

# INVOLUTION

LORD ERNEST HAMILTON

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**INVOLUTION**

## A SELECTION FROM

"Old Days and New."—Lord Ernest Hamilton, brother of the Duke of Abercorn, is of a decidedly literary bent.

L He has a good style,  
T knows how to tell a story  
M on paper (a test few  
T amateurs survive), and  
M can write of the past  
T with all the picturesque  
I enthusiasm of Ralph  
S Nevill.



M A short time ago his  
T "Forty Years On"  
T created a favourable im-  
T pression, and he has fol-  
T lowed this up with "Old  
I Days and New," published to-day (Hodder  
S and Stoughton, 15s.).

T It is removed as far as possible from the  
I conventional book of reminiscences, with its  
S mass of names of, mostly, nobodies in parti-  
I cular. If anything, it is a little bit too im-  
S personal.

S "Lady Podgyback."—Lord Ernest, for in-  
A stance, adopts the lively method of hanging  
F his views concerning the changing manners  
F of the set in which he has always been priv-  
I leged to move round imaginary characters  
I such as "the Countess of Mayfair," "Lady  
I Podgyback," "Lady Shropshire," and "Lord  
I St. James." Lively, of course, but scarcely  
I informative.

I Things Only a Footman Could Do.—Aristo-  
I cratic families in those days seem to have  
I been pretty helpless.

I "Fine ladies and gentlemen could do  
I nothing for themselves. Servitors took their  
I railway tickets for them, laced their boots,  
I paid their cab fares, affixed their salmon  
I flies—did everything for them, in fact, ex-  
I cept blow their noses.

I "Can it be wondered at that, under such  
I conditions, the belief gradually took root  
I that disaster would at once follow if anyone  
I but a servitor put his hand to the simplest  
I practical operation?

I "It was an article of common belief, in  
I my primrose days, that a house would at once  
I blow up if anyone but a footman lighted  
I the gas."

# INVOLUTION

BY

LORD ERNEST HAMILTON

To Mr. Alan Ruffin  
from

Ernest Hamilton

Oct 12<sup>th</sup> 1920

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## PREFACE

THE word "involution" implies a folding in towards the centre. It seems to bear a different sense to the word "concentration," inasmuch as the latter carries with it the suggestion of an organised movement directed from outside, while involution takes rather the form of an automatic convergence. The word is here used in the latter sense, and it has been chosen as the title of this book because it is the word which seems to describe best the cosmic process at which a glimpse is taken in the following pages.

SHANTOCK HALL, BOVINGDON,  
HERTS.

*August, 1911.*



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# CONTENTS

| CHAP.   | PAGE |
|---|------|
| PREFACE . . . . .                                   | 5    |
| APOLOGY . . . . .                                   | 9    |
| I. ATMOSPHERIC CLEARANCE . . . . .                  | 17   |
| II. DOGMA . . . . .                                 | 30   |
| III. HUMAN SACRIFICE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT . . . . . | 41   |
| IV. THE MESSIANIC CULT . . . . .                    | 64   |
| V. CANON . . . . .                                  | 84   |
| VI. GOSPELS IN THE MAKING . . . . .                 | 92   |
| VII. THE VIRGIN BIRTH . . . . .                     | 113  |
| VIII. PAUL OF TARSUS . . . . .                      | 127  |
| IX. THE DOGMA OF THE ATONEMENT . . . . .            | 144  |
| X. MARCION OF PONTUS . . . . .                      | 160  |
| XI. JESUISM . . . . .                               | 168  |
| XII. HEAVEN AND HELL . . . . .                      | 181  |
| XIII. INSTINCT . . . . .                            | 191  |
| XIV. THE LAW OF ETERNAL FLUX . . . . .              | 200  |
| XV. EMBLEMATIC ANALOGY . . . . .                    | 205  |

| CHAP.   |   | PAGE |
|---------|---|------|
| XVI.    | METEMPSYCHOSIS . . . . .                      | 221  |
| XVII.   | CREDENTIALS OF THE OLD PHILOSOPHERS . . . . . | 234  |
| XVIII.  | THE MECHANISM OF LIFE . . . . .               | 237  |
| XIX.    | THE CYCLICAL THEORY OF LIFE . . . . .         | 252  |
| XX.     | ATTRACTION AND REPULSION . . . . .            | 262  |
| XXI.    | VOLITION . . . . .                            | 271  |
| XXII.   | THE INVOLUTION OF THE SOUL . . . . .          | 281  |
| XXIII.  | ALTRUISM . . . . .                            | 288  |
| XXIV.   | THE ETHICS OF REPRODUCTION . . . . .          | 311  |
| XXV.    | SUMMA CULPA . . . . .                         | 325  |
| XXVI.   | THE MORALITY OF THE UNIVERSE . . . . .        | 333  |
| XXVII.  | IMMORTALITY . . . . .                         | 339  |
| XXVIII. | SUBJECTIVITY . . . . .                        | 350  |
| XXIX.   | SOPHROSYNE . . . . .                          | 363  |
|         | CONCLUSION . . . . .                          | 373  |
|         | INDEX . . . . .                               | 383  |



## APOLOGY

THE following pages merely put into words what many people think. They make, therefore, no claim to originality, except, perhaps, in respect to one line of thought which must speak for itself. The aim is not cheap destruction; and institutionalism is attacked only in an intense desire for reconstruction.

Iconoclasm in itself can have no charms, except for the insane; with others it is a necessary preliminary to spiritual progression. It is—in the sane—invariably provoked by the degraded conception of God with which it is confronted. Iconoclasm is usually denounced as atheism by those whose idols are broken, and in old days it was a risky pursuit. It brought Socrates to his death and the early Christians to the stake, to the beasts, and to far worse tortures. The most notable iconoclast of comparatively modern times was Spinoza, who, though himself a Jew, dared to impugn the purity and authenticity of the Old Testament records. When excommunicated and anathematised for his impiety, his reply was: “It is you who are impious, to believe that God would commit the treasures of the true

record of himself to any substance less enduring than the heart." This is a pronouncement which every one who looks religion in the face must endorse. What the world cries for is a creed which can boast a surer foundation than the ignorance of its adherents, and which is, at least, backed by the convictions of those who dispense it.

All humanity is groping for God. It stretches out its arms here and there, and sometimes, but rarely, touches what it seeks. But the millions have no time to seek, and so pay others to make the search. Some accept this position with a supine content which is called faith; but the greater part throw it aside with a laugh. But the desperate need for a reconstruction is surely brought home when we find that the second class is—more often than not—the ethical superior of the first. Such a result, deplorable as it may seem, is inevitable where ceremonial is held up as the basis of religion, and where such ceremonial claims an efficacy that is wholly independent of conduct of life.

The teaching of Jesus of Nazareth throughout was that apart from ethics there is no religion; and some of the following chapters are mainly directed to setting forth the evidence that this was so. Ethics are the moral obligations, outside of law, that shape man's daily life, graduating from a mere genteel moderation to a severe and ascetic abstention. Beyond abstention they carry few. But the ethical code of the Founder of Christianity went far beyond mere abstinence,

so much so, indeed, that abstinence was all but taken for granted. Its fundamental principle was altruism in a live and virile sense. This was no new revelation of God. For six or seven centuries before Christ it can be traced as the prevailing theme of the greatest of the world's religious teachers. There is evidence, too, that far back beyond the reach of history it was known as the Only Way. The avowed object of both Gautama and Lao-Tze was not to originate an idea of God, but to "revive the wisdom of the ancients" that had become corrupted from ethical to ceremonial. The Buddha was an agnostic; so was Socrates; but the one gave up an all but royal luxury, and the other his life, for a God that in the case of each baffled definition.

No religion in the world's history has been so rigidly ceremonial as was that of the Jews at the dawn of the Christian era. From the days of Ezra onwards the Law attributed to Moses had gradually usurped the place of God. Jehovah receded more and more into an inert obscurity. The Law became God, and Moses his vicegerent. Rewards and punishments were still in the main temporal. The prosperous were the chosen of God; the poor and the sick the rejected whom God deservedly afflicted, either for their own sins or for those of their ancestors. The Pharisees believed in a transmigration of souls, but for the righteous only. Philo and his school held the reverse belief, based on Hellenistic thought. The wicked were reincarnated, while the righteous

became one with God. The Sadducees saw the beginning and the end of God's favour in the worldly prosperity, which—it need scarcely be added—distinguished the members of that sect. The Essenes, in their agricultural retirement by the Dead Sea, kept sublimely aloof from the wrangles of the Jerusalem factions. They anticipated Christianity by the culture of a spotless purity of life and a self-effacing altruism that was never surpassed, and possibly never even equalled, in the primitive Church.

But the mission of Jesus was not to these. It was to the prominent and dominant sects, and to both alike it was unintelligible and blasphemous. They killed him, as they had killed the prophets before him, and for the same crime. He was an iconoclast. He unmasked the cankered visage of their God, the Law. He overturned the mechanical image that seven centuries of ecclesiastical sway had set up, and revealed God as he truly was. It was a capital offence, and he died. But even in his death he was misunderstood. His disciples were Jews, "ignorant and unlearned men," whose narrow perceptions were bounded by the walls of a canyon cut out by centuries of Judaistic tradition. Beyond those walls they never had seen, and were mentally incapable of seeing. To them the mission of Jesus was in the main political. Even after the resurrection, when their course of Christian education was in a sense completed, we find them asking: "Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?"

From such men come our only records of the words of Jesus; and even these only reached canonical safety after a century of Judaistic editing and revision. In the first heat of the Messianic craze the predictions of the prophets and the life of Jesus were, with untiring labour and with more ingenuity than honesty, brought into a sufficient harmony. Forty years later, however, came the fall of Jerusalem and the decimation of the Jewish race, followed after a brief interval by the final and conclusive devastations of Hadrian. As a nation the Jews had disappeared; the Temple worship, the very soul of their national existence, had ceased, and Jerusalem itself was forbidden to the sons of Abraham. Under such a succession of calamities the crude Messianic idea was no longer tenable. It was replaced by the more elastic idea of the Millennium. For a thousand years Christ was to reign over the elect. The seat of his kingdom (according to Irenæus) was once more to be Palestine, where the vines and grain-fields were to yield double crops, and the lion was to lie down with the lamb.

Eighteen hundred years have passed, and the Millennium idea has followed the Messianic into the regions of myth. The crops of Syria are dwindling, and over the face of an unappreciative world the Jews are scattered past recall. But with a curious inconsistency we still admit as the fundamental axioms of our religion the fantastic ideas of the very men who in their earlier conceptions of Jesus have been proved

to be so unutterably wrong. Marcion and Tatian are still heretics, and Jesus of Nazareth is still a mere appendix to Moses.

The following pages aim at pursuing the development of the successive accretions by the gradual accumulation of which the real message of Jesus was first blurred and finally completely hidden. But the ultimate object, of which this is only a necessary preliminary, is to try and trace through the fog the real message which all the historical reformers of religion have given to the world. All men believe in a God, but they differ as to his nature and requirements. The interest of all lies in making sure that their methods are really those that he requires. To make sure is perhaps difficult; but inspection reveals certain truths whose significance one cannot ignore. It shows us that the doctrines of Jesus were identical with those of the other great founders of the world's religions; that all the historical revealers of God, with Jesus of Nazareth at their head, have insisted that in altruism lies the only service of God (Paul, as Marcion read him, is no exception to the rule), and, finally, we find from inspection, and especially self-inspection, that all the higher instincts in man unerringly endorse what these have laid down. Here we seem to be within sight of truth; but it is a truth which many will be slow to see and slower still to follow, for dogmatic religion stands in the way as the hereditary foe of altruism.

The times are prolific of philosophic thought:



new literature, more or less metaphysical in character, flows in a constant stream from Germany, France, America, and England. To the few, such literature affords an absorbing interest and considerable solace, but to the many it is unsatisfying. Its conclusions are of necessity indefinite ; its speculations are, and for ever must remain, so frankly speculative that the reader rises with the sense of having lost much and gained but little in return. Can man fulfil his destiny on earth in the mere contemplation of an abstract idea? Can the hunger of our upward instincts be satisfied by sitting in a porch and speculating on the problems of existence? We know that it cannot. Philosophy in itself, however ethical, pure, and sublime, can never satisfy. Man is an active force ; and only in activity can his spiritual cravings find repose ; only in activity can he fulfil his higher destiny. And for that activity he needs an impulse, a motive, and a goal. This is religion. The impulse is God, the motive is good, and the goal is a higher existence for those coming after. Without these incentives at the back, ethics become a mere theoretical rule of conduct for others. The rule may be a good and a just one ; but the mere philosopher contemplates it from afar. The rule is for others ; for himself, sufficient honour to have coded it. We are all philosophers. We review with complacency our own noble thoughts, our sublime ideals ; but we do so from the shelter of the porch. The world sins and suffers outside, and calls none the less loudly

for a practical application of our code because its appeal is dumb. But it calls in vain. And it will always call in vain, till religion and ethics run hand in hand. Altruism, which is abstract ethics galvanised into life, if only self-sustained and self-dependent, quickly dies of inanition. The sporadic efforts of this man or that beat feebly against a wall. They spring from chance opportunity or from fleeting emotion, and are both subjectively and objectively worthless. Results to have any value, either subjective or objective, must have the backing of concerted movement and a system. And in all the world there is only one force strong enough to sustain such a movement and make it the first thing in life. That force is religion. But it must be real religion, and not make-believe. All the great religious systems of the world have started with a clear sight of God. All without exception drift steadily down hill as the ages pass. Ceremonial takes the place of ethics, till finally God himself gets hidden behind the accumulations of rites, symbols, sacraments, and dogmas, to which a talismanic virtue is conveniently ascribed. But trace all these polluted systems back to the fountain-head, and we find the inspired teaching of the founder to be in every case the same: the only service of God lies in the service of man. All else is make-believe.



# INVOLUTION

## CHAPTER I

### ATMOSPHERIC CLEARANCE

IN dealing with modern ideas on problems of existence and man's place in the universe, by no means the least of the writer's difficulties lies in the paucity of adequate terms of expression and in the obscurity of those in common use. There is a part of man which is indifferently known as soul, spirit, mind, and consciousness. All these terms relate to the same indefinable part of us ; and the confusing interchangeableness of the terms, coupled with the impossibility of clearly picturing the idea intended, leaves in the mind of the reader a sense of incompleteness which is perplexing and very far from satisfying. In orthodox Church definition there is no such confusing ambiguity. There we have a body and a soul ; and the functions and destinies of each are clearly defined. But even here there are obvious difficulties in connection with the moment of introduction of the soul into the body ; and these difficulties are never met even

in attempt by the oracles of the Church. Here is a just cause of complaint for those who would lean on orthodoxy; for the creed offered them lacks clear definition, and can, therefore, never satisfy even the mildest of critical inquiries.

All alike, whatever their view of life may be, must agree that in dealing with eternal problems intelligibility is the one thing that must count above all else. But unfortunately this intelligibility is what we seldom get, either in philosophical probings or in religious dogma—the temptation to take refuge in vaporous and indistinct forms of speech is so very great and so almost universally yielded to. In philosophical literature especially there is an unfortunate tendency to hide occasional poverty of thought, or inability to get the exact focus of an idea, behind technical grandiloquence. Or it may be that men frankly shirk the real issues from conscious vulnerability. To be intelligible is to be found out.

To some, however, it may seem that it is better to be found out than to be unintelligible; and to such the fear of detection and of consequent ridicule will not act as a deterrent, for even so the gain may outweigh the loss. Even the smallest of lights is better than a fog. As to the risk attending exact definition there can be no illusions. It is generally recognised that the clothing of a metaphysical idea in concrete shape is a perilous proceeding which the prudent philosopher shuns. The metaphysical idea, so long as it is a mere abstraction, alike excites

the curiosity of posterity, and eludes present criticism. But reduce your indistinct principle to a practical proposition, and it not only loses its fascination as a topic, but it provides a target for missiles of many kinds. Huxley, however, in one of his essays, propounds the undoubted truth that all material advance in knowledge has arisen out of error—bold dogmatic error which, when picked to pieces and flung contemptuously aside, still leaves behind the germ of a hitherto unsuspected truth. The proposition *per se* is ridiculed and passes away for ever from the field of discussion, but it has served the purpose of setting inquiry on the right track. Obscurantism, on the other hand, is safe but profitless. Its attraction for some lies in the fact that its non-committal attitude lends itself to the varieties of interpretation in which dialectic criticism so frankly rejoices. Such considerations, however, are unworthy of a real desire for advance. To push direct inquiry into the validity of dogma, whether religious or scientific, is the privilege of every layman and the duty of all who look for progression towards truth.

The destruction of existing Church dogmas is an easy and a popular recreation, but it is one in the pursuit of which men are apt to lose the sense of touch. All existing landmarks are beaten down, and perhaps justly beaten down; but there is a dangerous tendency to lose sight of the cause of their original erection, and, therefore, of the aspect which the field of exploration presented before their erection. And the evil

does not end here. The destruction is complete because safe ; but there is little corresponding effort to reconstruct. As a result there is an unhappy lack of motif behind the every-day life of man. Old dogmas have been shattered, but their places have not been filled. A happy-go-lucky and entirely negative philosophy holds precarious sway over the minds of the majority. For a certain class of contemplative dreamer this negative attitude is perhaps sufficiently satisfying. But there are many whom it does not satisfy. There are many who do not wish to dream life away, many whom the brutal shattering of nursery faiths leaves aimless and despairing, destitute of pilot or of goal. Such as these want plain words. They have no use for misty metaphysics. They wish to see their path in life clear, and to see it lead uphill. For such as these dogma of some kind is essential. Dogma alone can direct the combined energies of millions to a given end ; and it can do this because it supplies for all alike a common watchword which is their inspiration and their strength.

The dream of many is to see the world better : less sin, less sorrow, less suffering, less selfishness. But the shattering of the old dogmas, and the launching in their place of a hundred different philosophies running in more or less parallel lines, but independent, unconnected, and unauthoritative, can accomplish nothing that is not desultory and ephemeral. For the combined movement that alone can work results we must have dogma.

And this is possible. We may not dogmatise as to the exact mechanism of eternity ; but what we can do is to dogmatise as to the basic principle that has been the inspiring motive of all religion in its original state of purity.

The difficulty in dealing with the four hundred millions who range themselves under the banner of Christianity is to establish in their minds the elementary fact that Christianity as preached by its Founder differed in no essential respect from the other foremost religions of history. In order to establish this one fact, which must be the foundation-stone of any reconstruction, a wholesale demolition of dogmas becomes an imperative necessity. They stand in the way of a clear view. As long as an indifferent laity can be persuaded that salvation can be artificially secured by ecclesiastical machinery, so long will there be no general disposition to probe behind a doctrine that is at once convenient and easy. Even the most pious have at heart but a shaky faith in their orthodoxy. The clergy to a man know the unreality of what they dispense. This in itself is a limitless evil. The Christian world will never be a better place till the articles of its faith are such as an honest hierarchy can uphold and an enlightened laity can lean on. For this reason, if for no other, Church dogmas are doomed. It is not only that they cannot bear the light of day : it is that they are obstructive. They offer a false view of God : they distort him, and present him in caricature ; and by so doing they

impede that knowledge without which altruism can never be the dominant factor in existence that it should be and that it will some day be.

In this lies the justification for the destructive excursions that to so many stand for sacrilege. In no other way can we approach the avenues of truth. There is no pleasure in bombarding cherished myths with the brutal artillery of cold logic. It is a painful task, because to many it must bring pain. It must mean that the flattering anticipations they have hitherto nursed will for a time be replaced by a numb despair. But only for a time: when we once realise what artificial growths modern Church dogmas are, our estimate of their consolatory value quickly wanes. We realise that we must lean on something more solid; and with the grip of this truth comes the call to action which the doctrines of dependence and irresponsibility do so much to smother. It will be shown in the following chapters that no Church dogma has the authority of Jesus himself, or even of the Gospels that narrate the story of Jesus. It will be shown that Paul was entirely ignorant of any doctrine of a virgin birth; that the writer of the Acts of the Apostles (A.D. 70-90) had no knowledge of either a virgin-birth doctrine or of a doctrine of Atonement: that Paul's origination of the Atonement doctrine was purely a tactical move to induce the Judaistic party to recognise the Christian rights of Gentiles; that he himself attached absolutely no talismanic virtue to the doctrine; that the twelve Apostles resolutely



rejected it up to the break up of the Jerusalem Church ; and that during the first four centuries it formed no part of the Christian curriculum.

Even a general knowledge of these broad facts cannot but shift the point of view from which we see life and its obligations. And the change is unquestionably for the better. We at once realise the need for action, the imperative call to make our lives a record of service to mankind, in place of sitting down in inert dependence on the efficacy of a rite. This inert dependence with some passes for faith—is, in fact, their conception of faith. But it is a wrong conception ; it is not faith in God, but faith in the prescriptive rights of the members of a certain favoured cult to unmerited advantages. We were brought up in this faith. We were brought up to the belief that the English, North Germans, and Americans were the chosen favourites of God, not by virtue of their special righteousness but because they held certain religious opinions. This pleasing belief, however, is not easy to sustain into middle life. The awakening faculties begin to clamour for a reasoned theology that will stand the search-light. The mere word of a technical expert is not now sufficient as it was in the days of old. We want to examine for ourselves, to push our lay finger into the professional pie of both cleric and physician ; and as an inevitable result we lift them down, gently enough, from the niche of infallibility, from which they dogmatised to the nineteenth century. We have not, in fact, faith—if by faith is meant a blind acceptance of what-

ever is told us by the specialist. We ask ourselves: Is this so; and if it is, why is it so?

In the world of medicine the result is that we view with some mistrust the nostrums that our grandfathers would have swallowed in guileless faith. We see the medical propaganda of fifty years ago branded as useless, and even harmful, by the profession of to-day. We naturally wonder whether the fashionable cures of the moment may not in turn be the ridicule of the next generation, and we lose faith in what is clearly so very fallible. In the greater subject of religion our distrust is even more rudely awakened. The knowledge of a doctor depends as much on practical experience as on technical education; but the authorities for religious dogma are purely documentary, and, as such, open to the scrutiny of all. About these there is no mystery. The amateur meets the professional on level ground.

So we scrutinise; and with the scrutiny comes first doubt and then disillusion. The blind faith of the child withers and dies—dies hard, sometimes, and fighting, but it dies. While it lasts, it is a beautiful thing, because it fits a child. It is a faith, not in Christ but in the father or mother who tells the story; and it is pathetic and beautiful, but in no sense sublime; it is no more sublime than the innocence of ignorance.

If this death of our nursery faith comes while we are yet young, we laugh and shrug our shoulders. *Carpe diem*; what does it matter? Life is long and merry. But if it comes later



in life we do not laugh. It is a shock. We read on the wall the sentence of death, and the day of execution shows up with a horrid distinctness. We look desperately around for some ray of hope on which to anchor; but the shattered dogmas of our early beliefs lie piled around us and obscure our vision. The sting of death seems doubled, the victory of the grave complete. Heaven and immortality seem slipping away, and the cold grip of an eternal silence seems upon us.

But when these obstructive old dogmas are once buried out of sight, and the horizon is once more clear, then by degrees there steals into our spirit a glimmer of the truth, faint at first, but brightening with an amazing rapidity as we bend our mind to it. And out of that glimmer grows a calm confidence and an absolute reassurance. But a surgical operation is the first necessity—a brutal iconoclasm in which the hammer must be firmly gripped.

It is the common practice of the orthodox to condemn all new thought as atheistic. They write down as atheistic all who refuse to accept God in the cheap setting of familiar dogma. This is a time-honoured practice, but it is merely the railing of orthodoxy against progress. It is surely a curious fact that while science, art, and medicine are ceaselessly progressing onwards and upwards, and while such progress is by all encouraged and applauded, religion alone should be condemned to a perpetual stagnation. The doctor, the painter, the scientist who breaks

loose from a conventional habit of thought is a genius, a benefactor of the human race ; he is loaded with honours and titles. But the man whose labours are directed to the elevation of religion is a thing to be swept past with gathered skirts. Such a man's objects, however, are infinitely more noble than those of the others. He aims at raising the standard of both God and good. At present the familiar conception of God is low. He has passions, he has emotions ; he has legs and arms and a sex ; he is weak and vacillating. He is a mere sultan, to whom we bow as we do to all royalty, in fear of punishment or in hope of favours. A pragmatistical confidence that we shall obtain these favours is called faith, and by those who have it is sublimated into a virtue. But a very little reflection must show that it is not a virtue but a presumption, and a selfish presumption. If God tells me he will do a certain thing, and I believe, that certainly is faith in God ; but if the vicar tells me God will do a certain thing, and I believe, that is not faith in God but faith in the vicar. The faith of which the orthodox boast so proudly is not faith in God but faith in what the vicar tells them God will do. When we turn a little light on to the position we find that God makes none of the promises that the vicar so glibly fathers on to him. We find that the authority for the dogmas on which all the vicar's assertions hinge is not God, but a posse of men of a quite exceptional ignorance and the narrowest of perception. It may be safely

said that of all the early Christian Fathers, Paul, Jerome, and Origen, and possibly Justin Martyr, can alone lay claim to any intellectual powers. The ignorance, credulity, and Judaistic prejudice of most of the Fathers is nothing short of staggering. Even the original Apostles were so blinded by national vanity, and so mentally incapable of appreciating the Divine message of Jesus, that we find them, at the very close of their association with their Master, still possessed by the idea that his mission was purely political and patriotic.

From such men only a warped and biassed history could be expected, even supposing that history to have been preserved in all its virgin integrity. But we know that it was not so preserved. For over a hundred years these records were tossed hither and thither about the world, at the mercy of any pious enthusiast who had a theory to air. During this period enthusiasm vied with credulity and piety with fraud. Corruptions, and even frank forgeries, in the interests of orthodox belief, were not regarded as crimes but as actual virtues. The Christian world was deluged with apocryphal literature, which the authors had no scruples in attributing to the Apostles, and even to Jesus himself.

The task of discriminating between true and false fell to the lot of men who were not only mentally unequal to the task, but whose judgment was warped and their critical faculties hopelessly fogged by the narrow Judaism to which they were slaves. The Old Testament was for all these men the fundamental word of God.

Even after the canonisation of the New Testament books, these ranked far behind the Law and the Prophets in the estimation of the Fathers. The first requisite of any book that was a candidate for scriptural honours was absolute harmony with Moses. Any book that showed a tendency to represent Jesus as a new revelation of God, in which Abraham, Moses, and David had no part, was hardly to be touched, except with the aid of tongs to bear it to the brazier. Marcion's Gospel, Tatian's Diatessaron, and the twenty-four books of Basilides were ruthlessly destroyed, and their authors anathematised because they placed the God of Jesus on a higher plane than Jehovah of the Pentateuch. And the men who did this are the fathers of the dogmas that to-day hold the keys of heaven and hell.

When the thoughtful mind is awakened to such facts as these, it does not cry out that there is no God, but it reasonably inquires whether it is right to accept without scrutiny the view of God with which we are furnished by men to whom Jehovah of the Pentateuch represented the *ne plus ultra* of divinity. We want to know, not what the Vicar tells us God requires of us, on the authority of the men who burned Marcion's and Tatian's Gospels, but what God really says himself on the subject. If God communicates with mankind, it is through the intuitive knowledge of men whose spiritual perceptions are abnormally acute. Of these, Christians rely upon Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus gave to the world a

message which many had given before ; and by some this is used as a weapon with which to throw doubt upon the divine source of his teaching ; but the truer view is that it is a corroboration of that message and a warranty of its divine origin.

## CHAPTER II

### DOGMA

DOGMAS are the postulates of religion. They exact a childish and uninquiring belief in certain occurrences, past, present, and future, however improbable, and, indeed, impossible, such occurrences may appear to the logical sense of man. Those who comply with such regulations are credited with a quality known as faith. Those who do not are looked at askance, at times dubbed atheists, and, till quite lately, were buried in ignominious positions.

But the crime of these is not really atheism, but exploration. They trace back these dogmas to their source, and find that, so far from springing from the gates of heaven, they take, on the contrary, their rise in the superstition of an ignorant and savage age.

The soul of the world expands with the march of time, and invariably upwards. To us to-day the common practices of the Middle Ages seem inhuman, and even devilish. And yet to both the law and the Church of their day such practices were proper and desirable. Acts the very thought of which sickens us to-day were the



unpleasant necessities of the age. We are still mounting. Another four centuries and the unpleasant necessities of this generation, chiefly practised at the expense of animals, will be looked upon with a similar horror. The soul of the world is ceaselessly opening. The divine element is expanding, the primitive impulses shrinking. The common name for this process is "enlightenment."

In the field of dogma, however, we can trace no process of enlightenment. We are still in the dark ages, or we pretend to be. We neither boil coiners nor rack witnesses for the prosecution, but we frame our conduct on dogmas that are contemporary with those practices, and that faithfully reflect the spirit that countenanced those practices.

The qualities that may most reasonably be looked for in religious dogma are those which are often most conspicuously lacking. Permanence and consistency are obviously the very essence of dogma. Spiritual axioms must clearly either have a perpetuity of tenure, or else sink to the level of mere human deductions. When the latter, their periodical abandonment or revision should mark the upward progress of human thought. Buddhism, for instance, which has no dogmas, continually shifts its ground *pari passu* with the march of enlightenment. This is as it should be. But we in the enlightened West stand still. The dogmas on which we lean to-day were invented nearly sixteen hundred years ago by a coloured man named Augustine.

Those that they superseded were cancelled, where not already dead. The first-century dogmas had lived a bare hundred years. These have vanished for ever. Those of the second century were allowed a subordinate position in Augustine's scheme, and, indeed, still survive in Advent hymns, and in tub sermons where the hat goes round. The dogma of the Virgin birth, belonging to this period, still has a nominal existence, but it has little effective value in modern religion. It figures, indeed, prominently in the Creeds, but outside of these makes little show, and, indeed, in strict Protestant circles is gently pushed away out of sight.

The birth of the Church Trinitarian dogma is of uncertain date. John the Evangelist, as is well known, exploited a wholly different Trinity, from which the Son was excluded in favour of the Logos. The Arians accused the Church of borrowing its Trinity from the Valentinians and the Marcionite heretics; and it is a fact that the first mention of the word is found in the works of Basilides, a heretic in the latter half of the second century. The Atonement dogma, which is the hub of the present Christian system, was invented, as stated above, by Augustine in the fourth century; and with its adoption the spiritual purity of Christianity began to decline and its popularity proportionately to grow. No other result could possibly attend the advertisement of a mechanical redemption by proxy.

We can find purely natural causes for the inconsistency of Christian dogma in its early



days. Certainly for the first two centuries all dogmas had their birth in the idea that Christianity meant some occurrence (as to the exact nature of which men differed) that would benefit the Jews at the expense of other races. These dogmas were modified from time to time to fit political developments. The first Messianic hopes, for example, died with the fall of Jerusalem. No optimism could survive such a blow as this. It was the final extinguisher on the belief that the mission of Jesus had been political; and the labours of the dead Paul, mainly abortive during his lifetime, were given a fresh stimulus by this marked desertion of the chosen people. It was felt that the idea of a national God was no longer tenable; and when the principle was once established that God's jurisdiction might possibly extend beyond the slopes of Zion, it was but a short step to the corollary that Zion's view of God might have been defective. This feeling quickly spread. Sacrifices were discontinued and the initial rite dropped, the latter from the spread of Paulism, the former of necessity. The Church met the necessity by the doctrine, Petrine as well as Pauline, that the death of Christ had been at once the consummation and the abolition of all sacrifice. The immediate effect was elevating. Christianity rose and continued to rise with the dropping of each link that bound it to Judaism. Its highest expression was perhaps found in the heresy of the better Gnostic sects, where the chain was flung off bodily, and men looked

askance at the ungodlike doings of the God of Israel.

The Millennium idea—evolved from the thirty-fourth chapter of that good patriot but bad prophet Ezekiel—was the last straw at which preferential Judaism grabbed. It was the *pis-aller* necessitated by the failure of the Messianic expectations, and for a time, no doubt, it kept patriotic hopes more or less alive. But faith in this dogma was not equal to the strain of time. Towards the middle of the third century the whole conception began gradually to drift into more abstract and metaphysical lines. The Church leaders no longer looked for Christ in the clouds. Their interest in him became all but impersonal. They were now concerned, not so much with his teaching as with his rank; not only with his exact status in what quickly developed into a thinly veiled polytheism, but also as to the true significance of his coming, in relation to the Old Testament. This attitude of thought reached its climax in the fourth century, in the deadly duel between Arius and Athanasius over the spelling of a word.

During the latter half of this century orthodox Christianity probably soared higher than at any other period in Church history. The times produced a truly remarkable crop of prelates, who have been deservedly canonised by a Church that has completely forgotten the lesson they taught and the example they set. Basil, Gregory, and Chrysostom were patterns to all time of the ardour that seeks spiritual sublimation in the

subjection of primitive impulses. They emulated, and indeed surpassed, the self-denial and asceticism of those Marcionite Gnostics who had been the ridicule of the Church two centuries before. Anthony and Ambrose, though Christians of a somewhat different pattern, were still worthy representatives of a live and genuine religion. Jerome went even beyond Basil and Gregory in the matter of self-discipline, and in the interests of others less invulnerable than himself started the monastic system. According to the highest religious standard of the moment, celibacy was the first virtue both in man and woman; and, as an aid to the conquest of Nature, asylums were offered to those to whom mixed society proved too dangerous. Thousands of both sexes flocked to these refuges, and with their aid maintained till death that self-contained purity without which it was held humanity could never hope to approximate to the Divine.

In marked contrast to the teaching and example of these men was that of their contemporary Augustine. This ingenious African, to the permanent delight of Christianity, discovered a new and easier ascent to heaven than by the road of self-denial. Augustine deduced from the apostolic writings two principles which had not hitherto entered into the arena of practical religion—the principles of original sin and of “grace”—*i.e.*, of capricious selection on the part of the Deity. The practical imitation of Christ was succeeded by the institution of tricks to win the smiles of this capricious God, and so

elude the damnation to which he had consigned all who had not the good fortune to know the secret to his favour. The care for others, which had been so marked a feature of the second and third centuries, was lost sight of in the wild rush for the boats which followed on this revelation of the real needs of God. *Sauve qui peut* became the order of the day, and the hindmost were made over to the devil. It was forgotten then, as it is now, that a selfish striving for the joys of heaven may not be the surest road to the achievement of those joys.

With the new-found knowledge that salvation was secured by contract came a natural relaxation of morals. The stricter views of Chrysostom and Jerome became clearly out of place, and attempts to gain heaven by such disagreeable routes were gradually abandoned. Poor Jerome's monastic system shared in the general relapse. The homes of celibacy became such only in name, and before the close of the first millennium had pretty generally adopted habits at which their founder must have shuddered in his grave.

With its departure from its primitive simplicity Christianity began rapidly to absorb some of the more attractive features of the paganism it had replaced. The figures of Jupiter and Serapis were replaced by those of Christ and his Mother ; the pagan festivals became the Agapæ, and, a little later, the Saturnalia took on the form of Christmas. Images of the saints and apostles followed, and incense, genuflexions, and other

pagan institutions were gradually embodied in the ritual. The eighth century, however, saw a check to this adaptation of paganism in the Iconoclast movement and the temporary overthrow of the Christian idols. Curiously enough, this movement can be clearly traced to the influence of Islam. Mohammed's religious crusade had been originally inspired by his hatred of the Caaba images. Prior to his establishment of the one and only faith, the Arabs of Mecca and Medina had been Sabæans or Magians by religion, with here and there a few scattered Jews and Christians. Both these Arab religions had in their original form been elevated and pure, but had fallen away in the usual manner into a confused jumble of rites and mysteries. Amongst other of the innovations which Mohammed regarded as outrages upon religion had been that of the introduction of images into the Caaba, and his first act on entering Mecca as a conqueror was to pulverise the 360 figures which he there found. This uncompromising hatred of images was throughout a characteristic of the faith ; and as the tide of Islam swept over the Eastern provinces of the Roman Empire the spirit of iconoclasm was in a measure communicated even to the Christians. Under its spell fell Leo III., Emperor of the East. In his new-found zeal he convened a synod at Constantinople in A.D. 754, and 338 bishops pronounced images to be blasphemous and heretical. The East bowed to the decree, but Rome and the West rebelled ; and Gregory the Pope took up arms and fought



bloodily, and successfully, for the preservation of his saints and crucifixes.

In spite, however, of this momentary check, iconoclasm continued to gain ground ; and the piety of the moment proclaimed itself everywhere in the demolition of the sculptured saints. Irene, widow of Leo. III.'s grandson, was the first to try and fill once more the empty niches. In 787 she summoned a Nicene Council, who restored by decree the sanctity of the fallen images. Public opinion, however, was not yet ripe for a complete revival, and another forty years had to run before the Empress Theodora put a final extinguisher on a movement which had then lasted 120 years. Images reappeared everywhere ; popery received a new fillip, and from that time on till the wane of the Middle Ages the ignorance of an illiterate laity prostrated itself reverentially before the mitres and tonsures that dispensed the Christian faith. The faith itself had become despotic and intolerant. Good men preached it side by side with bad. Before good and bad alike the rabble gaped in superstition. Of the Founder of their faith they knew nothing. The textbooks were sedulously hidden from the public eye, and only such aspects of the Christ as seemed proper to his Viceregent were presented for worship and veneration. Christianity had already lost all semblance to the religion of the first two centuries. The teaching of Jesus was unknown. Mystery and symbolism held the keys of heaven and hell ; and the restored images became the actual and active mediators between God and the sinner.

The beatitude which the Church shed upon her sons during this revival was unlimited and impartial. Side by side in cowl and cassock the wasted, angel-faced ascetic and the bloated sensualist knelt before the image of the Saviour. Saint and sinner alike, in all the sublimity of uncritical faith, fixed their eyes upon the dying Christ. In the glittering cathedral nave, in the squalid garret, on the breast of the dancing-girl and of the holy sister alike that tortured Figure was the talisman that counteracted all ills. The Virgin Mother and the Apostles held minor offices as intercessors ; but the heroes of Leviticus and Kings rested unknown and unrequired.

Then came the upheaval of Wycliff. All that had been white was black and black white. The figures before which suffering humanity had for centuries poured out its soul were hammered into chips of painted plaster. Moses the forgotten leaped into sudden prominence, and in his second Law iconoclasm once more found inexhaustible fuel. The image of the Saviour was battered into dust because it was displeasing to Moses. The Nehushtan incident was conveniently brushed aside. Every seventh day men sat in mournful inertia, because Moses was supposed so to have rested his savage hordes. It went for nothing that Isaiah, Paul, and Christ himself had openly derided this custom. Christ, though the nominal figurehead, was in practice deposed, and Jehovah re-established on the throne of heaven. Christ was assigned an inferior office, though one of vital technical importance, as the

sacrifice by which Jehovah had been appeased. He was even worshipped, after a fashion, as the annual sacrifice to Tezcatlipoca was worshipped by the Aztecs ; but as the Evangelist of God he was put far away back behind Moses. His Mother and his Apostles were swept from their shrines, and Abraham, Moses, and David usurped their places, not in plaster but in the veneration of the Church. The very cross itself was thrust aside as a thing of horror. Paul's adaptable writings were given a new twist to meet the new requirements, and ancient Mosaism reigned supreme in what was by courtesy called the Christian Church.

This very curious recession to the parochial and far from flattering view of God held by the ancient Israelites could with some show of reason claim the authority of Scripture. With the Old Testament it naturally saw eye to eye. The Old Testament was, in fact, its inspiration, and Calvary merely an incident in the life of God. The reformed religion was, in effect, the revival of ancient Judaism under a new name. Its iconoclasm was the reflection of the inveterate hatred of the Jews for images, and its deposition of Christ an act of loyal service to Jehovah.

From this position the succeeding centuries have scarcely receded. Christianity has strayed out of sight of its original starting-point, and few take the trouble to trace the track back through the intervening mazes of artificial dogma.



## CHAPTER III

### HUMAN SACRIFICE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

WHEN the daily conduct and ethical standard of many million civilised people are based on the enactments of an ancient code, it is well to see whether that code reflects an atmosphere which may be called Divine, and whether the Presiding Principle at the back of it is distinguished by those sublime characteristics which we associate with the name of God. Every Sunday many thousands of people assemble in order to have explained to them the character and requirements of the Being whom they are instructed by their religion to worship. The majority of those who assemble are ignorant, or, at the best, semi-educated; and they not unnaturally shape their daily lives after the pattern which is held up to them as Divine. Only to a few of those assembled does the thought occur that they are being initiated into the mysteries of evil, and not of good.

The most salient characteristic of the object of worship of ancient Israel is his malevolence. A sacrificial system primarily implies malevo-

lence in the god to whom the victims are offered. Malevolence, in fact, is the main characteristic of divinity in all primitive cults. Even to-day an attitude of love is, to the savage mind, quite out of keeping with the spirit of divinity ; and a god who gives no practical proof of power to destroy is despised as effete. The religion of ancient Israel had no special features which are not common to all primitive cults, unless it be this : that it retrograded to a sacrificial system after having been intimate for over four hundred years with the elevated religion of Egypt, and that, to its last days, sanguinary rites were the only road that it knew to God's favour. It made no advance. Human sacrifices, it is true, ceased with the Exile, and do not seem to have been revived by Ezra ; but in all else the religion stood still. To the end God had to be fed with meat and wine.

The historical religion of Israel, as it has come down to us, had its birth among the tribes of Canaan. It was merely an adaptation of what the hordes of Moses there found. If the Israelites had any religion at all during their wanderings in the desert, it would in all probability be the religion of Egypt. The Golden Calf incident points suggestively in this direction ; and it would be clearly impossible for a race to live for over four hundred years in a country without becoming strongly infected with the religion of that country. Even if some of the traditions of their earlier religion were preserved throughout the period of captivity, it

would be done in secret ; and we may be sure that no sacrificial system would have been permitted by Egypt, and that none of the horrid rites which colour the later chronicles of Israel in Canaan were in any sense a legacy of the period spent by the Nile. The religion of Egypt stands out from amongst all the religions of the ancient world on account of its ethical purity and conspicuous freedom from sacrifice. The probability is that with every year that the Israelites wandered in the desert came a weakening of the elevating influence of Egypt, and a corresponding receptiveness for any new cult with which it might come in contact. The Tabernacle worship we may accept as historical. The elaborate rites and regulations laid down in the Priests' Code can hardly have been the imaginative work of subsequent historians. They must clearly have been embodied in the written chronicles from the Torah. But this Tabernacle worship may none the less have been a plagiarism from Canaan.

In order clearly to grasp the evolution of the Jewish religion and the evolution of the Jewish people as the dominant factor in Canaan, it is necessary in the first place to disabuse our minds of the accepted notion that Moses and Joshua burst upon the land as conquerors. The actual truth is, in all probability, very far removed from this. The Jews have never been a fighting race. Under that fine general, Joab, they undoubtedly achieved some successes—a fact to which David owes his reputation as the favourite of God. But

apart from this one oasis in an inglorious desert, the history of the race, down to modern times, shows them gaining their predominance by other methods than that of the sword.

In international relations the two surest signs of ascendancy are language and religion. In the case of the Israelites, there is the bare possibility that they may have secretly, preserved their ancient language no less than their ancient religion while in captivity ; but the improbability that this was so is very great. From the accounts furnished us by the Jewish books the rule of Egypt over Israel appears to have been an intolerant one ; and we may be sure that no language unintelligible to the dominant race would for a moment have been permitted. All this is of necessity conjecture. One speaking fact, however, stands out. After a few centuries in Canaan the Israelites—nominally conquerors and even exterminators—were indistinguishable from the aborigines in either language, religion, or general customs. All the Canaanite tribes before the advent of Israel spoke Hebrew ; all, with the exception of the Philistines, practised the rite of circumcision, and all observed a sacrificial system which differed from that of Israel only in the name of the god to whom the altar was dedicated, and whose name was called upon during the ritual. In the high places the rites of Baal and of Jehovah were so mixed up as to be indistinguishable. It is also to be remarked that the conquered natives, in spite of extermination, appear to have survived in un-

diminished numbers. All this points to absorption rather than conquest, and to the probability that it was the racial pertinacity of the priesthood which eventually promoted Jehovah over the heads of Baal, Ashtoreth, Nergal, Ninib, and the rest. The religion of all the Canaanite tribes was in the nature of a patriotism. The altars to which men brought their sacrifices marked their nationality ; and Jehovah, Chemosh, and Milcom were simply the invisible monarchs who handled the fortunes respectively of Israel, Moab, and Ammon. The act of sacrifice was the oath of allegiance, and, at the same time, the enlistment in the fighting force over which the god presided. Throughout the Hexateuch Jehovah is the commander-in-chief of the invading army. His military genius is his chief asset in the eyes of his worshippers.

If we accept the Jews' version of the events that led to their establishment in Canaan, we find a tale of unchecked conquest, of unvarying victory, and of a no less unvarying celebration of that victory by the extermination of the entire conquered race. We find the conquerors settled in the land, living cheek by jowl with those whom they had supplanted (and, incidentally, exterminated), and working patriotically to extend the religious rule of Jehovah. As this extension of Jehovastic worship was equally the extension of Israelite nationality, it is easy to understand the furious anger of the Lord against those who sacrificed to other gods. Such a transgression was not merely a religious lapse ; it was an act of



desertion to the enemy in the most literal sense, and, therefore, a capital offence.

As the centuries rolled on, the racial boundaries between the various tribes became more and more indefinite, until in the end religion became the sole badge of nationality. A hierarchical knowledge of these ignominious beginnings would naturally—in a race as vainglorious as were the Israelites—inspire the stories of the conquest and complete extermination of the aborigines which, with a nauseating sameness, fill the pages of the Octateuch.

This view of the original relations between the hordes of Moses and the Canaanites offers a ready explanation of the Tabernacle worship. It shows a tribe of peaceable tent-dwellers adopting, as far as their opportunities went, the established ritual of the settled nations—apeing, as it were, the ways of the aristocracy of the land, and finding solace for their racial vanity in the institution of a private deity of their own. The present object, however, is not to consider critically the historical value of the Old Testament chronicles, but to take the history for granted, and to consider its ethical effect, as it stands, upon present-day conduct.

There is no internal evidence of any licentiousness attaching to the rites of Jehovah, though there are indications that priestesses at one time officiated as well as priests. There is a strong suggestion that this was so in the words, "Every male among the priests" (Lev. vii. 6). On the other hand, it is probable that Baal and

## Human Sacrifice in Old Testament 47

Ashtoreth offered attractions in the shape of licentious orgies to their worshippers, and that the fees paid for participation in these orgies constituted their chief source of revenue. We get a momentary insight into the nature of these practices in the revivals of Egalabalus at Rome.

The chief feature in all the Canaanite rites was sacrifice—the sacrifice of their own children, of prisoners of war, and of animals; and this part of the cult the Israelites took over in its entirety. In fact, the fundamental principle which lay at the back of all Jewish religion, and which was subsequently turned to doctrinal account by the early Christians, was the sacrifice of the first-born son. This act of sacrifice was first instituted as a tribute to Jehovah for the deliverance from Egypt, and at the same time to commemorate the fashion in which that deliverance was carried out; and, in its original phase, all firstborn children were sacrificed, irrespective of sex. Then the females came to be exempted. Later on, again, the child was redeemed by the substitution of an animal. Then the law was again changed, and the price of redemption was fixed at five shekels in place of the animal. Later on the entire rite was practically abolished, and by a curiously inapt symbolism the Levites were accepted as the servants of Jehovah in place of the firstborn. But the spirit of the rite survived in the Passover, which became, as was fitting, the chief national feast of the Jews. The firstborn idea was allowed to drop, but the release from Egypt, which marked the birth of



the Jews as a nation, still provided the subject-matter for their principal ceremony. The first-born sacrifice, however, was clearly acquired from the Canaanites, and the tenth plague was therefore subsequently coined by the priests in order to justify and give countenance to an adopted practice.

There is a certain interest in tracing the devolution of this rite, the gradual abandonment of which can be followed with tolerable clearness, in spite of the entire absence of external evidence as to the chronological order in which the books of the law, and the many sub-sections embodied in those books, should be arranged.

In the earliest record, the Book of the Covenant, the law is inexorable and definite: "Sanctify unto me all the firstborn: whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of men and of beasts, it is mine" (Exod. xiii. 2). Here the law conforms exactly to the event it commemorates. In the tenth plague all the Egyptian firstborn were smitten, irrespective of sex; and similarly in the original law all the firstborn were sacrificed, irrespective of sex. Then in Exod. xxii. 29, 30 we get the first modification, exempting female children and female beasts. It is noteworthy that no emphasis is laid on this exemption; the law is laid down as though in ignorance of any prior and fuller edict: "Thou shalt not delay to offer the first of thy ripe fruits and of thy liquors: the first-born of thy sons shalt thou give unto me. Likewise shalt thou do with thy oxen, and with

## Human Sacrifice in Old Testament 49

thy sheep : seven days it shall be with his dam ; on the eighth day thou shalt give it me." This amended law speaks of settlement in Canaan and the possession of fields and vineyards, and of a consequent desire to increase and multiply, which would not have been present during the desert wanderings and the commissariat difficulties which must always have attended those wanderings. Children would then have constituted a tax on the food resources and a drag on the rapid movements of the nomads.

The next step is the complete redemption of the firstborn son by the substitution of an animal. To this period unquestionably belongs the story of Abraham and Isaac. The story is introduced in order to show the Deity himself establishing a precedent for the substitution of an animal for the child. We have an almost exact parallel in Greek mythology in the case of Iphigenia, who was on the point of being sacrificed to appease the wrath of Diana when the goddess herself substituted a hart, which was offered up instead. Both stories speak of a change in the public attitude towards human sacrifices ; but while the Grecian story probably marks the moment of entire emancipation, we know that this was not so in the case of Israel. The burden of the compulsory firstborn sacrifice was shaken off ; but other human victims continued to be offered to Jehovah, certainly up to the time of Micah, and probably till the date of the Exile. These, however, will be dealt with later. At the moment it is interesting to follow

this particular sacrifice to its commercial culmination.

The redemption amendment is first found in Exod. xiii. 15, where an Israelite is represented as explaining to his son the reason for the sacrifice. He refers back to the Egyptian incident, when the Lord slew all the firstborn of man and beast. "Wherefore," he says, "I sacrifice to the Lord all that openeth the matrix, being males. But all the firstborn of my children I redeem." The same amendment is found in Exod. xxxiv. 19-20, and again in Num. xviii. 15.

The date of this innovation can be fixed within limits. The law exempting female children was accompanied by a demand for field produce and wine which tells of a settled agricultural community; and the redemption law, being clearly subsequent again to this, may be assigned with safety to the early days of the monarchy. There is a commercial ring about this redemption law. Not only was the firstborn child to be redeemed, but the firstborn ass, and the firstborn of all unclean beasts, from which it is safe to infer that the priests saw no profit to themselves in the sacrifice of victims which were not good to eat.

The next stage is the handing over of the firstborn sacrifice, hitherto devoted to the Lord, to the sons of Aaron (Num. xviii. 16). The transfer is accompanied by Divine authority for the exaction of a tax of five shekels in commutation of the sacrifice. The change from payment in kind to payment in cash suggests, on the surface, that

## Human Sacrifice in Old Testament 51

Josiah's centralisation scheme had already taken effect, but any such thought is routed by a study of Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy, which was the authority for Josiah's scheme, carefully avoids all mention of the firstborn child sacrifice. Three times in the course of the book reference is made to the sacrifice of the firstlings of the flocks and of the fields; and in all the other books of the Pentateuch such a reference is invariably accompanied by instructions as to the treatment of the firstborn child sacrifice. The clear inference is, then, that by Josiah's day the compulsory firstborn son sacrifice had ceased to occupy any place in the cultus. Voluntary offerings of children, however, continued to be of common occurrence until the days of the Exile.

