, of the word of life. I am not telling you something which is a mere matter of hearsay; I have seen it and I know it." That is exactly what we tell you in this Church to-day. We are not speaking merely on the autho-

riety of any sacred scripture, though we often quote ancient scripture in support of what we say; we are not depending upon information handed down to us by tradition, though that often confirms our teaching; we are telling you of things with which many of us have experimented, things of which we have had experience again and again, so that we do know that whereof we speak and we give you direct personal testimony—which is more than you will get from most religious instructors!

But we do not therefore expect any one to accept all that we say without further enquiry. We leave men perfectly free in this Church to believe whatever commends itself to their own reason and common sense; but the fact that we leave them perfectly free does not mean that we have no knowledge and no convictions of our own. On the contrary, some of us do know quite a good deal about these things; we know it as the result of many years of patient and careful investigation, along lines precisely similar to those which scientific men adopt in studying chemistry or astronomy or any other subject.

For a long time it seems to have been thought that in this world of ours there were certain matters which must be left to the province of religion; that they were purely matters of faith, that no one could know anything definite about them, and that therefore some people believed one thing and some another. That has been an unfortunate thing for the world. There is no reason why people should not investigate for themselves these matters which are supposed to be appropriate to religion, any more than there is any reason why they should not inves-

tigate geology, chemistry or any other science. It is in no way more presumptuous or irreverent to enquire into the working of God's laws on the astral plane than on the physical.

For example, there is the whole vast question of the life after death. It is ridiculous to suppose that we cannot obtain any information about that. There is plenty of information to be had about it for anybody who will take the trouble to look for it. Of course there are conditions attached to psychic research, exactly as there are conditions attached to the study of electricity. If we want to experiment in electricity we must obtain the machinery which will generate it, we must have the wires which will conduct it, and in various ways we must provide ourselves with the necessary plant and supplies. It is exactly the same if we want to study matters of the higher world. We cannot deal with them with the same machinery which we should apply to chemistry or geology; but that does not mean that they cannot be studied, if we will take the trouble to learn and apply the appropriate methods.

Some of us have done that. I myself have spent half a century over these subjects, experimenting in various ways for myself and through others, and collecting masses of evidence; and I think one may fairly claim that at the end of so long an apprenticeship as that, one begins to know something about it. It is quite possible for any man who has the time, the money and the patience to do exactly what I did to obtain evidence and to experiment for himself. Meantime, we are quite ready to put the result of our enquiries and investigations before our people.



The message which we bring is exactly that which St. John brought. We have seen something of those higher splendours, and we know with utter certainty that there is a God of Light and Power, and we see how He works down here through His instruments, and through the matter which is a manifestation of Him. Through all the ages there has been continued testimony. There have always been those who knew, and there always will be. Not every one of us can say, "I know," although there are far more who can say it than is generally supposed, for many men have had their own experiences, some of one kind, some of another, so that they are quite certain inside. But those who take the trouble to train their higher faculties know now, just as others knew thousands of years ago. The testimony of the great Catholic Church is consistent and continual.

Christians recognize St. John as one of the greatest of their apostles, but it is curious that in spite of that no one seems actually to believe him—that is if we are to go by the general attitude of the Christian in the present day, the general tone of his prayer-book and his religious writings altogether. One great fact emerges from St. John's enquiry into these matters. He claims to know at first hand, and he declares that God is Light, and that in Him there is no darkness at all. If only Christians had believed him, had accepted his statement with its inevitable corollaries, we should have avoided a vast amount of totally unnecessary trouble and sorrow. Apparently Christians cannot believe him; they cannot believe the assertions of Christ Himself; they must go back to the old terrorism of the religion

of the early Jews, who worshipped a tribal deity of their own, whom they held to be excessively cruel, revengeful, jealous and in various ways very different from the loving Father Whom Christ consistently put before His people. If only those who call themselves Christians would follow Christ and His apostles, and leave the Jewish religion alone, we should get on much better.

Any one who can accept St. John's plain statement that God is Light and in Him is no darkness at all, will find that it changes everything, that it is of the most supreme importance, that it is the saving fact that makes all things clear to us, as soon as we grasp it. Some may say: "When we look round us in the world, we do not see sufficient evidence that God is a loving Father, that He is Light, and in Him there is no darkness. If that be so how came this awful war? Think of the appalling misery which it has meant to millions of people; how can that be if there is no darkness?"

Of course the evidence cannot be seen, so long as we are looking only at a small part of the thing. Imagine a number of ants crawling about on the wrong side of some magnificent piece of tapestry, and examining the ends which hang down at the back of it and arguing among themselves as to whether there could be any design in it. "Some colours here and some there," they might say, "and no apparent sense or reason in it all." We are just about in the same position to judge of what is really being done as those ants would be to judge the design of that tapestry. Some intelligent ant by chance or by extra development might learn to climb round to the other side. Then he would come back

and report to the others: "There is a real pattern to it all; there is some reason in it, but you can see only one side, and that the under side. All the important part you do not see at all." That is exactly the position in which men are who argue about the power and love of God when they see only this physical-plane side of things. They see only what happens to the bodies of men, the lowest part of them. If they could climb to the other side of the tapestry and see the pattern, if they could raise their consciousness to the higher level and see what is happening to the souls of men as a consequence of all this, they would comprehend the real plan and scheme of the whole business, and then they would understand that verily God is Light and in Him there is no darkness at all. If we cannot always see evidence of it down here, it is because we are seeing not even half, not a tenth of the working of the machine; we have no grasp whatever of the world as a whole while we examine it merely from this lower side. We must get above it and look down on it and see it altogether.

Take an analogy from the great war. We can imagine how little of what was being done in one of those battles a single private soldier would know while he was fighting in one corner of the battlefield. He had his orders, and he carried them out nobly, but he knew little of the plan of the general who had the whole affair in his mind. There might be terrible suffering, there might even be a partial defeat and retirement in one part of the field, in order that time might be gained to obtain a real victory in some other point of the same great battle. We cannot tell by seeing a small part; but if we get

up above and look down, we can see—not indeed the whole, but—quite enough to make us certain that there is a plan, that the plan is a noble and a true plan, and that it is succeeding and not failing.

That is the message of those who are able, after long practice and work, to raise their consciousness so that they can look down on it all from above and take a broader view than can be had down here. Once more we are repeating the statement of St. John, and we are repeating it on the same grounds—that we have ourselves seen the working of the scheme sufficiently to be able to affirm exactly what St. John affirmed two thousand years ago, that God is Light. The Act of Faith in the Office of Prime, which I have already quoted, conveys the idea:

“We believe that God is Love and Power and Truth and Light; that perfect justice rules the world: that all His sons shall one day reach His Feet, however far they stray. We hold the Fatherhood of God, the Brotherhood of man; we know that we do serve Him best when best we serve our brother man. So shall His blessing rest on us, and peace for evermore.”

We do not tell men, as do some other Christian denominations, that they will have an unpleasant and sulphureous future if they do not believe what we say; it is for them to take our evidence or leave it; but we do claim that it is evidence, and that every sensible man ought to take it into account. All who claim to have penetrated to higher levels and learned to see for themselves agree in telling us that there is an orderly scheme, which is moving on to a consummation of final good for all.

From that knowledge follow many things. That being so, the best of everything, and the best in everything, is the nearest to the truth in it; so when anything happens that seems to us to cause sorrow and evil, we should look and see whether there is not a good side to it. Look for the best always; for we shall always find that somewhere there is a best. Look for the good points, not only in *everything*, but in *everybody*; because in looking for the good we get nearer to the reality. Let us count our blessings instead of all the time grumbling and looking round for something with which we can find fault. If we look for the good we shall be surprised to see how much there is of it. If we accept the idea that God is light, and trust Him, follow Him, obey Him, we shall soon find evidence accruing to show that we are on the right track. Men find what they want to find. If a man goes about trying to find a grievance he can easily manufacture one; if he goes about searching for affairs that are going awry and not being properly managed, of course he will find some; but if, on the other hand, he tries to take the higher line and look for the best, he will presently see that the evidence on that side altogether outweighs that on the other.

It seems to me most important that we should adopt a proper attitude of utter trust towards God—the attitude of trust founded upon reason and not upon blind faith. We must eliminate all cringing and all prayers for mercy. Until we look into the matter we hardly realize how all the old prayers and hymns that our forefathers have been using these many centuries are permeated with these ideas of fear, cringing and horror. People say the words

and never think of the awful implications that follow from them. When they say: "Lord have mercy upon us," what do they mean? They must mean, at any rate, that if they did not ask Him to act mercifully, kindly, justly, He would not do so. What right have they to think such a wicked thing about our loving Father? They ask Him to forgive sins—meaning, I suppose, if words mean anything, that if He were not asked to forgive them He would hold a grudge against them. What right have they to accuse the Father of Light of holding a grudge against any man?

The Greek word is susceptible of a far better interpretation; instead of remission we may translate it *demission*—the putting away of sins. The word *may* be used to imply remission, if we import the idea that somebody else is required to put them away; but its simple meaning is the putting away of sins. It is perfectly open to us to read that article in the Creed in the sense that we believe in the necessity for putting away our sins before we can make any progress. It will just as readily bear that interpretation as the idea of remission; and when we come to see the facts about absolution, we observe that it is not in the nature of forgiveness by somebody Who is affronted by a wrong done to Him, but simply the actual mechanical putting straight of things that have gone askew. The forgiveness of sins is simply the untwisting of the distortion we have caused in the higher matter of our subtler bodies by setting ourselves for the moment against the great current of evolution, and doing something which interferes with that current. The absolution does not in the least degree remove any guilt; all it does is to rectify

some of the subjective consequences of guilt, when the new factor of an earnest desire for improvement is introduced.

