THE CALL OF THE TIME

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THE CALL OF THE TIME

BY

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PREFACE

Recently a young author told me: "In college, as soon as we have reached the age of sixteen or seventeen, we all criticize what we have been taught on religious matters. With the result that almost all of us soon wholly discard every sort of belief. To most young people, nowadays, even before they attain their twentieth year, religion has become something dead, something to which they never give a thought."

In different countries I have heard the same thing expressed. It is in the hope of making some young people pause and think it over again before definitely throwing away religion that this book has been written and issued.

The 2500 copies of this edition—none of which are on sale—will be sent out as gifts, mostly to college-libraries and public libraries.

Suna, Lago Maggiore, Italy, November 1932.

ANNA MARIA ROOS

THE GREATEST OF PROBLEMS

I.

In the year 1930 there was published in London a book in which a professor of the University was telling how he had asked his class: whether there was any of them who believed in God?

"Oh, no," they answered, all the young men and young girls.

And did they not feel any desire to have such a belief? the professor asked.

"Oh, no," they answered again.

One of the girls, however, expressed some faint wish in that direction. But then all the others fell upon her: "That's because you have such a delicate health," they cried. "Healthy people need no religion."

In the fall of the same year there was published in the United States, in a widely circulated monthly, a paper by a well-known journalist which began by saying: "I would have you meet one of the lonesomest and most unhappy individuals on earth — I am telling about the man who does not believe in God."

Wherever you go in this world of ours, most particularly in those countries reported to be Christian, you will hear echoes of the same unbelief, what with the gay, careless un-

belief of young people sailing out for Life's great voyage, what with the sadness of a more advanced age which begins to be seriously concerned about the end of that voyage.

And it may be that having heard in many countries the expression of that unbelief, you will begin to think: Is not this, at the bottom, the cause of the feverish restlessness of our age? Is it not there we might seek the cause of the mad pleasure and money hunting, of the wild despondency when money or pleasure or men's praise is not attained, of the sad satiety when they *are* attained?

II.

In that article in "The American Magazine", to which I was just referring, and which, on the whole, was quite sympathetic, having no word of scoffing, no word of arrogance, the author acknowledged, however: "I behold a universe governed by laws and the fact of law implies a law-making body. Here certainly is evidence of a Supreme Will."

Now that argument — the logic of things implying a logical principle — is about the same one as suggested by Aristotle when, with a glimpse of the dry humour only rarely met with in the writings of this great thinker, he remarks: "This world really does not give the impression of a badly composed tragedy."

Among other things Aristotle had also studied the tragic drama. He knew what amount of deep thought and constructive fantasy there is behind a work of that kind. And he

meant that he would be a bad observer who could not perceive that behind this gigantic cosmos there is a mighty Wisdom, behind this eternal movement an eternal Mover.

In a fragment, preserved in one of Cicero's writings, the same ancient Hellenian thinker has put forward a supposition: Imagine some people who all their lives have lived under the ground, without ever having seen the sun or the wonder of the stars; imagine these people suddenly emerging into the open and beholding all the beauty which is presented to the eye by the sky, the sea, and earth; imagine them observing the strange regularity of the phenomena of the heavenly vault — "if they saw all this, verily they must believe that there are gods."

Here we have the same trend of thought that was expressed, some two thousand years later, by Voltaire, when he said, that he could not conceive of a clock without supposing the existence of a watch-maker, a saying, varied by Strindberg in his: "They believe in the shoe but deny the shoemaker."

*

Modern science has discovered this most important fact: to the laws regulating the movements of the stars, there is a striking analogy in the movements of the atoms. Every atom, of those billions and billions which constitute our world, is a solar system *in miniature,* its centre being a kernel around which the electrons are moving as satellites.

Now, considering this general law of nature, that everything has a centre around which it moves, even the suns being assumed to revolve about a central sun — would it not

seem probable that also in the world of mind there might be a central power, ruling the souls by attraction?

As Aristotle has it: "The universe is ruled by an eternal attraction to the deity."

We may, indeed, be entitled to deem as a fact the existence of a Supreme Wisdom behind those wonderful laws of the Universe — quite as justified in presuming Its existence as are the scientists when presuming the existence of that invisible and imponderable ether and the equally unproveable atoms.

"We cannot prove the existence of the ether," the psysicists will admit; "only we must accept this hypothesis since there are a great many phenomena which else we could not explain."

Well, physicists who admit the ether to be an unproved but necessary hypothesis, should not object to the theory of a God, this being the only possibility of explaining — at least in some degree — the wonderful phenomena of this Universe.

III.

Man is a microcosm, said the old philosophers. The atoms, of which his body is built, are of the same kind as those which form the stars; the powers which fight for supremacy in his soul are the same the conflict of which brings about the development of the world; the flame of spirit which is at the core of his being is an emanation from the primeval

fire, — the origin of the worlds. And in a vague idea of his own connection with the macrocosm, this gigantic universe, man, since primeval times, has found it self-evident that, as his body is ruled by a soul, so is the universe ruled by a World Soul, a Deity.

There have been — and are — philosophical systems teaching that God is wholly immanent in the universe. The Stoics thought that God, the World-Mind, penetrates the universe as ether, the universe being regarded as God's body.

There have been — and are — systems of thought regarding the Deity as wholly transcendent.

Other thinkers, however, have held that the Deity must be considered at the same time immanent and transcendent, at the same time the soul of the universe and rising above it.

If the last mentioned view is the one most acceptable to our way of thinking, this may be due to its keeping to the idea of man being a microcosm.

Our soul, although chiefly manifesting itself through certain organs, must be considered to penetrate all our physical organism; at the same time there is something in our being — the Spirit, as we call it — that we fell to be immeasurably higher that its physical vehicle.

Hence man — spirit, soul, and body — is the counterpart of that other triad: God, world-soul, matter, — in each triad the highest part having for its aim to permeate, and thereby sublimate, the lower parts.[1]

[1] Professor H. Wildon Carr, of Los Angeles, California, recently in a remarkable essay in "The Hibbert Journal" (April 1931), — *"Is there a World-Soul"?* — pleaded against Theism and for the hypothesis of a World-Soul as the enthelechy of the Universe.

IV.

The above quoted unbeliever of The American Magazine, is, as already suggested, much too intelligent to discard the cravings of logic which have made so many great thinkers assume a world-mind to rule the universe; he even says: "For lack of a better name, I am perfectly willing to call it (viz: the Supreme Will) God, and do call it God."

Yet he adds: "But I fail utterly to grasp the idea of a personal God."

In this, to be sure, many present-day men and women will join him. There are thousands and thousands who declare: "We cannot believe in a personal God."

In most cases, however, such a statement means only a discarding of the anthropomorphic God, — that idea still held by many simple minds: an old white-bearded man sitting on a golden throne above the stars.

Between anthropomorphism, i. e. imagining God almost as a human being although immeasurably greater, and pantheism, i. e. imagining God as the infinite Power immanent in Nature, never becoming self-conscious, except in man, — between the extremes of these two views humanity is, and has always been, oscillating.

In so far as his argumentation involves a criticism of a kind of Theism, which overlooks or discards the immanence of Deity it is certainly justified. But Professor Carr does not seem to pay attention to the fact that there have been, and are, thinkers who as much stress the immanence as the transcendence of God. Or, if he thinks immanence to exclude transcendence, he does not seem to observe the above expounded analogy of the human personage.

Sometimes these two extremes have been expressed by the same individual — thus in two different sayings of a great, sad poet of ancient Greece:

Oh tell me, how should I imagine God
He, who sees all but who is seen by none.

And then, to contrast these verses where he is vying for visuality, there is that other entirely pantheistic saying of Euripides:

Look up to the sky, look up to infinite space,
Worshipping them as God.

After all — so many will be apt to think — anthropomorphism seems to be the neccesary outcome of every belief in a personal God. "Green Pastures", they will say, is an indirect evidence of the impossibility of now-a-day intelligent people believing in a personal God.

Well, it is true that in every human mind there is a strong desire to visualize every thought or idea. Even in those who feel every attempt to visualize the Invisible One to be a blasphemy, there will, at the same time, be lurking a hidden propensity to such a visualizing — albeit our notions may widely differ from those puerile representations just quoted. We will feel a constant necessity to contend this propensity. We will sometimes be in despair about our impossibility of quite overcoming it — until we realize that this perpetual oscillation in the human mind between anthropomorphism and pantheism is as much an eternal law as the alternating tide and ebb of the ocean.

Ever we must strive to understand that which cannot be entirely understood by us; ever we must try to imagine what cannot be imagined.

In the age-long strife between anthropomorphism and pantheism, raging in the history of mankind as well as in the mind of every thinking individual, the Christian churches have always been eager to contend against pantheism as the great danger. From an historical point of view, this is explicable since in the first fighting centuries of the Christian Church, Neo-platonism, with its bent toward pantheism, was her most dangerous enemy. But in our time the churches would perhaps be wise to be more on their guard against the opposite extreme, since a rather general inclination towards anthropomorphism has done incalculable damage to Christianity, accounting, as a matter of fact, for much modern unbelief.

Now, as to the justifiability of the expression "a personal God", I beg to point out that in terms of philosophy what will constitute a personality is: Reason, Will, and Consciousness. Reason and Will are clearly demonstrated, as even our sad agnostic in the American Magazine acknowledges, by the wonderful laws which are ruling the universe. As to Consciousness, there have been philosophers — as for instance a German thinker, Edward von Hartmann — who denied its existence in the Supreme Being. But there is a sound old axiom in the Latin tongue: "Effectus nequit superare causam" — "The effect cannot surpass the cause."

If millions and millions of beings created by the Supreme Power possess consciousness, it seems, indeed, too illogical to deny it to the creator.

V.

To return to the article, quoted from the American Magazine, it is not, however, that common clinging to anthropomorphism, often so naïvely expressed, which makes the author of it feel himself to be "a man without a God." He tells us the real reason: "That a Supreme Being, concerned with the infinitude of time and space, can pause to listen to my prayers and petitions and the private affairs of millions of atoms like me, seems to me an absurdity."

Aye, there's a problem! Really, it is far easier to believe in all the miracles ever told, not only those in the Bible but also those reported in the Acts of the Saints — nay, in all the myths of all the mythologies on earth — than to believe in an infinite God listening to the thoughts of our hearts.

There is the stumbling-block for many a soul.

And yet, if we deem such an idea an absurdity, there are things which we forget.

Firstly, the multiplicity of our own being.

Modern biologists are inclined to regard the human organism as a community of innumerable different units. According to them, not only are the heart, the lungs, the kidneys, the glands, etcetera, particular beings, endowed each with a life of their own, but even all the millions of atoms out of which these organs are built up should be regarded as each, in a way, independent beings. Even we who are not biologists could notice that there are many different actions simultaneously going on in our body: breathing, heart beat, digestion, blood-circulation, etcetera. And at the same time

what a turmoil of thoughts there may be within our minds, within the course of some few seconds!

We may be lying quietly on the grass, looking up to fleeting clouds, listening to the humming of the bees, feeling the sweetness of summer winds, smelling the odours of flowers and grass — and yet simultaneously our imagination will soar about to far-off places, to distant times, viewing, as it were, hundreds of men and thousands of events — all in a time which seems to be no time at all.

The fact of peculiarly gifted persons being able to dictate letters simultaneously to several persons will also strikingly denote human possibilities as to being active in different directions at the same time.

Certainly, this multiplicity of our own possibilities will not make us understand the immeasurably vast apprehension of a God, being aware not only of the course of millions of stars but also of the thoughts of every human soul. But we might at least realize the possibility of His having not exactly "to pause", as the quoted author has it, to listen to our prayers.

A Supreme Power, giving and supporting the laws of the universe, must be deemed to be present wherever these laws are operating. Hence He will be present not only in very star but also in every atom. Consequently, we must suppose Him to be aware of every thought of ours. We must presume Him to be conscious of all the millions of thoughts rising from millions of wistful hearts.

VI.

Probably no one will ever quite understand a being of greater measure than himself.

We might fancy a meeting of those microbes which are living by billions in our interior, and which, we are told, will be able to sit, six thousand of them, on the point of a needle — sitting there quite comfortably too! —; we might imagine a microbe — rather a clever microbe — standing up and haranguing the audience, saying: "I hope, ladies and gentlemen, there will be none among you still nurturing that obsolete notion of a Mr. So-and-So ruling, by his will, this immense world of ours: these great rivers, into which we sometimes plunge, those mighty mountains yonder from which a constant regular drone is heard, those immeasurable vaults above our heads. This ridicoulous notion of the existence of a Mr. So-and-So, a million times bigger than ourselves and ruling over this vast world — I hope you realize that it is unworthy of a thinking modern microbe to believe in such nonsense."

Avowing our failing to understand does not imply, however, that we ought to obey that old rule of "making our reason captive under faith" — which has so often been abused and so often proved fatal in the history of mankind.

We are simply in the case of a scientist considering a fact and trying to put it into harmony with other facts, wanting to bring it into congruence with laws he knows. If the scientist fails to state this connection, this does not make him despair of ever finding it; still less will he deny the fact from which he started.

VII.

"— — — my prayers and petitions and the private affairs of millions of atoms like me . . ."

Well, that apprehension as to the meaning of prayer is rather a common one. To ask for some boon, some help in our troubles — this is what most people will think to be necessarily implied in man's prayer to Divinity.

There are words which will forever retain a scent of some primeval, obsolete meaning. Such is the word *prayer,* having its origin from ancient times when people thought the smell of burnt flesh and the uttering of many devotional phrases would make friendly and propitious some powerful invisible beings, able to bestow upon their worshippers certain valuable gifts.

It is no wonder some modern thinkers purposely avoid the word *prayer,* using instead the expression *concentration.*

Concentration, that means discarding, for some moments as least, every futile, fluttering thought; that means being lost in the deepest depths of one's own spirit — there to meet the Everlasting One from whom we have issued and with whom, in the inmost core of our being, there is still a connection.

It is not from our supplicating Him that God becomes a loving Father. God is ever love. But having granted us the gift of liberty, He does not force upon us His benefits. He permits humanity to weld her own destiny. So He does not perform any "miracles" in the common sense of that word. His universe is ruled by eternal laws which He does not transgress Himself.

Yet there is one thing outside all law — above all law.

A man seeking his God, finding his God, will, from meeting the Power above all powers, derive an overwhelming richness, streaming forth into his life and work.

The ancient myth of Anteus, the giant, who received new strength every time he touched his Mother Earth — we have all experienced the deep truth of it, we who love nature; many a time we have felt a new strength rising within us from having been absorbed in the spectacle of beautiful flowers and trees and wide open spaces. Thus also the coming in touch with the Great Harmony will give us a new happiness, a new strength.

But just as earth, when evolving fogs and clouds will shut her out from the benefits of the sun's glamour and glory, so we, earth's sad children, are often by gloom or distrust or many sorts of cares shut out from the whole benefit of God's love. Only when contriving to dispel those clouds of our own making shall we gain full access to the Father.

And then we shall have light from His Light, power from His Power, love from His Love.

Hence it is verily true, that word: "Pray, and it shall be given unto you." "Seek, and ye shall find."

For through that contribution of new life and strength, we shall be able to do what previously we could not; we shall be able to bear our sorrows, to fight our fights, to work the work which we feel we ought to do. We shall succeed in expressing what seemed to be inexpressible.

When absorbed in meditation of what is most high, most great, man will not be able to think of petty personal boons. He will feel one with God, one with humanity. Hence he

will pray only for the common welfare, only for gaining more power and possibilities to help his brethren.

Thus it is supremely true, that word of Christ: "Whatever ye pray in my name, that will be given unto you."

For praying in Christ's name means praying in Christ's spirit, i. e. praying selflessly for the coming of God's Realm.

VIII.

A famous American philosopher, William James, in one of his works suggested that to modern men *pluralism* — the notion of a number of intelligent cosmic powers — would be easier to accept than the belief in one God.

Certainly William James is right in pointing out that this is comparatively easier to human thought than the belief in one God ruling all this Universe. It does not crave the same effort of thought.

But there is one thing which neither William James nor other modern "pluralists" seem to have contemplated: if there are several gods then most probably they will sometimes fight one another. Wherever we look in this world of ours, we notice strife and competition; why should it be otherwise among these mighty powers participating in the ruling of this world?

The ancient polytheistic religions avoided that consequence by assuming a Father and Supreme Judge of the gods, who had the power of quelling their disputes. So in the Greek

and Roman religions; so also in the ancient Scandinavian belief.

Modern pluralism, however, does not presume any Supreme Wisdom.

But, in that case, where is the satisfaction for the longing of our hearts?

IX.

Is not this the deepest want of our hearts: to feel at home in this immense universe?

But how should we be able to feel at home unless we are persuaded that there is a Supreme Being who is not watching coldly our struggles and our sorrows but is feeling for us as a Father towards his children?

For thousands of years this has been the yearning of humanity. Men were longing for it long before Christian belief was preached to the world. I shall not quote any of the beautiful sayings indicating this which are to be found in Seneca, Epictetus or Mark Aurelius, since notwithstanding the historians' unanimous discarding of that ancient legend about Seneca's having met Paul, there may be a possibility of the Roman statesman's having heard something about Christian beliefs. There were, anyhow, many Christians in Rome at the time of Seneca, and he was a man who met many kinds of men. Nor can it be doubted that the other just mentioned philosophers — the slave and the Emperor — were influen-

ced by Seneca. So I shall confine myself to pointing out a poet who lived nearly a thousand years before Seneca. Homer, speaking of Zevs, says that when we meet a poor and help-seeking stranger, we should know that this man has been sent to us by God, the Father of men, who wants us to help that helpless stranger.

In some respects, however, it is more difficult for us, modern individuals, than for the contemporaries of Homer, to believe in an ever benevolent disposition in the Supreme Being.

We know more of the miseries of Mankind. We know the history of thousands of years of suffering. We read every day reports of disasters and horrors in many different countries. And many are those that in these days put forth the ancient question: How could God be merciful as well as almighty, if allowing all this unhappiness to exist?

X.

Now firstly, what do we mean if we say that God is almighty?

Does it imply that, without permitting us to suffer, He could make us strong and patient, like as suffering, borne in the right way, will do?

Most probably not. Only by granting us a free will, with the power of choice, and thus the liability of often choosing

wrong, could He make us grow strong; only thus could we earn that differentiality which makes the richness of humanity.

A biologist quoted by Bishop Barnes of Birmingham, recently pointed out to what degree the susceptibility of pain is connected with higher development. The lower animals — worms and such like — do not seem to have any feeling of pain at all. The higher animals have a susceptibility of pain just corresponding to their higher place in the scale of development, none, however, having anything near the sensibility of man.

Now, seen from a biologist's point of view, what does this signify? Apparently that nature takes more care of preserving a life, the more valuable it is. For pain means a warning: Beware, here is something which is — or in the sequel may be — a threat to your life.

And just as bodily pain is a warning, so is also mental anguish, spiritual grief. It implies: Take heed! You have come far from that state which should be to man the natural one: a feeling of harmony with the universe.

If, without our altering the trend of our minds — putting it into tune with God's will — the Almighty One should remove that feeling of anguish and sorrow, that ever trembling keynote of sadness in our souls, then He would as little act mercifully as a physician who would soothe the pains of a patient by artificial means, although knowing that this invalid would not care to seek real help for his illness as long as he were given anodynes.

Moreover, any one with some habit of self-analysis will realize that suffering calls forth hidden strength.

"Suffering will awaken what is the best within us," said the ancient philosophers belonging to the Stoa.

And Goethe: "Who never ate with tears his bread — — he knows you not, ye heavenly powers."

Even a sceptic like Anatole France has stated: "We owe to suffering all our virtues."

And Shelley, speaking about poets:

"They learn in suffering what they teach in song."

This saying of a prince of poets was, as it were, foretold by some poor peasant in Northern forests:

"Out of sorrow song is born", says an ancient Finnish rune.

"Always is was men who had suffered much, who made most for helping and consoling others", wrote Frommel.

Once I met an English missionary who had been working in China; he told me about two Chinamen who, during a persecution against the Christians were hung up between two stakes to be tortured. Their tormentors, believing at last the men to be dead, left them. But they were not dead, and after having been released, some hours later, by their fellow believers, they told them of their experiences during those hours of intense suffering: all of a sudden they had both been overcome by an exultant feeling of joy. "Never before," they said," have we experienced such an ecstasy. Now we know, indeed, that man can be inundated by the spirit of God."

Did those men regret the cruel suffering they had gone through?

I do not think they did.

And, albeit there be few among us having the strength,

while suffering, to proclaim the value of pain, yet I think that some time, when looking back upon our existence on this earth, we shall realize that it was out of our bitterest sufferings that we acquired our deepest bliss.

XI.

There have been epochs when theologians wrote voluminous treatises on this subject: How could God live in perfect bliss although the children of this earth be laden with sorrow, although in the realm of death innumerable souls be wailing with woe?

And the answer to such questions used to be an expounding of how those dissonances — just like the wild moanings from the victims in Phalaris' fiery brazen bull — would melt into harmony in the ears of the Highest One and his heavenly hosts.

And the hearts of men became chilled, imagining this ever happy God to whom even the suffering of others afforded an augmentation of bliss.

Others, however, have said differently. "God suffers more than anyone else", said a great Swedish mystic, Baroness Lucie Lagerbielke. "He suffers intensely from all the wickedness, all the sadness of this earth — of this immense universe."

Such words will strike us like a sudden pain and a sudden joy. Pain because at once we realize how we, with our faults,

our short-comings, have added to His suffering — joy because at once we feel Him near to us as never before.

And with a flashlike lucidity we feel: So it is! So it must be! If God is love, He also must suffer. For in this marvellous universe such a coherence is maintained that if one suffers all must suffer. Even those owning innate harmony and hence in their inmost core possessing bliss, nevertheless must suffer from the sorrows of others.

For two things are inseparable from the essence of Love: a longing to help, sorrow if help cannot be given.

Yet being beyond time, God must also feel the supreme bliss of realizing to what wonderful future felicity His creation is struggling forth.

XII.

Then there is that still more harassing problem of Evil.

A great Danish thinker once wrote something which presents a striking analogy to those words just quoted from a biologist about the susceptibility of pain being a token of a higher development; Kierkegaard wrote that the feeling of one's own sinfulness is a token of the nobility of the soul. We should not feel sorrow at our shortcomings, if there were not within us a longing for the ideal. And sometimes this stinging feeling of what we ought to be but are not, will be brought out most powerfully by our becoming most painfully aware of our deficiencies.

An ancient Greek philosopher, Diogenes —, whose philo-

sophy, in fact, had a much deeper tenor than the current drastic anecdotes about him seem to imply — had in his youth been a counterfeiter; this having been discovered, he had to flee from his home town, Sinope. The hardships of the exile and the feelings of shame and remorse made his outlook on life deeper; and once when in Athens a man reproached him for the crime of his youth, Diogenes answered: "At any rate, it was that which made me a philosopher."

That Zeno, the father of Stoicism, thanked destiny for having been shipwrecked and thus having turned poor, since this brought him into the path of philosophy — that is what we can realize. But Diogenes — did he, too, thank destiny for having once gone astray in the course of crime? Was there within him — strangely mixed with the repentance and sorrow he no doubt felt — a perception of gain? It seems so from those above quoted words of his. As a sickness in an oyster may result in a beautiful pearl, so out of the fretting memory of his crime, there had grown forth new deep thoughts.

Here, however, a violent protest will awaken in most of us. Why, should the Power which directs the fates of men reckon evil as a necessary force in evolution? Is it not a blasphemy to presume this? Is not God the Holy One? Is there dwelling in Him, the Light, someting of darkness?

Infinitely arduous problems! They could scarcely be said to have been entirely cleared away by Augustine's: "Evil is only negative, is only a want of goodness."

Count Kayserling writing about Augustine says: "His life proved that sin implies not only an obstacle but also assi-

stance . . . that imperfection is the very substance of which God stands in need in order to take shape in man."

Already earlier a greater thinker than Count Kayserling had uttered the same thought, still more strongly expressed: Goethe, in holding forth what "humanity at last could — and should — attain," proclaiming that "lowliness and poverty, scorn and contempt, shame and misery, suffering and death should be regarded as divine," added that "also sin and crime should not be regarded as obstacles to holiness but should be revered as promoters of it."

Did Goethe, like Diogenes, speak out of this own experience? No doubt it is true, what a connoisseur of the human heart once said: that a person with a strong sentiment of responsibility may feel more intense compunction about a comparatively small transgression than many a criminal would feel with regard to heavy sins. And we know from Goethe's own words what deeply felt remorse he experienced for the way he had sometimes interfered in the life of other human beings. Was he perhaps at the same time conscious of there having been some spiritual gain out of that remorse?

Who can tell? (At any rate, we might be justified in protesting inwardly to the word *revere* in this connection.)

Truer and deeper than all that has been said on this topic may be deemed those words of Christ: "It must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh.'

In those words there is no trying to unveil the deep mystery of the origin of evil; there is only a statement that in the actual condition of the world we have to reckon with inevitable evil; yet at the same time it is strongly pointed

out that no one has the right, for that reason, to plead irresponsibility as to his deeds. Everyone has to bear his burden. Everyone has to take the consequences of what ever he has done.

XIII.

There are, indeed, ancient religions which seem to imply the view that what we term evil must, in a measure, be reckoned as emanating from the source of Life, from God.

In the mythology of the ancient Scandinavians, Loke, the god of fire, was said to have lived originally among the Gods of Light. We might imagine that it was after having experienced some fatally devastating instances of the terrible power of fire that the ancient Northerners came to the conclusion that the god Loke had become an enemy of the benevolent gods. At any rate, Loke became regarded as the god of evil, the memory always being retained, however, of his having been the sworn brother of Wotan.

Some of the Gnostics had this legend: the first born of God was Lucifer, the mighty Power of Knowledge; the second emanation of the Supreme God was Christ, the Principle of Love. "The twinborn pair of Gods," — these were named by some Gnostics. The Angel of Knowledge, overwhelmed by haughtiness, fell and drew with him in his fall innumerable souls. But Christ, his gentle brother, took upon him to try to save the fallen ones, and when, at some far-off time, his love has overcome the hate and haughtiness of his

dark twinbrother, then the evolution of this world will have reached its goal.

Two things are obvious to every thoughtful individual:

Firstly, there is a principle of order, of lawfulness, pervading our universe, as is shown by the course of the stars and the circulation of the molecules; as is evinced by the centrifugal and centripetal powers, keeping each other in constant balance, in the stars as well as in the atoms; as is most interestingly exhibited by those series of figures relative to the atom-weight of elementary matters, the strange regularity of which figures has been recently laid out by prominent physicists.

This principle of order has, by every people, at every degree of civilization, been personified and worshipped as a god.

Secondly, there is also an inherent element of strife in this universe of ours: a never ceasing fight between different species and different individuals. There is a trend towards destruction apparent in every domain.

This principle of strife, of destruction, of decay has also been personified by many peoples. Sometimes as a god, almost equivalent to the God of Order and Life — so in the Hindu mythology which, acknowledging the fact that out of decay grows forth new life, gave to Shiva, the god of destruction, as a mate Parvatis, the goddess of love.

In the ancient Persian religion — or at least in a branch of it — it was taught that Ahura Mazda and Ahriman, the fighting representatives of Light and Darkness, both had emanated from the very highest God.

Maybe it was in reference to this idea of the Parsees that Aristotle, that firm believer in the Unity of Divinity, wrote: "Those who assume two principles also must assume a third one, standing above the contrasts."

XIV.

"Why dost thou call me good? No one is good except God."

Who has not marvelled at those words of Christ? Who would not be inclined to think that Christ seems to have been more thoroughly good than God Himself? For in the Creator of life must there not have been lurking also some shadow, some "dazzling darkness," as ancient writers have termed it? Is not this the inevitable consequence if He has created this world? But Christ, does he not seem to be an emanation only of Divine Goodness? While as Lucifer, the adversary, seems to be an affluence of the shadow.

In order to create this world of endless variety, of unthinkable richness, had God, "The All-One", to adopt into His own being the idea of conflict? Had He to admit into his light the shadow? In His endless mercy also wrath? In His supreme restfulness an eternal unrest?

If it is so, if hence for our sake God has sacrificed the perfection of His bliss, then there is verily a truth in the teaching that God has sacrificed himself for man. Albeit not in the same sense as taught by orthodoxy.

"The Son can do nothing but what he seeth the Father do," said the Son of Man.

The great deed of mercy of the Son, was it a repetition, — in a way comprehensible to man, in the limitation of time and space — of the self-sacrifice of the Father before all time, beyond all space?

XV.

Jacob Boehme, the great mystic of the 17th century, when trying to explain the problem of evil, declared that Divinity originally was the "Eternal Quietness", hiding however as in a mysterious abyss, the element of darkness, of evil; through creating the world the Great Calm surged into Life, God himself thereby developing into pure Spirit. Thus Creation, with its forthcoming of evil, by Boehme was taught to be a sort of purification necessary for God's own development.

Schelling, the profound thinker of the 19th century, taught that although the existence of evil certainly needs an explanation, yet God could not be imagined to be its origin; influenced by Boehme he presumed it to have emerged from out of a dark abyss in Divinity, which is not, however, Divinity. It was not as a result of God's will that evil came into the world which He had created; nor was it, however, against God's will; only it was, as it were, with His permission.

But if creation implied a purification, must not then the

development of this world involve an ever continued sanification?

Is this what Paul suggests when saying that "the whole Creation groaneth and travaileth in pain", because "the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God"?

Another time, with a somewhat different view as to an immeasurably arduous problem, Schelling declared the Deity to be the unity in which oppositions are comprised, the Deity realizing its indwelling possibilities through the fight of the opposing elements.

"Conflict is the father of all", said Heraclitus, the profoundest, perhaps, of all Greek thinkers.

The Father of all is Love, said Jesus Christ.

Maybe those two sayings are not in such an irreconcilable opposition to each other as they will seem.

XVI.

When realizing this — that only through suffering and strife could humanity struggle forward to a wonderful future — when surmising also that it must have meant suffering for God himself to adopt this plan for his Creation: a free choice with all it must imply of often choosing wrong — then we also should realize that verily the Creator loves his Creation, loving it as a Father who himself suffers from the tribulations his children have to undergo.

And in answer to God's love, will there not grow forth our love of God?

Ay, there is the kernel of true religion! There is the law and the prophets. For they will always prove true, those deep words by Bernard of Clairvaux: "What we love we shall grow to resemble."

"Thou must love God," — so we were taught. Yet love was never born out of a commandment. But if we were told: Loving God, the source of Life, means having eternal youth — then we should be taught a great and fruitful truth.

For what is it makes us young? Is it not looking forward to life with an unconquerable belief that whatever may be our present griefs and troubles, yet the future will have happiness in store for us?

And what is it makes us old?

Is it not looking back, thinking that the best part of life is behind us?

But he who loves God with his inmost heart, he will ever rejoice in God's wonderful ways of leading humanity towards a goal of greatness and bliss. And trusting that that love of God which he feels to be the greatest bliss of man will ever grow within him, he is convinced that the best part of his life will ever be before him.

XVII.

How necessary is it not to love God in order to be able to love our fellow-men.

Many people go about poisoned by wrath without under-

standing that the injury they do to themselves by harbouring dark thoughts is far greater than the damage that could be caused them by others.

And yet — even if understanding this, would they be able out of their own force to get out of the mud of bitterness?

There is only one thing which helps us to forgive people, to think kindly of them, to wish them well in spite of all, and that is the thought: "In each of these God has planted a spark of his own being. For each of them He has a hope: that this spark will grow into a fire."

Thus our first duty is: to help God to bring the little spark grow into a flame.

"Thou must be God's fellow-worker," says a word in the Parsees' holy scriptures.

XVIII.

To open the soul towards God's sunlight — that is what prayer means.

It may be an effort, a long, intense effort to disperse the heavy thoughts, the bitter thoughts, the selfish thoughts. But if our fight is persevering it will not be in vain. For when at last the clouds are dispersed and we have regained the relationship with the sun of the spiritual life, then our soul is filled with light; then at once, as an answer to our silent prayer, comes the wonder — the wonder that is love.

And for some brief, fleeting seconds we know what bles-

sedness is. For at the same instant as we experience the deep, holy love for the centre of life, a wave of love for the whole universe will be overflowing our heart. And now we understand the significance of the word: "The kingdom of heaven is within you."

Now we feel the truth of what a great philosopher and poet once wrote: "The inmost core of creation is happiness."

XIX.