The final act in a drama which, in its day, must have presented the most piteous of all tragedies, is reached in Num. viii. Here the ancient rite is formally and for ever wiped out from the service of God. But it is done with a decent respect for the usages of old. The Levites are brought forward and the hands of the people laid upon them, thereby marking them as sacrificial victims, whereupon the Lord announces that he has taken the Levites for ever, "instead of the firstborn of all the children of Israel." The destiny of the Levites, however, is not the altar, but the official service of Jehovah. Superficial reading might deduce from this that the firstborn child from the beginning had been destined to ecclesiastical service, and not to the altar; but any such pleasing conclusion is at once dis-

pelled by reference to Lev. xxvii. 28, 29. This last act we must still place before Josiah's reign, for Deuteronomy, as has been said, shows the custom expunged even in memory from the ritual, and the Levites the sole ministers of the cultus.

In tracing the course of a ceremony which eventually took the form of the Passover, little attention has been paid to the arbitrary dates which the fashion of the moment places upon the various portions of the Pentateuch. The oldest records are undoubtedly contained in the Book of the Covenant, and Deuteronomy may safely be assigned to Josiah's reign; but when we come to deal with what is known as the Priests' Code, there is no evidence that is in any sense reliable. Spinoza attributed the whole of the Pentateuch to the pen of Ezra. Modern criticism, however, has cut down that estimate considerably, and now credits him with the Priests' Code only. But what must be apparent to any intelligent reading is that, though Ezra may have been the first to publish the Priests' Code in book form, he certainly could not have coined its intricate provisions with regard to the Tabernacle worship out of his imagination; nor, had he done so, would he have made them so hopelessly contradictory as they appear in some places, or so absurdly redundant as they appear in others.

The point of interest, however, is obviously not when these laws were first categorically scheduled for historical purposes, but when they

had actual force as live statutes. The Torah was the chief material from which the Priests' Code was built up, and the Torah was unquestionably of great antiquity. Prior to the Exile there was obviously no necessity for committing it to writing. It was passed down from priest to priest by oral instruction; and the occasional modifications which changes of conditions might make advisable would be the easier carried out if there were no cast-iron record in existence. But with the Exile all this would change. With the compulsory suspension of the national rights, the risk of the Torah dying of inanition would be acute, and patriotism would instinctively rush to pen and ink. The longer the prospect of exile the more important it would seem that the national institutions should not be lost in oblivion. The scribes would work with a zeal that would look for no fee. Their law was their nationality and their God. That this work was secretive is probable. There would be no central committee advertising for records, but scattered here and there about the Babylonian Empire small independent societies, each imbued with the patriotic spirit, would record, as well as they might, their national laws and traditions, as they knew them. There might well be no concerted movement. One scribe might have no knowledge of the efforts of others. Hence the repetitions, variations, and contradictions of the collective work. The frequent tautology, in fact, strongly suggests the existence of pre-Josian written records. The literary period of Israel may be



said to have commenced with the reign of Hezekiah. Prior to this, it is doubtful whether the nation possessed any literature, and such inscriptions as may have existed would be in cuneiform. From Hezekiah to the Exile, however, covers a period of over a hundred years, during which we may be sure that the advocates of established ritual would not be idle. It must be remembered that the crusade of the literary prophets, whom we may start with Amos and Hosea, was mainly directed against the cultus, and would inevitably call forth a defence in the shape of a Divine mandate from the ecclesiastical party. Jerusalem, Bethel, and Gilgal would each contribute its version of the Jehovastic decrees, all of which a conscientious compiler would subsequently embody in the canon. The speculative mistiness of this subject, however, does not encourage close analysis, and with the above brief suggestions it may be left.

Even with the abolition of the compulsory law the belief still remained that the sacrifice of the firstborn possessed some special efficacy; and, indeed, that Jehovah derived a peculiar pleasure from such sacrifices is made plain by his speech to Abraham, in which all sorts of blessings are showered on the parent's head because of the intention if not because of the deed. That the practice was fairly common, and that these child-sacrifices were offered with the sole object of advancing the parents' interests with Jehovah, is made fairly clear by Micah's contemptuous queries: "Will the Lord be pleased with thou-



sands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" Then comes the answer, the unvarying cry of all the prophets, from Hosea to Jesus: "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Micah vi. 7-8). In spite of Micah's undisguised scorn, there is no evidence from these words that the act itself inspired him with any horror; he merely pooh-poohs its efficacy as a lever with which to move God.

These voluntary sacrifices were in no circumstance allowed to be redeemed. The law on this point is so peremptory as to suggest a painful conflict between the father and the mother, the father obsessed by the one idea of advancing his own interests, and the mother recognising nothing beyond her maternal love and her willingness to pay anything as the price of her child. But the law was inexorable; the child must die. "Notwithstanding," it says, in reference to the subject of redeeming unclean beasts, "no devoted thing that a man shall devote unto the Lord of all that he hath, both of *man* and beast, and of the field of his possession, shall be sold or redeemed. Every devoted thing is most holy unto the Lord. None devoted, which shall be devoted of men, shall be redeemed; but shall surely be put to death" (Lev. xxvii. 28-29).

Hiel, when he rebuilt Jericho, sacrificed his firstborn son Abiram and his lastborn Segub in

order to satisfy the curse of Joshua. Recent excavations in Palestine point to the fact that this was a common practice where the erection of a new building was concerned. The child was sacrificed and his body laid beneath the foundations. Quantities of children's skeletons so placed are being discovered even at the present day.

The case of Jephthah's daughter was probably exceptional, inasmuch as she was an adult; and the Israelitish sacrifices were almost invariably those of children, except in the case of prisoners of war. That there were exceptions, however, and that the children were sometimes of knowledgable age, is proved by the incident in David's reign of which we have a glimpse in 2 Samuel. Here David "hung up to the Lord in Gibeah" the two sons of Rizpah and the five sons of his own late wife Michal with the object of putting an end to a famine in the land—and apparently with complete success. Rizpah's woes are still sung in song, but the full significance of the tragedy behind rarely comes home to the careless singers. Poor Michal's greater woes are unsung. According to Josephus, Michal's five sons were by Phalti, in which case they cannot have been very young. Rizpah's two sons were Saul's children, and therefore probably adults.

The practice of human sacrifice, in greater or less degree, probably ran through the entire period of occupation up to the Exile. The Exilic period would tend to mitigate the evil, but it

## Human Sacrifice in Old Testament 57

is doubtful whether it would succeed in entirely stamping it out. There is a story in Josephus against Apion to the effect that Antiochus Epiphanes in B.C. 150 found in the Temple a Greek captive destined for sacrifice. It is obvious that a custom definitely enjoined by law would die slowly.

To our minds, human sacrifices—apart from the insulting estimate of God which they present—are in themselves horrible; but no such feeling of horror would be present in the minds of the Israelites. Their entire religion reeked of blood, and slaughter was the daily occupation of their priesthood. On the occasion of the defeat of the Midianites in the plains of Moab, Moses and Eleazar the priest, after the battle, butchered in cold blood all the married women and all the male children. As the number of the unmarried girls (who were spared) is given at thirty-two thousand, the full extent of this cold-blooded massacre must have been something appalling; and it is obvious that a priest who could deliberately cut the throats of women and children by the thousand would see no difficulty in the act of human sacrifice. As a matter of fact, on the very occasion in question, it is on record that a certain percentage of the prisoners were officially sacrificed to Jehovah. The instructions are quite plain: "Take the sum of the prey that was taken, both of man and beast . . . and levy a tribute unto the Lord . . . one soul of five hundred, both of *persons* and of the beeves, and of the asses, and of the sheep

. . . and give it unto Eleazar the priest for a heave-offering unto the Lord" (Num. xxxi. 26-29). From subsequent verses it would appear that, in addition, a further number of the prisoners were given to the Levites in charge of the Tabernacle to be reserved for future sacrifice. There is no reasonable escape from this conclusion. In no other capacity than that of a sacrifice could any of the abhorred Midianites have assisted in the Tabernacle worship.

It must be borne in mind in criticising the pre-Exilic religion of Israel that the occasional offering of human victims is inseparable from a robust sacrificial system. The god gets sated with the slaughter of bulls and goats: the blood of these merely acts as a sedative to restrain him from inflicting calamities on the people over whom he holds sway. In the course of time, even for this purpose it loses its efficacy, and something more precious, and therefore more stimulating, has to be offered. This is especially the case on all occasions of national importance—the eve of a battle, the coronation of a king, the consecration of a building, or the aversion of an epidemic. The ordinary routine sacrifices would here be inadequate, and might even be construed into a deliberate slight. So the nobler offering is put up. Such rites are common to all primitive religions, and Jehovaism was merely passing through a phase. The Egyptian influence had evaporated, and the hordes of Joshua were without religion; they presented a virgin soil, on which the primitive cult of Canaan took quick

## Human Sacrifice in Old Testament 59

root, and which it subsequently required prolonged contact with higher thought to eradicate. The Exile achieved one result which is essential for religious elevation. It separated the benevolent principle from the malevolent. Prior to the Exile both were vested in the being of Jehovah. We trace this clearly throughout the Old Testament: "An evil spirit went out from the Lord to vex Saul." "Now therefore behold, the Lord hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets." In Deuteronomy the malevolence of Jehovah is particularly marked: "Know therefore that the Lord thy God he is God . . . and repayeth them that hate him to their face to destroy them" (Deut. vii. 9-10). Then again: "The Lord shall smite them in the knees and in the legs with a sore botch that cannot be healed," and much more in the same key in Deut. xxviii. The climax, however, is reached in chapter xxxii.: "For a fire is kindled in mine anger," says Jehovah, "and shall burn unto the lowest hell, and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains. I will heap mischiefs upon them; I will spend mine arrows upon them. They shall be burnt with hunger, and devoured with burning heat, and with bitter destruction; I will also send the teeth of beasts upon them, with the poison of serpents of the dust. The sword without, and terror within, shall destroy both the young man and the virgin, the suckling also with the man of grey hairs . . . I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them



that hate me. I will make mine arrows drunk with blood, and my sword shall devour flesh; and that with the blood of the slain and of the captives, for the beginning of revenges upon the enemy." Here we have a blood-lust and a ferocity that would clearly tax the capacity of the altars to their utmost.

During the Exile Jehovah shed a portion of his malevolence, and an official instrument of evil was appointed in the person of Satan. This embodiment of the evil principle was, of course, a Jewish adaptation of Ahriman, and he makes his first appearance in Job about 400 B.C. But though thenceforward Satan became the active principle of evil, the Jewish God was not wholly purged of malevolence till the advent of Jesus of Nazareth, and then only among a fragmentary section. The sacrificial system thrived with unabated vigour till the days of Hadrian. The House of God remained in effect the municipal abattoir. On the chief feast-days the priests worked with bared arms crimsoned to the shoulders. Thousands of beasts lay on the Temple floors, groaning in their dying agonies. The stench from the vast heaps of entrails was all but insupportable, in spite of the profuse burning of incense. These holocausts increased rather than diminished with time. Solomon, in the old days, had sacrificed on one single occasion 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep. Josiah, in his religious zeal, had attempted to break this record, but the last flicker of Judaism eclipsed all previous efforts. At the Passover, in the reign

## Human Sacrifice in Old Testament 61

of Nero, at which Cestus took the census, 256,000 animals were sacrificed between the ninth and the eleventh hours. All these were slaughtered in the Temple itself by the priests, after which the carcasses were handed back to the owners, to be eaten on their own premises (Josephus, Wars). If the altar of God were to be reared at La Villette, or in a Chicago packing-house, we should get a very fair reproduction of the Jewish fashion of worshipping Jehovah.

The underlying idea of a sacrificial cult is that the god must be fed in order to keep him in good humour. The sacrificial god is, in fact, the veritable ogre of fairy-tale, only far more dreadful. His satisfaction is derived from the smell of the blood and of the burning flesh. This idea was not dead in A.D. 70. During the siege of Jerusalem John of Gischala had forcibly stopped the daily sacrifices, and Josephus, priest as well as historian, puts this comment into his own mouth: "Should any one deprive thee of thy daily food—most impious wretch, thou wouldst esteem him an enemy. Dost thou then hope to have that God for thy confederate in the war, whom thou hast defrauded of his eternal worship?" Here we have clearly the idea of a hungry god refusing to fight. By a happy providence, however, the appetite of the Jewish God was mainly attracted towards those portions of the carcass which are not usually chosen for human consumption.

The contempt of Jesus, as of all the precedent prophets, for sacrifice as an article of religion



stands out very strongly. No words could be so eloquent as his overthrow and rout of the sacrificial birds and beasts for sale in the Temple. It was this exposure of a degraded cult that had killed the prophets, and it was this that contributed mainly to the persecution and death of Jesus. Priesthood is never very tolerant of interference with its rites. The prophets had gasped out their lives beyond the gates, and Jesus followed them to an even crueller death. His view of God, to which the Gentile world slowly came round, was never possible to the Jews. Of all the races upon earth they were the vainest and the most obdurate. Reason and kindness were alike wasted upon them. To all who were not Jews they were eternal and implacable foes. Their strongest national characteristic appears to have been a ferocious hatred of all uncircumcised humanity. No impartial reading of the Old Testament can fail to show the Canaanite tribes in a more amiable light than their conquerors. In the Roman troubles their irreconcilable obstinacy in defeat was only equalled by their savage ferocity in victory. Their hand was against every man, and every man's hand was against them; nor did they betray any wish to alter these uncomfortable conditions. While we sicken at the recital of their brutality to one another and to their vanquished foes, we are reluctantly forced to an admiration for their amazing fortitude on occasions such as that of the siege of Masada, where the entire garrison preferred suicide to surrender to the Romans.

## Human Sacrifice in Old Testament 63

To this extraordinary people Jesus came with a doctrine which to them was as impossible as would be a doctrine of *sang froid* to a Celt. He told them to love their enemies, to bless them that hated them, to pray for them that despitefully used them. For the fructification of such a seed the soil of Palestine was the most unfertile on earth, and, as might have been expected, the seed shrivelled and died. The doctrine was not only new—it was impious, for it ran counter to the edicts of the God of Israel.

What signed the death warrant of Jesus was not a claim to divinity, as the edited chronicles would infer, but a claim to a knowledge of God which the Jews from first to last had been without. Such an imputation was clearly blasphemy, and worthy of death: “Now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God” (John viii. 40).

## CHAPTER IV

### THE MESSIANIC CULT

THE striking contrast, and, indeed, antipathy, between Jehovaism and Jesuism was one of the main difficulties of the early Jew-Christians, and one which they were ceaselessly struggling to overcome. In this labour they were not hampered by scruples. The end justified any means. When, then, we sit down to criticise the value of the Gospels as historical narratives it is important, before jumping to hasty conclusions as to their general unreliability, to remember this point, and to bear in mind that the ceaseless endeavour of the narrators is to represent Jesus as being other than he himself claimed to be. This infirmity on the part of the authors and editors has, however, not worked the disaster that one might suppose. The real message is not damaged, and the occasional perplexing passages, which seem to clash so with the real message, are readily explained when we remember the aim and nationality of the compilers. Jesus claimed to be a communicant with God, one to whom the true nature of God was revealed. He held himself up as the evangelist

of truth, the scourge of superstition and pretence. The mission to which he devoted himself, and for which he gave up his life, was the elevation of the conception of God. For the ancient fetishes of Mosaism he had a contempt which even the editorial atmosphere of the Gospels cannot wholly conceal.

To Paul this aspect of Jesus came as a sudden rush of light. We read this clearly between the lines of his Epistles to the Romans and Galatians, documents which register the high-water mark of Pauline diplomacy. They bristle with empty concessions to a pachydermatous bigotry, but between the lines we read the scorn of the higher intellect and the newer thought.

But in the Gospels, though the new theology of Jesus runs in a strong undercurrent throughout the narrative, the essential message itself is subordinated to the primary Jewish object of making all the incidents of the Christ's career tally with selected extracts from the Old Testament writings.

To the first disciples their Master was the long-predicted Messiah murdered by the Sanhedrim. Herein lay the only difference between the early Christians and the Jews proper. Christian Jews read Jesus to be the promised Messiah, the orthodox Jews read him a pretender. It matters little that both were wrong. What we have to deal with is the trend of thought of those who compiled the Gospels. These, like all who write with an object, strained after their point. It was excusable. Their very existence as a religious body

depended on their proving their contention on the authority of the only recognised books of reference. Can we wonder, then, that in their zeal for the Messianic theory they should have ransacked the Old Testament for passages to prove their point, or that in that search they should not have been scrupulously critical?

The civilised world is nominally Christian. Here and there its Christianity is real and even ardent. But to all alike, the sceptic no less than the enthusiast, the prophet of Nazareth voices the spirit of true divinity. Even the Buddhist and the Moslem join in this tribute. It becomes therefore a matter of the highest interest to arrive at the original message as it was actually given, undiluted by foreign matter. In this undertaking it is essential that we should, as far as possible, penetrate the minds and lay bare the point of view of those who recorded the message, and the acts which formed the setting of the message; and, in order to do this, it is necessary to take a retrospective glance at the circumstances surrounding the break-up and fall of the kingdom, six hundred years before the advent of the Galilean reformer.

We will start with the dawn of the prophetic era, and with a brief review of the circumstances which called it into being.

In the days of Amos and Joel, the earliest of the prophets, the Jews had as yet no special charter as the chosen people of God. They had, it is true, their own God, a tutelary tribal deity, who rewarded or punished his people

according to his humour, but he was admittedly only one of many, and he interested himself only in the doings of the people who called him Lord. Baal and Ashtoreth were equally gods in their own right, who performed similar offices for neighbouring races.

At times the fortunes of the Jews went under. The hand either of the Philistines, the Syrians, or the Moabite tribes was heavy upon them, or else the far mightier heel of great Babylon or Assyria threatened to grind them in the dust. Egypt, on the other side, was always a live menace, and kept alive by the bitter recollection of the ancient days of thralldom. In all such calamities was traced the hand of Jehovah. Jerusalem had sinned and the chastisement of the Lord was upon her. Her only hope of deliverance lay in turning to the Lord. In such hours of affliction the priests called for sacrifice, the prophets for repentance. As to the cause of the calamity the two were in agreement, but as to the remedy far apart, and, in fact, in strong antagonism, the priests preaching ceremonial and the prophets conduct of life—hot advocates respectively of the two rival roads to God's favour, which, to the end of time, will divide the allegiance of mankind. Temperamentally, again, the two were in different planes. The prophets were poets, the priests butchers; but in this much they were agreed, that, could Jehovah but be placated, the enemy within their coasts would meet with swift and dire doom.

We, with our minds trained to the high



thoughts of Neo-Christianity, are so used to spiritualise the relations of God and man that we are apt to attribute to the utterances of the prophets meanings to which they were complete strangers. The God of the prophets was every whit as material as that of the priests. The ideals of the former were higher ; their standard of worship approximated more to that of the second-century Christians. They recognised the empty mockery of sacrifices which were designed to bribe God to turn a blind eye on their extortions, their immorality, their false weights and measures. But with the prophets, as with the priests, God's rewards and punishments were entirely of this world. Witness, *e.g.*, the storm that arose because of Jonah, and that ceased the moment he was put overboard. When we read, "Turn to the Lord and He will have mercy," we picture a loving father welcoming a penitent soul to heaven, but the idea of Isaiah was simply that of the retreating Assyrians. "He will abundantly pardon" means the discomfiture of Shalmanezar. "Though your sins be as scarlet they shall be white as snow" means that Sennacherib's hosts will be diverted against Syria or against Egypt.

The days of the prophets were the days of peril. Memphis to the west, Damascus to the north, and Nineveh to the east hovered with outspread wings over the devoted city, and the thoughts of those within the walls strayed longingly back to the days of the kingdom's greatness, to the days when the son of Jesse smote the

Philistines and the tribes of Canaan paid tribute to Jerusalem. Those were great days, and they would surely come again. The patriots of the prophetic era had not the wit to see that it was her internal feuds and squabbles which had killed the greatness of the kingdom, just as in later years they yielded Jerusalem a prey to Titus. Like many another race that cries out against oppression, the Jews were never true to themselves. They were incapable of self-government. Self-interest swamped all finer feelings, and, as a consequence, their patriotism fizzled out in fierce invectives against greater nations than they.

Rehoboam it was that sounded the kingdom's knell. The divided house steadily sank in power, tottered, and finally fell. Israel went first. More open than the southern State to the attacks of Damascus and Nineveh, it was the ceaseless prey of both, till, in its evil day, it flapped its wings too loud, Assyria swooped, Samaria fell, and the ten tribes vanished from the history of the world.

Judah, more wise in her generation, survived for a time, but her dark hour was fast coming, and, with its first shadow upon the horizon, uprose the prophets.

Uzziah's stirring reign was drawing to a close, when Pul swept down on Israel, fined Menahem a thousand talents, and returned satisfied for the moment. This, however, was the beginning of the end of Israel. Thirty years later Pul's son, Tiglath-Pileser, carried captive all the north-

eastern tribes of Israel, and, after a further respite of twenty years, Shalmanezar overthrew Samaria, and Israel ceased to exist.

In the meantime the prophets of Judah were loud-voiced in their warnings. Three times in half a century had the hordes of Nineveh swept the northern State. Why was the anger of the Lord thus kindled, except by the iniquities of Israel? Let Judah, too, beware, let her cease to do evil and learn to do well. "Let her turn to the Lord," &c.

Hezekiah was on the throne of David, and he was ill at ease, for the hosts of Assyria loomed ominously near. The land was stripped bare to assuage the maw of the invader, but the time was coming when the land could do no more. It had already been tried to the utmost. Tiglath-Pileser had emptied the treasury of Ahaz, and Sennacherib had once already gutted the Temple in Hezekiah's own day. The land groaned under the taxes necessary to repair these depredations, and still the Assyrian extorted and threatened.

It is the invariable rule throughout the Old Testament writings that the king who does "that which is right in the sight of the Lord" is successful in all his campaigns, while the king who "does evil" is invaded and overcome. So invariable is this rule that one is driven irresistibly to the conclusion that the righteousness of the king was subsequently measured by the success or otherwise of his undertakings in arms. From the standpoint of a religion in which prosperity was the invariable mark of God's

favour, and misfortune of all kinds the sign of his animosity, the historian would have no means of gauging the character of a king, except by the failure or success of his enterprises. This ineradicable Jewish idea would seem to have grown with the lapse of time rather than the reverse. Professor Marti truly points out that, while in the older record of Kings, Manasseh is represented as wholly bad, in the later account of Chronicles he is made to repent and turn unto the Lord, presumably as the only possible explanation of his long reign. There can be little doubt that Hezekiah would have been classed among the kings who "did evil in the sight of the Lord" except for the fact that Sennacherib's second army of investment was, for some unknown cause, withdrawn. All the subsequent kings till the final catastrophe "did evil," with the single exception of Josiah. And it is quite clear that Josiah's righteousness is deduced from the length of his reign and its immunity from Assyrian invasions. All the other kings bore the chains either of Egypt or of Assyria. Manasseh was carried captive to Babylon by Esa-haddon. Amon was assassinated after a reign of two years. Jehoahaz was deposed by Pharaoh-Necho. Jehoiakim was executed by Nebuchadnezzar and his chief nobles carried into exile. Ten years later his brother Jehoiachin was taken to swell the ranks of the captives in Babylon, and, after another lapse of ten years, the great Chaldean returned for the third time to Jerusalem, utterly destroyed the refractory city, killed Zedekiah's sons before his

eyes, blinded the king himself, and deported the entire upper class of Judah to the Euphrates.

To the modern student of these last days of the monarchy of Zion it is singularly clear that the evils which befell Jerusalem under the later kings were due, not to transgressions against Jehovah, but to transgressions against their suzerain lords in Mesopotamia, first Nineveh and then Babylon. And similarly Josiah's freedom from attack was due, not to the colossal scale on which he sacrificed to Jehovah but to his discreet policy towards the great king whose vassal he was. But the view of the prophets was very different. Jehovah was the tutelary god of the nation, and any inroads of the eastern hordes meant his sure displeasure, which again meant the iniquity of the people, led on by the reigning monarch. In their eyes Nineveh was the veritable scourge of God, the mechanical instrument of his displeasure ever ready at hand. "O Assyria, the rod of mine anger," sings Isaiah the First.

The days of Nineveh, however, were waning. In the year 606 B.C. Medea and Babylon combined against the mighty capital of Western Asia and laid it low. The sands of the desert swept over its gardens and its palaces, and Nineveh joined the list of names of cities that have been.

Babylon, its successor, enjoyed a bare century of supremacy. In 500 B.C. Darius Hystaspes threw down its vast walls, drove out its people, carried off its treasures, and Babylon joined Nineveh below the sand.



But it is the two great Mesopotamian cities that the prophets have mainly before their eyes. To the end, these two, Nineveh and Babylon, stand out as the embodiment of evil, the bane of Israel. Even in the Apocalypse of John the rancour of the writer is not dead. "Babylon is fallen, is fallen!" he cries in patriotic exultation—"Babylon the Mother of harlots, the abomination of the earth."

It is probable that for the anger of Jehovah in the prophetic era there was much provocation. The later kings of Judah were a weak breed, sunk in luxury and probably in vice. The iniquities against which the prophets inveighed were, we can hardly doubt, very real iniquities, debasing and horrible. In the meanwhile the peasant class groaned under the drain of a ceaseless taxation to meet the annual tribute to the Great King, and the replenishment of the Royal and Temple treasuries. Seven times in the history of the monarchy do we read that the Temple was stripped of riches to meet the exactions of the invader. The crushing taxation to repair these inroads fell on the toilers of the land, and it was on behalf of these—the ground-down peasantry—that the prophetic voice was mainly raised. Let the rulers but extend justice to the poor, and God would surely scatter the Assyrian like chaff before the wind.

Five hundred years had passed since the son of Jesse sat on the throne of Judah, and for at least two centuries before the final debacle the name of David had stood for all that was glorious



in the annals of the realm. It cannot be doubted that David owed his classification as a man after God's own heart to his invariable success in arms, for in his private character we can find little that was commendable. Nor is it easy to picture David himself as a great captain. The artistic temperament seldom excels in war. But in Joab he unquestionably possessed a general of the highest order, relentless, determined, and unscrupulous, and to the military genius of this man there can be no doubt that David owes his place among the favourites of Jehovah. But, except as a point of interest, this is no immediate concern of ours. To the Jews of the captivity, and of many years before, David was the emblem of God-aided prosperity. In his name lay the glory of the past, in his seed lay the hope of the future. What had been might well be again. From this royal stock might spring a being favoured of God, who would extend justice to the poor, and smite the oppressor even as David had smitten the Philistine and the Amorite.

Such was the Messiah, hoped for, prayed for, looked for, and foretold, from the first gathering of the black cloud of foreign bondage from which the nation never subsequently emerged. The prophets looked around and saw a feeble dynasty upon the throne. From such as these there was no hope of help. The glamour of five hundred years lay between them and David, and, at the far end, the ruddy shepherd king stood out in enhanced glory by contrast with the weaklings lolling in Oriental luxury in the capital. For

such another the stricken people cried, and such another the prophets provided—in prophecy.

But the Messiah did not come. The Assyrian, the Chaldean, the Mede, the Persian, the Greek, and the Roman in turn pressed the heel of bondage upon the neck of little Judah. Egypt and Mesopotamia during the period of their might were in ceaseless rivalry for the suzerainty of a State which was the half-way house between the two great empires. And between the two giants the remnant of Judah lay, and looked despairingly for the second David. But they looked in vain.

Under the Medes and Persians the Jews enjoyed a short but ignominious tranquillity. Alexander the Great squeezed them dry, but left them unmolested. It was when Egypt and the East clashed that Judah's hour was darkest. Fealty to the one then meant devastation by the other, for an Oriental Protectorate B.C. carried with it no pledge of protection from others. So long as Judah paid her annual tribute to Assyria, Assyria withheld her hand, but what others did was no concern of hers. Egypt might pillage to her heart's content.

The position, then, of little Judah was truly a pitiable one, and diplomacy of the highest order was needed to postpone the evil day, which not even the most patriotic of the pre-exilic prophets could hope entirely to avert. In Jerusalem itself the stress of the times produced two political parties, the party of Assyria and that of Egypt. The prophets were practically unanimous in

voicing the claims of Assyria, not from love of their hereditary scourge but from a shrewd recognition that the Asiatic empire was the stronger.

The prophecies themselves are an instructive study. Obadiah, not content with one Messiah, predicts that "Saviours shall come up on Mount Zion." Micah foresees the advent of one man, who will not only deliver Judah from Nineveh, but will actually waste the land of the Assyrian with the sword. The purely material application of Micah's prophecy and the jingo spirit that prompts it is unmistakable, and any one with sufficient curiosity to turn up the passage (Micah v. 2-6) will at once realise how amazing must have been the blindness that could apply such a prediction to Jesus of Nazareth.

The earlier part of the passage is certainly sufficiently cryptic to lend itself to any desired twist, but the last two verses make it quite clear that what Micah looked for was a military commander who would crush Assyria as Assyria had crushed Judah.

The application, however, of the prediction to Jesus of Nazareth, or to any one else, is completely discounted by the undeniable fact that, as a prophecy, it was a failure. No one ever arose from Bethlehem who swept the invader from the land, and ravaged Assyria with the sword.

If the critical sense of the gospel authors and editors had been a little more fastidious, they would have realised that the prophets of Israel did not prophesy of events six or seven hundred

years ahead ; it was not their business. Their business was to bring encouragement and consolation to the men of their own day. The country groaned, and a prophet of good things to come, and come speedily, was sorely needed, but the events of seven hundred years on had little interest either for Hezekiah or for the captives in Babylon. What these wanted were hopes for the near future, and with these the prophets fed them. Doom for Assyria, doom for Edom, Moab, and Egypt, and glory for Judah was the monotonous burden of their song.

As actual prophets, however, in the sense of foretellers of the future, the seers of Judah were singularly unfortunate, and it is impossible to read their patriotic diatribes without realising how undisguisedly they were built to order, and how opportunely they fitted the political requirements of the moment.

The villain of the piece varies with the times. With the majority it is Assyria, but with some, such as Habakkuk, it is the later Chaldea, and, with Zephania, it is the northern tribes of Moab, Ammon, and Edom, who have aided the invader against Jerusalem, and have taken advantage of the opportunity to extend their boundaries outwards. In his philippics against the enemies of his country, Zephania, like all the other minor prophets, is only an angry child, but there is a touch of the pathetic in the glorious future that he maps out for his own unhappy race. "The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies, neither shall a deceitful tongue

be found in their mouth, for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid." Many will hold the opinion that this prediction still awaits fulfilment. Scarcely less unhappy in his forecasts was the later prophet Zechariah. This man, living during the uneventful tranquillity of the Persian supremacy, prophesied elatedly that no more armies should henceforth be arrayed against Jerusalem, and that, if they were, the Lord would scatter them in confusion, and establish Jerusalem for ever. Unhappy prophet of an unhappy race! His words must have been still ringing in the ears of the exultant people when Ptolemy swooped down, and deported a tenth of the population to Egypt. This, however, was as nothing to what followed. Under the brutal regime of Antiochus Epiphanes the depth of Jewish degradation was reached. For three and a half years the daily sacrifices were suspended, and, as a crowning horror, swine were freely immolated on the altars of Jehovah. The abomination of desolations stood in the Holy Place, and Daniel, in his Apocalypse, inveighs loudly against the hideous fact. While the recollection of these outrages still rankled in the public memory, the siege of Titus laid the city low, with a million of her people; and, thirty years later, Hadrian finally wiped out the Jews as a nation, Jerusalem as a holy city, and Jehovah as a god. Henceforth Zion was to ring with the praises of strange gods.

Of all the national histories of time that of the Jews is the most strangely pathetic. There



is pathos even in their weak and childish vanity, in their vainglorious belief that only the advent of the Messiah was needed for them successfully to grapple with, and choke off, the giant empires of the world. The ravings of their prophets against Egypt and against Assyria excite in equal degree compassion and contempt. It is Samoa breathing war and threatenings against Germany—a toy terrier yapping at an elephant. But the sympathies that might otherwise be theirs are necessarily estranged by the thought of the inhuman savagery which invariably accompanied Jewish success in arms. The brutal massacre of the entire population of conquered towns was the least of the atrocities they practised. David, “the man after God’s own heart,” put the inhabitants of Rabbah “under saws and harrows of iron, and axes of iron, and made them to pass through the lime-kilns,” a catalogue of fiendish brutalities probably unparalleled in the horrors of war. And this was David himself, not Joab. Nor do we learn of any reprisals on the part of the Canaanite tribes that might have served as a justification in a measure for these atrocities. On the contrary, it is impossible to read Joshua and Judges without being struck with the magnanimity of the invaded tribes in the hour of victory, by contrast with the brutal ferocity of the invaders. The Assyrians and the Chaldeans, against whom the prophets ceaselessly raved, were angels of mercy by comparison with the Jews themselves; and one cannot wonder at Edom and Moab throwing in their lot



with the former, as against a race whose religion taught them to signalise every victory by an indiscriminate massacre of the vanquished. They had not forgotten the hideous experiences of Jericho, of Lachish, and the Rock of Horeb. Nor can it be claimed that the bloodthirsty tendencies of the Jews ceased with their emancipation from barbarism. The national ferocity dyes every page of Josephus's Wars. Jerusalem was conquered, not by Titus but by the domestic butcheries within her own walls. The Zealots were fiends rather than men, the Sikars were worse than the Zealots. Dion. Cassius records that, under Hadrian, "the Jews in Cyrene massacred 220,000, in Cyprus 240,000, in Egypt a very great multitude. Many of these unhappy victims were sawed asunder, according to a precedent to which David had given the sanction of his example. The victorious Jews devoured the flesh, licked up the blood, and twisted the entrails like a girdle round their bodies."

The war which culminated in the fall of Jerusalem was the greatest national calamity that had yet befallen the Jewish nation. According to Josephus, 1,100,000 fell in the siege itself, and during the same period 60,000 at Alexandria, 40,000 at Jolapata, 20,000 at Cæsarea, 18,000 at Damascus, 30,000 at Jericho, 15,000 at Jaffa, 13,000 at Scythopolis, 10,000 at Ascalon, 9,000 at Gamala, 7,700 at Tarichæa, while all the minor cities of Syria contributed in their degree to the general carnage.

Thirty years later came the wars of Hadrian ;

and to meet the situation a new Messiah was found in the person of one Barchochebas. No greater success, however, attended the efforts of this new Deliverer. Dion Cassius reckons the number of Jews slain in this war at 580,000, besides an incalculable number that succumbed to famine and disease. The jingo spirit, however stubborn, could ill survive such a succession of appalling calamities. Jerusalem had become a Roman centre, and for the first time in her history Jews were excluded from her walls. The derisive image of a swine surmounted the Gate of Bethlehem, and the smoke from Diana's altars wreathed up to heaven from Mount Moriah. Once more the abomination of desolation stood in the Holy Place. And once more Jewish impotence took refuge in the prophetic fury of an Apocalypse.

Let us now glance at the situation A.D. 33 through the eyes of the early disciples.

Jesus was dead. The marvellous personality that had compelled among his followers a love and devotion amounting to worship was now but a memory, half sweet, half mournful. But it was felt that the man who had died upon the cross, and whom many claimed to have seen after death, was no common man. Those who had been his companions would now recognise that there had been in him a Divine power that raised him high above his generation, possibly above all generations. Who was he? In the search for a solution it would never occur to a Jew to investigate beyond the limits of strictly Jewish

ground ; and Jewish tradition offered two defensible theories only. Jesus was either Elias or the long-expected Messiah. The claims of the latter alternative were clearly the stronger. The belief in Elijah's return rested solely on tradition, but the advent of the Messiah on the solid basis of prophetic records ; and a searching examination of these records revealed many passages more or less applicable to Jesus.

It may safely be said that there has been no occasion in the world's history to which some prophetic allusion could not be found in the Old Testament. Its predictions thinly cover the entire ground of speculative possibility ; and it would have been strange indeed if the eager Christians could not find in it passages to fit the requirements of their case. Their critical sense was not acute. Their business was to find in the books of their Scripture a recognition of the Messianic mission of their lost and (as they then thought) murdered Master. And they found it ; nor did the thinness of the relevancy of what they found in the least disconcert them. Where the prophetic allusions were not an exact fit the acts of Jesus were so shaped as to support the prophecies ; *e.g.*, in Justin's Gospel Jesus is born in a cave, because Justin deduces from Isa. xxxiii. that he must be born in a cave. In Matthew ii. 12 the parents of Jesus are represented as going into Egypt, "that it might be fulfilled," &c. Again, a native of Nazareth is represented as migrating to Bethlehem (a matter of eighty miles) in obvious concession to the

necessity that the Messiah should arise from the latter place. The need for such devices speaks eloquently of the feverish anxiety of the early Christians to produce documentary evidence of the Messianic diploma of Jesus. Their entire case hung upon such evidence. They knew of no virgin birth and of no miracles which their Master had performed. There was no way open to them by which they could establish his position, and obtain recognition of his mission, except by extracts from the only books of reference that sound sons of Abraham would acknowledge. If Jesus had been miraculously born, or had shown miraculous powers, or if his death had been attended by miraculous portents, it is quite certain that the Messianic theory would never have been launched. It is no compliment to a God to prove him a Garibaldi.

## CHAPTER V.

### CANON

ONLY one degree less important than the point of view of the biographers of Jesus is that of the men to whose lot it fell to select the books on which should be set the stamp of "Holy Scripture."

We kiss the Bible with reverential awe. Its presence in our hand means the difference between a bare misstatement and seven years' penal servitude. We assess it as a missal straight from the hands of God. And yet if we probe a little into the circumstances attending the sealing as the word of God of the second and more valued half, we find that the hands that gave it to us were not those of God, but of a committee of men whom few to-day would care to take as religious instructors.

Few people indeed realise the narrowness, the credulity, and the amazing ignorance of the Fathers who decided for God what was his word and what was not. By the judgment of these men we are bound to-day. The books which fell in line with their views are Holy Scriptures.

Those which did not quickly became ashes. Theodoret, writing in the middle of the fifth century, says :—

“Tatian composed the gospel which is called Diatessaron, cutting out the genealogies, and such other passages as show the Lord to have been born of the seed of David. This work was in use, not only among persons belonging to his sect but also among those who follow the apostolic doctrine, as they did not perceive the mischief of the composition. And I myself found more than two hundred such copies held out of respect in the churches in our part. All these I collected, and put away, and replaced them by the gospels of the four Evangelists.”

In the Glossary of Bar-Ali, written about the end of the ninth century, we find a confirmation of this story. Tatian was an Assyrian Christian. His claim, in common with that of all the Gnostics, was that Jesus had preached a wholly new and divine religion, in connection with which the old Judaism was a contaminating influence. This was the worst form of heresy.

Such gospels as the Church did not destroy it bowdlerised. Any passage in the life of Jesus that might be construed into throwing doubts on the infallibility of Jewish tradition it expurgated or revised, so as to bring into line with orthodoxy. To the vanity of the Jews it was an intolerable thought that any communication should come to man from God except through their agency, and, indeed, with their permission. This is no exaggeration. We have the exact state of



Judaistic feeling in this direction in the words of Justin Martyr, quoted and applauded by Irenæus from the lost attack on Marcion. Justin says: "I would not have believed the Lord himself, if he had proclaimed any other God than the God of the Old Testament." Hegesippus, another prominent Jew Father, denounces all doctrines which are not "enjoined by the Law, the Prophets, and the Lord"—a trinity in which it will be noted that the Law ranks first and the Lord last.

It is interesting to bear in mind that Irenæus, who so heartily applauds the above astounding principle laid down by Justin, was himself in all probability a member of the selecting committee which was responsible for the first canonisation of the New Testament books—a position for which his high Church rank and ecclesiastical zeal would naturally single him out. There is a certain probability that the first selection of books which should rank as Holy Scripture took place during the mission of Irenæus to Rome A.D. 176, and though he was not actually appointed Bishop of Lyons till a year or two later, still, his selection for such an important mission testifies to the esteem in which he was held by the Church of his day. If Tertullian was—as is not improbable—a collaborator with Irenæus in the work of selection, it is easy to imagine the considerations that would influence the judgment of these two. All works would be heretical that recognised in Jesus any divinity that was not a direct exhalation

from the tribal deity of the Jews. God, in fact, according to strict orthodoxy, did not exist outside of the confines of Palestine, and therefore there could be no divinity in Jesus unless it had been imparted to him by the Palestine God.

One can understand, even though he cannot sympathise with, this childish vanity. To the Jews their Law was everything: it was a national institution, which they would relinquish as hardly as an American would his Fourth of July. It was more: it was their very God, and apart from it they refused to recognise divinity. The early Fathers were solid Jews, and by their own admission would sooner have relinquished Jesus than Jehovah. But such narrowness, though excusable in a Jew, is hardly so in a sane Anglo-Saxon. It is scarcely sanity for men to take over ready-made an old tribal deity of questionable character, rather than search for God and find him in their own hearts. The excuse for the Fathers was their nationality and their ignorance. Commenting on their surprising zeal, that ardent Churchman Mossheim says: "All these writers of the first age of the Church possess little learning, genius, or eloquence, but in their simple but unpolished manner they express elevated piety. And this is honourable rather than reproachful to the Christian cause. For that a large part of the human race should have been converted to Christ by illiterate and imbecile men shows that the propagation of Christianity, must be ascribed, not to human eloquence and ability, but to a Divine power."

But surely the important point is, not how many converts the early Fathers made but whether the religion to which they converted men was the same as had been preached by the Founder of that religion. This is a point of vital importance, as to which it is hard to believe that "illiterate and imbecile men" are best qualified to judge.

The canonical books are the few survivors of a prolific family, and they survive, not because of any special marks of inspiration but because their point of view harmonised with that of the selecting committee, or, by a little manipulation, could be made to harmonise.

There can be little doubt that the inclusion of Paul's Epistles in the Canon must have been due, and due entirely, to the influence of the immense Marcionite school which existed in the latter half of the second century. By no other possible explanation can we account for their inclusion. Justin Martyr and Hegesippus rejected Paul entirely; until far beyond the date of the Canon, his writings were regarded by the Fathers as heretical and unintelligible. To the second-century Church Peter was the Prime Minister of Christianity, and Paul the leader of the Opposition.

Marcion himself probably died about the date, or shortly before the date, of the first Canon; and it is a reasonable supposition that his powerful school brought such pressure to bear as resulted in the inclusion of Paul's Epistles. It is improbable, however, that even these were

adopted in their original purity. Marcion boldly accused the Judaistic party of adulterating Paul's Epistles—an accusation which, if true, furnishes a ready explanation of Paul's occasional mixture of metaphor and contradictory reasoning. There is, in addition, the strong probability that some of his more obnoxious works, which were beyond bowdlerisation, were done away with.

We have seen that Tatian's Diatessaron, Marcion's Gospel, and the Gospel of the Valentinians were destroyed. The last two were wholly Pauline. Valentinus claimed to have received his teaching direct from one Theodas, a disciple of Paul. Basilides, another heretic, wrote twenty-four books on the Gospel, all of which were destroyed. This wholesale destruction and mutilation of books bearing on the ministry of Jesus was regarded by the Fathers as an act of piety. There can be no doubt that either Justin Martyr, Irenæus, or Tertullian would have considered that he was acting in the service of God in altering any passage in a religious document which threw doubts on the association of Jesus and Moses.

The actual date of canonisation is a matter of complete uncertainty. During the last twenty years of the second century Irenæus, Tertullian, and Clement of Alexandria all speak of the existence of a canon, from which it appears that some official weeding out of books must have taken place prior to that. But that any such selection was not final is self-evident, for books such as the Clementine Homilies, the Shepherd

of Hermas, and the Epistle of Barnabas, and even the Sybilline Books, continued to be freely read in the churches up to the end of the fourth century. It is generally supposed that there was a fresh revision of the Canon during the sitting of the Nicene Council in A.D. 325. One cannot conceive of 318 bishops being assembled at an extravagant cost to the State without having had a question of such supreme importance referred to them. But here, again, the selecting body does not appear to have been blessed with much intelligence, for Sabinus, Bishop of Heraclea, describes them as a set of "simple, illiterate creatures, who understood nothing." From this general condemnation he excepts himself, Constantine, and Eusebius.

Whatever may have been the verdict of this intelligent Council, it would necessarily be slow in taking effect. The treasured diocesan Bibles, we may be sure, would not be abridged without reluctance. Certain books had been consecrated by usage, and to these the churches would cling for a time. But the official stamping as Scripture of certain books by 318 bishops would have this good result, that it would naturally tend to limit the opportunities of the pious free-lance for corruption, although the heads of the Church were still in a position to make such amendments and modifications in the text as might seem good to them. The Sinaitic and Vatican Codes vary in important particulars from our Authorised Version. The former is the oldest extant version of the New Testament books, and its date is

generally fixed about the middle of the fourth century, or shortly after the sitting of the Nicene Council, but it would obviously embody a form of thought which was anterior to its composition.



## CHAPTER VI

### GOSPELS IN THE MAKING

THE primary object of every one to whom Jesus of Nazareth stands for more than a name must be to get at the real message which he delivered to the world. This is a task which is not unattended by difficulties.

Peter, in the Clementine Homilies, remarks that in the Scriptures there are some true sayings and some spurious. With this pronouncement few will disagree. The difficulty comes when we try to discriminate. Peter found no such difficulty. All passages that bound Jesus to Mosaism and Mosaism to Jesus were true. All that did not were spurious. The Gnostics steered the other course, and rejected everything in Christianity that made for the national exaltation of the Jews. If to-day we search the Gospels for truth in a proper critical spirit, we must go farther than the Gnostics and farther than Peter of the Homilies. We must discard all passages capable of a doctrinal construction. What is left cannot yet be labelled truth, but it at least points down no wrong road. The historical inaccuracies of the Gospels are suffi-

ciently self-evident ; but the aim of these is not doctrinal, and their effect is therefore harmless —*e.g.*, Matthew makes David eat the shewbread in the days of Abiathar the High Priest, whereas the event took place in Ahimilech's day, twenty years before Abiathar ; he attributes to Jeremiah a passage which actually occurs in Zechariah ; the writer of the Fourth Gospel repeatedly makes geographical mistakes. The evangelists themselves convict one another of inaccuracy. Their dates collide ; their genealogical tables disagree. The Synoptists represent the ministry of Jesus as lasting one year ; John extends it over three. The Synoptists fix the Crucifixion on the 15th Nisan, John on the 14th ; and with regard to the events immediately surrounding the final tragedy, the accounts are so strikingly at variance that no apologetic ingenuity has yet succeeded in constructing a theory of reconciliation. Some of the writers, again, narrate incidents of the first importance, such as the Transfiguration and the raising of Lazarus, which others entirely ignore. The silence, indeed, of the Synoptists as to the latter can only be explained by the rejection of the incident, a course which would indeed be forced upon us even if the Fourth Gospel were the only extant version of the life of Jesus.

These inaccuracies merely speak of a careless and none too scrupulous compilation, but they are in themselves unimportant and harmless. The only matter of real importance and interest is that we should get a clear view of what the

actual teaching of Jesus was. It is practically certain that there was at one time an official record of his sayings, and it is probable that this record came into existence shortly after the Crucifixion. In the first realisation of the loss of their master, and in the sympathetic realisation of the abnormal personality of that master (a realisation which seldom precedes loss) would arise the natural desire to perpetuate in writing those wonderful aphorisms that had so exercised the religious susceptibilities of Judea. That these aphorisms were committed to writing is beyond doubt. That they did not pretend to any chronological exactitude is also fairly certain. This is apparent in all the gospel narratives. The main thing aimed at was the preservation of the sayings themselves. The exact time and place at which they were spoken was a matter of secondary importance.

This record disappeared early in Christian history, and was in all probability burnt during the siege of Jerusalem; but its subject-matter survives in the three Synoptics. It had unquestionably been the exclusive property of the Jerusalem Church, and scrupulously guarded and treasured by that zealous body. The jealousy of the Twelve had kept its contents from Paul, and equally from the author of the Fourth Gospel, neither of whom show any acquaintance with this particular record; but Justin Martyr, on the other hand, appears to have been thoroughly familiar with it, or at any rate with the reflection of it which was handed down to his time.

These Logia, or aphorisms, are probably embodied in their entirety in the three Synoptics. The sayings attributed to Jesus in the Fourth Gospel are from a different source. The disciple whom Jesus loved was not the son of Zebedee, nor was he one of the Apostles. He was probably the Presbyter John referred to by Papias; and by some he has been identified with the young ruler of great possessions whom Jesus looked upon and loved. There is much probability in this theory, into the nice points of which it is not at the moment necessary to enter. But we know at all events that at the Crucifixion the mother of Jesus was consigned to the care of this disciple, who, "from that time on, took her to his own home." Here we have an explanation of the special sources of knowledge of the evangelist John. But even these sayings are not recorded as they were spoken. We know that Jesus made no long speeches. "Short and concise were his utterances," says Justin Martyr, "but his word was the power of God." However, in this Gospel, as in the Synoptics, we have unquestionably the essence of Jesuism. This stands out clearly from the later setting of miracles and doctrinal pointers. Of the latter there were four in particular which raised a perfect furnace of controversy throughout the second century. These were (1) "No man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son hath revealed him"; (2) "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the House of Israel"; (3) "It is not meet to take the children's bread

and cast it to the dogs"; (4) "Think not that I am come to destroy the law and the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil."

The first of these passages was one of the main weapons of the Gnostics, whose heresy is chiefly associated with the name of Marcion, and whose original inspiration was Paul. They flourished it in proof that the Old Testament magnates had known nothing of the God that Christ preached, and on the strength of it they boldly included Jehovah among the demons. As a counterblast the Jew Christians freely exploited the last three, with a view to proving Christ's recognition of Mosaic law, and of the preferential claims of the circumcised to God's favour. In the furious polemics between these two parties that followed, each loudly accused the other of coining, for its own purposes, the passages quoted; and evidence will presently be produced which suggests strongly that this is what actually did take place.

For such editorial additions and corruptions the Jew party had far greater opportunities than its adversaries. The heretics—*i.e.*, those who dissociated Jesuism from Jehovah—had their own gospels, but of these none are now extant; they were stamped out by the Church. Those that remain to us are the gospels controlled by the Christian-Jew faction, and this fact must be kept continually before the analytical reader. He will then find a simple clue to the origin of prophecies attributed to Jesus which have never been fulfilled, of commendations of the disre-

putable son of Jesse, and of the various other passages which shed lustre on the Jewish race and its institutions, but which clash hopelessly with the spirit of Christianity. These passages are simply sectarian battleaxes slipped into the text for the purpose of braining doctrinal opponents.

The spirit behind these various interpolations was the Messianic spirit. The Messiah was a patriot pure and simple. Outside of the confines of Judea he had no mission, no interest, no sympathy. This is even an under-statement of the case. To a patriot, in the Judaistic sense, every country beyond Jordan was an enemy, every foreigner the hated of God.

This was the spirit which was assigned to Jesus by the Twelve, and those who followed the Twelve; and this was the doctrine for combating which Paul was hated with an intolerant hatred by the Jerusalem Church and its sectaries.

