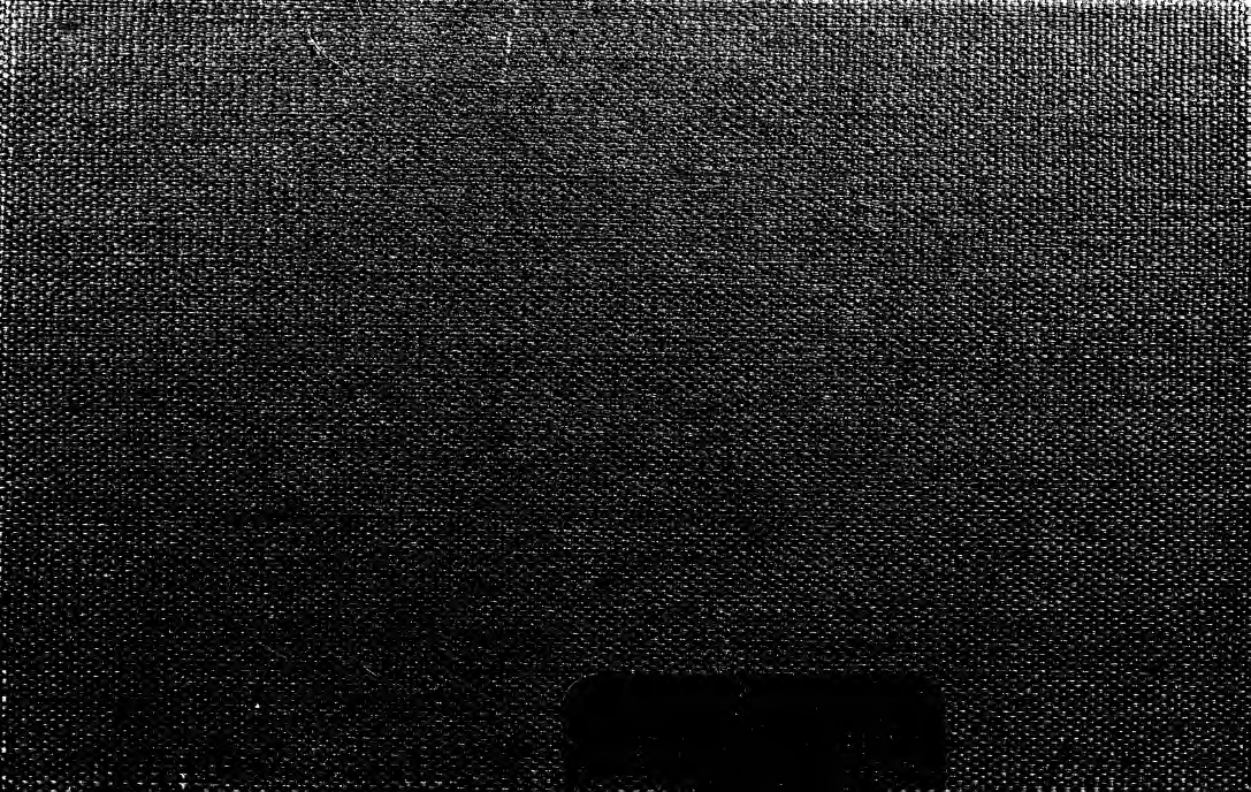

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RENAN'S MARCUS AURELIUS. TRANSLATED, WITH AN INTRODUCTION, BY WILLIAM G. HUTCHISON.

THE WALTER SCOTT PUBLISHING CO., LTD.
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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

As in the other volumes by Renan included in the Scott Library, exigencies of space have compelled me to omit the author's preface and notes, the latter of which appeal rather to the specialist than the general reader. Most general readers, however, have the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius on their shelves, and I have therefore deemed it desirable to give the references of all Renan's citations from that work.

INTRODUCTION.

"THIS volume brings to a conclusion the series of essays which I have devoted to the history of the origins of Christianity. It contains an exposition of the developments of the Christian Church during the reign of Marcus Aurelius, and a parallel picture of the efforts of philosophy to ameliorate civil society. The second century of our era had the double glory of finally establishing Christianity —that is to say, the great principle which has effected moral reformation by faith in the supernatural; and of witnessing the evolution, thanks to Stoic preaching and lacking all element of miracle, of the finest effort of the lay school of virtue which the world has up till now ever known. These two movements were alien to one another, and reciprocated contradiction rather than support; but the triumph of Christianity is only explicable, when we have well weighed what there was of strength and weakness in the philosophic effort. In this matter Marcus Aurelius is the subject of study to which we must constantly return. He sums up in himself all that there was of goodness in the ancient world, and to criticism he affords the advantage of presenting himself unveiled, thanks to a personal document of uncontested sincerity and authenticity.

"More than ever I believe that the period of origins, the

embryogeny of Christianity, if one may so express it, ends about the death of Marcus Aurelius in 180. At this date the child has all its organs; it is sundered from its mother; henceforward it will live its own life. The death of Marcus Aurelius, moreover, can be considered as marking the close of ancient civilisation. What of excellence is achieved after this is no longer achieved by the Hellenic-Roman principle; the Judeo-Syrian principle wins the day, and, although more than a hundred years are to elapse before its complete triumph, there is already no doubt that to it belongs the future. The third century is the death agony of a world which, in the second, has still been full of life and strength."

Thus Renan in his preface to the present volume, the seventh and last of his *Origines du Christianisme*, and for a rapid summary of the essence of the book it could scarce be bettered. As he says, we have here the history of two parallel developments of ethics, the one inspired with a spirit of supernaturalism which, by its appeal to popular emotions and desires, has continued through a thousand transformations to our own time; the other, in appearance a more fleeting phenomenon in the spiritual history of mankind, but one perhaps which we may ultimately look to prevail in a form adapted to the needs and aspirations of the age. It is Renan's merit that he has dealt with these two developments in a manner that is just to both. He willingly recognises that though Christianity may include much that is repugnant to the philosopher of positive cast of mind, it is none the less a phase of the world's spiritual existence, as the Tertiary or Pleistocene was a phase of its material existence. Each is but an instance of the action and reaction of nature, and nothing can better impress on us the natural character of all religious movements,

than the cool and impartial treatment of such a historian as Renan. On the surface this coolness and impartiality, which I claim for him, may be coloured and clouded by his personality, a personality which never ceased in its development till his death. But a historian of the emotional side of human nature, whatever may be said of the student of diplomacy and constitutional law, must have a personality if his work is to make appeal. He is "a spectator of all time and all existence," but, none the less, is himself a part of that sentient existence, some aspect of which he seeks to present to others, and as such cannot claim absolute freedom from prepossessions. There are not so many instances extant of historians dealing with the conflicts of forms of thought in a spirit of good humour, but that we can value the insight and sympathy of a writer who appreciates the point of view alike of Christian and pagan, mystic and rationalist.

The first volume of the *Origines* was filled with the personality of the founder of the new era in religion, as handed down in legend and tradition, and coloured, perhaps too much in the rose-pink manner, by the temperament of the author; in this last volume another majestic figure occupies a central place. Renan, it is true, does not rhapsodise over his hero in the present instance, as he did in the *Vie de Jésus*, and for this two reasons may be assigned. In the first place, nearly twenty years had elapsed since the writing of the former work; and in these twenty years his disposition had lost much of its sentimentality, its "gush," to use a vulgar and expressive word, and had undergone a certain hardening process of disillusionment, which students of his later books cannot fail to detect, and in which I, for one, see a healthy growth and not a decadence. Secondly, the materials for a life and study

of Jesus are so tinged by the doubt that must needs surround the miraculous legends of an age of unlimited credulity, that any biographer who hesitates to take the Gospels as a literal history must needs allow his imagination and selective faculty some scope. In Marcus Aurelius we have not the leader of an obscure Jewish sect, scarcely known at the time of his crucifixion beyond the small circle of his followers, but a Roman Emperor, monarch over almost the whole world, as the world then knew itself, his very features familiar on coins that circulated from York to Smyrna, his life lived publicly before the eyes of all men. Under this "fierce light" Marcus Aurelius is a historical figure, of whom we can get as definite a conception as of Frederick the Great or Napoleon the First. What is more, we have, what we would fain have of many other great men, an intimately personal record of his moral and intellectual life, the very abruptness and literary carelessness of which speak sincerity, and the source of which is unquestioned. In the *logia* of Jesus there is and will be a theme for endless disputations as to authenticity; in the *Meditations of Marcus Aurelius* we have the *ipsissima verba* of a man who stands open to our view without and within. There is no place here for ingenious explanation, glossing over, romantic conjecture; and Renan, apart from some reasonable remarks on the question of Faustina, to which I shall recur, takes what has been the universal view of the Stoic on the throne.

One of the facts that serve to relieve a low view of average human nature is the unanimity of praise which Marcus received from his contemporaries, pagan and Christian, the latter, indeed, erring by excess of zeal to the extent of fathering on him a forgery of their own, in

the shape of a rescript forbidding the punishment of Christians as such.[1] To later generations Marcus appeals not so much as a good Emperor as a good man. For Matthew Arnold, "the acquaintance of a man like Marcus Aurelius is an imperishable benefit;" as "the especial friend and comforter of clear-headed and scrupulous, yet pure-hearted and upward-striving men, in those ages most especially that walk by sight not by faith, but yet have no open vision." Renan's affection for the philosopher dead sixteen hundred years before him inspires his whole study. "Every one of us wears mourning in his heart for Marcus Aurelius, as though he died but yesterday."

Indeed, there is much in the character of Marcus to inspire an even warmer feeling than the retrospective esteem which we have for certain remembered figures of long past generations. There is the charm of the strong bringing forth sweetness. Rigorously severe in his discipline of self, living a life whose only pomp was to the honour of the state he ruled, not of himself, watchful at all times lest he should be guilty of wrong in act or word or even thought; he never in his self-reproaches descended to the fatuous delusions of his own shortcomings so characteristic of a certain type of Christian saint. He did not use of himself language that would be exaggerated applied to a criminal. While constantly alive to the weaknesses of his own character, he knew very well that he had attained a higher level of virtue than that of the mass around him, and from this he derived, not vainglory, but

[1] Eusebius gives this document in full and attributes it to Antoninus; Justin Martyr and Tertullian ascribe it to Marcus Aurelius. It is now, however, universally recognised to be one of the vast number of pious frauds put in circulation by the Christians for the advancement of their cause.

some measure of justifiable self-satisfaction. From this combination of faculties—firm self-command, suppression of unessential desires, reasonable appreciation of his own moral standing—might result an attitude of censure and contempt towards his fellows. But here, as Renan points out, "it is that the rare kindliness of nature of Marcus Aurelius shines forth in all its splendour." Severe to his own faults, he has charity for those of others, and, what is a still rarer, finer gift, a delicacy of moral tact, apt to be lacking in men of strenuous life.

A strenuous life his was. Philosophy did not withdraw him from the duties that lay to his hand; it was rather a religion that inspired him to their fulfilment. He governed well, reformed the legal code, waged war on foes without and within the state. In Chapter II Renan gives an appreciative account of his legislation, but on a later page describes the progress made as merely superficial. This is a somewhat sweeping statement, to be taken with caution, except in so far as is concerned the eternal verity that people are not made virtuous by Act of Parliament. The sadder tone that characterises the later *Meditations* need not mislead us. Men were probably no worse and no better at the end of his reign, than they had been at the beginning. He, so good himself that he had been unable to conceive of evil in others, and out of very goodness had brought evil to pass, had begun to find men out—that was all. Dawning perception of things as they were, and not as they ought to have been, has left traces in the *Meditations*. "Look at their Inner Selves, the things they push for, the titles to their liking and respect. Conceive their souls stripped naked—and then, fancy their censure hurting, or their plaudits doing any good!"[1] "If you have

[1] *Meditations*, ix. 34 (Rendall's translation).

need of some special reflection to reconcile you to death, you have but to consider that from which it is about to sever you, and the moral natures with which you will then cease to associate . . . Remember that it is not with men who feel as yourself that you are parting."[1]

In these later reflections we have the melancholy of one disillusioned, who has survived his friends and counsellors, and stands alone without spiritual kindred. Renan finely suggests how the Emperor's thoughts are no longer how he may strengthen himself for life, but how best he may resign himself to death. In the end that death, a death lacking the glimpse of paradisal delights that solaced the Christian martyr at the moment of parting, was a release from a world which had been too much with him, and for which his nature was too noble. He took his departure from it in the spirit that inspired one of his thoughts written down at Carnuntum: "—finally, in all serenity awaiting death, the natural dissolution of the elements of which each creature is compounded. And if the component elements have nought to fear in the continuous change from form to form, why should one look askance at the change and dissolution of the whole? It is of nature; and nature knows no evil."[2]

That his disposition was too noble for the world in which he lived is but too evident, and we are confronted with the apparent paradox that, had he been a worse man, he might have been a better Emperor. If his amiability and desire to credit those about him with the best intentions had only had the ballast of a more mundane suspicion, Rome might have been spared Lucius Verus and Commodus. Had he made inquiry into Faustina's alleged liaisons, and either proved her innocence or guilt, he would

[1] *Meditations*, ix. 3. [2] *Ibid.*, ii. 17 (Rendall's translation).

have approved himself in the public eye, which may be taken as a duty of the sovereign; and he would very possibly have thereby found a way to the heart of a woman, who perhaps felt at times that her husband, with his philosophy and statecraft, was indifferent to her. Renan, as we might expect from other passages in his writings, notably his apology for Poppæa,[1] is keen in the defence of the eternal feminine, and assures us, not only of Faustina's innocence but draws a pathetic picture of the young, beautiful, and capricious woman, wearied to death of the fine sentiments of her husband and his philosophic friends. Marcus Aurelius was a tender, faithful, indulgent husband, a too indulgent husband according to contemporary scandal mongers; but he was guilty of one serious marital offence, he bored his wife. It is one of the ironies of life that the rectitude of others, carried to extremes, can become a source of irritation to us, and that a world of absolutely virtuous persons would be a dreary desert of dulness.

The religion of Marcus Aurelius is somewhat difficult to define, for the reason that it had, properly speaking, no dogmatic basis. There was, of course, the state religion of Rome, which he practised with a pious assiduity; but the Roman religion was less a supernatural faith and communion, as we understand these terms, than a branch of the civil service. It was essentially practical and utilitarian in aim. The gods were held to have entered into a legal contract to befriend the state, so long as its citizens punctiliously carried out certain observances. I know of

[1] See *Antichrist* (Scott Library), p. 66. On the question of Faustina, Renan delivered a discourse of some length to the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres in 1867, in which all the evidence for and against her was carefully examined, and a verdict of acquittal given.

no better expression of the Roman idea of religion than the words of Symmachus, the pagan senator of the fourth century, in petitioning for the repeal of the law of Gratian, by which the statue and altar of Victory had been removed from the Senate-house: "Each nation has its own gods and peculiar rites. The Great Mystery cannot be approached by one avenue alone. But use and wont count for much in giving authority to a religion. Leave us the symbol on which our oaths have been sworn for so many generations. Leave us the system which has so long given prosperity to the State. A religion should be judged by its utility to the men who hold it."[1] "Roman religion," says Pater, ". . . had, indeed, been always something to be done, rather than something to be thought, or believed, or loved; something to be done in minutely detailed manner, at a particular time and place, correctness in all which had long been a matter of laborious learning with a whole school of ritualists."[2] To go beyond observances, to make any effort towards ecstatic communion with the gods was deemed superstition; and the Christian idea that calamity might be sent for the ultimate good of the sufferer would have been scouted by the orthodox Roman citizen, who, on any disaster to himself or the state, instantly bethought himself wherein the civic deities had been offended.

But the philosophers, of whom Marcus Aurelius was among the most illustrious, and who, as Renan tells us, formed a kind of unofficial priesthood at Rome, while strongly urging the performance of the ancient rites as a sacred duty, pushed speculation to its farthest. Broadly

[1] Quoted in Dill's *Roman Society in the Last Century of the Roman Empire*, p. 26.

[2] *Marius the Epicurean*, i. p. 194.

speaking, these teachers took up a position which is tacitly assumed by a very large number of persons to-day—scepticism of supernatural sanctions, combined with a whole-hearted belief that these same sanctions are essential to the morality of the multitude. Marcus, indeed, was not only scrupulous in his practice of all the state ritual, but, considerate of the prepossessions of others and appreciative of the spirit of devotion in every form, he welcomed the alien gods that had arrived in Rome, restoring, for example, the solemnities of Isis, proscribed in the capital since the reign of Augustus. None the less, his own personal beliefs in the divine governance of the universe and the destiny of humanity had no rigidity of conception. "In his theology," Renan says, "he floats between pure deism, polytheism interpreted in a physical sense after the manner of the Stoics, and a kind of cosmic pantheism." With speculative opinions of such fluidity, Marcus could not be otherwise than what he was, the most tolerant of men. It would, after all, be difficult to be fanatically attached to the doctrine that there may possibly be a god or gods, or that the deity may perhaps be the cosmos itself; that we must regard his or their action as on the whole equitable and benevolent; and that there are certain reasons for anticipating some form of immortality. But if Marcus were thus tolerant of foreign religions, thus nebulous in his own theology, why did he cause, or at least permit, the persecution of the Christians?

Here we touch the point at which some of his eulogists turn to regret and rebuke. Renan, however, makes a defence that, to any one unprejudiced by motives of partisanship, is reasonable and just. There are probably few historical episodes that have been so exaggerated and distorted as the persecutions of the early Church. In the

first instance, the records of martyrdom were, to a large extent, the fabrications of monks, whose zeal for the edification of the faithful was unhampered by any consideration for truth. The average historian, for his part, has been apt to view them through the glasses of a Christian champion, and to see all the Christians dazzlingly white, all their opponents of an extreme of blackness. Popular art, too, has seized on so obvious an opportunity to please the public's sentimentality, religiosity, and taste for the morbid. M. Gérome and Mr. Herbert Schmaltz on canvas, the late Dr. Farrar in romance, and Mr. Wilson Barrett in melodrama have combined to force a similar impression on people, who generally forget that the religion thus persecuted shed infinitely more blood when the turn of events brought it into power itself.

In considering the question of the Christian persecutions under Marcus Aurelius, it is well to understand clearly for what the Christians were really persecuted. It has been pointed out that, apart from personal motives, religious persecutions may take place on any of three grounds: that the religion persecuted tends to immorality; that it is injurious to the commonwealth; that it is offensive to the Deity, and imperils the souls of its adherents. All persecutions by the Christian Church have had this third ground as their justification, a ground that presupposes the Church's theological opinions to be essential to salvation, and theological error a deadly sin. We must hate those who, by differing from our theories about God, must obviously hate him. "Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? Yea, I hate them with a perfect hatred," pleasantly observes the Psalmist, and the sentiment might have been echoed by St. Louis, Isabella of Spain, or, for that matter, John Calvin, all of them pious and conscientious persons who, in Mr.

Lecky's words, "at last succeeded in persuading themselves that their Divinity would be offended if they hesitated to ascribe to him the attributes of a fiend." Anything more remote than the régime of manacled thought beloved by minds of this type, and maintained when they had the power, than the Roman Empire during the early growth of the Christian Church, it would be hard to imagine. Only within comparatively recent times in Europe has there been anything like the complete intellectual freedom of imperial Rome. The state ritual, indeed, was compulsory; the Emperor's statue must have its meed of adoration, but that was a matter of patriotism. Every one was free to conceive of the Divine as he would, and to approach the powers unseen with such ceremonial as seemed to him best. What mattered a god the more to a polytheism interpreted literally, or even to a polytheism reduced to monotheism by the simple expedient of turning the different deities into so many attributes of one Supreme Being?[1] It was an age when the Western world needed new inspirations in the sphere of religion. The old mythology formally survived in the official cult, but in itself was lifeless; the abstractions of Stoics, Platonists, and Epicureans were not for the many. A rational ethic has never been to the taste of the average man, still less the average woman. For them morality must be "touched with emotion," and not only with emotion, but with marvels and symbols as well. These concomitants may be sublime or vulgar, their professors seers or quacks; but from all time they have formed an essential part of popular religion, and, according to his capacity, the believer finds inspiration in a scale that

[1] Hadrian is said to have intended to enrol Christ among the gods. Alexander Severus adored in his oratory the statues of Apollonius of Tyana, Abraham, Orpheus, and Christ, a curiously assorted company.

reaches from the Epistles of Paul to the Book of Mormon, from St. Theresa to Mrs. Eddy.

Rome had conquered the "brooding East," and the East had given its conquerors new faiths, which they adopted with the enthusiasm of converts. "All the new religions which struggled together for the mastery of the world were oriental in origin; the triumph of Christianity was but a single episode in the general triumph of aggressive orientalism over the occidental element in the Roman system."[1] There had been long-continued suppressions and prohibitions, but after the time of Tiberius perfect liberty of worship was permitted to all religions, with one exception, Christianity. In itself Christianity was probably no more offensive to the state or the people than the other Eastern religions which reached Rome; it had, indeed, many points in common with the cults of Adonis, Attis, Dionysos, Osiris, and Mithra, all of which gave prominence to the doctrine of a saviour-god, born of a virgin, dying and rising again; all of which nurtured by form and ceremony an atmosphere of unrest, craving for communion, and religious rapture. It is, to say the least, probable that much of Christian ritual and symbolism, the eucharist especially, came direct from Mithraism or from some earlier common source in the East.[2] Renan goes so far as to say that at one time Mithraism was like to become the

[1] Grant Allen, *Evolution of the Idea of God*, pop. edn., p. 144.

[2] The early Fathers characteristically attributed the priority of the Mithraistic sacrament to diabolic influences. A phrase in the Apocalypse (vii. 14) about the washing of robes in the blood of the Lamb suggests the possibility of the Mithraistic rite of the Taurobolium, from which Marius, in Pater's romance, saw the courtesan Benedicta returning, having been a primitive usage among Christians. The idea of the regenerative character of the sacrificial victim's blood has survived in devotional language to the present day, and is embodied in certain

dominant religion of the West, and its survival till the fourth century is proved by the discovery of votive tablets, dedicated to Mithra, and bearing the most aristocratic Roman names.

It was not, then, so much for its positive beliefs, that the Christian community suffered under the weight of popular resentment and official chastisement. It was its negative quality of exclusiveness, its claim to be sole depositary of truth, its determination to ignore the religion of the state and hold itself aloof from the service of the state, that inspired the suspicion of government and populace. "He that is not for, is against," is an old belief, and pagans who would have been willing enough to accept the Christians' God with the rest of the alien divinities, were stung to indignation when they saw the sect pointedly abstaining from national festivals, refusing to offer incense before the Emperor's statue, and openly defacing and scoffing at idols; idolatry at that early stage of the Church's existence being as repugnant to it as to Judaism. Such contempt for the ancient worship presaged to the vulgar mind heavenly retribution, and the Christians were held responsible for every catastrophe of nature. Moreover, though there were, of course, exceptions, these exclusive sectaries would not take part in the state's business of peace and war, would not intermarry with pagans, kept themselves to themselves. The other religions were not mutually exclusive, tended, in fact, to syncretic combina-

evangelical hymns, no doubt still popular. One of Cowper's, for instance, begins:

"There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Emmanuel's veins;
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains."

tions; but the Christians, like the Jews, who, however, not being a proselytising body, were left unmolested, maintained that all other creeds than their own were the work of devils, and would bring damnation to their votaries.

Another objection of the Romans to Christianity was that in their eyes it was a hole-and-corner cult, the Church a secret society stealthily and nocturnally celebrating its mysteries in the presence of initiates alone. Many must have sincerely believed that the Christians habitually indulged in cannibal feasts with incest to follow. The undoubted licence and immorality of some of the Gnostic sects did much to discredit unfairly the Church as a whole, and, since scandal is never at a loss for picturesque detail, amazing stories were set abroad of the doings of the Christians at their love-feasts, stories which incensed citizens when they saw the Christians, successful as they were in their appeal to women, leading away their wives and sisters to the new cult. So much for popular prejudice; to the state the Church was an illicit association, subversive of good morals and good government. Accordingly as the provincial governors felt or did not feel this strongly, so in their districts were the Christians cruelly treated or ignored. There was much injustice in all this assuredly, and much ferocity; but both qualities are still extant in the world, and even the enlightened modern may refrain from too sweeping a condemnation.[1] To the average Roman

[1] I read in a newspaper of to-day's date (*Daily News*, July 9, 1903), that on Sunday, June 21st, in the present year of grace, the Reverend H. A. Ellwood, of Olivet Presbyterian Church, Wilmington, Delaware, U.S.A. (within thirty miles of Philadelphia), preached a sermon on 1 Corinthians v. 13, "Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person," in which he deliberately incited his congregation to deal themselves, and at once, with a negro arrested on a murder charge, whose trial was to be postponed till September. The flock was

the Christian must have been something akin to the conception of the Jesuit entertained in all seriousness by many a worthy Protestant. The truth of the matter, then, seems to be that while Marcus personally instigated no persecution, he did not attempt to check those that took place at Smyrna, Lyons, and elsewhere; that, so far as he knew aught of it, he had no liking for the sect, and that his prejudice against it was one honestly held, and held by many of his subjects. We can say if we will that he misunderstood its aims and methods. As remarked in the present volume, there is nothing to show that the case for the Christians, as presented by such apologists as Claudius Apollinaris and Melito, ever came under his eyes, and the apologies in question have their chief interest in foreshadowing the ultimate union of Church and Empire. Both Renan and Matthew Arnold—two writers who, as one of them remarked, had much in common[1]—have suggested how great would have been the gain to the world, had Christianity, and the virtue and intellect of the best Greek and Roman minds, joined in alliance. What fanatical follies, what deeds of savagery

worthy of its pastor. On the following day the man was forcibly removed from prison and burned at the stake in the presence of a large concourse. I must apologise for the irrelevancy of this note, but there is some satisfaction in putting on record the name of this "Reverend" miscreant.

[1] "I thought the other day that I would tell you of a Frenchman whom I saw in Paris, Ernest Renan, between whose line of endeavour and my own I imagine there is considerable resemblance, that you might have a look at some of his books if you liked . . . with respect both to morality and intelligence, I think we are singularly at one in our ideas, and also with respect both to progress and the established religion of the present day." (To Mrs. Forster, December 24 1859. *Letters*, vol. i. p. 129.)

might have been avoided, had the early Church attracted to it not only gloomy enthusiasts like Tertullian, but men of such sweetness and light as Plutarch, Epictetus, and the good Emperor himself!

Yet, cruel and discreditable as the persecutions were, the persecutors, without knowing it, were doing much to secure the Christian triumph. The psychology of martyrdom is a subject that would repay study. The first point to be observed is its infective character. Desire to die for a faith becomes a mania; and, while the Church gloried in her confessors, and their courage undoubtedly had the effect of converting many pagans, who argued that these men must have something great and glorious to die for, the bishops found it necessary at times to dissuade their flocks from rushing into what was practically suicide. Martyrdom too, like Christian asceticism, had its dark side, in that it did cruel wrong to human affections. Perpetua, so eager for the martyr's crown, has been immortalised by the Church in legend and picture, and given an honoured place in the calendar of saints. But I confess to feeling infinitely less admiration for her supremely selfish desire for personal salvation, than pity for her broken-hearted old father and her infant child. Yet, if the confessors had small regard for the ties of kindred, their martyrdom engendered between themselves solidarity and mutual love. Standing shoulder to shoulder, confronting the oppressor with the strength given by a burning conviction, men must have forgotten their petty squabbles on such questions as the proper day to keep Easter.[1] Their ordeal not only forced them back

[1] There were, however, limits to the reconciliation effected by martyrdom in common. Eusebius (v. 16) expressly tells us that the Catholic Christians held aloof from Montanists even in the hour of death.

on the primal virtues of courage and constancy, but inspired them with that loyalty to their faith and each other, which is such a striking feature in the early stages of the Church, before the wholesale conversions had begun. To martyrdom also, Renan in part attributes the rehabilitation of the slave. In Blandina, the serving-maid of Lyons, he sees the true emancipator. His view, of course, has more rhetorical effect than actual truth. Slavery, as he admits elsewhere, went on for long after the victory of Christianity, and in many cases the Churches, as corporate bodies, were owners of slaves. But if Christianity did not recognise the equality of bond and free before man, it did acknowledge their equality before God; and that in an association to which earth was no abiding city but merely a stepping-stone to eternity, was much.

We have seen that the universal suspicion of Christian manners was in some measure founded on the excesses of certain of the Gnostic sects, and to the Gnostics and other early heretics considerable attention is devoted in the present volume, an attention merited by reason of the great influence which Gnosticism had in shaping the ideas of Christianity. This influence, indeed, is from the orthodox point of view denied; ecclesiastical historians are anxious to disclaim all responsibility for the Gnostics. Thus, for instance, a recent writer of the popular order: "their teaching can in nowise be looked upon as simply 'heretical.' *The religion which they taught was absolutely distinct*, and their speculations find little, if any, support whatever in the teaching of the gospels and epistles of the New Testament canon."[1] What gives point to the reference to the Gospels in this passage, is the fact that the

[1] *Early Christianity and Paganism*, by Dr. Spence, Dean of Gloucester. The italics are the Dean's.

writer of that attributed to John must himself have been strongly imbued with the Gnostic spirit. By their ingenious methods of allegorical exegesis, moreover, the Gnostics were quite capable of producing evidence for their theories from all sources. They were enthusiasts, and the enthusiast has been defined as a person who believes four times as much as he can prove, and can prove four times as much as anybody else will believe. Some religions have professed salvation by faith, others by works, the Gnostics saved you by knowledge. To them Christianity was a higher and esoteric doctrine, which the ordinary Christian only superficially conceived, and this Christianity of theirs was transfused with many elements from other sources. With the terminology of the Christian and Jewish cults they combined the ideas of the theosophies of Egypt and the East in one great syncretic whole, which appealed both to the mystical type of mind and to that which delights in system spinning. "The most ingenious way of becoming foolish is by a system," shrewdly remarked Lord Shaftesbury, and with their antitheses of spirit and matter, their triads and æons and emanations, the Gnostics raised a fabric, which, with all its occasional sublimities, was in the main a mass of what, to the uninitiated, must have seemed absurdities. And yet, though Renan does not, I think, sufficiently bring the point out, there was a certain breadth of view in some ideas of the Gnostic teacher which merits respect. He could not bring himself to believe that the Jews were the one nation to which God had vouchsafed a revelation, and the tribal deity Jahveh seemed unworthy as the supreme Being of the universe; yet he realised the strength of the popular faith in the personality of Jesus and in Old Testament tradition, and did what

he could to turn this stream of energy into a wider channel.

The accumulated wisdom of the religions of the East was accordingly introduced into the framework of the traditional story of Jesus. The eternal mystery of God and the world, soul and substance, noumenon and phenomenon, the problem of the origin of evil, were settled by processes of intuition rather than reason, furnished with an accompaniment of visions, heavenly voices *et hoc genus omne*, and backed by a wildly allegorical interpretation, which, like that of our modern Donnelly's and Mrs. Gallup's, found cryptic Gnostic mysteries in Homer and even Anacreon. The many schools, differing from each other in practice and theory, yet agreed in the main in their dualism, the eternal antagonism of God and matter; in the separation of the creator or demiurge, sometimes identified with the Hebrew Jahveh, from the supreme Deity, a pure abstraction from which there proceeds a graduated scale of beings, each successively engendered from the inner essence of the higher form; and, finally, in docetism, the view that the human element in Christ was a mere deceptive appearance. There was not much that was new in the Gnostic creeds; what was new was the combination of elements from many and diverse faiths, a combination which in certain cases became an imbroglio of such complexity, as to give any but the most seasoned mystic a bout of intellectual indigestion.

What is of more interest to the modern reader than the transcendental theories of the Gnostic sects, is the effect of these theories on practice, on the conduct of life. And here we are met by the apparently contradictory situation that two orders of Gnostics, starting from the same principle, disdain of matter and exaltation of spirit,

followed diametrically opposite courses in the sphere of conduct, both with some show of logic. To Marcion, Saturninus, Tatian, and the Manichæans, matter, being the accursed thing, the root of all evil, must be inexorably shunned, and to this end the devotee must abstain from all sexual intercourse, which is an adulteration of self with sinful matter and perpetuates the reign of matter, and from all but the barest nutrition that will support life. The Ophites, Carpocratians, Marcosians, and other sects, held, on the other hand, that the spirit was much too high to be affected by the lusts of the flesh, and that these lusts, therefore, might be freely indulged without dishonour to the immortal part of the believer, a comfortable doctrine that in various forms has been extremely popular at many epochs. According to Clement of Alexandria, some of these mystical debauchees averred that it was no great thing to restrain lust, but a great thing not to be conquered by lust when they indulged in it. To become a perfect master of the flesh it was necessary to make the whole round of sensuality. In all this there is nothing that need surprise us. Religious and erotic passions pushed to the morbid stage are very near akin, and, as the Rev. Mr. Jortin acutely observes: "Enthusiasts and pious mystics have been remarkably fond of *the nuptial style*, and of applying *verba nupta* to godly subjects."[1]

Yet, although Gnosticism lasted into the sixth century[2] and left its impress on the doctrine, ritual and art of the orthodox Church, it was obviously not a religion to survive. Its cosmic theories were too complicated and

[1] *Remarks on Ecclesiastical History*, i. p. 37.

[2] The extraordinary Paulician movement of the twelfth century, described in Chapter LIV of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, may be regarded as a recrudescence of Gnosticism.

fine-spun for the average man, especially the average Western man, and its manner of life, whether ultra-ascetic or the reverse, was equally ill-fitted for a world of averages. Gnosticism, it is true, is known to us only through the writings of the orthodox opponents who vehemently assailed it, and, considering the methods of theological controversialists in all ages, the impressions to be thus formed of it may be far from fair. So far as I know, the sole authentic Gnostic book that has survived is the *Pistis Sophia* of Valentinus, or, as it is entitled by Renan, "La Fidèle sagesse," an English version of which by Mr. G. R. S. Mead has been issued under the appropriate auspices of the Theosophical Society. The bitterness of what, following Renan, we may call the Catholic Christians against the Gnostics may be accounted for, not only on the ground that all heresy is shocking to those who assume that they possess absolute truth, but also because, as we have seen, the Gnostics were identified by the outside world, which could not be expected to draw distinctions between different sects of the same order, with the general Church; and the sensual excesses of some of their number ascribed to the body of Christians as a whole.

In a like measure the exaggerated asceticism of some of the Gnostics, as of the Montanists, was a peril to the future of the Church, which, as Renan has elaborately demonstrated in the present volume, required moderation in its demands on human nature as a condition of life and growth. Hatred of the world, once anticipations of the world's early destruction had begun to pass away, would have been a fatal policy for an organisation aiming at the intellectual and spiritual mastery of the world. "The Church invariably holds to the average opinion," and a state of things in which every worldly tie is to be broken, every

indignity done to life and nature, is a sheer impossibility. In the episcopate and the body of moderate opinion which it represented, the historian finds the element in the Church which, by preserving it from excesses of speculation and asceticism, ensured its progress from its beginnings as an obscure and persecuted sect to a mighty world power, capable itself of persecution. For those who desired a life of poverty and abnegation there were the cloister and the desert. As time went on the profession of Christian entailed no particular heroism, no originality of spirit, but was merely the following of a general tendency. Docility to ecclesiastical superiors became the saving virtue, orthodoxy of creed the sovereign good. Paul had taught salvation by faith, the Gnostics by knowledge, the Church's principle was salvation by obedience. Whatever benefits the world has acquired from the Church, it has had to buy at the price of that obedience to a pseudo-divine organisation. At a comparatively early date Hegesippus seeks to prove to heretics the truth of Christian doctrines, by the assertion that they are uniformly taught in all the Churches, and have been so taught since the apostles, an assertion that in some measure justifies Jortin's trenchant description of Hegesippus as a "weak and credulous man; much such another as Papias;" for, as Renan points out, the Christian doctrines, though already all existent in solution, were not yet crystallised into the rigid dogmas of Nicæa. The Trinitarian formula, in particular, had not reached that nice precision of definition which it was one day to have in the so-called Athanasian Creed. Renan's survey of Christian dogma, worship, and discipline at the end of the second century, in Chapters XXVIII and XXIX of this work, is, however, so comprehensive that more need not be added

here. But it is well to note that his admiration for the free communism of the little band of Galilean followers of the founder, does not lessen his appreciation of the service done Christianity by a very different manifestation, the genius for organisation, the will to govern, that characterised the bishops of the period with which we are concerned.

An interesting chapter is devoted to the manners and morals of the Christian Church, in which, while its healthy influence, combined with that of the Roman code, on the status of the family is admitted, just condemnation is bestowed on its extravagant regard for virginity and its prudery. The interest of the study is manifestly increased by the charming little outburst, which the historian permits himself on beauty in general, and the beauty of women and women's dress in particular. "Woman's toilette, with all its refinements, is high art in a manner. The ages and countries which know how to succeed in this are the great ages, the great countries." There speaks a true countryman of Théophile Gautier, a worthy citizen of the great city that decrees the dress of the ladies of two hemispheres. The primitive Christians' prejudice against the divine right of woman to look her best, was of course all of a piece with their favourite doctrine that concupiscence was the "original sin" of human nature, and the natural desires, not symptoms of healthy life, but cravings inspired by Satan. The horror of baths had its natural result in the disgusting filth, which the hermits and other holy men imagined to be an essential condition of Christian perfection.[1] With other historians, Renan at this point notices the prevailing melancholy of the sect,

[1] Some curious particulars of this passion for what might be called the effluvium of sanctity will be found in Lecky's *European Morals*, ii. pp. 111 *et seq.*

a not unnatural result of sensuous and bodily starvation, conviction of human depravity, and gloomy anticipations of future torment. "The duty of a monk is not to teach but to weep," said St. Jerome, and St. Arsenius is said to have lost his eyelashes owing to the tears he was constantly shedding.[1] But all this overstrained Christian perfection was not for the multitude; and when, in the fourth and fifth centuries, the multitudes came flocking into the Church, the average of asceticism declined in intensity.

Exaggerated as it was, the Christian discipline of life was a necessary reaction in a world which required a moral reformation, that the intellectual virtues of philosophy, since they were too reasonable, could not effect. There was a field for a religion that, demanding righteousness, should make definite promise of reward for righteousness. In competition with the religions of Isis, the Bona Dea, Sabazius, Mithra, and many more, the religion of Christ, making this promise, won the day. It would be difficult to over-estimate its debt to the unity of the Roman Empire. Had the world been split up into a score of states, mutually jealous, vigilant on their frontiers, inaccessible to each other, the Christian conquest would have been slow indeed. By doing away with national boundaries Rome overcame the supreme obstacle to the Church's success. Both the

[1] Weeping as a pious duty has had survivals. Buckle quotes some amusing instances relating to the Scots Presbyterian divines of the seventeenth century. Wodrow tells us that James Alexander "used to weep much in prayer and preaching; he was every way most savoury;" the Rev. Alexander Dunlop was noted for what was called "a holy groan;" of the Rev. John Carstairs we are told: "his band in the Sabbath would have been all wet, as if it had been douked, with tears, before he was done with his first prayer." (*History of Civilisation*, iii. p. 255.)

centralisation and decentralisation of the Empire favoured a free trade in ideas; the first because Rome had become the metropolis of the world, the scene of a constantly changing concourse of strangers, a meeting-ground for every form of contemporary thought and superstition; the second because the Pax Romana necessitated large garrisons in distant provinces, the soldiers of which acquired alien customs, alien beliefs, and alien wives, and because the imperial system of communications permitted easier and speedier travel than the world knew again before the nineteenth century. With all its defects, in part because of its defects, Christianity made its way, and there is no more need to see miracle in its triumph than in the analogous triumph of Islam. Gibbon's famous five causes of this success (the intolerant zeal of the Christians, their doctrine of a future life, the miraculous powers attributed to the primitive Church, its pure and austere morals, the union and discipline of the Christian republic, which gradually formed an independent and increasing state in the heart of the Roman Empire), though much assailed by ecclesiastical apologists and historians, remain an ample and sufficient explanation. To the orthodox, Christianity is an isolated phenomenon with no affinities to its surroundings; to the historical student it is a product of all the contemporary forces.

To Christianity's continued course of evolution and adaptation to the time-spirit, the concluding pages of this history are devoted. Patriotism and the civic spirit had for the time being run their course; the Church's ideal was to make men, not citizens of any earthly commonwealth, but citizens of heaven; voluntary poverty was preached as a duty, wealth as a curse; material civilisation suffered a decline. But this was no democratic revolu-

tion; it was not the rights of man for which the Church was jealous, but the rights of God. In a negative sense the Christians, even under persecution, had been, as a rule, docile subjects. "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's" had been a maxim that, so far as mundane matters were concerned, they had generally followed. Once, then, the Empire had officially adopted the Christian doctrines, the union of Church and State was inevitable. The result was Theodosius and theocracy, and the temporary primacy of the Eastern over the Western Empire.

The spectacle presented by Christianity in the early centuries of its supremacy is not an edifying one. Pagan persecutions being a thing of the past, the Christians took to persecuting the pagans and each other. The mutual warfare of Catholics, Arians, Donatists, Nestorians, and other sects filled the world with scenes of horror that it had not known in the days of the pagan Empire. Hypatia stripped and foully murdered by Christian monks in a Christian sanctuary; George of Cappadocia in his Arian zeal slowly scorching young women over fires to make them abjure their creed; the bishop of Alexandria kicking to death the bishop of Constantinople at the Council of Ephesus,—such were typical incidents in the strife of men who professed to adore the Prince of Peace. "Persecution is universal—persecution by every means of violence and cruelty; the only question is, in whose hands is the power to persecute. . . . Bloodshed, murder, treachery, assassination, even during the public worship of God,—these are the frightful means by which each party strives to maintain its opinions, and to defeat its adversary."[1]

We are a long way here from the policy of turning the other cheek to the smiter, and in belief as well as in

[1] Dean Milman, *Hist. of Latin Christianity*, i. p. 318.

practice the ancient purity had departed. "The world in the sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, and tenth centuries was more grossly pagan than it had ever been before," says Renan. It is an emphatic statement, that may call for apology—to the pagans; but its truth can scarce be disputed. The pagan multitudes that flocked like sheep into the Christian fold did not leave their paganism behind them; it accompanied them into the new faith and became part of it. If their taste ran to ritual, they found in the Church very much what they had enjoyed in the religious sensations of the other Eastern cults; if to polytheism, they had the whole heavenly host of saints and angels to adore; if to idolatry, that also was permitted them. The old beliefs did not die; they merely took a Christian colouring. To this day paganism in some form or other enters into the daily life of every nation in Europe, even of those which broke away from it so much at the Reformation. The Christian year is a reproduction of the pagan year; Easter and Christmas date from long before Christianity.

In the last chapter of all we have a general review of the place of Christianity in the world, which, in its candid appreciation of the part that religion has played and may yet play in human life, is a fitting epilogue to the "long, eventful history" which it concludes. None the less, its estimate of present conditions and forecast of the future are fitted to please neither believers nor fanatical sceptics. Denial of the supernatural has, we are told, become an absolute dogma for every cultivated intellect. Between Christianity and science the struggle is inevitable, and must result in one going under. That one promises to be Christianity, for the progress of rationalism has been steady, despite certain unimportant reactions. Christianity is not sufficiently alive to its danger. The Protestant

Reformation reduced the daily allowance of supernaturalism, but Protestantism is standing still (what would Renan have said to the *Encyclopædia Biblica?*), and the material awaiting its reform will have been rationalised away before the reform takes place. What, then, is the world to do, with the faith of eighteen centuries slipping from it as a garment? It is to preserve Christianity for its beautiful morals and beautiful literature. Admitting no specific miracles, we are to bow down before the supreme miracle of the great Church. Side by side with fatherland and family, there must be an agency for the nurture of spiritual rapture, without which the world would be a barren desert, especially for women.

Especially for women—there we have the key to Renan's paradoxical ideal. His many-sided nature included a feminine element, which, when his critical faculties gave leave, laughed at logic and consistency and plunged, so to speak, on intuition as a means to attainment of the truth.[1] To the positive type of mind the idea of a Church founded on aspirations toward an unknowable deity, and suffused with spiritual rapture of the vaguer kind, would seem an impossibility. But Renan lays it down with a force and beauty of utterance that might produce conviction, were we not aware that we could contradict him over and over again out of his own mouth. As he himself candidly avows in his *Souvenirs*, Challemel-Lacour said of him that he thought like a man, felt like a woman, and acted like a child; and he accepts the verdict as just. It is perhaps this triune nature, with its flexible variety, that

[1] How significant a phrase is this, despite its lightness, "Je m'imagine souvent que les jugements qui seront portés sur chacun de nous dans la vallée de Josaphat ne seront autres que les jugements des femmes, contresignés par l'Éternel." (*Souvenirs*, p. 361.)

gives the personality of Renan such a charm to any one who has once given himself over to the spell. Yet he will never have any disciples; it is the people like Paul and Luther and Wesley, who "croient lourdement," that have many disciples. Renan, the perfect sceptic, since he is even sceptical of the benefits of disillusionment, goes on his own way, viewing the human comedy with keen and sympathetic interest (*j'ai eu un goût vif de l'univers*, he tells us), but with not too profound a gravity. His only reproach to Marcus Aurelius is the latter's austerity and overstrung seriousness of outlook. What the Emperor lacked, he says, was the kiss of a fairy at his birth. If it be to fairies that charm of manner, buoyancy of spirit, and love of beauty are due, there must have been a score of them awaiting the arrival of France's most amiable and smiling sceptic at the little Breton town of Tréguier on February 28th, 1823.

WILLIAM G. HUTCHISON.

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RENAN'S MARCUS AURELIUS.

MARCUS AURELIUS

AND THE END OF THE ANCIENT WORLD.

CHAPTER I.

THE ACCESSION OF MARCUS AURELIUS.

ANTONINUS died on the 7th of March, 161, in his palace at Lorium, with the calm of a consummate sage. When he felt the near approach of death he put his family affairs in order, like a private person, and gave orders for the golden statue of Fortune, which had ever to stand in the Emperor's state apartments, to be borne into the chamber of his adoptive son, Marcus Aurelius. To the tribune on duty he gave the pass-word *Æquanimitas;* then, turning himself about, appeared to fall asleep. All classes in the state vied in homage to his memory; priesthoods, public games, and guilds were founded in his honour. His piety, his clemency, his saintliness were the theme for universal praise. It was said that throughout his reign he had not caused the shedding of a drop of blood, Roman or alien. He was compared to Numa for his devoutness and strict observance of religious ceremonial, and also for the happiness and security which he had been able to give the Empire.

Antoninus would have enjoyed unrivalled repute as the best of sovereigns, had he not selected as his successor one who could bear comparison with him in goodness and modesty, and who to those effulgent qualities added

talent and the personal charm that makes a man live in human memories. Simple, kind-hearted, of winning cheerfulness of spirit, Antoninus was a philosopher without boasting of it, almost without knowing it. Marcus Aurelius was a philosopher of admirable temperament and sincerity, but he was a philosopher by reflection. In some respects Antoninus was the greater of the two. His goodness of heart did not lure him into indiscretions; he escaped the torment of the inward malady which pitilessly gnawed the heart of his adoptive son. That strange disease, that unresting study of the self, that demon of scrupulosity, that fever of perfection, are all signs of a nature with more distinction than strength. The finest thoughts are those that remain unwritten; but let it be added that we should be ignorant of Antoninus, had not Marcus Aurelius handed down for us that exquisite portrait of his adoptive father, in which he seems to have set himself, by humility, to depict the image of a man still better than himself. Antoninus is like a Christ without a gospel, Marcus Aurelius like a Christ who would have written his own.

It is the glory of monarchs that two patterns of irreproachable virtue should have been of their order, and that the finest lessons of patience and detachment from the world should have come from a condition of life that is naturally supposed to be given over to all the seductions of pleasure and vanity. Kingship at times is an aid to virtue, and assuredly Marcus Aurelius would not have been what he was, lacking the exercise of supreme power. There are faculties which only that exceptional position can bring into play, aspects of reality which it shows in a clearer light. Prejudicial to glory though it be, since the sovereign, the servant of all, must needs deny himself the free development of his own originality, such a situation is for a noble spirit highly favourable to the growth of that particular category of talent which constitutes the moralist. The sovereign, truly worthy of the name, surveys mankind from above and with completeness of vision. His point of view is almost that of the philosophical historian, that which results

from contemplating our poor human species as a whole; it is a feeling of benevolence mingled with resignation, pity, and hope. The sovereign cannot have the coldness of the artist. Freedom is the one condition of art, but the sovereign, subject as he is to the prejudices of the middle class, is the least free of men. He has no right to his own opinions; scarce can he claim a right to his own tastes. A crowned Goethe could not profess that royal disdain of Philistine ideas, that lofty indifference to practical results which are essential characteristics of the artist; but the soul of the good sovereign can be imagined as that of a sympathetic Goethe, of a Goethe converted to the pursuit of the good, who has come to recognise that there is something greater than art, and has been led to esteem men by the habitual nobility of his thoughts and the appreciation of his own worthiness.

Such, reigning over the greatest empire that has ever been, were those two admirable sovereigns, Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius. History presents but one other example of this heredity of wisdom on the throne, in the persons of the three great Mogul Emperors, Babar, Humaïoun, and Akbar, the last of whom offers such striking points of resemblance to Marcus Aurelius. The salutary principle of adoption had in the second century made the imperial court a true nursery of virtue. By laying it down, the noble and politic Nerva assured the happiness of the human race for nearly a hundred years, and gave to the world the finest century of progress known to history.

It is Marcus Aurelius himself who has drawn for us in the first book of his *Meditations* that admirable background through which, in a paradisal light, move the pure and noble figures of his father, his mother, his grandsire, his instructors. Thanks to him, we can understand how those old Roman families, which had seen the reign of the bad Emperors, still clung to their uprightness, their dignity, their sense of justice, their civic spirit, and, if I may say so, their republicanism. They lived in admiration of Cato, Brutus

Thrasea, and the great Stoics whose souls had never bowed down to tyranny. The reign of Domitian they held in abhorrence; the sages who had gone through it without flinching were honoured as heroes. The advent of the Antonines was simply the accession to power of the society whose righteous wrath has been transmitted to us by Tacitus, the society of good and wise men formed by the union of all those whom the despotism of the first Cæsars had revolted.

Neither the puerile ostentation of Oriental monarchies, founded on the degradation and stupidity of men, nor the pedantic pride of mediæval dynasties, based on an exaggerated sense of heredity and the naïve faith in blood of the Teutonic races, can give us any conception of the wholly republican sovereignty of Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, Antoninus, and Marcus Aurelius. Here we have no trace of hereditary kingship or divine right, nor anything analogous to military chieftainship. It was a kind of great civil magistracy, which had nothing resembling a court, and in no way deprived the Emperor of his character as an individual. Marcus Aurelius, in particular, was neither little nor much of a king in the proper sense of the word; his fortune was immense, but it was entirely hereditary. His aversion from "the Cæsars,"[1] whom he regarded as Sardanapali, ostentatious, debauched, and cruel, is at every instant apparent. His civic principles were strongly pronounced; to the Senate he restored all its ancient importance. When at Rome he never missed a sitting, and only quitted his place when the consul had pronounced the formula: *Nihil vos moramur patres conscripti.*

Sovereignty, thus held in common by a group of elect men who deputed or shared it according to the needs of the moment, lost part of that attraction which renders it so dangerous. The sovereign ascended the throne without having intrigued for it, but also without owing it to his birth or to a kind of abstract right; he reached it disillusioned, weary of men, and after long preparation. The office of Emperor was a civic burden which men took upon

[1] The Emperors before Nerva. Cf. *Meditations*, vi. 30.

themselves when their hour arrived, and none dreamed of hastening that hour. Marcus Aurelius was marked out for it at so early an age that the idea of reigning scarce had for him any beginning, and did not exercise a moment's seduction upon him. At the age of eight, when he was already *Præsul* of the Salian priests, Hadrian remarked the sad, gentle child, and loved him for his natural goodness, his docility, his incapacity for falsehood. At eighteen he was assured of the Empire. For twenty-two years he awaited it patiently. On the evening when Antoninus, realising that death was at hand, caused the statue of Fortune to be carried into the chamber of his successor, the latter felt neither surprise nor delight. Long since he had wearied of all joys without having tasted them; by the depth of his philosophy he had descried their utter vanity.

His youth had been tranquil and pleasant, divided between the delights of country life, exercises in Latin rhetoric of the somewhat "precious" style affected by his master, Fronto, and philosophical meditation. Greek pedagogy had reached perfection, and, as generally happens under those circumstances, perfection verged on decadence. Writers and philosophers divided opinion between them and waged fierce conflicts. The rhetoricians thought of nothing save the affected graces of discourse; the philosophers urged almost baldness and negligence in expression. Despite his friendship for Fronto and the latter's adjurations, Marcus Aurelius was soon an adept in philosophy. Junius Rusticus became his favourite teacher, and entirely won him over to the severe discipline which he advocated, in opposition to the ostentation of the rhetoricians. Rusticus always remained the confidant and intimate adviser of his august pupil, who confessed that to him he owed his taste for a simple style and an upright and serious bearing, not to speak of a still higher benefit: "To him I am indebted for my knowledge of the *Discourses* of Epictetus, which he lent me from his own library."[1] Claudius Severus, the Peripatetic philosopher, laboured in the same direction,

[1] *Med.*, i. 7.

and won over young Marcus, heart and soul, to philosophy. The latter was in the habit of calling him his brother, and appears to have been deeply attached to him.

Philosophy was then a kind of religious profession, and implied mortifications and rules of an almost monastic character. From the age of twelve Marcus donned the philosopher's cloak, and learned to sleep on bare boards and practise all the austerities of Stoic asceticism. His mother's entreaties were required to induce him to lay a few skins on his couch. More than once his health was affected by this excessive rigour. But it did not prevent him from presiding at festivals, and carrying out his duties as a youthful prince with a gracious air which in him was the result of the most lofty detachment.

His hours were as strict as those of a monk. Despite his delicate health, he found it possible, thanks to plain living and disciplined conduct, to lead a life of labour and fatigue. He was not gifted with what we should call keenness of wit, and had but little capacity for passion. Wit seldom goes unallied with a measure of maliciousness; it inures those who possess it to take things in ways that are those neither of perfect charity nor of genius. Marcus understood but one thing perfectly—duty. What he lacked was the kiss of a fairy at his birth, a highly philosophical matter in its way; in other words, the art of yielding to nature and gaiety, an art which teaches us that *abstine et sustine* is not everything, and that life must include "laughter and enjoyment" as well.

In all the arts he had the instruction of the most eminent teachers: Claudius Severus, who taught him the Peripatetic philosophy; Apollonius of Chalcis, whom Antoninus had brought from the East for the express purpose of confiding to him his adoptive son, and who appears to have been a perfect preceptor; Sextus of Chæronea, the nephew of Plutarch and a consummate Stoic; Diognetus, who inspired his love of asceticism; Claudius Maximus, with some fine saying ever on his lips; Alexander of Cotyæum, who taught him Greek; Herodes Atticus, who declaimed for him

the ancient harangues of Athens. In externals he was as one of his masters: plain and modest in dress, his beard untrimmed, his body attenuated to a shadow, his eyes strained with toil. No study remained unfamiliar to him, not even that of painting. Greek became a familiar tongue; when he meditated on philosophical subjects he thought in that language. But his solid understanding recognised the puerility of the literary exercises into which Hellenic education was degenerating; his Greek style, albeit correct, has a certain artificiality which savours of the school composition. For him morality was the final word of existence, and on it his energies found constant application.

How did those worthy but slightly priggish pedagogues succeed in forming such a man? It is a question that may well be asked with surprise. Judging from ordinary analogies, such a forcing-house education should have had the worst possible results. The simple explanation is that above those masters summoned from all the ends of the earth, Marcus had a unique master whom he reverenced above all others, Antoninus. The moral value of man is in ratio to his faculty of admiration. It was by having beheld at his side, and affectionately understood, the finest pattern of the perfect life, that Marcus Aurelius came to be what he was.

"Take heed that you be not be-Cæsared, steeped in that dye; it happens too often. Keep yourself simple, good, pure, serious, a foe to vain-glory, a friend to justice, god-fearing, considerate, humane, strenuous in the practice of duty. Strive to remain such as philosophy would have you. Revere the gods, save men. Life is short; there is but one fruit of earthly life: to be inwardly holy and do good service to society. Act at all times as a disciple of Antoninus; remember his constancy in accomplishing the dictates of reason, his equability under all circumstances, his holiness, the serenity of his look, his extreme gentleness of spirit, his contempt for vain-glory, his keen penetration; how he would never drop a subject till he had thoroughly looked into it and fully understood it; how he bore unjust reproaches without a word; how he did nothing hastily; how he turned a deaf ear to scandal; how he carefully studied character and action; neither slanderous, nor fastidious, nor suspicious, nor sophistical; frugal in house, bed,

dress, food, and service; industrious, long-suffering, abstemious to such a degree that he could busy himself with the same task till evening, without going out to relieve his physical needs except at the accustomed hour. Remember, too, his constant and even affection, his forbearance under contradiction, the joy with which he accepted an opinion better than his own, his piety that had no trace of superstition! Think of all this, that your last hour may find you with a conscience clear as his."[1]

The consequences of this austere philosophy might well have been harshness and rigour. Here it is that the rare kindliness of the nature of Marcus Aurelius shines forth in all its splendour. His severity is only towards himself. The fruit of this great tension of soul is an infinite charity. His whole life is spent in studying how he may render good for evil. After some sad experience of human perversity he only finds it in his heart at evening to write what follows: "If you can correct them, do so; but if you cannot, remember that charity was given you to use towards them. The gods themselves are charitable to those beings; they assist them, so great their bounty, to acquire health, riches, and glory. To you it is permitted to act as the gods."[2] Another day men must have been very wicked, for this is what he wrote on his tablets: "Such is the order of nature; people of this kind must of necessity act thus. To wish otherwise is to wish the fig-tree not to bear figs. Remember that in a very short time both you and he shall die, and soon after your very names shall no longer survive."[3] These reflections of universal pardon are constantly recurring. On rare occasions he mingles with this beautiful spirit of charity an imperceptible smile: "The best way of avenging yourself on wrong-doers is not to become like them;"[4] or a slight touch of pride: "It is a royal thing when you have done good, to hear evil spoken of you."[5] One day he has a self-reproach to make: "You have forgotten," he says, "what a holy bond of kinship unites every man with the human race, a kinship not of blood or birth, but participation in the same intelligence.

[1] *Med.*, vi. 30. [2] *Ibid.*, ix. 11. [3] *Ibid.*, iv. 6.
[4] *Ibid.*, vi. 6. [5] *Ibid.*, vii. 36.

You have forgotten that the reasonable soul of each man is a god, an emanation from the Supreme Being."[1]

In the business of life he must have been exquisite, though somewhat naïve, as very good men generally are. He was sincerely humble without hypocrisy or pretence or self-deception. One of the excellent Emperor's maxims was that the wicked are unhappy, and that we are only wicked in spite of ourselves and ignorantly; he pitied those who were unlike himself, but he did not believe that he had any right to impose himself upon them.

He clearly saw the baseness of men, but he did not avow it to himself. This kind of voluntary blindness is the infirmity of noble spirits. The world not being as they would have it, they deceive themselves that they may see it other than it is. Thence a slight conventionality in their judgments. In the case of Marcus Aurelius, this conventionality has at times a somewhat irritating effect upon us. To believe him, his masters, several of whom were of very moderate ability, must all, without exception, have been distinguished men. We would suppose that everybody around him must have been virtuous. This reaches such a point, that we feel constrained to ask whether the brother whom he eulogises so warmly in his thanksgiving to the gods, really was his brother by adoption, the debauchee, Lucius Verus. It is certain that the good Emperor was liable to strong illusions when it was a question of attributing his own virtues to some one else.

No rational being will deny that we have here a great soul. Have we a great intellect? Yes, since he saw to infinite depths in the abyss of duty and conscience. He lacked decision upon one point alone: he never dared absolutely to deny the supernatural. Assuredly we share his dread of atheism; we fully grasp his meaning when he tells us of his horror of a world without God and without Providence; but what we less understand is how he could seriously speak of the gods intervening in human affairs in specific exercises of will. The poverty of his education in

[1] *Med.*, xii. 26.

science can alone explain this failing. To shield himself from popular errors he had neither the frivolity of Hadrian nor the wit of Lucian. What must be admitted is that such errors were, in his case, of no consequence. The supernatural was not the foundation of his piety. His religious beliefs were limited to some medical superstitions and a patriotic leaning to ancient usages. The Eleusinian mysteries seem to have held small place in his moral life. His morality, like our own, rested on reason and nature. St. Louis was a very virtuous man, and, according to the ideas of his time, a very good sovereign, because he was a Christian; Marcus Aurelius was the most pious of men, not because he was a pagan, but because he was a perfectly developed man. He was the honour of human nature, not of a determinate religion. Whatever be the religious and philosophical revolutions of the future, his grandeur will suffer no scath, for it is founded on that which shall never perish, on nobleness of heart.

"Life with the gods! . . . And he lives with the gods who ever shows them a soul content with the lot dispensed to it, and obedient to the spirit that Jupiter has given off as a particle of himself, to serve as our director and guide. That spirit is the intellect and reason of each man." [1]

"Either the world is a chaos of alternate combination and dispersion, or it is unity, order, providence. If the former, why crave to linger on in such a slough? . . . Do what I will, dispersion will overtake me. But if the latter, I adore, I rest in peace, I have faith in him who governs all." [2]

CHAPTER II.

PROGRESS AND REFORMS—ROMAN LAW.

REGARDED as a sovereign, Marcus Aurelius realised the perfection of liberal statesmanship. The foundation-stone of his policy is respect for men. He is well aware that even

[1] *Med.*, v. 27. [2] *Ibid.*, vi. 11.

in the interest of righteousness, righteousness must not be imposed in too absolute a fashion, the free play of liberty being the ruling condition of human life. He desires the amelioration of men's souls, not merely a mechanical obedience to the law; he desires public happiness, but not at the price of the gravest of all evils, slavery. His ideal of government is entirely a republican one. The prince is the first servant of the law. He is no more than the lessee and usufructuary of the property of the State. There must be no useless luxury; he must practise strict economy, true and inexhaustible charity, give ready audience and use fair words, seek in all things, not applause, but the public welfare.

Historians, more or less steeped in that order of political ideas which believes itself superior since it can assuredly not be suspected of any philosophy, have sought to prove that a man so gifted as Marcus Aurelius could not have been other than a bad administrator and a mediocre sovereign. It may be, indeed, that he sinned more than once by excess of indulgence. However, apart from misfortunes which it was absolutely impossible to foresee or prevent, his reign presents itself to us as great and prosperous. It showed a marked advance in public morals. Many of the secret aims instinctively pursued by Christianity were legally attained. The general political system had grave defects; but the wisdom of the good Emperor acted on everything as a momentary palliative. Singular as it may seem, this virtuous prince, who never made the slightest concession to false popularity, was adored by the people. He was a democrat in the best sense of the word. The old Roman aristocracy inspired him with antipathy. He had consideration for nothing but merit, without regard for birth or even for education and manners. As he could not find among the patricians subordinates fitted to second his ideas of sound government, he summoned to its functions men with no other nobility than their uprightness.

Public assistance, founded by Nerva and Trajan, and

developed by Antoninus, reached, under Marcus Aurelius, its high-water mark. The principle that the state has quasi-paternal duties towards its members (a principle which ought to be gratefully remembered even when, in course of time, it is superseded),—this principle, I say, was first proclaimed in the world in the second century. The education of the children of freemen had, owing to the inadequate condition of public morals and by reason of the defective economic principles on which society rested, come to be one of the chief preoccupations of statesmen. It had been provided for since the time of Trajan by sums put out on mortgage, the interest of which was administered by procurators. Marcus Aurelius made these procurators officials of the first importance; he selected them with the most scrupulous care from consuls and prætors, and he enlarged their powers. His immense private fortune made this enlightened munificence easy for him. He himself created a large number of charitable funds for the benefit of the youth of both sexes. The Institute of Young Faustinians dated from the reign of Antoninus. After the death of the second Faustina, Marcus Aurelius founded the New Order of Faustinians. A fine bas-relief shows us these young girls thronging about the Empress, who pours corn into a fold of their robes.

Stoicism had, since the reign of Hadrian, infused into Roman law the profound spirit of its maxims, and transformed it into the natural law, the philosophical law, such as reason can conceive of as applicable to all men. The *Edictum perpetuum* of Salvius Julianus was the first complete expression of this new system of law, destined to be universal. It was the triumph of the Greek over the Latin spirit. Rigorous law gives way to equity; leniency wins the day over harshness; justice appears inseparable from beneficence. The great jurisconsults of Antoninus, Salvius Valens, Ulpius Marcellus, Javolenus, and Volusius Mæcianus carried on the same tradition. The last-named was the instructor of Marcus Aurelius in jurisprudence, and, to say truth, it is impossible to separate the work of

the two pious Emperors. From them date the majority of those humane and reasonable laws which abrogated the severity of the ancient code, and developed from a legislation of primitive narrowness and vindictiveness a legal system capable of adoption by all civilised peoples.

In ancient societies the weak had but little protection. Marcus Aurelius took it upon himself to be in some measure the guardian of all those who had none. The poor child and the sick child were assured of care. The tutelary prætorship was established to guarantee the support of the orphan. Civic registration, including that of births, commenced. A host of just regulations inspired the whole of the state administration with a spirit of leniency and humanity. The charges of the *curiales* were diminished. Thanks to improved administration of the food supply, Italian famines were rendered impossible. In the judicial system several reforms of an admirable tendency dated in like manner from Marcus Aurelius. The regulations of social manners, notably those concerning mixed baths, were drawn more strictly.

The slave, above all, was the object of the beneficence of Antoninus and Marcus Aurelius. Some of the worst enormities of slavery were reformed. Henceforth it is admitted that a master can be unjust to his slave. By the new legislation corporal punishment is regulated. The killing of a slave becomes a crime, treating him with excessive cruelty a misdemeanour which compels the master to sell the poor wretch he has tortured. The slave, in short, appeals to the courts, and becomes a human being and a citizen. He is the owner of his savings; he has his family; husband, wife, and children cannot be sold separately. The application of torture to persons of servile condition is limited. Except in certain cases, the master cannot sell his slaves to fight in the amphitheatre with wild beasts. The maid-servant sold under the condition *ne prostituatur* is saved from the brothel. There is what is called *favor libertatis;* in any doubtful case the interpretation most favourable to liberty is admitted. In

judgment humanity opposes the rigour of the law, often indeed, goes in the teeth of the letter of the statute. At bottom the jurists, from Antoninus onward, tinged as they are with Stoicism, regard slavery as a violation of natural rights, and use expedients to keep it within bounds. Enfranchisement is encouraged in every way. Marcus Aurelius goes further, and, within certain limits, recognises the rights of slaves to the master's property. If no one comes forward to claim a testator's estate, the slaves are authorised to divide the property amongst them; whether one only or several take part in the adjudication, the result is the same for all. The freed slave is protected by the most stringent laws against slavery, with its thousand devices for again depriving him of his liberty.

The son, the wife, and the minor were objects of a legislation at once intelligent and humane. The son remained under his father's government, but ceased to be his good and chattel. The more odious excesses, which the old Roman law deemed it natural to permit paternal authority, were abolished or put under restraint. The father had duties towards his children, the fulfilment of which gave him no claims; the son for his part owed his parents support in proportion to his means.

The laws of guardianship and trustees had up till now been very incomplete. Marcus Aurelius made them models of administrative foresight. In the old law the mother could scarce be said to form part of the family of her husband and her children. The Tertullian senatusconsult (in 158) and the Orphitian senatusconsult (178) established the rights of succession from mother to child, and from child to mother. Human feeling and natural law took the upper hand. Excellent laws dealing with banking, the sale of slaves, and informers and slanderers, put an end to a multitude of abuses. The treasury had always been hard and exacting. It was henceforth laid down as a principle that in doubtful cases the treasury should be held in the wrong. Imposts vexatious in collection were suppressed. The duration of law-suits was reduced. Criminal

law became less cruel, and the prisoner received valuable privileges; again, it was the personal practice of Marcus Aurelius to lessen in application the established penalties. Cases of insanity were provided for. The great Stoic principle that guilt consists in intention, not in deed, became the ruling spirit in jurisprudence.

Thus was definitely founded that marvellous system, Roman law, a kind of revelation in its way, honour for which ignorance ascribed to the compilers of Justinian, but which in reality was the work of the great Emperors of the second century, admirably interpreted and continued by the eminent jurists of the third century. Roman law was to have a less clamorous triumph than Christianity, but in a sense a more lasting one. Trodden out of sight at first by barbarism, it was to be resuscitated towards the close of the Middle Ages, to be the law of the world of the Renaissance, and to become, under slightly modified conditions, the law of modern peoples. Thus it was that the great Stoic school which, in the second century essayed the reformation of the world, after having to all appearance failed miserably, in reality won a complete victory. Gathered together by the classical jurists of the time of the Severi, mutilated and altered by Tribonianus, the texts survived, and later these texts came to be the code of the whole world. They were the work of the distinguished legislators who, grouped about Hadrian, Antoninus, and Marcus Aurelius, caused law to enter once and for all on its philosophic period. The task was continued under the Syrian Emperors; the terrible political decadence of the third century did not hinder the vast edifice from maintaining its gradual but noble growth.

It was not that Marcus Aurelius made any parade of an innovating spirit. On the contrary, he proceeded in such a manner as to give his reforms a conservative aspect. He invariably treated man as a moral being; he never affected, in the common fashion of would-be transcendental politicians, to take him for a machine or a means to an end. If unable to abrogate the atrocious penal code of his age,

he softened it in practice. A fund was established for the obsequies of poor citizens; funeral societies were authorised to receive legacies and to acquire the civil rights of possessing property and slaves, and of enfranchisement. Seneca had said: "All men, if you only go back to their beginnings, have the gods for their fathers." On the morrow Ulpian was to declare: "By natural law all men are born free and equal."

Marcus Aurelius would fain have suppressed the hideous spectacles which made the amphitheatres actual hells for any one with a moral sense. But he was unsuccessful. These abominable representations were part of the life of the people. When he armed the gladiators for the great Germanic war, there was almost an outbreak. "He wants to steal our amusements from us," cried the mob, "to compel us to be philosophers!" The habitual frequenters of the amphitheatres were his only foes. Constrained to give way to a body of opinion stronger than himself, Marcus Aurelius at least made his protest in every way possible. He tempered the evil he was unable to abolish: mattresses were spread beneath the rope-dancers, gladiatorial contests were not permitted unless the weapons were blunted. The Emperor attended the spectacle as seldom as possible, and merely out of complacency. During the representation he made a point of reading, giving audiences and signing warrants, without troubling himself about the jeers of the populace. One day a lion which a slave had trained to devour human beings did so much credit to its master, that there were shouts on every side for his enfranchisement. The Emperor, who had kept his head averted the whole time, angrily replied, "The man has done nothing worthy of liberty." He pronounced several edicts to prevent precipitate manumissions, proclaimed under the influence of popular applause, which seemed to him a premium bestowed on cruelty.

CHAPTER III.

THE REIGN OF THE PHILOSOPHERS.

NEVER until now had the problem of human happiness been pursued with such consistency and determination. Plato's ideal was realised: the world was governed by philosophers. All that in Seneca's great soul had been no more than fine sentiment was now coming to be the actual truth. Jeered at for two hundred years by brutal Romans, Greek philosophy triumphs by sheer force of patience. Already, under Antoninus, we have seen privileged and pensioned philosophers almost playing the part of public functionaries. The Emperor is now literally surrounded by them. His former instructors have become ministers and statesmen. He lavishes honours upon them, raises statues to them, places their images among his household gods, and on the anniversary of their death goes to sacrifice at their tombs, which he always keeps decked with flowers. The consulate, up till now reserved for the Roman aristocracy, is invaded by rhetoricians and philosophers. Herodes Atticus, Fronto, Junius Rusticus, Claudius Severus, and Proculus become consuls or proconsuls in their day. Marcus Aurelius had for Rusticus in particular the tenderest affection; he twice made him consul, and invariably embraced him before saluting the prefect of the Prætorium The important functions of prefect of Rome were for years immutably, so to speak, in his hands.

