THE SPIRITUAL SENSE IN SACRED LEGEND

EDWARD J. BRAILSFORD

THE SPIRITUAL SENSE IN SACRED LEGEND

The 40th Fernley Lecture

THE SPIRITUAL SENSE IN SACRED LEGEND

BY

EDWARD J. BRAILSFORD

London

ROBERT CULLEY

25-35 CITY ROAD, AND 26 PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.

To

My Wife and Daughter

my helpers

The Manse,
Williton, Somerset,
June 27, 1910.

First Edition - - - 1910

PREFACE

THE title of this lecture may promise too much. It may be supposed to announce a survey of universal history, and to concern itself with all literatures, religions, and mythologies. It does not do either. To follow the spiritual sense into every field of sacred legend would require a life-time for the research, and a library in which to gather the harvesting.

The range of inquiry has therefore been limited.

The sacred legends reviewed are all related to the Bible—they refer to its characters, or amplify its incidents, or interpret its doctrines. They have been drawn from a well-defined area. There has been no attempt to introduce at any length the illuminating records unearthed by recent archaeological discoveries in Assyria and Egypt, nor to discuss seriously how far the thread of legend has woven itself into the text of the Old and New Testaments. To endeavour to do so would have led me outside my main purpose, and beyond the range of my own information. I have aimed at being an interpreter.

Having accepted the phenomena of Sacred Legend,

I have ventured to suggest a philosophy which accounts for them, and which furnishes a clue to their natural classification. In doing this I have had to tell many of these old stories over again: sometimes in their own classic words, oftener, for the sake of brevity, in my own. The scholar well versed in the subject may think too many are quoted; the reader whose interest is excited may count them too few. But however this may be, the legends which have been recited are, after all, only a selection, and I would repeat to any one who is tempted to enlarge his acquaintance, what the child said to Audubon, the naturalist, who met her on an April day with a bundle of anemones in her pinafore, 'The woods are full of them.'

As to the subject itself, it may not seem to bear comparison with some of the theological themes which have been so ably treated in this series. It may appear, indeed, to belong to a phase of religious thought and feeling which has entirely passed away. And yet, while this in a sense is true, it must be borne in mind that the spiritual life of that former day is with us still. The influence of that legendary lore which gave it strength and loveliness remains, as the rainbow-coloured mist which now lies before the writer, like a scarf, across the shoulders of the Quantock Hills, will, when it vanishes, leave within the mind of the onlooker an unfading memory, and on the moorland fields a livelier green.

E. J. B.

WORKS READ OR CONSULTED

Talmud, Babylonian. Eng. Trans. Rodkinson, N. York.
Talmud, The Treasures of the. Hershon.
Talmud, Selections from the. Polano.
Talmud, Tales from the. Montague.
Talmud, The Bible, Koran and. Gustav Weil.
The Midrash. Edwin Collins.
The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs. Charles.
The Book of Enoch. Charles.
Bible Myths. Bouton.
The Apocryphal New Testament. Hone.
The Apocryphal New Testament. Wake and Lardner.
The Apocryphal Gospels. Cowper.
The Apocryphal Gospels (Dicty. of the Bible). J. G. Tasker, D.D.
The Extra-canonical Life of Christ. Pick.
The Koran.
Legenda Aurea. 6 vols. Englished by William Caxton.
The History of our Lord in Art. Mrs. Jameson and Lady Eastlake.
Sacred and Legendary Art. Mrs. Jameson.
Legends of the Madonna. Mrs. Jameson.
Legends of the Monastic Orders. Mrs. Jameson.
Legends of the Virgin. Guerber.
The Legends of the Saints. H. Delehaye, S.J.
The Saints in Christian Art. Mrs. Bell.
The High History of the Holy Graal.
Symbols and Emblems. H. J. Smith.
The Migration of Symbols. Goblet.
Symbolism in Christian Art. E. Hulme.

Natural History Lore and Legend. E. Hulme.
Folk Lore of the Holy Land. J. E. Hanauer.
Folk Lore of Plants. Thistleton Dyer.
Plant Lore. Folkhard.
Flower Legends. MacCollum.
Flower Legends. Hilda Murray.
Flowers and their Story. Hilderic Friend.
Dictionary of the Bible. Hastings.
Dictionary of the Bible. Smith.
Dictionary of the Bible. Herzog.
The Witness of Israel. Moulton.
History of Latin Christianity. Milman.
History of European Morals. Lecky.

ARGUMENT

Introductory—The relation of the Spiritual Sense to extra-canonical history, tradition, and legend—A definition of *Sacred* Legend—The storehouses of Sacred Legends—Their points of contact with progressive religious experience—Their variety, range, and intrinsic value—The principle determining their classification—The light which they cast upon the Spiritual Sense in its search for Truth and Beauty: On (1) its craving to know more than has been revealed; (2) its reverence for the saintly and heroic in human character; (3) its interest in theological truth embodied in Doctrine and Dogma; (4) its homage to the moral law and the Christian virtues; (5) its sympathy with truth in all forms of thought and natural phenomena.—Concluding inquiry: How far has the study of legendary lore revealed the vitality of the Spiritual Sense, its capacity and its limitations?—In what degree has that sense developed itself through the creation of Sacred Legends?—Have they nourished its continuous growth, and have their revelations of truth and beauty prepared and strengthened its sight for the beatific vision?

INTRODUCTION

SYNOPSIS

The Bible—Other revelations—An outside related mass of history, tradition, and legend—A definition of legend as distinguished from myth, fable, and story—Periodic cycles of legend—Their principal storehouses—Apocalyptic books—The Talmud—Sibylline Oracles—Josephus—Assyrian and Egyptian records—Apocryphal Gospels—Koran—The Golden Legend—The importance of the study of sacred legends—Their intrinsic literary value—Influence in art, poetry, architecture, and natural scenery—Their chief value as interpreters of the inner life of the people—They are the outcome of the creative spiritual sense—Is there a philosophy of sacred legends, and can they be classified?

INTRODUCTION

THE vessel which the potter has fashioned may be perfect, although he has not moulded in it all the clay which lay upon his table, or met his revolving wheel and shaping hands.

The Bible is one book. It is a unity of wonderfully varied materials. As a revelation it is adequate, and as an instrument it is entirely efficient. Its stretch of time, its range of subject, its insight into the human heart, its quickening virtue, its unveiling of the spiritual world, and its revelation of God, have made it unique, and have given it a divine authority which increases with the lapse of years.

But it does not contain all the thoughts of God which have visited and moved the world, nor all the knowledge of Him, of man, and of the universe which is the possession of the race. The recent researches into old-world records, the emerging into light of buried slabs and monuments, the comparative study of ancient religions, and the strangely recovered power of interpreting dead and silent languages, have immensely enlarged our knowledge of the area over

which the Spirit of Truth has brooded, and multiplied for us the number of the nations to whom He has said, 'Let there be light.'

We have come to know, almost with a shock of glad surprise, that other races beside the Hebrew have received their revelations—that they possess their independent accounts of the Creation and of the Flood—that they have had their own spiritual struggle towards enlightenment and liberty; and wherever we turn our eyes, and however far back into the dim past we look, there are human figures —men of like passions with ourselves, who strove to walk with God, as far as they knew Him, and to keep His commandments. This being so, we are prepared to meet with confessions of faith—conceptions of the divine nature, explanations of natural phenomena, ideals of conduct, and theories as to the meaning of life.

These efforts were of necessity crude, limited, and only half articulate; but they were *beginnings*, and as the result of their striving came the tradition, the legend and the history, and out of those early germs there grew eventually the sciences.

When we seek to find the cradle of the human race, we have to penetrate into the pre-historic past, and into regions that are only faintly outlined. It is probable that man's earliest home was on some broad Indian plain between the Euphrates and the Ganges. It is there that the earliest legends had their birth

and began their wanderings. They are found in all religions; they have a place in the great sacred books. Their shadows have fallen here and there on the pages of Holy Scripture, and within the divine oracle some echoes of their primitive voice may be heard.

But our inquiry brings us to a still greater mass of thought and knowledge which lies around the Bible. The writers of its different books had their separate assemblage of facts, out of which they moulded their song, their prophecy, or their history. Those facts may have been acquired by oral communication, by research, or in the heaven-sent vision or dream; in any case they formed the raw material out of which their works were fashioned. But only in part. Around the volume of the canonical scriptures there lies a belt of unused matter—some of it, no doubt, of little value. But in a portion of it, at least, there are nebulae which might be gathered into points of light—a film of protoplasm which holds within itself potential germs of life.

The story of the Book of Genesis is composed from two if not three separate narratives, and these bear signs of dependence on some records earlier still. In the later books of the Old Testament we meet with extracts from lost chronicles—references to compositions which have wholly disappeared, and fragments of old-world songs; and when we come to New Testament times we realize that the canonical writings are surrounded by a mass of extraneous literature, which, although outside the pale, bears many marks of affinity.

It is in this external substance of tradition, chronicle, and biography, that the class of narrative which we term the *legend* is included. It belongs to the same family as the myth, the fable, and the tale, but it differs from its relatives. In its normal simplicity it is an unauthenticated narrative about persons or things. Under certain conditions it may possibly have happened, but it has never been verified, and may be in its nature incapable of verification. There are, therefore, two elements within the legend—an element of uncertainty which separates it from history, and an element of truth and reality which distinguish it from the fable, the romance, and the myth.

There are other differences in feature and intention. The myth deals with natural phenomena, and offers an explanation. The dying of the Phoenix and his subsequent ascent from the ashes of his funeral pyre, which was to the early Christians a symbol of the Redeemer's resurrection, and to the Romans a prophecy of the apotheosis of the emperor, was an ancient myth of the sunrise. Jotham's story of the thistle and the trees of the forest, which points its moral by putting a soul into inanimate things, is a simple fable. The narrative entitled the Acts of Paul and Thekla is on the face of it a romance of free imagination. But the *Quo vadis* story of the Apostle Peter flying from Rome in the time of persecution, and confronted on his way by the vision of his Lord, is, with all its beauty and pathos, a sacred legend.

As we follow the course of history which the Bible chronicles—a history which mainly concerns itself with the Hebrew people as the custodians of the oracles of God, and the providers of a Saviour—every great national epoch is surrounded by innumerable legends, and they accompany in multitudes the footsteps of every great leader. The principal cycles of legendary lore are in the Old Testament connected with the Creation, the Fall of Man, the Deluge, the Call of Abraham, and the Giving of the Law. At the breaking up of the kingdoms, and the banishment of Judah and the scattering of Israel, they seem to fade away. With the birth of Christ and the unfolding of His life and character before the eyes of men, the imagination of the people is reawakened, and legends of varied forms and quality attend Him from the cradle to His grave. As heroes of legendary history, in addition to that sublime and central Figure we have all the Apostles and Evangelists who were associated with Him; while, as we return along the path of the past, we meet with such outstanding forms as Solomon, Moses, Joseph, Abraham the Father of the faithful, Noah, and, at last, Adam the father of us all.

There are many storehouses of sacred legend, but we need only refer to the chief. The first, although not the earliest in point of time, are the books so closely allied to the holy scriptures, but now styled the Apocrypha. They differ in interest and importance, but in them we have the story which

immortalizes the saying, 'Great is Truth and mighty above all things'; the touching tale of Tobit, with its simple humanity and childlike love, which can embrace the faithful dog and the Archangel Gabriel; the stirring romance of Judith and Holofernes; the Song of the Three Children, which is one of the grandest of all nature-hymns and worthy to be sung to the music of the spheres; the history of Susannah, with its illustration of the unerring wisdom of Daniel—an example which haunted the memory of Shylock in the trial scene; the narrative of the destruction of Bel and the Dragon, which chronicles the discomfiture of idolatry and symbolizes the dethronement of Nebuchadnezzar; the prayer of Manasses, which is a confession as poignant and as heart-moving as that of the Prodigal Son.

The so-called Apocalyptic Books are also charged with such stuff as legendary tales and dreams are made of. But their drift is nevertheless didactic. Their aim is to assert Eternal Providence, and justify the ways of God to men. They are almost entirely unknown to the general reader; but we are indebted to the author or authors of the Book of Enoch for some ideas regarding the angels, for a vivid topography of the celestial world, and especially for a striking conception of an ideal Judge, with His three great shining attributes of Righteousness, Wisdom, and Power—one day to be assumed and gloriously fulfilled.

The strange collection entitled 'The Testimony of

the Twelve Patriarchs' supposes a situation too set and formal to be altogether true. The head of each tribe recalls the notable events of his life and draws out a moral. One can realize what the value of such confessions might have been, but the actual impressions they leave behind are faint and disappointing.

The Book of Jubilees, or the Little Genesis, which probably comes next to the Book of Enoch chronologically, is equally interesting if less mysterious. It professes to be a revelation from God to Moses, on Mount Sinai. The medium of the revelation is the *Angel of the Presence*. He unfolds the chief events of Hebrew History in 'Jubilee' periods, from the Creation to the institution of the Passover and the Sabbath. He even sketches for the Great Lawgiver the opening scenes in his own eventful life and recapitulates his acts and speeches!

In the Ascension of Isaiah, we are with him at his martyrdom. The Assumption of Moses sketches the Lawgiver's parting interview with Joshua, when he places in his successor's hands a precious collection of prophecies regarding the history of Israel—predictions which carry the destiny of the Jews to the beginning of the ascendency of the Roman Empire.

Of the remaining apocalyptic books, the Sibylline Oracles are the most mysterious and singular. The appearance of the Sibyls in relation to the kingdom of the Messiah is highly significant. They had an exalted position in the ancient Gentile world, and their

oracular utterances wielded great authority. Their order broke away from received tradition, and lay outside all official status. The Jewish nation must have its Sibyl too. At a time when the Hebrew idea of the dignity of womanhood had waned, and when the Eastern estimate was prevailing, the first book of the Sibylline Oracles appeared. It professed to contain the utterances of a prophetess divinely inspired, and she was supposed to be in sympathy with her Sibylline sisters who had spoken in heathen countries and at different times. Other volumes followed. There were fourteen books in all. Their review of the Hebrew history, from the building of the Tower of Babel, down to the struggles of the Maccabees, and the beginning of the Messiah's reign, possesses its own interest; but we may venture to suggest that the appearance of the Sibyls on the scene of history, although they may be shadowy personages, is of higher meaning than their writings. They seem to mediate between the Pagan empires and the Messiah's kingdom. They predict the dissolution of the priestly caste, and above all are heralds of the time when the sons and daughters of men standing on the same platform of equality, should be moved by the Spirit and prophesy.

We come now to a volume which is worthy to be added to the seven wonders of the world. The Talmud can scarcely be regarded as a book; it is a continent of literature, the soil of which is the deposited

loam of innumerable streams that had been flowing for centuries. The 613 precepts of the Pentateuch which Moses received from Jehovah and codified form the bed-rock beneath the surface. He is said to have written them fully on thirteen rolls. He gave one into the custody of each of the twelve tribes. The thirteenth was placed for absolute safety within the Ark of the Covenant. They form the text or Mishna of the Talmud, and the innumerable commentaries and moralizings upon them, compose the Gemara or remaining portion. There are two prevailing tempers dominating the spirit which animates it throughout. One is styled Halacha or Rule—which deals with the precepts of the law critically, analytically, and with reverence. The other treats them in a lighter vein—illustrates them, adorns them or brightens them with the aptness, the wisdom, or the playful humour of the legend. This Hagada or legendary stratum of this amazing compilation was thought lightly of by the Rabbis who used it as their text-book. But the people loved it. Their instinct overruled the critical verdict, as in later times Englishmen refused to allow *Paradise Regained* to displace *Paradise Lost*, although Milton preferred it; and persisted in their passionate affection for *Robinson Crusoe*, despite the greater intellectual efforts of its author, Defoe. This heterogeneous collection of apologues, parables, anecdotes, legends, which Time was gathering in his wallet for more than a thousand years, is, as one might well suppose, of a

mixed and doubtful character. Some of the stories are incredible, others are convincingly true. Many are homely and easy to be understood; not a few are philosophical. There are some that are positively puerile; but here and there, truths come to our hand that are profoundly sublime. When and where and how the Talmud had its first beginnings remains an enigma. In Ezra's time we have a glimpse of a senate of 120 commentators and expositors of the law. They were probably the lineal descendants of the schools of the Prophets. But although the period when the scattered fragments of this wonderful production were first codified is uncertain, the year of its complete redaction is known. It was in 4253 of the Jewish calendar—150 years after the second temple had been destroyed.

The list of the sources of the narratives and traditions which shed light on the history and personages of the Old Testament is far from being exhausted. There are the Targums, which, as the word denotes, were intended primarily to be translations, when the language of the original Scriptures had ceased to be the common speech of the people. But the translators did not content themselves with offering an Aramaic version side by side with the Hebraic. They added notes, comments, and paraphrases, weaving into them information derived from other writings and from ancient and current tradition.

The works of Josephus must also have a place

amongst these sacred storehouses. His Jewish birth and training, his liberal education, his broad and lofty and amiable character, have won for him a place which is almost unique in the literary world. He was a moderator by temperament. Holding the Hebrew faith tenaciously, he was yet in sympathy with what was best in the pagan religion, and at the same time regarded the growing Christian cult with a more than philosophic toleration. His career was outwardly in keeping with this spirit. In early life he had sat at the feet of the Rabbi. At thirty he was governor of the province of Galilee. When he died, his works were placed in the public library in Rome, and the citizens erected a statue to his memory. It was in Rome that the *History of the Jewish War* and the *Jewish Antiquities* were written. The influence of his environment was upon him. He had to unveil the history of the Hebrews, to explain their religion, to delineate the virtues of their heroes, to prejudiced and critical Gentile readers. He omits discrepancies, softens objectionable features, avoids difficulties, and paints the great characters of the Jewish Pantheon in the most favourable hues. The colours on his palette were derived from rabbinical traditions, and from them he heightens the biographical portraits of patriarchs, prophets, and kings, and adds light and shadow to many of the strange and stirring incidents of a mysterious and peculiar race.

The list of the sources of the narratives and

traditions which shed light on the events and personages of the Old Testament history could be greatly increased, but there is only one other of the first importance—the ancient bricks and cylinders and slabs which have been unearthed in Babylonia. They were once dead and silent, but they have risen up as witnesses of the far-back past, and are speechless no longer. It is a most wonderful impulse which is impelling the scholars of the twentieth century to penetrate into those primaeval ages, and to hold communion with those early lawgivers, philosophers, prophets, and poets of a vanished race; while others of our sons are bent on the discovery of the unknown parts of the planet and on the conquest of the air. It is equally surprising that—as if with quickening force from within—those tombs of intellectual treasures should one after another be opening to the light. The discovery of a library amongst the ruins in the valley of the Euphrates is of greater importance than the unveiling of Tibet; and it is a wholesome chastening of modern pride to be told that if Rome had its Vatican and Oxford its Bodleian, Nineveh possessed its records of religious, historical, mathematical, astronomical, and legal research. It is on these inscribed tablets that we find many of the primitive legends which are the patrimony of the human family, and which make their presence felt in Holy Writ. They stand out like the massive Assyrian figures of man and beast that are engraved on ancient monuments and walls.

When we turn to those extra-canonical documents that are related to the history of the New Testament, we find our mind 'in wondering mazes lost.' There are innumerable books, and the number of their authors is legion. It would almost seem as if every individual of any note who had played a part in the momentous drama must have given an independent testimony. One is startled to meet with gospels attributed to James the Just, to Peter, Thomas, to Bartholomew, Barnabas, Matthias, Philip and Andrew, and to the twelve Apostles in their corporate unity, and to Nicodemus. We are furnished with Arabic histories of the childhood of Jesus, and of Joseph the carpenter, and a Greek and Syriac account of Mary's death and departure. Of all the apocryphal writings, perhaps the most remarkable and the oftenest quoted are the *Protevangelium*, the *Gospel of Nicodemus or the Acts of Pilate*, and the *Gospel according to the Hebrews*. The first is biographical, grave, circumstantial; the second graphic, imaginative, emotional. Of the third there are only about twenty-four extracts available, but it is one of the lost books that the Church would be glad to recover. Beyond these there are many fragments of parchment and papyri that have been stumbled upon in the archives of secluded monasteries. Almost every year is bringing some early Christian document to light. The inquiries raised by the finding of these apocryphal gospels are intensely interesting both to the scholar and to the

disciple. The question as to their genuineness and authenticity is furnishing the greatest minds of our day with an exacting problem. But our chief concern is with the traditions of incident and biography which they contain. The motives which impelled their authors to seize the pen were manifestly varied. There were undoubtedly a few who were devoutly anxious to supplement the received and perhaps authorized account, which appeared to them to have gaps, and to stop short in the unfolding of character. It is equally plain that some were conceived in the interest of some particular dogma. Others were the offspring of an excited imagination. They belong to a period of spiritual renaissance. They were the outcome of reverie, dream, and speculation; they came in cycles like the flashing of meteors in the November sky. As to their value—some are fabulous and are rejected as soon as seen; other narratives, compared with those of the canonical gospels, are trifles light as air—mere floating specks of dust in the sunbeam. But there are others that have a charm and a meaning which have endeared them to the simple believer in every age. Only on this understanding can we account for the fact that the chief of the apocryphal gospels are written in varied languages, and have been traced to Egypt, Syria, Persia, India, Greece and Spain, and have been quoted with approval by such men as Athanasius, Clement, Origen, Eusebius, Justin Martyr, and Augustine.

The Koran comes later than these, with its tales of the patriarchs and prophets and kings, its demonology, and its allusions to Jesus Christ and the holy family. As a whole these legends have been derived from Jewish sources—many from the Talmud and Targums and some of the most striking from the apocryphal gospels. The Koran has been fed also by other streams. There are Arabic traditions; and to one outside, unnamed, mysterious document, Mohammed refers as the *mother* of his book.

One channel by which a number of these legends have reached the modern religious mind is found in the *Golden Legend* of Jacob de Voragine. He gathered his extra-canonical materials mainly from the history of Eusebius and other works of the Fathers, but he interwove more recent tradition, both oral and written, within his picturesque pages. He was a pious and learned Dominican. In his early career he was a preacher of renown and a successful teacher. He died, Archbishop of Genoa, in the odour of great esteem and sanctity. As a preacher to the common people and teacher in the priory schools, he could not but have realized the practical importance of moving story and pathetic scene; and his experience resulted in the composition of this, his greatest work.

The spirit of the *Golden Legend* was the ruling influence of the religion of the Middle Ages. No book was more frequently printed or more widely circulated in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It was

translated from the Latin into most European languages; and when, in its old French form, it came over to England, William Caxton proudly printed it as one of his earliest translations.

With the lives of the modern saints which it chronicles, we have nothing to do. The golden legends of the saints of the Old and New Testaments are immortal.

Having now some conception of the nature and varied character of the legends we are discussing, there are preliminary questions to be answered. Are they worthy of a place in religious thought, and are they capable of inspiring or strengthening religious action? Is he who attempts to classify them a collector of inconsiderable trifles? or he who narrates their pedigree 'the idle singer of an empty day'? It is an easy task to discern their literary value. Although some of the stories may be simply dross, there are others whose rifts are 'packed with golden ore.' Their intrinsic worth has preserved them to the present, and has placed them amongst the treasures the world will not willingly let die. They have been a varied and inexhaustible source of inspiration to the artist of every order. They appear on the painted canvas, are shaped in the sculptor's marble, and adorn the galleries of the great cities of the world. Indeed, they surround and appeal to men in every department of their life, wherever they turn. They haunt the softest and the wildest scenery. The sward on Weary-All Hill,

Glastonbury, where Joseph of Arimathaea planted his thorn, is still green with his memory, and its name retains the recollection of the fatigue of his pilgrimage.

Mons Pilatus, near Lucerne, still frowns upon the gloomy lake at its foot into which Pilate plunged himself to drown his remorse, and to cleanse 'those hands that never would come clean.'

It was from the heroic or pathetic stories of the *Golden Legend* that the troubadour caught the inspiration of his ballad. They were dramatized in the Middle Ages, in miracle play and mystery, for the simple folk who could not read. They animate and beautify the pages of Dante, Shakespeare, and Milton, and underlie the Tennysonian lyric and the 'Idylls of the King.' If we turn to architecture, they look out from the stained-glass window of the minster, the bosses of the arch, and the gargoyles of the roof. They explain the chimes which ring out from the steeple, or the tolling of the bell which drives away all ghostly enemies.

In our business haunts we meet with them also. The Guild of the Fruiterers has adopted for its badge the Tree of Life with the serpent coiled around its trunk. In the Guildhall stands the griffin with its eagle head and leonine body, the symbol of the divine and human nature combined.

They are associated with the sound of our streams and rivers, and lend a sacred charm to our wells and fountains.

The murmur of their story is in every nursery;

we hear them in the Sabbath hymn and in the fireside tale. Indeed, 'the isle is full of noises, sounds, and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not.'

But the chief value of such legendary lore as we propose to deal with lies in the insight it affords us into the intellectual, moral, and spiritual life of the people. True legends are not things of private and individual inspiration. They are born of the spirit of the people—they belong to them and abide with them—their intellectual light, their moral standards, their spiritual food. If we can only ascertain the legends they have loved, we shall become acquainted with the moods that have swayed them. They are a development which has accompanied the progress of the human race from the dawning of history to the present day. They are one form of the expression of the spiritual sense in the common heart of humanity. What is their testimony? Are they in their infinite variety of age and form and origin capable of being classified, according to the creative moods of the religious instinct, as we account for the mathematical figures formed by the sea sand on the plate of glass, by the vibration of sound from the string of the violin beneath?

PART I

THE SPIRITUAL SENSE:

Its Craving to Know More than has been Revealed

PART I

SYNOPSIS

I

The spiritual sense and the unknown—Origin of the soul—Hebrew Pre-existence—Plato's Reminiscence—Wordsworth's interpretation—The subliminal self—Value of the inquiry.

II

The inhabitants of the invisible world—Legends of the angels—The celestial hierarchy—Archangels—Cherubim and Seraphim—Relation of angels to nations and individuals—A plea for belief in their ministry.

The evil angels—Their apostasy—Hostility to the divine government—Satan—Evolution of the idea of his personality—His character—The value of the doctrine of a personal tempter.

III

The life beyond—Attempt to unveil it—Early Babylonian legend—Descriptions of the invisible world shaped out of human experience—Heaven, hell, purgatory, and paradise in legend—Belief in immortality persistent but imperfect.

I

THE craving of the human mind to know more than has been revealed will account for an important group of Sacred Legends.

This is one of man's earliest and most undying instincts. Its attitude on the threshold of the mysterious and unknown is, perhaps, its first religious manifestation. Although it may carry with it a sense of its own ignorance and inefficiency, it pursues its inquiry in all realms, and nothing can wear out or beat down its obstinate questionings. Whatever may be the degree of its success, the nobility of the effort must be acknowledged. In its search for truth, it is sufficiently daring to climb the dizzy height, to span the widest chasm, and to knock at every bolted door. Whether this striving of man's intellect to penetrate the regions beyond his experience is either wise or moral is scarcely worth debating. It is by the appeasing of his thirst for knowledge that he comes to know himself and the universe he inhabits. As he follows on patiently and untiringly, the boundary of his inheritance enlarges. What seemed

an impassable horizon becomes the point of view for a farther prospect. All along the path of progress, the unknown country has been explored, the hard problem has been solved, conflicting theories have been balanced, and the veil of mystery which has hung over some facts of human existence has again and again been drawn aside.

The origin of personal life has always provoked inquiry. To the earliest thinker on this subject man's personality had only two parts—a body and a soul within it. He could trace the genesis of the body and understand something of its fashioning; but from whence had come the animating soul? How soon in the history of man this question assumed a definite and intelligible shape it is difficult to discover. Although it may be true, as Tennyson says—

> The baby new to earth and sky,
> What time his tender palm is prest
> Against the circle of the breast,
> Has never thought that '*this* is I';

i.e. was never troubled with the problem of his own existence—it is nevertheless apparent that in its very infancy the human race has striven to find out its spiritual origin. The pathetic inquiry of the pagan Saxon thane, as he pointed to the sparrow which had come out of the darkness, passed quickly through the lighted room, and had flown out into the darkness again—'From whence has the soul come and whither is it going?'—presents a scene which will probably

have its counterpart in the history of every tribe of the human race.

With the idea of a divine creation, the Hebrew coupled the pre-existence of the soul. As he gave scope to his imagination, there opened out a section of the invisible and heavenly world, where abode in light and glory all unembodied human souls, who had at a remote period of time been at one and the same moment created. They were housed there preparatory to their descent to their earthly experience. When the Creator had fashioned each tenement of clay, the soul to be housed within it was conducted by an angel to his residence. As soon as the spirit had entered the body, the angel touched the lips of the child, who from that moment gradually forgot the glories of his native home. The soul of Adam was, of course, the earliest emigrant. He is said to have had a thousand years of heavenly life before he came to Paradise. He obeyed reluctantly the summons of the guide to enter his body, and for that reason it was decreed that when the time arrived for his soul to leave, he should depart in pain.

When and where this idea of the pre-existence of the soul arose it is impossible to say. It is in all the great Eastern religions. Plato taught it, and insisted that knowledge was partly reminiscence. It was impressively stated by Origen, and won a very wide assent. Wordsworth, the most naturally philosophic of all our English poets, has immortalized the theory—

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar:
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home.

Indeed, it would seem to be the natural idea of the mind in presence of such a problem. One who has made the mind of the child a special study tells with great conviction of a little girl inquiring of her mother, 'Why does not baby speak?' And when the reply proved insufficient, answering herself the puzzling query. '*I* know; the things that baby saw in God's house before she came to live with us were so wonderful that she cannot speak about them; she has got to be quiet until she has forgotten.'

This theory has acquired new interest in our own time, from its association with the doctrine of the subliminal self. If we accept this later development, then only a portion of the soul's life is enclosed for the present within the mortal frame, but it looks forward to the ideal completion of its perfect life. In our present state, 'truly,' says Sir Oliver Lodge, 'the memory of our past is imperfect or non-existent; but when we waken and shake off the tenement of matter, our memory and consciousness may enlarge too, as we rejoin the larger self of which only a part is now manifested in mortal flesh.' Be that as it may, we

still venture to think that however faint and fitful such a memory may be, it is not without utility. The thought that we are not of yesterday, and come of lofty lineage, should help us to self-reverence. It will explain to us those hours of mystic elevation when—

> As angels in some brighter dreams
> Call to the soul when man doth sleep,
> So some strange thoughts transcend our wonted themes
> And into glory peep.

And should we be so bold as to gird ourselves to rise to the heights that those thoughts have reached, the memory of the past, although it be only half conscious, will be an impulse towards the achievement of nobler things.

II

THERE has always been a strong desire to know whatever can be ascertained concerning the inhabitants of the invisible world. Speculations regarding the number, nature, and offices of the angels have had a special fascination. This is not surprising. As they are represented as beings of ethereal loveliness, stainless purity, radiant energy, and glowing love, so they have awakened our imagination and charmed our affections. What the flowers are to the earth and the stars are to the heavens, the angels are to the sphere of our mundane and more material consciousness. Although their existence is clearly revealed in the Holy Scriptures, the subject is not expanded, and much is left to the excursions of a stimulated curiosity. Whenever this is present, the imagination is busy, and men are glad to gather together whatever traditions they are able to collect. The legends of angelology are sufficiently numerous to make a class by themselves. They view the nature of these celestial beings in two chief aspects—their relation to God and to man. As to the first, they are His living

and nobly endowed creatures. They reflect His glory, obey His will, and carry out whatever He commands. As order is Heaven's first law, we may well believe that the innumerable host is ranged in ranks: that they are grouped according to their attributes and the character of their services. It is to Dionysius the Areopagite that we are indebted for an idea of the celestial hierarchy. According to tradition, which is unhappily here at fault, he was a convert of St. Paul, and received from him, after he had been transported to the seventh heaven, an outline of the angelic orders and distinctions. First come the Councillors of God, next them the Governours, and then the Messengers. In each of these divisions there are three separate orders, numbering nine in all, Seraphim, Cherubim, Thrones, Dominions, Virtues, Powers, Principalities, Archangels, and Angels.

Whatever impression this somewhat arithmetical arrangement may make upon our modern imagination, it stamped itself upon the thought of the Christian Church from the ninth to the seventeenth centuries. The military archaic metaphors may have partly been suggested by Pauline expressions; they were certainly elaborated on the scale of the imperial Roman legions, and were confirmed in the mediaeval mind by the orders and degrees in feudalism. Thomas Aquinas accepts the arrangement of Dionysius as to the number of the principal divisions, only altering a few of the names of the powers. The classification

is more or less apparent in Dante's epic, and it figures impressively in *Paradise Lost.* The majestic line of the archangel's address to his peers rings through the imagination and haunts the memory—

Thrones, Dominations, Princedoms, Virtues, Powers.

When we come to single out persons in the bright array of the sons of light, there are seven superior spirits who stand in the presence of God. Two, Michael and Gabriel, are named in the canonical books. In the book of Enoch, Uriel and Raphael are mentioned. The remaining three, Chamuel, Jophiel, Zadkiel, are introduced by other sacred writers. These seven are the archangels. As each of the names denotes, the life and energy of all are derived from their Creator, and whatever power or virtue is wielded by them declares His glory, might, or love. Each name terminates with EL, which stands for God; and the syllable or syllables preceding it have specific meanings.

The image, strength, healing virtue, light, vision, beauty, and righteousness of God are thus splendidly personified.

Michael is represented as a majestic figure 'severe in youthful beauty,' the head of the angelic host, the protector of the Hebrew race. In later times he holds a sword and a pair of scales, for when the day of judgement arrives Raphael will gather the souls of men, Michael will weigh them, and the remaining five great angels will separate the just from the unjust.

Gabriel, the strength of God, is the most prominent in New Testament history. He is of milder splendour; his might is softened with gentleness; he is the angel of the Annunciation. He moves amidst the opening scenes of the Gospels like a planet through the silvery clouds of a peaceful sky. Uriel is God's bright angel standing in the sun. Chamuel was the mysterious spirit who wrestled at the fords of Jabbok with the patriarch Jacob, and touched the hollow of his thigh. He appeared later on at the brook Kedron, but at this time not to wrestle with, but to strengthen the agonizing Son of Man. Jacob was anxious to know his antagonist's name. Old Rabbi Duncan, as he was called, of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland—and many other students of the Gospel history since—regarded this anonymous visitor in Gethsemane as his favourite angel, and looked forward to the time when the secret would be disclosed. Jophiel, the Beauty of God, was the guardian of the Tree of Knowledge. It was he who after the fall drove Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden. The association of beauty with knowledge is natural, and needs no explanation. But why should Beauty expel the guilty pair, and wave the flaming sword, unless it was that they should ever carry with them the remembrance that justice was tempered with mercy, and have imprinted upon their last memory of paradise a vision, not of the terrible frown of an angry God, but of the beauty of goodness which was grieved and willing to be reconciled?

Zadkiel, as the Righteousness of God, was with Abraham when he went to offer Isaac. As the patriarch's willing faith without the deed was counted to him for righteousness—the angel stayed his hand.

In addition to these seven, there are others of notable name in the Mohammedan and other literatures. Azrael is the Angel of Death; Ithuriel, the knowledge of God, wields the spear which detects falsehood by its touch; and Israfel holds the trumpet with which he will sound the blast at the last day to summon the quick and the dead to the judgement.

As we venture to penetrate into the subject of the essential nature of the angels, they range themselves in two divisions—the Seraphim and Cherubim. The word 'seraph' signifies 'a flame, or a flash of splendour.' The root of the word 'cherubim' means to know. A flame is the symbol of love; the Seraphim are therefore compacted of love, and give forth its glowing energy. The Cherubim are instinct with knowledge, and convey its influence. Whenever they are represented in legendary hues correctly, the order of Seraphim have either tongues of flame around their heads, or they are clothed in flame-coloured or ruby robes. The Cherubim are clad in azure blue. Both colours speak for themselves. The one is the simple and eternal symbol of the love which comes from God, the fire which warms, expands, and purifies the soul. Charles Wesley, with his sensitive, poetic touch, has employed the image accurately—

Light of life, *seraphic Fire*,
Love divine! Thyself impart;
Every fainting soul inspire,
Shine in every drooping heart.