It is not easy to fix the exact moment when the Messianic theory, in relation to Jesus, first took shape. In the gospel narrative we find Philip asking, "Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" and Cleophas saying, "We thought that it was he that would have redeemed Israel"—the sentiment in each case being purely anti-Roman. The absence of doctrinal value in these passages inclines one to the belief that they formed part of the original records, and that therefore the Messianic idea began to shape itself during the lifetime of Jesus, though we may be sure that he himself would vigorously have combated any such jingo interpretation of his mis-



sion. The exact date, however, is unimportant. What is quite certain is that the idea grew with amazing rapidity after the crucifixion. The lost master was the Messiah murdered by the Sanhedrin. This was the first creed of the bereaved Twelve, to be quickly followed by the belief in the second coming, for the benefit solely of the elect—*i.e.*, of circumcised Christians. This latter doctrine was probably anti-Pauline in its intention, replacing and improving on the burst Messianic bubble.

In the Christianity of Paul there was no Messiah. Jesus was the evangel to the whole world of a new religion, and this heretical doctrine he spread with untiring energy by tongue and pen. Such a doctrine called loudly for a counterblast from the chosen people, whose monopoly of God was being assailed, and they found it in the cultivation and enlargement of the Messianic theory. Jesus was not the evangel of a universal religion. He was, on the contrary, an exclusively Jewish possession, the Liberator of the stock of David, whose coming the prophets and the psalmists had foretold.

This aspect of Jesus is put forward prominently throughout the Acts, and may be taken as fairly typical of the views of circumcised Christians towards the end of the first century. There are in Acts no mystical dogmas surrounding the birth and death of Jesus. He is simply the murdered Messiah. We have a very instructive passage in Acts iii. 22. Here Peter, in support of the claims of Jesus to be the Messiah, argues :

“For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you.”

The quotation is from Deut. xviii. 18, and it is at once apparent that the prophecy would equally well have applied to Elijah or Isaiah; and, furthermore, that in applying it to Jesus, Peter either belittles him into a mere prophet the equal of Moses, or else makes Moses the equal of God. Stephen uses exactly the same words in his defence before the Sanhedrin, so that the writer of Acts evidently attached importance to them. The curious and at the same time the interesting feature of the passage lies in the fact that it gives Jesus no precedence over Moses, but represents him as “like unto him”; and there can be no reasonable doubt that the intention of the author in putting this quotation into the mouths of Peter and Stephen was to do Jesus the highest possible honour, by producing an extract which made him the equal of Moses. Acts is generally supposed to have been written about A.D. 90, and it is difficult to doubt that the speeches put into the mouths of the Apostles reflect contemporary Christian thought among the circumcised. In further support of this belief we find the Clementine Homilies the official organ of Petrine Christianity, representing Jesus and Moses as one personality; and that such an identification was the doctrinal aim of the first Christians is beyond question.

The unlimited opportunities that were offered to those with a dogma to nourish of shaping the Gospels to suit their particular theory, will be appreciated by any who studies their vicissitudes during the hundred and fifty years that elapsed between their canonisation and the occurrence of the events which they recorded. What was their fate after they passed out of the safe official custody of the Twelve? No man knows for certain. Their evolution is buried in obscurity. But there can be little doubt that, for a considerable portion of this period, they drifted about the world at the mercy of every enthusiast with a doctrine to ventilate, and of every sectarian with an opponent to confound.

Paul makes Jesus the sacrifice of the Atonement, which was an annual autumn sacrifice. The Fourth Gospel makes him the Paschal Lamb, which was an annual spring sacrifice, with a wholly different significance. Acts and Mark make him no sacrifice at all, but a murdered Messiah. Peter says that Paul's doctrines have brought men to destruction, while Paul openly denounces Peter. John preaches an altruistic religion of his own, while the Apocalypse offers a fantastic picture of a rebuilt Jerusalem and the permanent re-establishment in the favour of God of the twelve tribes of Israel; there was no lodging for Gentiles in the New Jerusalem. One of the curious features of modern Christianity is that it accepts all these doctrines as equally inspired, without apparently finding any difficulty in their hopeless discord.

To the reasoning mind, however, it is at once apparent that such discrepancies are inseparable from the gradual growth of a number of unofficial versions of the same story.

Little more than a hundred and fifty years ago lived Charles Edward, the Pretender, the bonny, brave, debonair prince of his admirers, the cowardly, dissolute sot of his traducers. Can we trust the records even of these comparatively civilised times? Can we assure ourselves that no party colouring has tinged his deeds, and that his words come down to us as he spoke them? It would be a bold man who would say that he could. And yet in the case of Charles Edward there were but two sides—the “for” and the “against”; and in the battledore and shuttlecock between these two it is reasonable to look for a happy mean which approaches truth. But in the doctrinal controversies of the first two centuries there were a dozen contending sects, all pulling different ways, and each with a doctrine for which it claimed, and occasionally (we can hardly doubt) provided, authority in the particular gospel to which it chanced to have access. What a vista of possibilities is opened when Papias tells us that “Matthew composed the Logia in the Hebrew tongue, and each one interpreted them as he was able”! According to Irenæus, the followers of Valentinus had a gospel of their own, “which they call the Gospel of Truth, for they say that the apostles mixed up matters which are of the law with the words of the Saviour.” We find, again, Celsus, a neo-

Platonist, at the end of the second century, accusing the Christians "that they alter the gospel from its first written form in threefold, fourfold, and manifold ways, and remould it in order to have the means of contradicting the arguments of opponents."

The prevalence, indeed, of mutilation, even during the first century is clearly indicated in the concluding words of the Apocalypse of John, where the author invokes a dire curse on the head of any who tampers with what he has there written. Very similar, indeed, is the spirit in which Dionysius, Bishop of Corinth A.D. 170, writes to Soter, Bishop of Rome: "For the Brethren," he says, "having requested me to write epistles, I wrote them; but the apostles of the devil have filled these with tares, both taking away parts and adding others, for whom the woe is destined." There can be little doubt that the apostles of the devil, whose future the Bishop so piously forecasts, stand for the Gnostics.

For this, however, we may rest thankful; Jesuism itself still stands out as a distinct message. It was merely improved upon by a succession of editors. Strange meanings were attached to commonplace acts, mystic legends read for simple words. From this to the next stage was an easy road. The acts themselves were improved upon, the desired twist given to the spoken words; and quickly and naturally would follow a pious manufacture of unrecorded acts and of words which should have been

spoken but were not. To all whose judgment is not warped by the necessity for working backwards from a fixed theory, these thin devices must always stand out as devices. When even a superficial scrutiny shows us how obviously the vague utterances of the Old Testament were strained and tortured to fit the circumstances of the life and death of Jesus, one cannot feel an increase of respect for the intelligence of those Fathers whose reading of God still governs the conscience of the British Empire. The point to keep before one is that the aim of Jesus was in one direction, that of his biographers in another. Jesus delivered to the world a message which he claimed to have received from God. His biographers have recorded the message, but have for ever discounted its value as a pure revelation, by their frantic efforts to bring the messenger into line with the ancient monuments of their national religion. All the embellishments that surround the life and, more particularly, the death of Jesus, and that are so irreconcilable with historical accuracy, can be traced to Judaistic attempts to dwarf the voice of God into an exclusively Jewish possession. To us, however, who are not Jews, such corruption of the message of God should be a subject for resentment. We feel, with Marcion, that between Jesuism and the Mosaical system there is a gulf that cannot be bridged, and that no Gentile would wish to see bridged. Jesus, as a revelation of the true spirit of divinity, must always stand out as an illuminating beacon. However deep



the encircling gloom, that kindly light leads us surely on. But deck him in the Urim and the Thummim, view him over the blood-splashed altars of the Temple, or with the moans of butchered Canaanites in our ears, and his lustre fades in an unwholesome mirk.

Matthew's gospel was originally written in Hebrew. On this point all the Fathers are agreed. But they are silent as to the date and manner of its translation into Greek. Eusebius relates that one Pantænus found this gospel in India, where it had been preached and left by the apostle Bartholomew. Jerome confirms this, and adds that Pantænus, on his return to Alexandria, brought the gospel with him. If this story can be relied upon, it points to the probability that the translation into Greek took place at Alexandria, that prolific nursery of intricate theology and dogma; and we may be sure that it would not lose in mysticism during the translation.

The evolution of the three Synoptics into their present form is not difficult to follow. Fashioned at Jerusalem from common matter—the simple Logia of Jesus, free from all ecclesiastical dogma—they were carried by the first missionaries far and wide about the world. It is reasonable to suppose that these first missionaries were the members of the Twelve who disappear from history with the death of their Master. It is extremely probable that their mission was exclusively to the foreign Jews, scattered about the Eurasian and African continents. This we may

safely assume from the unbending and exclusive Judaism of those who were left at home—Peter, James, and John, the son of Zebedee, the three “pillars of the Church.” Paul was throughout in a different and hostile camp.

The “India” where Pantænus found Matthew’s gospel was probably our India of to-day. The Jews of the Captivity had filtered through far beyond the eastern Persian border, into the land of the Afghans and Indian Pathans, leaving behind a Semitic type that remains to this day. Here, to the exiled and homesick Jews, Bartholomew would preach the gospel that he carried, a Messianic gospel, telling of the return of the dead Jesus to re-unite the scattered Jews, shake off the Roman yoke, and establish Zion on an eternal pinnacle of glory. There would be nothing extravagant in such a gospel, to a race whose god had from its earliest history been nothing but a military leader. But its childish optimism would hardly survive the news of the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple. The gospel would languish and, with the death of the apostle-missionary, would either sink into obscurity or be reinvested with a new and more lively interest by the absorption of elements of the local religion. In India, Greece, and Egypt legends of virgin births were rife. Both India and Egypt could boast a Trinity. In such ideas, foreign as they were to the original doctrine of the first apostles, there was nothing antagonistic to the main principles of Judaism. On the contrary, after the gradual dissolution

of the first idea that Jesus was to be a material Messiah, *i.e.*, a political liberator, both the virgin-birth doctrine and that of the Trinity would lend themselves fittingly to the more spiritual and abstruse conception that superseded it, that of the Millennium.

The Millennium idea was as narrowly Jewish as the original Messianic idea. Jesus was to re-appear, collect the Jews from far and wide, and re-establish them in Palestine, where for a thousand years the fields and vineyards would yield double crops, and where the chosen people would enjoy one long, uninterrupted period of peace. To both Justin Martyr and Irenæus this idea appears sane and reasonable. Irenæus, indeed, actually attributes to Jesus the prophecy that "in these days every vine shall have ten thousand branches, and every branch ten thousand shoots, and every shoot ten thousand grapes, and every grape ten thousand seeds."

Such narrow and parochial views of the significance of Jesus's life and death would be given an additional stimulus by the contrary trend of the Pauline school, by this time a force to be reckoned with in the ecclesiastical world. Bigotry invariably contracts and hardens by contact with antagonistic views. In Ireland Protestant and Roman Catholic rub shoulders, and to each the other is the active ally of Satan. We find the same concentration of extremes in the case of the Roundheads and Cavaliers, the Covenanters and the Highlanders.

The free circulation of Paul's radical view, and

the alarming increase in the number of its adherents, was met by a fanatical stiffening on the part of the Jew Christians. Paul was long dead. The entire generation of the Apostles had passed away. Nothing was left that was authoritative or first-hand. The scope for pious fraud was wide and elastic.

We can picture our gospels setting out from Jerusalem on their respective journeys, each in charge of an apostle, burning with zeal to spread abroad the teaching of the Master. We can see them separated from one another by the breadth of kingdoms, each making his own little band of converts, each forming the nucleus of a Christian community. Then the death of the Apostle and the gradual accumulation of fantastic ideas round the simple teaching of Jesus. The Apostle would have talked freely of the Messianic question, and, as a prop for such encouraging hopes, the genealogies would spring into being, manufactured according to the materials at hand, and therefore hopelessly contradictory. Then Paul's cryptic doctrine of the Atonement might reach them, and be given vague expression in the text, varied, as in the case of the Fourth Gospel, by the Paschal theory. In the end some of these gospels, long lost sight of, would be discovered by some zealous Christians, carried to Rome or Alexandria, and with acclamations be embodied in the Canon. An eager enthusiasm would naturally attribute them to the giants of the cause, the second to Peter, the third to Paul, the fourth to John.

The introduction of the genealogies points to an understandable desire to prove Jesus, not only of the seed of David but a true Jew. For the predicted Messiah such qualifications were essential, and one cannot but suspect that they were qualifications which were by many denied to Jesus. The Galileans were not Jews by race. They were the descendants of the Chaldeans introduced by Tiglath Pileser to occupy the lands of Issachar, Zebulon, and Naphtali, when the Israelite inhabitants of these districts were deported to Mesopotamia. They had adopted the Jewish religion, but still spoke with a foreign accent, and were looked down upon as alien immigrants. "Can any good thing come out of Galilee?" must have been a galling question indeed to the pro-Messianists of the second century. Small wonder that they were eager to find their Messiah an Hebraic ancestry. To many, however, there will be comfort in the thought that Jesus of Nazareth was not a Jew.

The miracles were probably the final embellishment of a zealous and imaginative cult. The question of the authenticity of the miracles seems simplified when we reflect on two aspects of the case, the evidence of which seems fairly conclusive. In the first place, neither Peter nor Paul, in their epistles, claim any miracles either for themselves or for their Master. When we consider the astounding achievements with which these two are accredited in Acts, it is hardly conceivable that, in their elaborate reasoning in support of their creed, they should have made



no reference to manifestations of God's power through them, which would surely carry more weight with those whom they were trying to convince than a library of abstract arguments. Again, when we remember that Paul's credentials were questioned by the Twelve, and that, in reply, he produced all the arguments of which he was capable in support of his diploma, it is, to say the least of it, surprising that he makes no claim to have performed miracles. Such remarkable evidence of Divine favour would surely have established his position beyond all question. But of miracles he says nothing.

Even more conclusive is Paul's view of the divinity of Jesus and of the outward sign of that divinity. Throughout Paul's epistles we find that Jesus is the Son of God because God raised him from the dead, implying clearly an unique manifestation that established Jesus on a pinnacle above all others. But if the miracles really took place as described, the foundation of Paul's belief is valueless, for Jesus would only be one out of a number who had been similarly raised, even in his own generation.

The Lazarus incident can be dealt with in a few words. A man in whose body corruption has already set in is raised from the dead, restored presumably to perfect health, and goes about his ways. If this had really taken place, it is unnecessary to point out that Lazarus would have been a living monument to the miraculous powers of Jesus. He would have proclaimed his amazing experiences far and wide. The whole



country would flock to see and hear a man who had passed the gates of Sheol and come back. The world would be agog to learn his recollections, his sensations. And if Lazarus would be lionised, what of the man who had achieved this remarkable result? He would surely be immovably established as a god, with the powers of a god.

But none of these things happen. Lazarus, whom one would surely picture the most ardent and convincing among the apostles of the Being who had raised him from the dead, disappears permanently from history. Paul, Peter, and James seem ignorant of his very existence. It is not too much to say that the evidence of their epistles makes it impossible that they can ever have heard of Lazarus. The same may be said of the three Synoptists.

The Lazarus incident, then, falls to the ground, and in its fall other similar tales must be involved. Of these one only need be referred to. In the first Gospel Peter walks on the sea. In the second Gospel he does not—*i.e.*, there is no mention of the incident. But we know from Papias that the second Gospel was either dictated by Peter or else written from materials supplied by him to Mark. All the Fathers endorse one or other of these views. We also know that Mark omitted nothing that Peter told him. Eusebius quotes Papias thus: "This also the Presbyter said: Mark, having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote accordingly whatever he remembered, though he did not arrange in order the

things which were either said or done by Christ. For he neither heard the Lord, nor followed him ; but afterwards, as I said, accompanied Peter, who adapted his teaching to the occasion, and not as making a consecutive record of the Lord's oracles. Mark, therefore, committed no error in thus writing down some things as he remembered them. For of one point he was careful: *to omit none of the things which he heard*, and not to narrate any of them falsely." So the incident in Matthew stands out as fiction, but as fiction in which is a purpose. Peter was the champion of the exclusive, or, at any rate, of the preferential claims of the Jews, not only to the general favour of God but to all the benefits of the Christian dispensation. In the first Gospel (the most Judaistic of the four) there would accordingly be merit in any incident which singled out Peter as a special mark for Divine favour.

We can, then, with complete assurance classify the New Testament miracles with those that accumulated round the names of the Buddha and Mohammed after their respective deaths, and we do this without reluctance. They are an asset of doubtful value in Christianity.

In the midst of an eternal and insensate theological controversy—the wordy polemic of little minds to whom God is a Royal Personage and heaven a Court function—there must to many come the satisfying thought that none of these things count. They are but toys for children to play with and squabble over. The real thing,

of which these are but tactical evasions, is the life that is lived for others. We must either in common honesty admit this, or we must write down the teaching of Jesus as false. If we admit the divinity of Jesus, we must also accept the evangel of the Divine messenger, and from the direct pointing of that evangel there is no escape, except in a pious opportunism that deliberately subordinates truth to convenience.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE VIRGIN BIRTH

ONLY two out of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament contain any reference to the legend of a virgin birth. Paul and John, the most important contributors to the Canon, use words which leave no doubt that they believed Jesus to be the son of Joseph. In the Fourth Gospel Jesus is the Logos made flesh, a strictly Philonian thought. The term "only begotten," which occurs so constantly throughout this Gospel, is also borrowed from Philo. Philo invariably describes the Logos as the "first begotten," or "only begotten" of God. In his philosophy Moses was the Logos, and Elijah was the Logos, but, naturally, not Jesus. John, full of Philonian ideas, extends the title to Jesus. But this extension involves no greater need for a virgin birth than in the case of Moses or Elijah, whose parents were admittedly human. John's Logos, in fact, and equally, Philo's, is the Spirit of God using a man as a vehicle for revelation. Paul, who wrote at least forty years before John, and at a time when Philo's works must have been known to very few, knows nothing either

of a Logos theory or of a virgin birth. For him the divinity of Jesus, and his claim to the title of "Son of God," rests solely on the fact that God had raised him from the dead. This was the seal of his commission from God, the special mark of favour that established him as the Son of the Father who had so honoured him. But the words so familiar to our ears, "begotten" and "only begotten," are not found in the writings of Paul. In Hebrews the words occur twice, but not in the genuine Epistles of Paul. Paul describes Jesus as the Son of God, describes him so repeatedly, but never as the "begotten" or "only begotten" Son of God.

It is important to remember that this expression is purely Philonian, and that its application to Jesus is a plagiarism.

The doctrine of Philo was that the Logos was an emanation from, or the first begotten of, a God who was himself unbegotten—*i.e.*, of spontaneous origin. Here we have an intelligible idea, though presented in clumsy metaphor. We have the idea of a Word, or Power, or Wisdom, emanating from the Almighty, by means of which he communicates from time to time with mankind. The confusion arises from the use of the material word "begotten," which is clearly inept, but which figures with an extraordinary frequency in the writings of Philo. There can be little doubt that Philo derived such ideas in great measure from the Book of Proverbs. In Prov. viii. 22-30 we recognise the Logos figuring very unmistakably under the guise of "Wisdom."

Here again we equally have the birth metaphor, though differently presented. Wisdom is "brought forth," while the Logos is always "begotten," but the characters of the two are identical. In the "Wisdom" of Proverbs there is much, too, that recalls Socrates. The main maxim of Socrates was that virtue was knowledge. This is equivalent to saying that God is knowledge, or God is Wisdom, which is practically the idea in Proverbs, and, similarly, the idea of the Logos. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word *was* God."

The Logos idea itself was no new idea. From Philo we trace it back to Plato, from Plato to Heraclitus, and from Heraclitus to the East, where it disappears over the horizon of history in the form of Brahma; but there is no need that John should have known this. The probability is that he drew for his Logos idea, as well as for his "only begotten" idea, on Philo alone.

The point of importance which must never be lost sight of is that John borrowed the term "only begotten" from Philo, and that Philo uses the word in connection with the Logos itself, and not the human medium (in this case Moses and Elijah) in whom the Logos is temporarily vested. It is therefore quite unjustifiable to argue that John's employment of the word carries with it any suggestion of the Divine impregnation of Mary.

In the Fourth Gospel Jesus is metaphysically



the incarnation of the first begotten Logos, but physically the son of Joseph and Mary. John has no knowledge of any virgin birth theory. In the procreation of the Logos itself there is no feminine principle involved. The Logos is begotten—*i.e.*, created by a mere effort of will. The use of the word “begotten” is, in fact, thoroughly out of place as applied to the projection of the Logos, because, in its true sense, it obviously requires co-operation to be effective. In Justin Martyr’s gospel, for instance, the voice from heaven at the time of the baptism of Jesus says, “This is my beloved Son, *this day* have I begotten thee,” the idea being, as it seems, that at that moment the Logos, in the form of a white dove, took possession of Jesus. This is all the more curious because Justin knows of the virgin birth, and, as a consequence, makes Mary the lineal descendant of David in place of Joseph.

John’s unique Trinity makes it tolerably clear that the Trinitarian Son of God is the Logos proper, not its temporary tenement, Jesus of Nazareth. “For there are three that bear record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost ; and these three are one” (1 John v. 7).

This passage in John has been the subject of much controversy. In the sixteenth century Erasmus omitted it from both his editions of the Greek Testament, and Sir Isaac Newton had subsequently much to say on the subject. In Elizabethan Bibles it was printed in small type. It will be seen that from this Trinity Jesus is

excluded in favour of the Logos, who is once more incorporate. The Logos had "become flesh and dwelt among us," or, as modern phraseology would put it, Jesus had become the inspired mouthpiece of God, possessed, for purposes of revelation, by the Logos, or Word of God. But in John we have no miraculous birth, and no perpetuation of an anthropomorphic Jesus in heaven.

In the Epistles of Paul, Peter, John, James, and Jude there is no word or passage which can possibly be construed into a knowledge, on the part of the writers, of any miraculous circumstances connected with the birth of Jesus. Paul, as has been said, speaks freely of the Son of God, but in his mind the divinity of Jesus is established, not by a miraculous birth but by the fact that God raised him from the dead. This we have over and over again in the clearest terms. Apart from this signal proof of God's adoption of Jesus as his Son, the man who was crucified is the son of Joseph and Mary, "born of a woman, born under the law."

In Acts, from the first to the last word, there is no suggestion of a virgin birth. No evidence could be more conclusive than that furnished by this book. We have a series of long doctrinal discourses from Stephen, from Paul, and from Peter, in which these leaders of a new movement set forth, for the benefit of the unconverted, the foundations on which their faith rests. It is inconceivable that if these men had known of a virgin birth, or if the author, who puts the

speeches into their mouths, had known of a virgin birth, such a striking vindication of their belief in Jesus as the Christ would not have been caressingly dwelt upon. But of any such doctrine we find not a whisper. Throughout Acts, as in the Epistles of Paul, the claims of Jesus to divinity rest on the fact that God had raised him from the dead. We have it more than a dozen times in the course of the book.

The date of Acts is, by almost all biblical students, placed after the siege of Jerusalem, and by many at the latter end of the century. If we accept the earlier of these dates, we find Christian theology ignorant of a virgin birth forty years after the death of Jesus. If we accept the latter, we can with safety add another twenty years on to that period. This would bring us to the date of John's writings, and the evident belief of that writer in the human parentage of Jesus leaves little room for doubt that the first century had passed by before the virgin birth dogma began to take shape.

If we turn to the text of the Gospels we find neither in the mouth of Jesus nor of any of his disciples words which can be construed into belief in a virgin birth. Jesus, on the contrary, with singular persistence, refers to himself as the Son of Man. He speaks of himself as the son of his father in heaven, but only in the same sense in which we are all sons of "our Father which art in heaven." He speaks of "your heavenly Father" as readily as he does of "my father." It is also worthy of note that the words

which our Authorised Version puts into the mouth of Peter, "Thou art the Christ the son of the living God," do not appear in the oldest New Testament MS., the Sinaitic Code. Here Peter's profession is, "I believe that thou art the holy one of Israel"—a strictly Messianic idea, and vastly different to the other. The comparison is of immense interest, as showing how the Messianic aspect of Jesus was gradually superseded by his identification with God, and as showing how the text was altered to keep pace with the evolution of thought.

No reasonable mind can doubt that if the Nativity story had been history we should have found some reference to this marvellous occurrence either in the words of Jesus himself or in those of his disciples. But, so far from this being the case, we find Jesus with brothers who clearly have no knowledge of anything miraculous connected with his birth, and among whom we are told that he had no honour. It is impossible that he should have been without honour among his brethren if the immaculate conception had taken place, nor is it easily conceivable that a woman who had been singled out for such Divine favour should afterwards bear human children, or should "marvel" at the understanding of Jesus, or at Simeon's prophecy.

If we take the view that James, "the brother of the Lord," was actually a younger son of Mary's, we have the surprising fact that this man, from the evidence of his own Epistle, knew of no miraculous circumstances attending the

birth of his own brother. Even if we accept Renan's view, that James was first cousin to Jesus, the circumstance is little less surprising.

This James, for thirty years acknowledged head of the Christian Church, circularised his followers in the document known as the Epistle General of James. In this manifesto he expounds for their guidance the main tenets of the Christian belief, but no whisper does he breathe of a virgin birth. Need investigation go farther? Hardly; but there is still the evidence of the First and Third Gospel. Let us briefly examine these.

Matthew provides an elaborate genealogy to prove that Jesus was the lineal descendant of David, and that therefore the birth of Jesus was in accordance with the predictions of the prophets; but he then destroys its entire value by introducing a story according to which Jesus is not the son of Joseph, and therefore not descended from David. There is no possible explanation that can reconcile these two contradictory statements, except that the genealogies and the nativity story are by different hands, and are accretions of different dates, the nativity story being obviously the later of the two.

The looseness of early Christian dogma, and the astonishing want of critical perception that the Fathers showed in examining these dogmas, is made strikingly clear in Matt. i. 20, where the angel pointedly addresses Joseph as "Joseph, thou son of David." As one cannot well conceive of an angel as making a mistake, we must



assume from this that Joseph was of the royal lineage. To name a man's father in addressing him was a practice of the time, so that in the form of salutation there is nothing unusual. But David was not Joseph's father. Joseph's father, according to Matthew, was Jacob, and, according to Luke, Heli; so that, in the angel's manner of address, there is a marked intention which it is impossible to dissociate from a desire to emphasise the Messianic significance of his lineage. But if Joseph was not the father of Jesus this lineage has no value for Christianity, and the angel's salutation becomes meaningless.

In Luke we have a very similar state of things: a genealogy, wholly different from Matthew's, and yet clearly tracing Joseph's descent from David, the whole point of which is rendered utterly futile by the introduction of the three bracketed words "as was supposed" after Joseph's name. It is hardly conceivable that Luke should have worked out so laborious a genealogy (a work to which the greatest difficulty must have attached) if he believed that Joseph was only the supposed father of Jesus. The bracketed words stand out unmistakably as a later interpolation to make the genealogy fit in with the virgin birth story. The order of introduction would be: First, the genealogy, during the period of Messianic expectation; secondly, the virgin birth story, in the early part of the second century; and thirdly, the editorial note in brackets "as was supposed."

There is a probability that the Third Gospel



began abruptly, as does Mark's, with the present third chapter, and that all prior to that—with the exception of the four introductory verses—is of later interpolation. Marcion's Gospel, which by some of the German school is held to have been anterior to Luke's, and, indeed, the original of Luke's, began with the sudden appearance of Jesus in the synagogue at Capernaum. No careful reader of the opening chapters of Luke can fail to be struck with the misfit of the genealogy as it is now placed. The natural place for it would be where Jesus is first mentioned, and if the original Gospel began at the present third chapter, this would be the case.

Justin Martyr, recognising the impossibility of reconciling a virgin birth with the descent from David through Joseph, throughout his gospel makes Jesus descended from David through Mary and not through Joseph, thereby stamping the genealogies in Matthew and Luke as spurious. Irenæus and Tertullian follow his example. These three were the most prominent of the second-century Fathers, and their names are still held in honour by the Church; but it is characteristic of the logical inconsistency of early Christian days that Tatian was subsequently excommunicated, anathematised, and branded for ever as a heretic because his gospels omitted the genealogies. The lesson, however, is clear: Tatian's crime was not disbelief in Matthew's or Luke's genealogy, but a neglect to furnish some lineal connection, however impromptu, between David and Jesus.

If it is true, as Eusebius relates, that Pantænus found Matthew's Gospel in India, there is a reasonable probability that here was the origin of the virgin birth story, which would be readily assimilated by the Third Gospel. When we remember how widely separated were the Four Gospels previous to canonisation, we need feel no surprise that the Second Gospel escaped similar contamination.

No discussion of the virgin birth question would be complete without some reference to the famous passage in Isa. vii. This single verse, wrested from the context, was probably called up to support rather than to originate the idea of a virgin birth. Marcion of Pontus was the first to remark on its singular inaptness to the case of Jesus of Nazareth, a conclusion with which all who read Isa. vii. and viii. must agree. Here are the broad facts.

Rezin, King of Syria, and Pekah, King of Israel, were advancing against Jerusalem. Ahaz was afraid, and, in order to reassure him, Isaiah gave him a sign from the Lord. "A virgin," he said, "shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel. . . . Before the child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings." There is no mystery here; it is a straightforward assurance, that before a child about to be born shall have reached years of understanding Rezin and Pekah shall be no more. Any doubt on the subject which might remain is quickly dispelled by the next chapter.

Here Isaiah says : " I went unto the prophetess, and she conceived and bear a son. . . . Before the child shall have knowledge to cry My father and my mother, the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be taken away before the king of Assyria." The weakness of the attempt to drag this prophecy into the support of the virgin birth dogma is only equalled by the feebleness of a doctrine which has to fall back on such support. The virgin of chapter vii. is obviously identical with the prophetess of chapter viii., in whose case there is very clearly no immaculate conception. The prophecy is the same in each chapter, but handled in slightly different metaphor, and both passages have obviously to do with very local and present concerns. The word " virgin " should be read " young woman," and as such, Irenæus tells us, Theodotion of Ephesus and Aquilla of Pontus rendered it in their translation.

To turn from the historical aspect of the virgin birth theory to its religious significance, we find that the doctrine is one that Christianity could do very well without. We are so used to the expression " the Son of God," as applied to Jesus, that we seldom pause to consider what the words mean ; but when we do, it becomes at once apparent that they either mean that God is the father of Jesus, in the sense in which Jove was the father of Perseus, or else they mean nothing at all.

A moment's reflection must convince any one that if the Holy Ghost could impregnate the

mother of Jesus it could equally, and with far greater effect, impregnate Jesus himself. According to Church dogma, Jesus was only half Divine, his father being God and his mother a woman ; but it is evident that he would be in a far greater degree Divine if himself directly impregnated with the Holy Ghost in place of having the Divine principle transmitted to him through his mother.

A belief in Divine immanence is not necessarily pantheistic, or at any rate does not involve a pantheism that has any active doctrinal value. The question of a universal participation in the Directing Force of the universe has, in relation to inanimate matter, and even to lower organisms, no practical interest for religion. But when we come to the highest known form of life, man—and man in the incomparable person of Jesus of Nazareth—the question overshadows all others. To what extent was God actually immanent in the Son of Man? Was the universal divinity, of which we all hold a fragment, so abnormally developed in this one form as to carry with it perfect knowledge of God? If so, this man was of a truth the Son of God, even though his father was a carpenter and his mother a common daughter of Eve.

When we reflect on the fact that for the Twelve, for the author of the Fourth Gospel, and, above all, for Paul, the birth of Jesus was as that of other men, we begin to realise how entirely superfluous are all improvements on the ordered course of Nature. That they are also

injurious is no less certain. Another kindred thought, too, arises in sympathy—a thought of the unique personality of Jesus. For a child miraculously born, and whose birth had been the occasion of portents, to command a following would be but natural. It would be indeed strange if he did not. But for a carpenter by trade, a man who, as Justin tells us, himself made yokes and ploughs, to revolutionise the world by the sheer power of his personality, cannot but give rise to the thought that this man's teaching is not lightly to be put aside, and that such power, coupled with a blamelessness of life without parallel, cannot but be the hall-mark of what we may truly call divinity.

## CHAPTER VIII

### PAUL OF TARSUS

THIS extraordinary little man was, in all probability, not a Jew by race. According to Epiphanius, the Ebionites maintained that his father and mother were Greeks, but that he himself submitted to circumcision in the hopes of winning in marriage the daughter of the High Priest—an undertaking in which he apparently failed. That some such report was current is made probable by Paul's evident eagerness to establish himself as a Jew. "Are they Hebrews?" he says to the Corinthians, "so am I; are they Israelites? so am I; are they the seed of Abraham? so am I." In Rom. xi. 1 he definitely proclaims himself a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin, and again in his Epistle to the Philippians. But against this he tells us frankly, in 1 Cor. ix. 20, that "unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews." In any event, it is quite certain that to the professed Jews he was an object of intense loathing, and little less so to the circumcised Christians.

In the Apocalypse there are evidences of many veiled attacks on Paul, as, for instance, the



passage in iii. 9, which reads: "Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, and do lie." And again in the Exhortation to the Church at Ephesus: "And thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars." In the same chapter the author says further: "I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Baalam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols." This is unmistakably aimed at Paul and his assurance that these things counted for nothing—a doctrine which the Church fought to the end, and with apparent success. Eusebius relates that the Emperor Maximin caused unspeakable mental anguish to the Christians by feasting them at banquets at which was served the flesh of sacrificial victims. When they had well eaten, the guests, to their everlasting dismay, were informed of the nature of the food.

In the Epistle of Peter to James, which prefaces the Clementine Homilies, we find Peter constantly attacking with wordy violence a doctrinal opponent whose identity is thinly concealed under the pseudonym of Simon Magus, and in whom we clearly recognise Paul. "He came before me to the gentiles," says Peter; "I have followed him as light upon darkness, as knowledge upon ignorance, as health upon disease." Later on Peter becomes even more definite: "If therefore our Jesus indeed was seen

in a vision, was known by thee, and conversed with thee, it was only as one angry with an adversary. . . . But can any one in a vision be made wise to teach ; and if thou sayest, it is possible, then wherefore did our teacher remain, and discourse for a whole year to us, who were awake ; and how can we believe thy story, that he was seen of thee ; and how could he have been seen by thee, when thy thoughts are contrary to his teaching ; and if seen and taught by him for a single hour thou becamest an apostle, preach his words, interpret his sayings, love his apostles, oppose not those who consorted with him." These passages give us a remarkable insight into the real relations of Peter and Paul, which we cannot doubt that they reflected faithfully.

The Homilies claim to have been written by Clement of Rome, who died towards the close of the first century, but they are universally allowed to be spurious. The apocryphal character of the book, however, does not in the least detract from its value as evidence of the intense aversion in which Paul was held by the Jewish school of Christianity at the date of the writing of the book, which is generally placed early in the third century. The Homilies were read in almost all the churches up to the end of the fourth century. They ranked in Christian esteem only one behind the canonical books, and were included in the great Greek Bible of the fifth century.

The title of Simon Magus, here applied to Paul, was one freely used during the early days of

the Church by any one particularly desirous of vilifying a doctrinal opponent. We find it in Josephus's Antiquities applied to a certain Cypriot, who was employed by Felix as an agent to detach Drusilla from her husband. We find it in the Acts of the Apostles, again in the Clementine Homilies, and yet again in the person of one who travelled about with a beautiful female companion named Helena, and who claimed to be an emanation from God.

In the Homilies the hated term is applied to Paul. It shows him the bitter foe of Peter, and blows to the winds the pleasing fiction, put forward in Acts and adopted by the Church of to-day, that the two apostles ran in friendly double-harness. The hatred directed against Paul adds to the probability of the story that he was not a Jew by birth. He is far easier to understand if we read him a gentile by parentage and a Jewish proselyte by necessity. His methods then at once become systematic and intelligible.

Coming as he did late into the field, it is evident that he read Christianity as none of his predecessors had read it. Intellectually he was centuries ahead of the Twelve; he spoke three languages fluently, was a ready and facile writer, and an intricate and (on the whole) sound reasoner. The Acts narrative shows him a skilful debater; but he himself disclaims any powers of speech; and the latter we may without hesitation accept as the true version.

Paul's conversion to Christianity followed a sudden realisation of the significance of Jesuism.

At the time of Paul's conversion the Christians read Jesus the murdered Messiah. This view Paul had combated before his conversion, and continued to combat with equal vigour afterwards. But he changed his weapons. In recognition of the banner of love and peace under which he was now enrolled he buried the material hatchet; but to the day of his death he never ceased fighting the same fight, though, in a different uniform, by the legitimate weapons of tongue and pen. To Paul the Messianic idea was from the first a childish folly; it was the ethical crusade of Jesuism that appealed to him. To the bloody, implacable Jews, to the licentious provinces of the Roman Empire had suddenly come a message that claimed to come from God. Blood, that message said, and strife, and all the selfish lusts of man, were hateful to God. For those who eschewed such things there was an immortal life beyond the grave.

It is needless to speculate on the exact form of the revelation that converted Paul. It was probably in the nature of one of those overmastering spiritual intuitions which, in a certain psychical atmosphere, men may experience even at the present day. The Acts story of the Damascus journey may be at once dismissed as pure romance, in common with most of the Acts adventures. Paul himself says nothing about any such journey or vision; and the passages from the Clementine Homilies quoted above make it clear that he claimed no such experience. His own account of his conversion is very different.

He was caught up in a trance into the third heaven, "and there heard unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a man to utter." This appears to have been the sum of his Christian education. The Logia or Aphorisms of Jesus, from which our Synoptics afterwards sprang, were in all probability in written form at the time of his conversion. But that Paul never saw them is quite certain. Not only does he disclaim any doctrinal education at the hands of men, but the absence from his Epistles of any direct reference to incidents in the life of Jesus makes it perfectly clear that any records of such incidents as may have been in existence at the time of his writings were sedulously kept from him. Why? Why does Paul, who before his conversion we find busy around Jerusalem, disappear from Palestine for three years the moment he becomes a Christian? His natural course would have been to have sat at the feet of the Twelve, and learned from their lips the precious sayings and doings of the Master. The natural action of the Twelve would have been to have welcomed with open arms this convert from a hostile camp; to have revealed to him with eagerness the treasured *logia* of the Master, and to have kept him as a fellow-worker in their midst. It would have been the Vatican receiving Luther into the Roman fold. But how curiously different are the actual facts! The moment he is converted he disappears, and buries himself in Arabia for three years. Then he comes for a fortnight to Jerusalem, confers with Peter and



James, but with no one else, carefully avoids all the Christian Churches in Judea, and disappears from the country again for another fourteen years. If we can believe for once the evidence of Acts, he was subsequently warned by his friends against going up to Jerusalem. His letter to Rome seems to confirm this. "Now I beseech you, brethren," he says, "for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake and for the love of the spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me, that I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judea." Whether it is the Palestine Christians or the Jews proper that he fears is not made clear. Probably both in equal degree. This passage probably refers to his last visit to Jerusalem; and clearly his alarms were justified. Religious riots at once greeted his appearance. The Jews fairly yelped for his blood; and it is more than probable that in the fanatical outbreak that followed his arrival the sympathies of the Twelve were with their fellow-Jews rather than with their fellow-Christians. At any rate, it is not on record that the Twelve raised so much as a finger to save him, although the influence of James, who held high office in the Temple, and of Peter, who had converted many priests, must have been considerable. Had it not been for the interference of the Roman governor, he would unquestionably have fallen a victim to the fury of the mob.

This frenzied hatred of Paul by all Jews, whether Christian or otherwise, is full of meaning. It shows us by what an immeasurable



distance the members of the Jerusalem Church were Jews first and Christians afterwards. We know that they worshipped in the Temple; they observed the Jewish feasts, ablutions, sabbaths, and the rest of the "beggarly elements" of Paul. We know that James, while archbishop of the Christian Church, simultaneously held high office in the Temple, and, according to Hegesippus, was even High Priest. We know that Peter converted to Christianity "many of the priests"—a proof of how harmoniously the two religions blended, and how trifling was the doctrinal difference between the two. Early Christianity, indeed, was not a separate religion. It was simply a phase of Judaism, and as such raised no bad blood. James, the head of the movement, lived in Jerusalem for thirty years after the Crucifixion. Not only was he unmolested during that time, but he was actually singled out by the Jews for ecclesiastical honours. He was surnamed The Just, and eventually, according to Josephus, fell a victim to the personal jealousy of Ananias, the High Priest, on account of the superior esteem in which he was held by the people. We know that Peter and John the son of Zebedee, and presumably others of the Twelve, lived in Jerusalem for many years unmolested. The persecutions described in Acts we may unhesitatingly write down as pure fables, on the evidence of the continued residence of the Apostles in Jerusalem. If they had been persecuted, they would have gone elsewhere, more especially if the mandate of their Master to go

and preach to other nations be taken as authentic. In any case, there was clearly no virtue in residence in Jerusalem.

The Stephen incident may be history or may be pure myth. The latter is indicated by Paul's complete silence on the subject; but even if for the moment we accept it as history, it affords no evidence of any persecution of Christians, for Stephen was not a victim to his religion, but to the private animosity of some who bore him a personal grudge. Stephen was entrusted with the distribution of alms—a thankless task at all times, and one which in this case clearly made him enemies, for we read: "Some hired false witnesses to accuse him of blasphemy against Moses and against God." Note the apotheosis of Moses! Now, it is clear that, if he had been arraigned on account of his Christian principles, false witnesses would not have been necessary, for his Christianity was avowed. The specific charge was blasphemy against Moses and against God. Stephen repelled the charge with dignity, and was apparently on the high-road to acquittal when, for some unexplained reason, he suddenly lost his head, and broke out into a vehement abuse of the Council. The accusations which he hurled at his judges included those of persecuting the prophets, murdering the Messiah, and breaking the law. Whereupon "they were cut to the heart, and gnashed upon him with their teeth," and without further parley stoned him. It must be evident to all that here is no case of a tribunal judicially

condemning a man on account of his Christian professions. That such was not the case is conclusively proved by the fact that the Twelve did not share his fate. At the time of the Stephen incident they were openly proselytising in Jerusalem, unmolested by any. Peter, we learn, made three thousand converts in one day.

There was, in fact, no material for a persecution. Outside of the shady testimony of Acts, we look in vain for the martyrdoms which among a fierce, fanatical people such as the Jews would have been inseparable from a religious persecution.

It is often remarked upon as singular that Josephus makes no mention of the Christians; but the explanation is found in the fact that there was no essential difference between the Jews and the original Jerusalem Christians. Except for Paul, Christianity would have lived and died as the strange creed of an obscure Jewish sect. If there had been anything in the shape of religious persecution, Josephus, himself a priest, could hardly have failed to record it; nor could he have avoided mention of the Christians as a religious body if they had stood out conspicuously from the orthodox Jews. If Peter made converts at the rate of three thousand a day, and if "many priests were obedient to the faith," it is fair to assume that by the date of the siege the Christians must have formed a considerable portion of the population. And yet Josephus never so much as names them. He tells us all about the Pharisees, Sadducees,

Essenes, the Sikars, and the Zealots, but of the existence of a Christian sect he is apparently ignorant. The only explanation is that Jacobean Christians were indistinguishable from Jews.

James the son of Zebedee is claimed as a Christian martyr; but there is no shadow of justification for such a claim. He was put to death by Herod the Younger, as John the Baptist had been by Herod the Elder. No ingenuity can construe John the Baptist into a martyr to Christianity. He was put to death for criticising Herod's private life; and there is a strong probability that the Son of Thunder, with his proverbial impetuosity, had rashly attacked those domestic vices which were, if anything, more pronounced in the younger than in the older Herod.

The persecution theory is more discredited than helped by the tale of Paul's journey to Damascus. This, in common with most of Acts, reads like pure romance. It is, to say the least of it, singular that Paul himself gives no account of this miraculous occurrence, nor, indeed, so much as refers to it when he recounts the various adventures that had overtaken him during his career. According to the story of Acts, Paul in the rôle of persecutor asks permission to go to Damascus to bring bound to Jerusalem any Christians there found. But why bind Christians in Damascus when there were thousands in Jerusalem itself who were not bound? In Jerusalem three thousand had been converted by Peter in one day, in addition to which "many priests were obedient to the faith." Why not,

then—if the persecution of Christians was the object—save a journey of 150 miles and persecute those at the very door? The story has not the ring of truth, and the marvellous central incident is posted up as fiction by Paul himself, the hero of it.

The object of the author of Acts is throughout fairly transparent. He aims at representing the Jerusalem Church as sharing in equal degree the views of Paul, and the persecution which those views provoked. He wishes to paint the pillars of the Church as the pioneers instead of as the obstructionists of a movement which, at the time of writing, had become popular, and promised to become universal. Acts was written towards the close of the first century. By that time the entire face of Christianity had changed. The principle of universality was not only firmly established as a Christian tenet; it was the dominant note of a movement that was spreading over the entire Roman Empire. Its Founder, formerly branded as an apostate, had now been canonised by an ever-growing school as a martyr and a saint. The ranks of the gentile Christians swelled daily, and were seemingly destined to swell beyond seen bounds. With every extension of the movement came a corresponding increase of the foreign element. The religious outlook of Christianity had perforce, though reluctantly, broadened. The march of progress was too strong for the reactionaries. The gentile was no longer the hated of God, nor circumcision the only passport to heaven.



Peter was still the hero of the orthodox party ; and the author of Acts makes a valiant attempt to show this hero standing shoulder to shoulder with Paul in his fight for universalism, and equally undergoing persecution which was inseparable from that fight. In Peter's interests, as the Church hero, and in James's interests, as quondam archbishop, it was important to show these two as the fathers of an ever-growing popular movement, rather than of the ignoble Nazarene sect, now dwindling to extinction at Pella. In this spirit the author of Acts strains at proving that James and Peter not only accepted Paul's radical views, but actually anticipated them. Peter sees a vision of a sheet filled with animals, which convinces him of the equal rights of the gentiles. At the conference which preceded the famous visit to Antioch, both Peter and James speak in favour of the extension of Christian benefits to the gentiles. Paul is represented as tacitly concurring, but as contributing nothing to the debate, nor as being in any sense a leader.

If Paul had never written the Epistle to the Galatians, all this might have passed as history ; but, as it is, it stands out as pure romance, behind which is a deliberate intention. Paul's account of the matter is fairly clear. Seventeen years after his conversion he went up to Jerusalem and "communicated the Gospel which I preached among the gentiles, but privily to them which were of repute, lest by any means I should run, or have run in vain." From this



admission it is clear that he was nervous as to the reception which might await his daring doctrine, and apparently not without cause, for two verses later he complains that "False brethren came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage"—the bondage here referred to being obviously the bondage of the Law.

Here we have it fairly established that Paul came up to Jerusalem for the express purpose of communicating to headquarters his particular reading of Christianity ; and it is equally certain that he succeeded in making no permanent impression on the rigid Judaism of the Jerusalem Church, for we read farther on: "But when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed to me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter [they decided] that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcised." This reads like a fairly definite statement from Paul to the effect that after he had explained to the Twelve his views they and he agreed to differ, they going to the Jews and he to the gentiles. The pro-gentile speeches, then, of James and Peter which, according to Acts, were delivered prior to this, stand condemned as fiction, as does also the sheet story.

When Acts was written Paul had long been dead. Had he foreseen the garbled version of the affair which would afterwards be published, he would doubtless have been more explicit still. But even as it is, the further discrepancies

between the two accounts are sufficiently striking. According to Galatians, Peter, after the conference, accompanies Paul to Antioch, while in Acts it is Silas and Judas who go with him—an attempt, apparently, to establish an alibi in the case of Peter's subsequent rupture with Paul. In Acts the Jerusalem Church is represented as writing a letter of encouragement to the gentile Christians, announcing that it is sending "chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul." In Galatians the "chosen men" resolve themselves into spies from James, whose instructions clearly were to see that Peter was not seduced into universalism by the dangerous society of his companion. This diplomatic move was evidently as necessary as it was successful, for we read in Paul's account that "before that certain came from James, he did eat with the gentiles; but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision"—a defection for which Paul openly denounced him. This breach between Paul and Peter appears to have been permanent, for in the latter's epistles, written some fifteen years later, and on the eve of his own death, he writes of Paul as teaching "things hard to be understood, which many . . . twist to their own destruction"; and although he therein alludes to him as "our beloved Paul," it is fairly clear from the context that the epithet merely voices the desire of a dying Christian to be at peace with an old-time antagonist before facing eternity.

The Epistle to the Galatians convicts Acts of deliberate perversion of facts. The silence of both Peter and Paul as to any miracles performed by them stamps the marvellous deeds attributed to them in Acts as pious inventions of the author ; and we may safely take the same view with regard to the alleged persecution of the Jerusalem Church. It had no foundation in fact, and was manufactured by the author for the purpose of representing James and Peter as comrades in the same camp with Paul. Paul unquestionably was persecuted : " Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one," he complains. But not only did the Jerusalem Church not share as victims in this persecution, but the strong probability is that they sympathised with it, and even secretly fomented it.

Paul was an apostate from Moses and the Law. He had filched from the " chosen people " the benefits of the Covenant made with Abraham, and had deposed Moses from his seat on the footstool of God. There was no more heinous sin than this. It would rank as a capital offence with all Jews, and with the Twelve no less than with the Sanhedrin and the rabble.

The first chapter to the Galatians leaves no room for doubt that Paul renounces Jerusalem as the nursery of his faith. In explaining that he saw Peter and James, his tone is unmistakably apologetic : " But other of the apostles saw I none. . . . Now the things I write unto you, before God I lie not." Why this vehement denial of having seen other of the apostles? Clearly.

because he is repudiating education at the hands of the Twelve, and asserting his special right to preach by virtue of direct revelation. It is significant that he prefaces what we may term his personal explanation by invoking curses on the head of any and all who preach a different gospel to that which he himself lays down. "If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that you have received, let him be accursed." That the Petrine school is here indicated seems beyond the region of doubt. We know of no other gospel at this period outside of the contending schools of Peter and Paul, nor of any sect that would merit such vehement denunciation, except the sect which rains down contumely on the head of Paul in the diatribes of the Clementine Homilies.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE DOGMA OF THE ATONEMENT

A DOGMA often grows and matures from a very stray seed. The curious dogma of the Atonement is a relic of the old Jewish sacrificial systems, and it is the custom to father it back on to the Apostle Paul. This is in a sense correct, of course ; but Paul's doctrine, as will presently be shown, was no more than a technicality, and, apart from its name, had nothing in common with the modern Church dogma. Paul was working for a certain diplomatic result, and his Atonement doctrine was a concession to racial traditions in which he himself had no inherited belief, and the concession was practically forced upon him by the situation. Paul failed in the scheme he had in hand ; and, with the failure of the scheme, the lever that he had used for working the scheme was thrown away as no longer required. It disappeared entirely from a field of religion in which it had no longer any *raison d'être*.

We have the clearest proof that this was so in the evidence of the devout literature with which

the Christian world was deluged during the interval between the abandonment of Paul's abortive Atonement weapon and its reintroduction in the fifth century.

In the pages of this literature we search in vain for any trace of the modern Atonement doctrine ; it is simply non-existent. Clement, it is true, speaks twice of remission of sins, but "by the grace of repentance," which is, in substance, Paul's doctrine of the cancellation of original sin. That Clement was no believer in automatic redemption is made clear by his own words. "But how, brethren," he says, "shall we do this? [receive the reward God has promised]. We must fix our minds by faith towards God, and seek there things that are pleasant and acceptable unto him. We must act conformably to his holy will and follow the way of truth, casting off from us all unrighteousness and iniquity, together with all covetousness, strife, evil manners, deceit, whisperings, detractions, all hatred of God, pride and boasting, vainglory and ambition. For they who do these things are odious to God" (1 Clem. xvii. 7-8). And again in his Second Epistle: "Let us then not only call him Lord. For that will not save us ; for he saith : not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord shall be saved, but he that doeth righteousness."