It was inevitable that this sudden favour accorded by the Emperor to a class which included in its ranks both good men and contemptible, should lead to many abuses. From every part of the earth the good Marcus Aurelius summoned philosophers of renown. Among the arrogant mendicants in their tattered gabardines whom his wide appeal set in motion there was more than one mediocrity, more than one charlatan. That which implies an external profession always provokes comparison between the real

nature and what the garb is intended to suggest. Those parvenus were charged with covetousness, avarice, gluttony, presumption, and malice. The failings their philosopher's cloaks could harbour were sometimes food for mirth. Their unkempt hair and beard and nails were subjects for ridicule. "His beard is worth ten thousand sesterces to him," some one says; "come, we shall have to pay goats a salary next!" Their vanity often furnished grounds for such pleasantries. Peregrinus sacrificing himself on the Olympic pyre in 166 showed to what point the necessity of tragic effect could lead a fool infatuated with the part he played and eager to be talked about.

Their pretentious self-sufficiency lent itself to stinging rejoinders. People repeated the jest, attributed to Demonax, on Apollonius of Chalcis starting for Rome with a whole suite of retainers, "Here comes Apollonius with his Argonauts." Those Greeks and Syrians hastening to besiege Rome seemed bent on the conquest of a new Golden Fleece. The pensions and exemptions which they enjoyed caused it to be said that they were a burden on the commonwealth, and Marcus Aurelius found it necessary to justify himself on this point. Above all, complaints were raised that they maltreated private persons. The insolence characteristic of the Cynics only too amply justified such charges. These miserable snarling hounds had neither shame nor respect, and were very numerous.

Marcus Aurelius did not dissimulate the failings of his friends; but his perfect wisdom led him to draw a distinction between the doctrine itself and the weaknesses of those who taught it. He knew that there were few or no philosophers who sincerely practised what they preached. From experience he had learned that most of them were covetous, cantankerous, vain, and insolent, that they went about seeking quarrels, and were inspired by nothing save pride, malice, and jealousy. But he had too much good sense to look for perfection in men. As St. Louis did not suffer a moment's uneasiness in his faith by reason of clerical disorders, Marcus Aurelius never felt disgusted

with philosophy, whatever the vices of the philosophers. "Esteem for true philosophers, indulgence free from blame for pretended philosophers, without, however, ever permitting himself to be their dupe:" such was what he had remarked in Antoninus, and it was the rule he himself observed. He frequented the schools of Apollonius and Sextus of Chæronea to listen to their teaching, and paid no heed to the mirth this created. Like Antoninus he had charity enough to bear with the rebuffs of vain and ill-bred persons whom these honours, exaggerated as they no doubt were, made impertinent. Alexandria saw him walking unattended in the streets, clad in the philosophers' cloak and living like one of them. At Athens he founded liberally endowed chairs in all the sciences, and succeeded in giving what may be called the university of that city a still brighter lustre than that conferred on it by Hadrian.

It was natural that the representatives of what firmness, harshness, and strength still remained in the old Roman spirit, should feel a certain impatience at the sight of this invasion of the high places of the commonwealth by people of no family, lacking military bearing, and belonging, as a rule, to those Oriental races which the true Roman held in disdain. Such, in particular, was the position taken up, to his own misfortune, by Avidius Cassius, a true warrior and statesman, enlightened even, and full of sympathy with Marcus Aurelius, but convinced that the art of government requires other than philosophical talent. By dint of playfully calling the Emperor "a philosophical old woman" he allowed himself to be drawn into the most fatal of temptations, that of revolt. The great reproach he brought against Marcus Aurelius was that of confiding the highest offices of State to men who offered no guarantees of wealth, antecedents, or even, in some cases, education, such as Bassæus and Pompeianus. The good Emperor, indeed, went so far in his simplicity as to wish that the latter should marry his daughter Lucilla, widow of Lucius Verus, and even to assert that she loved Pompeianus

because he was the most virtuous man in the Empire. This unhappy idea was one of the chief causes of the poisoning of his home life; for Faustina supported her daughter's resistance, and this was one of the motives which placed her in opposition to her husband.

If to his goodness of nature Marcus Aurelius had not joined a rare degree of practical common-sense, his infatuation for a class of persons who were not always worth what their outward pretensions were intended to suggest, would have dragged him into serious indiscretions. Religion has had its ridiculous votaries, so also has philosophy. Those folk, who swarmed in public places, armed with cudgels and displaying their long beards, beggar's wallets, and threadbare cloaks; those shoemakers and artisans who left their booths to lead the idle life of the mendicant Cynic, inspired in persons of intelligence the same antipathy which in later days the wandering Capuchin friar excited in the educated middle-class. But in general, despite the somewhat exaggerated respect for the philosophers' habits of life which he had *a priori*, Marcus Aurelius showed a high sagacity in his judgment of men. The whole group of sages who clustered about the supreme power presented a very venerable aspect; the Emperor looked upon them less as masters or friends than as brethren associated with him in the government. The philosophers had become, as in Seneca's vision, a power in the state, in some measure a constitutional institution, a privy council whose influence in public affairs was of capital importance.

This curious phenomenon, unique in history, was certainly in accord with the character of the Emperor, but it was also in accord with the nature of the Empire and the Roman conception of the state, an entirely rationalistic conception, lacking any theocratic element. Law was the expression of the reason; it was natural, therefore, that the day should come for men of reason to succeed to power. As judges in cases of conscience the philosophers played a quasi-legal rôle. For centuries Greek philosophy had formed

the education of Roman aristocratic society; the teachers were nearly all Greeks, and instruction was entirely carried on in Greek. Greece boasts no finer victory than that thus won by her pedagogues and professors. Philosophy tended more and more to assume the character of a religion; it had its preachers, its missionaries, its spiritual directors, its casuists. Personages of rank maintained in their service a household philosopher, who was at the same time their intimate friend and monitor, and the guardian of their soul. Thence a regular profession, which had its difficulties, and the first conditions of which were a venerable appearance, a fine beard, and a knack of wearing the cloak with dignity. Rubellius Plautus is said to have had two "doctors in wisdom," Cœranus and Musonius, one a Greek, the other an Etruscan, to inspire him with motives for awaiting death with courage. Before dying it was customary to converse with some sage, just as nowadays people summon a priest, so that the last sigh might have a moral and religious character. Canus Julius walked to his execution accompanied by "his philosopher"; Thrasea died with the support of Demetrius the Cynic.

It was held to be the primary duty of the philosopher to enlighten men, to sustain them and to guide them. In hours of great grief a philosopher was sent for to administer consolation; and, not infrequently, the philosopher, as with us the priest summoned *in extremis*, would complain of being only called in times of sorrow and at the last moment. "We buy remedies only when we are grievously sick; we neglect philosophy so long as we are not too unhappy. Behold that rich man, enjoying vigorous health, with a wife and children healthy also: he does not trouble his head about philosophy. But let him lose his fortune or his health, let his wife or son or brother be struck down by death—then, ah, then will he call the philosopher to his side! He will call him that he may receive solace and learn how so many misfortunes can be endured."[1]

It was above all else the conscience of sovereigns that the

[1] Dion Chrysostom, *Orat.* xxvii.

philosophers, like the Jesuits later, sought to gain over to the cause of righteousness. "The sovereign is good and wise for thousands of others;" by making him a better man the philosopher does more than if he won over to wisdom hundreds of isolated individuals. For Augustus, Areus was a director, a kind of confessor to whom the Emperor unsealed all his thoughts, even his most secret emotions. When Livia lost her son Drusus it was Areus who consoled her. At times Seneca did like service to Nero. The philosopher, whom, from the time of Epictetus, churlish persons still treated despitefully in Italy, became the *comes* of the prince, his most intimate friend, welcome at all hours. He might be called in a sense a chaplain with definite functions and a regular stipend. Dion Chrysostom wrote for Trajan his discourse on the duties of kingship. We have seen how Hadrian was surrounded by Sophists.

Like the princes, the public had its regular lessons in philosophy. In important cities there was an official eclectic organisation for teaching, with lessons and lectures. All the ancient scholastic denominations lived on; there were still Platonists, Pythagoreans, Cynics, Epicureans, and Peripatetics, all receiving equal emoluments, on the sole condition of their being able to prove that their teaching was in accord with that of Plato, Pythagoras, Diogenes, Epicurus, or Aristotle. Scoffers even asserted that certain professors taught several philosophies at the same time, and managed to secure payment for each category. A Sophist once presented himself at Athens with the boast that he knew all philosophies. "Let Aristotle call me to the Lyceum," he said, "and I shall follow him; let Plato invite me to the Academy and I enter there; let Zeno claim me and I am the guest of the Porch; at a word from Pythagoras I am silent." "Suppose that Pythagoras calls you," rejoined Demonax.

It is too often forgotten that in the second century there was a genuine preaching propaganda on behalf of paganism, parallel with that of Christianity, and in many respects in accord with it. It was no rare sight in the circus, or at the

theatre, or in a public assembly for a sophist to rise and speak like a divine messenger in the cause of the eternal verities. Dion Cassius had already provided a model for such homilies, inspired by a polytheism much diluted with philosophy and recalling the teachings of the fathers of the Church. The Cynic Theagenes, at Rome, drew crowds to the course of lectures which he delivered in the gymnasium of Trajan. Maximus of Tyre in his sermons expounds a theology, monotheistic in essence, in which figurative representations are preserved as symbols necessary to human weakness, with which only sages can dispense. All religions, according to this sometimes eloquent thinker, are feeble attempts to grasp a single ideal. The varieties that they present are insignificant and no bar to the true worshipper.

Thus was realised an actual historical miracle, what can be called the reign of the philosophers. We may now conveniently consider what such a régime favoured, and to what it was adverse. To a marvellous degree it served the cause of social and moral progress; humanity and refinement of manners infinitely profited from it; the idea of a state governed by wisdom, benevolence, and reason was founded once and for all. On the other hand, military strength and the art of literature underwent a certain decadence. Philosophers and literary men were far from being the same thing. The philosophers looked down in pity on the frivolity of men of letters and their love of applause, while the latter smiled at the uncouthness of the philosophers' literary style, their want of manners, their beards and their gabardines. Marcus Aurelius, after hesitating between the two paths, threw himself heart and soul into that of the philosophers. He neglected Latin, ceased to encourage care in writing that language and gave preference to Greek, the tongue of his favourite authors.

From that time the utter ruin of Latin literature was sealed. The West rapidly declined, while the East grew day by day more brilliant; the dawn of Constantine already

flushed the horizon. The plastic arts, so dear to Hadrian, must have seemed quasi-vanities to Marcus Aurelius. What remains of his triumphal arch is effeminate enough in all conscience; all the figures in it, even the barbarians, have an air of respectability and the very horses wear a benign and philanthropical expression. The Antonine Column is an interesting work, but lacks delicacy in its execution, and is far inferior to the Temple of Antoninus and Faustina built in the preceding reign. The equestrian statue in the Capitol charms us by its sincere presentation of the excellent Emperor; but the artist has no right to abandon all glorification to such a point. We cannot but feel that the absolute ruin of the arts of design, which in the space of fifty years was to be consummated, must have had deep underlying causes. Christianity and philosophy were factors of equal influence in the matter. The world wandered too far from form and beauty; it asked no more than what ameliorates the lot of the weak and softens the strong.

The ruling philosophy was moral in the highest degree, but it lacked science; it had no enthusiasm for research. In such a philosophy there was nothing incompatible with forms of belief so little dogmatic as were those of that day. Philosophers were often invested with priestly functions in their respective cities. Thus it was that Stoicism, which contributed so powerfully to spiritual advancement, was weak against superstition; it elevated the heart, not the intellect. The number of true men of science was imperceptible. Even Galen was not a man of positive cast of thought; he admitted the existence of therapeutic dreams and several other contemporary superstitions. Despite the laws the most mischievous magicians achieved success. The East overflowed with its army of chimeras. In the provinces every form of folly found adherents.

Bœotia had a demi-god, a certain Sostratus, a kind of colossal idiot who led the life of a savage and was universally regarded as Hercules born again. He was considered the good genius of the country, and people flocked to consult him from all parts.

A yet more incredible circumstance! the foolish religion of Alexander of Abonoteichos, which we have seen coming to birth in the shallows of Paphlagonian fatuity, won followers in the highest ranks of Roman society, even among the retinue of Marcus Aurelius. Severianus, legate of Cappadocia, allowed himself to be drawn into it. There was a general desire to see the impostor at Rome; a man of consular rank, Publius Mummius Sisenna Rutilianus, took it upon himself to be his apostle, and, at the age of sixty, had the honour of marrying a girl whom this vulgar rogue asserted he had begotten on the goddess Luna. At Rome Alexander set up mysteries which lasted for three days. On the first was celebrated the birth of Apollo and Æsculapius, on the second the epiphany of Glycon, on the third the nativity of Alexander; the whole performance being accompanied by pompous processions, torchlight dances, and scenes of revolting immorality. At the time of the plague in 166 Alexander's talismanic charms, inscribed on the doors of houses, had the repute of a safeguard in the eyes of the superstitious rabble. During the great Pannonian War (169-171) Alexander made his serpent speak yet again, and it was by his orders that two living lions were cast into the Danube with solemn sacrificial rites. Marcus Aurelius in person presided over the ceremony, clad as pontiff and surrounded by attendants in long robes. The two lions were beaten to death with clubs on the other bank of the river and the Romans cut in pieces. But these mischances did not ruin the impostor, who, under the protection of Rutilianus, was able to elude all the attempts which defenders of public sanity made to arrest him. He died in the height of his fame; about 178 statues of him were the objects of public worship, especially at Parium, where his tomb adorned the public square. Nicomedia stamped the effigy of Glycon on its coins; Pergamus also honoured him. Latin inscriptions discovered in Dacia and Upper Mœsia prove that Glycon had many devotees in distant parts, and that Alexander was associated with him as a god.

Even this uncouth theology had its developments. The serpent was given a female, the *dracena*, and Glycon was connected with the agathodæmon Chnoubis and the mystic Iao. Nicomedia kept the serpent with the human head on its coins until about 240. In 252 the religion of Glycon still flourished at Ionopolis. The name substituted by the impostor for that of Abonoteichos has lasted longer than many better justified changes. It survives to our days in the word, Turkish in look, of *Inéboli*.

Peregrinus, after his strange suicide at Olympia, also achieved statues and worship at Parium. He delivered oracles, and the sick were healed by his intercession.

Thus intellectual progress in no way corresponded to social progress. Attachment to the state religion only encouraged superstition, and hindered the establishment of good public education. But that was not the Emperor's fault. What he could do, he did well. The object he had in view, the amelioration of men, demanded centuries for fulfilment. Those centuries Christianity had before it; the Empire had not.

"The universal cause," said the wise Emperor, "is like a winter torrent that sweeps all before it. What puny politicians are those pygmies who profess to rule by philosophic maxims! Drivellers every one. What then, O Man? Act as Nature now demands of you. Go forward if you can, and do not trouble whether any one be interested in what you are doing, or not. Banish hope of ever seeing a Platonic republic; be content to improve things in some small measure, and look not upon the result as a success of trivial import. How, indeed, are you to change the inner natures of men? And without that change in their thoughts what would they be other than slaves under the yoke and hypocrites? Go to, with your Alexander and Philip and Demetrius of Phalerum. If they did no more than strut through a tragic part, no one has condemned me to follow suit. The task of philosophy is simple and modest; so lead me not away into self-conceit."[1]

[1] *Med.*, ix. 29.

CHAPTER IV.

PERSECUTIONS OF THE CHRISTIANS.

PHILOSOPHY, which had so completely subjugated the heart of Marcus Aurelius, was hostile to Christianity. His teacher, Fronto, appears to have been deeply prejudiced against the Christians; and we know that Marcus Aurelius cherished as a religion memories of his youth, and the impressions made on him by his masters. As a whole, the class of Greek pedagogues was opposed to the new faith. Proud of holding his rights from the father of the family, the teacher felt injured by the illiterate catechists who clandestinely encroached on his functions and warned his pupils against him. In the world of the Antonines these pedants enjoyed a favour and importance that were perhaps exaggerated. Denunciations of the Christians frequently came from conscientious preceptors who considered themselves under an obligation to protect the young people confided to their care, from an indiscreet propaganda opposed to the ideas of their family. Writers like Ælius Aristides show no less severity. For them Jews and Christians are impious wretches who deny the gods and are foes to society, disturbers of the peace of families, intriguers who seek to curry favour everywhere and draw all into their own hands, vexatious, presumptuous, and malevolent bawlers. Men like Galen, practical spirits rather than philosophers or rhetoricians, exhibited less prejudice and had unreserved praise for the chastity, austerity, and mildness of the inoffensive sectaries, whom calumny had succeeded in transforming into odious wrongdoers.

It was the Emperor's principle to uphold the old Roman maxims in their integrity. Nothing more than this was necessary to make the new reign anything but favourable to the Church. Roman tradition was a dogma for Marcus Aurelius; he was enthusiastic for virtue, "as a man and a

Roman."[1] The prejudices of the Stoic were thus doubled with those of the patriot, and it was decreed that the best of men should commit the gravest of indiscretions by excess of seriousness, sedulity, and conservatism of spirit. Ah, had he only possessed some of Hadrian's frivolity or Lucian's mirth!

Marcus Aurelius was certainly acquainted with many Christians. He had them near his person among his servants, and he conceived small esteem for them. The supernaturalism that formed the basis of Christianity was antipathetic to him, and for the Jews he had the feeling common to all Romans. There is little probability of any copy of the gospel texts having come under his notice; the name of Jesus may even have been unknown to him; what impressed him as a Stoic was the courage of the martyrs. But one feature shocked him, their air of triumph, their custom of spontaneously confronting death. Such bravado towards the law seemed to him pernicious; as head of the state he saw the danger. Stoicism, moreover, did not teach men to seek death, but to endure it. Had not Epictetus described the heroism of the "Galileans" as the effect of hardened fanaticism? Ælius Aristides expresses himself in much the same fashion. Deaths coveted thus, appeared to the august moralist an affectation as unreasonable as the theatrical suicide of Peregrinus. This note is to be found in his book of thoughts: "Let the soul be ever ready to separate from the flesh, whether for extinction, or dispersal, or survival. By readiness I mean such as proceeds from inward conviction, not from mere perversity, like that of the Christians. It must be a deliberate, serious act, capable of influence on others, without any taint of tragic display."[2] He was right; but the true liberal must refuse everything to fanaticism, even the pleasure of martyrdom.

Marcus Aurelius made no change in the rules in force against the Christians. The persecutions were the natural consequence of the fundamental principles of the Empire

[1] *Med.*, ii. 5. [2] *Ibid.*, xi. 3.

with respect to associations. Marcus Aurelius, far from exaggerating former legislation, diminished it to the full extent of his power, and one of the glories of his reign was the extension he gave to the rights of the *collegia*. His rescript decreeing exile as the penalty for superstitious agitations applied much more to the political prophets and impostors who exploited public credulity, than to the established religious bodies. However, he did not go to the very root; he did not completely repeal the laws against the *collegia illicita*, and certain extremely regrettable enforcements of them resulted in the provinces. The reproach that can be brought against him is simply that which might be addressed to sovereigns of our own time, who do not sweep away by a stroke of the pen all laws restricting combination, association, and the liberty of the press. From our distant point of view we see clearly that Marcus Aurelius, by being more completely liberal, would have shown greater wisdom. It may be that Christianity, left at liberty, might have developed in a less disastrous fashion the theocratic and absolute principle within it. But we cannot reproach a statesman with not having provoked a radical revolution, in view of events which were to come to pass several centuries after him. Trajan, Hadrian, and Marcus Aurelius could not be acquainted with principles of general history and political economy which have only been perceived in the nineteenth century, and which only our latest revolutions could reveal.

In any case the good Emperor's mildness was in practice beyond reproach. In this matter we have no right to be more severe than Tertullian, who was in childhood and youth an eye-witness of the fatal struggle. "Consult your annals," he says to the Roman magistrates, "and you will see that the princes who have used us cruelly are of those whom it is an honour to have as persecutors. On the other hand, of all princes who have respected the laws of God and man, name one who has persecuted the Christians. We can even cite one who declared himself our protector, the wise Marcus Aurelius. If he did not openly revoke the

edicts against our brethren, he destroyed their effect by the severe penalties which he established for the accusers." The torrent of universal admiration swept away the Christians themselves. "Great and good," such are the two words in which a Christian of the third century sums up the character of the gentle persecutor.

It must be remembered that the Roman Empire was ten or twelve times greater than France, and that the Emperor's responsibility in provincial judgments was very slight. Above all, we must bear in mind that Christianity did not merely demand freedom for religious sects: all sects which tolerated others were very much at their ease in the Empire. What gave first Judaism and then Christianity a place apart was their intolerance and exclusive spirit. Liberty of thought was absolute. From Nero to Constantine not a single thinker or man of science was troubled in his researches.

The law was malignant, but the populace was still more so. Evil reports, set in motion by the Jews and spread abroad by baneful missionaries, commercial travellers in calumny so to speak, disaffected minds of the greatest moderation and sincerity. The people held fast by their superstitions, and were irritated with those who attacked them with sarcasm. Even enlightened persons, like Celsus and Apuleius, believed that the political degeneration of the age resulted from the progress of scepticism in the national religion. The position of the Christians was that of a Protestant missionary, living in a very Catholic Spanish town and preaching against the saints, the Virgin, and processions. The saddest episodes in the persecution under Marcus Aurelius were caused by popular hatred. With each famine, each inundation, each epidemic, the cry "The Christians to the lions!" resounded as a sombre menace. Never had reign beheld so many calamities. It was believed that the gods were enraged; devotions were multiplied; appeal was made to acts of expiation. Amid all this the attitude of the Christians remained stubbornly disdainful or even provocative. Often they received their

sentence of condemnation with insults to the judge. Before a temple or idol they breathed hard as though to expel an unclean thing, or made the sign of the cross. It was no rare circumstance to see a Christian stop before a statue of Jupiter or Apollo, question it, and strike it with a stick, crying: "See, that god of yours does not avenge himself!" The temptation was strong then to seize the blasphemer, crucify him, and ask him: "And, pray, does your god avenge himself?" The Epicurean philosophers were no less hostile to vulgar superstitions, but for all that they were left unpersecuted. A philosopher being compelled to sacrifice, to swear by the Emperor, to bear a torch, was a sight never witnessed. The philosopher would have consented to perform these vain formalities, and that sufficed for him not to be asked.

All the pastors and all serious men dissuaded the faithful from running and offering themselves for martyrdom; but it was impossible to command a fanaticism which in condemnation saw the most splendid of triumphs, and in torture a voluptuous delight. In Asia this thirst for death was contagious, and produced phenomena analogous to those which, later, developed on a great scale among the Circumcellions of Africa. One day the pro-consul of Asia, Arrius Antoninus, having ordered rigorous measures to be taken against certain Christians, saw all the faithful of the city present themselves *en masse* at the bar of his tribunal, demanding the fate of their co-religionists who had been selected for martyrdom. Arrius Antoninus, in a fury, gave orders for a small number to be removed for execution and dismissed the others, exclaiming: "Begone, you miserable creatures! If you are so bent on death, you have precipices and ropes!"

When in the bosom of a great state a certain faction has interests antagonistic to those of the rest of the population, hatred is inevitable. And at bottom the Christians desired that everything should go as badly as possible. Far from making common cause with good citizens, and seeking to ward off dangers from the state, the Christians rejoiced at

them. The Montanists and the whole of Phrygia reached a pitch of madness in their virulent prophecies against the Empire. It was like a revival of the age of the great Apocalypse of 69. Prophecies of this nature were a crime provided for in the law; Roman society instinctively felt that it was growing enfeebled; it had only vague glimpses of the causes of this enfeeblement; not without some justification it laid the blame on Christianity. It imagined that a return to the ancient gods would restore its fortunes. These gods had made the greatness of Rome; they were supposed to be provoked by the blasphemies of the Christians. Was not the obvious method of appeasing them to slay the Christians? Undoubtedly the latter did not restrain themselves from jeering at the inanity of the sacrifices, and the measures taken to dispel plague and public troubles. Imagine an unbeliever in England bursting out laughing in public on a day of fasting and prayer commanded by the Queen!

Atrocious calumnies and sanguinary mockery were the revenge taken by the pagans. The most abominable of the calumnies was the charge of adoring the priest with infamous embraces. The penitent's attitude in the confessional may have given rise to this despicable rumour. Vile caricatures were circulated among the public and exhibited on walls. The absurd fable, according to which the Jews worshipped an ass, caused it to be believed that the Christians did likewise. Here we have the image of a crucified figure with an ass's head receiving the adoration of a ragged urchin; here a person with a long toga and long ears, his cloven hoofs in wooden shoes, holding a book with a sanctimonious air, this device being attached: DEVS CHRISTIANORVM ONOKOITIIC. An apostate Jew, who had become an amphitheatre attendant, designed a great painted caricature of the same subject at Carthage in the latter years of the second century. A mysterious cock, with a phallus for a beak and bearing the inscription CΩTHP KOCMOY, can also be connected with Christian beliefs.

The liking of the catechists for women and children gave

rise to much ribaldry. Opposed as it was to the aridity of paganism, the Church had the aspect of a conventicle of milksops. The tender affection cherished by all for all, maintained by the *aspasmos* and exalted by martyrdom, created a kind of atmosphere of enervating languor, highly attractive to gentle souls and dangerous to certain others. The activity of good officious women in church matters, the Christians' habit of calling each other brother and sister, their respect for the bishop, which held them for ever on their knees before him, had a repulsive element and provoked foolish interpretations. The grave teacher, who beheld his pupils seduced from him by these effeminate attractions, conceived a profound detestation of them, and believed he was serving the state by seeking his revenge. Children, indeed, were easily led away by the words of mystic tenderness furtively whispered in their ears, and at times this brought down on them severe chastisement from their parents.

Thus persecution reached a degree of rigour till now unparalleled. All distinction between the simple fact of being a Christian and the crimes connected with the name was forgotten. To say "I am a Christian," was to make a confession which might result in a death warrant. Terror became the habitual atmosphere of Christian life. Denunciations came from every side, especially from slaves, Jews, and pagan husbands. The police, knowing the places and days for meeting, were in the habit of making sudden raids. The examination of those inculpated gave the fanatics occasion for shining. The reports of such proceedings were collected by the faithful as triumphal documents, which were spread abroad and eagerly read; they formed a kind of literature. To appear before a judge became a craze for which almost coquettish preparations were made. The reading of these reports, in which the sympathetic rôle was invariably played by the accused, exalted men's imaginations, provoked imitators, and inspired hatred of civil society, and of a state of things in which the good could thus be treated. The horrible punishments of the Roman

law were carried out in all their severity. The Christian as a *humilior*, and even as an infamous person, was punished by crucifixion, wild beasts, fire, and scourging. For death was sometimes substituted penal servitude in the mines, and transportation to Sardinia. A cruel mitigation! In their examination the judges used a completely arbitrary procedure, and at times an actual perversion of ideas.

We have here a miserable spectacle. No one can be more afflicted by it than the true friend of philosophy. But what could be done? It is impossible to be two mutually contradictory things at the same time. Marcus Aurelius was a Roman; when he persecuted, he acted as a Roman. Sixty years later an Emperor, as good of heart as Marcus Aurelius but of less enlightened intellect, Alexander Severus, was to fulfil, without regard for Roman maxims, the programme of true liberalism; he was to grant complete freedom of conscience, and withdraw the laws that restricted liberty of association. These measures have our entire approval. But Alexander Severus acted as he did because he was a Syrian, and an alien to the imperial tradition. In his enterprise, moreover, he failed completely. All the great restorers of Roman polity who were to come after him, Decius, Aurelian, Diocletian, were to return to the principles established and followed by Trajan, Antoninus, and Marcus Aurelius. The absolute peace of conscience of these great men ought not, then, to surprise us: it was evidently with complete serenity of heart that Marcus, in particular, dedicated a temple at the Capitol to his favourite goddess, Benignitas.

CHAPTER V.

INCREASING GREATNESS OF THE CHURCH OF ROME—THE PSEUDO-CLEMENTINE WRITINGS.

EACH day Rome grew more and more to be the capital of Christendom, and superseded Jerusalem as the religious

centre of mankind. *Civitas sacrosancta!* That extraordinary city was at the zenith of its greatness; there was nothing to foreshadow the events which in the third century were to be its ruin, and reduce it to being the mere capital of the West. Within its walls Greek was still at least as much spoken as Latin, and the great secession of the East could not yet be divined. Greek was exclusively the language of the Church; its liturgy, preaching, and propaganda were all in Greek.

Anicetus ruled over the Church and exercised high authority. The whole Christian world looked up to him for counsel. It was fully admitted that the Church of Rome had been founded by Peter; that apostle was believed to have transferred to his Church the primacy which Jesus had conferred upon him. To the Church of Rome were applied the weighty words with which, it was believed, Jesus had bestowed on Cephas the place of corner-stone in the edifice he desired to rear. By an unparalleled stroke of policy, the Church of Rome had succeeded in remaining at the same time the Church of Paul. Peter and Paul reconciled—such was the masterpiece of diplomacy which founded Rome's ecclesiastical supremacy for the future. A new mythical duality took the place of that of Romulus and Remus. We have already noticed how the question of Easter, the Gnostic controversies, and those of Justin and Tatian came to a head at Rome. All dissensions destined to rend the Christian conscience were to follow the same course; up till the time of Constantine, schismatics were to come to the Church of Rome, demanding arbitration if not solution of their difficulties. Doctors of renown deemed it a duty to visit for their instruction the Church in which, since the disappearance of the first Church of Jerusalem, all recognised the prestige of antiquity.

Among the Orientals who flocked to Rome under Anicetus must be included a Jewish convert called Joseph, or Hegesippus, no doubt a native of Palestine. He had received a careful Rabbinical education, knew Hebrew and Syriac, and was deeply versed in the unwritten traditions of

the Jews; but he lacked critical faculty. Like the majority of Jewish converts, he made use of the Gospel of the Hebrews. Zeal for the purity of the faith led him to undertake long journeys and play the part of an apostle. He went from Church to Church, conferring with the bishops, learning the points of their faith, and drawing up the order of succession which connected them with the apostles. The dogmatic unanimity which he found amongst the bishops filled him with delight. All those little Churches on the shores of the eastern Mediterranean were developing side by side in perfect harmony. At Corinth especially Hegesippus was greatly comforted by his intercourse with Primus, the bishop, and the latter's flock, whom he found to be of the most orthodox tendencies. Thence he embarked for Rome, where he put himself in touch with Anicetus, and made careful inquiry into the state of tradition. Anicetus had as his deacon a certain Eleutherus, who was later to become Bishop of Rome in his turn. Hegesippus, although a Judaist, even an Ebionite, took much pleasure in those Pauline Churches, and this was the more to their credit, seeing that his mind was subtle and keen to detect heresies everywhere. "In each succession of bishops in each city," he says, "all goes on in accord with the Law, the Prophets, and the Lord." He settled down at Rome like Justin, and remained there for more than twenty years, much respected by all, despite the surprise his Eastern Christianity and intellectual eccentricity must have excited. Like Papias, he had the appearance of one of the old school in the midst of the rapid transformations which the Church was undergoing, a kind of survivor of the apostolic age.

One material cause greatly contributed to the pre-eminence accorded by all the Churches to that of Rome. The latter was extremely wealthy; its skilfully administered property served the other Churches as a fund for charitable and missionary purposes. Believers condemned to the mines received a subsidy from it. The common treasury of Christianity was in a measure at Rome. The Sunday offertory, a habitual practice in the Roman Church, was probably

already established. A marvellous administrative spirit animated the little community, in which Judæa, Greece, and Latium seemed to have mingled their most diverse gifts, with a wonderful future in view. While Jewish monotheism furnished the solid foundation of the new structure, while Greece continued her task of free speculation in the form of Gnosticism, Rome, with an amazing persistence, undertook the work of organisation and government. For this all authorities, all artifices, had their use. Policy does not recoil before fraud, and policy had already taken its place among the more secret councils of the Church of Rome. About this period there came into being a new vein of apocryphal literature, by which Roman piety sought once more to impose itself on the Christian world.

The name of Clement was the fictitious guarantee which the forgers selected to cover their pious designs. The great reputation which the old Roman pastor had left behind him, and his recognised right to give commendation to books worthy of circulation, marked him out for this position. On the base of the *Cerygmata* and *Periodi* of Peter, an unknown author of pagan birth, who had entered the Christian Church by the Esseno-Ebronite gateway, was constructed a romance of which Clement was supposed to be at once author and hero. This precious document, entitled *The Recognitions* because of the surprising nature of its *dénouement*, has survived to us in two versions, which differ considerably from each other, and neither of which in all probability is the original. Both appear derived from a lost work which made its first appearance about the time we have now reached.

The author starts with the hypothesis that Clement was the immediate successor of Peter in ruling over the Church of Rome, and received episcopal ordination from the hands of the prince of the apostles. Just as the *Cerygmata* were dedicated to James, so the new romance is preceded by an epistle, in which Clement informs James, "Bishop of bishops and chief of the holy Church of the Hebrews at Jerusalem," of the violent death of Peter, and goes on to

relate how that apostle, the first of them all, the true comrade, the true friend of Jesus, constituted by Jesus the one foundation of the Church, has nominated him, Clement, as his successor in the Roman episcopate, and bidden him write a brief account of their journeys and missions in common, which he is to address to James. The work does not speak of Peter's sojourn at Rome, nor of the circumstances of his death. These latter narratives no doubt formed the substance of a second work, which constituted a sequel to that which has survived.

The Ebionite spirit, with its hostility to Paul, which inspired the earlier *Cerygmata*, is here almost effaced. Paul is not mentioned throughout the work. It is surely not without reason that the only apostles the author affects to know are the twelve over whom Peter and James preside, and that to Peter alone he attributes the honour of having disseminated Christianity in the pagan world. In a number of passages the wrongs of the Judeo-Christians are hinted at, but all is expressed with great caution; a disciple of Paul's could almost read the work without having his feelings hurt. Little by little, in fact, this scurrilous story of apostolic strife, invented by a malignant school, but in parts calculated to please all orders of Christians, lost its sectarian tinge, became almost Catholic, and was adopted by the majority of the faithful. By then the insinuations against St. Paul had grown sufficiently obscure. Simon the Magician remained the villain of the story; the allusions which his name had served to veil were forgotten; readers no longer saw in him more than a double of Nero in the infernal rôle of Antichrist.

All the rules of ancient romance are observed in the work. Nothing is lacking: journeys, love episodes, shipwrecks, twins who resemble each other, people taken prisoners by pirates, the mutual recognition of persons separated by a long series of adventures. Clement, by reason of a confusion of ideas dating from a very early epoch, is regarded as a member of the imperial family. Mattidia, his mother, is a Roman lady of spotless chastity, married to the

noble Faustus. Pursued with a criminal passion by her brother-in-law, and desirous to save at once her own honour and the reputation of her family, she quits Rome with her husband's consent and sets out for Athens, where she proposes to bring up her sons, Faustinus and Faustinian. At the end of four years Faustus, having heard no news of them, embarks with his third son, Clement, to go in quest of his wife and two sons. After many adventures the father, mother, and three sons are reunited. They were not Christians at the outset, but all deserved to be, and all become so finally. As pagans they were upright in conduct; and chastity possesses this privilege, that God owes it to himself to save such as practise it by natural instinct. "Were it not an absolute rule that no one can be saved without baptism, chaste pagans would be saved." The infidels who allow themselves to be converted are those who have deserved it by their moral life. Clement, in fact, meets the apostles Peter and Barnabas, throws in his lot with them, tells us of their preaching and their struggle with Simon, and brings about the conversion of all the members of his family, a conversion for which they are so well prepared.

This romantic setting is no more than a pretext for an apologetic on behalf of the Christian religion, and a demonstration of its superiority over the philosophical and theurgical opinions of the age. St. Peter is no longer the Galilean apostle whom we know from the book of Acts and the letters of Paul; he is an adroit controversialist, a philosopher, a masterful man who enlists all the trickery of the sophist's art in the service of the truth. His ascetic life, his rigour in fasting, recall the Essenes. His wife accompanies him in his wanderings as a deaconess. The ideas men had formed of the social conditions amid which Jesus and his apostles had lived were already quite erroneous. The simplest data of apostolic chronology were misconstrued.

It must be allowed to the author's credit that if he has a naïve confidence in the credulity of the public, he at least

has a faith in discussion which does honour to his toleration. He is quite willing to admit that men may deceive themselves innocently. Of the characters in the romance, Simon the Magician alone is entirely given over for lost. His disciples, Apion and Anubion, represent, the former the effort to derive a religious element from mythology, the latter a misguided sincerity, one day to be rewarded by knowledge of the truth. Simon and Peter argue about metaphysics, Clement and Apion about ethics. A touching spirit of sympathy with, and pity for, the erring diffuses a charm over those pages which, one feels, must have been written by somebody who had gone through all the agonies of scepticism, and thus knew better than others what suffering the seeker after truth must endure, and to what high worth he may attain. Clement, like Justin of Neapolis, has made trial of all philosophies; he is obsessed with the great problems of the immortality of the soul, future rewards and punishments, Providence and man's relations with God. In no school has he found satisfaction; in his despair he is about to throw himself into the grossest superstitions, when the voice of Christ falls on his ear. In the doctrine given him as that of Christ he finds the response to all his doubts: he is a Christian.

The system of refuting paganism which was to form the basis of argument of all the fathers of the Church is already to be found complete in the pseudo-Clement. The primitive sense of mythology was lost for the whole world; the ancient physical myths, now become mere indecent tales, no longer offered spiritual nourishment. It was easy to point out that the gods of Olympus had given very bad examples, and that any one who imitated them would be a scoundrel. Apion vainly seeks to escape the difficulty by symbolical interpretations. Clement has no difficulty in demonstrating the impotence of polytheism to produce a serious system of ethics. Clement has imperious cravings of heart; upright, pious, and straightforward as he is, he desires a religion that can satisfy his keen sensibility. At one moment the two adversaries recall to one another memories of youth, which

they now use as weapons in the controversy. Apion had once been the guest of Clement's father. Seeing Clement one day sick and sad with the self-inflicted torments of his quest of the truth, Apion, who had medical pretensions, asked what was the matter with him. "The malady of youth! . . . I am sick at soul," was Clement's response. Apion, concluding his friend was in love, made extremely indecorous suggestions, and wrote an erotic composition for him, which Clement now brings into the debate with more malice than propriety.

The philosophy of the book is deism considered as a fruit of revelation, not of reason. The author speaks of God, his nature, his attributes, his providence, of evil considered as a probation and a source of merit for man, in the fashion of Cicero or Epictetus. Lucid and just in intellect, a foe to Montanist aberrations and the quasi-polytheism of the Gnostics, the author of the pseudo-Clementine romance is a strict monotheist, or, to use the contemporary term, a Monarchian. God is the Being whose essence is of himself alone. The son is in nature inferior to him. For long these ideas, much resembling those of the pseudo-Hermas, formed the basis of Roman theology. Far from being revolutionary, they represented conservative theories at Rome. At bottom they were the theology of the Nazarenes and Ebionites, or rather of Philo and the Essenes, developed in a spirit of Gnosticism. The world is the theatre of the warfare of good and evil. Good is always gaining a little over evil, and in the end will conquer it. The partial triumphs of good are brought about by means of the appearance of successive prophets. Adam, Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Moses; or rather a single prophet, an Adam immortal and sinless, the human type *par excellence*, the perfect image of God, Christ, ever living, ever changing form and name, constantly pervades the world and fulfils history, preaching eternally the same law in the name of the same Holy Spirit.

The true law of Moses had almost realised the ideal of absolute religion. But Moses wrote nothing, and changes

were introduced into his institutions by those who came after him. Sacrifices were a triumph of paganism over the Law in its purity. A host of errors have crept into the Old Testament. David with his harp and his sanguinary wars is a very inferior kind of prophet, and the other prophets are still less perfect Adam-Christs. Greek philosophy, for its part, is a tissue of chimeras, nothing more than a logomachy. The prophetic spirit, which is none other than the manifestation of the Holy Ghost, the primal man, Adam as God made him, then appears incarnate in a last Christ, in Jesus, who is Moses himself, to such a degree that there is neither strife nor rivalry between them. To believe in one is to believe in the other, to believe in God. The Christian, to be a Christian, does not cease to be a Jew (Clement always takes the latter name; he and his whole family "make themselves Jews"). The Jew who knows Moses and knows not Jesus will not be doomed, if he obeys faithfully what he knows and hates not that of which he is ignorant. The Christian of pagan origin who knows Jesus and knows not Moses will not be doomed, if he observes the law of Jesus and does not hate the law which has never reached him. Revelation, moreover, is only the ray of light by which the truths hidden in the hearts of all men become visible for each one of them: to know thus is not to learn, but to understand.

The relations of Jesus with God were those of all the other prophets. He was the instrument of the Holy Spirit, nothing more. The ideal Adam, who, more or less obscurely, is immanent in every man born into the world, is in the prophets, those pillars of the world, self-conscious and in full possession. "Our Lord," says Peter, "never said there was any other God than he who has created all things, and did not proclaim himself to be God. All he did, and that rightly, was to declare the man happy that proclaimed him son of the God who created all." "But does it not seem to you," observes Simon, "that he who proceeds from God *is* God?" "How can that be?" is Peter's response. "The essence of the Father is not to

have been begotten; the essence of the Son is to have been begotten. And what has been begotten cannot be compared with what has not been begotten or what is self-begotten. He who is not in all things identical with another being cannot bear the same appellations in common with him." The author never mentions the death of Jesus, and affords us no reason to believe that to that death he attached any theological significance.

Jesus, then, is a prophet, the last of the prophets; he whom Moses announced as to come after him. His religion is only a purified version of that of Moses, a selection from traditions of which some were good, others bad. This religion of his is perfect; it befits both Jews and Greeks, men of learning and barbarians; it satisfies heart and intellect alike. It is carried on through the ages by the twelve apostles, of whom Peter is the chief, and by those who hold their powers from them. Only the presumptuous man makes appeal to dreams and personal visions.

Strange amalgam as it is of Ebionism and philosophic liberalism, of narrow Catholicism and heresy, of exalted love of Jesus, and fear lest his position should be exaggerated, of profane learning and chimerical theosophy, of rationalism and faith, the book could not for long satisfy orthodoxy; but it was appropriate to an epoch of syncretism, in which the different points of the Christian faith were ill-defined. Prodigies of modern critical sagacity have been necessary, again to distinguish the satirical treatment of Paul under the mask of Simon the Magician. The book, in short, is a book of conciliation. It is the work of a moderate Ebionite with an eclectic spirit, opposed at once to the unjust verdicts of the Gnostics and Marcion on Judaism, and to the effeminate prophecies of the disciples of Montanus. Circumcision is not commanded, yet, nevertheless, the circumcised ranks higher than the uncircumcised. Jesus is the equal of Moses; Moses is the equal of Jesus. Perfection consists in seeing that those two are but one, that the new Law is the old, and the old the new. Those

who have the one can dispense with the other. Let each man hold to his own, and bear no hatred towards the others.

It was clearly the absolute negation of Paul's doctrine. For our theologian Jesus is a restorer rather than an innovator. And even in this task of restoration he is no more than the interpreter of a tradition of the sages, who, in the midst of general corruption, have never lost the true sense of the Mosaic Law, which in itself is no more than the religion of Adam, the primitive faith of humanity. According to the pseudo-Clement, Jesus is none other than Adam himself. According to St. Paul, Jesus is a second Adam, differing in all things from the first. The theory of the fall of Adam, which is the basis of Pauline theology, we find almost effaced here. In one respect especially the Ebionite author shows more intelligence than Paul. The latter never ceased to protest against the idea that man owed to any personal merit his Christian election and vocation. The more liberal Ebionite holds that the good pagan prepares for his conversion by his virtues. He is far from deeming all the acts of infidels to be crimes. The merits of Jesus have not in his eyes the transcendent position they occupy in the Pauline system. Jesus brings men in contact with God, but he does not put himself in the place of God.

The pseudo-Clementine romance is sharply distinguished from the really authentic writings of the first Christian inspiration by its prolixity, its rhetoric, its abstract philosophy, borrowed, for the most part, from the Greek schools of thought. This is no Semitic book, lacking light and shade, like the purely Judeo-Christian writings. Although a great admirer of Judaism, the author has the Græco-Italian spirit, a political spirit, intent, before all else, on social necessity and popular morality. His culture is entirely Hellenic in cast, and of Hellenism he rejects but one element, its religion. The author shows himself in all respects far superior to St. Justin. A considerable faction of the Church adopted his work and accorded it a place, with the most venerated books of the Apostolic age, on the confines of the New Testament. Its gross errors on the divinity of Jesus Christ

and on the sacred books were prejudicial to the rest of believers, but it continued to be read, and the orthodox replied to all criticisms by saying that Clement had written his work without a blemish, and that heretics had altered it later. Extracts were made from it, in which awkwardly sounding passages were suppressed, and to which divine inspiration was willingly conceded. We have seen, and shall see many other cases of romances of heretical composition forcing thus the gates of the orthodox Church and winning its acceptance, because they were edifying and capable of nourishing piety.

The fact is that this Ebionite literature, despite its somewhat childish simplicity, touches a high level of Christian unction. Its tone is that of an impassioned preacher; its character is essentially ecclesiastical and pastoral. The pseudo-Clement is at least as enthusiastic a partisan of the hierarchy as the pseudo-Ignatius. The community is summed up in its head; the priesthood is the indispensable mediator between God and the flock. The bishop's slightest hint must be taken; you must not wait for him to tell you that such and such a man is his enemy, before you flee that man. To be the friend of any one whom the bishop does not like, to speak to any one whom he shuns, is to exclude yourself from the Church, to enrol yourself in the ranks of its worst foes. The office of a bishop is so difficult! Every one, therefore, should labour to make it easier for him; the deacons are the eyes of the bishop, and on his behalf must watch over all and know all. A kind of espionage is recommended; what can be called the clerical spirit has never been expressed in stronger terms.

Abstinences and Essenian practices were held in high esteem. Purity of morals was the chief preoccupation of those good sectaries. Adultery, in their eyes, was worse than homicide. "The chaste woman is the fairest thing in this world, the most perfect token of God's just creation. The pious woman who finds her pleasure only with the holy, is the ornament and the perfume and the example of the church: she aids the pure to be pure, she delights God

himself. God loves her, desires her, keeps her for himself; she is his child, the bride of the son of God, robed as she is in holy light."

Mystic images such as this do not constitute the author a partisan of virginity. He is too much of a Jew for that. He wishes that the priests should give the young people in marriage to each other as early as possible, nay, that they should even make the old marry. The Christian wife loves her husband, covers him with caresses, flatters him, serves him, seeks to please him, obeys him in all that does not imply disobedience to God. To be loved by another than her husband is for her a poignant grief. Ah, how infatuated is the husband who seeks to seduce his wife from the fear of God! The great source of chastity is the Church. It is there that the wife learns her duties, and hears of that judgment of God which punishes the pleasure of a moment with an eternal chastisement. It is the husband's duty to force his wife to go to such sermons, if he cannot succeed by caresses.

"But what is better," adds the author, addressing the husband, "is that you should come yourself, leading her by the hand, so that you, too, may be chaste and know the happiness of honourable marriage. To become a father, to love your children and by them be loved: all that is yours if you desire it. He that desires a chaste wife lives chastely, pays her conjugal duties, eats with her, lives with her, comes with her to be sanctified by the preacher, does not grieve her or find fault with her unreasonably, seeks to please her, and procure her all the pleasures in his power, and makes up for those he cannot give her with caresses. Not that the chaste wife requires these caresses to do her duty. She looks on her husband as her master. If he be poor, she bears with his poverty; she hungers with him if he be hungry. If he go to a foreign land, she goes with him. She consoles him when he is sad; even though her fortune may be greater than her husband's, she takes the inferior attitude of one who has nought. The husband, for his part, if he have a poor wife, must look upon her wisdom as an ample dowry. The prudent woman is temperate in her eating and drinking. . . . She never remains alone with young men, she even avoids old men, and she shuns unseemly mirth. . . . She takes pleasure in grave discourses and flies from all that is not decorous."

The good Mattidia, mother of Clement, is an example of

these pious maxims put in practice. Although a pagan, she sacrifices all to chastity; chastity preserves her from the greatest perils and brings her to the knowledge of the true religion.

Christian preaching developed and began to form part of public worship. The sermon was the essential element in the sacred meeting. The Church came to be the mother of all edification and all consolation. Rules of ecclesiastical discipline were already being multiplied. To give them authority they were attributed to the apostles, and, as Clement was regarded as the highest authority in the matter of apostolic traditions since he had been on intimate terms with Peter and Barnabas, it was under the name of that revered pastor that a whole apocryphal literature of constitutions, reputed the work of the twelve apostles, was to be seen in course of development. The nucleus of this apocryphal compilation, the first basis of a collection of ecclesiastical canons, has been preserved almost without admixture among the Syrians. With the Greeks the collection, augmented in course of time, underwent marked changes and became almost unrecognisable. It is cited as forming part of the holy scriptures, although certain reservations have always rendered its canonicity doubtful. In course of time liberty of giving this collection of alleged apostolic utterances the form best suited to strike the faithful and impress them was accorded. The name of Clement was always inscribed at the head of these different versions, which indeed present features of the closest relationship with the romance of *Recognitions*. The whole pseudo-Clementine literature of the second century thus possesses the character of perfect unity.

What in the highest degree characterises it, is a spirit of practical organisation. In the supposititious epistle of Clement to James, which serves as preface to *The Recognitions*, Peter is represented as delivering before his death a long discourse on the episcopate, its duties, difficulties, and excellence, on priests, deacons, and catechists, which is like a new edition of the Epistles to Titus

and Timothy. The *Apostolic Constitutions* formed a kind of code, which underwent successive enlargements, of these pastoral precepts. What Rome founded was not dogma; few churches were more sterile in speculation, less pure in doctrine; Ebionism, Montanism, and Artemonism were each in power by turn. What Rome established was discipline and Catholicism.

It was probably at Rome that the words "Catholic Church" were written for the first time. Bishop, priest, layman—all these words acquired in that hierarchical Church a fixed meaning. The Church is a ship in which each officer has his particular function with respect to the safety of the passengers. Morality is severe and already savours of the cloister. Simple love of wealth is denounced. Women's attire is nothing less than an incitement to sin. Woman is responsible for the sins in thought which she brings about. Assuredly if she repulses immoral advances the evil is less, but is it nothing to be the cause of others' perdition? To live modestly, occupied with one's own duties, to go on one's way without joining in the gossip of the street, to bring up one's children well, to give them frequent correction, to prevent them from dining out in company with others of their own age, to marry them off early, to abstain from reading pagan books (the Bible contains all and is all-sufficing), to take baths as seldom as possible and using great precautions: such are the rules for the lay members of the flock. The bishop, priests, deacons, and widows have more complicated functions, which, in addition to saintliness, demand wisdom and capacity. They are true magistrates, far superior to profane magistrates. As the Christians referred all their disputes to the bishop's tribunal, the latter's dicasterion came to be an actual civil tribunal with its own laws and regulations. The bishop's household was already considerable, and had to be supported at the common cost of the faithful. The ideas of the ancient Law concerning tithes and offerings due to the priests were gradually revived. A strong theocracy tended to become established.

The Church, in fact, absorbed everything; civil society was disparaged and disdained. To the Emperor were due the taxes and official honours, that was all. The Christian on this footing could only live with Christians. He was recommended to attract pagans by the charm of amiability of manner, when there was any hope of affecting conversions. But, apart from this hope, intercourse with infidels was surrounded with so many precautions and entailed so much contempt, that it must have been very rare. A mixed society of pagans and Christians was to be impossible. The latter were forbidden to take part in the rejoicings of pagans, to eat and find amusement with them, or be present at any of their spectacles, games, and other profane gatherings. Even the public markets were forbidden ground, save for the purchase of actual necessities. On the other hand, the Christians were expected to eat together as much as possible, to live together, to form a select community of saints. In the third century this exclusive spirit was to have its consequences. Roman society was to expire from exhaustion, a hidden cause was to sap its life. When a considerable class in a state holds itself aloof and ceases to labour in the common interest, that state is near its end.

Mutual aid was the principal function of this association of the poor, and was administered by its bishops, deacons, and widows. The position of the moneyed man among petty middle class folk and worthy small tradesmen, in the habit of discussing each other's affairs and scrupulous about weights and measures, was difficult and embarrassing. Christian life was not adapted for him. If a brother died, leaving sons and daughters, another brother adopted the children and married the daughter to his own son if their ages accorded. That seemed very simple, but the rich found it no easy matter to fall in with so fraternal a system. They were then menaced with confiscation of the means which they did not know how to use well, and to them was applied the saying: "What the saints have not eaten the Assyrians eat." The money of the poor was held a sacred thing; those in easy circumstances paid as high a quota as

possible. These offerings were called "the oblations of the Lord."

Scrupulosity was carried to such a point that everybody's money was not accepted for the Church's treasury. It was customary to refuse the contributions of tavern-keepers, of those who practised infamous trades, and especially of those who had been excommunicated and sought by their generosity to be received into favour again. "Those people are ready to give," said some, "and if we refuse their alms, how are we to help our widows and feed our poor?" "Better that they should die of hunger," rejoined the fanatical Ebionite, "than be under an obligation to God's enemies for gifts which insult his friends. Righteous alms are such as the worker gives from the fruits of his labour. When the priest is forced to take the money of the wicked, let him buy with it wood and charcoal, that the widow and the orphan may not be condemned to live on unclean money. So shall the gifts of the wicked be food for fire, not for the faithful." It is evident how tightly the chain was bound about Christian life. In the minds of these good sectaries so vast an abyss divided good from evil, that the conception of a liberal society, in which each man acts as he pleases under the tutelage of civil laws, without either rendering account to any one or supervising any one, would have appeared to them the depth of iniquity.

CHAPTER VI.

TATIAN—THE TWO SYSTEMS OF APOLOGETICS.

After the death of Justin, Tatian remained for several years in Rome. There he carried on his master's teaching, always professing the highest admiration for him, but every day deviating further from his spirit. He counted distinguished pupils, among others the Asiatic Rhodo, a prolific writer who later became one of the bulwarks of

orthodoxy against Marcion and Apelles. It was probably in the early years of the reign of Marcus Aurelius that Tatian wrote that work, harsh and slipshod in style, but animated and sparkling at times, which has every right to pass for one of the most original monuments of Christian apologetics in the second century.

It is entitled *Against the Greeks.* Hatred of Greece was, indeed, Tatian's ruling emotion. Like a true Syrian, he envied and detested the arts and literature which had won the admiration of the human race. To him the pagan deities seemed the personification of immorality. The host of Greek statues he saw at Rome gave him no rest. Running over in his mind the persons in whose honour they had been set up, he found that nearly all, men and women, had been persons of evil life. He had a better right to be revolted by the horrors of the amphitheatre; but he made the mistake of confounding with Roman cruelties the national games and theatre of the Greeks. Euripides and Menander were in his eyes masters of debauchery, and (a petition too fully granted!) he prayed that their works might be swept from existence.

Justin had taken a much broader idea as the basis of his apology. He had dreamed of a reconciliation of Christian dogmas and Greek philosophy. In that, assuredly, there was a great delusion. It required little effort to perceive that Greek philosophy, essentially rational as it was, and the new faith with its supernatural source, were two enemies, one of which needs must fall. St. Justin's apologetic method was a narrow and perilous one for the faith. Tatian felt this, and it was on the ruins of Greek philosophy that he sought to rear the edifice of Christianity. Like his master, Tatian possessed an extensive Greek erudition; like him also, he lacked all critical faculty and mingled in the most arbitrary fashion the real with the apocryphal, what he knew with what he did not know. Tatian's spirit is gloomy, dull, filled with wrath against civilisation and against Greek philosophy, to which he stoutly prefers that of the East, or, as he calls it, the

barbarian philosophy. An erudition of base alloy, like that displayed by Josephus in his work against Apion, comes to his aid here. Moses, according to him, is far more ancient than Homer. The Greeks have invented nothing of themselves; they have learned all from other peoples, notably from those of the East. They have only excelled in the art of literature; in depth of ideas they are inferior to other nations. The grammarians are at the bottom of it all; it is they who by their falsehoods have adorned error and created that usurped reputation, which is the chief obstacle to the triumph of truth. In the Assyrian, Phœnician, and Egyptian writers we behold the only true authorities.

Let it be what it will, far from making men better, Greek philosophy has been unable to preserve its adherents from the gravest crimes. Diogenes was intemperate; Plato, gluttonous; Aristotle, servile. The philosophers had all the vices; they were blind men arguing with deaf. The laws of the Greeks are worth no more than their philosophy. They differ one from another, but a good law ought to be common to all men. Among the Christians, on the other hand, there are no dissensions. Rich and poor, men and women, have all the same opinions. By a bitter irony of fate Tatian was to die a heretic, and so to prove that Christianity is no more immure from schisms and factions than philosophy.

Justin and Tatian, although friends during their life-time, already represented in the most characteristic manner the two contrasting attitudes which Christian apologists were one day to take towards philosophy. Some, Hellenes at heart, were, whilst reproaching pagan society for the looseness of its morals, to admit its arts, general culture, and philosophy. The others, Syrians or Africans as the case might be, were only to see in Hellenism a mass of infamies and absurdities, and to place high above the wisdom of the Greeks the wisdom of the "barbarians"; insult and sarcasm were to be their habitual weapons.

At the outset the moderate school of Justin seemed to prevail. Writings quite analogous to those of the philosopher of Neapolis, in particular the *Logos parœneticos*, the

Logos addressed to the Greeks and the treatise *De Monarchia*, characterised by numerous pagan, Sibylline, and pseudo-Chaldæan citations, began to group themselves about his principal works. There was a spirit of simplicity still abroad. The unknown author of the *Logos parœneticos*, the tolerant Athenagoras, the ingenious Minucius Felix, Clement of Alexandria, and, up to a certain point, Theophilus of Antioch, seek rational grounds for all dogmas. Even the most mysterious dogmas, those which are most alien to Greek philosophy, such as the resurrection of the body, have in the view of these broad-minded theologians, Hellenic antecedents. Christianity has, according to them, its roots in the heart of man; it consummates what the light of nature has begun. Far from rising from the ruins of reason, Christianity is nothing less than the complete development of reason; it is the true philosophy. There is every reason to believe that the lost apology of Melito was conceived in this spirit. The more or less Gnostic school of Alexandria, by taking the same point of view, was, in the third century, to give it immense fame. Like Justin, it was to proclaim that Greek philosophy is the preparation for Christianity, the ladder that leads to Christ. Platonism, above all, was, owing to its idealistic tendency, marked out for special favour from those Philhellenic Christians. Clement of Alexandria has nothing but admiration for the Stoics. If we are to believe him, each philosophical school has laid hold on a portion of the truth. He even goes so far as to say that for the knowledge of God, the Jews had prophets, the Greeks philosophy and some inspired beings like the Sibyl and Hystaspes, until the coming of that third Testament which has created spiritual consciousness and reduced the two other revelations to the state of forms outworn.

But Christian feeling was to undergo a strong revulsion against concessions such as these, made by a school of apologetics which sacrificed severity of dogma to the desire of pleasing those whom it would fain have won over. The author of the *Epistle to Diognetus* is almost akin to Tatian

in the extreme asperity with which he passes judgment on Greek philosophy. The *Sarcasm* of Hermias is pitiless. The author of the *Philosophumena* regards ancient philosophy as the source of all heresies. This apologetic method, to say truth the only Christian one, was to be revived by Tertullian with unparalleled talent. The rugged African was to challenge the enervating weaknesses of the Hellenic apologists with the disdain of his *Credo quia absurdum*. In that he was no more than the interpreter of the idea of St. Paul. "They are doing away with Christ," the great apostle would have said, confronted by this bland complacency. "If, by the natural progress of their thought, the philosophers could save the world, why did Christ come? Why was he crucified? Socrates, you say, knew Christ in part. It is then likewise in part by the merits of Socrates that you are justified!"

The mania for demonological explanations is carried by Tatian to the height of absurdity. Of all the apologists he is the most destitute of the philosophic spirit. But his vigorous attack on paganism brought pardon for much. The discourse *Against the Greeks* was highly praised even by men who, like Clement of Alexandria, were far from cherishing any hatred of Greece. The sham erudition which the author infused into his work set a fashion. Ælius Aristides seems to allude to it when, taking exactly the opposite point of view to that of our author, he represents the Jews as a melancholy race, who have created nothing, are alien to literature and philosophy, can do nought but vilify the glories of Greece, and only arrogate the name of "philosophers" by a complete reversal of the meaning of the word.

Tatian's ponderous paradoxes against ancient civilisation were nevertheless to triumph. That civilisation had, as a matter of fact, committed one grave error, that of neglecting the education of the people. The latter, thus deprived of primary instruction, were a prey to all the surprises of ignorance, and swallowed all the cock-and-bull stories told them with assurance and conviction.

So far as Tatian is concerned good sense had its revenge at least. That Lamennais of the second century followed in many respects the course of the Lamennais of our days. The exaggeration of spirit and wildness, which grate upon us in his discourse, cast him out of the orthodox Church. Such extreme apologists almost always become embarrassing to the cause they have defended.

In the discourse against the Greeks Tatian is only moderately orthodox. Like Apelles, he believes that God, absolute in himself, produces the Word which creates matter and brings the world into being. Like Justin, he teaches that the soul is an aggregate of elements; that in essence it is dark and mortal; and that only by its union with the Holy Spirit does it become illumined and deathless. Then his fanatical temperament threw him into excesses of unnatural rigour. In the nature of his errors and in his style, at once spiritual and uncouth, Tatian was to be the prototype of Tertullian. He wrote with the fluency and rapture of a sincere but little enlightened spirit. More exalted than Justin and less under rules of discipline, he did not, like him, know how to reconcile his freedom with all men's needs. So long as his master lived, he frequented the Church, and the Church maintained him. After Justin's martyrdom he lived a solitary life, without intercourse with the faithful, as a kind of independent Christian, keeping himself to himself. The desire to have a school of thought of his own, led him astray, according to Irenæus. What actually undid him, we believe, was much rather the desire to be alone.

CHAPTER VII.

GNOSTICISM IN ITS DECADENCE.

CHRISTIANITY, at the epoch we have now reached, had, if one may so express it, come to the full bloom of its youth. It had an abundant and overflowing vitality; no contra-

diction arrested its progress; there were representatives of every tendency and advocates of every cause. The nucleus of the Catholic and orthodox Church was already so strong, that all kinds of fantastic theories could be evolved by its side without affecting it. To all appearance the Church of Jesus was being devoured by sects, but these sects remained isolated and unstable, and, for the most part, disappeared after having momentarily satisfied the needs of the little group which had created them. It was not that their activities were barren; secret, almost individualistic doctrines were, for the time, at the height of their popularity. Heresies nearly always triumphed by the very fact of their condemnation. Gnosticism, in particular, was hounded from the Church and yet found adherents everywhere; the orthodox Church, whilst assailing it with anathema, was at the same time impregnating itself with it. Among the Judeo-Christians, Ebionites, and Essenes its current swelled to overflowing.

When a religion begins to count a great number of partisans, it temporarily loses some of the advantages which contributed to its foundation; for man finds greater pleasure and more consolations in a small circle than in a large Church, where he remains unknown. As the commonwealth did not lend its support to the service of the orthodox Church, the religious situation was similar to that of England and America at the present day. Chapels, if one may so express it, were springing up in all directions. The schismatic leaders competed in fascination for the faithful, as do nowadays the Methodist preachers and innumerable dissenters of free countries. Believers formed a kind of quarry, in pursuit of which voracious sectaries tore one another in pieces like famished dogs rather than pastors. Women especially were a coveted prey. When they were widows with property of their own, they did not lack the attentions of young and shrewd spiritual advisers, who made lavish use of mildness and indulgence, in order to monopolise a spiritual charge at once profitable and pleasant.

In this hunt for souls the Gnostic doctors had great advantages. Affecting a higher intellectual culture and less severity of manners, they found an assured *clientèle* in the wealthy classes, desirous of keeping themselves apart and escaping the common discipline prescribed for the poor. Intercourse with pagans, and the perpetual contraventions of police regulations entailed on a member of the Church, contraventions which constantly exposed him to the risk of martyrdom, constituted serious difficulties for a Christian occupying a certain position in society. Far from urging martyrdom, the Gnostics furnished means for avoiding it. Basilides and Heracleon protested against the extravagant honours accorded to martyrs. The Valentinians went still further; in times of severe persecution they advised abjuration of faith, alleging that God does not exact sacrifice of life from his worshippers, and that it is desirable to confess him less before men than before the æons.

They exercised no less seduction on wealthy women whose independence inspired them with longing for a distinctive personal position. The orthodox Church followed the stringent rule laid down by St. Paul, which forbade woman all participation in the services of the Church. In these little sects, on the contrary, woman baptised, officiated, conducted the liturgy, and prophesied. As antagonistic as possible in manners and spirit, the Gnostics and Montanists had this point in common, that with each of their doctors is to be found a prophetess: Helena with Simon, Philumena with Apelles, Priscilla and Maximilla with Montanus, and a whole galaxy of women about Marcos and Marcion. Talk and scandal seized on a state of things which lent itself to misunderstanding. Many of these dependants can only have been unreal allegories or inventions of the orthodox; but undoubtedly the modest attitude which the Catholic Church always imposed on women, and which brought about their ennoblement, was little observed in those little sects, subject as they were to a less rigorous discipline and, despite their apparent sanctity, little accustomed to practise true piety, which is abnegation.

The three great systems of Christian philosophy which had appeared under Hadrian—that of Valentinus, that of Basilides, and that of Saturninus—were in process of development, but showed few signs of improvement. The heads of these schools were still alive or had found successors. Valentinus, although thrice expelled from the Church, had a large following. He left Rome to return to the East; but his sect continued to flourish in the capital. He died about the year 160 in the island of Cyprus, leaving disciples all over the world. A distinction was drawn between the Eastern doctrine and that of Italy. The heads of the latter were Ptolemy and Heracleon; Secundus and Theodotus in the first instance, and then Axionicus and Bardesanes directed the so-called Eastern branch. The Valentinian school was by far the most serious and Christian of all those included under the general name of Gnostics. Heracleon and Ptolemy were learned exegetists of the Pauline Epistles and the Gospel attributed to John. Heracleon, in particular, was a true Christian doctor, from whom Clement of Alexandria and Origen profited greatly. Clement has preserved for us a fine and judicious passage of his on martyrdom. The writings of Theodotus also were constantly in Clement's hands, and extracts from them appear to have survived in the great mass of notes which the industrious Stromatistus made for his own use.

In many respects the Valentinians might pass for being enlightened and moderate Christians, but at the root of their moderation was a spirit of pride. The Church in their eyes was the depositary of but a minimum of truth, just sufficient for the ordinary man. They alone knew the essence of things. Under the pretext that they formed part of the spiritual world and could not fail to be saved, they allowed themselves unheard-of liberties, ate of everything without distinction, frequented pagan festivals and even the most cruel spectacles, shirked persecution and spoke against martyrdom. They were men of the world, free in manners and conversation, and accustomed to treat as prudery and bigotry the extreme reserve of the Catholics, who dreaded

even a light word or indiscreet thought. The spiritual direction of women, under such conditions, offered many dangers. Some of these Valentinian pastors were open seducers, others affected modesty. "But all the same," observes Irenæus, "the sister was soon with child by the brother." To themselves they arrogated a higher intelligence, and to simple believers left faith—"a very different affair." Their exegesis was ingenious but uncertain. When pressed in argument with scriptural texts, they declared that the scriptures had been corrupted. When apostolic tradition was against them, they no longer showed hesitation in throwing it overboard. They had, it appears, a gospel which they called the *Gospel of Truth.* In reality, they ignored the gospel of Christ. For salvation by faith or works they substituted salvation by gnosis, that is to say, by knowledge of an alleged truth. Had such a tendency prevailed, Christianity would have ceased to be a moral factor, to become a cosmogony and metaphysical system, lacking all influence on the general progress of mankind.

Abstruse formulas with secret significations cannot, moreover, be used to dazzle people with impunity. A single Valentinian book has survived to us, *Faithful Wisdom;* and it shows what a pitch of extravagance, speculations, not unworthy in the thought of their authors, could reach when they fell to puerile intellects. Jesus, after his resurrection, is described as having spent eleven years on earth teaching his disciples the highest truths. He tells them the story of *Pistis Sophia:* how, tempted by her imprudent desire to seize the light of which she had caught a distant glimpse, she fell into a material chaos; how for long she was persecuted by the other æons, who refused her her rightful rank; and how, finally, she went through a series of trials and acts of penitence until a heavenly messenger, Jesus, descended for her from the realm of light. Sophia found salvation because she believed in the Saviour before seeing him. All this is expressed in a prolix style and accompanied by a tiresome process of amplifying and exaggerating the Apocryphal Gospels. Mary, Peter, the Magdalene, Martha,

John *Parthenos* and the different Gospel characters play an almost ridiculous part. But the persons who found the somewhat restricted canon of the Jewish and Judeo-Christian scriptures barren of interest, took pleasure in such dreams, and to readings of this nature many owed their opportunity of knowing Christ. The mysterious forms and rites of the sect, resting before all on oral teaching and its successive degrees of initiation, fascinated the imagination, and caused great faith in the revelations obtained by so many trials. After Marcion, Valentinus was the heretic whose centres of teaching were by far the most frequented. Bardesanes at Edessa succeeded, through his inspiration, in creating a great and liberal school of Christian teaching of a kind that had never before been seen. Of this singular phenomenon we shall speak later.

Saturninus could always count numerous adherents. Basilides had as successor his son Isidorus. In this world of sects there were, moreover, fusions and divisions going on, which often had as their sole motive the vanity of the leaders. Far from growing purified and adapting itself to the requirements of everyday life, the Gnostic systems grew daily more fantastic, more involved, more chimerical. Every one wished to be the founder of a school, to have a church of his own with its attendant profits; and, with that end in view, a swarm of doctors, the least Christian of men, strove to surpass each other, and added new monstrosities to the monstrosities of their predecessors.

The school of Carpocrates presented an incredible medley of aberration and subtle criticism. Its adherents spoke, as of a miracle of learning and eloquence, of Epiphanes, the son of Carpocrates, a kind of infant prodigy, who died at the age of seventeen, after amazing those who knew him by his knowledge of Greek literature, and above all by his familiarity with the philosophy of Plato. It appears that a temple and altars were set up in his honour at Same, in the island of Cephalonia; an academy was established in his name, and his birthday was celebrated, like the apotheosis of a god, with sacrifices, banquets, and hymns of triumph.

His book, *On Justice*, was highly praised; what has survived to us of it is couched in a sophistical and condensed dialectic which recalls Proudhon and the Socialist writers of our own time. God, said Epiphanes, is just and good; for nature is impartial. The light is equal to all; the sky is the same for all; the sun makes no distinction between rich or poor, male or female, free men or slaves. None can take another's share of the sun to double his own, and it is the sun which makes food grow for all. Nature, in other words, offers to all men equal cause for happiness. It is human laws which, violating the divine laws, have brought into the world evil, the distinction of mine and thine, inequality and enmity. Applying these principles to marriage, Epiphanes denies its justice and necessity. The desires we have by nature are our rights, on which no human institution may set limits.