The blue is an emblem of knowledge. Knowledge is light, and the light of the heavens above our head, owing to its distance, becomes an azure blue. The position which these two great orders hold in their relation to the Presence of God is suggestive. As Mrs. Jameson points out, when they are represented pictorially in glorious circles as surrounding the Divine Presence, the nearest to the Person or the Throne of the Most High are the Seraphim, the Cherubim form the outer ring. It is in such legendary creations as this that true spiritual insight finds its fitting poetic expression. In what other way could we be more strikingly taught that knowledge should lead to love; that the attainment which marks our real progress is not so much growth in knowledge as in love; that the more we learn of God the more we shall love Him; that it is through the subduing and refining power of love that the soul becomes a partaker of the divine nature; and that we are nearing the goal of all our desire when with veiled faces we can say, 'Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee'?

The relation of the angels to men is one of sympathy and service. They are intermediaries between heaven and earth. While akin to men in spiritual intelligence, they are not made of any matter sensible to pain or tears.

The points on which they make common cause with man are these: they are created by the same Creator; the law of their life is obedience; and they realize their happiness in doing His will. It is from these things that their sympathy with men arises—these common experiences are the rungs of the ladder which is on the earth and reaches up to heaven. They are introduced both in the Old and New Testament history as the guardians, protectors, companions, friends, and fellow soldiers of men. Nowhere has their cheerful and manifold helpfulness been more beautifully expressed than in Spenser's lines—

> How oft do they their silver bowers leave
> And come to succour us that succour want?
> How oft do they with golden pinions cleave
> The flitting skies, like flying pursuivant,
> Against foul fiends, to aid us militant?
> They for us fight, they watch, and duly ward,
> And their bright squadrons round about us plant,
> And all for love, and nothing for reward!
> Oh! why should heavenly God to men have such regard?

When we add to the statements of the Bible the suggestions from other sources, we are led to understand that to each nation is assigned a guardian angel. Michael was alloted to the Hebrews. Along the eventful and chequered path which the Jewish people trod, an Angel from the Lord appears again and again. He and his celestial band watched over the destinies of Jerusalem, and when, as tradition tells us, the besieged in the city were at their last gasp, and

the legions of Titus were about to pour over the shattered walls—above the gates of the temple there went forth a procession of angels, which slowly vanished out of sight amongst the darkening clouds, leaving the lingering wail 'Let us go hence' behind them.

Later on, in the sixth century, it would seem as if Michael was regarded as protector of the City of Rome. After a pestilence had decimated the population, he is said to have appeared to Gregory the Great, who was praying for his people. The angel stood on the mole which had been raised above the Tiber in memory of the Emperor Hadrian, and sheathed his sword, to show that the plague was stayed. The castle of Saint Angelo stands on the summit of that elevation now, and commemorates the event.

The archangel Michael subsequently became the patron saint of Normandy. Mont Saint Michel is one of the most picturesque features of its coast, and when the Normans strode across the channel to English shores, their footprints on Saint Michael's Mount in Cornwall mark the path of their conquest.

The interest of the angels is not confined to nations or cities. It is concerned with the lives of individuals. According to the Talmud, when a child is born two angels are told off to be his guardians, one on the right and the other on the left. There are in other sacred books variations as to numbers. Some authorities count the sentinels by thousands. But should there be only two at first, they are joined by others as the child

develops. Whenever his mind has awakened and his will begun to move, for every good desire and noble impulse or gracious action, there comes down from above another angel to increase the number of his attendants, and to encourage his heart to greater efforts. The truth which is taught in this ancient idea is as profound as its form is simple. Moral power is cumulative—the will strengthening itself by its own exertions. It is not unlike yet much more beautiful than the belief of the Red Indian warrior, that the spirit of each enemy whom he slays enters and resides within his own. But the moral is probably the same. We gain force by using what power we have, in doing our duty, and in conquering difficulties, as Job in his day of apparent defeat maintained: 'Yet shall the righteous hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger.'

There is something unspeakably charming in what these sacred stories tell us of the tender solicitude of angels for little children. We naturally associate their presence with the age of childhood. We can imagine them around the sleeping infant without suspecting ourselves of unreal sentiment. It is the stooping of the infinitely great to the infinitely helpless. The child cherishes the belief, and repeats his vesper unconscious of the great thing he is claiming. It is of the four angels who sometimes 'support the throne of God,' and at other times stand 'at the four corners of the earth,' that he sings—

Four corners to my bed,
Four angels round my head,

and then falls asleep in innocent security.

The interest of these friends and companions in the struggle of men in common life is illustrated by innumerable legendary traditions. Here is one of Isidore the ploughman, as William Canton tells it—

In the ancient days of faith, the doors of the churches used to be opened with the first glimmer of the dawn in summer, and long before the moon had set in winter; and many a ditcher and woodcutter and ploughman on his way to work used to enter and say a short prayer before beginning the labour of the long day.

Now it happened that in Spain there was a farm labourer named Isidore, who went daily to his early prayer, whatever the weather might be. His fellow workmen were slothful and careless, and they gibed and jeered at his piety; but when they found that their mockery had no effect upon him, they spoke spitefully of him in the hearing of the master, and accused him of wasting in prayer the time which he should have given to his work.

When the farmer heard of this he was displeased, and he spoke to Isidore and bid him remember that true and faithful service was better than any prayer that could be uttered in words.

'Master,' replied Isidore, 'what you say is true, but it is also true that no time is ever lost in prayer. Those who pray have God to work with them, and the ploughshare which He guides draws as goodly and fruitful a furrow as another.'

This the master could not deny, but he resolved to keep a watch on Isidore's comings and goings, and early on the morrow he went to the fields.

In the sharp air of the autumn morning he saw this one and that one of the men sullenly following the plough behind the oxen, and taking little joy in the work. Then, as he passed on to the rising ground, he heard a lark carolling gaily in the grey sky, and in the hundred acre where Isidore was engaged he saw to his amazement not one plough but three turning the hoary stubble into ruddy furrows.

And one plough was drawn by oxen and guided by Isidore, but the two others were drawn and guided by angels of heaven.

When next the master spoke to Isidore it was not to reproach him, but to beg that he might be remembered in his prayers.

This may be a convenient point at which to inquire into the utility of a belief in the existence and offices of the angels, and how far it is a working conviction in modern Christian life and thought. If, indeed, there are such creatures, intelligent, radiant, and strong, made by God, and so endowed that they show forth His majesty and beneficence, is there not in such a manifestation an incentive to reverence which lies at the root of every beautiful growth in human character?

And when we in addition remember that they are enlisted on our own side, and, although unseen, are working for us in ways we may not understand, it supplies us with another cause of gratitude to Him who has so amply cared for us. If we could also realize that in our spiritual contests we are never really alone; that, although surrounded by opposing forces we can neither name nor number, the hills which

seem to imprison us are alive with chariots of the celestial host—our fainting hearts would instantly revive. How much more interesting to us the natural world would become—less material and less void—if we would accept the thought that the angels in their ministries employ the powers and laws of the universe! If, with John Henry Newman, we could believe—

> That as our souls move our bodies—be our bodies what they may—so there are Spiritual Intelligences which move these wonderful and vast portions of the natural world which seem to be inanimate; and as the gestures, speech, and expressive countenances of our friends around us enable us to hold intercourse with them, so in the motions of universal nature, in the interchange of day and night, summer and winter, wind and storm fulfilling His word, we are reminded of the blessed and dutiful Angels;

then, as he proceeds to say—

> Every breath of air and ray of light and heat, every beautiful prospect, would be, as it were, the skirts of their garments, the waving of the robes of those whose faces see God in heaven.

Besides, in the glimpse which is given us of the order and harmony of their ranks in the heavenly kingdom, a pattern is put before us, and an ideal state which the earthly commonwealths may keep in view and strive to attain. The prayer, 'Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,' is the aspiration and hope of many millions day by day. When

describing the closing hours of Richard Hooker of the *Ecclesiastical Polity*, Isaac Walton begins by saying, 'And now *his guardian angel* seemed to foretell him that the day of his dissolution drew near.' He lingered several days. On one of them the doctor 'saw a reverend gaiety and joy in his face, but it lasted not long.' On the next, however, he 'found him better in appearance, deep in contemplation, and not inclinable to discourse,' which gave the doctor occasion to inquire his present thoughts, to which he replied, 'That he was meditating the number and nature of angels, and their blessed obedience and order, without which peace could not be in heaven; and oh, that it might be so on earth!'

Although the contrast between the picture of that pure and peaceful celestial realm and the actual world we live in, where there are strifes, rivalries, jealousies, wars and rumours of wars, is painfully great, we may be moving slowly towards it. Even the contemplation of such a perfect state elevates the mind and stimulates endeavour. It is not an imaginary cloudland, 'the baseless fabric of a vision.' We may cherish the faith which Vaughan the Silurist sang when his country was stained with the blood of her children, and his countrymen, Cavaliers and Roundheads, were slaying one another in the Civil Wars—

> My soul, there is a country
> Far beyond the stars,
> Where stands a wingèd sentry
> All skilful in the wars;

There, above noise and danger,
Sweet Peace sits crowned with smiles,
And One born in a manger
Commands the beauteous files.

It must, however, be admitted that notwithstanding what has been revealed, and what legend and tradition have told us regarding the angels, the fact of their existence is not influencing the Christian Church appreciably. If it be entertained at all, it is assigned to contemplation and not to action, or it belongs to devotional moods and not to our work-a-day experience. When the words of the Te Deum are on our lips our song blends with their voices—

To Thee all Angels cry aloud: the Heavens, and all the powers therein.
To Thee Cherubin and Seraphin continually do cry,
Holy, holy, holy.

And when in the joyful solemnity of the Holy Communion we are exhorted to lift up our hearts and give thanks unto our Lord, we break forth in response and say—

Therefore with Angels and Archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify Thy glorious Name; evermore praising Thee, and saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts.

But when the hour of praise and prayer is over, we return to the streets of our cities, or the lanes of our country villages, and regard them as highways which the angels never tread.

It is not easy to account for the decay of this belief, which was held by the early Christians, and by the early Englishmen who carved the angels in Henry VII.'s Chapel in Westminster Abbey, and built the angel choir in Lincoln Cathedral.

It may be a national rebound from the heresy of angel worship, which arose with the Gnostics and descended to the Middle Ages. The doctrine of the beneficent ministry of Angels may have withered in the air of the same philosophic doubt which led Philo to teach that they were the ideas and energies of God ideally personified. Or it may have been affected by scientific analysis, which rejects what it cannot see, or measure, or weigh. But whatever may have caused the crumbling of this conviction, and relegated its remains to the realm of sentiment, it finds no warrant from the teaching of the Master. Looking at the children He said, 'Their angels do always behold the face of My Father.' As He welcomed the penitent He declared that 'there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.' And when His disciples were dreading the rush of His inveterate enemies, He calmly assured them that if need were He could summon to His aid more than twelve legions of angels.

It is said in explanation of such statements as these, that Jesus accepted the popular opinion of the day, even its credulity, if it did not interfere with His mission. But if so, would He not have maintained a

reserve, and kept silence, rather than have given such delusions currency? He must have meant what He said; and should we not welcome His words as the confirmation of an ancient belief, and as the unfolding of a new and inspiring revelation?

* * * * *

To this bright picture there is a dark reverse. Almost as soon as men were awakened to study the phases of nature—night following the day, the shadow of eclipse creeping over sun and moon—they became instinctively fearful that they were surrounded by unseen and hostile powers. So soon as the results of their speculation became definite, and the ideas received from dim tradition and fugitive revelation had shaped themselves, we encounter the widely spread belief that there were hosts of evil beings who had to do with man and his history. In different nations there have been varied opinions as to their nature. In Hebrew thought, especially after the Captivity, they were regarded as rebellious angels. In Arabic literature there are the apostate Seraphim, originally made of light, and the genii of fire, in contrast to man who was formed of the dust of the earth. We have also in apocryphal and rabbinical tradition a complex order of demons derived from the intercourse of the evil angels with the daughters of men.

The main idea which recurs through the Scriptures and extra-canonical books and kindred writings concerning them is that they are fallen celestial creatures.

They were once exalted, splendidly endowed, and happy. They sinned, and were expelled from heaven. Milton, who kindles his imagination from legendary and traditional fires, has a graphic picture of the expulsion of the revolting legions—

> Hurled headlong flaming from the ethereal sky.

Their descent to the engulfing abyss was a matter of days. And here comes one of those flashes of truth from the torch of tradition, which now and again is of service. Their fall had three stages, and each degree of degradation was revealed in the forms of the descending angels. When they left the battlements of the skies, they had still their beautiful features and robes of glory; as they sank downwards they were gradually stripped of their splendour, their loveliness faded, and deformities began to appear. When they reached the floor of their destination they were completely brutal in countenance and limb. Dante knew that he was nearing the centre of Paradise as he watched the face of Beatrice, who was guiding him, grow brighter and brighter. If we accept the suggestion of this legend, we shall learn that the perfection or deformity of the soul is determined by its nearness or distance from God.

As the idea of God and the divine government was developed, the Jewish opinions regarding the grades of both the good and evil angels became more fixed and coherent. This was partly owing to the

evolution of their political life, from the patriarchal, through the theocratical, to the monarchical form of government. It was then that the Supreme Ruler became a King, the centre of government a throne—the holy angels in their glittering ranks His standing army, or His attending retinue.

> His state
> Is kingly, thousands at His bidding speed,
> And post o'er land and ocean without rest.
> They also serve who only stand and wait.

In a corresponding way the rebellious spirits were arrayed in hostile camps according to their powers and orders. In outline and grouping the hosts are similar, though one is the antithesis of the other. One is essentially composed of light; the other is substantial darkness.

The attitude of the fallen angels towards God is avowed and inveterate rebellion. In their relation to man they tempt him to sin, accuse him before the supreme tribunal, and inflict upon him the punishment due to his transgressions.

In the realms of nature they are disturbing forces. The Arab saw the spiteful spirit in the spiral sand-storm—the Syrian sailor the destructive fiend in the water-spout. Their shrieks were heard in the tempest; and their baneful breath brought plague and pestilence. They were bent on ruin, death, and discord. But God's eye followed them; and when the Persian pilgrim watched the falling stars, he believed that God was

flinging His shining spears upon the heads of His enemies.

* * * * *

These rebellious angelic powers obey a leader, and it is around this mysterious figure that speculation has centred from time immemorial. While there was a vague foreshadowing of a personality before the times of the Exile, it was after the return of Israel that a great personal adversary to the Most High and a dread enemy of mankind became a part of Hebrew belief. The conception may have received strength and form from the contact of the minds of the captives with Persian philosophy, but there is a difference. In Zoroastrianism the elements of light and darkness are equal. Ormuzd reigns over the one and Ahriman over the other. The world is under a dualistic government. For monotheism there was only one supreme Lord, and all other powers were inferior.

The idea of a personal adversary to the Creator becomes clearer as history proceeds. The fuller revelation of a promised Deliverer accounts for it. The manifestation of the Champion of Good calls out his opponent the Spirit of Evil; as when on the plain of Troy Achilles stepped out from the ranks of the Greeks, proud Hector came from the Trojans to meet him. And as we follow the expanding course of the revelation into the times of the New Testament, we shall find that the personality of the Spirit of Evil is increasingly defined, and the presence of his followers

more sensitively realized as the day draws near for the manifestation of the Son of God, who should destroy the works of the devil.

If we seek to go back to the beginnings of history we reach the mist of uncertainty. Perhaps there are points here and there where the light appears to break through. The adversary was an archangel and fell from his high estate. The reasons traditionally assigned are various. One day, says the legend, when the hosts of heaven were rendering homage to their Creator, in a moment of inspiration this gifted angel burst forth in a lyric of praise while his companions were only bending in silent homage. The grateful acknowledgement he received for his song enflamed his pride. His pride led to his downfall. According to another story he was ambitious. In position he was near the celestial throne. He *stood* before Jehovah. He conspired to *sit* upon the royal seat in equal elevation. Shakespeare seizes this propensity. 'I charge thee, Cromwell, fling away ambition; by this sin fell the angels.'

From other sources we learn that after Adam was created in the divine image, the proud archangel was charged to do him homage. Replying that whereas he was a son of the flame man was made out of the dust, he turned contemptuously away. But however the narratives may vary, they all agree that it was pride which led to his undoing. It went before his destruction and haughtiness before his fall. There is a story quoted by St. Bernard which embodies this thought

and pictures his ruin. As he was the highest amongst the seraphs, he, like all of his order, possessed six wings. With twain he covered his face, with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. One of the mighty flaming pinions was the radiance of intellectual knowledge, the other was the ardour of divine grace. In his proud self-sufficieney, and trusting in his own strength, he attempted to soar into the empyrean; but, relying with all his weight upon the wing of knowledge and ignoring the grace of his Creator, he fell down helplessly.

The earliest symbol of his presenee and of his baneful influenee in the world was the serpent. It appears in the Genesis account of the fall. On an Egyptian slab Isis is seen piercing a serpent's head. Although the Hindu Krishna is represented within the coils of a snake, the foot of the goddess is crushing the monster. Sometimes the head of the serpent is a woman's with flowing hair—a form which persists throughout folk-lore with singular tenacity. There are yet many villages in which the superstition lingers that a woman's hair when cast upon the ground, under certain phases of the moon, will turn into a slow-worm. It is, of course, the truth struggling to express itself, that though sin may have a seductive beginning, it ends with a sting. Both early and late in human history there is a change of shape. The serpent becomes a dragon. Long before the first book of the Pentateuch was written there was in Babylonia the chronicle of

Marduk's victory over the Dragon, and it is the same monster that reappears on the stage of the Apocalypse.

However numerous the names of man's arch-enemy may be, beneath them all is the essential principle of evil. Sometimes he retains his original title of Lucifer, the light-bringer, Son of the Morning. In the Old Testament he is commonly called Satan. In the Apocrypha he appears as Asmodeus. In the New Testament he is known as Diabolus, the God of this World, the Prince of the Powers of the Air, and the Evil One. But although he has many titles they are all perhaps too few to indicate the protean forms which evil may assume: the innumerable emanations of evil which may arise from one who has made his eternal choice—'evil, be thou my good': whose thoughts are only evil and that continually, and whose spirit, incapable of shame and contrition, has fixed his everlasting doom. It is in the light of this proud obduracy that we must read the following legend: 'A saint, whose name has been forgotten, had a vision in which he saw Satan standing before the throne of God. And listening he heard the Evil One say, "Why hast Thou damned me—I who have only offended against Thee once, whereas Thou hast saved thousands of men who have offended against Thee many times?" And God replied, "Hast thou asked for pardon even once?" and Satan was silent.'

As we listen to popular legend on which the spirit of the glad tidings has breathed, we learn that Satan

is not invincible. However great his power, it is held in check; however wide his sphere of influence, it has its boundary. Wherever man in any stage of civilization worships the devil, the dayspring from on high has not yet visited him, or he shuts it out from his idol temple. The different forms by which his person has been placed before the people's imagination excite abhorrence rather than awe, contempt rather than admiration. There may be one exception. The portrait which Milton draws in 'Paradise Lost' is one of the greatest delineations of character which poetic genius has ever achieved. Although he faithfully portrays the passions of Satan—pride, hatred, malice, revenge—as the active energies of his nature, he reveals them on such a colossal scale and clothes them in such poetic light that their natural effect upon the mind is nullified.

> He above the rest
> In shape and gesture proudly eminent,
> Stood like a tower. His form had yet not lost
> All her original brightness, nor appeared
> Less than Archangel ruined, and the excess
> Of glory obscured, as when the sun new-risen
> Looks through the horizontal misty air
> Shorn of his beams.

With such a moving representation before us we shrink and yet are spellbound; we condemn, but not without regret. It was this consideration which made Dr. Arnold of Rugby turn away from Milton's sublime figure to the grotesque and brutal Pan-like creatures

of the Middle Ages as the truer representations of the spirit of evil—cunning, mean, grovelling, loathsome. Although these rude presentations have faded from the popular imagination, the forms which have displaced them still convey the idea of inferiority. The Satan of Dante's *Inferno*, the Mephistopheles of Goethe's *Faust*, the Apollyon of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, the half-humorous Devil in Burns' poems, are the pictures of a subtle, powerful, but not invincible foe.

There are many traditions which lay emphasis on this inferiority, and we owe a debt to sacred legend for keeping this wholesome feeling alive for many centuries. There is amongst others the picturesque story of St. Christopher. How the burly giant, then called Ofero, or *bearer*, revelling in his strength, resolved to serve no other but the strongest—how he came in his search to the palace of a mighty monarch, and impressed by his majesty, bowed down at his throne and entered his service. But inquiring why at the mention of Satan's name the king shuddered and crossed himself, he learned that there was one, a king of terrors, mightier than he. Setting forth in quest of him he wandered many days, but at last in an open plain he saw a terrible form approach with the air of a conqueror, at the head of a vast army. This was the Satan he sought, and Ofero flung himself at his feet and then followed him along the path of triumphant conquest.

When they came at last to four cross-roads where the crucifix had been erected, the slave of Satan saw his

lord and master stop suddenly, then quake with fear, and make a circuit round the cross to avoid it. He asked the reason and persisted in his questioning until the secret was made known. It was at the thought of the Christ who hung upon the cross that Satan trembled and shook with fear. 'Farewell,' said the giant, 'I go to seek Him'; and Ofero becomes Christ-ofero by-and-by.

We find other traces of this popular belief that the power of Satan might be restrained, annulled, or avoided. The sound of the name of Jesus and the appearance of the cross were the most potent charms, but there were other sights and sounds that were effectual. Satan dreaded the cock-crow. At that ringing note which heralded the daybreak he and all his host took fright and vanished with the darkness. The idea may have originated from the account of the cock which crowed thrice at the temptation of Peter. It is probable that the early Christians regarded the crowing of the cock not only as marking the repeated denials, but as sounding an alarm to arouse Peter's vigilance, and scare the lion who was seeking his prey. Anyhow, the idea of the ministry of the cock is prevalent. On a slab in Kilkenny Cathedral he is represented as so eager to warn the disciple of his peril, that he actually lifts his head out of the pot in which he is being boiled for the soldiers' supper. But what is a more exalted example, and more convincing, is the fact that on the vane of

the church steeple the cock is seldom absent, and whichever way he turns as the wind blows, he bids defiance to the devil and strikes terror into man's ghostly enemies. Once, however, the arch-imp is said to have trespassed within the walls of Lincoln Minster when frolicking with the wind. He was turned to stone, and the wind outside is waiting for him still.

* * * * *

The inquiry into the number and nature of the fallen angels acquires emphasis from its supposed relationship to the problem of the origin of evil. When it was that discord crept into the original harmony of the universe is a standing enigma. The conception of a personal adversary to the Supreme Ruler appears to be a step towards solution. If we can receive the hints and glimpses of a far back rebellion in the invisible world, then the appearance of evil on the earth is a continuance and a consequence of that ancient strife; the washing of the wave of a far off sea which was troubled long ago by some awful storm.

It is, of course, evident that the idea of a personal tempter and his subordinates is in the background of modern religious consciousness. So much of the evil in the world is traceable to heredity, to preventable causes, and to the selfish propensities of the human heart, that there seems but little room or need for an outside adversary. But though we may never be able to bring back the framework or

atmosphere in which the convictions which influenced men's lives in the past had their being, yet the fact which underlies it should never be relinquished. The idea of a personal tempter outside ourselves is a truth of revelation. It is surrounded with mystery, it may arouse our fear, but it certainly encourages our hope. We are not responsible for all the evil thoughts which harass us. The sinful solicitations which demand entrance can be barred out. Behind the outward agencies making for man's misery, there is an enemy who may be countermined and overcome. If we resist the devil he will flee from us.

III

IF, as we have seen, the mind of man has been interested in the question of pre-existence, it has been equally anxious to inquire into the reality of the life beyond. We can trace the course of its speculations and imaginations, its hopes and its fears, by the legends which spring from it like sparks from the chariot wheel. In no field of inquiry are these traditions, myths, and stories more strikingly daring, and in none do they more clearly show their futility. But if they start enigmas which they do not solve, and suggest trains of thought which they may not pursue, they nevertheless bear an unmistakable testimony to man's indestructible belief in the continuance of life beyond the grave.

It is impossible to discover the beginning of this conviction. It may have been one of man's earliest instincts. It would be strengthened as he saw the sleeper awaken from his slumber, and watched the chrysalis burst its casing and become a thing with wings; and, as we know, the annual dying down of vegetation into its wintry grave only to rise again with the spring, furnished him with an irresistible analogy.

When Ishtar, the earth-mother of the Babylonians, descended into the under world, at each of the seven gates she came to she was stripped of some part of her clothing from crown to sandals, and there she lay, starved and in darkness, until sprinkled with the water of life; then she revived and returned, putting on her garments one by one, until she reached the light of the day again. At first, this transformation story was a nature myth, but later on it became a prophetic tale of future life.

But although real, the invisible world, with its inhabitants, was not so clearly defined at first. It had no dimension and no boundary, and those who dwelt there were unsubstantial shapes, scarcely conscious within the gloom. As thought advanced, the territory was divided into two great sections—the dwelling-place of God and the happy, and the abode of the doomed.

Further along, it is as if another universe were uncovered, planet after planet, continent after continent, a reflection or a counterpart of the solar system of the visible world. As we follow Enoch when guided by the angel, or listen to the Twelve Patriarchs, or hear the story of Seth in the Gospel of Nicodemus, or accompany afar off Dante and his guides, Virgil or Beatrice, we have glimpses of heaven and hell, of purgatory and of paradise.

In speaking of these conditions, however bold or over-bold the weavers of legend may have been, I wish to be reticent—not so much following their

speculations as endeavouring to point out the significance of their conclusions.

It is very obvious that all the descriptions we have of the invisible realms, where God and angels and the spirits of men abide, are shaped and coloured by human imagination. This is so when we read what the Scriptures deign to reveal. It is still more evident in myth, tradition, and legend. The familiar landscape is reflected, the everyday occupations, the objects which make the furniture of our earthly home reappear, and the terrors that have haunted men in life fling their shadows beyond the grave. The Assyrian was proud of his great city with its seven walls, and he saw it again in the imaginary heaven with its seven divisions. The Hebrew had an equal number of heavens, but it was the seven planets that suggested them.

The most striking image of the dreadful abode of the impenitently rebellious which haunted the Jewish mind was Gehenna—the valley of Hinnom. In that deep, sunless gorge, all abandoned and unclean things, with the bodies of the utterly vile, were consumed with a slow and smouldering fire that leaped up fitfully into tongues of flame. But in the Middle Ages this awful valley was displaced by a prison-house of chains and torture, seeing that in each castle there was the underground cell into which the captive was flung to be tortured. Later still the ingenious horrors of the Inquisition are repeated in purgatory.

But it is when the celestial paradise is unfolded

that we see how the forms of thought and temperament incident to earthly experience have entered into the heavenly. The name 'paradise' is reminiscent. The celestial garden is copied from the Garden of Eden. The tree of life is there; the milk and honey taste familiarly. We may be surprised to learn from Enoch that in the sixth heaven (or paradise) there are the treasures of the snow, hail, rain and dew, and find it hard to harmonize this statement with the description of the blessed valley of Avilion—

> Where falls not hail or rain, or any snow,
> Nor even wind blows loudly—

until we remember that Canaan was often burnt with the sun and parched with drought, while the Britain of King Arthur had a scarcity of sunshine. For Mohammed, the camel-driver, accustomed to the expanse of the burning sands, the oasis of the desert, with its trees and flowers and sparkling springs, may very well have moulded his paradise. John Bunyan, whose early joy was to hear the chimes of Elstow Church bells, rang in his pilgrims to the celestial city with a peal of resounding melody. Indeed, what men have longed for most and have prized as the best growth of their earthly life, they have transplanted to the soil of the heavenly world. To Origen the chief joy of heaven was perfect knowledge; to St. Augustine it was liberty. To the wounded warrior it means peace; to the weary labourer, rest.

It is intensely interesting to follow these unchartered speculations. While they display the strength of man's imagination they betray its weakness. It is here that it attempts to deal with problems beyond its compass. How can God have His abode in 'the City Celestial' when He is omnipresent? how can it be that He—

> That hath no eyes to see, nor ears to hear,
> Yet sees and hears, and is all eye, all ear,
> That nowhere is contained and yet is everywhere?

The locality of hades, of heaven, of paradise has also evaded inquiry. At the centre of the earth—beyond the stars—in some fair island of the ocean—anywhere and everywhere these realms of bliss or woe have had a local habitation.

The problems of joy and suffering have baffled man's speculation most. One of the refrains of the Babylonian legend is, 'The land without return,' and it pictures graphically 'the door and lock on which the dust has settled'—hints that the words of Dante and Shakespeare and Milton have emphasized, when we read, 'Leave hope behind, all ye who enter here,' 'Hope never comes that comes to all,' or when we catch sight of the 'bourne from which no traveller returns'; and yet if we can credit sacred legends, ancient and mediaeval, some visitors have entered the shades and have come back happier or sadder men.

How far those who are in joy and felicity are

touched by the suffering of the condemned beyond the abyss has often been debated. St. Gregory in one of his dialogues has dared to say that the joy of the saved may be enhanced by the thought that there is a penalty of pain for the lost; but if the angel of 'Enoch' leads us to the fifth heaven he will show us Seraphim with melancholy countenances, shadowed by the knowledge that their brethren are in chains.

The results, therefore, are not quite satisfactory. We may find legendary support for all the theories regarding 'the last things,' however conflicting and mutually destructive. But underneath all the different ideas which have arisen as man has attempted to answer the question, Is death the end of all? there has been the persistent conviction that his life would continue beyond the grave—as if he were endowed with a flame from a parent fire which nothing could extinguish—

> For like a child sent with a fluttering light
> To feel his way across a gusty night,
> Man walks the world. Again and yet again
> The lamp shall be by fits of passion slain;
> But, shall not He who sent him from the door
> Relight the lamp once more, and yet once more?

It is here, however, that one turns with thankfulness to the living Word who has brought life and immortality to light. In the calm radiance of His gospel the dim truths of tradition have been brightened, and the spectral gloom of man's imaginings has vanished away. It has brought a truer revelation of the divine

character, and we can no longer regard God as a vindictive and implacable Avenger, since He makes His sun to shine on the evil and on the good. The time when the monk could teach that the diurnal movement of the earth upon its axis was caused by imprisoned souls within it; when the ploughman, as he watched the setting sun, believed that it was reddening as it looked upon the fires of doom and reflected them, has for ever departed. The idea of a sensuous joy, of material wealth, or of physical anguish has also lost its hold upon our imagination. The reality of both happiness and suffering as an inward consciousness, however, remains. The Gehenna is no longer outside but within. As Jacob Behmen puts it, 'Doth the soul not enter into heaven or hell as a man entereth into a house or goeth through a door or passage into another place? No; there is no such kind of entering, for heaven and hell are present everywhere, and it is but the turning of the will either into God's love or into His anger that introduceth into them. And that cometh to pass in this life.'

And should we think that this savours too much of individualism, and feel instinctively that the soul must find itself and its supreme good in fellowship with kindred souls, and in union with God as it is permitted to behold Him, then the same word of the New Testament is our warrant for the hope of such a paradise as Richard of Hampole saw in the early fourteenth century:—

And ther is alle manner friendshipe that may be,
And ther is evere perfect love and charitie;
And ther is wisdom without folye:
And ther is honeste without vilenage.
All these a man may joyes of Heaven call,
Ae yatte the most sovereign joye of alle
Is the sight of Goddes bright face,
In whom resteth alle manere grace.

PART II

THE SPIRITUAL SENSE:

Its Reverence for the Saintly and Heroic in Human Character

PART II

SYNOPSIS

Hero-worship and hero-legends. *Old Testament Characters*:—Adam: His creation—Physical and intellectual greatness—Eve—The Fall, its *dramatis personae*, its consequences. Enoch, the royal saint: His scientific knowledge—His translation.—Noah: Legends of the Flood—Their additions to the biblical narrative. Abraham: A real person—Life, character, and adventures in legend—His crucial trial—Isaac—Sarah. Moses, the greatest Hebrew hero: Legends of childhood and early manhood—His great refusal—Leader, legislator, and deliverer—Mystical death. Solomon: A favourite in Oriental legend—Grand monarque, judge, philosopher, magician—His declension and death. *New Testament Characters*:—The life of our Lord in apocryphal Gospels—In tradition and legend—His infancy—Flight into Egypt—Childhood—Early manhood—Public ministry—Personal appearance—His betrayer—Incidents of Trial—Descent into Hades—Ascent into Paradise. The Twelve Apostles—Apostles' Creed—Missionary journeys. Peter: Character—The keys—Simon Magus—The *Quo vadis* vision—Crucifixion. John: Symbols, palm-branch and chalice—Apostle of love—Old age—Falling asleep. Paul: Traditional appearance—Symbol of the sword—Martyrdom—Three Fountains. The glorious company of the Apostles—Noble army of martyrs.

I

AN important species of legend is the outgrowth of the interest of men in the lives of their fellows. If those lives have been eminent for virtue they revere them; when they have been remarkable for vice they abhor them. This sensibility to the influence of what is great or ignoble is a primitive instinct. It belongs to the human race in each stage of its development. It has revealed itself in some form of hero-worship in every barbarian tribe and in every cultured nation. It belongs to the boy at school, and to the man in business, in politics, and in religion.

The desire to know all that can be known of men and women who have been distinguished for mental, moral, or even physical powers has created a specific form of literature. The chronicles of kings, the histories of heroes, the biographies of statesmen and scientists, the 'acts' of the martyrs, the lives of the saints, have all been produced to meet this imperishable craving. And to these must be added the legend.

Whenever the mind is in sympathy with any

notable character, its interest grows by what it feeds on. It is impossible that any story-teller can narrate everything about his hero, and no biography has ever contained the whole substance of the recorded life. If the imagination of the hearer or the reader be excited, it will always be longing and seeking for more. He will be eager for fresh information for a variety of reasons. The character brought before him may be so great that the few incidents recited may appear too few and too meagre. Or one part of his career may be brought into bold relief and the beginning and the ending be left in the shade. The prominent virtues only may be portrayed and the lesser may never have been noticed. The critical events are often chronicled, while the thousand nameless acts which make up the best portion of a good man's life are unrecorded. And besides these considerations, it is evident that the facts which are revealed afford a vantage-ground for the creative imagination. Some event is narrated, but the cause, of which it is the effect, is not made manifest; or, on the other hand, some action fills the stage for a moment, and its after-results are never traced. Or when any noble soul has shown his greatness in any set of circumstances, the desire to know how he would acquit himself were he placed in other conditions is as natural as it is irresistible. It is owing to these and other considerations that so many biographical sacred legends have been created and preserved. Some of them appear to be simply true and credible, others

are not convincing, but all possess a meaning and a purpose.

No noble character, either in the Old or New Testament, stands before us simply draped in the vesture of the inspired narrative: some bold, or, more often, some reverent hand has put around his brow a garland of leaves which have been gathered from the garden of legend.

* * * * *

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. As soon as the earth was ready for its tenant man was created. It is around Adam that our interest centres in the beginning of the book of Genesis. The drama of human life opens, and Adam is the first actor that steps upon the stage. Although he will be followed by figure after figure, each bringing his own claim to attention, there must always be a peculiar significance in the history of the ancestor of the race. To go back through mazes of incalculable numbers representing the generations of his descendants to a unit—one solitary form standing in the dawn of creation—leads out the imagination; but, as in thought we take our place beside him, we are intensely curious to discover the features of his character, and there are also problems to be pondered and questions to be asked. For the first man must have been typical—in him the characteristics of human nature, however many and complex they are now, must have been simple and elemental. How far do these primitive features reveal

themselves in the portrait outlined for us? Again, in what way is the earliest man related to the problem of evil? Did he, by any wilful intention and with his own hand, cast that pebble into the smooth sea of human experience and ruffle its shining waters into the troubled waves which are breaking still?

The scriptural account of the making of man—his paradisaical state, temptation, fall, and expulsion—is only in the barest outline. It has, however, a grandeur of its own, which comes from authority, pristine freshness, and simplicity. It reveals essentials, and at the same time stimulates inquiry. It does not satiate, but suggests. Behind it there are no doubt dim traditions and rudimentary legends; and although it be history, it is evidently history with the lingering traces of legendary form and colouring.

Some of the prehistoric impressions of Adam's creation and subsequent fate are found in rabbinical writings and apocryphal and Mohammedan books, and they in the course of transmission have given rise to many additions. Some may be dismissed, but others can contribute something which will at least indicate the manner in which that early story has influenced the minds of those who have studied it. They are worth piecing together.