There was a time, not so long ago, when it was thought to be decidedly more intelligent and more liberal-minded to deny God than to believe in Him. This trend has changed, at least to some extent, in the last decades. People have begun to realize that it has nothing to do with liberalism whether we believe in the Universe having a centre or not. And as to the intelligence — well, there are so many prominent scientists, even in this late age of the greatest scientific progress, who have expressed their belief in a Creator that it would be difficult, indeed, to affirm this belief to be a sign of mental weakness.

J. R. Herschell, the great astronomer, wrote: "The more the field of science is widened, the more numerous and unimpeachable become the proofs of the eternal existence of a creative and almighty wisdom."

Örsted, the famous physicist, said: "Every thorough investigation of nature leads to the knowledge of God."

Faraday, the celebrated explorer in the field of electricity,

wrote: "Our science, therefore, in making these things known to us, will lead us to think of Him, whose wonders they are."

Louis Pasteur: "He who proclaims the existence of Infinity — and nobody can avoid doing that — compresses in this assertion more of the supernatural than there is comprised in all miracles in all religions. When this conception takes possession of our soul, we can do nothing but bend our knees." And in another passage: "The more I investigate nature, the more I am rapt by surprise and admiration at the works of the Creator."

Sir Charles Lyell, whose works in geological science are epoch making, wrote: "In whatever direction we may turn our investigations, everywhere we are met by the clearest proofs of a creating Intelligence."

And Darwin, by many considered an atheist, wrote: "The question as to whether there is a creator and leader of the universe has been answered in the affirmative by the greatest spirits that ever lived." In another work Darwin is speaking of "the almighty creator," saying that he could not conceive of the origin of life otherwise than as a result of a will that leads the world.

And recently, at the death of a great inventor and benefactor of mankind, we have seen quoted his conviction: "There is a great directing head of people and things, a Supreme Being who looks after the destinies of the world" whereas a friend of him stated that none who knew Edison "could have doubted his belief in and reverence for a supreme Intelligence."

In this time of much questioning and much restlessness,

in this time which appears to be the dawn of a new epoch, it is indeed urgently necessary to have it pointed out to young and old that it is quite as logical to believe in God as not to believe in Him — aye, indeed, more logical.

Not that it could ever be scientifically proved that He exists. But we may venture to say that, at the bottom of the heart of most men, there is lurking a desire to believe in a wise and merciful Power, linking our destinies — even if in gay, careless youth we do not always realize this.

Hence, pointing out that belief in God does not oppose the cravings of intellect, may prove to be a shuffling away of stones which hid a refreshing well.

Nevertheless we should frankly admit the arduousness of such a belief. It *is* difficult to believe in a Supreme Being comprehending all the Universe.

But it is still more difficult *not* to believe in Him.

Just out of the point of logic.

XX.

Indeed it makes a great difference in the whole of our life if we believe in God or not.

To believe in God implies a persuasion that, in the long run, those powers in the world which are working for what is good and beneficial, will gain the victory.

To believe in God involves the conviction that our efforts to serve some cause of goodness will never be futile, even if they seem to bring no result. Just as the rain falling in a

desert where no vegetation can exist, will ewaporate and gather anew into clouds, driving away to other regions where a rainfall may be a blessing — so in a mysterious way everything which is done in order to benefit mankind will, in some way or other, bring growth and progress to this world of ours.

To believe in a God being the origin of all, the goal of all, means to be harbouring in one's inmost core a great tranquillity even in the midst of strife and sorrow. It means to feel, even when disasters come overwhelmingly: "I *can*, however, bear them."

But not to believe in a ruling merciful power, this is indeed to be fatherless, homeless in the Universe. It is to feel cold in our inmost heart. It implies the persuasion that the disharmony which we see around us, and which, too often, we feel in our own beings, will prove unconquerable. It means to feel drearily convinced that our soul will never and nowhere find peace.

XXI.

"The sad sad thing is that a human soul is ever alone —" so J. P. Jacobsen, the great Danish poet, once wrote.

Who has not felt the truth of that saying! Who has not experienced that feeling of inner loneliness, even when together with those we love and by whom we know ourselves to be beloved.

Yet he who is deeply persuaded there is a God — he will, at the same time, think exultantly:

The great overwhelming wonder is that a human soul is never alone!

For he knows that just that place in our heart which seems to be an aching emptiness is the place where we have to meet God.

XXII.

"He who knows himself also knows his Master," an Arabian mystic has said.

These words say the same as those of the prophet Hosea: "God, the Holy, is within thee."

These words say what all mystics in all times have said: If you want to know the Eternal One you must descend into the hidden depths of your own being — those mysterious depths where the soul is alone with its God.

"This is the Eternal Gospel: that the human spirit must be united with God," wrote Origen.

But true it is what is written in that weird old book Hermes Trismegistus: "It is difficult to comprehend God, and it is impossible even for the man who can comprehend him to explain him to others."

XXIII.

"God is love" — never was there any deeper explanation of the world given to mankind. Out of love He created the world; love is the fundamental law He has given the universe. Hence only if we, of our own free will, accept as the load-star of our own being the law which — fundamentally and apart from the accidental — is prevailing in the universe, we gain that inner harmony which we call happiness. Only in this way can we participate in the force that permeates all the universe, in the bliss that is the foundation and goal of existence.

When gazing up towards shining distant stars, it may occur that we are lifted to that acme of life characterized by the expression: to love God. It may occur when we listen to beautiful unearthly music. It may happen that some deep, powerful words we hear or read light within us this secret happiness that is called union with the universe — love of God.

Here and there in writings given to us by inspired men there are notes which, as it were, open a door to a realm of rays and light. Here and there we hear some words fall which to us reveal the mystery of a heart. Here and there we catch a glimpse of someone's flaming love of the Highest. And out of this flame there may fly sparks.

A spark flies, a fire is lit, a rapture flashes in our hearts. Perhaps for some brief seconds only. But perhaps even then not in vain.

XXIV.

Many there are, to be sure, who would most decidedly oppose the idea that Love should be the fundamental law of this world. There is too much showing the contrary, they will object.

And yet, a deeper consideration will prove that indeed no power in the world is greater than love.

He who has love he has the sway of souls. Only he who loves men will exercise a lasting influence over them. For in this world of ours where so many want to *take* all they can get from people they meet — trying to take advantage of their time, their intelligence, their property — men will intuitively realize when they are meeting someone who wants to *give* something to his fellow-men.

He who has love, he has also the ascendency over himself. He is able to vanquish all that darkness and wrath which will be awakened by the injustice and cruelty of men. This dark bitterness, which more than anything else will curtail our possibilities of happiness could scarcely be conquered except by that strong love which raises a man above himself and his destiny, making him see Life and World in the immeasurably bright Light of Divine thought.

Hence he who has love has the power of transforming himself, of remodelling his life — aye, also of metamorphosing the world which surrounds him.

And seeing this power of Love to create and create anew, we feel and surmise this saying to be true: that God is Love — that Love is God.

XXV.

There are people possessing a profound inner conviction of the Deity. Whereby? They can have gained it in different ways, but the strongest proof to them all will surely be the inner experience of a new life, welling out of mysterious depths, a new joy that has nothing to do with outward circumstances, but which is pouring down on them from wonderful heights.

This life, this joy can be lit in a second or gradually. But he who carries it within him knows with certainty that it is of eternity.

A longing of the heart towards a space beyond clouds and stars, an inner certainty of a Mercy comprising stars and souls — that is what gives something of loftiness and sanctity also to a simple person's simple belief.

But the lack of that certainty may make the ceiling low even for the most intelligent person.

XXVI.

Through God's love the universe came into existence; through God's love all living beings were created — God's love permeating the world, sustaining the world — the Breath of God, so to speak.

In everlasting love God draws man towards himself.

There was a surmise of the wonderful magic of love in that saying quoted above of an ancient Greek thinker: "The world is ruled by an eternal attraction to God."

God's love is soaring above the world, seeking everywhere a soul which may be willing to open itself, to devote itself, to receive — — —

And wherever there be a heart which opens itself to admit the rays from above, there will be radiating through that heart, over the world, the Light and Power and Love of God. They are one, these three, and they constitute the Divine Magic which will metamorphose this world — perfecting it.

He who opens his heart to Divine love, he will feel himself quivering with the Force which keeps the worlds together. He will feel himself to be unified with mankind, unified with the Universe.

He has Godhead in his heart. And he will be made godlike.

The human spirit's penetration by the Divine Spirit — there is the greatest wonder.

THE STRUGGLE OF SOULS

I.

Once upon a time there came a man to King Croesus of Lydia, asking to be purified. After the king had performed the usual rites, designed to clean from bloodguiltiness, he asked the stranger his name and what crime he had committed. The stranger told his name was Adrastos; he was the son of another king of Minor Asia, and had accidently killed his own brother. In grief and anger, his father has driven him away from his home and his country. So now he was erring about, lonely and homeless.

Filled with commiseration, King Croesus asked the man to stay in his palace, as his guest. With gratefulness Adrastos accepted the invitation. Yet, when there were banquets and entertainments in King Croesus' palace he never was present. It would not beseem a man who had such a heavy burden to carry to take part in feasts, he said.

Now one day it came to pass that the eldest son of King Croesus was going to hunt a big boar which for some time had been spoiling the corn fields in a neighbourhood of the capital. This youth was the hope and joy of his father. But now the king was feeling uneasy about him, because during some successive nights he had had dreams about his son which seemed to portend evil.

The King sent for Adrastos and said to him: "If thou feelest some gratitude because of my giving thee a home and shelter, then do show it now by accompanying my son on that hunting party and doing what thou canst to protect him."

Adrastos answered: "With my own life, if so be needed, I shall protect thy son."

The hunters set off. Finding in a forest the boar, the men placed themselves in a semi-circle, all flinging their spears against the animal. But the spear of Adrastos went amiss; it hit the son of king Croesus.

There came a messenger to king Croesus: "Thy son is dead, — killed by accident by the spear of Adrastos."

Beyond himself with grief, the king cried out: "Now indeed he must be punished with death, that man who in such a way repays benefits."

Some hour later the hunters came, carrying on their spears the dead youth. After them came Adrastos, his head bowed in grief. He stretched out his hands saying: "Take my life, king Croesus! Take it as an atonement! Having caused this, I do not want to live any longer."

Seeing his despair, the king felt his heart softened.

He said: "It was not thou that killed him — it was Destiny."

The son of the king was buried. And above his body a barrow was cast up.

Next morning a man was found on the barrow, killed by his own sword. It was Adrastos. He could not bear to live any longer.

Two millenaries and a half have gone since that event. But still do we not feel as it were an echo, — vibrating

through the centuries, — of the grief, the heavy undeserved grief, of that man?

What is offered by the story of Adrastos in a condensed measure — the feeling of the injustice of destiny, its blows often most heavily striking generous sensitive individuals — that is what is inculcated by many a narrative of man's life. And there surges within us a spiteful query: How can the Ruler of the Universe be said to be righteous, allowing so much of injustice in this world of His?

In an ancient book of lofty poetry — The Book of Job — where bitter queries as to the injustices of life are voiced, the answer is: The Almighty One, the inscrutable One, possesses not only the power but also the right to form men's fates as it pleaseth Him. It does not beseem man to quarrel with his God.

Some centuries later one of the greatest men of Christianity wrote that as little as a vessel of clay has the right to ask the potter why he made it such and such, so little has a man the right to ask his maker why He created him so and so.

Maybe at the time when the Book of Job was written, and likewise when Paul wrote his letters, men's questions were silenced by such things as these. Certain it is, however, that modern people will not submit to such dictates. In this time of ours, man is conscious of his right and his duty to set forth his WHY in every domain.

Now the day has come when man will quarrel with his God. Now the hour has struck when the clay will ask the potter "Why didst thou make me such?"

For we feel: it is not enough that justice be dealt with us

after our death; we should be fairly treated also at our birth and during our life-time.

And how can a man be said to be fairly treated if he is born and fostered in an atmosphere of crime, with hereditary dispositions to evil?

From olden times however, there is, as it were, ringing an answer to such questions.

From times immemorial, and among all peoples, there have been men who have taught their fellow-men: this life of ours is not our first on earth; nor will it be the last. In many previous existences have we developed our capacities — or have neglected to develop them; in many existences we have incurred responsibilities for which we shall have to make amends.

II.

Some twenty years ago an English author, Harold Begbie, wrote that among primitive peoples of today the belief in reincarnation is so common as to make it a rare exception if we find a savage nation which does not accept this belief. The statement is remarkable especially as the author himself did not at all share the belief in question. Mr. Begbie seemed to think this notion belonged peculiarly to primitive races. There are perhaps others too who hold this opinion. Hence it may be worth while to point out how in all the great civilizations of yore we find instances of this belief, and even among their foremost men.

As everyone knows, the Indian peoples, for at least three millennia, believe in reincarnation. For almost as long a time the Persians seem to have harboured the same idea. Witness: the Great Bundahesh, one of the Holy Scripts of Parseeism, in which this legend is told: In primeval times Ahura Mazda asked a host of spirits: "Are ye willing to descend into the world of matter in order to fight there against Darkness and Evil?"

The spirits answering: "We are willing", Ahura Mazda clad them in matter and placed them on earth.

Now at that time the great struggle between Light and Darkness had not as yet begun; it began only three thousand years later, but Ahura Mazda had foreseen it, in his omniscience.*

Those spirits who pledged themselves to fight for light, in the shape of man, could not of course be presumed to have lived 3000 years; thus the ancient Persians if they did not suppose their God to have committed a great mistake — must have believed that those spirits were reborn when the great war began, to fight for Ahura Mazda.

Also in Egypt the belief in reincarnation was ancient. Witness: Herodotus, who tells us his persuasion that Pythagoras had learned his theory of reincarnation from Egypt. It may be the great historian was mistaken as to Pythagoras — this philosopher having studied in different countries before coming to Egypt — but from this passage may be concluded that at the time of Herodotus this belief was current among

[1] This as well as other quotations from the Parsees' Holy Scripts are taken from the translations of James Darmesteter.

Egyptian priests. For the historian from Halicarnassos was apparently well acquainted with sacerdotal Egyptian opinions. Considering the conservatism of Egypt's priesthood it could not be conjectured that this was a belief which was new at the time of Herodotus; it is far more probable it was a view held from immemorial time.

Ancient also was the Orphism in Greece, and as to its influence on Greek philosophers and poets we have many witnesses. Already Hesiod seems to have been an adherent of the belief in question. And Pindar writes in some lines quoted by Plutarch:

Those who Persephone received and who are doom'd
To make amends for ancient guilt, will be sent back
To earth when nine long epochs have passed on.

In "Menon" Platon makes Socrates say that "besides the priests and the priestesses" there were many poets who were adherents of this belief. "Aye, indeed", he adds, "as many of them as are divine" — as many as are inspired by Divinity, he obviously means. "They say", Socrates continues, "that man's soul is immortal and sometimes will go away from here — which is termed *to die* — sometimes will come back again."

Also among the Romans this belief was found. Witness: Cicero, who, in "The Dream of Scipio" says that the souls, which are born to this earthly life previously have been living on stars.

Witness also Vergil who makes Anchises tell Aeneas that those souls which he saw thronging about the river of Lethe were such as were sentenced by Destiny to be born again to earthly life; these must needs drink forgetfulness of their foregoing lives; else they would never be induced to go back into the prison of bodily life.

Witnesses also Seneca and Varro.

Among the Hebrews — probably in that respect influenced by the Greeks — the belief in question apparently was prevalent at the time of Josephus, for this historian tells us that once in the war against the Romans the Jewish men whom he commanded, when being besieged in Jotapata, declared they would rather kill themselves than allow themselves to be made prisoners, whereupon Josephus, trying to dissuade them from their desperate resolution said: "Do you not know that those who leave this life according to the laws of nature, will receive a very holy place in Paradise from where, after some time, they will be sent into pure bodies?"

Josephus also says that the Pharisees taught that "all souls are undestroyable" but "good men's souls will be removed to other bodies".

Josephus wrote his historical works about eighty years after the beginning of our era. But the belief in question obviously was widely spread among the Jews already some fifty years earlier. For when asking the disciples: "Whom do men say that I the Son of Man, am?" (Matth. 16: 13), Jesus was answered: "Some say that thou art John the Baptist, some Elias, and others Jeremias or one of the prophets", all suppo-

sitions except one involving a belief that Jesus was one of the prophets reincarnated.

Moreover, seeing a man who was born blind, the disciples asked: "Master, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" (Joh. Ev. Ch. 9). Presuming the possibility of his having himself caused the blindness which he was born with, will of course necessarily involve a belief in a previous existence.

The ancient Scandinavians also believed in reincarnation. In one of the songs of the Edda, in which is depicted the strong love between a hero and his bride, we are told that these two were universally thought to be two other famous lovers reincarnated. "For in old times", the Edda tells us, "men believed in reincarnation".

Thus already in those remote times men were seeking a solution to the riddle of a quick, strongly felt sympathy in the same way as that chosen by Goethe when he wrote to a woman he loved:

> "For oh, thou wert in far-off times
> my sister or my wife."

III.

Max Müller, the celebrated investigator into the history of religions, once wrote upon the theory of reincarnation: "There does not exist any other belief about which the great thinkers of humanity have so unanimously agreed."

And really, there is a glorious line of great philosophers — from Pythagoras, Empedocles, Socrates, Platon and Plotinos down to Johannes Scotus Erigena, from Giordano Bruno to Leibniz, Herder and Schopenhauer — who have pleaded for this idea.

And Voltaire, the great joker who sometimes found striking expressions for serious truths once wrote: "Really it is not more wonderful to be born twice than to be born once."

No less glorious a line of poets harbouring this same idea, might be recorded.

In "The Tempest", that wonderful last masterpiece of Shakespeare, man's life is spoken of as "engirdled by sleep", which seems to hint that he thought it preceded by a state of unconsciousness as well as ending therewith.

Calderon, the great Spanish poet, suggests the same belief when saying, in weird sad accents:

"The greatest crime of man
is this: that he was born."

Goethe voiced his persuasion that he had lived a thousand of lives and his hope to be still reincarnated a thousand times.

Schiller also believed in rebirth.

Victor Hugo, the greatest of French poets in the nineteenth century, was an adherent of this belief.

So were three celebrated English poets of the same century Shelley, Wordsworth and Robert Browning.

In this century Maurice Maeterlinck, the famous Belgian author, wrote: "There never did exist a more beautiful, more just, more pure, more ethical, more blissful, more consoling aye, in a certain respect also more probable belief."

And such a prominent modern thinker as Dean Inge in two of his works — "The Philosophy of Plotinos" and "Outspoken Essays" — speaks with respect and obvious symphaty of this idea.

Now, if in all the ancient civilizations this idea was harboured, if in the row of great European thinkers and poets there have been so many and so prominent adherents of it — how is it that among modern civilized nations it is comparatively little spread?

Well, the fact that two of the above mentioned philosophers — Erigena and Giordano Bruno — were condemned as heretics, may to some degree explain that extinction. The Catholic Church always was a decided enemy of the idea in question.

Why? Was it because the Church held the view that this idea opposed Christ's teaching?

They scarcely could pretend this.

It was towards the end of Christ's life on earth that his disciples, by asking the above quoted question about the man born blind, showed their belief in reincarnation — without being corrected by their Master. Jesus only objected to that notion which was at the bottom of their question: that by noticing the calamities which befall a man we should be able to judge about his sinfulness. We know so little about one another; sometimes a man whom we deem to be unhappy may be, on the whole, happier than another one who seems to be very successful. At any rate, neither on this occasion nor in any other place in the Gospels does Jesus utter anything against the idea of reincarnation.

What opinion of him who named himself The Way, the Truth, the Life, would those hold, who presume that He permitted his disciples to keep unto the end a wrong idea as to a very important question, without ever trying to correct it?

Moreover, it is obvious that Christ himself had in this respect the same opinion as uttered by his disciples. He says about John the Baptist: "If ye would believe it, he is Elias." (Matth. 11:14.) Some have tried to explain this as meaning only: a man with the spiritual gifts of Elias. But this is a perversion of a very clear statement.

Others have meant this saying to be in reality gainsaid by the vision of Tabor where Jesus is reported to have spoken with Moses and Elias. At that time, however, John the Baptist was dead and there is nothing improbable in this: that the individuality who had lived on this earth, once as Elias, once as John the Baptist, after having ended this later life, appeared in the shape of his former incarnation. Moreover, it is noteworthy that just after the events of Tabor Jesus said: "Elias is come already" and "then the disciples understood that he spoke unto them of John the Baptist."

Some have objected: But John the Baptist, when asked by the people whether he was Elias, answered no. Well, when he was asked whether he was "the Prophet", i. e. the expected forerunner of Christ, he also answered no. John the Baptist obviously was one of those rare men who decidedly — aye, curtly — refute all sort of praise. Besides, it is quite possible, that he, like most men, was ignorant about his previous incarnations.

Anyway, here we have two opposing sayings: of John and

of Jesus. The former one says: I am not Elias. I am not the Prophet. The latter one says: He is Elias. He is the Prophet, aye, more than a Prophet. It may be permitted to deem Jesus to be the more clear-sighted one.

Some however have pointed to the objection of Nicodemus: "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time, into his mother's womb, and be born" as witnessing an unwillingness among the Jews to accept the idea of reincarnation.

Of course, there may have been individuals who were unwilling to accept that belief, and it may be Nicodemus was among them. At any rate the retort of Jesus: "Art thou a master of Israel and knowest not these things?" indicates that he thought this member of Sanhedrin to show ignorance by not seeming to know that men will be born again, without having to "enter into their mother's womb".

It may be uncertain, whether what Jesus said on that occasion, before the objection of Nicodemus, was aiming at the reincarnation; it seems more probable he then meant the regeneration of the heart. But the refutation of Nicodemus having brought on the stage the idea of rebirth, it must be regarded most probable that the last quoted words of Jesus also refer thereto.

*

Thus it seems probable that Origen, the most learned and the most spirited of all the early Fathers, was right when he maintained that the idea of reincarnation belonged to those doctrines which Jesus taught to his disciples but not to the crowd. It is quite conceivable, that Jesus did not think it necessary to preach it to the multitude, especially as the idea of

reincarnation seems to have been already fairly spread among them. If he should have thought, however, most men of his time not to be ripe for the great truths connected with this doctrine, it would be comprehensible.

But in this time of ours, when scepticism is general and you often will hear: "It is impossible to believe in a God of Justice and Mercy when you see how different are the possibilities of men, not only as to happiness but as to a righteous life" — in this time the theory of reincarnation may have a great mission. It may be able to extirpate much bitterness; it may be able to bring many a soul to the belief in God.

IV.

In the dialogue "Menon" Platon represents Socrates as trying to evince, by means of examining a young slave and making him solve rather a difficult mathemathical problem, the idea of men having lived, and learned, already before being born to this earthly existence. In this special case the arguments of the philosopher could not be said to be incontestible, for by his serial of queries he almost put the words into the slave's mouth as to the solution of the problem in question. But unchallengeable is the underlying trend of thought: that a child's quick — often wonderfully quick — reception of various ideas seems to imply that in its mind there are already existing certain apprehensions; hence the learning of new things seeming often to be, in reality, an awakening of reminiscences.

The development of a child during its first years is always something of a miracle. It has been stated by investigators that a child of average gifts will learn during his second year comparatively about ten times as much as what an adult would be able to learn in a corresponding time. This fact, however, because of its commonness will not strike us so very much. But there are occasions when we are forced into surprise and consideration: viz, when we are told about the feats of "prodigy children".

Some few instances of what has been achieved by such children may be recorded here.

At the age of three Mozart already played fantasias of his own. Once when he was five, a friend of his father's entering their home with a recently composed concert, the boy eagerly asked to be permitted to play a part in it. He was laughed at; it seemed impossible indeed that such a small child should be able to play *a prima vista* a composition which he had not even heard. At last he was permitted to try. And to the great surprise of all present he played his part faultlessly. Once at the age of six he was found by his father daubing with some musicpaper; asked what he was doing he answered, that he was composing a concert; afterwards his father, being permitted to see his composition, stated that the child, without having had any sort of instruction as to the laws of harmony, yet had surmised and observed them.

Blaise Pascal being twelve years of age once was surprised by his father while he was drawing various geometrical figures. The father who had been the only teacher of his son, never had given him any lessons of geometry, nor spoken with him thereof; hence he asked with great surprise what

young Blaise meant by these drawings? The boy told his father he was trying to prove that the three angles of a triangle are always just the same size as two straight angles — which, as is well known, is one of the propositions in the Geometry of Euclid. On further questioning, it was revealed that the boy had found out all the first thirtytwo propositions of Euclid: both the theorems and the demonstrations. How utterly free he was from any sort of geometrical teaching was shown by the fact that he did not even know the terms *circle* and *line,* but was speaking of "rounds" and "streaks".

Pico della Mirandola when ten years of age, was thought to be the foremost poet and foremost orator of Italy at that time.

A still more surprising phenomenon was Heinrich Heineken, born in Lübeck in Germany in the eighteenth century. At the age of one year he was able to give an account of the historical contents of the Pentateuch. At the age of two he could pass an examination as to the whole of the Biblical history and likewise was skilled in geography. At the age of three he knew Latin and French, also being conversant with Universal History. The art of writing he learnt in a few days. Once being taken by his parents to the court of the Danish King he harangued the king in Latin and showed his knowledge in various topics. At the age of five he died.

About as stupefying is the story of Sigismund von Praun who was born in Hungary in the year 1811 and at the age of two years could relate the chief events of Universal History. He was also a musical prodigy; at the age of three he appeared as a violinist at concerts. At the same time he showed remarkable gifts for drawing.

Vilhelm de Ruysbroek, a Franciscan monk of the thirteenth century, who has left a valuable record of his travels in Asia, tells us that he met a Chinese boy of three years, who knew how to read and write, "also understanding all sorts of things". Considering the difficulty of learning those thousands of Chinese letters, we realize that this small boy's having mastered the art of reading and writing meant immensely more than a corresponding faculty in a European child. The Christian friar was told by some Buddhist monks that this little boy declared he remembered three previous incarnations.

During the last decades we have often been told in the newspapers, both in America and in Europe, about instances of prodigy children and their feats. There was a girl of six years who was an orchestra leader; there was one of eleven who published her third novel; there was a young artist of twelve who showed himself to be quite an accomplished painter. Some years ago we were told about a little Asiatic boy of four years who made such eloquent and profound discourses that the people of Farther India were persuaded he was a new Buddha.

And recently (May 1932) the newspapers were telling us about a man, Maurice Frankl, just dead in Hungary, who had shown at a very early age most astonishing gifts for mathematics, making mental calculation and multiplications with numbers of ten and twelve ciphers, and extracting cube-roots more quickly than learned men could find them out from their logarithmic tables. At the age of six he was examined at Budapest by the most eminent mathematicians of that capital; somewhat later in Paris, London, Berlin and New York

his wonderful capacities were tested by the scientific authorities of those cities.

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The above reported instances of surprisingly early forthcoming abilities must be said to be inexplicable if viewed in the light of normal children's development. Hence we may be entitled to take to that theory of Platon: that there exist in every individual complexes of remembrances and abilities which make learning to a great part constitute a re-learning. At least we might be qualified for treating it as a hypothesis, duly upheld until a better hypothesis be found.

In geometry there is sometimes used a method of demonstration called the method of indirect argument. You are asked to suppose that this and this were not true and then you will be shown what absurd consequences would ensue. Suppose this way of arguing be tried regarding the theory of reincarnation. Suppose it be tried with a man who believes in God, and believes man to be created by God.

Well, this man, believing in a merciful Creator, but not believing in the preexistence of souls, will presume a double absurdity:

1. He presumes that God's creating an immortal soul must depend on the wish — or the passion — of a man and a woman.

2. He presumes that a man showing from the beginning wicked dispositions, has issued directly from the all-righteous Creator as a criminal.

To both these suppositions you might certainly be entitled to retort a *"which is unreasonable"*.

V.

It is generally known that the different Theosophical Societies have done rather much for propagating the idea of reincarnation. Yet who believes in the truth and the benefit of this idea — not having acquired his belief from any one of the Theosophical Societies — will be rather doubtful whether the Theosophical propaganda of this theory should be thought to be on the whole profitable to it.

For in the Theosophists' apprehensions referring to that idea there are some which to many seem repulsive, yet being believed at the same time to be inseparable from the idea of reincarnation.

For instance, it is taught by at least one of the authoritative theosophical writers that the time between different incarnations of a man is "about 1800 years".

Knowing how very variable are all earthly circumstances and times, knowing that some human souls are born into this sublunar existence to live here only some few hours, while others have to stay here a hundred years, it seems rather ridiculous, this notion: that there should be fixed for all men the same number of centuries between the reincarnations.

Likewise, members of the Theosophical Societies proclaim that a person who is ethically on a low degree, has lived through fewer incarnations than a person with a highly developed character — an opinion voiced f. i. by Annie Besant in *Dharma*. When seeing a man who has gravely erred, in one respect or another, we ought to think, Mrs. Besant holds forth: He is a younger brother, one who has not had so many incarnations for his development.

As far as such an apprehension aims at inculcating tolerance and forbearance it is certainly respectable.

But pretending that a man who commits the most abominable crimes, is only younger than we, — which seems to imply that probably we all have passed a stage when such things were committed — this shows a wanting of insight into the fact that life is not always progress, but is sometimes regress.

Moreover, such a view is liable to lessen one's feeling of responsibility. If you think: Well, it is not my fault if I am younger than most other people, thus having had less opportunities of development — then you will scarcely be susceptive to that repentance which may lead to revival.

In other respects also the theosophical leaders were showing themselves to be somewhat doctrinaire. So Mrs. Besant in "Dharma" defended the Indian caste-institution by maintaining that those who are born in the sudra-caste have to learn obedience and faithfulness; having learnt these lessons, they will be reborn in the merchants' caste, there to learn thriftiness and sense for economy. Whereupon these same souls, as warriors and as Brahmins, have to learn the virtues belonging to these two castes.

An endless variety, an infinite multiplicity as to disposition and talents — that is what seems to be the law of life. And defending the constraint of caste-institution by pretending that life itself divides us into some large classes in which each one in the same class has the same task — that is an idea which has no great chance of convincing modern men.

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Among the Indian peoples there are also to be found some apprehensions as to reincarnation to which most

Europeans are averse, yet presuming them necessarily to belong to that idea. The multitude in India seem to think that immediately after death a man is reborn to a new life on this earth. They also believe that rather often men will be reborn as animals. And they think that what will save a man from those endless reincarnations is a resignation of the will of living, individuality being thereby obliterated.

But intelligent Westerners, embracing the doctrine of reincarnation, as a rule harbour the opinion that between two incarnations the soul is given time enough to draw the conclusions of its just accomplished life. They do not think men are reborn as animals. And what saves a soul from the incessant reincarnations is not, they say, the renunciation of individuality but the sacrifice of selfishness. He who sees as the goal of his life not his own happiness but the working for mankind's happiness — he is a conqueror in the fight of life, he is exempt from reincarnation.

VI.

"The best help which could be given to men is teaching them to understand causes and effects in this life" — so a great teacher once said.

Certainly in many respects the idea of reincarnation can be a help to men.

How sad does it not seem when a promising young life is cut off! A young scientist who never got the time to draw the conclusions out of the rich material he had collected, a

young poet or artist who never got the opportunity to bestow on mankind those treasures of beauty which his rare gifts seemed to forebode.

But if we feel sure that new lives will await us all, then we are persuaded that no work is in vain, no talents are thrown away. Nothing which we may do for developing our potentialities is futile. A development which in this life was only just begun may bring rich fruits in another incarnation.

Those who by illness or poverty or any other clogging circumstances are prevented from working in the way, or to the extention, they want, will not they feel it a consolation to think that during a long, perhaps even a lifelong, inactivity they may collect innate experience and spiritual richness to spend in the work of a coming life? Will there not thus be traced a new rich meaning in the words of a great poet:

"They also serve who only stand and wait."

When grief and troubles are coming, then assuredly the idea of the coherence of life will be a help. Not least so if distress comes through the doing of other people. For then it may be we become filled with bitterness. But nurturing thoughts of bitterness is like as constantly drinking poison. If we realize, however, the coherence of lives, causes in one life having their effects in another one, then there will be poured rest into our restlessness, then we see a meaning in the suffering, then the dark wave of bitterness will sink. For then we think: although men may be unjust Life never is unjust.

And if we feel sure that everything we do will have its

consequences to ourselves, sooner or later, how warning is such a persuasion! There is an Oriental saying: "He who stabs his knife into the bosom of a fellow-man in reality stabs it into his own bosom."

In this idea of life following life we also surmise the solution of one of the most difficult problems of this earthly existence; the fact that often the noblest souls have to suffer most.