Epiphanes, in truth, is less a Christian than a Utopian. The idea of absolute justice leads him astray. Confronted by the world below, he has dreams of a perfect world, a true world of God, founded on the doctrine of the sages, Pythagoras, Plato, and Jesus, in which shall reign equality and consequently community of all things. His mistake was that of believing that such a world could have a place in reality. Misled by the *Republic* of Plato, which he took quite seriously, he plunged into the sorriest sophistries; and although we must no doubt discount the vulgar calumnies related of those banquets at which, the lights having been extinguished, the guests gave themselves over to an abominable promiscuity, it must be admitted that there was a tendency to develop strange acts of folly of this nature. A certain Marcellina, who came to Rome in the time of Anicetus, adored images of Jesus Christ, Pythagoras, Plato, and Aristotle, and offered them worship. Prodicus and his disciples, who also passed under the name of Adamites, professed to revive the joys of the earthly Paradise by methods far removed from primitive innocence. Their Church was called Paradise; they had it warmed, and attended it nude. Notwithstanding, they claimed to be

chaste, and made a pretence of living in absolute virginity. In the name of a kind of natural and divine law, all these sects, Prodicians, Entychites, and Adamites, denied the validity of the laws of the land, which they described as arbitrary rules and pretended laws.

The numerous conversions of pagans which were taking place favoured scandals of this nature. Converts entered the Church, attracted by a certain perfume of moral purity, but they did not on that account become saints. A painter of some talent, called Hermogenes, embraced Christianity thus, but without renouncing either the freedom of his brush, or his taste for women, or his memories of Greek philosophy, which he combined as best he could with Christian dogma. He admitted the existence of a primary substance, serving as substratum for all the works of God and the cause of the defects inherent in creation. Other oddities of belief were fathered on him, and rigorists like Tertullian treated him with extreme brutality.

The heresies of which we have just spoken were of entirely Hellenic character. Their source was Greek philosophy, more especially that of Plato. Marcos, on the other hand, whose disciples called themselves Marcosians, came from the school of Basilides. The spells concerning the tetrad, which he asserted had been revealed to him by a woman from heaven, who was none other than Sige herself, would have been inoffensive if he had not added to them magic, thaumaturgical conjuring tricks, philtres, and illegal charms for the seduction of women. He devised special sacraments, rites, and unctions, and, above all, a kind of mass after his own fashion, which may well have been imposing enough in its way, though it included feats of sleight-of-hand analogous to the miracles of St. Januarius. He pretended, by virtue of a certain spell, actually to turn water into blood in the chalice. By means of a powder he gave water a reddish colour. He caused the consecration to be performed by a woman over a small chalice; then he poured the water from it into a larger one which he held in his hand, speaking these words: "Let the infinite and ineffable

grace which is before all things fill thine inner being, and augment in thee its gnosis, sowing the grain of mustard seed in good ground." The liquid then expanded, no doubt as the result of some chemical reaction, and overflowed the great chalice. The poor woman was stupefied and all the beholders struck with admiration.

The Church of Marcos was not only a nest of impostures. It had also the repute of being a school of debauchery and secret infamies. This characteristic was exaggerated perhaps, owing to the fact that in the Marcosian worship women performed priestly functions and administered the eucharist. Many Christian ladies, it was said, allowed themselves to be seduced. They put themselves under the sophist's guidance, and only left it bathed in tears. Marcos flattered their vanity, conversed with them in language of equivocal mysticism, triumphed over their timidity, taught them to prophesy, and took advantage of them. Then, worn out and ruined, they returned to the Church, confessed their sin, and vowed penitence, weeping and groaning over their evil fate. The Marcosian epidemic principally ravaged the Churches of Asia. The current, so to speak, that flowed between Asia and Lyons brought that dangerous man to the banks of the Rhone. There we shall find him making many dupes; terrible scandals were to spring up on his arrival in that Church of saints.

Colorbasus, according to several narratives, was closely implicated with Marcos; but it is doubtful if we can treat the name as that of an actual person. It is explained by *Col arba* or *Qôl arba*, a Semitic expression of the Marcosian tetrad. The secret of these strange enigmas will probably always elude us.

CHAPTER VIII.

EASTERN SYNCRETISM—THE OPHITES—THE FUTURE APPEARANCE OF MANICHÆISM.

We should exceed our limits in following up the history of those chimeras of the third century. In the Greek and Latin world Gnosticism had been a fashion; as such it disappeared rapidly enough. Things followed a different course in the East. Gnosticism took a second lease of life, much more brilliant and more comprehensive than its first, in the eclecticism of Bardesanes—much more lasting than its first in Manichæism. Even in the second century the Antitactes of Alexandria had been veritable dualists, attributing the origins of good and evil to two different gods. Manichæism was to go further; three hundred and fifty years before Mohammed the genius of Persia already realised what the genius of Arabia was to realise with far more power, a religion aspiring to be universal and to take the place of the work of Jesus, which was represented as being imperfect, or as having been corrupted by his disciples.

The stupendous chaos of ideas which reigned in the East brought about a general syncretism of the more extraordinary. Small mystical sects in Egypt, Syria, Phrygia, and Babylonia, profiting by apparent points of resemblance, claimed union with the body of the Church, and were occasionally granted it. All the religions of antiquity seemed rising from the dead to waylay Jesus and adopt him as one of their adherents. The cosmogonies of Assyria, Phœnicia, and Egypt, the doctrines of the mysteries of Adonis, Osiris, Isis, and the Great Goddess of Phrygia invaded the Church, and carried on what can be called the Eastern branch, scarcely Christian in character, of Gnosticism. Before long Jahveh, the god of the Jews, was identified with the Assyro-Phœnician demiurge, Ialdebaôth, "the son of chaos." At other times the old Assyrian IAΩ, who has strange signs of relationship to Jahveh, was given a vogue and connected

with his quasi-homonym in such a manner that it is difficult to distinguish between the shadow and the reality.

The Ophiolatrous sects, so numerous in antiquity, were especially attracted to those crazy associations. Under the name of Nahassians, or Ophites, were banded together certain pagan worshippers of the serpent, who one day saw fit to call themselves Christians. From Assyria apparently came the germ of this grotesque Church; but Egypt, Phrygia, Phœnicia, and the Orphic mysteries also had their share in it. Like Alexander of Abonoteichos, exponent of his serpent-god Glycon, the Ophites had tame serpents (agathodæmons), which they kept in cages; at the moment of celebration of the mysteries they opened the door for the little god and called it. The serpent came, mounted the table on which were the sacraments, and coiled itself round them. The eucharist then appeared to the sectaries a perfect sacrifice. They broke the bread, distributed it amongst themselves, worshipped the agathodæmon, and by it offered, so they said, a hymn of praise to the heavenly Father. They sometimes identified their little reptile with Christ, or with the serpent which taught men the knowledge of good and evil.

The theories of the Ophites concerning Adamas, considered as an æon, and concerning the egg of the world, recall the cosmogonies of Philo of Byblos, and the symbols common to all the mysteries of the East. Their rites had much more analogy to the mysteries of the Great Goddess of Phrygia than to the pure assemblages of believers in Jesus. The most singular point is that they had their Christian literature, their gospels and apocryphal traditions connecting them with James. They chiefly used the Gospel of the Egyptians and that of Thomas. Their Christology was that of all the Gnostics. For them Jesus Christ was composed of two persons, Jesus and Christ—Jesus, son of Mary, the most just, the wisest, and the purest of men, who was crucified; Christ, a heavenly æon, who came and united himself with Jesus, quitted him before the Passion, and sent down from heaven a charm which caused Jesus to rise

from the dead with a spiritual body, in which he lived for eighteen months, giving higher teaching to a small number of elect disciples.

On those forlorn confines of Christianity the most divergent dogmas were intermingled. The tolerance of the Gnostics and their proselytism opened so wide the gates of the Church that all passed in. Religions that had nothing in common with Christianity, Babylonian cults, perhaps offshoots of Buddhism, were classed and enumerated by the heresiologists among the Christian sects. Such were the Baptists or Sabians, afterwards known under the name of Mandæans, the Peratæ, partisans of a cosmogony half Phœnician, half Assyrian, a piece of utter balderdash worthier of Byblos, Mabog, or Babylon than of the Christian Church; and, above all, the Sethites, a sect, Assyrian really, which also flourished in Egypt. It had a punning connection with the patriarch Seth, the supposititious father of a vast literature, and at times identified with Jesus Christ himself. The Sethites cultivated an arbitrary combination of Orphism, Neo-Phœnicianism, and ancient Semitic cosmogonies, and claimed to find it all in the Bible. They declared that the genealogy of Genesis contained sublime visions, which vulgar minds had reduced to the level of simple family records.

A certain Justin, about the same period, in a book called *Baruch*, transferred Judaism into a mythology, and scarce left any part for Jesus to play. Exuberant imaginations nourished on interminable cosmogonies, and suddenly set down to the severe diet of Hebrew and evangelical literature, could not adapt themselves to such simplicity. They inflated, if I may say so, the historical, legendary, and mythological narratives of the Bible, to connect them with the genius of the Greek and Oriental fables to which they were accustomed.

It was clearly the whole mythological world of Greece and Asia surreptitiously stealing into the religion of Jesus. Intelligent men in the Græco-Oriental world strongly felt that a single spirit animated all the religious creations of

mankind. Buddhism was beginning to be known; and, although the time was yet far off when the life of Buddha was to become the life of a Christian saint, he was spoken of respectfully. Babylonian Manichæism, which in the third century represented a continuation of Gnosticism, was strongly tinged with Buddhism. But the attempt to introduce all this pantheistic mythology into the scheme of a Semitic religion was foredoomed to failure. Philo the Jew, the Epistles to the Colossians and the Ephesians, and the pseudo-Johannine writings had in this connection been as remote as possible. The Gnostics falsified all terminology by calling themselves Christians. The essence of the work of Jesus was the amelioration of the heart. But those empty speculations embraced everything in the world except good sense and good morality. Even if the stories told of their promiscuities and licentious habits be regarded as calumnies, it cannot be doubted that the sects of which we speak held in common a mischievous tendency to moral indifference, a dangerous quietism, and a lack of generosity which made them proclaim the uselessness of martyrdom. Their stubborn docetism, their system of attributing the two Testaments to two different Gods, their opposition to marriage, their denial of the Resurrection and Last Judgment alike closed to them the gates of a Church, in which the rule of the chiefs was ever one of moderation and antagonism to excess. Ecclesiastical discipline represented by the episcopate was the rock on which all those wild attempts were shattered.

In speaking at greater length of such sects, there would be a risk of seeming to take them more seriously than they took themselves. What were they but Phibionitæ, Barbelitæ or Borboriani, Stratiotici or Milites, Levitici, and Coddiani? The fathers of the Church are unanimous in pouring on all these heresies a ridicule which there is no doubt they deserved, and a hatred which perhaps they did not. There was more charlatanism than actual wickedness in the whole business. With their Hebrew words often misinterpreted, their magic formulas, and,

later, their amulets and abracadabra, the lower order of Gnostics only merit contempt. But that contempt ought not to be reflected on the great men who in that potent narcotic sought peace or, if you will, intellectual stupor. Valentinus was a genius in his way. Carpocrates and his son Epiphanes were brilliant writers, tainted with Utopianism and paradox, but capable at times of amazing profundity. Gnosticism played a considerable part in the work of Christian propaganda. It was often the stage of transition through which men passed from paganism to Christianity. Proselytes thus won over almost always became orthodox, and never returned to paganism.

Egypt, especially, retained an ineffaceable impression of these strange rites. Egypt had had no experience of Judeo-Christianity. The difference between the Coptic and the other Christian literatures of the East is a remarkable fact. While the majority of Judeo-Christian works are also to be found in Syriac, Arabic, Ethiopian, and Armenian, Coptic exhibits a Gnostic background with nothing beyond. Thus Egypt passed without a break from pagan to Christian illuminatism. Alexandria was almost entirely converted by the Gnostics. Clement of Alexandria is what might be called a moderate Gnostic. He respectfully quotes Heracleon as a doctor of authoritative standing in many respects; he uses the word Gnostic in a favourable sense and makes it synonymous with Christian; in any case, he is far from manifesting the hatred of Irenæus, Tertullian, or the author of the *Philosophumena* to the new ideas. It is not too much to say that Clement of Alexandria and Origen introduced into Christian learning all that was acceptable in the too daring proposals of Heracleon and Basilides. Bound up as it was with the whole intellectual life of Alexandria, the gnosis had a decisive influence on the direction taken in the third century by speculative philosophy in that city, which by then had become the spiritual centre of mankind. The consequence of those endless disputations was the establishment of a kind of Christian academy, a genuine school of sacred literature and exegesis, to which Pan-

tænus, Clement, and Origen were soon to give lustre. With each day Alexandria grew more and more to be the capital of Christian theology.

The effect of the gnosis on the pagan school of Alexandria was not less profound. Ammonius Saccas, who had been born of Christian parents, and his disciple Plotinus were quite imbued with it. The more open-minded thinkers like Numenius of Appamæa by that means acquired the knowledge of Jewish and Christian doctrines which up till then had been so rare in the pagan world. The Alexandrian philosophy of the third, fourth, and fifth centuries was strongly tinged with what can be called the Gnostic spirit, and it bequeathed to Arabic philosophy a germ of mysticism which the latter was to develop still further. Judaism, for its part, was to undergo the same influences. The Kabbalah is nothing more nor less than the Gnosticism of the Jews. The *sephiroth* correspond to the "perfections" of Valentinus. Monotheism has but one method for creating a mythology, that of animating the abstractions, which it is accustomed to range as attributes about the throne of the Eternal.

The world, weary of an exhausted polytheism, demanded from the East, from Judæa especially, divine names less threadbare than those of current mythology. Those Eastern names carried more weight than Greek names, and a singular reason was assigned for their theurgical superiority, which was this: that the Divinity having been more anciently invoked by Orientals than by Greeks, the terms of Eastern theology better responded to the nature of the gods than the Greek terms, and pleased them more. In Egypt the names of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Solomon had the repute of being talismans of the highest efficacy. Amulets inscribed in accordance with this wild syncretism were in universal use. The words IAΩ, AΔΩNAI, CABAΩΘ, EAΩAI, and Hebrew formulas in Greek characters were mingled with Egyptian symbols and the sacramental ABPACAΞ, the equivalent of the number 365. All this kind of thing is much more Judeo-pagan than Christian, and, since Gnosticism represents in Christianity aversion

from Jahveh carried to the point of blasphemy, it is quite erroneous to attribute to Gnosticism these monuments of absurdity. They were the result of the general tendency followed by the superstition of the time, and we believe that, at the epoch we have now reached, Christians of all sects remained indifferent to the little talismans. It was from the time of the wholesale conversion of pagans in the fourth and fifth centuries that amulets were introduced into the Church, and that words and symbols of decidedly Christian character began to come into circulation.

Orthodoxy, then, showed ingratitude in failing to recognise the services done it by those undisciplined sects. In dogma they only provoked reaction, but their part was more important in Christian literature and liturgical institutions. We almost always borrow a good deal from those we anathematise. Early Christianity, still quite Jewish in character, was too simple; it was the Gnostics who made it a religion. The sacraments were in great measure their creation; their unctions, especially those administered on death-beds, made a profound impression. The use of consecrated oil, confirmation (at the outset an integral part of baptism), the attribution of a supernatural force to the sign of the cross, and several other elements of Christian mysticism are derived from them. As a young and active party, the Gnostics wrote much and plunged boldly into apocryphal composition. Their books, discredited at first, were finally received into the orthodox family. The Church soon accepted what originally it had cursed. A host of beliefs, festivals, and symbols of Gnostic inception thus became Catholic beliefs, festivals, and symbols. Mary, the mother of Jesus, in particular, in whom the orthodox Church had taken little interest, owed to those innovators the first developments of her almost divine rôle. A good half at least of the apocryphal gospels are the work of the Gnostics. And these apocryphal gospels have been the source of many festivals, and furnished the most cherished subjects for Christian art. The earliest Christian images, the first portraits of Christ were Gnostic. The strictly

orthodox Church would have remained iconoclastic, had heresy not pervaded it, or rather had heresy not exacted from it by stress of competition more than one concession to pagan frailties.

Tossed in turn from genius to madness, Gnosticism defies all absolute judgments. Hegel and Swedenborg, Schelling and Cagliostro jostle one another within it. The apparent frivolity of some of its theories ought not to repel us. Every law that is not the pure expression of positive science is subject to the caprices of fashion. A formula of Hegel's, that in its time may have represented the loftiest vision of the world, now causes a smile. A phrase in which we imagine we sum up the universe will one day seem hollow and insipid. Indulgence is due to all who suffer shipwreck in the ocean of the infinite. Good sense, which at first sight seems incompatible with the chimeras of the Gnostics, was not so lacking in them as might be believed. They did not war upon civil society; they did not seek martyrdom; they held excess of zeal in abhorrence. They had the supreme wisdom, tolerance, at times even—who would credit it?—a prudent scepticism. Like all forms of faith, Gnosticism elevated and comforted and moved the souls of men. Read in what terms a Valentinian epitaph, discovered on the Via Latina, attempts to sound the abyss of death:

"Longing to behold the light of the Father, companion of my blood, of my bed, O my wise one, perfumed in the sacred bath with the pure and incorruptible myrrh of Christos, thou hast hastened thy flight to gaze upon the divine countenances of the Æons, the great Angel of the great council, the true Son, eager as thou wert to lay thee down on the nuptial couch, in the paternal bosom of the Æons.

"She that is dead had not the common human lot. She is dead, and she lives and beholds in its reality the incorruptible light. In the eyes of the living she is alive; such as believe her dead are in truth dead themselves. Earth, what sayest thy amazement at this new order of shades? What sayest thy fear?"

CHAPTER IX.

THE SEQUEL TO MARCIONISM—APELLES.

ADMIRABLY fitted as it was for personal consolation and edification, Gnosticism had extremely weak points as a Church. It could evolve neither presbytery nor episcopate; ideas so extravagant could only bring forth conventicles of dogmatisers. Marcion alone succeeded in rearing a solid edifice on that shifting foundation. There was a highly organised Marcionite Church. It was certainly tainted with a grave defect which put it under the ban of the Church of Christ. Not without reason were all the founders of the episcopate united in one common feeling of aversion from Marcion. Metaphysics did not exercise sufficient influence on intellects of that order, for this feeling on their part to be merely a theological hatred. But time is a good judge; Marcionism endured. Like Arianism, it was one of the great divisions of Christianity, and not, like so many sects, only a strange and fleeting meteor.

Marcion, while remaining consistently faithful to certain principles which for him constituted the essence of Christianity, varied more than once in his theology. Apparently he imposed on his disciples no absolutely fixed creed. After his death the internal dissensions of the sect were extreme. Potitus and Basilicus remained faithful to dualism; Syneros admitted three natures, though it is uncertain how he expressed his position; Apelles decisively returned to Monarchianism. At the outset he had been a personal disciple of Marcion's; but he was endowed with too independent a spirit to remain a disciple; he broke with his master and left his Church. Outside the Catholic communion such ruptures were everyday occurrences. The enemies of Apelles tried to spread the belief that he had been expelled, and that the reason for his excommunication was a looseness of conduct which contrasted unfavourably with the severity of the master. There was much talk about

a virgin Philumena, who was supposed by her seductions to have led him into all manner of disorders, and to have played him the part of a Priscilla or Maximilla. Nothing can be more doubtful than all these stories. His orthodox adversary Rhodo, who knew him, depicts him as an old man worthy of veneration for his ascetic manner of life. Of Philumena, Rhodo also speaks, representing her as a possessed virgin, whose inspirations Apelles actually admitted to be divine. The most austere doctors, Tertullian in particular, were subject to such credulous indiscretions.

The symbolical language of the Gnostic doctrines lent itself, moreover, to grave misunderstandings, and often afforded occasion for misapprehensions on the part of the orthodox, to whose interest it was to calumniate such dangerous enemies. Not with impunity did Simon the Magician play on the allegory of Helena Ennœa, and Marcion was perhaps the victim of a mistake of the same kind. The somewhat unstable philosophical imagination of Apelles might also cause it to be said that in pursuit of a fickle mistress, Philumena, he forsook truth to run after perilous adventures. It is permissible to suppose that, as a setting for his teachings, he made use of the revelations of a symbolical being whom he called *Philumena* (beloved truth). Certain it is at least that the words attributed by Rhodo to our doctor are those of a good man, a sincere friend of truth. After leaving the school of Marcion, Apelles betook himself to Alexandria, attempted a kind of eclectic combination of the incoherent ideas that floated past him, and then returned to Rome. Throughout his whole life he never ceased retouching his master's theology, and apparently he ended by acquiring a weariness of metaphysical theories, which from our point of view reconciled him to true philosophy.

Marcion's two great errors were those of the majority of the early Gnostics, dualism and docetism. By the former he proffered a hand to Manichæism, by the latter to Islam. The Marcionite and Gnostic doctors of

the latter years of the second century attempted, as a rule, to extenuate these two errors. The last Basilidians finally achieved a pure pantheism. The author of the pseudo-Clementine romance, despite his grotesque theology, was a deist. Hermogenes floundered awkwardly amid the insoluble questions raised by the doctrine of the incarnation. Apelles, whose ideas frequently resemble those of the pseudo-Clement, likewise sought to escape the subtleties of the gnosis, stoutly maintaining what can be called common-sense theology.

The absolute unity of God is the fundamental dogma of Apelles. God is perfect goodness; since the world cannot sufficiently reflect that goodness, the world cannot be his work. The true world of God's creation is a higher world peopled by angels. The chief of these angels is the glorious angel, a kind of demiurge or created *Logos*, creator in his turn of the visible world, which is but an abortive imitation of the higher world. Apelles thus escaped Marcion's dualism, and occupied an intermediate position between Catholicism and the gnosis. In reality, he corrected the system of Marcion and gave it a certain logical sequence, but he fell into many other difficulties. Human souls, according to Apelles, originally formed part of the higher creation, from which they fell by reason of their concupiscence. To bring them back to him God sent down his Christ to the lower creation. Christ thus came to amend the defective tyrannical work of the demiurge. In this matter Apelles resumed the classic doctrine of Marcionism and Gnosticism, according to which the essential task of Christ was to destroy the worship of the demiurge, that is to say, Judaism. To him the Old and New Testaments appear mutually inimical. The God of the Jews, like the God of the Catholics (in the eyes of Apelles the latter were Judaists), is a perverse god, the author of sin and the flesh. Jewish history is the history of wrong-doing; the prophets themselves are possessed with an evil spirit. The God of righteousness did not reveal himself before the advent of Jesus. To the latter Apelles accords an

elemental heavenly body, beyond ordinary physical laws, although possessing full reality.

On different occasions Apelles appears to have felt that this doctrine of the radical opposition of the two Testaments was rather too absolute, and as he was not stubborn in spirit, he little by little attained to ideas that possibly would not have been repugnant to St. Paul. At certain moments the Old Testament seemed to him rather incoherent and contradictory than positively evil, so that the work of Christ would appear to have been to discriminate between good and evil, in conformity with the saying so often cited by the Gnostics: "Be good Trapezites." Just as Marcion had written his *Antitheses* to demonstrate the incompatibility of the two Testaments, Apelles wrote his *Syllogisms*, a vast compilation of feeble passages from the Pentateuch, with the special purpose of showing the inconsistency of the ancient lawgiver and his lack of philosophy. In this work Apelles displayed a very subtle critical quality, at times recalling that of the eighteenth century sceptics. The difficulties presented by the early chapters of Genesis, if no mythical explanation were permissible, were criticised with much sagacity. His book was regarded as a refutation of the Bible and denounced as blasphemous.

Of too honest a spirit for the sectarian world in which he was involved, Apelles was condemned to constant change. Towards the close of his life he quite despaired of the scriptures. Even his fundamental idea of the divine unity wavered, and he attained, without suspecting it, perfect wisdom, that is to say, good sense and distaste for systems. His adversary, Rhodo, tells us of a conversation he had with him in Rome about 180.

"The aged Apelles," he says, "having come to confer with us, we demonstrated to him so well he was deceived in many things, that he was reduced to saying that religious matters ought not to be so rigorously examined, that each man should rest content with his own forms of belief, and that those would be saved who trusted in the crucified Lord, provided they were upright men. He confessed that the most obscure point for him was that which concerned God. Like ourselves, he

admitted but one principle. 'What proof have you of all this?' I asked him, 'and what grounds have you for affirming there is only one principle?' He avowed to me then that prophecies can teach us nothing of the truth, since they contradict each other and contravene themselves, and that the assertion, 'There is but one principle,' was in him rather the result of instinct than of positive knowledge. Having asked him to affirm on oath that what he said was the truth, he swore to me that he spoke sincerely, that he knew not how there was but one unbegotten God, and nevertheless believed it. For my part, I playfully reproached him for dubbing himself master, when he was unable to allege any proof of his doctrine."

Poor Rhodo! It was the heretic Apelles who that day gave him a lesson in good taste, tact, and true Christianity. Marcion's pupil was really healed, since to a hollow gnosis he preferred faith, secret instinct for the truth, love of the good, hope in the crucified.

What gave a certain force to ideas like those of Apelles, was that in many respects they were nothing more nor less than a return to St. Paul. There is no doubt that had the latter risen from the dead at the epoch in Christianity which we have now reached, he would have decided that Catholicism was making too many concessions to the Old Testament. He would have protested, and argued that a retrogression to Judaism was going on, that new wine was being poured into old bottles, that they were doing away with the distinction between the Gospel and the Law.

The doctrine of Apelles made no headway outside Rome, and scarce survived his death. Tertullian, however, deemed it his duty to refute it. A certain Lucanus, or Lucian, formed, like Apelles, a sect apart in the Marcionite Church. Apparently he admitted, as did Syneros, three principles: one good, the second bad, the third just. The strictly just principle was represented by the demiurge or creator. From his hatred of the latter, Lucian suppressed marriage. In his blasphemies on creation he appeared to others to resemble Cerdo.

Severus seems to have been much more of a belated Gnostic than a Marcionite. Prepo the Assyrian denied the birth of Christ, and maintained that in the fifteenth year of

the reign of Tiberius Jesus descended from heaven in the form of a full-grown man.

Marcionism, like Gnosticism, was in its second generation. Thenceforth those two sects were to have no illustrious doctor. All the fine conceptions, hatched in the reign of Hadrian, were fading away like dreams, and the shipwrecked crews of those adventurous little Churches were eagerly clinging to the sides of the Catholic Church and seeking admittance. Over them the ecclesiastical writers had the advantage that those who take no trouble in research and entertain no doubts, possess over the multitude. Irenæus, Philip of Gortyna, Modestus, Melito, Rhodo, Theophilus of Antioch, Bardesanes, and Tertullian were to take upon themselves the task of unmasking what they called the infernal wiles of Marcion, and to shrink from no violence in expression.

Although it had received its death-blow, the Church of Marcion remained for long, as a matter of fact, a distinct community side by side with the Catholic Church. In all the provinces of the East there were for centuries Christian communities which regarded it as an honour to bear the name of Marcion, and inscribed that name on the pediment of their "synagogues." These churches could boast episcopal successions comparable with the lists in which the Catholic Church glorified. They had their martyrs, their virgins, all that constituted saintliness. In them the faithful led a life of austerity, boldly faced death, wore the monastic sackcloth, fasted rigorously, and abstained from all that had had life. "They are hornets that imitate swarms of bees," said the orthodox. "Those wolves clothe themselves in the skins of the sheep they slay," sneered others. Like the Montanists, the Marcionites fabricated for their own use counterfeit apostolic writings and counterfeit psalms. It is needless to say that this heretical literature has entirely perished.

In the fourth and fifth centuries the sect, still alive, was energetically attacked as a positive plague by John Chrysostom, St. Basil, St. Epiphanes, Theodoretus, the

Armenian Eznig, and the Syrian Bodh Periodeutes. But its extravagance was its ruin. A general horror of the works of the creator led the Marcionites to the most absurd forms of abstinence. In many respects they were pure Encratites; they forbade the use of wine even in the mysteries. It was proved to them that to be logical they ought to starve themselves to death. They repeated baptism as a means of justification, and permitted women to officiate in the churches. Ill protected against superstition, they lapsed into magic and astrology. Gradually they came to be confounded with the Manichæans.

CHAPTER X.

TATIAN AS HERETIC—THE ENCRATITES.

WHAT clearly demonstrates that the order of ideas which swept away Marcion, Apelles, and Lucanus, was a necessary outcome of the theological situation, is the sight of the faithful of all orders turning the same way, although their antecedents may not suggest the likelihood of such a course. Such, in particular, was the fate reserved for the disciple of the tolerant Justin, the apologist who a score of times had risked his life for the faith, Tatian. At a date which cannot be precisely settled, Tatian, who was always an Assyrian at heart, and who far preferred the East to Rome, returned to his own land of Adiabene, where Jews and Christians were numerous. There his doctrine underwent more and more change. Detached from all the Churches, he remained in his own country what he had formerly been in Italy, a kind of solitary Christian, belonging to no sect although resembling the Montanists in asceticism and the Marcionites in doctrine and exegesis. His passion for work was prodigious; his eager brain could not rest; the Bible, which he was constantly reading, inspired him with the

most contradictory ideas, and on that subject he wrote endlessly.

After having shown himself in his apology a fanatical admirer of the Hebrews as opposed to the Greeks, he now went to the other extreme. The exaggeration of St. Paul's ideas, which had impelled Marcion to curse the Jewish Bible, led Tatian to the entire sacrifice of the Old Testament to the New. Like Apelles and the majority of the Gnostics, Tatian admitted the existence of a creative God subordinate to the supreme God. In the act of creation, in speaking such words as these: "Let there be light!" the creator, according to him, proceeded not by command but by prayer. The Law was the work of the creative God; the Gospel alone was the work of the supreme God. An exaggerated craving for moral perfection caused Tatian, after discarding Greek antiquity as impure, to discard Biblical antiquity likewise. Thence an exegesis and critical method that differed but slightly from those of the Marcionites. His *Problems*, like the *Antitheses* of Marcion and *Syllogisms* of Apelles, undoubtedly had as their object to prove the inconsistencies of the old Law and the superiority of the new. Therein he marshalled, with a great deal of common-sense, the objections that can be raised to the Bible from the point of view of reason. Thus the rationalistic exegesis of modern times finds its ancestors in the school of Apelles and Tatian. Despite its unfairness to the Law and the prophets, that school was certainly more sensible in its exegesis than the orthodox doctors, with their entirely arbitrary allegorical and typical interpretations.

Nor was Tatian's dominant idea in the composition of his celebrated *Diatessaron* better adapted to win orthodox approbation. The discrepancies of the Gospels grated on him. Anxious, before all else, to dispel the objections of reason, he removed with the same stroke that which most served for edification. All that in the life of Jesus was, in his opinion, too suggestive of the god of man, was ruthlessly sacrificed. However convenient may have been this attempt

to harmonise the Gospels, it was denounced, and the copies of the *Diatessaron* were violently destroyed. Tatian's chief adversary during this last period of his life was his former pupil Rhodo. Examining one by one the *Problems* of Tatian, that presumptuous exegetist took it upon himself to reply to all the objections which his master had raised. He also wrote a commentary on the Hexaemeron or work of six days. Doubtless, if we had the book which Rhodo wrote on so many delicate questions, we should find that he was less wise than Apelles and Tatian, for the latter prudently confessed their inability to solve them.

Tatian's faith varied as did his exegesis. Gnosticism, half-vanquished in the West, still flourished in the East. Combining Valentinus, Saturninus and Marcion, the disciple of St. Justin, forgetful of his master, fell into musings which in all probability he had refuted at Rome. He became an arch-heretic. Full of horror of matter, Tatian could not endure the idea that Christ should have had the slightest contact with it. The sexual relations of man and woman were in his eyes an evil. In the *Diatessaron* Jesus has no earthly genealogy. After the manner of an apocryphal gospel, Tatian would have said: "In the reign of Tiberius, the Word of God was born at Nazareth." Logically enough, he went so far as to maintain that Christ's fleshly body was only an illusion. In his eyes the use of meat and wine classed a man among the impure. He wished that only water should be employed in the mysteries. He was thus regarded as the chief of those numerous sects of Encratites or abstinents, then springing up on all sides, which prohibited marriage, wine and flesh, and asserted that in so doing they were carrying Christian principles to a logical conclusion. From Mesopotamia these ideas spread to Antioch, Cilicia, Pisidia, throughout the whole of Asia Minor, to Rome, and amongst the Gauls. Asia Minor, more especially Galatia, remained their centre. The same tendencies manifested themselves at several points simultaneously. Had not paganism, for its part, the mortifications of the Cynics? A body of

erroneous ideas, widely diffused, led to the belief that, evil being the result of concupiscence, return to virtue implied renunciation of the most legitimate desires.

The distinction between precept and advice still remained uncertain. The Church was conceived to be an assembly of saints awaiting in prayer and ecstasy the renewing of heaven and earth; for it nothing was too perfect. The institution of monastic life was one day to solve all these difficulties. The convent was to realise that perfect Christian life of which the world is not capable. Tatian was only a heretic, in that he desired to lay as an obligation on all, that which St. Paul had represented as the best.

It is easy to see how much Tatian resembled Apelles. Like him, he changed his views a great deal and never ceased to modify his rule of faith; like him, he resolutely attacked the Jewish Bible and took it upon himself to be its free exegetist. He is also akin to the Protestants of the sixteenth century, Calvin in particular. In any case he was one of the most profoundly Christian men of his age, and, if he fell, it was, like Tertullian, by excess of severity. Among his disciples can be included that Julius Cassianus, who wrote several books of *Exegetica*, maintained by arguments analogous to those of the *Discourse against the Greeks*, that the philosophy of the Hebrews was far older than that of Greece, carried docetism to such extremes that he was regarded as the chief of that heresy, and with docetism associated a horror of the works of the flesh which led him into a kind of nihilism, destructive of humanity. The advent of the Kingdom of God appeared to him as the suppression of sex and shame. A certain Severus followed a still freer train of ideas, rejecting the *Acts of the Apostles*, abusing Paul and reviving the old myths of Gnosticism. From shipwreck to shipwreck he was stranded at last on the chimeras of the Archontics, who carried on the follies of Marcos. After his name the Encratites called themselves Severians.

All the aberrations of the mediæval mendicant orders existed in those remote ages. From the earliest times there

were Saccophores or brethren wearing sackcloth, Apostolici who claimed to live the life of the apostles, Angelici, Catharists or purists, Apotactites or renouncers, who refused communion and salvation to all those who were married or possessed anything. Lacking the guardianship of authority, these sects fell into apocryphal literature. The *Gospel of the Egyptians*, the *Acts of St. Andrew*, and those of St. John and St. Thomas were their favourite books. The orthodox asserted that their chastity was only superficial, since they attracted women to their sects by every sort of means, and were continually in their company. They formed communities in which both sexes lived together, the women serving the men and following them in their wanderings as their companions. This kind of life was far from enervating them, for they supplied the contests of martyrdom with athletes who put the executioners to shame.

The ardour of faith was such that it was against excess of holiness that measures had to be taken; it was abuses of zeal that had to be kept at bay. Words that only implied praise, such as abstinent and apostolical, tended to become brands of heresy. Christianity had created such an ideal of unworldliness, that it recoiled before its own work and exclaimed to its faithful: "Do not take me so seriously or you will destroy me!" Men were appalled by the conflagration they had lighted. Sexual love had been so terribly denounced by the most irreproachable doctors, that Christians who wished to carry their principles to the bitter end had to regard it as guilty and banish it absolutely. By dint of frugality they came to find fault with the creation of God and leave unused nearly all his gifts. Persecution produced and, up to a certain point, excused these morbid forms of exaltation. Let us picture the hardness of the time, that preparation for martyrdom which absorbed the life of the Christian and made it a kind of rapture analogous to that of the gladiators. Vaunting the efficacy of fasting and asceticism, Tertullian says: "Behold how one can harden oneself to prison, hunger, thirst, privation, and agonies; behold how the martyr learns to come forth from

his dungeon such as he entered it, encountering therein no unknown pains, finding only his everyday mortifications, assured of victory in the conflict because he has slain his flesh, and on him torment finds not the wherewithal to gnaw. His dried skin will be as armour to him; the iron claws will slip upon it as upon thick horn. Such shall he be that by fasting has often seen death near at hand, and has rid himself of his blood, a heavy and irksome burden to the soul that yearns for escape."

CHAPTER XI.

THE GREAT BISHOPS OF GREECE AND ASIA—MELITO.

HAPPILY, in addition to moral excesses, fruits of ill-regulated feeling, and of an exuberant crop of legends born of the Eastern imagination, there existed the episcopate. It was more especially in the purely Greek provinces of the Church that this noble institution flourished. Opposed to all aberrations, classic in a manner and moderate in its proclivities, more absorbed in the humble path of simple believers than in the transcendental pretensions of ascetics and thinkers, the episcopate tended to grow more and more the Church itself and saved the work of Jesus from the inevitable disaster which it would have suffered at the hands of the Gnostics, Montanists, and even the Judaists. What doubled the strength of the episcopate was that this federative oligarchy, so to speak, had a centre; that centre was Rome. Anicetus had witnessed, during the ten or twelve years of his primacy, almost the whole of the Christian movement tending to concentrate about him. His successor, Soter (probably a converted Jew who translated his name of Jesus into Greek), saw that movement waxing greater yet. The vast correspondence which had long been carried on between Rome and the Churches reached a more extensive scale than ever. A central

tribunal for the settlement of disputed questions was in visible process of establishment.

Greece and Asia continued to be with Rome, the scene of the principal incidents of Christian belief. In Dionysius Corinth possessed one of the most honoured men of the age. His charity was not confined to his own church. He was consulted on all sides, and his letters had almost the authority of scripture. They were called "Catholic" because they were addressed, not to private persons but to the Churches as communities. Seven of these fragments were collected and held in equal reverence, at least, with the epistles of Clement of Rome. They were addressed to the faithful of Lacedæmon, Athens, Nicomedia, Gnossus, Gortyna, and the other Churches of Crete, and Amastris and the other Churches of Pontus. Soter, having, in accordance with the custom of the Church of Rome, sent alms to Corinth, accompanied by a letter of pious instruction, Dionysius thus thanked him for the favour:

"It was the Sabbath to-day and we read your letter, and keep it by us to read again when we require salutary counsel, as we have kept that already written to us by Clement. By your exhortation you have bound together more closely two plants both sown by Peter and Paul, I mean the Church of Rome and that of Corinth. For those two apostles indeed came to our Corinth, and taught us in common, then together set sail for Italy, there to teach in harmony with one another and to suffer martyrdom about the same time."

The Church of Corinth succumbed to the tendency of all the churches; like the Church of Rome it would fain have had as its founders the two apostles whose alliance passed for being the basis of Christianity. It asserted that Peter and Paul, after spending at Corinth the most brilliant period of their apostolic career, set out in each other's company for Italy. The differences of opinion on apostolic history then in vogue rendered possible such hypotheses, contrary to all probability and truth as they might be.

The writings of Dionysius were regarded as masterpieces of zeal and literary talent. In their pages he joined vigorous issue with Marcion. In a letter to a pious sister called

Chrysophora, he laid down with a master-hand the duties of a life consecrated to God. None the less, he was opposed to the gross exaggerations of Montanism. In his epistle to the Amastrians, he advised them at considerable length on the questions of marriage and virginity, and bid them gently receive all such as were fain to do penance, whether they had fallen into heresy or committed any other transgression. Palma, bishop of Amastris, fully admitted the right which Dionysius took upon himself to instruct his flock. The latter's taste for admonishment met with opposition from none save the bishop of Gnossus, Pinytus, a fanatical rigorist. Him, Dionysius invited to consider the weakness of some people, and not impose on the faithful at large the over-heavy burden of chastity. Pinytus, who had the gift of eloquence, and passed for being one of the shining lights of the Church, made his response, acknowledging much esteem and respect for Dionysius; but he counselled him in his turn to give his people more solid spiritual nourishment and more vigorous guidance, for fear lest, being always treated to the milk of indulgence, they might unconsciously grow old without ever having emerged in spirit from the weakness of childhood. The letter of Pinytus was much admired, and considered as a model of episcopal fervour. It must be admitted that vigorous zeal, when charitably expressed, has equal rights with prudence and mildness.

Dionysius was strongly opposed to the speculations of the sects. As a friend to peace and unity he resented all sundering influences. Heresies had in him a determined adversary. His authority was such that the heretics, "apostles of the Devil" as he called them, falsified his letters and sowed tares amongst them, adding or striking out what they pleased. "What surprise need we have," observes Dionysius on this matter, "if certain persons have the audacity to falsify the scriptures of the Lord, seeing that they have dared to lay hands on scriptures which have not the same sacred character?"

The Church of Athens, which was always characterised by a certain frivolous lightness of tone, was far from having

so assured a basis as that of Corinth. Events took place there which had no parallel elsewhere. Publius, the bishop, had courageously suffered martyrdom; then an almost general apostasy, a kind of abandonment of religion, had set in. A certain Quadratus, no doubt a different person from the apologist of the same name, reconstructed the Church, and there was as it were a revival of faith. Dionysius wrote to this fickle Church, not without a certain bitterness of tone, attempting to win it back to purity of belief and the severity of evangelical life. The Church of Athens, like that of Corinth, had its legend. It had attached itself to that Dionysius the Areopagite who is mentioned in the Acts, and made him the first bishop of Athens, so unquestioned was the position which the episcopate already held as an element in the existence of a Christian community.

Crete, as we have seen, had very prosperous churches, which were pious, beneficent, and generous. The Gnostic heresies, more especially Marcionism, laid siege to them, but without making a breach in their defences. Philip, bishop of Gortyna, wrote a fine work against Marcion, and was one of the most respected bishops of the time of Marcus Aurelius.

Proconsular Asia continued to be the principal province of the Christian movement. There the great battle was waged, there the great persecutions took place, there the great martyrs suffered. Nearly all the bishops of important towns were men of holiness, eloquence, and comparative sanity of judgment, since they had had a good Greek education; and, if one may so express it, they were extremely skilful religious politicians. Bishoprics were greatly multiplied, but certain influential families possessed a kind of privilege to the episcopate of the little towns. Polycrates of Ephesus, who in thirty years' time was so vigorously to defend the traditions of the Churches of Asia against the bishop of Rome, was the eighth bishop of his family. The bishops of the great cities had a primacy over the others; they were the presidents of the provincial assemblies of bishops. The office of archbishop was already foreshadowed,

although the word, had it been hazarded, would no doubt have been repelled with horror.

Melito, bishop of Sardis, enjoyed amongst those eminent pastors a kind of uncontested supremacy. He was unanimously accorded the gift of prophecy, and it was believed that he conducted himself in all things by the light of the Holy Ghost. His works succeeded each other from year to year amid universal admiration. His critical faculty was that of his time, but he at least took extreme pains to make his faith reasonable and self-consistent. In many respects he recalls Origen; but he had not the opportunities for self-instruction offered the latter by the schools of Alexandria, Cæsarea, and Tyre.

The slight attention given by the Christians of St. Paul to the study of the Old Testament, and the enfeeblement of Judaism in such regions of Asia as were remote from Ephesus, made it difficult in that country to obtain exact ideas on the biblical books. Neither their number nor order were exactly known. Melito, impelled by his own curiosity and, so it would appear, by the persuasions of a certain Onesimus, made a journey to Palestine for the purpose of informing himself as to the actual state of the canon. He brought back with him a catalogue of books in universal acceptance; it was purely and simply the Jewish canon of twenty-two books, Esther being excluded. The Apocrypha, such as the book of Enoch, the apocalypse of Esdras, Judith, Tobias, etc., which were not received by the Jews, were similarly excluded from Melito's list. Without being a Judaist, Melito took it on himself to be a careful commentator of the sacred writings. At the request of Onesimus, he collected in six books the passages in the Pentateuch and the prophets relating to Jesus Christ and the other articles of the Christian faith. He worked on the Greek versions which he collated with the utmost diligence.

Eastern exegesis was familiar to him; he discussed it point by point. Like the author of the so-called Epistle of Barnabas, he appears to have had a marked tendency to

allegorical and mystical explanations, and it is not impossible that his lost work, entitled *The Key*, may have been an early example of those collections of figurative interpretations, by which the attempt was made to get rid of the anthropomorphisms of the biblical text, and to substitute more exalted significations for such as were too commonplace.

The Apocalypse appears to have been the only New Testament scripture commented upon by Melito. He loved its gloomy images; for we find him himself announcing that the final conflagration is at hand, that after the deluge of wind and the deluge of water shall come the deluge of fire, which shall consume the earth and all idols and idolaters; the just alone shall be saved, as formerly they were in the ark. Grotesque beliefs like these did not prevent Melito from being a man of cultivated intelligence in his way. Familiar with the study of philosophy, he sought in a series of works, which unfortunately have nearly all been lost, to interpret the mysteries of Christian dogma by rational psychology. In addition, he wrote certain treatises, in which his absorption in Montanism seems to dominate him, and from which it is impossible to say whether he was its adversary or was in part favourable to it. Such were his books on the rule of life and the prophets, on the Church, on the Sabbath Day, on the nature of man and its formation, on the obedience which the senses owe to faith, on the soul and the body or on intelligence, on baptism, on the creation and the birth of Christ, on hospitality, on prophecy, on the Devil and the Apocalypse of John, on God incarnate or on the incarnation of Christ, against Marcion. There is reason to believe that a book of prophecies of his composition may also have existed.

Melito had, in fact, the reputation of being a prophet, but it is uncertain whether his prophecies formed a separate work. Admitting the prolongation of the prophetic gift up to his own time, he could not confute *a priori* the Montanists of Phrygia. His life, moreover, resembled theirs by a certain asceticism. But he did not admit the revelations

of the saints of Pepuza; had he done so, orthodoxy itself would assuredly have expelled him from its midst.

One of his treatises, that which he entitled *Concerning Truth*, seems to have survived to us. Its monotheistic mockeries of idolatry are full of bitterness, and hatred of images has never been expressed with greater force. Truth, according to the author, reveals itself to man, and if man see it not, the fault is his own. To be deceived with the majority is no excuse; multiplied error is only the more fatal. God is the immutable, uncreate Being; to confound him with such and such an element is a crime, "now, above all, when the revelation of the truth has been heard throughout all the earth." Already had the Sibyl said: idols are nothing more than the images of dead kings who have caused themselves to be worshipped. One might take for a recovered fragment of Philo of Byblos, revealing to us the old Phœnician euhemerism of Sanchoniathon, that curious page in which Melito, drawing liberally upon the most singular fables of the Greek and the Syrian mythology, grotesquely combined with the Bible narratives, seeks to prove that the gods were former real persons who were deified for services rendered certain countries, or on account of the terror they inspired. The worship of the Cæsars appears to him a continuation of this system.

"Do we not behold, even in our own days," he says, "the images of the Cæsars and their family more respected than those of the ancient gods, and these gods themselves pay tribute to Cæsar, as to a deity greater than they? And, truly, if scoffers at the gods were punished with death, it would be said that they suffered because they deprived the treasury of one of its revenues. There are even countries where the worshippers at certain sanctuaries pay a regular tribute to the treasury. . . . The great misfortune of the world is that those who worship inanimate gods, and of that number are the majority of the sages, whether from love of lucre, or love of vain glory, or love of power, not only worship them themselves, but constrain the simple in spirit to worship them also. . . .

"A prince will say, perhaps: 'I am not free to do good. Being a chief, I am bound to conform to the will of the greatest number.' Truly, he who speaks thus deserves mockery. Why should not the sovereign show the initiative in all that makes for good, why should he

not influence the people under his sway to do good and know God according to the truth, and himself give the example in all good deeds? What could be more seemly? It is the height of absurdity for a prince to act evilly, and none the less judge and condemn wrongdoers. For my own part, I consider that a state can only be well governed when the sovereign, knowing and fearing the true God, judges all things as one who knows that he in his turn will be judged before God, and when the subjects, fearing God too, are heedful to do no wrong either to their sovereign or to one another. Thus, thanks to the knowledge and fear of God, the state can be purified of all evil.

"If, indeed, the sovereign does not act unjustly towards his subjects, and if his subjects do not act unjustly towards him nor towards each other, it is clear that the land will live at peace and great good result; for in suchwise is the name of God praised amongst all men. The sovereign's first duty, then, that which makes him most pleasing in God's sight, is to deliver from error the people committed to his care. All evils, in short, arise from error; and the worst of all errors is to misunderstand God, and worship in his place that which is not God."

It is obvious how close Melito was to the perilous principles, which were to be in power at the end of the fourth century, and to form the Christian Empire. The sovereign set up as the protector of the faith, using all means to ensure the triumph of the faith, such was the ideal imagined. We shall find the same theories in the apology addressed to Marcus Aurelius. Dogmatic intolerance, the idea that we are guilty and unpleasing to God if we be ignorant of certain dogmas, is freely avowed; Melito admits no excuse for idolatry. Those who allege that honours rendered to idols are in reality given to the person they represent, and those who are content to say: "It is the worship of our fathers," are equally guilty.

"What! do those whom their fathers have left in poverty, abstain from enriching themselves? Do those whom their fathers have not instructed condemn themselves to be ignorant of that whereof their fathers were ignorant? The sons of the blind do not refuse to see, nor the sons of the lame to walk. . . Before imitating your father, find out if he has been taking the right path. If he has been on the wrong path, take the right, that your sons may follow you in their turn. Weep for your father, who has taken the way of evil, while yet the sight of your distress can save him. As to your sons, speak thus to them:

'There is a God, Father of all things, who has had no beginning, who has not been created, by whose will all things subsist and have their being.'"

We shall soon have to consider the part taken by Melito in the Easter controversy, and in the fashion which impelled so many men of intellectual distinction to present apologetic writings to Marcus Aurelius. His tomb was exhibited at Sardis as that of one of the just, most certain to rise from the dead at the heavenly summons. His name remained held in high honour among the Catholics, who considered him one of the leading authorities of his time. His eloquence was especially vaunted, and the fragments of his writings which we possess are, indeed, extremely brilliant. A theological system like his, in which Jesus is at once God and man, was a protest against Marcion, and must at the same time have pleased the adversaries of Artemon and Theodotus the currier. He was acquainted with the Gospel attributed to John, and identified *Christos* with the *Logos*, assigning him a rank secondary to the one God, before and above all. His treatise, in which Christ was represented as a created being, must have caused surprise; but, doubtless, it was little read, and the scandalous title was altered at an early date. In the fourth century, when orthodoxy had become more suspicious, these writings, so greatly admired two hundred years before, ceased to be copied. Doubtless many passages seemed little in harmony with the Nicene creed. Melito's fate was that of Papias, and of many other doctors of the second century, true founders, in reality the first of the fathers, whose only fault was not to have divined beforehand what was one day to be made law by the Councils of the Church.

Claudius Apollinaris, or Apollinarius, maintained the fame of the Church of Hierapolis, and, like Melito, combined literary and philosophical culture with holiness. His style was esteemed excellent, and his faith of the purest. By his aversion from Judeo-Christianity, and his taste for the Gospel of John, he belonged rather to the party of progress than to that of tradition. As it was progress that triumphed,

his adversaries were thenceforth behind their time. We shall find him presenting an apology to Marcus Aurelius at very nearly the same time as Melito. He wrote five books addressed to pagans, two against the Jews, two on truth, one on piety, without speaking of many other works which did not become widely known, but were highly approved by those who read them. Apollinarius strove vigorously with the Montanists, and was perhaps the bishop who contributed most to saving the Church from the dangers it incurred from these preachers. The excesses of the Encratites also met with great severity from him. An astonishing combination of common-sense and literary taste, of fanaticism and moderation, characterised those extraordinary men, true ancestors of the literary bishop, skilful politicians, despite their appearance of having ears for the inspiration of heaven alone, opponents of violence, and yet themselves men of violent opinions. Thanks to the deceptive suavity of a liberal manner of speech, those early Dupanloups proved that the most refined of worldly calculations do not exclude the most grotesque illuminatism, and that in one person can be combined, in perfect honesty, all the outward signs of a reasonable man with all the raptures of an enthusiast.

Miltiades, like Apollinarius a great adversary of the Montanists, was also a prolific writer. He wrote books against the pagans and two against the Jews, not to speak of an apology addressed to the Roman authorities. Musanus joined issue with the Encratites, the disciples of Tatian. Modestus specially devoted himself to exposing the stratagems and errors of Marcion. Polycrates, who was later to exercise some measure of primacy over the Church of Asia, was already famous for his writings. A flood of books poured forth on all sides. Never has Christianity had a greater literary output than during the second century in Asia. Literary culture was widely diffused throughout that province; the art of writing was universally known, and Christianity profited. The literature of the fathers of the Church had its beginning. The centuries that followed did

not surpass those first essays in Christian eloquence, but from the orthodox point of view the books of the second century fathers offered more than one stumbling-block. To read them aroused suspicions; they were less and less copied, and thus nearly all those fine works disappeared, to make place for the classical writers, who flourished after the Council of Nicæa, writers who were more correct in doctrine, but, as a rule, much less original than those of the second century.

A certain Papirius, whose episcopal seat is now unknown, was highly esteemed. Thraseas, bishop of Eumenia, in the region of the upper Meander, had the glory most envied, that of martyrdom. It was probably at Smyrna that he suffered, since his tomb was honoured there. Sagaris, bishop of Laodicæa on the Lycus, had the same honour under the proconsulship of L. Sergius Paullus, about the year 165. Laodicæa carefully treasured his remains. His name remained the more constant in the memory of the Churches, since his death was the occasion of an important episode in connection with one of the gravest questions of the time.

CHAPTER XII.

THE QUESTION OF EASTER.

As chance would have it, the execution of Sagaris almost coincided with the Easter festival. The appointment of a date for that festival gave rise to endless difficulties. Deprived of its pastor, the Church of Laodicæa fell into insoluble controversies. These controversies were of the very essence of Christian development, and could not be avoided. By mutual charity a veil had been cast over the gulf dividing the two Christianities—that which regarded itself as a continuation of Judaism, and that which regarded itself as the destruction of Judaism. But the reality is less

flexible than the spirit. Among the Christian Churches Easter day was the cause of serious variances. They did not fast, did not pray on the same day. Some were still in tears, whilst others were chanting their anthems of triumph. Even the Churches which were undivided by any question of principle were embarrassed. The Paschal cycle was so unsettled, that neighbouring Churches, like those of Alexandria and Palestine, were in the habit of corresponding with each other in the spring, in order to come to a mutual understanding and harmoniously celebrate the feast on the same day. What, indeed, could be more painful than the sight of one Church plunged in mourning, worn out with fasting, while another was already luxuriating in the joys of the Resurrection? The fasts preceding Easter, which were the origin of Lent, were also subject to the greatest diversities in practice.

It was Asia which was most convulsed by these controversies. We have already seen how the question was discussed, ten or twelve years before this date, by Polycarp and Anicetus. Nearly all the Christian Churches, headed by the Church of Rome, had altered the date of Easter, postponing the feast to the Sunday after the fourteenth day of Nisan, and identifying it with the feast of the Resurrection. Asia had not joined in the movement; in this matter it had remained, so to speak, behindhand. The majority of the Asiatic bishops, faithful to the tradition of the old Gospels, and relying especially on Matthew's words, urged that Jesus, before dying, ate the Passover with his disciples on the fourteenth of Nisan; consequently, they celebrated that feast on the same day as the Jews, on whatever day of the week it happened to fall. In support of their opinion, they alleged the Gospel, the authority of their predecessors, the precepts of the Law, the canon of faith, and, above all, the authority of the apostles John and Philip, who had lived amongst them, without stopping to consider a curious anomaly in the case of the former. It is more than probable, indeed, that throughout his life the apostle John celebrated Easter on the fourteenth of Nisan; but, in the

Gospel attributed to him, he seems to teach an entirely different doctrine; treats the ancient Passover disdainfully as a Jewish feast, and assigns the death of Jesus to the day on which the lamb was eaten, as though to indicate thus the substitution of a new Paschal lamb for the old.

Polycarp, as we have noticed, adhered to the tradition of John and Philip. So also did Thraseas, Sagaris, Papirius, and Melito, and doubtless the Montanists were of the same opinion also. But the view held by the universal Church grew daily more imperious and embarrassing for these stubborn spirits. Apparently, Apollinarius of Hierapolis had become a convert to the Roman practice. He denounced the Easter of the fourteenth of Nisan, as a relic of Judaism, and cited the Gospel of John as a support to his view. Melito, noticing the perplexity of the faithful of Laodicæa, deprived of their pastor, wrote for their benefit his work on Easter, in which he asserted the tradition of the fourteenth of Nisan. Apollinarius maintained a moderation which was not invariably imitated. Asiatic opinion remained universally faithful to the Judaistic tradition; the Laodicæan controversy and the manifesto of Apollinarius had no immediate results. The remoter parts of Syria, and, with still greater reason, the Judeo-Christians and the Ebionites, likewise remained faithful to the Jewish observance. As to the rest of the Christian world, swayed by the example of the Church of Rome, it adopted the anti-Judaistic usage. Even the Gaulish Churches, which were of Asiatic origin, and had, no doubt, at the outset celebrated Easter on the fourteenth of Nisan, promptly ranged themselves with the universal, the really Christian calendar. Memories of the Resurrection entirely replaced those of the flight from Egypt, as the latter had superseded the purely naturalistic sense of the ancient Semitic *Paskh*, the spring-tide festival.

About the year 196 the question came up again in a more acute form than ever. The Asiatic Churches persisted in their old usage. Rome, ever fervent in the cause of unity, would fain have overruled them. On the invitation

of Pope Victor, assemblies of bishops were held, and a vast correspondence was engaged in. Eusebius had in his hands the synodal epistle of the Council of Palestine, presided over by Theophilus of Cæsarea and Narcissus of Jerusalem, the letter of the Synod of Rome, countersigned by Victor, the letters of the bishops of Pontius, of whom Palma, as being the senior, was primate, the letter of the Gaulish Churches, of which Irenæus was bishop, and, finally, those of the Churches of Osrhoene, not to mention private letters from several bishops, notably from Bacchylus of Corinth. It was unanimously agreed that the Easter festival should be transferred to the Sunday. But the bishops of Asia, strong in the tradition of the two apostles and so many illustrious men, were unwilling to yield. Old Polycrates, bishop of Ephesus, wrote in their name a somewhat sharp letter to Victor and the Church of Rome:—

"It is we who are faithful to tradition, neither adding to it nor taking away aught. In Asia lie those great fundamental men who shall rise from the dead on the day of the coming of the Lord, on that day when he shall descend in his glory from heaven to raise up all the saints: Philip, he who was of the twelve apostles, and is interred at Hierapolis, as are his two daughters who grew old in virginity, without speaking of that other daughter, who in her life-time observed the rule of the Holy Spirit, and rests at Ephesus;—then John, he whose head lay upon the Saviour's bosom, who was a pontiff bearing the *petalon* and a martyr and a doctor; he, too, is buried at Ephesus;—then Polycarp, he who at Smyrna was both bishop and martyr;—then Thraseas, bishop and martyr of Eumenia, who is buried at Smyrna. What need to speak of Sagaris, bishop and martyr, who is buried at Laodicæa, or of the blessed Papirius, or of Melito, the holy eunuch, who in all things followed the rule of the Holy Spirit, and rests at Sardis, awaiting the heavenly summons that will raise him from amongst the dead? All those men celebrated the Passover on the fourteenth day, according to the Gospel, making no new change, but following the rule of the faith. And I, too, have done the like, I, Polycrates, the least of you all, conformably with the tradition of my kin, of whom some have been my masters (for there have been seven bishops in my family; I am the eighth); and all these kinsmen of mine, whom I venerate, solemnised the day on which the people began to forbid themselves leaven. I, then, my brethren, who have lived sixty-five years in the Lord, who have spoken with the brethren of the whole world, who have read the holy scripture from one end to the other, I shall not lose my head however they may

threaten me. Greater than I have said, 'It is better to obey God than men.' I could cite the bishops here present whom, at your request, I have convoked; were I to write down their names, the list would be long. They all, having come to see me, poor wretch that I am, have given their adhesion to my letter, knowing that it is not for nothing that my hair is white, and assured that all I do, I do in the Lord Jesus."

What proves that the papacy was already established, and firmly established, is the incredible scheme with which the rather bitter language of this letter inspired Victor. He claimed to excommunicate, to separate from the universal Church, its most illustrious province, on the ground that the latter would not let its traditions yield to Roman discipline. He promulgated a decree by virtue of which the Churches of Asia were outlawed from the Christian communion. But the other bishops opposed this violent measure, and recalled Victor to charity. Irenæus of Lyons, in particular, who, urged by the necessities of the world to which he found himself transported, had fallen in with the Western custom for himself and his Gaulish Churches, could not endure the thought that the mother Churches of Asia, to which he felt attached by his deepest and tenderest affections, should be severed from the body of the universal Church. He vigorously dissuaded Victor from excommunicating Churches which adhered to the tradition of their fathers, and recalled to him the example of his more tolerant predecessors.

"Yes, the elders who ruled before Soter over the Church which you govern now, I mean Pius and Hyginus and Telesephorus and Xystus, did not observe the Jewish Passover, or permit those about them to observe it; but though they did not themselves observe it, they none the less remained at peace with the members of the Churches that celebrated it when the latter visited them, albeit this observance in the midst of people who observed it not, made the contrast all the more glaring. Never was any man denounced for this reason; on the contrary, the elders who preceded you, and who, I repeat, did not themselves observe it, sent the eucharist to the elders of the Churches that paid it observance. And when the blessed Polycarp came to Rome in the time of Anicetus, these two gave one another on meeting the kiss of peace. They had certain little difficulties between them, but this point they did not even discuss. For neither did Anicetus seek to persuade Polycarp to give up a practice which he had always cherished, and

which he held from his dealings with John, the disciple of the Lord, and the other apostles; nor Polycarp to win over Anicetus, the latter saying that he must cleave fast to the custom of the elders before him. On these terms they took communion with each other, and in the church Anicetus left the eucharistic consecration to Polycarp, to do him honour. They parted from one another in perfect peace, and it was established that observants and non-observants were, each in their own fashion, in harmony with the universal Church."

This admirable piece of common-sense, which inaugurates so gloriously the annals of the Gallican Church, prevented the schism of East and West from taking place in the second century. Irenæus wrote all round to the bishops, and the question remained an open one for the Churches of Asia. Rome naturally continued its agitation against the celebration of Easter on the fourteenth of Nisan. A Roman priest called Blastus, who claimed the right to establish the Asiatic usage at Rome, was excommunicated; Irenæus opposed it. Those interested did not deny themselves the use of apocryphal documents. The Roman practice gained ground from day to day.

The question was only decided by the Council of Nicæa. Thenceforth it was heretical to follow the tradition of John, Philip, Polycarp, and Melito. What had already happened so often came to pass once more. By reason of their very fidelity, the defenders of the old tradition found it their fate to be expelled from the Church and have the status of heretics, Quartodecimans.

The Jewish calendar offered certain perplexities, and in countries where there were no Jews, there would have been some difficulty in determining the fourteenth of Nisan. It was agreed that the Sunday of the Resurrection should be the Sunday corresponding or succeeding to the first full moon after the spring equinox. The preceding Friday, naturally, became the memorial day of the Passion, the Thursday that of the institution of the Lord's Supper. Holy Week thus came into being on the tradition of the older Gospels, not on that of the so-called Gospel of John. Pentecost, which was now the feast of the Holy Spirit, fell on the seventh Sunday after Easter, and the cycle of the movable feasts of

the Christian year was uniformly settled for all the churches until the Gregorian reform.

The procedure entailed by the disputation had more importance than the disputation itself. By reason of this controversy, indeed, the Church was led to take a clearer view of its own organisation. It was evident, in the first place, that the layman had no longer any standing. The bishops alone joined in the discussion and expressed their opinions. They assembled in provincial synods, presided over by the bishop of the capital of the province (the future archbishop), or sometimes by the senior bishop. The synodal assembly decided on a letter which was despatched to the other Churches. There was thus, as it were, a rudimentary federative organisation, an attempt to solve questions at issue by means of provincial assemblies, held under the presidency of the bishops, and in mutual correspondence. At a later date, the documents of this great ecclesiastical struggle were searched for precedents in matters relating to the government of the synods and the hierarchy of the Churches Of all the Churches, that of Rome appears to have had a special right to take the initiative; and this right of initiative was chiefly exercised with the view of inducing unity among the Churches, even at the risk of the gravest schisms. The bishop of Rome claimed the inordinate right of expelling from the Church any fraction which held by its own special traditions. About the year 196 this exaggerated desire for unity all but brought about the schisms which took place later. But on this occasion a great bishop, inspired with the true spirit of Jesus, prevailed over the Pope. Irenæus made his protest, undertook a peace mission, and succeeded in subduing the evil caused by Roman ambition. Men were still far from believing in the infallibility of the bishop of Rome, for Eusebius declares he has read letters in which the bishops vigorously found fault with Victor's conduct.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE LAST REVIVAL OF MILLENARIANISM AND PROPHECY—THE MONTANISTS.

DESPITE the affirmations of Jesus and the prophets inspired by him, the great day refused to come. Christ was long in appearing; the fervent piety of the early days, which had had as its motive, belief in that advent being near at hand, had cooled in many believers. It was on the earth as it was, in the very bosom of Roman society, corrupt and yet keenly interested in reform and progress, that men now dreamed of founding the kingdom of God. Christian morals, from the moment they aspired to become those of society at large, had on several points to relax their primitive severity. No longer did the convert embrace Christianity, as in the early days, under the influence of a strong personal impression; many were born Christians. Every day the contrast between the Church and the world about it grew less sharply defined. It was inevitable that extremists should consider that the Church was plunging into the mire of dangerous worldliness, and that a pietistic party should arise to join issue with the general lukewarmness, carry on the supernatural gifts of the apostolic Church, and prepare mankind, by redoubling the rigours of austerity, for the trials of the latter days.

We have already seen the pious author of *Hermas* weeping over the degeneracy of his time, and praying for a reformation that would make the Church a convent of saints of both sexes. There was, indeed, something illogical in the torpor in which the orthodox Church slumbered peacefully, and in the easy-going morality to which the work of Jesus tended more and more to be reduced. The founder's precise predictions of the end of the actual world, and the Messianic reign to follow, were neglected. The approaching advent in the skies was almost forgotten. Desire for martyrdom and 'ove of celibacy, the consequences of such a

belief, weakened. Intercourse with an impure world, condemned to early annihilation, was indulged in; believers negotiated with persecution, and sought to escape it by paying fines. It was inevitable that the ideas which had formed the essence of nascent Christianity should reappear from time to time with all their severity and intimidation, in the midst of this general decrepitude. Fanaticism, tempered by the common-sense of orthodoxy, had periodical eruptions like a slumbering volcano.

The most remarkable of these very natural revivals of the apostolic spirit was that which took place in Phrygia, in the reign of Marcus Aurelius. It was something entirely analogous to contemporary phenomena in England and America among the Irvingites and Latter-day Saints. Persons of simple and enthusiastic spirit believed themselves called to renew the marvels of individual inspiration, unshackled by the bonds, already heavy, of the Church and the episcopate. A doctrine which had long been diffused through Asia Minor, that of a Paraclete who was to come and complete the work of Jesus, or rather to resume the teaching of Jesus, re-establish it in its truth, and purify it from the changes introduced by apostles and bishops, a doctrine such as this, I say, opened the door to all manner of innovations. The Church of the saints was conceived as being ever progressive, and destined to traverse successive degrees of perfection. Prophecy passed for being the most natural thing in the world. Sibyllists and prophets of every variety swarmed in the streets, and, despite their clumsy artifices, found credence and welcome.

Some little towns in the more desolate districts of Burnt Phrygia, such as Tymium and Pepuza, the very sites of which are now unknown, were the scene of this belated enthusiasm. Phrygia was one of the countries of antiquity most given over to religious ecstasy. The Phrygians had a general reputation of being stupid and simple. From the outset Christianity had amongst them an essentially mystical and ascetic character. In the Epistle to the Colossians, we have found Paul already attacking errors

of belief, of which foreboding signs of Gnosticism and the excesses of an ill-understood asceticism seem to form a part. Nearly everywhere else Christianity was a religion of great cities; here, as in Syria beyond the Jordan, it was a religion of villages and rustics. A certain Montanus of the country town of Ardabav, in Mysia, on the borders of Phrygia, succeeded in giving those pious follies a contagious character which up till then they had not possessed.

Undoubtedly, imitation of the Jewish prophets, and of those called into being by the new Law at the opening of the apostolic age, was the chief element in this renascence of prophecy. There was mingled with it also, perhaps, an orgiastic and corybantic element appropriate to the land of its origin, and quite alien to the regulated conduct of ecclesiastical prophecy, which was already subject to tradition. This whole credulous society was of Phrygian race, and spoke the Phrygian tongue. Even in the most orthodox parts of Christendom, moreover, the miraculous passed for being a very simple matter. Revelation was not closed up; it was the very life of the Church. Spiritual gifts, apostolic charisms continued in many communities, and were alleged as demonstrations of the truth. Agab, Judas, Silas, the daughters of Philip, Ammias of Philadelphia, and Quadratus were cited as having been endowed with the spirit of prophecy. It was even admitted as a principle that the prophetic gift would endure in the Church, by an uninterrupted succession, until the coming of Christ. Belief in the Paraclete, conceived as a permanent source of inspiration for the faithful, favoured these ideas. Who cannot see how fruitful of peril was such a belief? So it was that the spirit of wisdom which guided the Church tended more and more to subordinate supernatural gifts to the authority of the body of presbyters. The bishops claimed the power of discriminating between spirits, and the right to approve some and exorcise the others. In this case it was an entirely popular system of prophecy, which arose without the consent of the clergy, and would fain have governed the Church without refer-

ence to the hierarchy. The question of ecclesiastical authority and individual inspiration, which has pervaded the whole history of the Church, especially since the sixteenth century, was clearly propounded from this moment. Is there or is there not an intermediary between the believer and his God? Montanus returned an unhesitating negative. "Man," said the Paraclete in one of the oracles of Montanus, "is the lyre over which I fly like the the bow; man slumbers whilst I watch."

Montanus no doubt justified this pretension to being the elect of the Spirit by some superiority. We are ready to believe his adversaries when they tell us that he was a believer of recent date; we shall even admit that desire for pre-eminence was not foreign to his nature. As to the debaucheries and the shameful end attributed to him, those are merely the commonplace slanders, which never fail the pen of orthodox writers, when they deem it necessary to blacken the character of those who differ from them. The admiration he excited in Phrygia was extraordinary. One of his disciples asserted that he had learned more from his books than from the Law, the prophets, and the evangelists combined. It was believed that he had received the full inspiration of the Paraclete; at times he was taken for the Paraclete himself, in other words, for that Messiah, higher in many respects than Jesus, whom the Churches of Asia Minor believed Jesus had himself promised. Some even went so far as to say, "The Paraclete has revealed greater things by Montanus than Christ by the Gospel." The Law and the prophets were regarded as the childhood of religion, the Gospel as its youth, whilst the coming of the Paraclete was deemed the sign of its manhood.

Montanus, like all the prophets of the new alliance, was lavish in curses on the age and on the Roman Empire. Even the seer of 69 was surpassed. Never before had hatred of the world and desire of seeing the annihilation of pagan society been expressed with so naïve a fury. The one theme of Phrygian prophecies was the approaching judgment of God, the punishment of persecutors, the

destruction of the profane world, the reign of a thousand years with its delights. Martyrdom was recommended as the highest perfection; to die in his bed was reputed unworthy of a Christian. The Encratites, in condemning sexual intercourse, at least recognised its importance from the point of view of nature. Montanus did not even take the trouble to forbid an act which had become absolutely insignificant now that mankind had reached its last hour. The door was thus thrown open to debauchery at the same moment that it was shut to the tenderest duties.

In the company of Montanus appear two women—one called sometimes Prisca, sometimes Priscilla, sometimes Quintilla, and the other Maximilla. These two women, who seemingly must have forsaken the married state to follow a prophetic career, entered upon it with extreme daring, and an utter contempt for the hierarchy. Despite Paul's wise prohibition of women's participation in the prophetic and ecstatic practices of the Church, Priscilla and Maximilla did not hesitate to seek the notoriety of a public ministry. Apparently, in this, as in most cases, individual inspiration was accompanied by licence and audacity. Priscilla had features that recall St. Catherine of Siena and Marie Alacoque. One day, at Pepuza, she fell asleep, and saw Christ approaching her, clad in shining raiment, and having the appearance of a woman. Christ lay down by her side, and in this mystic embrace inoculated her with all wisdom. In particular, he revealed to her the holiness of the town of Pepuza. That privileged place was to be the spot on which the heavenly Jerusalem would take its stand, when it descended from the skies. Maximilla's preaching was couched in the same style, and she announced terrible wars, catastrophes, and persecutions. She survived Priscilla, and died asserting that after her there would be no more prophecy till the end of time.