As Adam's name denotes, the first man was of the earth, earthy. His body was kneaded by the hands of the Creator from the dust of the ground, either from the clay of the Mesopotamian valley, or from a slime-pit

near Damascus—according to the Koran; but all descriptions agree in the statement that the Earth he was to inhabit furnished the fabric of his physical frame. In that way was the necessary relation of at-home-ness established. Although his body was shaped from such common material, it arose lofty in stature, perfect in symmetry, and of a ruddy pleasant beauty. It revealed what the marvellous skill of the Great Moulder of the world could accomplish. But although united to the earth he must be linked to the heaven. If he was clay, he becomes, as Mrs. Barrett Browning puts it, 'clay' and a 'breath.' His soul had been created a thousand years before the earthly house of its tabernacle had been made. It is summoned now. It is borne upon the breath of God, through the gates of man's nostrils into the temple in which it will henceforth abide. In its pre-existent state it was bathed in a sea of glory, and the sound of that ocean will, no doubt, continue to murmur through his dreams. It comes down from its former happy place to enter its new abode reluctantly, and that unwillingness will be remembered when the hour for its departure from the body draws near.

The mind of Adam is as great as his body is noble. When the Almighty brings all the living creatures to him from the land and air and water, he can give them all their names according to their special qualities. The angels had attempted this task before and had failed. He must, therefore, have been acquainted with all the sciences. To him the future also is an open

book. He will by-and-by predict to his descendants the coming of flood and fire. It is even supposed that he wrote a record of those primaeval events in which he played his part, but time, alas! has swallowed up the Book of Adam—and many another precious thing.

When these early chroniclers come to speak of Eve, they deal with her candidly. They do not forget her act and deed; but still, however tragical its consequences, they contrive somehow to give it a softened setting.

The first woman was of finer substance, and was more delicately fashioned than man. He was made from clay and she from living flesh. He was created outside Eden from the common earth, and in the common air; she was shaped in Paradise, breathing her first breath within its pale. It is true that she was made from Adam, bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh; but if there was oneness there was also equality. Had she been taken from his foot it would have signified subjection—if from his head, ascendency. She was, however, taken from Adam's side and near his heart—she will therefore be his equal and not his inferior, his companion and not his slave.

It is really her finer nature which renders Eve susceptible to Satan's wiles. He endeavours to employ the peacock as an intermediary first. As that stately bird had then the sweetest voice of all the feathered choir, the Evil One depended on its charm to get a hearing, after he himself, concealed beneath

its emerald wings, had gained an entrance into Eden. But the peacock declined, and introduced the serpent as the better go-between. At that time the serpent stood erect or moved with uplifted head in graceful spiral motion. Its head was like a woman's and its features fair and winning, and therefore likely, as even the Venerable Bede suggests, to strike in the heart of Eve a chord of fellow feeling. The bribe which Satan offers is the divulging of three mystic words, which will shield their possessor from sickness, old age, and death. The serpent at last consents to be the agent of the Evil One, who enters its mouth and couches beneath its tongue. His angelic form must shrink to do so, for whosoever tempts another must demean and belittle himself. It is on the mischief-making power of the tongue when 'set on fire of hell' that Satan relies; but when the serpent accosts the woman the first sound which it utters is a sigh! Eve's heart is moved, and as soon as her sympathy is awakened the drama proceeds. The outline of the scripture narrative is in the main adopted with slight divergences. Our first parents had been in the garden five hundred years before approaching the forbidden tree. The Tree of Knowledge varies; each nation repeating the tradition sees on it the fruit which pleases itself the most—the vine, orange, fig, or pomegranate. To most Northern peoples the fruit of the tree was the rosy-cheeked apple. To them, as to the woman, it is good for food and a delight to the eyes. In most mediaeval paintings of the temptation,

a bitten apple is introduced to tell the tale. In the accounts which are tinged with Eastern prejudices, Adam appears in a more favourable light than his spouse. She assails him repeatedly. He holds out for one whole hour, which we must remember means eighty years as we count time. The fatal moment is graphically described. The crown on Adam's head falls instantly to the ground and all its jewels are scattered. His majestic stature begins to lessen and the peerless beauty of the woman begins to fade. All nature shudders with the shock of that first act of disobedience. When Eve put forth her hand—

> Earth felt the wound, and Nature from her seat,
> Sighing through all her works, gave signs of woe,
> That all was lost.

When Adam ate—

> Earth trembled from her entrails, as again
> In pangs; and Nature gave a second groan;
> Sky loured; and muttering thunder, some sad drops
> Wept at completing of the mortal sin
> Original.

All the beasts and birds, that were the loyal subjects in man's kingdom, were also conscious that their monarch had fallen. Their reverence declined. They besought the Lord to remove him. Everything pointed to his doom. The agents who had drawn him to his downfall suffered also. The song of the peacock became a scream; the serpent no longer walked with lifted head, but crawled and grovelled on the ground. On the day of Adam and Eve's expulsion they, too,

with the Arch-Seducer, were flung out of Paradise—the serpent on Sahara, the peacock into Persia, and Satan into the boiling torrent of the dark abyss.

Outside Paradise, in the land where thorns and thistles grow, the prospect is not inviting. The soil must be subdued. The creatures on the land and in the sea are shy. 'No longer can we play together on the sands of the seashore,' said the eagle to his brother the whale; 'we must keep at a distance from man'; and one of them shot up to the peak of the highest mountain, and the other plunged to the bottom of the sea. Although no angel had divulged the secret of Adam's degradation, even the oxen that he drove were aware of it. On a day when he beat them unmercifully, one of the beasts remonstrated, and reminded their driver that in the day of his disobedience his Master had not treated him so. The torment of the difference between their first estate and their earthly lot was hard to bear, and yet their misery is abundantly relieved. Michael teaches the man agriculture and the woman the way to spin, and so 'when Adam delved and Eve span,' as the old ballad has it, they both tasted the joy and solace of labour. It is true that they saw the days shortening with deepening dismay; but when the shortest day was passed and the dawn broke sooner, their hope revived. Sometimes as they remembered Eden their tears began to fall; but their sorrow was turned into joy, for the tears of Adam fertilized the soil, and the tears of Eve when

they had reached the sea, were changed into pearls. And so the years or centuries rolled on until their sorest trouble came upon them. The body of their favourite son Abel lies dead before their eyes. His brother had murdered him. Cain's offering had been rejected. It was a handful of wild growths hastily gathered, and the fire which fell from the sky and consumed Abel's firstling would not light upon them. He was wroth and struck the blow. And now that the lifeless body lies there, what can be done with it?

The death of Abel is not the only death that day. As Adam looks around in bewilderment, a raven is seen digging a grave to bury one of his brood. It is a friendly lesson. The raven's beak suggests the sexton's spade, and the timely aid will never be forgotten. Henceforth the bird will be one of nature's licensed scavangers, and whenever his young cry out for rain Jehovah will hear them.

And now the time comes for Adam himself to be buried. The number of years allotted to him was a thousand, but he begged leave to surrender seventy of them that they might be given to David. He died at the end of his nine hundred and thirtieth year, and was buried by Seth, Enoch, and Methusaleh with the greatest honours. Eve followed him, one year afterwards, into the rest of the celestial paradise.

* * * * *

Enoch, the seventh from Adam, was a saint. Although the account of him in the Book of Origins

is very meagre, it is sufficient to show that his character was singularly beautiful. The portrait in Genesis is simply a sketch. It has been filled in and touched by tradition and legend. His life, which was lived in the days before the Flood, has made a deep impression. Its influence survived that awful event and stretched down into the ages. It inspired the mystical author of the Book of Enoch after the Exile, and both Peter and Jude feel it as they write their letters to the early Christians. It is a wonderful thing that a type of holiness which is shining with the undimmed light of the morning star above our eyes to-day should have arisen from that primaeval night of selfishness and violence. The saintliness of Enoch may owe something of its lustre to the contrast of its environment. He had fallen on evil times. It was, however, itself essential goodness.

As we look at what the sundry scraps of extra-biblical tradition have to say regarding him, we shall learn what features of the saintly life are lovely in any or every age. We shall ascertain how men interpreted the words of the Bible, 'He walked with God.'

There must have been a strength in his holiness. By force of character, and by consent of the people, he became a king, and ruled over his subjects for more than three hundred years. He must have been as enlightened and as busy as our own saintly Alfred, who also—

> Wore the white flower of a blameless life
> In that fierce light which beats upon a throne.

Enoch was young when he began to reign. In the later years of his life he gradually withdrew from public affairs. The spiritual world with its realities was luring him from the material with its changeful shadows. And yet his subjects clung to him, and resorted to him in days of doubt and difficulty. He was the patron of the new year. He lived for three hundred and sixty-five years—as many as there are days in the solar year. On the first day of every new year his people came to him, and he blessed its beginning. He had never given himself to warlike conquest, nor, although he had inherited Adam's skin garment, which compelled its wearer to become a mighty hunter, had he ever followed the chase. He had a thirst for knowledge, and was an ardent student of science and philosophy. He is said to have invented writing and arithmetic, and to have understood the movements and influences of the stars.

It is evident, therefore, that in the nimbus of that early saintship the light of knowledge was included. The tree of knowledge which Adam had been forbidden to eat was not the tree of truth. Its fruit is the natural food of every soul which tries to walk with God.

As the end of his life approaches Enoch is often alone. He seeks secluded places where the angels can visit him. He is conducted into the spiritual world; visions of angels, of paradise, of the gloomy valley of Gehenna open before his eyes. When he

returns to the homes of men, if the remembrance of the abodes of the blest is uppermost, his face is shining and he prophesies; if he is still haunted by the vision of the lost, his face, like Dante's, is inexpressibly sad and he is silent.

The ties which bind his life to the seen are loosened. He who has once had a glimpse of the celestial city must be drawn to it as by a loadstone. He is summoned to take a seven days' journey. When he says farewell to his people there are some that refuse to be separated from him. Whithersoever he goes they will go; where he lodges they will lodge; where he dies they will die and there will they be buried. But we shall see. At the end of the first day a few are missing. On the second others leave him. The ranks grow thinner on the third and fourth. The sun of the sixth day sets upon a remnant who refuse to journey any farther. They are discovered later on. For when seven days were over a search was made. A band of men went out sorrowing for their absent leader, and for their sons who had accompanied him. They followed the tracks of the missing through regions which each day became more difficult to travel; the air blew keener, and the ground grew rougher. They met some of their kindred returning; but when they arrived at the sixth day's halting-place, they came upon the king's last band of followers, dead and buried in the ice.

The moral of this incident in the passing of Enoch

is not particularly encouraging. If it was intended to meet the inquiry, How far was this early saint's example imitated in those sinful times? the answer is not assuring. Although the quality of his holiness was neither aloof nor severe, it does not seem to have won the worldly-minded. The spirit of the age was too gross and sensual to respond to its gentle appeal.

In the meantime the man who 'was not' as far as the searchers could see, was nearing the walls of the heavenly city. The angel was there with the flaming sword, and before the gate stood Death. But as he came nigh to the wall, a lofty tree which grew within bent one of its branches over, and, as Enoch laid hold of it, he was lifted in. He did not see Death, for God had taken him. He was saved through faith and not by merit. By his own righteousness he could not have scaled the barrier; and yet, if he had not followed after holiness, he would never have seen the Lord. The lesson is for all time; it is the divine voice speaking—

> Mortals that would follow Me,
> Love Virtue: she alone is free.
> She can teach ye how to climb
> Higher than the sphery chime;
> Or if Virtue feeble were,
> Heaven itself would stoop to her.

* * * * *

Noah is one of the greatest heroes in Hebrew history. His character had some striking features which would have been sufficient in themselves to

have made him notable. It is, however, owing to his connexion with the second greatest event in the life of the race that he has gained such prominence. The story of the Fall reveals the deep impression which that act of disobedience must have made on the memory of men. The story of the Flood has left a deeper mark, and has had an immeasurably wider circulation. The earlier catastrophe was mainly moral; the later both moral and physical.

There is scarcely a tribe upon the face of the earth that does not possess some legend of a deluge. They differ from one another in various respects; and yet the wonder remains that in every quarter of the globe, on continent and island, however separated by mountain range or intervening sea, all races, civilized or savage, have a tale to tell of an awful flood which desolated their country, and of the marvellous escape of some of their progenitors. One of the standing puzzles of physiography and philology is to discover the relation between the Flood described in the Bible and those narrated in Greek and Latin literature, or stamped upon the records and the remembrance of the less cultured peoples of the world. None of the theories which have been proposed in explanation entirely solve the problem. It will continue for some time yet to perplex inquirers, while it increases rather than diminishes the popularity of the story. It compels attention, it strikes the imagination, it fills the mind with its magnitude. Painters, inspired by Raphael's

cartoons, will still strive to picture it; preachers will still point to its ethical lessons; and models of the ark and its tenants, rudely or artistically carved, will still find a place in our nurseries.

The narrative presents all the elements which arrest and retain our varied and deepest emotions. In the long hush before the bursting of the storm, we hold our breath in expectation. We feel the tremor of premonition which possesses the birds of the air and the beasts of the field. We gaze upon the gathering clouds and the thickening darkness with dismay. And when the crash of the elements comes—the roaring wind, with lightnings and thunder, followed by streams of never-ceasing rain—we are ready to hide ourselves, as the legend says the sons of heaven did, as the forces of nature rush so furiously together, and the waters rise above the highest hills. But when there comes an interval of calm, and we see the ark of refuge safely riding on the sullen water—the only object on the shoreless expanse—we feel a shock of joy, and watch its fate with mingled hope and fear. And then, when the recorded incidents which follow, so simple and yet so impressive, have passed—the stilling of the storm, the quieting of the heaving water as it is sinking inch by inch, the appearance of the peaks of the mountains one by one, the dispatch of the raven and the dove, the resting of the Ark on Ararat, the rainbow across the cloud, the ascending smoke of the morning sacrifice—we gladly take our places in

that great thanksgiving service in which every living creature instinctively joins.

In addition to its broadly human interest, the story of the Deluge has bestowed upon Christianity a strikingly impressive symbol, which would be sufficient in itself to keep its memory fresh and indelible. As often as we hear the baptismal service, we are reminded that *God in His mercy did save Noah and his family in the ark from perishing by water*, and we are invited to join in the prayer that the child *may be received into the Ark of Christ's Church, and may so pass the waves of this troublesome world.*

The inquiries regarding the area of the Deluge and its precise locality are still agitating engineers and explorers. According to a Constantinople journal of recent date, Sir William Willcocks, the British Advisor to the Turkish Ministry of Public Works, not only claims to have determined the exact site of the Garden of Eden—at Hairlaw, a flourishing oasis in the centre of a desolate Mesopotamian valley—but advances, with some confidence, the suggestion that the Deluge was merely the flooding of the entire plain between the Euphrates and the Tigris. Whether its range was quite so limited is extremely doubtful, but that Babylonia was the centre of the catastrophe is beyond all question.

The biblical account of the Flood is probably derived in part from two Babylonian chronicles. The history of it on the Accadian tablets, supposed to have been written 3,000 years B.C., may itself be based on older

records. There are two separate sources distinctly apparent in the Old Testament narrative which are not always consonant. They combine, however, to form a story which in its sublime and spiritual features, stands apart from all other traditions in its air of moral grandeur, its convincing veracity, and its simplicity of style.

All that the Book of Noah, and the scanty remains of other Hebrew traditions, may be permitted to do, is to bring out of the shadow something only partly revealed, or to throw upon some feature of the story a confirming emphasis, or to add an incident here and there which is not altogether out of keeping with the scope and meaning of the accepted history.

It is quite possible that the father of Noah never saw him, for Lamech when growing old was blind. It is also possible that there was the shadow of death upon his cradle. One day his father whilst hunting had heard a rustling in the copse, and shooting an arrow in the direction which his son Tubal-Cain had described to him, he had accidentally pierced Cain, the outlaw—who was hiding there in the bushes—to the heart.

Noah was a remarkable child; his flesh was white and red—as 'white as snow, and red as a flowering rose; and the hair of his head, and his long locks, were as white as wool; and his eyes beautiful'—so bright, indeed, that 'they lighted up the house like a sun.' Although he seemed surrounded with peace, so

much so as to suggest the name of rest or comforter, the rays of light which darted from his presence stirred all who saw him into wonder. Even Lamech was conscious of their strange effect, and hurried to Methuselah for an explanation, and Methuselah sets out to search for Enoch to have the mystery solved. Enoch foretells the coming of the Flood.

When Noah himself grows up, he has his vision. The earth appears as sinking down. It may have been a natural subsidence, the effect of an earthquake preceding the approaching calamity. But he and Methuselah resort to Enoch for an interpretation of the strange event. He prophesies again of the doom which is about to fall upon the world, and describes the nature of the sins which have caused God's wrath and provoked due punishment. It is curious to learn the character of some of those transgressions. There was lust and violence; there were the unnatural alliances between the sons of God and the daughters of men; but the sins of the greatest turpitude arose from the discovery of the metals and forging them into weapons of war, and moulding them into coinage, and from the finding of jewels and polishing them for pride and luxury. We are told, indeed, long afterwards, that *the love of money is the root of all evil*; but it is startling to be made aware that the prolific root had been planted so early.

The visit to Enoch had another ending. Noah married his daughter Naamah. We hear nothing

about her afterwards. We may, however, infer that the child of him who walked with God would foster her husband's early bent towards righteousness.

When the time has come to prepare the ark, and to select the living creatures, the supplementary legends make no attempt to add much to the biblical narrative. They tell us, however, that Methuselah went about with Noah to preach faith and repentance to the people. They show us Noah standing at the door of the ark to receive the animals that are flocking around him. We hear the words instructing him how to choose the elect pairs from the number. 'Those that lie down before thee let thy sons lead into the ark, and those that remain standing thou shalt abandon,'—a very graphic representation of the truth, 'Whosoever humbleth himself shall be exalted.' And when all are safely housed, and the ark is surrounded by the noise of the tempest and the flood, we can distinguish the voice of the terrified creatures above the awful din.

A trait of merciful compunction is also depicted in Noah's conduct. The king of Bashan swims after the ark, and succeeds in seizing one of its beams; the Patriarch will neither cast him off nor let him in, but, opening a window in the ark, will give him his daily rations—a very ancient prophecy of hope for the Gentiles. When Noah wants to learn whether the waters are assuaging, he sends out a swallow along with the dove and the raven. The swallow comes back, but with no clay in its beak to build a nest for its

young in the eaves of the ark. It will, nevertheless, from this time forth be sacred. And the dove returns, to be rewarded with an emerald ring around its neck. The raven alone remains to feed upon the floating carrion. For that desertion he and his descendants will lose the power to walk, and will have to move by leaping. The rising of the rainbow, and the sacred gathering to celebrate the miraculous escape, are adequately depicted, but the story ends in a lingering tone of sadness.

If there had ever been any hope that the Deluge would have utterly destroyed the germs of evil, it was doomed to disappointment. Within the ark itself there were latent dispositions which might develop disastrously. Ham is covetous—he steals Adam's coat of skins, which has been handed down from father to son for many generations. One of the first trees which Noah plants upon the renovated earth is the vine, which he is not content to allow the skies to water with rain or dew, but he must sprinkle it with the blood of apes and swine. Such are some of the legendary folk-stories which furnish a sequel to the history of the Flood. Although they are as rough as they are meagre, we cannot mistake their meaning. It was impossible to wash away the sin of mankind by any outward ablution. The world must wait for its inward cleansing of redeeming love—its baptism of fire.

* * * * *

It is said that when Dr. Thomson of *The Land*

and the Book was on his way to Palestine, in the hope of identifying some of the resting-places of the wandering patriarch Abraham, a German Professor did his utmost to dissuade him. 'Why, man,' said he, 'there never was an Abraham.' The same thing has been frequently asserted in more measured terms. It is said that the name stands for a race—that although there was no such person as Abraham, with human features, and human joys and sorrows, there was a people which the name personifies. What has been erroneously regarded as his 'life' is the history of a Semitic family, developing through various vicissitudes into an important tribe, on its way to a national breadth and unity.

But surely the narrative tells its story too circumstantially and too naturally for the simple reader to be deceived. It can no more be applied to the characteristics and adventures of a race than a biography of Abraham Lincoln can be taken to refer, not to him individually, but to him as he personified the American Republic in its historical struggle. The innumerable legends also which gather around the name of Abraham are not those that belong to a myth, but are the shadows that can only be cast by a living character of real substance.

The Father of the Faithful is the noblest of all the heroes of ancient history. The quality of greatness belongs to him in all the relations of life. He was a man of strong principle, burning zeal, steady

purpose, unflinching courage; and all these virtues were tempered and softened by humility and gentleness.

His character unfolds itself calmly, with a serene breadth and stateliness. His days and nights were spent on the Syrian plains—a boundless horizon around him, and above him the dome of a lofty and glowing sky. His spiritual nature, as it lay open to the vastness of the invisible, expanded in proportion, broad, steadfast, and radiant. His faith, hope, and charity were on a princely scale. His noble aspirations lifted him above all the men with whom he had to do in all his wanderings; but he never stood aloof. He was perfectly and tenderly human. He had his faults and erred, and his failings are uncovered by the historian with unsparing candour; but, for all that, our admiration is not lowered, nor our affection estranged. He is still worthy to be styled the *Friend of God* and the father of faithful souls.

By one of the many legends associated with his history we are told that when Abraham was born in Mesopotamia, a star arose and shone above his cradle. In the brightness of its light the other stars that were shining were one by one effaced. It is a common practice for historians to point back to some appearance in earth or sky as accompanying the birth of their heroes. It may have been a portent or a promise of hope. In the son of Terah's case the prediction was singularly appropriate. It prefigured Abraham's elevated, serene, and spiritual character, moving with

lofty and undimmed piety above the grovelling aims and idolatrous propensities of his contemporaries. For although obliged to touch and mingle with them here and there—

His soul was like a star and dwelt apart.

It would also predict that in the greatness of his steadfast and luminous faith he would be a guide and blessing to those who in all succeeding generations were called to be pilgrims to a far country—one of those lamps which Jehovah hangs in heaven, and 'fills with everlasting oil, to give due light to the misled and lonely traveller.'

When Abraham was ten years of age, he was sent to live with Shem and with Noah, from whom he was descended. It is in that way, according to tradition, that his early piety is to be accounted for. But, however that may be, his real belief in God came only by a definite and a personal revelation. He had probably retained throughout the forty years of his sojourn in the tents of Shem his early faith in the sovereign influence of the starry heavens on human life and destiny. Even the creed of Noah and Shem may have admitted a plurality of gods. The critical moment came to Abraham—as did all the principal epochs in his experience—when the day had declined and the lowing of the herds and the bleating of the sheep were hushed into silence; when any voice which breathed like the wind from without, or any whisper which arose from his spirit within, were

distinctly audible. It was then that 'the night overshadowed him and he beheld a star.' 'This,' said he, 'is my lord.' But when it set, he said, 'I love not *gods* which set.' And when he beheld the moon uprising, 'This,' said he, 'is my lord.' But when it set, he said, 'Surely, if my lord guide me not, I shall be of those who go astray.' And when he beheld the sun uprise, he said, 'This is my lord; this is greatest.' But when it set, he said, 'I turn my face to Him who hath created the heavens and the earth.'

On his return to his native country, he proclaimed that there was one only true God, and that he was His servant. His father Terah was a maker of idols. If Abraham was not taught how to mould or to carve their figures, he was commissioned to sell them. He refused. His antagonism went further. One day, when the sculptor came into the gallery, he found twelve of the images shattered to fragments. The noise of Abraham's doings reached Nimrod. He was the great world-power of evil in those days. It was he who defied the God who had sent the flood. In a fit of pride he had begun the tower of Babel, and had shot an arrow of defiance into the sky, which had dropped back powerless at the archer's feet. The tower itself had fallen. It was built on infidelity and cemented with inhumanity. If while the building was rising a stone of it happened to be displaced, the cruel despot grieved incontinently; but if one of the masons fell down and was mangled, his death was unheeded.

It was when brought face to face with this great tyrant that Abraham's first ordeal came. Ur, the name of the city he lived in, signifies flame. It implies that the inhabitants were fire-worshippers. He was commanded to bow down and worship the fire. The penalty of refusal was to be cast into a burning furnace. It was already kindled, as if to strike terror into the servant of Jehovah. Abraham, although given up to this fierce trial by his father, and deserted by his kinsmen, is unshaken and undismayed. He can calmly reason with Nimrod. When the king says, 'We will adore the fire,' 'Rather,' said Abraham, 'the water which puts out fire.' 'The water, then.' 'Rather, the clouds that bear the water.' 'The clouds, then.' 'Rather, the wind which scatters the clouds.' 'The wind, then.' 'Rather, the man who endures the wind.' But at this the patience of the infuriated inquisitor was exhausted, and the colloquy came to an end. The king could see to what conclusion it was inevitably leading, and he severed the links of Abraham's chain of reasoning abruptly by casting him into the fire. He was at home in the furnace. The angel of the Lord was with him. A breeze sprang up. Instead of fanning the flames the wind cooled them. The fire forgot its power to burn. 'There was radiant light and a genial glow, but no consuming heat.'

And so Abraham endured the first great trial of his faith. As he stood in the furnace he was the central figure in the Chaldean plain, but he was more. He was

the representative and spokesman of all kindred souls who were striving in the nations of the world to maintain their confidence in the one true and invisible God. They were all in unconscious sympathy with this hero, who in a sense unknown to them was suffering in their behalf. There was not a fire kindled on any hearth, in any city, of any country, in all the earth that day which did not burn without devouring heat!

That initial ordeal was one of the ten trials through which, according to tradition, the faith of the father of the faithful had to pass before it could be perfected. It was not the most severe. The stately march of his history from one event to another, turning each difficulty into a stepping-stone of progress, prevents us from estimating the loneliness and anxiety and anguish which he had to experience in his successive tribulations.

The call 'Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house,' must have torn the ties which attached his heart to the soil where the bones of his ancestors were buried.

When he migrated into Syria and was compelled to do business from time to time with the native chiefs, his sensitive spirit must have shrunk from the contact.

He was sorely disappointed in Lot. When the selfishness of his brother's son led to his separation, his residence in Sodom and Gomorrah, and his capture by the confederate kings, brought upon Abraham calamity after calamity.

Even while he acquiesces in the decree which doomed the cities of the plain to destruction, his heart is stirred with pity. It must have been with a pang of the keenest pain that he parted from Hagar and Ishmael and watched their forms grow less and less as they vanished into the wilderness. But when the darkest hour of Abraham's tribulation came, and a voice he was unable to escape from or to silence, commanded him to offer up his son, his only son Isaac, his anguish was immeasurable. The path which he had to traverse to the summit of the mountain was his *via dolorosa*, and he went forth, bearing his cross and wearing his crown of thorns. The scene is drawn by the Old Testament writer with a sharp, firm outline. The patriarch stands clearly before us. The faith which endures throughout his agony is apparent. But there are a few rays of light from supplementary sources which fall upon Isaac and his mother and remind us that they, too, had their tribulation.

Although Isaac spake unto his father Abraham, and said, 'My father,' and he had replied, 'Here am I, my son'; and Isaac had said, 'Behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?' he had already divined the fate that awaited him. And when Abraham had rejoined, 'My son, God will provide Himself a lamb,' the answer did but serve to confirm his conviction. And so he went on to lay down his life, not passively, but freely and voluntarily. He was as pure and as innocent

as he was willing. 'My son, is there any evil in thine heart?' said Abraham to him as they neared the mountain; and Isaac answered, 'No,' for was he not a type of Him who, when He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, was 'holy, harmless, and undefiled'? When father and son arrived at the summit of Mount Moriah, where the altar of sacrifice had to be built, it was Isaac who handed Abraham the stones. 'Bind me well,' said the son, as he looked up into his father's agonized face; and later, when he saw the gleam of the uplifted knife—'let the stroke be sure!' But as we know, it never fell upon him. There was a ram in the thicket provided to take his place. The ram had journeyed all the way from Paradise. It had been nourished on its pasture, and had drunk of its living streams.

In the meantime, what of Sarah, who had been left in the patriarchal tent behind? Neither her husband nor her son had forgotten her. Abraham had hidden the real object of their journey from her, and was anticipating his return to her alone with dread. Isaac, before he had stretched himself upon the altar, had besought his father to gather up a handful of his ashes, and take them back to his mother as a memorial of his love. She is, however, made aware of what is going on. While they are on their way, she too is entering into her dark valley. An old man has mysteriously appeared before the tent door, and told her the purpose of Abraham's absence, and of Isaac's approaching doom. At first, when the news pierces her soul, she is frantic

and inconsolable. But God pities her in her desolation, and His strength is imparted. In time she begins to feel resigned, and could bear to follow in imagination the steps of Abraham and Isaac along their sorrowful way. The bent and grey-haired messenger appears again. He proclaims that the ordeal is over—that the lad is alive. The news is too sudden. The mother's heart stands still—is broken—is broken with joy.

Sarah died in Kirjath-Arba and was buried in the cave of Machpelah. And again and again Abraham came to mourn and to weep for her. Her loveliness, which was only less than that of Eve, had been the light of his home. Her gay disposition had cheered him in all his journeys. He will lay his bones beside her by-and-by, when his wanderings are over.

We must not be tempted at present to follow the Patriarch further. These additions to the Old Testament narrative are only a few samples of a wealth of tradition which is inexhaustible. The story of Abram or Abraham is a favourite theme of Arabic and Persian legend. It never palls upon its listeners. It tell us a little, and we are eager for further information from any source whatever. 'We want to know more of that man than we do,' says Max Müller; 'but even with the little we know of him he stands before us as a figure second only to One in the whole history of the world.' With that appreciation we must end our sketch of his history, except, it may be, to quote one other bit of legend which refers to Abraham's approaching

end. When the hour of his death was drawing near and he was allowed to choose the manner of his departure, the Patriarch said, 'I should like to breathe my soul out at the moment when I fall upon my knees in prayer.'

* * * * *

Of all the leaders whom Jehovah gave to the Hebrew race, Moses is the greatest. It was under his guidance that they became a nation. His genius inspired their laws and shaped their polity. Not only did his personal influence animate the young and growing nation while he was alive, but it continued to dominate its religion and legislature through all the vicissitudes of its history, until the Greater Prophet appeared whom he had predicted.

Although Moses went in and out amongst the people as one of themselves, he was nevertheless a solitary figure—impressive, elevated, sublime. It is evident from the biographical sketches which we have, that those who looked back and endeavoured to estimate his life and character approached their subject with the utmost reverence. The man who had seen God face to face was not to be lightly regarded. The greatness of his genius filled their vision as Mount Sinai had filled the sight of the Israelites when it burned with fire; for although like that mountain it was based upon the common level, it was also fenced off from inquisitive and rash intruders. Some of the features of the character of Moses are boldly portrayed

in the Scriptures, while others are left in faint outline. Some of the events in his career are amply narrated, while others are dismissed with brief reference. The sketch of his public life which lies between the commission of the Burning Bush and his last ascent of Mount Nebo, teems with important incident and human emotions; but what preceded it—his early manhood, and what followed it—his final farewell, has never ceased to awaken a wondering inquiry. To employ again the figure of the mountain, however boldly its massive shoulders may be marked against the sky, there are deep ravines in shadow and lofty peaks which are veiled amongst the clouds.

It is with these hidden passages in the life of Moses that sacred legends and traditions are concerned. They have come from three main sources—Egyptian, Jewish, Christian. The first conclusively proves that Moses was not a mythical Hebrew hero. The second reveals the unsatiated interest of a grateful people. The third source acknowledges Moses as a forerunner of the Messiah, and sees, in the memorable events that occurred during his leadership, the types of the principal incidents and actions in the life of our Lord.

If these legends do not offer any fresh conception of the personality of Moses, they are not without attractiveness or value. They attempt, at any rate, to lend an additional touch of interest here and there to the history of his life; they introduce a new actor now and again to enliven the scene, and they endeavour to

raise the curtain of mystery which envelops some points of his glorious career.

The story of the Hebrew foundling in the ark of bulrushes is simply and perfectly narrated in Exodus. It does not need another syllable to heighten its charm. There is a danger of marring its loveliness. When we are informed from another source that the beauty of the baby had an almost divine radiance—that when the Egyptian princess took the child in her arms the leprosy from which she was suffering was cured, we may remain a little doubtful or unmoved. But when we are told that the hungry infant, with no language but a cry, refused to be fed from any breast that was offered to him until his sister Miriam found and fetched his mother, we are unwilling to reject the pathetic story.

As we follow the child into the palace of the Pharaohs we enter the region of the marvellous. He is surrounded by idols. When he was only three years old, just weaned from his mother's arms, his zeal flamed out remarkably. Pharaoh's daughter was carrying him. The king, attracted by his beauty, drew near. Taking off his crown he playfully placed it on the head of the infant. It was studded with images. In an instant the child dashed it to the ground, and all its idols were shattered.

This astonishing action led on to another, which is still more wonderful. The priests of Heliopolis were suspicious of Moses, and Pharaoh's courtiers were jealous of him. When the king was indignant at the conduct

of the child in breaking his crown, they saw their opportunity. They predicted that unless something was done, he would grow up and bring about the death of Pharaoh and the ruin of the monarchy. The King of Egypt, being a sagacious ruler, had invited wise men of other lands to be his councillors. Balaam, Jethro, or Reuel and Job, with others of eminence, are standing around him. As the priests are clamouring for vengeance he craves their advice. Balaam counsels death. It was owing to his suggestion that the law which condemned the male children of the Israelites to be drowned had been framed. He had held the idea that no Jew could escape death if plunged into the water. Moses had survived so far, but he would throw him into the river again, and this time to perish. To this Job, as we may well imagine, does not consent. Jethro advises delay, and that the doom of the child should depend upon the result of an ordeal. A silver salver is to be brought and on it are to be placed a gleaming ruby belonging to the king and a piece of glowing charcoal, in size and shape precisely similar. The infant Moses is to choose between them. If he avoids the burning coal and seizes the ruby, he is supernaturally clever. If, on the contrary, he should choose the fire, he will be doing only what any innocent child in its ignorance might do on a like occasion. He stretches out his hand to take the ruby, but an angel turns it aside and guides it to the piece of charcoal. He lifts it to his mouth, and burns himself.

His life is saved, but he has scorched his tongue and he will stammer ever afterwards.

It is easy to see why this legend was invented. There is a cause for everything. When Moses in after years was called to go with God's message to the Israelites and to stand before Pharaoh, he would willingly have given way to any other. 'O my Lord, I am not eloquent, but I am slow of speech and of a slow tongue,' he exclaims; and the Lord answers him, 'Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well; and he shall be thy spokesman unto the people, and he shall be, even he shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God.' It was evident from this account that the impediment in Moses' speech was not a family failing. If not hereditary—what was it, then?

The gap of forty years in the biblical narrative of the history of Moses inspires tradition or provokes poetic invention. To the eye that can see it is full of growth and stirring adventure. According to Stephen, the adopted son of Bathia, Pharaoh's daughter, 'was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians.' From other authorities we can gather what that curriculum meant. He learned arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, medicine, and music. It is said also that he invented boats, and engines for building, instruments of war, and hydraulics, hieroglyphics, and division of lands.

But he is destined to be more than a student. A crisis in Egyptian affairs develops his powers as a

general. The Ethiopians invade the land and win victory after victory. Pharaoh is dismayed and his troops are disheartened. He is instructed in a dream that Moses is to be appointed the deliverer. Moses accepts the post, and puts himself at the head of the army; and driving back the Ethiopians, prepares to invade their country and besiege their capital.

A desert swarming with venomous serpents stretches between him and the city. In the years that are to come he will be shown a sovereign antidote which will render the poison of the serpents of the wilderness harmless; but now he is to rely on his practical sense for a remedy. The sacred bird, the Ibis, is the serpent's deadly enemy. He transports hundreds of them in baskets; they are let loose, and the plain is speedily cleared of its pests, and his soldiers march on unmolested. When they encamped before the walls of Saba, the royal city, they found them surrounded by water and apparently impregnable. If the city may not be captured it can be surrendered. For as he stands upon the walls, Tharbis, the daughter of the king, is struck by the beauty of the brave general who leads the Egyptian host. Negotiations between them are set on foot; the gates are opened, Pharaoh's soldiers march in, and Moses and the Ethiopian princess are betrothed and subsequently married.