If those who have reached a high development will be exempt from reincarnation, then assuredly in their last life on this earth must be demanded retaliation "unto the last mite" for everything — in actions, words or thought, committed in this or in previous existences — which has not thus far been retaliated.

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William James says in his paper on "Survival of Man" that what caused him a long time to be hesitating before the belief in a life beyond death was the thought of those immense crowds of souls, "that incredibly and unbearably great number of beings" which, during those immeasurable spaces of time with which science is now counting for the existence of man, must have lived and died upon this earth.

If, as Professor James seemed to presume, there are many who from this reason hesitate to believe in the survival of man, it may be fit to point out that this "unbearably great number of beings" will be considerably lessened if we suppose that the same souls have had to come back again and again to people this earth.

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There is another, more profond concern which may be removed by the idea of the transmigration of souls, viz. this one: How is it that mankind during all those centuries we know through history have not more decidedly progressed as regards ethics?

Before the World War we had more of illusions in that respect — after it we scarcely could have them any more.

But what a gigantic failure is not then humanity! What a heartrending miscarriage is not then the sublime act of mercy of the Son of Man, who descended to this World of sorrow without being able, as it seems, to effect any significant improvement of men.

Here the idea of reincarnation may bring a gleaming of light into the depressing darkness.

If those souls who have accomplished their course — having reached that stage where selfishness is conquered — need no more to be reborn, then under those centuries which have gone by, the best ones have passed away from here. Then we who are now living on this earth are, on the whole, to be regarded as a sediment — mixed up perhaps with some few souls of higher development who have come here in order to help and lead their fellow-beings.

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Some will say: How about the theory of evolution? It could not be brought to agree with the theory of preexistence, could it?

It certainly could, if you presume that this estrangement from God which is termed "the fall of man" was something which occurred before mankind's appearance on this

earth. And that is what has been presumed by many, quite independently of the theory here in question.

If this earth was chosen by Eternal Wisdom as the place where rebellious souls should be brought to realize through toil and suffering, that the only possibility of real happiness is bringing one's being into harmony with the Spirit of Love and Power and Wisdom permeating the Universe, then it must be thought to be quite natural if this planet had to be prepared, by degrees, to become fit as a home for those souls. And just as little as any thinking individual will deem geology's incontestible displaying of a development of earth, through millions and millions of years, to be a refutal of the theory of a Creator, just as little ought it to be unthinkable that through millions of centuries animal organisms were developed until they were apt to be vehicles for conscious reasonable beings.

In fact, it is only through the hypothesis of an incarnation of already existing beings, that the theory of evolution receives its full consecration. There are unto this day prominent scientists who refuse to believe in this theory to its bitter end — refuse to believe the evolution of animal organism to be crowned by the stepping forth of man, thinking the step too large and not being satisfied with an uncertain expectation of some time finding a specimen of the failing link between ape and man. Of other links between different stages we are finding thousands and thousands of specimens, they hold forth.

But if the theory of evolution is filled out by the theory of reincarnation, then the thing is different. Then the surging wave of evolution was met by, and immersed into,

another wave: that yearning of beings not yet incarnated but dimly surmising incarnation to be necessary for their development, and hence stretching forth to reach the possibility of it.

In the ancient Nordic Edda we are told of the cold waves of Niflheim meeting fiery sparks from Muspelheim, and from the welding of these two streams the world and mankind were born. If, like as some ancient Greek philosophers, we consider matter to be cold, spirit to be fire, then, if accepting that theory of the two blending waves — that of evolution and that of incarnation — we might say that in ancient nordic lore there was, as it were, a surmise of the origin of the human world.

VII.

Some people will object: How much more beautiful is the Christian teaching about forgiving than this teaching about requital.

Yes, that doctrine about forgiving, such as it is preached in orthodox Christianity — that doctrine about our sins being wholly washed out, our faults and shortcomings having no consequences whatever, as soon as we believe Christ has suffered and died for us — this certainly may be a convenient teaching to those who prefer not to work and strive for their development. But, at any rate, this doctrine is *not* to be found in Christ's own teaching. He said that the Son of

Man when judging mankind "shall reward every man *according to this works*".

As a support to that very common doctrine of a forgiving which entirely washes out the crimes and their consequences, there will sometimes be quoted the parable of the prodigal son. But then certain details in this parable are overlooked. Firstly the prodigal son had already had to suffer deeply, because of his irresponsible levity. Secondly, when met by his father with great paternal tenderness, he was not, however, met with the message: that inheritance which you have lavished will be restored to you. To the elder son the father says: "All that I have, is thine," but so he does not say to the son who has squandered away his patrimony. Thus, in this case, the consequences of a life of irresponsible enjoyment were *not effaced*.

Forgiveness — yes, that is certainly a deep word, a beautiful word. It implies that whatever wrong a man may have committed, yet he may feel sure that a serious desire to change his ways, a persistent striving towards improvement will be met by Divinity with merciful helping.

One of the noblest thinkers of pagan antiquity, Mark Aurelius, once wrote that there is something wonderful in this: even if we have lost our connection with Divinity, yet this connection can always be brought about anew, if in a strong, sincere longing our soul stretches itself upwards. Here the same thought is suggested as that one expressed in the parable about the prodigal son.

But an ever recurring possibility of being forgiven does not imply that the consequences of evil-doing are effaced.

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Sometimes there is expressed an apprehension that the idea of reincarnation will make people less eager to work for their improvement; they might think, it is suggested, that in subsequent incarnations they will have time enough for that. I do not think there is much reason for that sort of fear. He who believes in reincarnation knows that the Eternal Justice meting out requitals will have a punishment for omissions as well as for positive offences.

Anyhow, the notion in question cannot be more detrimental to serious improvement than the doctrine that the believing-to-be-true of Christ's having died for us obliterates our sins.

VIII.

If, glancing forth through whiles and spaces, if surmising that it is from an inconceivably distant antiquity our being is issuing forth, that it is an incomprehensibly distant future our pilgrimage is aiming at — then we may well feel annihilated. But to believe in the world's being guided by Eternal Mercy, means to be filled with a desire to be warmed and lifted by that same spirit of mercy. To be longing for light involves to be filled with light. To be longing for perfection comprises to approach perfection. And a patient fighting against anything which may be apt to draw us down — such a fighting will not be without its reward.

Two wonders — a famous thinker has said — will always drive us anew to contemplation: the starry sky above our

heads, the moral law in our interior — that law which, when infringed, punishes us with grief and restlessness. From these two wonders are born and nourished the silent queries of our heart: From where am I coming? To where am I going?

The stars wandering on high in luminous majesty — in the same courses to night as since millions of years — they bring us word about a lawfulness, eternal, constant, the same in the falling of a drop as in the course of the suns, in the growth of the seed as in the whirling of molecules. Here we discern, here we surmise how everything is transformed, but nothing is vanishing, how everything has its origin in the night of far-off aeons and stretches for the morning light of approaching whiles. And we ask: Should I alone, I the Man, have my origin since only yesterday, have to expect my final extinguishing already to-morrow?

And again, when musing on that other wonder in the depth of our being — the voice speaking within us — then we say: if I, so weak, so imperfect, yet possess in my inmost heart a craving for righteousness which rises in wrath against the injustices of life, if I could not suffer the thought that justice should not at the end be administered — must not then the Eternal Law governing the world be as a fire of burning zeal?

If a tone slung into space sends vibrations to immense widenesses — must not then every deed, whether good or evil, awake billows, create consequences, produce echoes, rebounding to reach him who sent them out?

If differences — astoundingly great differences — are revealed, from the very first, in souls that make their

entrance into this world, must not these souls earlier — in life after life — have in different manners fought their fights, walked their way, developed their potentialities?

"Every man", says Charles Wagner, "is an expectation of God."

Do not we all, in our inmost hearts, know that we do not correspond to God's expectations — having not become what we ought to become, having not achieved what we ought to have achieved?

This inward feeling of discontent with ourselves can become an ever instigating spur: to expiate what we have offended, to make amends for what we have neglected, to grow out to that whole fulltoned man that God meant us to be.

But in the long run there is only on one condition that discontent with ourselves can prove to be instigating instead of enfeebling. And this condition is: that we know we have lives and spaces before us; know that our souls have a possibility to struggle forth to that harmony which we are ever longing for.

To strive with what seems hopeless — we have not long the strength to do this. But if we believe in the possibility of reaching the highest goals — be it in an ever so distant future — then this will be not only a consolation in our sorrows, but also a powerful help in the struggles of Life.

A NEW RELIGION?

I.

"Do you think the world is going to have a new religion?" So Rabindranath Tagore was asked some years ago by a journalist.

"A new religion could not be created," was the answer of the wise old Indian. "The deep truths of all religions have long ago been expressed by thinkers and seers of the olden times."

True, no doubt.

In different ways, at different times, among different peoples, the great eternal truths have been expressed. Now and then an inspired personality has spoken out in strong words what his fellow-people have recognized as words of divine truth.

Sayings of wonderful depth are to be found in the ancient writings.

In the Veda books it is said:

"The angels assembled around the throne of the Almighty, speaking humbly and asking him who he was himself.

He answered:

"If there were another than I, I should describe myself through him. I have been in eternity, and shall be eternally. I am the first cause of everything there is. — — I am truth. I am the spirit of the Creation and the Creator him-

self. I am knowledge and purity and light, I am almighty."

In the holy writings of the Parsism, we read:

"He has gained nothing who has not gained the soul. He who does not win the soul will win nothing."

"Those only fighting to gain enjoyment fight for evil."

"Holiness is the highest good. Holiness is happiness."

Lao-Tse, the wise Chinese, said:

"To be a true human being is to be in harmony with the Deity."

About five hundred years before our aera Konfu-tse said: "Do not do to others what you do not want others to do to you."

One century later the Athenian speaker Isokrates said: "Behave towards others as you wish others to behave towards yourself."

Had this thought on unknown roads travelled from the far east to the coasts of Attica? It is possible but hardly credible. The real reason will be: In the deepest depths all souls possess a mysterious kinship, because they all spring from the same primary cause.

Some will say: Thus, obviously it does not matter what religion one belongs to. For within each doctrine of faith we have possibilities to develop our best.

True, we have possibilities. But development may be quicker or slower. The influence of a sublime personality is immeasurable.

And Christ is a unique appearance in the world's history.

II.

There are those, to be sure, who deny this uniqueness of Christ. There are even such as pretend that Jesus never existed, the stories of the gospels being mere fiction.

By this however they have only shown themselves to be lacking in literary intuition. Or their intuition in said case has been blinded by preconceived opinions. For any one in possession of some literary insight understands this: nobody can invent a personality of greater dimensions than he possesses himself.

If a writer asserts us that his hero is a genius, the critical reader does not at all feel convinced if the poet has not succeeded in giving his creation a stamp of genius. Hence, to say that the figure of Christ is fictitious is the same as to say that those perfectly obscure authors who have written down the story of Jesus were the greatest geniuses the world literature knows. For how would they otherwise have been able to invent a figure of such overwhelming loftiness, such spiritual wealth? How would they have been able to form these powerful utterances, these parables of such striking beauty, these repartees, sharp as lightnings?

Verily, Jean Jacques Rousseau was right when saying that if the picture of Christ presented by the gospels were a fiction, this would be a still more surprising miracle than that of his having really lived upon earth. "One does not invent such things", he wrote. Rousseau was himself a man with a strong imagination; hence his testimony has its importance. Poets have an intuitive feeling of what may be fiction and what cannot be.

Moreover a strong proof of the story of Christ's possessing historical value is afforded by the inner connection between the synoptics and the fourth gospel. Certainly there are differences in these two pictures, but these are such as must occur when, of two biographers, one looks at a man from the view of his public work, the other describing him such as he appeared in an intimate circle — i. e. the same sort of difference as is to be found between Xenophon's description of Socrates and Plato's picture of the same man.

If the story of Christ were fiction, this would be absolutely incomprehensible: that after one exoteric picture of him has been given in the three first gospels, a later author so completely has succeeded in depicting the life of his soul that no one could maintain: here the inner picture does not correspond with the outer one.

Those who pretend that Jesus is a fictitious personality are in reality supposing the following chain of coincidences:

1. A great literary genius —, quite unknown to posterity although living at a time and in a country which are rather clearly lighted by history — has composed the first description from out of which the three synoptics are supposed to have taken their material.

2. These three authors, even they unknown to literature, have each after his own individuality somewhat worked up and increased the description, yet, strangely enough, without ever breaking the psychological connection;

3. a new genius of fiction has completed the picture by giving us a deep, intimate description of the same fancy figure.

The supposition of such a chain of coincidences is an

absurdity as great as that which Cicero once supposed in his hypothethical argument: "If one threw about a great many letters and they formed themselves into Ennius' Annals — — —."

III.

Others pretending Jesus to be by no means a unique personality have compared him with Socrates, deeming the wise Greek to be his equal both as a character and genius.

Those maintaining this, however, must be lacking in knowledge of Socrates' life such as it is told by his disciples.

For instance, both Plato's and Xenophon's descriptions show that Socrates did not attack the polytheism of his time and its often absurd myths with the fearless courage Jesus demonstrated when opposing what he considered to be wrong in the religious opinions of his people. In Plato's Phaidros, Socrates is asked by one of his disciples for his opinion of a myth: that of Boreas, the god of the northwind, and a young girl, daughter of an ancient king, Boreas, so the myth told, had fallen in love with the girl and once when she was on a cliff, had born her away. Socrates answers by giving his opinion: that the girl had blown into the river, this having given rise to the myth. But he instantly adds that he certainly has no leisure for occupying himself with more or less improbable myths.

Several times Xenophon points out that Socrates very carefully observed old habits and customs, not least so the

religious ones. And Plato relates how the philosopher, in the last moments of his life ordered a cock to be sacrificed to Asclepios. Also in both versions of Socrates' speech of defence, the accused philosopher expresses an open surprise at the accusation. With a clean conscience he can assure that he never used to critize beliefs, established by usage, nor had he ever forbidden his disciples the customs of their forefathers. Moreover, for about thirty years he had been teaching in public without ever having been molested in the slightest way — except in the reign of "the thirty tyrants" when he was suspected of being rather more a friend of freedom than was liked by the rulers.

Nobody would deny that Socrates was a courageous man and an honest nature. But how incomparably much greater was not the courage in the Galilean, who, ever since the beginning of his career, openly and vigorously disputed the powerful men of his time and nation, never hesitating to attack what he found untruthful and blameworthy — this in spite of his being persecuted and threatened to his life almost since the beginning of his public work.

Certainly Socrates made himself useful to the community when, every day, he spoke to the young men in the market place of Athens; certainly he was disinterested, never taking payment for his instruction although being poor himself whileas many of his pupils were rich men. And yet — how could his work be compared with that one of heroic selfsacrifice, practised by the Nazarene, he who wandered about, helping the sick, not even avoiding those so feared by all, the lepers; teaching all, assisting all, he who often did not get peace to eat or sleep for the crowds that sought

his assistance — he who, as a reward for his untiring activity, was met with scorn and persecution!

And when the martyr death came — how different was it for these two men!

Socrates spent his last hours together with his disciples who worshipped him. And he frankly told his friends that the fate that now befell him in reality was the best that could happen. For he was seventy years old and although still in possession of his full strength of body and soul, he well knew that soon the time would come when life would be a burden to him. He had been able to carry on his life's work for some decades; it seemed to him an advantage to be spared the epoch of gradual decline. Moreover, he emphasized to his friends the gain to his fame of suffering unjustly. He knew human nature well enough to realize that the envy superiority sets free dies away with misfortune and death; hence exactly the injustice he suffered would create an inclination to see and admire what was great and admirable in his life. And Socrates does not hide his satisfaction in thinking that posterity would praise him.

As regards the manner of death there was to Socrates nothing insulting or degrading in it. And the very executioner, offering him the poison drink, asked him in tears for forgiveness. Neither seems the death to have been a very painful one. Surrounded by those he loved he quietly drew his last sigh, certain that his friends would take care of his renown.

How much more courage, how much more strength of character, was required of the man who suffered death under Pontius Pilate. Only a few years he had had for

his life's work. Forsaken by his friends, insulted by rough soldiers, abused by a roaring mob, condemned to the most formidable of all capital punishments, and before that already tortured by the cruelty of flagellation, he was crucified between criminals. And until his last moment he was mocked — mocked because of his great goodness. "He saved others, himself he cannot save!" And yet — not a word of bitterness! In the last painful hours, still in merciful care he was thinking of those he left behind.

And to compare the genius of these two men it should be noticed that one of them has been depicted by two prominent authors, one of whom was among the deepest and most brilliant thinkers that ever lived on earth; it is therefore to be supposed that the biographers of Socrates have done full justice to his utterances. If possibly Xenophon's sober nature made him portray the philosopher somewhat prosy, it is on the other hand very probable and generally supposed that Plato has given more depth of thought and poetical glamour to his master's words than they originally contained.

Jesus, on the contrary, as has already been pointed out, was described by men who were not literary at all, perhaps not even what we term educated. And yet — let us compare the utterances of these two men! Where is there in Socrates to be found anything corresponding to the incomparable parables of the gospels? If such parables as that of the prodigal son and the merciful Samaritan are for ever fixed in our memory, this is not only due to our having heard them from childhood, it is also due to the description being wonderfully vivid and each detail charac-

teristic. And where do we find in Socrates such vigorous concentrated expressions as those of which the gospels are overflowing? But to concentrate is to stamp in gold; it is to give to a thought duration for centuries. And where are those quick, striking replies to be found which immediately silenced his adversaries?

As regards the deep and beautiful words, certainly there are many of them in Plato's writings! But is there in them anything that in starlit loftiness, in quivering intensity, in quiet heroism could be compared to those words of farewell directed by the Master to his disciples, and preserved in the fourth gospel, those words of farewell, which, before the approaching death with insults and pain, yet announce: "These things have I spoken that my joy might remain in you and that your joy might be full. — — — Your joy no man taketh from you."

IV.

Other people, in comparing Christ with Buddha, have been inclined to think the Indian sage to be the greater personality of these two. This apprehension is proclaimed by i. a. Count Hermann Kayserling in his remarkable work "The travelling diary of a philosopher", and he gives an argument for it by maintaining that Prince Siddharta gained his ideas through ascetism and strifes of thought, whereas Jesus of Nazareth was a "Sunday child" who re-

ceived all his thoughts by inspiration without any effort of his own.

There is a great difference, however, overlooked by Count Kayserling: Prince Siddharta, being the son of a King, was from his early youth observed by many; hence posterity knows a deal about his strifes and sorrows, f. inst. when leaving his wife and child and the pleasures of the royal palace for a life of poverty and loneliness, whereas about Jesus, the son of a poor carpenter in a small town, we know nothing from the age of twelve until he came forward as a teacher of his people.

Obviously he was not a man who spoke much about himself, and when there had been formed about him a circle of disciples, there was so much to teach and inculcate about great truths that probably he found little time for telling them of those eighteen years of his about which the New Testament says nothing.

There is however, in one of those early gospels which did not become included in the canonical books of the New Testament, something mentioned about those years; there we are told that Jesus in his youth was wandering about, far and wide, also coming to Egypt.

As to the veracity of this report, posterity of course has no possibility of ascertaining it. But there are two important reasons for making it more probable than the traditional notion of his having spent all his youth working in his father's carpenter's shop, going in hours of leisure to some rabbi of Nazareth to study the holy writs of his people.

One reason is a psychological one.

To all intelligent people youth is a time of eager longing

for knowledge and new experiences. Just as normal as the craving for food of our physical nature is the mind's desire for nourishment. Certainly, as to the greatest problems, it must have seemed natural to a personage such as Jesus, — even in his early years — to fetch answers from those immost depths of his own spirit where he met God. But this would not exclude that desire of knowledge which may seek its satisfaction in wanderings to other countries, learning about other people's ways of solving the great questions. An early independence of mind and a liability of taking initiatives of his own is shown by that remarkable episode when, at the age of twelve, Jesus went alone to the temple, astounded the rabbis of Jerusalem by his questions and, being met with some half reproachful words from his mother, held forth as both his right and his duty to be "about his Father's business."

Hence, we may deem it quite probable that Jesus had recourse to the same way of seeking knowledge as we hear of in the biographies of other intelligent young men from those times: wandering about to different parts of the world, listening to various teachers of wisdom. It seems very probable that he was staying for some time, perhaps for some years, with the Essenes, (although it is certainly a mistake to describe him as a "disciple" of the Essenes, his views being in some respects quite different from theirs); it may be it was there he acquired that thorough knowledge of the holy scriptures of his people which later was proved to be his. It seems very likely, too, that he, at some time, followed some one of the caravans, which probably rather often would be crossing the desert between Palestine and

Egypt, thus visiting the country renowned for ancient wisdom.

The second reason which makes it likely that Jesus spent a great deal of his youth far from the town of his childhood, is what is told in the gospels about the amazement of the people of Nazareth at his intelligence and his knowledge of the Scriptures, when he began preaching in their synagogue. "From whence hath this man these things? . . . Is not this the carpenter?"

In any country, at any time, it would be unthinkable that in a small town a highly gifted boy could grow up to a man without having attracted the notice of his townspeople. And especially if Jesus had been the pupil of some rabbi of Nazareth, this one could not possibly have failed to perceive his rare intelligence.

At any rate there is, in fact, in the New Testament a report, showing that wherever Jesus may have spent his youth, he did not escape these storms of strife and temptation from which Count Kayserling thinks him to have been so wholly safeguarded, I mean in those chapters of the synoptics where we are told about the temptations of Christ.

There, obviously referring to something which was told by Jesus to his disciples, — possibly as an answer to some question of theirs about his early years — is communicated, in a concentrated and symbolic form, what temptations he had had to fight through.

There was the temptation of, sometimes, using his high gifts for satisfying the cravings of his own physical organism, in a way which might have seemed to him profaning.

There was the temptation of astounding people by some feat showing his wonderful powers, thus making them more inclined to listen to his preaching.

There was the temptation of acquiring at once that power over all the peoples and countries of the earth which he felt to be due to him but which — that was what he knew also — if speedily acquired by means of exterior feats, would never become a blessing to humanity in the same way as if gained by slow progress, by inner development.

Temptations of the flesh, temptations of ambition, temptations of imperiousness — many are the young people who have been visited by them. Here was one who withstood them all. But it does not show much psychological insight to think that they were overcome without strife.

There is no difficulty in imagining why the narrative of the wanderings of Jesus in his youth was not admitted into the canonical scriptures, even if quite trustworthy. The first Christian congregations, chiefly consisting of Jews, were certainly not exempt from the somewhat narrow-minded national spirit of that people; to them it would seem offending to be told that the Messiah of their people had wandered about, studying pagan religions. Later, when most of the members in the leading Christian congregations were not of Jewish origin, there was another reason which tended to make the story of these wanderings decidedly unwelcome: there was a growing inclination to regard Christ as God, even equal to the Almighty and Omniscient One; how could then the idea of his having wandered about studying pagan religions fail to seem offending?

Certainly, orthodoxy was developing its theory about the

two natures of Christ, one wholly human, one entirely divine, and there was always the possibility of saying that this or that was said or done wholly from the standpoint of his human nature; yet, at any rate, it must have seemed more prudent to suppress statements which might have been used as arguments by the heretics.

V.

Sometimes still one meets a view of Christ similar to that one expressed by Ernest Renan three quarters of a century ago, i. e. that he was pure goodness and mildness, a tenderhearted dreamer, a harmless romantic!

What blindness!

He a mild and subdued dreamer! He with words like lighting which made the people amazed and frightened and caused them to whisper to one another that his speech was mighty and not like that of the scribes; he who flung answers like cutting swords to the insidious questions of the learned men of his people, with such an effect that "after that they durst not ask him any question at all", he who, when the enemies thronged around him and already had picked up stones to kill him, by the mere might of his glance, his overwhelming personality, suddenly caused them to stand nonplussed while he, like a conqueror "passing through the midst of them went his way"; he who, without any superiority other than that which his nature gave him, took upon him to drive out of the temple those brokers who had

taken up their stand there; he who in the night of his betrayal, with the incomparable loftiness in his being, by his: "It is I", caused the persecutors to draw back and trembling fall to the earth; who, when as a prisoner standing before the judge who had power to take his life, with proud quietness said: "Thou sayest that, I am a King."

How do we not find in him the feeling of great loneliness, so usual in great souls, the feeling to be unlike the masses and therefore misunderstood and mistrusted. "The world hateth me — — — I am not of this world."

What an irony is there not in some of his utterances: "Because I tell you the truth ye believe me not", "Many good works I shewed you from my Father, for which of those works do ye stone med?"

A still darker irony is found in his exhortation to the Jews, after having reminded them that their fathers always had persecuted and killed the prophets: "Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers!"

And in the parable of the unfaithful steward — which evidently has not been wholly understood by the evangelist who relates it because it is partly quite contradictory and incomprehensible — how bitingly sarcastic the whole line of thought: Behold, such things you are to do if you want success in this world!

He is always willing to serve, but in his humility there is no selfdepreciation. He knows his importance to the world and he speaks it out: "I am the Light of the world." He feels himself victor: "I have overcome the world." He points out that it is of his own free will that he has descended to this world and taken the suffering upon him.

"I lay down my life that I might take it again: no man taketh it from me but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again."

How characteristic is his inclination to express himself in paradoxes — an inclination not seldom found in those who feel the truth strongly burning within them.

In our concrete world truth is not an abstract line but something living and whole; it can therefore be seen from more than one side. One way of speaking the truth is drawing out the average of its utmost right and its utmost left — this method is used by cautious natures. Another way is to see and present only one side; this is the way of fanatics. A third method is to point out, with equal strength, the extreme right as well as the extreme left; this is done by those who, at the same time, possess the fire of rapture and the great calm permitting them to see clearly and judge rightly. These lastnamed are much misunderstood. But their method is the most fertile, because it forces people to think.

Filled with wrath against all half measures and tepidity, Jesus said: "He that is not with me is against me." But at another time, full of indulgent and comprehending love: "He that is not against us is for us."

He says: "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." But he says too: "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace but a sword."

He asks us to love even our enemies. But he says also: "If any man come to me and hate not his father and mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters, he cannot be my disciple."

He says: "Blessed are they that mourn." But he also requests his disciples: "Rejoice and be exceeding glad!"

He says: "Judge not!" But also: "Judge righteous judgment!" And "By their fruits ye shall know them."

He says: "Let not thy left hand know what thy right one doeth." But also: "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works."

The parable of the vineyard's men seems to impress that the same reward is given to all, whether working little or much. But in the parable of the different pounds, there is a distinct difference between people with different talents — "He who has much unto him shall be given."

VI.

Some people say: What a lack there is however in the personality of Jesus in his never showing any interest in some matters which to us nowaday people are of a supreme importance, viz. science and art.

People who say so overlook the fact that all the sayings of Christ, preserved to posterity, would not fill twenty pages in an average modern book. How, then, should there be room for utterances on other matters than those which formed the chief object of his life work?

If there had been, among the people by whom he was surrounded, a great interest in science and art, then, of course, the thing would have been different. But to the Jews of those times there did not exist any science worth

mentioning except the knowledge of the Scriptures; nor had they ever been an art loving nation — could not be as they were forbidden by their law to make any images or paintings of living beings, just what else is the first subject attiring a germinating art.

Only if there were among the sayings of Christ some which denoted an inimical turn of mind to the spirit of investigation or the love of beauty, there would be some foundation for the objection quoted above. But there are none of that kind. On the contrary there are utterances such as these: "Truth shall make you free," and there is a passage showing a most intense appreciation of beauty, viz those words about the lilies of the field: "Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."

That passage in Plato's Phaidros where the gracefulness of a platan tree is praised is sometimes quoted as expressing a feeling for beauty of nature rather unique in the literature of the ancients. As to the wonderful fairness of flowers, there is certainly nowhere expressed a more intense appreciation of it than in that comparison of Jesus.

VII.

Yet, however great the personality of Christ, there is still room for the question: will his teaching satisfy present day men and women, with their critical minds, with views in many respects different from those of two thousand years ago?

Will Christianity be an acceptable view of life to nowaday intelligent people?

This depends upon:

1:o Whether the chief ideas of Christ, those undeniably expressed by him — such as that of a Supreme Power which is Love as well as Wisdom, and that of the course of the world being in the long run ruled by justice — are acceptable to us;

2:o whether the prevalent ideas about Christian ethics, Christian dogmas, and the rites of the Churches, will be found to be inextricably bound up with Christ's own teaching.

In the first two essays of this book I have tried to show that those above suggested chief ideas of Christ may be consistent with modern thinking. As to the prevalent apprehensions just hinted at, there will be examined in the following chapters whether they are duly founded or not.

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THE ETHICS OF CHRISTENDOM

I.

Harnack, the celebrated German theologian, in his book about Augustine speaks of "a manner of thought that made religion only a crutch for morals."

Religion only a crutch for morals! Rather a strange expression when we bear in mind that the Sermon on the Mount, which is generally considered to contain the very kernel of Jesus' religion, is altogether a sermon about morals — albeit a most sublime moral, one that holds up, as it seems to us, unattainable ideals. Here as everywhere Jesus holds forth mercy and justice as proving our love for the Father and him whom He sent. On the other hand he holds forth that only by loving the Father and his Son do we receive strength and warmth enough for the ethical perfection required of us.

If any one wants to express this by saying that Jesus made religion a crutch for morals — well, he can do so.

The inclination to make a definite separation between religion and morals rather often met with among theologists of both ancient and later times, is, however, to a certain extent explainable.

People who declare themselves strangers to religion will sometimes say: "If we perceived that Christianity made

people considerably better, we should at any rate reverence it. We certainly do not demand absurdities, we do not expect a man to drop all his faults because he is turning a Christian. But, when seeing a man who calls himself a Christian, committing faults from which we keep ourselves free, we might be forgiven if we are rather sceptical regarding the value of religion as an educator."

Now before such arguments there is, of course, to be remembered in the first place that people very often make mistakes in judging one another. And undoubtedly the critic is often particularly suspicious towards those preaching Christian religion and morals.

Yet there remain some undeniable facts in support of such critics as just quoted.

"The greater sinner, the greater saint," is an expression, not seldom quoted with a certain irony. And the liberal Christian thinker, J. Brierley, quotes a statement: "that in all times great religious personages have been great liars," — a declaration no doubt enormously exaggerated but nevertheless stressing an undeniable fact: that there are, and have been, profoundly religious natures showing considerable faults of character.

On noticing this, should we then say: "Seeing the faults and shortcomings of these men, we have no wish, nor is it our duty to listen to their preaching however eloquent, however even God-inspired it may seem to be." Just as several contemporaries of Augustine were unwilling to accept his teaching since they knew him to have had a stormy youth repeatedly transgressing the commandment which, at that time, was held to be most important of all.

Or should we say as some do say —: "Religion and morals are different things; hence we may listen with benefit to the preaching of these men although we highly disapprove of their characters."?

Rather unsatisfactory reasoning, this too.

But there is however a third way of solving this problem: one which does not, like those just quoted, deviate from Christ's own, clearly expressed opinion about the close connection between ethics and religion, and which will be expounded in the sequel.

II.

What foundation is used for the generally accepted moral code?

The ten Mosaic commandments.

And what is the principal theme in these ten commandments?

A series of prohibitions. "Thou shalt not" and "Thou shalt not." Only two of the commandments — the fourth and the fifth — do not begin with "Thou shalt not". But after the way in which the fourth commandment is mostly apprehended this, too, contains a prohibition: Thou shalt not work on Sunday. With the addition in certain quarters: Nor shalt thou amuse thyself on Sunday.

The first education of a little child will chiefly consist in prohibitions. In the educating of a primitive people it is natural, too, to begin with interdictions.

But when a people has reached a certain stage of development, the thing will be different.

What must be the consequence of imprinting, in generation after generation, the view that the foundation of Christian morals rests on nothing but negatives? Quite naturally the general view will be that the token of a good person — according to Christian ideas — is *not* doing this or that. And he who has ignored one of the prohibitions is marked down as bad. The negative, not the positive, becomes the hall mark of holiness. Strength, courage, nobleness, active goodness, persevering search for truth — all such things become relatively insignificant in judging the moral value of a person. A narrowminded, mean person, who has never been of any use or joy to others, who has perhaps been a daily torture to those around him by his paltry and quarrelsome nature, becomes, according to those moral standards — if he has not, so far as we know, broken any of these "Thou shalt not" — more worthy of respect than a person who has generally shown goodness and magnanimity but who has fallen into the temptation to break one of the ten commandments, or let us say, one of those four which in respect to morals are considered the most important.

It is the negativism in the general ethical view that causes many people to remain so anxiously uncomprehending before certain of Jesus' acts and sayings.