It was not only prophecy, but all the functions of the clergy that this grotesque Christian Church claimed the right to assign to women. The presbytery, the episcopate,

and all offices in the Church, from the highest to the lowest, were thrown open to them. To justify this claim, such women were instanced as Mary, the sister of Moses, the four daughters of Philip, and even Eve, for whom extenuating circumstances were pleaded, and who was transformed into a saint. The most extraordinary feature in the worship of the sect was the ceremony of the Weeping Women, or Lampadophorian Virgins, which, in many respects, recalls the Protestant "revivals" of America. Seven virgins, clad in white and bearing torches, entered the church, uttering groans of penitence, shedding torrents of tears, and deploring with expressive gestures the misery of human life. Scenes of illuminatism then commenced. In the midst of the people the virgins were seized with enthusiasm, preached, prophesied, and fell on the ground in ecstasy. Those present burst into tears, and left the building, filled with contrition.

The fascination exercised by these women on the multitude, and even on a part of the clergy, was amazing. Some went so far as to prefer the prophetesses of Pepuza to the apostles, and even to Christ himself. The more moderate saw in them the prophets foretold by Jesus as destined to complete his work. The whole of Asia Minor was disturbed. People journeyed from neighbouring countries to see these ecstatic phenomena, and form an opinion of the new school of prophecy. The emotion experienced was so much the greater, since no one denied the possibility of prophecy *a priori*. It was solely a question of knowing if it were genuine. The most distant Churches, those of Lyons and Vienne, wrote to Asia seeking information. Several bishops, in particular Ælius Publius, Julius of Debeltus, and Sotas of Anchiale in Thrace, came thither to be eye-witnesses. The whole of Christendom was moved by those miracles, which seemed to be taking Christianity a hundred and thirty years back to the days of its dawn.

The majority of the bishops, Apollinaris of Hierapolis, Zoticus of Comana, Julian of Apamæa, Miltiades, the famous ecclesiastical writer, a certain Aurelius of Cyrene,

who was entitled "Martyr" in his lifetime, and the two bishops of Thrace refused to take the illuminati of Pepuza seriously. Nearly all of them declared individual prophecy subversive to the Church, and treated Priscilla as one possessed. Some orthodox bishops, Sotas of Anchiale and Zoticus of Comana more especially, even wished to exorcise her, but the Phrygians prevented them. Certain persons of distinction, moreover, such as Themison, Theodotus, Alciabiades, and Proclus, gave way to the prevailing enthusiasm, and took to prophesying on their own account. Theodotus, in particular, acted as the chief of the sect after Montanus, and was his principal zealot. As to the common folk, they were ravished. The gloomy oracles of the prophetesses were retailed and expounded far and wide. A veritable Church formed about them. All the spiritual powers of the apostolic age were renewed, the gift of tongues and ecstasies in particular. There was over-much readiness to accept the dangerous argument, "Why should not what has taken place take place again? The present generation is no more disinherited than the others. Is not the Paraclete, as a representative of Christ, an eternal source of revelation?" Innumerable little books diffused such chimeras abroad. The worthy folk who read them considered the fare they offered finer than the Bible. The new practices appeared to them superior to the miraculous powers of the apostles, and many dared to aver that a greater than Jesus had appeared. The whole of Phrygia literally went mad: the ordinary ecclesiastical life was, as it were, suspended for the time being.

A life of rigorous asceticism was the consequence of this burning faith in God's approaching descent on earth. The prayers of the Phrygian saints were unceasing. They prayed with affectation, a melancholy air, and a kind of bigotry. Their habit in praying of putting the point of the forefinger to the nose, so as to give themselves a look of penitence, brought them the nickname of "pegged noses" (in Phrygian, *tascodrugites*). Fasting, austerity, rigorous xerophagy, abstinence from wine, absolute reprobation of

marriage; such was the morality which pious persons, lurking in retirement and cherishing hopes of the last day, had logically to impose on themselves. Even for the Lord's Supper they only used, like certain of the Ebionites, bread and water, cheese and salt. Austere systems of discipline are always contagious in crowds, incapable, as the latter are, of high spirituality; for they make salvation certain at a cheap rate, and the simple, who have nothing more than their good will, find them easy to practise. These usages spread on all sides; borne by the Asiatics, who in such numbers ascended the valley of the Rhone, they even reached the Gauls. One of the Lyonese martyrs in 177 showed himself so attached to them, that Gaulish common-sense, or, as the belief was then, a direct revelation from God, was necessary to make him renounce them.

What was most mischievous, in fact, in the excesses of zeal of those ardent ascetics, was the intolerance they displayed to all who did not share their affectations. They spoke of nothing but the general laxity of morals. Like the mediæval Flagellants, they deemed their external practices a reason for foolish vanity and revolt against the clergy. They dared to assert that since Jesus, or at least since the apostles, the Church had been wasting its time, and that there was no longer any need to wait an hour for the sanctification of mankind and its preparation for the reign of the Messiah. The Church of the whole world was, in their view, worth no more than pagan society. The essential point was to form in the midst of the Church at large a spiritual Church, a nucleus of saints, of which Pepuza should be the centre. Those elect spirits disdained simple believers. Themison declared that the Catholic Church had lost all its glory, and obeyed Satan. A Church of saints: such was their ideal, differing but slightly from that of the pseudo-Hermas. He that was not holy was not of the Church. "The Church," they said, "is the whole body of the saints, not the number of the bishops."

Clearly nothing could be further from the idea of

catholicity, which tended to prevail, and the essence of which consisted in throwing the doors open to all. The Catholics took the Church as it was, with all its imperfections; according to them, it was possible to be a sinner without ceasing to be a Christian. For the Montanists these two terms were irreconcilable. The Church must be chaste as a virgin; the sinner is excluded from it by the very fact of his sin, and forthwith loses all hope of return. The Church's absolution is worthless. Holy things must be administered by holy men. The bishops have no privilege in aught concerning spiritual gifts. None but the prophets, organs of the Holy Ghost, can give assurance of God's forgiveness.

Thanks to the extraordinary manifestations of an ostentatious and indiscreet pietism, Pepuza and Tymium became, in a manner, holy cities. They were called Jerusalem, and sectaries would have it that they were the centre of the world. Pilgrims flocked to them from all parts, and many maintained that, as Priscilla had prophesied, the ideal Sion had already been created. Was not ecstasy the provisional realisation of the kingdom of God which Jesus had begun? Women forsook their husbands, as though humanity were at its last gasp. Every day men expected to see the skies open, and the new Jerusalem appear in the azure vault of heaven.

The orthodox, the clergy especially, naturally sought to prove that the fascination exercised on those puritans by eternal things, did not entirely detach them from the earth. The sect had a central fund for mission work. Collectors swarmed everywhere in quest of offerings. The preachers were in receipt of salaries; the prophetesses, on their return from the seances they gave or the audiences they accorded, received money, clothes, and valuable presents. It is clear how much all this laid the pretended saints open to criticism. They had their confessors and martyrs, and that was what troubled the orthodox most; the latter would fain have had martyrdom the criterion of the true Church. No scandal, accordingly, was spared to belittle the merit of those sec-

tarian martyrs. Themison, having been arrested, escaped pursuit, it was said, by bribery. A certain Alexander was imprisoned also, and the orthodox gave themselves no rest till they had represented him as a thief who entirely deserved his fate, and had a criminal record against him in the archives of the province of Asia.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE RESISTANCE OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH

THE struggle lasted for more than half a century, but the issue was never doubtful. The Phrygians, as they were called, were wrong on only one point. It was a grave one, that of doing what the apostles had done, and doing it when, for a hundred years past, the free employment of miraculous powers had been nothing more than an inconvenience. By now the Church was too firmly established to be shaken by the lack of discipline of the Phrygian enthusiasts. While duly admiring the saints produced by that great school of asceticism, the immense majority of the faithful declined to abandon their pastors and follow wayward masters. Montanus, Priscilla, and Maximilla died, leaving no successors. What assured the triumph of the orthodox Church was the talent of its controversial writers. Apollinaris of Hierapolis reclaimed all those who were not blinded by fanaticism. Miltiades elaborated the thesis that "a prophet ought not to speak in ecstasy," in a book reputed one of the foundations of Christian theology. About 195, Serapion of Antioch made a collection of testimonies condemning the innovators. Clement of Alexandria purposed to refute them.

The most thorough-going of the works called into being by the controversy was that of a certain Apollonius, otherwise unknown, who wrote forty years after the advent of Montanus (that is to say, between 200 and 210). It is to

extracts from this, preserved for us by Eusebius, that we owe our acquaintance with the origins of the sect. Another bishop, whose name has been lost to us, wrote a kind of history of this singular movement, fifteen years after the death of Maximilla, under the Severi. Possibly to the same literature belongs the work, of which the fragment known as the *Canon of Muratori* forms part, directed also, apparently, against the Montanist pseudo-prophecy and the visions of the Gnostics. The Montanists, indeed, aimed at nothing short of the admittance of the prophecies of Montanus, Priscilla, and Maximilla to the canon of the New Testament. The conference which took place about 210, between Proclus, who had become chief of the sect, and the Roman priest Caius, turned on this point. As a rule, the Church of Rome, up to the time of Zephyrinus, maintained a firm front against these innovations.

Animosity was intense on one side and the other; there were reciprocal excommunications. When adherents of the two parties were brought in contact by martyrdom, they avoided one another, and would have nothing in common. The orthodox multiplied sophistries and calumnies to prove that the Montanist martyrs (and no Church had more) were all of them miscreants or impostors; and, above all, to demonstrate that the authors of the sect had perished miserably by suicide, frenzied, demented, the dupe or prey of the devil.

The infatuation of certain cities in Asia Minor for those pious follies knew no bounds. At one time the whole Church of Ancyra, its elders included, was seduced by the dangerous novelties. To open the eyes of its members, the closely-knit arguments of the bishop, whose name is unknown to us, and of Zoticus of Otra were necessary, and the conversion was not a lasting one. Ancyra in the fourth century continued to be the home of the same aberrations. The Church of Thyatira was infested by them still more seriously. There Phrygianism had made its stronghold, and for long that ancient Church was deemed lost for Christianity. The Councils of Iconium and Synnada,

about 231, diagnosed the evil but were unable to cure it. The extreme credulity of those worthy folk of central Asia Minor—Phrygians, Galatians, and others—had been the cause of the prompt conversions to Christianity which had taken place in that region; and the same credulity now put them at the mercy of all manner of illusions. "Phrygian" became almost synonymous with "heretic." About 235 a new prophetess stirred up the countrysides of Cappadocia, wandering bare-footed on the mountains, announcing the end of the world, administering the sacraments, and eager to draw her disciples with her to Jerusalem. Under Decius, the Montanists supplied a considerable contingent to martyrdom.

We shall note in due course the conscientious difficulties into which the Phrygian sectaries were to lead the confessors of Lyons in the height of their struggle. Divided between admiration for so much saintliness and the amazement caused their logical sense by so many strange freaks, our heroic and judicious compatriots were in vain to attempt to extinguish the controversy. The Church of Rome also was momentarily almost taken by surprise. The bishop, Zephyrinus, had all but given recognition to the prophecies of Montanus, Priscilla, and Maximilla, when an ardent Asiatic, a confessor of the faith, Epigones, surnamed Praxeas, who knew the sectaries better than did the elders of Rome, disclosed the weak points of the alleged prophets, and pointed out to the Pope that he could not bestow approval on their dreams, without giving the lie to his predecessors who had denounced them.

The discussion was complicated by the question of penitence and reconciliation. The bishops claimed their right to give absolution, and employed it with a breadth that scandalised the puritans. The illuminati asserted that they alone could restore the soul to God's grace, and showed great severity. Every mortal sin (homicide, idolatry, blasphemy, adultery, fornication) closed, according to them, the way to repentance. Had these extreme principles remained confined to remote districts of Catacecaumene,

little harm would have been done. But, unfortunately, the little Phrygian sect served as a nucleus to an influential party, which afforded real dangers, since it was capable of tearing from the orthodox Church the latter's most illustrious apologist, Tertullian. This party, which dreamed of an immaculate Church and only achieved a narrow conventicle, succeeded, despite its exaggerations, or rather by reason of its exaggerations, in recruiting all the ascetics and extremists in the universal Church. How well it understood the logic of Christianity! We have already noticed the same thing occur in the case of the Encratites and Tatian. With its unnatural abstinences, its dislike of marriage, its condemnation of second marriages, Montanism was nothing more than a logical Millenarianism, and Millenarianism was Christianity itself. "What has the care of infants to do with the Last Judgment?" exclaims Tertullian. "Heaving breasts, the qualms of childbirth, and whimpering brats will make a fine scene combined with the advent of the Judge and the sound of the trumpet. Ah, what good midwives the executioners of the Antichrist will be!" Enthusiasts told each other how every morning for forty days there had been seen in Judæa, hanging from heaven, a city which vanished when one approached it. To prove the reality of the vision, they invoked the testimony of pagans, and every one reckoned up for himself the delights he would taste in that heavenly abode, as compensation for the sacrifices which he had made here below.

Africa especially, by reason of its fervour and barbarism, was to fall into the same snare. Montanists, Novatians, Donatists, Circumcellions, are the various names under which were manifested the spirit of revolt, morbid eagerness for martyrdom, aversion from episcopacy, and Millenarian hallucinations which always found a fertile soil among the Berber races. Those rigorists who exclaimed against being called a sect, but who, in each Church, posed as the elect, as the only Christians worthy the name, those puritans, implacable towards the penitent, were to be the worst of all curses to Christianity. Tertullian was to describe the

general Church as a den of adulterers and harlots. In the eyes of enthusiasts, the bishops, having neither the gift of prophecy nor that of miracles, were to be held inferior to the Pneumatomachians. It is by the latter, and not by the official hierarchy, that sacramental graces are handed on, the movement of the Church aided, and progress made. The true Christian, living with nought in view save martyrdom and the Last Judgment, spends his life in meditation. Not only must he not flee persecution, but he is bidden to seek it. There is constant preparation for martyrdom as an essential element in the Christian life. The Christian's natural end is to die in torture. A frenzied superstition, an invincible faith in spiritual powers, succeeded in making Montanism one of the most extravagant types of fanaticism recorded in human annals.

What was of grave importance was, that this terrible hallucination seduced the imagination of the one man of great literary talent whom the Church counted among its members for three centuries. An incorrect writer, but of gloomy energy, an ardent sophist, making use of irony, abuse, and petty quibbling in turn, the plaything of a fervent conviction even in its most obvious contradictions, Tertullian found means to endow the moribund Latin tongue with masterpieces, in expressing his savage ideal with an eloquence that had always remained unknown to the bigoted ascetics of Phrygia.

The victory of episcopacy was in this case the victory of indulgence and humanity. With rare good sense the Church, as a whole, regarded exaggerated abstinences as a kind of partial anathema cast on creation, and an insult to the work of God. The question of the admission of women to ecclesiastical functions and administration of the sacraments, a question left undecided by certain precedents in apostolic history, was irrevocably settled. The impudent claim of the Phrygian sectaries to insert new prophecies in the scriptural canon led the Church to declare, more distinctly than it had hitherto done, that the Bible was closed once and for all. Finally, the foolhardy quest of

martyrdom became a kind of offence, and, side by side with the legend exalting the true martyr, there arose the legend designed to show how guilty is the presumption that seeks chastisement, and, without compulsion, infringes the laws of the land.

The flock of believers, necessarily composed as it was of persons of commonplace virtue, followed in the steps of the pastors. Mediocrity founded authority; Catholicism began. To it belonged the future. The spirit of a kind of Christian Yogiism was temporarily stifled. This was the episcopate's first victory, and perhaps its most important, for it was a victory won over a sincere form of piety. Ecstasy, prophecy, and the gift of tongues had on their side the scripture texts and history. But they had become a danger; the episcopate brought law and order to bear on them, and suppressed all such manifestations of individual faith. How far we have travelled from the age so greatly admired by the author of the Acts! In the bosom of Christianity already existed that party of common sense and moderate views, which has invariably won the day in the controversies of Church history. The authority of the hierarchy was, from the outset, sufficiently powerful to subdue the enthusiasm of the lawless, to put the layman under guardianship, and to ensure the triumph of the principle that the bishops alone should deal with theology and judge of revelations. It was, indeed, nothing short of the death of Christianity by the destruction of the episcopate that the honest madmen of Phrygia were preparing to bring about. Had individual inspiration, the doctrine of revelation and change in permanence, won the battle, Christianity would have perished in petty conventicles of epileptics. Those puerile mortifications of the flesh, which could not possibly have won the acceptance of the world at large, would have checked its spread. If all the faithful had had the same right to priestly functions, to spiritual gifts, and to administration of the sacraments, utter anarchy would have ensued. Miracle-working was on the point of destroying the sacrament; the sacrament gained the day,

and the foundation-stone of Catholicism was laid once and for all.

In short, the triumph of the ecclesiastical hierarchy was complete. Under Callistus (217-222) moderate opinions prevailed in the Church of Rome, to the great scandal of the extremists, who avenged themselves by atrocious calumnies. The Council of Iconium closed the debate for the Church, without winning back the wanderers to the fold. The sect did not expire till a very late date; it continued to the sixth century as a Christian democracy, especially in Asia Minor, under the names of Phrygians, Cataphrygians, Pepuzians, Tascodrugites, Quintillians, Priscillians, and Artotyrites. They themselves assumed the name of Purists, or Pneumatomachians. For centuries Phrygia and Galatia were devoured by pietistic and Gnostic heresies, dreaming of clouds of angels and æons. Pepuza was destroyed, when, or under what circumstances, is unknown; but the site remained holy. The desert on which it had stood became a goal for pilgrims. There, initiates from every part of Asia Minor assembled, and celebrated secret rites, on which popular rumour had excellent opportunities for exercising itself. They energetically affirmed that to be the spot where the heavenly vision was to be revealed; and there they remained for days and nights of mystic expectancy, at the end of which they beheld Christ himself, coming to make response to the fervour that consumed them as with fire.

CHAPTER XV.

COMPLETE TRIUMPH OF THE EPISCOPATE—THE RESULTS OF MONTANISM.

Thus, thanks to the episcopate, deemed the representative of the tradition of the twelve apostles, the Church underwent without enfeeblement the most difficult of transforma-

tions. It passed, if I may dare to say so, from the conventual status to the lay status, from the status of a little chapel of visionaries to the status of a church open to all, and consequently exposed to many imperfections. What had seemed destined to be no more than a fanatical dream, became a lasting religion. To be a Christian, whatever Hermas and the Montanists might say, it was not to be necessary to be a saint. Obedience to ecclesiastical authority, much rather than spiritual gifts, was what made the Christian now. Henceforth these spiritual gifts were even to be suspicious, and frequently expose those most favoured by grace to the risk of becoming heretics. Schism was the ecclesiastical crime *par excellence*. Just as the Christian Church already possessed, in the case of dogma, a centre of orthodoxy, which laid the charge of heresy on all who departed from received tradition, so also it had a moral standard which was fitted to be that of the whole world, and did not forcibly involve, like that of the abstinents, the end of the universe. In repulsing the Gnostics the Church had repulsed the ultra-refined of dogma; in rejecting the Montanists it rejected the ultra-refined of holiness. The excesses of those who dreamed of a spiritual Church and transcendental perfection were shattered against the common sense of the established Church. The masses of converts, already considerable, who were entering the Church formed the majority within it, and lowered the moral temperature to the level of the possible.

In politics the question took the same form. The exaggerations of the Montanists, their furious ravings against the Roman Empire, their hatred of pagan society could not be a line of conduct for all. The Empire of Marcus Aurelius was very different from that of Nero. With the latter there was no reconciliation to be hoped for, with the former a mutual understanding was possible. In many respects the Church and Marcus Aurelius pursued the same end. It is clear that the bishops would have abandoned all the saints in Phrygia to the secular arm, had such a sacrifice been the price of

an alliance putting in their hands the spiritual direction of the world.

Miraculous powers, finally, and other supernatural practices, excellently adapted though they might be for exciting the fervour of little congregations of illuminati, were becoming impracticable for great Churches. Extreme severity in rules of penitence was an absurdity and folly, if aught else than a conventicle of professed purists were aimed at. There is no such thing as an immaculate people, and the humble believer must needs be permitted to repent more than once. It was accordingly admitted that to be a member of the Church it was neither necessary to be a hero nor an ascetic, that submission to the bishop sufficed. The saints were to cry out against such a view, the strife between individual sanctity and the hierarchy was never to be concluded; but moderation was to win the day—it was to be possible to sin without ceasing to be a Christian. The hierarchy was even to show a preference for the sinner who employed the ordinary means of reconciliation, over the proud ascetic, who justified himself or believed he had no need of justification.

Nevertheless, neither of these two principles was destined utterly to exclude the other. Side by side with the Church of all men, there was to be the Church of the saints; with the world, the convent; with the plain believer, the monk. The kingdom of God, as Jesus preached it, being impossible in the world as it actually is, and the world being stubborn in resisting change, what is to be done but found little kingdoms of God, islets, so to speak, in an ocean of irremediable perversity, in which the teaching of the Gospel is literally applied, and in which that distinction between precept and counsel, which in the worldly Church serves as a loophole of escape from impossibilities, is ignored? Conventual life is in some measure a logical necessity to Christianity. A great organism finds means to develop all that exists in germ within it. The ideal of perfection which forms the basis of the Galilean preaching of Jesus, and which some true disciples will ever persist in up-

holding, cannot exist in the world. For that ideal to be realised it was, then, necessary to create closed worlds—monasteries, in which poverty, abnegation, mutual watchfulness and correction, obedience and chastity were rigorously practised. In reality the Gospel is rather the enchiridion of a convent than an ethical code; it is the essential rule of life for every monastic order. The perfect Christian is a monk, the monk a consistent Christian; the convent is the place where the Gospel, everywhere else Utopian, becomes a reality. The book which claims to teach the imitation of Jesus Christ is a book for the cloister. Satisfied with the knowledge that the morality preached by Jesus is somewhere practised, the layman will find consolations for his worldly attachments, and easily accustom himself to believe that such lofty rules of perfection are not made for him. Buddhism has solved the question in another fashion. In that form of faith every one is a monk for part of his life. Christianity is content, if somewhere there are places where the true Christian life is put in practice; the Buddhist is satisfied, provided that at one moment of his life he has been a perfect Buddhist.

Montanism was an exaggeration, and had to perish. But, like all exaggerations, it left profound traces. The Christian romance was in part its work. Its two great enthusiasms, chastity and martyrdom, remained the two fundamental elements of Christian literature. It was Montanism which invented that strange association of ideas, created the virgin martyr, and, introducing womanly charm into the gloomiest narratives of torture, inaugurated the grotesque literature which haunted the Christian imagination from the fourth century onwards. The Montanist Acts of St. Perpetua and the Antioch martyrs, breathing faith in miraculous powers, inspired by extreme severity and burning fervour, impregnated with a strong savour of captive love, mingling the finest imaginations of a highly developed æsthetic sense with the most fanatical dreams, opened the series of those austerely voluptuous writings. The quest of martyrdom became an uncontrollable fever. Crazy bands of Circum-

cellions wandering the country, seeking death and forcing people to make martyrs of them, turned these fits of gloomy hysteria into an epidemic.

Chastity in marriage remained one of the leading interests in the Christian romances. Here again we have a Montanist idea. Like the pseudo-Hermas, the Montanists were incessantly stirring the dangerous crust of ashes, which it is well to leave to itself with its hidden fires, but imprudent to extinguish violently. The precautions they took in this matter testify to a certain morbid interest, in itself more lascivious than the freedom of the man of the world. In any case, the precautions were such as to aggravate the evil, or at least reveal it and give it life. An excessive susceptibility to temptation is to be concluded from this exaggerated dread of beauty, and from the regulations dealing with women's apparel, especially with their arts of hairdressing, which are to be found on every page of the Montanist writings. The woman who, by the most innocent turn given her hair, seeks to give pleasure and induce the simple reflection that she is pretty, is in the eyes of those bitter sectaries as guilty as she who excites to debauchery. The demon of the hair is entrusted with her punishment. Aversion from marriage was due to motives which should rather have encouraged it. The alleged chastity of the Encratites was frequently nothing more than an unconscious self-deception.

A romance which was certainly of Montanist origin, since it includes arguments to prove that women have a right to teach and administer the sacraments, turns entirely on this somewhat perilous ambiguity. It is of *Thecla* that I speak. Risky and exciting in a very different manner is the romance of St. Nereus and St. Achilleus; never was there such voluptuous chastity, never was marriage treated with such naïve shamelessness. He who reads in Gregory of Tours the delightful legend of "The Two Lovers of Auvergne," in the *Acts of John* the striking episode of "Drusiana," in the *Acts of Thomas* the story of "The Betrothed Lovers of India," in St. Ambrose the episode of the virgin of Antioch in the brothel, can understand that

the ages which found refreshment in such narratives could, with no claim to merit, imagine they had renounced profane love. One of the mysteries most profoundly perceived by the founders of Christianity is that chastity has a voluptuous delight of its own, and that modesty is one of the forms of love. The people who fear women are, as a rule, those who love them most. How often can the ascetic be justly told: *Fallit te incautum pietas tua!* In certain parts of the Christian community the idea that women ought never to be seen, that the only life suitable to them is one of seclusion after the manner which has prevailed in the Mohammedan East, is to be noticed coming to the surface at different times. It is easy to see to what degree, had such an idea prevailed, the character of the Church would have been changed. What, in point of fact, distinguishes the church from the mosque, and even from the synagogue, is that the woman enters it freely, and within its walls is on the same footing as the man, even although she may be separated from him, or even veiled. The question to be decided was, whether or not Christianity should be, like Islamism later, a men's religion from which women were practically excluded. The Catholic Church was far from committing that fault. The woman had diaconal functions in the Church, and took part in its work with the man, in a subordinate capacity indeed, but frequently. Baptism, the eucharistic communion, and works of charity entailed constant infringements of Eastern customs. In this matter also the Catholic Church, with rare tact, found the golden mean amongst the exaggerations of the different sects.

Thus is to be explained that singular combination of timid modesty and lax abandonment characteristic of moral feeling in the primitive Churches. Let us banish all the vile suspicions of vulgar debauchees, incapable of comprehending such a state of innocence. All was pure in those holy liberties, but how pure had they to be who would enjoy them! Legend describes the pagans as jealous of the priest's privilege of beholding for a moment in baptismal nakedness her who, by the holy immersion, was to become

his spiritual sister. What are we to say of the "holy kiss" which was the ambrosia of those chaste generations, of that kiss which, like the *consolamentum* of the Catharists, was a sacrament of strength and love, and the memory of which, mingled with all the most solemn impressions of the eucharist, sufficed for days to fill the soul with a kind of perfume? Why was the Church so dearly loved, that, to return to its fold after having left it, men were willing to confront death? Because it was a school of infinite joys. Jesus was truly in the midst of his own. More than a hundred years after his death he was still the master of subtly devised delights, the teacher of transcendental secrets.

CHAPTER XVI.

MARCUS AURELIUS AMONG THE QUADI—THE BOOK OF MEDITATIONS.

PAYING too little heed to what was occurring in the rest of the world, the government of Marcus Aurelius seemed to exist for nought save internal progress. The one great organised empire which touched the Roman frontiers, that of the Parthians, gave way before the legions. Lucius Verus and Avidius Cassius conquered provinces which Trajan had only held in temporary occupation—Armenia, Mesopotamia, and Adiabene. The real danger lay beyond the Rhine and Danube. There dwelt in menacing obscurity energetic populations, of Teutonic race for the most part, of which the Romans knew nothing, save for the well-built and faithful bodyguards (the Switzers of that period) whom certain of the Emperors loved to have about them, and those superb gladiators who, suddenly uncovering the beauty of their naked form in the amphitheatre, were wont to arouse storms of applause from the spectators. To conquer step by step that impenetrable world, to extend league by league the bounds of civilisation; for the accomplishment of that to

obtain a strong position in Bohemia, in the central quadrilateral of Europe, where there was still a considerable stock of Celtic Boians; thence to advance like American backwoodsmen, destroying the Hercynian forest tree by tree, substituting colonies for unsettled tribes, consolidating and civilising those populations full of promise for the future, making the Empire benefit by their fine qualities, their firmness, their physical strength, their energy; to bear the true frontiers of the Empire on one hand to the Oder or the Vistula, on the other to the Pruth or the Dniester, and thus give the Latin portion of the Empire a decided preponderance which would have prevented the schism of the Greek and Eastern portion; instead of building that fatal city, Constantinople, to set up the second capital at Bâle or Constance, and thus assure to the Celto-Teutonic peoples, for the Empire's good, the political supremacy which, later, they were to win on the ruins of the Empire: such would have been the programme of enlightened Romans, had they been better informed on the state of Europe and Asia, and on comparative geography and ethnography.

The ill-conducted expedition of Varus (10 A.D.), and the eternal blank it left in the numbers of the legions, acted as a bugbear to divert Roman thought from the great Teutonic region. Tacitus alone perceived its importance for the equilibrium of the world. But the state of internecine division in which the Germanic tribes existed hushed the disquietude which far-seeing minds must have conceived. So long, indeed, as these tribes, more inclined for local independence than centralisation, formed no military combination, they afforded little cause for dread. But their confederations were formidable. The results of that which formed in the third century on the right bank of the Rhine, under the name of Franks, are well known. About the year 166, a powerful league came into existence in Bohemia, Moravia, and the north of what is now Hungary. The names of a host of tribes, later to fill the whole world, were heard for the first time. The great expansion of the barbarians began; the Teutons, up till then unassailable,

delivered their assault. The dykes burst on the Danube, in the regions of Austria and Hungary, near Presburg, Comorn, and Gran. All the Teutonic and Slav peoples from Gaul to the Don, the Marcomanni, Quadi, Narisci, Hermanduri, Suevi, Sarmatæ, Victovali, Roxolani, Bastarnæ, Costoboci, Alani, Peucini, Vandals, and Jazyges, seemed united to force the frontiers and inundate the Empire. The impetus came from yet more distant sources. Under the pressure of Northern barbarians, probably the Goths, the whole mass of Slavonic and Teutonic peoples seemed in movement; they desired to be received into the Empire with their wives and families, and to be given lands and money, offering in return their services as soldiers in any capacity. It was a veritable human cataclysm. The Danube frontier was swept away. The Vandals and Marcomanni settled in Pannonia; Dacia was trodden underfoot by twenty peoples; the Costoboci wandered as far as Greece; Rhetia and Norica found themselves invaded; the Marcomanni crossed the Julian Alps, laid siege to Aquileia, and pillaged the whole country as far as Pavia. Before this terrific onslaught the Roman army gave way; the number of captives dragged about with them by the barbarians was enormous. Terror ran high in Italy; it was said that Rome had not had so furious an attack to withstand since the time of the Punic wars.

It is a well-established truth that the philosophical progress of the laws does not invariably correspond to progress in the strength of the state. War is a brutal thing, and demands brutal participants; thus it often happens that moral and social reforms bring about military degeneration. The army is a relic of barbarism which the man of progress preserves as a necessary evil; and it is a rare thing to do successfully what is done as a last resource. Antoninus had had a strong dislike to the use of arms; under his rule military customs had become greatly softened. It cannot be denied that the Roman army partially lost its discipline and vigour under Marcus Aurelius. Recruiting was difficult; the substitution and enrolment of barbarians had

entirely altered the character of the legions; undoubtedly Christianity was already drawing off the better forces of the state. When we consider that, side by side with this decrepitude, there were in movement bands of men owning no land allegiance, too lazy to till the earth, caring for nothing but slaughter, seeking for nothing but battle, even with their own congeners, it is clear that a great racial substitution had necessarily to take place. Civilised humanity had not yet sufficiently subjugated evil, to be in a position to abandon itself to dreaming of progress through peace and morality.

The attitude of Marcus Aurelius, before this colossal assault of all the forces of barbarism, was truly admirable; he disliked war and waged it despite himself, but when necessary, he waged it well; his sense of duty made him a great captain. To the horrors of war were added those of a terrible pestilence. Under these trials Roman society made appeal to all its traditions, all its rites; there was, as usual in the wake of scourges, a reaction in favour of the national religion. Marcus Aurelius gave it his countenance. The good Emperor was to be seen presiding in person over the sacrifices as high pontiff, taking a javelin head in the Temple of Mars, plunging it in blood, and casting it towards that point in the sky where was the foe. All were armed, slaves, gladiators, bandits, *diogmites* (police); Teutonic troops were hired for service against the Teutons; the treasures of the imperial store-house were turned into money, to avoid the necessity of levying new taxes.

Henceforth, almost the whole life of Marcus Aurelius was spent in the Danube region, at Carnuntum near Vienna, or at Vienna itself, on the banks of the Gran in Hungary, at times at Sirmium. His weariness of spirit was great, but he knew how to conquer it. His uninteresting campaigns against the Quadi and Marcomanni were very efficiently carried out; his distaste for them did not prevent him from using the most conscientious endeavours. The army loved him and did its duty perfectly. Lenient even to his enemies, he preferred a campaign long but certain in its results, to

the infliction of crushing blows; he completely freed Pannonia, beat back the whole force of barbarians to the left bank of the Danube, even made long marches beyond that river, and prudently practised the tactics, that were later to be abused, of opposing barbarians to barbarians.

Paternal and philosophical as he was with those half-savage hordes, his self-respect made him careful to show them a consideration which they did not understand, just as a man of rank would treat Red Indians as people of breeding out of regard for his personal dignity. He naïvely preached reason and justice to them, and ended by inspiring them with respect for him. It may be that, but for the revolt of Avidius Cassius, he would have succeeded in making a province of Marcomannia (Bohemia), and another of Sarmatia (Galicia), and of securing the safety of the future. He admitted Teutonic warriors to the legions on a large scale; he made grants of land in Dacia, Pannonia, Mesia, and Roman Germany to those who were willing to work; but he firmly maintained the military frontier, established a strict police administration on the Danube, and did not once permit the prestige of the Empire to suffer from the concessions wrung from him by policy and humanity.

It was in the course of one of those expeditions that, when encamped on the banks of the Gran in the midst of the monotonous plains of Hungary, he wrote the finest pages of the exquisite book which has revealed his whole soul to us. What cost Marcus Aurelius most in those distant wars was the deprivation of his usual society of men of learning and philosophers. Nearly all had shrunk from fatigues, and remained at Rome. Occupied during the whole day with military duties, he spent his evenings in his tent alone. There he threw off the constraint imposed on him by his functions; he examined his conscience, and meditated on the uselessness of the struggle which he valiantly maintained. Sceptical about war, even whilst waging it, he detached himself from everything, and, plunged in contemplation of universal vanity, doubted the legitimacy of his own victories. "The spider is proud of

catching a fly," he wrote, "one man of catching a hare, another of netting a sprat, another of catching wild boars, another Sarmatians. From the point of view of philosophic principles, they are brigands every one."[1] The *Discourses of Epictetus*, by Arrian, was the Emperor's favourite book; he read them with delight, and involuntarily was led to imitate them. Such was the origin of these detached thoughts, forming twelve books, which were collected after his death under the title of *Concerning Himself.*

It is probable that Marcus began at an early age to keep a private journal of his inner self. Therein he wrote in Greek the maxims to which he had recourse for support, recollections of his favourite authors, passages from the moralists who most appealed to him, principles which during the day had sustained him, and sometimes the reproaches with which his scrupulous conscience deemed it necessary to upbraid itself.

"Men seek solitary retreats, rural abodes, sea-shores, mountains; like others, you love to dream of all these things. What simplicity, seeing that it is permitted you at every hour to withdraw into your own soul! Nowhere has man a more tranquil retreat, above all, if he have in himself those things, the contemplation of which suffices to give him peace. Learn, then, to enjoy that retreat and there renew your strength. Let there be stored there such short, fundamental maxims as on the instant will give serenity to your soul, and render you in a fit state to endure with resignation the world to which you must needs return." [2]

During the dreary northern winters this source of consolation became still more essential to him. He had passed his fiftieth year; with him old age was premature. One evening all the images of his pious youth came back to memory once more; and he spent a few delightful hours in computing what he owed to each of the virtuous beings who had surrounded him.

"The examples of my grandfather Verus: gentleness of manners and invincible patience.

"Qualities which were esteemed in my father, the memory he has left me: modesty and manly character.

[1] *Med.*, x. 10. [2] *Ibid.*, iv. 3.

"The memory of my mother: her piety, her well-doing; her purity of soul that went so far as not only to abstain from evil, but even from the thought of it; her frugal life which so little resembled the luxury of the rich."[1]

Then in succession appear to him Diognetus, who inspired him with a taste for philosophy and made pleasant in his eyes the pallet, the simple covering of skin and the whole outfit of Hellenic discipline; Junius Rusticus, who taught him to shun all affectation of elegance in literary style, and lent him the *Discourses of Epictetus;* Apollonius of Chalcis, who realised the Stoic ideal of extreme firmness and perfect sweetness; the grave and good Sextus of Chæronea; Alexander of Cotyæum, who administered reproof with so refined a courtesy; Fronto, who taught him "the envy, duplicity, and hypocrisy of the tyrant, and what cruelty may exist in a patrician's heart;"[2] his brother Severus, "who introduced him to Thrasea, Helvidius, Cato, and Brutus, and gave him the idea of a free state in which the natural equality of the citizens, and the equality of their rights exist, of a kingdom which, before all else, respects the freedom of its citizens;"[3] and, towering above all the others by his immaculate grandeur, Antoninus, his adoptive father, whose portrait he draws for us with passionate gratitude and affection.

"I thank the gods," he says in conclusion, "for having given me good grandparents, good parents, a good sister, good masters, and in those about me, kinsmen and friends, people almost all filled with goodness. Never have I allowed myself to be lacking in respect for them; by natural disposition I might occasionally have been guilty of some irreverence, but the bounty of the gods has prevented such a circumstance from arising. Nay, more, I am indebted to the gods for having kept pure the flower of my youth; for my not acquiring manhood before the right age, even delaying it still further; for my having been brought up under the rule of a prince and a father who cleansed my soul of all vain glory, who made me comprehend how it is possible, even while dwelling in a palace, to dispense with bodyguards, splendid raiment, torches, and statues; who taught me, in short, that a prince may almost contract his life within the bounds of that of a private

[1] *Med.*, i. 1-3. [2] *Ibid.*, i. 11. [3] *Ibid.*, i. 14.

citizen, without thereby displaying less majesty and vigour, when it is a question of being Emperor and dealing with affairs of state. It was by their favour that I met a brother whose behaviour was a constant exhortation to keep watch upon myself, while at the same time his respect and affection were to be the joy of my heart. . . . If I have had the happiness of promoting those who conducted my education, to the honours which they seemed to desire; if I have known Apollonius, Rusticus, and Maximus; if many times I have been shown in a clear light the picture of a life led in conformity with nature (true, I have not reached the goal, but that is my own fault); if my bodily health has held out so well under the severe life that I lead; if I have kept clear both of Benedicta and Theodotus; if, despite my frequent disagreements with Rusticus, I have never gone beyond bounds or done aught to repent; if my mother, whose lot it was to die young, was none the less able to spend her last years with me; if, every time I have desired to succour some poor or afflicted person, I have never heard it said that money failed me; if I have never myself needed aught from any man; if fate has given me a wife so kind, so affectionate, so simple in character; if I have found so many capable persons to undertake the education of my children; if, when my passion for philosophy first began, I did not become the prey of some sophist—to the gods it is that I owe all these things. Yes, so many blessings can only be the result of the aid of the gods and of a blissful fortune."[1]

This divine candour is breathed in every page. Never did a man write more simply for himself, with the sole aim of relieving his heart under the eye of God alone. There is not a trace of system. Marcus Aurelius, properly speaking, has no philosophy; although he may owe nearly everything to Stoicism transformed by the Roman spirit, he is of no school. For our taste, he shows too little curiosity, since he does not know all that a contemporary of Ptolemy and Galen could have known. Certain of his opinions on the cosmic order are not on the level of the most advanced knowledge of his time. But his moral thought, being thus free from all bonds with a system, achieves a singular loftiness. Even the author of the *Imitation*, although little involved in scholastic disputes, scarce attains such a height, for his manner of feeling is essentially Christian; deprive his book of its Christian dogmas, and it retains but a part of its charm. The book

[1] *Med.*, i. 17.

of Marcus Aurelius, having no dogmatic base, will keep its freshness for ever. All can find therein fruits of edification, from the atheist, or him who believes himself such, to the man most absorbed in the special beliefs of some form of faith. It is the most purely human book that has ever been. It solves no controversial problem. In theology Marcus Aurelius floats between pure deism, polytheism interpreted in a physical sense after the manner of the Stoics, and a kind of cosmic pantheism. He does not incline to one of these hypotheses more than to another, and uses indifferently the three vocabularies—deist, polytheist, and pantheist. His considerations have ever two faces, according as God or the soul have or have not reality. "To leave the company of men is nothing so very terrible, if there be gods; and if there be no gods, or if they take no heed of human affairs, why should I live on in a world void of gods or void of providence? But assuredly there are gods, and they do concern themselves with human affairs."[1]

It is the same dilemma in which we, too, are constantly finding ourselves; for if it be the most thoroughgoing materialism that is in the right, we who have had faith in the true and the good shall be no more duped than the others. If idealism be in the right, we shall prove to have been the true sages, and to have been so in the only fitting fashion, that is to say, without any selfish expectation, without having counted on a reward.

Marcus Aurelius, then, is not a free-thinker, he is hardly a philosopher even, in the more restricted sense of the word. Like Jesus, he has no speculative philosophy; his theology is altogether contradictory; he has no definitely fixed theory of the soul and immortality. How was he so profoundly moral, lacking the beliefs now regarded as the foundations of morality? How was he so eminently religious without having professed any of the dogmas of what is called natural religion? It is into this that we must inquire.

The doubts which, from the point of view of speculative

[1] *Med.*, ii. 11.

reason, hover over the truths of natural religion, are not, as Kant has admirably demonstrated, casual doubts, capable of being dispelled, belonging, as is sometimes imagined, to certain states of the human mind. Such doubts are inherent in the very nature of these truths, and it can be said without paradox, that, were the doubts dispelled, the truths which they attack would disappear at the same blow. Let us suppose, in point of fact, a proof, direct, positive, evident to all, of future rewards and punishments: wherein would consist the merit of doing good? It would only be madmen who, light of heart, would run to their own damnation. A host of base souls would work out salvation with their cards on the table; in a manner they would force the hand of the Almighty. Who cannot see that in such a system there is no longer either morality or religion? In the sphere of ethics and religion it is indispensable to believe without demonstration; it is not a question of certainty, it is one of faith. This is what a certain variety of deism, with its habits of intemperate affirmation, is apt to forget. It forgets that over-precise beliefs concerning human destiny would sweep away all moral merit. For our own part, were a peremptory argument of this nature laid down to us, we should act as did St. Louis when some one spoke to him of the miraculous wafer; we should refuse to go and see. What need have we of those brutal proofs which only apply in the material order of facts, and which would hamper our liberty? We should fear being assimilated with those speculators in virtue, or those vulgar cravens, who in spiritual things employ the gross egoism of practical life. In the first days which followed the establishment of faith in the resurrection of Jesus, this feeling came to light in the most touching manner. The true loving friends, the sensitive of soul, preferred to believe without proof, rather than see. "Happy are they that have not seen, and yet have believed," became the phrase of the situation. Beautiful phrase! Eternal symbol of that tender and generous idealism, which has a horror of touching with its hands that which should be known of the heart alone!

Our good Marcus Aurelius, on this point as on all others, was in advance of his age. He never troubled to come to an agreement with himself concerning God and the soul. As though he had read *The Critique of Practical Reason*, he clearly perceived that in dealing with the infinite, no formula is absolute, and that in such a matter the only chance of beholding truth for once in a lifetime is to contradict one's self repeatedly. He resolutely severed moral beauty from all definite theology; he did not permit duty to depend on any metaphysical opinion concerning the First Cause. Never was close union with the hidden God carried to such an extreme of delicacy.

"Offer to the governance of the god that is within you a virile being, ripened with years, a friend of the public weal, a Roman, an Emperor, a soldier at his post awaiting the sound of the trumpet, a man ready to quit life without regret." [1]

"There are many grains of incense destined for the same altar; one falls sooner in the fire, another later; but the difference is nothing." [2]

"Man must live according to Nature during the few days that are granted him on earth, and, when the moment to retire is come, must gently submit like an olive, which, as it falls, blesses the tree that gave it birth, and renders thanks to the branch that has borne it." [3]

"All is in harmony with me that is in harmony with thee, O Universe. Nothing for me is too early or too late which is in due time for thee. Everything is fruit to me which thy seasons bring, O Nature! From thee are all things, in thee are all things, to thee all things return. 'City of Cecrops, thou whom I love,' saith the poet: and shall not I say: 'City of Zeus, I love thee'?" [4]

"Man, you have been a citizen of the great city, whether for five years or for three, what matters it? That which conforms with the laws is unjust to no one. Where, then, is the hardship, if no tyrant nor yet an unjust judge banishes you from the city, but Nature who brought you into it? It is as though an actor were dismissed from the stage by the same praetor who engaged him. 'But I have not played the five acts,' you say, 'I have played only three of them.' You say true, but in life three acts suffice to complete the play. He who marks its completion is he who, having been the cause of the combination of elements, is now the cause of their dissolution; neither was your work. Depart then satisfied, for he also who releases you is satisfied." [5]

Does this mean that he did not sometimes revolt against

[1] *Med.*, iii. 5. [2] *Ibid.*, iv. 15. [3] *Ibid.*, iv. 48.
[4] *Ibid.*, iv. 23. [5] *Ibid.*, xii. 36.

the strange destiny which has been pleased to leave, alone and face to face, man with his eternal craving for devotion, for sacrifice, for heroism, and nature with her transcendent immorality, her supreme disdain for virtue? No: once at least he was struck by the absurdity, the colossal iniquity of death. But soon his temperament, completely mortified, took the upper hand and he calmed himself.

"How can it be that the gods, after having ordered all things well and tenderly for men, have overlooked this alone, that men of approved virtue, who during their lives have had communion with the Divinity, and inspired the love of the Divinity by their pious deeds and sacrifices, should not, when dead, renew their being but be extinguished for ever? If it indeed be so, rest assured that, had it been better otherwise, the gods would not have failed to have it. Were it right, it would likewise be possible; had it conformed with Nature, Nature would have brought it to pass. Consequently from its not being so, be sure it ought not so to be. You can see for yourself that in making such an inquiry, you are disputing with God on his own rights. Nay, we could not thus dispute with the gods, were they not supremely good and supremely just. And if this be so, they have allowed nothing to pass in the ordering of the world that is contrary to justice and reason."[1]

Ah, this shows too much resignation, dear master! If this be so indeed, we have a right to murmur. To say that if this world have no compensations, the man who has sacrificed himself for righteousness or truth ought to leave it contentedly and absolve the gods, is too naïve. No, he has a right to blaspheme them. For, after all, why should they thus have abused his credulity? Why should they have planted in him deceitful instincts, of which he has been the honest dupe? Why should this bounty have been accorded the frivolous or wicked man? He it is, then, who is not deceived, who is the man of prudence? But if so, cursed be the gods who place their preferences so ill! I wish the future to be an enigma; but if there be no future, this world is a terrible ambush. Note that our desire is not that of the man of gross and vulgar mind. We wish neither to see the chastisement of the guilty nor to draw the interest of our virtue. What we wish has no trace of egoism; it is

[1] *Med.*, xii. 5.

simply to exist, to remain in contact with the light, to continue the thought we have begun, to learn more and more, and one day to enjoy that truth which we seek so laboriously, and behold the triumph of the righteousness which we have loved. Nothing can be more legitimate. Indeed, the worthy Emperor felt it deeply. "What! that the light of a lamp shall burn until the moment it is extinguished, losing nought of its brilliancy; and the truth, the justice, the temperance which are in you be extinguished with you!"[1] In this noble hesitance his whole life was passed. If he sinned it was by excess of piety. Less resigned, he would have been juster; for surely to ask that there may be a close and sympathetic spectator of the strife we wage in the course of goodness and truth, is not to ask too much.

It is also possible that, had his philosophy been less exclusively ethical, had it implied a closer study of history and the universe, it would have escaped certain excesses of rigour. Like the Christian ascetics, Marcus Aurelius at times carries renunciation to the point of aridity and subtlety. One feels that the calm which never fails him is obtained at the cost of immense effort. Evil, assuredly, never had any attraction for him; he had no passion to contend with. "Whatever men may do or however they may speak," he writes, "I must of necessity be a righteous man, as the emerald might say: 'Whatever may be said and whatever done, I must needs be an emerald and retain my colour.'"[2] But in order to keep a constant foothold on the ice-bound summit of Stoicism, he had to do cruel violence to Nature and cut from her more than one noble element. The perpetual repetition of the same reasonings, the thousand images under which he seeks to represent for himself the vanity of all things, the proofs, often naïve, of universal frivolity; all bear witness to the conflicts in which he had to engage, in order to extinguish all desire in himself. At times there results a touch of bitterness and sorrow; the reading of Marcus Aurelius

[1] *Med.*, xii. 15. [2] *Ibid.*, vii. 15.

fortifies, but it does not console. It leaves in the spirit a void, at once delightful and cruel, which we would not exchange for full satisfaction. Humility, renunciation, severity towards one's self have never been pushed farther. Glory, that last illusion of noble souls, is reduced to nothingness. We must do good without being uneasy in mind as to whether any one will know of it. He clearly recognises that history will speak of him; but of how many unworthy souls does it not speak as well? The absolute mortification of desire which he had achieved had consumed the self-love in him to the last shred. It can even be argued that his excess of virtue did him harm. The historians took him at his word. Few reigns have received more scurvy treatment from history. Marius Maximus and Dion Cassius spoke of Marcus affectionately, but without talent; their works, moreover, have only survived to us in fragments, and our only knowledge of the life of the illustrious sovereign is gathered from the indifferently executed biography of Julius Capitolinus, written a hundred years after his death, thanks to the admiration felt for him by the Emperor Diocletian.

Happily, the little casket, which enshrined the reflections he had had on the banks of the Gran and the philosophy of Carnuntum, was saved. Thence that incomparable book in which Epictetus was surpassed, that manual of the life of resignation, that gospel of those who have no faith in the supernatural, which only in our own days has been fully understood. A true and eternal gospel, the book of *Meditations* will never grow old, for it affirms no dogma. The gospel has aged in certain portions; science no longer allows the childish conceptions of the supernatural, which forms its basis, to be admitted. The supernatural element in the *Meditations* is but a slight and insignificant blemish, which does not affect the marvellous beauty of the work as a whole. Science may destroy God and the soul, while the book of *Meditations* still remains young with life and truth. The religion of Marcus Aurelius, like that of Jesus at moments, is the

absolute religion, that resulting from the simple fact of a high moral consciousness confronting the universe. It is of no race and of no country. No revolution, no advance in progress, no new discovery has any power to change it.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE LEGIO FULMINATA—THE APOLOGIES OF APOLLINARIUS, MILTIADES, AND MELITO.

An incident in the campaign against the Quadi brought Marcus Aurelius, in a manner, face to face with the Christians, and roused, among the latter at least, keen interest. The Romans were operating in the interior of the country; the summer heats had, without a break, succeeded a long winter. The Quadi contrived to cut off the invaders' water supply. The army was devoured with thirst, worn out with fatigue, and had blundered into an *impasse*, where the barbarians assailed it with all the advantages on their side. The Romans made but feeble response to the attacks of the foe, and a disaster was to be dreaded, when suddenly a fearful storm gathered. A heavy shower of rain fell on the Romans and refreshed them. It was asserted that, on the other hand, the lightning and hail turned on the Quadi, and terrified them to such a degree, that some threw themselves, distracted, among the ranks of the Romans.

Every one believed it a miracle. Jupiter had evidently declared in favour of the Latin race. Most people attributed it to the prayers of Marcus Aurelius. Pictures were made of it, in which the pious Emperor was represented supplicating the gods, and saying, "Jove, to thee do I lift this hand which hath never shed blood." The tradition was consecrated in the Antonine Column. In it Jupiter Pluvius is depicted in the likeness of a winged patriarch, from whose hair, beard, and arms flow torrents of water, which the Romans are collecting in their helmets and

shields; whilst the barbarians are struck and overthrown by the lightning. Some believed in the mediation of an Egyptian magician called Arnouphis, who followed the army, and whose incantations were supposed to have caused the intervention of the gods, the aërial Hermes in particular.

The legion which had received this mark of heavenly favour was entitled to assume, in colloquial use at least and for a time, the name of *Fulminata*. In such an epithet there was nothing new. Every spot touched by lightning was held sacred by the Romans; the legion whose encampment had been struck by the bolts of heaven was necessarily regarded as having received a kind of baptism of fire; *Fulminata* became its title of honour. One legion, the twelfth, which since the siege of Jerusalem, in which it took part, had been stationed at Melitena, near the Euphrates in Lesser Armenia, had borne the title from the time of Augustus, no doubt by reason of some physical occurrence, which caused the substitution of that appellation for the surname of *Antiqua*, which it had had up till then.

Marcus Aurelius had Christians about him; possibly there were some in the legion engaged with the Quadi. This miracle, acknowledged by all, moved them deeply. A beneficent miracle could be the work of the true God alone. What a triumph it would be, what an argument for the cessation of persecution, if the Emperor were only convinced that the miracle was due to the faithful! During the first few days following the incident, a version was put in circulation, according to which the storm that had been so favourable to the Romans was the fruit of the prayers of the Christians. It was by kneeling down, in conformity with the practice of the Church, that the pious soldiers were supposed to have won their mark of protection from heaven; and this flattered Christian pretensions from two points of view: first, in demonstrating the influence on heaven of a handful of believers; second, in testifying to a certain liking in the God of the Christians for the Roman Empire. Only let the Empire desist from the persecution of the saints, and the benefits the latter would obtain in its favour from

heaven would be made manifest. God, to become the protector of the Empire against the barbarians, awaited but one thing, that the Empire should cease to show a pitiless front to an elect body, the leaven of all righteousness in the world.

This manner of presenting the facts was speedily adopted, and made the round of the Churches. On the occasion of every persecution, every annoyance, there was this excellent answer to make the authorities, "We saved you." The answer gained new force when, on the conclusion of the campaign, Marcus Aurelius received his seventh imperial salutation, and the column, still to be seen standing in Rome, was erected by order of Senate and people, bearing among its bas-reliefs the representation of the miracle. Occasion was even taken to fabricate an official letter of Marcus Aurelius to the Senate, in which he forbade the official persecution of the Christians, and made their denunciation punishable by death. Not only is the fact of such a letter having been written inadmissible, but it is highly probable that Marcus Aurelius was ignorant of the claim set up by the Christians to the miracle, of which he himself was supposed to be the author. In certain countries, Egypt for example, the Christian fable does not appear to have been known. Moreover, it only added to the dangerous reputation for magic which the Christians were beginning to acquire.

The legion of the Danube, if it temporarily took the name of *Fulminata*, did not retain it officially. As the twelfth legion in quarters at Melitena was always designated by that title, as, moreover, the legion of Melitena was at an early date distinguished for its Christian ardour, a confusion arose; and this latter legion, transported, in the face of all probability, from the Euphrates to the Danube, was supposed to have performed the miracle, and accordingly received the name of *Fulminata*. That it had borne the surname two hundred years previously was forgotten.

What is certain in any case is that the attitude of Marcus Aurelius towards the Christians underwent no modification

whatever. It has been imagined that the revolt of Avidius Cassius, which had the support of the whole of Syria, Antioch in particular, prejudiced the Emperor against the Christians, who were numerous in those regions. Of this there is very little probability. The revolt of Avidius took place in 172, and the revival of persecutions is especially to be marked about 176. The Christians held aloof from all political movements; and, in so far as Avidius was concerned, the affectionate heart of Marcus Aurelius overflowed with pardon. The number of martyrs, however, only multiplied; in three or four years persecution reached the highest pitch of fury it knew before Decius. In Africa, Vigellius Saturninus was to draw the sword, and God knew when it was to be sheathed. Sardinia swarmed with exiles who were to be brought back under Commodus, by the influence of Marcia. Byzantium witnessed horrors. Nearly the whole population was arrested, put to torture, and led out to death. On the ruin of Byzantium some years later (in 192), by Septimus Severus, the governor, Cæcilius Capella, exclaimed, "What a fine day for the Christians!"

The state of affairs was still graver in Asia. Asia was the province in which Christianity most profoundly affected social order. But then the proconsuls of Asia were, of all the provincial governors, the bitterest in persecution. Without the Emperor's having issued new edicts, they alleged they had instructions which compelled them to proceed with severity. They mercilessly put in force a law which, according to interpretation, could be either atrocious or inoffensive. Those repeated executions were a bloody contradiction to a century of humanity. The fanatics, whose gloomy visions were confirmed by such acts of violence, did not protest—often they rather rejoiced. But the moderate bishops dreamed of the possibility of obtaining an end to so many injustices, from the Emperor. Marcus Aurelius welcomed all petitions, and was said to read them. His reputation as a philosopher and Greek scholar encouraged those who felt they had some facility in Greek composi-

tion to address him. The incident of the war with the Quadi offered an opportunity for putting the question more plainly than Aristides, Quadratus, and St. Justin had been able to do.

Thus was produced a series of new apologies, written by Asiatic bishops or authors, which unfortunately have not been preserved. Claudius Apollinaris, bishop of Hierapolis, was conspicuous in the front rank in this campaign. The miracle of Jupiter Pluvius had had so much publicity, that Apollinaris ventured to recall it to the Emperor, attributing the divine intervention to the prayers of the Christians. Miltiades also addressed the Roman authorities, no doubt the proconsuls of Asia, for the purpose of defending "his philosophy" against the unjust charges brought against it. Those who had the opportunity of reading his apology could not sufficiently praise the talent and learning which it displayed.

By far the most remarkable work produced by this literary movement was the apology of Melito. The author addressed Marcus Aurelius in the tongue that the Emperor loved:

"In the name of new edicts the race of pious men is in Asia persecuted and hunted down to a degree never witnessed before. Impudent rogues, greedy for the spoils of others, taking advantage of the existing legislation, practise their brigandage openly, lying in wait, day and night, to seize on people who have done no ill. . . . If all this be done by your command, it is well; for it cannot be that a just prince should order anything unjust. Willingly, then, we accept such a death as the fate that we have deserved. One request only we address to you, and it is this, that, after examining yourself the case of those represented to you as rebels, you should consent to judge whether they deserve death, or whether they are not worthy rather to live peaceably under the protection of the law? But if this new edict and measures, that would not be permitted against barbarous foes, do not emanate from you, we beseech you so much the more earnestly not to abandon us for the future to such public brigandage."

We have already noticed Melito making the Empire the most singular advances, when he was anxious to become protector of the truth. In his apology these advances are

still more accentuated. Melito endeavours to demonstrate that Christianity is content to be under the common law, and that there are reasons why it should be dear to a true Roman.

"Certainly it is true that, at the outset, our philosophy had its birth among the barbarians; but the moment when it began to flourish among the people of your states, coinciding with the great reign of Augustus, your ancestor, was, as it were, a happy omen for the Empire. From that moment, indeed, dates the colossal development of that splendid Roman power of which you are and will be, with your son, acclaimed the inheritor with our prayers, provided you are willing to protect that philosophy which in some measure has been the foster-sister of the Empire, since it was born with its founder, and your ancestors honoured it equally with other faiths. And what amply proves that our doctrine was destined to flourish side by side with the progress of your glorious Empire, is that from the moment of its advent you marvellously succeeded in all things. Only Nero and Domitian, deceived by certain slanderers, showed ill-will to our religion; and those slanders, as usually happens, were thenceforth accepted without further inquiry. But their error was corrected by your pious relatives, who, in frequent rescripts, repressed the zeal of those who would fain have adopted rigorous courses with us. Your grandfather Hadrian wrote such rescripts on several occasions, in particular one to the proconsul Fundanus, governor of Asia. And your father, at the time when you were associated with him in the administration of affairs, wrote to the cities, ordering that no new steps should be taken against us, more especially to the Larissans, the Thessalonians, the Athenians, and all the Greeks. As for you yourself, who cherish the same feelings for us, with a heightened degree of philanthropy and philosophy, we rest assured that you will do what we ask of you."

The apologists' theory, so warmly supported by Tertullian, according to which the good Emperors favoured and the bad Emperors persecuted Christianity, was already completely developed. Born together, Christianity and Rome had grown up together and prospered together. Their interests, their sufferings, their fortune, their future were all in common. The apologists were special pleaders, and special pleaders of all causes resemble each other. They have arguments for all situations and all tastes. One hundred and fifty years were to elapse before these smooth-spoken and somewhat disingenuous invitations were to be

listened to. But the simple fact that they suggested themselves, in the reign of Marcus Aurelius, to the mind of one of the most enlightened leaders of the Church was a prognostic of the future. Christianity and the Empire were to be reconciled; they were made for one another. The shade of Melito was to tremble with delight when the Empire became Christian, and the Emperor undertook the cause of "truth."

Thus the Church was already making more than one advance to the Empire. Out of politeness, no doubt, but also as a very logical consequence of his principles, Melito would not admit that an Emperor could give an unjust command. There was every disposition to allow it to be believed that certain of the Emperors had not been absolutely hostile to Christianity; a favourite tradition was that Tiberius had proposed to the Senate to enroll Jesus in the ranks of the gods, and that it was only the Senate which objected. The decided leaning which Christianity was to show to power, when it could hope for its favours, could have been divined beforehand. Attempts were made, in the teeth of all evidence, to show that Hadrian and Antoninus had sought to repair the evil wrought by Nero and Domitian. Tertullian and his generation were to say the same of Marcus Aurelius. Tertullian, it is true, was to doubt the possibility of being at once a Cæsar and a Christian; but a century later the incompatibility was to impress no one, and Constantine was to take it on himself to prove that Melito of Sardis showed great sagacity in foreseeing so well, one hundred and thirty-two years in advance, with the proconsular persecutions between, the possibility of a Christian Empire.

A tour in Greece, Asia and the East, which the Emperor made about this time, in no way altered his views. With a smiling face, but not without inward irony, he passed through the world of sophists at Athens and Smyrna, heard all the noted professors, founded a great number of new chairs at Athens, and, in particular, saw Herodes Atticus, Ælius Aristides and Hadrian of Tyre. At Eleusis he

entered, unattended, the most remote parts of the sanctuary. In Palestine the survivors of the Jewish and Samaritan populations, in distressful circumstances owing to the late revolts, welcomed him with noisy acclamations, and, no doubt, with grievances. A fetid odour of misery reigned throughout the land. Those disorderly and evil-smelling multitudes put his forbearance to the proof. At one moment, losing all patience, he cried: "O Marcomanni, O Quadi, O Sarmatæ, I have at last found stupider folk than you!"

In Marcus Aurelius the philosopher had repressed all save the Roman. He was instinctively prejudiced against Jewish and Syrian piety. The Christians, however, approached him very near. His nephew, Ummidius Quadratus, had in his household a eunuch called Hyacinthus, who was an elder of the Church of Rome. To the care of this eunuch was confided Marcia, a girl of ravishing beauty, whom Ummidius made his concubine. Later, in 183, Ummidius having been put to death as a result of the conspiracy of Lucillus, Commodus found this pearl among his booty and appropriated her for himself. The chamberlain Eclectos followed his mistress's fortunes. By lending herself to the caprices of Commodus, at times by her success in ruling them, Marcia exercised over him unbounded power. It is not probable that she was baptised; but the eunuch Hyacinthus had inspired her with a tender feeling for the faith. He continued to haunt her company, and won the greatest favours by her aid, in particular for confessors condemned to the mines. Later, driven to despair by the monster, Marcia headed the plot which rid the Empire of Commodus. At that moment Eclectos is still to be found at her side. By a singular coincidence, Christianity was very nearly involved in the final tragedy of the house of the Antonines, as, a hundred years before, it had been in a Christian circle that the conspiracy was hatched which put an end to the tyranny of the last of the Flavians.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE GNOSTICS AND MONTANISTS AT LYONS.

For nearly twenty years the Asiatic colony at Lyons and Vienne, despite more than one internal ordeal, had prospered in all the works of Christ. Thanks to its efforts, gospel preaching already illumined the valley of the Saône. The Church of Autun, in particular, was in many respects the daughter of the Græco-Asiatic Church of Lyons. In it Greek was for long the tongue of mysticism, and during centuries retained a certain liturgical importance. Then appear in a kind of hazy morning twilight Tournus, Chalons, Dijon, and Langres, whose apostles and martyrs are to be classed with the Greek Church of Lyons, and not with the great Latin evangelisation of Gaul in the third and fourth centuries.

Thus from Smyrna to the inaccessible parts of Gaul there stretched a line of strong Christian activity. The community of Lyons and Vienne was linked by an energetic exchange of correspondence with the mother Churches of Asia and Phrygia. The navigation of the Rhone afforded facilities for the prompt importation of every novelty in belief; whether it were a gospel of recent fabrication, a system freshly hatched by Alexandrian subtlety, a new miraculous gift set in fashion by the sectaries of Asia, it was known at Lyons or Vienne on the morrow of its advent. The quick imagination of the inhabitants was a still more efficacious vehicle. An exalted mysticism, a delicacy of nerves that reached the point of hysteria, a warmth of heart capable of any sacrifice, but also apt to lead to any form of error; such were the characteristics of the Gallo-Greek Christian communities. The venerable Pothinus, then upwards of ninety years of age, had the difficult task of governing those souls, more fervent than submissive, who in submission itself sought something other than the austere charm of duty done.

Irenæus had become the right hand of Pothinus, his coadjutor—if one may so express it, his successor-designate. A prolific writer and practised controversialist, he devoted himself, from the time of his arrival at Lyons, to writing in Greek against all Christian tendencies that differed from his own, in particular against Blastus, who wished a return to Judaism, and Florinus, who, like the Gnostics, admitted the existence of a God of righteousness and a God of evil. The doctrines of Valentinus, by their breadth and philosophical aspect, gained many adherents among the Lyonese population. Irenæus made a kind of speciality of combating them. No orthodox polemist before him had to such a point grasped the depth of the gnosis and its anti-Christian character.

Valentinus was a nimble-witted fellow, who assuredly would never have succeeded either in superseding the Catholic Church or usurping its direction. Gnosticism ascended the Rhone in the person of a much more dangerous doctor: I mean that Marcos, who was wont to seduce women by a strange manner of celebrating the eucharist, and by the audacity with which he made them believe that they had the gift of prophecy. His fashion of administering the sacraments entailed the most perilous intimacies. Feigning to be the dispenser of grace, he persuaded women that he was in the confidence of their guardian angels, and that they were destined to high rank in his Church, and commanded them to prepare for mystic union with him. "Of me and by me," he said to them, "shalt thou receive grace. Be as a bride that welcometh her bridegroom, that thou mayest be what I am, and that I may be what thou art. Prepare thy bed to receive the seed of light. Behold grace descending on thee; open thy mouth and prophesy!" "But I have never prophesied, I know not how to prophesy," the poor woman would reply. He redoubled his invocations, terrified and stunned his victim: "Open thy mouth, I say unto thee, and speak; all that thou shalt say shall be prophecy." The neophyte's heart beat fast; expectancy,

embarrassment, the idea that perhaps she really was going to prophesy, made her lose her head, and she raved at random. Then what she had said was represented to her as being full of sublime significance. From that moment the unhappy woman was lost. She thanked Marcos for the gift with which he had endowed her, asked what she could do in return, and, recognising that to resign her possessions to him was but a slight recompense, offered him herself, if he would deign to accept her. Frequently it was the best and most distinguished women who were thus taken by surprise; for on every side there was talk of penitents, given over to mourning for the rest of their lives, who, after receiving the prophetic communion and initiation from the seducer, drew back, horror-stricken, and appealed to the orthodox Church for forgiveness and oblivion.

Such a man was particularly dangerous at Lyons. The mystical tendencies and passionate temperament of the Lyonese women, their somewhat materialistic piety, their taste for the grotesque and for sensuous emotion, exposed them to every risk. What happens nowadays in the towns of the Midi in France among the female population, on the arrival of a fashionable preacher, happened then. The new manner of preaching was highly popular. The wealthiest ladies, those who were distinguished by the fine purple border of their robes, were the most curious and the most imprudent. Christian women, thus seduced, were not long in being disillusioned. Their conscience burned them, their life thenceforth was blighted. Some publicly confessed their sin and returned to the Church; others, for very shame, dared not make the avowal and remained in the falsest of positions, neither in nor out. Others, finally, fell into a despairing state, shunned the Church and hid themselves, "with the fruits of their dealings with the sons of the gnosis," Irenæus adds maliciously.

The ravages made on the souls of believers by the gloomy seducer were terrible. There was talk of love-philtres and poisons. The penitents avowed that he had absolutely exhausted them, that they had loved him with a fatal, a

superhuman love which enslaved them. One story in particular was much repeated, of the abominable conduct of Marcos to an Asiatic deacon, who, with true Christian affection, received him in his home. The deacon had a wife of rare beauty. She allowed herself to be won over by the dangerous guest, and lost at once her purity of faith and her bodily honour. Thenceforward Marcos dragged her about with him everywhere, to the great scandal of the Churches. The worthy brethren took pity on her, and sorrowfully sought to gain her back; they succeeded, not without difficulty. She was converted, confessed her sins and misfortunes, and spent the rest of her life in perpetual confession and penitence, humbly relating all she had suffered at the hands of the magician.

The worst feature was that Marcos trained pupils, who, like himself, were great corrupters of women, arrogating to themselves the title of "perfect," claiming the possession of transcendent knowledge, asserting that "they alone had drunk the plenitude of the gnosis of the ineffable virtue," and that this knowledge raised them above all authority, so that they could freely do as they would. The manner of their initiation was said to be of the most indecent nature. A room was arranged as a bridal chamber; then, with a paraphernalia of dubious mysticism and cabalistic spells, they pretended to perform spiritual nuptials, imitated from those of the higher syzygies. Thanks to their rites and the use of certain invocations to Sophia, the Marcosians even believed that they obtained a kind of invisibility, which permitted them to escape, in their nuptial chapels, the eyes of the Sovereign Judge. Like all the Gnostics, they misused the employment of unctions of oil and balm; of them they composed all kinds of sacraments, apolytroses or redemptions, even replacing baptism itself. Their extreme unction for the dying had certain touching features, and has alone remained in practice.

Pothinus and Irenæus energetically resisted these perverse guides. In the controversy Irenæus acquired the idea of his great work, *Against Heresies*, a vast arsenal of argu-

ments against all varieties of Gnosticism. His rational and moderate judgment, the philosophic base which he gave Christianity, his clear and purely deistic ideas on the relations of God and man, his intellectual mediocrity itself, all preserved him from the aberrations that result from intemperate speculation. The fall of his friends, Florinus and Blastus, served him as an example. He saw salvation only in the golden mean represented by the universal Church. The authority of that Church and its catholicity appeared to him the sole criterion of truth.

Gnosticism, in point of fact, disappeared from Gaul, both by reason of the violent antipathy it aroused in the orthodox, and of a gradual transformation which only permitted an inoffensive mysticism to survive from its ambitious theories. A marble monument of the third century, discovered at Autun, has preserved for us a little poem, presenting, like the eighth book of the Sibylline oracles, the acrostic ΙΧΘΥΣ. The singular style of this quaint fragment was to the taste of pious Valentinians and orthodox alike.

"O race divine of the heavenly ΙΧΘΥΣ, receive with respectful heart immortal life among mortals; make thy soul young again, my beloved, in the divine waters, the eternal floods of Sophia, giver of treasures. Receive the sweet sustenance as the honey of the Saviour of the saints; eat and drink according to thine hunger and thirst; thou holdest the ΙΧΘΥΣ in the palms of thine hands."