The bridegroom-elect returns to Heliopolis in triumph. The king rewards and promotes him. He is regarded as a national hero and deliverer. Through

all this experience he remains true to the faith of his fathers, and he never forgets his fellow countrymen in bondage. He will go outside the city walls to pray as the patriarchs did, turning his face towards the east from whence they came. He will even plead the cause of his kinsmen before Pharaoh and persuade him to give the brickmakers in Goshen one day of rest in the seven.

And so he continued to rise step by step in favour with the king and in the admiration of the people. He had his enemies; they were afraid to oppose him openly, but they secretly maligned him and watched every day for an opportunity to accuse him. At last it came. He had seen an Egyptian foreman brutally beating his fellow countryman who was bearing a burden. He slew the Egyptian, and thinking that no eye had seen the deed, he hid the body in the sand. The news of the manslaughter at last reached the palace. The priests and councillors professed to be outraged. The Hebrew upstart was dangerous; he would soon raise his hand against the nation which had given him shelter!

And Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh. The Book of Exodus says to Midian; but tradition says—not yet.

It is not at all surprising that the scanty sketch in the Bible of this phase of the life of Moses should be regarded as insufficient. The fact that he had attained an exalted position in Egypt had awakened the popular

imagination of his fellow countrymen. They were ever longing for details. They knew that he had made a great surrender—that if he had chosen to stifle his sympathy with his own nation he might possibly have climbed to the throne. His self-abnegation had been unparalleled. It showed itself in the Egyptian court; it revealed itself elsewhere.

When Moses fled from Egypt he took refuge first in Ethiopia. It was his wife's country. There he was brought face to face with Balaam, who had sought his life in the Egyptian court, and, when his counsel had been rejected by Pharaoh, had transferred his services to the king of Ethiopia, who had honoured him greatly. He was ungrateful, and hatched a conspiracy. A rebellion broke out. Moses was loyal to the king, and, placing himself at the head of the army, defeated the rebels. The traitor Balaam escaped, and returned to Egypt. We shall meet him again.

During the years that followed Moses was in high favour. He made himself to be almost indispensable. When the king, his father-in-law, died, he was actually offered the crown. According to some accounts he accepted it and reigned for a time, according to others he refused it; but both agree that it was tendered, and that when he had reached the pinnacle of his power he turned his back upon the dazzling prospect, abandoned the court, and became a wanderer in the land of Midian.

As to his adventures there: how he meets the

daughters of the prince of Midian; renews his acquaintance with their father Reuel, or Jethro; beholds the vision of the burning bush, and hears the call which shapes his future destiny,—are matters which are clearly narrated in Exodus. There are, however, one or two things on which tradition lays emphasis, and where its voice is suggestive.

We have already discovered the tendency in the religious mind to trace the continuity of personal influence. Sometimes it is transferred by lineal descent, and sometimes as a gift, or even by accident. Adam's coat of skins furnishes us with an illustration of the handing down of a sinister propensity. As we have seen, it came to be worn by Nimrod. But Esau one day met the mighty hunter, killed him, and recovered it; and was proud of his possession, although it was of little value compared with the birthright that he lightly forfeited afterwards. The rod which is in the hand of Moses as he stands before the Lord to receive his commission has quite a different history. It grew in Eden. It was with Adam on his first journey outside the gates. It became a sacred heirloom, and through the hands of Seth, Noah, and Abraham it came to the patriarch Jacob. With it he passed over Jordan, and when his earthly pilgrimage was ending he worshipped God, as he had done aforetime, leaning upon the head of his staff. Joseph inherited it. It somehow became the property of Pharaoh, who placed it in one of the temples. Jethro, who had some blood relationship to

the patriarchs, suspected its history, and conveyed it away. It was actually growing in his garden when Moses was introduced to him by his daughters. Moses used it to guide and defend the sheep. It became the rod of wonders. He and it were inseparable. It was his symbol of authority and power. He bore it when he entered Egypt to stand before the king. As he lifted it up, the four hundred gates of the royal city immediately rolled back. When he confronted the magicians he had to rely upon its powers. They chose seventy of their number to oppose him. Balaam, the bitter enemy of Moses and his rival, was at their head. Moses cast his rod upon the ground, and it became a serpent. The magicians Risam and Rejam, or, as they are named elsewhere, Jannes and Jambres, threw theirs down, and to all appearance they were turned to serpents also. But they had no life or motion, whereas the serpent of Moses with its seven heads struck terror into the hearts of the magi and chased them away.

The remainder of his public life is enriched here and there by extra-canonical records, but it is towards the close of his career that they chiefly swell the current of history.

We have a glimpse of the great leader in an hour of despondency. He is tempted to imagine himself forgotten and forsaken. He sits down sadly in the shadow of a rock, and at the touch of his rod it opens. There is a worm there which has been imprisoned for generations, but it has a green leaf in its mouth, and in

the warmth of the sunshine seems to be singing a song of deliverance. The dejected prophet learns his lesson, and is comforted.

Another tradition makes us realize the responsibility of the lawgiver. In addition to the ten commandments, the Lord had given to Moses six hundred and thirteen precepts. He had also explained them to him, and both the text and the commentary were lodged in his remembrance. But the children of Israel must hear them, and in such a way as will fix them in their memory for ever. The method which Moses adopts is as follows. He calls his brother Aaron into the tent and repeats the statutes to him alone. Then the sons of Aaron were summoned and heard them also, Aaron standing by. The seventy elders were sent for. To them the words were spoken, and then accompanied by all of these the lawgiver went out and proclaimed them to the assembled people. In that way the precepts and their commentaries were heard four times by Aaron, three times by his sons, by the elders twice, and once by all the children of Israel. These precepts were afterwards transcribed by Moses himself on rolls of parchment. There were thirteen altogether: one for each of the twelve tribes, and the thirteenth to be deposited in the Ark of the Covenant.

The death of Moses is the theme of many legends. The circumstances associated with it are sublime and pathetic. They move the heart, and they never fail to stir the imagination. The main incidents are very

real, and are simply told—the ascent of Nebo, the view from Pisgah, the broken purpose, the unknown grave. As we see the man of God leaving the plain to meet the angel Death, we are compelled by thought and wondering interest to join the mourning crowd and follow him.

Amidst the tears of the people, the women beating their breasts and the children giving way to uncontrolled wailing, he withdrew. At a certain point in his ascent, he made a sign to the weeping multitude to advance no further, taking with him only the elders, the high priest Eliezer and the general Joshua. At the top of the mountain he dismissed the elders, and then as he was embracing Eliezer and Joshua and still speaking to them, a cloud stood over him and he vanished in a deep valley.

So far Josephus, as quoted by Stanley, has conducted us. If the curtain of the cloud be lifted at all it must be reverently. As to the manner of the death of him whose eye was not dim, nor his natural strength abated, the Scriptures are silent. That there was no sting in his death we can rest assured. That the soul would pass with joy into the divine embrace, like a child to the outstretched arms of a father, we can well believe. 'It was as Jehovah kissed his lips that his soul departed,' says one mysterious tradition, which is echoed in our poetry still. The scene is recalled by Isaac Watts in lines that are simple and touching—

Softly his fainting head he lay
Upon his Maker's breast;
His Maker kissed his soul away,
And laid his flesh to rest.

In Charles Wesley's birthday hymn, as he anticipates life's closing day, it inspires the prayer—

> Then when the work is done,
> The work of faith with power,
> Call home thy favoured son
> At death's triumphant hour,
> Like Moses to Thyself convey,
> And kiss my raptured soul away.

It is Jude who lifts the curtain a second time, and shows us, in the mystic light, the forms of the archangel Michael and Satan contending for the body of Moses. As to the nature of the contest there is no information; we are left to conjecture; but the result was not doubtful, for 'the Lord buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor, but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day.'

* * * * *

The legends which have gathered around the history of Solomon are legion. They come from Jewish, Arabic, and Persian sources. They differ in character. Some are freaks of fancy; others are replicas of the incidents in the books of Kings and Chronicles. Many are wild and grotesque, but there are a few amongst the mass which are both interesting and suggestive. The main value of such literature lies in the fact that it is retrospective. The worst of it will show what impression his personality has made upon posterity, while the best will furnish an insight into his character, and give here and there a clue to the wonderful glamour which accompanies his name.

Solomon began well. The mind of the young king—asleep on the eve of his coronation in Gibeon—is bent in the right direction. In a dream his destiny is decided. He chooses wisely. He prays humbly, and the God of his father David not only grants him his petition, but heaps upon him blessings which he had not implored.

I have done according to thy word, lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart, so that there hath been none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee. And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches and honour. So that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days.

Solomon awoke — the dream vanished — but the heavenly illumination and divine endowments remained. From that moment he began to fill the eye of the nation. His genius breathed a new spirit into it. The influence of his character pervaded the national life, and his energy was felt in all its activities.

He strengthened his kingdom by friendly alliances; on one side grasping the hand of Hiram, king of Tyre, and on the other the hand of Pharaoh. His hewers of stone and lumber-men were in the quarries and forests of Lebanon, and his sailors were on the Persian Gulf and Indian Sea. His riches accumulated with the utmost rapidity, until they exceeded the fabled 'wealth of Ormuz or of Ind.' The merchandise from distant lands was spread out in the bazaars of his cities, and strange birds and animals were seen in

the parks and pleasure-grounds, which were planted with tropical trees and flowers. His army was being equipped with war-horses and chariots from Egypt. Frontier cities were being fortified. The walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt and strengthened. A stately palace was nearing completion outside the city boundary; while the temple, which was to be one of the wonders of the world, was silently arising within.

But we must turn from all this material growth and splendour, to him who is the animating soul of it all. It would be impossible to have a more adequate and impressive picture of the great king than that which the inspired chronicler portrays.

And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the seashore. And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the East, and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men; than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol: and his fame was in all the nations round about. And he spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five.

And he spake of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes.

And there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom.

By the three endowments, wisdom, understanding, and largeness of heart, we may understand that Solomon

had a judicious, penetrative, and catholic mind. It was essential that a king who had to be the supreme judge as well as the chief ruler of his people should have an unerring insight into the merits of the causes on which he had to arbitrate. He had scarcely taken the scales of justice in his hand, when a case was brought before him in which two mothers, with one living and one dead child, were concerned. The story or legend—for it probably is one—need not be repeated. It is a sample of many of its kind in which the knowledge of human nature or the wisdom of the heart, with its fellow feeling, is the reason's infallible guide.

There is another tradition which illustrates the same sympathetic faculty. Three young men appeared before the king, each claiming to be the only son of his father who had lately died. Each also claimed the property left behind as his personal inheritance. They were told to shoot an arrow one by one at the head of the dead body. The first did so, and the second, but when the turn of the third youth came, he refused to draw his bow. It does not in the least discredit the authenticity of the tale when we are informed that a similar story is told of another king in another country. It is no doubt one of those typical stories which has many variants.

One of the manifestations of Solomon's many-sided wisdom was his love of nature, and his wide and minute knowledge of natural history and physical science. It is here that he stands alone. One may

hesitate to accept the statements that it was from him that Hippocrates got his knowledge of medicine and Plato his symbolical philosophy, that Theophrastus was indebted to him for his botany, and what Aristotle knew of natural history was derived from the treatises of Solomon which were found in the library at Alexandria. But, nevertheless, this same King of the Jews must have been one of the first and one of the greatest in the long line of natural philosophers.

It would seem, from the examples afforded us, that the secret of Solomon's scientific successes arose from his faculty of sympathetic observation. Nothing escaped him and nothing was forgotten. When Balkis, the Queen of Sheba, came to visit him, she invented many ingenious ways of testing his wisdom. One was to invite him to detect at a distance the sex of her attendants. In one company there were five hundred boys who were dressed like girls, and an equal number of girls in a second who were dressed like boys. The king was to distinguish between them. He ordered water to be provided that they might wash their faces. The way in which they used their hands in their ablutions betrayed them.

One of the difficult tasks which his illustrious visitor set him was to thread the hole which had been pierced through a diamond without using a needle. He sent one of his pages for a worm whose habits he knew. She crept through the opening and, to the astonishment of every one, left a shining thread

dangling behind her. Here, again, it was applied observation which got the wise man out of the difficulty. As a sequel to the story, we are told that the worm was rewarded by the gift of the mulberry-tree to feed upon. In that modest way we may suppose the silk industry was established.

A still more difficult trial awaited Solomon. Balkis had reserved it as the final ordeal. The king is seated on his ivory throne, which is overlaid with gold, and has six golden lions on either side supporting it. His officers and courtiers are present in great number. In an almost breathless silence, two bevies of the queen's damsels arrayed in white are seen advancing towards the throne. In the hands of one of the bands are nosegays of flowers just plucked from the king's garden. In the hands of the others are bunches of artificial waxen flowers, which they themselves had made, identical in size and shape and colouring. At twenty paces from the king they halt, and he is asked to pronounce which are the natural roses and lilies. There is no reply. The wisest of the wise is puzzled. The stillness is oppressive. It is broken at last when Solomon commands the lattice window to be thrown open. His ear has caught the murmur of a swarm of bees; they enter in, and after wheeling for awhile alight—but not upon the waxen flowers.

In due time the Queen of Sheba returned to her own country. She was deeply moved by what she had seen and heard. In her graceful farewell to the king, she

is compelled to exclaim, 'Behold, the half was not told me.'

The signet ring of Solomon has become famous. It was studded with four precious stones. Each jewel gave him authority over the parts and powers of the universe. By the first he ruled the winds. The second made him lord of the birds. Land and water were subjected to him by the third; and the fourth made him the master of the invisible genii or spirits—good and evil.

It is as the possessor of this magic ring, and as summoning the powers of the natural and spiritual realms to his service, that Solomon has impressed himself most deeply upon the Eastern imagination. But is it not possible that under this Oriental symbolism and extravagance of language, there was a stratum of sober truth? May it not have been a pictorial way of saying that he was in touch with the forces of nature and was utilizing them; that he had discovered some of the wonderful laws of the physical world, and was applying them; that his marvellous sympathy with all growing and living things gave him a key to their properties and established a mode of communication with them? And especially may this have been so regarding the birds, which were his prime favourites. They hovered around him, they came and went at his call. He is said to have known their language, and to have understood the meaning of each of their songs. The cock was his right-hand herald,

and chanted out, 'Ye thoughtless men, remember your Creator.' The hoopoe at his left proclaimed, 'He that shows no mercy shall not obtain mercy.'

But surely such knowledge as this is not of the occult sciences. St. Francis of Assisi, preaching to the birds, and St. Cuthbert of Lindisfarne, with the eider-ducks in his bosom, reveal the same comradeship; and Gilbert White's *Natural History of Selborne* and Richard Jefferies' *Story of my Heart* contain the same knowledge.

Solomon in a wild and warlike age was a man of peace. When human life was of little value he was humane, and in the largeness of his heart there was room for the lowliest creatures, their ways and works, their sorrows and their joys. He was in league with the stones of the field, and the beasts of the field were at peace with him.

In Arabic legends the magic carpet of the King of the Hebrews is frequently prominent. When seated upon it the eight winds could raise him up and transport him in an instant to any point of the earth, over land or sea, while a cloud of birds above his head formed a canopy to protect him from the sun. Here, again, we may possibly have to do with symbols that can be plainly interpreted. Is there anything swifter than thought, which can put a girdle round about the world in less than a single minute; or more expansive than the imagination, which 'doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven'; or more far-reaching

than those inquiring thoughts that go wandering through eternity?

As the sun of Solomon's day moves towards its terrible eclipse, the legends that are associated with his history begin to darken. They cannot hide his decadence nor palliate his folly. Neither the Jew nor the Mussulman could approve his toleration of idolatry, and there seems to be in one tradition at least the portrayal of the degradation which inevitably befalls the selfish and sensual soul.

When Solomon had reached the pinnacle of his fame he loses his signet ring, and suddenly abandons his palace. Satan usurps his throne, and in the semblance of the bodily presence of the king assumes the reins of government. He wears the royal signet and affixes the seal to every deed of State when necessary. For thirty-nine days the wanderer begs from door to door, and is even driven to shelter with the beasts, and to eat grass like an ox. On the fortieth he hires himself to a fisherman and receives two fishes out of those he catches for his daily wage. As the time passes his heart grows humble, and at length his deliverance draws near. An angel has dethroned his enemy, who in his hurried flight has flung the ring into the depths of the sea. It is brought into the fisherman's net in a fish's mouth, and Solomon, recovering it, is reinstated in his kingdom. The moral of this legend is apparent. The Greek and Latin Fathers have disputed as to whether the voluptuous monarch repented at

the end, and was restored to the divine favour; or whether he died condemned and apostate. This story of the lost ring restored is more than hopeful. While it graphically describes the fall of the self-indulgent soul and its degradation, it also shows that, through the sovereign grace of true repentance, honour and power and liberty may be regained.

There is a curious legend of unknown date which has found its way into the *Gesta Romanorum.* It was often quoted with much impressiveness by the mediaeval preachers. A young bird was imprisoned by Solomon in a crystal vessel. Its mother, in her distress, flies off to the wilderness. She returns with a worm in her beak. With a drop of its blood she shatters the crystal, and the captive is free. It is not at all unlikely that in this story we have an intended parable. We know how early the truth was taught that without shedding of blood there was no remission, and may we not have here a quaint and vivid hint of the efficient cause of the king's redemption ?

The time had now arrived for the reign of Solomon to close. Somewhere in the king's garden there grew a wonderful tree. It had as many leaves as there were souls in his empire. Whenever a child was born a new leaf appeared with the name it was to bear. As the child grew to maturity the leaf developed. When old age drew near it began to change, and at the moment of death it withered and fell to the ground. Solomon's leaf was fading fast, and the angel of death

was approaching. The king was not old in years, but he was worn out and weary. Although chastened in spirit and hoping for mercy, his late repentance could never bring back the beauty of the past; its purity, simplicity, and joy had fled for ever. Like one who had also sinned and suffered greatly, 'His days were in the yellow leaf, the fruits and flowers of love were gone.' When Death finds him he is fearful but not forsaken. His spiritual enemies are mustering for a last struggle to gain possession. If they cannot conquer his soul, they will seize his body and bear it away in triumph when the last breath has left it. He begs leave of Death that he may die without their knowledge. And so, as he stood praying in his crystal hall alone, and leaning upon his staff, he died. His soul was borne away secretly by the angels. Month after month, for forty years, his body remained standing and life-like until the prop on which he leaned had done its work and crumbled beneath him. As one looks at this passing of Solomon, the words of David his father return again with a solemn yet hopeful dirge: 'Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: *Thy rod and Thy staff*, they comfort me.'

II

IF the author of any of the apocryphal gospels ever uttered an apology for his writings, he would probably employ some such words as those of the sturdy pilgrim Standfast, when he was at the end of his journey: 'I have loved to hear my Lord spoken of, and wherever I have seen the print of His shoe in the earth, there have I coveted to set my foot too.' Some of these supplements were no doubt composed with a doctrinal intention. Their purpose was to point out or refute some heretical notion. But the chiefest amongst them—those which have survived the lapse of time, made their mark on Christian thought, and lodged themselves in the hearts of the common people—are those which have sprung from a craving to weave together any scattered threads of tradition regarding our Lord; to add, it may be, some fringe or tassel to the robe of the evangelist's biography.

In this twentieth century we are so accustomed to regard the life of Jesus Christ unfolded in the four Gospels as beautiful, proportionate, and convincing, that we should think it almost a crime to imagine that their narrative is incomplete or unsatisfying in anything.

In the truest sense it is not. Each of the four Gospels and all together had a definite purpose: they were written that we might believe that 'Jesus was the Son of God, and that believing we might have life through His name.' It is not required of us, in order that we may be saved, that we should be able to trace out every road in Galilee the Redeemer travelled, or to repeat every word of truth He spake on the Mount or in the Temple, or to be able to call back every incident of His life; but it is necessary that we should know enough of what He was and what He said and what He did, that we may trust in Him who is the WAY, the TRUTH, and the LIFE.

At the same time, however, the reverent desire to know more than is recorded in the New Testament is entirely pardonable. Indeed, the wish to learn as much as possible of any one whom we admire or love is a natural and healthy craving. We must never repress its exercise; but we should always make sure that the food it feeds upon is genuine and wholesome. For example: when we read the life of Shakespeare in the latest biographical dictionary, and realize that there are parts of his life about which we are told nothing, that others are simply sketched in meagre outline, and that on many points of interest which are raised by the narrative no light whatever is cast,—although we may console ourselves with the thought that his greatest dramas are with us, and that the soul of the dramatist is still breathing through his

works, our craving is not appeased, and we eagerly inquire for any additional fact which may illumine the void, in any period of his history.

The apocryphal gospels vary in value. Some, because they were worthless, have been lost and forgotten; others are to be received with discriminating caution; a few remain which possess a permanent interest for several reasons. They add an incident here and there which is of a piece with the inspired narrative; or they sometimes explain an obscure passage or bridge over a chasm; and they always serve to indicate what features of the ministry of our Lord had impressed themselves most deeply upon the minds of the people of the first five centuries. Such writings as the Protevangelium, Thomas' Gospel of the Infancy, the Gospel of Nicodemus, or the Acts of Pilate, aim at dealing with those periods of the Saviour's life on which the synoptical Gospels, and the fourth, are comparatively silent. His childhood, His life in Nazareth before the baptism, and the days succeeding His death and burial, are the spaces in which tradition and legend are free to move and expatiate. From the commencement of His ministry to His death, they are comparatively few and unobtrusive. Through all that time the authority of the inspired evangel commands the field. The smaller birds are neither heard nor seen when the eagle is abroad.

As we keep the course of the life of our Lord in view, we will endeavour to select a few of the traditions

and legends concerning Him which may serve as a parallel to its story. Others we must reserve for consideration in the later divisions of the general subject.

In compliance with the decree of Augustus Caesar that all the Jews should be taxed, Joseph, being of Bethlehem, saddled his ass and set out for the city of David. He set Mary upon the beast, and while she went foremost, he and two of his sons walked after her. When within three miles of their goal, Joseph, looking at Mary, saw that she was sorrowful, and when he looked again, lo! she was joyfully smiling, and he wondered. She explained that her eyes beheld two sets of people, one of whom was sad and the other was rejoicing. So early are we to infer that the burden which she is carrying is to be the cause of emotions which are totally opposite. The child is set for the rise and fall of many in Israel.

The Virgin beseeches Joseph to lift her down. They shelter in the hollow of a cave, which, as they enter in, is filled with a radiant light. On his way to the village to seek a nurse, Joseph is astonished by seeing birds that were flying arrested in their flight; working people sitting down at a laden table with hands outstretched and motionless; a shepherd with sheep and goats upon the plain—the flock standing rigidly still, while the arm of the shepherd uplifted to strike will not fall, and the little kids have their mouths near the water and do not drink.

These are but artless embellishments, and yet too

suggestive to be lightly despised. Even if we suppose that they were the inventions of imaginative minds, they show that those who conceived them were profoundly impressed with the sublime significance of the birth of Christ—a fact so stupendous that the ordinary course of nature must be stopped to attest its exceptional character. In the mystery of the Incarnation we have—

> Heaven in earth and God in man;
> Great little One whose all-embracing birth
> Lifts earth to heaven, stoops heaven to earth.

It was meet, therefore, that there should be concurrent signs in the sky and on the ground—in the actions of men and in national events. It is generally accepted that the doors of the Temple of Janus were closed when Christ was born.

> No war or battle's sound
> Was heard the world around;
> The idle spear and shield were high uphung,
> The hookèd chariot stood
> Unstained with hostile blood,
> The trumpet spake not to the armèd throng;
> And kings sat still with awful eye,
> As if they surely knew their sovran Lord was by.

Even the powers of nature are in sympathy and harmony.

> (For) peaceful was the night
> Wherein the Prince of Light
> His reign of peace upon the earth began.

The winds with wonder whist,
Smoothly the waters kissed,
Whispering new joys to the mild ocean,
Who now hath quite forgot to rave,
While birds of calm sit brooding on the charmèd wave.

But Joseph has returned to the cave—the child is born and Salome is present. As she doubts the true nature of the birth, her arm is withered. When she touches the infant it is instantly restored. From the cave the holy family remove to a stable, and the child is laid in a manger. The ass and the ox, which are also tenants, kneel down in homage, and praise their Creator both loudly and with melody. 'For,' to use the legendary rendering, 'the ox knoweth his *Maker*, and the ass his Master's crib.'

The shepherds appear—simple peasants, with Jude and Simon Zelotes amongst the number. A few days afterwards the Magi arrive. They are princes who have followed the star to Bethlehem. They spread their presents of gold, frankincense, and myrrh before their liege Lord and sovereign King: myrrh to strengthen the tender limbs, frankincense to sweeten the stable, and gold for the Holy Family's present necessities and for their approaching journeys. The names of the wise men from the East are Caspar, Melchior, and Balthasar. They are of different ages. The first is a youth of twenty, the second a man of forty, and their companion is beginning to stoop and is turning grey. But He whom they have come to see is able to meet

the needs of youth, maturity, and age. Indeed, the method of their approach to Him suggests it—for as they draw near the manger one by one, to Caspar the child appears to be in radiant youth, to Melchior in the fullness of perfect manhood, to Balthasar in the serenity of a venerable age. If one may so paraphrase the scene—the star of Bethlehem is in turn the morning Star, the noonday Sun, and the Light at eventide.

It may seem a small return which Mary made for such princely gifts when she bestowed on the wise men one of the swaddling-clothes; but they treasured it as a thing of priceless value. They returned to their own country and proclaimed the glad tidings. Three hundred years after their death they were privileged to link the land of the East and of the West together. The Empress Helena discovered their bones, and brought them to Constantinople. Barbarossa the crusader carried them to the city of Cologne, where they rest, after all their wanderings, until the Morning Star of the Resurrection shall arise.

We must pass over the *Purification* and the touching interview with Simeon in the temple, and refer, but only briefly, to *the Massacre of the Innocents.* Warned by the angel, Joseph and Mary and the child are able to leave Bethlehem before the swords of Herod's soldiers begin their slaughter. John, the son of Zacharias and Elisabeth, is in peril. His mother is only just able to snatch him out of the jaws of danger and escape to the

mountains. The soldiers pursue the fugitives. The rock before Elisabeth is too steep for her to climb with her child, but when her enemies are at her heels, it opens and conceals them both.

The faces of the holy family are turned to Egypt. There is a long journey before them. They have to make all speed, for as soon as Herod is informed of their flight, he will hurry his soldiers upon their track. They come to a labourer who is sowing his field with corn. They know that their pursuers will question him. If he will do them a favour, he will say when the inquiry is made—'At what time did an old man with a woman and child pass this way?'—'When I was sowing this field.' Not many hours afterwards the soldiers arrived, the question was put, and the answer given; when lo, as they looked around, the field was standing thick with corn and ripe for the reaping.

If we remember that these gospels were written after the event, by those who believed that the reputed Son of Joseph was really the Son of God, it will be easy to understand why they should portray the way to Egypt as a path of triumphal progress. It was infested with perils. The holy family were threatened by hunger, storm, fierce wild beasts and fiercer men. They went unharmed through all. The date-palm bent to give them food; the trees of the wood invited them to shelter from the storm; the lions were the boy's playmates, and even the wild outlaws were tamed by His presence.

Having journeyed through the lonely country, they passed through city after city. In each some miracle of healing was wrought. Wherever the Divine Child was treated with dishonour, swift judgement befell the offender—so say those early writers who had not divined aright the spirit of Christ, and had forgotten that He rebuked the vindictive sons of thunder.

As Jesus with Mary and Joseph drew near the goal, the idols of Egypt were moved at His coming, and fell down with a crash to the ground. The priests were alarmed, and the people astounded, but no gates were shut against them, and so they entered Memphis and saw the face of Pharaoh.

When the Holy Child was three years old, He returned with His parents to Nazareth. He grew up just as any of His half-brothers or cousins did, in stature and in mind. And yet there were moments when His innate majesty broke out, and His miraculous power and knowledge asserted themselves. As the companions of Cyrus had crowned him, when a shepherd's lad, and predicted for him a throne and a sceptre, James and John and Joses and Jude encircled the head of their playmate with flowers, and spread their garments beneath His feet. He was always willing to share their games and to join them in their excursions. Now and again He scandalized the Pharisees. On one Sabbath day the little child had moulded some birds from the common clay. An angry neighbour who was passing by kicked them down. With one wave of His

arm the Moulder restored the figures to their places, and when He clapped His hands, they rose and flew with flashing wings and merry cries.

The story seems to have made an impression much deeper than its importance had warranted. It has done so possibly because it appeared to be an early indication of the revolt of the spirit of Christ from an oppressive sabbatarian bondage. But the tale has travelled far. It is very popular in Iceland, where the cries of the lapwings are said to repeat the cries of the birds of clay in Nazareth.

There is yet another simple legend, which is perhaps more truly characteristic. One of the companions of our Lord, when out in the woods bird's-nesting, had been bitten by a serpent. When Jesus touched him, he was made perfectly whole.

The silence of the evangelists on the subject of the Holy Child's education and knowledge is only once broken, when, as a boy of twelve, He is presented in the temple. Tradition is more explicit. We are told that a learned man named Zaccheus was His schoolmaster, whose only difficulty when teaching his pupil the Hebrew alphabet arose from his own inability to answer the questions which Aleph and Beth suggested. 'Was this child before Noah?' exclaimed the pedagogue in astonishment. As to the disputation of the boy Jesus with the doctors, the *Gospel of the Infancy* has little to add to St. Luke's narrative except to enlarge the scope of the subjects which were under discussion. In

addition to the law and the prophets, the sciences were under review, and when the rabbis and elders heard what Jesus could tell them of the stars, of the nature of the mind and of the body, they marvelled.

If there is one part of the life of Jesus on which one might wish for additional light, it is that which lay between His visit to the temple and His baptism. In all the synoptical accounts it is left an absolute blank. From thirteen to thirty lies the critical and vital period. If we could only have had the details of the early manhood of Jesus: how He fulfilled the daily round and common tasks of life; how He sustained its relationships and entered into its joys and its sorrows; how He bought or sold; or how He paid or received the wages of toil,—it might have been an incalculable advantage, seeing that He was to be our Example, and seeing also that the ethics of conduct affect the major portion of our work-a-day life. But so far as the synoptical narratives go, all this is denied us. The few traditions which refer to this period are of service, inasmuch as they lay stress on the fact that the Divine Son of Mary was a real *worker*, who earned His bread by the sweat of His brow. From that we may infer that the Jewish recognition of the dignity of labour had evidently taken root in Christian soil. They also portray the obedient spirit of Jesus as He followed Joseph, wherever he went about his calling, 'making chairs and tables, carts and ploughs.' That all He undertook was, as these writers affirm, done

with a will and perfectly, we can well believe. It is when they contrast the youth's workmanship with the father's that we are tempted to be sceptical. Joseph was an inferior workman, they say—he sometimes spoiled his handiwork; but whenever the thing he was fashioning came out rough, or narrow, or crooked, Jesus, without his knowledge, made the rough smooth, the narrow wide, and the crooked straight. Yet why should we object to this tradition who realize each day the grace which makes up for all our deficiencies!

As to that period which has been left in obscurity, there are at least two considerations which may lessen our disappointment. The three years of public ministry which came after it stand out in bolder relief, because of the indistinct and level foreground—like a mountain ridge in the sunrise while the valley is steeped in shadow. And although the principles which governed Jesus as a carpenter's son at the bench, and amongst His fellow workmen, as He earned His wages, are not referred to, are they not revealed in His after teaching—as the river which emerges from its underground passsage into the light shows upon its current the colour of the soil through which it has flowed?

* * * * * *

'And it came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan.' It is in these few calm words that the evangelist Mark describes the entrance of Christ on

the threshold of His active ministry. No one thought then of placing a stone on the bank of the river to show where Jesus stepped from it into the waters. According to tradition, it was at the confluence of the two streams Dan and Jordan that the baptism took place. We are, of course, intended to see the significance of the meeting of John and Christ, at the junction of the waters. The old covenant and the new have come together, the law and the gospel are blending; the older revelation is flowing into, and will find its fulfilment in, the stream of living waters. John is aware of this, and points to Him who must increase, while his own influence diminishes.

There is no authentic description of the personal appearance of Christ as He entered upon His public ministry. The four Gospels do not refer to any portrait, nor do they attempt to picture His features in words. In the ordinary course of things, there was nothing to prevent the one or the other. Although the Jew was forbidden to make an image of his God, the prohibition would not affect the Christian painter or sculptor. It would have been possible to have given at least an idea of the appearance of one whose character had produced such an indelible impression upon the minds of His followers. The busts of Plato with his dome-like brow, and of Demosthenes with his mobile lips, recall to us moderns their philosophy and oratory. It is not at all surprising, therefore, that at a certain time in the development of the

Church the inquiry regarding the personal appearance of our Lord should become keen and persistent. Men were hearing and reading of the marvellous things which He had said and done, and it was only natural that they should long to see some portrayal of the great Speaker and Worker. Descriptions were forthcoming. There is a striking verbal portrait in a letter reputed to have been written by Publius Lentulus, a friend of Pilate, to the Roman Senate. It has been translated from the Latin by Mrs. Jameson.

In this time appeared a man, who lives till now, a man endowed with great powers. Men call Him a great prophet: His own disciples term Him the Son of God. His name is Jesus Christ. He restores the dead to life, and cures the sick of all manner of diseases. This man is of noble and well-proportioned stature, with a face full of kindness and yet firmness, so that the beholders both love Him and fear Him. His hair is the colour of wine, and golden at the root—straight and without lustre—but from the level of the ears curling and glossy, and divided down the centre after the fashion of the Nazarene. His forehead is even and smooth, His face without blemish, and enhanced by a tempered bloom; His countenance ingenuous and kind. Nose and mouth are in no way faulty. His beard is full, of the same colour as His hair, and forked in form; His eyes blue and extremely brilliant. In reproof and rebuke He is formidable; in exhortation and teaching, gentle and amiable of tongue. None have seen Him to laugh; but many, on the contrary, to weep. His person is tall: His hands beautiful and straight. In speaking He is deliberate and grave, and little given to loquacity. In beauty surpassing most men.

Some of the points of feature and expression which are here specialized have afforded hints to many of the painters who have tried their hands since this letter was written. But that face, with its divine majesty and human fellow feeling—so full of kindness and of firmness, that beholders both loved Him and feared Him—has never been adequately portrayed.

Another source from which the early Christian artists were said to have drawn their inspiration was the cloth on which the Saviour Himself imprinted His image. There are different accounts of the circumstances connected with the bestowal of this miraculous portrait. In one of these legends Veronica, the woman who touched the hem of Christ's garment, and the Emperor Claudius, or as some say Vespasian, played a part. Another version associates the story with Abgarus King of Edessa, who suffering from incurable disease and hearing of the fame of the Great Physician, besought Him to visit his capital, of which he says, 'My city indeed is small, but neat and large enough for us both.' But the history, which is edited by no less a person than the Emperor Constantine, will tell its own story.

Abgarus, King of Edessa, suffering from the twofold infliction of gout and leprosy, withdrew from the sight of men. Ananias, one of his servants, returning from a journey to Egypt, tells him of the wonderful cures of Christ, of which he had heard in Palestine. In the hope of obtaining relief, Abgarus writes to Christ and charges

Ananias, who was not only a good traveller but a skilful painter, that if Christ should not be able to come, He should at all events send him His portrait. Ananias finds Christ as He is in the act of performing miracles and teaching the multitude in the open air. As he is not able to approach Him for the crowd, he mounts a rock not far off. Thence, he fixes his eyes upon Christ, and begins to take His likeness. Jesus, who sees him, and also knows in spirit the contents of the letter, sends Thomas to bring him to Him, and writes His answer to Abgarus. But seeing that Ananias still lingers, Jesus calls for water, and having washed His face, He wipes it on a cloth, on which, by His divine power, there remains a perfect portrait of His features. This He gives to Ananias, charging him to take it to Abgarus, so that his longing may be satisfied and his leprosy cured. On the way, Ananias passes by the city of Hierapolis, but remains outside the gates, and hides the holy cloth in a heap of freshly made bricks. At midnight the inhabitants of Hierapolis perceive that this heap of bricks is surrounded with fire. They discover Ananias, and he owns the supernatural character of the object which lay hidden. They search and find not only the miraculous cloth, but a brick that lay near the cloth which also has received the stamp of the Saviour's image. And as no fire was discoverable except the light that proceeded from the face of clay, the people kept the brick as a sacred treasure, and let Ananias go on his way. King Abgarus receives the letter and the cloth, and is immediately cured.