In the "Shepherd of Hermas" the term "remission of sins" occurs once only, and then unaccompanied by emphasis. The ceaseless insistence of the whole work is on the need for



chastity and charity, and there is throughout an undeniable suggestion that without these two qualifications any candidature for heaven is hopeless. "For the Lord hath sworn by his glory concerning his elect, having determined this very time that if any one shall even now sin, he shall not be saved."

The seven accepted Epistles of Ignatius, and the Epistles of Barnabas and Polycarp, are entirely free from any reference to a vicarious Atonement or a remission of sins. All the above-mentioned works were read and esteemed in the Churches of the first four centuries, and this evidence leaves little doubt that during the time they were in circulation avoidance of sin was to every Christian the only hope of salvation; of reliance on an Atonement we hear nothing. The virgin birth doctrine and the doctrine of the Trinity were, as we know, in ceaseless prominence; the Paschal controversies ripened at one time into a very bitter feud, and the Arian disputes were only quenched in the blood of many Christians. We have the schisms of the Ebionites, the Gnostics, and the Donatists; we have the heresies of Marcion and of Tatian, and the ceaseless feuds between the Judaistic party, and the school of independent Christianity; but in no single instance in any Church dispute do we find the Atonement doctrine as the *vexata questio*. When we remember that we are dealing with times when a correct interpretation of Scripture meant heaven, and a wrong construction inevitable and literal hell, it is impossible

to pass lightly over the fact that this doctrine was, among these earnest disputants, completely ignored. The second and third centuries were prolific in Christian literature. From Justin Martyr onwards the Fathers plied indefatigable pens. They devoted themselves with an astonishing assiduity to the task of setting out in writing the articles of their faith. But in none of these writings, of which many are extant, do we find any trace of that insistence on the efficacy of the Atonement which characterises the religious teaching of to-day. Towards the end of the second century, Melito, Bishop of Sardis, with enthusiastic fervour represents Jesus in sixty different religious aspects; but though the good Bishop's imagination is clearly taxed to the utmost to complete the series, not one of his sixty presentations has any sacrificial suggestion.

During the first four centuries Paul's Atonement doctrine was universally recognised as having been an "election dodge" called into play by a situation which had long ceased to exist. In the early part of the fifth century, however, the entire Church was electrified by the announcement of a momentous discovery. A certain Numidian African named Augustine had succeeded in reading a hitherto entirely unsuspected meaning in the cryptic arguments of Paul. It was now found that a certain attitude of mind, following on the performance of certain rites, was rewarded by a complete cancellation of all sin, whether original or committed. In explanation of the *prima facie* unfairness of a

system which reserved its benefits for such a fragmentary portion of humanity, Augustine evolved the doctrine of "grace"—*i.e.*, of capricious nepotism on the part of the Deity, and explained that the sure road to this special dispensation lay in the knowledge of certain mysteries which were concealed from all but Christians.

The acclamation with which this discovery was hailed can be imagined. For three hundred and fifty years hell-fire had gaped before the peccant Christian. The martyrs had undergone hideous tortures in dread of this fire, and in anticipation of a heaven from which backsliders were rigorously excluded. The early Christians had led lives of rigid purity, and painful self-denial with similar ends in view. And now it was discovered that all these sufferings had been unnecessary. Hell-fire was not for the wicked, but for the uninformed. The cardinal sin was not self-abandonment to the cardinal lusts which the first Christians had so painfully avoided, but ignorance of certain mysteries, rites, and formulas.

For fourteen hundred years the Church has hugged itself over the possession of these special privileges, and in gratitude to Augustine for the absolution which he provided from the consequences of sin, both the Roman Catholic and Protestant Churches have conferred on him the title of "saint"—and this in spite of certain chapters in his life not usually associated with the title.

Grotesque as the above views may appear, it is the astonishing fact that they are still in effect

the food on which the disciples of the Church are brought up. Aspirants for Confirmation have to commit them to memory, candidates for Holy Orders have to subscribe to the second article of the Christian faith, which lays down that committed sins, no less than original sin, are cancelled by the Atonement. There is no other religion in the world, outside of Ju-ju, with its attendant setting of human sacrifices, where such a manifestly immoral doctrine holds place ; and it is obvious that the ethical standard of any country must continue low where such a doctrine obtains. It was evolved, as has been said, by Augustine, from Paul's writings ; but even if the doctrine had in truth been Paul's, its inherent immorality would have condemned it. But it was not Paul's. We, equally with a fourth-century Numidian, have a right to read Paul's Epistles ; and to any open-minded reader it is at once apparent that Augustine's doctrine was a casuistic distortion in the interests of sin.

It must be understood before all else that Paul, in using his Atonement argument, is straining at justifying the action of God in opening heaven to the Gentiles. Paul was a born diplomat. A man of protean adaptability, he designedly presented different faces to different audiences. "To the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews. To them that are under the Law [I became] as under the Law, that I might gain them that are under the Law." "I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some." This is frankly Jesuitical ; and it is this

Jesuitical Paul, working in all sincerity for a sacred end, that we must keep in view when analysing the Atonement doctrine, and the mental attitude of the man who conceived it. "To the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews." A gentile by birth, and a student of the philosophical school of Hillel, it is probable that Paul viewed the entire portfolio of Jewish rites, traditions, and superstitions with a superlative contempt. But none knew better than he that it was only through their national vanity that he could hope to reach the Jews. So through that channel he made his endeavour. The one goal before his eyes was, of course, the spread of Jesuism throughout the world. But the Churches guarded their doors, and only through these portals could the movement spread beyond the circumcised. So to the Churches he brought his argument, carefully conceived, carefully worded, and scrupulously worked out on Mosaical lines.

In the first flush of his wrath at Adam's disobedience, God had declared war upon all mankind for evermore. From this feud in which he had involved himself he was powerless to find release, except in the sacrifice of his own son, but, that once accomplished, the old state of enmity was cancelled, and God and man were at peace. The special application of this doctrine to the case he had in hand is disclosed when Paul pleads that "as in Adam all die, so in Christ all become alive." This was sound logic, as far as it went; but the Jews did not admit the



premises, and herein lay Paul's failure. They saw through him. They saw that the craft of the man aimed at cajoling the sons of Abraham into sharing Jehovah with the uncircumcised, and the attempt was at once marked up as menacing and impious. But infinitely more so was the basis that Paul postulated for his argument—*i.e.*, the strained diplomatic relations existing between God and the Jews prior to the crucifixion. The Jews claimed to be the chosen people, the selected favourites of God. How could God have been at war for three thousand years (according to Jewish reckoning) with the people of his choice? The very thought was impious and impossible. Under no consideration would the Jews admit that any doctrine of original sin could possibly extend to themselves. The Clementine Homilies make this quite clear, and the Homilies unquestionably reflect the standpoint of the Christian Jews of the day. They represent Peter as "combating as blasphemous" Paul's doctrine of original sin, evidently because the accusation affected themselves. Apart from other considerations, it does not appear from Rom. v. 15 that Paul reckoned the redeeming effects of the crucifixion to have been in any sense retrospective, so that such objects of Divine familiarity as Abraham, David, Elijah, and even Moses himself, would be involved in the general condemnation, which was clearly a proposition as blasphemous as it was outrageous.

So the Christian Jews rejected Paul's ingenious



elaboration. The Twelve rejected it; the Jerusalem Church rejected it, after having had the niceties of the doctrine verbally explained to them by the author; and the second-century Fathers (certainly up to the time of Irenæus) rejected it. In the foreign churches, mainly owing, no doubt, to the geographical position they occupied, the doctrine took gradual root. It was hardly possible that it could be otherwise. The nucleus of these churches and their executive was Jewish, but the surrounding atmosphere and the entire recruiting-field was gentile. That recruits should join the churches was, of course, the aim of all; the bone of contention was the initial rite which the executive insisted on, which the recruits objected to, and which Paul, with some show of reason, maintained could be a matter of no special moment to the Deity.

It is necessary to point out these facts in order to make clear the drift of Paul's reasoning. It is necessary, in short, to get a grip of what he tried to do before examining the way he tried to do it. We can then appreciate his arguments, thin as these undoubtedly are in more than one place, and Mosaical as they necessarily are throughout.

In the first place, Paul took his start from the essentially Jewish belief that in his dealings with men God was not a free agent, but was constantly hampered by obligations under which he had laid himself in unguarded moments, *e.g.*, "The Lord sware, and will not repent." "The Lord repented him that he had made Saul king."

The entire structure of Judaism, in fact, is built on the foundation of a reputed covenant between God and Abraham, as the result of a bargain in which it need hardly be said that the Hebrew had the best of it. It is with such a God that Paul is called upon to deal. His purpose is to find a technical release for that God from the predicament in which he has placed himself by his own hasty act, when he cursed mankind for ever. Such a release could clearly only be achieved by some fateful and unique ceremony; and among Jews it need scarcely be said that such a ceremony would take the form of sacrifice, and more particularly of the sacrifice of the firstborn son, according to time-honoured custom. The interest of the matter, from the view-point of modern Christianity, is that Paul's doctrine of Atonement was simply a technicality, and did not in any way profess to provide absolution from committed sin. It absolved man, in fact, from the consequences of none of his own acts, but merely from the common ruin in which Adam had involved all posterity. Under the old dispensation the righteous and the unrighteous were alike condemned to what Paul calls "death"—*i.e.*, posthumous extinction. Under the new the righteous had the path to eternal life open to them—but only the righteous. On this point there is no ambiguity. "Liars, drunkards, revellers, adulterers, and suchlike shall *not* inherit the kingdom of God."

The moment this point is grasped there is an

instant disappearance of any talismanic virtue in Paul's Atonement. His doctrine does not guarantee heaven for us; it only makes it technically possible for God to grant eternal life to those who merit it. Before the crucifixion, according to Paul's argument, God could not have done so even if he had wished, for God and man were at enmity. The crucifixion was the ratification of the treaty between combatant parties, and thenceforward heaven was open to all competitors: "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." And again: "For if when we were at enmity, we were reconciled to God by the death of his son. . . ." This view of the effect of the atoning sacrifice on the destinies of men is consistently maintained throughout Paul's Epistles.

If we now turn the eye of modern criticism on Paul's theory, we see at once that the weak point in his argument was that the basis of his doctrine, viz., the posthumous extinction of mankind because of the Fall, has not the authority of the only available book of reference on the subject, to wit, Genesis. Eternal extinction was not one of the penalties invoked by the Fall; and those penalties that were invoked were manifestly not cancelled by the death of Jesus, for man still toils in the sweat of his brow, woman still conceives in sorrow and pain, and to dust they both return. Again, in making the great Atonement the corollary of Adam's fall, Paul was adopting a line of reasoning for which

he had no justification in the analogy of the yearly Atonement.

The yearly Atonement was a cancellation of the sins of the past twelve months, but it had no connection, however faint, with the fall of Adam. It was, on the contrary, offered on account of sins actually committed during the preceding period, from which it offered a full and convenient discharge.

The abstract idea of atonement is so childish as to be beneath discussion. It is based on the idea that if a man incenses his God, that God must have a life—but whose life it is is a matter of indifference to the God. In the infancy of the Israelitish ceremony the life given had to be a human one—the firstborn of the offender, for choice (Micah vi. 6); but in later years it became the custom to substitute an animal. Finally (as in the case of the universal firstborn sacrifice), the custom was directed into commercial channels; and instead of a life, we read that every man was called upon to pay half a shekel “for a ransom for his soul unto the Lord” (Exod. xxx. 12)—a demand which we cannot in reason call exorbitant. None of these Mosaical ordinances, however, properly furnish an emblematic model or precedent for Paul’s doctrine, inasmuch as his Atonement gave no quittance from committed sins. “They that do such things shall *not* inherit the kingdom of God.” The warning is incessant, in more or less veiled terms, throughout his Epistles. Paul’s parallelisms, then, were all wrong, and every

circumcised Christian in the Roman Empire must have seen that they were all wrong; and with his real object clearly, transparent, it is hardly surprising that he failed to drive his point home with his Jewish correspondents.

Let us now for a moment skip nineteen centuries and come to the present day, and we at once uncover a flaw in Paul's argument, of which the first century knew nothing, but which at once tumbles his whole elaborate structure down in a heap. We know now that man existed on earth hundreds of thousands of years before Adam. We know that Adam did not eat any forbidden fruit, and that there was no Fall and no inheritance of original sin. The stubbornest adherents of orthodoxy now admit the Creation story and the Fall story to be figurative, though—with a curious inconsistency—they retain the Atonement doctrine while reluctantly, relinquishing the foundation which alone makes it intelligible.

To the first and second centuries Adam was literally the first man, and Genesis an historical account of events that had actually occurred. They rejected Paul's arguments because they disallowed the theory of a state of enmity between God and the Jews, and because—apart from that one fundamental objection—they were able to detect fatal flaws in the general structure of the doctrine. But to us, with our fuller knowledge of Genesis, the basis of Paul's doctrine is not merely unsound, it is absolutely non-existent; and in its absence the entire doctrine loses all meaning and value.



The Atonement dogma in its modern aspect would not be worthy of five minutes' consideration were it not for the bar that it offers to ethical progress. Its immorality is conspicuous. Any religion which guarantees immunity from the consequences of sin in return for an attitude of passive confidence is manifestly immoral. And this guarantee of the Christian Church is unquestionably its chief asset. It is the bait which it holds out to recruits. It forms the subject-matter of nine-tenths of the hymns we sing, and of all the prayers we offer up in church. Winwood Reade, in his "Martyrdom of Man," puts the situation thus: "God so hated men for being as he had made them, that he condemned them all to eternal torment, but because they murdered his son, he forgave them."

The basic idea of redemption by sacrifice is not Divine but demoniacal. In the first place, the act which makes the redemption necessary, is clearly that of a demon. For an offence for which we should send a child to bed at six instead of eight, God condemned all mankind to eternal torment. Then the act which wipes out this ban is equally demoniacal. We are to-day sufficiently emerged from primitive savagery to know that the sacrifices of firstborn sons might give unholy pleasure to devils, but not to God. Even in the second century, Irenæus—staunch Churchman as he was—appears to have realised this insurmountable difficulty, for he attempts an ingenious compromise by making Jesus a sacrifice to the devil as a ransom for



the souls of men. Irenæus, to be consistent, should have antedated his theory, and made all the Jehovastic sacrifices devilish, instead of Divine, as they undoubtedly were. But logical consistency was not a characteristic of the moment; and whatever Irenæus may have thought, he kept his thoughts to himself. There was, after all, no need for him, any more than for Paul, to probe into the ethics of obsolete practices. Jewish sacrifice had been dead for a hundred years, and we may assume, in spite of the gruesome accusations of its Roman traducers, that Christian ritual had from the first been free from it. To Paul's elevated mind the whole system was doubtless repellent; but to have unmasked his real views on the subject to his Jewish correspondents would have been a fatal tactical error, and one for which there was no call. The sacrifice of Jesus was, in the theology of his Epistles, the consummation and, at the same time, the abolition of the established practices which had stood for religion from Moses to Caiaphas. This was a diplomatic concession to the past, and one that exercised no intrinsic effect for harm on the present and, so far as he could foresee, on the future.

Paul's Epistles were intended for private circulation only. There was no thought in the mind of the writer that centuries later his special pleading to the Jews would be twisted into a declaration of belief in automatic salvation. Could he have looked forward across the gulf of centuries and seen an indolent and selfish

world fathering its arrogant claim of prescriptive rights to heaven back on to him, he would surely have burned his letters undispached, rather than go down to posterity as the author of a doctrine so brimful of possibilities for evil.

## CHAPTER X

### MARCION OF PONTUS

A HUNDRED years had passed since the tragedy of Calvary; and the Christian God was still the monopoly of the Jews. The scope of his benevolence had, it is true, been extended beyond its ancient limits. On this point all were now agreed. The Crucified One had been a special envoy to ratify the act. Circumcised Greeks, Proselytes of the Gate, and—according to one school—the whole world, might now hope for God's favour. The schools wrangled over the extent of God's generosity in this direction. It was the one crucial question that tore and distracted the Church. Feeling ran high over it. The schools of Peter and of Paul rained pious curses on each other's heads. But behind all these differences there was a solid and, as it seemed, an irrefragable bond of union. All phenomena, all revelation, all Divine communication with mankind hailed back to the one and only God—Jehovah of the Pentateuch. From this fundamental article of faith there was at first no whisper of dissent, nor even a thought, however faint, of the possibility of such dissent. But

none the less the dissent came. Sects sprang into sudden existence who viewed askance the doings of the God of Israel. Could such acts, they asked, be Divine? Could the sublime ideals of the Christ spring from such a turgid source? The men who whispered these nameless blasphemies were the Gnostic heretics. The whispers grew. They broadened into a shout. Saturninus, Valentinus, and Basilides, each in turn raised it in a slightly varying key. Each founded a school whose tenets differed in detail, but who were solid on the main point of refusing the God of the Old Testament any part in Jesus of Nazareth. To each school belonged its special gospel, carefully purged of the polluting atmosphere of Israel.

The Gnostics would probably have made little mark in Christian history had it not been for the achievements of one truly remarkable man, who to his admirers stood out as the close imitator of Christ and to his foes as the active principle of heresy. Marcion of Pontus was born at Sinope towards the beginning of the second century. It has been claimed by some that he was the son of the bishop of that place, but the fact is not established. It is, however, known that he was a shipbuilder and a man of considerable wealth; and the act that first brought him into prominence was his contribution of a large donation to the Christian Church at Rome. This oneness with orthodoxy, however, was short-lived. Difficulties arose in the mind of Marcion over the character of Jehovah. By no reading, however

broad, and by no reasoning, however elastic, could he bring this Being into line with the Christ of Paul. From these difficulties arose gradually a solid belief. The God of Jesus and the God of the Jews were the width of the universe apart. The one breathed love, purity, and mercy, the other vengeance and bloodshed. Any attempt to identify them as one was sacrilege. There was no suggestion in Marcion's mind that Jehovah had been a mere reflection of the Jewish character; it was many centuries later before this idea took definite shape. To Marcion he was an actual being, supernatural and immortal, but one whose aim was evil and not good. He pointed out how this Demiurge had broken all his own commandments; how he had taught the Israelites to steal from the Egyptians, to covet the land of Canaan, to murder its inhabitants, to bow down to the graven image of a serpent, and to break the Sabbath by marching for seven consecutive days round the walls of Jericho.

To us the simple explanation of this apparent lawlessness on the part of Jehovah is, of course, that the Decalogue was subsequent to the recorded acts, or rather, subsequent to the recording of the acts. No reader of Exodus xix. and xx. can fail to notice how clumsily the Ten Commandments have been slipped into the context of the Book of the Covenant. From xix. 25 to xx. 18 the thread of the narrative runs on smoothly. We have the continuous and unbroken narrative of an incident which, as it stands, is cut in two by the clumsy interpolation

of the Decalogue. The exact moment of interpolation is not important; it was clearly subsequent to Isaiah, for that great reformer knows nothing of a decalogue, and it was probably exilic, or post-exilic.

Marcion, of course, knew none of these things; he accepted the Old Testament literally, and found consequent difficulty in tracing divinity in a being who instigated acts of rebellion against his own laws. In this spirit he drew attention to the many peculiar anomalies that always have harassed and always must harass observant Christians who strain after orthodoxy. Not only were the Gods different, but their rewards and punishments had nothing in common; Jehovah was the God of this world—in fact, the very Prince of this world denounced by Jesus. Allegiance in the nation he rewarded by a victory over the Amorites; in the individual by longevity, fat flocks, and the downfall of personal foes. Disloyalty in the nation he punished by an Assyrian invasion; in the individual by bad crops, poverty, blotches, scabs, itch, consumption, inflammation, mildew, plagues of locusts, and violent death (Deut. xxviii.).

In singular contrast, the God of Jesus offered his followers stripes and tribulation in this world, and the scorn of men, but compensating joys in a world beyond.

A purely destructive criticism, unsupported by a working alternative, will never move the world. It may with equal truth be said that sublime theoretical ideals, unsupported by the practical



example of their promoter, will merely command admiration from a distance. They will never become a live force. The immense power and spread of Marcion's religion was due, perhaps, no less to the resistless personality of the man than to his uncompromising practice of his own precepts. No doubt the one hinged on the other ; without the latter the former would have weakened and failed. As it was, the heresy threatened for a time to overrun Christianity. Its adherents were numbered by thousands. In every province of the Roman Empire its churches and schools sprang into sudden prominence ; and this was no ephemeral splash. In spite of the frantic efforts of orthodoxy to strangle it by the destruction of its literature, it survived and flourished for over two hundred years. In the fourth century, according to Eusebius, Marcionites were to be found all over the world. After this they gradually faded away, swallowed up in the larger Manichæist movement.

Between these two, Manichæism and Marcionism, were many points of strong resemblance. In both creeds Judaism was a devilish rather than a Divine religion. Both took Paul's reading of Jesus as the only true one. Both preached the conquest of crude passions by the mortification of the flesh. In both the ethical standard set up was so high as to be all but out of reach of the herd. Manichæism, however, was the more daring, as well as the broader, of the two cults. It aimed at blending the ethical tenets of Christianity with the philosophical thought of

Buddhism and the humanitarian principles of Zoroastrism, and in many respects anticipated modern thought in a remarkable degree. Its followers eschewed all sensuality and cruelty, and shed no blood, even for food. They worshipped Jesus as the true spirit of divinity, but Jehovah they identified with the spirit of evil and darkness. The sublimity of the original creed was, however, subsequently marred by the introduction of many fantastic elements which sapped the vitality of the religion, and finally caused its disappearance. But for a thousand years it held its place as one of the great religions of the world.

The ruling principle of the Marcionite system was the suppression of the carnal self in the reach-up for spiritual sublimation. It claimed that in this only lay surrender to the law of Christ. Marcion himself lived up to his creed. He led a life of unchallenged uprightness, purity, and altruism. He enjoined similar practices on his followers. Fish was the only animal food allowed. All pleasures of the senses were discountenanced, on the principle that elevation of spirit was in constant ratio to the subjection of matter. In this creed Jesus was a direct emanation from God, for the sole purpose of revealing to man the true nature of religion. His death upon the cross had been an illusion of the senses of those who looked on. The real Jesus had never been crucified, but, having fulfilled his mission, had been reabsorbed into the Father.

Marcion's Bible consisted of the first ten

epistles of Paul and the third gospel, purged of the Nativity story and the Genealogies. He himself wrote a gospel, which by some is claimed to have been the original of our third gospel, to which the necessary, Judaising improvements were subsequently added. Orthodoxy, on the other hand, asserts that his gospel was merely Luke's, relieved of all the elements with which Marcion did not agree. There is nothing to be gained by scrutinising all the thrusts and parries in this controversy. It is sufficient that Marcion held the third gospel to have been doctored. His own began with the sudden appearance of Jesus in the synagogue at Capernaum.

A curious, and at the same time an intensely interesting feature from the doctrinal standpoint, is that Marcion pronounced for Paul, and Paul only, as an interpreter of Jesus. Paul's epistles and the gospel reputedly inspired by Paul were the only books that he admitted. The interest lies in the fact that in Marcion's religion there was no suggestion of an Atonement. The modern Atonement doctrine is admittedly built up on Paul, and on Paul alone; and yet here we have so ardent a follower of Paul that he rejected all writings except those which emanated from Paul, and who yet could deduce from those writings nothing in the smallest degree savouring of an Atonement. Marcion's eschatology was of the simplest type. Those who believed in Jesus, and who testified to their belief by performing the good works that he had enjoined, should be saved. But of an automatic redemption he had

no thought. His high ethical aims in themselves are sufficient evidence on this point.

It is impossible to contemplate the principles of Marcion, and the life of the man himself, without feelings of admiration. We feel that, at any rate, here was a genuine man, and that his religion was ennobling and, therefore, Divine. Religion is only vicious when it is proffered as an efficient substitute for morals. Unfortunately, however, no religion is popular for long which is not proffered as a substitute for morals. Morals are irksome, and a mechanical dispensation from all sins of omission and commission is naturally attractive. It is always easier to sing a psalm than to be good. And so religion, in the sense of a private understanding with God, will always, or at least for many generations to come, hold the field against the altruism which so many great minds have held to be the only ladder to divinity.

Of all the second-century heretics, Marcion was the most hated. His rejection of Jehovah excited the fury, and the elevated aims of his moral standard the ridicule, of the orthodox party.

## CHAPTER XI

### JESUISM

AT the back of all natural religion, as opposed to mere ceremonial, there must be a single plain principle. In other words, the key to all religions, ancient and modern, Eastern and Western, must lie, not in a complicated ritual, but in one fixed and very simple truth, which is open to the understanding of all men, without the need for professional explanation. It is difficult to see how any other view than this can survive five minutes' serious thought, but the view has never been popular.

Till quite lately the current belief was that religion lay in a form of magic, the secret of which had been capriciously revealed to some races and withheld from others. It was not alone the Christian who held this view. It was equally the belief of the Hindu, the Buddhist, and the Mohammedan. The nature of the magic differed in each case, but the principle was the same. In no instance, however, did the magic figure in the earlier and purer forms of the religion. In every case it grew under the cultivation of that religion's adherents.

The simplest religion in the world, in its original form, was Jesuisism. Its Alpha and its Omega lay in the three-word formula, "Love one another." Under the attention of its official custodians, however, it quickly grew into a cult little less intricate and elusive than later Hinduism. The distinctive feature of original Christianity was its practicalness. Its teaching was exclusively practical, as opposed to the more metaphysical outlook of Brahmanism and Buddhism. The transcendental element of Jesuisism lay in its promise of immortality to those whose lives were governed by the eternal principle of love. But even here the absence of speculative flights and the careful avoidance of detail are very striking. The eschatological forecasts of the Gospels where they can reasonably claim authenticity are invariably allegorical, and, as such, indefinite, while the more concrete pictures, such as we see in the Dives parable, are no less certainly editorial and Judaistic. Metaphysical speculation had no part in the teaching of Jesus. All the efforts of his short crusade were directed to one object: the elevation of goodness of heart above ceremonial. In considering this point, it must never be lost sight of that the knowledge of Jesus was self-found, and that his career was cut short at a very early age; as far as we know, he had no teacher, though there is a possibility that the doctrines of Hillel may have exercised an influence on his youth. Hillel stood out from the times as the greatest of modern ethical reformers. His cele-



brated reply to a common question of the times is instructive. "What is the law?" inquired a disciple. "Do not unto another what thou wouldst not have another do unto thee," was Hillel's reply; "this is the whole law; the rest is mere commentary." Here we have the root-matter of both Jesuism and Paulism; and the ready, and slightly inexplicable, acceptance by Paul of the Divine diploma of a reformer whom he only knew by repute is possibly, accounted for by the theory of a source of ethical instruction which was common to both Master and disciple. Paul's tutor Gamaliel was Hillel's grandson.

Two facts Jesus saw with absolute certainty: the fact of God and the fact of immortality; but he defined neither the one nor the other. For the rest, his religion was strictly an ethical code, in which there was no room for probings into the problems of existence. This reticence argues nothing more than lack of certainty. Where Jesus did not see clearly he was silent. His mission was one of moral and religious reform; and to the task to which he felt that God had called him he adhered unswervingly. This singleness of purpose, however, and its attendant neglect of all speculations dealing with the common problems of existence, is the justification which the conscientious Christian has for turning to other religions less restricted in their outlook. There need be no collision of doctrines in such action, for the general moral tone of Jesuism is identical with that of the other higher

religions. Jesuism, however, stopped short at rules for conduct, while the religions of India, Greece, and Egypt, by centuries of cumulative thought, arrived at broadly-defined doctrines on subjects which are more obscure.

If Jesus had lived to an old age, unharmed by sectarian persecutions, it is possible that he, too, would have left some pronouncement on the problems of eternity. But he did not. A short year's crusade—and the end came. And of that year every hour was too short for the task he had set himself, of stripping God of all the malignant attributes with which Jewish tradition had invested him.

That Jesuism was anti-Mosaical and anti-Jehovastic is certain. Not only did it deride the Sabbaths and sacrifices of the old law, but it contemptuously rescinded the decrees of Jehovah: Ye have heard how it has been said of old time, Do so-and-so; but I say unto you, Do the contrary. In the Gospel of Nicodemus the crime for which Jesus is executed is simply and solely that of breaking the Sabbath: he is a breaker and traducer of the law. This fact is instructive and very significant. One thing is certain: all the tin-trumpet blasts of Judaism that sound sporadically throughout the Gospels must come out. They are editorial, and their effect is merely obstructive and confusing. It will be found that what remains is a simple ethical message, "Do unto all men," &c.

It must be remembered that Jesus had no basis, either solid or speculative, from which to

start on metaphysical excursions. The Buddha had had the Upanishads and the Bhagavatas, and possibly older records of which we know nothing, but Jesus had only the writings of the prophets, and though these offer a fair starting-point for religious and ethical reform, they never so much as touch the fringe of cosmogony. There is, in fact, no room for cosmogony in Judaism. The sole *raison d'être* of God was to act as dry-nurse to the Jews. In Orientalism God is the expression of an eternal principle, but not in Judaism. Here he is, on the contrary, a very human personality ; mercurial and impulsive, he deals specifically with each case as it arises, not on the basis of an universal law but according to his mood at the moment. And his adjudications are always material : death, disease, and poverty to those who offend him ; riches and longevity to the faithful. From these eminently pagan ideas Isaiah had certainly revolted ; but his revolt was only in part. From the eleventh to the seventeenth verse of his first chapter he strikes the keynote of all natural religion, but the nineteenth and twentieth verses show clearly that his view of God is still that of an invisible sultan with exceptional powers. He sees clearly that sacrifices, Sabbath, and ceremonial are mere tricks of priestcraft, and that the service of God lies in the practice of good and the avoidance of evil ; but his rewards and punishments are still of earth. Of eschatology in the ordinary sense he has not the faintest perception.

It can be easily understood, then, that the study of such books would be no education for reflections on the subtler problems of life. That the writings of Isaiah exercised a powerful influence on the mind of Jesus we cannot doubt ; but neither can we doubt that that influence was entirely in the direction of moral reform as a means to the favour of God. It carried with it no suggestion as to man's potential affinity to God ; and though such affinity is evidently suspected, and even postulated, by Jesus, there is no evidence of any dogmatism on the subject in the existent records of his teaching.

But the real point of importance is that Jesuism followed the exact lines of Buddhism up to a certain point. There Jesuism stopped ; and it stopped, we may well believe, because of the premature silencing of the voice that gave it to us. But Buddhism did not stop. It forged ahead into a realm of thought which Jesuism of necessity left unexplored, but which was in perfect harmony with the general spirit of Jesuism, and with which every doctrine subsequently laid down by Jesus was in tune. We can, therefore, turn to the religions of the East with no sense of disloyalty to our own religion and its Founder.

At the moment, however, the object is to try to arrive at what it really was that Jesus of Nazareth tried to drive home to the minds of his generation. The obvious sources to which we must turn are the Gospels. Paul, when he wrote his epistles, had seen neither Jesus nor the written records of his Logia. Peter's epistles are

probably genuine ; but of this we are not sure. The first epistle was generally accepted by the Fathers, though it was, of course, rejected by the Pauline school ; and it is not found in the Canon of Muratori. The second epistle was viewed with some distrust by the second and third century Fathers, but was afterwards accepted by Athanasius, Jerome, and Augustine. Peter, however, in addition to being an " ignorant and unlearned " man, was also a very fanatical Jew ; and to him Christianity was never anything more than Jehovah's latest device for exalting the horn of Israel. From such a source it would be hopeless to look for the true spirit of Jesuism.

The epistle of James was probably the work of James the Just. Eusebius says that in his day it was generally attributed to " James the brother of Jesus " ; and Ephrem Syrus, in quoting from the epistle, ascribes it to " James the brother of the Lord." If so, it was the work of a good man ; but as a key to Jesuism it has no value, for James was a Mosaical Jew, little less bigoted than Peter. The name of Jesus is only twice mentioned in the epistle, and his life and teaching are ignored. The epistle was probably written to combat the doctrine put forward in the Epistle to the Hebrews—a work which Eusebius attributes to Clement of Rome, and Tertullian to Barnabas, but which was certainly not written by Paul. In any event, the epistle is quite valueless as a guide to Jesuism.

This leaves us the epistles of John only ; but from these possibly more than from any other



source do we get an unsullied view of Jesuism. The fourth chapter of the first epistle is in itself an education. The epistles are unquestionably by the same hand as the gospel; and this hand is not that of the son of Zebedee. There is little doubt that they were written by John the Presbyter, as indeed the second and third epistles claim. This John the Presbyter crops up frequently throughout the Patristical writings, and he was clearly looked upon as an authority on all matters connected with the life and teaching of Jesus. In the preface to Papias's records of Jesus, as quoted by Eusebius, there is a passage which speaks of John the Presbyter and John the Apostle as two distinct persons, each of whom had been intimate with Jesus. It has at times been suggested that John the Presbyter was the young ruler of great possessions whom Jesus "looked upon and loved." There is probability in the theory. The writer of the Fourth Gospel had the *entrée* to the High Priest's house, he had acquaintance with the writings of Philo, he had a polished literary style, and he had a comfortable home to offer to the mother of Jesus. From that mother he would learn much that was unknown to the Twelve. His higher intelligence and personal intimacy with Jesus would also have taught him much to which the others were blind. It is probable that he was not a Jew, for he speaks throughout of the Jews as a foreign race. The hatred of this man by the Twelve is strongly suggested from the internal evidence of the New Testament. He was a



foreigner, and, coming late into the field, he had supplanted them in the affections of the Master. He was excluded from the ranks of the sacred Twelve even when the death of Judas caused a vacancy ; and the written Logia of Jesus was kept from him, as they were also kept from Paul. It is not surprising, then, that John's view of Jesus differs from that of the others. Throughout his writings, love of others is the badge of Jesuism, and the only badge. Judaism in its symbolical aspect crops up here and there ; but whether from his or from editorial pens will never be known.

From first to last in our search for pure Jesuism this editorial element is the main obstacle. All the editors were Jews, and in religious matters the Jew was not a sane man ; his sole religion lay in a frenzied and fanatical patriotism. When Justin Martyr said that he would not have believed the Lord himself if he had proclaimed any other God than the God of Israel he was unquestionably striking the dominant chord of Judaism. Irenæus loudly applauds the sentiment ; and in this applause, without the slightest doubt, every circumcised Christian within the Roman Empire would have joined.

In trying, then, to get at the root-matter of Jesuism it is necessary to keep this Jewish peculiarity ceaselessly in sight. It will help us with our blue pencil, which we can—in a reading of the Gospels—draw without the slightest hesitation through the chronic crowings of the

bantam chanticleer—Judea. These crowings are the expression of a spirit of vanity that valued national glorification far above spiritual truth. It is not so much the writers of the gospels that we have to deal with as the subsequent revisers. With these it was invariably a question of one for Christ and two for Moses. We can, however, for the moment leave this side of the question, and continue our search.

There are two passages in the Gospels where we have a direct answer to the question which the religious world has been asking itself for nineteen hundred years: "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" and "What is the first and greatest commandment?" The two questions are in effect the same; and though in each case the answer came direct from Jesus of Nazareth the vast majority of Christians entirely disregard these answers and, for the regulation of their own lives, substitute others which, if less Divine, are at all events more convenient. The Jesuistic answer to the first question is perhaps conventional. It embodies advice which any ethical preacher in any age might be expected to give. But none the less, coming as it does in all four gospels, it bears on its face the stamp of an authentic utterance which was actually made by Jesus in reply to questions put. It is, in fact, the only speech which does appear in all four Gospels, and, as such, is unique. But it is a passage of which the pious are not fond.

In the case of the second question and answer there are two points of interest. First, the

advance which the reply of Jesus makes on that given by Hillel to the preceding generation, inasmuch as it makes altruism positive instead of negative ; and, secondly, the fact that the quotation attributed to Jesus is a composite one. The part relating to love of God is from Deut. vi. 5, and that enjoining love of neighbour from Lev. xix. 18. The association of the two is essentially anti-Mosaical, for the command in Deuteronomy to love God is followed a few verses later by a most unneighbourly command to exterminate without mercy all conquered foes. In identifying the two commandments, then, Jesus was revolutionising the entire Mosaical law, which restricted the exercise of all kindly acts to Israelites and deliberately preached brutality to all who were not Israelites.

There is a very live possibility that the part of Jesus's reply relating to love of God is editorial. It would be wholly in keeping with Jewish tradition to give a ceremonial command (or one that could be construed into a ceremonial command) precedence over one that was purely ethical. A certain colour is given to this theory by Paul's pronouncement on the same subject. Paul recites the principal restrictive commandments, and then adds : " And if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." In Gal. v. he is even more definite : " For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." This is Hillelism ; and the omission in the

definitions of both Hillel and Paul of any reference to love of God tends to cast a certain doubt upon the authenticity of the first part of the reply of Jesus. This doubt is increased when we find that the lawyer who puts the question in the Third Gospel, in asking for further enlightenment, says, "Who is my neighbour?" as though love of neighbour had been the only matter under discussion. In any event, from the standpoint of Jesuism, it is not really material whether the injunction to love God is editorial or not. If authentic, it was included with the object of emphasising the truth that love for neighbour is the only practical expression of love for God which is open to man. This point is brought out very clearly in the sheep and goats parable: "Inasmuch as ye did it not unto the least of these, my brethren, ye did it not unto me." From the pantheistic standpoint, this condemnation may be read quite literally; but even apart from this—perhaps rather strained—reading, we find the poor held up as God's proxies for the receipt of the love which man would yield to him. In the Zend-Avesta the same principle is laid down in very clear terms: "The reward of heaven is to be hoped for those works performed in the world for Mazda. Ahura holds him right who supports the poor." In John's first epistle the language is plainer still: "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen?" The Good Samaritan story,

which is all part of the same incident, comes as an answer to the lawyer's question of "Who is my neighbour?" and is clearly designed to overthrow the Pentateuchal doctrine that only an Israelite is a neighbour.

The moral of the whole incident obviously is that love of our neighbour represents the exact measure of our love for God.

## CHAPTER XII

### HEAVEN AND HELL

THERE are few points more curious than the seeming disproportion between the value of the heaven pointed to by Jesus of Nazareth and the price that men and women were ready to pay for it. As far as we know, the early Christian heaven, to gain which men and women cheerfully underwent indescribable tortures, was quite indistinct. In the Gospels the allusions of Jesus to heaven throughout are of quite a non-committal kind. He is never definite, never dogmatic. He holds out no dazzling prospect of a paradise provided with inexpressible joys for those who win it ; not even by suggestions does he encourage such a thought.

Equally reticent are the writers of the epistles. Paul, on one single occasion, breaks out into an ecstatic utterance ; but not even then does he venture upon details. In all the higher religions we find this same vagueness. The individual becomes merged in the Universal ; and in that mergement he finds joys which must obviously baffle the descriptive powers, as well as the imaginative conception of those whose daily



needs are gross and animal. Islam as a religion is hardly worth considering. It is a mere hash-up of Judaism and Christianity, with the addition of a strong sensual flavour to which both its prototypes were strangers. The heaven of this religion is one worthy of its originator, and one that strips it at once of any claim to a Divine parentage.

It will be generally conceded that the spiritual insight of Jesus of Nazareth was abnormal. If to any one would come a revelation of the true nature of heaven, we cannot doubt that it would have been to him. But it did not come. He was sure of the fact of immortality, but as to the conditions attending it he knew nothing, and was therefore silent. One cannot help feeling that this reluctance to particularise increases the confidence with which we can accept his pronouncement on the main point. It would have been so easy for an acclaimed prophet, whose followers were frankly disappointed at his and their present obscurity, to have painted the joys of futurity with the lavish hand of imagination. But he did not. The inducements which he held out to those who followed his standard were stripes, tribulation, and martyrdom in this world, as the purchase-price of an immortality of which the joys were left wholly to the imagination.

It must be remembered that inspiration is not practical. A prophet is obsessed by one idea, which dominates his whole being. Beyond this one point of illumination his vision is not clear; it may even be clouded; we have abundant

proof that, outside of his Divine message, the knowledge of Jesus was limited. The abnormal penetration of inspired minds is doubtless due in great measure to their entire disregard of all matters outside of their one focus-point. It is for others, of shallower but more general knowledge, to reconcile the instinct of inspiration with the facts of acquired knowledge. With or without such a comparison, we feel that the message delivered by Jesus was a true message, that he had a call to preach what he did ; we feel that the spirit of divinity was so abnormally developed in him as to qualify him to be called Divine, not by the vicarious impregnation of his mother, but by the direct impregnation of himself.

If the heaven of Jesus was indistinct, equally so was his God. "God is a spirit," he says, "and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." Renan, commenting on this definition, says : "Le jour où il prononça cette parole il fut vraiment fils de Dieu. Il dit pour la première fois le mot sur lequel reposera l'édifice de la religion éternelle. Il fonda le culte pur, sans date, sans patrie, celui que pratiqueront toutes les âmes élevées jusqu'à la fin des temps. Non seulement sa religion, ce jour-là, fut la bonne religion de l'humanité, ce fut la religion absolue ; et, si d'autres planètes ont des habitants doués de raison et de moralité, leur religion ne peut être différente de celle que Jésus a proclamée près du puits de Jacob."

The pronouncement of Jesus, however, has

never been popular. The atavistic impulse in man cries for an idol. God may be dematerialised under Divine inspiration, but under human pressure he quickly resumes concrete shape. God is a spirit, says Christ. God is a man, says the Church of Christ, born of Mary the Virgin. The first and second Articles carve him as definitely, and as grotesquely as any chisel of the Hindu. We fashion a Jinn, and clothe him with all the functional attributes of man ; but, in deference to Moses, we hide him behind the clouds. Instead of trying to soar to God we drag him down to our own level. We cannot picture an impersonal being, and we resent it ; there can be no doubt that we all resent it. We should like an obtrusive object in the sky, on which to fix our worship, and, in default of that, we picture the same object, still above us, behind a covering veil of distance. We turn up our eyes to heaven at morning prayers, and again at evening prayers, without any sense of inconsistency. We are ceaselessly at war with the fact that " Lord, Lord " will not bring us to heaven.

It is a curious fact that the three greatest revolutionisers of religious thought in the history of the world had this in common : that they all alike aimed at dematerialising God, and that they all passed away without leaving behind them one word in writing. The school of Socrates found its literary expression in Plato and Aristotle, and the widespread interest in the philosophy of the last two dwarfed the personality of the Founder. But the leader of

thought was Socrates. Even such an unbending champion of Moses and the Law as Justin Martyr allowed that the Christian principle had found expression in his philosophy. The religious instinct of Socrates was true, but he systematically refused to define God.

Equally was God beyond the reach of the Buddha's mind. All that he saw clearly was the upward path, but no such difficulty exercised the minds of the Buddha's followers. The God that he had failed to define they found in the Buddha himself. Portents clustered round his birth, miracles illuminated his daily path. By a curious irony the God dematerialised by Jesus and by the Buddha was in each case reincarnated in the very instrument that had freed him from the arms and legs of pagan convention. Socrates escaped. The Greeks had too much *νοῦς* to deify the man they had poisoned; and, besides, his bust was on record, and even an elastic polytheism saw insurmountable difficulties in that bust.

There is no reason to suppose that the eschatology of Jesus owed anything to outside influence. It is doubtful if he had so much as heard of Mithraism. All evidence points to the fact that he was entirely self-taught, and that his religion sprang spontaneously from scriptural study and contemplation. That he was familiar with Greek philosophy is also improbable in the extreme, as is the suggestion that he knew Greek. We know that he was no orator. "Brief and concise sentences were uttered by him," Justin Martyr

tells us. "For he was no sophist, but his word was the power of God." Here we have a picture, not of a fiery fanatic, not of an impatient orator swaying men by an appeal to their emotions, and perhaps carried away by the fervour of his own eloquence, but of a religious leader whose sole source of strength lay in his true measure of God and in the clearness with which he saw the boundary-line between good and evil. The existing line of division he saw to be wholly false, wholly artificial, wholly hypocritical. He felt that he had a call to put this great wrong right, to clear God of the bad character which the Jews had given him. In the fulfilment of this mission he was prepared, and even eager, to die, a willing sacrifice on the altar of truth. "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." Never before or since has been uttered such a prophecy as this. So little a thing in the destinies of Judea was the crucifixion of the Galilean Reformer that in contemporary history it passed unnoticed. Even Josephus, with his love of sensational anecdote, is silent. He gives us all the details of the death of James the Just, the brother of the Lord, but not a word as to the greater tragedy of the greater brother. And yet this trivial incident in the history of an insignificant race has brought all white men to their knees. If Jesus had died as other men his message would have died with him. It is the tragedy of Calvary which has carried that message across nineteen centuries. The silhouette of the cross has drawn the eyes



of all civilisation to the Figure stretched upon it, and to the message of which that Figure is the embodiment.

If Jesus was reticent on the subject of heaven, we may be quite sure that he was silent on the subject of hell. An active hell played no part in his theology. No student of the Gospels can fail to be struck with the indiscriminate way in which the wicked are consigned either to "hell-fire" or to "outer darkness." It is hard to conceive of two ideas farther apart; no stretch of imagination can read them as interchangeable terms. There can be little doubt that the only hell of Jesus was exclusion from heaven. Here we have outer darkness, an idea wholly in harmony with the general Christian spirit, and an idea obviously inseparable from any conception of heaven, unless heaven is the common lot of all. But such negative retribution would fall far short of the conceptions of the Jews as to a fitting doom for their religious opponents. Only in hell-fire could the vindictive Hebrew spirit find true satisfaction. If, as is probable, the son of Zebedee wrote the Apocalypse of John, there is nothing incongruous in the man who wished to call down the destruction of heaven on an unoffending village picturing an eternal doom of burning brimstone for those who disagreed with him. But that such ideas had their origin in the world's eternal emblem of love is an impossible thought.

We have strong support of this view in Justin Martyr's Gospel. Here, in the famous sheep and



goats parable, Jesus as Judge says : " Begone into *the darkness without*, which the Father hath prepared for Satan and his angels." Compare this with the language in the first and most Judaistic of all the Gospels : " Depart from me, ye cursed, into *the eternal fire* which is prepared for the devil and his angels."

The Dives and Lazarus parable calls for little attention. In the whole field of New Testament criticism, nothing stands out clearer than that Jesus never spoke this parable. The Third Gospel, the only one that gives it, does not even suggest that Jesus spoke the parable. It is suddenly flung at the reader without any preamble, without any scenic surroundings. Every line is anti-Christian, every line exudes rabid Judaism ; it deifies Abraham and holds up Moses, and inferentially his law, as the only pilot to heaven ; it voices throughout the implacable ferocity of the Chosen People. No one in whom the critical faculty is not wholly dead could read Jesus as the author of such a production. Not only was he himself the embodiment of compassionate love, but his sole doctrine was that of compassionate love for others. Hatred, cruelty, and revenge are sentiments which it is impossible to associate with the Son of Man.

The evolution of Jewish eschatology is not easy to trace. The one point that stands out clear is that the Exile was responsible for the idea of a retributionary heaven and hell, as it also was for the introduction of Satan, who first appears in the Book of Job, *circa* 400 B.C. Sheol was

merely the general abode of the dead. In pre-Exilic days rewards and punishments were wholly of this world; the prosperous were the chosen of God; the weak, the sickly, the miserable were those whom he deservedly afflicted. The prophets, though denouncing this gruesome doctrine, offered no psychical alternative. Even the post-Exilic books follow the old lines. The eschatology of the returning Jews was strangely mixed. Allegiance to Moses and the Law was the only link that bound them all alike to the Temple. The upper classes belonged mainly to the sect of the Sadducees, who believed in no future life. The Pharisees, on the other hand, believed in a transmigration of souls for the righteous, and for the wicked endless torment (doubtless hell-fire). Philo, on the other hand, framing his doctrine on Greek models, foresaw transmigration of souls for the wicked only, and for the righteous final union with God. In the Wisdom of Solomon, however, generally supposed to have been written by the Alexandrian Jews about 100 B.C., we have distinct assurances of immortality. Of the religious beliefs of the fierce sect of the Sikars we gain a glimmering from the speech of Eleazar at the siege of Masada. The passage, though interesting, is too long for quotation. There is in it no forecast of rewards and punishments; and, as Eleazar's appeal was to the entire garrison, it would seem that he anticipated a like futurity for all. The passage is especially interesting as giving us a glimpse of Indian belief in immortality two thou-

sand years ago, and also as showing Jewish familiarity with Indian thought.

The heaven of the Essenes was peculiar, as was everything connected with that remarkable sect. The righteous enjoyed an eternity of peaceful bliss in the Elysian fields, while the wicked were ceaselessly tormented in gloomy caverns. Such a heaven would naturally attract those ascetic sons of the desert, familiarised as they were by necessity with the barren and forbidding district of the Dead Sea; and their hell is thoroughly typical of the times and the race. It would seem as though no Jewish sect could find complete satisfaction in any eschatology that did not provide eternal torment of some sort for doctrinal opponents.

## CHAPTER XIII

### INSTINCT

THE first feeling experienced by the disillusioned dogmatist is one of shock ; the second is one of relief. To any man of average intellect, however orthodox his belief, there must come moments when he feels that his cherished dogmas stand on shaky ground. So strong is this feeling, even in the most earnest of conventional Christians, that they deliberately—and, as they think, piously—shun investigating the props on which they lean, from a half-concealed fear that the examination may prove disastrous. In such minds there is, if not constantly present, at least constantly recurring, a feeling of uneasiness. The feeling may be banished by a strong effort, but it leaves behind a touch of ice which the consciousness only half admits. And it keeps coming back.

There are four standard religions that divide the allegiance of the world. Each despises the other with the unfeigned assurance that its own is straight from God. The contempt of the Christian for the Hindu is even less than the contempt of the Mussulman for the Christian. To the Mussulman the Christian is an infidel, a

polytheist, and an idolater. These are not mere words. The man who uses them will readily die for his faith, so certain is he of its truth. This feeling of contempt is reciprocated by the Christian—on paper, but only on paper. Even the staunchest has at root a sleepless mistrust, whose eye he shrinks from meeting. The unhappiness of such a man's position lies in the stubborn feeling that he must stand or fall by the dogmas in which he has been reared. He cannot realise that there may be broad general principles which he may share with the Mussulman and with the Hindu without renouncing hopes of heaven. It is this that makes him fear examination. Disillusion seems to him the end of all things, the loss of heaven and of faith in God. So he constantly deceives himself with loud-voiced assurances of faith in axioms which he instinctively knows are not solid. It is a miserable position; and, to such a man, emancipation from the cast-iron dogmas which his education has taught him to lean on will—after the first shock—come as a relief. His greatest loss will be over the dethronement of Jesus of Nazareth; for, however irregular our beliefs, that Figure can never be less than sacred to us. Nor is there any need that it should; and this our disillusioned Christian will in time realise. For after we have dethroned the Son of Joseph and Mary from a majesty which he never claimed we still find him occupying the same position that he did in the eyes of Paul. We still find him the central figure in the world's history,

the one human personality for love of whom thousands have gladly died. We still find him the inspiration for all that is best and noblest in us, and—over and above all—we still find him the revelation of the true God.