About eighteen hundred years ago the Roman author Celsus arguing against Christendom wrote that it had a special liking for sinners — a view that was opposed by Origen. It cannot be denied, however, that in the gospel

Celsus gets a certain support for his statement. Remember those words that "joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance." And think of the parable of the prodigal son! Who is able to read it without feeling more sympathy for the repenting sinner than for his morose elder brother, who, at the news of the feast of welcome shows only sour displeasure. And besides — is not the father himself a bit partial? He has never given a kid to the model elder brother, but he kills the fatted calf in his joy over the conversion of the sinner.

It is evident that Jesus, when judging a person, takes into consideration his nature as a whole, i. e. its positive as well as its negative sides. He saw where the great possibilities lay; he knew what a mighty driving force repentance can be. A person who has sinned but repented can, like the prodigal son returning to his father, or like Peter, going out and weeping bitterly, feel within him, for the rest of his life, an urgent desire to make atonement for his sins.

There is an old Spanish ballad about the sinner, weeping at the feet of Jesus in the house of the Pharisee, in which ballad she is made identical with Mary of Bethany, Martha's and Lazarus' sister — the same view being also expressed in several legends in different countries. And there are serious Bible researchers who maintain that there is so striking a likeness in the story of those two women who poured precious ointment over the worshipped Master that these versions — in spite of insignificant variations — must be considered as aiming at the same person.

"But this is absurd!" most people would say. "How could

this woman, in regard to whom the Pharisee scornfully said: 'This man if he were a prophet, would have known who and what kind of woman this is' — how could she be one of the two women of whom it is said in the gospel 'Jesus loved them'?" Maybe Jesus was "the friend of publicans and sinners", yet people mostly suppose that this "friendship" was rather different to that he bestowed upon a "just person"; they think it to have been a rather condescending friendliness. How distressed the Church has always been at the Master's mildness towards sinners, is best shown by the fate that has befallen one of the most striking stories in the gospel: that of Jesus and the adultress. As it is well known this story is not to be found in most of the older and more important sources of the text. Yet it is impossible to believe that this narrative should be a fiction introduced into the Gospel later on. What strength and originality it does show! And how vivid, how characteristic of Jesus is the biting harshness with which he turns away the Pharisees, and the sad gentleness with which he treats the sinner. Assuredly this story must be genuine. In certain quarters, however, they seem to have felt perturbed about it and so had copies made with the story excluded from the gospel. There was already more than one passage in the gospel that was disturbing to the believers in negative morality. For instance, the fact that Jesus gave so much of his wisdom to the Samaritan woman who was also a "sinner", and without reproaching her.

In reality, Celsus was perhaps right in his remark that the founder of Christendom had a certain preference for sinners. Jesus knew that, on the whole, the rules of negative

morality were generally accepted, — even though certainly they were not generally followed — but he knew at the same time that people were hardly conscious of the value of positive morals — the value of goodness, magnanimity, and love towards mankind. So he might have considered it needful to point out that positive ethics were at least as valuable as the negative ones.

Hence for instance when describing the last judgment, he does not mention at all how much the people have sinned against the ten commandments; he speaks only of how they have fulfilled the claims of mercy.

The publicans and the sinful women whom Jesus visited, those who knew themselves despised by all and because of that must have been rather well protected against selfsatisfaction, these people — whatever other faults they might have had — were more susceptible to the exhortations of the Master than the Pharisees who were so excellent in their own eyes.

"Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy but to fulfil."

Never did Jesus discard the old Mosaic prohibitions but he pointed out what was wanted to complete them: a recognizance of the value of positive morals.

III.

There is a play — at one time very much discussed — which gives a kind of modern counterpart to the above mentioned parable of the two brothers, and which hints at

a view of life corresponding to that pronounced by the Master. It is Ibsen's "A Doll's House", which was not written chiefly with the idea of being, as it was often understood, a play pleading for the emancipation of women. The dramatist here presents two types: "the sinner" and the "just person" — the woman who sinned, and the man who is indignant about it. They part — these two — because they both fail to grasp the other's point of view and cannot forgive each others' faults. The man is angry at the lack of truthfulness and sense of righteousness in the woman, and the woman is revolted at the lack of goodness and highmindedness in the man. It is not difficult to perceive in what direction the author's greatest sympathy lies. Like the great discerner of men who formed the parable of the prodigal son, the deep sighted dramatist has intuitively felt where the greatest powers and the richest promises were to be found. When the wife in "A Doll's house" has gone through her sufferings, when she has learnt to know her faults and begun to combat them, she will grow up into a human being with great possibilities to be of use and joy to her fellow men, while on the other hand her excellent husband has every chance of growing dryer, more correct, more sterile and more satisfied with himself as years pass.

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If a number of persons were asked to give their opinions on Jesus' apostles, it is not likely that any of them would think of saying that next Judas Iscariot Peter was the worst of them all. And yet, as far as we know, none of the others ever committed anything half so serious as

Peter did on the night in which Christ was betrayed. Not only did Peter make himself guilty of perjury, when declaring that he did not know Jesus, but he was cruel enough to pronounce his denial when Jesus — forsaken by all, mocked, scorned, and threatened with death — had to hear what the fallen disciple said. In judging the character of Peter, however, we also rightly take notice of the good things he has done — the whole important work he did later.

The same thing can be said of Paul.

He did something which is generally considered abominable: he persecuted, tortured, and killed people because of their belief. Certainly he did it in the conviction of serving God in this way. But the cruel Spanish inquisitor Torquemada also believed himself to be serving God when burning heretics, which fact does not prevent us from finding him decidedly unsympathetic. When Paul, however, came to perceive what crimes he had committed, he spent all the rest of his life doing penance for them and he did this in such a way that humanity must acknowledge him to be one of her greatest sons. Evidently the memory of his faults was to him a constant exhortation. That he never complains of the many hard afflictions;[1] that he patiently receives the knowledge, which he says, was given to him in the spirit: that always and everywhere he would meet with

[1] With one exception, it must be admitted, viz in that Ch. 4 of the first letter to the Corinthians where he speaks of "us the apostles", obviously hinting at himself, as "reviled", "defamed", "made as the filth of the world and the offscouring of all things", "despised", in opposition to the Corinthians to whom he writes and whom he terms, with something of a mild irony, as "honourable".

sufferings; that he, in spite of all, thanks God and commends constant joy, and constant love — this is certainly to a great extent due to his feeling that he had a heavy guilt to repair.

In Peter, too, repentance became a power that changed him. Not so that he got rid of his faults all at once. Even during the happenings described in the second chapter of Paul's letter to the Galatians he behaves cowardly and untruthfully. But otherwise, throughout his work, he showed to satisfaction that he belonged to them whose way leads upwards.

When trying to understand what the feeling of guilt must have meant to these two — the two whose work has been of such importance to humanity — we may perhaps be able to understand what Jesus meant when saying that there is more joy in heaven at the repentance of one sinner than there is over ninety and nine just persons "which need no repentance", adds Jesus. What sad irony there is in these words! Not understanding that they needed repentance — that even was their sin, seen from the view point of eternity.

*

If a person has fallen into temptation, on account of a weakness of which, perhaps, he was not even conscious before, then it happens that he, when recognizing his fault, is struck by this heartfelt contrition which is the beginning of the great fight, the beginning of the phase of life that leads upwards. All life is either growing or declining; either it goes upwards or downwards. So it is with spiritual life too. Seen from a higher standpoint, it is therefore

utterly important for a person to arrive at the stage where he no longer secretly admires himself but judges himself severely.

Socrates' assurance that "he who sees what is right does it", has often been smiled at, as being too naïve an optimism. And yet there is a deep truth hidden in these words. He who has looked down into the deepest pit in his own being and there, with agony and sorrow, has seen selfishness as the fatal dark spot; he who has felt and perceived that only by his devotion to Eternal love could he be saved from this selfishness — such a person may certainly yet have to fight many battles, he may yet suffer many defeats, but his striving to rise again, to proceed forward and upward, can never die within him.

Thus from the point of view of Eternity, the difference between the "ninety and nine just" and "the sinner" who seriously repents chiefly becomes this: the latter has passed the straight gate and is now on the narrow way that leads upward, while the ninety and nine still have to make the crucial decision. However respectable they may seem in this life, it is by no means certain that they will be able to stand upright in a coming existence with perhaps more trying circumstances than they have ever experienced in this one.

Perhaps the law, perhaps God's plan for the world is that each soul at some time or other is to be put before the most difficult temptation — the temptation that is most difficult for it to withstand. And perhaps no one who has not learned to find strength in Strength itself, can then avoid falling. Thus maybe every one of the ninety and nine just

persons will at some time or other become a sinner — one who has sinned deeply. And then the question is whether the fall leads — or does not lead — to the deep selfreflection which changes their anguish into a regenerating repentance.

If it is this way we may understand why there cannot be any great joy in heaven over the just persons "which need no repentance."

IV.

Rather early negative morality became prevalent in Christianity.

Certainly is was never preached by Jesus. But in the Hellenistic philosophy, which in an early period of Christianity strongly influenced the Mediterranean peoples, there was a decided trend in that direction.

Greek philosophy was from the first more pessimistic in its views than is generally acknowledged. When in the second century A. D. Plutarch had to write a letter of condolence to his friend Apollonius, who had lost a dear relative, he began by quoting a lot of sayings by Greek poets, all expressing themselves, with regard to man's life on earth, in a highly pessimistic way.

Among those he quotes is Aischylos:

> No mortal man should be afraid of death,
> the best of cures is death for many a woe.

He might also have quoted Sophocles, who says the best

thing for a man is never to have been born and the next best to die early.

And he might have quoted Euripides:

> When man is carried dead from out the house
> Exult! For then his griefs have reached an end.
> But when a man is born then ye should wail
> For well ye know: much woe he'll have to meet.

In narrow connection with this sad apprehension of human life there was an ascetism which regarded matter as the cause of evil.

Even Anaxagoras, says Aristotle, was of the opinion that matter was the cause of evil. The same view was expressed by Empedocles. Pythagoras taught that the soul is imprisoned in the body for punishment. Plato makes Socrates say: "As long as we possess a body and our soul is grown together with such an evil, we shall certainly not reach what we toil for — namely *truth.* — — Would not the cleansing consist just in this: to sever the soul from the body as much as possible and accustom it to being alone with itself, severed from the body as from chains. — — Its (the soul's) very entrance into a human body was as an illness to it, it was the beginning of its destruction."

Aristotle expressly points out that Plato considered matter as the cause of all evil. The Neoplatonists emphasized this trait still more. They thought this world to have been brought about by sin: in criminal lust souls had been dragged down into matter. And salvation could be gained only by making oneself free from all sensuality, by strict ascetism.

The Gnostics who, to a great extent, derived their impulses from Hellenic philosophy, were as convinced as the Neoplatonists of the overwhelming importance of liberation from matter. And the Church, which on the whole with much zeal fought both Neoplatonism and Gnosticism, had the same view, regarding sensuality as the chief sin.

As late as in the middle of the second century, the foremost men of the Church — such as Justinus and Clemens Alexandrinus — were considerably free from ascetic tendencies. But at the end of the same century these tendencies grew stronger and soon gained a definite victory.

When, however, hot-blooded Southern natures believed this to be the strongest demand of the Deity: that humans were to kill within them the mighty natural instinct which bids people to "multiply and replenish the earth" — then their fight became so intense, so desperate, that there was little place within them for other striving. The demand for other, more positive virtues, sank down to something comparatively small.

And when a man such as Augustine came to the conclusion that it was impossible to suppress every desire of the flesh, then, out of this conclusion were born two fatal doctrines: that of original sin, making it impossible for men even to wish to do something good, and that of the vicarious redemption, which alone could avert God's wrath over the impotence of humanity to give up sin.

When a person, however, had withstood the temptation of the sins of the flesh, he was regarded as a great saint — no matter if he otherwise had a lot of very unchristian shortcomings such as pride and rancorousness. He was con-

sidered to have achieved something so great that in reality God became his debtor — as was openly declared by San Luiz Gonzaga, one of the famous saints of the Middle Ages.

Of the reformers, Luther, in certain respects, broke with the ascetic view of life — while he kept the doctrines of original sin and the vicarious satisfaction derived from it. But with the negative moral view he only broke halfway. The moral view prevalent in the churches founded by him and Calvin is enough to show that by no means did they rid themselves of one-sided prohibition morals.

V.

Nowadays to be sure another view is prevalent. With the exception of some pious persons of Puritan character most people are far from stamping the sin of the flesh as the chief sin. On the contrary one is often met by the declaration that there can be no question of sin in this case because people only submit to the irresistible demands of life, if again and again they recklessly give way to the lust of their hot blood.

But to maintain life by giving the body the nourishment it requires is also one of the strongest and most irresistible instincts of nature. Is then the starving man who steals to be able to exist as willingly excused as the one who, in a lawless way, satisfies his erotic desires?

No, this is by no means agreed to.

Why?

The reason cannot be that more harm is caused by the former than by the latter. In most cases a man who seduces a woman or a woman who tempts a man to unfaithfulness towards his wife bring more pain and suffering over their fellowmen than that sustained by the baker from whom a poor wretch steals a few loaves of bread. But here the superficiality of the present morality is shown. If found out, the thief is punished by the law and dishonoured for all time, in the public opinion, whereas the reckless erotic is never punished by the law — except in some abominable cases — and consequently not dishonoured in the public opinion, even though he may have wrecked many lives and spoilt his own chances of becoming an individual useful to the community.

The great change of view as regards the right of giving way to the erotic sentiment was undoubtedly mostly brought about by artists and poets... The creative geniuses experiencing the increase of creative power by erotic intoxication have been inclined to see, in this, the necessary source of inspiration. Certainly they know that in art not only fire and storm but also critical consideration is necessary. Seldom, however, have they been inclined to acknowledge self-discipline as a source of force.

Often the responsibility of talented persons as to ethical problems has been discussed.

Some proclaim a particular moral for superhumans. Others tend to the opinion — even though not declaring it openly — that genius is an aggravating circumstance when judging someone's actions. Or at least that genius is a serious proof

against a man when it is question of judging the truthfulness of current slander.

"The greatest men are not the most faultless", says the historian Mommsen.

Certainly true.

Michelangelo, one of the greatest men humanity has seen, sold one of his sculptures under the false pretence that it was a work of art from antiquity. And more than once in a dangerous moment he denied his friends or betrayed his ideas.

Shall we then say, as some have said, this was a justified care of a life precious to humanity?

Verily it would serve geniuses badly if we were to demand less of them in respect to ethics than we demand of other people.

But by applying positive morals we may glimpse a solution of the problem presented.

Infinitely much toil lies behind the life work of every creative genius. And if development is Deity's law and humanity's goal, is not then work the most important duty of all?

If all that widens our sphere of thought or feeds our longing for beauty is a gain to humanity, may not then this working for the benefit of mankind be regarded as a positive virtue which, to a certain degree, atones for what geniuses otherwise have broken?

Here many will object: "But the work of a genius often seems merely play."

In most cases this involves a misunderstanding.

A world-famous Swedish painter, Zorn, who as a rule worked only two hours a day and was generally considered to work "with much facility", told his friends that during those two hours he used all his faculties to such a degree as to make it impossible for him to work any longer time.

Indeed one of the chief ingredients of genius seems to be the power of straining all the forces of the mind in a way scarcely comprehensible to others. Not that their creating will always be felt as work; certainly it will often be apprehended as inspiration. But the possibility of receiving inspiration — whether this be considered as a direct influencing by other intelligences or is regarded as a collecting from the unknown depths of the subconscious mind — will certainly depend on intense preceding work. Probably in most cases also on work in foregoing lives.

And if creative geniuses have worked much, they have, no doubt, also suffered much. Assuredly we must all suffer. But as it was pointed out above, it is a biologically stated fact that sensitiveness to suffering grows more developed the more differentiated a being is. That intense sensibility to different impressions which is a constitutive quality in creative genius, must also, of course, heighten the impressionability as regards suffering.

Having paid for his development with much work and much suffering, a genius may perhaps be rightly regarded with a little of that forbearance which, in fact, we owe to all our fellow-beings.

For those warning words of the greatest discerner of men are valid even to day: "Judge not!"

One thing is certain: in all people good and evil lie close together.

"Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona," says Jesus, in Matthew 16th, adding that God himself had revealed to the disciple what he had just confessed.

"Get thee behind me, Satan, thou art an offence to me," says the Master six verses later on in the same chapter to the same disciple.

VI.

"Woe unto you when all men speak well of you!"

Who among us has not, at some time or other, said in his heart: "These are cruel words." Especially when we are young and so badly want other people to feel kindly towards us.

But a time will come when we shall understand the deep truth in these words of Jesus.

Why do people speak well of a person?

Partly because he is considered to be in possession of the negative virtues. But still more because he is lacking certain of the positive ones. For instance the eagerness to spread the knowledge of truth in high and important subjects.

The Son of Man demanded of his disciples that they should be "the salt of the earth;" that they should "let their light shine before men." He exhorted them to follow him. And what was his life work if not first and foremost an in-

struction in truth, a clearing away of wrong views and outgrown ideas?

But among those calling themselves Christians the path of the messenger of truth is today as thorny as ever.

*

Never did Jesus attack negative morality more forcibly than in the parable of the different talents.

The man who received only one talent knew well enough that his Lord was a strict master, but when considering how to avoid punishment he could find no better way than to dig the talent into the earth. In this way he had at least not done any harm with it; he was an irreproachable person.

The believers in negative morality reason thus.

But the man with the one talent was roused from his self-satisfied calculations in an unpleasant way.

"Thou wicked and slothful servant," were the flashing words. All his negative good behaviour was of no use, for he had neglected the most important, the most necessary thing: to administer his talent so that it increased. He had neglected that development of his inner personality which would have made him better equipped to serve his master.

VII.

No, the chief sin is neither sensuality nor any other of the trespasses condemned in the Decalogue.

If God is Love then the chief sin must be selfishness.

If it is God's intention that a stream of helping, com-

forting, and life inspiring mercy should circulate through all the Universe in much the same way as the stream of warm, living blood circulates through the physical organism of every human being — then everyone, isolating himself in selfishness, who has, as a goal for all his brooding thoughts, all his secret hopes, the enjoyment and glorification of the ego only, becomes a hindrance and a danger, like the unhealthy cell formations that check the circulation of the vital powers in the human body.

It is significant that the illness which is most feared nowadays and which increases most — the malady called cancer — biologically means: that certains cells in a rebellious egotism take away powers that rightly belong to the whole body, trying instead to build up an independent organism within the organism — one which injures and destroys the whole.

There is only one way of healing that cancer which is called egotism. An operation by the steel of the will? No, such an operation is almost always of very short duration. But if we longingly open up our being to the radiation of Eternal Love, then can be lit within us, too, the love which will burn out our selfishness.

What makes selfishness so fatal is that it is so difficult to perceive both in others and in ourselves. Many intensely selfish natures succeed, with beautiful phrases, in wholly deceiving the world. And most of them succeed wonderfully in deceiving themselves. Perhaps in most cases a deeply soul-stirring experience is necessary to bring a person to look down into himself, to judge himself.

An old Persian legend tells of how Yima, the great king,

when looking about in his kingdom and seeing how well he had arranged everything, full of pride exclaimed: "Wherever I look I see myself only."

But at the same instant that the wise prince let himself be seized with selfadmiration, the *hvareno* that had been shining round his forehead — that mysterious halo signifying the compact with God — vanished.

And Yima fell down into the night of the underworld. To emerge again only at the end of the world, cleansed and purified.

*

In the world system of the atoms as well as that of the suns, there are satellites moving round their sun in a course approaching the perfect circle — in constant harmonic balance between, on one side, the attraction of the central point, and, on the other side, the centrifugal force, the feeling of freedom which saves their individuality and prevents them from being swallowed up by the sun —; there are also comets, which, in their courses often go so far from the sun that every chance of development into organic life is cancelled. The scientists maintain, that in the world of the atoms, an electron, which has had an elliptic course, can go over to the regular course of the circle. Perhaps the same holds good of the vagabonds of heaven, the comets? Perhaps, through the influences and attractions to which all the wanderers of heaven are subjected, it is possible for each one of them to be directed into a more harmonic course and thereby become participators in the limitless life of the planets? — — — And we ourselves — we erratic

souls, who, deep in our being feel the attraction to that Sun of the world from which we have emanated but from which we, in our disintegrating unrest, our selfishness, have strayed so far away — are we not meant to tend towards this goal:

In obedience to the perfect law, the law of love, to work ourselves into the harmony of complete balance?

VIII.

A great Russian poet, Dostoievski, has fought with the problem which he called: to unite the man-god with the god-man, to unite the Hellenic ideal of a whole and full man with the Christian ideal which points to the necessity of humility and the duty of selfsacrifice.

There is perhaps a solution of this great problem:

Even if the gates to God's realm be called humility, even if we have to feel our shortcomings deeply to be able fully to receive the strength from God — as soon as man knows how to receive this stream of strength, this stream of light from above, his powers will grow in such a way as to make the old word: "Ye are gods" come true. Thus the man-god is born, not as an opposition to the god-man, Christ, but in virtue of his relation to him, in virtue of the full devotion of his heart for him who came to earth to manifest God's nature and man's nature.

With such a view of Christianity, there is space given not only to humility but also to selfreliance, not only to mercy but also to courage, not only to pity but also to the

joy of life. Thus the ethics of Christ will be suited in an eminent degree to the thinking, seeking, independent people of today who cannot reconcile themselves with the old monk ideal, with a religion mostly consisting in negations, a religion suppressing much of what we deeply feel is of great value.

No, verily, Christianity does not consist in mere negations. It is strength and it is joy, it is the flight of strong wings towards the infinity of free space. It is not only a yearning to a world of bliss beyond death, it is first and foremost a striving to change our soul and the world surrounding us into a space of blessedness.

THE DOGMA

I. THE VICARIOUS REDEMPTION

Jesus of Nazareth, when viewing, as in a vision, the crucial day of humanity speaks of a judgment in which each one is judged according to what he has done or left undone. He who has neither fed the hungry, nor clothed the naked, nor nursed the sick, nor consoled the distressed, he — according to Christ — has no part in the life to come.

But orthodoxy preaches: "That which gives salvation is man's belief that the Innocent One suffered for his sins. It is false to think that our own acts are of any importance whatever in this matter."

We all remember the story of the little man who climbed the sycamore tree to be able to see Jesus and who was pleasantly surprised when Jesus cried out to him: "Today, Zacheus, I must abide at thy house." When this man had received Jesus and heard him speak, there awoke in him a new resolution. He was a publican, one of those who were in the habit of charging higher duty than was bidden by law and putting the surplus into their own pockets. Zacheus, however, now declared that he would stop this iniquity, and that he would compensate each one he had

wronged by giving him back four times as much as he had taken. What would a preacher of official Christendom say if confronted with such a confession and purpose? He would answer: "Well, my good Zacheus, this is all right, but the chief thing for you is to understand that none of your own exertions, none of your own good works can take you a step nearer to eternal happiness — the only thing of any avail to you being the belief that Christ suffered and died for you."

But Christ — what answer did he give Zacheus?

He said: "This day is salvation come to this house."

And when Christ, after his resurrection, met the disciple who had disowned him, did he then say to him: "Thy sin is blotted out if only thou believest that I bled on the cross to bear the punishment for thy sins?" No, after having asked Peter whether he loved his Master, and after having received the disciple's sad and humble answer, he spoke with threefold emphasis the exhortation: "Feed my lambs!"

To prove his love for his Master by helping the humanity his Master loved, — this would make amends for what he had broken; this was to become the atonement after the fall.

Thus differs the teaching of the Church from the teaching of Christ.

As is well known the orthodox doctrine of the redemption is based, in principle, on some words of Paul.

But Paul was a man of temperament, who used strong words and often paradoxical expressions; moreover, as he says himself, he used to speak to each one as suited him best. "I please all men in all things". "Unto the Jews I

became as a Jew" — — "To the weak became I as weak." Thus it is manifestly absurd to attach such significance to some of the single statements of this man so as to overlook what his master has expressed on the same theme: "The Son of Man shall reward every man according to his works."

It is the more absurd as Paul himself in other passages speaks quite differently on the above question. Before king Agrippa he says that he has taught people to "repent and turn to God and do works meet for repentance." (Ap. 26:20). He writes to the Romans, that God "will render to every man according to his deeds", to them who have shown "patient continuance in welldoing — eternal life." And "the doers of the law shall be justified". And to the congregation in Corinth: "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" and "every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour." And to the congregation in Ephesus, that they should know "that whatsoever good thing any man doeth the same shall he receive of the Lord." (Ephes. 6:8).

We know that Paul met with resistance not only from the Jews but also from many Christians who were born Jews, and who thought they were still to sacrifice, also in other respects keeping the Mosaic law; thus it became a very important thing for him to make clear — both to the Christian Jews and the converted heathens — that sacrifices were no longer necessary because the sacrifice was something prefiguring, and that which was prefigured had now

come to pass. Hence it was to be stressed that Jesus was in reality the lamb that had been sacrificed for an atonement to all eternity. As the Israelites had painted the blood of the lamb of sacrifice on their door posts, on their leaving Egypt, and thereby avoided being slain by the angel of death, in the same way the blood of Jesus was to become a salvation to everybody believing in him.

Yet although undeniably some expressions in Paul's epistles have given birth to the "blood theology" which later on distorted the religion of Christ lowering the ethical level of Christianity, the first origin of the theory of vicarious redemption is much older than Paul.

Plato taught that God was separated from this world of matter by an immense gulf; Logos, however, being the mediator uniting God to His Creation.

Philo Judaeus who was strongly impressed by Platonism saw in the Logos of Plato a foreboding of the Messiah whom his nation expected. And the first philosophers of Christianity, men such as Justinus and Clemens of Alexandria who had been disciples of Platonism before they became Christians, took over something of the idea of God's remoteness, not perceiving how very divergent it was from Christ's teaching about a loving Father. And gradually, out of this supposed remoteness, there grew forth that theory of God's wrath towards mankind which could only be appeased by the punishment of the Innocent One.

If Augustine first and Luther afterwards had not taught justification through faith only, millions and millions of

people would not have been tempted to separate morals and religion as they have actually done and still do. A man, following in politics principles of violence and brutality, need not be a conscious hypocrite while declaring himself to be a Christian, but his selfdeception would not have been possible if sound ethical instincts had not been corrupted for centuries by the teaching of vicarious satisfaction. Stressing the importance of a higher morality — as supposedly most Christian preachers do — is of little avail as long as our comprehension of morality is founded on this: man's own work, the fight of his will towards development, are without any importance whatever, as regards the goal of his existence: the gaining of eternal blessedness.

Besides, as regards this goal, is this — always thinking of one's own salvation — really an aim worthy of a fighting and seeking human soul?

The Buddhists — in their picture language — speak of the salvation of "the little carriage" and "the big carriage." "The little carriage" signifies to be bent only on one's own blessedness and cannot lead to more than a relatively poor bliss. "The big carriage" on the other hand represents the endeavour to lift one's brethren, lift all humanity towards a goal of endless greatness. To him who thinks and acts greatly the great reward will be given.

Certainly, Christianity has much to learn from the so called heathen religions.

But certainly Christians could also learn from their own Master what is great and small in this question. He lived to lift his fellow-brethren God-wards, and he exhorted his disciples to continue his life's work. Never did he lay down

the seeking of one's own salvation as the only and exclusive goal for our toil.

To support the doctrine of redemption through Christ's passion alone people sometimes have not hesitated to distort some words in the Bible:

"The *just* shall live by the faith", says one of the prophets of the Old Testament. That the just man — i. e. a man intent on righteousness — receives through his belief new life and new strength for his striving, is clear to everyone believing in God's power and the power of prayer. But the Church in quoting these words often seems to mean: "The *sinner* shall live by the faith *only.*"

And when the words of Jesus regarding the last Judgment are rendered in theological works, we sometimes find the statement that the Lord, on that day, shall say to *"those who have been faithful to him":* "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world;" but *"to the unfaithful"* he shall say: "Depart from me, ye cursed" etc.

Through the inserted words "to the faithful" and "to the unfaithful", this passage is altogether distorted. The original meaning is evident: Christ will welcome to his kingdom all such as have shown mercy unto their fellowmen — even when this happened without knowledge of the Lord and his commandments.

II. "EQUAL TO THE FATHER"

Orthodoxy, when maintaining that Christ is "equal to the Father" supports this view by quoting some eleven passages from the New Testament.

When submitting these passages to a brief examination, what I have to say is principally based on the works of different investigators in different countries. Most people, however, do not take the pains of making themselves acquainted with the results of independent research in this domain, and thus it may not be thought superfluous to present the following.

In the first verse of the 4th gospel it is written: "The Word was God."

I shall not here urge the fact that the first fourteen verses in the 4th gospel are supposed by many to have been written later than the rest and by another author. As an argument against those believing in a literal inspiration, this view may have its importance. But to him that sees the word of God in what is felt by the spirit as the word of God — independent of the time of its origin — to him the said supposition would only be of slight importance even if it could be proved. In any case, these first fourteen verses possess a loftiness, a note of inspiration, which will make any person with spiritual apprehension bow his head in reverence.

No, it is something different that shall be pointed out here.

When, in the New Testament, the Greek word for God — θεός — has an article — ὁ θεός — it is, as a rule translated with God. Undoubtedly right. For with "the god" the authors of the New Testament no doubt meant the god who, to them, was the only true God. When, on the other hand, the word "theos" is left without the definite article, it is, as

a rule, not translated with God but either with "one god" or with the adjective "divine".

There are, however, some very few exceptions to this rule, one of which is to be found in the first two verses of the fourth gospel.

The translation in use says:

"The Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God."

The Greek text, however, has in the first and last place ὁ θεός but in the middle place θεός. If the same principles as elsewhere had been maintained, the translation would have run:

"The Word was with God, and the Word was a god (or divine). The same was in the beginning with God."

Why, in this case, the deviation from rules otherwise kept in the translation?

The reason can only be one: if rendered faithfully, the translation would do away with one of the most important supports of the orthodox doctrine.

Even to those not acquainted with the language in which the original text of the New Testament is written it must be clear, that if a word is put three times close to another and if written twice with the article and once without it, there must be some difference in its significance. Thus: the said verse cannot — the question of its age left aside — be a proof that the oldest Church believed in the divinity of the Word in the sense that orthodoxy teaches, viz. that the Word — or Christ — were equal to the Father.

There is another passage in the same chapter that should also be pointed out.

In the fourteenth verse we read: "And the word was made flesh — — and *we beheld his glory.*" But the eighteenth verse of the same chapter says:

"No man hath seen God at any time."

Thus, if the author of the first fourteen verses meant that the Word was not "a god" but God — as the official Bible translation wants to have it — then he stands in definite opposition to the evangelist who wrote the verse number eighteen.

But now there is no opposition between these two. For to them both Christ certainly is "a god" but not "the God."

Another passage in the 4th gospel is often quoted as a support of the dogma in question: the exclamation of Thomas before the risen Master: "My Lord and my God!"

There are Church historians who want to see, in this expression, an intentional protest against the custom, prevailing in Syria and Asia Minor and later on even with the Romans, of greeting the emperor with the name: "Lord and God!" This hypothesis, whether it may seem likely or not, at any rate reminds us of how accustomed the contemporaries of Christ were to hear the word "god" used about men, and how little it must have occurred to them to deem the word god exclusively due to the Highest Being.

Moreover, in their own scriptures, the Jews had many examples of the name of God being given to both angels and humans. The 95th psalm says: "For the Lord is a great God, and a great king above all gods!" The 96th: "The Lord is great — — he is to be feared above all gods." "The 97th: "Worship him, all ye gods!" And the 82th:

"God standeth in the congregation of the mighty: he judgeth among the gods."

Likewise in some passages in the books of the Pentateuch: "Lord, who is like to Thee among the gods", sing Moses and the people of Israel.

And when beholding the ghost of Samuel, the fortune teller in Endor says: "I saw gods ascending out of the earth."

This usage among the Jews, — to make the word god signify a high and holy being — does not seem to have been extinct at the time of Christ, for without blaming it, Jesus himself quotes a word of the Psalms saying: "Ye are gods."

As to the aforesaid exclamation by Thomas it is evident that those present on the occasion did not comprehend it as a dawning acknowledgement of "Christ's Deity", because none of the apostles later on in their preachings — such as we have them in our keeping — ever betrayed the conception that Christ was God.

And as to the evangelist who alone has rendered Thomas' exclamation, it is evident that even he does not consider the statement as the right definition of the nature of Christ, for only three verses later he declares that his gospel is written "that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God"; (20:31). Never earlier in this gospel Christ was called God; hence the author would naturally have noticed Thomas' expression and announced: "Behold, from this ye shall know that Jesus Christ is God", *if* he had been of that opinion.