If the impressions which these and other legends convey are not satisfying, they are not repugnant. They indicate, at the least, an unquenchable desire to bring the idea of the Redeemer's life into the study of imagination.

They fail because failure is inevitable. To be able to put into stone or on canvas a perfect image of the Saviour, the eye of the artist must be able to see in that countenance the light eternal blending with the features which are mortal. The greatest geniuses have not succeeded. The features presented to us may be severe in awful majesty, or soft with tender sympathy, or—

> Fairer than the evening air,
> Clad in the beauty of a thousand stars.

But it is not the face which appears in the soul's true vision. Even before the canvas of a Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, or Rembrandt, we are ready to say, Is this the face of Him who attracted the little children, awed the proud Pharisee, wept over Jerusalem, and kindled in the heart of a Magdalen the undying flame of a purifying love?

The Holy Spirit who inspired the four evangelists to write the life of Jesus might have taught the hand of Luke, who was said to have been an artist as well as a physician, to paint His portrait; but, if he had done so, many thousands would have missed the blessing pronounced on those *who have not seen and yet have believed.*

* * * * * *

The betrayal of our Lord by Judas Iscariot is regarded as the crime of crimes. In the character of the man, human nature has reached its worst development. In his treacherous deed the terrible power of

evil could go no further. It is indeed such an unrelieved act of baseness, so unprovoked and inexplicable, that the only motive alleged for its committal seems wholly inadequate. To sell the Redeemer for thirty pieces of silver!

As the sum which Judas received was so pitiably small, many have sought for a clue to his conduct in ambition and not in avarice. He had been attracted to Christ by the prospect of sharing in the glory of an earthly kingdom. He was anxious that his Master should declare Himself openly and announce His claims. He had such confidence in His omnipotence as to believe that although He should brave the priestly hierarchy and Roman power with His handful of unarmed followers, His victory would be assured; he, Judas, would therefore force His hand—would precipitate the crisis and hasten the establishment of the kingdom. The essays of De Quincey and Disraeli have modernized this ancient theory. It is ingenious and has a show of charity, but it breaks down before the real Judas and the facts of the narrative.

The idea which prevailed in the Middle Ages is much more plausible. The traitor was the child of destiny, foredoomed to play his part in the awful tragedy. In a dream his parents had been forewarned. The child about to be born would live to commit murder and incest, and to betray his God. In their horror, and in the hope of preventing such monstrous crimes, they put the infant within a chest and

cast it into the sea. The sea returns it to a foreign shore. The king and queen of that country find the boy and adopt him. He subsequently becomes the playfellow of their son, whom he slays because he was beaten by him in a game of chess. He flies from vengeance and enters the service of Pontius Pilate as a handsome, quick-witted page. It is then that the three abhorrent crimes are committed. Pilate, longing for the fruit of an orchard near his castle, sends Judas to fetch it. The owner is no other than his father. He is an old man, but he resists the demand of the page, who ruthlessly slays him. Eventually the widow is given in marriage to the murderer, who, when he unfolds his story, is told of the relationship between them. Judas is horrified, and once more flies from the face of mankind. He meets with Jesus, and, smitten with the pangs of penitence, beseeches His pity. He who came to save that which was lost, receives him; He knows him through and through and is aware of his history, but nevertheless opens His arms to the sinner, and numbers him amongst the apostles. It is this magnanimity which blackens the apostacy.

The price at which the Divine Master was apparently valued has impressed the religious imagination. Thirty pieces of silver!—the sum which redeems the commonest slave. They too have an antecedent history. They were the actual coins the Ishmaelites paid to the sons of Jacob when they sold their brother

Joseph. They were brought to Egypt, and after passing into other countries through divers hands, came back to Egypt and were lost. A shepherd found them and hoarded them. Being struck with leprosy, and hearing of the Great Healer, he journeyed to Palestine. He was cured, and presented the thirty pieces to the priests of the temple as a thank-offering!

The *kiss* of the deceiver is also one of the unforgiveable incidents of the betrayal. It was the essence of treachery. Some sign may have been necessary to distinguish Jesus from James the Less, who was said to resemble Him, but why select the symbol of love for hatred's consummation?—as Shakespeare puts it when describing a similar act of Gloucester's—

> So Judas kissed his Master,
> And cried 'All Hail!' whenas he meant—all harm.

The utter unnaturalness of that deceitful deed appears to startle even Jesus Himself—'Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man *with a kiss*?'—words which George Herbert amplifies—

> Canst thou find hell about My lips and miss
> Of life—just at the gates of life and bliss?

At last the awful moment comes when, realizing what he had done and what he was, the traitor attempts to escape from himself. He fastens a rope to a branch of an elder-tree, and hangs by the neck, until the rope broke and he fell to the ground. His body was rent asunder that the breath of life might not leave it by

the lips which had kissed the Master. The corpse was thrown over the parapet of the temple to Gehenna beneath. In the meantime the priests must get rid of the thirty pieces which Judas had flung back on the temple pavement. With part of the blood-money the Roman soldiers were paid to keep guard over the sepulchre, and with the remainder the potter's field was bought in which to bury strangers.

The traditions which seek to supplement the accounts of the trial of Jesus are not out of keeping with its pathos and solemnity. In the strange book originally styled *The Acts of Pilate*, we have some particulars which are intended to bring out the majesty of the prisoner, the malignity of His accusers, and the overwhelming testimony in His favour. Annas and Caiaphas and other leading Jews accuse Jesus to Pilate, and petition to have Him conducted to his judgement-hall. A messenger is dispatched, who will not employ force, but, prostrating himself and spreading his garment on the ground, entreats the prisoner to follow him. As Jesus approaches along the file of the guards, their standards bow down to Him. The priests are enraged, and accuse both the messenger and the soldiers of complicity. The soldiers explain to Pilate that their standards did homage of their own accord, while the messenger confessed that he recognized in the prisoner the man whom he had met one day riding upon an ass. Before Him the people had strewn palm branches and cast their garments

while the air rang with their Hallelujahs! He was impressed with His dignity then; he must show his reverence now. At this Pilate wonders, and as the high-priests continue to charge his guards with connivance, Jesus is led out of the hall. Twelve strong men of the Jewish party are supplied with standards and take the places of the Roman soldiers. Jesus is brought back through another entrance, but, as before, the standards droop down as He passes.

Pilate is still further bewildered when men and women volunteer to refute the charges alleged against Christ by the priests and Levites. He is not a profane Sabbath-breaker, or in league with the devil, or a blasphemer worthy of death. First, Nicodemus stood up before the governor, and testified to His useful and glorious miracles. Then rose up a Jew, who said he had lain for thirty-eight years by the sheep-pool at Jerusalem, and at the word of Jesus had been able to take up his bed and walk. After him came forward a man who said he had been blind; another who had been a leper; another who had been bent and crooked —all of them had been cured. They tried to silence a woman who wanted to speak; but Veronica, who had touched the hem of His garment, must add her testimony. A man who had been a guest at the marriage of Cana in Galilee and seen the first miracle, the centurion whose servant had been healed at a distance, the nobleman whose son was restored to health, were all there to speak on the prisoner's behalf; but when others

arose and bore witness to the fact that He had raised Lazarus, after he had lain four days in the grave, the governor, trembling, said to the multitude, 'What will it profit you to shed innocent blood?'

The trial is over. The conscience of the weak-minded Pilate is counselling the release of the innocent man at the bar; but 'I dare not waits upon I would,' and He is handed over to the members of the Sanhedrin to be crucified. The feeling of the fickle people has veered round against Him. Already the cry of 'Crucify Him! crucify Him!' is in His ears. As Jesus is going out of the judgement-hall, faint and weary with the agonies of the night and morning, Kartaphilus, who keeps the door, is impatient, and bids him 'Go faster! go faster!' 'I am, indeed, going,' was the solemn reply; 'but thou shalt tarry here till I come.' According to some authorities the door-keeper repented of his brutality, and was in after years baptized, but the prediction had to be fulfilled. He was thirty years of age on the day of the Redeemer's trial. Each time he reaches a hundred he falls into a trance and recovers his youth again; but through all the changes he sees and experiences, there is one burning spot in his memory: the death and resurrection of the Lord.

While this story is akin to the weird legend of the Wandering Jew, there are too many differences to allow of its being received as a variant.

The Saviour is on His way to Golgotha, and is fainting under the weight of the cross. He halted for

a moment to lean against the door-post of a cobbler's hut which was nigh at hand. Ahasuerus was a fierce zealot. He sprang up on the instant, and, thrusting Jesus from the door, bade Him go on to the doom He deserved. The Man of Sorrows again lifted the cross and departed, but at that moment the hard-hearted Ahasuerus heard a voice which would sound in his ears for many days to come—'Thou shalt go on and on, a wanderer, until the Son of Man returns.' That night the journey of the Wandering Jew began. He has visited many lands and witnessed the rise and fall of many empires. His heart is ever craving for the rest that never comes. Death never meets him, no churchyard will receive him. Although he is invisible, the Westphalian peasant hears him rushing past in the blast of the tempest, and tracks him wherever the plague and pestilence have been. Although the Bavarian ploughman would be terrified to see him, he will leave his harrow in the field at night, that it may serve as a resting-place, if perchance the Wanderer may be passing that way, and will make use of it.

But on and on, with uneasy feet and an aching heart, he is doomed to travel until he finds two living oaks which will stand before him in the form of a cross. He will know then that his repentance has been received, and feel that in the love of the crucified One he has found rest to his soul.

* * * * *

If the Christian believer endeavours to follow the

clause of the Apostles' Creed which declares that '*He descended into hell*,' he is plunged at once into the unseen world and into the land of mystery. The period of time which these four words cover was very brief. As to the way it was spent by the descending Lord, what He experienced and what He achieved, the canonical books of the New Testament are almost entirely silent. It was scarcely possible that the early Christians would be content with such brief references as St. Peter gives in his first epistle. The vision of the Christ as He preached to the dead and to the spirits in prison must only have increased the reader's curiosity. There would be a universal craving for any hint, for any ray of light which would pierce the shroud of mystery. In the so-called *Acts of Pilate* an attempt is made to lift the veil.

Among the saints 'who came forth out of their tombs after His resurrection' were Charinus and Lenthias, the sons of Simeon who had sung the Nunc Dimittis. They went first to Arimathaea, where they spent the time in prayer, but afterwards, at the solicitation of Annas and Caiaphas, they came to Jerusalem and made known their story. They could not speak, but each of them wrote his account in a separate room. I must condense the story.

One day, when Charinus and Lenthias were sitting with their fathers in Hades amidst its blackness and gloom, a sudden golden radiance appeared, which changed into a purple light and illumined the darkness.

As soon as Adam beheld the light he rejoiced. Isaiah and Simeon recognized it as the dawn of the Saviour's coming. John the Baptist stood forth then and announced to the patriarchs, prophets, and saints that this bright light which had burst upon their prison was the forerunner of Christ, who was on His way to visit them. Then Seth, at Adam's bidding, declared that now the time had come for the oil of mercy from the tree of life to be given to mankind. The five hundred years which the angel Michael had foretold had been fulfilled, and Christ had brought the oil of mercy into the world, and would restore their father Adam again to Paradise. Then all who heard the news were glad and rejoiced exceedingly.

But before Jesus arrives in Hades, Satan appears. He informs the Prince of Hell, Beelzebub, that his great enemy is coming. He boasts of the part he has played in His betrayal and approaching death.

> I sharpened the spear for His suffering, I mixed the gall and vinegar, I prepared the cross to crucify Him, and the nails to pierce through His hands and feet, and now His death is near at hand I will bring Him hither subject both to thee and me.

The Prince of Hell is slow to share in Satan's exultation. 'Is this He who took away Lazarus from me?' he asks; and when he is informed the 'very same,' he exclaims in terror, 'Bring Him not to me!'

A voice as of thunder and the rushing winds breaks in upon their colloquy. It heralds the coming of Christ,

whose spirit has left the body on the cross, and is starting on its journey. 'Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and be ye lift up, O everlasting gates, and the King of Glory shall come in,'—the voice proclaimed. At the sound of the words Beelzebub was smitten with fear. Thrusting Satan outside the walls, he bade him, if he were the warrior he professed to be, to go and fight the King of Glory. Then, turning to his officers, he ordered them to shut the brazen gates and to make them fast with iron bars, while he and they defended them courageously.

Once more the roll of the great voice is heard, now nearer and louder, and the words are echoed far and wide. But the Prince of Hell is stubborn, and pretends to be incredulous. 'Who is this King of Glory?' he inquires. And David, on the instant, boldly answers, 'He of whom I sang, "The Lord strong and powerful, the Lord mighty in battle."'

While David was speaking the mighty Lord Himself appeared in the form of a man. He enlightened the dark places and broke asunder the fetters of the prisoners, and visited those who sate in the shadow of death.

Pursuing His triumphal course, He struck terror into the heart of the monster Death, who disputed his progress. The interview was short and decisive. Nothing could withstand the Invincible Redeemer. The King of Glory tramples upon Death, defeats Beelzebub, and, humbling Satan, compels him to be

subject to his subordinate, the Prince of Hell. The symbol of victory is raised upon the battle-field, and the cross is seen shining amongst the shadows and gloom of hell. The voice of the royal prophet David is heard once more as it leads the triumphant chorus of the saints, 'O sing unto the Lord a new song, for He hath done marvellous things; His right hand and His holy arm have gotten Him the victory.'

Above this scene of warfare, with its contending hosts—the victors and the vanquished, the shouts of triumph and the murmurs of dismay—there is seen a broad and shining path to Paradise. Leading Adam by the hand, and followed by an innumerable company of saints, Jesus enters the open gates. The first to welcome them are Enoch and Elijah; the next to meet them is the penitent thief.

Such is the story which each of the sons of Simeon wrote separately down. Both documents agreed: 'the one not containing one letter more or less than the other,' and when the writing reached the hands of the elders, the writers were immediately 'changed into exceeding white forms and were seen no more.'

III

WHEN we turn to *The glorious company of the Apostles*, we are introduced at once into the region of tradition and legend. While the New Testament tells us a great deal about some of them, and a little about others, the only reference it makes to one or two is simply to record their names. Outside the canonical gospels and epistles there has been woven from time to time a wide fringe of supplementary literature. In the writings of the Fathers there are threads of biography of the greatest interest. From such sources, original and additional, the student of the lives of these saints is able to clothe their characters with attributes that have distinctness and reality.

It was desirable that we should know all that could be known regarding these remarkable men. They were chosen by the Lord to be His messengers. Although with two or three exceptions they were without social rank or culture, they possessed natural dispositions and gifts, which accounted for the selection. Under the inspiration and guidance of the Spirit of God they were the founders of the kingdom of heaven

upon the earth. They infused into human life a new energy, which was destined to influence its systems of philosophy and morals, its social standards and political codes, until the worn and decaying face of the world should renew its youth and loveliness. Who were these men, and what were they like? What did they achieve beyond what the New Testament has recorded? —are consequently not merely the questions of a lively curiosity; they come naturally and of necessity to any one who wishes to learn the history of the Christian faith, and to weigh the evidences of its value for the human race.

The position which these characters hold in universal Christendom is in itself a powerful testimony to the truth and vitality of the gospel which they proclaimed. Their names were once obscure and unknown, but each of them is now as a sparkling 'jewel on the outstretched finger of Time.' They are the patrons of important philanthropies. They not only stand at the head of a variety of religious orders, but they have lent their names to flourishing guilds and handicrafts. They are the tutelary geniuses of many European nations, whose sons are called after them in baptism. The noblest buildings which have ever been built are associated with their memory, and the words which they spake and wrote are echoed within the walls by generation after generation. The inference is obvious. The truth which informed and moulded their characters and inspired their utterances must have been divine.

They were once as ciphers in society. The doctrines they taught were of no account; the simple virtues which they embodied in their lives were ridiculed; the Master for whom they joyfully suffered torture and death was despised and rejected of men. It is this consideration which gives to each scrap of tradition and each fragment of legend, concerning the Apostles of our Lord, inestimable value. These men were not simply satellites in the train of the central sun; they reflected His light and spread far and wide His healing rays.

After the day of Pentecost the Twelve are said to have met together on two memorable occasions. On the first of these, and under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, they assembled in council to shape out the clauses of a common confession of faith. Ambrose is responsible for this statement. He describes the Apostles as skilful artificers, and the result of their skill as that 'by which the darkness of the devil is disclosed that the light of Christ may appear.' In a sermon attributed to St. Augustine we have the further assertion that each of the twelve Apostles contributed one of the twelve articles which are now contained in what is styled the Apostles' Creed. The idea is ingenious and suggestive. It is one of those statements which the Church of the Middle Ages grasped at but never sifted. It wanted to believe it. It assigned to each Apostle the clause in which he was supposed to have been specially interested, and when the figures of the twelve were portrayed, a scroll

inscribed with his distinctive article of faith was placed in the hands of each Confessor. In its simplest original form the Apostles' Creed was unknown before the year 600. It was then without some parts which are now included. If Thomas had affirmed that 'He descended into hell,' as well as that 'the third day He rose again from the dead,' the former phrase had been strangely omitted. The 'communion of saints' which Simon Zelotes dictated is also absent, and of the 'life everlasting' which Matthias is said to have contributed, there is no mention whatever. These clauses were added as necessity required. They were weapons forged as the conflicts of the truth with error successively arose. But although we are compelled to relinquish the tradition, we may rest assured that all the declarations of that simple form were substantially believed by the Apostles. It is certain also that some one of the manifold messages which they preached would, according to their individual temperament, be specially emphasized. No single one of the messengers of the gospel could utter its fullness, but all together might declare in varied and harmonious tones now one part and then another. It was so that the bright spirits which Dante saw made known the letters of the mystic sentence. They first sang a letter, and then by their movements formed it.

> And as birds, risen from the bank, as though rejoicing together o'er their pasture, make themselves now a round, now a long, flock,

> So within the lights the sacred creatures flying sang, and in their shapings made themselves now D, now I, now L.
>
> First singing to their note they moved, then as they made themselves one of these signs, a little space would stay and hold their peace.

When the Apostles met a second time, remembering their Lord's command—'Go ye into all the world and baptize all nations'—they cast lots to determine the course which each of them should take. They were ready to go anywhere; climate, race, and language concerned them not. They were as free from personal predilection or prejudice as are the streams which flow down the mountain-side. When we come to trace the twelve we shall find Andrew in Scythia, Peter in Syria, John in Ephesus, Thomas in Coromandel, and the rest are scattered to all points of the compass, save James the Major, who evangelizes Jerusalem and Judea.

The prospect which this tradition sketches out is full of pathetic interest. Did they ever all meet together again? Putting aside the wholly imaginary statement connected with the assumption of the Virgin —they never did. They were as sowers that went out into separate plots of a vast field, into which they would drop the seed, catching occasional glimpses of each other, hearing faintly one another's voices, but only destined to gather together when the long day's work was over and the sun went down.

We cannot follow them all. If from the original

twelve we choose Peter and John and add to them Paul the Apostle of the Gentiles, our purpose may be answered. In the track of all the others there are flowers of legend which are very tempting. If we are compelled to pass them by at present, we may employ some of them in the consideration of other subjects later on. Even from those which are told of the three great Apostles we can only make a selection. But the selection may suffice.

* * * * *

When Peter, the pilot of the Galilean Lake, left all to follow Christ, he never foresaw the eminence to which the admiration and adulation of his fellow men would raise him. Superstition has mingled with veneration, and idolatry has united with reverence, in placing this Apostle upon such a pedestal of pre-eminence; but notwithstanding, he never could have attained such an elevated position nor commanded such a powerful influence if he had not been endowed with natural qualities and spiritual gifts of the highest order.

To have reached such an ascendency is in itself a miracle. That he who denied his Master should be regarded as the chief of the Apostles; that he who refused to allow his Lord to wash his feet should have a bronze statue in the city of Rome, the foot of which is worn away by the kisses of devout thousands; that he who through his denial was a stone for Christ to break His heart upon should have

the greatest sacred building in the world dedicated to his memory,—these are facts requiring explanation.

Long before the Lord had turned and looked upon Peter, His eyes had searched him and known him. He saw in the crude and massive elements of his nature the possibility and promise of eminent goodness and service. To others he might appear, because of his impulsiveness, as a shifting stone in a running stream. To Him he was a rock on which ere long dependence might be placed: on which other souls might yet be built; a foundation-stone, firm and unmovable.

To him the keys of heaven were given. He is always represented in art as bearing them.

> Two massy keys he bore of metals twain,
> The golden opes, the iron shuts amain,

says Milton, who most surely had not the slightest sympathy with the papal interpretation put upon the words of Christ. Peter himself divined their meaning. He never himself assumed pre-eminence. In the early part of his career the calm and stately character of James overshadowed him, and to him he was ready to defer. In his later days he acknowledged the greatness of the Apostle Paul. The early Church assigned him no exclusive authority, and explained the metaphors of the rock and keys in general terms. 'He who has Peter's faith,' writes Origen, 'is the Church's rock; he who has Peter's virtues has Peter's keys.' Indeed, the symbol of the keys will bear more than its initial

application. It denotes energetic purpose and enterprise, for he who bears the keys in any procession will go before. They also, even more than the anchor, are an emblem of hope, for the keys of hope unlock the doors of the future with its unseen treasures. Withal they are significant of humility. They are not as the rod of the ruler, nor as the sceptre of the prince.

If these suggestions are admissible, we may leave the keys in the hands of the great Apostle, whose character revealed itself in the energy of love, the vigour of hope, and the grace of humility. The traditional and legendary references to Peter are on the whole consistent with these cardinal virtues.

The fiery boldness which struck the Sanhedrin is apparent in them. The passionate loyalty to his Master which, according to St. Augustine, would have led him to tear the traitor Judas in pieces with his teeth if his name had been disclosed, comes out in different ways. His conflict with Simon Magus is an illustration. They first met in Syria. Simon had given himself out to be an incarnation of God. He professed to work miracles. When a child, he could make a sickle by itself cut down the standing corn. The brazen serpents he fashioned moved. The iron images he moulded laughed. His beautiful companion, Helena, was Helen of Troy, whose spirit had passed through his own brain and then embodied itself again. When Peter confronted him, he became instinctively afraid. His magic would not bear the touch of truth.

He shrank from inevitable exposure, and flinging his cabalistic books into the depths of the Dead Sea, he fled to Rome. Nero received him. After he had become bewitched by his magical arts and wonders, he loaded him with honour and riches, and made him his favourite counsellor. As soon as Simon had reached the zenith of his fame, then Peter arrived. His enemy had found him. The struggle between the arch-heretic and the great Apostle recommences. The whole city is moved. The citizens take sides; Nero is the arbiter. To the miracles of mercy wrought by St. Peter in the name of Jesus, Simon Magus replies with his deceiving wonders. At length he grows angry; he will leave the city polluted by the presence of the Galilean. He will return again to heaven. The day of his ascension is announced. The people assemble; the superstitious emperor is looking on. Climbing to the pinnacle of the tower which stood upon the highest of the seven hills, the magician crowns himself with laurel and flings himself out upon the air. At first he seems to float and fly, as if his robes were wings; but suddenly he falls.

The multitude, who had been gazing upward, had scarcely noticed Peter as he knelt at the foot of the tower. It was his prayer which had driven away the demons who were bearing the son of Satan in their hands.

This strange story, which was extremely popular in the Middle Ages, may after all be history in a poetic

and allegorical form. The impostor may have been Heresy; his discomfiture the victory of Truth.

When we turn to another side of the Apostle's character he was Bar-Jona, the son of a dove. As Jacob de Voragine expounds the appellation, 'He had beauty of manners, gifts of virtues, and abundance of tears, for the dove hath wailing for her song.' Indeed, as St. Clement will have it, his face was burnt with tears; and often when he awoke at the crowing of the cock, he would call to mind his fault again and again and weep bitterly. With such a remembrance spiritual pride was impossible. It kept alive a fervent ambition to make amends. It fanned the flame of a passionate love to his Master.

According to the most beautiful of legends, he was destined to die for the Lord he had once denied. It was in the days of Nero's reign of terror. A fierce persecution was raging. The little church was threatened with destruction. The brethren besought the Apostle for their sakes to fly. He left them reluctantly, and only in order that he might return and shepherd them again. At a spot, now sacred, on the Appian Way, he met 'Jesus Christ coming against him.' 'Lord, whither goest Thou?' exclaimed Peter. 'I go to Rome to be crucified,' was the sorrowful reply. The vision was enough; the Apostle understood its message. As he turned back to his doom it vanished.

A few days afterwards he went out of the Mamertine prison to be crucified. As he approached the

cross on the Janiculum hill, his face was glowing; at the remembrance of the Saviour's death on Calvary it was overcast. He was unworthy to die as his Lord had died. He entreated that his head might hang downwards. And so he was crucified.

* * * * *

Although John outran Peter on the way to the sepulchre, he was not the first to enter. Peter had been dead many years before John received the welcome summons. He died a natural death. His path was shadowed with deadly perils. He is sometimes pictured with a palm branch in his hand, for when in Rome, in the days of Domitian, he was thrown into a cauldron of boiling oil, and came out of it as if it had been a refreshing bath. He was banished to Patmos, and listened on its bleak rocks to the moaning of the sea. When the cruel emperor died, John took refuge in Ephesus. A fresh danger awaited him. While preaching the gospel in the city, Aristodemus, the chief priest in the temple of Diana, opposed him. He denied the veracity of John's statements, and proposed that he should drink a cup of poison in proof of his belief in their validity. Relying upon the power of his Master, the Apostle drank, while the venom rose up out of the cup, and departed in the form of a serpent. It is this incident which has furnished another of the Apostle's characteristic symbols—the chalice and the adder within.

It was at the entreaty of the elders of the church

in Ephesus that he wrote his Gospel, some sixty years after the Ascension. He was becoming old, but neither the eye of his body nor the eye of his soul had grown dim. Although the Holy Spirit was moving him to write, he would not use his pen until the bishops and elders had fasted and prayed three days that he might be inspired and guided. The answer came, and 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God'—was written. The eagle is the symbol of St. John the Evangelist. He can rise high into the upper air, and he can look at the sun.

If Peter's love was the energy of action, the love of John was the energy of feeling. His heart yearned over his disciples. St. Clement gives in proof a touching illustration. The Apostle had converted from his wild and evil ways a young man whom he loved very tenderly. Leaving Ephesus on a lengthened visit to the churches, he entrusted him to the care of a bishop as a charge to be most carefully guarded. On his return, he made haste to see the young convert, but was overwhelmed with grief when he learned that he had returned to his riotous ways, and had fled to the mountains. After severely rebuking the bishop for his negligence, he called for a horse and rode hot haste in search of the wanderer. He had joined a band of robbers in the hills, who had elected him to be their captain. St. John was on his track, but before they met, the robber recognized his pursuer, and fled to his fastness. Then the Apostle forgot his age, and rode

after him, crying behind him that fled, 'My most sweet son, why fleest thou from thy father, feeble and old? Turn again, my son, turn again, Jesus Christ hath sent me to thee.' The cry from such a loving heart was irresistible. The fugitive halted, turned round, and, flinging himself at the Apostle's feet, acknowledged his sin and repented.

The last scene in St. John's active life, which St. Jerome pictures for us, is very simple and very pathetic. When he could no longer walk to the assembly of the saints, his disciples carried him. He was unable to preach. He could only raise his hands to bless the congregation, and to say, 'My little children, love one another.'

In extreme old age, when John had outlived the rest of the Apostles, he heard the footfall of the Master. He had tarried long, but was in no way wearied. When he died, his followers buried him, as he had enjoined them, but he looked as if he had only fallen asleep. When they visited his grave from time to time the ground above him seemed to rise and fall with his breath. A perfume lingered around the grave. That is the legend, and we know its meaning in these later days. Love cannot die; its fragrance is imperishable.

> The actions of the just
> Smell sweet and blossom in the dust.

* * * * *

If we were to estimate the position and influence of St. Paul in the Early Church by the number of

legends associated with his name we should be entirely mistaken. They are very few. The authentic history is so ample, picturesque, and thrilling that there is scarcely any void for imagination to fill in, and no dull incident which needs to be brightened. There is possibly another reason for their scarcity. The spirit of Paul was modern. Although he was a Jew, he was cosmopolitan. He was in advance of his age. He lived more in the future than in the past. He would therefore move in a sphere in which the legend is not at home. There are legends about Paracelsus; there are none about Bacon. But we owe something to tradition, and tradition and legend are frequently indistinguishable. From both of them we can picture Paul's personal appearance. Of medium height with spare, bent figure; an oval face with lofty brow and Grecian features, all save one, which Lucian ridicules when he sneers at 'the bald-headed Galilean with the hooked nose.' His eyes were bright and piercing: they could either flash with kindling thought or grow dim with tears. It is thus that we picture Paul on Mars' Hill, and it was some such presentment as this which Chrysostom hung in his study. We may judge of the place he occupied in the estimation of the cultured of his day, by St. Augustine's reference to the private gallery of the Lady Marcellina in the second century. Side by side with the statues of Homer, Pythagoras, and Jesus Christ, stood one of the Apostle of the Gentiles. His disciple Dionysius styles his master an earthly

angel, a heavenly man. His symbol—a drawn sword—is significant of three things in particular: of his keen invincible spirit; of the Word of God, which was his victorious weapon; and of the manner of the death by which he sealed his testimony.

He was beheaded two miles outside the walls of Rome in the reign of the Emperor Nero. Three Roman knights were told off to escort him to the block of the executioner. They marvelled at the joy which shone in his features as he spoke of the King whom he served and to whom he was going. What was His name? they inquired. As the prisoner discoursed along the road his guards were made captives to Jesus, and believed. They loosened his bonds, and bade him escape. 'God forbid, brethren,' said Paul; 'I am a lawful knight of Christ, I cannot flee.' Further along, the Christian lady Plautilla was standing to cheer him as he passed. He begged for the veil she wore that he might bind it over his eyes at the last.

The block was ready at the foot of a pine-tree, and the sword was in the executioner's hand. Stretching out his arms to heaven, the Apostle committed his soul to God the Righteous Judge. With his own hands he bandaged his eyes, and knelt down willingly. The sword fell. As the name of Jesus was on Paul's trembling lips, his head dropped down. It bounded three times, and wherever it touched the earth a fountain sprang forth. A dazzling light surrounded the mangled body!

The place of the Three Fountains is visited year by

year by a thousand pilgrims. The water is insipid, the light has faded into common day, the pine-tree has decayed; but throughout the civilized world the truth which Paul proclaimed is living, radiant, imperishable.

With the exception of St. John, all the glorious company of the Apostles are by tradition enrolled with the noble army of martyrs. They died because they believed in the gospel they proclaimed, and out of loyal love to their Master. They were willing to be thrown down from the temple parapet, as was James the Less; to be flayed alive, as was Bartholomew; to be pierced through with a lance, like Thomas the twin; to be crucified, as were Andrew and his brother Simon; or to be sawn asunder, as was Simon the Zealot. There was no visible glory attending their departure. Their self-sacrifice was regarded as folly. The last sound they heard was derisive laughter; the last earthly sight they saw was the angry faces of their enemies. Such endurance and suffering are, at the least, a testimony to their sincerity, and a tribute to the personal influence of Him who inspired His followers with such intrepid devotion. But an inquiry of equal if not greater importance remains, How far did they in their words and actions reflect the features of His character before the world?

> Was He revealed in any of [their] lives
> As powers, as love, as influencing soul?*

The answer which the New Testament and tradition, history and legend supply is emphatically the same.

PART III

THE SPIRITUAL SENSE:

Its Interest in Theological Truth embodied in Doctrine and Dogma

PART III

SYNOPSIS

The theological legend—Its origin and purpose, e.g. Scapegoat, &c.—The legend of dogma and doctrine—The Penitent Thief—Adam's skull.

The marvellous history of the True Cross—The symbolic use of the Cross in the Middle Ages—Its place in modern Christian thought.

The Virgin Mary—Her personal appearance—Character—Legends of her Nativity—Marriage and Annunciation—Her association with the Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Ascension of our Lord—Legend of her Assumption—Adoration of the Virgin—Baneful effects—Redeeming features—A plea for due reverence.

I

THERE are many sacred legends which may be termed Theological because of their substance and intention. They are inspired or tinged by the truths which concern the salvation of men and their eternal destiny. They form a class by themselves. However interesting their artistic or literary form may be, their motive is apparent. They confirm doctrine or enforce dogma, or, it may be, stoop sometimes to support heresy or superstition. But whatever part they play it is always with a purpose. In their simplest form they are scarcely more than illustrations—as, for instance, the tradition attached to the scapegoat on the great Day of Atonement. After the high-priest had solemnly laid his hands upon its head, confessing the sins of Israel, a skein of scarlet wool was tied around its neck to signify their heinous guiltiness. It was led away. As soon as the scapegoat reached the edge of the wilderness the colour of the skein began to fade. When it was entirely out of sight the scarlet wool became *as white as snow*.

The sinlessness of Jesus is evidently the subject of the following incident. The time when He would enter upon His public ministry had almost arrived, when one day His mother said unto Him, 'Let us go to the banks of the river Jordan, for John is preaching repentance to the people and baptizing his converts there.' Jesus replied, 'But, mother, I have done no sin and have no guilt to wash away, unless peradventure what I have said is ignorance—yet notwithstanding we will go to the baptism.'

The anxiety of Mohammed and others to abolish the central doctrine of Christianity—the Atonement—accounts for the wild tradition which is cited by the Koran, that although the Jews boasted, 'Verily we have slain the Messiah, Jesus the Son of Mary, an apostle of God—yet they slew him not, and they crucified him not, but they had only his likeness.' It was Simon of Cyrene who not only bore the cross when Jesus fainted beneath it, but who also took the semblance of Jesus and died upon the cross in His room and stead.

It is when dealing with ecclesiastical dogma that theological theories have sometimes condescended to shifts and inventions. If any theory is substantially true it will be found to fit in with facts, however apparently remote or contrary. But, on the other hand, whenever dogma is partly truth and partly human invention, it is tempted to act tyrannically in the squaring of facts to its own position. Or should

the truth within it in course of time be lost in vain speculations, then the dogma changes into sheer superstition, and the credulous mind can never look at the facts except through a haze which distorts and discolours them.

* * * * *

The salvation of the Penitent Thief is a very simple story. To the heart of a little child it presents no difficulty. To some of the learned Fathers of the Middle Ages the incident in the bare narrative was incredible. Their eyes were holden. Both the penitence of the sinner and the magnanimity of the Saviour bewildered them—the depth of the one and the greatness of the other. How in such a short space of time the callous heart could soften, and out of it could spring forth such triumphant faith; how one knock of the robber's hand could open wide the gates of mercy; how, while the heaven was dark above, and the earth was trembling beneath, and the storm of human passion was surging around, the soul of the suffering Son of God and the soul of the crucified criminal could meet, never to be divided again,—was more than dogma could warrant or reason could understand.

They summoned their suppositions to aid them. If in his early days the remorseful robber had ever shown a bud or blossom of good; if the good fortune that befell him could be regarded as the reward of some former meritorious act; or if only in some mysterious way some sacramental rite had prepared and shriven

him by anointing or baptism, then—as was said afterwards of another notorious sinner in Shakespeare's drama—he might have gone away 'an it had been any chrisom child.'

Can tradition throw any light upon the difficulty? In the apocryphal Gospel of the Nativity we have a glimpse of the earlier career of both malefactors. As the holy family are on their flight into Egypt, they come to a lonely region infested by bandits. Two of the number, outposts of the gang, break in upon their encampment, intending to rob and to slay. Titus is arrested by the divine majesty of the child, and endeavours to check the fury of his comrade. But Dumachas is blinded by passion, and can only be persuaded to sheath his sword by the offer of a ransom. When Titus lays down forty groats at his feet, together with his girdle of much greater value, he consents to let the pilgrims pursue their journey unmolested. They move on, but not until the Virgin has predicted that the good robber would one day be rewarded with a seat at God's right hand, and not until the Holy Child Himself has promised that after thirty years they should meet again, and that Titus should go with Him to Paradise.