God is not mocked; we need not deceive ourselves; whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap; but if we are brave and honest we do not desire anything else than that. If we have made a mistake, we are ready to take the consequences. We do not want to shuffle them off upon somebody else; we do not want anyone else to suffer for the mistake we have made. That surely is fair and reasonable; that is only common honour and decency. We have to realize that matters connected with religion are not cloudy, far-away and uncertain, but that they work under exactly the same laws as everything else in nature. A cause produces its effect in physical matters; so in moral matters also, if we make a mistake we have set a cause in motion, and we produce an effect which reacts upon us. If we do a good action, then also we have set a cause in motion, and that effect also reacts upon us. The angle of incidence is always equal to the angle of reflection; these are matters not of faith but of common sense.

Another point shown to us by the fact that God is light is that His attitude towards us is not that of a tyrant who long ago laid down a code of rules and expects us to follow them; He is a living Friend, near us all the time and ready to help us all the time if we will take advantage of His aid. Christ is truly a Ruler and King; yet to every man among us Christ is also the best Friend; not a mere historical character of two thousand years ago, but an actual Friend living here and now, a mighty Power

in every human life if the man will only let Him be so. But we have to learn this; and many will not learn. Men turn their backs upon the sun and cry out that it is dark. It seems easy enough to put that right; we have only to turn round and we shall see that the sun is shining.

Whatever darkness there is, we have made it for ourselves, either in the past or now. Remember what a great Teacher Who lived six hundred years before the birth of Christ said: "Do not complain, and cry and pray, but open your eyes and see; for the truth, the light, is all round you all the time, and it is so wonderful, so beautiful, so far beyond what any man has ever dreamt of or prayed for; and it is for ever and for ever."

That is the eternal truth. It is just as true for us who are Christians now as it was for those who heard it two thousand five hundred years ago from the lips of the Lord Buddha far away in India—the same eternal truth that God is Light, and in Him is no darkness at all.



## CHAPTER XXVIII

### FORETHOUGHT

Many people, good and earnest Christians, have doubted somewhat about the words of the Sermon on the Mount; because it is obvious that to take no thought for the morrow is distinctly to be improvident, and that the man who takes no thought as to the provision of food and clothing for himself is simply throwing the onus of that duty on to someone else.

People accept this statement as representing the teaching of the Christ; yet they feel (and quite rightly) that such instruction does not fit in with our modern life at all. The usual way—not to get over the difficulty, but rather, I think, to evade it—is to say that a condition of affairs which allowed such conduct may possibly have existed in the time of Christ; or that that is how we ought to live, but we do not.

Those who have made any study of the higher criticism are aware that it would be unjust to attribute to the Christ all the words that are credited to Him in the gospels, because we know that those gospels are chiefly meant as symbols or parables and not as history; but it is also true that the early Christians wrote down and preserved many of the sayings of the Christ, and there is no reason to doubt that they have represented some of those sayings with reasonable accuracy. There are certainly some of them (such as the cursing of the barren fig-tree) which are so obviously unworthy of Him that we

are justified in instantly rejecting them; but the remark under consideration does not necessarily belong to that class, though to understand and appreciate it, it is necessary for us to make a clear distinction between directions given to His immediate disciples and precepts intended for the world at large.

People so often forget that Christianity is an oriental religion, and that the Christ was a Jew. There seem still to be many good and earnest Christians who think that He addressed His audiences in idiomatic English; how else can we account for their blind belief in the verbal inspiration of the English version? He spoke in the *Koine* or popular Hellenistic form of Greek; many documents in exactly similar language have recently been discovered, showing that this tongue was that of the people all round the eastern end of the Mediterranean at that time. Students must remember that any religion that comes from the Orient, and was originally spoken to Eastern races, is written and preached from the oriental point of view. One of the strong features of all Eastern systems is the idea that every religious teacher must be a man specially devoted to the holy life; he must be what in India we should call a *yogi*—a man such as are the Buddhist monks, a man not unlike the friars or the monks of the Middle Ages in Europe, devoted to poverty, chastity and abstinence; a man who, by the very terms of his existence as a teacher, can possess nothing whatever in this world. That is so at the present day in India, and in the Buddhist countries; a religious teacher may theoretically have nothing of his own; even the robes that he wears must be valueless.

That is one reason why Christian missionaries have made so little headway with those oriental races. There have been Christian missionaries in India for some hundreds of years, and the number of converts is very small, and none of them are from what we should call the reputable classes. They see the bishops and clergy of the Church of England living precisely as do other white people, with a retinue of servants, and a fine big salary. The Oriental laughs at them. The very first sign by which he knows a religious teacher is that he has no possessions whatever. That is his point of view, though of course there is much to be said on both sides. Religious teachers could hardly live in that way in Europe or Australia; but as that is the ingrained oriental idea, the only way to approach the Eastern race with a new religion would be to send men who are prepared to live like that. The only Christians who have approached the Orientals, at least in India, in a reasonable way are the two opposite poles of Christian belief—the Roman Catholic priests and the Salvation Army. They go and live among the people, and as the people live; consequently they are at least honoured and respected as religious teachers by the Indians, even though the latter may say that the religion which these missionaries put before them does not appeal to them as their own Hindu faith does.

In the same truly oriental way the Christ chose His disciples; He called them straight away from their ordinary modes of getting a living, and with true oriental fatalism they followed Him without hesitation. Most of them were fishermen, according to the story; one of them was a publican (which

does not mean one who kept a public-house, but a man who collected taxes). St. Paul is said to have been a tent-maker. The Christ called them from their work, telling them to give up their lives to religion and to follow Him. They had been in their small way tradesmen or business men, or workmen, and perhaps they had some qualms about giving up their living; it would not be unnatural, so the Christ exhorts them constantly: "You are My disciples; you are to teach the people, and to set them an example; therefore you need not worry about money or clothes or any such things. Do your work, and these things will come to you."

Our ideas are so absolutely different from those in the Orient that it would be quite likely to occur to us that these religious teachers of the East have a very easy life. Everything they need is provided, truly not on a magnificent scale; but food and clothing are always certain. I once heard an Indian trying to explain these matters to an American. The Indian asked: "Have you not people who wander about the country thus, without any money, making their way from place to place?" "O yes," answered the American, "we have plenty in America, but we call them tramps!" That is the way it strikes the man of this quite different civilization. The Indian would say, "Do not think of these people as lazy: on the contrary, they are living a spiritual life and devoting themselves wholly to that, pouring out a spiritual influence and shedding the light of a spiritual life over us; therefore they are doing for us a work which we ourselves have not time to do, and consequently we are very glad to supply them in return with the little food and clothing they need." Truly,

it is little enough, as far as that goes; but we see how totally different is their point of view.

If we look at the beginning of the account of this Sermon on the Mount we shall see that Christ called His disciples round Him and spoke to them; so that obviously He is telling *them* how they ought to live. He does not by any means lay down that same sort of life for all the people to whom He speaks on other occasions. We must have a rational comprehension of what was meant before we proceed to condemn the teaching as unreasonable. Most Christians do not indeed condemn it as unreasonable, though they live as though they thought it so; but I think that tacit assumption has done a good deal of harm. Here are quite definite commands which they take as given to them, yet they do not obey them; they do not begin to think about obeying them. No ordinary Christian would for a moment consent to take no thought for the morrow, or to live as the flowers of the field live. But because they who think they are enjoined to do this do *not* do it, and would consider it thriftless, objectionable, unmanly to do it, a certain unreality overshadows their religion. Here are what they regard as plain commands, yet they never think of obeying them; why therefore should they obey any of the other commands given to them under the guise of religion?

There should be no pretence about religious matters in any way. If that really is a definite command given by the Christ to all of us, we ought to be trying to obey it. But it is *not* a command given to all of us; it was given especially to that band of peripatetic disciples. He speaks quite differently

when He is addressing the general public. Nevertheless, there are useful lessons which we can all learn from those words, even though we recognize that they were not addressed specifically to us. Christ says that we cannot serve God and mammon; and that is eternally true. If any man is devoting the whole of his life only to the making of money and thinking always of that, it is little likely that he will be doing much to help on evolution. There is assuredly no wrong in being rich. That is another quaint idea that has arisen from the distortion of this same doctrine—the theory that it is a wicked thing to be rich. Christ is reported to have said: “How hardly shall the rich man enter into the kingdom of heaven!” and the envious and ignorant take that to mean that a rich man cannot escape hell, which is not in the very least what the Christ intended. The kingdom of heaven means the Communion of the Saints, the Great White Brotherhood, the body of Initiates; and it is true that a very rich man would find it difficult to lead such a life as an Initiate leads. He is, and he must be, altogether too busy in worldly affairs to devote himself entirely to a spiritual life. But we must remember that it is his duty to be busy in physical life, because of the wealth which has been entrusted to him. So the Christ’s remark is a statement of an obvious fact, not a ridiculous condemnation of a man to hell because he happens to be rich! That would be altogether unjust. But it is true that every man, rich or poor, who wishes to please God and to make progress, must undoubtedly seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; he must always keep before him the idea that he is serving God, and not

living merely for wealth. That, however, is a totally different thing and quite a reasonable claim. He who devotes himself to the service of God can best do so, as the Christ Himself tells us, by living to serve his fellow-men. He says, "You have fed Me when I was hungry; you have given drink to Me when I was thirsty, visited Me when I was sick and in prison. . . Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me."

