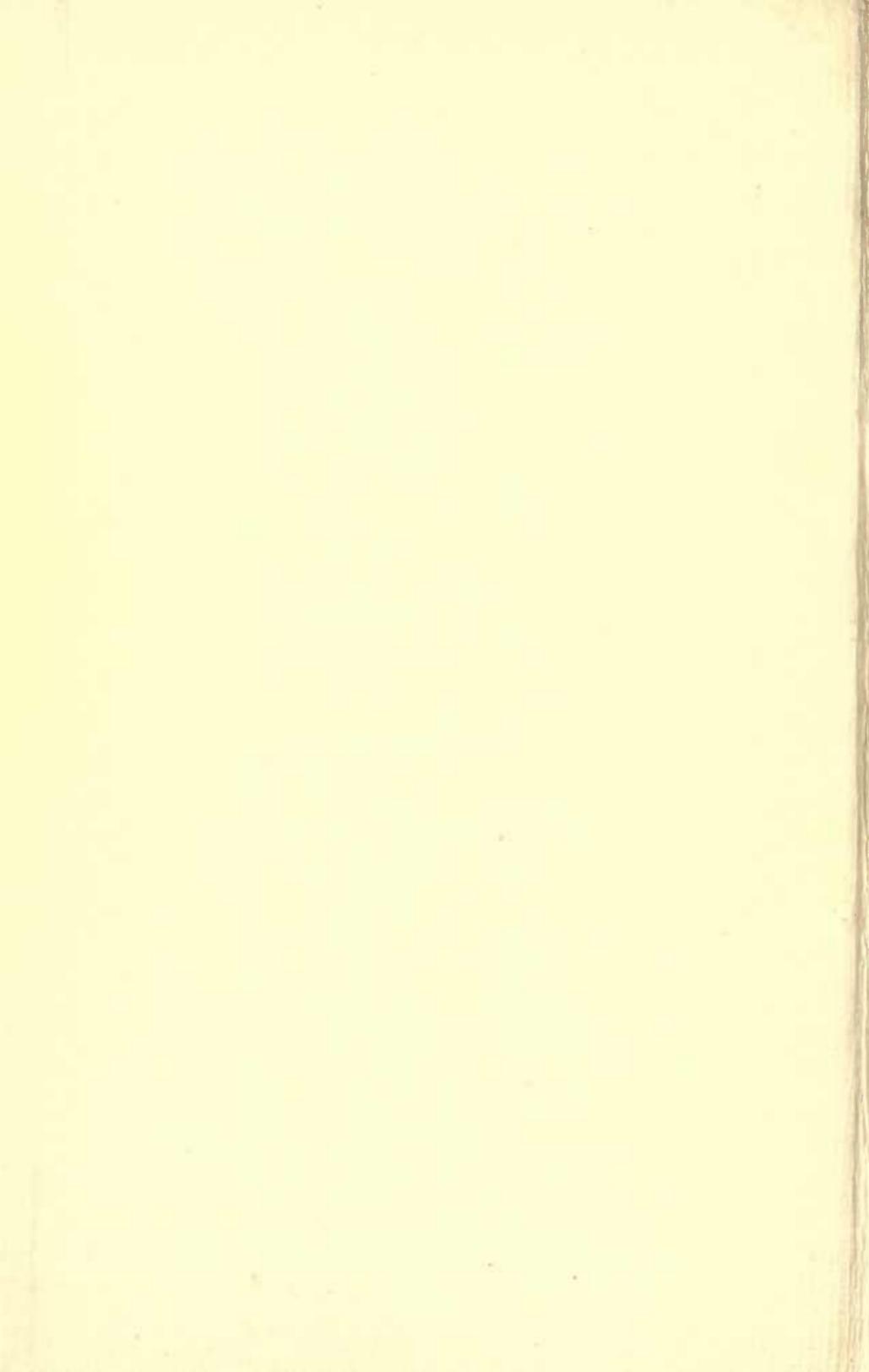
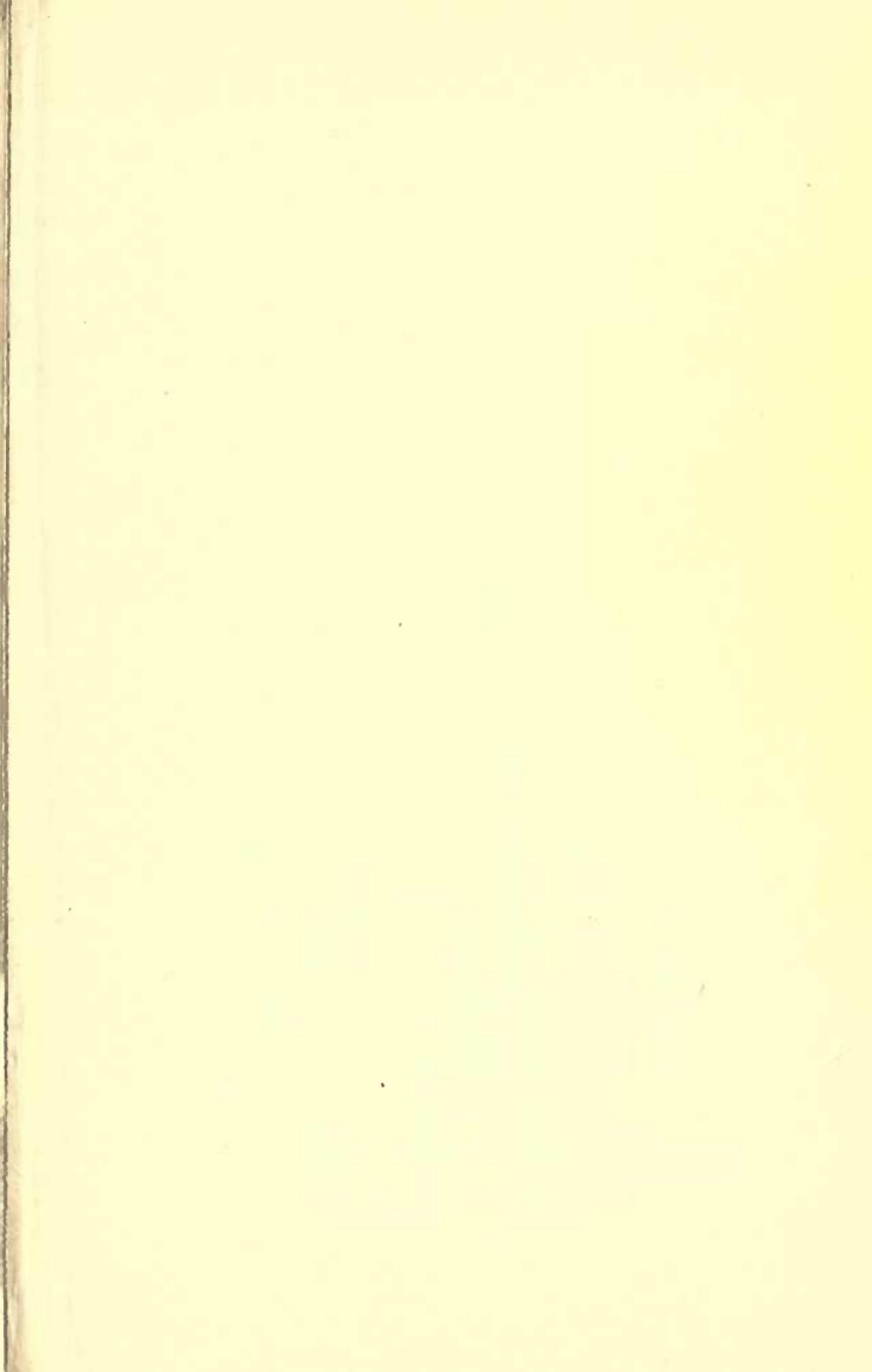