Montanism, like Gnosticism, visited the valley of the Rhone and achieved great successes. Even in the lifetime of Montanus, Priscilla, and Maximilla, their prophecies and supernatural gifts were the theme of admiring discussion at Lyons. Issuing as it did from a world that bordered on Montanism, the Church of Lyons could not remain indifferent to the movement which was winning over Phrygia and agitating the whole of Asia Minor. The terror-inspiring oracles of the new prophets, the pious practices of the saints of Pepuza, their striking miracles, the revival of the supernatural phenomena of the apostolic age, the many items of news which arrived one upon another from Asia

and petrified the whole Christian world, could not but move them strangely. In those ascetics they could almost see the reflection of themselves. Did not their Vettius Epagathus recall the most noted Nazarenes by his austerities? The majority accordingly considered it perfectly natural that the source of God's gifts should not have dried up. Many distinguished members of the Lyonese Church were natives of Phrygia; a certain Alexander, a physician by profession, who had dwelt among the Gauls for many years, came from that country. This Alexander, who amazed the whole world by his love of God and the boldness of his preaching, seemed endowed with all the miraculous powers of the apostles

Regarded from a distance, the Lyonese give us the impression of belonging in many respects to the pietistic circle of Asia Minor. They seek martyrdom, they have visions, practise supernatural gifts, enjoy interviews with the Holy Ghost or Paraclete, and conceive of the Church as a virgin. An ardent Millenarianism and constant brooding over the Antichrist and the end of the world, formed in some measure the soil from which those great enthusiasms drew their sap. But a touching docility, united with rare common-sense, put the majority of the faithful at Lyons on their guard against the evil spirit which was frequently concealed under those vainglorious peculiarities.

Sometimes, indeed, there arrived from Phrygia grotesque phenomena, attesting a Christian effervescence that lacked all rational guidance. A certain Alcibiades, who came from that country to settle at Lyons, amazed the Church by his exaggerated macerations. He practised all the austerities of the saints of Pepuza, absolute poverty and excessive forms of abstinence. It was almost the whole of creation that he rejected as impure, and he was asked how he could live, in refusing the most obvious needs of life. In all this the pious folk of Lyons at the outset perceived nothing but what was praiseworthy; but the absolute view which the Phrygian took of things disturbed them. At times Alcibiades impressed them as a maniac. Like Tatian and

many others, he seemed to condemn in principle a whole class of God's creatures, and he scandalised several of the brethren by the way in which he held up his manner of life as a precept. Worse was to follow when, arrested with the others, he stubbornly continued his abstinences. A revelation from heaven was necessary to bring him to reason, as we shall shortly see.

Irenæus, so firm on the question of Marcionism and Gnosticism, was, as regarded Montanism, much more undecided. The saintliness of the Phrygian ascetics could not but touch him; but he saw too clearly into Christian theology not to perceive the peril of the new doctrines concerning prophecy and the Paraclete. He does not mention the Montanists among the heretics whom he attacks. He vigorously finds fault with certain subversive pretensions, without, however, naming their authors, and the precautions with which he hedges himself in clearly show that he has no wish to put the Phrygian pietists on the same footing as the schismatic sects. A man of order and episcopal authority before all else, he apparently concludes by seeing in them false prophets; but he hesitates for long before committing himself to that severe judgment. All the Lyonese were given over to the same perplexities as he. In their embarrassment they thought of consulting Eleutherus, who had shortly before succeeded Soter in the Roman see. The bishop of Rome was already the authority to which difficult cases were referred for solution, the councillor of the divided Churches, the centre for the accomplishment of harmony and unity.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE MARTYRS OF LYONS.

Lyons and Vienne counted among the most notable centres of the Church of Christ, when a terrible storm burst

upon these young Churches and put to the proof the gifts of strength and faith that they had within them.

It was in the seventeenth year of the reign of Marcus Aurelius. The Emperor did not change, but public opinion was in an irritable state. The scourges which desolated, the perils that menaced the Empire were supposed to have as their cause the impiety of the Christians. On every side the populace called on the authorities to maintain the national religion and punish the scorners of the gods. Unfortunately, the authorities yielded. The two or three concluding years of the reign of Marcus Aurelius were saddened by spectacles wholly unworthy of so perfect a sovereign.

At Lyons popular clamour reached the point of fury. Lyons was the centre of that great worship of Rome and Augustus, which was the cement of Gaulish unity and the outward sign of its communion with the Empire. Round about the famous altar, situated at the junction of the Rhone and Saône, extended a federal city, composed of permanent delegates from the sixty peoples of Gaul, a rich and powerful city, strongly attached to the religion which was the reason of its being. Every year on the first of August, the great day of the Gaulish fairs and the anniversary of the altar's consecration, deputies from the whole of Gaul gathered there. It was what was called the *Concilium Galliarum*, an assembly of no great political, but of high social and religious, importance. Festivals were held, consisting of competitions in Greek and Latin eloquence and sanguinary sports.

All these institutions greatly strengthened the national religion. The Christians, who did not practise that religion, must have seemed atheists and blasphemers. The fables concerning them, which found universal acceptance, were repeated and envenomed. They were said to have Thyestian feasts, and practise incest in the manner of Œdipus. Scandal paused at no absurdity; enormities, beggaring description, were alleged, crimes that have never existed. In all ages, secret societies affecting mystery have provoked such suspicions. It should be added that the

disorders of certain Gnostics, the Marcosians especially, might well afford some apparent justification, and this was by no means the least weighty reason for the ill-will borne by the orthodox to these sectaries, who compromised them so much in public opinion.

Before proceeding to actual punishments, malevolence expressed itself in petty annoyances and everyday vexations. A beginning was made by putting the cursed body of people, to whom all misfortunes were attributed, in quarantine. The Christians were forbidden to appear in the baths, at the forum, to show themselves abroad or even in private houses. If one of them happened to be noticed, there were shameful disturbances; he was beaten, dragged along the streets, stoned, forced to barricade himself. Vettius Epagathus alone, by reason of his social position, escaped such outrages; but his standing was not sufficient to preserve from popular fury the co-religionists, with whom he had identified himself by a choice which all the Lyonese described as infatuation.

The authorities postponed intervention as long as possible and partly exercised it in order to put an end to intolerable disorders. One day nearly all persons known to be Christians were arrested, led to the forum by the tribune and duumvirs of the city, and examined before the people. All avowed themselves Christians. The imperial legate *pro prætore* was absent, and the accused, whilst awaiting his arrival, suffered the hardships of severe prison-life.

On the arrival of the imperial legate, the trial began. The preliminary torture was applied with extreme cruelty. The young and noble Vettius Epagathus, who so far had escaped the severities which his co-religionists had suffered, could not contain himself. He presented himself at the tribunal and asked permission to defend the accused, or at least to prove that they did not deserve the charge of atheism and impiety. There was a cry of horror. That people of the slums, Phrygians and Asiatics, should be given over to perverse superstitions appeared quite simple; but that a man of standing, a resident in the upper city,

a nobleman of the land, should undertake to be the advocate of such follies, appeared absolutely intolerable. The imperial legate harshly denied the just request of Vettius. "And are you a Christian too?" he asked him. "I am," replied Vettius in his loudest voice Nevertheless he was not arrested; no doubt in a city in which people's conditions of life were very diverse, he was protected by some immunity.

The examination was long and cruel. Those who had not been arrested and remained in the city, the victims of the most abominable treatment, did not leave the side of the confessors; by bribery they obtained permission to serve and encourage them. The great source of anguish to the accused was not the punishment; it was the dread that some, less prepared than others for the terrible ordeal, would allow themselves to renounce Christ. The trial, indeed, proved too much for some ten of the unhappy beings, who by word of mouth forswore their faith. The grief which these acts of weakness caused the prisoners and the brethren about them was profound. What consoled them was that the arrests continued daily, and that other believers, worthier of martyrdom, came to fill up the gaps left by apostasy in the phalanx of the elect. The persecution soon extended to the Church of Vienne, which at first apparently had been spared. The elect of the two Churches, nearly all the founders of Gallo-Greek Christianity, found themselves assembled in the prisons of Lyons, ready for the formidable assault which was to be made upon them. Irenæus did not suffer detention; he was of those who kept the confessors company and witnessed all the incidents of their struggle, and it is to him perhaps that we owe the narrative of it all. The aged Pothinus, on the other hand, was soon, if not from the beginning, included with his flock; day by day he followed their sufferings, and, dying as he was, never ceased to instruct and encourage them.

As was the custom in great criminal prosecutions, the slaves were arrested at the same time as their masters; and many of these slaves were pagans. The torments they saw

being inflicted on their masters terrified them; the soldiers of the *officium* whispered in their ears what they had to say in order to escape being tortured themselves. They declared the infanticides, banquets on human flesh, and incestuous acts were realities, and that the monstrous stories told of Christian immorality were in no way exaggerated.

Public indignation was now at its height. So far, the believers who had remained at liberty had received some consideration from their relatives, neighbours, and friends; now, however, no one had anything but contempt for them. It was resolved that the art of the torturer should be carried to its last refinements, in order to obtain from the faithful also the confession of crimes, that would relegate Christianity to the order of monstrosities for ever cursed and forgotten.

The executioners surpassed themselves indeed, but they did not prevail over the heroism of the victims. Enthusiasm and the joy of suffering in company put them in a state of quasi-anæsthesia. They imagined that a divine stream of water flowed from the side of Jesus to refresh them. The public nature of their punishment sustained them. What a glory it was to affirm their words and faith in the face of a whole people! It came to be deemed a challenge, and very few gave way. It has been proved that self-respect often suffices to inspire an apparent heroism, provided publicity be an element in the matter. The pagan actors endured horrible tortures without flinching; the gladiators cut a fine figure in the face of obvious death, that they might not confess to weakness under the gaze of an assembled multitude. What in other circumstances would be vanity, became, transferred to a little group of men and women in prison together, a pious madness, a sensuous delight. The idea that Christ suffered in them filled them with pride, and transformed the feeblest creatures into beings of supernatural strength.

The deacon Sanctus of Vienne shone among the most courageous. As the pagans knew him to be the depositary of the secrets of the Church, they sought to draw from him some phrase which would afford a ground for the infamous

accusations brought against the community. They did not even succeed in making him give his name, or the name of his people, or of the city of which he was a native, or say if he were freeman or slave. To all the questions put to him, he responded in Latin, *Christianus sum.* That was his name, his country, his race, his all; no other avowal could the pagans wring from him. This obstinacy only redoubled the fury of the legate and the torturers. Having exhausted all their resources without conquering him, they had the idea of applying white-hot plates of brass to the most sensitive organs. Sanctus all this while remained inflexible, and would not vary his stubborn confession, *Christianus sum.* His body was one great wound, a bleeding, convulsed, twisted, shrunken mass with no human form. The faithful rejoiced, saying that Christ could render his own insensible to pain, and put himself in their place to suffer for them, whilst they were under torture. The most horrible feature in the affair was that some days later the torture of Sanctus was recommenced. His condition was such that the touch of a hand made him leap with agony. The executioners reopened, one after another, his inflamed sores, each of his wounds was renewed, on each of his organs were repeated the frightful experiments of the first day; it was hoped either to vanquish him or behold him die in torment, which might have reduced the rest to terror. Neither happened; Sanctus resisted so well, that his comrades believed it a miracle, and asserted that this second torture had had the effect of a cure on him, had straightened out his members, and given back to his body the human bearing it had lost.

Maturus, who was but a neophyte still, also bore himself as a valiant soldier of Christ. As to the maid-servant Blandina, she proved that a revolution had been achieved. Blandina belonged to a Christian lady, who, no doubt, had initiated her into the faith of Christ. The consciousness of her social degradation only had the effect of spurring her to equal her masters. The true emancipation of the slave, emancipation by heroism, was in great measure her work. The pagan slave was supposed to be essentially

wicked and immoral. What better way to rehabilitate and free him, than to show him capable of the same virtues, the same sacrifices as the freeman? How were those women to be treated with disdain, who had been seen acting with even more sublime heroism than their mistresses in the amphitheatre? The good Lyonese maid-servant had heard it said that the judgments of God are the overthrow of human appearances, and that God is often pleased to choose that which is humblest, ugliest, and most despised, to confound that which seems beautiful and strong. Inspired by her rôle, she called for torture, and burned with eagerness to suffer. She was slight in build, and of such feeble bodily strength that the faithful trembled lest she should be unable to withstand the tortures. Her mistress, especially, who was among the prisoners, feared that the weak, timid girl was not capable of boldly affirming her faith. Blandina showed prodigies of energy and audacity. She tired out the gangs of executioners who followed one another in torturing her from morning till evening; the baffled tormentors avowed that they had no other agony for her at their command, and declared that they did not understand how she still could breathe with a body so dislocated and pierced through and through. Any one of the tortures they had applied, they asserted, ought to have sufficed to cause her death. The blessed woman, like a courageous athlete, gained new strength in the act of confessing Christ. For her it was a tonic and an anæsthetic to say: "I am a Christian; men can do nought of evil amongst us." Scarce had she spoken the words, than she appeared to recover all her vigour, and present herself, refreshed, for new struggles.

This heroic resistance irritated the Roman authorities; to the tortures accompanying examination were added those of sojourn in a prison made as horrible as possible. The confessors were thrown into dark, insupportable dungeons. Their feet were put in the stocks and stretched to the fifth hole; they were spared no cruelty which the gaolers had at command to cause their victims suffering. Many died of

asphyxia in the dungeons. Those who had been tortured held out amazingly. Their wounds were so frightful that their survival defied explanation. Intent on encouraging the others, they themselves seemed animated with divine strength. They were like veteran athletes, hardened to everything. On the other hand, those last arrested, who had not yet undergone torture, almost all died soon after their incarceration. They were compared to raw novices, whose bodies, uninured to torment, could not stand the ordeal of imprisonment. Martyrdom tended more and more to appear a species of gymnastics or gladiatorial school, for which long preparation and a kind of preliminary ascetic training were essential.

Although secluded from the rest of the world, the pious confessors lived the life of the universal Church with remarkable intensity. Far from feeling divided from their brethren, they were deeply concerned in all that occupied Catholicism. The advent of Montanism was the great topic of the moment. Nothing was talked about save the prophecies of Montanus and Theodotus and Alcibiades. The Lyonese were the more interested, since they shared many Phrygian ideas, and since several of their number, such as Alexander the physician and Alcibiades the ascetic, were admirers at least, and, in a measure, adherents, of the movement which had originated at Pepuza. Reports of the dissensions excited by such novelties of belief reached even them. They had no other subject for conversation, and they spent the intervals between their bouts of torture in discussing these phenomena, which, no doubt, they would have liked to find true. Strong in the authority which the title of prisoner of Jesus Christ conferred on the confessors, they wrote several letters on this delicate subject, breathing a spirit of tolerance and charity. It was admitted that the captives of the faith had, in their latter days, a kind of mission to act as peace-makers in the variances of the Churches and solve questions at issue; in this respect a grace, due to the position, and, as it were, a special privilege, were ascribed to them.

The majority of the letters written by the confessors were addressed to the Churches of Asia and Phrygia, with which the Lyonese believers had so many spiritual ties; one of them was addressed to Pope Eleutherus, and was to have been conveyed by Irenæus. The martyrs accorded that young priest the warmest praise.

"We bid you joy in God in all things and for ever, father Eleutherus. We have charged our brother and comrade Irenæus to bear you these letters, and we pray you to hold him in high esteem, imitator as he is of the Testament of Christ. Did we believe that the position of people is according to their deserving, we should have recommended him to you as priest of our Church, a title which in truth he possesses."

Irenæus did not take his departure at once; it must even be concluded that the death of Pothinus, which shortly followed, entirely prevented him from going. It was only at a later date that the martyrs' letters were despatched to their address, with the epistle which contained the narrative of their heroic struggles.

The aged bishop Pothinus wasted away gradually; old age and imprisonment sapped his strength; only desire for martyrdom seemed to sustain him. He could scarce draw his breath on the day on which he had to appear before the tribunal, but, none the less, he had breath enough to make worthy confession of Christ. It was clear from the respect manifested towards him by the faithful that he was their religious chief, so he was the object of great curiosity. The city authorities followed him, in his passing from the prison to the court. The company of soldiers which escorted him found it difficult to extricate him from the throng, and shouts of the most diverse significance broke out. As the Christians were called sometimes the disciples of Pothinus, sometimes the disciples of *Christos*, many asked if this old man were Christos. The legate put the question: "What is the god of the Christians?" "You will know him, if you be found worthy," replied Pothinus. He was dragged away and brutally beaten; without respect for his great age, those who were near him buffeted him with

their fists and kicked him, those at a distance cast at him any missile that came to hand. All would have deemed themselves guilty of the crime of impiety, had they not taken their share in heaping outrages upon him; they believed that thus they should avenge the insult done their gods. The old man was taken back, half-dead, to the prison, and two days later he breathed his last.

What formed a strange contrast, and rendered the situation in the highest degree tragic, was the attitude of those who by force of torture had been vanquished and had renounced Christ. They were not released on that account; the fact that they had been Christians implied the confession of offences against the common law, for which they were prosecuted even after their apostasy. They were not separated from those of their brethren who had kept the faith, and all the aggravations of imprisonment which the confessors suffered were applied to them also. But how different was their state! Not only did the renegades find that they had derived no advantage from an act which had caused them pain, but in some measure their position was worse than that of the faithful. The latter, indeed, were persecuted simply because they bore the name of Christians, without any special crime being alleged against them; whilst the others, by their own confession, lay under the accusation of homicide and monstrous offences. Their bearing, too, was pitiful. The delight of martyrdom, the hope of promised blessedness, the love of Christ, the Spirit proceeding from the Father, lightened everything for the confessors. The apostates, on the contrary, seemed rent by remorse. It was more especially in the journeys from the prison to the tribunal that the difference was to be seen. The confessors walked with an air of radiant tranquillity; a certain gentle majesty and grace shone in their faces. Their chains were as the adornments of brides decked out in all their jewels; the Christians believed that about them they could breathe what they called "the perfume of Christ," some even asserted that an exquisite odour was exhaled by their bodies. Very different were the poor renegades. Shameful and

with drooping heads, lacking all beauty and dignity, they went on their way like vulgar felons; even the pagans treated them as cowards and curs, murderers convicted out of their own mouths. The noble name of Christian which made those who paid for it with their lives so proud, was no longer theirs. This difference in bearing made the strongest impression. It was often noticed also that, when the Christians were arrested, they took care to make their avowal at once, so as to remove all possibility of withdrawal.

Grace was at times indulgent to those unfortunates, who so dearly expiated being taken for a moment by surprise. A poor Syrian woman, of fragile constitution, a native of Byblos in Phœnicia, had denied the name of Christ. She was put anew to torture, with the hope of dragging from her weakness and timidity a confession of the secret monstrosities with which the Christians were charged. In some measure she came to her senses on the rack, and, as though awakening from a deep sleep, vigorously denied all the calumnious allegations. "How can you imagine," she said, "that people who are forbidden to eat the blood of beasts should eat children?" From that moment she avowed herself a Christian, and shared the fate of the other martyrs.

The day of glory at last came for certain of those tried combatants, who by their faith founded the faith of the future. The legate expressly ordered one of the hideous festivals consisting of exhibitions of torture and fights with wild beasts, which, despite the wish of the most humane of Emperors, were more in vogue than ever. These horrible spectacles were held on regularly recurring dates; but it was no rare thing for special performances to take place, when there were wild beasts on hand to exhibit to the populace, and unhappy wretches to throw to them.

The festival was probably given in the municipal amphitheatre of the city of Lyons, of the colony, that is, which rose in terraces on the slopes of Fourvières. This amphitheatre was apparently situated at the foot of the hill,

near what is now the Place de Saint Jean, in front of the cathedral. The Rue Tramassac must almost mark the major axis. It is believed to have been completed five years before. An exasperated multitude crowded the tiers of seats and shouted loudly for the Christians. Maturus, Sanctus, Blandina, and Attalus were the chosen victims for the day. They supplied all the entertainment. On this occasion there were none of the gladiatorial spectacles, the variety of which had so much attraction for the people.

Maturus and Sanctus endured anew in the amphitheatre their whole series of torments, as though they had suffered nothing before. They were compared to athletes who, after winning in many minor competitions, were reserved for a last struggle which conferred the final crown of victory. The instruments for these tortures were arranged the whole length of the *spina*, and gave the arena the look of hell. Nothing was spared the victims. As usual, the proceedings commenced with a hideous procession, in which the prisoners, filing past naked before the company of beast-fighters, received terrible lashes on the back from each of them. Then the beasts were let loose. This was the most exciting moment of the day. The brutes did not devour the victims at once; they gnawed and worried them; their teeth sank in the naked flesh, leaving bloody marks. The spectators were now wild with delight. Shouts echoed from tier to tier of the amphitheatre. What, in point of fact, made the interest of the ancient spectacle was that the public intervened in it. As in Spanish bull-fights, the spectators were in command, decided on the incidents to take place, judged the strokes, and decided on life or death. The exasperation against the Christians was such that the most terrible punishments were demanded for them. The red-hot iron chair was perhaps the most infernal creation of the executioner's art; Maturus and Sanctus were seated therein. A repulsive smell of roasted flesh filled the amphitheatre, and only heightened the mad excitement of the infuriated spectators. The doggedness of the two martyrs was admir-

able. One phrase alone, always the same, could be drawn from Sanctus: "I am a Christian." The two martyrs seemed unable to die, while the wild beasts, for their part, appeared to avoid them. To bring matters to a conclusion they had to be given the *coup de grace*, as was done in the case of the gladiators and those who fought with the beasts.

Blandina all this while was bound to a stake and exposed to the wild beasts, which were egged on to devour her. She did not cease from prayer, her eyes lifted to heaven. No beast that day would touch her. The poor, little, naked form, exposed to the thousands of spectators, whose curiosity was only baffled by the narrow girdle which the law required should be allowed to actresses and condemned women, excited, apparently, no pity among the spectators; but for the other martyrs it acquired a mystic significance. Blandina's stake appeared to them as the cross of Jesus; the body of their friend, gleaming white at the other end of the amphitheatre, recalled to their minds that of the crucified Christ. The joy of thus beholding the image of the gentle Lamb of God made them insensible to pain. Blandina, from that moment, was Jesus for them. In moments of atrocious agony a look cast at their sister on the cross filled them with rapture and enthusiasm.

Attalus was known to the whole city; so the mob shouted for him loudly. He was made to go the round of the amphitheatre, preceded by a placard on which was written in Latin, *HIC EST ATTALVS CHRISTIANVS.* He walked with a firm step and the calm of an assured conscience. The populace demanded the most cruel tortures for him. But the imperial legate, having learned that he was a Roman citizen, put an end to the proceedings, and gave orders for him to be led back to prison. Thus ended the day. Blandina, tied to her stake, still waited the fangs of some wild beast, and waited in vain. She was loosed and taken away, that she might serve on another occasion for the amusement of the populace.

The case of Attalus was not an isolated one; the number of accused mounted up every day. The legate believed it his duty to write to the Emperor, who, about the middle of the year 177, was, it seems, at Rome. Weeks had to be waited for a reply. During the interval the prisoners overflowed with mystical joys. The example of the martyrs was contagious; all those who had forsworn their faith repented, and asked to be examined anew. Many Christians doubted the validity of such conversions; but the martyrs settled the question by offering the right hand of fellowship to the renegades, and imparting to them part of the graces within themselves. It was admitted that in such a case the quick could bring the dead to life again; that in the great community of the Church those who had too much should lend to those who had not enough; that he who had been cast forth from the womb of the Church as an abortion could in some manner return to it, be conceived a second time, take his place in the virginal womb, and again come in contact with the sources of life. The true martyr was thus supposed to have the power to compel the demon to vomit from his maw those whom he had devoured. His privilege came to be one of indulgence, grace, and charity.

The admirable feature, indeed, in the Lyonese confessors is that glory did not dazzle them. Their humility equalled their courage and holy freedom of spirit. Those heroes who twice or thrice had proclaimed their faith in Christ, who had faced wild beasts, whose bodies were covered with burns and wounds and sores, dared not call themselves martyrs, did not even permit that name to be given them by others. If one of the faithful, either in writing or speech, referred to them thus, they took him severely to task. The title of martyr they reserved first of all to Christ, the true and faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, the guide to the life of God, and then to those who had already been permitted to die confessing their faith, and whose title was, in a manner, sealed and ratified; for their own part, they were but modest and humble confessors, and they entreated

their brethren to pray without ceasing that they might make a worthy end. Far from adopting a proud, haughty, harsh attitude to the poor apostates, like the pure Montanists and certain martyrs in the third century, they showed them motherly tenderness, and shed continual tears on their behalf before God. They blamed no one, prayed for their executioners, found extenuating circumstances for all offences, absolved all, and condemned none. Some rigorists considered them too indulgent to the renegades; they replied by quoting the example of St. Stephen. "If he prayed for those who stoned him," they said, "is it not permitted to pray for one's brethren?" Righteous spirits, on the other hand, justly recognised that it was the charity of the captives that constituted their strength and brought about their triumph. Their constant recommendation was peace and concord; and so it was that they left behind them, not like some confessors, who nevertheless did not lack courage, intestine broils for their mother the Church, and discords and disputes for their brethren, but an exquisite memory of joy and perfect love.

The confessors' common-sense was no less remarkable than their courage and charity. Montanism, by its enthusiasm and the ardour it inspired for martyrdom, could not entirely displease them, but they perceived its excesses. Alcibiades, who lived on bread and water alone, was of the number of the captives. He wished to continue his diet in prison, but the confessors looked with disapproval on such eccentricities. Attalus, after his first struggle in the amphitheatre, had a vision concerning this matter. It was revealed to him that the course taken by Alcibiades was not good, that he was wrong in systematically refusing to avail himself of things created by God, and in thus causing a scandal to his brethren. Alcibiades allowed himself to be persuaded, and thenceforth ate all kinds of food without distinction, giving thanks to God for them. The prisoners believed they thus possessed in their midst a permanent furnace of inspiration, and received the direct counsels of the Holy Ghost. But what in Phrygia scarce did aught

but foment abuses was here a principle of heroism. Montanists in their ardour for martyrdom, the Lyonese were profoundly Catholic in their moderation and lack of all vainglory.

The imperial response at last arrived. It was harsh and cruel. All those who persisted in their confession of faith were to be put to death, all the renegades released. The great annual festival, which was celebrated at the altar of Augustus, and at which all the peoples of Gaul were represented, was about to begin. The affair of the Christians conveniently occurred to add to its interest and solemnity.

With the aim of making an impression on the people, a kind of theatrical court was organised, to which all the captives were led in pompous procession. They were simply asked if they were Christians. On an affirmative answer being given, those who appeared entitled to the rights of Roman citizenship were beheaded, while the others were reserved for the wild beasts; several also were pardoned. As was to be expected, not a single confessor wavered. The pagans were in hopes that those at least who had formerly apostatised would repeat their anti-Christian declaration. They were questioned separately in order to withdraw them from the influence of the others' enthusiasm, and immediate release was promised as the sequel to their renunciation. This, in a measure, was the decisive moment, the crisis in the conflict. The hearts of those of the faithful, who had remained at liberty and were spectators of the scene, throbbed with anxiety. Alexander the Phrygian, who as a physician was known to all, and whose zeal had no bounds, stood as near the tribunal as possible, and, by vigorous nods to those under examination, endeavoured to persuade them to confess their faith. The pagans took him for one possessed; the Christians saw in his contortions something that recalled to them the convulsions of childbed, and the deed by which the apostate returned to the Church appeared to them a second birth. Alexander and the grace of God won the day. Apart from a small number of miserable creatures who had been terrified by

the tortures, the apostates retracted and avowed themselves Christians. The wrath of the pagans was intense. They loudly accused Alexander of having been the cause of these guilty recantations. He was arrested and brought before the legate. "Who are you?" asked the latter. "A Christian," was Alexander's response. Stung to irritation, the legate condemned him to the beasts, and the execution was fixed for the following day.

Such was the exaltation of the faithful flock, that they were much less concerned about the awful death that stared them in the face than about the question of the apostates. The horror conceived by the martyrs of those who had relapsed was extreme. They were treated as sons of perdition, as miscreants who covered their Church with shame, as folk divested of all trace of faith, or of respect for their wedding garment, or of fear of God. Those, on the other hand, who had made reparation for their first backsliding, were reunited with the Church and fully reconciled.

On the morning of the first of August, in the presence of the whole of Gaul assembled in the amphitheatre, the horrible spectacle began. The people were very anxious for the punishment of Attalus, who, after Pothinus, was apparently the real chief of Lyonese Christianity. It is difficult to understand how the legate, who, on the first occasion, had saved him from the wild beasts because of his status as a Roman citizen, could this time deliver him over to them; but the fact is certain. Probably the claims of Attalus to Roman citizenship had been found insufficient. Attalus and Alexander were the first to enter the sanded and carefully-raked arena. Like heroes they went through all the tortures for which apparatus was set up. Alexander spoke not a word, uttered not a cry; in pious self-meditation he held converse with God. When Attalus was forced to seat himself on the red-hot iron chair, and his body, burned all over, exhaled an offensive smoke and odour, he said to the people in Latin: "It is you that are devourers of men. As for us we do nought of evil." He was asked: "What is God's name?" "God," he said, "has no name

like a man." The two martyrs received their *coup de grace* after enduring, in a fully conscious state, all the worst atrocities which Roman cruelty could devise.

The festivities lasted several days; on each day the gladiatorial combats were set off by tortures of the Christians. It is probable that the victims were introduced two by two, and that each day saw one or more pairs of martyrs perish. Those who were young and supposed to be weak of will were placed in the arena, that the sight of their friends' doom might strike terror into them. Blandina and a youth of fifteen called Ponticus were reserved for the last day. They were thus witnesses of all the ordeals of the others, and nothing shook their resolution. Every day a supreme effort was made to move them; attempts were made to induce them to swear by the gods; they refused with disdain. The populace, extremely irritated, would listen to no prompting of shame or pity. The poor girl and her young friend were submitted to the whole hideous cycle of the arena, and after each ordeal they were invited to swear. Blandina was sublime. She had never been a mother; the child, tortured by her side, became her son, brought forth in the midst of her anguish. Her attention riveted on him, she followed him through each stage of his agony, to encourage him and exhort him to persevere to the end. The spectators saw this by-play and were struck by it. Ponticus expired after having endured the whole series of torments.

Of all the holy flock there now remained only Blandina. She triumphed and shone with joy. She looked upon herself as a mother who has beheld all her sons proclaimed conquerors, and presents them to the Great King to be crowned. The humble waiting-maid had shown herself the inspirer of her comrades' heroism; her burning words had been the stimulant which sustained feeble nerves and faltering hearts. And now she also plunged into the rugged path of torments which her brethren had traversed, as though it were a marriage feast. The near and glorious issue of all her trials made her leap for joy. Of her own accord she went and took her stand at the end of the arena,

that she might lose none of the adornments which each torture was to grave upon her flesh. There was first of all a cruel scourging which tore her shoulders; then she was exposed to the beasts, which contented themselves with biting her and dragging her about. She was not spared the hateful burning chair. Finally, she was enclosed in a net and exposed to a furious bull. The animal, catching her on its horns, tossed her several times in the air and let her fall heavily. But the blessed saint was no longer conscious of aught; already she enjoyed supreme bliss, oblivious to all as she was in her inward converse with Christ. She had to be despatched like the other victims. The mob ended by being struck with admiration. In dispersing they spoke of nothing but the poor slave. "Truly," said the Gauls to one another, "never in our land have we seen woman endure so much!"

CHAPTER XX.

RECONSTITUTION OF THE CHURCH OF LYONS—IRENÆUS.

THE fury of the fanatics was still unsatisfied. It was wreaked on the corpses of the martyrs. The bodies of the confessors who had died of suffocation in prison were thrown to the dogs, and a guard was posted day and night so that none of the faithful might give them sepulchre. As to the formless remains that each day had been dragged or raked from the arena into the *spoliarium*, crushed bones, strips of flesh torn off by the teeth of the wild beasts, limbs roasted or charred in the fire, severed heads and mutilated trunks, they also were left unburied and in the sewers, open to the air, with a guard of soldiers which watched over them for six days. This hideous spectacle aroused diverse reflections among the pagans. Some considered that there had been an excess of humanity, and that the martyrs should have been submitted to still more cruel agonies; others

mingled irony with their comments, at times even a touch of pity. "Where is their God?" they said; "Of what service to them has been that religion of theirs which they preferred to life?" The Christians sorrowed deeply at being unable to lay the holy remains in the earth. The pagans' excessive hardness of heart seemed to them the proof of a malevolence which had reached its zenith, and the omen of an approaching judgment of God. "So that was not enough, then!" they said to one another. And they added, remembering their apocalypses: "So be it, let the wicked grow worse and worse still, even as the righteous grow better." They attempted to carry off the bodies by night, tried the effect of bribes and entreaties on the soldiers. All was useless; the authorities with stubborn ill-nature kept their hold on the miserable remains. Finally, on the seventh day, the order came to burn the infectious mass and throw the ashes into the Rhone, which flowed hard by, that no trace of them might be left upon earth.

For this procedure there was more than one secret motive. It was imagined that, by the complete disappearance of the corpses, the Christians would be deprived of their hope of resurrection. That hope seemed to the pagans the root of all evil. "It is by their confidence in the resurrection," they said, "that they bring amongst us this new and strange worship; that they despise the most terrible tortures; that they walk to their doom with eagerness and even with delight. Let us see, therefore, if they are really going to rise from the dead, and if their God has power to deliver them out of our hands." The Christians reassured themselves with the thought that God is unconquerable, and well knows how to recover the remains of his servants. Later, indeed, belief arose in miraculous visions, which revealed the ashes of the martyrs, and the whole mediæval age imagined it possessed them, as though the Roman authorities had not annihilated them. The people were pleased to give the innocent victims the name of Maccabees.

The number of victims had been forty-eight. The survivors of the Churches thus severely tried very soon rallied. Vettius Epagathus again appeared in his true colours as the good genius and protector of the Church of Lyons. He was not, however, the bishop. The distinction between the professional ecclesiastic and the layman who will always be a layman, was already clearly defined. Irenæus, the disciple of Pothinus, who had, if one may so express it, a clerical training and habits, took the latter's place in the government of the Church. He it was, perhaps, who, in the name of the communities of Lyons and Vienne, drew up that admirable letter to the Churches of Asia and Phrygia, of which the greater part has survived to us, and which includes the whole narrative of the struggles of the martyrs. It is one of the most extraordinary fragments possessed by any literature. Never has a more striking picture been drawn of the pitch of enthusiasm and devotion which human nature is capable of achieving. It depicts the ideal of martyrdom with the minimum of pride on the part of the martyr. The Lyonese narrator and his heroes are certainly credulous men: they believe in the Antichrist who is about to come and ravage the world; in all things they detect the doings of the Beast, of the wicked fiend whom the good Lord permits (wherefore is unknown) to enjoy a momentary triumph. Nought more mysterious than this God who makes of the agonies of his servants a garland of flowers for himself, and is pleased to classify his pleasures, expressly designing some of his creatures for the beasts, others for decapitation, others to be suffocated in prison. But the exaltation, the mystical tone of the style, the spirit of mildness and relative common-sense which inspire the whole narrative, inaugurate a new rhetoric, and make this fragment the pearl of Christian literature in the second century.

To the circular epistle the Gaulish brethren added letters relating to Montanism, written by the confessors while in prison. This question of the Montanist prophecies was acquiring such an importance that they deemed them-

selves under an obligation to speak their minds on it. In this also Irenæus was probably their interpreter. The extreme reserve with which he expressed himself in his writings on Montanism, the love of peace which he showed in all controversies, and which so often caused it to be said that none had been better named than he, *Irenæos* (peaceful), lead one to believe that his opinion was impressed with keen desire for conciliation. With their usual sound judgment, the Lyonese no doubt pronounced against excesses, at the same time, however, advising a toleration which, unfortunately, in those burning disputations was not always sufficiently observed.

Irenæus, henceforth settled at Lyons but in constant communication with Rome, furnished the model of the consummate churchman. His antipathy to the sects (the materialistic Millenarianism which he professed, and which he had derived from the *presbyteri* of Asia, was not, in his view, a sectarian doctrine), his clear perception of the perils of Gnosticism, led him to write those vast controversial books, the work, no doubt, of a limited intellect, but inspired with a moral consciousness of the sanest type. Thanks to him, Lyons was for the moment the source of the most important Christian writings. Like all the great doctors of the Church, Irenæus found means to associate with supernatural beliefs, which to us now seem irreconcilable with a well-balanced mind, the most remarkable practical sense. Far inferior to Justin in philosophical spirit, he was much more orthodox, and left a deeper trace in Christian theology. With an exalted faith he united a surprising moderation; to a rare simplicity of soul he added profound knowledge of ecclesiastical administration and spiritual government; finally, he possessed the clearest conception which, up till then, had been formulated of the universal Church. He had less talent than Tertullian, but how far he surpassed him in conduct and heart! He alone, amid the Christian controversialists who strove with the heresies, showed charity to the heretic, and put himself on his guard against the calumnious suggestions of orthodoxy.

Intercourse between the Churches of the Upper Rhone and Asia becoming more and more infrequent, the surrounding Latin influence gradually assumed the upper hand. Irenæus and the Asiatics about him already followed the Western custom for Easter. The use of Greek died out; Latin was soon the tongue of the Churches, which, in the fourth century, were no longer to be essentially distinguished from those of the rest of Gaul. Traces of Greek origin were, however, very slow in being effaced, and many Greek usages were preserved in the liturgy at Lyons, Vienne, and Autun until well into the Middle Ages. An indelible memory was inscribed in the annals of the universal Church; that tiny Asiatic and Phrygian isle, lost amidst the shadows of the West, had diffused an unparalleled radiance. The solid good qualities of our races, associated with the brilliant heroism and love of glory of men of Eastern race, produced a sublime episode. Blandina on her cross at the end of the amphitheatre was like a new Christ. The pale and gentle slave, bound to her stake on that new Calvary, showed that the humble handmaid, when a sacred cause is to be served, can equal the free man, and sometimes surpass him. Let us say no evil of silk-weavers nor of the rights of man. The ancestors of that cause are very old. After having been the city of Gnosticism and Montanism, Lyons was to be the city of the Vaudois, of the *Pauperes de Lugduno*, in anticipation of its becoming the great battle-field in which the opposing principles of modern consciousness were to meet in the most passionate strife. Honour to all who suffer for something! Progress, I trust, will bring the day when those majestic edifices which modern Catholicism is rashly raising on the heights of Montmartre and Fourvières shall be the temples of the supreme Amnesty, and contain a chapel for all causes, all victims, all martyrs.

CHAPTER XXI.

CELSUS AND LUCIAN.

THE stubborn conservative who, passing by the mutilated corpses of the Lyons martyrs, said to himself: "We have been too lenient; we must invent severer castigations for the future!" was no more hidebound than the politicians who, in all ages, have imagined they can check religious or social movements by punishment. Such movements contend with time and the progress of reason. The sectarian Socialism of 1848 disappeared in twenty years without recourse to special laws of repression. Had Marcus Aurelius, instead of employing lions and the red-hot iron chair, put in force primary schools and a state system of rationalistic education, he would better have succeeded in stemming the seduction of the world by Christian supernaturalism. Unfortunately, the true standpoint was not taken. To oppose religions, whilst at the same time maintaining, and even exaggerating, the religious principle, is the worst of courses. To demonstrate the inanity of all supernatural ideas, such is the radical cure for fanaticism. But scarce any one took this point of view. The Roman philosopher Celsus, a man of learning and great sagacity, who on several questions anticipated the results of modern criticism, wrote a book against Christianity, not to prove to the Christians that their manner of conceiving God's intervention in the things of the world was contrary to our knowledge of reality, but to show that they were wrong in not practising religion as they had found it established.

This Celsus was a friend of Lucian's, and at bottom appears to have shared the scepticism of the great scoffer of Samosata. It was at his request that Lucian wrote the witty essay on Alexander of Abonoteichos, in which the stupidity of belief in the supernatural is so ably presented. Lucian, addressing him as friend to friend, depicts him

as an unreserved admirer of that great liberating philosophy, which has saved man from the phantoms of superstition, and which preserves him from all vain beliefs and all errors. The two friends, precisely as does Lucretius, regard Epicurus as a saint, a hero, a benefactor of the human race, a divine genius, the one man who has beheld the truth and dared to speak it. Elsewhere Lucian speaks of his friend as a faultless man; he vaunts his wisdom, his justice, his love of truth, the refinement of his manners, the charm of intercourse with him. His writings seem to him the finest and most useful of the age, fitted to open the eyes of all such as have some reason. Celsus, in point of fact, had undertaken, as his special task, to investigate the impostures to which poor humanity is subject. He had a strong antipathy to magicians and inventors of false gods like Alexander of Abonoteichos. In general principles he appears to have been less inflexible than Lucian. He writes against magic rather to expose the trickery of the magicians than to demonstrate the absolute vanity of their art. His criticism, in what concerns the supernatural, is identical with that of the Epicureans, but he comes to no conclusion. He puts astrology, music, natural history, magic, and divination on the same footing. He rejects the majority of marvels as impostures, but admits some. He does not believe in the legends of paganism, but he considers them great, wonderful, and useful to men. Prophets, in general, appear to him to be charlatans, and, nevertheless, he does not treat the art of predicting the future as positive delirium. He is eclectic, a deist, or, if you will, a Platonist. His religion much resembles that of Marcus Aurelius and Maximus of Tyre, and what was later to be that of the Emperor Julian.

God, or universal order, delegates his power to special gods, spirits, or ministers, to whom polytheistic worship is addressed. This worship is legitimate, or, at least, highly acceptable, when it is not pushed to excess. It becomes a positive duty when it is a national religion, the duty of each person being to adore the divine under the form which has been handed down to him by his forefathers. True worship

consists in keeping one's thoughts ever raised to God, the common father of all men. Inward piety is the essential thing; sacrifices are but the outward sign. As to the adorations paid to dæmons, these are obligations of trivial consequence, which can be satisfied with a motion of the hand, and which one shows great goodness in taking seriously. The dæmons have need of nothing, and too much pleasure should not be taken in magic and magical feats; but, on the other hand, people should not be lacking in gratitude, and, besides, all piety is salutary. To serve the inferior gods is to give satisfaction to the great God on whom they are dependent. The Christians accord many outrageous honours to a son of God who recently appeared in the world! Like Maximus of Tyre, Celsus has a philosophy of religion which allows him to admit all forms of faith. He would admit Christianity on the same footing as other beliefs, had Christianity only a limited pretension to absolute truth.

Providence, divination, temple miracles, oracles, the immortality of the soul, and future rewards and punishments seem to Celsus integral parts of a state doctrine. It must be borne in mind that the possibility of magic was then almost a dogma. He who permitted himself to deny it was deemed an Epicurean, an atheist, a blasphemer, and risked losing his life. All sects, the Epicureans excepted, taught it as a reality. Celsus seriously believes in it. His reason shows him the falsity of the supernatural beliefs generally admitted; but the inadequacy of his scientific training and his political prejudices prevent him from being logical; he maintains, in principle at least, ideas quite as irrational as those which he attacks. The slight knowledge then possessed of the laws of nature made all credulity possible. Tacitus is assuredly an enlightened spirit, yet he dares not plainly reject the most puerile marvels. Temple visions and divine dreams were regarded as notorious facts. Ælianus was soon to write his books to demonstrate, by alleged actual occurrences, that those who deny the miraculous manifestations of the gods "are more unreasonable than children,"

and that those who believe in the gods fare well at their hands, while the most dreadful calamities befall sceptics and blasphemers.

Celsus is, before all else, a devoted subject of the Emperor and a patriot. He is supposed to have been a Roman or Italian; certainly Lucian, perfectly loyal as he is, has not so pronounced a sympathy with the Empire. The fundamental argument of Celsus is this: Roman religion has been a concomitant phenomenon of Roman greatness, therefore it is true. Like the Gnostics, Celsus believes that each nation has its gods, who protect it so long as it adores them as they would fain be adored. To forsake its gods is for a nation the equivalent of suicide. Celsus is thus, in all things, the antipodes of such a man as Tatian, the implacable foe of Hellenism and Roman society. Tatian entirely sacrifices Greek civilisation to Judaism and Christianity. Celsus attributes all that is good in Jews and Christians to borrowings from the Greeks. Plato and Epictetus are for him the two poles of wisdom. He may not have been personally acquainted with Marcus Aurelius, but he assuredly loved and admired him. From such a point of view he can only regard Christianity as an evil. But mere calumnies do not satisfy him; he recognises that the conduct of the sectaries is inoffensive and orderly; it is the sect's claims to credibility that he wishes to discuss. Celsus made a regular study of the subject, read the books of the Jews and Christians, and conversed with them. The result of his researches was a work entitled *A True Discourse*, which naturally has not survived to us, but which it is possible to reconstruct, with the aid of the quotations and analyses which Origen has given of it.

It is beyond all doubt that Celsus knew Christianity and the books on which it was based better than any other pagan writer. Origen, despite his remarkable Christian education, is amazed at finding he has so much to learn from him. In erudition Celsus is a Christian doctor. His travels in Palestine, Phœnicia, and Egypt have opened his mind to questions of religious history. He

has attentively read the Greek translations of the Bible, Genesis, Exodus, the Prophets, including Jonah, Daniel, Enoch, and the Psalms. He knows the Sibylline writings, and sees clearly through their impostures; he is not exempt from the vanity of attempts at allegorical exegesis. Among the New Testament writings, he is acquainted with the four canonical Gospels and several others, perhaps with the *Acts of Pilate.* While showing a preference for Matthew, he duly takes into consideration the various retouchings which the Gospel texts have undergone, more especially in view of apologetics. It is doubtful whether he ever had the writings of St. Paul in his hands. Like St. Justin, he never mentions him by name; but, nevertheless, he recalls some of his sayings, and is not ignorant of his doctrines. In the matter of ecclesiastical literature, he has read the dialogue of Jason and Papiscus, and numerous Gnostic and Marcionite writings, in particular *The Heavenly Dialogue,* a work not mentioned elsewhere. He does not seem to have handled the writings of St. Justin, although the manner in which he conceives Christian theology, Christology, and the canon, exactly conform to the theology, Christology, and canon of Justin. The Jewish legend of Jesus is familiar to him. According to this, the mother of Jesus committed adultery with the soldier Pantherus, and was turned away by her husband, the carpenter. Jesus performed his miracles by means of secret arts which he learned in Egypt.

It is in exegesis more especially that Celsus amazes us by his penetration. Voltaire has not scored a greater triumph in biblical history—the impossibilities of Genesis taken in its natural sense, and all the naïvely childish elements in the narratives of the creation, the deluge, and the ark. The hard, sanguinary, egoistic character of Jewish history, and the eccentricity of the divine choice on fixing on such a people to make it the people of God, are admirably exhibited. The bitterness of Jewish raillery against other sects is keenly criticised as an act of injustice and pride. The whole Messianic scheme of Judeo-Christian history, having as its basis the exaggerated importance which men,

the Jews in particular, attribute to themselves in the universe, is refuted with a master-hand. Why should God descend here below? To learn what is taking place amongst men? But does he not know all things? Is his power so limited, that he can correct nothing without himself coming into the world or sending some one? Can it have been to make himself known? That is to attribute to him an impulse of entirely human vanity. And then why so late? Why at one moment rather than another? Why in this country rather than that? The apocalyptic theories of the final conflagration and the resurrection are in like manner triumphantly refuted. Can there be a more grotesque pretension than that of immortalising putrefaction and the dunghill? Celsus triumphs by opposing to such religious materialism his pure idealism, his absolute God, who does not manifest himself in the course of finite things.

"Jews and Christians give me the impression of a troop of bats, or a swarm of ants coming out of their hole, or a settlement of frogs by a swamp, or a meeting of worms in the corner of a puddle . . . saying to each other: 'Tis to us that God reveals and proclaims all things in advance; he takes no heed of the rest of the world; he leaves heaven and earth to follow their own devices, that he may devote his whole attention to us. We are the only beings with whom he communicates by messengers, the only beings whose society he desires to cultivate; for he has made us in his own likeness. All things are subordinate to us—earth, water, air, and stars; all things have been made for us and destined for our service; and it is because certain of us have happened to sin that God himself shall come or send his own son, to burn the wicked with fire and make us enjoy with him eternal life.'"

The discussion of the life of Jesus is conducted in exact accordance with the methods of Reimarus or Strauss. The impossibilities of the Gospel narrative, treated as history, have never been better exposed. The manifestation of God in Jesus seems to our philosopher unseemly and useless. The gospel miracles are paltry; vagrant magicians do as much, without on that account being regarded as sons of God. The life of Jesus is that of a miserable necromancer, hated by God. His temperament is irritable; his peremp-

tory manner of speech indicates a man who is powerless to persuade, and does not befit a god or even a sensible man. Jesus should have been handsome, strong, majestic, eloquent. But his disciples confess him to have been short, ugly, and without noble bearing. Why, if God wished to save the human race, did he only send his son to a corner of the world? He ought to have placed his spirit in several bodies, and despatched his heavenly envoys in different directions, since he knew that the envoy destined for the Jews would be put to death. Why also should there be two opposed revelations, that of Moses and that of Jesus? Jesus is reported to have risen from the dead. The same story is given out of a host of others, Zamolxis, Pythagoras, Rhampsinitus.

"It would perhaps be desirable to investigate, in the first instance, whether any really dead man has risen with the same body. Why treat the adventures of others as improbable fables, as though the issue of your tragedy had a better air and was more credible, with the cry that your Jesus uttered from the summit of his cross when expiring, the earthquake and the darkness? In his lifetime he had been able to do nought for himself; when dead, you say, he rose again and showed the marks of his punishment, the holes in his hands. But who was it that saw all this? A woman of diseased mind, as you yourselves avow, or some one else possessed with devils in the same fashion; whether the alleged witness dreamed what his troubled intellect suggested to him, whether, as often happens, his misused imagination embodied his desires, or whether the fact was rather that he wished to impress the minds of men by a tale of wonder and, with the aid of this imposture, furnish material for the charlatans. . . . There appeared at his tomb, some say one angel, some say two angels, to announce to the women that he had risen from the dead; for apparently the son of God had not enough strength to open his tomb by his own exertions; he needed some one to come and roll away the stone. . . . If Jesus wished his divine virtue really to shine forth, he should have shown himself to his enemies, to the judge who had condemned him, in short to every one. For, seeing that he was dead, and, what was more, a god, as you allege, he no longer had aught to fear from any man; and apparently it was not to remain in hiding that he had been sent. At a pinch, indeed, to exhibit his divinity unmistakably, he should have suddenly vanished from his cross. . . . In his lifetime he was lavish of his company; when dead he only permitted himself to be seen in hiding by a crazy woman and some supernumeraries. His execution had innumerable witnesses, his resurrection one alone. The contrary ought to have been the case.

"If you were so very anxious to manufacture a novelty, how much better it would have been to deify one of those who have died like men and are worthy a divine myth! If you objected to take Heracles, Asclepios, or any of the ancient heroes who have already been honoured with worship, you had at your disposal Orpheus, incontestably an inspired man, and one who suffered a violent death. Perhaps you will say that he was no longer available. Be it so; but then you had Anaxarchus, who, cast one day into a mortar, jested with his executioner while he was being cruelly pounded. 'Pound away,' he cried, 'pound the husk of Anaxarchus, for you will not touch the man himself!' a saying instinct with divine wit. Here again, you will say, you have been anticipated. . . . Very well, then, why not take Epictetus? As his master was twisting his leg, he remarked, calm and smiling: 'You are going to break it;' and, as a matter of fact, the leg being broken, he added: 'I told you, you would break it!' What has your god said like that under torture? And the Sibyl, whose authority many of you allege, how have you taken her? You have had the best reasons for calling her the daughter of God. You have been content to interpolate fraudulently and at random a number of blasphemies in her books, and you offer us for a god a being who ended an infamous life with a miserable death. Come, you would have done better to choose Jonah, who emerged safe and sound from a great fish, or Daniel, who escaped the wild beasts, or one of the others about whom you tell us droller tales still."

In his judgments on the Church, as it existed in his time, Celsus shows himself singularly malevolent. Some good and amiable men apart, the Church appears to him as a mob of sectaries in mutual recrimination. There is a new race of men, born yesterday, without a native land, without ancient traditions, leagued together against civil and religious institutions, pursued by justice, held up to infamy, glorying in the execration of all men. Their meetings are clandestine and illegal; in them they mutually swear to violate the laws and suffer all things for a barbarous doctrine, which, in any case, requires to be perfected and purified by Greek reason. A doctrine secret and dangerous indeed! Their courage in sustaining it is praiseworthy; it is well to die rather than abjure, or feign to abjure, the faith we have embraced. But, for all that, the faith should be one founded on reason, and not have as its sole basis a determination to investigate nothing. Martyrdom, moreover, is no new invention of the Christians; every belief has afforded examples

of ardent conviction. They scoff at impotent gods who cannot avenge their insults. But has the supreme god of the Christians avenged his crucified son? Their presumption in deciding questions concerning which the wisest hesitate, is the act of people who aim at nought save the seduction of the simple. All the good points in their doctrine Plato and the philosophers have said better before them. The Scriptures are but a translation in clumsy style of what the philosophers, Plato in particular, have expressed in an excellent style.

Celsus is struck by the divisions of Christianity, and the anathemas which the different Churches reciprocally hurl at one another. At Rome, where, according to the most probable view, the book was written, all the sects flourished side by side. Celsus was acquainted with the Marcionites and the Gnostics. He clearly perceived, however, that in the midst of the labyrinth of sects there was the orthodox Church, "the great Church," which had no other name than that of Christian. Montanist extravagances and Sibylline impostures naturally inspired him with nothing but contempt. Assuredly, had he been better acquainted with the lettered episcopate of Asia—with men like Melito, for instance, who dreamed of agreement between Church and Empire—his judgment would have been less severe. What wounds him is the extreme social degradation of the Christians and the low intelligence of the circles in which they practise their propaganda. Those whom they desire to gain are simpletons, slaves, women, children. Like impostors, they avoid as much as possible honest folk, who do not allow themselves to be duped, to catch in their nets the ignorant and the foolish, the usual prey of knaves.

"Wherein, then, consists the evil of being well bred, of loving the higher learning, of being wise and having the reputation of being so? Are these things obstacles to the knowledge of God? Are they not rather aids to attaining the truth? What do strolling players and mountebanks do? Do they accost men of sense with their claptrap? No, they somewhere catch sight of a group of children or street-porters or boors, and there it is that they ply their industry and find gaping

admirers. The same thing occurs in families. Take wool-combers or shoemakers or fullers, people steeped in ignorance and absolutely devoid of education. Before their masters, who are men of experience and judgment, they dare not open their mouths; but if they come in private on the children of the house, or on women who have no more reason than themselves, they start retailing their marvels. It is they alone who are to be believed; the father of the family, the teachers, are fools, ignorant of true blessings and incapable of teaching them. Those preachers alone know how one ought to live; the children will see fit to follow them, and, through their agency, happiness will descend on the whole family. If, while they are holding forth, some responsible person, one of the teachers or the father himself, come upon the scene, the more timid are silent; the brazen-faced do not desist from exciting the children to throw off the yoke, insinuating in a low voice that they do not wish to teach them anything before their father or tutor, lest they should expose themselves to the brutality of these corrupt persons, who would have them punished. Those anxious to know the truth have only to give father and tutors the slip, and come with the women and brats into the women's quarters or the shoemaker's shop or the fuller's workshop to learn the absolute. Such are the means they take to gain adherents. . . . Whosoever is a sinner, whosoever is without intelligence, whosoever weak-witted, in a word, whosoever is a miserable creature, let him approach, the Kingdom of God is for him."

It is easy to understand how hateful such a subversion of family authority in education must have been to a man who perhaps exercised the functions of tutor. The exclusively Christian idea that God was sent to save sinners revolts Celsus. He only wishes justice. The privileges of the prodigal son are incomprehensible to him.

"What harm is there in being free from sin? Let the unjust man, they say, humble himself in consciousness of his misery, and God shall receive him. But if the just man, trusting to his virtue, raises his eyes to God, shall he be rejected? Conscientious magistrates do not allow the accused to break out in lamentations, for fear of being led to sacrifice justice to pity. Can God in his judgments, then, be accessible to flattery? Why such a preference for sinners? . . . Do not such theories come from the desire to attract a more numerous following? Is it alleged that by this indulgence it is proposed to reform the wicked? What an illusion! You cannot change people's natures! the bad do not mend their ways either by force or soft persuasion. Would not God be unjust, if he were complacent to the wicked, who understand the art of touching him, and forsook the righteous who have not that talent?"

Celsus does not wish a premium to be put on false humility, importunity, and servile prayers. His God is the god of proud and upright souls, not the god of forgiveness, the comforter of the afflicted, the patron of all miserable wretches. He evidently sees a great danger, from the point of view of the politician and also from that of his own profession of public teacher, in permitting it to be said that, to be dear to God, it is a good thing to have been guilty of sin, and that the humble, the poor, and the uncultured have special advantages therein.

"Listen to their professors: 'The wise,' they say, 'reject our teaching, misguided and impeded as they are by their own wisdom.' What man of judgment, indeed, can let himself be attracted by so ridiculous a doctrine? To despise it, one need but contemplate the mob who embrace it. Their masters only seek and only find as disciples men of no intelligence and dull wit. These masters resemble the quacks who promise a sick man to restore him to health, provided he does not summon the professional physicians, for fear lest the latter should expose their ignorance. They use every effort to throw suspicion on science. 'Let me alone,' they say, 'I shall save you by myself; the ordinary doctors kill those whom they boast they cure.' One might compare them to drunken folk who, amongst themselves, accuse sober men of being the worse of liquor, or short-sighted persons who wish to persuade others as short-sighted as themselves that those who have good eyes cannot see at all."

It is, above all, as a patriot and friend of the state that Celsus shows himself the foe of Christianity. The idea of an absolute religion, with no distinction of nationality, appears to him a chimera. All religion is in his eyes national; none has a right to exist save as a national religion. He certainly does not care for Judaism; he considers it puffed up with pride and ill-founded pretensions, inferior in every way to Hellenism. But in so far as it is the national faith of the Jews, Judaism has its rights. The Jews should preserve the customs and beliefs of their fathers, as other peoples do, although the powers to whom Judæa has been confided are inferior to the gods of the Romans, who have conquered them. A man is a Jew by birth, a Christian by choice. That is why Rome has never

seriously dreamed of abolishing Judaism, even after the terrible wars of Titus and Hadrian. As for Christianity, it is the national religion of no one; it is the religion adopted as a protest against national religion, in a spirit of clique and partisanship.

"If they refuse to observe public ceremonies and to render homage to those who preside over them, then let them also renounce the garb of manhood, marriage, fatherhood, and the functions of life; let them all take their departure far from hence, without leaving the least seed of themselves, and let the earth be rid of the brood. But if they wish to marry, have children, eat the fruits of the earth, share in the things of life, in its blessings as well as its evils, they must render to those entrusted with the administration of all, the honours due to them. . . . We ought constantly, both in words and deeds, and even when we are neither speaking nor acting, to incline our souls towards God. That granted, what harm can there be in seeking the favour of those who from God have received their power, and in particular that of kings and the mighty of the earth? For, indeed, it was not without the intervention of a divine force that they were raised to the rank which they occupy."

From a strictly logical point of view Celsus is in the wrong. He does not confine himself to demanding political confraternity from the Christians; he wishes religious confraternity also. He does not limit himself to saying, "Keep your own beliefs; serve the same country with us; this is asking nothing contrary to your principles." No; he wishes the Christians to take part in ceremonies opposed to their ideas. He employs unsound arguments to demonstrate to them that they ought not to take offence at polytheistic worship.

"No doubt," he says, "if one wished to force a pious man to do some impious deed or utter some shameful saying, he would be right in enduring all tortures rather than consent; but it is not the same thing at all when you are ordered to celebrate the worship of the Sun or sing a fine hymn in honour of Pallas Athene. These are forms of piety, and there cannot be too much piety. You admit the existence of angels; why do you not admit that of dæmons or secondary gods? If idols are nothing to you, what harm is there in taking part in public festivals? If there be dæmons, ministers of the Almighty God, should not pious men render them homage? The more, indeed, you

glorify these secondary divinities, the more you will be seen to honour the great God. By being thus applied to all things, piety reaches a higher perfection."

To which the Christians had a right to rejoin, "That is a matter for our conscience; the state has no right to argue with us on that point. Tell us of civic and military duties which have no religious character, and we will fulfil them." In other words, nothing pertaining to the state should be of a religious character. This solution seems a very simple one to us; but how can we reproach the politicians of the second century for not having put it in practice, considering that in our own time it presents so many difficulties?

More admissible, certainly, is our author's reasoning with regard to the oath of allegiance to the name of the Emperor. This was a simple adhesion to the established order of things, an order which was in itself no more than the bulwark of civilisation against barbarism, lacking which Christianity would have been swept away like everything else. But Celsus seems to us wanting in generosity, when he mingles menace with argument. "Doubtless you do not claim," he says, "that the Romans should abandon their civil and religious traditions to embrace your beliefs; that they should forsake their gods to put themselves under the protection of your Most High, who has been unable to protect his own people. The Jews no longer possess a clod of ground; and, as for you, hounded from every land, wanderers, vagrants, reduced to small numbers, you are sought out that an end may be made of you."

The most singular point is that, after having fought Christianity to the death, Celsus at times finds himself approaching it closely. It is clear that at bottom polytheism is nothing but a stumbling-block to him, and that he envies the Church its one God. The idea that Christianity will one day be the religion of the Empire and the Emperor presents itself to his eyes, as to those of Melito. But he turns away with horror from such a prospect. It would be the worst form of death. "An enlightened and more fore-

seeing power," he says to them, "will destroy you root and branch, rather than perish itself at your hands." Then his patriotism and common-sense reveal the impossibility of such a religious policy to him. The book, which opens with the bitterest refutations, concludes with proposals for conciliation. The state is exposed to the gravest perils; it is a question of saving civilisation; the barbarians are overflowing on all sides; gladiators and slaves are being enrolled. Christianity will suffer as much as the established order of society from the barbarian triumph. Mutual concord then is easy. "Support the Emperor with all your strength, share with him the defence of the right; fight for him if circumstances require it, help him in the direction of his armies. For this, cease to shun civic duties and military service; take your part in public functions, if that be necessary for the safety of the laws and the cause of piety."

This was easy to say. Celsus forgot that those whom he was anxious to rally, he had just before threatened with the most cruel of tortures. Above all, he forgot that in maintaining the established worship, he was inviting the Christians to admit wilder absurdities than those which he attacked in them. Accordingly, this appeal to patriotism could not be heard. Tertullian was proudly to exclaim: "To destroy your Empire, we have but to withdraw. Without us there would be nought save inertia and death." Abstension has ever been the vengeance of vanquished conservatives. Conservatives know that they are the salt of the earth, that without them there is no society possible, that functions of the first importance cannot be performed without their co-operation. It is only natural, then, that in their moments of vexation they should simply say: "Do you dispense with us?" Truth to tell, no one in the Roman world, at the time of which we speak, was prepared for liberty. The principle of the state religion was that of nearly all the citizens. The Christians were already scheming to make their faith that of the Empire. Melito pointed out to Marcus Aurelius that the establishment of the revealed

religion would be the noblest use to which he could put his authority.

The book of Celsus had very few readers when it first appeared. Nearly seventy years elapsed before Christianity became aware of its existence. It was Ambrose, that Alexandrian book-lover and scholar, the instigator of Origen's studies, who discovered the impious work, read it, sent it to his friend, and besought him to refute it. The book, then, had a very limited effect. In the fourth century Hierocles and Julian made use of it and almost copied it; but it was too late. The probability is that Celsus did not deprive Jesus of a single disciple. He was right from the point of view of natural common-sense, but simple common-sense is little heeded when in opposition to the demands of mysticism. The soil had not been prepared by a good public education department. It must be borne in mind that the Emperor himself was not exempt from all leanings to the supernatural; the keenest intellects of the age admitted therapeutic dreams and miraculous cures in the temples of the gods. The number of pure rationalists, so considerable in the first century, was now very limited. Thinkers, who, like the Cæcilius of Minucius Felix, avowed a kind of atheism, only clung the more tenaciously to the established religion. In the latter half of the second century we really see but one solitary man who, being superior to all superstition, was fully entitled to smile at all human follies and pity them equally. That man, at once the sanest and most fascinating spirit of his time, was Lucian.

Here we have no ambiguity. Lucian absolutely rejects the supernatural. Celsus admits all religions, Lucian denies them all. Celsus believes himself in conscience bound to study Christianity in its sources; Lucian, who knows in advance what to rely on, has a very superficial idea of Christianity. His ideal is Demonax, who, taking the opposite course from that of Celsus, makes no sacrifices, initiates himself into no mystery, and possesses no other religion than universal cheerfulness and benevolence.

This absolute difference in starting-point makes Lucian much less remote from the Christians than Celsus. He who has a better right than any one to look severely on the supernaturalism of the new sectaries, seeing that he does not admit the supernatural, shows himself, on the contrary, somewhat indulgent to them at times. Like the Christians, Lucian is a subverter of paganism, a resigned subject, but no lover of Rome. In him we never detect a patriotic disquietude, one of those statesman's cares which gnaw his friend Celsus. His laughter is that of the fathers, his *diasyrmos* is in chorus with that of Hermias. He talks of the immorality of the gods or the contradictions of the philosophers almost like Tatian. His ideal city singularly resembles a church. The Christians and he are allied in the same war—war with local superstitions, wizards, oracles, and thaumaturgists.

The chimerical and Utopian side of the Christians could only displease him. It really seems as though he must have thought of them many times in drawing, in *The Fugitives*, that picture of a world of shameless, ignorant, insolent vagrants, levying positive tribute under pretext of seeking alms, austere in words but in reality debauchees, seducers of women, foes of the Muses, folk with pale faces and shaven crowns, partisans of infamous orgies. The picture is less sombre, but the allusion perhaps more scornful in *Peregrinus*. Certainly Lucian does not, like Celsus, see any danger to the state in those silly sectaries, whom he depicts for us living as brethren and animated with the most fervent charity for each other. It is not he who would demand their persecution. There are so many fools in the world! And those are not nearly the most mischievous.

Lucian had assuredly formed a strange idea of "the crucified sophist who introduced those new mysteries, and succeeded in persuading his followers to worship none but him." He pities such great credulity. How can poor devils, that have got it into their heads that they are immortal, escape being exposed to all manner of aberrations? The cynic who "evaporates" at Olympia, the Christian martyr

who seeks death to be with Christ, appear to him lunatics of the same order. In presence of such pompous, self-sought deaths, his reflection is that of Arrius Antoninus: "If you are so set on grilling yourselves, do it at home at your ease and without theatrical display." The care bestowed on collecting the martyr's remains, raising altars to him, the pretension of obtaining miracles of healing from him, and making a sanctuary of his funeral-pyre, are so many follies common to all sectaries. Lucian is of opinion that one may be content to laugh at it all, provided there be no knavery in it. He only bears the victims a grudge because they stimulate the executioners.

He was the first representative of that form of human genius of which Voltaire was the complete incarnation, and which, in many respects, is the truth. Man being incapable of seriously solving any of the metaphysical problems which he is rash enough to moot, what is the sensible man to do amid the warfare of religions and systems? To stand aloof, smile and preach tolerance, humanity, unpretentious well-doing, and cheerfulness of heart. The evil thing is hypocrisy, fanaticism, superstition. To substitute one superstition for another is to render paltry service to poor humanity. The radical remedy is that of Epicurus, who settles religion, its object, and the evils which it entails at the same blow. Lucian thus appears to us as a wise man astray in a world of madmen. He hates nothing and laughs at all, save serious virtue.

But at the time when the present history concludes, men of this stamp are becoming rare; one can almost count them. The extremely witty Apuleius of Madaura is, or at least affects to be, much opposed to freethinkers. He has been in priest's orders. He detests the Christians as blasphemers. He rejects the accusation of magic, not as being chimerical, but as an unfounded fact; for him gods and dæmons are omnipresent. The freethinker was thus an isolated being, looked on with ill-favour and compelled to dissimulate his views. The story was told with horror of a certain Euphronius, a hardened Epicurean, who fell ill, and whom

his relatives bore into a temple of Æsculapius. There a divine oracle gave him this prescription: "Burn the books of Epicurus, knead the ashes with moist wax, coat the stomach with this liniment and wrap the whole in bandages." There was another tale of a cock in Tanagra, which, wounded in the foot, took its place amongst those who were singing a hymn to Æsculapius, accompanying them with its crowing and showing the god its injured foot. A revelation having been vouchsafed to effect its cure, "the cock was seen flapping its wings, walking with long strides, straightening its neck and shaking its comb, to proclaim Providence which watches over creatures void of reason."

The defeat of common-sense was achieved. The fine railleries of Lucian, the sound criticisms of Celsus, were only to have the weight of powerless protests. In the space of a generation man, on entering life, was to have no more than a choice of superstitions, and soon not even that choice was to be permitted him.

CHAPTER XXII.

NEW APOLOGIES—ATHENAGORAS, THEOPHILUS OF ANTIOCH, MINUCIUS FELIX.

NEVER had the struggle been fiercer than it was during the latter years of Marcus Aurelius. Persecution was at its highest pitch. Attacks and counter-attacks crossed and intercrossed. The belligerent parties borrowed from each other by turns the weapons of dialectic and irony. Christianity had its Lucian in a certain Hermias, who called himself a "philosopher," and apparently made it his task to supplement all Tatian's exaggerations concerning the misdeeds of philosophy. His work, probably written in Syria, is not an apology; it is a sermon addressed to the assembled faithful. The author published it under the title of *Diasyrmos*, or

"Mockery of the Philosophers from Without." Its humour is heavy and somewhat savourless. It recalls the attempts, made in our own time by Catholicism, to use Voltaire's irony in the service of the good cause, and frame religious apologetics in the tone of a good-humoured Tertullian. The sarcasms of Hermias not only attack the exaggerated claims of philosophy; they also strike at the most legitimate efforts of science, the desire to know things which are nowadays completely investigated and known. Science, according to the author, has as its origin the apostasy of the angels. The latter are unhappy and perverse beings, who have taught men philosophy with all its contradictions. The author's acquaintance with the ancient schools is extensive but not very deep, and, as for philosophic spirit, there never existed any one more absolutely devoid of it.

The Emperor's clemency and his well-known love of truth inspired from year to year fresh petitions, in which generous advocates of the persecuted religion attempted to expose the monstrous character of the persecutions. Commodus, who had been associated in the imperial government since the end of the year 176, had his share of these supplications to which—strange though it be—he was later to do more justice than his father. "To the Emperors Marcus Aurelius Antoninus and Marcus Aurelius Commodus, Armeniaci, Sarmatici, and, to give them their highest title, philosophers. . . ." Thus commences an apology, written in a very good, old-fashioned style by a certain Athenagoras, an Athenian philosopher, who seems to have been converted to Christianity by his own efforts. He is indignant at the exceptional treatment meted out to the Christians, under a rule of mildness and happiness which gives the whole world peace and liberty. All cities enjoy perfect equality of political rights, all peoples are permitted to live according to their own laws and religion. The Christians, although very loyal to the Empire, are the only persons persecuted for their belief. And if the authorities were only satisfied with depriving them of their property and lives! But what is most unendurable is the official

calumny, which heaps on them accusations of atheism, cannibalism, and incest.

If the Christians be capable of atheism, the philosophers are guilty of the same crime. The Christians admit the existence of that supreme, invisible, impassable, incomprehensible intelligence which is philosophy's last word. Why reproach them for what in others is praised? What the Christians say of the Son and the Spirit completes philosophy, in nowise contradicts it. The Son of God is the Word of God, the eternal reason of the eternal spirit. The Christians reject the sacrifices, the idols, the immoral fables of paganism. Who can blame them for that? The gods are most often only deified men. The miracles of healing performed in the temples are the work of demons.