His instruction to us is that we shall show our love to God in the shape of service to our fellow-men. That means that we must always be on God's side. One might think that a superfluous suggestion, because of course everybody would always be on God's side. Yes; if some great choice were set before us—to choose between the good and the evil, between the unselfish and the selfish—I quite believe that all decent people would at once declare themselves on the side of God and would take the unselfish line. But people, Christians as well as others, often forget that such a decision comes to each of them many times every day in the little things of life. I have already quoted St. Augustine's acute remark, "Many there be who will die for Christ; but few there be who will live for Him." With all respect to the great martyrs it is not so difficult to be a martyr on some tremendous historic occasion, but in the every-day little troubles and trials we often do not realize that there is any kind of test, and so it often happens that inadvertently we fail, just for want of thought. We have to live for Christ day by day, and we must be on God's side in the little things as well as in the great emer-

gencies. These latter occur but rarely, but the little things are always with us.

The world, as has been truly said by a great Teacher, is divided into two classes: the people who know what God's scheme is and therefore are always working on His side, and those who do not know and therefore are at present following selfish ideas. You must either be among the few who are lifting the heavy karma of the world, or else among the enormous majority who are being lifted. That is the truth of it.

Let us make up our minds that in little things as well as great we will be among the lifters, and not make part of the burden that they have to raise. Let us see to it that our service to our God is rendered all day long, and that our lives are in every respect lives devoted to Him, because they are devoted to usefulness to our fellowmen.



**Part 3**

**ADDRESSES DURING THE WAR**



## CHAPTER XXIX

### THE TRUTH ABOUT THE WAR

The great war is the one topic of the day, the one thing about which everyone speaks—the one thing, also, about which everyone thinks; and yet vast numbers of people are not thinking rightly about it. There are many who do not know what to think. They are torn by a number of different ideas, and they find it hard to take a balanced view. On the one side there is often a rush of hatred called forth by awful barbarities, by unexampled cruelties; on the other side there is a strong feeling—a well-founded feeling—that war is a wicked and insane thing, which never settles any point properly, because the side that wins in a war need not at all necessarily be always the right side. Providence, they say, is on the side of the biggest guns, and the old mediæval idea that war was always decided by some higher power does not find invariable acceptance in the present day. People say: “We know war is an evil and a wicked thing; we know that peace is right and beautiful; so how can we fight with any heart?” Yet, on the other hand, when such awful things are happening, is it not every man’s duty to do what he can to stay the evil? So there is a general uncertainty of feeling, and many people hardly know what line they ought to take.

Perhaps a statement of facts with regard to the war from the inside may help us as to the attitude which we ought to adopt. In my own mind the position is absolutely clear and definite, because I

have the advantage of some knowledge of the inner side of things. I feel that the attitude which men take with regard to this war is a matter of great importance. It is quite true that the one thing to be thought of now is to win. But many of us are not able to go and fight, and the attitude that we take with regard to the war may make the final settlement a comparatively easy thing or an almost impossible thing; therefore it is not unimportant that we should have the right ideas clearly in our minds.

In order to have clear ideas upon any subject we must first of all have the facts at our command. There is always a hidden side to everything—a side which is unseen by the ordinary man, un contemplated by the ordinary thinker; yet that unseen side is nearly always vastly more important and vastly more informing than the side which is seen.

I am going to try to explain something of the hidden side of this great struggle, because that may help us to take up an attitude, to form an opinion, which will be helpful and not harmful when we come to the settlement later.

On the surface this war seems simple enough, although incredible. All who know anything of the real history of events—I mean from the external point of view—know that Germany has been preparing through many, many years, with a careful, calculated thoroughness which has perhaps never been equalled in the world, to make a spring at the throat of Europe; just precisely that—to make a tremendous bid for world-domination. I know that even that much is not generally believed in Germany. There they try to persuade themselves that they

were forced to make this attack; but all of us who have read the evidence, the Blue Books, and the various messages interchanged between the countries concerned, know that the attack was absolutely unprovoked, and that one side had prepared for it in a perfectly marvellous manner—a manner which is an example of thoroughness to the rest of the world, but unfortunately an example of unparalleled treachery and dishonour as well. The Allies were, most unfortunately, unprepared to a terrible extent—to an extent which has cost a vast amount in lives and in suffering.

All that is on the surface and is obvious. Calculated, detailed, and marvellously unscrupulous as was the preparation, it has been fully equalled by the execution, which has been carried out with a deliberate brutality, with a finished and fiendish cruelty never before approached. I know that is a strong thing to say, but you have only to read unimpeachable evidence to see that it is true. Unfortunately, I *know* it to be true. I have had in the course of work on other planes opportunities of observation for myself. I know that the most awful stories we have heard are absolutely founded on fact. I am sorry, but it is so. We have to face things as they are—not as sentimentalism would like to have them. We have to face things as they are, so that actually we have come to see that Kipling was right in his memorable phrase: “We shall now have to revise our vocabulary: we shall now have to divide the inhabitants of the earth into human beings and—Germans.” I am sorry, but I am giving the facts of the case.

If we think of it, that is a most amazing thing; and remember that, so far as we have been allowed to hear, there has been no protest. Just think: I do not want to stir up any man's passions—it is the last thing I should desire to do; but just think of the things which have happened. Remember the Lusitania; remember the Persia and the Arabic. Think of how many cases there have been of attacks upon unprotected towns, the deliberate murder (a verdict of wilful murder has been brought in by a court over and over again) of non-combatants. Think of that for a moment, and then say: how can we account for such a thing?

Probably all of us have known people belonging to this race. I, at least, have known many Germans. I belong to the Theosophical Society—a society which has branches in every country in the world. I have met men of that race. I have known them well; they have been friends of mine.

It is true that in that Theosophical Society we had a foretaste of this endeavour to dominate the world, for the German section of the Theosophical Society rose against the rest of it and tried to obtain supreme power in the Society some years ago, before this war was in sight. They employed exactly the same weapons that are now being employed by the political agents of the German press: the same unscrupulous lies, the same discovery of spies in all sorts of unexpected places. We in the Theosophical Society went through—on paper of course mainly—a small edition of this attempt to capture the whole organization. We did not understand then; the utter unscrupulousness of it all astounded us. Now we see that it was only part of the whole

German scheme—an attempt to get hold of a world-wide Society, through which something might have been done to help the German plan of world-domination. Fortunately, the scheme was defeated, with all its attendant calumny and treachery.

We have all known men of German race: were they on the whole the kind of people who would behave in this fashion? They were not. This dire change requires accounting for; it needs something absolutely unusual, something entirely novel in the way of an explanation. I will try to show exactly how it did happen—how it is happening.

Here is another point. We all of us feel, I think, that we are engaged more or less in a war of principle, that there are great principles at stake, that we are fighting for liberty, for what is called democracy. I have not personally by any means an unalloyed admiration of democratic methods; but democracy at least means an effort towards liberty for the people, though I think there is a good deal which is crude, unfinished and unscientific about it.

We are fighting for democracy and liberty on one side as against terrible tyranny and slavery on the other. It is not only the right of existence of smaller nations. It has been quite openly stated in the German press that the day of small nations is over, that Germany does not want small nations, that they have no right to exist. But it is not only that that is at stake; more nearly than that is it honour, and the keeping of a pledge. We know well how the next man below the Emperor described a solemn treaty as “only a scrap of paper,” and could not understand how we could wish to go to war merely

for this scrap of paper. It is against *that* kind of thing that we are fighting. The fact that our enemies have miscalculated does not, after all, make the matter any better; they cynically judged us by themselves—they supposed that Ireland would be certain to rebel (because it seemed on the verge of civil war) if England were attacked; they believed that men in Australia, with our fellow-citizens of the Empire in Canada and the Cape of Good Hope, would all take the opportunity to break away. That is what they expected; they calculated on all that. They have miscalculated, but that does not make their case any better.

So quite clearly we are standing for principles; more truly than most men know, and on a greater scale than they know, is this a question of principle.

We know that there are forces which work against evolution as well as those which work in favour of it. We know that there is frequently a small, even a personal, struggle taking place between these forces over individuals, and sometimes over what seem to us quite small things. But we know also that now and then great world-crises arise, where good and evil set themselves against one another in serried array, and humanity is influenced by these powers and driven into taking part on one side or the other. The last occasion on which so great a world-struggle took place was in Atlantis some twelve or thirteen thousand years ago. There was a great fight then between those who were on the side of good and those who were on the side of selfishness.

We may read something of the action of the Lords of the Dark Face in Atlantis in *The Secret Doctrine*.



Madame Blavatsky devotes much time and energy to expounding their line of work. We must try to understand that there may be people who are doing what to us seems absolutely evil, and yet they may think themselves justified in their action. They may think that the line which they are taking is not evil, but in the long run good. It is true that when they say: "in the long run good," I think they generally mean good for themselves; but these Lords of the Dark Face had their own view of evolution, and to themselves they justified it, much along the line in which some people in these days try to justify the action of Judas Iscariot on the ground that he was more anxious than the rest that the Master's glory should be shown forth to the world, and so he put his Master in a position where he thought that He *must* show forth His glory. However incredible it may seem, that view is gravely put forward by some writers.

The Lords of the Dark Face in Atlantis were intensifying themselves as separated beings against the stream of evolution. We hold that the trend of evolution is towards unity—that this vast multiplex Universe that we see around us is all the expression of One Mighty Power, and that as from Him we all came out, so to Him one day we shall all return—not losing our sense of individuality, not losing the memory and the benefit of all our experience, but certainly rising ever higher and higher into perfect realization of our unity with Him. Therefore, we know it to be pleasing to Him that we should work ever towards that unity.