When, then, our inquirer finds his dogmas dissolved in a new knowledge that was only not his before through indolence or through fear, there is no need for him to rush into the arms of a hopeless Monism. Such an action is weak and quite unreasonable; but it is unhappily the line of action of many. The tendency of the day is destructive. The successful overthrow of the weaker dogmas seems to awaken a lust of demolition which becomes insatiable. Nothing is sacred; nothing is admitted. The inability to furnish proof of an occurrence is taken as conclusive evidence that the occurrence did not take place. The true critical touch becomes lost. In the end honesty of purpose appears to be so weakened that the destructive craze ripens into a mania. From this butchery of detail scientific thought holds scrupulously aloof. Scientific thought merely divests God of anthropomorphism and raises physical difficulties to immortality. It readily, however, admits its limitations, and is careful not to dogmatise. Materialism of the kind known as Monistic is not representative of the highest scientific thought. Science is progressive and creative, and, above all, cautious. Materio-Monism is essentially destructive. All our aspirations for better things hereafter it sweeps away with a ruthless hand. Man has no



goal ; the cosmos has no purpose. We are the mere automatic outcome of fixed laws (as to whose origin it is carefully reticent). Our coming and our going is of no more importance than the bursting of a bud or the falling of a leaf. God, so called, may be there—probably is there, somewhere in the background—but he is too remote and too big to take notice of such trifles. He originates, perhaps—though this is not wholly conceded—but he certainly neither supervises nor interferes. To him we are nothing and less than nothing. We are as the ants in his dominions are to the King of England. Ants come and go ; they are trodden under foot by thousands, but the British Empire is undisturbed. Ants are not an integral part of its destiny. They are not essential. No more, says Monism, are we essential. The earth on which we live is but a grain of sand in the universe, one out of millions of similar worlds. If we were wiped out of existence to-morrow, the universe would roll on its way unruffled into the infinite ages of the future. Only to Mars would our disappearance be a matter of the very smallest concern.

So runs the familiar song of the Monist ; and a million apostates from dogma swell the chorus. But this is a chorus in which the man who reflects does not join. There is clearly no need to discard God because we discard certain dogmas which palpably lack God's signature. A paste tiara does not mean that there are no diamonds.

The real bugbear of the Materio-Monist school

is transcendentalism ; and transcendentalism is religion—that is to say, there can be no religion without transcendentalism. In this everlasting conflict between the materialist and the psychist there is, however, on the side of the latter a force which is quite unconquerable. The psychist himself calls it instinct, but his opponents call it emotion, and as such write it off as valueless. But, nevertheless, this instinct is an asset to be reckoned with. When we mark its infallibility in animals, when we see how unerringly it guides them to results which no acquired knowledge can rival, we may well consider whether the remnants of instinct in man may not have a higher value than all the lore of a Royal Society. The parentage of an instinct is a riddle ; no one knows why the pigeon heads for home, why the beaver builds its dam, why the salmon re-seeks its native river. There are instincts among animals more unaccountable than these—pre-science of impending calamities, a foreknowledge of elemental disturbances, to which man is a complete stranger.

Two facts stand out. Instinct infallibly guides for good, and the instinctive faculty can be killed by reliance on mechanical substitutes. In civilised man the *material* instinct is dead ; in savage races it still survives in part. The only compelling instinct of which civilised man is now conscious is a psychic instinct, and this is not universal. In the Materio-Monist we may assume that it is non-existent. But in some men it is very strong ; and the infallible guidance for good

of the material instinct in animals suggests strongly that man's psychic instinct may be equally infallible. The chapter on Emblematic Analogy draws attention to the remarkable parallelisms in principle between seen processes and cognate processes which cannot be seen. That such an analogy may exist between the material instinct of animals and the psychic instinct of man is probable ; and if this is so, then the emotional instinct despised of the Monist is a surer guide than the cold deductions of the highest science.

The Monist, then, having annihilated the forces of dogma, has still this irrepressible instinct to deal with, an instinct which tells of a goal or ultimate purpose, in which man is in some way involved. The strength of an instinct lies in its superiority to detail ; and it is this that makes it difficult to dislodge by mere negative evidence. Physiological objections leave it unmoved, based as they are, not on positive knowledge but on inductive science, which is a vastly different thing. The crucial question between the materialist and the man with an unscheduled religion born of instinct is the question of cosmic purpose. Here, when dogma has been discarded, lies the sole difference between the man without a religion and the man with. The moment we prove a purpose we prove God, not, perhaps, in his conventional setting, but still God ; and to such a God we may even yield the epithet of personal. This question of cosmic purpose resolves itself, as will be seen in chap. xxiii.,

into the question of free-will in man. The materialist, however, can find no purpose and no free-will. To him the mechanism of the universe is the chance outcome of an agency which he styles Necessity. Things happen, not because there is any object in their happening but because they cannot help happening. To the ordinary thinker the salient absurdity of such a theory lies in its associating the colossal cosmic intelligence with a policy that is inanely purposeless. The realisation of the hopelessness of logically meeting this difficulty has, from time to time, seriously thinned the ranks of the Monists. Kant, Virchow, and Du Bois Raymond, in their later and more reflective years, were instinctively forced to discard the Monism which they had in their earlier days so laboriously advocated. The compelling impulse was instinctive rather than logical. They felt, rather than were persuaded, that the cosmic mechanism and aimlessness cannot go together. This is surely the conclusion from which calm reflection cannot escape. The end of all energy is life. There are around us hundreds of millions of worlds whose present business or ultimate destiny is the sustenance of life. Long after we are all dust and ashes, long after our world is cold and dead, there will be life teeming on those unseen worlds. Solar systems may ripen and die, but their place is taken by others: their very materials are used in reconstruction. A million times a million years may pass, but the background of heaven will show no difference. The

grouping may be different, but the general scheme will be unchanged—a purple background relieved by a thousand twinkling points. Multiply your numerals by another million—it will make no difference. The stars will still blink on. This endurance into infinity is common ground, where we divide is as to the meaning of it all. Is it all empty, futile, purposeless; or is there any coherent scheme?

Let us come down to our little world, of which we have some knowledge. Here we find man evolved by an infinitely slow and laborious process from a very plebeian ancestry. We are told on the authority of the highest biological science that evolution has ceased—*i.e.*, that man has “got there.” Palæontology bears this out; the evidence of the strata goes to show that man became man in the Eocene period, which is some time back; but man is still man, and shows no sign of becoming anything else. Is man, then, the consummation? Let any one go into the slums and ask himself whether what he sees there represents the supreme effort of constructive energy. Countless ages and limitless powers have been employed in the elaboration of a *chef d'œuvre* such as this, whose only rôle, according to Monism, is to battle for a few weary years with circumstance and then disappear. It hardly seems worth it. The engine seems out of proportion to the fabric. A thousand-horse dynamo to make a mud-pie! Nor does the bathos end here. What applies to our world applies equally to others—millions of others. The imbecility of

the whole scheme becomes then multiplied indefinitely. It is difficult to persuade ourselves that the cosmic forces have no higher aim in view than this. The very thought is an insult, and one that we cannot in justice claim is merited. The microscope and telescope are sufficient in themselves to acquit Nature of imbecility. Altogether apart from instinct, cold judicial consideration refuses to attribute imbecility in design to powers that can with the one hand organise the cosmic movements and with the other work out the perfection of detail that the microscope shows up. The instinct in animals is always right ; it is unreasoning and quite unaccountable, but it is always right, and it may be that the psychical instinct in man is right. That instinct does not endorse Church dogmas ; on the contrary, it revolts against them. But it tells us of a purpose in the cosmic scheme and of a purpose in which man is in some way involved.

Thus far instinct, and no farther. It brings us to the cross-roads of teleology, and there leaves us. Beyond that we must trust to other guides.



## CHAPTER XIV

### THE LAW OF ETERNAL FLUX

NOTHING that comes within range of inspection is constant in form or state. When, therefore, we talk of a goal towards which all purpose tends, and up to which evolution is gradually working, it is well to remember that the finality of such a goal is technical and not real. It has real finality in the sense of being the consummation of a cyclical epoch, but in the eternal scheme of things it is but a single revolution of the wheel. Eternity is not the indefinite stretching-out of time; it is the recurrence of what has passed. A child's hoop, with an inch gap in the circumference, may represent a hundred million years; but whatever it represents it is clearly a finite quantity. Complete the connection, however, and you have at once eternity. A point on the hoop, then, represents past no less than future, and future no less than past. For the guerdon of eternal life the early Christian martyrs suffered tortures that will not bear description. Blandina at Vienne, Perpetua and Felicitas at Carthage, underwent pains too awful to contemplate in the firm belief that an eternity

of happiness would more than compensate for their present pains. It may well be that those sufferings were not wasted, that they bore fruit worthy of the expectations of the sufferers. But even if eternity were the guerdon on which their eyes were fixed, we, their well-wishers, can hardly pray for its achievement. We may crave for a prolongation of life, we may revolt from the thought of extinction ; but surely the greatest glutton for the preservation of his distinctive personality must shrink from the prospect of an eternity of activity. It is the shadows of the night that make the glory of the day. Day without night, life without the recurrent death of sleep, would be a torture beyond endurance. The sun is the joy of our lives, but it is the clouds that make it so. In the brazen skies of West Australia the same sun becomes the embodiment of all evil. Picture a hundred million years of life ; conceive that at the end of this period a man had only completed a hundred-millionth of his allotted existence. To such a man where would heaven lie if not in the Nirvana of the Buddhist?

A little reflection on these lines brings home to us that we are no losers if our teleology is limited to the consummation of an epoch or cycle which, in itself, may be only one cog in the wheel of eternity, but in which all the heaven of desire may lie. Eternity is built up of disintegration, evolution, reintegration. Reintegration represents the horizon of our epoch, and therefore our heaven. Or, in another form of

metaphor, it is the completion of one little wheel's revolution. Evolution is a system of wheels within wheels. The little process revolves to its conclusion within the big process. The conclusion to which it works may be (and is, if analogy has any value) qualification for absorption into the larger encircling process, and so on, again and again, till we are brought to face the possibility of a central hub which may be outside of analogy. The moon moves round the earth, the earth round the sun, and the sun itself moves with unvarying swiftness in obedience to the control of some body or force beyond our ken. The moon's epoch is closed, or nearly closed. It will some day be reabsorbed into the earth that threw it off. The little wheel's revolution will have been made. But its destiny is still involved in that of the larger wheel. Some later day the larger wheel's revolution will have been made. The earth and all the planets will be reabsorbed into the sun that threw them off. Two epochs are closed, but the actors still play a part in the drama of the sun. As to how the curtain will fall on that drama astronomy can only vaguely guess, and its guesses are, so far, unpublished.

All analogy points to a universal tendency to centralisation. The small system obeys the large and the large the larger, till the track of the systems grows out of knowledge and speculation takes the place of science. But even this change is a mere question of names.

Professor Darwin estimates that for at the very

least 500 million years the sun has risen and set, morning and evening, upon this earth of ours. For 500 million years certain mysterious laws have been at work evolving man from primary ooze. For better purposes of illustration, we can even put the clock back a little farther. For 500 million years prior again to this primary ooze itself was being gradually evolved from a nebulous, gaseous, incandescent mass. Here we have, then, a vast period during which slow and orderly processes are working steadily to an end. The visible end, up to date, is Man—Man, who limps about for seventy years and then is laid away under the yew-trees. There is in this fact such a blatant anticlimax that we cannot bow to it; we cannot reasonably conclude that Man is the ultimate consummation to which these 1,000 million years have been devoted. It seems more reasonable to conclude that these 1,000 million years represent the earlier stages of a cycle which may yet be very far from completion, and which, when completed, will represent a mere tick of the eternal clock.

The main principle involved in all cosmic processes would appear to be an inevitable reversion in all things to the *status in quo ante*; the period involved in effecting this reversion may vary from one year to a billion years, or to even far greater periods. But from ultimate obedience to the law nothing organic, inorganic, material, or spiritual, that we know of, is exempt. The method is not one of sudden reclamation, but of a systematic and eternal flux.

In the stellar systems of the cosmos we have an eternally recurring cycle of nebulæ, live worlds, dead worlds, nebulæ. From nebulæ they return to nebulæ, to be once again thrown out for a fresh cycle—eternal flux.

In the ocean we have a typical God. It is the God of all moisture on, and within the influence of, earth. It gives off vapour, which forms clouds. The clouds break in rain and form streams. The streams form rivers, and the rivers return once more to the ocean, to be again given off in vapour—eternal flux.

The earth is the god of all terrestrial matter, including the physical side of all living organisms. All that we eat, and from which our bodies are built up, is the produce of the earth. "For dust we are, and to dust we return," says the Burial Service. "All things come from earth, and all things pass into earth," said Xenophanes. A seed falls into the earth: from that seed a tree, in time, grows and matures—all its bulk is drawn from the earth. Each year its leaves wither and fall and revert again to earth; and in the end the tree falls, and in time itself becomes mere earth, to feed another seed to its completion—eternal flux.

## CHAPTER XV

### EMBLEMATIC ANALOGY

IN 1896 the principle was laid down by Wundt that "every elementary process on the physical side has a corresponding elementary process on the psychological side." A translation in a more familiar form of thought would be that in any one of Nature's processes, to which there is an invisible as well as a visible side, the fundamental principle which governs the visible side equally governs the invisible side. If we accept this postulate of Wundt's as an axiom, we have at once a clue to much that is otherwise undecipherable. By the simple expedient of reference to the instructive lessons of analogy, we gain an insight into the working of many psychological processes which are quite unfathomable by direct investigation. The word *psychical* might more fittingly be read *invisible*. It has no relation in any sense to the supernatural, but to that side of Nature which, owing to its lack of materiality, offers no tangible basis for the explorations of science.

There is an undeniable interest, and perhaps



an equally undeniable importance, in fathoming as far as possible the laws that govern these psychical or invisible processes. If there is in us any principle that survives the change which we know as death, that principle must clearly be governed as to its subsequent state by a definite law which is common to all animate creation. It is inconceivable that there should be one law governing the future of the Englishman and another that of the Kamskatkan and another that of the cow. Nature is not capricious, but prosaically regular.

We want, then, by induction from analogy, to try and get at the basic law which governs the posthumous existence of all creation. More than this we cannot hope for ; any attempts to particularise must obviously be frank speculation. But the basic law should content us, if in that law we can find pointers for conduct, and equanimity with regard to the state known as " hereafter."

All through the observable cosmos we are confronted with parallelisms, or, to use a handier word, with analogies, between the universal and the individual, between the larger and the less. A man's day is the recital in miniature of that man's life. In the morning he wakes to a slow consciousness. At first his powers, both physical and mental, are undeveloped, but with the rising of the sun his strength grows. In the forenoon he is buoyant and sanguine ; at mid-day he is in full strength ; in the evening he is weary and languid with past work ; and at night he lies

down and dies. In reflecting on this symbolical epitome we inevitably raise the crucial question, Is it truly symbolical? Shall we wake up on the morrow with a clear consciousness of the events preceding that last sleep? To this question each must fill in the answer as he will, but this point is at least apparent, that, apart from the exigencies of business and kindred duties, Thursday is none the less bright because Wednesday is forgotten, but it may well be far less bright because of the recollection of Wednesday.

The general parallelism between this twenty-four-hours life and the seventy-year life is plainly observable up to the point when, in each case, the weary man closes his eyes and falls asleep. Beyond this we have, on the one hand, an indication, on the other ignorance. But the probability is surely in favour of the analogy being complete throughout, and not failing in the one particular only where our experience cannot keep pace with it. If the analogy is true throughout, we have an undeniable suggestion of a return to activity after a period of unconsciousness. This suggestion falls in harmoniously with the Buddhist doctrine of *Pralaya-manvantara*—two conditions of existence which again correspond very nearly with the alternate periods of potential and actual energy which modern thought, following in the track of Aristotle, assigns to the cosmic activities. The reincarnation, in fact, which is the basis of all Buddhistic thought, does not synchronise with death, but is

preceded by a period during which the vital energy may be said to be potential, but certainly is not kinetic or actual.

The use of the term "vital energy" is not unattended with danger. There has for many years been a disposition to discredit any theory based on a postulate of "vital energy" or "vitalism," on the ground that any such theory is inconsistent with the law of the conservation of energy, but the reasonableness of such an attitude is not apparent. The law of the conservation of energy may be a reality, and in all probability is a reality, as any working alternative is beyond conception; but it must be remembered that the law has no effectual value in relation to human discussions on cosmic problems. It is, in fact, a law which is not a law in effect, on account of the tendency of energy to remain latent—*i.e.*, non-effective—for immense periods, during which the sum total of effective energy is correspondingly reduced. In solutions of life, therefore, any attempts to square the sum total of energy are clearly futile, on account of our complete inability to estimate the proportion of that sum total which may, for the time, be out of commission.

There appears to be no limit to the time during which energy may be "bottled up," nor to the extent to which it may be compressed. A quite astonishing quantity of energy may be stored up in an atom of radium or of cyanogen for thousands of years, and is only released when instability is set up. The properties of these

substances do not upset the law of the conservation of energy any more than the properties of magnetism upset it, but they do show that for purposes of computation the law is valueless, and that any objections to a theory which take refuge in that law are frivolous objections.

The Buddhist doctrine, then, that vital energy may be latent or stored up, is not to be rejected as unimaginable, and has certainly the backing of analogy. The reading, however, from all analogies is indicative rather than definite. In cases where two analogous processes are equally under observation we invariably find a close rather than an exact correspondence. From such evidence, therefore, we must look for broad principles rather than exact details, and with this result we should be content. If we can establish within reasonable limits the broad principle of eternal existence in relation to man's present state, we may safely leave the details to be filled in according to individual fancy.

From observation with a view to induction from analogy we learn two lessons—the invariableness of the law of flux, or cyclical recurrence, and the homogeneity of all cosmic processes, so that the small presents a drama in miniature of the great, and the great of the greater. The case of the twenty-four-hours life above mentioned may be claimed as an illustration of both these lessons, for it suggests that as the waking hours of the twenty-four are symbolical of the seventy-years life, so may the seventy-years life

in its turn be symbolical of a greater life beyond. Wheels within wheels.

Equally instructive are the lessons from astronomy. Here the moon revolves round the earth, the earth revolves round the sun. As to the principle controlling the movements of the sun we know nothing. Astronomy, so far, cannot detect any curve in the path of the sun. Mere observation, therefore, might here mislead us into belief that the path of the sun is straight; but the educational value of analogy here steps in, and teaches us with an all but unquestionable authority that this is not so, but that the sun in its turn revolves again round its own master, which may itself again be within the jurisdiction of a yet greater master. But even here, though the main principle is the same in each case, the details vary. The earth completes its rotation in twenty-four hours, while the moon occupies a month over the same task. But this variation in detail does not affect the main principle, which, in this case, is clearly that of revolution round a superior body.

One of the most remarkable analogies of this class is that between the life of the human embryo or fœtus and the life history of the *genus homo*. In the first few months of conception there is enacted, in total obscurity from ordinary observation, a complete drama of the evolution of man from protoplasm. A month stands for a million years, and the secrets of dead æons pass in quick succession before a blind audience. Biological science admits un-



hesitatingly the educational value of this most remarkable discovery. It sees the germ that will one day be man assume, during this short nine months, the successive shapes of simple cell, worm, fish, mammal, ape, and finally man; and it deduces (and reasonably deduces) that this is a reflection of the history of the species. But why this should be so no man can say. Any idea of an educational intention being at the back of this synopsis of evolution is discounted by the fact that the process takes place so completely, *in camera* as only to have yielded its secret to researches which were quite recently illegal, and which must always be horrible. But as an instance of the lesser offering an instructive parallelism of the greater, this discovery is invaluable. The lesser process occupies nine months, the greater many million years; and yet from observation of what takes place in that short nine months we can see re-enacted with tolerable exactitude those far-off scenes in a proper knowledge of which lie such vital religious issues. The fundamental principle which the development of the fœtus here illustrates is clearly that of a gradual climb from lower to higher.

Examples of another class point mainly to the invariableness of the law of flux: the eternal story of birth, meridian, death, re-birth. In the case of the processes which illustrate this law of eternal flux there is again no need for an exact harmony in detail. The details, in fact, of the many processes that come under this heading



vary most conspicuously ; but this variation does not in the smallest degree detract from the instructive value of the processes as regards the fundamental principle underlying them, which is very clearly that of the emanation of the individual from the universal, and of its inevitable ultimate return to the universal. We find this instruction, perhaps, most forcibly presented in the parallelism of the ocean. Evaporation draws the rain from the universal ; the rain falls upon the earth and meets with various vicissitudes ; but no vicissitude can keep it from return to the universal in the end. So with the earth. All that comes from it returns to it to be again put forth. Going farther afield into space, we find a vast system made up of offshoots from larger bodies, into which larger bodies they must inevitably return in the end.

The above examples mainly illustrate the remarkable correspondence in principle between processes which are sufficiently compressed to be under the observation of man and corresponding processes which stretch across vast periods far beyond the reach of examination. Even if the intention of these parallelisms is not educational, their effect is so. They teach us all we know. From material phenomena within range of the lens of science we deduce with an unchallenged reasonableness the laws governing similar phenomena, which may be screened from observation by either time or place. Our method of arriving at interpretations the general correctness of which no man questions is by deduction from

analogy—by hypothesis of the unseen based upon experience of the seen. These hypotheses are in the legitimate field of legitimate science. A further and more absorbing point of interest arises when we consider whether the same rule does not equally hold good when the unseen is unseen because of our lack of a sense, no less than when it is unseen because of its separation from us by time or space. This is, in effect, Wundt's proposition, which suggests that every physical process is accompanied by a psychical process which works on corresponding lines. Leibnitz is another German apostle of the same doctrine, which is also conspicuous in the writings of Spinoza.

It is clear that a consideration of this theory raises at once one question, which in importance overshadows all others. All men are conscious of the possession of a superphysical quality, which is nevertheless elusive, hard to focus, and harder still to name. The interest of man in this quality is only natural, as it clearly represents the only part of him which is not subject to the law of corruption, and for which, therefore, a continuance may be hoped after the physical side of him has undergone those chemical changes which we call death. The destination of this superphysical quality and the various influences which, it is claimed, can control that destination have occupied the attention of men from the earliest days. When men are sure of what that destination is they call their itinerary religion; when they are not sure they

call it philosophy. Let us, in this division, range ourselves on the side of those who are not sure, and who, therefore, seek for guiding indications in the broad handwriting of Nature. In this handwriting certain processes are disclosed to us from Alpha to Omega. In others we only see the Alpha, and the rest is hidden. The itinerary of man's physical side we see from Alpha to Omega, from the first entry of the spermatozoon into the ovum to the desiccation of the last bone. Of the itinerary of his super-physical or—as we may more conventionally call it—his psychical side we see but one letter, which we have reason to believe is neither Alpha nor Omega, but something between the two. Of this, however, we may at all events be sure: that the letter is not Omega. The Omega of man's physical side is not really Omega; it is equally Alpha; it is a new beginning no less than it is a destined end.

As we can trace the itinerary of man's physical side from Alpha to Omega so may we reasonably hope to track man's psychical journey from its Alpha to its Omega, even though the trail be faint; and the guidebook that we carry in our hand is the itinerary of the physical side. In the pages of that book are two things that stand out prominently beyond all others. The one is a principle, the other a process. The principle is that of gradual but systematic and inevitable ascent from lowly beginnings to something very much higher. The process is the process of reproduction, and is the blind agent of the

principle. These are the two most salient features in organic life, as far as we are able to trace its evolution from protoplasmic beginnings to the reality of the present day.

The point of importance is that the principle of ascent is, and must be contained in, the act of reproduction, because reproduction takes effect by the projection to another organism of that which has itself been received by projection ; and we know that the result of these successive acts of projection during the millions of years down which we look has been to evolve man from simple cellular forms of life. Therefore we say, and say with assurance, that—though each act of reproduction may not register a rise—reproduction stands for the principle of ascent, and that ascent takes place through the projection of inherited types with an improvement on the inheritance. It does not matter that within our own personal observation no improvement may be the case ; it matters nothing whether the advance be gradual or by sudden jumps after periods of inactivity or—like the advance of the flood tide—with an apparent retreat after each wave. These are matters of detail which the controversial schools must wrangle out among themselves.

But superior to all such questions of detail stands the main fact : that for millions of years we have an unbroken succession of projections, at the hither end of which is man in his highest embodiment, and at the nether end of which are the protozoa. For not one fraction of a second

during these millions of years has there been a break in the material connection which binds man to his humble ancestry. Man is of the same "flesh and blood" as the plasmic bodies of earth's earliest days; and the medium of conveyance of the improvement that man registers over these bodies is the act of reproduction.

This is the principle or—as Wundt puts it—the elementary process on the physical side which must be the basis of any investigations in search of a "corresponding elementary process on the psychical side."

It is a reasonable belief that the seen or physical is a faithful mirror of the unseen or psychical as regards process and the principle underlying the process. The physical process to which we may here look for instruction is that of the transmission or projection of certain qualities from one organism to another, with a constant, though gradual, improvement in the nature of those qualities. The qualities projected on the physical side are the structure and the mind; the analogous psychical quality which accompanies the above physical process, but accompanies it out of sight, is generally described by the word "soul." The word "soul," however, is objectionable, on account of the vagueness of its focus-point. Soul is an attribute with which religion credits man, and only man. But we are not searching for something which is found in man and is not found in the worm or in the bluebottle; for there we get right away from the principle indicated by our analogy, which is



that of gradual ascent from the very lowliest beginnings.

We want, therefore, a psychical quality which has climbed up from the very lowest rung of the long ladder and which must therefore be a constituent of life itself. If analogy has, in this case, any value as a guide, we want something which is received, improved upon or not, as the case may be, during its association with the organism which we know as *ego* and passed on. The process here, again, if our analogy has any value, must be one of gradual but systematic ascent. A general psychical atavism is no more possible than is a general physical atavism. The moon may get nearer the earth and the earth nearer the sun, but by no possibility can they get farther off.

It is obvious, then, that, if our analogy is here correct, we must look for a progressive psychical sublimation or elevation corresponding to the physical advance of which we have undoubted evidence. This advance must be projected from one organism to another in exactly the same way that the physical advance is projected from father to son. But throughout the history of species we see that physical advance runs *pari passu* with psychical. The superiority of the cat to the worm, and of the man to the cat, is physical no less than psychical. We know, too, that cosmic processes do not get tired of their objective and chop round in pursuit of something new by way of a change. Every evolutionary or cyclical process is carried right through to its destined conclusion.



The question then arises as to whether man can possibly be regarded as the destined conclusion of an evolutionary process. To this question all the forces of argument—instinct, reason, and education from analogy—answer unhesitatingly: No. The very suggestion is an absurdity.

The consummation of every cycle is equally the starting-point of a fresh cycle. By no effort of imagination can man be conceived as the starting-point of a cycle. Therefore, as physical and psychical progression have so far advanced hand in hand, we must look for a similar progressive partnership in the future. Physical evolution, however, is generally admitted to have ceased; at any rate, it has stood practically still for 260,000 years, and to-day shows no signs of advance. During the same period, however, there is evidence of considerable expansion in the seat of psychic activity. Between the brain of the Næanderthal man and of man to-day there is a very appreciable chasm. We may also claim at the present day to have continual evidence of a still further psychical evolution. The increase in the spirit of humanity, the increase in the sense of human obligations, the anti-cruelty societies that are springing up throughout the world, all point to a progressive sublimation in the soul of man. We have in addition a consciousness of that craving for psychical advance which is the necessary precursor and—in the Lamarckian sense—the actual cause of the advance. There is no corresponding craving

for physical advance. Man would seem to have arrived at the structural formation which is best suited to the conditions by which he is surrounded.

We have, then, practical evidence of a psychical advance in actual progress ; we have strong indications furnished by our psychical cravings that such advance will continue systematically ; we have the assurances of evolutionary history to the effect that physical and psychical advance is always *pari passu*, and finally we have irrefutable evidence that, while psychical advance on earth is *in esse* and *in posse*, physical advance is not. The conclusion is irresistible that the higher organisms with which that future psychical advance will be associated must be sought for in other spheres than this. Any difficulty in this thought disappears the moment we are able to disabuse our minds of the parochial idea of the earth as a self-contained field shut off from its neighbours by an insurmountable wall. The wall in our case is space ; its claim to be insurmountable can only be sustained by proof that it is not a medium of conveyance. We do not know this. We know, on the contrary, that all space is filled with ether, and that ether is a medium of conveyance for energy in the form of light and heat. It is, therefore, reasonable to argue that, as regards other forms of energy, we are potentially within reach of every solar system whose light can be detected by our telescopes.

If, then, there is in man a surviving psychic

principle, there is clearly no need to call in supernatural agencies for its transmission to other quarters of the universe. Where light can travel other forms of energy can equally travel.

## CHAPTER XVI

### METEMPSYCHOSIS

A CONSIDERATION of the foregoing points brings us with a leap into the field of metempsychosis. The line of reasoning from analogy is as follows : The history of species—*i.e.*, the history of living organisms from the highest to the lowest—is the history of a gradual progressive ascent.

The quality of ascent is transmitted from one organism to another, so that each new organism benefits by the rise registered by the organism which it succeeds.

The psychical parallelism is equally simple, though the operation in this case must of necessity be out of sight.

The soul of species has risen *pari passu* with the rise of its organic structure, and here again each new organism benefits by the past sublimation of the soul which it inherits. It would be illogical and, indeed, absurd to assume that this process of gradual sublimation is not destined to continue in the future on lines similar to those which we can trace in the past ; and, if this is so, it is clear that the further sublimated soul will call for association with a higher organism

than man, and that, therefore, such organisms must be sought for outside of the boundaries of earth.

In this proposition we obviously have the basis of the idea of heaven. The curious feature, however, in connection with the metempsychosis of Greece and India is that its apostles seem to have been incapable of conceiving of a higher organism than man, or of other worlds among the myriads within the universe, where conditions of existence might be superior to any of which we here have experience. As a consequence, their reincarnations were invariably terrestrial, and their entire reincarnation outlook was therefore of necessity pessimistic. The most righteous and deserving could hope for no better fate than that of a king or noble, and the less worthy found their future tenements in a descending scale, according to their merits or demerits.

In the Code of Manu (Brahmanistic), and equally in the philosophy of Plato, homes are found for the souls of the wicked in the forms of cats, pigs, beetles, leaves, &c. It says much for the strength of the principle itself that it could, in the minds of profound thinkers, have stood the strain of such desperate expedients as these.

Many centuries later we find Plotinus still hampered by the same unnecessary pessimism. "Each soul," he says, "descends to that which is prepared for its reception according to similarity of disposition. For it tends to that to which it has become similar, one soul indeed to

man but another to some other animal." The word "descend" here used does not imply descent in grade, but descent from the emporium where the soul was laid by till the birth of the organism that was exactly fitted to its quality. "When the prescribed period arrives, souls may, as it were, spontaneously descend, and enter into that receptacle in which it is necessary for them to reside." This, Plotinus goes on to explain, is not brought about by conscious volition, but by automatic attraction.

The pessimism of this doctrine is apparent, and in this respect it shows no advance on the Code of Manu, for it is obvious that, if reincarnation as man is the highest that can be hoped for, the general tendency must be either stationary or downwards. To this spirit of pessimism may be traced the dread of reincarnation which was so prominent a feature in Buddhist psychology, and, to a lesser extent, in the philosophy of the school of Philo. Life on earth was evidently associated with more pain than pleasure, and all terrestrial incarnations were therefore undesirable. Freedom from these, in the shape of Nirvana, was the great desiderandum.

Apart from its hopeless pessimism, the chief objection to this feature in old Oriental metempsychosis is that it runs counter to universal law. All cycles are progressive. There is no such thing as retrogression in any cosmic process. This law is so invariable that we have an absolute assurance that any reincarnation that



may be before us must, on balance, be upward, and that the worst to which we can look forward is stagnation, or a temporary check in the inevitable upward trend.

The parochial view of futurity held by the ancients seems to have been due to an improper grasp of the principles of astronomy rather than to an ignorance of the existence of other worlds. In the earliest Buddhistic records there is mention of countless world-systems throughout space. The Greek philosophers, too, were strongly impressed with the possibility of other worlds, but seem to have been unable to picture a psychical intimacy between such worlds and ours. In Greek mythology all the departed dwell within a stone's-throw. Even the gods inhabited a mountain range in Thessaly. Pluto dwelt underground, and the Gardens of the Hesperides and Elysian Fields were close at hand on the Atlantic shore. The possible co-operation of all the heavenly bodies in one autonomous system is a thought which blends harmoniously with the general basic idea of Greek philosophy, but it is a thought to which they were unable to give proper expression, owing to their ignorance of physics.

The passage of twenty-five centuries, although it may not have increased our intuitive perception, has increased our knowledge of the laws of Nature. We know now that all cyclical occurrences are orderly *and progressive*. There is no going back in any cyclical process which comes under observation, from which we may deduce with absolute assurance that, if reincarna-

tions are before us, such incarnations can no more be retrogressive than can a cog-wheel. Animals may—and, according to law, should—work systematically upwards, through the *genus homo*, to the ultimate things beyond; but man could under no circumstances revert to the animal state.

No less foreign to the spirit of metempsychosis proper is the idea of the recession of Beings from a superior state to the human. The idea has, of course, always had a peculiar fascination for the human mind, but metempsychosis offers two solid objections: (1) That such an occurrence would be contrary to the law of cyclical processes, and (2) that the law of affinity which is the basis of metempsychosis forbids the interaction of a soul and body which are out of tune. The goodness of Jesus and the badness of Judas would, from this point of view, be physiological in the first instance; but important variations from the initial state might follow on the effort of the subject. The obvious difficulty here lies in the question of free-will which is involved, but as that question is dealt with elsewhere, it need not be further considered at the moment.

It will be noticed that in new as in old metempsychosis, reincarnation on the present plane, being attended with more pain than pleasure, may be regarded as a calamity. But whereas old Buddhism found its only refuge from this calamity in Nirvana, more modern thought sees the probability of a progressive rise through a succession of ascending states before the final

mergement of which original Buddhistic philosophy had prescience.

A more modern and more daring and, at the same time, an infinitely more autonomous construction of the old Buddhism is found in the doctrine known as Esoteric Buddhism. This doctrine is too elusive and intricate to be dealt with even in outline; it is doubtful, in fact, whether its real tenets are properly known to any Occidental. But here, at any rate, the crude errors due to the restricted outlook of the old Buddhist school are recognised: post-mortem reincarnations take effect on other planets than this, and, as a consequence, the general tendency is upwards, onwards, and inwards towards a destined and inevitable end. The plasmic, and therefore the religious, element in a scheme which is in the main automatic, arises only in connection with the rapidity or delay with which the inevitable End is reached. In this respect alone does individual interest—*i.e.*, religion—come into play, for though in cosmic processes a hundred thousand years may be but a single tick of the clock, to individual consciousness it represents many life periods.

The advantage in probability that a scheme of reincarnation can show over the current Christian belief is very marked. The Christian soul is a spontaneous generation: it comes from nowhere, and, upon death, it passes for ever to heaven or hell. In metempsychosis, on the other hand, the soul passes through a complete cycle: it comes from God, and gradually, by repeated

sublimations in successive organisms, it returns to God. Empedocles defines this doctrine as clearly as any one. Here the soul ( $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$ ) emanates from the Absolute, and, after a series of incarnations, each of which is the direct resultant of the acts of the previous life, finally, after a cycle covering thousands of years, returns to the source from which it came. Empedocles was naturally restricted in his outlook by his ignorance of astronomy, and his system was therefore in part incoherent; but, with all its crudity, his scheme is, both ethically and logically, far ahead of present-day Church eschatology.

In metempsychosis, too, it must be remembered that man advances towards divinity itself—a marked advantage over the Church system, which merely promises him a menial situation in a divine establishment.

In present-day dogma any suggestion of metempsychosis is necessarily banned, and for the clearest of reasons. Metempsychosis presupposes an eternity of a cosmic energy past and future which may well be identified with God. In dogmatic Christianity God is equally eternal in both directions, but he has only been active for five thousand years; for the rest of eternity he has slumbered. It is obvious, too, that a religion which reserves God's personal interest and favour for one-third of the human race on earth cannot consistently allow him any benevolent concern for the dwellers on other planets. The difficulty is avoided rather than met. The Church does not specifically deny the

existence of life on other cosmic bodies, but it implicitly believes that earth holds the place of foremost importance, and that the stellar scheme is in the main decorative.

Such views cannot survive serious thought. We know that God cannot be a latent force, but must be in ceaseless activity. His very nature, as regulator of an eternal universe, necessitates a ceaseless activity, which is coeval with his field of operation. From that vanishing-point which we call the back of eternity, there has been ceaseless activity: suns have been warming their worlds and the living creatures on those worlds. This is a great thought; but there is no escape from it, even if we wished for one. For ever and ever, back across the abysses of past eternity, there has been in existence in some part of the cosmos man, or what corresponds to man. This is as certain as the fact of the universe. Palæontology tells us of the existence of man on earth 250,000 years ago—and we express surprise. But we know that billions of years before our earth was earth, before it was even the nebulous mass from which our solar system took shape, its matter composed worlds on which was life corresponding to our human life, on which were mortals to whom God was no less God than he is to us to-day.

The bases of modern metempsychosis are as follows: (1) All known things in the universe, organic or inorganic, are ceaselessly fluxing in ever-recurrent cycles; (2) the sum total of all energy and matter throughout the universe



remains constant ; (3) life is a form of energy ; (4) though other forms of energy, such as light, heat, movement, sound, and electricity, are convertible one into the other, life cannot by any human appliances be converted into other forms of energy, nor other forms of energy into life ; (5) there is no such thing as an Alpha or an Omega : that which appears to be an Alpha is merely a fresh aspect of Omega ; (6) from all eternity there have been in the universe numberless worlds inhabited by mortals ; (7) the life that animates and leaves these mortals must be a constant quantity, unless it is transmuted into some other form of energy, of which there is no evidence.

It is obvious that, in treating of the doctrine of metempsychosis, any descent to detail is perilous ; and the man who, for purposes of illustration, supplies details must do so in full view of the probability that such details may range very wide of the actual truth. Error in details, however, is unimportant. It is the broad principle that counts ; and the broad principle in metempsychosis is in substance unassailable, because there is no other reasonable solution of existence, scientific or religious.

This principle is that the psychic quality which for want of a better name we call soul is drawn from the Central Store, or Protarch, exactly as a raindrop is drawn from the ocean. It starts in association with the lowliest forms of life and works its way up, through man, to something as much higher than man as man is



higher than the amoeba. In the end it rejoins that from which it came, just as the raindrop rejoins the ocean. Other examples of the same "prodigal son" process are found in the case of the earth and that which comes from it, and in the case of all stellar systems. The ocean analogy, however, is the handiest for illustration purposes.

In this analogy God is represented by the ocean, and life by the sum total of moisture. To us the ocean appears unchanging and unchangeable, but this is not so. It is in a state of ceaseless metabolism. The rivers of the world are constantly pouring into it vast volumes of water, and no less constantly is it giving off moisture in the form of vapour. The vapour falls upon the earth in the form of rain, and once more hurries down the rivers to the bosom of its God. It is an endless cycle. The form of the moisture changes, but the sum total is ever the same. Clouds, rain, snow, ice, pellucid rivers, and stagnant, land-locked pools all find their way surely and inevitably back to the ocean, the God from which they emanated and of which they are a part. The constituents of the ocean are not constant. The putrid, stagnant pool seems past hope of salvation; but this is not so. Gradually it is being volatilised and finding reunion with the ocean. And similarly the crystal waters of mid-Atlantic may, in the turn of a cycle, be a foetid horse-pond, to be in its turn reabsorbed once more into its Protarch.

In Eastern metempsychosis all life, in the sense

of psychic life or soul, is from time to time, in the recurrence of endless cycles, one with God —is, in fact, God, to be in turn given off for the run of a new epoch. From this point of view the constituents of God are not constant, but are in a state of ceaseless metabolic flux.

It is clear from the start that the cause of all cyclical processes lies in the interaction of the opposing principles of attraction and repulsion. Where the processes are discernible to the senses, as in the examples of the ocean and the stellar systems, this is patently so ; and as uniformity of law is Nature's most characteristic feature, it is tolerably safe to assume that the same causes govern processes which are not discernible.

Attraction and repulsion in interaction furnish the motive power of all creation. It is the tendency to polarity which keeps the cosmic clock from running down. There is no positive without a negative. In this dualistic control the balance of opposing forces, in the ebb and flow of eternity, is equal, but in individual cycles the dominant factor is attraction. The forces of repulsion start the cycle with an expenditure of energy which, thenceforward to the close of the cycle, leave attraction in slight but sufficient superiority. The earth was flung out from the sun by repulsion, but, in making the effort, repulsion sacrificed its power of permanently keeping her there. Attraction has now the upper hand, and some day the earth will once more rejoin the sun.

The end of a cycle, then, is inevitably the

*status in quo ante*, and this solid fact is the basis of the entire fabric of metempsychosis. The elaboration of the idea has, of course, its difficulties, and much must always remain obscure; but in the succeeding chapters an attempt is made to set down in intelligible form some of the current Eastern ideas in regard to that gradual sublimation of the soul which marks its progress along its cyclical orbit.

It is probable that the doctrine of metempsychosis in the East is far older than history. According to Herodotus the Greeks did not acquire it from India but from Egypt, in which case it must—in that country, at any rate—date back beyond existing records, for there is no trace of it in the worship of Osiris and Ra. In the field of philosophic thought antiquity is not, of course, necessarily a mark of merit; at the same time it must be borne in mind that, though the standard of ethics undoubtedly rises with the advance of time, the same does not hold good of religion. The record of all the standard religions of the present day is one of gradual declension from the initial high-water mark. It is also practically certain that when we talk of certain elevated beliefs having existed in prehistoric days, we must not reckon such beliefs to have been universal or popular, but rather to have marked the opinions of an enlightened few whose ideals would have been incomprehensible to the masses of their day. Sublime beliefs have never been general at any period of history. Sacerdotalism and its

rites, whether bloody, licentious, or merely adulatory, has always been the candle round which the unthinking flutter. The rites may change with the march of time; from blood and tom-toms we may pass to panegyrics and genuflections, but the motive remains the same. Men want favours, and they angle for them with the bait which the fashion of the moment votes most attractive. In metempsychosis, on the other hand, the sole determinant of the future is conduct. The very basis of the doctrine is that as a man sows so shall he reap. Such a doctrine, in a selfish world, can never vie in popularity with the teaching that the crop which a man reaps has no relation to the seed which he sows, but can be insured by easy incantations.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE CREDENTIALS OF OLD PHILOSOPHY

PHILOSOPHICAL explanations are naturally incomplete, and lay no claim to exactitude. All they aim at is the grasp of a governing principle. They can therefore claim this advantage over scientific explanations, that they stand the test of time. The philosophy of twenty-five centuries ago holds good in substance to-day, and will still hold good in twenty-five centuries from now. But in twenty-five centuries from now the science of to-day will be museumed as the curious gropings of the dark ages. This is inevitable. Science, built up as it is on experiment and induction from experiment, is naturally progressive. Intuitive knowledge is not ; it has nothing to lean on but instinct, and its conclusions are, therefore, the same in one age as in another. For the same reason it pursues only broad principles, but it looks confidently to the science of the future, not only for corroboration of the principles but for explanation of many of the details which are at present obscure.

Few people at the present day have the courage to pronounce openly for metempsychosis ; still

fewer take the trouble to evolve anything approaching a concrete system of existence ; but none the less it is unquestionable that the doctrine has had the unacclaimed allegiance of many modern thinkers, among whom may be reckoned such men as Goethe and Schopenhauer. It is, indeed, the only logical refuge of any who postulates a surviving principle in man ; and its lack of avowed adherents at the present day is probably to be traced to the ridicule attaching to some of the more absurd flights of fancy of the old-time doctrines. These are, of course, sufficiently conspicuous, but it must be remembered that, in an unscientific age and among an unscientific and illiterate people, errors in detail are inseparable from any attempt to elaborate abstract ideas. The idea itself may be fundamentally sound, but the elaboration of it is surrounded by pitfalls. In these modern days of ours a library of reference may guide detail along a safe path, but may equally blur the outline of fundamental principles. The value of the old thought of two or three thousand years ago is in its fundamental principles. In a frugal diet, in complete freedom from the hurly-burly of business or of pleasure, and perhaps not least in the absence of a speculative science, men found in contemplation elemental truths which the carnivorous world flounders to, long after, through the fumes of its laboratories.

Darwin has been canonised as the pilot of a great idea, but four hundred years before Christ the East knew that man was evolved from the



lower animals. Empedocles had a more than general knowledge of the law of Natural Selection, while Aristotle's doctrine of Causes forms the groundwork even to-day of much up-to-date thought. The law of the Conservation of Energy, again, is generally coupled with the name of Mayer, but twenty-five centuries before Mayer, Anaxagoras had got the measure of this law. Anaximander knew all about the nebular origin of the heavenly bodies, while Democritus was the pioneer of the atomic theory, and himself built up a mechanical explanation of life and of cosmic phenomena to which Haeckel's doctrine can give few points to-day. It is impossible, therefore, to deny a certain value to the opinions of men who arrived at truths such as these by the simple method of thought.

Before, however, examining into the basis of the old Oriental view of existence, it is advisable to consider briefly the explanations offered by the more material school of biology to-day.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE MECHANISM OF LIFE

LIFE, according to this school, is not a psychical but a physical quality ; that is to say, its presence in the newly-born is laid to the credit of the genital cells in the parents. This explanation, however, on examination, will be found to fail, because of its incompleteness and want of system. It does no more than explain, or rather account for, those structural activities of growth which are obviously contained in the seed of all plants and animals. It is felt, however, and strongly felt, by many, that the problem of life, as we consciously experience it to-day, is not to be met by a mere explanation of the structural activities that make for growth. It is felt that there is, as an inalienable part of life itself (as distinct from mere growth), a something which is indestructible, and with regard to which the parents have no responsibility. This something is usually known as *soul*; and, in spite of the objections to the word, it is probably the best available. It is quite clear, on reflection, that the soul cannot be transmitted from parent to child, for every child has two parents, and many

parents have many children whose psychical qualities vary most conspicuously. The noblest parents can produce the most depraved children, and vice versa. The mental characteristics which a parent transmits are in great measure traceable to the structural background of the mind, and are, therefore, in a sense partly physical. We describe them as constitutional. From his parents a child may inherit cowardice or courage, meanness or generosity, and various tastes and idiosyncrasies. These are constitutional, and, as such, ineradicable. A coward is always a coward, a mean man always mean; an effort of will may momentarily overcome the tendency, but can never alter it. Courage and cowardice, though their immediate derivation is clearly mental, are generally classed among physical qualities, and properly so, for they ebb and flow according to the physical condition of the body. A brave man after breakfast is often a coward before. Similarly meanness, generosity, melancholy, good temper, &c., and even the intellectual qualities known as mental capacity, are really no more than various reflections of the physical condition of the structure. All these can be transmitted as easily as can the features and voice; but the soul cannot be transmitted, because it has no structural background, or, at any rate, any such background as it may depend on for its expression has no part in determining its quality. The structural background is a constant quantity, or sufficiently so for purposes of argument, and any mental attri-

butes dependent on it are necessarily equally constant. The boy coward becomes a man coward, the mean boy a mean man. The intellectual man remains constantly intellectual till the brain begins to decline, then the decline of his mental forces is in exact ratio to the decline of the physical background on which those forces are dependent.

But the soul, though it finds its public expression through the physical equipment of man, is clearly independent of the condition of that equipment. It may be at its strongest when the frame and brain are tottering, at its weakest in the very heyday of manhood. Its very inconstancy makes it impossible of transmission. A father at twenty-five can obviously not transmit a quality which may not be fully developed in him till fifty years later ; and, even if he could transmit the soul that was in him at twenty-five, this is no help towards determining the goal of the further developed soul at seventy-five. So that if we accept the parental cells as explaining the beginning of the soul, we are as far as ever from an understanding of the end. All happenings are orderly and cyclical. There is no sunrise without a sunset, nor sunset without a sunrise. Where is the explanation of our sunset? There is none—none is even attempted, though an attempt is made when for soul we substitute the word *life*.

It has already been explained that soul must be viewed as a constituent of life itself. In Eastern metempsychosis the two ideas are practi-

cally one. Even in our own terminology, it is very difficult to separate them. We search for the Whence of life and the Whither of the soul. If we reverse the names our quest will still be the same. It is, in truth, one principle that we are on the track of, and not two, and whether we name it soul or life makes very little difference. But when we are in debate with biology it does make a difference. Most people would ridicule the proposition that the soul is transmitted from parent to child; but the doctrine that life is transmitted from parent to child they would be less disposed to ridicule. The doctrine has a plausible ring about it. On the surface it appears reasonable, and even convincing. It appears to be borne out past controversy by evidence with which we are confronted at every step along the path of life. And yet there is nothing more certain than this: that if we admit the transmission of life by the parent, we must also admit that of the soul, and that if we deny either the one or the other, we are forced into the arms of metempsychosis. There is no alternative.

There is a certain school of biology that is loath to admit limits to its knowledge. This school attempts a mechanical explanation of life with the meagre stock of materials at its command. It declines to admit that these materials are insufficient, and as a result its explanations do not satisfy, and never can satisfy. What it really explains is structural growth, but it calls this life. Structural growth in itself is mysterious



enough, and much in connection with it is still obscure ; but the general principle of structural growth has unquestionably been laid bare from A to Z by the labours of the three standard sciences in whose province the thing lies. For the fruits of these researches we pay proper homage. They are monuments to the labours of great men. But they are not an explanation of life.

The trouble begins over the definition of the word "life." We find the word applied indiscriminately to the principle animating the sponge, the amoeba, the cabbage, the spermatozoon, the foetus, and adult man. Even the crystal is sometimes included in the category of claimants. Preyer and Fechner credit the sun with life, Hippocrates thought that all flame was living. The only quality that these claimants for life share in common is that of assimilation from outside. They all draw external matter into their systems and assimilate it. Life, however, as we consciously experience it, means something more to us than this. We cannot allow the cabbage into common clanship with ourselves. We have certain qualities which the cabbage lacks. We have independent movement, conscious volition. It is impossible to refuse a value to these special attributes: it is all-but impossible to persuade ourselves that they only mark a difference in degree. The feeling is that they mark a difference in kind—that they register, in fact, the boundary-line between life and growth. The diploma of growth is the assimilation of external



matter. Man and the cabbage can equally claim this diploma, and in this respect we may admit relationship. But man has something more: he has above all else independent movement. To those who restrict the difference between animal and vegetable life to a question of degree, this matter of independent movement presents a constant difficulty. How did it start? Biology lays down unhesitatingly that the animal world was evolved from the vegetable. There is no need to quarrel with this dogma, because it carries with it no vital issues, but it may be observed that the evidence on the point is far from complete. Embryology, which is the first and most important witness for the evolution theory, has nothing to say in the matter. There are no indications of vegetable life in the earlier embryonic stages. The evolutionary process can in the development of the embryo be continuously, though dimly, traced from the simple cell to man. The evidence so afforded is irrefutable; but there is no evidence of the leap from vegetable to animal, from fixity and irresponsibility to independent movement and conscious volition.

The explanation of the beginnings of independent movement which biology offers is not convincing. Primordial plants, this explanation says, remained stationary so long as their food supply was within reach; when it ceased to be within reach they followed it. Thus began independent movement, which is synonymous with animal life. But we know by sad experience that if we remove a plant's nourishment out of reach

the plant does not follow it, but it dies ; so that an all-but superhuman faith is needed if we are to credit the primordial flora with these miraculous powers of pursuit. Here we are indeed in touch with the supernatural !

To the bulk, then, at any rate, of mankind, it must seem that the beginnings of independent movement are among the mysteries that have not yet been explained. In the absence of a tenable explanation, the question arises as to the possibility of the difference between animal and vegetable life being something more than a mere difference in degree.