Athenagoras has no difficulty in proving the improbability of the unnatural crimes alleged against the Christians. He affirms the perfect purity of their conduct, despite the objectionable inferences drawn from the kiss of peace.

"According to differences in age, we treat some as sons and daughters, others as brothers and sisters, others as fathers and mothers; but these terms of relationship entail no stain of impurity. The Word says indeed: 'If any one repeats the kiss to obtain enjoyment . . .;' and it adds: 'We must be highly scrupulous concerning the kiss, more especially in the case of adoration, since, were it defiled by the least impure thought, it would deprive us of eternal life.' The hope of eternal life makes us despise our present life, even to the pleasures of the soul. Each of us uses his wife according to certain rules which we have laid down, and in such measure as serves for the procreation of children; even as the husbandman, having left his seed in the ground, awaits the harvest without sowing anything more. You will find amongst us many persons of both sexes who wax old in celibacy, hoping thus to live nearer God. . . . Our rule is that each must remain as he is born, or be content with a single marriage. Second marriages are nothing more than decorously disguised adultery. . . .

"If our accusers be asked whether they have seen what they allege, there are none of them so shameless as to affirm it. We have slaves, some more, others less; we do not dream of hiding ourselves from them, and, nevertheless, not one of them has up till now brought those false charges against us. We cannot endure the sight of a man being put to death, even justly. Who is not eager to witness the shows of gladiators and wild beasts, especially when it is you who give them? Well, we have renounced such spectacles, believing there is scarce any difference

between looking on a murder and committing it. We regard as homicides the women who procure abortion, and we believe that merely to expose a child is to slay it. . . .

"What we ask is the common justice of not being punished for the name we bear. When a philosopher commits a felony, he is judged for that felony, and philosophy is not held responsible for the deed. If we be guilty of the crimes with which we are charged, spare neither age nor sex, exterminate with us our wives and our children. If they be inventions, with no other foundation than the natural opposition of vice and virtue, it is for you to examine our life, our doctrine, our devoted submission to you and your house and the Empire, and to do us the same justice you would do our adversaries."

Extreme deference, almost obsequiousness to the Empire, is the characteristic of Athenagoras as of all the apologists. In particular, he flatters the ideas of heredity, and assures Marcus Aurelius that the prayers of the Christians may have as their effect that of assuring the regular succession of his son.

"Now that I have replied to all accusations and shown our piety towards God, as well as the purity of our souls, I ask no more than a nod of your royal heads, O princes, whom nature and education have made so excellent, so moderate, so humane. Who is the worthier of being heard by the sovereign than we who pray for your government, to the end that succession from father to son may be established amongst you, according to all that is most just, and that your Empire, ever receiving new accessions, may extend through the whole universe. And in praying thus we pray for ourselves, since the peace of the Empire is the condition that enables us, in a quiet and tranquil life, to give our whole minds to the observance of the precepts imposed on us."

The dogma of the resurrection of the dead was that which caused most difficulties to intellects which had received the Greek education. To this Athenagoras devotes a special lecture, attempting to respond to the objections derived from cases in which the body loses its identity. Immortality of the soul does not suffice. Precepts such as those relating to adultery and fornication do not concern the soul, since the soul is incapable of such misdeeds. The body has its part in virtue, it must have its part in reward. Man is only complete when composed of body and soul, and all said of man's ends applies to the complete man. Notwith-

standing all these arguments the pagans persisted in saying: "Show us one risen from the dead, and when we have seen, we shall believe;" and they were not altogether wrong.

Theophilus, bishop of Antioch about the year 170, was, like Athenagoras, a convert from Hellenism, who in his conversion believed he did no more than change one philosophy for another that was better. He was a very prolific doctor, a catechist gifted with a great talent for exposition, and a skilful controversialist according to the ideas of the time. He wrote against Marcion's dualism and against Hermogenes, who denied the creation and admitted the eternity of matter. He wrote commentaries on the Gospels, and, it is said, made a concord or harmony of them. His principal work, which has survived to us, was a treatise in three books addressed to a certain Autolycus, probably a fictitious person, under whose name Theophilus represents the educated pagan, confined in error by current prejudices against Christianity. According to Theophilus men are Christians at heart; it is passions and vices that withhold them from seeing God. God is immaterial and without form, but his works reveal him. The gods of the pagans are men who have caused themselves to be worshipped, and the worst of men.

Theophilus already talks of the Trinity; but his Trinity is only in appearance that of Nicæa; it is composed of three persons: God, the Word, and Wisdom. His confidence in the reading of the prophets as a means of conversion for pagans may appear exaggerated. His erudition is extensive, but the critical faculty is lacking in him, and the exegesis which he gives of the early chapters of Genesis is very weak. What shall we say of the assurance with which he quotes to the pagans, as a decisive authority, the Judeo-Christian Sibyl, the authenticity of which he fully admits?

On the whole, Theophilus is more akin to the narrow and malignant spirit of Tatian than to the liberal spirit of Justin and Athenagoras. Occasionally he will acknowledge that the Greek philosophers and poets anticipated revelation, notably in what concerns the final conflagration of the

world; but most often he deems them tainted with gross errors. The Greeks have plundered Genesis, and in doing so have transformed it. Greek wisdom is but a colourless, modern, and feeble plagiarism of Moses. Just as the sea would dry up were it not unceasingly fed by the rivers, so the world would perish by reason of the wickedness of men, if the Law and the prophets did not maintain virtue and justice therein. The Catholic Church is like an island prepared by God in the midst of a sea of errors. But let men not be deceived: there are heresies, rockbound islands without water or fruits, and swarming with savage beasts. Beware of the pirates who would fain entice you thither to your ruin! Theophilus only scores a complete triumph when he annihilates the ridiculous calumnies with which his co-religionists were pursued. Otherwise he is ineffective, and Autolycus, after such arguments, is not wrong in persisting in his incredulity.

The pearl of this apologetic literature of the latter years of Marcus Aurelius is the dialogue composed by the African, Minucius Felix. It is the earliest Christian work written in Latin, and already one feels that Latin Christian literature, theologically inferior though it be, must needs win the day over Greek Christian literature by the lights and shadows and the virility of its style. The author, a native of Cirta, dwelt in Rome, where he practised the profession of barrister. Born a pagan, he had received the highest education, and had embraced Christianity by force of reflection. He knew his classics perfectly, imitated them, and sometimes copied them, Cicero, Seneca, and Sallust being his favourite authors. Among his contemporaries none wrote Latin better than he. The book of his compatriot Fronto impressed him, and he was anxious to respond to the attack; he did so, apparently imitating the somewhat studied style of the illustrious rhetorician, and borrowing from it more than once. Perhaps also he had read the work of Celsus, and occasionally aimed his arguments at it without mentioning it by name.

Cæcilius Natalis, an educated pagan belonging to the

most aristocratic family of Cirta, and two Christians, Octavius and Minucius, are walking on the sea-shore near Ostia during the autumn recess. Cæcilius, noticing a statue of Serapis, raises his hand to his mouth according to custom. A discussion arises. Cæcilius begins with a long discourse, which may be considered as an almost textual reproduction of Fronto's line of argument. It is a perfect statement of the objections which a well-bred Roman would naturally make to Christianity. The tone is that of a conservative, who fails to dissimulate his haughty incredulity, and defends religion without believing in it. Sceptical of the essence of things, disdainful of all speculation, Cæcilius only adheres to the established religion from decorum and habit, and because the dogmatism of the Christians is offensive to him. The schools of philosophy have only engendered controversies; the human intellect cannot cleave the space that divides it from the Divinity. The wiser renounce the attempt. What is to be said of the presumption of certain folk who, springing from the lowest classes, lacking both education and knowledge, alien to all literature, claim to solve problems before which philosophy has pondered for centuries? Is it not much the wiser course, abandoning questions too high for our humble judgments, to follow the worship established by our forefathers? The ages of antiquity, thanks to their ignorance and simple faith, had privileges, that in particular of seeing the gods near at hand and having them as kings. In such a matter antiquity is everything; the true is that which has been long believed. Rome has won the privilege of reigning over the world by accepting the rites of the whole world. How can any one dream of changing so useful a religion? The ancient faith saw the beginnings of Rome, defended her against the barbarians, bid defiance at the Capitol to the onslaught of the Gauls. Would you have Rome renounce it, to please a few rebels who abuse the credulity of women and simpletons?

Thanks to a rare dexterity of languages, Cæcilius permits us to understand that all is fabulous and nevertheless true

in the matter of divination, religious rites, miraculous cures, and dreams. His attitude is that of Celsus. At heart he is an Epicurean; he has little faith in Providence and supernatural interventions, but his attachment to the state religion makes him crafty.

"Man and the lower animals are born, inspired with life, and grow up by a kind of spontaneous concretion of the elements, which then divide, dissolve, and disperse. Everything comes back upon itself, flows back to its source, without a single being playing in any part of the process the part of maker, judge, or creator. Thus the union of the fiery elements causes suns to shine forth unceasingly, and then other suns still. Thus the vapours exhaled from the earth gather together in mists, rise in clouds, fall in rain. The winds blow, the hail rattles, the thunder roars at the shock of the clouds, the lightning flashes, the thunderbolt is hurled—all this at random. The lightning smites the mountains, smites the trees, blasting indifferently places sacred and profane, consuming guilty men and often religious men. What shall we say of those blind, capricious forces that sweep all away without order or trial? In shipwrecks the fate of good and wicked confounded, their deserts *ex æquo;* in conflagrations the innocent surprised by death as well as the wrong-doers; when the air is infected with pestilential virus, death for all without distinction; in the midst of the furies of war the most valiant succumbing; in times of peace wickedness not only put on the level of virtue but privileged, so that there are many concerning whom we ask whether they are to be detested for their wickedness or envied for their good fortune. Were the world governed by a higher Providence and the prerogative of some divinity, would Phalaris and Dionysius have deserved the crown, Rutilius and Camillus exile, Socrates poison? Behold, here are trees covered with fruit, an exuberant harvest and vintage: the rain rots, the hail shatters all. So true it is that the truth is for us concealed and forbidden, or rather that lawless chance reigns supreme throughout the infinite and innumerable variety of cases."

The picture which Cæcilius, as interpreter of the prejudices of Roman aristocratic society, draws of Christian manners is of the gloomiest nature. They are right to hide themselves, those sectaries; they do so since they dare not show themselves. Their secret and nocturnal assemblies are conventicles of infamous pleasures. Disdaining all that is honourable, the priesthood, public honours, the purple, incapable of uttering a word in decent company, they take refuge in holes and corners to dogmatise. Those wretches

in rags, half-naked—O height of audacity!—despise present torments by their belief in future and uncertain torments. From fear of dying after death, they have no fear of dying now.

"They recognise one another by marks and secret signs; they love one another almost before they are mutually acquainted. Next debauchery becomes their religion, the bond that unites them. Without distinction they call each other brothers and sisters, so that by the use of these sacred names, what would be no more than adultery or fornication comes to be incest. Thus it is that this vain and foolish superstition glories in its crimes. Were there not in those tales some foundation of fact, it would be impossible for popular rumour, always shrewd, to spread abroad so many monstrous things concerning them. I hear it reported that they venerate the head of the ignoblest of beasts, consecrated in their eyes by the inanest of arguments: a worthy religion, indeed, and expressly made for such manners of life! Others relate. . . . Whether these be inventions, I know not; they are, at any rate, suspicions naturally provoked by occult and nocturnal rites. And, after all, when the worship of a man who underwent the most degrading of punishments for his misdeeds is attributed to them, as well as the presence in their ceremonies of the sinister wood of the cross, we do no more than grant them the altars that befit them best; they worship what they deserve.

"The scene that takes place at the initiation of the neophytes is as notorious as abominable. A child covered with dough and flour, to deceive those who are not in the secret, is laid before him who is to be initiated. He is bidden to strike; the floury crust makes him believe it the most innocent affair in the world; the child perishes under his occult, blindly-aimed blows. And then—O horror!—they greedily lap its blood, and tear it limb from limb. Thenceforth their brotherhood is sealed by a victim; the mutual knowledge that they have of their crime is the pledge of their silence.

"No one is ignorant concerning the feast; it is everywhere discussed, and the discourse of our compatriot of Cirta proves all allegations. On holy days, people of all ages, men and women, assemble for a banquet with their children, sisters, and mothers. After much feasting, when the guests are heated and drunkenness has kindled in them the fire of incest, there takes place the following:—A dog is fastened to the candlestick, and is then coaxed and made to jump out of the space in which it is confined by a little cake being thrown to it. The candlestick is overturned. Then, disembarrassed of every gleam of importune light, in the midst of a darkness that favours all shamelessness, they mingle, as chance will have it, in embraces of infamous concupiscence, guilty of incest all of them, if not in fact at least in complicity, since the oath taken by all covers that which may

result from the act of each one. I pass on, for there are already enough allegations, all, or nearly all, proved by the one fact of the darkness of this perverse religion. Why, indeed, should they take pains to hide the object of their worship, whatever it may be, when it is admitted that goodness loves publicity, and crime alone seeks obscurity? Why have they no altars, no temples, no recognised images? Why do they never speak in public? Why their horror of open meetings if what they adore with such a parade of mystery be neither felonious nor shameful? Of what nature is this unique, solitary, distressful god, known to no free nation, no kingdom, not even to the lowest stage of Roman superstition? Alone the miserable Jewish nation honoured this solitary god; but at least it honoured him openly with temples and altars and victims and ceremonies. Poor god, ended and dethroned, since now with his nation he is captive of the Roman gods! . . . The greater, the better part of you suffer, you confess, from misery, cold, weariness, and hunger, and your god permits it, feigns to behold it not! Either he will not or cannot succour his people; he is either impotent or unjust.

"Menaces, punishments, tortures, such is your lot; 'tis not so much a question of worshipping the cross as of mounting it; the fire which you foretell and dread, you actually suffer. Where, then, is that god who can save his servants when they come to life again, and can do nought for them in their present life? Is it by the grace of your god that the Romans rule over you, command you, are your masters? And you, all the while, ever suspicious and uneasy in mind, abstain from lawful pleasures, shun festivals, public banquets, sacred spectacles. As though you feared the gods whom you deny, you hold in horror pieces of meat from which part has been cut off for sacrifices, and beverages from which libations have been made. You do not wreathe your head with flowers; you deny your body perfumes, reserving them for obsequies; you even forbid crowns to be laid on tombs; pale, trembling, pitiful beings that you are. . . . Thus unhappy, you do not rise from death, and, awaiting it, you do not live. If you have any grain of wisdom, any sense of the ludicrous, cease to go on losing yourselves in the heavenly realms of space, and greedily seeking the destinies and secrets of the earth. Looking at one's feet is enough, especially for ignorant, uncouth folk, of no education, no culture, to whom the understanding of human things has not been vouchsafed, and who therefore have so much the less right to expatiate on things divine."

The merit of the author of this curious dialogue is that he in no way attenuates the force of his adversaries' arguments. Celsus and Fronto did not express with more vigour how contrary to the simplest ideas of science were those perpetual announcements of the burning of the

world, with which the simple were intimidated. Nor are Christian ideas on the resurrection criticised with less energy. Whence this horror of the funeral pyre and the cremation of corpses, as though the earth did not effect in a few years what the pyre does in a few hours? What matters it to the corpse whether it be torn to pieces by wild beasts, or plunged in the sea, or put underground, or consumed by flame?

Octavius makes feeble response to these objections, which in some measure are inherent in his dogma, and which Christianity is to drag with it through the whole course of its existence. God, says the advocate of Christianity, has created the world; he can also destroy it. If he made man of nothing, he can very well raise him from the dead. The doctrine of the final conflagration is taught by the philosophers. If the Jews have been conquered, it is their own fault. God has not forsaken them; it is they who have forsaken God.

Octavius is still more fine-spun in his theories when he asserts that the sign of the cross is the basis of all religion, and, in particular, of the Roman religion; that the Roman standard is a gilded cross; that the trophy represents a man cross-wise; that the ship with its yards, the yoke of a chariot, the attitude of a man in prayer, are all representations of the cross. His explanation of auguries and oracles by the action of perverse spirits is also somewhat childish. But he eloquently refutes the aristocratic prejudices of Cæcilius. Truth is the same for all; all can find it and all must seek it. God is evident to the mind; belief in Providence results from a glance cast on the order of the world and the conscience of man. This truth even reveals itself, although in an obliterated form, in pagan traditions. At the bottom of all religions and all poetry is to be found the idea of an all-powerful Being, father of gods and men, who sees all and is the universal first cause. Octavius proves his thesis by phrases culled from Cicero. Monotheism is the natural religion of man, since in emotion he simply exclaims, "O God!" God's providence is the

last word of Greek philosophy, and, in particular, of Plato, whose doctrine would be divine, were it not tainted with an excess of complaisance towards the principle of the state religion. This principle Octavius attacks with extreme energy. The reasons alleged from the greatness of Rome touch him little; that greatness is in his eyes but a tissue of deeds of violence, perfidies, and cruelties.

Octavius excels in proving that the Christians are innocent of the crimes with which they are charged. They have been put to torture; not one has confessed, and yet a confession would have saved them. The Christians have neither statues nor temples nor altars. They are right. The true temple of the Divinity is the heart of man. What sacrificial victims are worth a conscience, an innocent heart? To do justice is to pray, to cultivate virtue is to sacrifice; to save your brother is the best of offerings. Among the Christians the most pious is he that is most just. Octavius glories, above all, in the courage of the martyrs.

"How splendid is the spectacle for God when the Christian fights with pain, when he draws himself up in the face of threats, punishments, torments; when he laughs at the sinister sound of death and the awful sight of the executioner; when he asserts his liberty against kings and princes, and bows down before God alone, to whom he belongs; when, triumphant and victorious, he defies him who has decreed his sentence of death! To conquer, indeed, consists in being able to achieve one's aim! . . . The Christian, then, may sometimes seem, but never is unhappy. You laud to the skies men like Mucius Scævola, whose death would have been assured had he not sacrificed his right hand. But how many of us have suffered without a murmur not only that their right hand but that their whole body should be burnt, when it was in their power to obtain release! . . . Our children, our women laugh at the crosses and torments and wild beasts, at the whole array of punishments, thanks to a patience with which they are inspired from on high."

Let the magistrates who preside over such horrors tremble! God allows them honours and riches only to confound them; the higher they are raised, the heavier shall be their fall. They are victims fatted and already

crowned for death. Bodyguards, fasces, purple raiment, nobility of blood—what vanities are all these! All men are equal; in virtue alone is there aught of difference between them.

Vanquished by these arguments, Cæcilius, without leaving Minucius time to conclude, declares that he believes in Providence and the faith of the Christians. Octavius in his exposition has scarce emerged from pure deism. He mentions neither Jesus, nor the Apostles, nor the scriptures. His Christianity is not the monastic life of which "the Shepherd" dreams; it is a Christianity for men of the world which hinders neither gaiety, nor talent, nor an amiable taste for life, nor the quest of elegance in style. How remote we are from the Ebionite or even the Jew of Galilee! Octavius is Cicero, or, better, Fronto, transformed into a Christian. In reality it is by intellectual culture that he attains deism. He loves nature and takes pleasure in the conversation of the cultured. Men made on this model would have created neither Gospel nor Apocalypse; but, on the other hand, without such adherents, the Gospel, Apocalypse, and Epistles of Paul would have remained the secret writings of a close sect, which, like the Essenes or the Theraputæ, would finally have disappeared.

Minucius Felix suggests, much better than the Greek apologists, the tone destined to prevail amongst the defenders of Christianity in all ages. He is a skilful advocate, addressing people less versed in dialectic than the Greeks of Egypt or Asia, dissimulating three-quarters of his dogma to secure adhesion to the whole without discussion of detail, and assuming the air of the lettered man to convert lettered men, and convince them that Christianity does not compel them to renounce the philosophers and writers whom they admire. "Philosophers, Christians . . . why, they are one and the same thing. Dogmas repugnant to reason! . . . Nonsense! Christian dogma is in literal terms precisely what Zeno, Aristotle, and Plato have said, nothing more. You treat us as

barbarians, yet we cultivate the study of the best authors as well as you." Of beliefs peculiar to the religion preached, not a word is said; to inculcate Christianity he carefully avoids pronouncing the name of Christ. Minucius Felix is the preacher of Notre Dame, speaking to easily satisfied people of the world, making himself all things to all men, studying the weak points and fads of those whom he wishes to convince, affecting, under his leaden cope, the bearing of the man at ease, tampering with his symbol to make it acceptable. Turn Christian on the faith of this pious sophist by all means, but remember that all this is a snare. On the morrow what was represented as merely accessory will become the principal element; the bitter rind that he has been fain you should swallow, in small compass and reduced to its simplest expression, will regain all its bitterness. You were told that the upright man had, in order to be a Christian, scarce any alteration to make in his rules of life; now that the trick has been played, you are presented with an enormous bill to settle in addition. This religion, which was, you were told, no more than natural morality, implies, into the bargain, an impossible physical philosophy, a grotesque metaphysic, a chimerical version of history, a theory of things human and divine which is in all respects the antipodes of reason.

CHAPTER XXIII.

PROGRESS IN ORGANISATION.

Under circumstances apparently so difficult, the organisation of the Church was being brought to completion with surprising rapidity. At the moment we have now reached, the Church of Jesus is something solid and consistent. The great peril of Gnosticism, that of splitting up Christianity into innumerable sects, has been exorcised. The term "Catholic Church" shines forth on all sides,

as the name of that great society which is henceforth to traverse the ages without shipwreck. And the character of this catholicity is already clearly defined. The Montanists are regarded as sectaries; the Marcionites are convicted of tampering with apostolic doctrine; the various Gnostic schools tend more and more to be expelled from the bosom of the general Church. There is, then, something that is neither Montanism, nor Marcionism, nor Gnosticism; which is unsectarian Christianity, the Christianity of the majority of the bishops, resisting the heresies and making use of them all, possessing, if you will, only negative characteristics, but by these negative characteristics preserved from pietistic aberrations and the dissolvent of rationalism. Christianity, like all bodies that mean to live, disciplines itself, prunes away its own excesses. With mystical exaltation it unites a fund of common-sense and moderation, which in time is to slay Millenarianism, miraculous powers, the gift of tongues, and all the other primitive spiritual phenomena. A handful of enthusiasts like the Montanists, seeking martyrdom, discouraging penitence, condemning marriage, is not the Church. The golden mean triumphs; radicals of whatever kind are not to be permitted to destroy the work of Jesus. The Church invariably holds to the average opinion; the Church belongs to the whole world and is not the privileged preserve of an aristocracy. The pietistic aristocracy of the Phrygian sects, and the speculative aristocracy of the Gnostics, are alike over-ruled in their pretensions. In the Church there are both perfect and imperfect; all can form a part. Martyrdom, fasting, and celibacy are excellent things, but it is possible to be a Christian, and a good Christian, without any particular heroism.

It was the episcopate which, without intervention of the civil power, without the support of police and courts, thus established order above freedom in a society founded in the first instance on individual inspiration. That is why the Syrian Ebionites, who have no bishops, no longer possess the idea of catholicity. At first sight the work of Jesus was

not born capable of independent existence; it was a chaos. Founded on a belief in the end of the world, which the years in their lapse were to convict of error, the Galilean congregation seemed powerless to do aught but dissolve into anarchy. Free prophecy, miraculous powers, glossolalia, individual inspiration—there was more than would suffice to reduce all to the proportions of one of the ephemeral sects so numerous in America and England. Individual inspiration creates, but immediately destroys what it has created. After liberty must come the reign of law. The work of Jesus could be considered saved, on the day when the Church was admitted to possess a direct authority, an authority representing that of Jesus. Thenceforth the Church dominated the individual and, if need were, expelled him from her midst. The Church, an unstable and changing body, was soon personified in the elders; the powers of the Church became the powers of a clergy, dispensing all the graces and acting as intermediary between God and the believer. Inspiration passed from the individual to the community. The Church had become all-supreme in Christianity; but one step further was required for the bishop to become all-supreme in the Church. Obedience to the Church, then to the bishop, was regarded as the first of duties; innovation was the mark of false doctrine; schism was thenceforth to be the worst of crimes for the Christian.

Thus the primitive Church possessed at once order and excessive liberty. The pedantry of scholasticism was still unknown. The Catholic Church readily assimilated the fertile ideas that came to birth among heretics, pruning them of such elements as were too sectarian in character. The spontaneity of theology surpassed all later developments. Apart from the Gnostics, who carry fantasy to its utmost limits, St. Justin, the author of *The Recognitions*, the pseudo-Hermas, Marcion and innumerable other masters appearing on every side, have an abundance of materials for their purpose, if one may so express it; each constructs a Christology to suit his own taste. But in the midst of the

immense variety of opinions that floods the first Christian epoch, one fixed point is established, the idea of catholicity. To convince the heretic, there is no need to reason with him. It suffices to point out that he is not in communion with the Catholic Church, with the great Churches that trace their succession of bishops back to the apostles. *Quod semper, quod ubique* becomes the absolute test of truth. The argument of prescription, to which Tertullian is to give such eloquent form, sums up the whole Catholic controversy. To prove to any one that he is an innovator, a late-comer in theology, is to prove him in the wrong. An inadequate rule, since by a singular irony of fate, the very doctor who elaborated this method of refutation in so imperious a fashion, died a heretic!

Correspondence between the Churches was customary at an early date. The circular epistles of the heads of the great Churches, read on Sunday at the meetings of the faithful, formed a continuation of apostolic literature. The church, like the synagogue and the mosque, was an essentially urban institution. Christianity (and the same can be said of Judaism and Islamism) was to be a religion of cities, not of country-folk. The countryman, the *paganus*, was to be the last resisting force that Christianity had to encounter. Such countrymen as were Christians, and they were very few in number, attended the church of the nearest town.

The Roman municipality thus came to be the cradle of the Church. As the country districts and small towns received the Gospel from the great cities, so they also received their clergy, who always remained under the sway of the bishop of the great city. Among the towns the *civitas* alone had a true Church with an *episcopos;* the small town was in ecclesiastical dependence on the greater. This primacy of the large cities was a fact of capital importance. Once the great city was converted, the small town and countryside followed the movement. The diocese was thus the original unit of the Christian aggregation.

As to the ecclesiastical province, implying the precedence

of the great over the small Churches, it corresponded as a rule to the Roman province. The founder of the organisation of Christianity was Augustus. The partitions of the worship of Rome and Augustus were the underlying law that regulated all. The cities which had a *flamen* or *archiereus* were those which later had an archbishop; the *flamen civitatis* became the bishop. From the third century onwards the *flamen duumvir* occupied in the city the position which, a hundred or a hundred and fifty years later, was that of the bishop in the diocese. Later, Julian endeavoured to set up these *flamines* in opposition to the Christian bishops, and to make parish priests of the *augustales*. Thus the ecclesiastical geography of a country is very nearly the geography of that country in the Roman period. The list of bishoprics and archbishoprics is that of the ancient *civitates*, according to their ties of subordination. The Empire was as the mould in which the new religion congealed. The internal framework and the hierarchical divisions were those of the Empire. The ancient rolls of the Roman administration and the registers of the mediæval Church, and even of the Church of our own time, scarcely differ.

Rome was the centre in which this great idea of catholicity was elaborated. Her Church had an incontested supremacy, which it owed in part to its saintliness and excellent reputation. Every one now recognised that this Church had been founded by the apostles Peter and Paul, that these two apostles had suffered martyrdom at Rome, and that even John had within her walls been plunged in boiling oil. The spots sanctified by these apostolic incidents, in part true, in part false, were pointed out. All this invested the Church of Rome with unparalleled glory. Dubious questions were referred to Rome for arbitration, if not solution. The argument was used that, since Christ had made Cephas the corner-stone of his Church, the same privilege must necessarily extend to his successors. The bishop of Rome became the bishop of bishops, he who admonished the others. Pope Victor (189-199) extended this claim to excesses which

the wise Irenæus held in check, but the deed was done; Rome had asserted her right (a perilous one indeed!) to excommunicate those who did not see eye to eye with her in all things. The poor Artemonites (a kind of early Arians) had every right to complain of the injustice of fate which made heretics of them, although, up to the time of Victor, the whole Church of Rome thought like them. Thenceforth the Church of Rome arrogated a place above history. The spirit which, in 1870, was to cause the proclamation of the Pope's infallibility, was distinguishable from the close of the second century by signs that were already unmistakable. The work, of which the fragment known under the name of the *Canon of Muratori* forms a part, written at Rome about 180, shows us Rome engaged in regulating the canon of the churches, attributing the Passion of Peter as a base to catholicity, and rejecting Montanism and Gnosticism alike. Attempts at framing creeds also began about this time in the Roman Church. Irenæus refutes all heresies by the faith of that Church, "the greatest, oldest, and most illustrious, which, by its continuous succession, possesses the true tradition of the apostles Peter and Paul, and to which, by reason of its primacy, the rest of the Church must resort." Every Church with the reputation of having been founded by an apostle had privileges; what, then, was to be said of the Church which was believed to have been founded by the two greatest of the apostles at once?

The precedence of the Church of Rome only waxed greater in the third century. The bishops of Rome displayed remarkable adroitness, evading theological questions, but always to the fore in questions of organisation and administration. Pope Cornelius managed everything in the Novatian affair; in particular we note him superseding the Italian bishops and appointing successors to them. Rome was also the central authority of the African Churches. Aurelian, in 172, rules that the real bishop of Antioch is he who is in correspondence with the bishop of Rome. When does this supremacy of the Church of

Rome suffer an eclipse? When, at the end of the third century, Rome ceases to be in reality the one capital of the Empire; when the centre of great affairs is removed to Nicæa and Nicomedia, and, above all, when the Emperor Constantine creates a new Rome on the Bosphorus. The Church of Rome from Constantine to Charlemagne had in reality decayed from what it had been in the second and third centuries. It rose again, more powerful than ever, when, by its alliance with the Carlovingian house, it became, and for eight centuries remained, the centre of all the great affairs of the West.

It may be said that the organisation of the Churches knew five stages of advance, of which four were traversed in the period covered by the present work. First, the primitive *ecclesia*, in which all the members are equally inspired by the Spirit. Then the elders or *presbyteri* acquire considerable disciplinary rights in the *ecclesia*, and absorb the *ecclesia*. Then the president of the elders, the *episcopos*, almost absorbs the powers of the elders, and consequently those of the *ecclesia*. Then the *episcopi* of the different Churches form, by mutual correspondence, the Catholic Church. Among the *episcopi* there is one, he of Rome, who is evidently destined to a great future. The Pope and the Church of Jesus, transformed into a monarchy with Rome as its capital, are dimly to be perceived in the distance; but the underlying idea of this last transformation still remains weak at the close of the second century. It must be added that this transformation has not had, like the others, a universal character. The Latin Church alone has acquiesced in it, and in the bosom of that Church even the encroachment of the papacy has ended by bringing about revolt and protest.

Thus the great organisms, which still form so essential a part of the moral and political life of the European peoples, were all of them created by those sincere and simple-minded men whose faith has become inseparable from the moral culture of mankind. At the end of the second century the episcopate was entirely mature, the

papacy existed in germ. Œcumenical Councils were impossible; the Christian Empire could alone permit those assemblies. But the provincial synod was practised in dealing with the question of the Montanists and that of Easter; the primacy of the bishop of the provincial capital was admitted without question. An extremely active epistolary intercourse was, as in apostolic times, the soul and condition of the whole movement. In the Novatian affair, about 252, the various provincial assemblies with their intercommunication constituted a true corresponding council, with Pope Cornelius as president. In the action taken against Privatus, bishop of Lambese, and in the question of the baptism of heretics an entirely similar procedure was followed.

A work which vividly shows the rapid progress of this internal movement of the Churches towards a constitution, or rather towards the exaggeration of hierarchical authority, is the alleged correspondence of Ignatius, to which the letter attributed to Polycarp is perhaps a supplement. It may be supposed that these writings made their appearance about the time we have now reached. Who could have been better fitted than these two great martyr-bishops, whose memory was universally revered, to counsel submission and order to the faithful?

"Obey the bishop as Jesus Christ obeys the Father, and the body of presbyters as the apostles; show reverence to the deacons as the very commandment of God. Let nothing that concerns the Church be done apart from the bishop. In regard to the eucharist, that must be held valid which is administered by the bishop or by him whom he has entrusted with the office. Wheresoever the bishop appears, there let the people be, even as where Christ Jesus is, there is the Catholic Church. None are permitted to baptize or conduct the love-feast without the bishop's authority. The bishop's approbation is the mark of what pleases God, the sure and constant rule to follow in practice.

"It is meet, then, that you should keep in harmony with the mind of the bishop, as you do. For your venerable band of presbyters, worthy of God, are with the bishop in the same harmonious relation as the strings with the lyre. It is by your joining together in affectionate concord that Jesus Christ is sung. Let all of you, then, be as a choir, so that, in harmonious accord, receiving the key-note from God in full

accord, you may sing in unison with one voice through Jesus Christ to the Father, that he may hear you, and by your good deeds know you for members of his Son."

Already the name of Paul and his relations with Titus and Timothy had been cited, to give the Church a kind of miniature canonical code on the duties of laymen and clergy. The same thing was done under the name of Ignatius. A piety of wholly ecclesiastical cast took the place of the ardour, which for more than a hundred years the memory of Jesus had kept alive. Orthodoxy is now the sovereign good; docility the saving virtue; the old man must bow down before the bishop, even though the latter be young. The bishop must concern himself with all things, and know the names of all his subordinates. Thus by dint of pushing Paul's principles to extremes, ideas were reached which would have horrified Paul. He who was unwilling that any one should be saved by works, would he have admitted still further that a man should be saved by simple submission to superiors? In other respects the pseudo-Ignatius is an authentic disciple of the great apostle. Equidistant from Judaism and Gnosticism, he is of those who speak in the most exalted manner of the divinity of Jesus Christ. For him, as for the author of the *Epistle to Diognetus*, Christianity is a religion entirely separated from Mosaism. All the primitive distinctions, moreover, had disappeared before the ruling tendency which hurried the most opposite parties towards unity. The pseudo-Ignatius held out his hand to the Judeo-Christian pseudo-Clement, to preach obedience and respect for authority.

A very striking instance of this renunciation of variances, which for more than a hundred years had filled the Church of Christ, was that afforded by Hegesippus. Originally an Ebionite, but received into full communion by the orthodox Church, that respected old man completed at Rome his five books of memoirs, which form the first foundation of ecclesiastical history. The work began with the death of Jesus Christ, but it is doubtful whether it were carried on in chronological order. In many respects it was a pol-

emical book directed against the heresies and the apocryphal revelations written by the Gnostics and Marcionites. Hegesippus showed that many of these apocrypha had been composed quite recently.

The memoirs of Hegesippus would have been of infinite value to us, and their loss is no less regrettable than that of the writings of Papias. The book represented the whole treasury of Ebionite traditions, made acceptable to the Catholics and set forth in a spirit of active opposition to the gnosis. All concerning the Jewish sects and the family of Jesus was elaborately treated, evidently from special information. Hegesippus, whose mother-tongue was Hebrew and who received no Greek education, had the credulity of a Talmudist. He faltered before no freak of imagination. His style appeared to the Greeks bald and dull, no doubt because it was modelled on the Hebrew, like that of the Acts of the Apostles. We have a curious specimen of it in the narrative of the death of James, a fragment of so singular a tone that one is fain to believe it to have been borrowed from some Ebionite work written in rhythmic Hebrew.

No one, however, less resembles a sectary than the pious Hegesippus. The idea of catholicity holds as important a place in his mind as in that of the author of the pseudo-Ignatian epistles. His aim is to prove to heretics the truth of Christian doctrine, by pointing out to them that it is uniformly taught in all the churches, and that it has always been taught in the same manner since the time of the apostles. Heresies, from that of Thebuthis (?) onwards, have arisen from pride or ambition. The Roman Church, in particular, has revived the old Jewish discipline as the authority, and created in the West a centre of unity similar to that which the episcopate of the kinsmen of Jesus, issue like him of the seed of David, set up at the very outset in the East.

It is clear that the old Ebion was much softened down. After Hegesippus this variety of Christianity was known no more, unless in the remoter parts of Syria. There Julius

Africanus, about 215, found primitive Nazarenes still surviving, and from them received traditions extremely analogous to those on which Hegesippus lived. The latter suffered from progress, or rather from the shrinking tendency of orthodoxy. He was little read, and still less copied. Origen and St. Hippolytus ignore his existence. Only historical investigators, like Eusebius, knew of him, and those of his valuable pages were preserved which more modern chroniclers inserted in their narratives.

Another sign of maturity is the epistle addressed to a certain Diognetus, doubtless a fictitious person, by an anonymous writer, eloquent and of some literary ability, who at moments recalls Celsus and Lucian. The author supposes his Diognetus to be animated with a desire to become acquainted with "the new religion." The Christians, replies the apologist, are equally remote from Greek idolatry and superstition, and from the uneasiness of spirit and vanity of the Jews. The whole output of Greek philosophy is nought but a mass of absurdities and claptrap impostures. The Jews, on the other hand, are guilty of the error of honouring the one God, in the same manner as polytheists adore their gods, by sacrifices namely, as though that could be agreeable to him. Their fastidious precautions concerning food, their Sabbath superstition, their boasts about circumcision and their petty solicitude for fasts and lunar festivals are ridiculous. Man is not permitted to make distinctions between the things which God has created, to accept some as pure and reject others as useless and superfluous. What can be more impious than to assert that God forbids an action, however honourable it may be, on the Sabbath day; what more grotesque than to uphold mutilation of the flesh as a sign of election, and imagine that it wins the love of God?

"As to the mystery of the Christian faith, hope not to learn it of any man. For the Christians, indeed, are not to be distinguished from other men either by their locality, or their speech, or their manner of living; they dwell not in cities set apart for them, they make use of no peculiar dialect, their life is not remarkable for any special asceticism; they do

not lightly adopt the dreams and imaginations of troubled spirits; they do not cleave, like so many others, to sects bearing such and such a name. But, dwelling in Greek and barbarian cities, as fate has placed them, conforming to local customs in their dress, diet, and the rest of life, they amaze the whole world by the truly admirable government of their commonwealth. They live in their own countries, but only as sojourners; they bear their part in all things as citizens, and they endure all hardships as strangers. Every foreign soil is to them a fatherland, and every fatherland a foreign soil. Like all men they marry and beget children, but they never cast away their new-born. They eat in common, but their table is not common for all that.[1] They are in the flesh, but live not according to the flesh. They dwell upon the earth, but are citizens of heaven. They obey the established laws and, by reason of their principles of life, rise above the laws. They love all men, and by all men they are persecuted, disowned, and condemned. They are put to death and so assured of life. They are poor and they enrich others; they lack all things and in all things abound. They are overwhelmed with outrages, and by outrage they attain to glory. Calumny is heaped on them, and the moment after they are justified; when reviled they bless, to insult they respond with respect; doing nought but good, they are punished as felons, and under punishment they rejoice as though life were being bestowed on them. The Jews war upon them as upon the Gentiles; they are persecuted by the Greeks, and those that hate them can give no reason for it.

"In a word, what the soul is in the body the Christians are in the world. The soul is spread through all the members of the body, and the Christians are spread through all the cities of the world. The soul has its abode in the body, and yet is not of the body; even so the Christians have their abode in the world, but are not of the world. The invisible soul is held captive in the visible body; even so the presence of the Christians in the world is of public notoriety, but their faith is invisible. The flesh hates the soul and makes war upon it, without the soul doing it aught of wrong save that of hindering its pleasure; so it is that the world hates the Christians, for no other reason than that the Christians set their faces against its pleasures. The soul loves the flesh which hates it, and even so the Christians love those who loathe them. The soul is imprisoned in the body, and yet it is the bond that preserves the body; even so the Christians are held captive in the prison of the world, and are those who sustain the world. The immortal soul has a mortal dwelling place; even so the Christians are for a season domiciled in corruptible habitations, awaiting the incorruptibility of heaven. The soul is made better by suffering hunger and thirst; the Christians, under daily tortures, multiply more and more. God has assigned them a post which he has not permitted them to desert."

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[1] That is to say, they do not eat of all things indifferently.—*Author's note.*

The keen-witted apologist himself lays his finger on the explanation of the phenomenon which he wishes to represent as supernatural. Christianity and the Empire stood face to face like two animals on the point of devouring each other, without trying to understand the causes of their mutual hostility. When a society of men takes up such an attitude in the midst of society at large, when it becomes in the state a commonwealth apart, it is a plague, even though composed of angels. It was not without reason that men in appearance so mild and well-meaning were detested. In reality they were demolishing the Roman Empire. They sucked away its strength; they deprived its offices, the army especially, of its best subjects. It is of no use to say you are a good citizen, because you pay your taxes and are charitable and well-behaved; when in reality you are a citizen of heaven, and regard your earthly country as a prison in which you are chained side by side with miscreants. Your native land is an earthly thing; he who would fain play the angel is always a poor patriot. Religious enthusiasm is bad for the state. It is vain for the martyr to argue that he does not revolt, is the most submissive of subjects; the mere fact that he challenges punishment, and puts the state in the dilemma of either persecuting or submitting to the law of theocracy, is more prejudicial to the state than the worst of revolts. No one is the object of universal hatred without there being some good reason for it. In this matter nations have an instinct that does not deceive them. At heart the Roman Empire felt that the secret commonwealth would slay it in the end. But let us hasten to add that, in violently persecuting the commonwealth, it allowed itself to follow the worst of policies, and hastened the consequences while striving to prevent them.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE SCHOOLS OF ALEXANDRIA AND EDESSA.

Many things came to an end; others began; books and the school took the place of tradition. No one claimed any longer to have seen either the apostles or their immediate disciples. Arguments like that of Papias forty years before, disdain of the written word and avowed preference for people who knew the original, were no longer in fashion. Hegesippus was to be the last to make journeys for the purpose of studying the doctrine of the Churches on the spot. Irenæus deemed such inquiries useless. The Church was a vast depository of truth, from which men had but to draw. Apart from barbarians who could not write, no one had any longer need of consulting the oral tradition.

Writing was resolutely resorted to accordingly; the doctor and ecclesiastical author replaced the traditionist; the creative epoch of origins was at end; ecclesiastical history commenced. I say ecclesiastical, and not clerical. The doctor, in point of fact, at the period we have now reached, was very frequently a layman. Justin, Tatian, Athenagoras, and the majority of the apologists were neither bishops nor deacons. The doctors of the school of Alexandria occupied a distinct position outside the clerical hierarchy. The institution of the catechumenate aided the development of this state of things. Postulants, often men of education, prepared outside the Church for receiving baptism, demanded a system of instruction apart, more detailed than that of the faithful at large. Origen was a catechist and preacher by authority of the bishop of Cæsarea, without holding a definite rank in the clergy. St. Jerome was to occupy a similar position, which, even in his time, was full of difficulties. It was, indeed, natural that, little by little, the Church should absorb all ecclesiastical teaching, and that the doctor should become a member of the clergy, subordinate to the bishop.

We have seen that Alexandria, as a consequence of the Gnostic controversies, and perhaps in imitation of the Mouseion, had a catechetical school of sacred literature, distinct from the Church, and ecclesiastical doctors to comment rationally on the scriptures. This school, a kind of Christian university, was in process of becoming the centre of the whole theological movement. A young Sicilian convert, called Pantænus, was at its head and was to infuse into sacred teaching a breadth of ideas which no Christian pulpit had up till then possessed. All had a fascination for him, philosophies, heresies, the most curious forms of religion. From all he garnered his honey, a Gnostic in the best sense of the word, but far removed from the wild imaginations which Gnosticism nearly always implied. Thenceforth some young men, at once lettered and Christian, gathered about him, in particular the young convert Clement, who was about twenty years of age, and Alexander, the future bishop of Jerusalem, who played so important a part in the first half of the third century. The more especial vocation of Pantænus was oral teaching; his speech had an intense charm; on his pupils, who achieved higher fame than himself, he left a profound impression. No less favourable than Justin to philosophy, he conceived Christianity as the religion of all that is noble. A happy genius, brilliant, luminous, well disposed to all, he was in his time the most liberal and open-minded spirit which the Church had up to then possessed, and he marked the dawn of a remarkable intellectual movement, surpassing perhaps all the other attempts at rationalism which have ever been made in the bosom of Christianity. Origen, at the date at which we conclude, was not yet born; but his father Leonides fostered in his heart the fervent idealism which was to make of him a martyr and the first teacher of that son, whose breast he kissed, as the temple of the Holy Ghost, when the lad lay asleep.

The pagan East did not invariably inspire in the Christians the same antipathy as Greece. Egyptian polytheism, for instance, they treated with less severity than Hellenic poly-

theism. The Sibylline poet of the second century announces the end of their reign to Isis and Serapis with more sorrow than affront. His imagination is impressed by the conversion of an Egyptian priest, who in his turn is to convert his countrymen. He speaks in enigmatic terms of a great temple raised to the true God, which will make Egypt a kind of holy land and remain standing till the end of time.

The East, for its part, always inclined to syncretism, and prepared to sympathise with all bearing the character of disinterested speculation, rendered Christianity that wide tolerance. Compare with the narrow patriotism of a Celsus or a Fronto the open mind of a thinker like Numenius of Apamæa: what a difference! Without being precisely either Christian or Jew, Numenius admires Moses and Philo. He places Philo on an equality with Plato; he calls the latter an Attic Moses, he even knows the apocryphal compositions concerning Jamnes and Mambre. With the study of Plato and Pythagoras, the philosopher must, in his view, unite an acquaintance with the institutions of the Brahmins, the Jews, the Magi, and the Egyptians. The result of the investigation, one may feel assured in advance, will be that all these peoples are in accord with Plato. As Philo allegorises the Old Testament, Numenius furnishes a symbolical explanation of certain facts in the life of Jesus Christ. He admits that Greek philosophy is of Eastern origin, and owes the true idea of God to the Egyptians and Hebrews; that philosophy he proclaims insufficient even in his most venerated masters. Justin and the author of the *Epistle to Diognetus* scarce say more. Numenius did not, however, belong to the Church; sympathy with and admiration for a doctrine do not entail on an eclectic formal adhesion to that doctrine. Numenius was one of the precursors of Neo-Platonism; it was through him that the influence of Philo and a certain acquaintance with Christianity penetrated to the school of Alexandria. It may be that Ammonius Saccas, at the time at which this history concludes, still frequented the Church which philo-

sophy was soon to cause him to leave. Clement, Ammonius, Origen, Plotinus! What a century was to open for the city which nurtured all these great men, and tended more and more to become the intellectual capital of the East!

Syria counted many of those independent spirits who expressed themselves favourably of Christianity, without on that account embracing it. Such was that Mara, son of Serapion, who regarded Jesus as an excellent legislator, and admitted that the destruction of the nationality of the Jews had come to pass because they had put to death "their wise king." Such also was Longinus, or the author, whoever he may be, of the treatise *On the Sublime*, who has read the first pages of Genesis, and places the verse: "'Let there be light,' and there was light," among the finest passages known to him.

The most original of these mobile and sincere intellects whom the Christian law charmed, but not in a sufficiently exclusive manner to detach them from all else and make them simple members of the Church, was Bardesanes of Edessa. He was, if one may so express it, a man of the world, wealthy, affable, liberal in his views, well informed, with a good position at court, versed at once in Chaldæan science and Greek culture, a kind of Numenius, familiar with all the philosophies, all the religions, all the sects. He was sincerely Christian; he was even an ardent preacher of Christianity, almost a missionary. But all the schools of Christian thought which he traversed left some trace on his mind; none held him fast. Marcion alone, with his austere asceticism, entirely displeased him; while, on the other hand, Valentinianism in its Eastern form was the doctrine to which he always returned. He delighted in the syzygies of the æons, and denied the resurrection of the body. To that materialistic conception, he preferred the views of Greek spiritualism on pre-existence and the survival of the soul. The soul, according to him, neither was born nor died; the body was but its temporary instrument. Jesus had no visible body; he was united with a phantom. Towards the close of his life, apparently, Bardesanes became more

reconciled to the Catholics; but orthodoxy definitively rebuffed him. After enchanting his generation by his brilliant preaching, ardent idealism, and personal charm, he was overwhelmed with anathema, and he who had ever shrunk from classification was assigned a place among the Gnostics.

One alone of the treatises of Bardesanes found favour with orthodox readers: this was a dialogue in which he opposed the worst error of the East, Chaldean error, astrological fatalism. The form of the Socratic conversations pleased Bardesanes. He liked to pose before the public, surrounded by his friends, and with them discussing the highest problems of philosophy. One of his disciples called Philip reported, or was supposed to report, the conversation. In the *Dialogue on Fate* the principal interlocutor of Bardesanes is a certain Aoueid, who is tainted with the errors of astrology. Against these errors the author brings a really scientific argument: "If man be governed by environment and circumstances, how comes it to pass that the same land witnesses the evolution of entirely different human developments? If man be governed by race, how is it that a nation, by changing its religion, turning Christian for instance, grows absolutely different from its former self?" The interesting details which the author gives of the customs of unknown countries stimulated curiosity. The last editor of the romance of *The Recognitions*, then Eusebius, and then St. Cæsarius profited by them. It is strange that, being in possession of such a document, we should still have to ask ourselves what Bardesanes really thought about the question of the influence of the stars on the acts of men and the events of history. On this point the dialogue has all the clearness that can be desired. And yet St. Ephræm and Diodorus of Antioch attack Bardesanes for being steeped in the errors of his Chaldæan masters. At times his school appears as much a profane school of astronomy as one of theology. It claimed to fix by its calculations the duration of the world at six thousand years, and it admitted the existence of sidereal spirits residing in the

seven planets, in the sun and moon more especially, whose monthly conjunction preserved the world by giving it new energy.

What Bardesanes was uncontestably, was creator of Syriac Christian literature. Syriac was his native tongue; although he knew Greek, he did not write in it. The labour necessary to adapt the Aramaic idiom to the expression of philosophic ideas was entirely his. His works, moreover, were translated into Greek by his disciples under his supervision. Allied as he was with the royal family of Edessa, apparently brought up with Abgar VIII bar Manou, who was a fervent Christian, he powerfully contributed to the extirpation of pagan customs, and held a social and literary position of the most important kind. Poetry had always been lacking in Syria; the old Aramaic idioms had known no other form than the ancient Semitic parallelism, and had been unable to produce from it great results. Bardesanes composed, in imitation of Valentinus, one hundred and fifty hymns, whose rhythmic cadence, in part modelled on Greek examples, delighted every one, especially the young. They were at once philosophical, poetical, and Christian. The strophe consisted of eleven or twelve verses of five syllables scanned accentually. The hymns were sung in chorus to Greek airs, with lyre accompaniment. The civilising influence of this fine music was considerable. Nearly the whole of Osrhoene turned Christian. Unfortunately, Abgar IX, son of Abgar VIII, was in 216 dethroned by Caracalla, and this ephemeral phenomenon of a petty principality, founded on the principles of a liberal Christianity, disappeared. Christianity continued to make headway in Syria, but on orthodox lines, and diverging further day by day from the speculative liberties which, at the outset, it had permitted itself.

The relations of Bardesanes with the Roman Empire are obscure. According to certain indications, the persecution during the latter years of Marcus Aurelius would seem to have inspired him with the idea of addressing

an apology to that Emperor. Perhaps he may have been in communication with Caracalla or Elagabalus, whom it is easy to confound in the texts with Marcus Aurelius. Apparently he wrote a dialogue between himself and a certain Apollonius, supposed to be a friend of the Emperor's, in which the latter urges him to renounce the name of Christian. Like Demetrius the Cynic, Bardesanes returns the courageous answer, "Obedience to the Emperor's orders would not rid me of the necessity of dying."

Bardesanes left a son called Harmonius, whom he sent to study at Athens, and who continued the school, making it incline still further to the side of Hellenism. In imitation of his father, he expressed the most elevated ideas of Greek philosophy in Syriac hymns. From all this resulted too high a standard of discipline, considering the average permitted by Christianity. To be a member of such a Church both intellect and education were essential. The worthy Syrians took fright. The fate of Bardesanes much resembled that of Paul of Samosata. He was treated as a dangerous enchanter, as a seductive woman, irresistible in privacy. His hymns, like the *Thalia* of Arius, were regarded as a work of magic. Later, St. Ephræm could find no other way to dethrone these poems and withdraw children from their charm, than composing orthodox hymns to the same tunes. Thenceforth, when any one of distinction came to the front in the Church of Syria, and displayed independence of mind and great knowledge of the scriptures, people said to each other in alarm, "He will be a Bardesanes."

His talent and the services which he had rendered were not, however, forgotten. The day of his birth was marked in the Chronicle of Edessa among the great anniversaries of the city. His school survived during nearly the whole of the third century, but produced no member of high celebrity. Later, the germ of dualism in the doctrine of the master drew near the school of Manichæism. The Byzantine chroniclers and their disciples, the Arabian polygraphers set up a kind of trinity of evil, composed of Marcion,

Ibn-Daïsan, and Manes. The name of Daïsanites came to be synonymous with atheist and *zendik;* and these Daïsanites counted, for the Mussulmans, among the secret sects affiliated to Parsiism, the accursed trunk of all heresies.

CHAPTER XXV.

STATISTICS AND GEOGRAPHICAL EXTENSION OF CHRISTIANITY.

In one hundred and fifty years the prophecy of Jesus had been brought to pass. The grain of mustard seed had become a tree which was beginning to cover the earth. In the hyperbolical language customary in such matters, Christianity had spread "everywhere." So early as about the year 150, St. Justin affirmed that there was no corner of earth, even among the barbarian peoples, where prayer was not offered up in the name of Jesus crucified. St. Irenæus expressed himself in the same manner. "They sprout forth and spread like weeds; their meeting-places multiply on every hand," said those who wished them ill. Tertullian, from another standpoint, was twenty years later to write: "We are of yesterday, and already we fill all your ranks, your cities, your strong places, your councils, your camps, your tribes, your decuries, the palace, the senate, the forum; we leave you nought save your temples. Without recourse to arms, to the use of which we are ill-fitted, we could fight you by separating from you; you would be terrified at your solitude, at a silence that would seem the stupor of a dead world."

Until the time of Hadrian, acquaintance with Christianity was only possessed by persons in the secrets of the police and a small number of the curious. Now, however, the new religion enjoyed the widest publicity. In the Eastern portion of the Empire no one was ignorant of its existence; scholars spoke of it, discussed it, and borrowed from it. Far

from being confined to Jewish circles, the new faith gathered the greater number of its converts from the pagan world, and, at Rome at least, outnumbered the Jewish Church from which it had sprung. It was neither Judaism nor paganism; it was a definite third religion, destined to supersede all that had preceded it.

In such a matter it is impossible to be precise in figures, and certainly they varied a great deal according to the provinces. Asia Minor continued to be that in which the Christian population was densest. It was also the centre of piety. Montanism seemed the ferment of the universal ardour with which the spiritual body of the Church burned. Even in opposing it, men found inspiration in whatever sacred fire it possessed. At Hierapolis and several Phrygian towns the Christians must have formed the majority of the population. From the reign of Septimius Severus, Apamæa in Phrygia assumed for its coins a biblical emblem, Noah's ark, as an allusion to its name of *Kibotos*. In Pontus, after the middle of the third century, towns were to be seen destroying their ancient temples and seeking conversion *en masse*. The whole of the adjacent region of Propontis participated in the movement. Greece proper, on the contrary, clung to her old faiths, which she was not to forsake until well into the Middle Ages, and almost reluctantly then.

In Syria, about 240, Origen finds that, in proportion to the total population, the Christians are "very few in numbers," almost what might be said of Protestants or Jews in Paris. When Tertullian tells us: *Fiunt non nascuntur Christiani*, he indicates to us by that even, that the former Christian generation counted few souls. The Church of Rome, in 251, possessed forty-six priests, seven deacons, seven sub-deacons, forty-two acolytes, fifty-two exorcists, readers, and door-keepers; it supported more than fifteen hundred widows or indigent persons, which would lead one to suppose there to have been about thirty or forty thousand of the faithful. At Carthage, about the year 212, the Christians formed a tenth part of the popula-

tion. The whole of the Greek portion of the Empire counted flourishing Christian communities; there was no city of the slightest importance which did not have its Church and bishop. In Italy there were more than sixty bishops; even small and almost unknown towns had them. Dalmatia was evangelised. Lyons and Vienne had Christian colonies composed of Asiatics and Syrians, using the Greek tongue, but exercising their apostolic efforts on the neighbouring populations which spoke Latin or Gaulish. Scarcely any impression was made, however, on the Gallo-Roman and Hispano-Roman world. A local polytheism of extremely superstitious character was in these vast regions to present a mass, which it was very difficult to work upon.

Britain had undoubtedly already seen missionaries of Jesus. Her claims in this matter are founded much less on the legends with which the Isle of Saints, like all the great Christian communities, arrayed the cradle of her faith, than upon a fact of capital importance, the observance of Easter according to the Quartodeciman rite, that is to say, according to the ancient usage of Asia Minor. It is possible that the earliest Churches of Britain may have owed their beginnings to Phrygians and Asiatics, like those who founded the Churches of Lyons and Vienne. Origen remarks that the virtue of the name of Jesus Christ has crossed the seas, to seek the Britons in another world.

The believers, as a rule, were people of very humble condition. Some exceptions apart, all of which are subject to doubt, no great Roman family was to be seen going over to Christianity with its slaves and dependants, before Commodus. A man of the world, a knight or personage of official rank was apt to run foul of impossibilities in the Church. In it the wealthy were, so to speak, out of their element. Life lived in common with persons who had neither their fortune nor position, was sown with difficulties, and social relations came to be almost suspended for them. Marriages especially were a source of enormous difficulties; many Christian women espoused pagans rather than resign themselves to a poor husband.

From the fact that in Christian cemeteries of the epoch of Marcus Aurelius and Severi, the names of *Cornelii*, *Pomponii*, and *Cæcilii* are to be found, it would be rash to conclude that there were believers bearing these great names by right of birth. The system of family dependants and servility was the origin of such ambitious *agnomina*. In like manner, the intellectual standard was at the outset rather low. That high cultivation of the reason which Greece had inaugurated was, for the most part, lacking in the first two generations. With Justin, Minucius Felix, and the author of the *Epistle to Diognetus*, the average went up; with Clement of Alexandria and Origen it was soon to rise higher still; while, from the third century onwards, Christianity was to possess men on a level with the enlightened of the age.

Greek was still essentially the Christian tongue. The most ancient catacombs are all Greek. In the middle of the third century the sepulchres of the Popes have Greek epitaphs. Pope Cornelius wrote to the Churches in Greek. The Roman liturgy was in the Hellenic tongue; even when Latin prevailed it was often written in Greek characters. Greek words, pronounced in the iotacistic fashion, which was that of people in the East, remain as traces of descent. One country alone really had a Latin-speaking Church, Africa. We have seen Minucius Felix inaugurating Latin Christian literature with a masterpiece. Tertullian, in twenty years' time, after hesitating between the Greek and the Latin language for the composition of his writings, was fortunately to prefer the latter, and present the strangest of literary phenomena, an unheard-of medley of talent, intellectual insincerity, eloquence, and bad taste. He was a great writer, if it be admitted that to sacrifice all grammar and accuracy of style to effect is to write well. Finally, Africa was to give the world a fundamental book, the Latin Bible. One at least of the earliest Latin translations of the Old and New Testaments was made in Africa; the Latin text of the mass and important parts of the liturgy likewise appear of African origin. The *lingua*

volgata of Africa thus contributed in large measure to the formation of the ecclesiastical tongue of the West, and exercised a decisive influence on our modern languages. But there resulted yet another consequence, which was this: that the fundamental texts of Latin Christian literature were written in a language which the Italian scholars deemed barbarous and corrupt, and that, later, this gave occasion for endless objections and epigrams from the rhetoricians.

From Carthage, Christianity radiated strongly in Numidia and Mauritania. Cirta produced the most fervent adversaries and defenders of faith in Jesus. Scillium, a remote city in the depths of the province of Africa, at fifty leagues from Carthage, provided, some months after the death of Marcus Aurelius, a group of twelve martyrs, led by a certain Speratus, who displayed inflexible resolution, held his own with the proconsul, and gloriously inaugurated the line of African martyrs.

Edessa gradually became a Christian centre of major importance. Placed in the vassalage of the Parthians, Osrhoene had been submissive to the Romans since the campaign of Lucius Verus (165), but she retained her dynasty of Abgars and Manous until about the middle of the third century. This dynasty, which was allied with the Jewish Izates of Adiabene, showed great favour to Christianity. In 202 a church at Edessa was destroyed by a flood. Osrhoene possessed numerous Christian communities at the end of the second century. A certain Palut, bishop of Edessa, ordained by Serapion of Antioch (190-210), was handed down to fame by his conflicts with the heresies. Finally, Abgar VIII bar Manou (176-213) definitely embraced the Christianity of the time of Bardesanes, and, in accord with that great man, waged fierce war on pagan customs, especially the practice of emasculation, a deeply-rooted vice in the Syrian religions. Those who continued to honour Targatha in this strange fashion had a hand cut off. Bardesanes, in order to combat the theory of environment, points out that the Christians spread throughout

Parthia, Media, Hatra, and the most distant lands, in no way conform to the laws of those countries. The first example of a Christian kingdom with a Christian dynasty was afforded by Edessa. This order of things, which created many malcontents, especially among the great, was overthrown in 216 by Caracalla; but the Christian faith scarcely suffered thereby. It was probably from that time that the apocryphal writings, intended to prove the sanctity of the city of Edessa, were composed, and more especially that letter purporting to have been written to Abgar by Jesus Christ, of which Edessa was afterwards to be so proud.

Thus was founded, side by side with the Latin literature of the Churches of Africa, a new branch of Christian literature, that of Syria. Its creation had two causes, the genius of Bardesanes and the necessity of possessing an Aramaic version of the sacred books. The Aramaic scriptures had for long been in use in those countries, but had not as yet served to fix a true literary standard. Judeo-Christians laid the foundation of an Aramaic literature by translating the Old Testament into Syriac. Then came the translation of the writings of the New Testament, and next apocryphal works were written. The Syrian Church, destined later to a vast development, appears at this epoch to have included the widest variety of believers, from the Judeo-Christian to the philosopher like Bardesanes and Harmonius.

The progress of the Church outside the Roman Empire was much less rapid. The important Church of Bosra possibly had suffragan churches among the independent Arabs. There were, no doubt, already Christians in Palmyra. Numerous Aramæan populations, tributary to the Parthians, embraced Christianity with the zeal which the Syrian race always manifested for the religion of Jesus. Armenia received, about the same time, the first germs of Christianity, with which it is not impossible that Bardesanes may have been connected. From the third century there is mention of martyrs in Persian Armenia.

Legendary traditions, eagerly gathered from the fourth

century onwards, attributed much more distant conquests to Christianity. Each apostle was reputed to have chosen his part of the world for conversion. India, above all, owing to the geographical uncertainty of the name which it bears, and the analogy of Buddhism to Christianity, was the subject of singular illusions. It was asserted that St. Bartholomew had borne Christianity thither, and left behind him a Hebrew copy of the Gospel of St. Matthew; while the famous Alexandrian doctor Pantænus was supposed to have followed in the footsteps of the apostle, and to have found the Gospel in question. All this is dubious. The use of the word *India* was extremely vague; whoever had embarked at Clysma and gone on a voyage to the Red Sea was said to have been in India. Yemen was often called by that name. In any case, there assuredly resulted no enduring church from the travels of Pantænus. All that the Manichæans told of the missions of St. Thomas in India was fabulous, and the connection, alleged in after years, between the Syrian Christian communities established in the Middle Ages on the Malabar coast with this legend was artificial. In this tissue of fables some confusion was possibly made of the names *Thomas* and *Gotama*. The question of the influence which Christianity was in a position to exercise on Brahmanic India, and in particular on the worship of Krishna, is beyond the limits at which we must stop.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE INWARD MARTYRDOM OF MARCUS AURELIUS—HIS PREPARATION FOR DEATH.

WHILE those strange moral revolutions were in course of accomplishment, the excellent Marcus Aurelius, with a calm and affectionate gaze on all around him, bore with him, wherever he went, his pale, gentle, resigned countenance and his heart-sickness. He never spoke but in a

low voice, and walked with short steps. His strength visibly dwindled; his sight grew dim. One day, when from fatigue he had to lay down the book that he held in his hand, he wrote: "You are no longer permitted to read, but you are still free to purge your heart of violence, to despise pleasure and pain, to rise superior to vainglory, to abstain from wrath with fools and ingrates—more, far more, you are still free to continue doing them good."[1]

Living his life without pleasure, as without revolt, resigned to the destiny which nature had assigned him, he did his everyday duties with the thought of death constantly before him. His wisdom was absolute, which is another way of saying that his ennui was limitless. War, the court, the theatre—all wearied him alike, and, none the less, what he did, he did well, for he did it as a duty. At the point which he had reached, pleasure and pain, men's love and their hatred were one and the same thing. Glory is the last of illusions, and yet how vain a thing it is, and how fast the memory of the greatest man fades away! The most brilliant courts, like that of Hadrian, grand festal displays like those of Alexander, what are they but a theatrical show which passes and is cast aside? The actors change, but the inanity of the play is the same.

When the Christian enthusiasts were at last to comprehend that their hope of beholding the realisation of the kingdom of God was only possible by flight to the desert, men like Ammonius, Nilus, and Pachomius were to proclaim renunciation and distaste for material things as the supreme law of life. In perfect detachment, these masters of the Thebaid failed to reach the level of their crowned colleague. For his own use he had drawn up for himself ascetic methods and prescriptions, like those of the fathers of spiritual life, with the aim of self-conviction, by means of invincible deductions, of the universal vanity.

"To despise song, the dance, the *pancratium* (athletic sports), it suffices to divide them into their elements. In the case of music, for

[1] *Med.*, viii. 8.

example, if you analyse each of its chords into the constituent notes, and ask yourself for each note, 'Is this what charms you?' the charm has vanished. Even so in the case of dancing, decompose the movement into attitudes, and do likewise for the *pancratium*. In a word, for all that is not virtue, reduce the object to what in the last analysis it is made of, and by such an analysis you will come to despise it. Apply this process to life as a whole."[1]

His prayers were of a positively Christian humility and resignation.

"Wilt thou one day, O my soul, be good and simple, all one, naked, more translucent than the material body that contains thee? When wilt thou taste fully the joy of loving all things? When wilt thou be satisfied, independent, lacking all desire, without the least necessity of a living or inanimate being for thy delights? When shalt thou have need neither of time to prolong thy pleasures, nor of scope, nor of place, nor of clime serene, nor even of the harmony of thy fellow-men? When wilt thou be content with thine actual estate, happy in what thou hast, convinced that thou hast all it befits thee to have, that all is well with thee, that all cometh from the gods; that in the future, too, all shall be well, all that they shall bring to pass for the salvation of the living whole, perfect, good, just, and beautiful, which hath brought forth all, containeth and comprehendeth all individual things, which only dissolve to reappear in new forms like unto the first? When wilt thou be such, O my soul, that thou canst at last dwell in the city of gods and men, never making them complaint and never having need of their forgiveness?"[2]

Day by day this resignation grew more necessary, for the forces of evil which at one time, it had been possible to believe, had been subdued by the government of philosophers, were raising their heads on every side. In reality the progress effected by the reigns of Antoninus and Marcus Aurelius had been merely superficial. It had been limited to a varnish of hypocrisy and external professions, which people assumed in order to be in harmony with the two wise Emperors. The masses were grossly materialistic; the army was decaying; the laws alone had been changed for the better. The prevailing feeling was one of profound melancholy. In a sense, Marcus Aurelius had succeeded too well. The ancient world was donning the monkish

[1] *Med.*, xi. 2. [2] *Ibid.*, x. 1.

cowl, like those descendants of the Versailles nobility who are nowadays becoming Trappists or Carthusians. Woe to old aristocracies, which, after the excesses of a reckless youth, suddenly turn virtuous, humane, and decorous! It is a sign of their approaching death.

The saintliness of the Emperor had achieved, so far as public opinion was concerned, a higher result than might have been expected; in some measure it had consecrated him in the popular eye. In this we have a fact honourable to human nature, and one that history ought no more to omit, than the great number of saddening truths which it records. Marcus Aurelius was held in extreme affection; popular opinion, so apt to be deceived on the value of men, was for once in the right. The best of sovereigns was the best appreciated. But the wickedness of the age avenged itself in other ways. Three or four times the goodness of Marcus Aurelius all but caused his ruin. The great drawback of actual life, that which renders it insupportable to the man of high character, lies in this—that if ideal principles be observed in it, good qualities become faults, so much so, indeed, that very often the perfect man has less success in life than he whose motives are egoism or common routine. The conscientious uprightness of the Emperor had caused him to commit a first error by persuading him to associate with himself in the imperial government, Lucius Verus, to whom he was under no obligation. Verus was a frivolous and worthless man. Prodigies of kindness and delicacy were required to prevent him from indulging in disastrous follies. The wise Emperor, grave and studious, took about with him in his litter the foolish colleague whom he had given himself. He always persisted in taking him seriously; not once was he revolted by the tiresome companionship. Like other people who have been very well trained, Marcus Aurelius was under an unceasing self-discipline; his habits were the result of a general determination to maintain deportment and dignity. Souls of this order, whether to avoid causing pain to others, whether out of respect for human nature, do not resign themselves

to avowing the existence of evil. Their lives are a perpetual self-dissimulation.

In the life of the pious Emperor, Faustina was a source of grief of a very different kind. Providence, which watches over the training of great souls and labours unceasingly for their perfection, prepared for him the most painful of ordeals, a wife who did not understand him. She began, it appears, by loving him; at the outset, perhaps, she even found some happiness in that villa of Lorium, or in the beautiful retreat of Lanuvium on the lower slopes of the Alban mountains, which Marcus Aurelius describes to Fronto as an abode full of the purest delights. And then she grew weary of so much wisdom. Let us say all: the fine aphorisms of Marcus Aurelius, his austere virtue, his perpetual melancholy, his aversion from all that resembled a court, might well seem tedious to a young, capricious woman, of ardent temperament and marvellous beauty. Careful research has reduced to very small proportions the accusations which scandal was pleased to bring against the wife of Marcus Aurelius. Yet what remains to her charge is grave enough: she did not like her husband's friends; she did not enter into his life; she had her own tastes apart from his.

The good Emperor understood it, suffered from it, and held his peace. His absolute principle of seeing things as they ought to be and not as they are, did not fail him. In vain they dared to pourtray him on the stage as a cuckold; in vain the actors named Faustina's lovers to their audiences; he would hear nothing. He did not waver from his attitude of implacable mildness. Faustina always remained "his very good and very faithful spouse." Even after her death he could not be induced to abandon this pious fiction. In a bas-relief still to be seen at Rome, in the museum of the Capitol, Faustina is represented being borne up to heaven by Fame, while the excellent Emperor follows her from earth with a gaze full of tenderness. The most extraordinary feature is, that in the fine, heart-felt prayer to the gods which he wrote on the banks of

the Gran, he thanks them for having granted him "a wife so submissive, so affectionate, so simple." In his latter days he came to self-delusion and oblivion of all. But through what struggles he had to pass to reach that consummation! During long years an inward malady slowly consumed him. That despairing effort which is the very essence of his philosophy, that passion for renunciation, at times pushed even to sophistry, hid beneath them a gaping wound. How imperative it must have been to say farewell to happiness in order to attain to such excesses! Never will men understand all the sufferings of that poor, blighted heart, or the bitterness which lay masked behind that pale countenance, ever calm and almost smiling. True it is that that farewell to happiness is the beginning of wisdom, and the surest way of finding happiness. There is nought so sweet as the return of joy that follows the renunciation of joy; nought so keen, so deep, so full of charm as the enchantment of the disenchanted.