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# NEOPLATONISM

BY

C. BIGG, D.D.

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# NEOPLATONISM

## I

### STOICISM

IN this little volume it is proposed to run over the history of the later Platonism, a large and intricate subject. But, narrow as are our limits, it is not possible to enter fairly upon the task without a brief review of Stoicism. This school of thought, the Porch, as it is often called, from the Painted Porch at Athens where its first professors lectured, was founded in the third century before Christ, by Zeno, Cleanthes and Chrysippus, and was predominant in Rome from the time of Nero to that of Marcus Aurelius. It affected Platonism partly by direct influence, but still more by way of re-action.

In the days of Epictetus, under the Flavian emperors, the only schools, that could be regarded as serious rivals of Stoicism in the capital, were the Academics and the Epicureans. Peripatetics, the disciples of Aristotle, were, he tells us, few and faint-hearted ; Plato himself was hardly read at all.

The Epicureans were atomists in science, and utilitarians in morals. They taught that the world was made by the fortuitous aggregation of infinitesimally small particles of matter, and they admitted no standard of right or wrong but pleasure. They did not deny the existence of gods; but they held that the gods were made in exactly the same way as everything else, and took no part whatever in the government of the world. They "sat around their nectar," and "lived a careless life." Hence the Epicureans were commonly regarded as atheists. The Academics, degenerate representatives of the Academy of Plato, were universal doubters. They had learned from Plato himself to distrust the senses, and from the conflict of opinions to distrust reason. Their maxim was, "Suspend thy judgment," or, as Pliny expresses it, "only one thing is certain, that nothing is certain."

Epicureanism is not necessarily coarse. Men may be utilitarians without being "swine," in spite of Horace. But it is necessarily selfish and relative. Even of its modern social form—the form given to it by Mr. J. S. Mill—this is true. Men differ in their ideas of what is agreeable, and each is supreme judge in his own case. Hence, though the pursuit of pleasure may establish a coterie, it cannot build a society or organize a state.