In the light of this possibility points of unexpected interest arise. Vegetable growth has to be deprived of its diploma of life—it is mere growth. The distinctive mark of life is independent movement. From this point of view the fœtus has no life, but only growth, for it has no independent movement. It cannot pursue its food. It sucks nourishment from the placenta, as a clematis sucks nourishment from the earth. Its features, when formed, bear the stamp of death, and not of life.

If we turn to the born child, we find at once something present which was lacking in the fœtus. The child breathes, it feels, it feeds, it cries, its brain works, the instrument (as Plato calls it in the "Phædo") which for months has been dumb now plays a tune, small at first, certainly, but always gaining in strength. In a word, the child lives ; it is animated by something which was manifestly lacking in the inert, corpse-like

foetus. What is that something? Not the soul of conventional dogma, for it is equally found in the new-born calf and in the new-born sparrow; and yet the poverty of our language is such that soul we must for purposes of lucidity call it.

Of all the old-time philosophers, Democritus and Aristotle alone obtain any recognition among the material biologists of the day. The former, of course, was a Monist in every sense of the word, while Aristotle's doctrine of causes cannot but appeal to the cause-finding tendency of the moment. It is one thing, however, to admit a cause, and another to find it. "To know the cause is to know truly," said Bacon, and with this all must agree. But it might with equal truth be said that to attribute a wrong cause is worse than ignorance—for it is error. We all search for the causes of happenings, but the majority of us have to confess that in many cases the causes are out of reach. There are others, however, who do not admit this, and who in this spirit fashion causes out of the common mundane materials at hand? Of such material is the cause of the soul which we have just considered. This is a palpable misfit, and most will agree that the parents of this cause must be told to try again. Exactly the same cause is assigned to the life. It is transmitted from parent to child in the ordinary way. This explanation, though less palpably defective than the other, is still on examination a very bad fit indeed. That some form of activity is transmitted is obvious on the surface; the question is, whether this activity has

the essential attributes of life in the highest sense. From the moment of conception this activity is present ; the embryo grows ; it assumes strange and varied shapes, which in the final stages resolve themselves into the semblance of a dead child. The body, after the manner of every plant, draws nourishment through a stem ; its limbs develop and unfold exactly as the petals of a bud develop and unfold. Is this life? From one fact there is no escape : the brain of the foetus, though perfectly healthy, has yet no consciousness ; therefore, though there may be no consciousness without brain, still it is quite clear that there can be brain without consciousness, and that, for this reason, the brain is merely an instrument upon which some force not yet present in the foetus plays. As the foetus has explicitly all the attributes of growth, this force, which is lacking in the foetus, is something outside of mere growth, and something which is requisite before personal life in an independent form can exist.

It is at once clear that if biology claims to have found in the sexual act a mechanical explanation of structural growth, that claim is logically substantiated : we can follow that structural growth from the moment of conception till the dissolution of the structure in gases and other elements. But when biology claims that this material process is an explanation of life, the claim is not substantiated, for the mechanism is very far from complete. It makes no provision for the Whither of the life. The process cannot

be traced from end to end. There is, in fact, no causal system. If an explanation is to be considered mechanical, and therefore tenable, we must have the entire sequence of causes from A to Z. But here we have clearly nothing but the A. No Z that would fall in line with the parental transmission theory has yet been exploited.

Altogether, however, apart from this damning weakness, the parental explanation of the A fails in itself, for extended backwards it leads to a newly-made and inorganic world, without parents. Clearly, the only refuge from this *impasse* lies in spontaneous generation, and to this the doctrine has recourse. It must surely be confessed, even by its authors, that this explanation of the A of life leaves something to be desired. But the complete breakdown of the theory comes from its inability to follow the life to a logical conclusion—to evolve even in attempt a cyclical orbit. If the life starts with the moment of conception, the Whither of the father's life ought logically to be in the son. To be systematic and mechanical there ought to be an actual *transference* of life. But this is clearly not so. Father and son live side by side; their two lives are distinct things running visibly parallel. It is clearly fatuous to search for the Whither of the father's life in the son. The son may die first, and die childless; but the father's life is still a very real thing. We want to trace that father's life to the end. Aristotle found the formal cause of the child in the paternal cell, and the material cause in the maternal cell. This



view we may readily adopt, or—perhaps more properly—we may mix up the two and find the formal and material causes of the child conjointly in the parental cells. The proposition, in fact, goes almost without saying; but it is another matter altogether when we try to find the cause of the child's *life* in the life of the same cells; for even if we take the purely materialistic view that the life of the reproducers continues in the reproduced, we may much more fittingly find that continuance in the living cell units which reproduce their species within the organism, rather than in the sudden and unaccountable access of energy which follows upon birth. For it must be remembered that the cell units of the organism are alive in the true sense before birth no less than after, and after no less than before; so that there is, at birth, no sudden transference to the general organism of cellular energy from within. The ante-natal cellular energy remains undiminished after birth, so that any theory which looks for the animating principle of the whole from within the organism must conjure up that animating principle *ex nihilo*.

In the Chicago packing-houses many thousands of beasts in the fullest vigour of life are daily slaughtered. At the Battle of Mukden thirty thousand strong lives were suddenly cut short. What became of these many thousand lives? In the transmission theory no explanation is even attempted. Here is a lack of system, and this becomes emphasised on further examination. In Haeckel's explanation, the evolution of the soul



has advanced *pari passu* with that of the structure and in obedience to the same process. But here he takes us straight into a *cul-de-sac*; for structural evolution has ceased. This is common biological ground. Man is the consummation. The soul, therefore, must either cease developing with the cessation of the structural development, or else it must continue developing in association with a wholly inadequate and inexpressive organism. In either case there is a complete lack of system; for it is impossible to trace the course of evolution forward to a sane or beneficial conclusion, and nature stands, therefore, convicted of a chaotic inanity of which serious thought cannot but acquit her. We may not all be professed teleologists; but surely no one in these days can *think*, and at the same time hold that nature's processes are incoherent and meaningless.

Mr. McCabe, Haeckel's ardent apologist, evidently recognises this flaw in the system, for he finds the departure of the life in the inorganic energies that are set up subsequent to death. It must be quite clear to any one with an open mind that these inorganic energies represent the end of the material structure. They arise from the chemical changes that take place in the corpse, and they represent the end of that of which the sexual act was the beginning. If this explanation stopped here, one would say that it was a legitimate explanation of the A and Z of the process of growth, wrongly named life. But the explanation does not stop here. In an effort

to demonstrate a systematic cyclical process, it lays down that, as the life passes away in the inorganic energies that succeed death, so was it originally drawn from the inorganic energies of the molecules that go to build up the structure. This is an amazing doctrine, coming as it does from such a school, for it is obviously a renunciation of the parental cell theory. The life cannot possibly arise in both ways. If the parental-cell doctrine is sound, then the inorganic-energy doctrine is clearly unnecessary, and vice versa. The doctrine, however, is valuable as being a tacit admission, from a quarter that is very reluctant to make it, that there is something in life which is not to be accounted for by the mechanism which is responsible for growth. For the moment we may leave this second-string explanation of the A of life (but without losing sight of the immense concession that its introduction implies), while we consider once more the disappearance of the Z in the post-mortem gases. That these gases are not the end of life is evident on the surface. The corpse of a sheep will keep for weeks in a freezing chamber. In this case, the inorganic energies are still in the body: they have not even begun to escape; but the life is clearly not there. If we want to drive the proof home we have but to expose the same corpse to a strong sun-heat. The inorganic energies are at once set up, and it would be possible to watch the structural fabric actually dissolving in gases and other inorganic energies. These inorganic energies cannot possibly represent

the hereafter of a life that was set free some weeks before: they very clearly represent the end of that which had its beginning in the fusion of the parental cells—structural growth.

To return to the cognate explanation of the A of life in the inorganic energies of the molecules that go to build up the structure. It is clear that the introduction of this theory—in addition to admitting insufficiency in the parental transmission theory—is perilously near to a draft on the immaterial world. For if we resolve molecules back into atoms and atoms again into electrons, we then find that man's life, according to this theory, is a synthesis of the inorganic energies of the electrons that go to build up his structure; in other words, a man's life is drawn from the recesses of space. Here is, indeed, a plunge into the transcendental ocean! Metempsychosis demands no more from us than this. For electrons are not an exclusively earthly possession: they are in effect the ether; they join us up with every planet in the universe, and any system which calls in their services admits in doing so that life cannot be fashioned entirely in our own little home-workshop. This point is really the only point in contention. The mechanicality of the life process is not in dispute. No thinker can avoid swearing allegiance to a mechanical system. But where the streams divide is over the restrictions which Haeckel and his school place upon the mechanism. They try to isolate this little globe and cut it off from all outside communication; they try to manufacture

all phenomena from home produce and to exclude all imports. This is hardly reasonable. Solar disturbances ninety million miles away influence magnetic needles. Light, which is a form of energy, reaches the earth from incalculable distances. Life is another form of energy, and may equally reach the earth, *qua* life from incalculable distances, the vehicle of conveyance being in each case the same.

This admission of imports is spoken of disparagingly, as "bringing in something from outside," and again as "having recourse to an immaterial world"; but when we find the origin of life traced back to the inorganic energies of electrons, which are ubiquitous throughout space, we may well claim that we are not alone in bringing in something from outside. And if we begin to talk of material and immaterial—what man is to be found in these days brave enough to mark the dividing line between the two?

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE CYCLICAL THEORY OF LIFE

A BRIEF outline has now been sketched of, on the one hand, the old-time view of life, and, on the other, that of the modern school of mechanical biologists. An attempt will be made in the present chapter to explain broadly the modern Oriental theory of metempsychosis, purged as it is of many of the crude errors of old, and squared as to the more essential points with the ascertained facts of modern science.

Any attempt to explain in current terms Oriental theories of life are heavily handicapped by the vagueness of those terms' boundaries. On all sides we find formulas laid down in language which requires translating, and which no man living can translate intelligibly. What are the meanings of the words "soul," "life," "matter," "energy," "volition," "consciousness"? Where is the boundary between the physical and the psychical, between matter and energy, between life and growth, between consciousness and sensibility? No man can say. Each merges imperceptibly into the

other. The artificial boundaries between them vanish, and with their disappearance equally disappears the value of the various terms for purposes of clear definition. The fact is that single-sense words such as "life," "matter," "energy," "volition," "consciousness," &c., are quite unfitted to express the intricate ideas they stand for. Nature's processes, as Herbert Spencer justly observes, are always vastly more complex than we at first suppose. The equipment of the English language is quite inadequate to cope with these intricacies. German is better; but even here there are limitations. The would-be exponent, then, is in the position of a sculptor trying to carve a statuette with a crowbar: lucidity in detail becomes an impossibility, because the details have no equivalent in language. The words in common use are too hopelessly elastic.

Of all these artificial boundaries between concepts none is more artificial, or exercises a more confusing effect upon discussion, than that between the "material" and the "immaterial." There is a growing feeling that the two cannot be separated by a rigid boundary, and that what to our senses appears immaterial may in reality have a material basis, though one which we cannot as yet allocate. Immaterial or psychic phenomena, in other words, are not miracles, in the sense of being violations of law, but are the mechanical results of a direct causation, even though the causation is not at present understood. Modern Orientalism assigns an absolute



mechanicality to all processes, psychical as well as material. The fundamental idea from which this belief springs is that a perfect uniformity of principle governs all happenings, great and small, physical and psychical. This is, of course, a monism ; but it is a monism of process, which must not be confounded with a monistic view of all that comes under the direction of the process. A monism of process offers no antagonism to a religious belief ; it carries with it, certainly, the suggestion of a cyclical evolution, the end of which may be described as predestined, inasmuch as it is inevitable, but in which the religious element (free-will, in other words) finds a place in relation to the rapidity or otherwise with which the end is attained. The effect of conduct is to accelerate or delay the end ; and as the end may clearly be identified with the great *desiderandum*, rapidity of attainment may fittingly represent heaven and the contrary hell.

In this doctrine the fate of the soul depends inexorably on causation and not on caprice. The soul is itself the automatic register of the changes in it that follow on the will-pressure of the organism with which it is associated. This doctrine, of course, introduces the difficult question of free-will, which is, and ever must be, the one crucial question round which all religious controversy revolves. Oriental metempsychosis does not dogmatise as to free-will, but it quietly accepts the fact as established. Its entire religious fabric is built up on the assumption of free-will ; and it is the pressure of this free-will

which regulates, in one direction or the other, the ceaseless metabolism of the soul.

Metabolism may be described as a ceaseless giving-off on the one hand and of receiving on the other ; *e.g.*, the body or the soul may appear to be a constant quantity hedged round by an iron fence of individuality, but in reality this is not so. Both are in a state of ceaseless quantitative and qualitative flux—or both. A simple illustration will best bring home the idea. Niagara Falls form one of the most striking features of the world. Numbers of people have seen the thing itself ; others, perhaps more numerous, have seen realistic photographs of it. In the minds of most people its image is engraved as a vast horseshoe of falling water. For many thousand years that horseshoe cascade has existed, to all appearances, unchanged. No one would deny it a striking individuality. Many could roughly draw a picture of it from memory. And yet, though Niagara has so pronounced an individuality that it would be impossible to confuse it with any other known object, never for two consecutive seconds during all these years have its constituents been the same. Niagara at six minutes past twelve has an entirely different composition to what it had at five minutes past twelve ; it is in a ceaseless state of metabolism—of receiving on the one hand and giving off on the other. Further illustrations of the same type may be found in a gas-jet or a fountain.

A giant wave of the Atlantic would appear to have an individuality. It can be watched

approaching for miles, until it finally hurls itself against the rocks. But here, again, the metabolism is ceaseless. The wave a hundred yards from shore is different as to every drop of water in it from that which hurls itself upon the rocks. The human body, though to our senses it appears stable, is equally in a ceaseless state of metabolism. The origin and cause of metabolism is an inscrutable mystery. All that is known is that it is inseparable from life, and, in fact, that life cannot exist without it. Mr. Butler Burke defines metabolism as "the ceaseless building up and breaking down of molecular groups" in the human structure. According to this author, instability is the chief characteristic of life. Nothing that is stable has life. "Life," he says, "is an actual flux, or continuous change of substance in a specialised, unstable state of motion." Max Verworn, quoted by the above, says of metabolic processes: "These processes are only brought about because each atom, or group of atoms or molecules, attracts by chemical affinity other atoms, groups of atoms or molecules, in a certain direction. This causes a continuous flow of matter, some atoms, or groups of atoms, being withdrawn and others taking their place."

It requires but a slight effort of imagination to realise that as a metabolic process is ceaselessly at work on our bodies, so may a metabolic process be ceaselessly at work on our souls. The latter, indeed, is far the easier conception of the two. The causes governing the metabolism of the body are not yet understood, but the meta-

bolism of the soul is more understandable. As in the case of physical metabolism, attraction and repulsion are the two governing principles. With every thought and every act, certain qualities in harmony with such thoughts and acts are assimilated by the soul, and others out of harmony with it are expelled. In Oriental philosophy the qualities so assimilated are an actual part of God. The fragment of God, the *μόριον τοῦ θεοῦ* which Diogenes of Apollonia assigned to every man, can be augmented by proper conduct of life, and this augmentation takes place, not miraculously but by purely mechanical causation. The soul is, therefore, in a state of ceaseless qualitative flux, so that its religious value—if one may use the expression—is always automatically conforming to the thoughts of the mind and the acts of the body. The religious value so arrived at is the exact determinant of the soul's destiny. As it is at the moment of release so will its future be. The workableness of such a process has lately been made quite intelligible to us by the Marconi system of telegraphy; but the underlying idea may perhaps be more clearly presented by the simple illustration of a musical instrument. The middle string of a harp has a screw by which it can be tuned either up or down; but, whatever may be its pitch, a note struck on it will be received, repeated, and assimilated, so to speak, by the string of another harp with which it is in tune. If high, a high string will vibrate in response; if low, the contrary.

By some such law of affinity or harmony, the released soul enters into association with the organism with which it is in tune. This would appear to take place at the moment of birth. An exact correspondence in principle may here be found between the history of the fœtus and the history of the species. In each case simple growth develops, as growth, up to a point at which something from outside, which we call soul, enters into association with it, and thenceforward interacts with it in the complete state known as life. The process by which this something from outside may automatically invade the province of growth at a certain point in this development is within easy reach of understanding. If we picture an electric lamp containing a filament which is not metallic, but which is in gradual process of becoming metallic, we get a fair grasp of the idea. An electric current in communication with that lamp will be as though it did not exist till the psychological moment arrives when the filament becomes metallic. Then in a flash we have a phenomenon. We have light where before there was no light. It cannot here be claimed that the light is potential in the lamp—the light arises from the interaction of the lamp with an outside influence which becomes effective when the structure of the lamp arrives at a certain state.

In exactly the same way, it is assumed that the soul enters into association with growth in response to the demand of a certain state of development, and in combination with growth



forms life. In metempsychosis, however, the soul itself is a composite idea, and may be resolved into the Morion, or fragment of God + the Karma (the latter in the Buddhistic rather than in the Brahmanistic sense), the percentage of the former to the latter varying according to the point which the soul has arrived at in its cyclical orbit. The Karma is, in fact, the material incubus with which the Morion is burdened, and as it decreases so does the Morion automatically increase. This composite idea, it is true, is not found as such in any single Oriental religion or philosophy, and the above is mainly an attempt to weld different reincarnation doctrines into something coherent and intelligible to the Western method of thought.

The Karma, in its true Buddhistic sense, is a slightly elusive idea. Technically, there is no soul in Buddhism, but in effect the Karma resolves itself into the soul; for upon the disintegration of an organism the Karma alone survives and is taken up by a new organism, who in turn either elevates or debases the inheritance, till, by repeated sublimation, it is sufficiently emancipated from evil to permit of its reunion with Brahma (Rhys-Davis). This, unassisted, is not a workable scheme, for Karma (Works or Actions) is itself that which has to be got rid of, so that complete emancipation would mean that nothing was left. But if the shedding of Karma carries with it a proportionate increase of the Morion we arrive at a workable proposition. The end is pure good, or God, purged of



all which throughout the cycle has kept it from reunion with the Protarch. One point which is clear is that the qualitative value of the Morion never varies: it is pure good; its quality is the sole determinant of the soul's rank; and this quantity increases in exact proportion to demand, *i.e.*, to the elimination of the predatory impulses of growth. Compare the parable of the Ten Talents, which seems specially designed to illustrate this truth.

In Buddhism this pure good is known as "God fallen into Matter." Aristotle calls it the *νοῦς θεωρητικός*, but the word Morion fits it best. It is a fragment of God striving to get home. This idea of striving and counterstriving is very prominent—the good strains after a return to itself, the bad strains to impede that return. Here we at once get the motive-power of a cycle. The entire orbit of every known cycle is governed from A to Z by the co-operation in hostility of attraction and repulsion. In the Oriental explanation of life the attraction is represented by the principle which we here call the Morion, and which finds its visible expression in altruism, and the repulsion is represented by the Karma, which we can identify with the predatory impulses of growth. For the moment, however, the word Karma may be dropped, as being too elusive. It is sufficient to point out that the preponderance of predatory impulses in the organism to which the soul is attracted is in exact ratio to the Karma of the former organism—if 60 per cent. of the Karma, then there can be but 40 per cent. of the

Morion. The Morion is the attractive principle, the Karma the repellent; and these two are in ceaseless conflict from end to end of the age-long cycle.

We are one and all singularly conscious of the reality of this conflict. We are aware of an attribute within us whose presence it is hard to account for; it wrestles ceaselessly within us against the two predatory impulses of growth—the impulse of self-assertion at the expense of others, and the reproductive impulse. It tells us that these things are wrong; and in this respect it is sometimes called conscience. But the conventional sense of the word “conscience” falls far short of what is required. Conscience is either restrictive or remorseful, it is always negative, and always pessimistic. The Morion within us goes much farther. It urges us on unaccountably towards acts which are not in our own best interests, which are possibly directly contrary to our interests. It views other men and women, and even animals, subjectively; and from this subjective point of view it enters sympathetically into their sorrows and their joys. Growth, on the other hand, knows nothing of subjectivity: everything outside of itself is a mere object, to feed its needs if may be. In the incessant strife between these two antagonistic principles we find the nucleus of all religious thought—the struggle between Good and Evil, God and the Devil (Bible); Ormuzd and Ahriman (Zoroastroism); Love and Hate (Empedocles); Reason and Necessity (Plato); the Spirit and the Flesh (Paul); Mind and Matter (Aristotle).

## CHAPTER XX

### ATTRACTION AND REPULSION

THE difficulty of making an abstract idea intelligible in terms of language is so great that it may be allowable to restate the above case in a somewhat different form.

Life, like everything else within the universe, is a cyclical process ; and like everything else within the universe, this cycle is not a thing apart by itself, with which the rest of the universe has no concern, but it is an integral part of one vast, comprehensive scheme in which all creation is engaged. It has already been pointed out that in every known cyclical or evolutionary process the motive-power is found in the interaction of repulsion and attraction. Repulsion, quick and sudden, starts the cycle ; and the return to the *status in quo ante* is found in the gradual counteraction of the initial repellent impulse by the steady pressure of attraction. The repellent impulse we may characterise as centrifugal, both literally and metaphorically. Attraction, on the other hand, ceaselessly strains after a return to the centre : it is, in fact, centripetal ; but repulsion, which, in its centrifugal aspect, takes

the form of simple motion, as ceaselessly impedes that return. But it can only impede—it cannot prevent.

In sidereal processes we find the planetary cycle started by sudden repulsion from the Protarch, and we find the planets that have been thus repelled always straining after a return but impeded by centrifugal force, which, in this case, takes the form of simple motion. The fight between attraction and repulsion would here be a drawn one were it not for the fact that attraction has an ally in the ether, whose friction is always imperceptibly diminishing the initial velocity.

In the ocean illustration the cycle starts with the repulsion, or, as we may call it, the *éloignement*, of moisture in the form of vapour from its Protarch; and it ends, as does every cycle, in the victory of attraction and the return of that which has been repelled to its starting-point. In Orientalism the surviving quality in life may be said to have an orbit. The emanation of life from a Protarch and its ultimate return to that Protarch is the basic thought in Brahmanism, Buddhism, and Greek philosophy. The first two, however, have developed the principle into a religious system to a far greater extent than was ever attempted in Greek philosophy. The cycle of life is started, as are all other cycles, by a violent divorcement from the central Protarch—*i.e.*, from the principle of Good, or God. This is, of course, the work of repulsion, standing for evil. Thenceforward, the

Good strains after a return, and the evil impedes that return ; that is to say, it is only the association of the Good, or *μόριον τοῦ θεοῦ* (fragment of God) with matter, which prevents its immediate return to the Protarch.

One of the most fixed beliefs in Orientalism is the belief in the desirability of approaching nearer to a so far unattainable Centre. This Centre may be regarded as existing both physically and psychically ; in fact, in this doctrine the psychical is looked upon as the mere mirage of a process which is material in essence. The psychical and the physical are, in fact, the same : the psychical is merely the straw which shows which way the wind blows. From this point of view, such a process as that of the involution of the soul may be regarded as strictly material, and is only classed as psychical on account of our inability to make blue-prints of the plant that works it.

This doctrine can, at any rate, claim the support of empirical knowledge. A centralised energisation seems to be an invariable cosmic rule, which applies alike to planetary systems and to the smallest known forms of life. In the sidereal scheme we can pursue this centralisation no farther than our own sun, whose path through the heavens is now generally admitted to be curved, in obedience to some central control. Analogy as well as probability suggests that the superior body which controls our solar system has also other solar systems under its control, which circle round it as the various planets circle



round the sun. The astronomy of the day, owing to the want of foresight of former generations, cannot read the writing of the skies, but photographic charts have now been made, by comparison with which the astronomy of a hundred years hence will be able to unravel much that is now a mystery. Amongst other things, it will probably be able to group together the various stars that are partners with our sun in allegiance to a superior control.

As all cosmic laws are invariable and not capricious, it is evident that the star or stellar mass which governs our sun and other suns must itself be one of many that yield obedience in turn to their master ; and if we pursue the system far enough we must at last come to a common centre or hub, round which the entire universe revolves. A heavenly body that is stationary, or that moves without control, is inconceivable ; and if there is movement, analogy teaches us that such movement is invariably revolutionary, *i.e.*, in obedience to central control. Flammarion's latest theory is that the universe is divided up into groups of systems, separated by incalculable distances from each other. This is, naturally, pure guess-work ; but even if it were proved, there is no reason why such groups should violate an universal law and be independent of a central control.

That one comprehensive scheme governs the movements of all the cosmic bodies seems beyond the region of doubt. When we remember that, according to Professor Darwin, the sun has been



a sun for at least 500 million years, and that this sun is known to be moving in the direction of Hercules at the rate of a million miles every two days, we arrive at the fact that the sun has already travelled something like 100,000 billion miles in the direction of Hercules, but has not yet succeeded in arriving there or in appreciably reducing the distance which separates it from Hercules. 100,000 billion miles is a thousand times the known distance from us of some of the other stellar systems; therefore, during its journey, the sun might have run foul of a thousand other systems. But that it has not done so is evident, as is also the fact that it is still at a safe distance from any other system. The obvious inference is that all the cosmic bodies form part of one piece of mechanism—that the universe is, in fact, a single system, and worked as a single system. This necessitates the idea of some control, and the teaching of all analogy points all but irresistibly to the conclusion that such control must be central.

Such conclusions lead inevitably to others even more far-reaching in their interest. If the universe is one comprehensive mechanical system, then it seems to go without saying that all within that universe must equally be part of one comprehensive mechanical system. In such a case, all creation, so to speak, psychical as well as material, would be in process of involution—*i.e.*, of rolling in towards a centre. From this point of view, the word *evolution*, or rolling out, conventionally used to describe the advance of

species is a misfit, and should more properly be *involution*, a word which implies a folding in towards a centre, which centre would also be the Alpha and the Omega, *i.e.*, the starting-point and the goal, of all that has existence within the cosmos. In such a process there would be no distinction in law between the psychical and the physical, the psychical being simply that which we cannot see, and therefore cannot measure up, the physical that which we can. All alike would be equally pressing in towards the central control, which, according to analogy, should also supply the energising principle. This we know to be the case in the largest as well as the smallest of the systems that come within our range of observation. The sun is not only the central control and the Alpha and Omega of our planetary system, but it is also the energising principle. Extinguish the sun, and all life on its planets would at once cease.

If we turn next to the smallest centrally-controlled system that is visible, we find, as far as observation can go, an identical state of things obtaining. The *Centrosome*, *Nucleosus*, or Inner Nucleus, of microscopic forms of cellular life is universally admitted to be the energising principle as well as the controlling power of the surrounding structure, and probably also of the potentialities of that structure. No form of life has yet been found so microscopic as to be without a centrosome. Haeckel claimed to have discovered certain simple forms of life without the centrosome, which he named *Monera*; but the

general opinion is that these *Monera* are, on the contrary, centrosomes without the surrounding shell.

These centrosomes appear to be the seat of properties of a peculiar nature, so much so, indeed, as to be outside of law, if for law we read the invariableness of Nature's processes as they come within observation. Infinitesimal as they are in size, they appear to be the storehouse of an immense energy, and in this capacity to have a radio-activity to which there seems no limitations. The same may be said in a minor degree of the sun, which appears to radiate immense quantities of heat and light without any loss of energy ; so that we have the backing of analogy if we extend these mysterious properties to the central cosmic control, of which the radio-activity might well be unlimited as to extent and penetration.

The idea of a cosmic centrosome from the astronomical point of view has always been prominent in Oriental philosophy. We get it in the Pythagorean Hestia and in the Pleroma of the Gnostics. The idea is also in part Aristotelian, and in more modern times received strong suggestive support from Newton. In modern Orientalism the idea takes on a more metaphysical form. The soul is always winning nearer and nearer to the Absolute, and that approach may well be an actual no less than an essential approach. We get thus the two parallel ideas of all life and all ponderable matter being ultimately merged in the Protarch,

which is, of course, the cosmic Centrosome. In this sense all reincarnations on a higher plane would be actually as well as essentially nearer God. The centralisation of the entire universe necessitates the idea that the nearness of cosmic bodies to the centre is in constant ratio to their size. It is an allowable thought that such nearness may also be in constant ratio to their desirability, and that the sublimated soul on seeking a higher organism finds it in a literal advance towards the Centre or the great Desiderandum.

This conception carries with it the apparently colossal thought, that all the thousand million suns with which Lord Kelvin credits the universe were flung out from one centre, as sparks are flung out from an anvil. The thought, however, is only colossal from the point of view of the thinker. Nothing is intrinsically great or small; dimensions are only arrived at by comparative figures—that is to say, a sidereal system can only be reckoned large and an electron small by reference to an arbitrary standard, which has its birth in our parochial experience. An aggregation of millions of molecules is needed to form an organism that is barely visible under the strongest microscope. If we resolve these molecules into atoms, and still further into electrons, we arrive at a complexity of structure in this infinitesimal speck of protoplasm which absolutely baffles imagination.

It is an old thought in all philosophy that matter is synonymous with evil. Among the Gnostic Christians the malignity of matter was

the foundation of all religious thought. The basis of the thought is very clear. Repulsion in the centrifugal sense is only matter in motion, and the greater the material mass, the longer the motion and the greater the resistance to attraction. When the earth has absorbed the moon its mass will be so increased as to appreciably retard its own absorption by the sun. From the religious point of view, then, the emancipation of the soul from Karma should facilitate the advance of that soul in the direction towards which it is attracted and the greater its emancipation from the impediment of matter, the quicker its advance. Reincarnation on a higher plane would thus take the form of reincarnation in a less material vehicle, by which the *point d'appui* of repulsion would be correspondingly weakened.

## CHAPTER XXI

### VOLITION

THE Oriental conceptions outlined above are perfectly simple as far as they go: they describe in general principle, without any attempt at descent to detail, the workings of what may be strictly called a metaphysical process. But it is apparent that in this process the ethico-religious element does not so far enter at all. We have a piece of God temporarily associated with an antagonistic, predatory organism. The piece of God fights with the predatory impulses of the organism (the original sin of the Bible), and in proportion to its success is reinforced from the main body, and by virtue of this reinforcement makes an appreciable advance towards its objective. All this, even in Oriental thought, is according to law: we have a blind force finding its destiny in fixed laws. In this philosophy—if we stop here—we are merely, in our organic aspect, the battle-field in which two contending cosmic forces settle their dispute. We are as passive spectators of the combat as was the Plain of Esdraelon in the old Semitic battles. The



religious element only encroaches on the situation when we raise the problem as to whether we are in fact mere spectators, or whether, on the other hand, we have the right and power to take sides. Can we, in other words, assist either one or the other of the combatants? Are we associated in the future with the victory; or do the contending parties, having made use of our organism as a battle-field, throw us in the dustbin, and pass on to continue the fight elsewhere? If we admit the latter alternative, then there is at once a complete disappearance of any personal interest in the result, and equally, it might seem, of any obligation on us to throw in our lot with this side or with that. The sophist will—in this humour—acknowledge no law but inclination, and will shift the responsibility for all acts on to the superiority in force of this side or of that, in a battle of which he is the mere scene. If we discard (as we can scarcely fail to do) the above view, then it is clear that we have to deal with something more complex than a simple duel between centrifugal and centripetal forces. If the centripetal force is a piece of God, and if that piece of God, in virtue of victory, is reinforced from home, and escapes in a pure, augmented state (*i.e.*, as pure God), we have clearly no further concern with that which so escapes. It is exiled God on its way home. We can only have a personal concern in that return if we accompany it in some form other than God. That is to say: the surviving principle in us must not

be pure God alone, but must be pure God + some other quality which is personal.

In the philosophy of the East, the personal element which accompanies the pure God on its way home is Karma. To the Western mind, however, this name conveys very little, and is practically useless for purposes of close definition. We have already seen that Karma may be considered as the physical result of former incarnations. But it is clear that something more than this is needed before we can claim to have any personal concern in the return home of the exiled Fragment. We must have the power of helping or of impeding that return—in other words, we must have what is known as free volition.

It is at once evident that round this question of free volition all the controversies of religion revolve. If we can prove free volition we prove purpose, and if we prove purpose we finally prove immortality. This must be so. Free volition in man leaves man master of his fate, and shivers to fragments any cast-iron duct of final causes. Aristotle was a teleologist in the literal sense; but in his doctrine of final causes man's destiny had been implicit from the beginning of things. In this doctrine Aristotle mulcted man of free-will, clearly recognising the far-reaching consequences of the alternative. For the man who has free-will is clearly a god to shape circumstance. If he does this, the result is so-and-so; if that, the result is by so much different. So, within certain constitutional

boundaries, he shapes, not only his own destiny, but that of the soul which he transmits to posterity, and in so doing he is a god shaping the course of eternity. The conflict between monism and dualism can be for ever decided by reference back to the problem of volition. Have we free-will, or is every act, word, and thought predetermined by cast-iron *causæ finales*? If the former, we prove purpose, and man's inalienable participation in the destinies of the universe; if the latter, we become mere cogs in a wheel that turns an endless chain. It is a problem which each is competent to think out for himself, and without any recourse to *a priori* reasoning; for we have, at all events, subjective experience of volition and its manner of working. The verdict of the majority will without doubt be in favour of freedom of will; but the moment we go farther and try to focus the seat of the free-will, we are baffled. We cannot focus it. It is not a part of the centripetal force, for that is wholly good; and it is equally not a part of the centrifugal force, for that is all evil. It must, therefore, be something that in a sense holds the balance between the two, that can throw its weight in the scale for either side, and that participates in the victory of either side. Here we have a mystery which it is profitless to attempt to pursue; but this hopelessness of pursuit and explanation may still leave faith unshaken in the reality of that which we would pursue. Even the ordinary processes of organic life evade close pursuit. At every

step the inexplicable crops up. Biology and its stable-companion, physiology, are rife with mysticism. Their most rudimentary laws are based on insoluble enigmas. These laws are simply statements of known effects which follow on known causes ; but why they follow, no man knows. We cannot even attempt to understand how from the same material the pressure of needs can have produced the food and the feeder —*e.g.*, the grass and the sheep, the heather and the grouse, the worm and the thrush ; how the midge and the elephant can be descended from a common ancestry. We cannot even attempt explanations of the beginnings of growth, of sex, of independent movement, of the change from inorganic to organic. In astronomy we have the equally insoluble mystery of the beginning of motion. In everyday life we are faced with mysticism at every turn. We see the hare and the ptarmigan turn white in winter, the chameleon change in an instant from brown to green. We know that such changes are involuntary and unconscious, and, therefore, in obedience to some subtle law outside of the subject, which makes for his welfare.

A mother builds up, within her, a form and life out of the actual materials of her own body ; but of how she does it she knows nothing : all the details are arranged, and carried out with scrupulous exactitude, by a mysterious agency whose intelligence is never at fault. We explain the mystery by saying that it is Nature ; but this is merely giving a name to the mystery : it is

not an explanation of it. The fact that we are accustomed to processes, and can foresee their results, does not explain them; and although it removes the result from the field of mysticism, it does not so remove the process.

The fact, then, that the exact nature and seat of free volition baffle inquiry goes for nothing. The riddle is only one out of a hundred with which life is surrounded. All that we know for certain is that we are conscious of taking an active part in the fight that goes on within us, sometimes on one side, sometimes on the other. We feel that we are not merely a passive battle-field. At every turn of life two roads are open to us. We select one—not always that towards which our inclinations point. Is that choice of ours forced upon us by a cast-iron necessity; or was it within the scope of our free-will to have acted otherwise?

In trying to arrive at a decision, we have (in addition to the instinctive consciousness that we are belligerents) two analogous processes to which we may turn for instruction. One is the process of physical evolution from simple cell to man: the other is the sidereal cycle. The instinct question has already been dealt with. It is the fashion of the moment to disparage this instinct as valueless evidence, and in this mood to stifle and starve it; but it is not easy, to kill it. It is a matter of common knowledge that Haeckel himself at times expressed doubts as to the soundness of the conclusions towards which his elaborate arguments pointed. "What



if I should be all wrong!" he remarked on one occasion to a friend, who surprised him in one of these moods. All this man's life and great intellect were devoted to the task of ruling out the dualistic nature that is claimed for man; but he was powerless to kill the instinct within himself, which at odd moments contradicted and outweighed the laboured conclusions of his reasoning faculties. We have also the remarkable cases of Immanuel Kant, Virchow, Du Bois Raymond, Baer, and Wundt—men who, after devoting their entire lives and brains to the gospel of Monism, found it necessary in their later and more reflective years to reverse their opinions, renounce all that they had so far written on the subject, and admit the impossibility of denying a dualistic nature to man. There is certainly instruction in the fact that, even in men who have studiously trained their brains in the opposite direction, there springs up unbidden the irrepressible feeling that there is in us some principle which is distinct from, and superior to, the material vehicle with which it is at present associated.

We next look for instruction to the process known as the evolution of man. It needs no reference to Wundt or Leibnitz to teach us that there should be a mechanical correspondence between this process, of which we have some knowledge, and the cognate process of the soul's evolution, or rather involution, as to which we know nothing empirically. Unfortunately, however, on the very point as to which we seek



enlightenment we meet with a difference of scientific opinion. We want to know whether free volition has played any part in the sequence of physical causes that has resulted in man. To this inquiry the Darwinian school answers *No*; the Lamarckian school *Yes*. Lamarck, who lived at the end of the eighteenth century, was the pioneer of the modern doctrine of evolution. The difference between him and Darwin resolves itself into a difference over the question of free-will. It is impossible to express that difference in better language than that employed by Professor Otto, of Göttingen. "Instead," he says, "of passive and essentially unintelligent adaptation through the sieve of selection (Darwinism), we have here (Neo-Lamarckianism) a direct self-adaptation of organisms to the conditions of their existence through their own continued, restless activity and exertions; an ascent of their own accord to ever greater heights of perfection." Man's rise, in other words, has not taken place because it was bound to take place in obedience to a series of inevitable causal sequences, that have been implicit in destiny from the beginning of things. If a man's remote or even his immediate ancestors had acted differently, his place might now be among lower organisms, or at any rate different to what it is. And it was competent for those ancestors to have acted differently, had they so chosen: their action was not compelled by an inexorable necessity. Darwinism, on the other hand, is based on the Aristotelian doctrine of final causes. Man has become man because a

necessity existed from the beginning that he should become man. The apparent difference between the two doctrines is immense. In the one case, man appears as a mere pawn in the game; in the other, he is the king, because on his freedom of will and action hinge all the destinies of the future, as they have hinged in the past. A man must be armed with some boldness to propound the paradox that these two doctrines, apparently so hopelessly at variance, may yet both be true; and yet it will probably be some day recognised that they merely present different aspects of one fundamental truth.

From the process of physical evolution, then, we derive no certain indication—only the same difference of opinion that exists in regard to the psychological question. The evidence of the cosmic cycles is at first sight against the theory of free volition. We seem to see here an absolute mechanicality of process; but, on closer examination we find the presence of an outside interference with the private affairs of attraction and repulsion. These two are not allowed to settle their disputes on level terms. If they were—as we have already seen—the victory would lie with repulsion; for in accordance with the first law of motion, the initial velocity of the projected bodies would continue unabated for ever. The ether, however, throws its weight into the scale on the side of attraction. It is a feeble ally; and yet its co-operation is sufficient to ensure the ultimate victory of the centripetal force.

Analogies, as we know, must never be pressed

too far. They are always indicative of a principle, rather than a guide to exact details; and in this case the indications are conclusive neither in one direction nor in the other. The action of the ether, it is true, is constant and determinable, while the action of free-will is clearly sporadic; but, on the other hand, it may with justice be claimed that the ether is an outside factor, whose action influences the rapidity with which attraction brings that which has been repelled back to the Protarch. This is all that is claimed for free-will. None of Lamarck's laws claim more than free-will *within constitutional limits*. If a man falls into a river running through a cañon, it is inevitable that he must be carried down to where the river debouches into the plain; but it is within his own competence to decide whether he eventually emerges on the right bank or on the left.

## CHAPTER XXII

### THE INVOLUTION OF THE SOUL

LAMARCK laid down four laws, the first of which is not germane to the present discussion. The second and third are: (2) "The production of a new organ in an animal body results from the supervention of a new want continuing to make itself felt, and a new movement which this want gives birth to and encourages"; (3) "The development of organs and their force of action are constantly in ratio to the employment of those organs." The fourth law predicates the transmission of acquired characteristics.

The second and third laws stand on firm ground. According to Wundt and Leibnitz, these laws, if established physically, are equally applicable psychically. The second law, in its psychical application, would then read as follows: "The production of a new quality in a soul results from the supervention of a new want continuing to make itself felt, and of a new movement which this want gives birth to and encourages." The interest arises from the fact that the psychical application fits present-day needs, while the physical most clearly does not.

The physical law is an explanation of the age-past processes of differentiation of species. At the present day we see no sign of a continuation of these processes. Civilisation has interfered with the crude processes of Nature by artificially strengthening the lines of least resistance, and so giving stability to existing species. We are conscious of no physical cravings such as might, under Lamarck's law, effect physical changes of structure, but of psychical cravings we are singularly conscious. We feel a desire—more or less distinct, according to the individual—for an existence which is less sordid, less cruel, less transitory. From the very cradle of this desire we may suppose that Lamarck's second law begins to work. But it is clear that, in order to produce results, the consciousness of the need must be accompanied by an effort. The giraffe's neck grows because he wants to get at the high leaves ; but it would not grow if he merely stood and stared at them. He has to stretch up. Man, too, has to stretch up. This stretching up, in its initial stages, probably takes the form of a craving for association with a less gross and predatory organism. Such a craving would clearly find its practical expression in a suppression of the grosser and more predatory impulses in the existing organism. This we may take to be equivalent to free-will throwing in its lot with the centripetal forces, and by so doing augmenting their quantitative power.

Here we are suddenly faced with an interesting analogy, from which conclusions on the subject

of free-will may be derived. Man has to stretch up in order to qualify himself for the higher things. The giraffe has to stretch up to get at the higher leaves. In each case a certain constitutional result follows upon an effort. Is that effort the result of free-will or not? On the psychological side of the parallelism, the question, as we have found, baffles close pursuit. But if our reliance is in this case, as in others, on instruction from physical analogy, we naturally turn for that instruction to the physical process of the giraffe's neck. We know that his neck grows in response to an effort. Is that effort the result of free-will? Surely here we may look for an answer which will finally settle the dispute.

But when we have given that answer, which at first sight will assuredly be *Yes*, and when in our quiet moments we begin to reflect on that answer, it will be found that our assurance gradually wanes. In any case, the answer can under no circumstances be positive or beyond question, either in one direction or the other. The problem, however, is one which each is competent to think out for himself, but it must not be lost sight of that in a correct solution lie mighty issues. There may be seeming bathos in the dogma that the solution of all the problems of eternity is contained in the solution of the problem of the giraffe's neck ; but, all the same, the dogma is not far from the truth. We are trying to get at the root-matter of a fundamental and universal law ; and the most naked case in which that law proclaims itself is that of the



giraffe's neck. If it can be established that the neck grows in response to an effort, whose father is free-will, then it may fairly be claimed that man has an absolute endorsement of all for which his higher nature craves, and which his instinct assures him of.

At the moment, however, we are postulating the reality of free-will in man, and the automatic increase of the principle of good in him in response to the exercise of that free-will. It is curious how the essence of this idea is found in the philosophy of all periods. Beginning nearest home, we find Spinoza, always a champion of the theory of parallelism between physical and psychical processes, laying down that "the mind contracts *in itself* the character of that upon which it is fixed." Tatian, in his Oration to the Greeks, puts the case in rather different form, but the underlying idea is the same: "The Logos truly is the light of God," he says, "but the ignorant soul is darkness. For this reason, if it remain alone, it tends downwards to matter, dying with the flesh." Paul's version is even simpler: "If ye live after the flesh, ye must die, but if by the Spirit ye mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." It is customary to, in a sense, allegorise these words, and read them as vaguely symbolical of some subtle change of character, but there can be no reasonable doubt that Paul meant them to be taken literally. If we turn to the Gospels, we find the same thought expressed in the allegorical metaphor which we associate with those records: "If a man love

me, he will keep my words ; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." In the same field, too, we find a perfect paraphrase of Lamarck's second and third laws, in the words : " Ask, and ye shall have ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Farther back, again, we get the same idea in the " Timæus " of Plato, where a man whose constant quest is that of pleasure or money loses all that can be lost of immortality because he only feeds the mortal side of his nature. It would, perhaps, have been more consistent if Plato had said that by feeding the lower side of his nature a man sinks out of the zone of attraction of the higher life. It is interesting to note that Plato here identifies the instinct of good which is within us with the spirit of immortality.

Metempsychosis in epitome is a doctrine of exiled fragments eternally working as centripetal impulses in a desire to rejoin that from which they have been exiled. The ultimate success of these centripetal impulses is predetermined and inevitable, but the rapidity with which the end is achieved is within the control of the succession of organisms with which the centripetal impulses are associated (free-will). The more material the organism the greater is the obstruction to the aim of the centripetal impulses. No patron of this doctrine would contend that it presents no difficulties, but he might well contend that it presents fewer difficulties than the other standardised theories of existence. Darwin's great apologist,

Weismann, says, in supporting the doctrine of natural selection: "We accept it, not because we are able to demonstrate the process in detail, not even because we can with more or less ease imagine it, but simply because we must, because it is the only possible explanation that we can conceive." The same attitude may reasonably be adopted here. If all the explanations of existence were submitted to the judgment of a Board pledged to give the award to the solution which in the light of all available evidence, had the most inherent probability, the chances are that the verdict would go to some form of metempsychosis. The alternative offered (putting aside the heaven of harps and the hell of brimstone) is an infinite and eternal universe, peopled throughout its infinity and throughout its eternity by ephemeral beings whose short lives are painful to themselves and valueless to the general scheme. Such an explanation is an insult to the intelligence of the cosmos. Apart from all question of the value or not of instinct, the cold, logical reason of man must sum up such an explanation as being saturated with improbability. Only some theory of gradual psychical evolution (the word should properly be *involution*, but the other is used on account of our greater familiarity with it) can be in tune with the supreme order of intelligence which the cosmos gives evidence of, or fit in with the instructive lesson which is provided by the physical evolution of terrestrial organisms. In the latter case we find a law which, in response

to a subconscious demand, effects organic changes by methods which are permeated with mysticism. It may well be claimed that there is no appreciable increase in the demands on our credulity when we extend the workings of such a law to that side of us which is without the means of visibly recording its changes. In the former case we speculate backward from a known position ; in the latter we reverse the situation, and speculate forward from a position of which we have an instinctive assurance, even if we have no positive knowledge.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### ALTRUISM

WE have now briefly outlined some of the ancient and modern views of the path taken by the exiled soul in its return to that from which it was originally thrust out. It remains to consider: (1) the causes which may influence the rapidity of that return, and (2) the conscious participation of the organic ego in that return.

In a consideration of these two points we may look for the germs of a moral standard and a positive religion. The first is obviously the more important of the two, and the easiest to arrive at. It is easy to arrive at because of the extraordinary unanimity of opinion on the subject which we find in all the religions and philosophies of history. Wherever we find sublimity of thought, back to the very horizon of recorded history, we find that good is altruism, evil is egoism. Altruism is easily defined, egoism not so easily. Broadly speaking, it is the sacrifice of others in the interest of self. The points for personal settlement are: first, as to what properly comes under the head of "others"; and secondly, as to the extent of man's obli-

gations to these others. In many of the old Gnostic creeds, in Manichæism, Zoroastroism, and Buddhism, there was a notable absence of the arbitrary division-line which Christianity draws between human and animal life. To any, and all, indeed, to whom the gradual ascent of man by evolution is a reality, the animal world must always stand in the position of poor relations, and the daily meals must in principle approach perilously near to cannibal feasts.

It is sufficiently clear that any doctrine which holds up altruism as synonymous with good must always meet with a relentless foe in ceremonial religion. Ceremonial is a substitute for morals. The secret of its power lies in its flattery of the sinner. The sinner sins, but the Church gets rid of his sins for him. The Roman Church does it by absolution, the Protestant Church by the Atonement. The process varies in different latitudes and different ages ; but the principle is always the same, and the priestly preamble is always the same : man is inherently sinful, and therefore sin is inevitable ; but the antidote is inexhaustible, and its efficacy is personally guaranteed by the Church. The fierce and, at times, bloody antagonism between rival religions resolves itself, on analysis, into a simple competition between various ecclesiastical antidotes for sin. The classification of a religion lies, therefore, not in its interpretation of God, but in its advertisement of its own special whitewash, and in its pious assault on all competitors.



A situation arises out of this which is not only anomalous, but full of real danger. We find the entire fabric of institutional religion built up on the fact of sin, and dependent for its existence on the fact of sin, as surely as a physician's position depends on the fact of disease. The danger, however, reaches beyond this. Disease proclaims its own presence in unmistakable terms. It needs no definition. Sin does not ; it is not cast in a stock mould for all latitudes and all time. So that an authoritative definition is needed from outside. This office the Church takes upon itself, and discharges with zeal.

In our own Church of England pulpit oratory is mainly directed to two points: the inherent sinfulness of mankind, and the unfailing efficacy of the special remedy which it prescribes. It will be noticed that we are very rarely favoured with exhortations to sinlessness, or to attempted sinlessness. The keynote of Church teaching is that any such attempt is hopeless, and even verges on the immoral. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." Virtuous living, therefore, has little value in the eyes of institutional religion. Real godliness lies in a proper realisation of sin, and in application to the Church for a cure which is reckoned better than prevention. "But if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." In the last words lies the keynote of evangelical doctrine ; and they are

not words which it is easy to justify. They amount, in effect, to an open invitation to sin, and we cannot wonder that many find the invitation irresistible.

An unreal religion is excusable and even desirable, if its aim is ethical, and even more so if its effect is ethical. But institutional religion in England can claim to be ethical neither in aim nor in effect. Aspirants to a perfection of life are even held up to obloquy, as presuming to "work out their own salvation." The Thirteenth Article of our faith, after drawing attention to the worthlessness of good works, bravely adds: "Yea, rather, for that they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but they have the nature of sin." Ethics, in fact, though tacitly admitted to be desirable, are not an essential part of the Church of England religion. To-day our Christianity is either a mere badge of respectable superiority, or else an impudent coxsureness that, by virtue of that badge, we have a prescriptive right to heaven. Christ the teacher is ignored, but Christ the scapegoat is held up at every corner for the encouragement of sinners. In the Ninth Article of our faith, we have the following amazing declaration: "Although there is no condemnation for them that believe and are baptized, yet the Apostle doth confess, that concupiscence and lust hath of itself the nature of sin." A religion which takes its stand on such doctrines is something more than a sham religion—it is a bad one; and its badness is rapidly unrolled

before a thoughtful scrutiny. In the first place we find a religion whose foundation-stone is a human sacrifice to appease a malignant god. This in itself is bad enough, but when we find in addition that this human sacrifice is advertised as a cancellation for all committed sins, it becomes at once apparent that we are faced with a hopeless stumbling-block to moral elevation or ethical progress.

It is for this reason, and not because of exorbitant demands on our credulity, that the thoughtful mind rejects it. Even with the whole miraculous scheme accepted, institutional religion fails, because it falls far short in ethical value of the natural religion which the heart dictates. The heart tells us with an unimpeachable authority that the service of God must lie in something more solid than rites and incantations, passwords and countersigns. In all ages, the natural religion of the heart has been the religion of altruism. All that is best in us is constantly urging us to enlist under this banner. We feel that, if God is what we picture him, he must surely find more pleasure in seeing the wretched made happy than in listening to the discordant chaunts of well-dressed people. We feel, too, that in rejecting the Christian religion of the day, we have on our side Him in whose name the religion stands. The Alpha and the Omega of the propaganda of Jesus was altruism. He was the Syrian champion of the heart's religion as against ceremonial. Other countries have had their own champions of this cause, but

though we look to them for confirmation, we look for our inspiration to the carpenter's son of Nazareth. The words of his teaching have—as we have already seen—been seriously tampered with; but even so, through the fungus growth of second-century accretions and corruptions, the real message shows up plainly enough.