Probably, on this occasion, all the disciples saw, in the words of Thomas, an outbreak of a sudden, overwhelming

feeling of worshipping love, ardent joy, and deep regret over his previous doubts. To them the word "god", addressed to the Son of God, did not sound strange or peculiar as they were accustomed in their holy writings to find the word used to and of others than the Eternal, the Only One.

In the 14th Chapter of the 4th gospel one of the disciples says to Jesus: "Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us," and Jesus answers him: "Have I been so long with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

This utterance, however, even if strictly verbally quoted, needs not imply the conception of Christ as equal to the Father.

Christ, being the purest emanation of the Father, could — and can — transfer to mortal men a clearer conception of God than could otherwise have been possible. Thus in his answer to Philip's naïvely anthromorphistic demand Jesus rightly points out that so far as this demand could be granted it was already complied with.

In the first of his epistles, the apostle John, after having spoken of "him that is true" and "his Son Jesus Christ," says: "This is the true God, and eternal life." Purely formally taken, this statement may be referring to Christ. But it can refer to the Father too, who, just before, has been called, "him that is true." And in view of what has been said before in this epistle, the expression in question must necessarily refer to the Father, as otherwise the apostle, at the end of the epistle, would have been in direct

contradicting with his preceding statement. For there he has declared: "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him and he in God." (4:15.)

Thus here the apostle only demands the confession that Jesus is the Son of God — which confession has been given at all times by all Christian churches and sects.

If John should be given the credit of the authorship of The Revelation the seer of Patmos would be responsible for yet another saying considered to be a support to the aforenamed dogma.

In the English Bible translated in the reign of King James, we read in The Revelation 1:8 these words: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending," in the 1:11: "I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last;" and in 22:13: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last."

In verse 1:8, these words seem to be spoken by Christ, coming immediately after a verse in which he is spoken about; moreover, after these words comes "saith the Lord", — "the Lord" mostly, though not always, in the apostolic writings, signifying Christ. Yet in the most ancient scripts there was written "saith the *Lord God*", which last word also has been introduced in some new translations in different countries in which care has been taken to adhere to the oldest and most reliable texts.

As to the words quoted in 1:11, they do not occur in the oldest codices and thus have been excluded from later Bible-translations.

The words in 22:13 seem to be spoken by Christ; yet prominent researchers are of the opinion, that they should be regarded as spoken by the Father himself, or by an angel representing him.

At any rate, if Christ is, as Paul represents him, the beginning of Creation and also the goal of Creation who ultimately will bring to the Father the humanity which he has saved — then certainly he may be called Alpha and Omega without being apprehended as equal to God the Highest.

But the decisive point is this: the words in 22:13 would stand in a very curious contradiction to the other contents of the Revelation if they were to be interpreted as making Christ equal to the Father. Because in The Revelation, there is everywhere a marked difference between the Father and the Son as to might and glory. Christ is depicted as having entered the full glory which is due to him; yet he is named "the faithful witness", "the beginning of God's created world", who "hath made us — — — priests for his God and Father."

In this book as everywhere in the New Testament, the expressions of the old Christian belief — the Son not being the equal of the Father — are many and clear and unambiguous, whereas the reputed supports in favour of the orthodox idea are few and, in certain cases, vague and ambiguous; in others there is an evident distortion of the original text.

*

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul writes (Chapt. 2 v.

6) that "Jesus being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God."

But here, too, the translators have not paid attention to the fact that in the expression ἴσα θεῷ the article before θεός is missing. Thus the apostle does not say that Christ "thought it not robbery to be equal with God" but "to be godlike."

In Chapter 9: 5 of the epistle to the Romans it is said: "Christ came who is over all, God blessed for ever."

This passage, however, is translated by such prominent researchers of Biblical texts as Lachmann and Tischendorf in this way: "Whose are the fathers and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came. The God, who is over all, be praised for ever, amen."

In the first Epistle to Timothy we read: "God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."

In the oldest codices, those written only in uncials (i. e. with capital letters) the word which in the English translation is rendered with *God,* is written ΟΣ which means *he who;* now it is obviously easy to change a Greek O (in capital letter) into a Θ (= Th). The first one to put in this little line making a Θ of an O, was, it is said, Bishop Macedonius of Constantinople, at the end of the 5th century. ΘΣ is a common abbreviation for ΘΕΟΣ = God; thus the aforesaid bishop, through that little line, made Paul say that *God* had been "manifest in the flesh."

Bishop Macedonius having been denounced because ot this falsification, was deposed and exiled by the reigning emperor. But the falsification was not thereby extirpated. Of late, however, in different countries the original text, with its *he who*, has been restored in the Bible translations.

As another support of the orthodox view, an expression in the 2nd epistle to the Corinthians (5:19) is sometimes quoted: *"God was in Christ,* reconciling the world unto himself."

In an earlier verse in the same chapter, however, (5:17) the apostle says: "Therefore, if any man *be in Christ,* he is a new creature." Here we have the same expression of a mysterious unity in everything that is of God.

Moreover, there are many passages, where Paul most emphatically says that Christ is *not* God.

In his speech to the Athenians he says that God "will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained." (A 17:31). He calls Christ "the image of God"; he speaks of how, at last, "the Son shall be *subject unto him* that put all things under him"; he calls God "the blessed and only Potentate, the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, who alone hath immortality;" he speaks of "God who quickeneth all things, and — — Christ Jesus, who, before Pontius Pilate, witnessed a good confession." He says that we have "one only God, the Father, — — and one only Lord Jesus Christ," "one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." Like Peter and the

other apostles he continually repeats that God raised Christ, not that he rose of his own power; like John he says that "no man hath seen God", — although he himself saw Jesus after the Son of Man had left the earth and was in the realm of his glory ("Have I not seen Jesus Christ, our Lord?" 1. Cor. 9: 1); he says "the head of Christ is God" as Christ is "the head of every man". Thus, in Paul's opinion, God is as far above Christ as Christ is above us.

The author of the epistle to the Hebrews, quotes from one of the psalms: "Thy throne, o God, is for ever and ever — — therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows."

To say to the Messiah "thy God" must signify that the Messiah himself is not the Highest One.

Moreover it is evident from several passages in this epistle that the author by no means favours the doctrine of the divinity of Christ in the orthodox sense. He writes, for instance, that Christ's prayer was heard "because he feared God" and that God "made him perfect". He speaks, too, of "our High Priest Jesus Christ", who was *"faithful to him* that appointed him"; and when speaking of Christ in his glory, he says that "he is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a *minister* of the sanctuary."

*

In the Acts of the Apostles we have in Ch. 2 that preaching of Peter's on the day of Pentecost when he expounds the chief contents of the New Gospel to a numerous crowd; there he speaks of "Jesus of Nazareth, a *man* approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which

God did by him"; he says that "this Jesus hath God raised up", and "God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."

Three thousand men were that day baptized to the new gospel without having heard a word about Jesus' being God and equal to the Father.

In Ch. 3 of the Acts, after a lame man had been healed, Peter, speaking again to a large crowd about the new gospel, quoted those words from the Pentateuch where Moses says: "A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, of your brethren, like unto me." But Peter did not say a word about this prophet being God himself.

Ay, in that same speech Peter most decidedly gainsays such an idea. For what in V. 13 and V. 26 is, in the English Bible translation, rendered with *son* ought to be translated with *servant,* as Luther and several other Bible translators have it. The word, used in the Greek text — παῖς — has both significations: *child* and *servant;* when used in the former meaning, it often refers to children under age — as of Jesus when twelve years old and Jairus' daughter, reported to be of the same age, — or is used about young persons whose age is not explicitly mentioned, viz. the epileptic boy healed by Jesus on his coming down from Mount Tabor, and the son of the nobleman of Capernaum. Also Eutyches (Acts 20:9—12) who went to sleep and fell out of the window is called first youth and then παῖς. What Aramaic word was used in that speech of Peter's we do not know, but the Evangelist rendering it with παῖς must have been aware of the fact that the apostle was speaking to a crowd which well knew that Jesus at his

crucifixion was not in his first youth; hence if he meant God's *son* he is not likely to have designed him as God's παὶς, especially as everywhere else in the New Testament when Christ is called God's son the word ὑιος is used.

It may be added that in the Ch. 4 where we are told that the first Christian Community, rejoicing at the deliverance of Peter and John, "lifted up their voice to God with one accord", speaking in their prayer of Jesus as "God's παὶς" — which is rendered in V. 27 and V. 30 with God's "holy child" — in that same Ch. 4, in V. 25, when David is designed as God's παὶς this is rendered with *God's servant.*

Everywhere in the Acts the same view of Christ and his relation to the Father is maintained. With however one remarkable exception.

In Ch. 20, verse 28th, Paul speaks of the "Church of *God* which *he hath purchased with his own blood.*"

But the original text, restored by authoritative researchers, — as has been pointed out by Viktor Rydberg, a celebrated Swedish poet and investigator — speaks of "The *Lord's* Church which he hath purchased with his own blood."

Even to those who are not in possession of the philologic and historical insight necessary to judge which of the versions is the right one, it must be clear that the orthodox version cannot very well be the original. For if, in a work of so clear and simple an historical character as that of the Acts, the man, who may be said to be the hero of the chief part of the story, *were to express all at once, on an important question, a view contrary* to the one prevalent in

the said work, this sudden new view would have had to be motivated, if the author of the book were in possession of ever so slight a sense of logic.

*

The most important evidence in the present question is however what Jesus himself says.

"My Father is greater than I." "The word ye hear is not of me but of my Father who hath sent me;" "I have not come of myself, but he who hath sent me is the true one;" "the Son can do nothing of himself but what he seeth the Father do;" "I am come down from heaven, not to do my own will but his who hath sent me;" "From God have I emanated, and I have not come of my own but he hath sent me;" "I can of mine own self do nothing." "I do nothing of myself, but as my Father hath taught me I speak these things"; "The works which the Father hath given me to finish — — bear witness of me that the Father hath sent me."

Certainly he did say: "He who hath seen me hath seen the Father." But he said, too, to his disciples: "He who heareth you heareth me." Certainly he also said: "I and the Father are one", but he said too: "All may be one, as thou, Father art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us." "I am in my Father and ye in me and I in you."

Thus, if with the above quoted words "I and the Father are one," and "He who hath seen me hath seen the Father," Jesus wishes to announce himself as God, then he also announces his disciples to be Christ.

*

The most learned, most eloquent, and perhaps — humanly judged — the most pious of all the Church fathers, Origen, who, about 200 years after the death of the Son of man, wrote his profound treatises on the Christian faith, certainly calls Christ God, at the same time emphasizing, however, that the Father is greater. To Origen the Son is the image of the Father, who was to teach us humans to understand, to some extent, the nature of the Father, which otherwise, in its limitless greatness, would have been absolutely incomprehensible to us. During the lifetime of Origen it did not occur to anybody to accuse him of heresy because of his view on this question. On the contrary, he was considered to be one of the pillars of orthodoxy. For in his lifetime this original view of the relationship of the Son to the Father was still generally prevalent in the Church.

Later on, when another view worked itself through and by and by became permanent, there was a certain argument which made a strong and decisive impression on many. People said: If you do not honour Christ as the highest God, you do not love him in the right way.

This argument has been used up to our time, continually making a deep impression on pious and sensitive souls. But when hearing it used I remember an old story:

That French king, who was named by his flattering subjects "King Sun", once told his courtiers that an Englishman who was at that time his guest, would behave more courteously to him than any one of his court. The courtiers declared this to be impossible. Some days later, when about to mount into his coach, the king ordered one of those attending him to mount before himself. The courtier refused,

frightened at the mere thought of such presumptuousness. Likewise all the others. Then the king turned to the Englishman with the same request. He instantly obeyed. "You see, gentlemen," said the king, "that I was right. For is not this the best courtesy: to do what I bid?"

Which is to honour Christ best: to believe him to be what he said himself to be, or to strive to award him a place equal to the very Highest, which he himself said was not his due?

*

Swedenborg, who was a most decided adversary to the dogma of the Trinity, tried to solve the problem of Christ's divinity by declaring that Christ was the Father himself, descended to earth; no God existing but Christ. Leaving aside the question how anyone could imagine the Infinite one, the Upholder of the Universe, to be living some thirty years here on earth, only that starting point of Swedenborg's will here be called attention to: he says in *"Vera Religio Christiana"* that no man is able sincerely and fervently to pray to a God whom he cannot in his imagination represent to himself; hence God's only possibility of stirring men to love and adore him was to descend to earth as a man. For after this men have a possibility of representing to themselves, as in an inner vision, their God.

As to the inherent want of man to imagine to himself what he cannot see there can be no doubt; and denominations such as the Moravian brethren who, although very far from accepting the above quoted Swedenborgian theory, yet could almost be said to adore Christ as their only God, show that the psychological argument of the Swedish seer

contains some innate truth. But even if the soul's inner vision of Christ brings us nearer to God, this does not exempt us from the duty of ever reminding ourselves that the Infinite is immeasurably beyond our understanding — although not beyond our love.

III. THREE AND YET ONE

"Everything that is perfect has three parts" — this was taught in the ancient Egyptian mythology. And Plutarch tells us how, according to this principle, the ancient Egyptians imagined every good Deity as threefold, while the evil god was one and undivided.

This perception of the holiness of the number three is expressed also in many other mythologies. Brahminism has the Trinity: Brahma, Visjnu, and Shiva, the Babylonians that of Anu, Bel and Ea. The Hellenes spoke of three world powers succeeding one another: Uranos', Kronos' and Zeus', and of a dividing up of the Universe into three parts under Zeus, Poseidon and Pluto. In the ancient Germanic mythology, we find Odin and his two brothers Vile and Ve, who created the world together. The Gauls believed in Teutates, Esus and Taranis as governing the Universe; the Ireans in Bress, Balar and Tethra. Three were also the Fates of the Hellenic mythology as well as in the ancient Northern belief.

When the Pythagoreans, in their teaching of numbers, wanted to give a philosophical motive to the ancient holiness of the number three, they declared that one is the number of the Deity, which in itself encloses all other numbers,

while two signifies the matter that emanated from the Unity, this being the number of disintegration. But three, which in itself encloses both one and two, signifies the reunion of the purified matter with the original Unity.

"The threefold unknown darkness", was a name of the deity in the Orpheism. And the perception of the holiness of the number three was so wide spread as to make it safe to maintain that when people began calling Christ God, the impulse was given to look for a third person to complete the holy number.

Professor Samuel Sharpe, the famous Egyptiologist, in his work "Egyptian Mythology and Egyptian Christianity" pointed out to what extent, in ancient times, Egypt excercised an influence on religious thought in Hellas and Rome. This can be seen already in Herodotus who is of the opinion that the Hellenes had received most of their religious conceptions from Egypt. Even after it had lost its independence in political respect and had become a part of the Roman Empire, Egypt was venerated as a cradle of religion. With their strong respect for tradition, the Romans were especially inclined to revere the ancient Egyptian religion.

When bearing in mind that the Egyptians, as regards the sacredness of the number three, went farther than any others, declaring that only the evil god was not threefold, it must be considered natural that in Egypt there was an earlier and stronger demand than elsewhere for a Trinity even in the Christian belief.

At a certain time there was an inclination towards putting the Virgin Mary as the third person in the deity. Soon however the perception of the Holy Ghost as a third person

became dominant. In this there was at first a certain attachment to the aforementioned belief in the Virgin Mary, as the Holy Ghost was regarded as the female principle in the deity, (owing to the fact that in the Greek language, as well as in the Hebrew, the word spirit is feminine).

As to the dogma that God's spirit should be the "third person in the deity" a few passages from the Scriptures may be here recalled.

"What man knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God." (1 Cor. 2:11). Paul here compares the relation between God and his spirit with the relation between man and his spirit. Certainly nobody would want to maintain that man and his spirit are two persons?

The 19th Chapter of the Acts tells how Paul comes to some disciples and asks them: "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" And they said unto him: "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost."

Certainly it is told that these men in Ephesus had received only "John's baptism." Nevertheless they are called disciples and we are told that they "believe." And yet they do not know anything about the Holy Ghost? Is there any better proof that the oldest Church — the congregation of the apostles — did not preach that the Holy Ghost was God?[1]

[1] As regards the expression "John's baptism" it is to be remarked that Apollos, who in the Acts, Chapt. 18, is said to have been "instructed in the way of the Lord, and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord," even he was "knowing only the baptism of John."

Among the arguments in favour of the doctrine of the Trinity there are some words in the first epistle of John which are still retained in the English Bible although in most other translations they are definitely discarded. Those words are in Ch. 5: "For there are three that bear record in Heaven, the Father, the Word and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one."

Viktor Rydberg, the above quoted Swedish Bible investigator, has traced out the story of this falsification.

In none of the ancient Greek uncial-manuscripts this verse is to be found. In none of the Syrian translations. In none of the old Egyptian, Armenian, Arabian or Ethiopian translations is it to be found. Nor in the Slavonian translation made by Cyrillus and Methodius in the ninth century. Nor in the ancient Latin translations. Nor was it ever quoted by those learned authors, who in the conflict between Arianism and orthodoxy pleaded for the dogma of Trinity; although even such men as Athanasius, Basilius and Gregory of Nazians certainly would have been glad to have that argument against their adversaries.

The oldest Codex into which the verse in question was inserted was the Codex toletanus, written in the 7th or 8th century. At the Church Congress in the Lateran, in the year 1215, this verse was quoted; and after that it was considered authorized and began to be introduced into the Bible-copies. Luther, when making his translation excluded it, as an obvious falsification. Yet Luther firmly believed in the orthodox dogma of the Trinity. But he did not wish to use a falsification as an argument for his opinion.

Later, however, the verse was smuggled back into the

German Bible as well as into the New Testaments of other Protestant Churches. But of late it has been removed from most of them.

Can anybody really think that a man, who never heard about the doctrine of the Trinity, would, of his own accord, in reading the Bible come to the conclusion that it taught of a triune God? Every one wanting to answer the question honestly must answer no. And the best proof of this doctrine's not belonging to original Christianity is this: in the first two centuries after Christ no Christian author presented it.

It was only in the third century that the doctrine of the Trinity was developed. And in the 4th century at the Church Congress in Nicea it was carried through by an emperor who thought that the easiest way to stop the endless quarrels would be to accept the idea preached by the rather violent prelates in Alexandria. The year before, Bishop Hosius of Cordova arriving in Alexandria had brought with him a letter from the emperor, exhorting bishops and priests not to quarrel and fight "over such trifles" as different views as to the nature of the Father and the Son. It is probable that Hosius, when delivering such a message from his imperial friend, shared to some extent the views expressed therein; however, on his return to the emperor, Hosius proposed to assemble a general Church Congress to decide the important question. Thus the eloquence of the Alexandrian theologians seems to have won over the bishop of Cordova to their doctrine. And at Nicea it was the Egyptian theologians who triumphed.

"But still in the first part of the third century," says Harnack in his great historical work "Dogmengeschichte", "Tertullian, Hippolyte, and Origen testify that most Christians were strict monotheists and wanted to remain so."

When in the fourth century the doctrine of the Trinity had become dominant, still even Augustine was evidently sometimes embarrassed by the talk about the one God who is "one and yet three, three and yet one." Once he lets slip these words: "When saying about the Deity, that in it there are three persons, this is not said in order to express something but in order to avoid saying nothing."

And the incomprehensibility of these definitions bred agony and doubts in innumerable people, driving many of them from the belief in one God and Father.

*

I knew a little boy who asked a near relative: "What was the name of the third God?"

"Do you mean the Holy Ghost?" was the somewhat embarrassed answer.

"Yes, so it was," said the child looking pleased.

And I knew a little girl who was rather sorry for the Holy Ghost, fearing he might feel somewhat neglected, no one ever praying to him. So she wondered whether she ought not to pray to him, now and then, — just as a little encouragement.

"No doubt", a churchman in a high position once frankly

admitted to me, "no doubt, to most people the belief in the Trinity means a belief in three gods."

Yet he did not wish for any change in the formulation of the creeds.

IV. WHO WAS HE?

If Christ is not what the Church proclaims him to be, if he is not "the second person in the deity" — who is he?

Was he, as many believe, a human being like ourselves? Although certainly having more goodness and greatness than anyone else we have met or heard about in this world.

That he was a human being — yes, this he has declared times innumerable. "The Son of man" was the name he always gave himself.

But "a human being *like us*" — no, that was evidently not his meaning.

First and foremost we do not find in him the slightest trace of any consciousness of guilt.

And one time he declares distinctly and clearly, though with indirect words, that he is free from sin. It was when he said those proud words to the Jews: "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" (Joh. 8:46). In the mouth of a superficial person, the words might have contained the implication: "I have not committed any grave errors." A hypocrite, in speaking these words, could have thought to himself: "My sins are well hidden." Pronounced by a cynic, they could have signified: "At least I am not worse than

you others!" But being spoken by a profound and truthful man, they must have meant: "I do not know of any sin in myself."

Thus, either we must consider Christ as the greatest of hypocrites, or we must believe him to have been wholly free from sin.

Further: what he says of himself shows that he is conscious of his unique importance to humanity. "I am the light of the world"; "I am the bread of life"; "I am the way, the truth and the life." Such words out of the mouth of a man who is evidently free from any inclination to boast, who usually tries to escape from the praise and homage of the people — such words from such a man reveal the consciousness that the message that he had to bring was of immeasurable greatness and that he was the only one to whom it could be given.

Who is he then, this Christ, who is human as we are and yet something much more than we?

Might it not be said: he is the only one of those who have lived on this earth who never, at any time, fell away from the Father, never for a moment broke the tie which united him with the Origin of life? Therefore, while others sank, became stained, he ever progressed in wisdom and power and glory.

Paul calls him "the firstborn of all creation." That he was the first emanation of God's love, that he was the ideal prototype of humanity, the Word, through which the world was created — this was believed and confessed by all the apostles and teachers of Christianity from the most ancient times.

Did he say this himself? We do not know. But what we know and what we need to know is this: He was sent to us so that we might learn the nature of God.

Never should we have understood how God could be at the same time unfailing righteousness and endless love, if we had not seen these qualities combined and living in the shape of the Son.

His love work on the earth was to lead his lost brothers back to the Father. He is our chief; he is our brother too. With proudness and, at the same time, with shame for ourselves, we can say: "He, too, is of our kith and kin."

When many Christians violently oppose the Bible interpretation which, with the support of the Scriptures, declares that Christ is not God but the Son of God; when they say: "This and that cannot have been spoken about a human being," such expressions reveal their unawareness of the great honour which the Bible in reality confers on the human race. When God demands: "Be ye perfect as I am perfect", this demand — which would be mockery if it asked for the impossible — in reality contains a promise: that the demand later on, albeit in an endlessly far off time, will be met. When Jesus says: "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do," he herewith hints at the mighty gifts deposed in man and which, when his will has become one with the Almighty's, will give him a wonderful power over the forces of nature. When it is said that man has been created "in God's image", when it is said that we, at some time, will be "attired in Christ's image", there is, in these

words, a hint of a coming glory for humanity, greater than we are now able to comprehend.

Hence, if man is created to so great a glory, how supremely high must be he who, emanating from the Father, never fell away from Him, who is the head of humanity, who is the Way that leads to the Father, who teaches us Truth, who gives us Life, and who at last, when he has gathered the whole of humanity together in a uniting love for the Highest, will lay down his sceptre "that God may become all in all."

More than once it has happened that humanity has deplored as a loss that which later on was proved a gain. When Christ did not stand forth as the triumphant Messiah who quickly overcomes his enemies, his disciples felt this as a disappointment. And yet, through his suffering and death he was to become of far greater importance to humanity than they could dream of.

When the Reformation condemned many old customs, when it taught that no one was to pray to people, either living or dead, then many felt it, undoubtedly, as a loss not to be allowed to invoke the gentle Virgin Mary or the Saints they had learned to love. Yet by and by it must have become clear to these people that it was a gain for their inner life when they learnt to turn to the heavenly Father himself.

Perhaps some having learned in their childhood that Christ was God, when becoming convinced that this, taken in its orthodox sense, is not according to Christ's teaching will, in the beginning, feel it as a painful loss. But maybe they

will by and by learn to feel otherwise. For Christ will no longer appear to them as a strangely double nature, who, when praying to God, in reality prayed to himself. No longer with regard to certain sayings of his need they ask themselves: Does he speak here as a man or as God? which they, with the orthodox view, had many a time to ask themselves. Neither need they think: his temptations must have been unreal, for as God he must have been above all temptation.

But when he stands before us as a living man, though great and holy and loving as nobody else, then it might happen for us to love him more than we ever did before. We shall be filled with an endless reverence, an ardent devotion for him who — we understand it now — must have suffered intensely, must sometimes have been tempted to use his power to perform astounding miracles, to gain a rapid confidence over a defiant humanity, but who nevertheless took upon him the cross of suffering and misjudgment, which at last, and for ever, was to win for him the hearts of men in a way that no success would have been able to do.

Ought one to pray to Christ?

The question has many times been debated among Christians. It was discussed already at the time of the Church fathers, it was discussed when Lelius and Faustus Socinius fought their reformation fight at the same time against the papacy and against the protestantism which seemed to them, in many things, to be only half carried

through. Even today it is a subject of wondering and doubt.

Ought we to pray to Christ?

No, some say, many times he has told us to pray to the Father, but never has he exhorted us to pray to him.

Those who so say have, however, omitted to pay attention to some of Jesus' expressions.

"Abide in me", he said to his disciples, "he that abideth in me and I in him — — the same bringeth forth much fruit."

What does it mean — to "abide in Christ?"

It must mean an ardent devotion, in which we feel as Paul felt when saying: "I live, yet not I but Christ lives in me." But how could this devotional fire be lighted and kept burning in our hearts if we did not, in our spirit, speak to Christ?

The Son of Man has repeatedly emphasized the importance of our being near even to him, expressly saying that this is necessary if we would be able to "bear fruit". And many are those who can witness about the truth of this, many are those whose deepest spiritual experiences have proved to them the necessity of "abiding in Christ".

*

Many are the shades and variations in men's views about the personality of Christ, even among those who term themselves Christians — and have the right to term themselves so. It does not beseem us, human beings, to condemn the opinions of others who are earnestly, honestly striving to solve this great and arduous question. And as to oursel-

ves — well, it is good to know this: if we are wrong in our comprehension of his nature *he* will not judge us for it. At the utmost he will say, perhaps, as he sometimes said to his disciples: "Are ye yet without understanding?"

V. THE RIGHT DOCTRINE

A lively antipathy against all heretics and heresies is expressed in the Church history, written by Eusebius, bishop of Cæsarea, in the fourth century.

This "father of Church history" relating a not entirely indisputable story of John, the apostle, — how on entering a bath in Ephesus and learning that Cerinthus was inside, he at once hastened out again with the remark that such a heretic being there it might be feared that the roof would fall in, — is so satisfied with this trait of intolerance that he repeats the story in another passage of his work. With no less satisfaction Eusebius tells of Origen, that he, even in his youth, refused to pray together with heretics. And when obliged to admit that martyrs were to be found even among the heretic montanists, Eusebius triumphantly adds that at the persecutions the other martyrs used to keep at a distance from those. It is said that even the wild beasts cease to show enmity towards their fellow-sufferers when faced with common danger. Now, is it not edifying to think that such as called themselves disciples of Christ, the great proclaimer of love, took care even in the agony of death to

keep at a distance from people who had comprehended the Master's teachings in another way than they had themselves!

What is, however, tragicomic as regards all these outbursts of intolerance, in Eusebius and the fathers of the Church whom he quotes, is this: we children of later times, know that both Origen and Eusebius later on were considered as heretics. Ay, as early as the year after Eusebius had finished his Church history, he was convicted of heresy through what was decided at the Congress at Nicea, his view in the question of the Trinity being about the same as that of Arius.

At the same time a shadow of heresy was thrown over Papias too, and this was probably the reason of the regrettable loss that befell Christianity by the disappearance of Papias' collection of the sayings of Jesus. Eusebius relates that Papias, a younger contemporary of the apostles, had been eagerly travelling about, calling on those of Jesus' personal disciples who were still alive and asking them about the things that the Master had said. Eusebius states that Papias' book, in his time, — i. e. in the beginning of the fourth century — was owned by many Christians. In spite of the persecutions, in spite of the commands of Roman Cæsars to burn all Christian writings, many copies of this valuable book had been saved. When Christendom had become a state religion, however, it disappeared, — although next to the gospels that book ought to have been the most valuable to Christians. Hardly could its disappearance be explained otherwise than by the orthodox Church having found certain sayings therein somewhat embarrassing to

orthodoxy, consequently using the same tactics in this respect as towards other heretical writings; i. e. they made the book disappear.

*

If one were to point out to a contemporary Churchman the facts briefly set down in the preceding chapters, asking him why people should be taught something that is contrary both to the Bible and to reason as regards the nature of God and the person of Christ — either would he then admit these facts, if he were what is termed a newtheologian, or else would he make an attempt to oppose them, if belonging to the conservative party. In both cases, however, the final observation would almost always be the same: the old forms ought to be preserved out of regard for the belief of our forefathers and out of the consideration that these forms are still dear to many pious people.

Is it not evident to what an extent such reasoning supports Catholicism against the Reformers? The Catholics can say, and with reason, that even the Reformers of the 15th and 16th century greatly lacked respect for what their forefathers had believed for centuries, and what many pious people had suffered and died for. Is it not evident that such a reasoning would support, too, the Jewish synagogue against Christ — he who stood in the most marked opposition to certain traditional views.

If the Protestant standpoint is once accepted, it is the clearest inconsistency wanting to protect old distortions of Jesus' teaching by the argument that piety demands the keeping of the old dogmas.

There is a confessional writing, the so called Athanasian creed, which up to now is common to all Christian Churches, and which has scarcely its equal in presumptuous intolerance; it declares that any person daring to say that one of the three persons in the deity is greater than the others will be damned in eternity. Now Jesus himself says: "My Father is greater than I!"

Of late the Churches have shown some embarrassment as regards this creed. But whenever someone demanded its disappearance from the number of confessional writings, most of the Church men decidely opposed such a measure.

The Churchmen are afraid to displace anything whatever of the established order of things, fearing that all would then break and fall.

They do not dare to believe that the God of Truth is best served by our openly and fearlessly confessing the Truth.

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These last years there has been much talk about the "unity of the Churches." Conferences are assembled, speeches are delivered, treatises are written, and great joy is shown whenever a little modification in the details can be brought about. But there is no mentioning the fact that there exists a very simple way in which unity between the different Christian Churches could be brought about. The only necessary thing would be a decision of all the Churches to preach only that which Christ himself taught, leaving as problems those questions in which the Master has not expressed his views, as far as we know.

In this way Christian unity would come of itself.

There is another question that of late has been much debated in the Protestant Churches: How are we to protect ourselves against Catholic propaganda?

If the Protestant Churches had not strayed away from the chief principle of Protestantism: that the human spirit should be free to seek God, unbound by all outward authority — then there would be no need to fear Catholic propaganda. But now it is not surprising if many people think: tradition being supposed to have the right to bind human thought within the so called Protestant Churches as well as within Catholicism — why should we not rather choose the tradition that has a certain weight on account of its age and universality?

Some years ago, a Protestant priest publicly declared: The Church finds that in any case it feels a greater sympathy towards believers anxiously keeping to tradition, than towards the sceptics who desire a reformation.

This implies that those wanting a reformation must, as a rule, be sceptics! Yet the strongest demands for reform always came from people possessed of a burning zeal that the teaching of Christ should be preached in all its purity and loftiness.

The Church, we are told, feels a great tenderness for the simple souls who would be worried if they were told the real content of Christ's teaching. But the question is: *Has* the Church distorted the teaching of Christ? And has she the right to distort it? These are questions that should be answered. Instead it is declared: On the whole our sympathy

is more with those who want to maintain the distortions than with those wanting to get rid of them.

Thus the Church has more sympathy with a person not caring to find out what really Christ taught than with someone who may have devoted his whole life to studying the matter and who, after having found the truth, fearlessly faces the antipathy and scorn that usually meet the truth-teller! Thus the Church has more sympathy for the slothful than for those who are awake, more sympathy for a coward than for the courageous fighter for truth!

Well then, may the Church keep for herself the sluggish and the cowards! But may she then stop calling herself the Church of Christ! For where His sympathy went is shown in lightening clearness by all his story. He disliked the idle and the fainthearted, he exhorted his disciples fearlessly and untiringly to fight for the truth. He never hesitated to pass severe judgment on those of his contemporaries who were official religious leaders, although certainly many simple, believing souls among the Jews must have been annoyed and disquieted by his sharp words.