The day foreshadowed comes. But the word of Jesus must fulfil itself in harmony with theory and doctrine. Forgiveness depends on penitence and faith; but to the rigidly orthodox mind even these are insufficient; and we are told, therefore, that as the

robber uttered his cry the shadow of the cross of the Redeemer fell upon him, and in the water and the blood from the side which the spear had pierced, he found an efficacious baptism. We may turn at once from such sophistries as these to a simpler and a truer faith—the faith of Augustus Toplady when he prayed—

> Let the water and the blood,
> From Thy wounded side which flowed,
> Be of sin the double cure,
> Save from wrath and make me pure;

or of the gentle spirit of William Cowper when he sang—

> The dying thief rejoiced to see
> That fountain in his day,
> And there may I, as vile as he,
> Wash all my sins away.

* * * * *

There is a theological tradition which may be entitled the Legend of the Skull. In very many pictures of the Crucifixion the skull is a striking object. It is either at or near the foot of the Redeemer's cross. It is much more than a mere *memento mori*.

When Noah left his home, and entered the ark, he took the bones of Adam along with him. They were too precious to be allowed to perish in the Flood. They were links with the past which could not be utterly forgotten. They would carry a good omen with them as they freighted the vessel on her fateful voyage.

When the storm was over, and Noah had settled

safely on the earth again, instead of interring the bones he divided them amongst his sons as a sacred legacy. Shem, the eldest, received the skull. His family increased and multiplied, as did the families of Ham and Japheth. They were separated, each taking its own course to subjugate and people the earth. Wherever the family of Shem went, the skull of Adam was carried. It accompanied their wanderings, it rested where they encamped; it was a relic to be preserved, and a treasure to be guarded. After having shared the varying fortunes of its guardians for many generations, it was secretly buried on the crest of a rounded hill far away from any human habitation. The sons of Shem may have feared that the heirloom was no longer safe in their custody—their migrations were frequent, their conflicts with hostile tribes incessant — or some premonitory instinct was guiding them. There it lay out of sight and solitary, until a city was built not far away, and a road led from the city by the foot of the knoll into the quiet country. The form of the little hill in which it was concealed was so rounded that it came to be called Golgotha, the place of a skull, although men little thought of another meaning which the name might bear. One day a procession swept along the road. On the top of Golgotha three crosses were erected. The stem of the central cross was driven beneath the ground until it touched the buried skull. It is here that the story reaches its climax, and unfolds its significance. He

who was stretched upon that cross was the Second Adam, the Federal Head of the human race, the Son of Man, Redeemer of the world!

It is impossible to ignore the teaching which underlies this story. The legend is charged with religious meaning, and becomes a homily, telling

> Of Man's first disobedience, and the fruit
> Of that forbidden tree, whose moral taste
> Brought death into the world, and all our woe.

Although the doctrine of original sin was of late development, the belief in the possibility of transmitting the habit and consequences of ill-doing was a very early conviction. It may have been at first a vague and an uneasy suspicion, but it soon defined itself in the Hebrew mind, and the author of Esdras exclaims, 'A grain of evil seed was sown in the heart of Adam from the beginning, and how much wickedness hath it brought forth unto this time, and how much shall it yet bring forth until the time of threshing come?' It is this source, and persistence, and growth of evil from one original cause which finds expression in the legend of the skull. That symbol of sin and the death which follows it is handed down from father to son, and is borne along the line of many generations. But at last its course is arrested. The Second Adam atones for the original transgression. His cross is on the skull. His death destroys the power of death, spiritual and natural. 'For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.' The shedding

of His blood was not simply the giving of His life as a ransom—it was a source of life to the dead and the dying. Even Adam felt its influence. For, as the legend proceeds to say exultingly, 'when the sacred blood fell down and reached the skull at the foot of the cross, the saying was fulfilled—"Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."'

II

IT is in the so-called *History of the True Cross* that we find the sacred legend in one of its noblest forms. It stretches over a long period of time. It has many successive parts, but it is linked together by one idea, and filled with one profound emotion. Imagination, ingenuity, passion prevail in it by turns. It probably took its rise from a brief statement in the Gospel of Nicodemus, but it enlarged rapidly. Each fond generation seems to have contributed something to it of more wonderful texture than the original; as the descendants of the Iranian blacksmith added cloth of silver and gold, from time to time, to the leathern apron which had been the first standard of national victory.

When the early Christians saw a symbol of their faith in the form of the cross, they were simply following a natural instinct. When thought expresses itself in language and emotion in gesture, both are outward forms and symbols. At first the cross was employed as a sign of recognition. Afterwards it appeared in outlined graving, or mosaic, associated with

the figure of a lamb. Later it developed into the crucifix bearing the outstretched body of the Lord. It then became a visible representation of His death, of the atoning offering, and of the life that comes to mankind through His dying.

The cross was not peculiar to Christianity as a religious emblem. In the dust of the Pyramids a mummy has been discovered with a cross, the symbol of life, in his hand; and long before the Crucifixion the Teuton pagan had looked at the head of Thor's hammer with fear and trembling. But the follower of the crucified Jesus knew nothing of this. When he adopted the cross his memory went back to Calvary; he was celebrating a miraculous transformation. What had been a sign of suffering and shame had become to him a symbol of triumph and of glory. The very object which the soldiers of Pontius Pilate had scorned was on the standards of the army of Constantine and had a place in the Emperor's crown.

It was in such a psychological period that the wonderful legend of *The True Cross* unfolded itself.

Adam is full of years, and life has become a burden. He is longing also for the oil of mercy from the tree of life in Paradise, whose image had not wholly faded from his mind. He calls Seth and sends him with his message to the Guardian Angel. Seth has never ventured towards the forbidden gates, but as the grass has refused to grow above his father's and mother's footprints since they were expelled from Eden,

he cannot fail to find the way. Although Michael receives him graciously, the oil of mercy cannot yet be granted. Five thousand years and more must intervene before a descendant of Adam shall appear and offer it to all mankind. But Seth is not allowed to return empty-handed or without a word of comfort. He is to tell his father that the hour of death is near. And when he dies, he is to put beneath his tongue three seeds which the archangel chooses from the tree of life. The sentence of death is joyful news to Adam, and he laughs merrily for the first time since the gates had closed behind him. As soon as he is buried the seeds shoot up into saplings and unite in one trunk above his grave. From the growth of that tree there follows incident after incident until a climax is finally reached.

When it was yet a little plant Lot filled his jug from the river Jordan and set out to water it, but never reached the tree. Three times he attempted, but on each occasion a thirsty fainting traveller moved his compassion and drank all the water at one single draught. It was Satan who baffled him.

Moses sweetened the bitter waters of Marah with one of its branches, and with another he smote once and twice the rock of Horeb. David discovered its virtue and transplanted it to Jerusalem, and built a wall around it to protect it.

For a while it was forgotten, until Solomon coveted the stately tree for his temple. But when it was cut

down, the workmen were at their wits' end to know what to do with timber that was sometimes too short and sometimes too long. They threw it aside. It became a bridge. The Queen of Sheba refused to cross it, and knelt down before it instead. For once wiser than Solomon, she informed him of what would happen in connexion with that sacred wood when the Redeemer of the world was revealed. It was overlaid then with gold and silver, and became a beam in the temple porch, where all who passed beneath it could bow and do it honour. But Solomon's profane grandson Abijah stripped the beam of its precious metal, removed it from the porch, and had it buried, that it might be out of sight and, as he hoped, out of mind for ever.

No one supposed that the pool of Bethesda really owed its healing virtues to this beam in the loam beneath its depths—yet so it was. It had lain there for many years, but on the morning of the day when Jesus of Nazareth was led forth to be put to death, it rose and floated on the surface of the waters. The soldiers drew it in and fashioned it into a cross, on which Jesus the Son of God and the King of the Jews was crucified.

If we permit the narrative to pause for a moment, it is only that we may realize that the promise of redemption given to Adam has been working its way as a connecting-rod through the successive generations. The manner in which the religious imagination secures

continuity is amazingly ingenious. It has to brush aside the varying traditions which say that the actual cross was composed of different timbers—

> Nailed were His feet to Cedar,
> To Palm His hands,
> Cypress His body bore,
> Title—on Olive stands.

But by fastening attention to one tree only, the roots of which were in the primaeval past, it achieves unity and makes manifest an increasing purpose through the generations.

To resume its history. All three crosses which had stood together on Calvary were taken down and in course of time were buried. For the Holy Cross, however, there was a day of resurrection. Helena, the Emperor Constantine's mother, was, to use the mediaeval word, the agent of its *Invention*. She went as a pilgrim to Jerusalem with a great retinue. She inquired regarding the whereabouts of the cross, and only one man possessed the secret. He was compelled to lead her to Hadrian's Temple of Venus, which had been unwittingly built above its resting-place. But it was really the sweet scent of the air above it which betrayed its presence, and showed the searchers where to dig. The three crosses were brought to light, but which of the three was the true and holy one remained a mystery until the dead body of a man, being borne to the grave, was laid upon each in turn, and sprang to life again when it touched the cross of the Redeemer.

From that time, according to the narrative, its destiny varies. It certainly was regarded by the empress with the highest honour. She is said to have left part of it in Jerusalem and to have taken the other half with her back to Constantinople. The nails which had been driven in it were recovered also. One of them becalmed a whirlpool into which it was cast; a second was forged into a bit for Constantine's charger, to fulfil Zechariah's prediction that the bridles of the horses should be 'holiness'; and the third was twisted amongst the jewels of his crown. The section of the cross left at Jerusalem passed through many scenes of honour and dishonour, the part which crossed the Hellespont was eventually broken up into fragments, and distributed among the European nations as the most precious relics which the world possessed. They were looked upon as such treasures fit for one king to present to another.

In examining such a legend as this we are brought into touch with one of the greatest elemental emotions which has ever been felt in human history. For about ten centuries the cross and the truth it symbolized were never absent from the minds of the followers of the crucified Saviour. To the eyes of their imagination the cross on Calvary occupied the bounds of space—its upright touched the sky, its arms stretched to the uttermost east and west, while its stem descended to the depths of the abyss.

So was it with the emotion which that symbol

had created: it entered and ruled the realm of their religious consciousness; it filled the expanse of their active life; it reflected itself on every object, coloured every scene, and made itself heard in every murmuring sound.

It may not have been essentially a spiritual emotion animated by love to God and charity to men; but it was compact of reverence and hope and fear. And above all, it seemed to realize that the prime fact in the development of the salvation of the race, as well as in the revelation of the gospel, was redemption by the cross. The image of it met them everywhere. When they looked back they saw it in the faggots of wood which Isaac carried for a burnt-offering. Its crimson sign was on the lintels of the doors of the Israelites in Egypt. They beheld it in the Paschal lamb as it was dressed for roasting before the fire; and they even discovered it in the two sticks which the widow of Sarepta was to lay together in baking her last meal.

Not only did the past reveal the cross, but each day of the mediaeval Christian's life was pointing to it. The anchorite saw it in the antlers of the stag; the sailor in the mast which the yard had crossed; the alchemist in the crystal he weighed and analyzed; the ploughman as he watched the yoke-beam of his plough; the swimmer shaped it as he swam; the bird flying in the air, the penitent standing with uplifted hands to pray, the weary workman stretching forth

his arms—all cast beneath them the shadow of the cross.

Although it is customary to characterize the Middle Ages as the Dark Ages, it is very evident that men were striving to make their religious experience, such as it was, co-extensive with the work-a-day experience of common life. They did nothing in that day without the cross. It stood in the market-place to plead for honesty in business; it was put on the coins as a guarantee of their genuineness; erected on the boundary lines of boroughs and parishes; emblazoned on important parchment deeds and charters, and left behind on the last will and testament of the illiterate. When men went to worship they met in a building with a cruciform ground-plan, and below a roof whose burnished cross shone brightly in the sun. At its stone font, when children, they had been baptized with the sign of the cross; and when the time came for them to be buried, it would stand at the head of their last resting-place.

While the cross was in the eyes of mediaeval Christians a symbol of sorrow and suffering, it was significant of triumph as well. It is in this light that one of the oldest English poets interprets the actual crucifixion. It is the tree itself that speaks.

I behold the Master of mankind approach with lordly courage, as if he would mount upon me, and I dared not bow nor break—opposing the command of God—altho' I saw earth tremble. Then the young Hero laid his

garments by—He that was God Almighty, strong and brave, and boldly in the sight of all, He mounted the lofty cross, for He would free mankind.

The sacred symbol was therefore, from the time of Constantine onwards, embroidered on the military standard, and its name was shouted in the battle-cry as an omen and foreword of victory. And when the early Christian poet, Cynewolf, had his spiritual vision, and looked forward to the triumph of the kingdom of God over all things evil, then the cross appeared in the heavens, eclipsing the sun by its brightness, and he hails it with rapture.

The brightest of beacons shining brightly over the vast creation,
Shadows shall be put to flight when the resplendent cross shall blaze upon all peoples,
When the red rood shall shine brightly over all in the sun's stead.

There was no sign of a tendency to idolize the cross itself until the eleventh century, and even then the great teachers of the Church protested against it. In one of his homilies, Ælfric simply and strongly declares—

In the Holy Rood-token is our blessing, and to the cross we pray ; by no means, however, to the tree itself, but to the Almighty Lord who hung for us upon the Holy Rood.

If such interpretations as this had been received and acted upon, there would have been no need for the

rough work of the zealous reformer or the iconoclastic Puritan. But as it was, the cross was allowed to hide the Crucified One, and its adoration to rob Him of His reverence. Nehushtan had once again to be broken.

But, however Protestantism may recoil from the worship of the symbol, it is itself indelibly engraved upon our spiritual imagination. It is in the core of our deepest religious feeling. It lies at the root of our living faith. It rises before us when we sing, when we preach, or when we pray. We may not gaze upon it in the sky as did Constantine the Great, but nevertheless our eyes

> Survey the wondrous cross
> On which the Prince of glory died.

As Charlemagne taught his warriors to call it the banner of victory, we also teach our youths and maidens to chant

> Onward, Christian soldiers,
> Marching as to war,
> With the Cross of Jesus
> Going on before.

When Pasteur died, he held a cross in his right hand, and in his left the hand of his faithful wife. It may not be natural for the Protestant to follow his example, but the strictest Puritan can breathe the prayer—

> Hold Thou Thy cross before my closing eyes,
> Shine through the gloom and point me to the skies.

III

IT would have been a strange thing if the followers of the Lord Jesus had not become profoundly and universally interested in the life and character of Mary, His mother. While He was alive He naturally filled their vision: even for one who stood to Him in such a peculiar relationship they had no special thought to spare; but, afterwards, when He had gone, the memory of her life came back and awakened inquiry and admiration, as the moon, which has hung unseen in the noon-day sky, appears and becomes brighter and brighter as the sun goes down. It could not have been otherwise. The salutation of the angel had shed a distinguishing light upon her which would never fade away. Of all women who had lived, or should live, she was the most highly favoured, 'for the holy thing which was to be born of her was to be called the Son of God.'

And when the child was born, was she not associated with Him from the time when she laid Him in the manger to the day when she saw Him hanging on the cross? The relationship in which they stood one to

the other would continue to give her a sacred claim upon the love and gratitude of the world. It was through her that the Redeemer came. She was the 'Eve' of the new creation, and therefore blessed among women for evermore.

But beyond all this there was the beauty of her own character. Although the Gospels do not tell us much about her, their silence is significant and speaks in her praise. She does not presume upon her privileged position. Her humility, reticence, self-suppression, are eminently remarkable. Her disposition is not so much portrayed as suggested to our imagination. It must have possessed a gentle loveliness all its own. In appearance she is said to have resembled her Divine Son. There is a description of her given by Epiphanius in the fourth century, which has probably helped to fix the main outlines of her portrait for all after-time. 'She was of middle stature, her face oval, her eyes brilliant and of an olive tint, her eyebrows arched and black; her hair was of a pale brown, her complexion fair as wheat. She spoke little, but she spoke freely and affably. She was not troubled in her speech, but grave, courteous, and tranquil. Her dress was without ornament, and in her deportment was nothing lax or feeble.'

When the time came for the selection of a symbol which might manifest in some degree her beauty, modesty, purity, and spiritual grace, the white lily was chosen. In its petals we are supposed to see her

body; in the anthers within them, her soul; and in the light which shines upon both, the holy radiance which comes from God.

The legends of the Madonna are innumerable; very many of them must have sprung almost spontaneously from the interest which her life and character inspired. Others are intimately connected with doctrine and dogma. If they were not shaped in the first instance by the early theologian in support of some theory or article of faith, they were enlisted afterwards in his service. Some of these legends would, no doubt, have continued to live because of their literary value, although no ulterior purpose lay behind them. But they, as well as the rest, owe very much of their preservation to their supposed utility. They are quoted by the Fathers; they appear in theological tracts; they colour confessions of faith; they are appealed to by great councils, and they inspire the thoughts and prayers of the people.

Some parts of Mary's history, as given by the four evangelists, seem to invite further expansion. But it is in relation to her birth and betrothal and motherhood, at the beginning of her life, and her experience from the death of Jesus to the time of her own departure, at the close, that we have the principal legends which are linked to her name. Such phrases as 'The Immaculate Conception,' 'The Annunciation,' 'The Virgin Birth,' and 'The Assumption of Mary,' will indicate where the veins of

tradition have crossed the stratum of the received narrative.

Although this account of Mary's Nativity comes first in chronological order, it can only be interpreted by the events which are said to have followed. The theological logicians argued that if the child Jesus to be born of Mary was to be the holy thing that the angel announced, she must herself have been free from the taint of original sin. They lost sight of the facts that He was to be conceived of the Holy Ghost—that the Spirit of God was the vital agent of purification, and that by His power her body became the temple of the Holy Ghost. The dogma is in danger of limiting the power of the Holy Spirit also in another way. It discourages the hope that He is able to sanctify ordinary humanity; it denies that He can 'bring a clean thing out of an unclean.'

When, later on, the Ascension of Mary was received as an article of faith, the Immaculate Conception was considered as a first and necessary link in the conditions which led up to that consummation.

This idea of Virgin birth did not begin to shape itself into dogma until the twelfth century, when St. Bernard proclaimed it with his characteristic zeal. It was authorized as an article of faith by Pope Pius IX. in 1854.

The Immaculate Conception was the subject of the apocryphal Gospel of the Birth of Mary, ascribed to St. Matthew; and of the Protevangelium,

attributed to St. James. The traditionary story was known by Mohammed, and gave point to the Arabic legend that although every descendant of Adam is touched by Satan at its birth, both Mary and Jesus, when they were born, escaped his finger—God dropped a veil between him and them.

It is necessary now to recall the legend of Mary's nativity, and it cannot be summarized.

There was a man of Nazareth, whose name was Joachim, and he had for his wife a woman of Bethlehem, whose name was Anna, and both were of the royal race of David. Their lives were pure and righteous, and they served the Lord with singleness of heart. And being rich, they divided their substance into three portions—one for the service of the temple, one for the poor and the strangers, and the third for their household. On a certain feast day, Joachim brought double offerings to the Lord, according to his custom, for he said, 'Out of my superfluity will I give for the whole people, that I may find favour in the sight of the Lord, and forgiveness for my sins.' And when the children of Israel brought their gifts, Joachim also brought his; but the high priest Issachar stood over against him and opposed him, saying, 'It is not lawful for thee to bring thine offering, seeing that thou hast not begot issue in Israel.' And Joachim was exceeding sorrowful, and went down to his house, and he searched through all the registers of the twelve tribes to discover if he alone had been childless in Israel. And he found that all the righteous men, and the patriarchs who had lived before him, had been the fathers of sons and daughters. And he called to mind his father, Abraham, to whom in his old age had been granted a son, even Isaac.

And Joachim was more and more sorrowful; and he would not be seen by his wife, but avoided her, and went away into the pastures where were the shepherds and the sheep-cotes. And he built himself a hut, and fasted forty days and forty nights; for he said, 'Until the Lord my God look upon me mercifully, prayer shall be my meat and drink.' But his wife Anna remained lonely in her house, and mourned with a twofold sorrow, for her widowhood and for her barrenness.

Then drew near the last day of the feast of the Lord, and Judith her handmaid said to Anna, 'How long wilt thou thus afflict thy soul? Behold the feast of the Lord is come, and it is not lawful for thee thus to mourn. Take this silken fillet, which was bestowed on me by one of high degree whom I formerly served, and bind it round thy head, for it is not fit that I, who am thy handmaid, should wear it, but it is fitting for thee, whose brow is as the brow of a crowned queen.'

And Anna replied, 'Begone, such things are not for me, for the Lord hath humbled me. As for this fillet, some wicked person hath given it to thee, and art thou come to make me a partaker in thy sin?' And Judith her maid answered, 'What evil shall I wish thee, since thou wilt not hearken to my voice? for worse I cannot wish thee than that with which the Lord hath afflicted thee, seeing that He hath shut up thy womb, that thou shouldst not be a mother in Israel.'

And Anna, hearing these words, was sorely troubled. And she laid aside her mourning garments, and she adorned her head, and put on her bridal attire; and at the ninth hour she went forth into her garden, and sat down under a laurel-tree and prayed earnestly. And looking up to heaven, she saw within the laurel-bush a sparrow's nest; and mourning within herself, she said, 'Alas, and woe is me! who hath begotten me? who hath brought me forth?

that I should be accursed in the sight of Israel, and scorned and shamed before my people, and cast out of the temple of the Lord! Woe is me! to what shall I be likened? I cannot be likened to the fowls of heaven, for they are fruitful in thy sight, O Lord! Woe is me! To what shall I be likened? Not to the unreasoning beasts of the earth, for they are fruitful in thy sight, O Lord! Woe is me! To what shall I be likened? Not to these waters, for they are fruitful in thy sight, O Lord! Woe is me! To what shall I be likened? Not unto the earth, for the earth bringeth forth her fruit in due season and praiseth Thee, O Lord!'

And behold an angel of the Lord stood by her, and said, 'Anna, thy prayer is heard; thou shalt bring forth, and thy child shall be blessed throughout the whole world.' And Anna said, 'As the Lord liveth, whatever I shall bring forth, be it a man-child or a maid, I will present it an offering to the Lord.'

And behold another angel came, and said to her, 'See, thy husband Joachim is coming with his shepherds'; for an angel had spoken to him also, and had comforted him with promises.

And Anna went forth to meet her husband, and Joachim came from the pasture with his herds, and they met at the golden gate; and Anna ran and embraced her husband, and hung upon his neck, saying, 'Now know I that the Lord hath blessed me: I who was a widow am a widow no longer; I who was barren shall become a joyful mother.'

And they returned home together.

And when her time was come, Anna brought forth a daughter, and she said, 'This day my soul magnifieth the Lord!' And she laid herself down in her bed, and she called the name of her child Mary, which in the Hebrew is Miriam.

As we follow the history of Mary to the time when she was 'espoused to a man whose name was Joseph,' we are treading on holy ground. The narratives of St. Matthew and St. Luke are simple and sufficing. They would probably have been received as the only authorized and true account of the great mystery of the Incarnation but for subsequent theological speculation and controversy. As it is, a legendary story intervenes which professes to fill up gaps, to account for certain occurrences, and to supply the details which are lacking. How much of this legendary matter is tradition more or less reliable, and how much of it is invention, pure and simple, it is impossible to say. It is probably a blending of both. It may, in some respects, be fanciful, but for the most part the tale is told with an artless sincerity and a reticent reverence.

When Mary had reached her fourteenth year, she and other virgins in the service of the temple were commanded to return to their homes and prepare for marriage. Then Mary begged leave to stay, as she had vowed to remain a virgin. The high-priest was perplexed, and entering into the Holy of Holies, made prayers concerning her. And behold the angel of the Lord came to him, and said, 'Zacharias, go forth and call together all the widowers amongst the people, and let every one of them bring his rod, and he by whom the Lord shall show a sign, shall be the husband of Mary.'

And the criers went out through Judea, and many widowers came together, and Joseph, who had been at work and had laid down his hatchet, was among them. They all went to the high-priest, bringing their rods with them. But Joseph shrank from presenting his, as he was an old man, and had children. Then Zacharias took the rods into the temple and prayed, but no sign followed. He brought them out, and returned them to their owners. It was then that the discovery was made that Joseph had kept his rod behind, and when he offered it, behold it burst into blossom, and a milk-white dove from heaven descended upon it. Then Joseph was afraid, but he acknowledged the sign, and he took Mary into his house, and said unto her, 'Mary, behold I have taken thee from the temple of the Lord, and now I will leave thee in my house. I must go to mind my trade of building. The Lord be with thee.'

He travelled into distant cities building houses, it was not until the sixth month afterwards that he returned.

The Annunciation is supposed to have taken place in the early spring, and it was in the hush and twilight of the evening, just after the going down of the sun, that the angel came to Mary. The visitation was in this wise. Mary was one of seven virgins chosen to spin a new veil for the temple. The honour of weaving the true purple for it fell by lot to her. One day, at sunset, she had left her spinning-wheel

and taken her pitcher to draw water, when she heard a voice saying unto her, 'Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou amongst women.' She looked round to the right and to the left to see from whence the voice came, but finding no man, she returned trembling to her house. She set down her waterpot, and took her seat once more before the loom which held the purple web. Then the room was filled with dazzling light, and in the glory the angel Gabriel appeared, and standing beside her, said, 'Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found favour in the sight of God.' When she had listened with humility and wonder to the mysterious message of the angel, then Mary said, 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord, let it be unto me according to thy word.' The days went on, and when she had finished her purple cloth, she took it to the high-priest, who, as he beheld her coming, lifted up his hands and blessed her, saying, 'Mary, the Lord hath magnified thy name, and thou shalt be honoured throughout the world, in all ages.'

We learn from St. Matthew that when Joseph was about to marry the virgin to whom he had been espoused, he was minded to put her away privily. The legend runs side by side with the Evangelist's account except in one particular. Joseph being a just man, says St. Matthew, was not willing to make her a public example. From the apocryphal Gospel of James we learn that the circumstances came to the

knowledge of the high-priest, and we are led to infer that they were known to the friends of Joseph and Mary also. In the dream which the just man had as he lay asleep, an angel removed his doubts and fears, and when he awaked he was ready to do what he had been commanded. By other and equally wonderful ways the suspicions of the priests and the people were removed, and the innocence of Mary and of Joseph was made manifest as clear as the noonday.

The Protevangelium (from which this version of the miraculous birth is chiefly derived) was valued by many of the Fathers because of its insistence on the virginity of Mary when the Christ was born. According to their judgement, it supported the doctrine of the divine nature of the Holy Child. It was quoted also by theologians of a later date for another purpose. When the virtue of celibacy came to be emphasized and enjoined, the history of Mary was the sanction and example. With regard to the doctrine of the divinity of Jesus Christ, no other teaching than that of Matthew and Luke was needed. It is from their clear and wonderful account that the clause in the Apostles' Creed, 'Conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary,' received its form. It is true that it conducts the reader into the atmosphere of mystery—but how could it be otherwise? It has to deal with a fact which is above the plane of the ordinary and the material. It has to awaken and appeal to our higher and spiritual sense. It discourages

curiosity, and offers no lure to speculation. It does not even attempt to satisfy reason, but it confidently opens out the truth to the simple and reverent heart.

The doctrine of the Incarnation, with its two main elements of the true divinity and the real humanity, has again and again been submitted to criticism. It is in the crucible of the New Theology now. Whatever may be the issue of the present controversy regarding the Virgin birth, it will certainly be revived again. When three such men as Bishop Gore, Canon Henson, and Sir Oliver Lodge maintain divergent views, the hope of ever attaining universal intellectual agreement seems doomed to disappointment. Is such consent a necessity? Should we not rather ask, Is there not enough to satisfy the intuitive trust of the heart without meeting the cold demands of a logical faculty? When Mary heard the first announcement of the divinely human birth she was filled with amazement. As often as it is repeated it will produce the same effect. Her faith staggered not, and from the Son of God *incarnate* we need not turn aside.

> Thou seemest human and divine,
> The highest, holiest manhood Thou.
> Strong Son of God, immortal Love,
> Whom we, that have not seen Thy face,
> By faith, and faith alone, embrace,
> Believing where we cannot prove.

After the marriage feast in Cana of Galilee, we

learn little from tradition about Mary until we see her standing with the other women below the cross on Calvary. But she has been with her Son in spirit, if not in person, through all the activities of His ministry. Wherever He went, her heart went with Him. She divined His experiences, and felt instinctively His joys and His sorrows. When the darkest hour came, she emerged from her retirement to take her natural place at the side of her Son in His agony. She was there with the faithful few when the darkness fell on the scene of the Crucifixion. And when the body was taken down, she was at hand with her tender helpfulness.

The insight with which tradition enters into her peculiar maternal grief is very true and touching. It tells us that when Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus had drawn out the nails which fastened the hands of Jesus to the cross, John took them quickly and hid them away, lest Mary should see them. The nails at the feet were removed by Nicodemus, who received upon his shoulder the head and arms of the Lord. Then Mary drew near, and taking the wounded hands in her own kissed them, and sank down, fainting beneath the weight of her sorrow.

It is on the third day afterwards that the early legends bring her again to our notice. If they are to be credited, it was to Mary His mother, and not to Mary Magdalene, that our Lord first appeared on the morning of His resurrection. She was alone in her

room waiting and hoping. A volume of the prophecies which she had been reading lies open before her. As she knelt in prayer, and even as she reminded the Lord of His promise to rise again from the grave on that very day, and stretched forth her hands in longing, there was a burst of music and a rush of wings, as the angels appeared, waving branches of palm, and singing their hallelujahs. Then Jesus Himself entered the room with the patriarchs and prophets around Him—His face radiant with the glow of victory. Men and angels together celebrated His triumph over Death and Hell. After the patriarchs and prophets had knelt at Mary's feet in grateful homage for the part she had taken in bringing the Redeemer into the world, the risen Lord departed to reveal Himself to another Mary in the Garden of the Sepulchre.

Although this story of the Resurrection differs from that which is attributed to St. Mark, it is impossible to find serious fault with it. When we read the words, 'He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, *out of whom He had cast seven devils*,' we are ready to say it was the depth of her peril which drew Him to the forlorn woman. She *needed* Him the most. But, after all, there was a wound in the heart of Mary the mother of the Lord which only His hand could heal.

* * * * *

On the day of the Ascension Mary is a prominent figure within the circle of the Apostles. As

Jesus is going up into the heavens she implores Him to remember her when He comes into His kingdom, and not to leave her long behind.

It will not be necessary for our purpose to follow every further detail of her history. After living with St. John in Jerusalem a few years, it is said that when persecution arose she accompanied him to Ephesus. She can even be traced to Mount Carmel, where Elijah the prophet took refuge. It was eleven years after the ascension of Christ, when she was in her sixtieth year, that the crowning event of her life is said to have happened.

As the dogma of the Roman Catholic Church, which sanctions the worship of the Virgin, is chiefly based upon this alleged Assumption, we must listen to the story which records it. It is given very fully by the author of the *Golden Legend*, who quotes from a gospel which was attributed to St. John the Evangelist. We can only repeat it in outline.

Mary had returned from her wanderings to Jerusalem. She lived on Mount Zion, and spent most of her time in visiting the places associated with the life of her Divine Son—the scenes of His baptism, fasting, passion, resurrection, and ascension. 'On a day when all the Apostles were spread through the world in preaching, she was greatly smitten with a desire to be with her Son Jesu Christ, and great abundance of tears ran withoutforth.' An angel came to her with great light and saluted her as the mother of his Lord.

He brought in his hand a bough of Paradise, which was to be borne before her bier, at her burial, the third day following. Then was Mary glad ; but she had three favours to ask of the angel. First, that he would tell her his name ; then that her sons and her brethren the Apostles might be with her when she died, that she might see their faces, and that they might carry her to her grave ; and, lastly, that when she departed she might not behold any fiend of the Evil One. The angel withheld his name, but the second and third requests were granted. 'And this said, the angel mounted to heaven with great light,' and the leaves of the palm which he left behind shone like the morning star.

The Apostles began to assemble. John was preaching in Ephesus, when it thundered, and 'a white cloud took him up and brought him to the gate of Mary.' He had scarcely saluted her when the rest of the Apostles arrived from different parts of the world, all wondering why they had been gathered together. St. John went out to meet them, informed them, and brought them in. 'And about the third hour of the night Jesu Christ came with sweet melody and song, and with the orders of the angels.' The bed on which the Virgin lay was surrounded by her earthly friends and by the heavenly host. Jesus Himself, bending over her, said, 'Come!' And she replied, 'Son, my heart is ready.'

In the early morning His arms received the soul

as it left the body. 'Then said our Lord to His Apostles, Bear ye the body of this virgin, My mother, into the vale of Jehoshaphat, and lay her in a new sepulchre that ye shall find there, and abide there three days till that I return to you.'

When the day of the burial came John went before the bier, with the shining palm branch in his hand, while Peter and Paul, the one at the head and the other at the foot, lifted it and bore it along. There was music in the air, and it was sweet with the perfume of roses and lilies of the valley. The other Apostles walked beside the body, and chanted praises all the way; but none of their enemies could see the singers although they heard the song. They could only listen, alarmed and wondering.

For three days the Apostles sat round the sepulchre of Mary, keeping watch. On the third day Jesus came with a great multitude of angels and saluted them.

When He asked them in what way He could honour His mother and show her grace, they besought Him by His almighty power to raise her up and set her body at His right hand. As this was what our Lord Himself had willed, He granted their petition. 'And anon the soul came again to the body of Mary and issued gloriously out of the tomb, and thus was received in the heavenly chamber and a great company of angels with her.'

As the Holy Virgin was passing out of sight, St. Thomas, who was absent at her death and burial,

joined his brethren. When they told him what had happened he stood amazed, and refused to credit it. But for his sake, Mary, as she was still ascending, loosed her girdle and let it fall at his feet. He raised it reverently and believed.

The incident of the girdle, which was probably suggested by the falling mantle of the Prophet Elijah, gave rise to a romantic story which follows its fortunes until it is enshrined in a church in Europe as its greatest treasure. We need not notice it now.

The legend of the Assumption, as I have given it, stripped of some of its offensive redundancies, reveals imagination and sentiment, but its dogmatic purpose also is plainly apparent. It is a declaration of the divinity of the Virgin and of her equality with her Divine Son. In its main features it duplicates the incidents of His resurrection and ascension. It is, indeed, a copy and reflection of those glorious miracles. He had lain three days in the grave, and His flesh saw no corruption. For the same time Mary was entombed, but there were no signs of approaching decay upon her body. When Christ arose and showed Himself in the upper room to the Apostles, all who were there were convinced. Thomas was absent, and doubted. When Mary arose and began to ascend, he was once more at a distance. When he arrived at the last hour he was again unbelieving, but again what he was privileged to see and to touch swept his incredulity away.

Up to the end of the fourth century there was no sign that the 'deification' of the mother of our Lord was definitely believed. The dogma may have been silently shaping itself, but there is no trace of its existence until a century later. It is in the efforts of early Christian art that we find the most striking register of the stages in the growth of the worship of the Virgin. There is a fifth-century representation of the Adoration of the Magi in which Jesus is seen enthroned. Behind the throne are angels, and around each of their heads there is a *glory*. The wise men are standing before the throne, and Mary is on a level with them, and without a *nimbus*. One hundred and fifty years later there is quite a different record. In a Syrian manuscript, dated 586 A.D., there is a sketch of a scene in which Mary is the central figure. The Apostles are grouped around. She has the nimbus on her head, but they have none; and, what is still more gravely significant, her Son is kneeling before her, as if to crave her blessing.

From this time onwards the signs and symbols of the growth of Mariolatry are multiplied. In the ninth century the image of the Virgin was stamped on the coins throughout the Greek empire. In religious pictures and sculpture of the same period she begins to appear as enthroned, and in the succeeding centuries she is invested with all the marks of increasing power and majesty.

It is at this point that we must endeavour to

trace the chief movements of thought which brought about the development of this dogma. In the fourth century, when Constantine had adopted the cross on his standard, and Christianity had suddenly become the authorized religion of the Roman Empire, the Church was exposed to the inroads of surviving pagan influences. Very many of her converts were unable to divest their minds entirely of their former associations. Their early belief in a number of divinities was not easily destroyed. Their devotion to some ideal representation of the beauty and bounty of the female element in nature was at first unconquerable. But it must find a nobler object and a purer form of expression. Juno, Diana, and Venus may no longer be worshipped; but Mary, the divine mother, must be beloved and adored.