In the epistles of the only two contemporaries of Jesus of sufficient culture and understanding to read him aright, the altruistic chord is sounded very plainly. Paul, in his celebrated 13th Corinthians, gives compassionate love (*ἀγάπη*) a value unapproachable by all the other virtues combined. John, in the 4th chapter of his First Epistle, goes even farther: "Beloved," he says, "let us love one another, for love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love . . . God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God and God in him."

After reading this, surely the most beautiful epitome of love in the English language, it is not hard to believe the tale told by Eusebius that when John, in his extreme old age, attended the meetings of the Christians, his one and only exhortation would be, "Little children, love one another." When asked why he always said the same thing, his reply was that there was nothing else.

In this Johannine identification of God with love, Oriental philosophy may find its positive

religion. The Centrosome, or Protarch, is love itself. The *μόρια τῶν θεῶν* are fragments of that same love, exiled from home, and straining after a return. Therefore by the exercise of love, in accordance with Lamarck's Third Law, we reinforce that which is within us from the Centrosome, and so accelerate our return to the Centrosome.

The proposition that God is love is often felt to be attended with difficulties. The prevailing note throughout the world is one of pain. The hawk rends the dove ; the tiger rends the fawn ; the earth upheaves, and a thousand innocent victims are crushed and mangled. But in the philosophy of the East we have no such difficulty. The difficulty only arises when we postulate omnipotence in God. If God is omnipotent, all the cruelty and pain of the world clearly lies at his door. In 'Orientalism, this is not so. Here we have an invariable Dualism, and an antagonistic Dualism—attraction and repulsion, good and evil, God and the devil. Altruism in all its aspects is the handmark of the former, cruelty and pain the handmarks of the latter. In the eternal struggle between these two, every man is a miniature battlefield illustrative of the great cosmic struggle, and not only illustrative of it, but actually assisting in it, and influencing the issue.

The Christian dogma of the omnipotence of God is clearly a conscientious straining after monotheism. Satan is accordingly relegated to the position of a mere prince ; but as Mill justly



points out, it is inconceivable that God, if he were really omnipotent, would permit the existence of Satan, in view of the fact that he not only thwarts him at every turn, but appears to have the larger following of the two. It is clear, too, that if God is omnipotent, he must be in part malevolent. The Oriental idea is incomparably more beautiful. Here God is pure good and love, but he is engaged in an eternal struggle, in which the assistance of every humble unit on earth is solicited.

It is almost impossible to doubt that this was the doctrine of Jesus. Certainly it has been the doctrine of all the other great religious teachers of the world. The Buddha assigned to love a religious value sixteen times as great as that of any other virtue. He says: "All the means that can be used as helps towards doing right avail not the sixteenth part of the emancipation of the heart through love." It is more than probable that, in laying down this axiom, the Buddha was exhuming ancient truths that had been allowed to decay. His avowed object was to restore the "wisdom of the ancients" from which the Brahman religion had fallen away; and, as the principle that he championed soared high above the mirky theology of the Vedas, it is reasonable to assume that he had knowledge of some earlier and more elevated records or traditions which have since disappeared.

There is no direct dogma of the operative power of love in the Rig-Veda, the oldest of the extant sacred books of India; but it by no means



follows that such was not found in earlier and purer forms of the religion. We cannot doubt that at the time we first find it, Hinduism—after the manner of all religions—had deteriorated greatly from its original state.

The Vedic period is clearly a degenerate period; it bristles with gods, chiefly of the bloody and malevolent type. The later doctrine, however, of the Bhagavad-Gîta is simple and beautiful, and embodies the salient points of every genuine religion—altruism, self-renunciation, and final union with God. But with these sublime ideas, Hinduism was not long content; in the sixth century B.C. the laity knew nothing of them, and the priests kept them scrupulously in the background. Degrading cults, such as those of Siva and Parvati, represented the popular forms of worship, and by the Buddha's day the religion had reached a very low level indeed.

The points in common between Christianity and Buddhism are a matter of frequent comment. With many of these we have no present concern; they have to do with traditions and accretions which grew round the original doctrine, as first taught, and round the personality of the Founder. But the religions as first taught were strangely similar. We have a common insistence on the value of love, a common condemnation of the sacrifice of animals, and—in the case of each religion—a complete self-renunciation on the part of the Founder. Jesus died for His religion; the Buddha, born to almost royal state, gave up

all that is generally held to make life worth living, and passed his time on earth as a beggar. The God of the Buddha was quite indistinct and intangible; the God of Jesus more clearly defined, but still nebulous and allegorical. Heaven in each case was left wholly to individual imagination.

The main tenets of Zoroastroism bear a singular resemblance to those of early Buddhism; and the possibility must never be lost sight of that Zoroastroism may have been, in part, the inspiration at the back of the Buddha's reforms. The Persian was certainly some centuries earlier than the Indian; and the remarkable resemblance between the two doctrines suggests the possibility that Zoroastroism had penetrated to the Benares district, or that Gautama, before his renunciation of earth, may have travelled over the Persian borders, and there picked up the seeds of his later faith. The main *motif* of both creeds is altruistic love, and in both creeds the obligations of this altruistic love extend to animals. There is an interest in the fact that in Buddhism, and equally in some phases of Brahmanism, this consideration for animals superseded a system of wholesale animal sacrifice, and it cannot be doubted that the later and more beautiful religion was in great measure inspired by the hideousness of the former rites, and by the conviction that the suffering these occasioned must constitute a service to the Evil Principle, and corresponding estrangement from the Good. In later days, St. Francis of Assisi,

the saintliest of all saints, held strongly to the opinion that the obligations of altruism extended to animals.

Passing to Taoism, we find the same insistence on the value of altruism. "Those who fight with the weapons of love," says Lâu-tsze, "they win the greatest victory, the victory over themselves; thereby they are protected from all misfortune and shielded from all evil; hence they have eternal life." Confucius, again, lays down as the one golden rule of life: "What you do not wish that another do unto you, do not unto others." This maxim, which may be taken as the keynote of natural religion, occurs again in almost identical words in the Gospels, in the epistles of Paul, in the Zendavesta, and in the Koran.

In the religion of ancient Egypt, one of the purest of any age, we find altruistic love again the central theme. The service of God lay in conduct and not in catchwords. Kindness to those in an inferior position was the chief thing insisted on. Dr. Petrie tells us that "a higher standard of good feeling and kindness existed than any that we know of among ancient peoples, or among most modern nations; in the general interchange of social life, perhaps the main feature was that of consideration for others."

According to the Book of the Dead, the soul, in making its plea for entrance, says: "I have given bread to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, raiment to the naked, and ferriage to him without a boat. I have been a father to the orphan, a husband to the widow, a shelter to

the freezing." The extraordinary resemblance between this plea and that which Jesus puts into the mouths of those whom God will receive, is both striking and instructive. From this fine religion blood sacrifices were conspicuously absent. Such sacrifices invariably imply malevolence in the god worshipped; and neither the Egyptian Trinity (Osiris, Isis, and Horus) nor Ra, the Sun-god, were malevolent. Osiris, in fact, when, in his final judgment, he weighed the hearts of men, had little to learn in the way of divinity. It needed something more than a password or countersign to gain entrance into his heaven.

Here, then, among all the great religions of the world, in their original pure state, we find this striking unanimity of opinion as to the efficacy of love or altruism as a means to the favour of God. Here we may well claim to have an essential truth.

A sad fact in history is that in no standard religion has the teaching of the founder long survived his death. The history of all religions, as far as we can trace them, is the same. Men spring up from time to time in different quarters of the globe who see clearly things that are veiled from the ruck of men. They give the world a message, and the message is always the same: The only road to heaven is through the gates of love. For a generation or two the message of the founder is the oriflamme of a sect. His words are treasured, his rule of conduct scrupulously followed. Then arises the inevitable church. The dead founder is deified, miracles

are attributed to him, a mystical significance is given to his birth and death, a treacherous network of symbolism is woven over the record of his life, sacrifices and sacraments are hung on every available peg, and the tide of sacerdotalism rolls over the faith. The original purity of the message, as it came from the founder, gets fogged and distorted, and finally disappears in a fungus-growth of mummery. This is the beginning of the end: by the priests of the order the mummery is made the hub of salvation, and the message itself is stigmatised as heresy and even as atheism. We bow to it, we sit under the pulpit and bend a polite ear to the curious pabulum of the Church. We repeat the Nicene and even the Athanasian creed without protest. But, in the innermost recesses of our soul, we know with a solid certainty that conduct of life and that alone can weigh with God. We know that education cannot deify nor ignorance damn. We know that salvation cannot lie in esoteric rites of which a favoured few hold the secret, nor in an artificial attitude of mind which is taught by rule of thumb. We know that divinity cannot be partial or biassed, cannot whisper secrets to Aryans which Turanians are not allowed to hear.

Let us now take a glance at philosophy. Philosophy may be described as religion in its speculative as opposed to its dogmatic mood. The basis of religion is sacrifice, while the basis of philosophy is ethics. The former seeks to please God by blood and flattery, the latter by conduct. In the case of Rome, as well as of Greece, it was



invariably philosophy, and not religion, that stood for higher morals. In the case of Greece, this was, of course, notably so. The most exhaustive and fruitful inquiry after God that we find in the world's history was that pursued by the remarkable sequence of Ionian philosophers that stretches from Pindar to Aristotle. We find here an uninterrupted series of profound thinkers, each starting his contemplative excursions from the conclusions arrived at by his predecessor. Not that they were in invariable agreement, but none the less their knowledge was progressive and cumulative, for even error, if it be thoughtful error, is a starting-point for the advance of truth.

Philosophy does not, as a rule, define its god. It is agnostic in the broadest sense, and its only dogmatism is that the cosmic control and the keys of destiny are not vested in a behaloeed potentate, but in a principle. There is no need to quarrel with religion because it adopts the opposite course. The objectionable feature in all religions is the sacrificial element. The vesting of principles in a Person is not in itself objectionable; for the understanding of the masses a Person, and even an anthropomorphic Being, is all but necessary. The danger lies, not in the materialisation of God, but in the fear that the reasoning mind, in rejecting the idol, may be tempted to lose sight of the fundamental truth which is the justification for the idol. Religion, in its best aspect, is a pictorial representation of the automatic workings of eternal laws. The judicial tribunals of the New Testament, and equally others



such as those of Osiris, are simply attempts to allegorise, for popular understanding, the mechanical consequences of conduct on the destiny of the individual. A Person is substituted for a Principle, and the course is legitimate, because no man can fix the dividing line between the two. Evil only arises when we credit the Person with *caprice*.

In Ionian thought, the controlling cosmic principle, which we call God, is again love—at times hinted at, at others boldly defined. Five hundred years before the Prophet of Nazareth preached the omnipotence of love to the reluctant Jews the same truth had come home to the minds of Empedocles and Plato in the West and of the Buddha in the East.

It would be legitimate and indeed accurate to place Jesus among the philosophers. His god was indistinct. His teaching was wholly ethical and anti-sacrificial. In any event, whether philosopher, prophet, or god, we can, without scruple, range him alongside of Zoroaster, the Buddha, Confucius, Lâo-tsze, and the Greek philosophers, as an unfailing advocate of the power of love to sublimate the spirit, and dynamically to bring us nearer to God. Can we disregard such a concensus of opinion, with the Founder of Christianity as its foremost and most modern spokesman?

If we look to more recent days, we find the same idea dominating the minds of such men as Spinoza, Kant, Gœthe, and Spencer. At all these men the opprobrious name of atheist was

hurled, but on each and all it fell lightly. Atheism is nonconformity to dogma, and those on whom the title is pinned can find solace in the reflection that it was on this charge that the Christian martyrs were flung to the lions and burnt at the stake. The same charge was made against the Christians by the Jews. Justin Martyr says of them: "You sent chosen men throughout all the world proclaiming that an atheistic and impious heresy had arisen from a certain Jesus, a Galilean impostor." Socrates met his death on the same charge because he refused to associate the idea of divinity with the dissolute gods of Athens. Spinoza, the atheist, who was anathematised and excommunicated for his heresies, probably shares with St. Francis of Assisi the claim to be the best man, after Christ, of whom history speaks. Heine says of him: "His life was a copy of the life of his divine kinsman, Jesus Christ." Matthew Arnold writes: "He led a life, the most spotless perhaps to be found among the philosophers . . . declining honours, declining riches, declining notoriety." Froude says of him: "He was one of the very best men that these modern times have seen; he refused pensions, legacies, money in many forms, and maintained himself by grinding glass for optical instruments." Institutionalism beckons such men in vain, with its offers of exemption on the one hand from duty and absolution on the other from sin, and, in pique at its rejection, it calls them names, but the majority of men it does not beckon in vain. The convenience of mechanical exemption from what

is unpleasant, and of a vicarious redemption from the consequences of what is pleasant but wrong, is too attractive for the strength of mind of most. They accept it thankfully and without examining too closely into its value. With these, as a natural consequence, ethics recede in value as ceremonial advances. All the inspired religions of the world, as preached by their founders, were ethical. All, without exception, have drifted into ceremonial. Altruism is the invariable theme of the founder, idolatry, either openly expressed or sacramentally disguised, is the invariable grave of his precepts.

Spinoza was anathematised and excommunicated, but his words hold. No thoughtful mind can long retain the opinion that the decrees of God are contained within the covers of a paper book that is open to the corruptions, interpolations, and erasures of men. There must be a fundamental principle which is superior to printers' ink, and which is engraved, as Paul puts it, "not on tablets of stone, but on the fleshy tablets of the heart," and it is also evident that such a fundamental principle must be one of extreme simplicity, and one which needs no bishops or bibles to interpret it, but which asserts itself spontaneously in the inner consciousness of man. That principle can be no other than the golden rule of life which is known as altruism.

The evidence from the ascent of species goes to show that altruism only made its appearance after many rungs of the ladder were below. In the youth of the world the laws of natural selec-

tion and of reproduction of species were the only rules of life. The strong victimised the weak, the males fought for the females. In nature to-day, apart from man, we can find little, if any, trace of altruism. The pig eats tranquilly while his brother is shrieking in death agonies ten yards away. The weak, the wounded, the sickly, are mercilessly put down. There is no sentiment, no pity. The brute creation blindly obeys a natural law. The maternal instinct is not altruism: it is obedience to an instinct which has an obvious purpose in the maintenance of species, and in the carrying out of that purpose it is as pitiless as it is devoted. Nothing can be crueller than maternal love. The merlin kills the linnet for its young, the panther kills the gazelle. The stepmother is capable of horrid cruelties out of love for her own offspring. A hen shows no shadow of concern for her ailing or dead chick; all her energies are concentrated on the living. There is no altruism in maternal love, for it blindly obeys a compelling instinct.<sup>1</sup>

The self-restraint, again, which we know as purity of life has, among the brute creation, no existence. The only instinct brutes follow is that of inclination. Here, again, they blindly obey a natural law. But, by a prudent provision of nature, inclination is economically limited to

<sup>1</sup> The nearest approach to altruism in animals is probably to be found in the relations between a dog and its master; but these are obviously artificial relations producing artificial results. In their relations *inter se* animals show little, if any, altruism.

certain seasons of the year, or certain conditions of the female. So that, though self-restraint is unknown among beasts, equally so is intemperate excess. Among mankind alone is the opportunity for incontinence unlimited, and mental control the only check.

So that we find man alone of all creation obeying, or, at any rate, strongly susceptible to, an instinct which is diametrically opposed to his natural impulses. As this instinct marks a high rung on the ladder, it is only to be expected that it should not be found as a primary characteristic of the lower types of humanity.

In primitive or savage states of society, altruism and purity, in the sense of self-restraint, have little more ethical value than among beasts. With some this would count as *prima facie* evidence that both instincts are the artificial product of the artificial state known as civilisation, but this theory will not bear examination. Civilisation is not an artificial state. It is, on the contrary, the barometer of human progress towards the divine. It is in the abuse of civilisation by the vicious that its tragedies lie. An ideal altruistic civilisation would be the most perfect state of society conceivable.

In brute societies and savage societies natural selection still holds first place. Altruism does not enter into the domestic economy of such communities because of the inability of the strong to put it into practice. Civilisation has not yet shown them how. A rook cannot cure his wounded brother, so he kills him for the good



of the community. With the same idea in view, the savage brains his decrepit father. In brute societies, and equally so in savage societies, the strongest male takes his pick of wives. Weaker competitors he defeats and kills. A vigorous breed is maintained, and the race thrives. There can be no doubt that if we adopted the same methods civilisation would correspondingly benefit. If sickly children and diseased adults were systematically put down, an incalculable amount of prospective suffering would be averted. The race would profit physically, but morally would relapse to the brute level. Of such a philosophy Nietzsche and Bernard Shaw are unashamed adherents. But civilisation interferes firmly with such projects. Why? Because civilisation means the recognition of the rights of the weak. It recognises the rights of the weak and builds up combinations for his protection. The maiden (one of the weak) is no longer the prey of the strong. She is allowed free choice, and her choice does not always incline to muscle. Muscle can no longer seize the maiden by force, for the protective combinations of civilisation interfere. Moreover, civilisation provides artificial sources of strength. The weakling with a pistol is more than a match for muscle without. Physical decadence is inevitable, but on the other hand, institutions to encourage the puny brain-worker are founded, and knowledge grows with each succeeding generation. The race shrinks physically, but grows intellectually.

Civilisation establishes monogamy. This is



again protection of the weak. The strong man is limited to one wife, and his leavings fall to the share of the weak. The self-restraint which we know as purity of life is here, for the first time, called into action, for in polygamous societies it clearly plays no part. Man realises for the first time that he must rise superior to natural impulses. This is the process of involution at work. It tells him in some subtle way that submission to brute inclinations is alienation from God, that the shrinkage of the divinity in him is in exact proportion to the encouragement of the bestial, and vice versa.<sup>1</sup> It tells him, too, that the weak must be helped, the sick tended, the hungry fed, and the miserable made happy. He realises that the ends which, in his primitive state of ignorance, he achieved by the crude brutality of natural selection, he must now achieve by the exercise of altruism. He has at his disposal scientific instruments and appliances for the prevention and cure of disease. He has institutions and organisations for the relief of suffering. He has accumulated wealth with which to maintain and stimulate these institutions. He achieves the same end as does natural law, but by different means. Natural law is, in fact, the safety-valve for helpless ignorance. Where the reasoning faculties are undeveloped, the balance of nature can only be maintained by a rigid and

<sup>1</sup> The Essenes held this view so strongly that their conjugal relations were exactly regulated to the requirements of race maintenance. Beyond this point they considered all intercourse as sinful and degrading.

compelling law. But with the growth of reason, natural law not only ceases to be a necessity, but actually becomes a crime. Where a wise provision of nature formerly said, "Kill the weak and sickly," the spirit of involution now says, "Nurse them back to strength, and prevent others from becoming weak and sickly." Natural law says "prey," involution says "love." The greater the progress of involution the less do we prey on the weak, *i.e.*, on the poor, on the feminine, and on dumb beasts. Our rule of life is love, as opposed to lust—lust of blood, lust of the flesh, and, as a kind of by-product, lust of gold. If the instinct were universally obeyed, we should have an ideal state of society. But it is only obeyed in small part; it is too often smothered out of sight because of its interference with our pleasures, or with what we think are our pleasures. We repress natural impulses because the spirit of involution tells us that they are wrong. But its further dictates to replace these by altruism we only partially regard. As a result, we have, instead of an ideal state of society, one in which misery and disease are the lot of the majority.

But the day will come, in the history of human progress towards the divine, when these things will no longer be, when the physical improvement of the race will advance *pari passu* with its psychical elevation. This will be brought about, not by the brutal methods of Nietzsche but by an altruistic regard for posterity. It will be recognised that the obligations of mankind extend

not only to the living but to the yet unborn, and the destiny of the unborn will be the direct charge, first of the State, and then of the individual. As things stand, we have deposed the process of selection, which under purely natural conditions maintains the level of physical excellence, and we have not yet succeeded in evolving an efficient altruistic alternative. This is simply because man's obligations to posterity are not yet sufficiently realised. That will come. A transition state between worse and better often aggravates for a time the evils it replaces; but, if the ultimate gain is sure, the process is justified. We are to-day in the transition state between beast and God, and we can either accelerate or retard the transition process by the nature of the lives we lead. We ourselves determine whether we die nearer to the beast or nearer to God. We need no recording angel to recite our good or our bad deeds before a magisterial tribunal. The growth of the centripetal instinct in us is the self-registering index of our state, and that growth follows automatically on the raising of our ideals, and on our ability to live up to those ideals. Huxley, in his "Ethics and Evolution," says: "Let us understand once for all that the ethical progress of society depends not on imitating the cosmic process, still less in running away from it, but in combating it."

## CHAPTER XXIV

### THE ETHICS OF REPRODUCTION

“I have shown that the unlimited increase of the population over a limited area must sooner or later re-introduce into a colony that struggle for the means of existence between the colonists which it was the primary object of the administration to exclude, inasmuch as it is fatal to the mutual peace which is the prime condition of the union of men in society.”

HUXLEY : “Ethics and Evolution.”

IN simple, uncontrolled Nature, *i.e.*, in animal life, two primitive impulses stand out beyond all others: the self-assertive impulse and the reproductive impulse. Of these two the former is very markedly the stronger, though at certain seasons of the year it is mitigated by the influence of the latter. The object of these two impulses in the scheme of Nature is sufficiently obvious without explanation. It secures, in the first place, the survival and ascendancy of the strongest, and, in the second place, the maintenance of the species by those strong survivors.

We have, in the preceding chapters, seen that in these two impulses lies the whole armament of evil—that they are, in fact, evil itself, and that good lies in their subjection and defeat. It is obvious, however, that a direct pursuance

of good on these lines would quickly free the world from the presence of man. The problem, therefore, presents itself: Does the highest good aim at any such consummation? In the opinion of certain thinkers, notably of J. S. Mill, it does. Mill held that the sexual impulse could, and would in time, be eliminated by the constant pressure of suggestion, and that in this way would come the end of human life on earth. This theory, however, fails from the entire lack of evolutionary purpose behind it. Its pessimism is nihilistic; and reason refuses a nihilism that is in conflict with that orderly progression which is the ruling principle of every cosmic process. We must, therefore, seek in more constructive fields for the idealistic goal of ethical progress; and that goal we find, not in the slaughter of natural impulses but in giving them a calculated and controlled direction. It is clear, in the first place, that it is the pure objectivity of their outlook which identifies the self-assertive impulse and the reproductive impulse with the principle of evil. Such an outlook views all other organisms as mere instruments of its will and pleasure. Its egoism is conspicuous and complete; and in the case of the latter, *i.e.*, of the reproductive impulse, the effect of its egoism reaches farther than the mere temporary object of desire: it reaches to another generation, and to another beyond, right on into the hazy mists of futurity. Such an effect may be good, but it is far more often bad. Toil and suffering are the inheritance of

most. It is clear, then, that a proper altruism must view subjectively, not only the object of immediate desire but also the result of union with that object of desire.

In the expansion of this view may be found the reclamation of the reproductive impulse from the province of evil to that of good. Eugenism is no new idea. It was one of the dreams of Plato in a day when the call for it was less painfully apparent than it is now. To-day, at every step along the streets, appeals, and urgent appeals, for eugenism meet the eye. We feel that in calculated, rather than in haphazard, production lies the only hope of physical or psychical advance for the race. We feel, indeed, more than this; we feel that without it a progressive decadence lies before us, and a decadence accompanied by unexampled misery, social revolution, and psychical atavism. All drastic reforms, however, must deal out pain in their first steps: if we rear the altar of an altruism that extends beyond the present generation, it goes without saying that such an altar will claim its victims. Against such sacrifices certain sections of society will always cry out hysterically; but so long as the ultimate altruism of the project is clear, this cry is unreasonable. Two methods suggest themselves, neither free from objections, practical as well as sentimental: the sterilisation of the unfit, and a communistic valuation of decadent infants—*i.e.*, a valuation from the national rather than from the parental standpoint. A general acceptance of any such



doctrines must clearly be accompanied, if not preceded, by a readjustment of our entire moral standard, in so far as it affects our appraisalment of what is right and what is wrong.

The moment we disassociate the idea of God from anthropomorphism, there comes an immediate disappearance of the artificial wall which a sham religion has reared between animal and human life. We cherish the rickety offspring of the slum girl because of its supposed resemblance to God. In this strange obsession we religiously establish millions of lives doomed from the very womb to misery and to the transmission of misery, doomed to be a domestic burden and a national reproach. Individual and national interests are sacrificed to the bringing to maturity at all costs of the diseased "images of God" which our slums pour forth upon the world. A contrary policy in the interests of the nation would, in deference to the current assessment of right and wrong, be opposed with horror. And yet, in the national interests, we have no scruples in devoting to destruction by bullet and bayonet thousands of other images of God, and these our best and strongest. The Church itself smiles upon the sacrifice. It is in the national interest. In the national interest these men die hideous, and too often lingering, deaths. Apart from its immediate object of inflicting similar horrors on men of another race, their death is quite profitless. They leave destitute widows and children, who either drift into starvation or become a burden on the nation. Here is incon-

sistency indeed. When we bring up into line the undoubted fact that it is this "forcing" to maturity of those condemned by nature to death which is the indirect cause of all modern war, the topsy-turveydom of current views as to our obligations towards human life is even more conspicuous.

The animal world obeys natural impulses blindly and with no trace of misgiving, conscientious or otherwise. In this case, however, any evil results that such uncontrolled conduct might occasion are foreseen and neutralised by two wise provisions of nature, which we may call law. The one limits the mating periods, the other takes charge of over-population. A plague of rats attracts a mitigating factor in the shape of owls, hawks, foxes, and stoats. If these prove insufficient to keep the numbers within bounds, starvation and disease come to their assistance. The weak are killed and eaten by the strong, and only the fittest survive. The case of the rat is typical of that of all beasts and birds. The balance of nature is maintained by a cruel, but thoroughly effective, system of automatic adjustment. In the case of man, we interfere with this system in the name of humanity. We preserve instead of destroying the diseased and decrepit. We not only preserve them, but we encourage them to transmit their disease and decrepitude to other generations. The difficulty of the situation is undoubtedly great; but in dilemmas of this kind a real altruism can never be in doubt as to the true mark for its solicitude. In forming a right

judgment there is no need to view self objectively, as is the case in so many social and charitable problems. The only requirement is to consider from a detached standpoint what policy is for the greatest good of the greatest number. It is here that Huxley falls into such curious error. He urges the practical unworkableness of altruism from the judicial point of view, and, as an illustration, pictures the judge taking a subjective view of the prisoner's delinquencies and the jury sympathising altruistically with the murderer. But it is evident that the judge's altruism must extend beyond the prisoner and the jury's beyond the murderer. Let them by all means view the prisoner subjectively, but equally, subjective must be their view of the prisoner's victims, both actual and potential. From a judicial weighing of the claims of the many against the claims of the one will come the sentence.

In eugenistic problems the same principle must be clearly applied. The claims of the many must weigh against the claims of the few; and the fact that the many are not yet in existence must not invalidate their claim. The progress of involution is in exact ratio to man's emancipation from natural impulses. This is the starting-point of all that these pages contain. But nature, when thoroughly subjugated, may yet be moulded to philanthropic uses—but as our servant, and not as our master. Fire as a servant gives warmth and life, but as a master it kills. So, too, with electricity.

The first business, then, of enlightened man must be to harness nature to altruistic purposes, and to distrust all its crude impulses as a sure sign of atavistic decline. It must never be lost sight of, in assessing the value of nature as a guide, that *natural impulses are the belated records of obsolete needs*, and are, therefore, inapplicable to the requirements of the more enlightened present. Nature obviously intended girls to marry at fifteen or under. This is a relic of the time when it may have been desirable in the interests of the race to sacrifice the youth and happiness of the wife on the altar of fecundity. These days are long past, and both law and custom mark their disapproval of the beckoning finger of nature. Law and custom may be taken as representing the ethical standard of the moment, though, in point of fact, they are probably always a decade or two behind the ethical standard of the moment. We have here, then, a case of ethics condemning that which nature advises, and that not on moral but on humanitarian grounds. A dog turns round and round before lying down. This habit may be labelled nature: we say it is the nature of the dog to do so, and yet it is clearly a survival from long past days, when a nest had to be made in the prairie grass. A score of similar instances might be given to show that nature never runs concurrently with needs, but is always an epoch behind, and that obedience to the indications of natural impulses makes, therefore, for retrogression, or at any rate, for ethical stagnation.

A recasting of morality is loudly called for. The morality or immorality of an act will in time be judged by the good or ill results that follow upon it, or that can be reasonably expected to follow upon it. At present, morality does not avowedly aim at results. In actuality it does aim at results, though covertly and half-heartedly ; but avowedly it only calls for compliance with certain forms, quite irrespective of whether good or evil may be expected to follow. The result is that morality has lost sight of its starting-point, which was to mitigate the evil consequences that follow on obedience to natural impulses. One of its first and most obvious moves in this direction was the institution of monogamy. Monogamy is in reality a recognition of the rights of women. For the purposes of maintaining the race each man is allowed one woman. He is allowed to take any one woman who is willing to be taken. A feast is given. Pipes and timbrels sound ; names are written in a book ; and what is otherwise wrong becomes right. But, alas ! the pipes sound and the church blesses, and the crowd cheers quite impartially, whether twenty-five mates with twenty, eighty with eighteen, or tuberculosis with anæmia. Morality here gets out of joint. The gestation of the lusty milkmaid is rightly reckoned immoral because of her own precarious future, and the consequent suffering that may result to herself ; but in her case the immorality is limited by the term of her own suffering. Her contribution to posterity is all good. On the other hand, the

gestation of the anæmic wife is reckoned moral because her own future is safeguarded. But if we judge of morality by its consequences, good or bad, to others, her act is obviously the worse of the two, for she deliberately lays the seed of generation after generation of misery. Her reproduction of disease, however, excites no hint of censure. On the contrary, each addition to the quiver is the subject of playful banter, behind which lurks a note of congratulation. The fecundity of the woman is taken as furnishing circumstantial evidence of the constancy of the man, for by some curious process of reasoning it is always assumed that, even though a man may have achieved many years of bachelor continence, he must inevitably after marriage be either uxorious or faithless. It cannot be doubted that some such idea as this underlies the smiles that the world turns on the production of no matter how many legitimate children predestined by their parents to lives of starvation, vice, misery, or crime.

But for all its encircling aureole of holy wedlock, this production of flotsam and jetsam is egoistic and wrong. The unborn have on us a claim which is even stronger than the claim of the living, when we stand to those unborn in the relation of creators. An altruism that takes no account of such has but a dim sense of proportion. We may, however, safely assume that, as in all other cases of ethical reform, the public conscience will only be awakened to the iniquity of procreating the unfit or the unprovided-for by



the rod of the law. The law, acting on the initiative of enlightened minds, must post up such acts as cardinal offences against society before mankind will realise its moral responsibility in the matter.

The word "legitimate," as applied to the children of those who have gone through a certain statutory performance, is one that appears to place the benediction of the State on all such children, no matter to what grim fate they may be predestined, and stands, therefore, as a serious obstacle in the way of reform. It encourages blindness to the plain fact that gallinaceous habits in human society are only condemned as immoral because of the trail of misery they leave behind them. There is no magic in the marriage ceremony: all the archbishops on earth could not marry a couple by mere prayers and psalms and benedictions. The actual deed is accomplished in the short half-minute that is occupied in the signing of two names in a register. The act that was wrong before marriage is only right after marriage because the law has taken what steps it can to guard against, or at all events to minimise, the misery consequent on alliances the duration of which is merely limited by caprice or convenience. In other language, the act which before marriage is reckoned against a man as sin becomes sinless after marriage solely by virtue of the removal of the element of selfishness. In the former case, the burden of consequences falls on the woman alone: in the latter, the law compels the man to share

it. It is clear, then, that the law condemns irregular alliances solely on account of their evil consequences, or possible evil consequences, either physical or moral.

The wedding service lays down that marriage was instituted primarily for the procreation of children. This is manifestly absurd. Polygamy, which is not marriage, but which may rightly be regarded as the alternative of marriage, is naturally more prolific than "holy wedlock." Marriage was clearly instituted for the protection of women against the selfish desertion of men. It is a recognition of the rights of women ; and therein lies its sole superiority over more barbarous forms of alliance. No legislation can make right what is intrinsically wrong. A State ceremony cannot alter the nature of an act itself: it can merely guard against evil results arising from that act. Morality in the ordinary sense is a matter of geographical boundaries. In the last century an act which was entirely moral at Gretna Green was entirely immoral at Carlisle. The act was in each case the same ; but in the one instance the future of the woman and her children was safeguarded, in the other it was not. The immorality of the act at Carlisle lay solely in its possible evil consequences, as the result of selfish gratification. We may well, then, ask ourselves whether all acts which seek a passing gratification, and leave behind an inevitable trail of suffering, are not, *per se*, immoral, even though such acts transpire under the ægis of Church and State.

The vast majority of the struggling masses are the product, not of casual or irregular alliances but of holy wedlock. A man A and a girl B marry at eighteen and sixteen respectively. By the time the wife is thirty she has had eight children, and is herself an old woman, worn out by a struggle to which she is physically unequal. Herself anæmic and ill-nourished, and compelled to an unhealthy work which overlaps maternity at both ends, she inevitably raises a weak and miserable brood, who, in their turn, immaturely multiply the evil. And so it goes on. Kind and charitable people support institutions that do an immense amount of good, but these are quite powerless to cope with the ever-rising deluge of starvelings and decadents. It is obvious that the only remedy for such an evil lies in its avoidance. If all the A's and B's of our big towns were sufficiently enlightened to realise the selfishness, *i.e.*, the sin, of their action the reign of evil would soon cease. They would rear the two children that their means enable them to properly nourish and otherwise equip for the struggle of life. B herself would prolong her own vigour and life for another thirty years. In place of dying a degraded bar-loafer at forty, with half her children furnishing the prisons and the other half the streets, she would be supported into an honourable old age by the loving care of her two happy and prosperous children. If we were to extend this enlightened action on the part of A and B to all our shores, poverty, with its attendant satellites crime, immorality,

and war, would gradually vanish. The fuel of all is found in the over-fecundity of the woman B. Poverty, for obvious reasons. Immorality, because the vulnerability of woman lies in her numbers. A rare bird holds its head high, and dictates terms, but a sparrow is thankful for crumbs. War, because over-population has been, is now, and will be still more in the future, the primary cause of all war. The overflowing East, under an Attila or an Alaric, pours its murderous hordes over the West. The overflowing West pushes farther west to strange lands, alternately preaches to and butchers the natives, rears the Cross over their corpses, and peoples the cleared lands with what it cannot itself nourish. The root of the whole evil lies in the six unneeded children of B; and the production of those children is, therefore, the worst, because the most far-reaching, form of immorality.

It may seem futile to dwell dejectedly on familiar evils which are generally reckoned beyond the reach of remedy. The justification for so doing is a belief that the remedy is not unattainable, and that the day is in sight, though perhaps far distant, when it will be forced upon the nations. England is over-populated to-day: the fields of the newer worlds, vast as they are, will in course of time be peopled and over-peopled. The safety-valve for the unrequired will be shut down. The next step must either lie in a voluntary restraint on the production, in State interference, or else in a relapse into a primitive state of society where might will be

right ; and a new struggle for existence will commence, on lines dictated by natural law alone.

From the purely patriotic standpoint of the utilitarian, we reach the same result. Recent warfare has fairly established the principle that the strength of an army lies not in the number of its units, but in the efficiency of those units. A mere multiplication of decadents is only a profitless drain on its system, on its commissariat, on its transport, on its exchequer. What applies to an army applies equally to a State. Hordes of weaklings, half-starved and half-diseased, are no source of strength, but are handcuffs on the wrists and fetters on the legs of any nation. The Superman and Superwoman of Nietzsche and Bernard Shaw are perhaps far-off visions ; but, none the less, it is absolutely certain that some such product will be the aim of future generations. The crude methods preached by these two frank utilitarians may never be put into practice : their brutality is too blatant. There are, however, milder roads to the same end. In lieu of the extirpation of the decadent element of a generation by the methods that primitive nature puts into practice, it may be possible to prevent the spread of that decadence to succeeding generations, and so obtain the same results at a smaller expenditure of suffering.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Experiments recently made in France have proved that by intercepting the soft X rays with an aluminium plate complete sterilisation can be effected in both sexes, by means of the hard rays, without any injury to the skin and membranes or detriment to health.



## CHAPTER XXV

### SUMMA CULPA

WHERE the virtues lauded by institutionalism are so wide of those dictated by the higher instincts of man, it is only to be expected that a similar disproportion will be found between the sins which it paints reddest and those of which we are most ashamed. We may take it that the fundamental basis of Church appraisal of sin is the Decalogue; and, though we may accept the Decalogue as an excellent scaffolding for a code whose first aim is social stability, as a guide to twentieth-century morals it has no greater claim to our respect than the Zend-Avesta or the Code of Hammurabi. Even if we accept the doctrine that God himself wrote the commandments on tables of stone, we are still only faced with a code which was specially designed for a special purpose; and however admirably it may have been adapted for that purpose, it clearly does not wholly meet the requirements of a more complex and modern state of society. A circumstance in itself remarkable lends further colour to this view. The tables



of stone have disappeared. As though in proof of the temporary purpose behind the edicts they carried, this unique record of divine legislation has completely vanished. It is hardly conceivable, if the ten commandments had been meant to fit the needs of all ages, that the original document, bearing the handwriting of God himself, should have been so completely lost; and this fact in itself is sufficient evidence that its loss was either a matter of indifference to its author or else was outside of his control. In either case, the twentieth century is clearly released from any allegiance to a code which it was either unnecessary or impossible to perpetuate in its original form. Biblical evidence, however, points very strongly to the probability that the Decalogue was of post-Exilic origin, and that, so far from representing the decrees of Jehovah, it is an adaptation of Babylonian law to the social requirements of the Jews.

In these days, then, an attempt at even an approximate valuation of particular sins must rest on something more stable and authentic than the old Jewish code. In the Decalogue all sins were accounted equal; and for each and all there was but one punishment—death. Similarly, freedom from sin, *i.e.*, abstention from any breach of the law, met with one reward only, namely, wealth and longevity: “Honour thy father and thy mother,” &c. Obviously, where the potentialities of eternity were not called into action there was no other reward to offer.

Equally in the Church assessment of to-day there would appear to be no degrees of sin. The indictment that man has to face at the Last Tribunal is not one of committed but of original sin. His ancestors angered God ; and if he does not take the proper steps to allay that anger, things will go hardly with him. But if, on the other hand, he follows the beckoning finger of the Church, and adopts the attitude of mind indicated by the Church, "though his sins be as scarlet," &c. This is the ceaseless promise of the pulpit, and in this promise disappear all gradations of sin.

This facile cancellation of all debts, great or small, though it may appeal to the cupidity of men, can hardly appeal to their reasoning powers. Only the wilfully blind can deceive themselves into the belief that the Control of the universe wipes out all sins as soon as committed ; nor in the interests of morality can any right-minded man wish that such a figment were fact. If civil courts showed the same indulgence towards wickedness that the Church credits the divine Court with, the state that society would drift into can be readily imagined.

The moment we admit, as we must, man's responsibility in regard to committed sin, we are forced to recognise the existence of degrees in sin ; but we equally recognise that to tabulate those degrees categorically is a divine and not a human task. Their religious value must be worked out by reference to the "fleshy tablets"

of the individual heart. But with regard to the Summa Culpa we need have no such diffidence. There is less moral responsibility in labelling a sin great than in labelling it small.

It will be admitted by most, as a general though not as an infallible principle, that as a basis for the valuation of sin we may take the evil which that sin occasions. To this rule there are obvious exceptions. Some sins have luck and leave no smear behind ; and we may further take it as an axiom that the evil occasioned to others by a sin is, in the majority of cases, a matter of annoyance, if not of actual regret, to the sinner : it certainly brings him no satisfaction. When, therefore, we find a sin whose only gratification to the sinner lies in the pain that it inflicts on others, we may with some confidence label that sin the Summa Culpa. And its name is cruelty. Acts of cruelty are often stigmatised as " fiendish " or " diabolical " ; and it does in truth seem as though such acts bore upon their face the very print of the Satanic seal. It is impossible to conceive of any form of sin more anti-divine. Divinity we associate wholly with the spirit of compassionate love ; and with such a spirit cruelty must be in direct conflict. Church censure, however, with reluctance recognises cruelty as a sin at all. Regular church-goers may journey through a lifetime without once hearing from a pulpit a single word in condemnation of cruelty. Our village boys grow up, as often as not, veritable demons of wanton cruelty. When remonstrated with, they will

plead with perfect sincerity that they have never been taught that the infliction of pain on the helpless is wrong. The plea is a just one: they never have. And the omission is not one of negligence: it is systematic and deliberate. Cruelty to animals is not written by the Church a sin. It is difficult, in fact, to see how it could be so long as a God is held up for worship whose chief delight was in the butchery of animals. The Church, when in turn attacked, is apt to find a divine vindication for cruelty to animals in Genesis. It will tell one that animals are not Christians, that they have no souls, and are, therefore, unworthy of consideration. With such a frame of mind it is useless to reason. All gods of sacrifice are cruel, and their worshippers are cruel; but with a higher and a purer view of God comes the sure conviction that the spirit of cruelty marks the absence of God, and that abhorrence of cruelty is in exact ratio to the development of God in man. If love is God, cruelty must be anti-God.

It is now all but universally recognised that man has reached his present state by gradual ascent—*i.e.*, that he has at some time passed through the state now occupied by animals, and that he now only differs from these animals by reason of the development in him of certain qualities which are also theirs potentially. For a description of these qualities, we have borrowed from Diogenes the expression, *μικρὸν μόνιον τοῦ θεοῦ*, which means, “a small fragment of God”; and though man in his best aspect has by the exer-

cise and development of this Morion approached nearer the divine than have the brute beasts, it is arguable that man in his worst aspect has so completely extinguished the Morion in him as to have sunk below the psychological level of the beasts of the field. A dispassionate mind, in contemplating a drunken East-end carter maltreating his horse, must feel that, if any measure of divinity is to be assigned to either, it certainly cannot be to the man. After all, it is but the faculty of speech and the power of communicating ideas which that faculty of speech carries with it, that raises man above the beasts; and a contemplation of this point suggests strongly that the dividing line between murder and mere killing is a somewhat arbitrary one. In any event, it must be the duty of man who aspires to divinity to spare undue suffering to the dumb creation within his dominions. We are ceaselessly whining to God to spare us and be merciful to us, but to the creatures to whom we are in the position of gods we show no mercy. And yet the gap between them and us must surely be far less than the gap between us and God. There is a highly instructive parable in Matt. xviii. 23 which is eminently applicable to the case in point. This may be denied by those to whom Jehovah stands for divinity, on the ground that the lesson pointed out does not extend to animals. Those, however, who look for God outside the very narrow pages of the Pentateuch will not be disposed to accept any such conclusion. They will say that those who claim from God a direct



charter to torture animals, by their own showing divest their God of all divinity: they place him in a brotherhood with Siva and Huitzilopochtli.

Cruelty can be either of the active, deliberate type or of the non-observant, passive type. The latter is by far the commoner of the two. Men deliberately shun observation of horrid cruelties which take place daily in their very midst. They are conscious of the existence of an "unfortunate necessity," any attempt to interfere with which would be unpleasant, irksome, and possibly futile. So they shut their eyes, dull their senses, and let things drift. This is selfishness of the same type as that which avoids the slum and the fever hospital. These latter, however, have their numerous bands of devotees, brought together by the call of duty, the sense of right, and, in some few cases, by the hope of personal profit in the world to come. From none of these have the animals much to hope for. Some of these devotees even encourage the systematic torture of animals, on the chance of thereby discovering some secret which will benefit their own species. But among the devotees of slums and hospitals are to be found many whose work springs solely from the principle of love; and such as these will affirm with certainty that the exercise of love cannot be restricted to the needs of one species, but must find an outlet wherever there is a field for its practice, and that any love so restricted, even in its inclination, is imperfect and undeveloped.



The Summa Culpa is cruelty. In its more malignant form it marks the active presence of the Satanic element, and in its callous form it marks the survival of the anti-divine spirit of self-assertion at the expense of others.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### THE MORALITY OF THE UNIVERSE

THE causes which may influence the rapidity of the soul's return to its Protarch have now been briefly touched upon, and it only remains to consider the question of the conscious participation of the ego in that return. A revolt against the prospect of annihilation seems all but universal. "Tout passe, tout lasse, tout casse," sighs a dissatisfied world. "Mais tout renaît," says Nature, reassuringly. The evidence of our senses confirms this, and yet we are not reassured, for what interest has the falling leaf in the bud of the coming spring? We seem to be the sport of a malign destiny. We toil, we suffer, we pass away. *Tout passe*. . . . All that we experience is on balance evil; but we have instinctive assurance of better things to come. Are such assurances justified? *Tout renaît*. . . . We know that this is, and must be so, but what is our interest in the renaissance; and is such renaissance on the whole desirable? If such renaissance is to take the shape of a re-enactment of present experiences, we may safely say, with Buddhism, that it is not desirable. But there is even more in it

than this : if the renaissance is to be on present lines, and again on the same lines, and again and again, it is at once clear that the governing principle of the universe must be evil. If there is a purpose in it, it is a malignant purpose, and if there is no purpose, the governing principle must still be malignant, for the effect is universal evil.

In the philosophy of the more material school of biology this is actually the state of things postulated. The fetish of the school is Monism, and its Monism is self-evidently evil. Orthodox Christianity is also Monistic ; but its Monism is, on the other hand, exclusively good, in happy disregard of the evidence of every-day life. The latter doctrine falls to pieces every time we look around us : the former falls to pieces because of its outrageous improbability. It is impossible to persuade ourselves that the universe has no morality. Cosmic purpose and cosmic morality are in reality one and the same thing. When we talk of a purpose, we mean a good purpose, a beneficent purpose. But we have on the surface no evidence before us of any such good purpose. All the pain, and cruelty, and sorrow of life seem to lead to nothing. The best that we can wish for our dearest friends is the non-existence of the grave. But this is a horrible pessimism, against which the whole armament of reason revolts. It is impossible to believe that the entire universe is malignant. But if we do not believe this, then our only logical refuge is in a dualistic control ; for the evil principle is in ceaseless evidence.

In forming such a verdict we have on our side the analogy of all creation. "An inevitable dualism," says Emerson, "seems to beset Nature, so that everything is a half and requires another half to make it a whole." He might justly have added that this dualism invariably takes the shape of an antagonistic polarity. We find it, not only in the processes but in the very ultimate elements of nature—the electrons of ether. Here, as in all forms of electricity and magnetism, we have the positive and negative. In every known cosmic process we find the same two polar principles asserting themselves in the form of attraction and repulsion. Without such a dualism of aim and effort to keep it in order, the universe would run amuck in five minutes.

A Monism, however, of aim and effort, *i.e.*, of principle, is a very different thing from a Monism of process. All men who think must pronounce for a Monism of process; but the moment we begin to look into the workings of the process we are forced to fall back on a dualism, and even on a pluralism. If all creation is resolved back to one element, we obviously arrive, not at process but at inertia. If that one element could be supposed to have in itself the potentialities of process, it would, *ipso facto*, forfeit its claim to rank as an element, for it would be capable of further resolution. The *ne plus ultra*, therefore, of resolution must stop short of one ultimate element; for with one element only we should have inertia in place of activity. All nature's analysts recognise this necessity. Haeckel, the

staunchest of Monists, resolves all creation back to two ultimate elements, Matter and Energy—an obvious dualism which he seeks to disguise as a Monism by the contention that the two are one. Sir Oliver Lodge, also by profession a Monist, pronounces for Ether and Motion—another dualism. Motion, again, seems capable of further resolution into attraction and repulsion. The same objection applies to Haeckel's Energy. Energy is a comprehensive term; and this again may well be still further dissected into attraction and repulsion. It is probable, again, that electrons are the basis of all matter, so that neither energy nor matter can be taken as elements in the true sense. We find, however, this unanimity of opinion: that all the contending schools resolve creation back into something tangible, which is acted upon by the two antagonistic principles of attraction and repulsion. In the interaction of these three ultimate elements we can find a sufficiency for all phenomena. The ceaseless aim of repulsion is disintegration—that of attraction is reintegration. Mind and matter—*i.e.*, ponderable matter—having a common ancestry in the ultimate elements, are essentially one—they merely represent different aspects of the interaction of these elements.

The metaphysical application of the above proposition is very simple. Psychical processes run on parallel lines with cognate physical processes. As the physical process of growth arises from the fusion of two opposite or polar principles,

the male and the female, so does the psychical process of life arise. At a certain point in the development of growth an antagonistic principle in the shape of the *μόριον τοῦ θεοῦ* or fragment of the divine Centrosome, enters into association with it. The quality of this fragment is always constant, but its quantity is in exact proportion to the automatic demands of the organism. This quantity, after association, responds to the thoughts and acts of the subject, so that it may attract to itself more of itself, and so register an increase in quantity on the dissolution of the organism. In the infancy of the species the quantity was small. Here we recognise Plato's Necessity, which is merely another aspect of growth, matter, repulsion, or evil. The word *necessity*, however, here fits the case best. Organic evolution was necessary in order to produce an adequate vehicle for the articulation of the Morion. This necessity finds its expression in the process known as Natural Selection. Of this process man may be taken as the *causa finalis*. He is the predestined battlefield for the struggle between the Morion straining to return to the Protarch and the material principle of Growth, or repulsion, straining to impede that return. In this struggle the ultimate victory of the Morion is only a question of time. As it increases in quantity, so does it find its affinity in higher organisms free from the grosser material needs, and certainly free from the necessity for preying on one another. It gravitates slowly but surely towards the Centro-



some, until the *rapprochement* ends in reabsorption, and the individual is once more one with the universal. In Zoroastrism this is represented by the final victory of Ormuzd over Ahriman. In Brahmanism it is oneness with Brahma. In Buddhism it is Nirvana—not in the sense of annihilation, but rather of repose after an epoch-long struggle. The cycle is ended, and the fragment has once more got home to the Centre from which it started. But even in the Centre we must look for a ceaseless metabolism—a ceaseless giving-off as well as receiving. Throughout the universe primitive organisms are ceaselessly working from lower to higher ; ceaselessly, as the incandescent spheres of space condense and cool into habitable worlds, fragments of the Protarch are being thrown off for the course of another cyclical orbit. In connection with the above thought there is interest in the words : “I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world : again I leave the world, and go to the Father.” Here is clearly no claim to divine parentage, but a simple statement of a fundamental principle of existence, of which the speaker—in common with all the great founders of religion—had an intuitive consciousness.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### IMMORTALITY

THE foregoing chapter brings us to the consideration of personal immortality.