Thus, to follow Christ is to be at variance with the Church. For she has first distorted his teaching and then — when humanity, because of these distortions, is turning away from Christ — she refuses to make a belated repentance, refuses to preach the true teaching of the Master.

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Among the authorities of the different Churches today there are, nevertheless, those who do not fail to see that the teachings of the Church have gone rather far away from

the religion of Christ. But such people generally seem to reason: The alterations must be made gradually and very quietly. We will avoid talking of the dogmas. By and by people will understand that they have become antiquated. Later on it may be possible to abolish them — if considered necessary.

Those adhering to this slow method, however, overlook one thing: in this way — in the name of compromise — is sacrificed the spiritual wellbeing of generations. Every year, in every so called Christian country, thousands of young boys and girls leave school and colleges, almost all of them more or less with the impression that religion is something that includes a lot of nonsense. These young people put religious questions wholly aside. Out they go into the world lacking the support and help to live the life which belongs to those seeing a purpose in existence, and a loving Will as the origin of all. If it were openly declared that the irrational dogmas do not belong to Christ's own religion, many that are now without a religion, would perhaps take into consideration whether the Christian view of life has not the power to give clearness and strength to a seeking soul.

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The late Ignaz Goldziher, the famous expert on Islam and its history, in one of his works ("Katholische Tendenz und Partikularismus in Islam") quotes a Mohammedan author of the 11th century, Abdallah ibn-al-Sid, who maintains that "differences of opinion depend on different natural tendencies and are therefore fully justified", and supports

this tolerant view by a number of sayings from the Koran. In the same work Goldziher also quotes a writer of the 12th century, Abu-l-Fada'il Ahmed, who, in a book called "Arguments from the Koran", quite objectively cites the different passages in Islam's holy writings that are quoted by the different sects in support of their doctrines. This author himself belonged to the orthodox trend, yet he declares in the forewords of his book that it is written with the purpose of preventing people from rashly attacking sects or presumptuously condemning any of them, inasmuch as it shows "that here argument stands against argument in accordance with God's foreordained plan."

At the same time that Abu' l-Fada'ils book was published, the Christian Church was most diligently and most cruelly persecuting the Albigensians.

On the whole, declares Goldziher, there have seldom been any persecutions of heretics in Islam. Certainly violent words are often used in the fight of pens, but as a rule the adversaries are allowed to live in peace and preach their views.

Christians would have done well in following the example of this tolerance. They would have done well if they had understood this: that differences of opinion are, considering the differences of people's minds, something fully justified, while as the method of trying, in one way or other, to force similarity in the way of thought is in reality very irreligious.

As a rule, says Goldziher, it was not the deeply religious characters, who were zealous about one dogma or the other. On the contrary, the religious turned away in disdain from the demand of right belief in every detail. No, it was the

dry and cool souls, the intellectual fanatics, who demanded orthodoxy, violently blaming the heterodox teachers.

This is an observation which doubtless can be applied also to adherents of other religions than Islam's.

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The disciples of Jesus once asked their Master: "Lord, teach us to pray!" Is it not probable that they also some time may have asked: "Lord, teach us what we are to believe!" But whether or not they ever demanded such guidance, certain it is that Christ never presented any confession of faith to humanity.

What cruelty this would have meant if really a "right doctrine" were necessary to gain blessedness!

But what a presumption when people want to force on their fellow-beings a detailed confession of faith although the Master, he who alone would have had the authority to do so, refrained from any such.

"But we cannot live without dogmas", many say. "We must have a confession to gather around."

Well, why should we need any other confession than the one that was accepted by Christ himself? When Peter confessed: "Thou art Christ, the living Son of God", the Master praised him and called him blessed for those words.

And at the only baptism accompanied by a confession which we are told of in the New Testament — that one in the Acts, Chapt. 8, verses 37, 38 — the man who is to be baptized confesses thus: "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

May each one have the right to think as to him seems

best in the different problems of thought. Can we not, in any case, feel like brethren in Christ, if only we agree in this confession: Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

VI. IT IS WRITTEN

It is written — how often have these words been pronounced as a support for one view or other! Many believe that if only a support for one's view be found in the Bible, the cause is proved.

Yet, in most cases, if one desires to be honest, one must admit that the adversary, too, can show Bible support for his view. For the Bible is no correct work of reference, free from contradictions. The Bible is not meant to save us all the trouble of thinking for ourselves. On the contrary, it spurs us on to use our own intelligence.

That the Bible contains divine words is evident to any one possessing some spiritual clairvoyance. But the idea that everything in the Bible is inspired by God is irrational, not only to sound reason but to the whole sense of the New Testament, where it is said: "The letter kills."

Even those, who most persistently retain the dogma they have been taught of the infallibility of the Scriptures, ought to become doubtful before certain undeniable facts.

Firstly, there are the obvious contradictions.

For instance:

In Exodus Chapt. 24: 10, 11 we are told that Moses, Aaron

and seventy of the elders in Israel "saw the God of Israel". "They saw God, and did eat and drink." In Exodus 33:11, we are told that God showed himself to Moses, "face to face as a man speaketh unto his friend." The same chapter relates, however, that Moses asked God to be allowed to see him but was answered: "Thou canst not see my face; for there shall no man see me, and live." Yet Moses was permitted to see God's "back parts".

In John 1:18 we read, however: "No man hath ever seen God."

Exodus 20:4 says that God ordered: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth." But Numbers 21:8 tells us: "And the Lord said unto Moses: Make thee a fiery serpent and set it upon a pole, and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live." Of this "brazen serpent that Moses had made" it is told (in II Kings 18:4) that the children of Israel worshipped it for hundreds of years by burning incense to it.

Deuteronomy 6:3 says: "Thou shalt serve the Lord, thy God, and shalt swear by his name." But Jesus says: "Swear not at all!"

One of the Gospels tells us that Christ "ascended unto heaven" the same day he rose from the dead, but in the Acts we are told that this event took place forty days after the resurrection.

In the fourth gospel, 3:16, it is written: "For God so loved the world — —". But in John's first epistle 2:15 we

read: "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

The believer who is not too literal will not be in the least worried by a contradiction of the last kind. He will understand that the word "world" in these two passages has a different meaning. In one passage it signifies the same as humanity, and in the other it signifies all the superficial and vain things in the world which are a danger to the soul.

The literal believers, however, would consider it a very grave offence if someone maintained that a word can have a different significance in different places in the Bible. This would be to let in individual criticism, they would say; this would jeopardize the authority of the Bible.

Secondly: there are the obvious interpolations.

For instance: In Luke 16:16 Jesus says: "The law and the prophets were until John" therewith distinctly expressing the thought that with the new time, beginning with John the Baptist, a great many rules and regulations of the Old Testament were no longer valid. But immediately after, in verse 17, the evangelist makes Jesus say: "It is easier for heaven and earth to pass than one tittle of the law to fail." The fact of the Bible having undergone not a few alterations has been proved, among others, by such an orthodox man as the Churchfather Jerome, who, in the 4th century, complained of the difficulty of knowing what in reality is said in the Bible, as the different issues of same were so different. If aware of this fact, one gathers at once, that in the aforementioned passage someone of the Jewifying Christians has been at work, someone wanting even the Christians to

obey, in part at least, the Mosaic ceremonial law. The statement in verse 16 was a rather grave argument a g a i n s t this Jewifying trend. This had to be opposed by inserting some words in the contrary direction. At the time in question such an action was scarcely considered as falsifying. In our time an explanatory note is inserted or an illustrative comment is attached to a presentment, when considered necessary; but in the first centuries of our chronology words thought to be needed as an explanation, or meant to prevent a misunderstanding, sometimes were simply inserted in the text.

If, however, a literal believer repudiates any thought of possible interpolations — what will he do as regards the demands presented in Luke 17: 17? If Christ really did say that "not a tittle of the law" can fail he has herewith commanded his followers, in all times, to keep the Mosaic ceremonial law — which forbids the eating of pork, the wearing of linsey-woolsey clothes, and so on. Paul then must have been on the wrong road when he abolished circumcision.

Yet, what Paul writes about this does belong, too, to "what is written in the Bible." Thus we again find ourselves in the hopeless circuit which will inevitably catch the literal believer.

Likewise the strange contradiction in Matthew 11: 11 suggests an interpolation.

Jesus had just received the disciples of John the Baptist; — who had been thrown into prison for having spoken in the name of righteousness, and who wondered why the one he had believed to be the king of righteousness did not hasten to his help. John's disciples had been sent with the doubtful and anxious question: "Art thou he that should

come, or do we look for another?" And Jesus had given them his answer in pointing out his work of help to humanity. But understanding what his own disciples would think in hearing this question and surmising that they would blame John for his doubts, Jesus wanted to impress on them, that John, in spite of his accidental weakness, was a great prophet. So he says: "Verily I say unto you: Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist."

The text, however, immediately after makes him add: "But he that is least in the Kingdom of heaven is greater than he." Thus, in the same instant that Jesus had pronounced his strong praise, it seems to have occurred to him — if the quoted text is fully reliable — that this high estimation of John was a capital mistake. His own disciples, standing around him, and belonging to "the kingdom of heaven", must — according to the text in question — be considered as of a decidedly higher standing than he who had just been praised as the greatest "among them that are born of women."[1]

[1] Some have tried another rather strange solution of the problem in question by maintaining that Christ with those words: "he that is least in the kingdom of Heaven" meant himself — being very short of stature, they suppose.

Now firstly, there is nothing else in the Gospels or in the tradition hinting at such a fact. Secondly, it would be utterly incongruous with Jesus' ideas to speak, in such a connection, of something so insignificant as the outward stature of a man, terming some one — whether himself or another — "the least in the kingdom of heaven" because he were short of stature! Thirdly, it would be utterly unlike Jesus — and indeed unlike any one of some generosity of disposition — after having praised a man to hasten to add: Yet, of course, I myself am greater than he.

If Jesus did express himself as is told by this text, he has shown himself to be strangely inconsistent. But if we care more for the personality of Christ than for the orthodox point of view as to the word of the Bible, we are inclined to think that an interpolation has taken place. It is not difficult to find the reason for it. Many of the doctrines of the Church — e. g. that no human merit is of any importance, only the "adopting of the merit of Christ;" that no salvation exists outside the Church — all this would be contradicted by Jesus' strong praise of the forerunner.

Indeed, there could hardly be conceived a more decisive proof for the so called "Christianity by deeds" and against all Church dogmatism than this evidence of Jesus to the greatness of John, given in the same moment as he, i. e. John, was in uncertainty as to the importance of Christ himself. To the partisans of formalism and especially to the defenders of the doctrine of the atonement, it must have seemed very important to neutralise this statement. And so it may have happened that these words, — that at any rate John the Baptist was far beneath all the members of the Church — were inserted.

Thirdly, there are those passages which offend our feelings of morality or decorum.

Recently I had a letter from a young girl who told me about her schoolexperiences as to instruction in religion.

"Whatever the rector or the teacher or my old grandfather might say about the mercy of God — that God whom we were told about in the Old Testament was terrible! In this all the other children agreed with me. We were afraid of that God, he killed people during their sleep, or drowned

them as mice whenever such was his pleasure. He was partial, he had favourites and to favour them he killed other people, he stole about in the night and murdered, he was capricious, why did he like Abel's sacrifice better than Cain's? — — I now understand that it was injurious to children to be taught the story of Israel, they should not be taught those stories until they were grown up; then they would not imbibe that abhorrence of God which will necessarily be suggested to every intelligent child by the narratives of the Old Testament."

If children were taught that the Old Testament represents the development of the religious ideas of a nation, from a most primitive stage unto the sublime preaching of the prophets, then they would understand that f. i. the report of God's commanding the people of Israel to kill all the Amalekites, with their wives and their small children, only proves that at that epoch there was still a lingering, in the Jewish idea of God, a notion of a blood-thirsty Oriental despot.

Likewise it offends our moral feelings to read that statement of Matthew's that "not a sparrow falls to the earth without the will of the Father," which seems to suggest that nothing happens — thus: no violence, no crime — without God's will. This is a word which has been nourishing a deedless, submissive fatalism in many and bred a scornful doubt of Eternal Righteousness in others.

In Luke, however, the expression is rendered thus: "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings? And not one of them is forgotten by God." When saying that the latter

version is probably the right one, I do not maintain this out of what is termed critical textual reasons. But if Jesus meant what the first version seems to imply, he would not have been justified in pronouncing the scorn of human cruelty and human hypocrisy that he did more than once express. On the other hand, that God is conscious of everything that happens, as the version of Luke indicates, is evident to every one believing in God as Omnipresent.

It may be added, that modern Bible investigators — among whom may be quoted Wilhelm Bussmann — generally accord on the Gospel of Luke's being the one which renders most reliably the original sayings of Christ.

Fourthly: When Jesus quotes from the Old Testament, his quotations are *never literal,* as has been proved by experts of the two original languages of the Bible.

Thus, either did Jesus quote an older edition of the Old Testament, or the Gospels have rendered his expressions wrongly, or Jesus — with the contempt for all petty formalism, characteristic to him — pronounced his quotations without greatly caring as to whether or not they were literally correct.

Whichever of these alternatives is chosen, the result will be the same: the Bible itself contradicts the dogma of an infallible verbal inspiration.

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The variations in the different Bible handwritings are recorded to amount to 30,000 different kinds of reading. Even if a number of most insignificant differences then have been taken into account, it is nevertheless astonishing that

some people still persist in their idea: that in each detail a perfect and incontrovertible codex of wisdom has been given us in the collection of writings which we call the Bible.

Of the Old Testament there are two texts: "Septuaginta", a translation maintained to have been made in Alexandria about 300 years before the beginning of our chronology, and the so called masoretic text. The differences between these two texts are not insignificant. Especially as to the chronology. Thus, for instance, according to Septuaginta, Moses lived 1550 years after the flood, whereas the masoretic text states that only 800 years had elapsed between the great inundation and Moses.

Which of those two Bible texts is now to be considered the right one? The Hebraic, of course, would be considered nearer the original, if it were not for the fact that the oldest manuscripts of Septuaginta are by far older than the oldest Masoretic text in existence. Moreover, when in the New Testament evangelists and apostles quote the Old Testament, they follow, as a rule, Septuaginta's text.

The question as to which of the texts ought to be given authority is of no importance to those who in the Bible see only a channel for religious truths. For in this respect there exists no difference between the two texts. But to the believers of every word in the Bible as having been inspired by God it must be a great worry not to know whether Moses lived 800 or 1550 years after the flood, — just as many simple souls have brooded over the evident contradiction in the family register of Joseph's forefathers in Matthew's and Luke's gospels.

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That there still exists quite a number of literal believers was clearly shown by two recent law-suits, lively commented in the world's press; an orthodox investigation in Holland about the serpent in Genesis, and a law-suit in Dayton, U. S. A., about the creation story and contemporary science.

As regards the story of the creation in the first book of the Pentateuch literal believers ought to take certain things into consideration. If God let the earth be formed during endless spaces of time, as geology teaches us, and if He, through long periods of evolutional processes prepared the physical organism, intended to serve the human soul as a vehicle, is He not in any case the Creator of both the world and the human race? Even the most persistent among literal believers will not deny that he was born into this life as a consequence of a man's and a woman's embrace, which fact, however, does not prevent him from declaring himself to have been created by God. Thus admitting that God, in His creative intentions, can act, so to speak, indirectly, using people as His tools, ought we not to admit too, that God, in forming the human race, may have followed the laws and used the forces that have sprung from His fathomless wisdom and are at work in the evolution?

There are people who laugh when hearing of such things as the Dayton law-suits but who have no right at all even to smile at them, viz. those who, although they privately admit that the Bible is not in every word infallible, yet oppose this being said openly and publicly.

If simple honest minds who have been taught that the Bible is in every word inspired by God himself and who have no leisure, nor perhaps sufficient power of intellect to

investigate or think these matters over, if such people strictly adhere to the view that it be man's duty to believe those divine words — where is there anything ridiculous in this?

Once — about one hundred years ago — a Swedish country judge wanting to take revenge on twelve peasants who were his assessors — because of their having more than once voted him down — said to them in the case of a man accused of having abused his brother: "Well, Swedish law would condemn this man to such and such a penalty, but God's law says that he should be condemned to the fire of hell; how do you vote?"

They all said: "God's law must be obeyed."

So they condemned the man to the fire of hell. The judge opposed. But the Swedish law prescribes that when all the twelve assessors are of one accord, their verdict shall outweigh that of the judge. Thus the verdict was issued.

People laughed, of course. But to the sly and vindictive judge the matter was not altogether pleasant. For the Superior Court, to which the case was referred, on learning how the thing had been brought about, gave the judge a sharp rebuke for having allured simple-minded men to make themselves ridiculous.

That is a reproof which could also be directed to those theologians objecting to downright speaking. For thus many people are made to utter ridiculous notions. And thus others are induced — and that is worse — to become thorough sceptics.

Some object: independence as regards the Scriptures would mean that everyone could think as he chooses.

Well, call it subjectivism if you like. But it could also be said that freedom as regards the Scriptures implies a reliance on the inner voice. We have been taught that a divine voice within us — our conscience — teaches us what is right or wrong. Would not this "co-knowledge" with God be able also to discern as to whether the words we hear emanate from the Deity or not?

There are words that awaken hidden echoes in our soul. There are words that make secret chords vibrate. There are words that lift us towards the Highest. No book in the world has so many words of that kind as the Bible. But it is to do both the Bible and Humanity an ill turn to want to apprehend this wonderful book as a handbook to geology and zoology.

THE RITES

1. CULT AND CEREMONIES.

Was not the whole life of Jesus a fight against formalism, against the inclination to see in outward things, in cult and ceremonies, something creditable? The protest against all outward piety, which even in the prophets of the Old Testament took such flashing expressions—for instance in Isaiah's strong words: "The Lord hath spoken — — — Your new-moons and appointed feasts my soul hateth,"—received a flaming sequel in the polemic of Jesus against Pharisees and scribes and all those seeing something important to religion in outward customs and manners.

But when in our time Churchmen speak of a renascence of the Church, they usually comprise therein, as an important moment: increased splendour in ceremonies and cult.

Yet there are proofs that the first Christian Congregation still remembered the teachings of Christ in this respect.

The Roman philosopher Celsus, when writing, nearly 1800 years ago, his book against Christendom, among other things accused the Christians of this: that they had no temples, altars, or images, yea, that they were even harbouring an antipathy to such things—a behaviour that the Roman philo-

sopher considered rather godless. Origen, who, some decades later, replied to the accusations of Celsus, did not, however, oppose this statement of his. Origen calmly admits that Christians really do not want any temples, altars and images. But he expounds what inner correspondances to these outward things were to be found in Christianity. From these statements of Origen it is unmistakeably clear that even some two hundred years after the death of Jesus, the Christian Congregation kept well in mind that the preachings of the Master were exhortations to seek the inner bond with the Father, and that they prescribed no outward services.

When the Christian Congregation had developed into the Church of the State, they had become aware however, that many people are drawn by outward splendour: by temples and images, ceremonies and processions. Yet this development had not taken place without protests. The building of churches was eagerly opposed by many early Christians. They pointed out the danger; they foresaw that people would begin to consider the visiting of Churches as essential to religious life.

We know that this apprehension was not without reason.

Even those of the contemporary Church who admit, from a purely religious point of view, that the rites or services are of no real importance, often declare that, at least, outward splendour and ceremonies do no harm; such things, they say, often bring people to think of what belongs to religion.

But very often they do harm. For such is human nature that many people will imagine—though often perhaps in a

half unconscious way—that by taking part in Church ceremonies they do something meritorious.

Great is the power of language over thought. Having got used to the word "divine service" as indicating a regular keeping of certain religious practices, many people imagine —albeit often rather vaguely—that the taking part in such practices is to "serve God."

In the New Testament there are two earnest exhortations to divine service. One of them is Jesus' command: "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father." The other is the word of James that charity, shown to the suffering, is "pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father." These exhortations do not exclude gatherings for common edification. But the Church has exaggerated, in a fatal way, the importance of such gatherings.

Many people are possessed of an inextirpable desire to take short cuts when finding it difficult to proceed on the right way. And the way of penitence and inner deepening is weary and long, but to go to Church or to Chapel is comparatively easy. Therefore, as soon as cult and ceremonies are presented, by authoritative persons as being of great importance, people are tempted to seek in such things a substitute for the real divine service which is: in our innermost being to seek the way to the Deity that from It we may receive strength to do the right thing.

It is certainly not only Catholicism that has given an exaggerated importance to cult and ceremonies. For ever

so long the Protestant Churches used to punish with prison or various corporal chastisements those not regularly attending divine service. People, toiling with hard labour for six days in the week, did not even on the seventh get any rest, if living far from their Church.

Slowly, step by step, the Church had to give up that method: that of forcing people to go to the services. But by no means has she given up the idea that outward things can influence the spiritual life of man, as is best shown by her still indicating as a necessary "means of salvation", baptism and the Lord's supper. The gospel states that Jesus himself never baptized. And he protested very strongly against the conception of his time that "what enters by the mouth" would be of any importance to man's spiritual life. But the Church that calls itself after him declares baptism necessary to salvation as well as the eating of bread and drinking of wine with certain words and ceremonies.

In his controversial treatise quoted above, the Roman philosopher Celsus praised the mysteries of the Greeco-Roman religion; he pointed out how through these mysteries the soul gained strength and comfort, aye became a participator of the power of God. And he held that Christianity lacked an equivalent in this respect. Origen, admitting that the Christians owned neither temples nor altars, in his answer to Celsus maintained, however, that among his fellow-believers there did exist an equivalent to the mysteries of the heathens: viz. the sacrament of the Lord's supper.

The last meal of which Jesus partook was that which the Jews celebrated in remembrance of their leaving Egypt. He

whose life work was to deliver humanity from worse chains than those of the Egyptian thraldom, he, at this last supper, told his disciples that they were to think of him whenever, hereafter, they celebrated this feast.

Or did he mean: every time they were having supper together? In the text this is not made quite clear. At any rate it would be quite explicable if soon after the disciples had taken the habit of reminding one another, at every evening meal, of those words of the Lord spoken at the last supper. In fact, there are two passages, in Ch. 2 of the Acts, which seem to hint as much. In V. 42 we are told: "They continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship and *in breaking of bread* and in prayers". And again in V. 46: "And they continuing daily with one accord in the temple and *breaking bread from house to house* did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart."

We could scarcely imagine this "breaking of bread" to have been recorded twice, and in such connection, if it were not thought to have something of a religious signification. Certainly the apostles and their followers at those meals were thinking of their Lord and repeating his words.

In all the three synoptics, there are, also in the sequel, words which indicate the Lord's supper to be meant as an act of commemoration. So in Matthew (26:29) "I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom", Mark and Luke having almost literally the same words. But besides that element of commemoration which has always been prominent when Christians partake of the Lord's Supper,

there is also to be found another trend of thought suggested by these words: "Take, eat, this is my body — — Drink ye all of it for this is my blood."

In the fourth gospel where, in the narration about the last night of Christ, no mention at all is made of the establishment of a Sacrament, it is reported in a foregoing chapter (6:51—56) that Jesus, speaking in the synagogue of Capernaum, said: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh which I will give for the life of the world. — — Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life. — — For my flesh is meat indeed and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me and I in him. As the Father has sent me and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me."

It would be difficult to deny that this is spoken symbolically, especially as it is a well-known fact that in the Orient, where symbolical language is much in use, the relation of a disciple to the doctrine of his teacher is often compared to eating. For like as the body is nourished by what it eats, so the mind of the disciple is nourished by the teaching he receives.[1]

[1] Sometimes also "eating" seems to signify symbolically: keeping near to, as is shown in the first chapter of the Genesis where we are told that the serpent was thus sentenced "dust shalt thou eat". The ancient Hebrews could scarcely have been so ignorant regarding the nature and habits of the animals of their own country as to

Now, the remarkable fact of the 4th gospel's not mentioning at all those commandments of Jesus which are thought to involve the establishment of the Sacrament, is mostly explained as a natural consequence of this gospel's having been written as a supplement to the synoptics. Certainly there is no reason to doubt the ancient tradition, recorded by Eusebius, as to the first origin of the 4th gospel: John's having found Mark's narrative of the life of Jesus unsatisfactory. But even if chiefly aiming at a completing of the story of the synoptics, the 4th gospel contains however several instances showing that the author—or the authors—did not hesitate to repeat events and sayings already told by the synoptics, if these were deemed necessary to make the story coherent and the image of the Son of Man living. And if really, in his last night on this earth, Jesus had established a mysterious act of so great an importance to mankind as the Church would have it to be, who would, most probably, have been more eager to tell about it and stress it than the inspirer of the 4th gospel?

It may be objected: If the same words which were once spoken by Jesus in the synagogue of Capernaum were re-

literally believe that snakes eat dust. There is a well-known ancient engraving which was found among the ruin-heaps of Babylon, which seems to refer to a myth resembling the story recounted in Genesis; this engraving represents a man, a woman and a serpent standing on its tail; it may be that this position, taken up by the Cobra when attacking, was believed to have been originally the natural one for all snakes, until, as a punishment for some crime, they were doomed to creep on the earth.

peated in the night of the Lord's supper; then, the 4th gospel having already quoted them in Ch. 6, it is quite comprehensible that it was not thought necessary to repeat them again in Ch. 13. Well, it is however a fact that never was an author less unwilling to repeat his own words than the author of the 4th gospel; as is conspicuous especially in Chapters 14—17. Indeed, the theory of the 4th gospel's having had its origin in the welding together of annotations of some of the disciples of John's, has no better support than in those chapters: the 14th chapter ending with: "Arise, let us go hence," while the 15th, 16th and 17th, nevertheless, continue Jesus' farewell speech. If there existed different scripts, written down by some of John's disciples and rendering the venerated teacher's recordings of the last events and sayings of Christ, it is quite conceivable that in welding them together people were unwilling to cross out any, even obvious repetitions and no less obvious misstatements—in regard to the sacred importance of these events and sayings.

Now considering this unhesitating readiness to repeat, and this obvious eagerness to retain anything important in the narration of the last night, the fact of the 4th gospel's omitting to report the last supper, and those sayings about the necessity of eating Christ's body and drinking his blood, quoting, instead those words as having been spoken earlier in the synagogue of Capernaum—would not this rather seem to indicate a desire to correct the narrative of the synoptics?

Or may be, at the time the 4th gospel was written, those things were not yet to be found in the synoptics?

Even if the synoptics all originate from the first century —as modern Bible investigators are inclined to believe—yet there exist no copies of them made earlier than in the 4th century, and we know from what Eusebius makes Papias say—and also, as already pointed out, from what Jerome wrote—that there were not few divergencies between the different copies of the Biblical writings. Maybe from the Ch. 6 of the 4th gospel the sayings in question were inserted in the synoptics later on, those words seeming particularly suited to the narrative of the Lord's supper.

Harnack has pointed out these two facts:

1.—the Gnostics were the first to urge the supreme importance of the Lord's supper, maintaining that on the partakers were bestowed the most valuable spiritual gifts, and

2.—the development of the idea of the Sacrament was greatly influenced by the pagan mystery-religions.

As a rule the Gnostics, before becoming adherents of Christianity, had been disciples of Greek philosophy and had also been initiated into some of the mysteries: the Eleusenian or those of Isis, or Mithra; in those mysteries sacred meals were offered to the adorers of the god, with the assertion that therewith was given unto them the body of the god; through the eating of which they would be participators in his power, aye and become part of his very life, being granted even immortality. No wonder then if the Gnostics were particularly interested in hints as to a sacred meal which might be found in the Gospels. May be it was the Gnostics who brought about an insertion such

as just suggested, viz. some verses from the 6th chapter of the 4th gospel being introduced into the synoptics?

Now the words in question when spoken in the synagogue of Capernaum could very well be interpreted as symbolical; but if spoken in such a connection as in the narrative of the synoptics, — i. e. on the occasion of a real meal and with the declaration: *This* is my body, *this* is my blood, — it is undeniably difficult to maintain such an interpretation. Thus the hypothesis above presented—verses from John 6 having been inserted into the synoptics[1]—is made justifiable, aye necessary, by the fact that otherwise there would be a glaring contradiction between the two words of Christ's, viz. that one saying that whatever enters by the mouth is of no significance as to a man's spiritual life, and that one maintaining the great importance of the eating and drinking in a sacred meal.

If we have to choose between two openly contradictory sayings maintained to be uttered by Christ, it is our right, and our duty, to ask which of them is more in conformity with the spirit of his doctrine; in this case it would, indubitably, be that one discarding the possibility of meat and drink having any influence on the spiritual life of a man.

[1] It should be added that there is a certain support for the theory of an insertion in the strange fact that Luke in Ch. 22 twice tells about the drinking of wine, viz. firstly in verse 17: "And he took the cup and gave thanks and said: Take this and divide it among yourselves"; then in verse 20: "Likewise also the cup after supper saying: — This cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you."

When noticing with what an air of superiority Celsus blamed Christendom for not possessing any mysteries, when observing with what zeal Origen pointed out that such were not missing in the Christian religion, the thought inevitably arises that here there seems to be a cause and effect. The Greeks, Romans, and Orientals alike praised the mysteries supposed to give eternal blessedness after death; this praise might have induced the Christians, by and by, to attach more and more importance to the meal in question, declaring that they too, by mysterious eating and drinking, had important spiritual gifts bestowed upon them.

In the 4th century bishop Gregorius of Nyssa wrote that he was conscious, in the Lord's supper, of "tearing with his teeth and slashing Jesus' very body, his muscles and sinews, yea, even his fair hair." Some centuries later, a French bishop was condemned as a heretic for his refusal to accept similar expressions on the mystery of the Lord's supper. When Luther, in opposition to Zwingli and Calvin, adhered to the belief that the bread in the Lord's supper does not only mean but really *is* the body of Christ, he agreed in reality with the view of Gregorius of Nyssa, although he would certinly have hesitated to use such offending expressions.

It should not be denied that a symbolical act may be able to kindle devotion. Even if we believe in those words of Christ that wherever "two or three are assembled in my name I shall be among them", yet it may be we feel his presence more strongly when participating in what is called

the Lord's supper; also we may feel more strongly than elsewhere the bond uniting us with other human beings. Ay, in a way I acquiesce in something which recently was written to me by somebody who speaking of "the longing of the human soul for the supernatural", pointed out that "if the Holy Communion is held to be only a ceremony of commemoration it will hardly have the same consoling effect as if it is held to be a miraculous act". Certainly, this world is full of miracles, and if a Christian feels himself wonderfully consoled and wonderfully strengthened by partaking of the Lord's supper, we need not term this "self suggestion". It may be something of a higher order: an influence of the Divine Spirit upon the human spirit. For wherever a human spirit is able to lift itself in intense devotion to the Highest One—whether it may be with the help of what is called a sacrament or not—he will receive new force, new joy, new warmth.

But those who have experienced a soothing and strengthening influence from this sacrament—should not even they acknowledge that it is a pity many should be prevented from participating in it by the orthodox representation of its meaning? There are many thinking, earnest individuals to whom the dogma of our "eating the body of Christ and drinking his blood" makes it impossible to partake of the Lord's Supper.

Likewise in thoughtful individuals there will be a most decided objection to the Church dogma of this sacrament's being a necessary "means of obtaining salvation"—an idea

particularly harboured by Catholicism but not alien to the apprehension of some Protestant churches.[1]

II. THE PEOPLE OF THE CULT.

"No change within the Church ever was so great as that one turning bishops and elders into priests," wrote Harnack in his great work on the development of the dogmas.

And the learned Church historian expounds how, to the oldest Christian congregation, the words of the apostle became a literal truth: that they should be a people of priests. Each one had God for a Father, to each one Christ was the Saviour; there was no need of priests as intermediaries between God and his congregation. "The elders" saw to order and discipline and the bishop's work was about the same as that of the deacon's, i. e. he administered the economy of the congregation and distributed alms to the poor.

"As far as up to the middle of the 2nd century there can hardly have been (within the Christian congregation) a priest, because there were not yet any altars." (Harnack). "For priesthood and offering are essential to each other."

[1] When first this idea was proclaimed — of the Lord's Supper being a necessity for the soul's welfare — it was objected that many of those whom the Church revered as saints had been living for years, ay decades, in the desert without any possibility of ever partaking in any sort of divine service; then was invented that legend about an angel's coming every week to those anchorites and offering them the Holy Communion.

"As late as in Irenæus and Tertullian," writes the same author, "the idea of prayer as the right Christian offering was still prevalent."