But there was another movement in the thought of Christendom which had more to do with the rise of Mariolatry than any pagan survival—the gradual elevation of womanhood. The spread of the gospel had undermined Eastern prejudice and tyranny. It had purified the best Greek and Roman ideals of the relation of the sexes, and pointed out their legitimate fulfilment. It was slowly but surely hastening on the day when woman would be placed side by side with man—his companion and his equal. It was reasonable that, with this rise of sentiment regarding womanhood, the thought and feeling of Christendom should be turned to the Woman who was most highly favoured,

and by whom the world's redemption came. It was natural that she should receive an exalted place in the grateful memory of the Church, and be highly honoured. Beyond that was the beginning of error.

But, as we have already seen, the trend of theological thought was in the direction of the undue homage of Mary. The emphasis which was placed upon the divine nature of Jesus, and His immaculate conception, at once raised her to a dignity above all women; and when the theologians went further, and insisted that she herself was miraculously born, the dogma of her equality with her Son was inevitable. Her resurrection, assumption, enthronement, and coronation, followed in necessary sequence. The evidence forthcoming for any and all of these doctrines was extremely slender; but, granted the Virgin's immaculate conception, and the last and crowning climax came in logical progression. According to one of the latest statements of the Roman Catholic Church upon the subject, 'Mary's corporeal assumption into heaven is so thoroughly implied in the notion of her personality, as given by Bible and dogma, that the Church can dispense with strict historical evidence.'

It will, I think, be evident that the legends and traditions about the Virgin Mary are in the main responsible for the place which the Church of the Middle Ages assigned to her, and for the adoration which she has ever since received. The extent of her unconscious sway, and the strength of her influence, are

almost appalling. There are at least two hundred and forty millions of Roman Catholics in the world, and it is not too much to say that in all these hearts she holds a divided empire, with her Divine Son, her own Redeemer. This is clearly apparent in all the spheres in which the inner and spiritual life of the people expresses itself: in literature, poetry, music, painting, and architecture. The worship of Mary demands a large share of the time at the disposal of her votaries. Three times a day, morning, noon, and evening, they are to think of her with adoration and blessing. One day of the week, Saturday, is sacred to her memory. One month of the twelve, and that the month of May, the fairest, is linked to her name. The great festivals associated with the notable events of her history, from her nativity to her coronation, are spread over the year. They vie with, and outnumber, the days which commemorate the life and acts of our Lord. This year the Feast of the Annunciation, or Lady Day, fell on Good Friday, and the spiritual vision of one half of Christendom was divided between the spectacle of the crucified Saviour and the listening Virgin. In every Roman Catholic chapel in the world there is more than one image of Mary; and in other sections of the Catholic Church, the number of sacred buildings dedicated to her is almost innumerable. In nearly every Protestant cathedral in Great Britain there is a Lady Chapel, and wherever the lily is carved on boss, or architrave, or stall, it is the

symbol of her invisible presence. There are more prayers offered to her by the lips of many millions of our fellow Christians than are presented to any person of the Holy Trinity. In 1210 A.D., the devout were instructed to utter one hundred and fifty Ave Marias and fifteen Paternosters in completing the prayer circle of the Rosary. Ten times the number are to ascend to the Virgin than are to rise to our Heavenly Father. And, indeed, it is very evident that all the Christians of the middle centuries not only prayed devoutly to Mary, but relied upon the merit of her intercession when they offered prayer to God the Father or to God the Son. It is almost startling to meet such words as these in a sermon of Wyclif's—

> It seems to me impossible that we should obtain the reward without the help of Mary. There is no sex or age, no rank or position, of any one in the whole human race which has no need to call for the help of the Virgin Mary.

It is true that this extract is from one of his earlier sermons, and he may possibly have somewhat changed his mind—although he has left no sign of it; but it is, at any rate, indicative of the conviction of mediaeval Christianity. It expresses in the prose of the greatest preacher of his day, what the greatest poet of the same period had already declared—

> Lady, thou art so great, and hast such worth,
> That if there be [he] who would have grace,
> [And] yet betaketh not himself to thee,
> His longing seeks to fly without [its] wings.

Whichever way the mediaeval Christian turned, he looked to Mary as his guide, his helper, and defender. In the duties and dangers and sorrows of his earthly career he implored her aid. As she bent over him with protecting pity, her crown was studded with stars. He was to fix his gaze on them, as he steered his frail barque through life's voyage. 'If the winds of temptation blow fiercely upon you, look to these stars,' cries St. Bernard. 'If you find yourself in a sea of trouble, look to these stars. In all the storms of life implore the aid of Mary. If you are tossed on the waves of pride, ambition, envy, look to these stars and invoke the name of Mary. O holy virgin, no man is saved but by thee alone. O thou pure virgin, no one escapes from evil but by thy help. O chaste virgin, no one receives the joys of life eternal but by thee. God takes pity on no man but by thy mediation, mother of eternal benediction.'

Her sway extends to the celestial kingdom and to the under-world. In this respect Mariolatry may clash with the homage due to St. Peter as the bearer of the keys—but so it is. The Virgin Mary is the Queen of Heaven, and the arbiter of the fate of those who are imprisoned in purgatory.

When the spirit of Dante, accompanied by Beatrice, enters Paradise, and approaches the beatific vision of the Virgin, he thus addresses her—

> Here art thou unto us the meridian torch of love,
> And there below with mortals art a living spring of hope.

The saintly Thomas Aquinas speaks more strongly still, when he styles the Virgin 'the door or gate to heaven.' It is by the magic of her name that the soul is protected from the powers of evil. The gentle Thomas à Kempis assures us that 'all devils, the moment they hear the name of Mary Queen of Heaven, will flee away as from a burning fire.' The devout of the Middle Ages were also taught that whosoever wore the scapular of the ancient order of the Carmelites in honour of the Virgin Mary would escape the flames of hell.

But it is here that a problem awaits us, and we are compelled in all justice to inquire if there were no redeeming features in the influence produced by the exaltation of the character of the mother of our Lord.

If the reverence paid to the Virgin Mary in mediaeval thought had wholly arisen from the selfish instincts of human nature—for 'the sake of winning heaven, or of escaping hell'—it would not have promoted civilization, and it would not have been a living force in Christendom to-day. If in the adoration in which she was held there had not been an ennobling element; if her character as it was presented before the people had not aroused spiritual imagination, generous emotion, and self-denying energy, many of the developments of progress would have been dwarfed and retarded. When it is remembered that she has inspired the noblest efforts of Raphael and Michael Angelo; that the most ethereal music has breathed out

her joys and her sorrows, and that her sweetness and purity and grace have been sung by Dante, Chaucer, and Wordsworth, it will be readily admitted that there must be something in the prominence given to Mary which is not wholly unwarranted, and something even in the adoration offered to her which sheds a benignant influence.

The history of modern civilization supports this conclusion. At a time when the nations of Europe were in danger of setting too great a value on the virile and rougher virtues, there arose before them the vision of womanly tenderness, purity, and grace, like the evening star above a stormy sea. The revelation appealed to the better self which was struggling to rise above the lower ideals of character and conduct which had hitherto prevailed. The effects were immediate. Men and women began to discover a beauty in the neglected graces of modesty, gentleness, and charity. They added these to their conception of perfect manliness and womanhood. We can find the traces of this impulse, which inspired our forefathers to see the value and cultivate the beauty of the humblest things, in the newly awakened love for the simplest flowers of the field. The lowliest plants and herbs became the friends of the people and the playmates of their children. The name of the benignant Virgin was associated with them, and the rose-*mary*, the *lady*-smock, and the *mari*-gold were admitted into fellowship with the loftiest of their kind.

From that moment also began the dawn of the age of chivalry. To the scholar, troubadour, and man-at-arms, she was the *Lady*. The image of the pure and gentle Virgin aroused in men the spirit of reverence for womanhood. It restrained their brutal instincts and refined their coarser manners. It set before them the loveliness of loyalty, chastity, and self-sacrifice; and by its influence on love went far to consecrate the master passion of human life to unselfish aims and noble causes. The name of Mary was in the vow of the knight who was winning his spurs in the lists of the tournament, and in the song of the wandering minstrel. It was on the lips of the earl and his squire as they went forth to fight in the Holy Wars. It awakened emotions which cast a softening light on the gloomy horrors of the baron's castle, and helped to break down the barriers of feudalism. Even the bold outlaw, whose hand was against every man, acknowledged its spell. For, as the old ballad tells us—

> Robin loved our dear Lady,
> For doute of dedeley synne,
> Wolde he never do company harme
> That ony woman was ynne.

Under her patronage, guilds were formed for the relief of the poor, the visitation and healing of the sick, and the succour of the tempted and the fallen. The craftsman in the city, the servitor in the manor, and the peasant in the field, turned to her in the hour of prayer, and believed that their yoke was eased and

their burden was lightened. When the bell of the Angelus sounded, and the silvery twilight stole over the scene—in the mystic stillness which followed the hush of tool and wheel, the toiler rested from his labour, and bowed his head in silent prayer.

But it was in her relation to woman that the idea of the saintly Mary commanded the greatest influence. Her character embodied a new ideal and furnished a fresh standard of womanly excellence. She was the Madonna—the true model of motherhood. She had entered into the mystery of a mother's joy, and had felt the pang of a mother's sorrow. She sanctified and ennobled maternity. To all mothers in child-birth, and in the care and training of their children, in the hour of their rapture or their agony, her example was a source of guidance and of sympathy. Her exalted position shed honour on the social status of women. She was the guardian of their rights and the champion of their claims for an equal share in the blessings of human life and in the hopes of salvation. To them the girdle which she had left behind was a precious legacy. It reminded them that they remained in her remembrance, and that her helpful influence would be with them in all their endeavours and in all their difficulties. The crown which she was supposed to wear was a shining pledge that one day they would come into their kingdom.

But while we gladly see, and set a high value upon, such gracious effects as these, the homage paid to Mary

produced a baneful result, for which they are unable to offer any equal compensation. There came a time when—as we have seen—the reverence which was due to one so worthy developed into adoration, and adoration ended in idolatry. Instead of being approached as an intercessor, she became to the supplicant the hearer and answerer of prayer. If she had once been regarded as—

> The mother with her child,
> Whose tender winning arts
> Had to his little arms beguiled
> So many wounded hearts,

she now becomes the goal of desire and the place of refuge. Her Divine Son is in the background. She sits enthroned. Incense is offered to the queen of heaven, and the smoke of the innumerable censers swung in her honour hides the face of the Saviour from the people, and robs them of His redeeming grace and sympathy.

It is in this way that the dogma of the Coronation has done its deadliest injury. It has not only encouraged sinful men and women to regard the Virgin Mary as an intercessor, but has led them to believe that her intervention is indispensable. While St. Paul declares that there is one God and one Mediator between God and man—the man Christ Jesus, the Romish prelate proclaims 'that the only bridge between man and God is the mother of God.'

It is in the emphasis placed upon the phrase 'the

mother of God' that we find a clue to this baneful error. The word 'mother,' and the relationship for which it stood, suggested two things: a tender heart and a persuasive tongue. The universal craving of men was for sympathy. They also needed mercy. It was through the pitifulness of a woman's nature that they could receive the one, and it was by the pleading of maternal authority that they might hope to obtain the other. The assignment of such a place and such an influence to Mary could never have happened if the person and character of the ascended Lord had not been misunderstood. It was assumed that His divinity would necessitate a degree of aloofness. It was supposed that in His humanity, seeing that He was a man, there would be sternness rather than tenderness. This doctrine was not only taught to sorrowful and sinful men and women, but it was pictured before them and filled their vision. As early as the twelfth century the Virgin was represented as seated enthroned in glory, side by side with Christ, and endeavouring to shield mankind from the outburst of His anger. This was a deadly error then, and unpardonable. If the revelation of the Redeemer in the New Testament had been before the eyes of the Church, they would never have allowed any other being—man, woman, or angel—to usurp His royal place in their faith and affection. They would have remembered that although He was exalted to the highest heavens, He was still 'touched with the feeling

of our infirmities'; that while He was the Son of Mary He was also the Son of Man, and was before the throne as their representative; and that in His person their humanity had access to the Father. The noble utterance of St. Augustine would have emboldened the most timid to approach Him.

> There is in Jesus Christ our Lord Himself a portion of the blood of every one of us. Where any part of me reigns, there I understand myself to reign. Though my sins keep me back, yet my *substance* calls me on. Though my offences shut me out, yet my *communion of nature* with Him rejects me not.

If also the Church of that day had realized that the perfect manhood of Jesus Christ implied a full-orbed human nature in which both the male and female elements were perfected and united, there would have been no desire for the softer sensibility of womanly tenderness. For—to use the impressive words of Frederick W. Robertson—

> His heart had in it the blended qualities of both sexes. Our humanity is a whole made up of two opposite poles of character, the manly and the feminine. In the character of Christ neither was found exclusively, but both in perfect balance. There was in Him the woman-heart as well as the manly brain—all that was most manly, and all that was most womanly.

If these erroneous tenets were no longer taught, if the ideas which they created had ceased to command

an influence, and the superstitious observances associated with them had crumbled into dust—like so many of the mediaeval monasteries which nourished them—there would have been no need to review them at so great length. But those errors are still vital and malignant, and the unwarranted worship of the Virgin is casting a chilling shadow on one half of the Christian world.

The problem, as it seems to us, is how to retain due reverence for the person and character of the mother of our Lord, and at the same time to maintain the living presence of Christ in the centre of the thought, and feeling, and activities, of the human race.

When such a lovely ideal of womanhood and such a gracious example have been furnished, it would be foolish and ungrateful not to let them have their sway. They are probably more needed now than they were in the decay of the Roman Empire or in the Middle Ages. The dignity and the sacred duties of maternity require to be impressed again and again upon the hearts of the mothers of Great Britain, and indeed of the English-speaking world. The appalling infant mortality; the substitution of other foods than the natural nourishment of the mother's breast; the handing over of children, with their first cravings for knowledge and love, to hired helpers, as the mother devotes herself to a life of fashionable excitement and frivolity,—are ominous signs of conditions which may end in national decadence. The gracious form of the

Madonna with the child in her arms, which smiled upon the women of so many centuries, has assuredly a mission in the twentieth!

Nor is it possible for any one who loves his country to read unmoved the revelations of the law courts—the tragedies of ill-assorted lives, the ruptures in family life, and the desolation of a thousand homes—without feeling that the chivalrous relation of the sexes is sorely imperilled. It is possible that the blame may be divided, but the remedy lies mainly within the woman's sphere. If the reign of love is to be preserved or restored with purifying, ennobling, and strengthening force, it must be by woman's influence—through the heart which knows what a maiden's modesty, a mother's tenderness, and a wife's fidelity mean, and which exercises them all.

How to give the living Christ His supreme place in the world to-day, is a problem of even greater importance than to retain the influence of Mary's example, or to secure for woman her legitimate place and power. If, in the energy of His quickening love, He could be enthroned within the consciousness of men, this worn and weary world would breathe again like man new made. There is only one Agent by whom this can be effected, and only one way in which it may be done. It will not be possible to regenerate society by recalling the Jesus of the Gospels to the historic imagination; and although mankind may be uplifted by the vision of the ascended Lord in the highest

heavens, it will not be sufficient to expel the poison of sin from their veins. And even if it were really possible by any priestly process to turn the bread upon the altar into the bodily presence of the Lord, the Saviour outside the soul is not all that our sick humanity needs. It is the birth of the *new* man within the race that the world is waiting for, and this is the work of the Holy Ghost.

It is one of the strangest things that the Church which preserves the memory of the Annunciation almost ignores the office of the Holy Spirit. And, indeed, it would seem as if one glorious revelation in the Gospel of the Nativity had not penetrated the faith of Christendom as it should have done: 'The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee.'

It is in that announcement that we have the secret of the new birth of the individual, the quickening of the Church, the vitalizing of social life, and the regeneration of the race.

PART IV

THE SPIRITUAL SENSE:

Its Homage to the Moral Law and the Christian Virtues

PART IV

SYNOPSIS

The Didactic Legend, its creation and intention—Enforces the three fundamental things: (1) The Moral Law, e.g. Legends of Moses' dark day and the Arab sheik—Of our Lord, Peter and the carrier and his cart. (2) Worship: As the vision of God; legends of Mohammed and the Angel Gabriel; of Joseph of Arimathaea and the Holy Grail. (3) Charity: (*a*) Hospitality, a Hebrew virtue—Legends of Abraham as a host—A Christian grace—St. Cuthbert. (*b*) Almsgiving: legend of St. Thomas the Master Builder and the celestial palace—Charity the infallible sign of a Church's vitality—St. Oswald's hand.

I

SOME of the legends which the world has not been willing to let die are didactic in character. They may have been shaped out by the teacher or the preacher from a suggestive incident, to confirm some ethical principle, or he may have found them already in being, and have pressed them into his service as illustrations or examples. In either case they possess the same features—simplicity, strength, and directness. They appeal to the people, and are easily understood. As it is their mission to awaken interest, they must make the truth they carry attractive—an arrow feathered from the golden wing of a bird of Paradise. They must remain within the memory, that the lesson they bring may have an abiding habitation.

The narrator of the legend never pauses to draw his moral, for it needs none. Its motive is as plain as the story of Cinderella, and its meaning as audible as Whittington's Bow-bells.

The truths which these legends convey are themselves simple, elemental, and convincing. They have

to do with the primal virtues and everyday conditions of human life. They have no business with metaphysical hair-splitting or casuistical subtleties. Although simple they may be sublime—as deep as the sea and as clear as the stars. Truth is not always welcome. It has often to force its way into a mind that is preoccupied and hostile. It is then that the homely legend wins its greatest triumph—it is the wooden horse which carries the invaders within the walls of the city.

The existence of a class of legend that has been either created or employed for these purposes is a tribute to the value and authority of the truths they embody. It proves two things: that the moral lessons were so weighty as to make an indelible impression, and so universal as to become wedded to the folklore of the nation. I can only give samples.

One of the sayings of Simon the Just, the last of the 'Men of the Great Synagogue,' has survived, and will furnish us with three divisions under which a few of these legends may be gathered, 'On three things stand the world: on Law, on Worship, and on Charity.'

Probably *the rule of the will of God* will best express the Scribe's notion of *Law*. He regarded the divine purpose as the operating cause in all human affairs—ordaining and controlling all events, and guiding them eventually to a good issue. This will of God was revealed to man for all the practical purposes of life. It furnished him with precepts to govern his

conduct and to build up his character. In so far as he apprehended the mind of God, and conformed to His ways, he attained happiness and peace. In so far as he believed that the government of the God of all the earth was just and good, he found rest to his soul. But there were times when the faith of the holiest of men was shaken—when their spirits beat against the enigmas of human life. A problem which may almost be regarded as a perennial puzzle was how to reconcile the wicked man's immunity from evil, and the good man's tribulations, with the righteousness of the divine providence.

It is even said that Moses, the man of God, had his dark day.

He was sitting on the mountain-side. In the valley beneath was a green oasis, with its palm-trees casting their shadows to temper the burning heat of the sun, and a spring of water which sparkled like a diamond. While his eyes were resting on the pleasant scene, a young sheik came out of the desert with a bag of pearls in his hand. He laid them at the foot of a tree, and, stretching himself in the shade, he fell asleep, for he was weary. Startled out of his slumber by a sudden noise, he arose as if alarmed, and, forgetting his treasure for the moment, fled away from the oasis. No sooner had he gone than another Arab chief appeared, who, seeing the bag of pearls which the sheik had left behind, laid hold of it and vanished. At this point a third traveller comes upon the scene,

an old man, grey and bearded, who also cast himself upon the ground and fell asleep. Before the sun went down, the youth who had remembered his treasure returned to recover it. Finding no trace of his pearls, he believed that the old man had stolen them, and, waking him roughly, he accused him of the theft. Then followed a fierce but unequal struggle. Their weapons were drawn, and the sword of the young man pierced the old man through the heart. As he fell to the ground, Moses, the unseen spectator, started up with the cry, 'O Lord, is this Thy justice!' 'Hush! be still!' a voice replied, as if from the crags above him. 'Years and years ago, when that old man was in his youth, he wantonly slew the father of the young sheik who lost his pearls. Since then he has never repented of his crime, nor confessed it openly. But vengeance is Mine!'

Although this illustration of the doctrine of retribution is not on the heroic scale of a tragedy of Euripides or Aeschylus, it would serve to impress the solemn warning of the great Hebrew lawgiver—'Be sure your sin will find you out'—on the minds of the people in such a way as would not allow it easily to be forgotten.

'*Heaven helps those who help themselves*,' is an everlasting truth in a universal saying. It reveals a law which any man might learn from nature alone. When the sailor spreads his canvas to the wind and the sower goes forth to sow, they obey it, and are

rewarded. But, none the less, it needs to be reiterated and enforced. It is the law of progress in every realm of the life of man. If we are to grow in grace, if civilization is to spread and the kingdom of God to advance, we must be workers together with God. It is a lesson which is taught in precept, parable, and fable. This is how a simple Basque legend embodies it—

Our Lord and St. Peter went out walking one day. They came across a man kneeling in the middle of the road, and praying with all his might to God to lift his cart out of the ditch into which it had fallen. But Jesus passed on—as if He had never seen the carter or heard him praying.

'Lord, wilt Thou not help this poor man?' cried out Peter imploringly. 'He does not deserve My help,' was the Lord's reply, 'for he himself has not lifted a finger.'

A little farther along the road they came to another man whose cart was in the ditch also. He, too, was shouting out his prayers, but at the same time he was doing his utmost to raise it. In a moment the Lord was at his side to assist him!

II

IF *Worship* be the second thing on which the world must stand, it is essential to know what worship really is, and how it can best be rendered. There are two legends, one from a Christian source and one from a Mohammedan, that shed a helpful light on this inquiry. In substance and in atmosphere they differ widely, but the moral lesson which they teach is almost identical.

When we ask what worship is, and in pursuit of our inquiry we brush aside the unessential, we arrive at the conclusion that it is nothing less, and can be nothing more, than *a vision of God*. A second question follows: In what way may sinful men prepare to see the vision?

Mohammed longed to see Jerusalem, and to enter its gates. He believed that within the Temple there was an assembly of holy prophets, and that Christ was in their midst. In the middle of the night, when his longing was drawing out his soul towards Mount Zion, the sacred city, the angel Gabriel came to him. His prayer was heard. The high favour which he was

craving would be granted. But his soul must be prepared. The angel then took out his heart, washed it in the well of Zemzem, and, filling it with faith and knowledge, put it back again. His body was clothed in a robe of light, and a turban of brightness was placed upon his head. He was ready for his journey. The wings of the lightning bore him. He prayed as he went. There were voices to the right and to the left, but he heeded them not. A host of angels accompanied him, and when he reached the city walls, another host was there to bid him welcome, and to guide him into the holy place. We need not follow him. And, indeed, when we soberly review the story, the whole vision may dissolve as a mere dream of the imagination, but the truth it teaches will remain.

* * * * *

When we turn to listen to the legend of the *Holy Grail*, we are under quite another spell. We are led on holier ground, and are surrounded with a pure and mystic light, but the goal we arrive at is the same. In the year 63, Joseph of Arimathaea landed on the shores of Britain, and made his way to Glastonbury in Somersetshire. He, and the eleven missionaries who were with him, were as poor as poor might be; but he brought with him a priceless treasure in the Holy Grail, which he carried reverently in his hands. After the weariness of their journey was over, the twelve evangelists cut down the willows of the

surrounding marsh, and wove them into the wattled walls of the first Christian church which ever stood on British soil. They placed the Holy Grail within it, and they worshipped God.

But we must go back upon the narrative and account for their coming.

When Joseph got Pilate's leave to take down the body of our Lord, he went first to the upper room in the city where the Last Supper had been held. He found upon the table a golden vessel which had been used in the Paschal meal. Some say it was the cup which had contained the wine, and some the dish in which the flesh had lain. Enough that Joseph took the cup, and carried it with him to Calvary. The body was taken down reverently and tenderly, as we know, but the nail-prints and the pierced side were open still, and the drops of blood which fell were received within the golden vessel, which Joseph bore away. He never parted with it night or day. For two years he was imprisoned for the faith in Syria, but it nourished his life and brightened the darkness of his dungeon. He was set free at last, and began to preach the gospel.

The heathen islands of the West were longing for the light, and Joseph was sent out to visit them. He voyaged over stormy seas, but landed safely in the end, bearing—

> The cup, the cup itself, from which the Lord
> Drank at the last sad supper with His own,
> To Glastonbury, where the winter thorn
> Blossoms at Christmas, mindful of our Lord.

And there awhile it bode; and if a man
Could touch or see it, he was healed at once
By faith, of all his ills. But then the times
Grew to such evil that the holy cup
Was caught away to heaven and disappeared.

The quest was now to find it. But here we must let the progress of the story pause for a moment, that we may try to discover its motive. There are several suppositions. It was invented, says one historian, by a monk of the eighth century, to assert the independent origin of the Christian Church in Britain. Others, interpreting the name, '*Sang-real*,' to mean the true blood, regard the vessel containing it as a symbol of the union between the two natures of our Lord. It stands in the eyes of some for the Church itself, and its strange and eventful history as a representation of the fortunes of the Church in the midst of an unfriendly world.

But no one can follow the story of the Holy Grail, when it has entered into the mystical history of King Arthur and the Knights of the Table Round, without feeling that, whatever else it meant, it was a sacred symbol of the presence of God—of God in Christ, we may say; the Christ whose blood was shed for sinful men—and of the satisfaction which comes to the soul when it sees the beatific vision.

This seems to be the teaching of Tennyson in the Idyll of the Holy Grail. It was his noblest poem—what Robert Browning styled his highest and best.

He tells us himself that the impulse to write it came upon him suddenly as a breath of inspiration. While he was composing it, his face appeared to his children as rapt and inspired. He was repeating the message which the Holy Grail had given to our forefathers in the bygone days, to the English race of the nineteenth century. He spoke as one who himself had seen the vision.

Our narrative follows the adventures of Percivale. His sister had retired from the pomps and vanities of the world, and was breathing out her soul in praise and prayer. One night, she heard a 'sound as of a silver horn' blown o'er the hills. When all her senses were awake—

> Streamed thro' her cell a cold and silver beam,
> And down the long beam stole the Holy Grail,
> Rose-red with beatings in it, as if alive,
> Till all the white walls of her cell were dyed
> With rosy colours leaping on the wall;
> And then the music faded, and the Grail
> Passed, and the beam decayed, and from the walls
> The rosy quiverings died into the night.

The Holy Thing had come back again to Britain. It was not to be an utterly forsaken land, for all its strife and sinfulness. If the simple maid had seen the Grail, then others, if they were worthy, might behold it too. She tells her brother of the vision, and beseeches him to let his comrades, the Knights of the Round Table, know, that he and they might fast and pray until they saw what she had seen. The months

pass on, and then, one summer's night, when they were silently sitting in the banquet-hall in Camelot, a strange thing happened, which impelled Sir Percivale to pledge himself to seek the Sacred Cup. In this wise he describes the scene.

> All at once, as there we sat, we heard
> A cracking and a riving of the roofs,
> And rending, and a blast, and overhead
> Thunder, and in the thunder was a cry.
> And in the blast there smote along the hall
> A beam of light seven times more clear than day:
> And down the long beam stole the Holy Grail
> All over covered with a luminous cloud,
> And none might see who bare it, and it passed.
> But every knight beheld his fellow's face
> As in a glory, and all the knights arose,
> And staring at each other like dumb men
> Stood, till I found a voice and sware a vow.

And young Sir Percivale was not the only one to pledge himself that day.

> Galahad swore the vow,
> And good Sir Bors, our Lancelot's cousin, sware,
> And Lancelot sware, and many amongst the Knights,
> And Gawain sware, and louder than the rest.

But we must follow Percivale. He is under changeful moods. One day he steps high with confidence, as he recalls his prowess in the lists, and his many victories. He tells us then that—

> Never yet
> Had heaven appeared so blue, nor earth so green,
> For all my blood danced in me, and I knew
> That I should light upon the Holy Grail.

But, smitten with shame at the thought of his boastfulness and pride, he is plunged into gloom, and his sins are brought to remembrance.

> Then every evil word I had spoken once,
> And every evil thought I had thought of old,
> And every evil deed I ever did,
> Awoke and cried, 'This Quest is not for thee.'

Still, on he rode; to realize, as all must do, that the vision is only for those who follow on. Other sights, on the right and on the left, opened out to allure him and to mock him. A fierce thirst was upon him. There was a green meadow and a running brook and apple-trees in front, inviting him. 'I will rest here,' he said, 'I am not worthy of the Quest.' But while he drank of the brook and ate the apples, all these things at once fell into dust.

Farther on, there was a fair woman at a door spinning. The house was comely. She stretched forth her arms to meet the weary knight as if to bid him rest. But when he touched her, she, too, fell into dust and nothing. The same thing happened when he met a majestic being in golden armour wearing a crown of gold. He seemed to the young soldier like the lord of all the world. He, too, opened his arms as if to embrace Sir Percivale, and he, too, fell into dust, and the knight was left alone.

As he still ventured forward, a hill rose before him. It was steep, but as he climbed a city came in sight—'pricked with pinnacles into heaven.' And there were

men at the gates who cried, 'Welcome, Percivale, thou mightiest and thou purest amongst men.' And then, when he had mounted to the walls, he found no inhabitant within the city, which lay in ruins, save 'one man of an exceeding age,' who gasped, 'Whence and what art thou?' and even—

> As he spoke,
> Fell into dust and disappeared.

Indeed, it would seem as if the vision could never appear to him, if he singly and unaided sought to find it.

It was Galahad whom he met and joined, who imparted his own spirit to his comrade, till he grew one with him, to believe as he believed. Galahad beheld the holy vessel first, as he passed over the bridge of many arches into the glorious city. As Sir Percivale watched him, he too beheld it hanging above his head, redder than any rose. His heart was filled with joy, for then he knew the veil had been withdrawn.

Like all the simple primitive legends, this high legend of the Holy Grail never dreams of drawing out its moral in so many formal words, but its meaning is one that whosoever will may know and feel. It is the music of the beatitude set to the rhythm of a moving story, '*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*'

Perhaps no one of us would be anxious for time to run back and fetch the age of that mystical cup, and yet if our land to-day had some of the holy chivalry of that

period, it would be infinitely the richer for the gain. It is quite true that few of the knights who went forth in quest of the Grail beheld it. We know also that the bond of the goodly fellowship of the Table Round was dissolved; that the Hall of Camelot vanished, like the baseless fabric of a vision. But still the memory of their self-sacrificing effort to reach a spiritual ideal remains to inspire the youth of the twentieth century. If Galahad, Gawain, and Lancelot, Bors, and Percivale believed that there was something better worth having than the victory of the tournament, which had the smile of beauty for its reward; if they could deny themselves daily for the sake of the heavenly Quest, would it not be a good day for England if our youth could be inspired by a passion which would raise their ambition above the football-field and race-course, and be moved to gird themselves to fight for purity and liberty and righteousness—a warfare which must always end in the vision of God?

III

WHOSOEVER has seen a vision of God immediately longs to be like Him. In order to be like Him, we must have charity. Charity begins in feeling—a movement of the heart; but it finds expression outwardly in deeds. The two earliest forms in which it manifested itself were *hospitality* and the *giving of alms.*

When men began to understand that they were dependent one upon another, hospitality became a sacred, social duty. It is one of the primitive virtues. There are signs of its existence in the dim ages of barbarism. The rude savage was willing to share the shelter of his cave with any member of his tribe. The wild Bedouin of the desert had room within his tent for the belated traveller. As civilization spread, its practice continued. It was a fundamental law in the religion of the Latin race. Its observance was pleasing to the gods. Its neglect provoked their anger.

It was by the exercise of this grace that the progress of the human race was made possible. There was intercourse between city and city, between one

country and another. Knowledge was diffused, commodities were exchanged, discoveries were shared, and a community of life was secured. In some form or other it must continue to exist, or the fabric of social life must fall asunder.

The privilege of showing hospitality was an essential part of the belief and practice of the Hebrew religion. In patriarchal times it was faithfully observed. When the social code of the Mosaic economy was shaped, it was solemnly enjoined. When the children of Israel came to build their houses and their cities, they were to bear in mind that they had once been wanderers, and 'remember the stranger within their gates.'

Every noble character portrayed in the Old Testament was hospitable when he had the opportunity. Abraham, the friend of God, was the most hospitable of men.

It is said that he always kept a table set and ready for any casual wayfarer who might need a meal, and a suit of garments for any who came in rags. Abraham could never take his own meals unless he had gone out of his camp, for a mile or two, to see if he could find a hungry wanderer. His giving did not impoverish him, for all men saw that the more the patriarch gave the more he prospered. One year a dreadful famine came; but hearing that there was corn in Egypt, he sent his servants to a friend he had at court to purchase a supply. The friend was really a secret and bitter enemy, and now that he had the opportunity to ruin

Abraham he refused to send a grain of corn, saying, in self-defence, that if it had been for Abraham and his household he would have gladly granted his request, but as it was sure to be wasted on vagabond beggars, he was obliged to refuse.

The servants were greatly grieved, and, not wishing to bring their sacks back empty, they filled them full with fine white sand. Abraham was deeply wounded by the treachery of his friend, and fell asleep pondering the mystery. While he was still sleeping, Sarah, who knew nothing of what had happened, returned from a journey. On opening one of the sacks she found the finest of flour, which she baked into the finest of bread.

But on one occasion, according to the legend, his generous spirit was sorely tried. His zeal for the divine righteousness is, for the moment, in conflict with his charity, as the story shows.

When Abraham sat at his tent door, according to his custom, waiting to entertain strangers, he espied an old man stooping and leaning on his staff, weary with age and travel, coming towards him, who was an hundred years of age. He received him kindly, washed his feet, provided supper, caused him to sit down ; but observing that the old man ate and prayed not, nor begged for a blessing on his meat, asked him why he did not worship the God of Heaven. The old man told him that he worshipped the fire only, and acknowledged no other God ; at which answer Abraham grew so zealously angry that he thrust the old man out of his tent, and exposed him to all the evils of the night and an unguarded condition. When the old man was gone, God called to him, and asked him where the

stranger was; he replied, 'I thrust him away because he did not worship Thee.' God answered, 'I have suffered him these hundred years, though he dishonoured Me: and couldest thou not endure him for one night, when he gave thee no trouble?' Upon this, saith the story, Abraham fetched him back again, and gave him hospitable entertainment and instruction. [Go thou and do likewise: and thy charity will be rewarded by the God of Abraham.]

Apart from its intrinsic value, this legend has other claims upon our interest. It is certainly of Jewish origin, but it cannot be found in Talmud or Targum. It has been traced to one of the poems of Saadi the Persian. He was told it when a captive slave amongst the Moors by a Jewish fellow prisoner. From Persia it migrated by the intervention of Grotius to Holland, and from thence through Jeremy Taylor to England. It is quoted by him in his immortal *Liberty of Prophecying*, which is like the warm breath of spring upon the stern and icy intolerance of the Church of his day towards all freedom of thought and practice. It is not even out of place in the religious life of the twentieth century.

* * * * *

The early Christian Church was not behind the Hebrew. It inherited this ancient grace of hospitality, and enriched it with new instincts and vitality. All its members were to be careful to entertain strangers. In every city there was some hospitable Gaius, who welcomed the traveller and gave him good-speed along

his journey. In this way, as apostle, evangelist, or Christian merchant passed from place to place, the life of the Church was kept in healthy circulation, the separate congregations, so wide apart, were vitally linked together, and the seeds of knowledge which these birds of passage carried with them fostered varied growths, which continued to multiply.

One of the striking and beautiful features of the monastic life in Great Britain in the early centuries was its ever-open door to the wayfarer. No monastery, however poor or humble, was without its guest-house; no belated traveller was denied shelter, no hungry beggar went away unfed. It was the special duty and honour of some one of the order to welcome and provide for strangers. He must needs be a man of large heart and practical sympathy: some one who, like St. Cuthbert of Northumbria, always remembered that his Master was once a wayfaring wanderer who had not where to lay his head, and who was willing to welcome even the most worthless for His sake.

The effect of such charity in those ages, when the light of the gospel was struggling with the darkness of lingering heathenism, can never be over-estimated. While it had its practical side, and ministered to the bodily wants of the poor and needy, it could not fail to find a way to the heart of many an outlaw and prodigal. It proclaimed the charity of the religion of Christ. And as the monks of St. Bernard kept their hospitable

fires burning in the midst of the Alpine snows, it maintained the glow of brotherly love in a cold and selfish world.