But those who hold the opposite view think that the Deity sets up this current which we call evolu-

tion in order that we may strengthen ourselves by fighting against it; and although we do not believe that, we can see that it is a possible view, and it is clear that men who hold it will not live at all as we do. We think that such people are vitally in error, that they are allowing themselves to be clouded by the lower self; still we can see that they try to justify their position by a certain line of argument.

It is not necessary to suppose that those Lords of the Dark Face were doing evil for evil's sake; but they held what we consider a wrong and selfish view as to the intention of the Deity. I have myself heard some of their successors of the present day say: "You people think you know what God means; your Masters hold these views, and, of course, you follow Them. But we have a different view; we are following the traditions of a very ancient school and we contrive to hold our own fairly well."

In Atlantis this attitude led, among the ordinary and commonplace followers, to extreme selfishness and sensuality, to general unscrupulousness and irresponsibility. It led to an extraordinary condition in which each man set up an image of himself and worshipped that as a god—a perversion of the perfectly true idea that God is within everyone of us, and that if you cannot find Him within yourself it is useless to look for Him elsewhere. So it came about that there was a vast revolution against the Ruler of the Golden Gate, and practically the good and evil forces which are always seeking to influence the world found physical expression in that great series of battles in Atlantis. In that case the majority of the population was distinctly

on the side of evil, and the evil won. Because the evil won, it was necessary, more than one thousand years afterwards, to whelm that great island of Poseidonis beneath the waters of the Atlantic; and sixty-five million people died within twenty-four hours in that great cataclysm.

This time once more the forces of good and evil have materialized themselves here on the physical plane, and the mighty contest has come down again to this level. Remember, we are the same people who were in Atlantis, and it is probable that we took our part in the struggle—with the minority, let us hope—yet perhaps some of us with the majority; it is a long time ago, and we cannot be certain.

I remember reading a terrible story (fiction only, I hope, for it could hardly have been actual fact) of the recovered memory of a past incarnation. There was once a man, an earnest and devout Christian, who through the accident of subjecting himself to mesmeric treatment, found that in a trance condition he was able to gain glimpses of what he felt to be past lives of his own. Incredulous at first, the strength and vividness of his experiences soon forced him to admit that they must be real reminiscences; and in this way he acquired much interesting information about mediæval periods. Then arose in his mind a wild but fervent hope that if he could press his memory further he might discover that he had been on earth during the lifetime of Jesus; he yearned inexpressibly for a glimpse of that Divine Presence; he imagined himself following and ecstatically worshipping the Lord whom he so loved; he even dared to hope that perhaps he might have had the supreme honour of martyrdom for his faith.

Further and further in successive trances he pushed back his recollection, until at last with inexpressible thankfulness and awe he realized that he *had* trodden the sacred soil of Palestine at the very same time as that majestic Figure. And then, with a shock so terrible that it left him a dying man, he knew the appalling truth that in that life of long ago he had been a rabid unit in an angry crowd yelling wildly: "Crucify Him! crucify Him!"

I trust devoutly that we were all on the right side in that stupendous struggle in Atlantis; but, however that may have been, at least the very same people are having their chance again now; but this time the majority, thank Heaven, is on the side of the good, and the good will win. This very fact, that many who were on the wrong side then are on the right side now, is full of hope and cheer for us, for it shows that in spite of all appearances to the contrary, the world *is* evolving; and, however disheartening are our failures, we are on the whole better men than we were twelve thousand years ago.

Therefore we may hope to avoid for some thousands of years to come a cataclysm on the tremendous scale that sank Poseidonis. But *if* the evil won, the cataclysm would follow; it *must* follow, for the Deity intends that humanity shall evolve, and if part of humanity deliberately casts itself out of the line of evolution, that particular set of bodies and minds must be wiped out, and must begin again under other conditions. These German souls will come back to birth again presently, scattered all over the world in various countries, so that there can no longer be the same terrible

strength of united unscrupulousness that has made that nation a danger to the world.

We must not think, if we can help it (I know how hard it is to help it) that the people who fight on the side of the evil are necessarily all wicked people. Unquestionably many of them are appallingly wicked; but equally unquestionably many of them are not so by nature; they are victims of a mighty obsession—an obsession so tremendous in its power that if you and I had been subjected to it we too might not have seen our way clear through it and come out of it unstained; who can tell? Thousands and thousands of people, as good as we, have not come through it satisfactorily.

The power behind which is contrary to evolution can and does seize upon a whole nation and obsess it and influence it. It is true that it cannot do that (just as is the case with individual obsession), unless there is in the obsessed something or other which responds. But if there be in any nation a majority, or even a powerful minority, which—perhaps through pride, perhaps through grossness and coarseness, through not having opened up sufficiently the love side of the nature, through having given itself too entirely, too unscrupulously to developing intellect—is already in that condition of ready response to evil, then the rest of the nation, the weaker people, are simply swept along with them, and they cannot see straight for the time. We must try to realize that.

What, then, was there in Germany which has made this awful obsession possible? I find part of the answer to this question in a remarkable set of statistics which I came across recently in *Pearson's Maga-*

zine, in an article by Mr. F. W. Wile, the resident correspondent in Berlin of various well-known newspapers. They are taken from a book called *The Soul of Germany*, written by a Professor of the University of Erlangen, in Bavaria. He makes a comparison between the amount of certain kinds of crime which came before the Courts in England and in Germany in a period of ten years. It must be remembered, in making such a comparison, that the population of Great Britain is about forty million, while that of Germany is seventy million; so that we must add 75 per cent. to the English numbers to see what, if the two countries stood at an equal level of moral development, we might reasonably expect to find in Germany; but even after making this allowance we shall see a truly appalling disproportion. Forgive me if the statistics are unsavoury, but we want to understand how this ghastly condition of affairs has arisen.

The professor takes first the crime of maliciously or feloniously wounding. Of this there occurred in England 1,262 cases, so we might expect in Germany about 2,200; the actual number is 172,153.

During the same time there were in England 97 murders, which would lead us to estimate those in Germany at 170; the number given is 350—almost exactly double what might be expected; and there is a further complication due to the fact that (we read) there are hundreds upon hundreds of man-killings in the Fatherland which the German law does not technically term murders—which, therefore, do not appear in murder statistics.

Of rapes there were in Britain 216, which should give 380 in Germany; there were actually 9,381.

Cases of incest were with us 56; we might, therefore look for about 100 in Germany, but we find 573.

The number of illegitimate children was with us 37,041—a sufficiently shameful total, which should lead us to look for perhaps 65,000 in the larger country; instead of this there are 178,115.

Of malicious damage to property—a peculiarly mean and cold-blooded crime—I regret to say that we had in England 358, so on the same scale there might have been 627 in the Fatherland; but there really were no less than 25,759.

When I first quoted these statistics they were questioned; but I find them confirmed in Mr. de Halsalle's book, *Degenerate Germany*, where it is stated that the English figures are extracted from Home Office publications, and the German figures from the Imperial Statistics of 1908 (*op. cit.* p. 180). Any one who will procure and read the book which I have just mentioned will find therein abundant evidence for a worse and more far-reaching indictment even than that. To quote from another and quite distinct source, in a leaflet published in the United States, Mr. George L. Fox, Principal of the University School, Newhaven, Connecticut, makes the following comparison of crime in the two countries:—

“The population of Germany is to that of England as 5 to 3. As to crime, the proportion in incest is about 13 to 1; in procuring it is 264 to 1; in procuring abortions it is 29 to 1; in unnatural offences it is 7 to 1; in rape and other sexual crimes it is about 9 to 1; in murder, manslaughter and other death-causing crimes it is 5 to 1; in arson it is about

4 to 1. With regard to divorces it is 22 to 1; as to illegitimate births it is 5 to 1; while the number of suicides is four times as great as in England."

In some cases the figures given in this last comparison are worse than those of the first, while in others they are better; probably Mr. Fox worked with data covering a much shorter time than the Erlangen Professor. But in both cases alike the results are astounding and terrible.

God forbid that we should set ourselves up to be self-righteous; we English have our faults, and grave faults; but when we examine those statistics we cannot but realize that there has been a difference in the average level of morality; we begin to see how this incredible and awful obsession has happened, and why it was that the plan originally made by the Great Ones for this particular little bit of human evolution could not be carried out.

It was hoped that the Fifth Root-Race would stand as a whole, or, at any rate, that the Fifth Sub-Race would stand as a whole. And the hope was nearly realized. The Powers that stand behind human evolution worked long through Their pupils to prevent this catastrophe. Whether those Powers knew all the time that Their labour would not achieve its end, I cannot tell. We sometimes think of Them as knowing beforehand all that will happen; whether They do or not, I know not, but at least it is certain that in many cases They work most earnestly to produce certain results, and to give to men certain opportunities. Through the failure of humanity to take the chances offered, the results may not then be attained, but often they are post-



poned for what to us seems an enormous time. The Great Deity of the solar system knows perfectly all that will happen, and knows who will take his chances and who will not. That we must believe; whether all who work under Him also know that, we cannot tell. Certainly I know that a great conflict between good and evil forces has been long impending over us. I know also that it need not have taken precisely the form it has taken, if only some of those to whom great opportunities were offered had risen to the level of those opportunities and had taken them.

Some *have* taken them. This mighty British Empire has been formed, and has been welded together by bonds of close affection in a way in which no Empire has ever been united before. There was a huge Roman Empire; but it was self-interest, the Roman peace, and the power of Rome which held that together. It was not the *love* for Rome of those subject races at all. There have been other vast Empires in the past, but they were held together by force, not by love. But what else than love holds *this* Empire together? England, the little Mother State, has no wish to coerce it. Once she did, under utterly mistaken direction by an obstinate King and a foolish Minister, try to coerce the American colonies. The only result of that was that nearly half of what should have been the Empire is not part of it now, though it is being bound closely to it by other ties. It should have been all within this one great Empire; that was the plan, but the stupidity of man overthrew that part of it. England has made no later effort to coerce the far mightier Dominions attached to her. She has left them perfectly free;

yet they are bound to her more closely now than they ever were before.