The cause of the changed view in this respect was hinted at in the preceding chapter. The Christians did not want to be surpassed by the heathens, whose offerings and mysteries were proved to exercise such a great influence on the minds of people. By and by they took to maintaining that they, too, had an act of offering in the Lord's supper. For there Christ's death of sacrifice was repeated anew. Thus, as the cult developed there arose among the Christians, as well as among the followers of other religions, a people of the cult. "The elders," the presbyterians, were turned into priests, and the bishops, whose power and authority had increased more and more, became the superiors of the priests.

"God appoints bishops: it is therefore a blasphemy against God to criticize bishops," bishop Cyprianus wrote in the third century.

"The constituting of a priesthood implied that heathendom and Judaism came into power in the Church," writes Harnack.

Here should be held forth, however, what was pointed out some twenty years ago by a learned Jewish expert, the rabbi Klein: that not even in Judaism was the priesthood something original. In Exodus 19:6 Moses says to his people that they are "a kingdom of priests and a holy people." "Priesthood and offerings," says Klein, "arose among the Jews as a consequence of their contact with the heathens, first in Canaan and then in Babylon."

In that ancient story in the Book of Judges about Micah and his housegods and his Levite, we have, perhaps, the oldest story of Jewish rites and offerings. And it betrays very clearly that conception of religion as magic, of which the old Hellenic playwright Menander ironically said:

> When man by means of cymbals loud
> Can draw a god where'er he likes,
> Then man is even greater than the god.

*

Great and holy is the idea of offering. The will to sacrifice oneself for the good of the whole—to give, for the joy and benefit of others, what of value one possesses—this is the flower of all development of character, the goal towards which our inner longing goes; it is this, which—when reached—gives the deep inner harmony which is happiness, yea, more than happiness.

But what became of the offerings in most religions? The idea that God—or the gods—had their pleasure in the smell of blood and in the meat devoured by the fire of the altar.

And what was the cause of such a conception, which so ill corresponds with those glimpses of lofty belief in God found in even very primitive religions?

We might glimpse an explanation, if we notice the change in the religion of the ancient Persians.

To Zaratustra, who required a frank and active attitude in the great battle between Light and Darkness, between

Good and Evil, hard work and righteous living was the right divine service. People, longing to feel a fervent connection with the Deity, had no need of shutting themselves up in temples; they were to ascend the hills, breathe the pure air up there, look out over the expanse and up towards the endless space, lift themselves up in prayer to the Highest and drink in new strengh from Him who is the origin of Life, Health, and Beauty.

But when writing his history some centuries after Zaratustra Herodotus states that the Persians, when going up to the hills, used to take with them beasts for sacrifice. which, however, should not be killed without the attendance of a priest, who was also to get his part of the offering.

By and by this view became predominant in most religions: that the gods were particular about the offerings being presented tho them in the right manner, hence there being a need of special persons familiar with the arranging of the offerings, so as to please the gods. And as the priests put their knowledge at their disposal, they ought to have their part of the offerings. When later on the priests were expected to exist on such a share, they, of course, were rather eager to represent the offerings as someting essentially necessary and pleasing to the gods.

The pointing out that this view was made a basis for many regulations and rites does not imply that priests should be considered more selfish than other people. But in maintaining that an organised clergy has often tended to coarsen religion, making it formalistic and superficial, we should only pronounce an incontrovertible historical truth.

In different creeds and among different peoples the clergy has proved obstructive to progress. This is shown not least by the cruel human sacrifices in which, in many countries, the cults have culminated. And even with people, who otherwise have been highly cultivated.

Herodotus relates how, at Salamis, a priest demanded human sacrifices, to gain the favour of the gods and victory in the oncoming battle. Themistocles tried to prevent the crime but the army, excited by the words of the priest, forced the commander to let it pass.

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At any rate, as the difference in development between humans is great, it is natural and necessary that in each scope those more developed teach those who have not gone so far. Consequently it is not unnecessary for some people to devote themselves, as far as they are able to do so, to helping and teaching their fellows in the religious field. Neither can it be thought wrong that the teachers should earn their living by their work. But there are three things that make the Church organisation, such as it is at present in most countries, rather unsuitable in a religious respect.

Firstly: it is almost entirely by reading for examinations, by the exhibition of mere memory work, that the right to become a public messenger of Christ is acquired.

Knowledge is a good thing, but the most important knowledge is not gained from books, nor does it show in examinations. In any case, knowledge is of little avail in a spiritual respect if it is not combined with qualities of character which by no means can be found out by examinations.

Secondly: He who chooses the clerical coat is, as a rule, tied up to it for the rest of his life.

Theoretically, of course, every priest has the right to renounce to his office in case he finds himself unsuitable for it or his ideas have changed so that he no longer believes what he has taken upon himself to preach. But practically, in most cases, it is impossible for him to make a change. Partly for economical reasons, and partly because of the indignation that such a step would arouse among fellow-clergymen.

Neither can the congregation, if a priest is found unsuitable for his office, get rid of him, unless he is found guilty of some gross error.

Thirdly: in consequence of the above mentioned circumstances—the entrance to the priest's office being by the gates of examination and the exit by death—the clergy forms a closed society, governed by that "esprit de corps" which, as a rule, is prevalent in every large corps. Such an esprit de corps, it is well known, tends to make the members of the corps hostile to new ideas. It makes them favourable to everything that furthers the outward prestige and economical aspect of the corps. The danger of exaggeration in such a "spirit of the corps" will be still greater if the members harbour the idea that, in virtue of their office, they possess a kind of holiness. And the inconvenience of that spirit becomes graver still when it is a question of ideas of the greatest importance to humanity. For the interests and prestige of the corps are, in fact, easily mixed up with the interests of religion.

It is sometimes pointed out that in reality narrowmindedness and intolerance are greater in the free Churches than in the State Church. If a preacher of a Free Church pronounces views contrary to those accepted by the congregation, he will, in most cases, be discharged, whileas a priest of the State Church, who criticises the dogmas, will usually keep his place.

There is a certain truth in this. But what made the free churches narrowminded if not their being influenced by the whole view that by and by has been worked out by the State Church? When a Free Church movement is young and vigorous it does not—as a rule—keep any anxious watch over orthodoxy. If, later, it stiffens and becomes even more dogmatic than the State Church, this is due to its leaders and followers not being clearsighted enough to comprehend to what degree the teaching of Christ has been distorted—how wholly alien it is to the spirit of Christ to request a standardized opinion in matters which are, at any rate, too arduous for being finally grasped by human intellect.

In some respects, however, the denominations—or at least some of them—must be considered to have an advantage in not choosing their ministers chiefly with regard to the testimony of examinations.

At any rate, both State Church and denominations would do well to observe some hints in the New Testament as to meetings for mutual edification. As is shown both in the Gospels and the Acts, lay-men were allowed—aye invited—to speak in the Jewish synagogues. Likewise we gather from the letters of Paul's that in the early Christian congregations any member of it, if feeling induced to speak at a

meeting, had the right to do so. Certainly, this custom had its disadvantages, as is shown by some exhortations of Paul's; the same has also been testified by some denominations which adhere to this ancient custom. There is always the danger that people may mistake any sudden impulse for being an inspiration from God, and there will always be the probability that people totally destitute of self-criticism will be the most eager to speak—often making the listeners rather impatient. Apparently, whatever may have been the case in the early Congregations—and it may be added: whatever may perhaps become the case in the future—among modern people, it is rare to find such as are able to speak extemporaneously, and yet bring something valuable. But no doubt there are lay people who would be able, now and then, to give something of real value to their fellow-beings. A greater willingness to accept—or even to invite—the assistance of such lay people would no doubt be a decided gain to Churches and denominations.

III. UNDER HIGH VAULTS.

It is possible to be rather critical as to the State Church system and yet love churches—i. e. the buildings of stone or wood that have been erected as a home for the eternal longing of the human heart, houses symbolically expressing the old exhortation: Let us lift up our hearts!

What beauty there is in the simplest unadorned temple only by this: that there is space above us. We are used to live in rooms where the ceiling is only a little distance above our heads—undoubtedly an arrangement practical for our every day life. But on entering below the high Church vaults, we are at once reminded that there is an air beyond that of every day, a space beyond our every day thinking and every day cares. What nobleness in lines there may be in the arched windows alone! What exquisite colours and light in the old whitewashed cross-vaulting, where age has lent a shade of suggestive darkness to the whiteness of the lime stone.

Those, who are zealous for ceremonies, processions and suchlike use to think that therewith is nourished the innate love of beauty of men's. This is in most cases a mistake. To rather uncultivated minds such a show as f. i. men walking about dressed in stoles, may give an impression of beauty; but to many people it will seem rather grotesque. Real beauty, however, heaven-ward lifting beauty, is to be found in most church architecture, and likewise in most church music.

God's houses the churches are called. But what a pity that for so long it has been forgotten that as the Eternal Father is always ready to listen to the cries of the humans, in the same way the houses that have been erected to Him ought to be always ready to receive those longing for quiet, and lofty beauty, to give voice to the innermost notes of their souls.

From time to time this question has been discussed: Why are Protestant churches mostly closed except at the so called

divine services? The reply has been: It is a question of money. If they are to be open, they must be kept warm, and people must be engaged to keep an eye on the visitors.

But it does not seem to be difficult for the Church people to collect money when it is a question of something they desire very much. More likely the clergy has not been over zealous in this respect. The view, often prevalent in this quarter, is best shown by the following expression heard at a public discussion: It might happen that the churches in such cases might be used as "hot-rooms."

Thus, if a poor, frozen beggar entered a church only to get a little nice warmth into his frozen body, this would be regarded as a sacrilege! Certainly the Son of Man in speaking of the acts of mercy which would open his realm to their practisers, did not mention to "warm the cold," for he lived in a climate where the winter frost never lasted so long, nor was so very hard as to be counted as one of life's great sufferings. But if he had been living in a more Northern country, where cold can be as bad as hunger, he might perhaps have added: I was cold and ye warmed me not.

It is to be hoped, however, that there will be a time, when the church buildings will come into better use than they are now, being open the whole day, not only—as is sometimes the case now—for a few hours when most working people are not able to visit them. They will be open to whomsoever cares to enter, either to seek warmth for his body or quietness for his soul.

You who are relatively well situated in life, have you

ever tried to imagine what it means: to be a workman, shut up most of the day in a factory with creaking and roaring machines, and after the day's work to come home to a lodging of one or two rooms and a kitchen with perhaps half a dozen noisy children? Not to own a corner where quietness may be found.... Can you imagine what it would mean to such a man to have a place to go to and be met with silence and peace? And, although we may hope that the residential conditions of the working people will be improved by and by, it certainly will take much time before they have become such as to afford the tired father of a family and the care-worn house mother a place in their home where they can get the silence they long for.

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I dream of a future when the houses of God will always be open.

It is evening and twilight. We enter a church. In the midst of the choir a lamp throws out a mild light, such a light as makes you feel rested only by looking at it. Here and there in the pews a lamp is burning too. Those wanting to read take their seats in these lighted pews. I see one who has just taken a book out of his pocket. But now and then he lets it sink and sits listening to the silence.

Look! Someone is coming. Quickly he goes up to the warden, who is sitting at the main entrance. He whispers some words and gets a nod for an answer. Then he hastens towards the organ loft. Hark! Notes as majestic as distant thunder fill the temple. And then—with a sudden transition—

they become soft and whispering as the soughing of winds among summer leaves, as the dream of the heart in a moment of unearthly bliss.

Have you observed how much stronger is the effect of music if breaking in upon you all of a sudden—like a vision? Here where it comes like a gift while we sit and dream, here it sweeps over us like a stormflood of beauty—even though he may not be called a great artist, the young man, who, a moment ago when walking in the street, was seized with a sudden desire to give to listening souls the music that lived within him.

Now he has finished. Once more silence reigns. For one of the few edicts is that there must be no talking here, as little as in the reading room of a library. There are so many places where one may talk, but this is a place where one goes to be alone with one's soul.

Sometimes there is a lecture. In these lectures different subjects may be treated—no theme is forbidden except such as our sense of beauty and style would tell us to be unfit for this place.

Now someone in the choir is asking whether there are some who would like to sing?

Certainly there are! A group of young people is soon gathered together—and again notes are filling the high vaults, awakening dormant echoes among pillars and monuments.

Have you felt how empty the air becomes when notes are silenced, when a song has died away? We wake up again to something dry and every day like. The world is still cold and grey, though we had forgotten it for a moment.

But we do not feel like that, we who are sitting under high temple vaults. It seems to us as if the notes were still lingering up under the crossvaulting. The silence has become richer to us since our souls were filled with this music.

This was a church in a town. But if we betake ourselves to a country church, one gleaming with whitewashed walls in the midst of a village, then we shall find that even here the church building gives much joy since the new order was established. It is not open all day—this would be of no use here—but it is open in the evening and the whole of Sunday to every one that cares to come.

And people come from far and near, people who never used to go to Church before; they are coming to feel how much of poise and harmony for the soul can be gained only through this: to feel oneself surrounded by lofty beauty, bathing in silence, in the waves of music, or in words, full of euphony and dreams.

I imagine that each Sunday there will be an equivalent to the divine service now in use, though I believe that the word "divine service" will be avoided seeing what occasion it has given to fatal mistakes such as to make people imagine that they were "serving God" by rites and ceremonies.

And I imagine that such hours of devotion will mostly be held in the evenings. "Each day—one life," wrote a philosopher, and certainly, in the hours when the sun rises or is standing high in the sky, we are drawn out into Nature

or tied to various occupations, just as in our most vital years we are tempted by the joy and fascinated with the charm of work. But with the vanishing day small thoughts will vanish too and greater thoughts will get their grip on us—thoughts of what is beyond this world of illusions.

In these hours of devotion one would do well not to cling to a long cultivated mistake: i. e. the accustomed repeating of words, in themselves lofty and sacred but which, through constant use, have lost their influence on our souls.

I imagine that the hours of devotion will begin with an organ recital—as now. With some work by some prince of music. Then someone will read from the choir some verses from the Book of Books; not always those which are most known and read. There are treasures of sublime poetry, of deep devotion, even in those parts of the Bible that are comparatively little known. But there will follow no interpretation. The sonorous words will be left to impress themselves immediately on listening souls.

Follows a song by a choir. Then someone ascends the pulpit. But by no means does the public demand from him the impossible thing that he should, on every Sunday of the year, present a newly written treatise, duly learned by heart. People are aware that only an inspired genius could create something valuable so often, and they know that geniuses are few and far between. But the literature of the world owns treasures of spiritual riches which are but little known, and he who is speaking to the public on Sundays has a right there to choose something suitable. For what people want to hear is someting provocative of thought, something

giving harmony. And first of all something that can kindle their rapture.

For do we not all long for this: something which may kindle in us the holy fire of rapture?

Do not our souls resemble the wood placed on the hearth which contains, as a principal substance, the matter we call carbon. And the carbon harbours a violent desire to unite itself with oxygen. There is oxygen in the very air that surrounds the wood, but the carbon does not seem to know anything about it. It is sleeping, — bound, cold, lifeless.

Then a fire-brand approaches.

And suddenly, at the contact with that which is already burning, the sleeping carbon is roused into consciousness: yes, this is what I have been inwardly longing for!

And in a burning joy it hastens to meet this longed for oxygen. It flares up, it sparkles high, it flames, it glows.

And before it is burnt out it has given warmth and vitality to frozen, numbed people.

Millions and millions go half sleeping through life—not knowing that they are constantly surrounded by mighty, life giving streams. But a burning heart can—like the fire brand approaching fuel—kindle them into the consciousness of this.

Rapture—that is to feel unity with the great, eternal, creative ideas. Rapture—that is to fetch strength and happiness from the happiness and power flowing through the Universe.

Rapture—that is the most valuable gift that any one can give to his fellows.

For in moments of rapture we learn to understand—we selfish, restless, worried souls—that "happiness" is to give, not to take.

We learn to understand that "power" is to serve, not to reign.

AND THE ISSUE OF IT?

I.

Thus—

if the chief ideas of Christ—those about God being a loving and righteous Father, governing our life with justice and mercy—are such as satisfy both the logic of human minds and the yearning of human hearts,

if Christian ethics are not marked by narrowness and negation as they have too often been charged with being,

if dogmas, pretended Christian have never been taught either by Christ or his apostles,

if what seems to be magic and superstition in the rites of Christian Churches is in fact derived from ancient paganism, whereas the rest of it are *adiaphora*, customs which may be kept if really they raise our hearts heavenwards and which may be discarded if found to have lost their power in this respect—

then the problem as to whether Christianity be acceptable to intelligent modern men and women will come, indeed, into a different position.

Then it may be that Christianity will be just the religion which humanity is now longing for.

For if religion, when attaching importance to rites and

ceremonies, is disguised superstition; if when fettering souls in the chains of dogma it becomes deeply irreligious; if when seeing as its only goal one's own bliss it is sheer selfishness, yet there does exist another kind of religion.

True religion—this means ever to concentrate one's self anew in order to seek God in the deepest depth of one's heart; this means ever to try anew to help one's brethren, in the way which one's disposition indicates.

True religion—that is naught of narrowness, nor pettiness, it is storm and splendour and wide space.

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Many will ask: But what remains of Christianity if you discard all that which you term its outgrowths?

There remains that commandment on which Christ once concentrated his teaching: "Thou shouldst love God with all thy heart and thy neighbour as thyself."

And there remains Christ himself.

Even other religions have urged the love of God and the love of men; but nowhere else has humanity seen this love —active, strong, all embracing—exemplified as in the life of Christ.

So if it is, indeed, essential to the spiritual welfare of the human soul to

"hitch its wagon to a star,"

where could it find a star more shiningly great than that one about which one of the early Church fathers wrote: "A star shone in heaven beyond all the stars and its light was unspeakable."

II.

For some decades civilized humanity's general attitude towards the great problems of life could be defined as *agnosticism.*

An agnostic means *one who does not know.* Littré, the French scholar, who first started the word, connected it, however, with the idea of not wanting to know, not wanting to search for any knowledge as to the goal of man, the aim of life, the existence of God--not wanting because persuaded that such searching would be in vain.

Hence an agnostic is a man who keeps at a distance from what gives life its most important substance.

An agnostic is a man who thinks it inconvenient to dig into the profound pits of knowledge, inconvenient to strive up to the far heights of thought.

An agnostic is a man who refuses to participate in the world's great battle between light and darkness—who prefers to be quietly looking on.

From different countries there have been recorded cases of young men's having crippled themselves in order to escape military service and such deeds, when perpetrated, have caused an outcry of indignation. But is not this cowardice too: making oneself defective in order to escape life's infinitely important contest?

Defective?

Ay, it really means making oneself crippled. For do not imagine a man could refrain from seeking what is high —what he is born to seek—without thereby causing something

within himself to wither and die. This is the law of life: an organ which is not used will dwindle away.

The civilisation of our age would not be so empty, so impotent as it now is, had not too many of those who, with their intelligence, should have been leaders failed to fulfil this duty, having spiritually mutilated themselves.

*

The Brahmins of India, we are told, having reached the zenith of life, are seen to leave home, family, and public honours in order to meditate in solitude on eternal truths. The papuas of Australia, we are told too, having reached the age of forty, will, as a rule, devote themselves to that primitive magic which to them is the chief content of religion.

The highly developed Indian sages and the primitive Australian men are both persuaded that this life is only an episode in an existence which will stretch through immeasurable eras; and finding it natural that in youth and early middle age man should be mostly occupied with things belonging to this earthly life, they deem it natural also that at an age when the end of life is approaching he should concentrate his interest on the next existence.

As to us Westerners, what is with us the regular metamorphosis belonging to the zenith of life?

As a rule people at that period will come to the conclusion that after all the chief thing is to make this earthly life as agreeable as possible. Success, money, a social position—these are things to be aimed at. And with a smile of com-

miseration one looks back to the idealistic dreams of one's youth.

Young people in their turn will not fail to notice this condescending irony of their elders. But to make a youth perceive that enthusiasm is thought to be something rather ridiculous is a sure means of extirpating every inclination in that direction.

Thus, for decades, generation after generation—albeit unconsciously—has inoculated the next one with a materialistic view of life.

III.

Catchwords come and go and in these days the word agnosticism is not met with so often as a couple of decades ago. Yet, no doubt, what it implies is still prevailing and may be said to have been conducive to the triumph of Freudianism, especially among the post-war generations, whose "intellectual perplexity and unrest" was recently held forth by a writer in "The Hibbert Journal". In most young minds the background of that trend towards Freudianism is a vague conviction that as to spiritual values nothing is certain, whereas, in the above mentioned theory we are met with indisputable facts guaranteed by Science. W. J. Blyton, the above quoted writer, indicates the trend of thought in question as one of the principal causes of a

"very commonly encountered mentality of discouragement among young people" which he has heard daily voiced in the question: 'What's the use'?" Mr Blyton holds forth, rightly, that it is a mistake to maintain "that apparent origins explain the final results exhaustively". To contend with the effort of Freudianism always to explain the higher out of the lower, there is among other important arguments, that one of history. With the Freudian theories, how can we explain the fact of personages of the highest ethical and religious value, having existed among nations at a comparatively low level of development? How were those sayings of theirs, of so wonderful a depth to be accounted for? If we believe in a spiritual world from which impulses are coming to this world of ours, then the suggested facts do not include any insolvable mystery. But with the Freudian theories no answer to those problems can be found.

The above quoted writer in "The Hibbert Journal" holds forth that also from another quarter modern young people are "battered with cumulative negative suggestions", i. e. from "relativity", viewed not as a physical theory but as one valid also in "the realm of knowledge, values and conduct."

Mr Blyton, pointing out that Einstein himself never meant his theory to be valid in those domains, even quoting the celebrated scientist as deploring that the word in question is used in the field of "obligation, thought and behaviour", holds forth that this idea—that" everything is relative"—is obviously the same doctrine that was preached by Pyrrho more than two thousand years ago, a statement which has its value in contending with that kind of current snobism which

is always very anxious to be up-to-date in one's opinions. On the whole, however, the best cure for that sort of subjectivism, too, would be a thorough-going study of history. The fate of decadent men and declining civilizations should indicate that there are views which are intrinsically inimical to the mental health of individuals and nations.

IV.

Alongside with the lazy "I-do-not-care-to-know"-agnosticism of average people there has surged up, however, during the last decades, a grave, conscientious "Alas-we-do-not--know" agnosticism of prominent thinkers and scientists.

In the last decade of the nineteenth century, the famous German physiologist Du Bois-Reymond in his "The seven worldriddles" stressed the fact that Science cannot solve the riddles of life, nor will she ever be able to solve them. Science will never be able to tell us how life originated, what power is, what matter is, what movement is, or how we can have, on the whole, any perception of the outer world.

A prominent French mathematician, Henri Poincaré, in his "La science et l'hypothèse" pointed out how very unjustifiable it is to speak of science as giving absolute certainty. All our knowledge, says Poincaré, is built on hypotheses. Even the existence of matter is an hypothesis, it is "a

coefficient, handy to introduce into calculations." Also in those sciences which are considered the most exact and incontrovertible of all—mathematics, geometry and mechanics—we move among mere hypotheses, we use conceptions impossible to define. "The law of the inertia of bodies, for instance—one of the very foundations of mechanics—is an hypothesis, because it cannot be an a-priori truth, neither does it rest on experimental facts. Were there ever any experiments made with bodies deprived of the influence of every kind of force? And if they were made how could we know that these bodies were not influenced by any force at all?"

Poincaré points out that without a certain belief in the force of one's own reason, it is impossible to carry on any science, not even a very elementary one. And even though the physical laws, seen at large, seem to be unshakeable, "yet one finds," says the famous scientist, "in their last figures deviations very difficult to explain and which show us that these great laws do not speak the whole truth but that there is some mystery that eludes us."

Even earlier than Du Bois-Reymond and Poincaré, the great English physicist Thomas Huxley had expressed a similar opinion. "All our knowledge is a knowledge of states of consciousness," he wrote. "According to all we can know, matter and power are only the names of certain states of consciousness. We term something *necessary* because we cannot conceive anything to the contrary; *law* is a rule which has always been found to hold good. Thus it is an indisputable truth that what we call the material world is known to us only in the form of the ideal one, and that,

as Descartes says, our knowledge of the soul is more intimate and certain than our knowledge of the body." "Matter" is in reality only "the name for the unknown and hypothetical cause of states in my own consciousness."

Huxley admitted that the direct consequence of this comprehension would be "Kant's critical idealism —, which states as the foremost of all wisdom and, in reality, the only absolute wisdom: the existence of the soul."[1]

Thomas Huxley has often been treated as a thoroughgoing representative of a materialism now deemed obsolete. But words such as those above written are not, in fact, very different from the standing-point proclaimed by a famous modern scientist, Sir James Jeans, i. a. in these words: "The universe begins to look more like a great thought than like a great machine."

*

In the year 1930 the editor of an English review (Everyman) summed up in this way the contents of the present day state of mind: "We have been proud of our critical abilities and our scepticism. We have been careful to take nothing to heart and not to believe anything too deeply. Everything has been changed. Religion has been found wanting. — Morality has proved out of date. The gods have been overthrown. And now having questioned all things we wait for the answer. That is where hope lies for the future."

[1] These above written words, taken from a collection of essays of Huxley's, are partly quoted from memory.

Ay, that is where hope lies. It is true that "the merely destructive critical spirit is passing". Humanity begins to realize that negations are a very meagre food to live on.

V.

"Storm-time, woe-time—
The world is wailing—
Brothers madly
Murder each other—
There's a dripping of blood
From the dwellings of gods—
Flaming stars
fall from the sky.

The ancient words were made true. Humanity had to see—as in that destruction of the world foreboded by the Nordic Edda—how stars were falling and gods had to die. Many a glittering star which had been imagined to show the path of happiness lost their glamour. And the ancient gods—those evoked when the Czar declared that "The God of Russia is a powerful God," when the Kaiser praised "the God of the Hohenzollerns," when the English were speaking of "God's own English" and a French poet wrote: "God says: I am a good Frenchman"—do not they seem to-day as dead and gone as the Kemos of the Moabites or the Dagon of the Philistines?

Yet though gods may die humanity cannot live without gods.

In order not to be weighed down by the pains and griefs of this life, not to be carried off in giddiness by those pleasures earth can bid, men must have something to look up to above the mists of earth.

Ay, humanity is longing for new gods. Or rather: for a preaching with a new, strong conviction, about the Eternal God for whom it has been yearning since immemorial times.

For in the depths of every human soul is there not something calling for the Highest One? Is there not in every heart a thirst for what is radiantly great, a desire for living Light?

VI.

"Healthy people need no religion," said those London students quoted above.

What a mistake!

Mental health must include a longing for an increase of life, just as bodily health could not be found where no craving for food were shown.

And increase of life, how could it be gained except by intercourse with the greatest Power, the Origin of Life?

Some two or three decades ago a Russian author wrote: "You do not know, you Westerners, how old you seem to be when looked upon by us, Russian people," explaining

this view by stating that whenever two or three Russians were together they would infallibly start a discussion on religious matters, whereas two or three Westerners when meeting would always discuss business or politics.

In the country of the writer quoted the case certainly seems to be rather different now. But the observation that interest in religious discussion denotes youthfulness of mind is undoubtedly right. Just as to a mentally healthy child there is an inexhaustible interest in its surroundings, so in intelligent and healthyminded young people there will be a strong natural desire to find out something about the meaning and origin of this life, and the aim of their own souls.

VII.

A new day for humanity—is not this what we are all hoping for?

A new day with new ideals....

"Having an ideal—that means to have the right of living," a French thinker wrote some years ago.

If we are measured by that measure, have we really, we Westerners, the right of living?

*

What was it that caused the decline of the Hellenic civilization and the fall of the Roman empire?

Historians have pointed out that in innumerable wars the most valuable personalities—the bravest, the most con-

scientious and loyal ones—were killed. They have shown the disadvantageous consequences of a diminished birth rate and a constant mixture of races.

Certainly these points of view are justifiable. But to those who see, in the history of mankind, a fight among different ideas, the decisive reason in these cases must be: these civilisations had consumed their vigour, having spent their content of ideas. They had given what they had to give.

Assuredly to nations as to individuals, there is a possibility of renewal through a deepening of the ideas which they have been living upon. The idea of Beauty which was at the bottom of the culture of Greece was deepened by its greatest son who held forth that by the way of Beauty the human soul could reach even the very Highest. But Plato was on the whole the great lonely one. His epoch and his nation did not let themselves be metamorphosed by his ideas. Only some hundreds of years after his death came his real followers. At that time, however, the situation had become complicated by the appearance of a new view of life which, in some respect, reached higher than that of Plato.

And Rome—what great values did it give to mankind?

Was it not the idea of law, of justice, of discipline? The nations which were ruled and influenced by Rome all received useful impulses in that direction.

But when the world-commanding imperium met that movement which, in a deeper sense than any previous one, maintained the idea of righteousness, then Rome was at first persecuting and later on, when adopting that new view of life, mixed into it what was the reverse of its appreciation of

justice: a stiff formalism, a dry shrewdness—thus incurring a heavy responsibility in that corruption of Christianity which became so fatal to mankind.

And modern European civilisation, what has been its greatest gift to humanity?

Undoubtedly an intense development of intellect leading to magnificent results in the domains of science and material progress.

To historians of a coming age, however, it will perhaps be obvious that it was during the last century that this intellectually emphasized civilisation had its hour of destiny: being weighed it was found to be too light. During the 19th century Science met Religion under a new aspect: historical investigation, a thoroughgoing criticism of texts—no longer barred by narrowminded prejudice—evinced that Christ's teaching did not coincide with orthodoxy. At the same time a new science, the comparative study of religions, exhibited in every faith traces of what might be termed a primordial religion.

What might then have occurred—a new reformation of Christendom and, at the same time, a broad-minded admitting of a spark of divine truth lurking in every religion—did not occur, nevertheless.

It is melancholy now to read certain sayings from the last century in which the champions of a new reformation pronounced their persuasion of its swift approach. At the present day we are well aware of what prevented it: partly clerical egotism which was unwilling to give up its power, unwilling to admit its mistakes, partly a scientific materialism

which considered religion as a surmounted stage in the history of mankind, and thus, being indifferent to reforms in this domain, influenced in a negative direction the thoughts of the century.

Hence the 19th century having been an epoch of the greatest possibilities became, as to spiritual development, an epoch of forfeited chances.

*

But now—now the hour is come to perform what was neglected in the past century.

Ay, this is the call of the time: everything in religion that is no longer vital must be swept away.

To be sure, a new reformation has been called for more than once. Yet now the time seems to be riper than ever for an action in that direction.

For at this moment there exists a wide spread longing for a religious view of life and, at the same time, the conviction is ever growing stronger that Christendom *as it is now generally preached,* is unable to satisfy the cravings of modern people.

VIII.

Yet discarding what is fallacious or obsolete will not suffice. There must also be a pointing out as to what values have been superseded by a narrow-minded apprehension of the personality and teaching of Christ.

When such a man as Kierkegaard, the Danish thinker, fought his heroic fight for a deeper and truer idea of Christendom there were two drawbacks causing his life's work to be less fruitful than might otherwise have been the case.

At that time it had not yet been made undisputably clear, by an unprejudiced exegesis and a thoroughgoing investigation of early Church history, that the dogmas voted by Church congresses in the 4th century did not express Christ's own teaching. Hence to Kierkegaard, as to Pascal and some other heroic spirits of Christianity, to be a Christian meant to believe that God, having created man with an intelligence urging him to seek, learn and try to understand, yet had commanded him to trample upon this same intelligence whenever the greatest questions were involved.

And connected with the dark anguish thus born, and with that distrust not only of one's own reason but also of all the gifts of Nature, there was a fear of Beauty and of the love of Beauty.

Ominous and widespread has been that sort of misunderstanding as to the value of Beauty. And considering its fatal effects—both positive and negative—one may well be inclined to agree with the view proclaimed by Dean Inge: that through a welding with Platonism Christianity might still be made a conqueror. Which same thought might also be expressed by saying that Christ's religion will conquer anew if it is held forth to what extent the noblest of Greek ideals are to be found in nucleus in Christ's personality.

There were early Christian thinkers who were not alien to the thought that also in the path of Beauty could the

Highest One be sought and found.[1] Later however that deep truth became too much forgotten. But now indeed the hour is come when it should be preached from the roofs. For in many modern minds the deepest chord which could be struck is that one responding to the plectrum of Beauty.

*

"Make my altar twice as great"!

Thus ran the command given through the oracle to the inhabitants of Delos. And the Delians, unsuccessful in their attempts to make Apollo's altar just twice as large, addressed themselves, solicitously, to Plato, knowing him to be skilled in geometry.

But it may be that the true significance of the Delian God's command was not what could be solved by geometry. And the son of Ariston did not omit to hint as much.