A much more painful martyrdom was inflicted on Marcus Aurelius in the person of his son Commodus. Nature, by a cruel freak, had given as a son to the best of men a kind of stupid athlete, only fitted for bodily exercise, a superb journeyman butcher, ferocious in temperament, and caring for nothing but slaughter. His total lack of intelligence inspired him with hatred of the cultured society which surrounded his father; he fell into the hands of blackguards of the lowest type, who made of him one of the most detestable monsters who have ever lived. More clearly than any one, Marcus Aurelius saw the impossibility of making anything of this stunted creature; and, nevertheless, he neglected nothing to ensure his being well brought up. The best philosophers lectured before the youth, and he listened, almost as might a young lion being instructed, allowing his teachers to have their say, yawning, and showing them his long teeth the while. Marcus Aurelius was led astray in this matter by his want of practical tact. He could not shake off his habitual phrases about the charity which we must have in our judg-

ments, and the consideration which we owe to those less good than ourselves. The nine motives for indulgence which he drew up for himself show us his charming good nature. "What evil can the most wicked of men do you if you continue obstinately kind to him, and if, on occasion, you gently admonish him, and, without anger, give him, at the moment he is trying to injure you, lessons like this: 'Not so, my son; we are born for other ends. It is not I who shall be injured; it is to yourself you are doing ill.' Show him, with tact, that on general principles such is the rule; that neither do the bees act as he does, nor any of the gregarious animals. Use neither derision nor insult; let all be said in a tone of true affection, as though coming from a heart unembittered by wrath; do not speak to him as a schoolmaster, or with the aim of winning admiration from those present, but use the same frankness that you would if you and he were alone together."[1] Commodus, if it be he who is in question, was doubtless little moved by this good paternal rhetoric. There was, obviously, but one means of staving off the terrible misfortunes that threatened the world, which was, by virtue of the right of adoption, to substitute a worthier individual for him whom the chance of birth had marked out. Julian particularises still further, and holds that Marcus Aurelius ought to have given a share in the imperial government to his son-in-law, Pompeianus, who would have carried on his traditions in administration.

These are things which it is very easy to say when the obstacles no longer exist, and we argue at a remote distance from the facts of the case. It is, in the first place, forgotten that the Emperors after Nerva, who made so fruitful a political system of adoption, had no sons. We find adoption, coupled with disinheritance of the son or grandson, in force in the first year of the Empire, but without good results. In principle, Marcus Aurelius was for direct heredity, in which he saw the advantage of preventing competition. As soon as Commodus was born in 161, he

[1] *Med.*, xi. 18.

presented him alone to the legions, although he had a twin brother; often he took him in his arms and renewed this ceremonial act, which was a kind of proclamation. Marcus was an excellent father. "I have seen your little brood," writes Fronto to him, "and nothing has ever given me so much pleasure. They resemble you to so great a degree that never was there such a likeness. I saw you doubled, so to speak; on my right and left it was you I believed I beheld. They have, thanks to the gods, a healthy colour and a lusty fashion of crying. One held in his hand a morsel of very white bread, like the royal urchin that he is; the other, a piece of home-made bread, as a true son of a philosopher. Their little voices seemed to me so soft and pretty, that in their babbling I imagined I heard the clear and welcome sound of your own speech." These feelings were then universally shared. In 166, it was Lucius Verus himself who asked that the two sons of Marcus, Commodus and Annius Verus, should be made Cæsars. In 172, Commodus shared with his father the title of Germanicus. After the suppression of the revolt of Avidius, the Senate, to recognise in some measure the family disinterestedness which Marcus Aurelius had shown, demanded by acclamation for Commodus the Empire and tribunitial power. Already the latter's evil disposition had revealed itself by more than one indication known to his teachers; but why should the future of a child of twelve be prejudiced because of a few bad reports? In 176-177 his father made him *Imperator*, Consul, and Augustus. This assuredly was an imprudence, but precedent was binding, and Commodus, moreover, still restrained himself. Towards the close of the life of Marcus Aurelius the evil was wholly made manifest; on every page of the later books of the *Meditations* we find traces of the inward sufferings of the excellent father, the perfect Emperor, who beholds a monster growing up at his side, ready to succeed him and decided on taking in everything, by antipathy, the opposite side to that which he has seen espoused by good men.

Then, no doubt, the thought of disinheriting Commodus

must have more than once occurred to Marcus Aurelius. But it was too late. After having associated him in the Empire, after having so many times proclaimed him before the legions as perfect and accomplished, to confront the world with a declaration of his unworthiness would have been a scandal. Marcus Aurelius was entrapped by his own phrases, by that conventionally charitable style which was too habitual with him. And, after all, Commodus was only seventeen: who could be certain that he would not improve? Even after the death of Marcus Aurelius it was still possible to hope. Commodus at first showed some intention of following the counsels of the meritorious men with whom his father had surrounded him. Was it not obvious, moreover, that if Pompeianus or Pertinax succeeded Marcus Aurelius, Commodus would at once become the head of the military party, a survival of that of Avidius, which held the philosophers and friends of the wise Emperor in detestation?

"We believe, then, that we should refrain from hastily passing judgment on the conduct of Marcus Aurelius in this matter. Morally he was in the right; but circumstances decided against him. At the sight of this miserable wretch ruining the Empire by his crapulous life, shamefully dragging in the dirt, among the stable-boys of the circus and amphitheatre, a name consecrated by virtue, there were curses for the kindly charity of Marcus Aurelius, there were regrets that the exaggerated optimism which had led him to take Verus as a colleague, and which had perhaps never permitted him to see all the wrongs he had suffered from Faustina, should have made him commit a still graver error. According to public opinion, he could so much the more rightly have disinherited Commodus, in that a legend came into being, according to which Marcus was discharged of all paternal duty towards him. From a feeling of righteous indignation, there was a reluctance to admit that Commodus could be the son of Marcus Aurelius. To absolve Providence of such an absurdity, the mother was calumniated. People exclaimed, when they saw the un-

worthy son of the best of men fighting in the amphitheatre or posturing like a third-rate actor: "He is no prince—he is a gladiator! This is not a son of Marcus Aurelius." Soon in the ranks of the gladiatorial troupe some one was discovered who was considered to resemble him, and it was affirmed that he was the real father of Commodus. The fact is, however, that all the monuments attest the likeness of Commodus to Marcus, and fully substantiate in this respect the testimony borne by Fronto.

Without reproaching Marcus Aurelius for not having disinherited Commodus, it may be regretted that he did not do so. The perfection of the man harmfully affected the inflexibility of the sovereign. Had he been capable of harshness, he would perhaps have saved the world, and he would have been in no way responsible for the terrible decadence which followed. His error lay in having had a son at all. He forgot that the Cæsar is not a man like another, that his primary duty is to come to an arrangement with destiny, and to be able to divine him whom time has marked with a sign. The hereditary system of dynasties has no application in Cæsarism. Of all methods of rule it is that which brings forth the best or the worst fruits. When it is not excellent, it is execrable. Atrocious in the first century of our era whilst a law of half-heredity was followed, Cæsarism achieved splendour in the second century, when the principle of adoption had finally won the day. Decadence began when, by a weakness pardonable since inevitable, the best of the princes whom adoption had given the Empire failed to follow a custom which had given as chiefs to mankind the finest series of good and great sovereigns it has ever had. To complete the pity of it all, he did not succeed in founding heredity. Throughout the whole of the third century the Empire was at an auction of intrigues and violence. The ancient world succumbed to it.

For years Marcus Aurelius endured this torture, the most cruel that fate has inflicted on a man of sensitive feeling. The friends of his childhood and youth were no more. All

that admirable circle formed by Antoninus, that serious and distinguished society which believed so profoundly in virtue, had descended to the tomb. Left sole survivor in the midst of a generation which no longer understood him, and even desired to be rid of him, with a son by his side who filled him with grief, he had before him only the horrible prospect of being the father of a Nero, a Caligula, a Domitian.

"Curse not death, but give it welcome, for it is of the number of those phenomena that Nature wills. The dissolution of our being is as natural as youth, old age, growth, and full maturity. . . . If you have need of some special reflection to reconcile you to death, you have but to consider that from which it is about to sever you, and the moral natures with which your soul will then cease to associate. Far be it from you to quarrel with them, rather should you love them and endure them mildly. Yet remember that it is not with men who feel as yourself, that you are parting; the one thing that could attach us to life and chain us to it, would be the blessed companionship of kindred souls. But, as it is, see what inward pangs are yours, so that you even cry out: 'O death, delay not thy coming, lest I too forget myself!'[1]

"'He was a good man, and a wise,' one will say; yet that will not withhold another from saying within himself: 'Behold us at last delivered from that pedagogue—we can breathe again! True, he was never hard on any of us, but I felt he was inwardly condemning us all the while.' . . . On your death-bed let this reflection enable you to pass more easily from life: 'I am leaving a life from which even my own associates, for whom I have so striven, prayed, and taken thought, desire that I should go, hoping that my death will put them more at ease.' What motive can there be then for yearning to remain longer here?

"Yet do not show them less of charity at your departure; maintain your habitual demeanour to them; be still affectionate, indulgent, gentle, and do not affect the air of a man who has to be entreated to go. . . . It was Nature which formed your bond with them; now, behold, she breaks it. Be it so, farewell, my friends; I take my departure without there being need of force to tear me from your midst, for even in that separation there is nought that does not conform with Nature."[2]

The latter books of the *Meditations* coincide with this epoch, in which Marcus Aurelius, left solitary with his philosophy, no longer shared by others, has but one thought, that of gently withdrawing from the world. It is the same

[1] *Med.*, ix. 3. [2] *Ibid.*, x. 36.

melancholy as that which we find in the philosophy of Carnuntum; but the epoch in the thinker's life is a very different one. At Carnuntum and on the banks of the Gran, Marcus Aurelius meditates how he may strengthen himself in the struggle of life. Now his whole thought is no more than a preparation for death, a spiritual exercise to enable him to reach the altar apparelled as he should be. He inwardly repeats all the reasons which can be urged for the idea that death is not a sovereign act of injustice to the virtuous man; he reaches the point of sophistry in his attempt to absolve Providence and prove that man should die satisfied.

"The duration of man's life is but a moment; his being is in a state of perpetual flux; his senses are dim. His bodily form, composed of diverse elements, tends of itself to corruption; his soul is an eddy, his destiny an insoluble enigma; fame is hard to appraise. In a word, all that concerns the flesh is but a stream that flows away, all that concerns the soul a dream and vapour; life is a warfare and a sojourn in an alien land, and after-fame, oblivion. What then can serve us as guide? One thing, and one alone, philosophy. And philosophy consists in acting in suchwise that the spirit which is our true self remains pure of all soilure, stronger than pleasures or pains . . . accepting circumstance and destiny as emanating from that source whence it comes itself, and, finally, in all serenity, awaiting death, which it regards as the natural dissolution of the elements of which every living being is composed. If it be no evil for the elements themselves to undergo perpetual metamorphoses, why look with sadness on the change and dissolution of all things? That change conforms with the laws of Nature, and nought is evil that conforms with Nature."[1]

Thus by dint of analysing life, he dissolves it and renders it little different from death. He attains to perfect charity, absolute indulgence, indifference tempered with pity and disdain. "To live one's life with resignation in the midst of false and unjust men," such was the aim of the sage. And he was right. The most solid goodness of heart is that which is founded on absolute weariness, on the clear perception of the fact that all in this world is trivial and without real depth. In this absolute ruin of all things, what remains? Wickedness? Oh, that is not worth the trouble!

[1] *Med.*, ii. 17.

Wickedness presupposes a certain faith in the seriousness of life—faith at least in pleasure, faith in vengeance, faith in ambition. Nero believed in art, Commodus in the circus—and that made them cruel. But why should the disillusioned being who knows that every object of desire is frivolous, give himself the trouble of cultivating a disagreeable feeling? The charity of the sceptic is the most assured, and the pious Emperor was more than a sceptic; the movement of life in his soul was all but as imperceptible as the whispered sounds of the interior of a tomb. He attained the Buddhist *Nirvana*, the peace of Christ. Like Jesus, Sakya Muni, Socrates, Francis of Assisi, and three or four other sages, he had absolutely vanquished death. He could afford to smile at it, for, indeed, it had no longer any meaning for him.

CHAPTER XXVII.

DEATH OF MARCUS AURELIUS—THE END OF THE ANCIENT WORLD.

On the 5th of August, 178, the saintly Emperor left Rome, to return, in the company of Commodus, to those interminable wars on the Danube, which he wished to crown by the formation of strongly organised frontier provinces. The most brilliant successes were achieved. The term so long desired, which had only been retarded by the revolt of Avidius, seemed at last on the point of being attained. A few months more, and the most important military enterprise of the second century was to be brought to a conclusion. Unhappily, the Emperor was in a very weak state of health. His digestion was so ruined that he often lived for a whole day on a few doses of theriac. He only ate on occasions when he had to harangue the soldiers. Vienna on the Danube was apparently the headquarters of the

army. An epidemic had been raging in the country for several years and decimated the legions.

On the 10th of March, 180, the Emperor fell ill. He at once welcomed the approach of death, abstained from all food and drink, and thenceforth only spoke and acted as if on the brink of the grave. Having called Commodus to his side, he besought him to carry the war to a conclusion, that he might not appear to be betraying the state by a precipitate departure. On the sixth day of his illness he summoned his friends, and addressed them in the tone habitual to him, that is with a light irony, on the vanity of things and the small account that should be taken of death. They shed abundant tears. "Why weep over me?" he said to them. "Think only of saving the army. I do no more than precede you—farewell!" He was asked to whom he commended his son. "To you," he said, "if he be worthy of it, and to the immortal gods." The army was inconsolable, for it adored Marcus Aurelius, and saw too clearly the abyss of evil into which the state was to fall after he had gone. The Emperor had still strength enough left to present Commodus to the soldiers. His skill in maintaining his calmness in the midst of the greatest agonies enabled him to keep a calm countenance even at that cruel moment.

On the seventh day he felt the end approaching. He no longer saw any one save his son, and him he sent away after a few moments, for fear lest he should contract the disease with which he himself was stricken. But perhaps this was but a pretext to rid himself of the hateful presence of Commodus. Then he covered his head as though to sleep. On the following night he rendered up his soul.

His body was brought back to Rome, and interred in the mausoleum of Hadrian. The outburst of popular piety was touching. Such was the affection in which he was held, that he was never designated by his name or titles. Every one, according to his age, called him "Marcus my father, Marcus my brother, Marcus my son." On the day of his obsequies, scarcely any tears were shed, all being

certain that he had done no more than return to the gods, who for a season had lent him to the earth. During the funeral ceremony itself, he was proclaimed "propitious god," with an unparalleled spontaneity. Any one who, if his means permitted him, did not have the Emperor's image in his house, was denounced as sacrilegious. Nor was this worship like so many other ephemeral apotheoses. A hundred years later the statue of Marcus Aurelius was to be seen in a great number of domestic shrines among the Penates. The Emperor Diocletian had a special form of adoration for him. The name of *Antoninus* was thenceforth sacred. Like that of *Cæsar* and *Augustus*, it became a kind of attribute of empire, a mark of human and civic sovereignty. The *Numen Antoninum* was, as it were, the favourable planet of that Empire whose admirable system remained for the century that followed, a reproach, a hope, and a regret. Souls so little poetical as that of Septimius Severus, are to be seen dreaming of it as of a lost paradise. Even Constantine bowed down before that clement divinity, and desired that the golden statue of the Antonines should be counted among those of the ancestors and guardians of his power, founded, however, under entirely different auspices.

Never was worship more legitimate, and it remains our own to-day. Yes, every one of us wears mourning in his heart for Marcus Aurelius, as though he died but yesterday. With him, philosophy was on the throne. For a moment, thanks to him, the world was governed by the best and greatest man of his age. It is important that this experiment should have been made. Will it be made a second time? Will modern philosophy, like ancient philosophy, attain to the throne in its turn? Will it have its Marcus Aurelius, surrounded by men like Fronto and Junius Rusticus? Will the government of human things belong yet again to the wisest? What matters it, seeing that such a reign would endure for but a day, and that the reign of fools would undoubtedly begin again? Accustomed to contemplate, with an amused gaze, the eternal mirage of

human illusions, modern philosophy knows the law of passing tendencies in public opinion. Yet it would be curious to trace what would result from such principles, if ever they should attain to power. There would be pleasure in constructing *a priori* the Marcus Aurelius of modern times, and in seeing what amalgam of strength and weakness would create in an elect spirit, summoned to the widest sphere of action, the order of reflection peculiar to the age. We should like to see how the critical faculty would find the way to ally itself with the highest virtue and the most passionate fervour for good; what attitude a thinker of this school would assume before the social problems of the nineteenth century; by what art he would succeed in turning them, hushing them asleep, eluding or solving them. What is certain is, that the man called on to govern his fellows must always meditate on the exquisite model of sovereignty offered by Rome in her best days. If it be true that it is possible to surpass him in certain parts of the science of government, which have only been known in modern times, the son of Annius Verus will ever remain inimitable for his strength of soul, his resignation, his consummate nobility, and the perfection of his charity.

The day of the death of Marcus Aurelius can be taken as the decisive moment at which the ruin of ancient civilisation was decided. In philosophy the great Emperor had placed the ideal of virtue so high, that it was incumbent on none to strive to follow him; in politics, for lack of having sufficiently separated the duties of the father from those of the Cæsar, he involuntarily inaugurated the era of the tyrants and that of anarchy. In religion, by his exaggerated attachment to a state religion, the weak points of which he clearly perceived, he prepared for the violent triumph of the non-official worship, and left hovering over his memory a reproach, unjust, it is true, but one whose very shadow we ought not to meet in a life so pure. In all, save the laws, decrepitude was visible. Twenty years of indulgence had relaxed the administration and favoured abuses. A certain reaction in the direction of the ideas of Avidius Cassius was necessary;

in place of that there was a total collapse. What a horrible deception for virtuous folk! So much goodness, so much love, only culminating in the world being put in the hands of a beast slayer, a gladiator! After the beautiful vision of an Elysian world on earth, to fall back into the hell of the Cæsars, which men had believed to be closed for ever! Faith in righteousness was then lost. After Caligula, after Nero, after Domitian, there had still been room for hope. Experiences had not been decisive. Now, it is after the greatest effort in administrative rationalism ever made, after eighty-four years of an excellent government, after Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, Antoninus, Marcus Aurelius, that the reign of evil begins again, worse than ever. Farewell, virtue; farewell, reason! Since Marcus Aurelius has been powerless to save the world, who shall save it? In the meantime, hurrah for the madmen! hurrah for the absurd! welcome to the Syrian and his dubious gods! Serious physicians have been unable to do aught. The sick man is worse than ever. Bid the quacks hither; better than honourable practitioners they know what the people want.

The saddening feature of the situation, indeed, is that the death day of Marcus Aurelius, so mournful for philosophy and civilisation, was an auspicious day for Christianity. Commodus, having made it his business to do in all things the contrary to what he had seen, showed himself much less unfavourable to Christianity than his illustrious father. Marcus Aurelius was the consummate Roman with his traditions and prejudices; Commodus was of no race. He liked the Egyptian worship; he himself with shaven head presided over the processions, bore the Anubis, went through the whole round of ceremonial in which the effeminate took such pleasure. He had himself represented in those attitudes in the mosaics of the circular porticos of his gardens. He had Christians in his household. His mistress Marcia was almost a Christian, and exploited the credit given her by love to alleviate the fate of the confessors who had been condemned to the mines of Sardinia. The martyrdom of the Scillitans, which took

place on July 17th, 180, four months consequently after the accession of Commodus, was no doubt the result of orders given before the death of Marcus, which the new government had not yet had time to withdraw. The number of victims under Commodus appears to have been less considerable than under Antoninus and Marcus Aurelius. So true it is that between the Roman wisdom and Christianity there was war to the death. Decius, Valerian, Aurelian, and Diocletian, who were to attempt to revive the maxims of the Empire, were destined to be drawn into being ardent persecutors, while the Emperors who were alien to Roman patriotism, such as Alexander Severus, Philip the Arabian, and the Cæsars of Palmyra, were to show themselves tolerant.

With a less disastrous system than an unbridled military despotism, the Empire, even after the ruin of the Roman ideal by the death of Marcus Aurelius, might still have been able to survive, to give Christianity peace a century sooner than it actually did, and to escape the torrents of blood which Decius and Diocletian poured forth to no purpose. The rôle of the Roman aristocracy was at an end; after having worn out folly in the first century, it had worn out virtue in the second. But the hidden forces of the great Mediterranean confederation were not exhausted. Just as after the downfall of the political edifice built on the rights of the family of Augustus, a provincial dynasty, the Flavians, was found to restore the Empire, so, after the ruin of the edifice built by the adoptions of the higher Roman nobility, men from the provinces, Orientals and Syrians, arose to reconstitute that great association in which all found peace and profit. Septimius Severus reconstructed, without moral elevation but not without glory, what Vespasian had set up.

Assuredly the men of this dynasty are not comparable to the great Emperors of the second century. Even Alexander Severus, who equals Antoninus and Marcus in bounty, is far their inferior in intellect and nobility of soul. The principle of government is detestable; it consists in bidding in indulgences for the support of the legions, in putting a

premium on revolt; he who addresses the soldier must have his purse in his hand. Military despotism never assumed a more shameless form, but military despotism can be long-lived. Side by side with hideous spectacles, under the rule of those Syrian Emperors whom we disdain, how many reforms are brought to pass, what progress is made in legislation! What a day is that (under Caracalla) when every free man in the Empire achieves equality of rights! There is no need to exaggerate the advantages conferred by this equality then; words, however, are never altogether empty of significance in politics. The philosophers of the school of Marcus Aurelius had disappeared, but jurisconsults replaced them. During execrable years, Papinian, Ulpian, Paul, Gaius, Modestinus, Florentinus, and Marcianus produced masterpieces and, in sober truth, the legal code of the future. Far inferior to Trajan and the Antonines in political traditions, the Syrian Emperors, from the very fact that they were not Romans, and had no Roman prejudices, often afforded proof of an openness of mind, which the great Emperors of the second century, profoundly conservative as they all were, could not possess. They permitted, even encouraged colleges or associations. Allowing themselves in this respect to go to extremes, they would fain have had trade guilds organised in castes with special forms of dress. They flung the gates of the Empire wide. One of them, the son of Mammæa, the good and lovable Alexander Severus, almost equalled in his plebeian kindness of disposition the patrician virtues of the great ages; the loftiest thoughts look colourless beside the honest impulses of his heart.

It was more especially in religion that the so-called Syrian Emperors inaugurated a breadth of ideas and a tolerance up till then unknown. Those Syrian women of Emesa, beautiful, intelligent, bold to the point of Utopianism, Julia Domna, Julia Mæsa, Julia Mammæa, and Julia Soæmias, are curbed by no tradition or social restraint. They dare whatever Roman woman dared; they enter the Senate, deliberate therein, actually govern the Empire, dream of

Semiramis and Nitocris. That is more than a Faustina would have done, despite her nimbleness of spirit; she would have been checked by tact, by the sense of the absurd, by the rules of good Roman society. The Syrian women falter before nothing. They have a senate of women which enacts all manner of extravagances. The Roman worship appears to them cold and insignificant. Not being attached to it by any family ties, and their imagination finding itself more in harmony with Christianity than with Italian paganism, these women delight in stories of the wanderings of gods on earth; Philostratus enchants them with his Apollonius; possibly they have a secret affiliation to Christianity. During this period the last honourable ladies of the old society, like that aged daughter of Marcus Aurelius, respected by all, whom Caracalla caused to be put to death, survived in obscurity to be present at an orgy which formed so strange a contrast with their memories of youth.

The provinces, more especially the Eastern provinces, which were more awake and active than those of the West, definitively took the upper hand. Elagabalus was assuredly a maniac; but, nevertheless, his chimera of a central monotheistic worship established at Rome, and absorbing all other forms of belief, showed that the narrow circle of the Antonine ideas was shattered. Mammæa and Alexander Severus were to go still further; while the jurists continued to transcribe with the tranquillity of routine their old and ferocious maxims against liberty of conscience, the Syrian Emperor and his mother studied Christianity and vouchsafed it their sympathy. Not content with according security to the Christians, Alexander, with a touching feeling of eclecticism, enrolled Jesus among his household gods. Peace seemed made, not, as under Constantine, by the humiliation of one of the parties, but by a broad reconciliation.

In all this, certainly, we have a daring attempt at reform, rationally inferior to that of the Antonines, but better fitted to succeed; for it was much more popular, and took

more account of the provinces and the East. In such a democratic scheme, people of no family, like those Africans and Syrians, had better chances of success than persons of pompous and irreproachable bearing like the aristocratic Roman Emperors. But the profoundly vicious element in the imperial system revealed itself for the tenth time. Alexander Severus was assassinated by his soldiers on March 19th, 235. It was clear that the army could no longer suffer any but tyrants. The Empire had fallen successively from the higher Roman nobility to the provincial officials; it was now passing into the hands of petty officers and a murderous soldiery. Whilst, up to the time of Commodus, the murdered Emperors had been intolerable monsters, it was now the good Emperor, he who would fain have restored discipline, he who kept in check the crimes of the army, who was marked out for certain death.

Now opens that hell of a half century (235-284), in which all philosophy, all civic feeling, all refinement go down into the depths. The supreme power is at auction, the soldiery masters of all; at moments there are ten tyrants at once; the barbarian enters through all the fissures of a cracked and crumbling world. Athens demolishes her ancient monuments that she may hem herself in with feeble bulwarks against the terror of the Goths. If anything proves how necessary the Roman Empire is by its intrinsic reason, it is the fact that it is not entirely shattered in this reign of anarchy, that it has retained enough of the breath of life to revive under the powerful influence of Diocletian, and run a further course of two centuries. In every department the decadence is frightful. In fifty years the art of sculpture has been forgotten. Latin literature ceases completely. It is as though an evil genius were brooding over society, drinking its blood and its life. Christianity appropriates to itself all there is of good, and to that extent impoverishes the civil order. The army expires for lack of officers; the Church lures all into its fold. The religious and moral elements in a

state have a very simple manner of punishing the state, which does not accord them the place to which they believe themselves entitled; it is that of retiring to their tents, for a state cannot dispense with them. From this time civil society has only the riff-raff of souls; all the best are absorbed by religion. Men separate themselves from a country which represents no more than a principle of material force. They choose their fatherland in the ideal, or rather in the institution that takes the place of the overthrown city and state. The Church becomes the exclusive union of souls, and, as she waxes greater by the very misfortunes of civil society, consolation is readily found for these misfortunes, in which it is easy to point out an act of vengeance on the part of Christ and his saints.

"If it were permitted us to render evil for evil," says Tertullian, "a single night and a few torches would suffice for our vengeance." The Christian was patient, for he was assured of the future. The world was slaying the saints now, but to-morrow the saints would judge the world. "Look us all well in the face that you may know us again at the Last Judgment," said one of the Carthaginian martyrs to the pagans. "Our patience," said the more moderate, "comes from our certainty of being avenged; it heaps coals of fire on the heads of our enemies. What a day shall that be when the Most High shall count his faithful, and shall send the guilty to hell, and make our persecutors burn in the brazier of eternal fires! How great a spectacle it shall be, how I shall rejoice and admire and laugh aloud! How I shall stamp my feet with delight when I behold groaning in the depths of the shadows, with Jupiter and their own adorers, so many princes whom they avowed to be received into heaven after their death! What joy to see the magistrates who persecuted the name of the Lord consumed by flames more devouring than those of the pyres lighted for the Christians!"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

CHRISTIANITY AT THE END OF THE SECOND CENTURY—DOGMA.

In the space of time which has elapsed from the death of Augustus to the death of Marcus Aurelius a new religion has been born in the world; it is called Christianity. The essence of this religion consists in believing that a great manifestation has been made by heaven in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, a divine being who, after an entirely supernatural life, was put to death by the Jews, his countrymen, and rose again on the third day. Thus, victor over death, he waits at the right hand of God, his Father, the propitious moment to reappear in the clouds, preside over the general resurrection, of which his own has been but a prelude, and inaugurate on a purified earth the kingdom of God—that is to say, the reign of the risen saints. Whilst awaiting this consummation, the union of the faithful, the Church, represents a kind of city of the saints now alive, still governed by Jesus. It is, indeed, accepted that Jesus delegated his powers to the apostles, who established the bishops and the whole ecclesiastical hierarchy. The Church renews her communion with Jesus by means of the morsel of bread and the mystery of the cup, a rite founded by himself, in virtue of which Jesus becomes momentarily but actually present amongst his followers. As a consolation in their time of waiting in the midst of the persecutions of a perverse world, the faithful receive supernatural gifts from the Spirit of God, that Spirit which once inspired the prophets, and which is not yet extinct. Above all, they have the reading of the books revealed by the Spirit—that is to say, the Bible, the Gospels, the letters of the apostles, and such of the writings of the new prophets as the Church has adopted for use in public assemblies. The life of the faithful must be a life of prayer, of asceticism, of renunciation, of seclusion from

the world, since the present world is governed by the prince of evil, Satan, and idolatry is nothing other than the worship of demons.

Such a religion as this appears at the outset as a product of Judaism. Jewish Messianism is its cradle. The earliest title of Jesus, a title that has become inseparable from his name, is *Christos*, a Greek translation of the Hebrew word *Mesih*. The great sacred book of the new faith is the Jewish Bible; its festivals, so far at least as name is concerned, are Jewish festivals; its prophecy is a continuation of Jewish prophecy. But the separation of mother and child is complete. As a rule, the Jews and Christians hate each other; the new religion tends more and more to forget its source and what it owes to the Hebrew people. By the majority of its adherents Christianity is regarded as an entirely new religion, having no links with what has preceded it.

If now we compare Christianity as it existed about the year 180 with the Christianity of the fourth and fifth centuries, with that of the Middle Ages, and with that of our own time, we shall find it has had but slight additions during the centuries that have elapsed. In 180 the New Testament is closed; not a single new book will be added to it. The Epistles of Paul have gradually won their place as a sequel to the Gospels in the sacred code and in the liturgy. As for dogmas, nothing is fixed, but the germ of all exists; scarce an idea will make its appearance, for which authority cannot be found in the first and second centuries. There is, indeed, a superabundance of dogmas, there are contradictions; the work of theology will consist much more in pruning and discarding superfluities than in inventing new. The Church will let drop a host of ill-begun things; she will escape from many deadlocks. She has still two hearts, so to speak; she has several heads. These anomalies will fall to the ground; but no other truly original dogma will be formed.

The Trinity of the doctors of the year 180, for example, is unsettled. Logos, Paraclete, Holy Spirit, Christ, Son,

are words perplexingly employed to designate the divine entity incarnate in Jesus. The three persons are not counted and numbered off, so to speak; but Father, Son, and Spirit are already assigned as three terms which must henceforth be held distinct, without, however, dividing the indivisible Jahveh. The Son is destined to immense developments. This species of delegate, whom monotheism, from a certain epoch, has been pleased to assign to the Supreme Being, will overshadow the Father to a singular degree. The grotesque formulas of Nicæa will establish ranks of equality against nature. Christ, the sole active member of the Trinity, will take upon himself the whole work of creation and providence, will become God himself. But the Epistle to the Colossians is only a step from such a doctrine; a little logic is all that is necessary to arrive at these exaggerations. Mary, the mother of Jesus, is herself destined to attain to colossal importance; she will become, as a matter of fact, a member of the Trinity. Even now this future has been divined by the Gnostics, who have thus inaugurated a worship fated to be of immeasurable consequence.

The dogma of the divinity of Jesus Christ exists in entirety; only there is not universal agreement on the formulas which serve to express it. The Christology of the Syrian Judeo-Christian and that of the author of *Hermas* or *The Recognitions* differ considerably. It will be the task of theology to select, not to create. The Millenarianism of the earliest Christians grows more and more antipathetic to the Hellenes who embrace Christianity. Greek philosophy makes a kind of violent effort to substitute its dogma of the immortality of the soul for the old Jewish (or, if you will, Persian) ideas of resurrection and an earthly paradise. The two formulas still co-exist, however. Irenæus surpasses all the Millenarians in gross materialism, when for fifty years the fourth Gospel, purely spiritual as it is, has been proclaiming that the kingdom of God begins here below, that we carry it in ourselves. Caius, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Dionysius of

Alexandria are soon to condemn the dream of the early Christians, and include the Apocalypse in their antipathy. But it is too late to suppress anything of importance. Christianity is to subordinate the advent of Christ in the clouds and the resurrection of the body to the immortality of the soul, to such an extent that the old primitive dogma of Christianity will be almost forgotten and relegated, like a theatrical piece out of vogue, to the background of a last judgment now almost meaningless, seeing that the fate of each man is decided at the moment of his death. Many admit that the sufferings of the damned are unending, and that these sufferings will add a spice to the joy of the just; others believe that they will end or be mitigated.

In the theory of the constitution of the Church, the idea more and more takes the upper hand that the apostolic succession is the basis of the power of the bishop, who is thus regarded, not as the delegate of the community, but as the successor of the apostles and the depositary of their authority. Many Christians, however, still hold to the far simpler conception of the *ecclesia* of Matthew, in which all the members are equal. In the settlement of the canon, there is unanimity of opinion on the great fundamental texts; but an exact list of the writings of the new Bible does not exist, and the boundaries, if one may so express it, of this new sacred literature are quite uncertain.

Christian doctrine was already, then, so compact a whole, that nothing essential was to be added to it, and no considerable curtailment to be possible. Up till the time of Mohammed, and even after him, there were in Syria Judeo-Christians, Elkesaites, and Ebionites. In addition to those *Minim* or Syrian Nazarenes, with whom only the erudite among the Fathers were to be acquainted, and who, so late as the fourth century, did not cease from cursing St. Paul in their synagogues and treating ordinary Christians as counterfeit Jews, there have always been in the East Christian families observing the Sabbath and practising circumcision. The Christians of Salt and Kerak in our

days appear to be Ebionites of a kind. The Abyssinians are true Judeo-Christians, practising all the Jewish precepts, often with more rigour than the Jews themselves. The Koran and Islamism were but a prolongation of this old form of Christianity, the essence of which was the belief in the second coming of Christ, docetism, and the suppression of the cross. From another point of view, even in this nineteenth century of ours, the Communist and Millenarian sects of America make Millenarianism and an impending Last Judgment the basis of their belief, as it was in the early days of the first Christian generation.

So it was that in this Christian Church of the end of the second century all had already been said. Not an opinion, not a tendency in ideas, not a fable but had had its champion. Arianism was in germ in the views of the Monarchians, the Artemonites, Praxeas, and Theodotus of Byzantium; and they pointed out, not unreasonably, that their belief had been that of the majority of the Church of Rome up to the time of Pope Zephyrinus (about 200). What was lacking in this age of unbridled liberty was that which the Councils and doctors were later to furnish: learning, discipline, order, and the elimination of contradictory elements. Jesus was already God, and yet many felt reluctant to call him by that name. The severance from Judaism was complete, and nevertheless many Christians still practised the whole of Judaism. Sunday had replaced the Sabbath, which did not prevent certain of the faithful observing the latter. The Christian Passover was distinct from the Jewish Passover, and yet whole Churches continued to follow the ancient usage. In the sacrament the majority made use of ordinary bread; many, however, in Asia Minor especially, only employed unleavened bread. The Bible and the New Testament writings were the foundation of ecclesiastical teaching, and at the same time a host of other books were adopted by some and rejected by others. The four Gospels were permanently fixed, and yet many other evangelical texts were in circulation and acquired favour. Most of the faithful, far from being foes of the

Roman Empire, only looked forward to the day of reconciliation, and already cherished the thought of a Christian Empire; others continued to fulminate against the capital of the pagan world the most gloomy apocalyptic predictions. A standard of orthodoxy was formed, and already served as a touchstone to avert heresy; but if there were any tendency to abuse this argument from authority, the most Christian doctors mocked what they were to call "the plurality of error." The primacy of the Church of Rome was beginning to manifest itself; but even those who submitted to it would have protested, had they been told that the bishop of Rome should one day aspire to the title of sovereign of the universal Church. To sum up, the differences which, in our time, separate the most orthodox of Catholics and the most liberal of Protestants are of small account compared with the points of disagreement which then existed between two Christians, who, none the less on that account, remained in perfect fellowship one with the other.

This it is which causes the unparalleled interest of that creative epoch. Accustomed to study only the reflective periods of history, nearly all those who in France have set forth their views on the origins of Christianity, have limited their consideration to the third and fourth centuries, the centuries of famous men and Œcumenical Councils, creeds, and rules of faith. Clement of Alexandria and Origen, the Council of Nicæa and St. Athanasius, these are for them the great figures, the topmost peaks. We should be loath to deny the importance of any period of history, but it is not here that we shall find the beginnings of Christianity. Christianity was fully formed before Origen and the Council of Nicæa. And who formed it? A host of great, unknown men, groups of persons unwitting what they did, writers nameless or pseudonymous. The unknown author of the Epistles alleged to be from Paul to Titus and Timothy contributed more than any Council, whatever it might be, to the constitution of ecclesiastical discipline. The obscure authors of the Gospels have

apparently more real importance than their most famous commentators. And Jesus? It will be admitted, I hope, that there was some reason for which his disciples loved him to the point of believing he had risen again, and of seeing in him the consummation of the Messianic ideal, the superhuman being destined to rule over the complete renewal of heaven and earth.

Fact is in such matters the sign of right; success is the great criterion. Invention is for nothing in the sphere of religion and morality; the maxims of the Sermon on the Mount are old as the world itself; none can claim any copyright in them. The essential thing is to realise these maxims, to make them the basis of a society. That is why personal charm is the element of capital importance in the religious founder. The master-work of Jesus was to have won the love of a score of persons, or rather to have won love for the idea within him, to the point of triumph over death. It was the same for the apostles and for the second and third Christian generations. The founders are always obscure, but in the philosopher's eyes the glory of those nameless beings is the true glory. They were not great men, those humble contemporaries of Trajan and Antoninus, who decided the faith of the world. Compared with them, the celebrated personages of the Church of the third and fourth centuries cut a much finer figure. And yet these last did no more than build on the foundation which the former had laid. Clement of Alexandria and Origen are only half-Christians. They are Gnostics, Hellenists, Spiritualists, ashamed of the Apocalypse and the earthly reign of Christ, finding the essence of Christianity in metaphysical speculation, not in the application of the merits of Jesus or in the scriptural revelation. Origen avows that if the law of Moses were taken in the proper sense, it would be found inferior to the laws of the Romans, the Athenians, or the Spartans. St. Paul would almost have denied the name of Christian to a Clement of Alexandria, saving the world with a gnosis, in which the blood of Jesus plays scarce any part at all.

The same reflection can be applied to the writings which those antique ages have bequeathed to us. They are bald, simple, uncouth, naïve, like the misspelt letters written in our own days by the most disdained of Communist sectaries. James and Jude recall a fanatic of 1848 or 1871 like Cabet or Babick, convinced of his cause, but ignorant of his own language, awkwardly expressing in touching fashion his artless aspirations to consciousness. And, nevertheless, it is these stammerings of men of the populace which have become the second Bible of the human race. Paul the tent-maker wrote Greek as badly as Babick wrote French. The rhetorician, swayed by literary considerations, for whom French literature begins with Villon; the doctrinaire historian, who only takes account of deliberate developments, and for whom the French constitution commences with the alleged constitutions of St. Louis, cannot comprehend such apparent extravagances.

The age of beginnings is a chaos, but a chaos rich in life; it is the fertile glair in which a being prepares for existence, a monster still, but endowed with a principle of unity, of a nature sufficiently strong to discard impossibilities and acquire essential organs. What are all the efforts of the centuries of self-consciousness compared to the spontaneous tendencies of the embryonic age, that mysterious period when the being in course of evolution throws off a useless appendage, creates a nervous system, develops a new member? It is at moments such as these that the Spirit of God broods over his work, and that the band of those who labour for mankind can truly say:

Est Deus in nobis, agitante calescimus illo.

CHAPTER XXIX.

WORSHIP AND DISCIPLINE.

THE history of a religion is not the history of a theology. The worthless subtleties which are dignified under that name, are much rather the parasite that devours religions than the soul that animates them. Jesus had no theology; he had the keenest sense that man has ever had of divine things and the filial communion of man with God. Moreover, he instituted no form of worship, properly so called, beyond that which he found already established by Judaism. The "breaking of bread" accompanied by thanksgiving, or eucharist, was the sole rite of a slightly symbolical character which he adopted; and, further, he did no more than give it importance and appropriate it to himself; for the *beraka* (benediction) before breaking bread has always been a Jewish usage. However it may be, this mystery of bread and wine, considered as being so truly the body and blood of Jesus, that those who ate or drank of it participated in Jesus, became the generative element of a whole system of worship. The *ecclesia* or assembly was its basis. From that Christianity never departed. The *ecclesia*, having as its main object the communion or eucharist, became the mass; and the mass has always reduced the rest of Christian worship to the rank of accessories and secondary observances.

Great progress had been made by about the time of Marcus Aurelius from the primitive Christian assembly, in the course of which two or three prophets, frequently women, would lapse into ecstasy, speaking simultaneously, and, after their paroxysms, asking each other what marvels they had uttered. This was no longer to be seen except among the Montanists. In the immense majority of churches the elders and bishop presided over the assembly, regulated the readings, and were the only speakers. The women were seated apart, silent and veiled. Order reigned

everywhere, thanks to a considerable number of secondary assistants with distinct functions. Little by little the seat of the *episcopos* and those of the *presbyteri* came to constitute a central semicircle, a choir. The eucharist necessitated a table before which the celebrant spoke his prayers and mystic formulas. Soon a pulpit was set up for the readings and sermons, then a chancel separating the *presbyterium* from the rest of the room. Two memories controlled this birth of Christian architecture: first, a vague recollection of the Temple of Jerusalem, of which one portion was accessible to the priests alone, then a preoccupation with the great heavenly liturgy with which the Apocalypse opens. The influence of that work on the liturgy was of the highest importance. There was a desire to do on earth what the twenty-four elders and the choristers in beasts' form did before the throne of God. The service of the Church was thus modelled on that of heaven. The use of incense was no doubt a product of the same inspiration. Lamps and candles were especially used in funeral ceremonies.

The great liturgical act of the Sunday was a masterpiece of mysticism and understanding of popular feeling. It was indeed already the mass, but a complete mass, not the mass prosaic and crushed, if I may say so, of our own days: it was the mass alive in all its parts, each part retaining the primitive significance which later it was so strangely to lose. That skilfully-composed combination of psalms, canticles, prayers, readings and professions of faith, that sacred dialogue between bishop and people, prepared souls to think and feel in common. The bishop's homily and the reading of correspondence from foreign bishops and persecuted churches gave life and actuality to the peaceful meeting. Then came the devout prelude to the mystery, an announcement full of gravity summoning souls to contemplation; then the supreme act of brotherhood, participation in the same bread, the same cup. A solemn stillness hung over the church at that moment. And then, when the mystery was at an end, life was renewed, the chanting

was resumed, thanksgivings were multiplied; one long prayer embraced all orders of the Church, all ranks of mankind, all established powers. Whereupon the presiding functionary, after exchanging pious wishes with the faithful, dismissed the assembly with the formula usual in courts of law, and the brethren dispersed, greatly edified for several days.

This Sunday meeting was in some measure the bond of all Christian life. The sacred bread was the universal tie of the Church of Jesus. It was sent to those who were absent at home, to the confessors in prison, and from one church to another, especially about Eastertide; it was given to children; it was the great outward sign of communion and brotherhood. The *agape* or evening repast in common, indistinguishable at first from the Lord's Supper, detached itself from it more and more, and degenerated into abuses. The Lord's Supper, on the other hand, became essentially a morning office. The distribution of bread and wine was made by the elders and the deacons. The faithful received them standing. In certain countries, especially in Africa, it was believed because of the prayer: "Give us this day our daily bread," that the faithful should communicate every day. For that purpose a morsel of consecrated bread was taken away on the Sunday, and eaten at home after the morning prayer.

Imitating the mysteries, the Christians took pleasure in surrounding their supreme rite with profound secrecy. Precautions were taken that none but the initiated should be present in the church at the moment of celebration. This was almost the only error made by the infant Church; because she sought the shadow, it was believed she had need of it, and that, added to many other indications, gave colour to the accusation of magic. The holy kiss was also a great source of edification and perils. The wiser of the doctors recommended that it should not be repeated if any pleasure were felt in it, nor be given twice, nor with parted lips. It was not long, moreover, before the danger was suppressed by the introduction of the separation of the sexes in church.

The church had no resemblance to the temple; for it was maintained as an absolute principle that God has no need of a temple, his true temple being the heart of a righteous man. It is not certain that it had any particular style of architecture by which it could be recognised; but it was, however, already a building apart. It was called "the house of the Lord," and the tenderest feelings of Christian piety began to attach themselves to it. The nocturnal assemblies, precisely because they were forbidden by the law, had a great charm for the imagination. In reality, although the true Christian held temples in aversion, the church secretly aspired to becoming a temple; it had entirely become so in the Middle Ages; the chapel and church of our time resemble the ancient temples much more than the churches of the second century.

An idea which soon spread abroad greatly contributed to this transformation; it was imagined that the eucharist must be a sacrifice, since it was the memorial of the supreme sacrifice consummated by Jesus. This conception filled a lacuna which the new religion, in the eyes of superficial people, seemed to have, a lack of sacrifices. In this manner the eucharistic table became an altar, and there was a question of offerings and oblations. These oblations were the supplies of bread and wine which the well-to-do among the faithful provided, that the Church might not be put to expense, and that what was left might belong to the poor and those who assisted in the services. It is obvious how fertile in misunderstandings such a doctrine could be. The Middle Ages, which introduced so many abuses into the mass, by exaggerating the sacrificial idea, were to achieve very great eccentricities. By successive transformations was evolved the low mass, in which a man in some tiny nook, with a child to take the place of the people, presides over an assembly consisting of himself alone, carries on a continuous dialogue with persons who are not there, apostrophises absent hearers, bestows the offering on himself, and to himself gives the kiss of peace.

By the end of the second century the observance of the

Sabbath was almost suppressed among the Christians. To keep it appeared to betoken Judaism, a bad sign. The earliest Christian generations celebrated both the Saturday and the Sunday, one in memory of the creation, the other in memory of the resurrection; and then all was concentrated on the Sunday. It was not that this second day was regarded as one of rest. The Sabbath was abrogated, not transferred; but the solemnities of the Sunday, and more especially the idea that the day must be given up entirely to joy (fasting and praying on their knees were forbidden the people), brought about abstinence from servile work. It was much later that the belief arose that the precepts for the Sabbath applied to the Sunday. The earliest rules on this subject concern the slaves, to whom, from a feeling of pity, there was a desire to ensure holidays. The Thursday and Friday, *dies stationum*, were consecrated to fasting, kneeling, and memories of the Passion. The annual festivals were the two Jewish feasts, Passover and Pentecost, transposed as has been described. As to the feast of Palms, it was half suppressed. The custom of waving palm branches and crying *hosannah!* was connected, for good or ill, with the Sunday before Easter, in memory of an incident in the last week of the life of Jesus. The anniversary of the Passion was devoted to fasting, and on that day there was abstinence from the holy kiss.

Adoration of the martyrs already filled so important a place that the pagans and Jews took objection to it, maintaining that the Christians revered the martyrs more than Christ himself. They were entombed with a view to their resurrection, refinements of luxury being employed which contrasted with the simplicity of Christian manners; their bones were all but venerated. On the anniversary of their death there was an assemblage at the tomb, the narrative of their martyrdom was read, and the eucharist was celebrated in their memory. This was a development of the commemoration of the dead which held a considerable place in Christian life. Already almost, mass was said for the dead. On the anniversary of their decease the offering was made

for them, as though they were still alive; their names were included in the prayers preceding the consecration; the bread was eaten in communion with them. The adoration of saints, by which paganism regained its place in the Church, and prayers for the dead, source of the greatest abuses of the Middle Ages, are thus derived from the highest and purest elements in primitive Christianity.

Ecclesiastical singing existed at a very early date, and was one of the forms of expression of the Christian conscience. It was used for hymns of free composition, a specimen of which we possess in the "Hymn to Christ" of Clement of Alexandria. The measure was short and light; it was that of the songs of the time, of those, for example, attributed to Anacreon. In any case, it had nothing in common with the recitative of the Psalms. Some echo of it can be found in the Easter liturgy of our churches, which has particularly retained its archaic character, in the *Victimæ paschali*, the *O filii et filiæ* and the Judeo-Christian *Alleluia*. The *carmen antelucanum*, of which Pliny speaks, or the office *in galli cantu* are probably to be found in the *Hymnum dicat turba fratrum*, more especially in the following strophe, the silvery sound of which almost recalls to us the air to which it was sung:

Galli cantus, galli plausus
Proximum sentit diem
Et ante lucem nuntiemus
Christum regem seculo.

Baptism had completely replaced circumcision, to which originally, amongst the Jews, it was but the preliminary. It was administered by a triple immersion in a room apart, near the church, and the neophyte was then brought into the assembly of the faithful. The baptism was followed by the laying on of hands, the Jewish rite for the ordination of rabbis. This was what was called the baptism of the Spirit, and without it the baptism of water was incomplete. Baptism was only a rupture with the past; it was by the laying on of hands that a man really became a Christian.

To this were added anointings with oil, the origin of what is now called confirmation, and a kind of profession of faith in the form of question and answer. All this constituted the formal sanction, the *sphragis*. The sacramental idea, the *ex opere operato*, the sacrament conceived as a kind of magical spell, thus became one of the foundations of Christian theology. In the third century a sort of novitiate to baptism, the catechumenate, was established; the believer only reached the threshold of the church after traversing the successive orders of initiation. The baptism of children began to come into use towards the close of the second century; until the fourth century it was to find determined adversaries.

Penance was already a regulated system at Rome about the time of the pseudo-Hermas. This institution, which implied a strongly organised society, had surprising developments. The marvel is that it did not rend the infant Church in twain. If anything proves how the Church was loved and the intensity of the joy to be found therein, it is the sight of what hard ordeals people were willing to undergo, that they might return and recover the place among the saints which they had forfeited. Confession or avowal of faults, already practised by the Jews, was the first condition of Christian penance.

It is obvious that never was the material equipment of a worship more simple. It was only gradually that the communion vessels acquired their sanctity. The saucers, made of glass, which were used in the service were the first to obtain a certain attention. The adoration of the cross was a mark of respect rather than a worship; the symbolism remained of extreme simplicity. The palm, the dove with the olive branch, the fish, the ΙΧΘΥΣ, the anchor, the phœnix, the ΑΩ, the letter T signifying the cross, and perhaps the *chrisimon* ☧ signifying Christ: such were almost the sole allegorical representations received. The cross itself was never represented either in churches or houses; on the other hand, the sign of the cross made by lifting the hand to the forehead was frequently used, but

it may be that this custom was particularly dear to the Montanists.

Emotional worship, on the contrary, was more developed than ever. Although the free exercise of the primitive charisms had already been much restricted by the bishops, spiritual gifts, miracles, and direct inspiration continued in the Church, and were her life and soul. In those supernatural faculties Irenæus saw the true mark of the Church of Jesus. The Lyonese martyrs participated in them. Tertullian believed himself compassed about by perpetual miracles. It was not only among the Montanists that a superhuman character was ascribed to the simplest acts. Divine inspiration and thaumaturgy were permanent features of the whole Church. There was constant talk of spiritualistic women, who answered questions, and seemed like lyres resounding under the touch of the divine plectrum. The *soror*, the memory of whom has been preserved for us by Tertullian, amazed the Church by her visions. Like the illuminati of Corinth in the time of St. Paul, she mingled her revelations with the solemnities of the Church; she read men's hearts, she proclaimed the remedies, she beheld souls in corporeal form as little beings of human shape, aerial, bright, tender, and transparent. Ecstatic children also passed for being the interpreters whom the divine Logos at times chose to elect.

Supernatural healing was the first of the gifts considered as inheritances from Jesus. Consecrated oil was the instrument. Pagans were frequently cured by the oil of the Christians. So far as the art of expelling demons was concerned, every one admitted the great superiority of the Christian exorcists; possessed persons were brought to them from all parts that they might be delivered, precisely as is done to this day in the East. It even occurred sometimes that people who were not Christians exorcised in the name of Jesus. This stirred the indignation of some Christians, but the majority rejoiced at it, seeing therein an act of homage to the truth. There was no stopping in so successful a course. As the false gods were no more than demons,

the power of expelling demons implied the power of unmasking the false gods. The exorcist thus incurred the charge of magic, which recoiled on the Church as a whole.

The orthodox Church saw the peril of these spiritual gifts, survivals of a potent primitive ferment, which the Church must discipline if she were to continue to exist. The prudent doctors and bishops were opposed to them; for those marvels which delighted the irrational Tertullian, and to which St. Cyprian attached so much importance, afforded grounds for evil reports, and had, mingled with them, individual eccentricities which orthodoxy distrusted. Far from encouraging them, the Church laid supernatural powers under the ban of suspicion, and, in the third century, without having wholly disappeared, they were becoming more and more rare. They were no longer anything save exceptional favours, with which the presumptuous alone believed themselves honoured. Ecstasy was condemned. The bishop became the depositary of spiritual gifts; or, rather, to spiritual gifts succeeded the sacrament, which was administered by the clergy, while spiritual gifts were a personal matter, an affair between man and God. Permanent revelation was inherited by the synods. The first of these were held in Asia Minor, against the Phrygian prophets; transferred to the Church, the principle of inspiration by the Spirit became a principle of order and authority.

The clergy was already a body entirely distinct from the people. Any large complete Church had, in addition to the bishop and elders, a certain number of deacons and assistant-deacons attached to the bishop, and carrying out his orders. It also possessed a series of petty functionaries, *anagnostes* or readers, exorcists, doorkeepers, choristers, and acolytes, who served the ministry of the altar, filled the cups with water and wine, and bore the eucharist to the sick. The poor folk and widows, who were supported by the church, and who lived in it more or less, were considered Church people, and were inscribed on its registers (*matricularii*). They fulfilled the more servile duties, such

as sweeping and, later, bell-ringing, and lived with the clergy on the surplus of the offerings of bread and wine. For the higher ranks of the priesthood celibacy tended more and more to become the rule; second marriages were at least forbidden. The Montanists soon reached the point of asserting that the sacraments administered by a married priest were null and void. Castration was never anything more than an excess of zeal, and was condemned at an early date. The sister-comrades of the apostles, whose existence was proved by well-known texts, were revived as *subintroductæ*, a kind of domestic deaconesses, who gave rise to the allegations of concubinage made against the clergy in the Middle Ages. The rigorists demanded that they should be veiled, to avert the over-tender sentiments which their ministry of charity might awaken in the brethren.

Tombs became, from the close of the second century, an annexe of the Church, and the object of ecclesiastical supervision. The method of Christian sepulchre always remained that of the Jews, interment, which consisted in placing the corpse, shrouded in a winding-sheet, in a sarcophagus shaped like a trough, and often surmounted by an *arcosolium*. Cremation always inspired great repugnance in the faithful. The Mithraists and other Eastern sects shared the same ideas, and practised at Rome what can be called the Syrian method of sepulchre. The Greek belief in the immortality of the soul led to incineration; the Eastern belief in the resurrection led to interment. Many indications would lead us to seek the oldest Christian sepulchres in Rome near St. Sebastian's, on the Appian Way. There also are to be found the Jewish and Mithraistic cemeteries. It was believed that the bodies of the apostles Peter and Paul had lain in this place, and for that reason it was called *Catatumbas*, "The Tombs."

About the time of Marcus Aurelius a serious change took place. The problem which preoccupies great modern cities called imperiously for solution. As the system of cremation economised the space consecrated to the dead, so interment in the Jewish, Christian, and Mithraistic fashion

took up much superficial area. It was necessary to be fairly wealthy in order to purchase in one's lifetime a *loculus* in the most expensive site in the world at the gate of Rome. When great masses of the population, more or less well-to-do, wished to be interred in this way, it was requisite to go below the surface of the ground. Shafts were first sunk to a certain depth to find sufficiently solid strata of sand; then those labyrinths of galleries, in the walls of which the *loculi* were dug out, were bored out horizontally, sometimes at several levels. The Jews, Sabazians, Mithraists, and Christians simultaneously adopted this method of sepulchre, which entirely suited the sectarian spirit and taste for mystery which marked them. But, the Christians having continued this manner of burial throughout the whole of the third and fourth centuries and part of the fifth, the mass of catacombs in the environs of Rome is almost wholly a Christian work. Necessities analogous to those which caused those vast underground chambers to be excavated in the neighbourhood of Rome, also brought about their production at Naples, Milan, Syracuse, and Alexandria.

In the early years of the third century, we find Pope Zephyrinus confiding the care of these great mortuaries to his deacon, Callistus. They were called cemeteries or "dormitories," for it was imagined that the dead slept there awaiting the day of resurrection. Many of the martyrs were interred in them. Thenceforth the respect attaching to the bodies of the martyrs was also devoted to the places where they were laid. The catacombs were soon holy places. The organisation of the maintenance of the catacombs was complete under Alexander Severus. About the time of Fabian and Cornelius that maintenance was one of the chief cares of Roman piety. A devout woman called Lucina spent her whole fortune and activity on the sacred tombs. To rest beside the martyrs, *ad sanctos*, *ad martyres*, was deemed a privilege. There was an annual pilgrimage to celebrate mysteries over the holy burial-places. Thence resulted the *cubicula* or sepulchral

chambers, which, when enlarged, became subterranean churches, where the Christians assembled in time of persecution. Outside, *scholæ*, serving as a *triclinium* for the love-feasts, were sometimes added. Persons assembled under such conditions possessed the advantage that they could be taken for mourners, which ensured them the protection of the laws. The cemetery, whether subterranean or in the open air, thus became an essentially ecclesiastical place. The *fossor* was in some Churches a clerk of the second order, like the *anagnostis* and the doorkeeper. The Roman authorities, who in questions of sepulchre displayed great tolerance, very rarely interfered with these subterranean places of burial; except at times when the fury of persecution ran high, they admitted that the rights of ownership of the consecrated *areæ* belonged to the community—that is, to the bishop. The entrance to the burial-places, moreover, was almost always masked externally by some family sepulchre, the rights of which were beyond question.

The system of burial by brotherhood thus prevailed entirely in the third century. Each sect built its own subterranean gallery, and shut itself up in it. The separation of the dead became a common right. Men were classified according to their religion, in the tomb; to remain with their brethren after death became a need. Up till then, burial had been a personal or family affair; thenceforward it was a religious and collective matter, implying a community of opinions on things divine. This was to be by no means one of the less serious difficulties which Christianity was to bequeath to the future.

In its earliest beginnings, Christianity was as opposed to the development of the plastic arts as Islam has proved itself. Had Christianity remained Jewish, architecture would have been its sole artistic development, as has happened among the Mussulmans; like the mosque, the church would have been a pompous house of prayer and nothing more. But religions are what the races which adopt them make of them. Transplanted amongst peoples friendly to art, Christianity became a religion as artistic as it

would have been the opposite, had it remained in the hands of the Judeo-Christians. It was, moreover, the heretics who founded Christian art. We have seen the Gnostics taking this path with an audacity which scandalised true believers. It was still too soon; all that recalled idolatry was suspect. The painters who had been converted were frowned upon, as having served to divert to graven images worship due to the Creator. Images of God and Christ—I mean isolated images which might have seemed idols—excited apprehension, and the Carpocratians, who had busts of Jesus and addressed pagan honours to them, were regarded as profane persons. The Mosaic precepts against figured representations were, in the churches at least, literally observed. The idea of the ugliness of Jesus, subversive as it was of Christian art, was generally diffused. Portraits were painted of Jesus, St. Peter, and St. Paul, but improprieties were seen in the practice. The erection of a statue by the woman cured of an issue of blood seems to Eusebius to call for apology; his excuse being, that the woman who thus showed her gratitude to Christ acted as she did from a survival of pagan habit, and a pardonable confusion of ideas. Elsewhere, Eusebius denounces as absolutely profane the desire to possess portraits of Jesus.

The *arcosolia* of the tombs called for paintings. At first they were made purely decorative and devoid of any religious significance: vines, clusters of foliage, vases, fruits, birds. Then, with these, Christian symbols began to be combined; and, later, it became customary to paint certain simple scenes taken from the Bible, which suggested the particular atmosphere of the prevailing persecution: Jonah under his gourd, or Daniel in the den of lions, Noah and his dove, Psyche, Moses drawing water from the rock, Orpheus charming the beasts with his lyre, and, above all, the Good Shepherd, for which it was scarce necessary to do more than copy one of the most generally diffused types of pagan art. The historical subjects from the Old and New Testaments only appeared at more recent epochs. The table, the sacred bread, the mystic fish, fishing scenes, and the

other symbolism of the Lord's Supper were, on the other hand, represented as early as the third century.

There is nothing original in this miniature system of decorative painting, which was still excluded from the churches, and only tolerated because of its insignificance. It is a great mistake to see in these timid attempts the idea of a new art. They are weak in expression; Christian conceptions are quite lacking; the general aspect is indecisive. Their execution is not unskilful, and suggests artists who have had a good studio training; in any case, it is far superior to that displayed in the true Christian school of painting which came into existence later. But how great is the difference in expression! In the artists of the seventh and eighth centuries one is sensible of powerful effort being made to introduce a new feeling into the scenes represented; it is the material means that are entirely lacking. The artists of the catacombs, on the contrary, are painters of the Pompeian school, who have been converted by causes absolutely alien to art, and who apply their skill to what the austere places which they decorate seem to demand.

By the earliest Christian painters the Gospel history was treated only partially and by slow degrees. It is especially in this respect that the Gnostic origin of these images is evident. The life of Jesus, as the ancient Christian paintings represent it, is precisely that imagined by the Gnostics and docetists—that is to say, the Passion does not enter into it. From the Prætorium to the resurrection all details are suppressed, Christ, according to this order of ideas, having been incapable of real sufferings. The ignominy of the cross, which to the pagans was a great cause for scandal, was avoided. At this epoch it was the pagans who derisively represented the god of the Christians as crucified; the Christians almost forbade it to themselves. They would have feared, in representing a crucifix, to provoke the blasphemies of their foes and to support their views.

Christian art was born heretical, and it long retained traces of its origin. Christian iconography slowly cast off the pre-

judices in the midst of which it came to birth. It only escaped them to suffer the domination of the apocryphal writings, which were themselves born more or less under Gnostic influence. Thence a position of affairs which for long remained a false one. Until well into the Middle Ages, Councils and doctors denounced art; while art, on its side, even when ranged on the side of orthodoxy, permitted itself strange liberties. Its favourite subjects were for the most part from condemned books, so that the representations forced the gates of the Church when the book explaining them had for long been excluded. In the West, in the thirteenth century, art entirely emancipated itself; but such was not the case in Eastern Christianity. The Greek Church and the Eastern Churches have never completely conquered that antipathy to images, which has been carried to its height in Judaism and Islamism. They condemn high relief, and immure themselves within a sacerdotal system of imagery which serious art will find much difficulty in shaking off.

It does not seem that in private life the Christians made any scruple in using productions of ordinary industry, which bore no representations obnoxious to them. Soon, however, there were Christian craftsmen, who, even on articles of everyday use, replaced the old ornaments by images appropriate to the taste of the sect, such as the Good Shepherd, the dove, fish, ship, lyre, and anchor. In particular, guilds of goldsmiths and makers of church glass were formed to provide for eucharistic requirements. Ordinary lamps nearly all bore pagan emblems; soon, however, lamps of the "Good Shepherd" type could be purchased, which probably came from the same workshops as those of the Bacchus or Serapis kind. The sculptured sarcophagi, representing sacred scenes, first made their appearance towards the close of the third century. Like Christian paintings they made no departure, save in subject, from the characteristics of the pagan art of the same period.

CHAPTER XXX.

CHRISTIAN CONDUCT.

THE conduct of the Christians formed the best preaching of Christianity. It could be summed up in one word, piety. It was the life of honest, poor folk, without worldly prejudices, but of sterling goodness. Expectation of the coming of the Messiah waned day by day; there was a transformation in progress from the somewhat strained morality befitting a time of crisis to the stable morality of a settled world. Marriage assumed a lofty religious character. There was no need to abolish polygamy; Jewish customs, if not the Jewish law, had almost suppressed it in practice. The harem, indeed, was only an exceptional abuse among the ancient Jews, a privilege of royalty. The prophets always displayed hostility to it; the practices of Solomon and his imitators were an object of censure and scandal. In the early centuries of our era cases of polygamy must have been very rare among the Jews; neither Christians nor pagans reproach them with it. By the double influence of the Roman and the Christian marriage was thus born that lofty ideal of the family, which is to our own time so truly the foundation of European civilisation, that it has become an essential part of natural law. It must, however, be recognised that on this point Roman influence overruled Jewish influence, since it is solely by the influence of modern codes derived from Roman law that polygamy has disappeared from among the Jews.

Roman, or, if you will, Aryan influence is also more marked than Jewish influence in the disfavour shown to second marriages. They were regarded as a decorously disguised adultery. No less rigour was shown in the question of divorce, in which certain Jewish schools had displayed a reprehensible laxity. Marriage could only be broken by the adultery of the woman. "Not to divide

what God has joined" became the basis of the Christian law.

Finally, the Church took its stand in flat contradiction to Judaism, by considering celibacy or virginity to be a preferable state to that of marriage. In this matter, Christianity, preceded, as a matter of fact, by the Therapeutæ, approximated, without suspecting it, to ideas which, among the ancient Aryan peoples, represented the virgin as a sacred being. The synagogue has always held marriage to be obligatory; in its view the celibate is guilty of homicide. He is not of the race of Adam, for man is only complete when united to a woman; marriage must not be deferred beyond the age of eighteen. An exception is made only in the case of him who gives himself over to the study of the Law, and fears that the necessity of providing for the needs of a family would take him from his work. "Let those who are not, like myself, absorbed in the Law, people the earth," said Rabbi ben Azaï.

The Christian sects which remained akin to Judaism advised early marriages, like the synagogue, and even wished that the pastors should keep an eye upon the old men, whom it was desirable to screen from the peril of adultery. At first, however, Christianity reversed the teaching of Ben Azaï. Jesus, although his life extended to more than thirty years, had never married. The expectation of the end of the world being at hand, rendered any care for generation useless, and the idea established itself that only by virginity could one be a perfect Christian. "The patriarchs were right to watch over the multiplication of their posterity. The world was young then; now, on the contrary, all things decay and approach their end." The Gnostic and Manicæan sects were only consistent in prohibiting marriage and denouncing the act of procreation. The orthodox Church, always taking a middle course, avoided such extremes; but continence, and even chastity in marriage were recommended. An excessive feeling of shame was attached to the gratification of natural desires, and women acquired an insane horror of marriage. The

revolting timidity of the Church in all that concerned the legitimate relations of the two sexes was one day to provoke more than one well-founded scoff.

In accord with the same current of ideas, the state of widowhood was looked upon as sacred; widows constituted an ecclesiastical order. The woman must ever be subordinate; when she no longer has her husband to obey, she serves the Church. The modesty of the Christian ladies answered to these severe principles, and in several communities they could not go out of doors without a veil. The use of the veil, covering the whole face in Eastern fashion, was within an ace of becoming universal for women, whether married or unmarried. The Montanists regarded this custom as obligatory; if it did not prevail, it was by reason of the reaction provoked by the excesses of the Phrygian and African sectaries, and, above all, by the influence of the Greek and Latin countries, which for the inauguration of a true ethical reform had no need of this hideous sign of physical and moral debility.

Ornament, at least, was absolutely forbidden. Beauty was a temptation of Satan; why add to the temptation? The use of jewels, paint, hair dye, or transparent garments was an outrage on modesty. The use of false hair was a still graver sin: it misled the benediction of the priest, which, falling on dead hair, taken from another's head, knew not where to rest. Even the most modest arrangements of the hair were held to be dangerous; St. Justin, taking this as his starting-point, considered the hair of women a simple nest of vermin, and recommended its being cut off.

In all this the great failing of Christianity is clearly apparent. It is too uniquely moral; in it beauty is absolutely sacrificed. But, in the view of a complete philosophy, beauty, far from being a mere superficial advantage, a peril, an unseemly thing, is a gift of God like virtue. It is of as high worth as virtue; the beautiful woman expresses a side of the divine purpose, one of the ends of God, as well as the man of genius or the virtuous

woman. She feels it, and hence her pride. She is instinctively conscious of the infinite treasure she possesses in her body; she is well aware that without wit or talent or great virtue, she is to be accounted among the chief manifestations of God. And why should she be forbidden to display to the best advantage the gift which has been granted her, to put the diamond which has fallen to her lot in a worthy setting? In adorning herself woman fulfils a duty; she practises an art, an exquisite art, in a sense the most charming of all arts. Let us not be misled by the smile which certain words excite in the frivolous. We award the palm of genius to the Greek artist who succeeded in solving the most delicate of problems, the decoration of the human form—the decoration, that is, of perfection itself, and we desire to see more than a mere affair of chiffons in the attempt to collaborate in the finest work of God, the beauty of woman. Woman's toilette, with all its refinements, is high art in a manner. The ages and countries which know how to succeed in this are the great ages, the great countries; and Christianity showed by the embargo it laid on this order of study, that the social ideal of its conception would not become the framework of a complete society until very much later, when the revolt of worldly people had broken the yoke imposed on the sect in primitive times by an exalted pietism.

All that could be called luxury and worldly life was, in truth, put under a ban. Spectacular entertainments were held to be abominable—not only the sanguinary spectacles of the amphitheatre, which all decent folk detested, but even the most innocent entertainments which were regarded as scurrilous. Every theatre, from the mere fact that men and women assembled therein to see and be seen, was a dangerous place. The horror of *thermæ*, gymnasia, baths, and athletic resorts was no less pronounced, owing to the nakedness usual in such places. In this matter Christianity inherited a Jewish prejudice. Public places of this nature were shunned by the Jews because of circumcision, which exposed them to all kinds of unpleasantness. If the games

and competitions, which for a day made a mortal the equal of the gods, and the memory of which is preserved in inscriptions, entirely died away in the third century, Christianity was the cause. A void formed about these ancient institutions; they were taxed with vanity. The charge was just, but human life is at an end when we have too well succeeded in proving to man that all is vanity.

The sobriety of the Christians equalled their modesty. Enactments concerning viands were nearly all repealed, the principle, "to the pure all things are pure," having prevailed. Many, however, observed a self-imposed abstinence from things which had had life. Fasts were frequent, and in some people brought on that state of nervous debility which causes the shedding of copious tears. Readiness in weeping, the gift of tears, was deemed a heavenly privilege. The Christians were constantly weeping; a kind of mild melancholy was their habitual state. In the churches meekness, piety, and love shone in their faces. The rigorists complained that on leaving the holy place this resigned attitude made way for dissipation; but, as a rule, the Christians could be recognised by their bearing alone. They had, in some measure, faces unlike those of other men —good faces, impressed with a tranquillity which did not preclude the smile of amiable contentment. This was in obvious contrast with the easy air of the pagans, which must often have lacked distinction and reserve. In Montanist Africa certain practices—in particular that of every now and then making the sign of the cross on the forehead —revealed the disciples of Jesus still more readily.

The Christian, then, was essentially a being apart, vowed to even an outward profession of virtue—in short, an ascetic. If there were no sign of monastic life until towards the close of the third century, that was because, up to that time, the Church itself was an actual monastery, an ideal city devoted to the practice of the perfect life. When the age flocked into the Church *en masse*, when the Council of Gangra in 325 declared that the Gospel maxims on poverty, renunciation of kindred, and virginity were not addressed to ordinary

believers, the perfect were to create places apart, in which the Gospel life, too lofty in its ideal for the generality of men, could be practised in its entirety. Martyrdom had, up till then, afforded a means of fulfilling the most exaggerated precepts of Christ, in particular those concerning disdain of family affections; the monastery was now to supply the place of martyrdom, that the counsels of Jesus might somewhere be carried out. The example of Egypt, where the monastic life had at all times existed, may have contributed to this result, but monachism was of the very essence of Christianity. Once the Church threw its gates open to all, it was inevitable that little churches should be formed for those who claimed to live the life of Jesus and the apostles of Jerusalem.