It was hoped that the other nations which belong to our sub-race would join in a great confederation. America and England have been drawn closely together, so that war between them is now scarcely thinkable; and the hope was that Scandinavia and Germany would have come into a similar friendship; but Germany would not come in. There has been for many years a curious and undesirable form of national spirit arising in that country. There is plenty of evidence as to this. If we read the German literature, we shall easily see the direction in which for forty years and more its people have been going. Because of their intense pride, because of the teaching of brutality and of force, of blood and iron instead of the law of love, and because of the low level of general morality which is the direct consequence of such teaching, they have laid themselves open to this dreadful obsession, and some of the great Lords of the Dark Face have again taken their place among them.

Prince Bismarck was such an one, as Madame Blavatsky told us long ago. While he was still alive he laid his plans for the subjugation of Europe. We may be thankful he has not survived till the present, for his plans were far wiser than those of the men who have followed him. Long ago Madame Blavatsky explained to us that he had considerable occult knowledge, and that before the war with France in 1870 he had travelled physically to certain points to the north, the south, the east, and the west of France, and had there cast spells of some sort, or made magnetic centres, with the object of prevent-

ing effective resistance to the German armies. Certainly the French collapse at the time was so complete and unexpected that it seemed to need some unusual explanation.

In the course of the work of the invisible helpers on the battle-field I have several times encountered and spoken to the Prince, who naturally watches with the keenest interest all that happens; and some months ago I had an interesting conversation with him. Speaking of the war, he said that if we were servants of the Hierarchy and students of Occultism we must know that Germany was in the right. One of our party, becoming somewhat indignant, replied that all the rest of the world was willing to be at peace, that Germany had made an unprovoked attack, and had caused all this awful carnage, and was therefore entirely in the wrong. But the Prince said:

“No, no; you do not understand. This is a struggle which had to come—a struggle between the forces of law and order, science and culture on the one hand, and on the other those of disorder and license, and the degrading tendencies of democracy. It does not matter how it started. If, as you say, Germany began it by an act of unexampled aggression, what of that? It is fate; it had to be—if not in this way, then in some other; and this way offered us the best chance of success; though for my part, I should have set all these nations to fight one another first, and I should have stepped in when they were all exhausted.”

We maintained that *we* also loved law and order, science and culture, but we wished along with them to have liberty and progress. The Prince would

have none of such ideas; he declared that democracy cared nothing for culture, but wished to drag everybody down to a common level, and that the lowest; that it desired law to rob and restrain the rich, but itself would obey no law; that it had no conception of liberty under law (which is the only true liberty), but desired a triumph of utter lawlessness, in which selfish might should rule, and only those should be restrained who wished to live and work as free men. Further, he said that if we ourselves served the true inner Government of the world we must know that it is the very opposite of all democratic theories, and that therefore it is Germany, and not England, who is fighting for the ideals of the hierarchical Government.

“Which,” he asked, “is nearer to the true ideal of a King—our Kaiser, who holds his power from God alone, or your King George, who can strike out no line of his own, whose every action is limited by his ministers and his parliament, so that he can do no real good? And the French President, what is he but the scum momentarily thrown to the top of a boiling mass of corruption?”

We were most indignant at such an insult to our brave Allies; but we could not but admit that there was a modicum of truth in some of his earlier remarks. We tried to tell him that, though we shared his utter disbelief in the *methods* of democracy, we thought it a necessary intermediate stage through which the world had to pass on its way to a nobler freedom, because a scheme (however good) which was *forced* upon a people could never lead to its ultimate evolution; but that men must learn to choose the good for themselves with open eyes, to re-

nounce their brutal selfishness, not because they were driven to do so at the point of the sword, but because they themselves had learnt to see the higher way and the necessity that each should control himself for the good of all.

The Prince was absolutely unconvinced; he said that our plan was utopian, and that we could never bring the *canaille* to understand such considerations—that the only way to deal with them was the method of blood and iron, forcing them for their own ultimate good (and meantime for our convenience) into the life which we who were wiser saw to be best for them.

When some of this was later reported to the King of England, he smiled, and said quietly:

“I believe that God has called me to the position which I hold, just as much as He has called my imperial cousin the Kaiser; I rule not by force, but because my people love me, and I want no higher title than that.”

I fear we must admit the Prince's claim that man as a whole is not yet fit for freedom; but he can never become fit unless he is allowed to try the experiment. Of course at first he will go wrong just as often as he will go right. We shall have an intermediate period when things are not at all as they should be, when they are not by any means as well managed as they would be under a benevolent despotism. Nevertheless we shall never get men to advance unless we leave them a certain amount of freedom. We must pass through this unlovely stage of democratic mismanagement, in order to get a time when the government of the people will be the government of the best. At present frankly it is

not that. Aristocracy means government by the best; democracy means government by the people. We hope for a time when democracy and aristocracy will be one. We expect to reach that by our system; we should never get there along the line of military despotism. That is the real fundamental point at issue; so we see that this war is essentially one of principles.

If any should be inclined to doubt that a whole nation can be so obsessed from behind—a nation which has a great deal that is beautiful in its past history, which has produced some really fine people—let him take the official German statements, and read the proclamations of His Imperial Majesty the Kaiser; the proclamations in which he speaks of himself (and probably he believes it) as commissioned by God to govern the world; in which he says: “On me the spirit of God has descended. I regard my whole task as appointed by heaven. Who opposes me I shall crush to pieces. Nothing must be settled in this world without the intervention of the German Emperor.” See the insane pride of this, and realize that the whole nation, so far as we know, applauds and approves. Read Mr. Owen Wister’s “embodiment or composite statement of Prussianism, compiled sentence by sentence from the utterances of Prussians, the Kaiser and his generals, professors, editors and Nietzsche; part of it said in cold blood, years before this war, and all of it a declaration of faith now being ratified by action.” Read the calm statement: “Weak nations have not the same right to live as powerful nations. The world has no longer need of little nationalities.” “The Belgians should not be shot *dead*; they should

be so left as to make impossible all hope of recovery. The troops are to treat the Belgian civil population with unrelenting severity and frightfulness." Think of the calculated devilishness of that instruction; were there ever ruffians so inhuman, so unspeakable since the the world began? Remember all the horrors of the sinking of the Lusitania, and remember how that great German nation went mad with joy over the slaughter of non-combatants, of helpless women and children. Except by that theory of obsession how can we account for it? As I have said, many of us have known people of that nation. Were they such people as would have agreed to anything of that kind? Of course they were not; no more than you or I. Unquestionably it is true that the powers from behind are working through these people now.

This is the real explanation of all that seems so incomprehensible; these people that fight us are not fighting only of themselves. They are directed by a power of will far stronger than their own, and they are driven on to do awful things. They are willing enough to be driven, for that is all part of the obsession. The men who drive them are utterly unscrupulous, and will use any means whatever to gain their end, for they know nothing of what we mean by right or wrong. They hold it as a manly duty to kill out all emotion or sympathy, because they consider such feelings a weakness. They are pitiless, exactly as a shark is. The slaughter or torture of thousands or millions is nothing whatever to them, so long as they gain their end.

If this had not been; if the Fifth Sub-Race had all combined together to present a perfect front, we

should still have had a conflict, but it would have been with some tremendous uprising of the much less developed races—perhaps another attempt such as Attila made to overrun Europe. The evil would have expressed itself, but it would have been among the backward nations. It is a great victory for the powers that stand for darkness that they can take a nation supposed to be in the forefront of civilization, and twist that to their ends.

We must not think that all the members of that nation are wicked people. We must not let ourselves be brought down to their level. They have made it their special boast to set up a stream of hatred towards us, to compose hymns of hate and teach them to the innocent school-children. We must not be led away into such foolishness at that. We must have no single thought of hatred. We shall hear of the most terrible things being done, of incredible brutality and horror on their part; but if we wish to take the occult point of view we must have no shadow of hatred in our hearts for all this, but only pity.

The tragedy of Belgium has horrified the world. It has been one of the most terrible things that the world has ever known; but the tragedy of the moral downfall of Germany is greater even than that—that such a great nation, with such possibilities, should sink to this. That is, in truth, a more awful thing to see than all the pain and misery of countless ruined homes. That a race which produced Goethe and Schiller should so fall as to become a byword among the nations, so that for centuries to come all decent men will be ashamed of any connection with it, and none shall speak its name without a



shudder of horror and uttermost loathing—surely that is a tragedy unequalled since the world began.

Therefore not hatred, but pity should fill our minds. But on no account and under no circumstances must our pity be allowed to degenerate into weakness, or to interfere with our absolute firmness. We stand for liberty, for right, for honour, and for the keeping of the pledged word of the nation, and that work which has come into our hands must be done, and it must be done thoroughly. But we must do it because we stand on the side of the Deity, because we are in very truth the Sword of the Lord, because this is, indeed, a holy war, in a far deeper and more real sense than were the Crusades of old.

Let us take care that we do not spoil our work and our attitude by such an unworthy passion as hatred. We do not hate the wild beast that is attacking our children, but we suppress it. We do not hate a mad dog, but for the sake of humanity we shoot it. We do not hate the scorpion we tread under foot, but we tread on it effectively. We do not hate a lunatic; we are sorry for him; but we defend our dear ones against his attack with unflinching determination, and we have no hesitation in taking whatever steps are necessary to deprive him of the power to do further harm.