The prevailing conception of immortality is that of a state of conscious survival after death. This idea, however, if pursued below the surface, will be found to be strangely elusive. It resolves itself into a question of individuality and of what constitutes individuality. The whole problem of immortality, in fact, very rapidly glides into the problem of individuality, and the problem of individuality presents marked difficulties the moment we divorce it from association with body. We have, for instance, our own personality, the mysterious ego which each one of us knows so intimately, and yet cannot detach and view objectively. This personality is clearly to a very large extent the reflex of the structure which encloses it. Certain bumps in the head denote certain idiosyncrasies : a man A has strong passions, which are traceable to the peculiar formation of his skull, or of the brain inside the skull. But these passions, which appear to be such an integral part of himself as to mainly

rule the course of his life, are clearly only a part of A's ego so long as he is alive. In the event of his consciously surviving death he would obviously be relieved of all idiosyncrasies due to the shape of the skull he has left behind him. The lives of most men are largely governed by animal appetites, tending either in one direction or another. Our main daily concerns are animal, and these concerns unquestionably exercise an intrinsic effect upon the constitution of the ego which each one of us knows.

With all animal appetites, then, left behind us in the grave, how should we recognise the ego that survives? How is the surviving ego of A to know itself from that of B, except by memory of the past? During life they were easily distinguishable. But with death all distinguishing marks vanish; they disappear as completely as do the eyes, nose, and mouth which, during life, A and B respectively knew for their own. What is left by which, after death, A can know himself from B? Nothing, clearly, except the consciousness which would enable each to say, "I was A," or "I was B." This is nothing but memory of the past. But memory of the past is an impossible factor in the case. No doctrine of metempsychosis can entertain the idea of that conscious connection between two states of being which is known as memory; for with an eternity of existence behind us, we have yet no memory of it. To a mind trained to the current idea of immortality this may seem a loss, but a little reflection will make clear that

there is no loss, but, on the contrary, a probable gain.

There is no essential truth which presents more *prima facie* difficulty in acceptance than this—that conscious continuity between a lower and a higher state cannot contribute to the happiness of the latter. And yet there is no truth that becomes plainer under the lens. A very little reflection must make it clear that continued consciousness has no value except in anticipation; that is to say, it has no value at all except such as is sentimental and imaginary. The lark is none the less happy because of its ignorance that it was once an egg, or let us take the more common illustration of the caterpillar, which is strangely typical of the orthodox view of existence.

The caterpillar crawls sluggishly on the earth: it is a low type of organism. It apparently dies, is shrouded, and buried in the envelopments of the chrysalis. But it is not really dead. After a period of unconsciousness, it emerges in the radiant form of a butterfly, soars to hitherto undreamed-of heights, and lives a life of flawless happiness. Now, then, is there in the mind of the butterfly any link that connects it with its former state of being as a caterpillar? We may confidently answer: No. Is the butterfly any the less happy on this account? Again we may unhesitatingly answer: No. And yet that the butterfly represents the resurrection of the creature that was once a caterpillar is indisputable. The caterpillar is dead, but lives happily

again in the form of the butterfly. But it is clear that the participation of the caterpillar in the happy consummation is in exact ratio to his prescience of that consummation. For him, the only joy of immortality (if we take the butterfly as emblematic of immortality) is in its anticipation. For it is obvious that the retrospective faculties of the butterfly (if any) cannot posthumously benefit what is dead and disintegrated.

Let us take another example, to show how our petty egoism warps the true perspective of the beyond. There is probably no more miserable existence among animals than that of the overworked, under-fed, under-watered, sore-backed camel of the desert. Correspondingly happy in his way is the favourite dog of a devoted master. But it is evident that the dog's happiness would not be increased by the knowledge that he had once been a camel. The camel's happiness would doubtless be increased, or at least his sufferings made more tolerable, by the certainty that he would one day be a favoured dog. But to parallel our conventional demands for immortality, the camel would have not only to say, "I wish to be a dog," but "I wish when I am a dog to remember that I was once a camel." The conventional desire for immortality, in fact, is simply a desire for a future recollection of a past existence.

One more parable which brings the subject more into the plane of common thought. A man, C, has had a life of poverty and wretched-

ness. At the age of thirty he has an accident, is unconscious for days, and when he finally recovers has permanently lost all memory of the past. During his illness he unexpectedly inherits a title, a large fortune and estates, and, incidentally, he subsequently marries the girl whom, of all others, he loves best, and let us say he lives happily ever after. Now to apply the illustration. C, when he met with his accident, to all intents and purposes died and was buried. There was an end to him. The man who rose from the sick-bed was Lord D, as new a life, as far as recollections go, as the babe the accoucheur hands to the nurse. Two problems present themselves. Is the individuality of C and Lord D the same? And is Lord D's happiness any the less complete because his former existence is obliterated? The first question is a difficult one. If we answer Yes, we are driven to confess that individuality is an empty name for something which does not count. And we are reasonably forced to say, Yes. According to the only standard at our disposal, they are the same individual. But it is the second question that concerns us more intimately. And here we can unhesitatingly answer, No. Not only is he none the less happy, but probably far happier, for his forgetfulness of a wretched past.

Now let us apply the fairy-tale finale in its literal sense, and suppose that D actually lived happily for ever after. Has C, then, achieved immortality? Clearly; he is dead, but he lives again in eternal happiness in the form of D.



“But,” people will say, “how does this help C? We are all C’s, and our interest is in C. D has ‘got there’ and belongs to another sphere. What of C?” This is the crux. Can C, who is dead, benefit posthumously by the retrospective powers of D? “Yes,” people will say, “because, if D can recall the past, C is not really dead, but survives consciously in the form of D.” This is indisputable, but in accepting it we are approaching perilously near to a vicious circle. We have also seen that D is extremely happy without any retrospective powers, probably happier than he would be with them; and if he is happier without them, and if he and C are one individual, then C must clearly be the happier if D has no retrospective powers—*i.e.*, if C’s consciousness ceases with the grave.

The loss, then, is reduced to the anticipatory loss of C, and it is into this apparent loss that we have to inquire. Anticipation is the shadow that coming events, or events which are expected to come, cast before them. That shadow may be light or it may be dark; and its lightness or its darkness is by no means in exact ratio to the lightness or darkness of the event itself. None the less, anticipation has a very real value, for it is clearly in his anticipation of immortality that C’s religious consolation lies. If he dies in the fixed and unshakable belief that certain happiness will be his hereafter, he has, in effect, achieved all the joys of immortality that are open to him *quâ* C. What happens hereafter cannot possibly affect him. If obliteration—what

matter? Obliteration—*i.e.*, non-existence—in itself can be neither painful nor unpleasant. The unpleasantness lies entirely in the prospect of non-existence, not in the fact itself.

Equally in considering the question of the non-renewal of home ties, it is patent that the loss of C. can only be an anticipatory loss. The happiness of D. has no weak spot, for it is clear that there can be no regret for omissions where there is no sense of omission. Buddhism, however, provides against even the anticipatory loss, for it teaches that a point will be reached in man's gradual climb towards divinity when the whole past will be unrolled, not by a miracle but by the natural acquisition of higher faculties, and that those for whom the soul yearns will be there by virtue of that craving. This was one of the Buddha's original doctrines, and the same idea finds frequent expression in Platonic writings.

There can be no doubt that the only unassailable view of immortality lies in a dissolving of the impenetrable shell which men build round the set of functions and sensations which they know as "I." Egoism springs from the tendency to accentuate individuality, and the parent of individuality is the predatory impulse. This predatory impulse in modern civilisation takes the form of competition, and it will be found that the outline of individuality fades in exact ratio to the removal from existence of the element of competition. So certain is this that we can lay down with absolute

assurance the dogma that, if we eliminate *all* competition from existence, we equally eliminate all individuality.

It is only the rivalry of face, form, strength, health, intellect, energy, riches, power, and, above all else, love (in the strictly reproductive sense) which carves the lines of personality. Without these delineating factors there can be no lines and therefore no personality.

It follows, then, that the higher the existence, the less will the spirit of competition be found and the fainter will become the lines of the personal ego, till we finally reach the perfect consummation of mergement in the Universal, which is, in fact, the Nirvana of the Buddhist. This consummation, which to the egoist appears so very unattractive, was to the Buddha the one thing of all others to be desired, because of its freedom from competition, and therefore from suffering, and therefore from evil. He was the first historical character to recognise the great truth that personality only exists for purposes of competition, *i.e.*, of inflicting injury on others, and is therefore a characteristic of a low state of being and one which we should try to shed rather than to retain in our aspirations for divinity. Similarly, it may be said that a desire to make permanent the lines of personality is in effect a desire to make permanent the spirit of competition, which is, again, the spirit of evil or of self-assertion at the expense of others. In such a light it would appear that the orthodox desire for personal immortality is a desire for

a continuance of evil into all eternity, and is therefore in itself evil.

Further points of interest arise from this view of the conditions surrounding future and higher states of existence. If heaven, or the purely divine state, is a state in which there is no personality, because no competition, it follows that the obliteration of our personal outlines must keep exact step with our advance towards that divine state. Even in the observable history of the ascent of species we can detect a gradual fading of the lines of personality; the objective and the subjective become merged; in man's most altruistic mood the boundary-lines between the two are all but lost; the objective, in fact, becomes the subjective, and vice versa. Even average man, by comparison with the protozoa, gives evidence of a relaxation in the lines of individuality, or, at any rate, in that *sense* of individuality which we know as egoism. It seems clear that a continuance of this movement must accompany any future climb towards the divine, with a corresponding fading out of existence of the *objective*; and it seems equally clear that such a climb may be entered upon, even during the present life by the cultivation of a subjective view of others. The man who shapes his life on such lines will insensibly lose the outline of his ego, and so get his foot on the first rung of the ladder of immortality.

In connection with the difficult but intensely interesting question of personality, the case of the unicellular forms of life is interesting, not

as an instance of the gradual dissolution of all distinctive outlines, for this does not take place, but rather as an illustration of how permanency of existence may be coupled with a perpetual recasting of that which we know as personality or individuality.

The simple cell has always an individuality ; each unit can boast a protoplasmic wall and a nucleus, which is the seat of energy ; it has life in the truest sense ; it has independent movement and free volition ; when it wishes to move it throws out legs, which, as soon as they have fulfilled their purpose, disappear again till they are once more wanted. But though there is always individuality, the identity of that individuality is perpetually changing. Two cells fuse and their nuclei fuse ; they become one cell with one nucleus. Then the nucleus divides into two, and, later on, the cell itself divides into two. Thus A and B become C, and C becomes D and E, and so on *ad infinitum*. Where, we may ask, in this *pot-pourri*, is A? As A he has ceased to exist, but there is no death, for nothing dies. So that we are in the position of having to admit that we cannot mark out the future career of A, even though his immortality, so to speak, is within plain and uninterrupted view of our microscopes.

The illustration is useful as showing how the individual may be obliterated and yet survive, and how futile it is, therefore, for any one to try to lay down what the future has in store for us in terms of I, you, he, or she.

It is probable that no reasoning or reasonable mind has any doubts as to the fact of immortality. The debatable points arise over our endeavour to attach that immortality to the personal ego. Then we at once find trouble, for the farther we penetrate into eternity, the farther does the shadow of the ego recede into obscurity and the more irrevocably does it lose all recognisable lines. The thinking man pursues no such *ignis fatuus*. Not only does he see the uselessness of pursuit, but he also suspects strongly that success in that pursuit is, of all things, the last to be desired.



## CHAPTER XXVIII

### SUBJECTIVITY

SUBJECTIVITY, in its *prima facie* sense, is the faculty of viewing other organisms from inside, instead of from outside. Concurrently with this faculty must run that of depreciating the importance of the organic ego. By the organic ego is meant the synthesis of body, brain, and consciousness which each individual associates with the word "I." The term is used in contradistinction to the surviving quality in man, which is the true ego, but which will never after this life be again associated with the other constituents which now go to make up the organic ego. In other words, the same synthesis of body, brain, and surviving quality will never again exist, and from this we arrive at the proposition that the possibility of achieving immortality is in inverse ratio to the worship of this synthesis. The negative side of the proposition is plain enough. Hopes built up on the reconstitution of a synthesis which is for ever dissolved at death are doomed to disappointment; and these hopes only spring from a too inordinate love of the synthesis. The converse or positive side of the proposition is

not so self-evident, but is quickly appreciated upon a realisation of the potentialities contained in a subjective view of other organisms. This subjective faculty marks the high-water limit of altruism, but is, in fact, a thing apart from altruism, because of its independence of effort. Subjectivity is a mood, which in turn induces a state, which in turn again confers a power—the power of reviewing others from within instead of from without. Altruism is a line of action which may be laboured and artificial, especially in its earlier stages, but which, by its suggestive pressure, feeds the subjective faculty, and eventually establishes it as an intrinsic part of the nature.

The proposition that the only realisation of immortality open to us lies in the cultivation of this subjective faculty becomes tolerably plain under examination. Attention has already been drawn to the remarkable unanimity with which all inspired minds have held up the practice of altruism as the beginning and the end of religion, that is (in cant language), as the beginning and the end of the means of obtaining that favour with God which leads to heaven. Here is, then, we may well believe, an essential truth. But it is but common ground that, when we talk of “pleasing God,” we are talking in fairy-tale symbol. We take a concrete form to represent an unimaginable principle, and we place a smile on the face of that form to represent an upward step on the ladder of knowledge which is synonymous with divinity. It is a legitimate figuration.

Altruism, however, we may be sure, does not open the doors of heaven to us by virtue of an accumulation of good marks, but by virtue of something which happens within ourselves, in consequence of the practice of altruism. That something is the development of the subjective faculty, which is identical with the principle of good.

One of the most curious and, at the same time, one of the commonest anomalies in altruology, is that many of the best-meaning people are altruistic in intention up to death, and egoistic afterwards: their altruism is, in short, an investment to which they look confidently for a good and a quick return. On the few occasions when the Church advocates altruism, it is always as a means of ingratiating God; and such an altruism as it does prescribe does not extend beyond the moment when, in Church eschatology, we lay down our burden and grab our fee. But here we have an altruism whose ultimate aim is egoism, and which is, therefore, nothing more than disguised egoism throughout. For to be altruistic in intention up to death, and egoistic after, is merely an attempt to humbug God. It is on a par with the honesty which is the best policy. So altruism, to have any value, must go right through; and if it goes right through, it at once assumes that subjective aspect which can alone open the doors of heaven from the anticipatory standpoint.

It is a trite saying that the greatest happiness lies in doing good to others. The saying has become trite because it is based on the universal

experience of all who have made the experiment. There can be no question as to its fundamental truth. The explanation of that happiness lies in the fact that we are able in certain moods induced—or, at all events, inducible—by training, to take a subjective view of the joys of others who benefit by our action. In novel-reading, the hero's triumphs, dangers, loves, and ambitions become our own. We follow his conflicts with adversaries (possibly far worthier than himself) in a partisan spirit that has no logical justification. If the positions were reversed, and the adversary became the narrator, our sympathies would at once veer round to the opposite side. The experience is of value as showing how easily attainable is a subjective sympathy with others. No less trite, because no less true, is the maxim that all egoism is doomed to miss its mark. The pursuer of happiness for its own sake has never yet succeeded in overtaking what he chases. The plutocrat is no happier than the pedlar. Midas had the ears of an ass, and John Rockfeller suffers from melancholia. The blacksmith sings and laughs while the duke takes liver-pills. All energy devoted to the ego burns out in dead ashes.

We have, therefore, something more than a *priori* grounds for concluding that the claimant for heaven who is altruistic up to death, and egoistic after, will fail of his ambition. In other words, a posthumous egoism will miss its mark just as surely as an anthumous egoism misses its mark. "He that will save his life shall lose it,"

said Jesus, "and he that will lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it." The pusher for heaven shall not get there; but the man who puts forward no application will find himself there, and he will find himself there by virtue of the subjective faculty.

Let us get this idea into shape. All ceremonial religion which goes down on its knees to a placatable God is worship of the mighty Ego. Piety is merely a commercial arrangement with God. We bribe him to look after our interests. The Israelites wanted long life and flocks, and bribed for it with sacrifices great and small, human and animal. The Aztecs wanted victory over their enemies, and bribed for it with rivers of human blood. The Christian wants prolongation of his organic ego in Elysian fields, and bribes for it with a human sacrifice nineteen hundred years old. Throughout, the cry is for self. "O Lord, save my precious soul!" prays the penitent before the altar. What he really means is: "O Lord, preserve in its integrity beyond the black grave the synthesis of body, feature, and sensations that I love so much better than I love anything else." The immortality for which he craves is, in fact, the immortality of his organic ego. All men and women love their own bodies. They may wish them rejuvenated, idealised, straightened, and beautified; but they wish to keep them through all eternity. The moment we abandon this attitude (which is unquestionably universal among the pious) we approach subjectivity; and with this approach to subjectivity

we develop in ourselves the potentialities of immortality. "He that will lose his life, the same shall save it."

The attitude of mind that succeeds the abandonment of the desire for the prolongation of the organic ego takes the form of a realisation of trusteeship. There is in us something which is immortal. This something we have inherited<sup>1</sup> in a certain state; and this something we pass on in a higher state, or not, according as we act. The being to whom we stand in the relation of a trustee is as yet unborn; and that being will take over our legacy in the state to which we have brought it by our acts. In fact, we pre-determine the degree of happiness that will be associated with the life of that unborn being, so that, in effect, we stand to that being in the relation of a god to its creature. This is the being that we have to regard subjectively; and it is obvious that, if our view of that being is sufficiently subjective, we actually become one with that being: we qualify ourselves, in fact, to apply to that creature of the future the title of "I." Some one in the future will use the term "I" in relation to that unborn being; and the identity of that future I with the present ego can only be established by the exercise of a disinterested subjectivity. There can be no question of a prolongation of the present organic ego. Our bodies, for which we weakly desire permanency, will dissolve into their original elements. The surviving principle that we pass on will be associated with

<sup>1</sup> There is no suggestion here of parental inheritance.



a different organism ; and between that organism and our present body there will be no chain of conscious connection ; but nevertheless in that future organism lies our heaven or our hell.

It has already been shown that in the lack of conscious connection between a lower and a higher state there is no loss. I am to-day what I am because a succession of past egos did this or did that. Of what they were, or did, I know nothing, and care nothing. All I am concerned with is the result, and the result is ego. A recourse to symbols will be found helpful. A synthesis of certain sensations, organs, and proclivities ( $m$ ) is the ego of which each one of us is conscious. The happiness of the  $m$  is in exact ratio to the past performance of a former synthesis of sensations, organs, and proclivities no longer in existence ( $n$ ). As  $n$  stands to  $m$ , so does  $m$  stand to a future synthesis of sensations, organs, and proclivities ( $q$ ).  $M$ ,  $n$ , and  $q$  (and many others unspecified) are all one ego.  $Q$  represents the heaven or hell of  $m$ ; and the difficulty that  $m$  has in recognising himself in  $q$  lies in his determined worship of his present organic ego. It is obvious that a purely subjective state can never be attained by the *genus homo*; any such state would, in effect, amount to a state of divinity. But none the less, a mood in which subjectivity is in the ascendant can—like any other attitude of mind—be induced by training, and by the constant pressure of suggestion. Such a mood—entirely apart from egoistical ambitions—can be conscious of an anticipatory view of

the world to come which is impersonal and yet satisfying.

Let us place ourselves on our deathbed, and let us try to picture the thoughts which in such a case would occupy the mind. It can hardly be doubted that a complete contentment and satisfaction would be found in the reflection that as the result of the life with which we were parting there would be somewhere in existence a diviner, more perfect being. It is a fact that the thoughts of the dying are almost invariably altruistic. In those last supreme moments the great ego seems to fade from the field of interest. In place of the thoughts of self that Church consolation would encourage: "Where am *I* going to?" "What is going to become of *me*?" we find, in fact, the anxieties of the dying centred upon the well-being (and in some cases on the ill-being) of those with whom they are parting for ever. A clause in a will unaltered, a consolatory message undelivered, will rack to distraction the parting soul. But these purely altruistic matters once adjusted, anxiety is at an end, and the features assume a look of perfect contentment and peace. Thoroughly selfish and egoistical a man may have been in life, but in death altruism dominates his whole being. It may be that the clearing vision of the consciousness on which matter is relinquishing its hold can more truly grasp the unreality of the ego, and the vanity of all happiness that is built on its apotheosis.

It will be seen, then, that a subjective view of immortality should carry with it an antici-

pation of happiness hereafter falling short in no respect of that held out by orthodox religion. As a child, I was always puzzled by the obvious difficulties of the Day of Judgment doctrine: "Where is A now?" I would ask.

"In heaven, my dear."

"But he has not gone through the Day of Judgment," I would plead, puzzled.

"Hush, my dear! you mustn't talk like that."

Then again: "Will all our souls be tried on the Judgment Day?"

"Yes, my dear."

"Then will A have to go back into his grave to be tried?" And once more the answer would be:—

"Hush, my dear! you mustn't talk of these things."

But though I might not talk, I thought; and the more I thought, the more irreconcilable the two doctrines appeared—and, for that matter, so do still. I once heard a pulpit cleric grapple with the difficulty, and explain that the souls of the dead slept unconsciously until the Last Day, when they would simultaneously arise for trial. It is probably fair to take that explanation as representative of orthodox belief; for there is no working alternative.

Here, then, we have a procedure which is merely a pictorial replica of reincarnation on Buddhistic lines. The terminology is different, but the fundamental idea in each case is identical. In Buddhism, the "fifth principle" is latent, *i.e.*, unassociated with matter, for an undefined

period, after which it is reincarnated on a higher plane, or not, according to its acts in the last life. In orthodox Christianity, the soul sleeps till the Last Day, is then judged by a tribunal, and is allotted its future place according to the finding of the court. The procedure is, in fact, identical. Nor is there any essential difference in the anticipatory outlook. Buddhism cuts all conscious connection. The Church burial service tries to avoid this by making us "rise with our bodies"—a truly desperate expedient, and yet clearly the only one that makes a doctrine of conscious continuity tenable. The pulpits of England, however, have now unanimously abandoned the bodily resurrection as being too palpably absurd. So that, according to present orthodoxy, the soul awakes after a period of unconsciousness, and is allotted a fresh habitat in accordance with its merits. Does this forecast carry with it the promise of conscious connection? Clearly not, for during the rest in the grave the soul is unassociated with any organ of consciousness. Nor can the recollection of a career on earth be a necessary condition of happiness in heaven. To exhume all the sins and pains of a past existence cannot possibly bring pleasure, but may well bring pain.

The man, then, who relinquishes the orthodox Church heaven relinquishes nothing that carries with it any prospective advantage over metempsychosis. The only belief that might perhaps be relinquished with reluctance is that which offers instant and conscious transportation to

Elysian fields ; but any such belief clashes hopelessly with the Day of Judgment creed, as indeed with the idea of any judgment at all, in the sense of a magisterial investigation. In any such doctrine admission to or exclusion from heaven must be automatically determined by some self-registering law, so that here again we are singularly close to the main principles of metempsychosis. The only difference in substance is in the different clothing of ideas. The Church calls automatic law "angels," and a reincarnation on a higher plane "heaven."

So far, then, as actual eschatological results go, metempsychosis registers no loss from orthodoxy. Any loss that there may be is found in the anticipatory mood of the subject on the approach of dissolution. Here, if the mind has been trained to sordid egoism, metempsychosis is certainly at a disadvantage with both Christianity and Islam. But we may accept it as an axiom that any such egoism as finds its expression in a craving for sensuous pleasures for the surviving principle, as is the case in both Christianity and Islam, is not representative of the highest religious thought, and is doomed to fail of its ambition.

It is probable that the most elevated national religion of the day is that of Japan. Japan is generally credited with having no religion. By no religion is meant no rule-of-thumb formula for cajoling God into giving us what we do not deserve. It is because of the absence of any such self-seeking devices that the Japanese

religion so conspicuously excels all others. Their religion may be summed up as an absolute effacement of self—a demolition of the artificial glass-topped wall that arbitrarily marks off this individuality from that. It is true that this self-effacement is in the interest of the nation rather than of other individuals; but this does not detract from the sublimity of its altruism. To the Jap the ego which we Occidentals worship, under the pretence of worshipping God, is of no account except in so far as it may be of value to the nation. A volunteer crew was needed for a ship which had to be blown up and sunk, to block the entrance to Port Arthur harbour. Every man present instantly claimed the privilege. In other countries men will be found in plenty to take big risks, but nowhere else in the world will men be found to cheerfully devote themselves to certain death in the interests of their country; and it is not difficult to trace the origin of this astonishing altruism to the absence of a religion which places the ultimate destiny of self far above all other considerations.

The Japanese religion is, in truth, a patriotism. Equally was the religion of the Jews a patriotism; but the difference is very marked. Patriotism may be the sublimest or it may be the very meanest of all motives. The Jews' patriotism belonged to the latter class, and found its expression in a blatant self-glorification, and in a corresponding depreciation and hatred of all other races. The Jap, on the other hand,



is invariably courteous to, and appreciative of, other races ; but he holds his own individual ego as of no account at all by the side of the collective interests of the community. This is the purest altruism, and arises from the cultivation of an objective view of self which we may take to be, not only the highest form of religion but the only form of religion that can find real anticipatory joy in the thought of immortality ; because in this mood a man derives real substantial joy from the prospect of the general betterment and happier conditions to which he will have been a contributing factor. "A man's true wealth hereafter," says the Koran, in a flash of true inspiration, during which the hours of the true believer are sent flying to the four winds, "is the good he does in this world to his fellow-men."

## CHAPTER XXIX

### SOPHROSYNE

It is sufficiently clear that at the present time a subjective attitude of mind can only follow upon effort, but it is none the less certain that a period will be reached in the world's history when such effort will no longer be called for. Even in the experience of a lifetime we find a sensible weakening of the necessary effort. Continued effort, in fact, in a certain direction, soon ceases to be effort; it becomes first ease, and then desire, so that we find the unpleasant duties of one epoch figuring as the inclinations of the next.

At present, inclination often runs wide of duty, but, distinct as the gap may still be between the two, we can yet trace, even during the last few centuries, a marked convergence. There seems no reason why these lines of convergence should not be still further prolonged to the actual point of meeting. Certain results in the past have followed upon certain causes, and a continuance of the same causes should produce a continuance of the same results, for the body is the servant of the mind. The ultimate cause

in the past has been individual effort. By the individual efforts of groups or sects of men certain primitive impulses have been repressed. In the men themselves—as in the case of poor Jerome—the impulse may have been simply conquered, and in no sense destroyed or even perceptibly weakened, but even such bare conquest leaves its mark on posterity, for, with every effort of attack, the difficulty becomes less, and such decrease is continuously cumulative in the life of the species.

In this way it is clear that by the systematic repression of certain impulses during a succession of generations the intrinsic nature of man may be actually changed, but the change will only result in response to an effort, and, as the French proverb justly remarks, it is the first step that costs.

A case in point may be found in the sexual relations observed between persons who are closely connected by blood. Here the effect of cumulative suggestion extending over many centuries has been to all but extinguish an impulse which is still found in full force in the brute world, where no such suggestion has operated. In this case, nature, as it originally stood, has been first condemned and then actually *altered*. The thought inevitably follows that such alteration might be extended almost indefinitely—that natural impulses, in fact, by the pressure of proper suggestion might be so moulded for the better as to entirely efface or at least reduce to a negligible quantity those characteristics which

stand between man and divinity. The sheep-dog was once the wolf, but countless generations of constant suggestion in one direction have actually altered the inclinations of the beast. He has made an appreciable advance towards the Centrosome, but only in response to an effort. In his case the effort was at first suggested from without, and in its first stages must have been desperately difficult; but, as generation succeeded generation, the difficulty became gradually lessened, till what had once been a penance became in the end an absorbing pleasure. In this case the effect has been produced by suggestion from outside, and that against the initial inclination of the subject. We have a very similar state of things in the case of what are known as social reforms.

Social reforms are aimed at restricting those rights of self-assertion which a minority exercises at the expense of a majority. All such reforms are at first bitterly denounced by those whose self-assertive powers are thus restricted, but, in almost every historical case, two or three generations of suggestion have entirely effaced even the desire for the exercise of that act or habit of self-assertion which was formerly considered indispensable to happiness. Here the initial effort, without which no rise can take place, comes—as in the case of the sheep-dog—from outside; it takes the form of law and may loosely be identified with enlightenment.

For the very reason that the initial effort does

come from outside, the self-assertive impulse, in so far as it affects human society, is rapidly being brought within bounds. Here there are, and always must be, two parties, one of which has an interest in curbing the self-assertive powers of the other. The members of this party—being in a sense the victims of the self-assertive impulse—are ceaselessly fighting it in others, if not in themselves. They fight with whatever weapons may be theirs at the moment, and if they fight with success, an upward movement takes place without the individual effort of those who rise. These may be said to rise in spite of themselves.

As between man and the animal world subjugation of the self-assertive impulse must necessarily be slower, for here the victims have no means of urging ethical progress on those who are dominant, and the upward movement must therefore come from within, inaugurated in this case by those whose enlightenment is in advance of their generation.

We can thus, within limits, forecast the wane of the self-assertive impulse under two sets of conditions quite distinct from and indeed in direct conflict with one another: that in which the interested party forces morality, so to speak, on the other, and that in which the interested party, having no voice, has patiently to await the dawn of enlightenment in those at whose mercy it lies, and against whose action it has no appeal. Of these two sets of conditions it is evident that the second will be the slower in producing an effect.

In the case of the reproductive impulse, we have a third and entirely different set of conditions. In No. 1 case cited above we have two parties, one of whom is always at work exposing the immorality of the natural impulse in the other party. In No. 2 case we have again two parties, of whom the one obeys the natural impulse and the other, though victimised, is powerless to complain; but in the third case—that of the reproductive impulse—we have two parties, each of whom is interested in encouraging the impulse, not only in itself but in the other; and, as a consequence, it is safe to predict that, in this case, reclamation will be far slower again than in the second case.

The actual procedure of reclamation will take the form of a transference of the act of reproduction from the field of egoism to that of altruism. At present, on the man's side at any rate, the act may be regarded as wholly egoistic, and it is from the man's side that the upward movement must and will come. On the woman's side there is, even now, a strong element of altruism in the act, but it is all but certain that such altruism will always find its sufficient expression in the sense of sacrifice, or surrender to the desire of another; it will never be extended to the interests of posterity. The movement must therefore come from the man, and it will come with a realisation of the iniquity of that haphazard procreation on which the Church now smiles. It is true that this Church encouragement, based as it is on the Pentateuch,



may be reckoned an expiring force, but far more dangerous and difficult to overcome will be the tendency, which still survives among the thoughtless, to accept nature as a reliable ethical tutor. It will be many years yet before this view is succeeded by the realisation that Nature and Evil are different names for the same thing. Nature in effect is egoism, and a natural impulse is merely another name for an egoistic impulse. On the male side this is unquestionably so. The case does not even admit of argument. On the female side the egoism is less marked; the reproductive act itself has a strong altruistic flavour, and this in turn and in time gives place to the maternal instinct, which clearly comes under the head of a natural impulse, and which—even though its effect may in many cases be prejudicial to the happiness of those whom it affects—can yet hardly be identified with egoism. The *prima facie* verdict, in fact, would be that the maternal instinct is undiluted altruism, and that therefore all natural impulses cannot be evil; but a little consideration makes it clear that the maternal instinct stands in a different category to all other natural impulses, inasmuch as it is only called into existence by surrender to another natural impulse—*i.e.*, that of reproduction. It is clear that, if the reproductive impulse were not yielded to, there would be no maternal instinct; the two impulses are therefore correlative, with a correlation which refers the maternal instinct back to the reproductive act for its character, so that the morality of the former

becomes an exact reflection of that of the latter, if for morality we read eugenism.

Following up this line of reasoning, it becomes clear that if the reproductive impulse be directed into wholly eugenistic channels, the maternal instinct must of necessity be good, and if the contrary, then bad ; so that the maternal instinct constantly takes its morality from the morality of the reproductive act of which it is the aftermath. It follows with automatic exactitude the lines of morality pencilled out by the reproductive act, and so shifts the responsibility for all that it may be the cause of on to the latter.

The interesting feature in connection with the maternal instinct is that it provides the only case in Nature where duty and inclination run hand in hand. At the same time, it clearly cannot be identified with a purely subjective attitude because the mother, in obeying the instinct, does not act in calculated consideration for the child's future. If she did, it is clear that she would not cruelly prolong the life of a hopelessly imbecile or diseased child. From this point of view it would be arguable to classify the maternal instinct among egoistic impulses, inasmuch as its indulgence is often productive of much misery to those who are the objects of it. It is important, however, not to confound this line of thought with that which sees selfishness in every act of altruism because of the pleasure which the act carries with it. This latter view clearly will not bear investigation. Altruism is otherism, and its ethical value is wholly independent of any

pleasure or inconvenience which its author may derive from it. The sole register of its value is the good which it brings to the others. No subjective pleasure experienced by the author can detract from this value ; in fact, as has already been pointed out, the gradual convergence of duty and inclination is that which marks the approximation of the human to the divine, for a divine state must obviously be one where there are no restrictions, and where, therefore, that which is wished for is that which is right.

In the case of the maternal instinct—though duty and inclination run parallel—the duty can hardly claim to be counted as such, except in the cases where it is productive of good to posterity ; and the number of cases where this is so must clearly be in constant ratio to the eugenistic aim of the reproductive impulse.

The maternal instinct, therefore, can scarcely claim to be an independent natural impulse, but is rather the blind continuation of the causative reproductive act.

We come back, then, to the proposition that all natural impulses are egoistic and therefore evil. The most conspicuous among these are slaughter, cruelty, spoliation, and reproduction. The first three are recognised as evil, but it is noteworthy that the Christian world indulges in all four to the utmost limits permitted by the law. It wades in blood ; in the shedding of that blood it shows no concern over the torture which may be inflicted ; under the banner of "business" it systematically robs the weak and

helpless, and it floods the surface of the earth with ill-equipped humanity whose inevitable destiny is sorrow.

There is at present no general recognition of evil in the reproductive impulse, but if we judge of the morality of acts by their effect on others it is clearly the worst of the four, for its consequences for evil have practically no limit in time.

Entirely outside of sex questions there are other fields in which we can visibly trace the gradual convergence of duty and inclination. We no longer butcher our prisoners of war. We house them and feed them, and, in time, liberate them. It is expensive and inconvenient, but we do it. We no longer torture our civil prisoners, or immure them in loathsome dungeons. Why? The superficial answer will be because of education, of the growth of ideas consequent on the spread of literature, and, above all else, because of terror of the public press. But after all, what do these things resolve themselves into? What is education in the sense of enlightenment? It is merely the absorption by the masses of high and noble thoughts born of the contemplative study of great minds, and, to go a step farther, a great mind is merely a precocious one. It is in advance of its contemporaries, and of the customs which bind those contemporaries, but by the process of communication known as education it brings them with a leap on to a level which the unassisted expansion of the soul might have taken centuries to reach. All these reforms, as

they would now be called, may be marked on the chart of progress as victories over natural impulses. They register a change not only in that which we do, but in that which *we wish to do*.

## CONCLUSION

AN inquiring survey of the problem of existence—no matter how conscientious such a survey may be—can never result in more than the detection of a general principle; and even such a principle can be no more than indicated. Details are beyond pursuit. Many, however, decline to realise this, and not only pursue such details, but confidently claim capture; for it is in the details that the egoistic element lies. It will be found, however, that the more thorough our survey, the firmer becomes the conviction that the egoistic element is unimportant even from the egoistical point of view. If we can detect a general scheme from participation in which nothing is exempt, and if we can associate with that scheme a Final Cause which is good, we have no need to look farther. In such a consummation there can be no weak spots. The road to it may bear the dints of a ceaseless duel between good and evil, but the end is the Best, and therefore to be anticipated with perfect complacency.

Still, even against such a forecast our egoism revolts. It wants to know more. It wants to see ahead not only the BEST but the best for ego. It fails to see that the BEST would not be



worthy of large type if it did not embrace the best for ego, and for all the egos of all time. This does not mean that the Best is necessarily that which we should ourselves choose if the fairy waved her wand. We should choose according to our lights. A cow would choose long green grass; it is the best she knows; and man would choose his own form of green grass, which would represent the best that he knows. And because he does not see with certainty that green grass ahead, he feels that he is being left. But he is not being left. All that is being left is the ego, which we have seen to be synonymous with competition and therefore with evil. That which man rebels against leaving behind is evil, and it is only the evil in him which causes the rebellion.

It is clear that there is no profit in abstract *a priori* discussions unless they result in the raising of some ethical finger-post. It is equally clear that there is both moral and social danger if we scrape the gilding of self-interest from such a finger-post. Egoism will always trample where it dares. But there are stronger reasons than those of mere expediency for raising our finger-post. *Pari passu* with the scrutiny of philosophic problems advances the conviction that the heaven and hell of our childhood are pictorial representations—caricatures if you will—but still pictorial representations of a reality. The law of causality has no exceptions to its rule. Causality has been defined as a spatial change which results in another spatial change.

The second spatial change is the effect of the first, but is itself the cause of another effect, and so on. If we were asked what is meant by a "spatial change" we could not say. We should probably reply: a change in position of atoms or particles of matter. But if we were further asked as to the chemical quality and cosmic value of these particles, we should have to confess that we do not know, that we are, in fact, using forms of speech which have no real meaning even in our imagination. We cannot even say whether these changes of position deserve the name of material or immaterial, for when we look out into space we see that such distinctions are purely descriptive, and have no existence in reality.

But all the same we know that our dogma—though we cannot justify it in detail—is in the neighbourhood of truth. Any and every movement (and in laying down this law we are disregarding all sentimental boundaries between material and immaterial) is a cause producing an effect which is again the cause of another effect. Every human act produces a movement. Such movement cannot be categorically labelled material or immaterial, and any attempt to do either the one or the other is a mere splitting of terminological hairs. All human acts, then, are causes producing effects which are in turn the causes of other effects. Such causes and effects may be reckoned as operating on the ego, not on the organic ego *quâ* organism, but on that of which the organic ego is the present vehicle of

expression. To this something, on which these causes and effects leave an indelible impression, we have to give a name, and there is no name which fits. It is best known, in a slipshod way, as "soul," and reasons have been advanced for identifying it with the real life or vitalistic principle which is attracted from outside and enters into association with the organism. In advancing these reasons it has been necessary to break to a certain extent with the classification of Linnæus with regard to animal and vegetable organisms, but the question is in reality not one of facts or of dispute over facts, but of terminology. We try with the aid of a few current and familiarised terms to describe cosmic processes of extreme and unimaginable complexity. As a necessary result of this attempt, many ideas which are really widely apart in their essence have to be grouped together under generic descriptive terms such as that of "life." The common terms in use are, in fact, all generic, and the reason for this is to be found, not so much in a jejune dictionary, as in the inability of the human mind to grasp anything beyond generic ideas in dealing with cosmic processes. Many German philosophers have tried, by the aid of a special terminology, to split up these generic terms into their constituents, but the result is invariably confusion in place of lucidity. The attempt in these pages to attach the term "growth" to vegetal and embryonic development is merely an attempt to split a generic idea without the aid of a specially coined ter-

minology. All that matters is that the word used should convey the idea intended. It cannot be claimed that the word "soul" does this, nor can it truly be claimed that the idea behind the word has a clearly defined outline. The idea of divine immanence is itself within reach of understanding. The difficulty arises when we try to permanently associate the immanence with a personal quality. There is nothing of which we have visible evidence with which we can permanently associate it except the life. This, again, must be an association and not an immanence in the strict sense. In fact, it is to be doubted whether any psychical quality can truly be said to be *within* that which it influences. Only the material submits to confinement by the material. Only in a descriptive sense can we speak of a soul or a divine fragment as being an inherent part of that which is pure matter. Such qualities obviously cannot be imprisoned by the hemispheres of the brain, or by the protoplasmic coating of a cell. We must rather think of them as responding to the attractive capacity of a certain condition of material structure, which thus plays the part of a mere temporary vehicle for the expression of that which is attracted from outside.

But a further point arises as to the maintained identity of that which is attracted into an association which is only temporary. Is such a preservation of identity possible as is assumed in Eastern metempsychosis? Prima facie such an idea is inconceivable. If that which is attracted

is pure divinity, in greater or less quantity, then its destination on release would *prima facie* appear to be that from which it came; and to us it is unimaginable that a mere quantity, which is in no way qualitative, should retain its quantitative value in integrity when returned to the common stock. We can no more imagine this than we can imagine a dozen drops of the ocean remaining a specific unit through a thousand Atlantic storms. The only continued association which we can imagine would be that of the "life" with the quantity of divinity which it had succeeded in attracting during its last association with organic matter. The "life" would then be the individualised unit, and the grade of the organism to which it would next be attracted would be governed by the *quantity* of divinity associated with it.

This is in substance the basic principle of metempsychosis, and in this principle we can find all the necessary factors of what may be termed psychical causality. The alternate attraction and repulsion of the *μόρια τοῦ θεοῦ* by the acts of the organism with which the life is, for the moment, identified results in ceaseless spatial movements. Certain causes and effects, each contingent on the other, follow the ceaseless fluctuations of a ceaseless duel between centripetal tendencies and centrifugal impulses, a duel in which the law of equilibrium is patiently restoring homogeneity to a dislocated system. In this duel are all the necessary factors of indetermination and consequent freedom of volition



and action ; only the ultimate goal is inevitably determined. Here we have a *causa finalis* in the true sense ; and that *causa finalis* is, as we have seen, an obliteration of all individual outlines in the One, and a consequent cessation of competition and therefore of evil.

The doctrine of the interaction of an outside intelligence with what are known as organisms is one which (once ridiculed) is now rapidly gaining favour among thinkers. The chief reason for this change of attitude is found in the complete failure of all attempted explanations of life on materialistic lines. Twenty-five years ago the scientific world was almost uniformly materialistic. To-day it is beginning on all sides to admit the necessity for postulating the co-operation of some "outside" factor. Lodge in England, Bergsen in France, and Driesch in Germany, are the most conspicuous apostles of the new movement. The last named, by profession an embryologist, even denies autonomy to structural growth. His arguments, based chiefly on the adaptive intelligence displayed by mutilated germ-cells, are worked out with a care and elaboration which certainly carry conviction. The adventitious state of the germ-cell, brought about by mutilation, seems to call into activity an outside intelligence which he names Entelechy, by which the potentialities of the germ-cell are completely re-arranged so as to fit the new requirements. It is impossible, he urges, with many convincing illustrations, that this intelligence can be in the protoplasmic or



nuclear matter of the cell. It must come from outside and it must be an "elemental" and, as such, outside of all the categories which schedule under specific names the forces imaginable by the human mind.

The Entelechy of Driesch and the Morion of these pages are close relatives. The one name is applied to that interaction of an outside agency with the germinal material which results in "growth," the other to that interaction of an outside agency with "growth" which results in "life." In each case the arrival and effect of the agency can be noted ; in each case a moment is reached when the agency leaves that with which it has been associated. In neither case is there any clue as to the "whence" or the "whither" of the attracted agency. Except in co-operation with organic matter there is no sign of the existence of such an agency. The invisible, however, and even the unimaginable is not necessarily the non-existent. We may conclude that, in the matter of any such agency, we are dealing with the supreme intelligence of all things, where the perceptions at our command necessarily fall short ; and where we try to formulate our own personal interest in the process, we may once more say that our perceptions fall short. They are out of focus with the question. It is not so much lack of knowledge as the parochial range of our imagination which puts us wrong. So desperately do we cling to our personal outlines, so persistently do we hanker after a bowdlerised apotheosis of

the organic ego, that we lose sight of the essential truth that approach to God must always be in constant ratio to the obliteration of the ego. We see the cell-units of the body fighting and feeding and reproducing in their earlier stages, and then gradually losing their competitive *inter se* outlines, and becoming identified with the general good of the whole. This should teach us a lesson by analogy, but it does not. "What is an ego?" might be asked by an outside spatial observer. "An ego," would be the answer, "is a predatory organism which fights other organisms for food and wives, reproduces, and dies in expectancy of continuing the same process elsewhere." This is a true definition. It matters nothing whether the fight be with stone axes or with dollars; the egoism of it is the same, and egoism is the expression of evil. The singular paradox then arises that when we pray for immortality in the sense of a perpetuated ego, we are praying for a continuance of the one insuperable barrier which keeps us from union with God. A perpetuated ego is, in fact, the best we know; it is our form of green grass; and as a cow would exchange all the glories of Paradise for an acre of green grass, so would we exchange that which is before us for a perpetuated ego. But we should be wrong.

THE END.

## INDEX

- ABSOLUTION of sin, 289  
 Acts, the object of, 138  
 Agapæ, 36  
 Altruism, 288-310  
 Apocryphal literature, 27  
 Atonement—  
     dogma of the, 32, 107, 144, 159, 289  
     immorality of, 157  
     origination of, 23  
 Attraction and repulsion, 231, 262  
 Augustine, 31, 35, 147  
  
 BAAL and Ashtoreth, 46, 67  
 Babylon, 73  
 Barchochebas, 81  
 Bartholomew preaches in India, 104  
 Basil, 34  
 Bible, the, 84  
 Biologists' explanation of existence, 237  
 Book of the Dead, 298  
 Buddha's God, 185  
 Buddhism, basis of, 172  
  
 CAPTIVITY, the, 69  
*Centrosome Nucleosus*, 267  
 Ceremonial, 289  
 Christianity—  
     and Buddhism, points in common, 296  
     early, a phase of Judaism, 134  
     Christianity not different from the other greater religions, 21  
 Christmas, 36  
 Chrysostom, 34  
 Civilisation, 306  
 Clementine Homilies, 128  
 Code of Manu, 222  
 Conscience, 261  
 Constitutional characteristics, 238  
 Credentials of the old philosophy, 234  
 Cruelty, 328  
 Cyclical theory of life, 252  
  
 DARWINISM, 278  
 Day and life analogy, 206  
 Decalogue, 325  
     date of, 162  
 Definitions, need of, 17  
 Dives and Lazarus parable, 188  
 Dogma, 30-40  
     atonement, 32  
     Church Trinitarian, 32  
     origin and qualities of, 31  
 Dogmas, Church, 19  
     doomed, 21  
 Dualistic nature of man, 276  
  
 EGOISM, 288, 354  
 Egypt, religion of, 43, 298  
 Elections, 250  
 Emblematic analogy, 205  
 Empedocles' doctrine, 227

- Enlightenment, 31  
 Esoteric Buddhism, 226  
 Eternal life, 201  
 Eternal universe, 286  
 Eugenics, 314
- FAITH, common conception of, 23  
 Firstborn, sacrifice of, 47  
 Flammarion's theory of the universe, 265  
 Fourth Gospel, 113-17  
   writer of, 175  
 Free volition, 273
- God, nature of, 182  
 Gospels—  
   historical inaccuracies in, 92  
   in the making, 92  
   the second, 110  
 Grace, 35, 148  
 Gregory, 34
- HADRIAN, the wars of, 80  
 Heaven, 181-9  
   of Essenes, 190  
 Hell, 181-9  
 Hezekiah, 70  
 Human embryo analogy, 210  
 Human sacrifice in Old Testament, 41
- IMAGES, 37  
 Immortality, 339  
 Instinct, 191  
 Involution of the soul, 281-7  
 Irenæus, 86, 101, 106, 122, 158, 175  
 Islam, 37, 182  
 Israel, historical religion of, 42
- JAPAN, religion of, 360  
 Jerome, 35  
 Jerusalem, the fall of, 80  
 Jesuism, 169
- Jesus—  
   mission of, 65  
   predictions as to His birth, 82  
 Josiah, 51, 71  
 Justin Martyr, 86, 89, 94, 106, 116, 122, 176, 185
- KARMA, 259  
 Knowledge, advance in, arisen out of error, 19
- LAMARCK'S laws, 281  
 Law of eternal flux, 200  
 Lazarus, 109  
 Levites, 47  
 Life, definition of, 241  
 Logia, 94, 132  
 Love, 169, 293
- MALEVOLENCE of divinity, 41  
 Manichæism, 164  
 Marcion, 88, 96, 160-7  
 Marcion's Gospel, 28  
 Marriage, object of, 321  
 Material and immaterial phenomena, 253  
 Maternal instinct, 368  
 Maternal love, 305  
 Matter, basis of, 336  
 Matthew's Gospel, 104  
 Mechanism of life, 237  
 Messianic cult, 64  
 Messianic hopes, 33  
 Messianic theory, 97  
 Metabolism, 255  
 Metempsychosis, 221, 229, 2  
 Micah, 54  
 Millennium idea, 34, 106  
 Miracles—  
   origin of, 108  
   the value of, 111  
 Mohammed, 37

- Monastic system, 35  
 Monera, 267  
 Monism, 193, 254, 335  
 Morality of the universe, 333-8  
 Morion, the, 259  
 Movement, origin of, 242  
 Mysteries of Nature, 275
- NATURAL selection, 337  
 Nature behind needs, 317  
 Neo-Lamarckism, 278  
 New Testament Books—  
   canonisation of, 86  
   discord of, 100  
 Nicene Council, 90  
 Nineveh, 72
- OBSCURANTISM, 19  
 Ocean—  
   analogy of metempsychosis, 230  
   and earth parallelism, 212  
 Oriental dualism, 294  
 Original sin, 25, 150-56
- PAUL, 127-43  
   hatred of, by the Jews, 133  
 Paul's doctrine, 98  
   epistles, 65, 88, 158  
 Peter, relations with Paul, 129  
 Philo, influence of, in Fourth  
   Gospel, 113  
 Philosophy, 300  
 Plotinus's theory, 223  
 Polycarp, Epistles of, 146  
 Priests' Code, 43, 52
- RECESSION from a superior state to  
   the human, 225  
 Reincarnation, 224  
 Religion, one truth basis of, 168
- Reproduction, ethics of, 311-24
- SACRIFICE, abolition of, 33  
 Sacrificial cult—  
   idea of, 61  
   contempt of Jesus for, 62  
 Satan, 60, 294  
 Saturnalia, 36  
 Sheep and Goats parable, 188  
 Sin, 289, 326  
 Socrates, 184  
 Solar System analogy, 210  
 Soul, 216, 237  
   parental transmission of, 240  
 Spontaneous generation, 246  
 Stars, superior control of, 265  
 Stephen, stoning of, 135  
 Subjectivity, 350
- TAOISM, 298  
 Tenth plague, 48  
 Tertullian, 89, 122  
 Torah, the, 53  
 Transcendentalism, 195  
 Trinitarian dogma, 32
- UNIVERSE, a single system, 266
- VIRGIN birth, 22, 32, 113-26  
   dogma, date of, 11  
   legends of, 105  
 Vital energy, 208  
 Volition, 271
- WEAK, rights of, 307  
 Wycliff, 39
- ZOROASTRIANISM, tenets of, 297

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## AUTUMN ANNOUNCEMENTS.

### **The English Court in Exile: James II. at St. Germain.**

By MARION and EDWIN SHARPE GREW, Authors of "The Court of William III." With 16 Illustrations. 15s. net.

The Court in Exile was the Court of James II., after his flight from England on the arrival of William of Nassau, Prince of Orange. "The Court of William III.," by the same authors, described the advent of the Prince of Orange. In the present volume the fortunes of the exiled King and his Italian wife are followed through the subsequent years which he spent in France, whilst fruitlessly endeavouring to regain his throne. James and his consort were received in France by Louis XIV.



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The little Court of St. Germain was a melancholy thing, notwithstanding its share in all the splendid gaieties of Versailles. All James's attempts to regain his kingdom were unsuccessful. The chief of these attempts, the journey to Ireland, the campaign there, and the Court at Dublin, are described. A motley crowd of adventurers, as well as loyal and devoted adherents, flocked to St. Germain, and many of them, the most gallant and devoted, were Irishmen. The records and characteristics of these, drawn from contemporary sources, are one of the features of the book.

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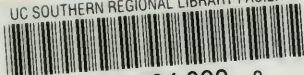
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