A great conflict loomed in the future. Christian piety and worldly honour were to be two antagonists locked in deadly strife. The awakening of the worldly spirit was to be the awakening of scepticism. Honour was to revolt, and maintain its superiority to that morality which permitted a man to be a saint without being invariably a gentleman. There were to be sirens' voices to restore all the exquisite things which the Church had declared profane in the first degree. One always keeps some trace of one's first state. The Church, an association of saintly folk, was to retain that character, despite all the transformations through which she went. The worldly man was to be her worst enemy. Voltaire was to demonstrate that the diabolical frivolities, so severely excluded from a pietistic society, are in their way good and necessary. Father Canaye was to do his best to show that nothing is more polite and well-bred than Christianity, and that no one can be more of a gentleman than a Jesuit. He was not to convince d'Hocquincourt. In any case, the witty folk were unconvertable. Ninon de Lenclos, Saint-Évremond, Voltaire, and Merimée were not to be induced to be of the same religion as Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, and the good Hermas.

CHAPTER XXXI.

REASONS FOR THE TRIUMPH OF CHRISTIANITY.

It was by the new discipline of life which it brought into the world that Christianity conquered. The world had need of a moral reformation; philosophy did not provide it, the established religions in Greek and Latin countries were smitten with incapacity to make men better. Of all the religious institutions of the ancient world, Judaism alone uttered a cry of despair over the corruption of the time, an eternal and unique glory which ought to make us forget many an act of madness and violence. The Jews were the revolutionaries of the first and second centuries: all honour to their vehemence! Possessed by a lofty ideal of justice, convinced that that ideal must be realised on earth, impatient of the postponements with which those who believe in heaven and hell are so readily contented; they thirsted after righteousness, and conceived it under the form of a petty synagogue existence, of which the Christian life was but the ascetic transformation. Small groups of humble and pious folk, leading a pure life, and in company awaiting the great day which was to be their triumph and inaugurate the reign of the saints on earth—such was infant Christianity. The happiness enjoyed in these little communities came to be a powerful attraction. Whole populations flung themselves into a sect which satisfied their most inward aspirations, and opened up infinite hopes.

The intellectual requirements of the time were very slight, the emotional needs of the heart were very imperious. Men's intellects were not growing more enlightened, but their manners were softening. A religion was desired which should teach piety, myths which should afford good examples that could be imitated, a kind of morality in action furnished by the gods. A religion of righteousness was desired, and paganism was not that.

Moral preaching implies deism or monotheism; polytheism has never been a faith of ethical influence. Above all, there was a desire for assurance of an after-life, in which reparation should be given for the injustice of this. The religion which promises immortality, and assures men that one day they shall see again those they have loved, always wins. Those "which have no hope" are very soon conquered. A host of brotherhoods, in which such consoling beliefs were professed, attracted numerous adherents. Such were the Sabazian and Orphic mysteries in Macedonia, and the mysteries of Dionysos in Thrace. About the second century, the symbolism of Psyche acquired a funereal significance, and became a miniature religion of immortality which the Christians eagerly adopted. Ideas on the other life, alas! like all matters of taste and sentiment, submit more readily than aught else to the caprices of fashion. The imaginations, which in this respect have for a moment satisfied our thirst, quickly pass away. We are always desiring something new in our dreams of the bourne beyond the tomb, for nothing bears examination long.

The established religion gave no satisfaction to the profound needs of the age. The ancient god is neither good nor bad: he is a force. In course of time the adventures related of those alleged divinities had become immoral. Their worship was culminating in the grossest, at times the most ridiculous idolatry. It was no rare thing for philosophers to make public attacks on the official religion, and that to the applause of their hearers. The government, by seeing fit to meddle in the matter, only caused an earlier downfall. The divinities of Greece, which for long had been identified with those of Rome, had their lawful place in the Pantheon. The barbarian divinities underwent similar identifications, and became equivalents to Jupiter, Apollo, Æsculæpius, and so on. As to the local divinities, they found refuge in the worship of the Lares. Augustus had introduced a change of the most important order into religion by restoring and regulating the worship of the Lares, more especially the Lares of the public streets,

and by permitting the addition to the two Lares consecrated by usage, of a third, the Genius of the Emperor. From this association the Lares gained the epithet of Augustan (*Lares Augusti*), and as the local gods owed, for the most part, their legal status to their title of Lares, nearly all of them were also qualified with the title of Augustan (*Numina Augusta*). About this complex system of worship a clergy formed, composed of the *flamen*, a kind of archbishop representing the state, and Augustan *seviri*, corporations of workmen and tradesmen, specially attached to the Lares or local divinities. But the Genius of the Emperor naturally overbore its neighbours; the true state religion was the worship of Rome, the Emperor, and the government. The Lares remained very minor personages. Jahveh, who was the only local god to make an obstinate resistance to the Augustan association, and whom it was impossible to transform into an innocent street fetish, slew both the divinity of Augustus and all the other gods, who so readily lent themselves to being the subsidiary deities of tyranny. Thenceforth a permanent struggle was waged between Judaism and the curiously blended worship which Rome claimed the right to impose. Rome was to suffer shipwreck on this point. She gave the world government, civilisation, law, and the art of administration, but she did not give it religion. The religion which was to spread, apparently despite Rome, but in reality thanks to her, was to be in no sense that of Latium or the religion patched up by Augustus; it was to be the religion that Rome had so often believed she had destroyed, the religion of Jahveh.

We have witnessed the noble efforts of philosophy to respond to the need of souls whom religion no longer satisfied. Philosophy had seen all and expressed all in exquisite language; but it was essential that a popular, that is to say, a religious form should be given to it. Religious movements are only brought to pass through priests. Philosophy was too reasonable. The recompense which it offered was not tangible enough. The poor and the illiterate who could not understand philosophy were in

reality without religion and without hope. Man is born so imperfect, that he is only good when he dreams. He must have illusions in order to do what he ought to do from love of righteousness. He is a slave who needs to be frightened and deceived before he will fulfil his duty. The sacrifice of the mass is only to be obtained by promising him that it will be paid for. The Christian's abnegation is, after all, no more than a clever piece of calculation, an investment with the kingdom of God in view.

The cause of reason will never have many martyrs. People are only devoted to what they believe, and what they believe is the uncertain, the irrational; they submit to the reasonable, they do not believe in it. That is why reason is not an incentive to action, but rather to abstention from action. No great revolutions are wrought amongst mankind without fixed ideas, without prejudices, without dogmatism. We are only strong on condition that we deceive ourselves like everybody else. Stoicism, moreover, involved an error which greatly injured it in the eyes of the people. From its point of view virtue and moral sentiment were identical. Christianity distinguishes these two things. Jesus loves the prodigal son and the harlot, souls good at bottom although sinful. Christianity has forgiveness for all sins. The more one sins, the more one belongs to it. Constantine embraced Christianity because he believed that the Christians alone could expiate the murder of a son by his father. The popular success, from the second century onward, of the hideous sacrifices of bulls, whence the spectators emerged covered with blood, proves the desperate effort made by the imagination of the time to find means of appeasing the gods in their supposed anger. This form of sacrifice was of all the pagan rites that most dreaded for its competition by the Christians; it was in some measure the last effort of expiring paganism against the efficacy, every day more triumphant, of the blood of Jesus.

For a moment it had been possible to hope that the

brotherhoods of *cultores deorum* might give the people the religious nurture of which it had need. The second century saw their splendour and also their decay. Their religious character little by little became effaced. In certain countries they even lost their funeral purpose and became tontines, insurance and pension funds, or mutual aid societies. The colleges dedicated to the worship of Eastern gods (Pastophores, followers of Isis, Dendrophores, monks of the Great Mother) alone kept their devotees. It is clear that these gods appealed much more to the religious sense than the Greek and Italian gods. Groups of adherents formed about them; their followers soon became comrades and friends, while men showed little tendency, from motives of genuine loyalty at least, to rally round the official deities. In religion it is only the comparatively small sects that succeed in founding anything.

It is pleasant to consider yourself one of a little aristocracy of truth, to believe that you possess with a group of privileged beings the treasure of all good! Pride plays a part in it; the Jew or the Syrian *metuali*, objects of all men's scorn and humiliation, are in reality insolent and disdainful; no affront touches them, they are so proud among themselves of being the chosen people. In our own time a wretched association of spirit-rappers gives its members more consolation than the sanest philosophy; hosts of people find happiness in such wild imaginations, and connect them with their moral life. In its day the *abracadabra* procured religious joys, and with a little good-will it was possible to find therein a sublime theology.

The worship of Isis was regularly established in Greece from the fourth century before Christ. It literally invaded the whole Greek and Roman world. This worship, which we see represented in the paintings of Pompeii and Herculaneum, with its tonsured and shaven priests clad in a sort of alb, much resembled our own Church services; every morning the Egyptian timbrel, like our church bell, called the devout to a kind of mass, which was accompanied by a sermon, prayers for the Emperor and Empire, sprink-

lings of water from the Nile, and the *Ite missa est.* In the evening took place the rite of salutation; the goddess was bid good-night, and the worshippers kissed her feet. There were fantastic parades and burlesque processions in the streets, in which the brethren bore their gods on their shoulders. On other occasions they went about begging alms, clad in an outlandish garb which made true Romans laugh. In this they somewhat resembled the penitent brotherhoods of Southern countries. The worshippers of Isis had shaven heads, and dressed in a linen tunic, in which it was their wish that they should be buried. In the proceedings of the sect were included miracles performed before select audiences, sermons, ordinations, fervent prayers, baptisms, confessions, and sanguinary acts of penitence. After initiation a poignant emotion was felt like that inspired in the Middle Ages by the Virgin; there was a voluptuous delight in merely beholding the image of the goddess. Purifications and expiations kept the soul on the alert. Between the supernumeraries of these pious comedies there tended to grow up a tender feeling of brotherhood; they became fathers, sons, brothers, and sisters to one another. These systems of freemasonry with their passwords, like the IXΘYC of the Christians, created secret and profound bonds of sympathy.

Osiris, Serapis, and Anubis shared the favour with which Isis was received. Serapis in particular, who was identified with Jupiter, came to be one of the divine names held in most affection by those who aspired to a certain monotheism, and more especially to intimate relations with heaven. The Egyptian god has the attribute of the real presence; he is constantly seen, he communicates by means of dreams and continual visions. Religion, understood in this sense, is a perpetual holy kiss between the believer and his divinity. Women, above all, were fascinated by these alien forms of worship. The national religion left them cold. Courtesans especially were nearly all devotees of Isis and Serapis; the temples of Isis had the reputation of being rendezvous for lovers. The idols of these chapels were

decked out like Madonnas. Women took part in the ministry and bore sacred titles. All tended to inspire devotion and excite the senses: tears, passionate singing, dances to the music of flutes, commemorative representations of the death and resurrection of a god. Moral discipline, without being serious, was kept up with some ostentation. There were fasts and austerities and days of continence. Ovid and Tibullus complain of the wrong these holy days do their pleasures, in a tone that clearly indicates that the goddess demanded very limited mortifications from her fair devotees.

A host of other gods were accepted without opposition, even welcomed. The heavenly Juno, the Asiatic Bellona, Sabazius, Adonis, and the goddess of Syria had their adherents. The soldiers were the vehicles of these diverse faiths, owing to the habit which they had of embracing the religions of the countries through which they successively passed. On their return home they consecrated a temple or altar to their memories of military life. Thence the dedications to the Jupiter of Baalbek or that of Dolica to be found in all parts of the Empire.

Above all, an Oriental god held for a moment the fortunes of Christianity in the balance, and all but became the object of one of these universally diffused forms of worship which take possession of whole portions of mankind. Mithra is, in the primitive Aryan mythology, one of the names of the sun. Among the Persians of the Achæmenidian period he became a god of the first rank. He was first heard of in the Græco-Roman world about the year 70 B.C. His vogue came to him by degrees. It was only in the second and third centuries that the worship of Mithra, skilfully organised on the lines of the mysteries which had already so profoundly stirred the emotions of ancient Greece, obtained so extraordinary a success.

Its points of resemblance to Christianity were so striking, that St. Justin and Tertullian saw in it a Satanic plagiarism. Mithraism had baptism, the eucharist, the love-feast, penitence, expiations, and unctions. Its chapels much resembled

little churches. It created a bond of fraternity between the initiated. That, as we have said twenty times, was the great need of the time. There was a widespread desire for congregations in which mutual love, support, and observation could be practised, and for brotherhoods offering a field (since man is not perfect) for all kinds of vain and petty pursuits and the inoffensive development of childish synagogue ambitions. In many respects Mithraism was like Freemasonry. There were grades, orders of initiation with fantastic names, successive ordeals, a fifty days' fast, terrors, and flagellations. An intense piety resulted from these practices. There was belief in the immortality of the initiates, in a paradise for pure souls. The mystery of the cup, so similar to the Christian eucharist, the evening assemblies, analogous to those of our pious congregations, in caves or little oratories, a numerous clergy, to which women were admitted, and sacrificial expiations, terrible but impressive, responded in great measure to the aspirations of the Roman world to a kind of materialistic religiosity. The immorality of the ancient Phrygian Sabazia had not disappeared, but was masked by a veneer of pantheism and mysticism, at times by a tranquil scepticism of the type of Ecclesiastes.

It can be asserted that, had Christianity been arrested in its growth by some mortal disease, the world would have been Mithraistic. Mithra lent himself to all kinds of confused identifications—with Attis, with Adonis, with Sabazius, with Men, who for long had had the power of drawing tears from women. The soldiers also were attached to this religion. When they returned to their homes they bore it to the frontier provinces on the Rhine and Danube. Better, too, than other forms of faith, Mithraism resisted Christianity. To overthrow it the Christian Empire had to deal terrible blows. It is in the years 376 and 377 that we find the greatest number of monuments raised by adorers of the Great Goddess and Mithra. Highly respected senatorial families remained attached to it, rebuilt at their own expense ruined chapels, and, by means of legacies and endow-

ments, sought to ensure eternity to a worship that was smitten with death.

Mysteries were the usual form of these exotic religions, and the chief cause of their success. The ceremony of initiation made a very profound impression, just as contemporary Freemasonry, quite empty of significance as it is, serves as nurture for many souls. It was a kind of first communion; for a single day one had been a pure, privileged being, presented to the pious public as a blessed saint, crowned and bearing a taper. Weird spectacles, displays of colossal puppets, alternate light and darkness, and visions of the other life which were accepted as real, inspired a fervour of devotion which was never effaced from memory. In all this there was more than one dubious element for the evil customs of antiquity to put to use. As in the Catholic brotherhoods, the members believed themselves bound by an oath; they clung to it even when their belief was all but gone, for to it attached the idea of a special privilege, a stamp that marked you off from the common throng. All these Oriental faiths had much more money at their disposal than those of the West. The priests held a more important place than in the Latin worship; they formed a clergy of various orders, a sacred soldiery with its own rules, holding aloof from the world. They had a serious and what would now be called a clerical bearing; they were tonsured, wore mitres and a special garb.

A religion founded, like that of Apollonius of Tyana, on belief in the wanderings of a god on earth had peculiar chances of success. Humanity seeks the ideal; but it wishes the ideal to be a person, it has no love of an abstraction. A human incarnation of the ideal, whose career could serve as a setting for all the aspirations of the time, such was what religious opinion demanded. The gospel of Apollonius of Tyana had only a half-success; that of Jesus completely triumphed. The needs of imagination and heart which worked upon whole peoples were precisely those which Christianity fully satisfied. The objections which the Christian belief presents to intellects trained by

rational culture to the impossibility of admitting the supernatural, did not then exist. As a rule, it is harder to prevent a man from believing than to make him believe. Never, moreover, was there a century more credulous than the second. Every one admitted the most absurd miracles; the current mythology, having lost its primitive significance, was attaining the last limits of ineptitude. The sum of the sacrifices demanded of reason by Christianity was less than that implied by the acceptance of paganism. Conversion to Christianity, therefore, was not an act of credulity; it could almost be called an act of relative good sense. Even from the rationalist point of view, Christianity could be regarded as a step in the right direction; it was the man of enlightened views in religion that adopted it. He who was faithful to the old gods was the *paganus*, the peasant, always unyielding to progress and behind his time, as one day, in the twentieth century perhaps, the last of the Christians will in their turn be called *pagani*, "rustics."

On two essential points, the worship of idols and bloody sacrifices, Christianity responded to the most advanced ideas of the time, as we should say now, and effected a kind of junction with Stoicism. The absence of images, which brought on the Christian worship the charge of atheism from the populace, was pleasing to men of intelligence, revolted by the official idolatry. The sanguinary sacrifices also implied the most offensive ideas for the Deity. The Essenes, the Elkesaïtes, the Ebionites, and Christians of all sects, heirs herein of the ancient prophets, had in this respect an admirable feeling for progress. Flesh even found itself excluded from the Easter festival. Thus was founded pure worship. The lower side of religion consists of those practices which are supposed to operate of themselves. Jesus, by the rôle ascribed to him, if not by his personal action, marked the end of such practices. What need to speak of sacrifices? That of Jesus is worth all the rest. Of the Passover victim? Jesus himself is the Paschal lamb. Of the *Thora*? The example of Jesus is worth far more. It was by this reasoning that St. Paul

destroyed the Law, that Protestantism slew Catholicism. Faith in Jesus has thus taken the place of all else. The very excesses of Christianity have been the principle of its strength; by the dogma that Jesus has done all for the justification of the believer, works have been convicted of uselessness, and all worship other than that of faith been discouraged.

Christianity, then, enjoyed an immense superiority over the state religion which Rome patronised, and over the different faiths which she tolerated. The pagans vaguely understood it. The idea having occurred to Alexander Severus of raising a temple to Christ, he was shown ancient sacred texts, according to which, if he carried out his intention, every one would turn Christian and the other temples be abandoned. In vain was Julian to attempt the application to the official worship of the organisation which formed the strength of the Church; paganism was to resist a transformation which went against its nature. Christianity was to impose itself, and to impose itself in its entirety, on the Empire. The religion which Rome was to diffuse throughout the world was to be precisely that which she had most fiercely opposed, Judaism under a Christian form. Far from being surprised at the success of Christianity in the Roman Empire, we should rather be astonished that the revolution should have been so slow in its consummation.

What Christianity profoundly affected were the maxims of statecraft which formed the foundation of the Roman polity. These maxims made a vigorous defence for one hundred and fifty years, and retarded the advent of the religion destined for victory. But that advent to power was inevitable. Melito was right. Christianity was fated to be the religion of the Roman Empire. The West still made a stubborn resistance; Asia Minor and Syria, on the other hand, counted dense masses of Christian population increasing daily in political importance. The centre of gravity of the Empire tended to transfer itself in that direction. It already seemed likely that a man of ambition might be tempted to lean for support on these multitudes, whom beggary put

in the hands of the Church, and whom the Church in her turn would put in the hands of the Cæsar who should show her favour. The political rôle of the bishop does not date from Constantine. In the third century the bishop of a great city in the East appears to have been a personage like the bishop in Turkey among the Greek and Armenian Christians, etc., of our own days. The savings of the faithful, wills, the guardianship of wards, lawsuits, in a word the whole business management of the community was confided to his care. He was a magistrate existing side by side with the public magistrates, and profiting by the latter's errors. The Church in the third century was already a vast agency for popular interests, making up the deficiencies of the Empire. It was evident that when one day the Empire fell to decay, the bishop would be its heir. When the state refuses to interest itself in social problems, they are solved independently by means of associations which demolish the state.

The glory of Rome is to have attempted to solve the problem of human society without theocracy or supernatural dogma. Judaism, Christianity, Islamism, and Buddhism are, on the contrary, great institutions embracing the whole of human life under the form of revealed religions. These religions are human society itself; nothing exists outside them. The triumph of Christianity meant the overthrow of civil life for a thousand years. The Church is the Commune, if you will, but it is the Commune in a religious form. To be a member of this Commune, it is not sufficient to have been born; it is essential to profess a metaphysical dogma, and if your intellect decline to believe that dogma, so much the worse for you. Islamism did no more than apply the same principle. The mosque, like the synagogue and the church, is the centre of all life. The Middle Ages, the reign of Christianity, Islamism, and Buddhism, were the era of theocracy indeed. The stroke of genius of the Renaissance was the return to Roman law, which is essentially a layman's law; the return to philosophy, science, true art, and reason independent of all

revelation. Let us hold fast by that principle. The supreme end of humanity is individual freedom. But theocracy and revelation will never create freedom, Theocracy makes of the man invested with power a functionary of God; reason makes of him a mandatory of the will and rights of every citizen.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL REVOLUTION BROUGHT ABOUT BY CHRISTIANITY.

THUS, in proportion as the Empire declines, Christianity rises. During the third century Christianity sucks ancient society like a vampire, drains all its strength, and brings to pass that general enervation, against which the patriotic Emperors are to struggle in vain. Christianity has no need to attack actively; it has but to shut itself up in its churches. It takes its revenge in not serving the state, for it keeps almost to itself alone certain principles without which the state cannot prosper. It is a case of the same great war that we nowadays see waged on the state by our conservatives. The army, the magistracy, the public services have need of a certain amount of seriousness and probity. When the classes which could furnish that seriousness and probity hold aloof, the whole organism suffers.

The Church in the third century, by monopolising men's lives, exhausted civil society, bled it, made it a void. The little societies slew society at large. The ancient life, a life entirely external and virile, a life of glory, of heroism, of civic activity, a life lived in the forum, the theatre, the gymnasium, was vanquished by the Jewish life, an unwarlike life, hugging the shadow, the life of anæmic recluses. Politics have no use for men too greatly detached from the earth. When man makes up his mind to fix his aspira-

tions on heaven alone, he has no longer a native land here below. A nation cannot be made of monks and *yogis;* hatred and disdain of the world is no preparation for the struggle for life. India, which, of all countries known to us, has plunged deepest into asceticism, has from immemorial times been nothing more than an open field to all conquerors. The same holds good in some respects of Egypt. The inevitable result of asceticism is to cause all that is not religious to be deemed trivial and inferior. The sovereign and warrior compared with the priest are no better than boors and barbarians; civil order is regarded as an irksome tyranny. Christianity was to soften the manners of the ancient world, but from the military and patriotic point of view it destroyed the ancient world. The city and the state only came to an understanding with Christianity in later years, by making the latter undergo the most profound modifications.

"They dwell upon the earth," says the author of the *Epistle to Diognetus*, "but in truth their native land is heaven." As a matter of fact, when a martyr was asked his nationality he would reply, "I am a Christian." The state and the civil laws, such, according to Clement of Alexandria, were the father and mother whom the true Gnostic must despise, in order to seat himself at God's right hand. The Christian was clumsy and incapable in dealing with worldly affairs. The Gospel formed faithful believers, not citizens. It was the same with Islamism and Buddhism. The advent of these great universal religions put an end to the old idea of nationality. Men were no longer Romans or Athenians; they were Christians or Mussulmans or Buddhists. Thenceforth they were to be classified according to their faith, not according to their country; they were to be at variance over heresies, not over questions of nationality.

Marcus Aurelius perceived all this perfectly well, and this it was which made him show so little favour to Christianity. The Church appeared to him a state within the state. "The camp of piety," that new "national system founded on

the divine Logos," had nothing in common with the Roman camp, which made no pretensions to forming subjects for heaven. The Church, in fact, claimed to be a complete society, far superior to civil society; the pastor was accounted worthier of respect than the magistrate. The Church is the Christian's native land, as the synagogue is that of the Jew; Christian and Jew live as aliens in the countries in which they happen to reside. Scarcely, even, can the Christian be said to have a father and mother. He owes nought to the Empire, and the Empire owes him all; for it is the presence of the Christians disseminated throughout the Roman world, which withholds the wrath of heaven and saves the state from perdition. The Christian does not rejoice over the Empire's victories; to him public disasters appear a confirmation of the prophecies which doom the world to perish by the barbarians and by fire. The cosmopolitanism of the Stoics also had its perils indeed, but an ardent love of civilisation and Greek culture served to counterbalance the excesses of their detachment of spirit.

In many respects, assuredly, the Christians were loyal subjects. They never rebelled; they prayed for their persecutors. Despite their grievances against Marcus Aurelius, they took no part in the revolt of Avidius Cassius. They affected the principles of the most absolute legitimism. Since God gave power to whom he pleased, he who officially possessed it had to be obeyed without question. But at bottom this apparent political orthodoxy was only the worship of success. "There has never been amongst us a partisan of Albinus or a partisan of Niger," says Tertullian ostentatiously, in the reign of Septimius Severus. But, after all, in what respect was Septimius Severus more legitimate than Albinus or Pescennius Niger? He had more success than they, that was all. The Christian principle, "He who exercises power must be recognised," was destined to contribute to establish the worship of accomplished facts—that is to say, the worship of force. Liberalism owes nothing, and will never owe anything, to Christianity. The idea of republican government is the antipodes of that

expressly professed by Jesus, St. Paul, St. Peter, and Clement of Rome.

The most important of civic duties, military service, the Christians could not fulfil. That service implied, apart from the necessity of shedding blood, which to the enthusiasts appeared criminal, acts which timorous consciences deemed idolatrous. There were no doubt many Christian soldiers in the second century, but the incompatibility of the two professions was soon manifest, and the soldier unbuckled his sword or became a martyr. The contradiction was absolute; by becoming a Christian one forsook the army. "A man cannot serve two masters" was the constantly repeated principle. The representation of a sword or a bow on a ring was forbidden. "We fight sufficiently for the Emperor by merely praying for him." The great degeneration, which was to be remarked in the Roman army at the end of the second century, and which became specially striking in the third, had its cause in Christianity. Celsus perceived the truth in this matter with marvellous penetration. Military courage, which, according to the Teuton, alone sufficed to open Valhalla, was not of itself a virtue in the eyes of the Christian. If employed in a good cause, well and good; if not, it was mere barbarism. Certainly a man who is brave in war may be of indifferent morals; but how feeble a society of perfect people would be! From an excess of logical consistency the Christian East has lost all its military efficiency. Islamism has profited therefrom, and provided the world with the melancholy spectacle of the eternal Christian of the East, everywhere the same, despite racial differences, always being beaten, always massacred, incapable of confronting a man of war, always offering his neck to the sabre; a victim who fails to inspire interest, since he does not revolt, and is ignorant of how to hold a weapon, even when it is put in his hand.

The Christian also shunned the magistracy, public offices, and civic honours. To pursue such honours, to covet such functions, or merely accept them even, was to give a testi-

mony of faith to the world which on principle was declared doomed and infected with idolatry. A law of Septimius Severus permitted "adepts of the Jewish superstition" to attain honours, dispensing them from obligations that might clash with their belief. The Christians could certainly have profited by these dispensations, but they did not do so. To wreathe one's door with garlands when festal days were announced, to take part in entertainments and public rejoicings, were acts of apostasy. The same interdict held good for the legal tribunals. The Christians were never to refer their disputes to them; they had to leave them to the arbitration of their pastors. The impossibility of mixed marriages ended by rearing an insurmountable wall between the Church and society. The faithful were forbidden to walk about the streets, or to take part in public conversation; they were only to visit one another. Even inns could not be common. Christians when travelling betook themselves to the church, and there participated in the love-feasts and distribution of the remains of the sacred offerings.

A number of arts and trades, the practice of which entailed relations with idolatry, were forbidden to the Christians. Sculpture and painting, in particular, became almost purposeless; they were treated as enemies. Such is the explanation of one of the most singular facts in history—the disappearance of sculpture in the first half of the third century. What Christianity first slew in ancient civilisation was art. More slowly it slew wealth, but in that respect its action was no less decisive. Christianity was, before all else, a mighty economic revolution. The first became last, and the last first. This was, in truth, the realisation of the kingdom of God, according to the Jews. One day Rabbi Joseph, son of Rabbi Joshua ben Levi, having fallen into a swoon, his father asked him when he came to himself: "What hast thou seen in heaven?" "I have seen," replied Joseph, "the world turned upside down; the mightiest were in the lowest rank, the humblest in the highest." "It is the actual world that thou hast seen, my son."

The Roman Empire, while depreciating the nobility and

reducing the privileges of blood to vanishing point, augmented, on the other hand, the advantages of fortune. Far from establishing an effective equality among the citizens, the Roman Empire, flinging wide the portals of the commonwealth, created a profound distinction between the *honestiores* (people of good standing and wealth) and the *humiliores* or *tenuiores* (the poor). While the political equality of all was proclaimed, inequality was introduced into the law, especially the penal law. Poverty rendered the title of Roman citizen almost illusory, and the great mass of the population was poor. The error of Greece, disdain for the workman and peasant, had not disappeared. At the outset, Christianity did nothing for the peasant; it even injured the rural population by instituting the episcopate, in the influence and benefits of which the towns alone shared. But it had a bearing of the first importance on the rehabilitation of the worker. One of the counsels given to the artisan by the Church was to pursue his trade with zest and application. The name of *operarius* was restored to honour; in their epitaphs the Christian workman and working woman were praised for having laboured well.

The workman honestly making his livelihood day by day, such indeed was the Christian ideal. For the primitive Church avarice was the supreme crime, and yet most often avarice was simple economy. Almsgiving was deemed a strict duty. Judaism had already made it an injunction. In the Psalms and prophetical books, the *Ebion* is the friend of God, and to give to the *Ebion* is to give to God. Almsgiving in Hebrew is a synonym of justice (*sedaka*). It was necessary to put a check on the eagerness of the pious to justify themselves in this manner; one of the precepts of Ouscha forbade them to give to the poor more than a fifth part of their means. Christianity, which was in its origin a society of *Ebionim*, fully accepted the idea that the rich man, if he fails to give away his superfluous wealth, is holding back the property of others. God gives his whole creation to all men. "Imitate the equality of God, and none shall be poor," we read in a text which

once on a time was held to be sacred. The Church itself became a charitable institution. The love-feasts and the distributions made of surplus offerings served to feed travellers and the poor.

All along the line it was the rich man who was sacrificed. Few wealthy persons entered the Church, and their position therein was of the most difficult nature. The poor, proud of the Gospel promise, treated them with an air that might well seem arrogant. The rich man had to seek forgiveness for his fortune, as a derogation to the spirit of Christianity. Strictly speaking, the kingdom of God was closed to him, unless he purified his wealth with almsgiving, or expiated it by martyrdom. He was regarded as an egoist, who thrived by the sweat of others. Community of goods, if it had ever existed, did so no longer; what was called "the apostolic life," that is to say, the ideal of the primitive Church of Jerusalem, was a dream lost in the distant past; but the believer's property was only half his own. He had little hold on it, and in reality the Church participated in it as much as he did.

It was in the fourth century that the struggle grew great and infuriated. The wealthy classes, nearly all of whom were attached to the old worship, fought vigorously, but the poor won the day. In the East, where the action of Christianity was much more comprehensive, or rather less thwarted, than in the West, there were scarce any rich men left after the middle of the fifth century. Syria, and more especially Egypt, became countries of an entirely ecclesiastical and monastic cast. The church and the monastery—that is to say, the two forms of community—were the sole wealthy bodies. The Arab invaders, when they hurled themselves on these countries, found, after some battles on the frontier, that they had no more to do than drive a flock of sheep. Once their liberty of worship was assured, the Christians of the East were ready to submit to all tyrannies. In the West, the Teutonic invasions and other causes prevented the complete triumph of poverty. But human life was suspended for a thousand years. Industries

on a large scale became impossible; by reason of the erroneous ideas current on usury, all banking and insurance business was put under a ban. The Jew alone could manipulate money; he was forced to grow rich, and then he was reproached for the fortune to which he had been condemned. Here was Christianity's greatest error. It did much worse than say to the poor: "Enrich yourselves at the expense of the rich;" it said: "Riches are nothing." It cut away the very root of capital, it prohibited that most legitimate thing, interest on money, and, with the air of guaranteeing the rich man his wealth, it deprived him of its fruits, rendered it unproductive. The fatal terror diffused throughout the whole of mediæval society by the alleged crime of usury, was the obstacle which, for more than ten centuries, hampered the progress of civilisation.

The total amount of industry in the world considerably diminished. Countries like Syria, where comfort brings less enjoyment than it costs trouble, and where, accordingly, slavery is a condition of material civilisation, were lowered a step in the human ladder. The ruins of antiquity remained as vestiges of a world vanished and misunderstood. The joys of the other life, unattainable by labour, represented so much taken from the incentives that impel man to action. The bird of the air and the lily neither labour nor sow, and yet by their beauty they hold high rank in the hierarchy of created things. Great is the joy of the poor man, when tidings of happiness without work are brought to him. The beggar to whom you say that the world will be his, and that, spending his life in doing nothing, he is yet accounted noble in the Church, and his prayers have so much the more efficacy, that beggar soon becomes dangerous. It was noticed in the movement of the last Messianists in Tuscany. The peasants, indoctrinated by Lazaretti, having lost the habit of work, were reluctant to resume their ordinary life. As in Galilee, as in Umbria in the time of Francis of Assisi, the people imagined they could conquer heaven by poverty. After such dreams, they do not willingly resign themselves to take up the yoke once more. A man

will turn apostle rather than resume the chain which he has believed broken. So hard it is to bend all the livelong day under a humiliating and thankless task!

The goal of Christianity was in no way the perfection of human society, nor was it the increase of the sum of individual happiness. Man strives to make the best of things on the earth, when he takes the earth and the few days he spends on it seriously. But when he is told that the earth is near its end, that life is but a day's ordeal, the insignificant prelude to an eternal ideal, what good purpose is there in adorning it? We do not trouble to embellish and render comfortable the hovel in which we do no more than make a momentary sojourn. It was, above all, in the relations of Christianity with slavery that this idea was evident. Christianity contributed in a high degree to console the slave, to make his lot better; but it made no direct effort to extirpate slavery. We have seen that the great school of jurists which sprang from the Antonines was entirely possessed with the idea that slavery was an abuse, that it must be quietly suppressed. Christianity never said, "Slavery is an abuse." But, none the less, by its exalted idealism, it did powerful service to the philosophical tendency which for long had been making its influence felt in laws and conduct.

Primitive Christianity was an essentially religious movement. All that in the social organisation of the time was not bound up with idolatry seemed to it good to retain. It never occurred to the Christian doctors to protest against the established institution of slavery. That would have been a revolutionary course of action quite contrary to their spirit. The rights of man were in no respect a Christian idea. St. Paul fully recognises the master's legitimacy of possession. In the whole of ancient Christian literature there is not a word to preach revolt to the slave, to counsel enfranchisement to the master, or even merely to discuss the problem of public rights which slavery raises amongst us. It was only the dangerous sectaries like the Carpocratians who spoke of doing away with the differences

between men. The orthodox admitted property as an absolute right, whether its object were a man or a thing. The terrible lot of the slave did not touch them nearly so much as it touches us. For the few hours that life endures, what matters man's condition? "If thou hast been called a slave, take no heed of it; if thou canst free thyself, profit by it. . . . The slave is the freedman of the Lord; the free man is the slave of Christ. . . . In Christ there is neither Greek nor Jew, slave nor freeman, man nor woman." The words *servus* and *libertus* are of rare occurrence on Christian tombs. The slave and freeman are alike *servus Dei*, as the soldier is *miles Christi*. The slave, from another point of view, openly proclaims himself the freedman of Jesus.

Submission and conscientious attachment on the part of the slave to the master, mildness and brotherly kindness on the part of the master to the slave: to these the moral code of primitive Christianity on this delicate point was limited in practice. The number of slaves and freedmen was very considerable in the Church. Never did the latter counsel a Christian master who had Christian slaves to set them at liberty; she did not even forbid the corporal punishments which are the almost inevitable consequence of slavery. Under Constantine grants of enfranchisement seemed to decline in frequency. If the movement which started with the Antonines had continued into the second half of the third century and the fourth century, the suppression of slavery would have come about by legal enactment and with compensation. The ruin of liberal policy and the misfortunes of the times caused the loss of all the ground that had been won. The fathers of the Church speak of the ignominy of slavery and the baseness of slaves in the same terms as the pagans. John Chrysostom, in the fourth century, is almost the only doctor who counsels the master to free his slave as a good action. After his time the Church possessed slaves, and treated them as every one else did—that is to say, somewhat harshly. The condition of the slave of the Church was even aggravated by one

circumstance, the impossibility of disposing of the property of the Church. Who was his owner? Who could set him at liberty? The difficulty of deciding this question perpetuated ecclesiastical slavery, and brought about the singular result that the Church, which in reality did so much for the slave, was the last to possess slaves. Emancipations were generally made in last wills and testaments, but the Church had no wills to make. The ecclesiastical freedman remained under the protection of a mistress who did not die.

It was indirectly, and by way of deduction, that Christianity so powerfully contributed to change the position of the slave, and hasten the end of slavery. The part played by Christianity in the question of slavery was that of an enlightened conservative, serving the cause of radicalism by his principles, whilst expressing very reactionary sentiments. By displaying the slave capable of virtue, heroic in martyrdom, the equal of his master and perhaps his superior from the point of view of the kingdom of God, the new faith made slavery impossible. To give a moral value to the slave was to suppress slavery. The assemblies at the church would have sufficed of themselves alone to ruin that cruel institution. Antiquity had only maintained slavery by excluding the slaves from the patriotic rites. Had they sacrificed with their masters, they would have been morally raised. Attendance at church was the most perfect lesson in religious equality, and what is to be said of the eucharist, of martyrdom suffered in common? From the moment the slave has the same religion as his master, prays in the same temple as he, slavery is very near its end. The feelings of Blandina and her "carnal mistress" were those of a mother and daughter. At the church master and slave called each other brothers. Even in the most delicate matter of all, marriage, miracles were to be seen, certain freedmen wedding ladies of noble birth, *feminæ clarissimæ*.

As may be naturally supposed, the Christian master most often converted his slaves to the faith, without, however,

using an indiscretion which might have peopled the Church with unworthy members. It was a good deed to go to the slave-market, and, letting yourself be guided by grace, to choose one of the poor human bodies on sale to assure it salvation. "To buy a slave is to win a soul," came to be a current proverb. Another kind of proselytism, more usual and more legitimate still, consisted in collecting foundling children, who then became Christian *alumni*. At times, certain Churches would buy, at the expense of their funds, one of their members of servile condition. This strongly excited the desires of less favoured wretches. The orthodox doctors did not encourage these dangerous pretensions: "Let them continue to serve for the glory of God, to the end that they may obtain from God a far better liberty." The slave, or rather the freedman, filled the most important ecclesiastical offices, provided that his patron or master raised no objection.

What Christianity founded was equality before God. Clement of Alexandria and John Chrysostom, above all, never lose an opportunity of consoling the slave, of proclaiming him a brother of the freeman and of equal worth, providing he accepts his position, and does his service for God willingly and heartily. In its liturgy the Church had a prayer "for those who toil in bitter slavery." Judaism had already put forth relatively humane sentiments on the same subject. It had opened as wide as possible the gate of enfranchisement. Slavery among the Hebrews was much relaxed in severity. The Essenes and Therapeutæ went farther: they declared servitude contrary to natural rights, and wholly dispensed with servile labour. Christianity, less radical, did not suppress slavery, but it suppressed the customs of slavery. Slavery is based on the absence of the idea of fraternity amongst men; the idea of fraternity is its dissolvent. From the fifth century onwards, enfranchisement and the ransom of captives were the acts of charity most strongly recommended by the Church.

Those who have pretended to see in Christianity the revolutionary doctrine of the rights of man, and in Jesus a

precursor of Toussaint Louverture, have utterly deceived themselves. Christianity has inspired no Spartacus; the true Christian does not revolt. But, let us hasten to say, it was not Spartacus who abolished slavery; it was much rather Blandina; above all, it was the ruin of the Græco-Roman world. In reality, the slavery of antiquity has never been abolished; it has fallen into disuse, or, rather, has been transformed. The state of inertia into which the East plunged after the complete triumph of the Church in the fifth century made servitude useless. The barbarian invasions in the West had a similar effect. The kind of detachment from the world which seized on mankind as a sequel to the fall of the Roman Empire, brought about innumerable emancipations. The slave was a surviving victim of pagan civilisation, an almost futile relic of a world of luxury and leisure. Men believed they could ransom their souls from the terrors of the other life by delivering their brethren suffering here below. Serfdom, moreover, came to be a specially rural institution, and implied a bond between the man and the land, which was one day to become the principle of ownership. As to the philosophic principle that man must belong to himself alone, it was very much later that it made its appearance as a social dogma. Seneca and Ulpian had proclaimed it theoretically; Voltaire, Rousseau, and the French Revolution made it the foundation of the new faith of humanity.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE CHRISTIAN EMPIRE.

NOTWITHSTANDING appearances to the contrary, there were profound and old-standing reasons for the Empire turning Christian. The Christian doctrine of the origin of power seemed expressly made to become the doctrine of the Roman state. Authority loves authority. Men so conservative as the bishops must have been under a terrible

temptation to reconcile themselves with public force, the action of which, they saw, was most often exercised in the cause of righteousness. Jesus had laid down the rule. The effigy on the coin was for him the supreme criterion of legitimacy, beyond which there was nothing to seek. Whilst Nero was at the height of his power, St. Paul wrote: "Let every soul be in subjection to the higher powers, for there is no power but of God; and the powers that be are ordained of God. Therefore, he that resisteth the power, withstandeth the ordinance of God." Some years later, Peter, or he who wrote in his name the epistle known as the first Epistle of Peter, expresses himself in almost identical terms. Clement also cannot be surpassed in his devotion to the Roman Empire. Finally, one of the features of St. Luke, as we have remarked, is his respect for the imperial authority, and the precautions which he takes not to wound it.

There were, assuredly, Christian fanatics who shared Jewish wrath in its entirety, and dreamed of nothing but the destruction of the idolatrous city, which they identified with Babylon. Such were the authors of the apocalypses and those of the Sibylline writings. For them Christ and Cæsar were two irreconcilable terms. But the adherents of the great Churches had utterly different ideas. In 70, the Church of Jerusalem, with a feeling more Christian than patriotic, forsook the revolutionary city, and fared forth to seek peace beyond the Jordan. In the revolt of Bar-Kokheba the separation was more marked still. Not a single Christian would take part in that effort of a blind despair. St. Justin in his apologies never attacks the principle of the Empire; he is anxious that the Empire should examine the Christian doctrine, approve it, countersign it in a sense, and condemn those who calumniate it. We have seen how the leading doctor of the time of Marcus Aurelius, Melito, the bishop of Sardis, made still more pronounced offers of service, and represented Christianity as the basis of an hereditary Empire ruled by divine right. In his treatise *On Truth*, which has survived in a Syriac

version, Melito expresses himself in the style of a bishop of the fourth century, demonstrating to a Theodosius that his first duty is to procure the triumph of the truth (without telling us, alas! by what sign the truth is to be recognised). All the apologists flatter the favourite idea of the Emperors, that of heredity in direct lineage, and assure them that the result of Christian prayers shall be the reign of their son after them. Let the Empire become Christian, and those persecuted to-day will discover that the interference of the state in the domain of conscience is perfectly legitimate.

The hatred that existed between Christianity and the Empire, was the hatred of people who were destined one day to love each other. Under the Severi the language of the Church remained what it had been under the Antonines, plaintive and tender. The apologists professed a kind of legitimism, the pretension that the Church had always paid honour in the first instance to the Emperor. St. Paul's principle was bearing fruit: "All power comes from God; he that holds the sword holds it from God for the sake of righteousness."

This correct attitude towards power was due as much to external necessities, as to the principles themselves which the Church had received from her founders. Already the Church was a great association; she was essentially conservative, she had need of order and legal guarantees. This is clearly visible in the episode of Paul of Samosata, bishop of Antioch in the reign of Aurelian. At that epoch, the bishop of Antioch could pass for being a personage of distinction. The property of the Church was in his hands; a crowd of people lived on his favours. Paul was a man of brilliant gifts, very little of a mystic, worldly, a secular magnate who sought to render Christianity acceptable to people of the world and the authorities. The fanatics, as might be expected, considered him a heretic, and brought about his supersession. Paul resisted, and refused to give up his episcopal residence. It is in affairs like this that the haughtiest sects are caught;

they possess, but who can decide a question of property or occupation, if not the civil authorities? The question was referred to the Emperor, who was at Antioch at the moment, and the odd spectacle was to be seen of an infidel and persecuting sovereign charged to decide which was the real bishop. In this incident Aurelian showed a somewhat remarkable lay common-sense. He had the correspondence of the two bishops laid before him, noted which of the two was in relations with Rome and Italy, and decided that he was the bishop of Antioch.

Aurelian's theological reasoning in this affair might lend itself to many objections; but one fact was growing evident, which was, that Christianity could no longer live without the Empire, and that the Empire, on the other hand, could do no better than adopt Christianity as its religion. The world desired a religion of congregations, of churches or synagogues or chapels; a religion the essence of which should be union, association, and brotherhood. Christianity fulfilled all these conditions. Its admirable worship, its pure morality, its skilfully organised clergy assured it the future.

Several times in the third century this historical necessity was all but realised. This was especially manifest in the time of the Syrian Emperors, whose foreign birth and low origin preserved them from prejudices, and who, despite their vices, inaugurated a breadth of ideas and a tolerance up till then unknown. The same state of things recurred under Philip the Arabian, in the East under Zenobia, and, generally speaking, under the Emperors who by their origin stood outside Roman patriotism.

The struggle was redoubled in fury when the great reformers Diocletian and Maximian believed themselves capable of giving new life to the Empire. The Church triumphed by her martyrs, Roman pride gave way; Constantine perceived how strong the Church was inwardly, and how the populations of Asia Minor, Syria, Thrace, Macedonia, in a word, the Eastern part of the Empire, were already more than half-Christian. His mother, who had been the maidservant of an inn at Nicomedia, dazzled his

eyes with the vision of an Eastern Empire, the centre of which should be about Nicæa, and the sinews of which should be the allegiance of the bishops, and of those multitudes of the poor adherents of the Church who formed public opinion in the great cities. Constantine inaugurated what was called "the peace of the Church," and what, in reality, was the domination of the Church. From the point of view of the West, that astonishes us; for in the West the Christians were still no more than a feeble minority. In the East Constantine's policy was not only natural but imperative.

Julian's reaction was a caprice of no significance. After the strife came close union and love. Theodosius inaugurated the Christian Empire—that is to say, the thing that the Church in her long life has most loved, a theocratic Empire of which the Church was the essential framework, and which, even after its destruction by the barbarians, remained the eternal dream of the Christian conscience, at least in Latin countries. Many believed, indeed, that with Theodosius the goal of Christianity was attained. The Empire and Christianity became identified with one another to such a point that many doctors conceived of the end of the Empire as the end of the world, and to that event applied the apocalyptic images of the supreme catastrophe. The Eastern Church, which was not hampered in her development by the barbarians, never forsook this ideal. Constantine and Theodosius remained her two poles, and she holds to them still, in Russia at least. The great social enfeeblement which was the necessary consequence of such a régime soon manifested itself. Devoured by monachism and theocracy, the Eastern Empire was as a prey thrown to Islam; in the East the Christian became a creature of an inferior order. In this manner the singular result has been reached that the countries which created Christianity have been victims of their work. Palestine, Syria, Egypt, Cyprus, Asia Minor, and Macedonia are to-day countries lost for civilisation, and subject to the hardest yoke of a non-Christian race.

Happily, things shaped themselves in the West in an entirely different manner. The Christian Empire of the West soon perished. The city of Rome received from Constantine the gravest blow with which she had ever been smitten. What succeeded with Constantine was no doubt Christianity; but it was, before all else, the East. The East—that is to say, the Greek-speaking half of the Empire—had, since the death of Marcus Aurelius, taken more and more the upper hand of the Latin-speaking West. The East was freer, more alive, more civilised, more versed in politics. Diocletian had already transferred the centre of affairs to Nicomedia. By building a "New Rome" on the Bosphorus, Constantine reduced old Rome to being no more than the capital of the West. The two portions of the Empire thus became almost alien, the one to the other. Constantine was the true author of the schism between the Latin and the Greek Churches. It can also be said that to him Islamism was remotely due. The Syriac and Arabic-speaking Christians, persecuted or frowned upon by the Emperors of Constantinople, became an essential element of the future following of Mohammed.

The cataclysms which followed the severance of the two Empires, the invasions of the barbarians, which spared Constantinople but fell on Rome with all their weight, reduced the ancient capital of the world to a limited, often humble rôle. The ecclesiastical primacy of Rome, which shone so conspicuously in the second and third centuries, no longer existed after the East had a separate existence and capital. The Christian Empire was the Empire of the East, with its Œcumenical Councils, its orthodox Emperors, its court clergy. This state of things lasted till the eighth century. Rome, meanwhile, was taking her revenge by the seriousness and depth of her spirit of organisation. What men were St. Damasus, St. Leo, and Gregory the Great! With admirable courage the Papacy laboured for the conversion of the barbarians; it attached them to it, made them its followers and subjects.

The masterpiece of its policy was its alliance with the

Carlovingian house, and the daring stroke by which it re-established in that house the Western Empire, which had been dead for three hundred and twenty-four years. The Western Empire, indeed, was only in appearance destroyed. Its secrets survived in the higher ranks of the Roman clergy. In a measure the Church of Rome retained the seal of the ancient Empire, and availed herself of it surreptitiously to authenticate the unprecedented act of Christmas Day in the year 800. The dream of the Christian Empire began again. To the spiritual power was necessary a secular arm, a temporal vicar. Christianity, lacking in its nature that warlike spirit, which is inherent in Islamism for example, could not evolve military strength from itself; it had therefore to seek it outside itself, from the Empire, from the barbarians, from a dynasty constituted by the bishops. There is an infinity of difference between this and the Mussulman Caliphate. Even in the Middle Ages, when the Papacy admitted and proclaimed the idea of an armed Christendom, neither the Pope nor his legates ever attained the position of military chiefs. A holy Empire, with a barbarian Theodosius wielding the sword in defence of the Church of Christ, such was the ideal of the Roman Papacy. From it the West only escaped thanks to Teutonic untractableness and the paradoxical genius of Gregory VII. Pope and Emperor quarrelled to the death; the nationalities which the Christian Empire of Constantinople had stifled were able to develop in the West, and a door was opened to liberty.

That liberty was in scarce any degree the work of Christianity. Christian kingship proceeds from God; the king made by the priests is the anointed of the Lord; but the king by divine right finds it difficult to be a constitutional monarch. Throne and altar thus became two inseparable terms. Theocracy is a virus that cannot be eradicated. Protestantism and the Revolution were necessary for the conception of the possibility of a liberal Christianity; and liberal Christianity, without either Pope or king, has not sufficiently stood the test of time yet, for us to

have the right to speak of it as an achieved and enduring fact in the history of mankind.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

SUBSEQUENT TRANSFORMATIONS.

THUS a religion made for the consolation of a little flock of the elect, became, by an unprecedented stroke of fortune, the religion of millions of men, constituting the most active part of humanity. It is more particularly in the case of victories in the religious sphere, that it is true to say that the vanquished make laws for the conquerors. The multitudes in entering the little Churches of the saints introduced their imperfections, at times their impurities. A race, when it embraces a worship that has not been made for it, transforms it in accordance with the needs of its heart and imagination.

In the primitive Christian conception a Christian was perfect; the sinner, by the mere fact of being a sinner, ceased to be a Christian. When whole cities came to be converted *en masse*, all was changed. The Gospel precepts of devotion and self-abnegation grew inapplicable; they were made counsels solely destined for those who aspired to perfection. And where could that perfection be realised? The world, as it actually was, excluded it absolutely; he who should literally practise the Gospel in the world would play the part of a dupe and a fool. There remained the monastery. Logic resumed its rights. Christian morality, the morality of a small Church, and of persons withdrawn from the world, created the environment necessary to itself. The Gospel was to culminate in the convent; a Christendom with its organisms complete could not dispense with convents—that is to say, places where the Gospel life, elsewhere impossible, could be put in practice. The convent is the perfect Church, the monk is the true

Christian. Moreover, the most efficacious labours of Christianity have only been carried out by the monastic orders. These orders, far from being a leprosy attacking the work of Jesus from without, were the inward and inevitable consequences of the work of Jesus. In the West they had more advantages than drawbacks; for the Teutonic conquest maintained a powerful military caste to confront the monk. The East, on the other hand, was in truth devoured by a monachism, which had only the most deceptive appearance of Christian perfection.

An indifferent morality and a natural leaning to idolatry, such were the sorry tendencies that the masses who were induced to enter the Church, partly by force, from the end of the fourth century, brought into her. Man does not change in a day; baptism has no instantaneous miraculous effects. These barely evangelised pagan multitudes remained what they had been on the eve of their conversion: in the East, malicious, selfish, and corrupt; in the West, uncouth and superstitious. In the matter of morality, the Church had merely to uphold her rules, which were already nearly all written down in books regarded as canonical. In the matter of superstition, the task was a much more delicate one. Changes of religion are, as a rule, merely superficial. Man, whatever his conversions or apostasies, remains faithful to the first form of worship which he has practised and more or less loved. A host of idolaters, essentially unchanged at bottom, and transmitting the same instincts to their children, were entering the Church. Superstition began to overflow in the religious community which up till then had been most exempt from it.

Some Eastern sects left out of account, the primitive Christians were the least superstitious of men. The Christian and the Jew could be fanatics, but they were not superstitious like a Gaul or a Paphlagonian. Amongst them there were no amulets, no sacred images, no object of worship apart from the divine hypostases. Converted pagans could not adapt themselves to such simplicity. The worship of martyrs was the first concession torn by human

weakness from the laxity of a clergy, willing to be all things to all men in order to gain all to Jesus Christ. The bodies of holy men had miraculous virtues, and became talismans; the places where they were laid were marked with a higher sanctity than other shrines consecrated to God. The absence of all idea of natural laws soon opened the door to a frenzied faith in thaumaturgy. The Celts and Latins, who form the basis of the population of the West, are the most superstitious of races. A profusion of beliefs which the earliest Christianity would have deemed sacrilegious, accordingly passed into the Church. The latter did what she could; her efforts to refine and elevate barbarous catechumens constitute one of the noblest pages in human history. For five or six centuries the Councils were occupied with combating the old naturalistic superstitions, but the pure found themselves overwhelmed. St. Gregory the Great made up his mind on the question, and advised the missionaries not to suppress the rites and holy places of the Anglo-Saxons, but merely to consecrate them to the new worship.

Thus came to pass a singular phenomenon; the tangled growth of pagan fables and beliefs which primitive Christianity deemed itself called on to destroy, was in great part preserved. Far from succeeding, like Islam, in suppressing "the times of ignorance"—that is to say, former memories—Christianity permitted the survival of nearly all these memories, concealing them beneath a thin Christian veneer. Gregory of Tours was as superstitious as Ælian or Ælius Aristides. The world in the sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, and tenth centuries was more grossly pagan than it had ever been before Until the progress of primary education in our own days, our peasants had not abandoned one of their petty Gaulish deities. The worship of the saints was the cover under which polytheism was restored. This invasion of the spirit of idolatry has sadly dishonoured modern Catholicism. The follies of Lourdes and La Salette, the multiplication of miraculous images, the Sacré Cœur, votive offerings and pilgrimages, make of contem-

porary Catholicism, in certain countries at least, a religion as materialistic as any Syrian worship attacked by John Chrysostom, or suppressed by the edicts of the Emperors. The Church, in fact, maintained two attitudes towards pagan religions: now a struggle to the death, as happened at Aphaca and in Phœnicia; now compromise, the old belief accepting more or less complacently a Christian colouring. Every pagan who embraced Christianity in the second or third century held his former faith in horror; he who baptised him demanded that he should detest his old gods. It was by no means the same thing for the Gaulish peasant, the Frankish or Anglo-Saxon warrior; his old religion was so trivial a thing, that it was not worth the trouble of hating or seriously attacking.

The complaisance which Christianity, once it had become the religion of the multitude, showed to the old faiths, it also displayed to many Greek prejudices. It appeared ashamed of its Jewish origin, and did all possible to conceal it. We have seen how the Gnostics and the author of the *Epistle to Diognetus* affected to believe that Christianity was born spontaneously, without relation to Judaism. Origen and Eusebius dare not say so, for they know the facts too well; but John Chrysostom and, generally speaking, all the fathers who have received a highly Hellenic education, ignore the true sources of Christianity, and have no wish to learn them. They reject the whole of the Judeo-Christian and Millenarian literature; the orthodox Church hunts down its productions, and books of this nature are only preserved when translated into Latin or the Eastern tongues. The Apocalypse of John only escapes because it is rooted in the very heart of the canon. Attempts at a Unitarian Christianity, without metaphysics or mythology, a Christianity differing little from rational Judaism, like the experiment of Zenobia and Paul of Samosata, were cut away at the root. Endeavours such as these would have produced a simple Christianity, a continuation of Judaism, something analogous to what Islam was. Had they been successful, they would, no

doubt, have forestalled the success of Mohammed amongst the Arabs and Syrians. What fanaticism would thus have been avoided! Christianity is a version of Judaism adapted to the Indo-European taste; Islam is a version of Judaism adapted to the taste of the Arabs. Mohammed, in short, did no more than return to the Judeo-Christianity of Zenobia, by reaction against the metaphysical polytheism of the Council of Nicæa and the Councils that followed. The more and more distinct separation of clergy and people was another consequence of the wholesale conversions which took place in the fourth and fifth centuries. These ignorant multitudes could only listen. The Church soon reached the point of being nothing more than a clergy. Far from this transformation contributing to raise the intellectual average of Christianity, it lowered it. Experience proves that small Churches without a professional clergy are more liberal than the great Churches. In England the Quakers and Methodists have done more for ecclesiastical liberalism than the established Church. Contrary to what happened in the second century, in which we note the admirably reasonable authority of the *episcopi* and *presbyteri* pruning away excesses and follies, the needs of the lowest party in the Church were henceforth to make the law for the clergy. The Councils obeyed the commands of mobs of monks and the most degraded fanaticism. In all the Councils it was the most superstitious dogma that won the day. Arianism, which had the most distinguished merit of converting the Teutons before their entrance into the Empire, and which might have given the world a Christianity capable of becoming rational in time, was smothered by the materialism of a clergy with a passion for the absurd. In the Middle Ages that clergy became a feudal system. The democratic book *par excellence*, the Gospel, was confiscated by those who claimed to interpret it, and they prudently dissimulated its daring sentiments.

It was, then, the fate of Christianity almost to suffer shipwreck in the hour of its victory, like a ship nearly

sinking by reason of the clumsy passengers who crowd on board. Never has founder had followers who have less resembled him than Jesus. Jesus was much more a great Jew than a great man; his disciples have made of him what is most anti-Jewish, a man-god. The additions made to his work by superstition, metaphysics, and politics have entirely masked the great prophet, to such a degree that every reform in Christianity apparently consists in removing the embellishments added by our pagan ancestors and returning to Jesus in all his purity. But the gravest error that can be committed in religious history is to believe that religions have any positive value of themselves. Religions acquire their value from the peoples who adopt them. Islamism has been efficacious or deadly according to the races which have embraced it. Amongst the degraded peoples of the East, Christianity is a religion of very indifferent quality, inspiring very little virtue. It is amongst our Western races, Celtic, Teutonic, and Latin, that Christianity has been really fertile.

Entirely Jewish in its origin, Christianity has thus in time succeeded in throwing off all its family characteristics, so that the view of those who consider it the Aryan religion *par excellence* is in many respects true. For centuries we have infused in it our modes of feeling, all our aspirations, all our good qualities, all our defects. The exegesis according to which Christianity was inwardly moulded in the Old Testament is the falsest of all. Christianity was the rupture with Judaism, the abrogation of the Thora. St. Bernard, Francis of Assisi, St. Elizabeth, St. Theresa, Francis of Sales, Vincent de Paul, Fénelon, Channing have no trace of Judaism. They are people of our own race, feeling with our hearts and thinking with our brains. Christianity was the traditional theme on which they wove their poem; but its genius is their own. St. Bernard interpreting the Psalms is the most romantic of men. Each race, adhering to the disciplines of the past, attributes them to itself and makes them its property. Thus, the Bible has borne fruits which are not its own; Judaism

has been no more than the wild stock from which the Aryan race has produced its flower. In England and Scotland the Bible has become the national book of that branch of the Aryan race which least resembles the Hebrews. That is how Christianity, so notoriously Jewish in origin, has been capable of becoming the national religion of the European races, which to it have sacrificed their ancient mythology.

The renunciation of our old ethnic traditions in favour of Christian sanctity, a renunciation of little seriousness in reality, was in appearance so complete, that nearly fifteen hundred years have had to elapse for that consummation to be again called in question. The great awakening of national spirit which has taken place in the nineteenth century, the resurrection, so to speak, of dead races which we see going on around us, could not fail to recall the memory of our abdication in favour of the sons of Shem, and in that matter provoke some reaction. Although no one assuredly, outside museums of comparative mythology, can any longer dream of reviving the Teutonic, Pelasgian, Celtic, and Slavonic mythologies, it had been better for Christianity if these dangerous imaginations had been entirely suppressed, as was done when Islam was founded. Races which lay claim to nobility and originality in all things are wounded at the thought of being in religion the vassals of a despised family. Ardent Teutonists have not dissembled their feeling of affront; certain Celtomaniacs have manifested the same sentiments. Nor have the Greeks, recognising their importance in the world by memories of ancient Hellenism, concealed from themselves that Christianity is for them an apostasy. Greeks, Teutons, and Celts have consoled themselves with the reflection that if they accepted Christianity, they at least transformed it and made it their national property. It is not less true to say that the modern racial principle has been prejudicial to Christianity. The religious action of Judaism has impressed men as being colossal. They have seen Israel's weak points as well as its great-

ness; they have been ashamed of having turned Jewish, even as enthusiastic German patriots deem themselves under an obligation to treat the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in France with the more severity, seeing that they owe them so much.

Another cause has, in our own time, seriously undermined the religion which our ancestors practised with so full a satisfaction. Denial of the supernatural has become an absolute dogma for every cultivated intellect. The history of the physical and moral world appears to us as a development having its causes within itself, and excluding miracle—that is to say, the intervention of specific, deliberate acts of will. But, from the point of view of Christianity, the history of the world is nothing more than a series of miracles. The creation, the history of the Jewish people, the mission of Jesus, retain, even when assayed in the crucible of the most liberal exegesis, a residue of the supernatural which no process can either eradicate or transform. The monotheistic Semitic religions are at heart foes of physical science, which seems to them a diminution, almost a negation, of God. God has done all, and does all still, such is their universal explanation. Christianity, without having pushed this dogma to the same pitch of exaggeration as Islam, implies revelation—that is to say, a miracle, such an occurrence as science has never verified. Between Christianity and science the struggle is, then, inevitable; one of the two adversaries must succumb.

From the thirteenth century, the moment when, as a consequence of the study of Aristotle and Averroës, the scientific spirit was beginning to awaken in Latin countries, up till the sixteenth century, the Church, with the secular power at her command, succeeded in crushing her enemy; but in the seventeenth century scientific discoveries were too striking for it to be possible to stifle them. The Church was still strong enough gravely to trouble the life of Galileo and to disquiet Descartes, but not to prevent their discoveries from becoming intellectual law. In the eighteenth century reason triumphed; about 1800 no

one believed in the supernatural any longer. The reactions that have followed have been checks in development of no consequence. If many timorous spirits, dreading great social questions, forbid themselves to be logical, the people both of the cities and the country are withdrawing more and more from Christianity, and the supernatural loses some of its adherents every day.

What has Christianity done for its defence against this formidable assault, which will sweep it away if it does not abandon certain desperate positions? The Reformation of the sixteenth century was assuredly an act of wisdom and conservatism. Protestantism reduced the daily allowance of supernaturalism; in a sense, it returned to primitive Christianity, and diminished to small proportions the idolatrous and pagan elements in worship. But the principle of the miraculous, especially in what concerned the inspiration of books, was retained. That Reformation, moreover, has not extended over the whole of Christianity; it has been overtaken by rationalism, which will probably have done away with the material awaiting reform before the reform has taken place. Protestantism will only save Christianity if it attain to absolute rationalism, and join hands with all the emancipated spirits whose programme may thus be summed up:

"Great and splendid is the world, and, despite all the shadows that beset it, we see that it is the fruit of an inward tendency towards the good, of a supreme charity. Christianity is the most striking of those efforts to bring to birth an ideal of light and justice, that succeed one another in the history of the world. Although its first growth may have been Jewish, it has with time become the common work of humanity; each race has endowed Christianity with the special gift bestowed on it, with its best elements. God is not present in Christianity alone, to the exclusion of other faiths; but he is more immanent in it than in any other religious and moral development. Christianity is, in fact, the religion of civilised peoples; each nation acknowledges it in diverse senses, according

to its degree of intellectual culture. The freethinker dispenses with it altogether, and has a perfect right to do so, but the freethinker constitutes a highly honourable individual exception; his intellectual and moral position cannot yet be that of a whole nation or of humanity at large

"Let us, then, preserve Christianity with admiration for its high moral value, for its majestic history, for the beauty of its sacred books. These books in truth are books; to them must be applied such rules of interpretation and criticism as are applicable to all books. But they form the religious archives of mankind; even the weaker portions which they include are worthy our respect. The same is to be said of dogma; let us, without enslaving ourselves, revere those formulas under which fourteen centuries have adored the divine wisdom. Admitting neither specific miracle nor limited inspiration, let us bow down before the supreme miracle of that great Church, the inexhaustible mother of unceasingly varied manifestations. As to worship, let us seek to eliminate offensive dross: in any case, let us regard it as a secondary thing, of no value save for the feelings that inspire it."

Had many Christians followed such a tendency of thought, one might hope for a future for Christianity. But, the liberal Protestant congregations apart, the great Christian masses have modified their attitude in nothing. Catholicism continues to bury itself with a kind of despairing fury in its faith in miracles. Orthodox Protestantism stands still. Meanwhile, popular rationalism, the inevitable consequence of the progress of public education and democratic institutions, empties the temples and multiplies the number of purely civil marriages and obsequies. The people of the great cities are not to be led back to the ancient churches, and the country folk only attend them from force of habit. But a church does not exist without people; the church is essentially the meeting-place of people. The Catholic party, from another point of view, has during these latter years been guilty of so many blunders, that its political power is almost exhausted. We may there-

fore look for a formidable crisis in the bosom of Catholicism. It is probable that a part of that great body will persist in its idolatry, and remain side by side with the modern movement as a parallel counter-current of stagnant water. Another section will live, and, forsaking supernatural errors, will unite with liberal Protestantism, enlightened Judaism, and idealistic philosophy, to march onwards to the conquest of pure religion "in spirit and in truth."

That which is beyond all doubt, whatever the religious future of humanity, is the mighty place which Jesus will hold therein. He was the founder of Christianity, and Christianity remains the bed of the great religious river of mankind. Tributaries flowing from the most opposite points of the horizon add their waters to it. In that mingled flood no source can any longer say, "This is my water." But let us not forget the primitive brook of its beginnings, the spring in the mountain, the upper course in which a stream, wide as the Amazon now, flowed at first in a channel but a step across. It is the picture of that upper course that I have desired to paint, happy if I have presented in its truth all there was on those lofty summits of strength and vigour, sensations now glowing, now icy, of life divine and colloquy with heaven. The creators of Christianity occupy by right the foremost place in the homage of mankind. These men were far inferior to ourselves in knowledge of reality, but they were unequalled in conviction and devotion. These qualities it is which do the work of foundation. The solidity of an edifice is in ratio to the sum of virtue—that is to say, of sacrifice—that has been built into its foundation.

In this edifice, moreover, ruined by time as it is, how many excellent stones there are which might be employed for the benefit of our modern structures! What, better than Messianic Judaism, shall teach us steadfast hope in a happy future, faith in a splendid destiny for mankind under the governance of an aristocracy of the just? Is not the

kingdom of God the supreme expression of the final goal pursued by the idealist? The Sermon on the Mount remains the consummate code of conduct; mutual love, mildness, goodness, and unselfishness will ever be the essential laws of the perfect life. The banding together of the weak is the legitimate solution of the majority of the problems raised by the organisation of humanity; on that point Christianity can instruct all the centuries. Till the end of time the Christian martyr will remain the typical defender of the rights of conscience. Finally, the difficult and perilous art of spiritual government, if it be one day restored, will be restored on the pattern furnished by the earliest Christian doctors. They had secrets which we can only learn in their school. There have been firmer and more austere professors of virtue perhaps, but there have never been such masters of the science of happiness. Spiritual rapture is the great Christian art, to such a degree that civil society has found it necessary to take precautions against man burying himself therein. The fatherland and the family are the two great natural forms of human association. Both are essential, but they cannot suffice of themselves. Side by side with them must be maintained an institution in which the soul can be nurtured and receive consolation and counsel, in which charity may be organised and spiritual masters and directors be found. That institution is called the Church, and it can never be dispensed with, except at the risk of reducing life to a barren desert of despair, especially for women. What is of the deepest import, is that ecclesiastical society should not enfeeble civil society, that it should only be a liberty, that it should have no temporal power, that the state should not meddle with it either to control or to patronise. For two hundred and fifty years Christianity provided consummate models of such little free fraternities.

THE END.

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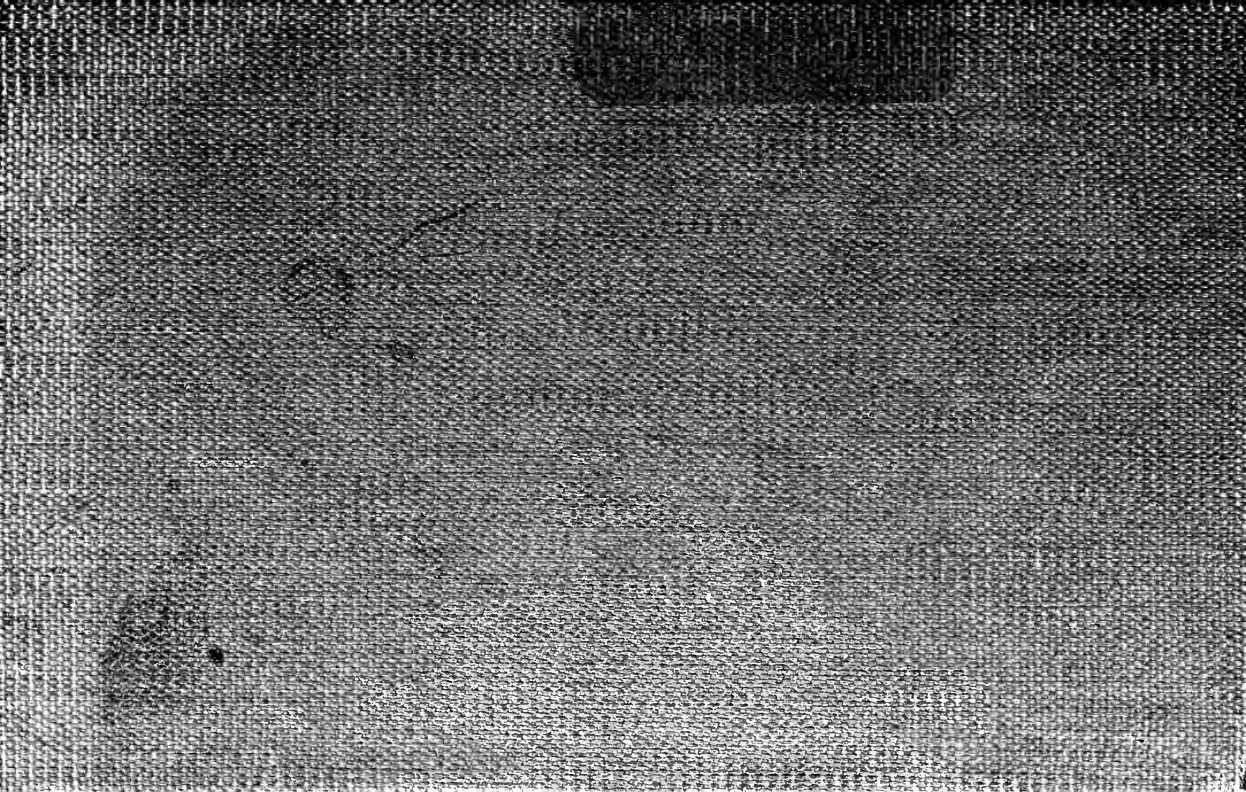
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