There must be no thought of hatred, but there must be no weakness. There must be no sickly sentimentality or wavering. There are those who clamour that the mad dog is our brother, and that it is unfraternal to shoot him. They forget that the men whom his bite would doom to an awful death are also our brothers, and that they have the first

claim on our consideration. Germany is the mad dog of Europe, and must be suppressed thoroughly and at all costs. "Therefore fight, O Arjuna." Remember, we are fighting for the liberty of the world; Germany itself is a part of that world, and we are fighting to free Germany from its obsession. These German soldiers under their present obsession are not men but fiends; no demon from the lowest pit of the imaginary mediæval hells can rejoice in bestial cruelty more than they. The kindest thing that we can do for them is to destroy their physical bodies, so that they may be saved from further and still more awful crime, that the devil-ridden egos may be set free after their appalling failure—free to begin again to climb the ladder of evolution from the depths of savagery into which they have allowed their lower vehicles to be cast.

Let us have that well in our minds, and we shall begin to see what is the attitude we must take with regard to this terrible war; and if we do our duty unflinchingly in maintaining that attitude we shall make the final settlement infinitely easier. When this is over, as it will be over presently, when the struggle is of the past, there will still remain the aftermath. Those among the Allies who have hated will find their hatred turning into fiendish glee in their victory; but, having allowed themselves to be turned aside from the true view of the struggle, those people will be in no condition to understand calmly and rationally what is to be done. It is only those who have kept their heads, who have shown themselves philosophers, but nevertheless puissant soldiers to stand and strike for the right—it is only

they who will be able to judge what can be done, and what is best for the world.

So we who know the inner facts should hold a firm and steady attitude, and not allow ourselves to be misled. The path of wisdom is, as usual, a razor edge. We must not fall over on one side or the other, though we have to face fiendishness, wickedness, horror such as the world has never known till now; we must have neither weakness nor vindictiveness, but a grasp of the real reasons for it all, and of what it is that is really happening.

The egos that have been swept into this vortex of hate on the wrong side of the fight will come back again; they will recover. It is indeed a terrible thing to throw oneself open to such an obsession. They will have a long way to climb, just as had those who went wrong in Atlantis; but thousands of those who were on the wrong side in Atlantis are on the right side now, and that is an omen of great hope for us. The world has advanced, otherwise the evil would win again; and this time it will not win.

So our attitude must be one of unselfishness and of firm attention to duty. But we must do our duty *because* it is our duty, and not because of any personal feeling of hatred, or even of horror. We cannot but feel uttermost loathing at the awful things that have been done, at the deliberate way in which they have been justified, at the terrible things that have been said. We cannot help feeling horror, but nevertheless we must try to hold ourselves steady, with iron determination as to what is to be done, but yet with readiness when all this is over to take once more the philosophical point of view.

The Lord who is to come, although when He came last time He said to His people: "I come not to bring peace but a sword," is nevertheless the Prince of Peace, the Lord of Love and the Lord of Life; and when love and life and peace *can* be for these people, He will lead them into love and life and peace. But when the people have made that impossible for themselves for this incarnation, when these things cannot be for them, then will the other side of the prophecy come true, that those who draw the sword will perish by the sword.

In the midst of raging selfishness let us try to live in utter unselfishness; let us be full of trust, because we know; however dark and difficult things may be, we cling to the certainty that evolution is working. We went down in that great conflict in Atlantis, and yet we never lost our faith in the final triumph of good. This time good will triumph even in the outer world; but remember, victory will be achieved only by the greatest effort, by the most utter determination, and the most thorough federation and trust among the people who are chosen to rule the world and to do the work. To Germany also a great opportunity was offered. To the egos incarnated there an opportunity is offered even now of protest and of martyrdom. They have not taken it so far, but there may yet be those among them who will take it. I trust and hope that it may be so; that there will be those who will shake off the nightmare of obsession, who will say: "Kill us if you will, but we will not share in these horrors; we will denounce them." Those people will earn a better fate than their fellow-countrymen.

Let us take it all as part of the development of the great world. That war is an awful thing, wrong and wicked in itself, none can doubt; also that it is an utterly irrational way of deciding a disputed point. The karma of the man who provokes a war is more appalling than the human mind can conceive. But for those upon whom it is forced, as it has in this case been forced upon us, it is clearly the lesser of two evils. Since it had to be, Those who stand behind and direct the evolution of the world are unquestionably utilizing it for great and high purposes, and thus wringing good out of the very heart of ill. Horrific as it is, it has yet lifted thousands upon thousands of people clear out of themselves, out of their petty parochialism into world-wide sympathy, out of selfishness into the loftiest altruism—lifted them into the region of the ideal. It has raised them at one stroke more than many lives under ordinary conditions would raise a man.

We know how nobly people have thrown away their lives—not even for their country in the ordinary sense of the word. Remember that we were not in immediate danger, though that would inevitably have come later. It was not self-defence; it was the honour of the flag; it was the name of England; the sacredness of a promise; the duty of standing by the weak and defending them against brutality. It was for an ideal in the truest and noblest sense of the word that our fellow-countrymen have shed their blood, and just because they gave to the uttermost that which they had to give, they have by that very act raised themselves greatly in the scale of humanity. The ordinary man has not usually any opportunity for a splendid effort such as this. It

is true that wonderful and beautiful self-sacrifice is often shown by individuals in ordinary life: a man will give up all his hopes and ambitions to minister to some relation who is weak and ailing; but still such chances come only here and there. I suppose nothing else than a colossal war could have offered an opportunity for so splendid an outburst from so many simultaneously.

Remember that unselfish and awakened egos are needed at this very moment for the Sixth Sub-Race, which is beginning most prominently in America and Australasia. Perhaps there was no other way to get them in sufficient numbers and in a sufficiently short time, except through some great world-conflict. Be thankful that we, at least, are on the right side in this. Be thankful, you who send to this great war those whom you love, that the opportunity has come to them thus to advance themselves in one incarnation more than otherwise they could have done in a score of lives. You have sorrow and suffering and pain as your share; but you are offering that suffering for the freedom of the world; you who send the soldier are thereby also taking your part in the fight, and the very sorrow and pain through which you pass is lifting you, just as his devotion to duty has lifted him. Many of those who die will be worthy of birth in the new Sub-Race, but so also will be many of the women who have bravely sent forth their nearest and dearest to answer to their country's call. They have given up husband or son or brother. They win the advantage by that noble sacrifice just as much as the men who go and stand in the firing-line.

There are many who cannot for one reason or another go and fight, though I hold very strongly that everyone who can should do so. But we can all do something to help. Some of us are too old to fight ourselves—or so the Government thinks: but at least we can take up the work of some younger man and set him free to go. That I have done myself. So all may bear their share in this. All can help, and furthermore, all *must* help; certainly all should be on the side of the right in a matter like this, and all should do whatever they can to help in any one of the many indirect ways that are possible.

We are all trying, so far as may be, to prepare for the coming of the Great Teacher. Realize that this great war is part of the world preparation, and that, however terrible it may be, there is yet the other side—the enormous good that is being done to individuals. Perhaps in the distant future when we come to look back upon it all with greater knowledge and with wider purview, we shall see that the good has outweighed all the frightful evil, and that though the old order changeth, giving place to new, it is only that God may fulfil Himself in many ways.

## CHAPTER XXX

### ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE OUTBREAK OF WAR.

A day has been appointed for what is called intercession in connection with the great world-war. We who belong to the Liberal Catholic Church assuredly wish to take our part in all loyal activities, but in this case we shall have to do it in some way a little differently from the other branches of the Church, because we do not pray in that sense at all. We do not think ourselves competent to tell God what He ought to do; we do not think that it is necessary for us constantly to be asking Him to do something or other in connection with us. We should consider such an attitude as showing a great lack both of faith and knowledge. It is surely obvious that to ask God to do this or that implies one of two things—either that we have to persuade Him to do something which otherwise He would not do, or else that we have to remind Him of something which He would otherwise forget. We do not cast such slurs upon our heavenly Father. I am aware, and I am thankful that it is so, that many people when they talk about prayer really mean something like the higher meditation. They mean that they want to raise themselves into communion with God—that the God within shall rise to realize and become one with the God without. Nothing can be more estimable than that, nothing can be better for them; but to ask Him to do this or that implies that we know better than He what is best for us, or for the world.



We know that God is already doing all that can be done in every way for the whole human race. However little we at our lower level may be able to see and to understand, be sure that that is true even in this awful war. I am not minimizing its horrors in the least. Perhaps I know more about them than many do, because it is my duty astrally to visit these battle-fields and try to help. I know that all we have heard (and that has been dreadful enough) is not half of the crime that those fiends have committed; that the atrocities of which we read in the newspapers are as nothing to the atrocities which have really been perpetrated; and yet, knowing all that, I still say that God knows very well what He is doing, and that He is training both us and our enemies; for after all these incredibly diabolical criminals wear the human form, even though they disgrace it, even though they are at the lowest and most savage stage of evolution.

I am stating facts based on knowledge and not on supposition when I say that it is actually a kindness to these ruffians to kill their bodies, for in that way we save their souls from this madness; we actually help in carrying out the training which will show them that they must not again let themselves be misled and hypnotized as they have been this time. We must face the fact that the present generation of our enemies is not composed of at all the same type of egos that used to inhabit that nation. They are simply dangerous wild beasts who must be sent back into the savage tribes to which they belong. That may sound harsh to some who do not understand the inner meaning of what is happening; yet it is true. They are obsessed, and therefore

not in all cases fully responsible on the physical plane; but they are responsible for being liable to obsession; they must learn their lesson. In their pride they will not learn by reason, and therefore they are being taught by the terrible national calamity which is already overhanging them.