Whenever Divine Wisdom be given to man it will always become gradually mixed up with human pettiness. Hence, now and then must sound the exhortation: "Make my altar greater"!

An altar—is it not a symbol of sacrifice? And what we have to sacrifice, we men, is it not ultimately ourselves? A sacrifice which does not, however, signify self-dissolution but self-realization in its highest degree.

Only slowly, step by step, man attains to the sacrificing of his own selfishness. And the steps up to the altar may be: longing for beauty, search for truth, desire of creating, love

[1] Maybe a surmise of it might be found in that saying of Clemens Alexandrinus that the Hebrews and the Greeks had both been educated by God, each in their way, so as to be able to accept Christ.

of one's country, love of human beings if through that love we are lifted above ourselves and our own petty interests.

But not seldom men have held the view that religion means to desist from all these longings of heart and mind, in order to devote oneself entirely to the worship of Divinity—not understanding that whatever lifts us above ourselves is a step towards the altar, aye, belongs to the altar.

Thus everything that is great, everything that is beautiful should be included in our religion.

Assuredly in this time of ours there is need for that exhortation: "Make my altar greater"!

WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

I.

Thought is searching through the world, searching for a country to which may be directed the hopes for the dawn of a new Reformation and a new Revival.

No wonder if Thought stops at first at the country where Luther fought his fight so bravely; where many great thinkers have furthered the development of the human mind; where masters of music, an unequalled phalanx, have shown that for the deepest of arts the German soul has exceptional gifts; where in the last century many prominent theologians and investigators of the Bible — albeit with some mistakes and exaggerations — have done much to forward progress in that domain, and where until recently lived Adolph von Harnack, whose learning in this field as well as his courage and broadmindedness were exceptional.

"But how can you expect such a thing from Germany," many, even among the friends of Germany, will say. "A country which has been suffering so intensely, suffering from starvation, suffering from many disasters, carrying such heavy burdens, filled with the bitterness which does not fail to surge in a people, allured by promises, which were not kept, into a seemingly intolerable plight?"

Ay, certainly Germany is drooping under its burden. But what if it should apply also to burdens, that word: "To those who have received much, more will be given?" What if there should be burdens, the carrying of which in the long run would make you grow strong and straight — just as the women of the East accustomed to carrying heavy water-jugs on their heads acquire a royal bearing?

More than once Germany has shown that times of grief and disaster have been to it times of spiritual growth.

And never shall I forget what a German mother once told me: her son, about ten years old, once said to her: "Mother, to work is after all the chief pleasure."

This love of work and this toughness of spirit which are characteristics of the German mind, may still perform miracles.

During the great war, and immediately after, there was in Germany, as there seems to have been in all the countries participating in the world combat, a movement of religious revival. It may be, however, that the religious feelings then evolved were rather often of the same kind as those displayed in a case told by a clergyman: A woman who used to come regularly to his church ever since the beginning of the war, all at once was seen there no more; although it might seem that now more than ever she ought to need the support of religion, her son having been killed in a battle. Happening to meet the woman, the clergyman asked her why she did not come any more to divine service? "Oh, apparently there was nothing to be gained by it," the woman answered.

This idea of religion — an observance of church rites in the secret hope that in return one might be spared grief and disaster — is not uncommon. But it is not that sort of religion which will save humanity.

*

The world-war was not yet finished when Oswald Spengler published the first volume of his remarkable book "The Downfall of the Western World" in which was declared: "The essence of all Culture is religion"; whereto by the German historian — in whose terminology "civilisation" means the decline and death of true Culture — was added: "The essence of all Civilisation is irreligion."

Some years later there was published in Germany a book called "The City in the Clouds" in which the author, Alfred Wien, — referring to that saying of Plato's that as little as a city could be built in the clouds, so little could a state have duration if among its citizens no feelings of religion were to be found — pointed out the obviously atheistic and materialistic trend of thought prevalent during the decades preceding the World War, thus deeming that mad self-destruction of Europe to be the logical out-come of what had long been prepared. For souls had been dying and were dead before the great slaughter of human bodies began. There were in that book some appalling statistics referring to the present plight of the world, and especially that of Germany, where despair has taken hold of so many minds, betraying itself in reckless pleasure hunting, in crime. in suicides. To this author the total downfall does not, however, seem, as to Spengler, inevitable; he still hopes for a

religious revival. Yet attributing no fault to the churches as to their interpretation of Christ's message he does not suggest any sort of reformation; hence his book, although having obviously impressed rather wide circles in Germany, does not inspire much hope. For how should a new strong effect be expected from preaching which thus far has proved itself unable to check the downfall?

Recently an Italian author, writing (in the Corriere della Sera) about the present plight of Germany, expressed the view that after the war this country had been submerged by a wave of materialism, influencing politics, society and art; yet he utters his conviction that in these days there is surging among young Germans a longing for new ideals. And they are finding them, says the quoted writer, in a strong political movement with proclaimed idealistic aims.

It may be this Italian author sees things with too much onesidedness, it may be the young people of Germany are not so entirely absorbed in political questions as he presumes. At any rate, even if a political party with a tinge of idealism may attract the enthusiasm of young people, there is little chance of its being able to retain it.

It has always been, and will always be, the destiny of political parties: to see the early glow of enthusiasm slowly vanish. For politics involve compromise, hence in the long run a political party will never be able to keep up thoroughly idealistic aims. The political history of mankind is, in fact, a history of rising and sinking enthusiasms—rapidly rising, slowly sinking.

But ever at a turning point of history, ever at the dawn of a new epoch, it will be felt that there are heights not

to be reached by political aspirations, there are depths, deeper than those in which men dig for the solution of economical questions.

Speaking of a public debate in a college in Berlin, a great German newspaper recently made the following statement:

"It is not generally known to what extent the younger generation is turning towards Philosophy."

This statement was, in fact, more hopeful than a possible record of a religious revival among college youths. Revivals may come and go, sometimes leaving but little trace behind, as has been shown by the religious history of several countries. But what humanity is wanting in its present plight is a new harmony of thought and feeling in the dominion of religion. Some eighteen centuries ago such a fusion was tried. And out of the welding of Greek philosophy and Christian faith then brought about, the world's thinking and the world's destiny were worked out for several hundred years.

Now we have realized, however, not that this fusion was a mistake, only that stiffening constraint aimed at neither by philosophy nor Christian faith, but brought about by narrow-minded men, has been slowly draining life out of the system thus created.

And now the world is waiting — —

I have quoted the statement of a German mother; there is another saying of another one which I cannot forget: she was telling me of her child, a girl of fifteen, who, from her earliest years, had shown a remarkable religious disposi-

tion and recently had been instructed for confirmation by the Rector of her parish; but after that, said her mother, the child's interest in religion had totally disappeared.

I certainly do not suggest this to be the rule. No doubt, in every country, there will be clergymen able to influence favourably the children they are teaching, awakening in them an interest in religion, not extinguishing it. Yet it may be safe to say that there are in the orthodox Christian religion such dogmas as, when stressed, may make modern young people inimical to religion.

Will not then mothers believing that true religion would be a support to their children in the battle of life do everything possible to free official Christendom from what is disloyal to its origin, and unfaithful to its Master, making his religion seem unfit to thinking individuals? Will not German women fain join hands in such a work?

Why have German women lost interest in politics? it was asked some time ago in the same newspaper I quoted above, the *Vossische Zeitung.*

Some one answered: "Women are quickly kindled to enthusiasm, but when finding things are not what they expected they will, too, quickly tire of them."

Would not however this one, here suggested, be an aim, which might kindle a permanent enthusiasm? For in such a movement certainly everyone might have a feeling of being able to do something for a great cause.

Suffering awakes hidden forces. Suffering will give a rise to enthusiasm such as never could be excited by economical progress.

And if there is surging in young German minds a longing for ideal aims — and how could it be otherwise in a nation where so many great thinkers, poets and artists have given expression, directly or indirectly, to profoundly idealistic views — will not then the flow of enthusiasm, ere long, turn into deeper furrows than those of politics?

Maybe the noble revenge of Germany for its defeat in the world war will be this: inaugurating a movement which may perhaps stop the decline of Western civilization, deemed by prominent thinkers to be so inevitably ending in a downfall ominously near.

II.

Thought is continuing its searching.

Are there any possibilities of a new Reformation surging up in that other great Protestant country of Europe?

Well, is England, after all, to be reckoned as a Protestant country?

There are many who deny it, even among those belonging to the Church of England. "It is not strictly a Protestant body," says Dean Inge, speaking of the Church to which he belongs, "for Protestantism is the democracy of religion, and the Church of England retains a hierarchical organisation, with an order of priests who claim a divine commission not conferred upon them by the congregation."

Certainly there are other Protestant countries the national

Churches of which are not free from hierarchical tendencies and priests claiming a divine commission. But the fact of England having been made free from Rome by a royal command far more than by the express will of the nation, naturally caused the idea of individualistic freedom in matters of faith, the "glorious liberty of the children of God", to be less emphasized than in e. g. Lutherian Protestantism. And it is a wellknown fact that the inclination towards Roman Catholicism has been of late very strongly expressed by a rather great part of the English High Church people.

And yet — will not England remember some lines by one of its greatest poets in which he warned spiritual oppressors not "to force our consciences that Christ set free." Will it not remember that the seeking thought of Milton led him near to the views now confessed by the Unitarian — who refuses to believe in one of the dogmas most stressed by the Church — and likewise near to those of the Quaker who is indifferent to all dogmas and all sacraments?

Will not England remember that Isaac Newton, its greatest scientific genius, when offered an office in the Church of England, declined it, — although in other respects it would have been very welcome to him — deeming that it would be against his conscience to preach a Trinity such as proclaimed by orthodoxy.

Some twenty-five years ago a well-known English author wrote: "In this country a religious revival has always been followed by a Reformation; the revival is here — will not the Reformation come?"

But the revival of the year 1905 — chiefly confined to Wales — was not followed by any reforming movement.

Nor seems there to have been any such movement perceptible during the post-war religious revival, the one of the year 1921.

Are the possibilities in this respect greater at present?

As everyone knows, the English are, on the whole, a conservative nation; and they are proud of their conservatism. Yet there is a true and reasonable conservatism which in order to save great values, may admit the necessity of reform.

If Christ's teaching is being forgotten, if even the belief in God, embraced by so many pagans, seems to fade away, if these calamities of the whole humanity could be relieved by discarding some man-made formulations of Christian belief — would it not be worth while to save the eternal values of Christendom by discarding those formulas?

The chief reason why many Christians, earnest, sincere Christians, oppose a new Reformation is their not realizing to what extent indifference, or even animosity, towards religion has taken possession of modern men and women. They do not realize how a doctrine contrary to reason may cause impatience in young people and may even make them inimical to religion. That there are things *above* our understanding, that is what we all have to admit; that is what is made easier to acquiesce in by the fact pointed out by great modern scientists that Science itself presents mysteries which seem to be for ever unsolvable; that is something to which already Xenophon gave a classical argument

by pointing out that although the eye is made for receiving light yet it is unable to look at the sun.

But something which is *against* reason — such a formulation as that one about three different persons that are however one — that is something different! That is what makes modern people rebellious.

If most theologians — also many so called new-theologians — fail to see clearly in these matters, the reason is obvious: during their years of study they have had a good opportunity of thinking over the problem of the Dogma, they have grown familiar with the idea that behind the dogmas there is an everlasting truth and they say: "Well the dogmas — every one knows that, after all, they should be regarded as symbolical." They do not realize that young people beginning to criticize dogmas which they were taught, will not, as a rule, have the leisure, nor the necessary knowledge to judge about what must be discarded and what should be kept. Hence in most cases the issue will be: they discard it all.

Teachers often know the minds of the young people better. I have quoted above the answers which Professor Joad had from his pupils and which are reported in his work: "The present and the future of religion." And I have heard a professor in another country declare, that in the highest class of the public school where he was lecturing, all the pupils were avowed atheists. Yet in the same country where this experience was made even learned and intelligent theologians, although privately admitting that several dogmas of orthodox Christianity had their origin in Greek philosophy, strenuously oppose every attempt at changing or

abolishing creeds, saying that their historical sense bids them retain the formulations of the faith of their fathers.

If, in a country where the memory of a great national hero is generally venerated, some one proposed that in honour of this great memory the nation should resolve always to follow in military matters the orders given in warfare by that hero — how nonsensical this would seem to everyone! "Just that great hero of ours", people would say, "just he would be the first to oppose such a plan; he loved his country and certainly would not wish to have it ruined by a foolish clinging to bygone practices."

Likewise, who could doubt that the great religious personalities of bygone days would strenuously oppose a kind of piety involving danger to present day Christianity!

*

At present England has a grand old man in the domains of theology and free thought. Dean Inge is said to be the most learned man in England; he certainly is one of its deepest thinkers and one of its bravest men. He — a clergyman in a high position — has pointed out that Christ "was a revolutionary prophet", "the greatest leveller of barriers that ever lived," he has proclaimed it to be "the greatest blunder of Protestantism, that of substituting the verbally infallible Book for the infallible Church", and he has held forth that Christ "founded no new religion in the ordinary sense of the word — no organized Church, no priests, no sacred writings."

England has a bishop, too, uttering valiant ideas as to free thought and respect for science. In his "Should such

a faith offend?" Bishop Barnes of Birmingham has eloquently pleaded the possibility of bringing the theory of evolution into agreement with a Christian view of life.

In his essay about "Institutionalism and Mysticism", the Dean of St. Paul's, as a conscientious historian, is very careful to do justice to that part which to him is least sympathetic. Institutionalism — i. e. the view of the Church-system's being not only a useful establishment of order but also a necessary means of imparting God's grace to mortal men, thus making synonymous a Christian and a Churchman, — this view has had, and still may have, its advantages, he admits. Yet he is positive in his view that Institutionalism, on the whole, is alien to Christ's own religion.

"There is no evidence," he says (in "The addictment against Christianity") "that the historical Christ ever intended to found a new institutional religion — he treated the institutional religion of his people with the independence and indifference of the prophet and mystic." Institutional Christianity may be a legitimate and necessary historical development of the original gospel, but it is something alien to the gospel itself.

And he states his belief "that the aberrations or exaggerations of institutionalism have been, and are, more dangerous and farther removed from the spirit of Christianity than those of mysticism and that we must look to the latter type rather than to the former to give life to the next religious revival."

Earlier in the same essay, the Dean of St. Paul's, when speaking of the mystic's religion, says: "There is reason

to think that this conception of religion appeals more and more strongly to the young generation of today."

If so, there is hope, indeed, for a movement of reform in England. For the mystic's religion "brings home to us the meaning of the promise made by the Johannine Christ that there are many things as yet hidden from humanity which will, in the future, be revealed by the spirit of truth. — — It breaks down the denominational barriers which divide men and women who worship the Father in Spirit and in Truth. It makes the whole world kin by offering a pure religion which, substantially, is the same in all climates and in all ages — a religion too divine to be fettered by any man-made formulas."

Ay, there must be hope for a Reformation even among the English.

At any rate, no great movement, be it religious or political, ever rose because the majority of the people wished it. It always came as a result of the strivings and the enthusiasm of a small flock.

III.

Thought, continuing its search, crosses the Ocean.

What about hopes as to America?

In that work by an English author — C. E. M. Joad — which was quoted in the first essay of the present book, there were also to be found statements as to the standing point concerning religion among young people in U. S. A. There were quoted reports from the Students' Christian

Movement, amongst which one from a Women's University College containing this statement: "There is no doubt that the general attitude of the majority of the students in College towards religion is one of indifference rather than of support or hostility."

And Mr Joad, summing up the result of his studies on this subject, writes: "Since it is impossible to tell what the youthful American believes in, it must be presumed that he believes in nothing."

One thing should however be remembered: until not long ago it was considered in all Anglo-Saxon countries as an indispensable sign of respectability to accept Christian belief — whether in the terms of the Church or of some denomination —; when after the great war views were changed in this as in other respects, young people finding that they had acquired the right which previously had been denied to them, i. e. that of professing sheer unbelief in all matters concerning religion, it is rather natural that they should be eager to avail themselves of their opportunity. Youth would not be youth if it did not show a bent to oppose inherited opinions. Hence it may be that the statements recorded in the afore-said work are giving a somewhat exaggerated view of the unbelief of young Anglo-Saxons.

At any rate, of late there have been heard in America some voices witnessing to another tendency. In the fall of 1930, in a public discussion treating the question "What does youth want?" a well-known orator, Mr Charles Tuttle, declared: "Faith was never at such a flood-tide as it is today," adding that "modern youth wants the adventure of true religion."

Maybe there has been a change in the trend of thought since those reports quoted by Mr Joad were written. Maybe also they are right, both Mr Joad and Mr Tuttle, there being among those who have accepted, rather unreflectingly, the opinions of their fathers, — which in this case means: who are openly expressing the half hidden unbelief of their parents — also some that are feeling, as it were, the morning breeze of the dawning day, eagerly looking out for "the adventure of true religion."

Recently another American orator holding forth that "the world today is suffering from the lack of religion", pointed out as a remedy: children should be made to attend Church and Sunday school. Not a very efficient remedy perhaps. A more adequate view of what is really wanted was evinced by Dr. H. Th. Kerr, the Moderator of the Presbyterian General Assembly, who declared: "The Church must capture the intelligence of the modern world. If it cannot capture the intellect of its own generation, it must die."

Certainly many a preacher and many a writer among Church people has tried with much diligence, and often with much eloquence, to capture the intelligent, attempting to make them swallow contradictions and absurdities in spite of the protestation of their intellect. But now the time has come when the Church ought to understand that her only hope of success in capturing intelligent youth will be: to admit openly that absurdities need not be swallowed by Christian believers since they were not taught by Christ himself.

*

There is one very promising fact in the present day spiritual life of America: viz. the fact that so many different denominations have united into the "Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America."

In that association are included the Unitarians, who refuse to accept the dogmas of the Trinity and of Christ's deity in their orthodox sense, also the Society of Friends who are not only indifferent to all sorts of dogmas but also discard the Sacraments, refusing to accept the view of their being necessary to the salvation of man. In admitting into their union societies with such views, even other denominations belonging to this great association have acknowledged that such as criticize and discard important dogmas in the creeds of Nicea and Constantinople, may nevertheless be recognized as Christians; a great progress in fact, from ancient intolerance!

And when reading the wide-hearted works of such men as Harry Emerson Fosdick, Harry F. Ward, and others, you will be inclined to think that America seems to have accepted the essential part of religion, leaving aside obsolete formulation.

Yet it may be you will soon perceive that even in the U. S. A. there is to be found an institutionalism strangely alien to present day mentality.

In the spring of the year 1931 there was to be seen in a newspaper, published in one of the Southern States, a large advertisement, wherein the young man in business was told that he owed "to himself and his future to go to Church regularly;" adding that "success and religious observance often go hand in hand," since "men at the top of the

ladder of success look with a kindly eye on the young man they constantly see at Church."

The advertisement was sponsored by a great many firms in the town where it was published, so the young man in business might reasonably think that if he should want a situation in one of those firms it would be, in fact, judicious to follow their counsel, regularly attending Church service.

Even if admitted that the young man induced by that sort of argument to go to Church might have some spiritual gain from what he heard there, and doing the advertisers the justice to acknowledge that most probably this was what they aimed at, yet it seems astonishing that those advertisers did not realize how disastrous such an expedient might be to the religious views they wanted to propagate. In fact, it would be very likely to alienate those intelligent young people, whom a prominent speaker quoted above thinks it so important to capture.

*

Americans are accustomed to think of themselves as a youthful people; Europeans likewise are apt to regard a spirit of undertaking and optimism, giving an impression of eminent youthfulness, as an inherent trait of American mentality. Yet from thinking Americans are sometimes heard utterances showing rather a different apprehension.

Recently in a great American review (The Atlantic Monthly) a writer, Albert Jay Nock, characterizing his country spoke about "the glorification of profit-making and the implied disparagement of all intellectual, aesthetic and even moral processes which did not tend directly or indirectly

to profit-making", "a preposterous misconstruction of the democratic principle, a childish reverence for bigness and an exclusive preoccupation with profit-making", "a whole civilization grovelling in the unintelligent worship of bigness".

Such verdicts will make one remember that above quoted saying of A. Dostoievski's: "Westerners always seem to be old, being destitute of interest for other things than business and politics".

"You are always young, you Greeks", said an Egyptian priest to Solon. Certainly he did not think only of that spirit of undertaking shown in valiant sailings and colonizatory enterprises; no doubt the wise Egyptian chiefly meant that spiritual inquisitiveness which looks about the Universe in audacious queries: Whence have we come? Whither are we going?

Everyone who has made a study of human physiognomy, knows there are faces which, having had, for a long time, a youthful, even a childish look, suddenly turn old. America should take care not to become, mentally, a specimen of that sort of transformation.

Having Prosperity for a watchword and worshipping Success as an idol seems, however, to be rather out of date in the present plight of the world.

In times of distress many a human soul has been brought to recognize the undying value of religion. It may be that the world crisis, for all its dire consequences, will nevertheless set people thinking more earnestly of deeper things than money and success.

If then, it is true what was recorded by an above quoted

orator: that there is surging up in American youth a longing for true religion, they ought to remember those judicious words of Abr. Lincoln: "If we could first know where we are and whither we are tending, we could then better judge what to do".

To "know where we are" in the domain of religion, is not this to realize that during one century and a half humanity, on the whole, has ever been drifting further away from the Christian religion?

To realize "whither we are tending" must include a recognition of the fact that Christ being, at least during the last decades, rather universally admitted to be the greatest religious teacher the world ever saw, yet one of the conclusions people have made thereof has been: if even h i s teaching is unacceptable to modern men and women, this obviously signifies that religion is something obsolete, something to be dismissed from the minds of present day humanity.

To "judge what to do" then, must mean — to those who feel a revival of religion to be an urgent need of the world: fully to recognize and earnestly hold forth that if what is termed Christian religion seems to be a failure, this is due to its not being an adequate representation of Christ's own teaching; it must include the request that no more, out of consideration for dead people, should there be retained creeds and formulations which injure the living, detaining them from what would make their lives happier and better.

For "God is not the God of the dead but of the living."

*

Recently a German Professor (a Protestant) wrote to me: "When speaking privately with clergymen I find that mostly they admit the truth of your views, but these same men, when meeting in corpore, will let the herd instinct prevail, realizing that if such avowals were made publicly their power over the host of believers would be endangered." And a Catholic Professor told me in a letter that he shared my opinions, yet hinted at the reprisals it would call forth from the Church if my book were given to young people to read.

Such sayings make one realize what a hope-inspiring thing it is, after all, that America never was ruled by a hierarchy.

IV.

In speaking of three great countries where Protestantism is prevalent, I have not forgotten the fact that a great movement often had its origin in a small country, — as Taine pointed out, reminding us of the ancient Greek Republics, and the small Italian States of the Renaissance. Nor should it be thought impossible that in some Roman Catholic countries a strong movement of Reformation may still arise, with greater success than that of "Modernism", and it may be added: with a nearer adherence to Christ's own teaching.

At any rate, wherever a movement of the kind suggested may surge, it will be sure to meet much opposition, much indignant blame, not least so from good, earnest men and women who will feel themselves called upon to defend the cause of Christianity against strife and dissension.

But did not Christ himself say that he was going to bring dissension into this world? If true Christendom has been disfigured, how would it be possible, without strife, to make humanity turn back to Christ's own teaching?

When hearing about the first spreading of Christian belief, when learning f. i. that at the time of Paul's arrival in Rome, only some twenty years after the Crucifixion, there was already a numerous Christian Congregation in that city, we marvel at this swift spreading af new ideas, without any apparatus whatever of methodical mission.

Now the time is come when we have to marvel at the swift decay of Christianity. In spite of a numerous body of Christian missionaries in pagan countries, the increase in converts is comparatively small and, some pretend, made illusory by the fact of many yearly conversions from Christianity to Islam. In spite of a very large army of Christian preachers—churchmen or denominationalists—in the so called Christian countries, there is to be recorded a catastrophical desertion from Christian belief, thousands and thousands of young men and women yearly leaving school and college with an innate conviction that Christianity has nothing to say to modern thinking individuals.

What is the reason of this difference between the first times of Christianity and our own time?

Can it be that Christ's religion is obsolete, having ceased to be an adequate answer to the inmost longings of modern people?

It will not be seemly for orthodox opposers to a reform to answer this question otherwise than with an emphatical No.

Can it be that in the last seventeen or eighteen centuries wickedness has increased to such an extent as to make people deaf to the words of Christ?

The mere supposition of the Incarnation resulting in such a complete failure seems, indeed, a blasphemy.

Must not then the fault be found in the way of preaching?

Not that the preachers should be accused of defectiveness in zeal. No doubt there are many honest preachers who do their utmost to win souls for their belief. But no one, when reading the New Testament, could deny that between our time and the first centuries A. D. there are great differences in representing Christ's religion. No one could deny it if studying the history of the controversies of the third and fourth centuries, when men were trying to define what obviously had been left undefined by the first disciples of Christ and their immediate followers. These controversies may have brought some gain to the development of human thought; it may be that they were an historical necessity. But now the outcome of those human speculations has proved to be a screen hiding the real Christ from the eyes of millions and millions of men, is it not a crime against our Lord and Master still to cling to them?

*

"Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you."

Most men may, on the whole, treat these words as a metaphor. Yet there are unto this day men and women who know them to be a literal truth.

And if these words stand for individuals, they may stand for nations too.

In the present plight of the world, when so may wise men are seeking the way out of Chaos, there is again and again heard the watch-**word of Trust: The nations** should leave off their distrust, they should trust one another; then the economical crisis would be overcome, then those armaments which are ruining the world would be made unnecessary.

Everyone realizes that those are wise words of wise men. But the world seems to be at a loss as to what should be done to create trust where distrust has so long been reigning.

Yet if nations who have long been terming themselves Christian should really turn Christian—would not then trust arise spontaneously?

If in several countries young people who feel themselves to be the People of the Dawning Day, did start movements for turning to Christ himself, discarding what is superfluous and obsolete in ancient creeds and formulations — would there not arise a quick contact between these different movements? And would not the world feel that just because outward things had been discarded the stronger would the obligation be felt to keep the great inward law of love and righteousness?

And thus there might come a day when humanity would feel that indeed, between Christian nations, wars have become impossible.

*

To turn back to Christ, — this certainly does not imply anything of reactionary strivings, as some people might maintain.

Christ's personality is rich enough, great enough to contain

the whole development of humanity, with its aspirations towards Beauty, Truth, and Brotherly love.

For "Christ is the eternal Forward!"—as wrote some decades ago a Swiss clergyman. Even if somewhat disagreeing with the views of F. Kutter as to the political and economical movements, with which his watchword was put in connection, one may emphatically agree with the watchword itself.

Ay, Christ is the eternal Forward! And who wants to be his follower must not be among those that hesitate and tarry and dig their talents into the earth.

*

Although by proclaiming the duty of subjugating reason to the dogma of orthodoxy men such as Pascal and Kierkegaard misinterpreted the cravings of true Christendom, yet thus far they certainly were right: that a Christian should dare to believe what to the world seems impossible.

Certainly to most judicious people it will seem foolish to believe that a new Reformation could dispel the clouds of calamity now hanging over the world. For the power of ideas was always disregarded—until they proved victorious.

Dostoievski, when brought as a captive to Siberia, seeing on his long way the innumerable barracks and regiments obedient to the Czar, thought his earlier dreams of liberty for Russia futile; it seemed impossible that this immense power could ever be overthrown. Half a century later an other intelligent observer, Sven Hedin, seeing the enormous display of the military powers of Czarism, had the same impression.

Yet the downfall was not far off.

When under the reign of Diocletian, the Christians were deprived of all social rights and thousands of them were tortured and killed because they had embraced a religion thought to be disloyal to Rome, it might have seemed foolish indeed to hope for a victory of Christendom; yet fifteen years later a troop of men gathering in Nicea — many of them lame and limping, with scars from torture and scourging, — experienced the wonder: having been convoked by a Christian emperor to form resolutions regarding matters important for the great Roman empire.

In the long run ideas are ever shown to be stronger than anything else on this earth.

Faith is a power. Enthusiasm is a power. And daring to believe in God means to dare to believe in what to the world seems unthinkable.

*

Never before, it was held forth recently by a German author—Hans Zehrer in "Die Tat",—the different states of Europe have been standing so isolated as is now the case.

In fact, only once this Europe has been united by a common idea; it was when the call rang: "The grave of Christ is profaned! No more are Christians permitted to kneel there in prayer."

In the enthusiasm then blazing up nations recently at feud united to fight for a goal sacred to them all.

Now something is at stake which is more important, more sacred than keeping the piece of earth where Christ lived and died. Now what is in question is this: shall the religion

of Christ go under or shall it become anew a source of spiritual life to individuals and nations?

Will the devotion for a great idea once more give the nations the power of overlooking barriers, remembering what they hold in common, forgetting what separates them?

In the midst of dissension there surged the idea of a "Pan-Europe", the "United States of Europe". Even to those who acknowledged the greatness of this thought the realizing of it seemed to be, at present, a utopia.

The now existing isolation has been considered by all the states as an absolute necessity. To desist from it, must seem to them all a hazardous undertaking, a leap into the unknown.

Will this leap ever be risked except by nations able to raise themselves above their own interests, embracing a common idea?

"God wills it", so rang the watchword which nine hundred years ago united the armies of the crusades. In these days of ours most probably no such watchword will sound loudly and publicly. But maybe within the heart of every one of those working for the coming revival, there will sound as a silent spurrer, a strong secret hope:

"God wills it."

And "with God all things are possible."

EXTRACTS FROM CRITICISM

on a work by Anna Maria Roos: *Phariseeism in our Time* (published in Sweden.)

In my opinion, "Phariseeism in our Time" by Anna Maria Roos, is one of the most splendid and valuable proofs of religious study, that has, within recent times, been made available here to a larger public.

Prof. Nathan Söderblom.
(Archbishop of Sweden.)

This distinguished book is a victorious defense of a Christianity, which has been freed from the fetters of dogmas.

It would be a good thing, if Anna Maria Roos book, through public lending libraries, could gain a wide circulation also among the working classes, for this would cause the unreasonable hostility to Christianity, expressed in discussions in the People's House in Stockholm, to give up considerable ground for a clearer and purer apprehension of Christ. — But this book should be read, not only by learned high-church people, but also by others, for it contains living words of a higher religious wisdom than the officially accepted one in our country.

Social Tidskrift.

With a seriousness, throughout worthy of the vital, although delicate task; with a loving regard even for those of different thought, and with a widened generosity in its noblest sense, which cannot but instil awe for the authoress' lofty way of thinking, even in such instances as those where one might be of a different opinion, she has here attacked the dogmatic formalism, the slavery to the letter, which dries up the heart. — It is to be hoped that her work has not been done in vain, but that her enthusiasm, like a purifying fire, will heat through many hearts. *Idun.*

The detailed and minute statement, indicating great learning, given by Miss Roos in her book about Jesus' anti-ascetic ideal of life; of the positive position of protestantism in the world; of the ascetic key-note that goes through the whole of antique ethics, is by no means unnecessary or put on too broadly. For my part I consider this one of the noblest features of the excellent

book which Miss Roos has presented to her contemporaries for reading and consideration. It is with a feeling of gratitude that I have parted with the study of Miss Roos' talentful book.

S. A. Fries.
Dr. of Theology.
Sv. Dagbladet.

Firstly it is extraordinary that an authoress, who has before been occupied with belles-lettres, is able to show, in her first work of another genre, such wide reading, not to say learning, as we really find in the new book. The reviewer has felt great admiration before her extensive knowledge.

Secondly the book is extraordinary, because it shows an independence, a broadmindedness, and a justice in judging events that usually are apt to either bewilder people's thoughts or make them fanatic.

N. J. Göransson.
Professor in Theology at the
University of Uppsala.
Aftonbladet.

It tells us, like no other book, what Christianity is, at the same time giving answer and contents to life, thoughts and visions of splendour.

It must be shown that one can be a whole human being without maiming and beating down, without starving or suppressing any part of one's being; that one can have access to the richest and fullest development of one's self, and yet at the same time be a Christian. In my opinion, this book has been able to prove this possibility.

K. J. in Ord och Bild.

On starting to read one soon is carried off and fascinated with the quiet strength of the presentment; with the profoundness and magnificence of thought, and the beautiful warmth of the language on the Son of Man. — Even those of a different opinion, cannot help being deeply impressed by the personal faith and love which, here as everywhere, is the key-note of the book. It is as rare as it is improving to meet with a personality who does not belong to any party, one who opposes all authorities — except one. For there is one authority whom Anna Roos acknowledges. But that is no common, modern, party-making authority: it is Jesus Christ.

Dagny.