The traditions which linger around the remains of some of those religious houses are very beautiful. They show that whoso giveth a cup of cold water in the name of Christ shall not lose his reward. They illustrate the high value which the Master set on such acts of kindness. One such legend St. Cuthbert has left behind. On a cold and wintry night, he was roused from his slumber by a knocking at the door. He arose instantly and greeted the traveller, welcomed him to the fire, bathed his feet, and spread a table before him. After a while the prior retired into an inner room to offer his prayer. He returned to find that the guest of the night had gone. He opened the door and looked around in the clear light of the stars: there were no footprints in the snow. But when he returned to the refectory, three white loaves lay upon the table, and a perfume as of roses filled the air.

I have ventured intentionally to emphasize this primitive virtue. It should never be allowed to decline. Some of its forms of manifestation are obsolete and have vanished, but the spirit of the grace of hospitality has still its mission and sphere. Wherever it can be exercised, it brings out the noble qualities of the giver and the receiver—it softens prejudices, it diffuses goodwill. Its scope is really enlarging. Whereas it was once shown to a solitary pilgrim or a migrating family,

it is now offered by some great Church to another, or by one nation to its neighbour. It may show itself in an '*entente cordiale*,' or in other ways; but its features are familiar, and whether we trace it in the negro hut or Arab tent, in the monastery or in the Mansion House of the largest city in the world, its influence is perpetually the same!

* * * * *

Another way in which the spirit of charity reveals itself is by *Almsgiving*. In this respect also the character of God was a model for the actions of men. In the light of the Old Testament we see Him as the Father of Mercies who opens His hand to supply the wants of every living thing. In the New we see Him as the Father of Lights, who is the Giver of every good and perfect gift. The invocation which was always on the lips of Mohammed and preceded every proclamation was, 'In the name of God the compassionate, the merciful.' From time immemorial the poor were regarded as God's pensioners, and under His protection. He who gave alms to the poor was lending to the Lord.

Every man who tried to please Him, and in whom His love dwelt, was generous to the needy. It was the unmistakable hall-mark of a noble character. The almsgiver was beloved of God and the angels. Job in his dark days remembered how the hearts of his neighbours had been opened to him. 'When the ear heard me then it blessed me, and when the eye saw me it gave witness to me. Because I delivered the

poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me, and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy.'

When Tobit in his old age was counselling his son Tobias, as he was setting out on his journey to Media, he laid stress upon the duty and blessedness of charity. 'My son, give alms of thy substance, and when thou givest alms let not thine eye be envious, neither turn thy face from any poor, and the face of God shall not be turned away from thee.'

When one compares this advice with the parting counsels which Polonius gave to Laertes, the difference between a worldly sagacity and a heavenly charity is at once apparent.

> Give every man thy ear, but few thy voice;
> Neither a borrower nor a lender be—

are 'saws' which, no doubt, sounded in the young man's ears as infallible words of wisdom; but they savour too much of selfishness to find a place in any noble heart.

One of the legends which is told of St. Thomas the Twin is in praise of almsgiving.

Once upon a time Gondoferus, the king of the Indies, desired to build a beautiful palace for himself. It was to surpass in magnificence every royal residence in the world. He sent his provost into Syria, to search out a builder, who would undertake the task. He

found his way to Caesarea. The Lord Jesus saw him as he started on his errand, and told Thomas, who was a master mason, and was then in Caesarea, to get ready to go with him. The provost, who was looking for a craftsman in the market-place, met the Apostle and engaged him. They set out together for the East, and after many wonderful adventures arrived at the court of the king. The treasure which Gondoferus had hoarded for the building of the palace was handed over to St. Thomas, with the exhortation to spare no money, and to begin forthwith, while the king departed into another province of his empire. When two years were over he returned, but although he looked everywhere for a stately palace, it was nowhere to be seen. Thomas had not been idle. The heap of treasure had entirely disappeared; but no timber had been hewn, nor had any stone been laid upon another. The king was furious, and ordered that the Apostle be arrested. He was flung into the deepest dungeon, and sentenced to be burnt at the stake. In the meantime the king's brother took fever and died. At the end of four days he appeared to Gondoferus, and besought him to let no harm befall the holy man. In a vision he had been led by an angel into heaven, and had seen there a mansion built of all manner of precious stones. He had never beheld anything so glorious; and while he was wondering, the angel told him that it was the palace built for the king of the Indies by St. Thomas with the money which he had

given to the widow and the fatherless, the sick and the needy. The prisoner was liberated, and the king had learned his lesson in a divine architecture he had never known before. '*They build too low who build beneath the skies.*'

How St. Thomas came to be regarded as an architect and mason it is impossible to say. This legend is old enough to have started the idea, but it seems more likely that it was fashioned in support of it. The mind of Thomas the Doubter moved slowly. It advanced step by step. It could only arrive at conclusions by the measurement of facts, and by placing them one on the other upon a firm foundation. 'Master, we know not whither Thou goest, and how can we know the way?' said he one day when Jesus had assumed that the disciples were aware of the way He was going. And afterwards, when the dazzling light of the Resurrection was too much for the eyes of reason, and the heart would fain believe what the mind doubted—'unless I see—unless I place my fingers—I cannot believe.' These, the confessions of a soul that builds its house of faith by the plans and specifications of logic, may have led the Apostle's friends to regard him metaphorically as a builder. If so, the metaphor was very soon to be regarded as a matter of fact. This is a supposition only; but however we may account for it, St. Thomas is the patron of carpenters and masons, and is never seen in sculpture or in painting without appropriate tools.

Thorwaldsen has placed a marble statue of him in the Free Kirke of Copenhagen; the face is rapt in thought, the head supported by the left hand, while the right hand holds a builder's square.

* * * * *

It was a strong thing for the Talmud to say that one of the three foundations on which the world rested was *Charity*. It is, nevertheless, true. No personal character can build itself up without it. The municipality which is indifferent to the condition and claims of the poor must never hope to prosper; the nation which amasses wealth to spend it in luxury or in pleasure, while neglecting the needy, is doomed to perish. Yet it is becoming increasingly difficult to ascertain who are the really destitute, or how best to administer charity. One reads with envy of the benevolent Count of Champagne.

In the city of Troyes, in which he lived, there was a castle, and in the castle a tower from which the whole city was visible. He supported two almoners, who were charged to search out the poor and miserable of the city day by day, and to bring their report to him at eventide. When at any time they were able to announce that there were none who needed bread or shelter, he used to look down upon the mass of houses beneath and say, 'Are there indeed no tears below to wipe away? Blessed be God, who protects my people!'

Although there is no city now within our Empire with such an experience, it furnishes an ideal at which

to aim. With an amended poor law, an old-age pension scheme in full operation, and bureaux of labour exchange in centres of population here and there, we may look forward to the day when no man or woman or child will be allowed to starve in the midst of plenty. No man who is able and willing to work will stand idle in the market-place while there are millions of unused wealth, and no labourer who has borne his burden throughout the long day will ever need to dread the poor-house or a pauper's grave.

But it is to the spirit of Christianity, enlightening and inspiring political and social action, that we must look for the fulfilment of this dream. It was through the Church of Christ that the principles of charity began to permeate the community and the nation. These ethics of mercy, pity, grace, benevolence, which were inculcated under the law, sprang into new life and beauty under the gospel, and were imparted to every nation it visited. Even Emanuel Deutsch, in his famous eulogy on the Talmud, avows that 'It is the glory of Christianity to have carried these golden germs into the market of humanity.'

The history of the Church as a whole, or of its separate sections, may be measured by the ebb and flow of its practical charity. Pentecost was followed by the election of the deacons who cared for the widow and fatherless. The Methodist revival of the eighteenth century gave an impulse to the establishment of almshouses and orPhanages. When the

early zeal of the Salvation Army had almost spent itself, the Holy Spirit guided the movement into the channels of social philanthropy. From that moment this latest development of aggressive Christianity revived, and became as fair as the moon and as terrible as an army with banners. We shall do well to foster such work as the Methodist Church is doing through the missions in East London, in Manchester, and elsewhere. Our existence, our vitality, and our share in the blessing of God, depend upon it. The tradition which is told of the good King Oswald of Northumbria may be a legend, but it is a true tale notwithstanding. One night he was sitting at the supper-table in his hall at Bamborough when a hungry beggar ventured to the door. The times were hard, and there was a scarcity of bread. But Oswald divided the meat on the dish and gave it to the stranger, whom he had never seen before. When he had taken the food and blessed the giver, Aidan, who was sitting by Oswald's side, arose, and taking the king's right hand, declared that it should never know corruption. Then came the dark day of the battle of Maserfield, when the good and gracious king was overthrown and slain by Pendu and his heathen horde. His mangled and mutilated body was left on the field, for the wolves and the ravens. His followers searched for it, and found the beautiful hand still white and undecayed!

PART V

THE SPIRITUAL SENSE:

Its Sympathy with Truth in all Forms of Thought and Natural Phenomena

PART V

SYNOPSIS

The imagination as a creator of legend—Examples of its interpretation of passages of Scripture—Jacob and the corn of Egypt—Simeon and his Nunc dimittis. Its insight into the inner life of Nature—Its method of working—Legends of trees, beasts, birds, flowers and the rainbow.

I

A LARGE and interesting species of legend is the offspring of the religious imagination. When the spiritual sense is stimulated, it becomes exceedingly active and prolific. It is easily aroused when anything remarkable is brought to its notice from the outside world. It is quick in discovering affinity with these phenomena, and, regarding them as germs, proceeds to fertilize them into growths of surprising luxuriance. The objects which have arrested the notice of this creative imagination have presented themselves in every realm into which it can penetrate. But they have, for the most part, been found where the divine or human thought has expressed itself in written language, and where the mind of God has been revealed in the works of Nature. With regard to the first of these sources, many legendary creations have arisen from written inscriptions, fragments of history, and passages of Scripture imaginatively interpreted. They are not all of equal value. Some may only bear witness to the rapidity with which the excited mind leaps to conclusions. When a martyrologist of the Middle

Ages read the inscription on the eighty-third milestone of the Roman road, lxxxiii. mil[iaris], he referred it at once to eighty-three martyred soldiers, lxxxiii mil[ites]. This daring spirit is often bold enough to rush in where the modest antiquarians fear to tread—as when it interpreted the name Titulus de Fasciola formerly given to a church on the Appian Way, as being connected with an incident in the last days of St. Peter. The general opinion is that Fasciola is the name of the foundress; but as the word also signifies a small bandage, we have a graphic picture of the Apostle, as he passed the place when liberated from prison, dropping the bandage from his wounded leg.

In its eagerness to see developments, the inflamed imagination will ignore difficulties, and even impossibilities. In one early catalogue the name of Caesar is to be found in a list of bishops, on the authority of the passage in Philippians—'All the saints salute you, especially they of Caesar's household'—the said Caesar being, as we know, none other than the reigning Nero.

It is amazing from what scanty materials it can evolve its creations, weaving its web from within and attaching its strands here and there to the things which aroused its attention. It is prepared in its credulous moments to give to airy nothing a local habitation, and has a museum for the 'corner-stone which the builders rejected,' and for the remains of the Three Tabernacles which St. Peter wished to build on the Mount of Transfiguration.

But putting aside such fanciful interpretations as these, which, however ingenious, are often the offspring of ignorance, we are offered examples of this particular class of legend which are suggestive and beautiful. I can only find room for two specimens, one from the Old Testament, and one from the New Testament writings. In Genesis, the forty-second chapter and the first verse, the chronicler says, 'Now Jacob *saw* that there was corn in Egypt, and said unto his sons, Why do ye look one upon another?' The emphasis of the narrative is of course on the word *saw*. We must realize the fact that in the time of the famine, Jacob got to know that there was corn in Egypt, not by rumour or by receiving a message, but by actually seeing it—but how? The legend bears us away to the banks of the Nile. In a summer-house on the brink of the river, Joseph is pensively thinking of his home in Canaan, and he is wondering how his father and brethren fare. He has heard of the severe famine which lay heavy upon their country, and he is trying to think of some way of relieving the misery which has come upon man and beast. He can think of none; and yet, while he is anxiously brooding, Divine Providence is carrying out its plan. As he looks down upon the flowing Nile, he has some ears of corn in his hands. They fall, without his thinking, into the water, and are borne away. The Nile conveys them to the river of Canaan, and it reaches by-and-by the land where Jacob lives.

One morning the patriarch comes down to walk by the river, and sees the floating ears of fat and golden corn, which could only have come down from the land of the Pharaohs. He shouts aloud for his sons to join him, and they fetch them in. The next day the ten sons of Israel saddle their asses, and with money in their hands set out on their journey.

The main difficulty in accepting this story is geographical. But in all legendary lore the boundaries of time and space are always accommodating.

In the next example we are led to the city of Alexandria, in the days of the enlightened Ptolemy Philadelphus. He had a strong desire to have the Hebrew Scriptures translated into Greek, intending to place the volume in his celebrated library. He sent messengers to Eleazar, the Jewish high-priest, inviting him to choose some able scribes and scholars to undertake the translation. Eleazar selected six from each of the twelve tribes of Israel, seventy-two in all, and despatched them to the king with his blessing. There was a young Rabbi among the number called Simeon, full of grace and learning. The portion committed to him for translation was the book of the Prophet Isaiah. In the beginning of his task all went easily and well. But when he came to the sentence 'Behold, a virgin shall conceive,' his reason halted and he laid down his pen. Impelled to take it up again, he resolved to render the Hebrew word which signified a virgin by a Greek word which simply meant 'young woman.' He

wrote it down, but an angel blotted it out. Again and again he put his own word upon the parchment, for he feared to give offence to the Gentiles if the original appeared. Three times he did it, and as often an unseen hand erased the writing. He wondered greatly and knew not what to do, until he heard an inward voice which said, 'Simeon, thou shalt write what the prophet has written. Thou shalt not die until the mystery is made known and the miracle is accomplished; until thou hast seen the Lord's anointed, the Virgin's Son.'

That happened two hundred and sixty years before the birth of Jesus Christ. But Simeon lived on and on through the three centuries—waiting for the consolation of Israel. On the day that the Virgin Mary took her Son to present Him and make her offering, the Holy Spirit led the old man into the temple. As soon as he beheld the child he took him in his arms and said, 'Lord, NOW lettest thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation.'

We hesitate to add a word which might spoil the simple pathos of this story. It was possibly suggested by the words of the Nunc Dimittis themselves. They seem to have aroused the listener's attention, and to have carried his mind back for a key to interpret them. But although in our critical moods we may question the veracity of the tradition, we cannot doubt for a moment its beauty and meaning.

But at this point it may be asked how such ideas as these, which were the offspring of a creative mind, became legends. By a natural process. At first they would be given as what they were, 'imaginings,' or as illustrations or apologues. If, after their birth, they had any elements of probability in them, they obtained a lodging in the mind of the people: the nature of their origin was gradually forgotten, and they were written down or told as things which undoubtedly had happened. This process of development requires some stretch of time, but it need not cover a very wide interval. A fiction which resembles nature, if popularly received, will soon begin to wear the garb of reality.

II

IT is when the spiritual sense, charged with its highest feeling, is brought into intelligent mental contact with living creatures and with nature, that it becomes intensely active and abundantly creative. Whenever it sees any striking features in either, it associates them with its own thoughts and moods. They are the points to which it attaches the web of imagination which it is weaving. They share in its ideas and its feeling. The invisible substance or soul of the natural world, of which these objects are outstanding representations, lies behind them. If these notable features in living or inanimate things are supposed to be suffused with intelligence and emotion, it implies that the world of which they are parts is similarly affected. It may, of course, be said that there is really no response in nature to the thought and passion of the human spirit; that the lower creatures have no kinship with the mind of man, and are therefore unresponsive; that there is no soul in nature to enable it to sympathize with our consciousness; that if ever we believe that our moods are shared, or our yearnings are answered, it is only

the reflections of our emotions that we see, and the echo of our own voices that come back to us —

> We receive but what we give,
> And in our life alone does nature live:
> Ours is her wedding-garment, ours her shroud!

But no religious thinker who has left behind him a legend with any tincture of imagination in it believed this theory. He could not have understood it. When his mind was dominated by any thought, or his heart was swelling with any emotion, he took it for granted that there were creatures that could think and feel along with him, and make manifest their agreement. Or they could refuse to share in his conviction, in his joy, or in his sorrow; and, if so, there would be outward signs of their dissent and isolation.

We have seen this already in the legends which associate creatures, or plants, or aspects of natural scenery with any great sin, or crime, or moral disaster. The harsh scream of the peacock proclaims to every one the part it played in the temptation of Eve. The ring around the burnished neck of the dove is the reward she received for carrying the message of hope in her mouth. While the raven, no longer able to walk as he used to do, is compelled to move by leaps, as he did from floating carcase to carcase, when he refused to return to the ark out of which Noah had sent him.

But it is when the mind is wholly absorbed in the history of our Lord, and following Him with passionate interest, that we have the legends which most strikingly

illustrate the capacity in nature to respond to man's emotional experience.

When the Holy Family journeyed to Egypt, the palm-trees and the wild beasts paid homage to their presence. One day when a storm of rain came suddenly upon them, they turned aside into a wood for protection. As they entered, each tree bowed down before its Creator, and murmured its welcome. One only, the aspen, remained upright. The storm rolled past, and left it unharmed by the thunder or the lightning. But it was smitten with palsy, and its leaves began to shiver although the wind had died away. Its descendants suffer likewise. Wherever they are planted we can hear their sighing—

> When not a breeze is stirring,
> When the mist sleeps on the hill,
> And all other trees are moveless,
> Stands the aspen trembling still.

The triumphal entry of our Lord into Jerusalem made a deep impression on the mind of the early Christians. They looked back upon that day as a sunny calm before the lowering tempest—when the people, left to themselves in an interval of happy sanity, instinctively recognized the Messiah and sang their hosannahs and their hallelujahs. It was a bright hour for the ass's colt on which the Redeemer rode. He knew his Royal Master, and stepped out proudly. He never forgot the great privilege he had enjoyed, for Jesus had laid the mark of the cross upon his

back and shoulders, and it still remains the sacred badge of all his tribe from generation to generation.

It was out of gratitude for this service rendered to the Master, that there grew up a very tender feeling towards this humble beast of burden. In the Middle Ages the donkey had his golden age. He was free to graze on every common. He carried a blessing wherever he went. A few hairs from his shoulders would heal the sick, and children were placed upon his back to cure the whooping-cough. Once a year there was a feast of asses, when one of the tribe was led within the church with all the signs of respect, and a hymn was sung in honour of his noble ancestor. It was probably at such a time that Theodulph composed his celebrated Palm Sunday lyric, and ranges himself beside his four-footed fellow Christian—

> Be Thou, O Lord, the Rider,
> And we the little ass,
> That to God's Holy City
> Together we may pass.

There seems to have been no limit either to the beneficent deeds of which the ass was capable, or to the grateful acknowledgement of his many virtues, on the part of our forefathers. One old writer, fearing that his motive might be misunderstood, hastily concluded a piece in praise of the family of asses with the quaint apology—'I could write much of this beast, but that it wolde be thought *it were to mine owne glorie.*' From such mediaeval customs and sentiments as these,

we may infer that the Church of that day was itself the society for the prevention of cruelty to animals.

* * * * *

When we penetrate into the mystery of the Passion, the stories and traditions which are associated with it take on a solemn colouring. Although the references of the Gospels to the sublime sympathy of the sun and earth with their Creator are left untouched, they concern themselves with humbler details. The rods of flagellation which the soldiers used in the judgement-hall were from a kind of willow-tree; it has been called the *weeping willow* ever since, and its branches are always drooping. The scarlet *anemone* was white as it grew on Golgotha before the Crucifixion, but some drops of blood fell from the cross that day and dyed it. When the Master seemed to be left alone by His friends, there were two of His smallest creatures that never forsook Him. The little bird the *crossbill* tried to tear out the nails that fastened His hands and feet; but although its beak was broken in the effort it could not move them. The *robin* did its utmost to lift off the crown of thorns which pierced the brow of Jesus, and it failed. But its own breast was reddened with the precious blood, and it will wear the stain in remembrance as long as time shall last. Of course, Mary the mother of our Lord was one of the last to leave Mount Calvary, and as she was coming down the hill her shadow fell upon a bank of violets, and it was then that they began to wear their purple hue.

From such examples as these it will be seen that the mind of the mediaeval saint was filled with the living image of Christ, and that everything around reflected Him. Each loving disciple became unconsciously a poet, and could say of his adorable Saviour what the author of 'In Memoriam' said of his departed friend—

> Thy voice is on the rolling air;
> I hear thee when the waters run;
> Thou standest in the rising sun,
> And in the setting thou art fair.

But this was by no means all. As we have already argued, the spiritual sense not only projects its own sensations—it penetrates into the life which lies beneath appearance, and interprets it. In those early times it seemed to work intuitively. Long before Jacob Behmen sat for the livelong day in the fields, as if entranced, and, gazing upon the herbs and flowers, beheld in them their essences, uses, and properties, as in an illuminated revelation, the simple Christian idealist saw into the very heart of things. Some growths of nature were essentially evil, while others were the outward shapes of some form of truth or love or righteousness.

When a drawing of a mysterious wild flower was brought over from South American forests to Rome in the seventeenth century, it stirred the whole Church with amazement. It was an epitome of the passion of our Lord. It appeared to carry within itself the instruments

associated with the Crucifixion. The five stamens looked like wounds. It had filaments like scourges, and three styles like nails. On all of these there were blood-like spots. Around its centre there was a purple circle resembling the crown of thorns, and it sent out rays which made its outer rim a nimbus of glory. The seed was soon brought over and planted throughout Europe. It seemed to show to those who could read its heart that even the growths of nature were in sympathy with the mystery of redeeming love. The Spaniards called it the flower of the five wounds, and its English name is the *passion-flower*.

The *forget-me-not* has a different story. It reveals the divine charity which is ever ready to make allowances. The duty of allotting names to all the birds and beasts was entrusted to Adam. The pleasure of giving to each flower its distinctive name was reserved by the Lord Jesus for Himself. The day after He had named them all, He went round to see if they remembered the titles He had given them. As He went from one flower to another they answered Him. The rose blushed as she repeated her name correctly, and the lily bent her head modestly and replied. But when He stooped over a little blue flower, the tears came into her eyes, for she had entirely forgotten. 'Do not fret, My child,' said Jesus gently, as He raised her drooping head. 'Any one may forget a thousand things, but always remember that I love you—Forget-*Me*-Not.'

Sometimes the messages of the trees and flowers

are almost ethical in their character. You can read a moral essay in their growth, or you can see a drama unfolding in the stages of their development.

There is a simple plant which bears the popular name of the *Prophet's Flower*. It has a mission. It proclaims that good is mightier than evil. It grew first in an Eastern land, but it has been brought over to England, and may be seen amongst us. It is like the common buttercup. It has five golden yellow petals. On the day when it first opens, its cup is a pure bright yellow in every part. On the second day, a circular dark spot is seen on each of the five petals. When the third day dawns, they disappear. And now for its history. Long, long ago, a stranger visited a little village far away from the noisy world. He wore a prophet's robe. From the early morning he went about from house to house, until he had spoken to every man and woman and child. He won their hearts; but when the sun went down he vanished, leaving them exceeding sorrowful. He was the angel Michael, but they knew it not. The next day came, and to their great delight they found a little bright yellow flower, growing wherever the print of the prophet's feet had been. It cheered them greatly. It showed that he had not forgotten them. But the next day, to their great surprise and sorrow, five ugly, dark spots appeared upon the flower. It was Satan's work. He had crept stealthily into the place, and as soon as he had heard of the angel's visit, and of the beautiful yellow plant,

he resolved to spoil its beauty, and vex the people's souls. He had only to touch the petals of each flower, and the tips of his fingers left five sooty spots behind. All that day the people mourned. When the third day came, the prophet came back to the village. He was eager to know how they were faring. It was then that he saw what mischief the Evil One had done. The people were sad and dispirited. The beauty of the flower he had given them was tarnished. He looked kindly on both for a moment, and then, when he had said to the people, 'Be of good cheer,' he waved his wand, and the dark spots which had marred the brightness of the golden flowers began to fade away.

* * * * *

In very many of the early legends there are intimations of that insight into nature which revealed itself more fully in the poetry of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. To those who believed them the material world was not a mask of clay, opaque and soulless. Sometimes it seemed to be a transparency. At other times it appeared to be alive, and its movements, and the lights and shadows which played upon its features, were the language by which God made known His beauty, grace, and wisdom to the minds of men.

The *rainbow*, for example, was at once a pledge and a promise. As man and all other living creatures gazed upon it, when the drops of rain were falling, their fears would be allayed. The great Spirit, whom

they could not see, had given His word that He would not again destroy the earth by water, and there above them was the sign of the covenant. It was as if His arms were bending over man and beast, protecting them. But in its undimmed brightness there was also a message of hope. Although the part of the bow which now and then appeared was infinitely lovely, it was not complete. It was the half of a circle which one day would become a perfect round. For thus the legend runs.

When the earth was made, and Adam and Eve were placed in Paradise, heaven and earth were linked in love and harmony. The rainbow was the sign of union and the marriage-ring. Its glory was even greater then than now. When sin separated man from God, and earth from heaven, the bridal ring was broken. The half has disappeared; but it is only out of sight, reserved for the consummation of redemption when Christ shall reconcile all things to Himself. When He shall be the Bridegroom of a new marriage-day, and all creation shall be a pure and happy bride, then the halves of the rainbow shall be welded together, and the perfect ring shall reappear; and there shall be a rainbow *round about* the throne in sight like unto an emerald.

CONCLUSION

IT is time to review the course of the argument, Have its differing lines converged to any definite conclusion? and if so, what is its practical value? Our contention was this: That all legends will submit to classification. That however they may differ in motive and form, they will fall into orderly groups if we can discover the moods of mind which created them. They may have sprung into being in a variety of ways, some of them slowly, a large number fitfully; but even for these there has been a law of genesis and growth—they must not be regarded as the erratic sparks from the blacksmith's anvil, scattering themselves in unforeseen directions, but as a shower of meteors whose coming can be announced and whose track can be predicted.

It has only been possible to make a selection from an innumerable multitude. For, to use an Eastern proverb—'you can bring a nosegay to the city when you cannot bring a garden.' But those which have been considered, have been viewed in their relation to the

religious instinct which belongs to man, as man, and is universal. It is this spiritual sense which has summoned all sacred legends into existence, which has kept them alive, and has used them for its manifold purposes. In the relation of legendary lore to this religious faculty lies its supreme importance. It has other claims upon our consideration. Many of its stories have an intrinsic value and a native beauty; but however interesting they may be when viewed independently, their interest is immeasurably enhanced when we recall their origin and their history—as the shells we pick up from the shore are invested with their full significance when the murmur that we hear in them reminds us of the sea from whence they came.

If this spiritual sense has been the creative force of sacred legends, they in turn have shed light upon the nature of this parent faculty.

In their number and variety, and distinctive classifications, we may see the evidences of its strength or its weakness—its range and its limitations—its virtues or its defects. This testimony is valuable. Anything that will show that man has had from the earliest times a religious instinct is supremely important; anything that will demonstrate its vitality, or illustrate its capacity, is infinitely encouraging.

How far are we indebted to legends? In these respects:—

They carry us back to the beginning of things, before history was written. They show us the stirring

of the religious sense in the primaeval races. They reveal its mysterious vitality as man passes from stage to stage along the path of progress. Its restless inquisitiveness, its unsatisfied craving, its lofty aspirations and its invincible energy, are all embodied or illustrated in the traditions and stories which have accompanied the human family along the road of its pilgrimage.

In the different classes into which the legends have arranged themselves, we have discovered the versatility of the powers of this spiritual faculty, and the variety of the subjects in which it is interested. It has endeavoured to pierce the partition between the visible and invisible, to unravel the enigma of life, to hold converse with the angels, to unveil the future, to lay hold of the keys which unlock the ivory gate of bliss or the iron gate of doom.

In the biographical legends we have studied there has been abundant proof of the interest of mankind in man. They have thrown into bold relief the features of character which have won the peoples' admiration. They have branded the vices which merited shame. As hero after hero has appeared, we have seen how life is moulded by life; how the moral influence of one generation is transmitted to its successors; how man is uplifted and swayed by ideals; how the evil that men do lives after them how the bread they cast upon the waters is seen after many days.

As to its interest in intellectual and ethical problems, some of the doctrines which have most affected human destiny, and some of the moral principles which have been the guiding posts of human conduct, have been embodied in simple tradition or moving story. And indeed, as we have followed the religious sense by the light of legend, in its daring explorations, we must have realized that no mystery is beyond its touch, and no problem is too abstruse for its analysis. It has

> reasoned high
> Of providence, foreknowledge, will and fate;
> Fixed fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute.

And reasoned truly, with illumination and success; but sometimes—to finish the quotation candidly—reasoned—

> And found no end, in wandering mazes lost.

But we are anticipating the record of its defeats, when we have not exhausted the list of its victories.

One of the most interesting ways in which this religious sense has shown its strength has been in its endeavour, in the early days of Christianity, to annex both pagan myth and classic legend. It did this from loyal zeal, and for the sake of the Master. It claimed as its right every beautiful symbol, and it made it the shrine of some noble truth—as when Alexander conquered Darius he placed Homer's 'Iliad' in the alabaster box which had held his perfumes.

As the spiritual sense reveals itself in many of these beautiful legends, we have a glimpse of its achievements in interpreting nature. The simple men and women who embodied their poetic thought in these stories must have gazed through the surface of matter to the soul beneath. They sought affinities in high and lowly things. They imagined that they heard the echoes of their thoughts amongst the hills and saw the ripple of their emotions on the dark or shining waters. Whatever feeling swelled their soul, overflowed its boundary and mingled with the universe. They longed for communion with all that was proportionate and fair. They tried to enrich their experience from the open treasury of heaven and earth, adopting every musical sound as a note in their psalter of praise, and every beautiful object as a letter in their litany of prayer.

They were willing to learn from any of nature's books—from the falling star, the wayside flower, the precious stone. It is here, indeed, as we receive the testimony of a multitude of nature legends, that we are able to detect one of the great longings of those who believed them. By their spiritual imagination they endeavoured to regain possession of the material world which man's disobedience had forfeited. It was so far purified and made sensitive that it brought them into sympathy with the spirit which lay behind the veil of matter. It strove to reunite the broken bond of fellowship between man and the

living creatures; and by it, in some degree at least, all those whose eyes were opened were enabled to behold the Creator of man and beast in every part of the universe—to see His going forth in the dawn of the morning and to hear the voice of the Lord God, walking in the garden in the cool of the day—and not to be afraid.

But if sacred legends have revealed the strength and manysidedness of man's religious faculty, they have also made manifest its weaknesses and errors. When we examine some of the strange and fantastic stories which have impressed the popular imagination, we cannot fail to see that they have had their origin in ignorance or superstition or intellectual pride. They show conclusively that it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps; that neither his reason, imagination, nor even his faith can see by their own light; that no one by searching can find out God; that He Himself must hold the lamp that guides us to His feet.

It is true that in very many of the traditions we have quoted there is the stamp of veracity. We might almost say that in every one of them there is some spark of the divine light. In some of the tales, indeed, there is a moving loveliness which could only be born of truth and beauty; so that when we compare them with the biographical narratives of the Scriptures we are compelled to acknowledge a family likeness, and are led to inquire why these should be apocryphal and those canonical.

And yet, estimating the mass of sacred legends as a whole, we are bound to admit that, whatever revelation of truth there may be in them, it is insufficient for man's salvation. To be perfectly fair, they do not often profess to be more than supplementary. They have been well satisfied to be regarded as torches and not suns; but whenever they have assumed authority in their own right, whatever light there has been within them has led astray.

Then again, if we consider these sacred legends in their power to react upon the spiritual life, we discover the defects of their qualities. They do not contain all the elements which are necessary to build up or sustain a robust and strenuous faith. It was in the Middle Ages that they were most relied upon for nourishment. The Bible was closed to the common people. It was written in an unknown tongue. It was out of their reach. Although it contained the bread of life, it was regarded as too good for human nature's daily food. Its truths were broken to the hungry in fragments. The morsels were mingled with legend. The results are apparent. While a few of the faculties of the religious sense were abundantly developed, others were entirely neglected. The religion of the period had its charming manifestations. It had imagination and emotion. It had sympathy with the beautiful in nature and art; a childlike curiosity and a reverence for what was ancient and holy. Many of the forms in which these powers embodied themselves in the social and religious

life were beautiful and enduring; and for both the spiritual forces and their effects we are greatly indebted to the inspiring and refining influence of sacred legends. But they did not and could not impart the new life that was needed. The age was deficient in moral principle, its conscience was uncertain in its judgements, its idea of freedom was unenlightened, its quality of mercy was strained. Faith became credulity, and reverence degenerated into superstition.

The religious history of these times is in consequence one of inequalities and contrasts—patches of golden light, tracts of sepulchral darkness, stately virtues and grotesque vices. Wherever the spirit of the gospel had free course there was piety and charity, the love of peace and goodwill, but its range was far from universal. The cross was planted on every main road, but the highway robber was there as well. The beggars who swarmed at the baron's gate were fed from his table, while the knight whom he had taken prisoner was starving within.

At the sound of the Angelus men and women would bow profoundly before the image of the mother of our Lord in the Lady Chapel, and then hurry away to burn some old grey woman, as a witch, in the cathedral square. On the anniversary of the very day when the Redeemer was crucified on Calvary, and with His dying breath prayed for His enemies, the Crusaders broke down the walls of Jerusalem, and made its streets run red with the blood of the Saracens.

The teaching of Christian legend was not, of course, responsible for such anomalies as these. Far from it; they breathed an entirely different spirit, and furnished examples of an utterly different cast. And most certainly if the Middle Ages had been without the instruction and refining power of legendary lore, its darkness would have been denser and its roughness more brutal. As far as they had force and could exercise it their influence was invaluable. But what Europe needed was a renaissance of spiritual life, and that was beyond their power to supply. This they did, however: they stimulated the desire of the people, and helped to keep alive the germs of faith and hope within their hearts until the great revival came.

In estimating the value of the religious teaching in sacred legends another fact should be kept in mind. Their influence could not be permanent. They appeared at a certain period in the progress of civilization and in the growth of the Church; but they were confined to that stage only. As the human race advances in knowledge or in grace, they are necessarily left behind. There are moments, perhaps, when, recoiling from the spirit of the times—grown hard with materialism and sordid with its craving for wealth—we look back wistfully to that age when our forefathers fed their imagination and faith with—

> Beautiful old stories,
> Tales of angels, fairy legends,
> Stilly histories of martyrs,
> Festal songs and words of wisdom.

Or still further back, when men could—

> Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea,
> Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn.

But the days of myth, folk-lore, fairy tale, and legend are over. There is no such thing as crying 'halt' in the advance of the human race. The world can no more go back to its bygone experience than the river can return to its fountain, or the eagle to the egg in the parent nest. The golden day is not behind but before. We are the heirs of all the ages. We have not sundered ourselves from the past. It is a part of our actual present, and it will penetrate into the future.

When discussing the necessary development of the religious sense to meet a fuller revelation, St. Paul employs two metaphors. They are both suggestive. 'When I was a child,' says the Apostle, 'I spake as a child, I felt as a child, I thought as a child; and now that I am become a man I have put away childish things.' He does not mean that the first effort of his tongue, the first impulses of his will, the first movements of his mind, had no connexion with the fluency and passion and reasoning power of his manhood.

And it must be so in the experience of the Church, as it advances from its childhood through youth and early manhood to maturity; none of the influences which ministered to its growth, in any of the stages of its development, have been left behind. Whatever

there has been in legendary lore, in its tales and songs, in its symbols and dreams, which could stimulate its imagination, or strengthen its courage, or feed the flame of its love, has passed into its body corporate and will make itself felt in the blood and brain and heart of the perfect man that is yet to come.

And when St. Paul goes on to show the inferiority between the knowledge which is mediate and the knowledge which is direct—the infinite difference there is between the reflection of truth and truth itself—he does not intend to disparage the act of seeing. In whatever way the spiritual sense has sincerely exercised itself in the past, its efforts have never been in vain. Each revelation of the divine mind may have been limited and preparatory—beheld as in a glass darkly. Yet, since sight is strengthened by seeing, the eyes which have gazed upon the reflections in the mirror, or caught a glimpse of that which is perfect, will be all the more fitted for the Vision which is face to face.

INDEX

PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, LIMITED, LONDON AND BECCLES.