We do not pray with regard to this matter; yet we can join heartily in this celebration, for as subjects of our King-Emperor, as citizens of this great British Empire, we have on this anniversary cause for great thankfulness. This day four years ago our country of England entered this war. We have reason for thankfulness that in spite of well-meaning but ignorant fanatics who talked peace at any price, in spite of the spirit of commercialism, and in spite of the natural shrinking from suffering and from horror, England was wise enough to choose her side in this great world-war—wise enough to see her duty and bold enough to do it; and that she has had the courage and determination to endure. So must she endure to the end, for we have the highest authority for the saying that he that endureth unto the end, the same shall be saved.

There is an aspect of this terrible war that may perhaps be new to us. We have thought of its horror; we have thought of its loss; that has been brought home closely and terribly to many of us. We have the idea, most of us, that it is a struggle between right and wrong; but we may not have thought of it as an unparalleled opportunity. First, certainly, for the soldiers, for those who are able to go and fight. They risk their lives for their country, but how can man die more nobly than that? To die thus is to gain, for by that one supreme act

of self-sacrifice they make advancement which otherwise might take them twenty lives. The soldiers differ greatly; some of them are educated men of high ideals, and others are perhaps much less developed; but all have the one magnificent quality of devotion to an ideal. They die for the sake of what is after all an abstraction to them—their country, the right, the cause of justice; but that one quality (and the fact that they have proved their belief to be real by the greatest sacrifice that any man on the physical plane can make) will carry them far, and will fit them for the instruction now being given to them in the astral world. That will bring them back into life at a level far higher than that at which they left it.

Assuredly everyone who can ought to fight; there ought to be not one single eligible person who is not taking up his cross and following his Master. But there are some who are physically unable to go; yet for them also the war is an opportunity. Everyone can do something, and it is the duty of every man, woman and child to find a way to do something; some direct work if possible. There are the women who knit socks; there are those who save in order to be able to help with money, who deny themselves in various ways to do that; there are those who do Red Cross work. All that is good and as it should be. Certainly under these circumstances, and in this emergency, any person who spends money on sport and fine clothes, on drink or horseracing, any man who strikes and refuses to do his work for petty personal reasons in order that he should work a few hours less or receive higher wages—such a man is a traitor to God and to his country, and his action

is a scandal and a crying shame. It shows an utter lack of appreciation; it shows a lack both of intellect and of heart. We must regretfully admit that many people are still as undeveloped as this. We cannot help it; we have to face that unpleasant fact. It is a proof of their brutal selfishness and of their blindness to the meaning of events. The karma of this brutishness will be heavy; but what one feels most is the pity of it all—that they do not see, that they do not know. Christ said over Jerusalem long ago: “If thou hadst but known, at least in this thy day, the things that belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.”

This is one of God’s periodical examinations of His people, to see how the world stands. He gives them this wonderful opportunity; who will rise to it? who will take it? Who will rise superior to the obvious appeal of the body for ease and comfort, the appeal of the lower mind to forget all about these horrors? Some people here on the other side of the world still live in all sorts of foolishness, sport and self-gratification. We in this Church have the privilege of deeper knowledge than many; shall we then fail Him Who has given us that knowledge? We must stand boldly against the insidious treachery and treason which veils itself under fair names, and tries to make us apply to this extraordinary time of trial apophthegms which would be right and reasonable in ordinary times. They say that we should be forbearing rather than fight, that we should give up things rather than enter into a contest. Ordinarily we have the right to give up for the sake of peace that which concerns ourselves alone, but when right and wrong are met in open conflict we have no right

to stand aside and say that it does not concern us. Now is the time to quit ourselves like men and fight, as the apostle tells us; if not in one way, then in another. If we cannot go out and take weapons in our hands, we can give money, some of us, and others can give time and work. If we cannot fight with our hands, we can fight with our voices and our pens, teaching the ignorant and rousing the selfish; but at least each can do something; and he who neglects the opportunity to do something will regret his failure to see the light through many lives to come.

It is very rarely in the world's history that God makes a clear issue like this between good and evil. In nearly all wars there is something to be said on both sides; there is misunderstanding which might be removed. Here is no misunderstanding; here is the clear issue—freedom, right to develop as God means us to develop on the one side, and on the other a soulless tyranny which seeks only to crush out all individuality. The development of the individual is God's plan for men. Therefore we are fighting on His side; therefore everyone of us must take some share in that work. Happy indeed are they who can give their lives; but if we cannot all do that, then at least let us be doing what we can. Only let us be sure of this one thing, that we are on God's side; that we stand for Him. Do not let us stand aside and say it does not make any difference to us personally who wins. That is crass selfishness and blindness. It may not immediately affect your daily pence, or the amount of food or clothing you obtain, though it would assuredly affect that presently if the evil were to triumph. It will

not triumph; we know that; but there is something we do not know—who will help in the triumph that is coming, and who will stand aside and take no part, saying that he does not want to take the trouble. It is hard to believe it, but there may be some so lost to decency and manliness as to say even that. In the future under the unerring divine justice each man will receive the reward he has earned; we who know a little more than many, through our study of the inner side of life, have a responsibility connected with that knowledge. We know the truth; the truth shall make us free—free from prejudices, free from selfishness, able to see and able to take our part on the side of God Himself.

## CHAPTER XXXI

### ON GOD'S SIDE

At all times, since we are human, there is going on round us a struggle between good and evil. There are those—both men and other entities to which often we give the vague name of “forces”—who are striving for evolution; and there are also those who, blindly and in ignorance, but none the less really, are striving against it. So we find that there is a constant struggle going on within ourselves and round about us.

In ordinary life that struggle comes before us, I think, in two different ways. First, personally and with regard to ourselves. We find that we have to maintain a constant fight against what we call our lower nature. It is not in reality ourselves at all; it is only the instinctive elemental consciousness in one of our lower vehicles; but still there is a perpetual contest going on, so that if we wish to develop the good within ourselves, and to repress the evil within and about us, we must keep up a constant effort to do so.

Secondly, we are constantly struggling against public evils. We try to combat drunkenness and disease; we try to restrain the selfishness of our fellowmen, which is constantly interfering with the welfare of the community. These are ways in which in ordinary times we can take our part in the contest between good and evil. We range ourselves definitely on God's side; we recognize that evolution is His will, and that we also are part of Him.

The more we can realize the fact that we are divine in essence, the more truly shall we be able to take our due part in this struggle.

In this daily effort of ordinary life we have to a large extent to make opportunities for ourselves; we have to look carefully round and see what we can do; but always we must be working on God's side in some way or other. Sometimes in the world's history, but only rarely, great crises occur when the forces of evil come out into the open and try to overcome, to overwhelm the world; when they try to persuade a whole body of men to espouse their cause, and to say frankly to themselves: "Evil, be thou my good." Now when that happens, those who are on earth at the moment have an unequalled opportunity of magnificent devotion; some of them may even have the opportunity of the extreme sacrifice, of offering up life itself.

Such a crisis as that has come to the world now—now after many centuries, for some twelve thousand years have elapsed since there was a like occasion; so we must try to understand exactly what is happening. The opportunity which has been offered sometimes to individual martyrs, of giving up their life for the sake of the truth rather than bowing down before evil or wrong, is exactly that which comes now to thousands upon thousands of men and women—a chance to stand for the right and to take up a position on God's side, even to the very uttermost, even to the sacrifice of life itself.

When at these rare intervals that great call comes, it would be unspeakably foolish not to take advantage of it, to lose the immense amount of good karma that may comparatively quickly be made by standing at



all costs for the right. More than that, any one who fails to take that opportunity becomes recreant and coward before the God Who made him. Happy, indeed, are they who are of such age and health and position that they can enlist, and go forth and bear a direct part in the fight. Shameful beyond all words is their action if, being so able, they turn their backs upon God and are cowards before His face; for that is what such action is, and it is useless to attempt to gloss it over by specious falsehoods. The women have their part to play too. As things are now they cannot well go out and take arms in their hands, though in the last resource they have even had to do that sometimes; but they can willingly, even joyfully, send forth those whom they love to make that stupendous sacrifice; and be sure that they who do that are just as much earning their part of the good karma, are just as much fighting on God's side, as the men whom they send. If it were possible to conceive that there would be a woman sunk so low as to wish to hold back her man from such a glorious opportunity, she would fall under the condemnation of the man who fears to go. Such there will not be among us, I hope and believe. If to our lasting shame as a nation there should be any cowards among us, it must be because such men and such women are still at a very low stage of evolution—are incapable yet of understanding that this is a grand and wonderful opportunity, and that the risk of mere personal suffering cannot weigh for a moment against God's need for His people in this struggle.

I know what horrible suffering awaits many of those who go forth to fight. I know, too, how those

suffer who wait at home, longing for news and yet afraid of it when it shall come. If this one life were all, if there were nothing beyond this, I think we could almost understand that there might be those who fear to make the sacrifice. But we all know—somehow blindly and instinctively, I think almost everyone knows—that this life is *not* all—that there is a grander and more glorious future, and that they who do their duty now even to the uttermost shall see the result of their work and be satisfied in that higher life which lies before us. In other lives than this we shall come back to a world which we have helped to purify and to make better, and because evolution is God's will, so is it also His will in His lovingkindness to give an opportunity to those who have fought for Him now to help prominently, wonderfully, in that future work. We can all help every day and all day long in small ways, but those to whom there comes such an opportunity as this can make further progress by that one supreme act of taking it than they would have made in many lives of more ordinary work.

Terrible, dreadful beyond words, horrible, cruel, wicked as is such a war as this, yet there is something of compensation. By means of passing through that furnace of affliction the world will evolve more rapidly than otherwise it could have done, and those who take their part in that war now will be the leaders in that work hereafter. Not only do they gain a rapid rebirth in that new Sub-race which is now beginning to appear here among us, but also they are themselves greatly uplifted by the tremendous effort which they have made. Many

small efforts through many lives would perhaps equal it, but here is the opportunity to do at one stroke that which otherwise would occupy a very long time indeed.

We cannot all actually go and fight, but we can all help in some little way, in money or in service, in making things easier for those who can do what we cannot. No matter though it is little that we can do, so long as it is *all* that we can give. Be very sure that no effort is lost. Those who have died are just as truly martyrs in God's cause as ever were any of the great saints whose days are kept by the Church, and their reward is immediate and great progress. The same reward comes to those who have willingly sent them forth and blessed them on their way.

We owe a great debt to those who have gone: and whether they be dead or living, we can help them by our love and our thought. We are not helpless, we are not without resource. Every day we help them as we send out loving thought toward them; we strengthen and comfort them most of all when such loving thought is offered along with the sacrifice of the holy Eucharist, which Christ Himself has ordained as the supreme method of helping His people.

Let us one and all take our places on God's side and do something definite to help in some way. It is for each man and his own conscience to say what he can do, and how much he can do. That no man can dictate to him, but at least he must see to it that, when this struggle between good and evil is over, it is not to be said of him that he failed to

give aid to God. I hope there may be very few of whom eventually that will be said; yet one cannot but feel grave misgiving when one looks round and sees how little in this favoured country the people seem to know or understand of what is taking place. It is disgraceful, but I believe it is rather ignorance than selfishness. At least one clings to that hope; so that whatever it be that we can do, any of us—either directly ourselves to help, or to persuade others who should be helping directly to give themselves or their goods, or whatsoever they can give—that thing I think we should do in God's name and for Christ's most holy sake.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

### THE FUTURE

An armistice has been signed; the terrible world-struggle is drawing to an end; the horror of the war at its worst is over, and victory lies with the cause of right. In almost every war between nations which have any pretence to civilization, each side claims to be in the right; but here, more clearly than in any other case in history—except perhaps in such invasions as those of Attila, when Asiatic hordes tried to sweep over Europe, or in the atrocious attack of the Spaniards upon peaceful races in Mexico and Peru—there is a definite right and wrong as to which no unprejudiced person can possibly have any doubt. The very method in which the war has been waged on each side, and the acknowledged objects of each of the combatants, show us that this for once is a clearly-marked struggle between the forces of good and the forces of evil.

We who have studied these inner matters must try to take this higher view, must realize that, dreadful as the suffering has been, yet there is a side to it which is not all bad. For the struggle had to come, and the right has won; and opportunity has been taken to pay off masses of karma which otherwise would have had to be spread over many lives. So, looked at from the point of view of evolution as a whole, and of the world as a whole, this ghastly holocaust has its purpose, and is good in precisely the same way that a surgical operation is good

when it is absolutely necessary. It is a formidable thing at the best, and it means a vast amount of suffering and anxiety, and yet it is often the only way; and this is just such a case as that.

We have good reason to celebrate the peace when it comes to us, and I suppose it will not be long now. But when we have won our peace, when we have defeated the enemies of evolution, what are we going to do then? The world will have to be carried on; and the work must be done under serious difficulties for a good many years to come. One cannot kill millions of the best of all the leading races, one cannot destroy vast amounts of shipping and enormous quantities of goods and produce and machinery and everything that we need for life, without producing convulsion, without upsetting the order of life; and we cannot put it all right again in a day by signing a document. We shall have to live under the shadow of this great war for some time to come, and we shall have to carry on evolution from this particular point where the war has left it. Conditions are very different in every country from what they were before the war. They are less changed here in Australia than in England, because we happen to be at the other side of the world, and so are out of the centre of the struggle; only the fringes of the great storm-cloud have touched us, but nevertheless even here there is a tremendous opportunity opening before us, as it is opening before all the nations of the world; and the most important question now is whether we are all going to take it.

How have we won this war, we, the Allies? We have won it by standing together; we have won it

by subordinating every other consideration to that great question of right and wrong; we have had to put everything else aside in order that we might win it; and because at first we did *not* all of us do that, we came near to losing in the beginning. The victory at first lay all with our foes, for they had forty years of preparation behind them—forty years of rigid organization, forty years of the most amazing falsehood, intrigue and treachery that have even been heard of in history—intrigue in every country of the world. All this perfidy had been going on, and we, innocent and unprepared, suffered for our lack of preparation. And at first, because we were many countries, and each country worked along its own line, we were not brilliantly successful. Glorious bravery was shown, but not much co-ordination. There have been great men who drilled the nations into unity until (but only quite lately) all of these different Allies are absolutely working as one nation under one Commander-in-Chief. The moment that was done, victory began to come our way.

The great lesson of this war, when we come to look back on it, is first that we must all be ready, as the heroes have been, each in our way to sacrifice ourselves, and all our personal thoughts, feelings and wishes, for the good of all. Not in war only, but in peace must we learn this unselfishness, must we learn to attain a condition in which we think first not of ourselves, not of our own family, not of our own class, as it is called (hateful though the word is), but of the community as a whole. A section of the people here is trying, I see (and I see it with

great regret), to revive what in such a country as this you should have absolutely conquered—the class feeling, the idea that the capitalist is necessarily the enemy of the labourer, and the labourer of the capitalist. There has been great excuse for that attitude in older countries—great excuse, when we hear of the sweating, the ill-treatment, the underpayment, and the appalling overworking of the labouring classes; but surely here in this country that is the one thing from which we ought to be free. Where all stand equal before the State as far as votes go, there is an unparalleled opportunity for us to show that what are called classes need not, as such, exist at all. There must be those who provide the brains and those who provide the manual labour; but their interests in the ultimate are one and the same; and we must try to go back to those ultimate interests—not to raise into prominence petty little points of difference, but to penetrate behind those to the greater considerations which are interests for us all.

We must return to the condition which Lord Macaulay describes as existing in ancient Rome:

Then none was for a party;  
Then all were for the State;  
Then the rich man helped the poor,  
And the poor man loved the great.

That is the first thing that we must learn—the necessity of co-operation, the necessity of Brotherhood—the taking of the wide view that shall embrace the whole, and not the mere personal view that looks only as far as it can reach with its hands. It is going to be very hard for people to forsake their



old party shibboleths, for them to give up the attitude into which by the enemy they have been sedulously persuaded—because more and more, as we look into it, is it clear that the difficulties and troubles and disputes have been promoted everywhere by German gold and by German influence. It has crippled us sadly; surely we shall not be so foolish as to let a trace of that evil work remain.

Surely now we shall learn that we must stand together, first of all for the world as a whole, and then inside of that, for Australia as a whole—not for this class or for that class, not for this State or for that State, but for this great continent of yours. Here you have a continent which could support without the slightest difficulty fifty million, perhaps a hundred million people, and in it you have a beggarly five million inhabitants, less than the population of London. That is not the way to prosperity and to final victory. Remember we have still to pay for the war, not only in money but in many other ways as well. The military victory is practically won; we are justified in singing that peace is drawing near, and in giving hearty thanks that it is so.

But there lies yet before us a long time of self-sacrifice. For a long time we have been told how necessary economy was in order that the war should be won. Of course it was; and personal economy is still necessary in order that the fruits of the war may be garnered, in order that we may help on this glorious current of evolution which is springing up amongst us in the form of the Sixth Sub-race. We must still live not for ourselves, but for all. We must

put aside our private differences and work for the common good. A whole generation of such work is required if the best results are to be obtained.

We speak much and often of brotherhood; here is an opportunity to live it. Therefore let us take to ourselves that lesson. We give thanks that the demon is defeated, we give thanks that the war is won; let us see to it that the blood that has been shed has not been shed in vain—that we gain from our victory all that can be gained; and in order that that shall be so, let every individual man, woman and child try to live not for self, but for the good of all. Each may easily feel: “I am an insignificant person; what can I do to help the Commonwealth?” Every little economy that can be made, every little help that can be given, is something done towards the great cause. Every penny that is saved from extravagance in dress, and invested in a war savings stamp or bond, is a penny given to the Cause. Think what an enormous saving might be made every year if people would give up absolutely unnecessary and selfish indulgences. Take three things only—drink, smoking and horseracing; all three selfish, all three unnecessary, all three positively harmful; if these three evils were exterminated, think how soon we could pay off all debts, and what a huge fortune could be devoted to the development of the country. Think what might be saved if people would ignore the kaleidoscopic changes dictated by the silly vagaries of fashion, and dress only for comfort and beauty! Why cannot these reforms be carried out? Only because the vast majority of people are still unevolved, still

brutally selfish. They have quietly made up their minds that they *will* have their drink or their tobacco, their racing or their extravagant dress, no matter what happens to their brothers or to their country.

At least we need not follow the herd; we have learnt a little more than they; let us put into practice the knowledge that has been given to us. Each of us can do some little thing. Remember the story in the gospel of the widow's mite. Little could she give as compared to the rich Pharisees, and yet the Christ said that she had given in greater proportion than they all, because she had done all that she could. Let that be said of every one of us; that every one of us is doing what he or she can in the cause of righteousness, in the helping forward of the great stream of evolution. So shall we be fellow-workers together with God Himself; so, in thanking Him, shall we show Him that that for which we thank Him has not been wasted upon us.

A. M. D. G.

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