It is at this point that Epictetus attacks Epicurus. He charges him with denying the great moral truth of "the natural brotherhood of man with man." But now, he proceeds, see what happens! These audacious thinkers, who would destroy the obvious and whole-

some facts of human nature, are compelled by that very nature to assert the very facts which they deny. "What does Epicurus say? 'Do not be mocked, good people. There is no natural brotherhood between one reasonable being and another, believe me. Those who tell you this are deluding you.' Well, but what does it matter to you? Let us be deluded. Will you be any the worse off, if the rest of the world believes that there is a natural brotherhood, and that they ought zealously to cherish this faith? Nay, it will be far better and safer for you. Good sir, why trouble your head about us? Why lie awake for our sake? Why light your lamp, and get up early, and write books, lest we should be deluded into thinking that the gods care for men, or lest we should imagine that the Good is something else, and not pleasure? If that be so, go to bed and sleep, live like the worm whose equal you make yourself; eat, drink, and snore. Why should you care what others think about these things? For what bond is there between us and you?"

Epicurus takes pains to make people follow pleasure. Surely, says Epictetus, it is Nature herself who thus convicts him out of his own mouth.

With the same weapon the Stoic smites the apostles of doubt. "If I were the slave of an Academic, I would plague him finely, though I were to be flogged for it every day of my life. 'Bring me oil, boy,' he would say, 'for the bath.' I would take fish-sauce, and pour it over him. 'What is this?' he would cry. 'By my fortune,' I would answer, 'my

senses tell me that it is oil.' Or again, 'Boy, give me my barley-water.' I would bring him a bason full of brine. 'Did I not call for barley-water?' 'Yes, sir, this is barley-water.' 'Is not this brine, sirrah?' 'Why not barley-water?' 'Take it and smell it,' cries he in a fury, 'take it and taste it.' 'And what, sir, is the good of that, if our senses deceive us?' O, if I had three or four fellow-slaves of the same mind as myself, I would make him hang himself or recant."

It is the same argument that "coxcombs" urged with a grin against the idealist Berkeley, and no doubt a man may question the existence of an objective cause of sensation without denying the reality of the sensations themselves. But these lively passages show very clearly the position taken up by Stoicism against its two most formidable opponents. The Stoic agreed with the Epicurean, that sense and reflection upon the data of sense are the two sources of all that we can be said to know. As against the Academic, he insisted that both can be trusted, if we have learned to use them aright. As against the Epicurean, he maintained that reflection on the order of nature teaches us that there is a God; that reflection on the mind of man teaches us that it contains a faculty, the reason or conscience, which ought to bear rule; that reflection on life shows that we are social beings, owing certain duties to one another. The sum of these reflections is what the Stoic meant by nature. When he enunciated his great maxim, "Live according to Nature," he was not thinking of the "state of nature" of the French *philosop-*

*phē*, still less of the animal instincts which we sometimes call natural. By Nature he intended that which is best in man. "Follow Nature," means, "take Reason for thy guide."

The Roman Stoics cared little for theory, differing in this probably from their brethren in Greece. Epictetus impressed upon his disciples hardly anything beyond the necessity of strict moral discipline. Logic was useful in the last stage to "clear the mind of cant," to correct false impressions, and read correctly the lesson taught by experience; yet, even for this limited purpose, its usefulness was dubious. Simple men, he thought, were better without intellectual accomplishments, which sometimes puzzled them, and sometimes puffed them up. Epictetus is particularly emphatic in his disparagement of book-learning. "It is in the bath, in bed, above all in fever and sickness, that a man shows whether he is a philosopher or not." He has no patience with the man who complains that he has no time to read. Books are only a means to tranquillity, and where is the tranquillity, if one is to fret and fume every time he is called away from his books? Still less can he tolerate the man who boasts that he knows his Chrysippus. "Do you not know that the whole volume is worth but half-a-crown? And he who can explain it all is worth no more than the volume." In the same spirit Marcus writes, "Pitch away your books, and be no more distracted." "Look within." So too Musonius Rufus. "Those who are to be true philosophers," he says, "do not need many words, nor should young

men attempt to learn this welter of theorems on which the sophist plumes himself. In truth, this kind of thing is enough to wear a man's life out. What is most necessary and useful a farmer can learn, for after all he is not always at work."

These last words remind us of Tyndale's saying, that "if God spared his life, he would cause a boy that driveth the plough to know more of the Scriptures than great doctors." Erasmus again, in the preface to his *Paraphrases*, spoke in a similar strain of the Bible and its contents. "I long that the husbandman should sing portions of them to himself as he follows the plough; that the weaver should hum them to the tune of his shuttle; that the voyager should beguile with these stories the tedium of his journey."

Stoic, Humanist, and Reformer were all anxious to simplify dogma. The resemblance between Tyndale and the Roman Stoic is very close. Both thought that the necessary beliefs are few, and attainable by the simplest man, without any help from instruction or authority.

It may be that the Roman Stoics did not wholly believe their own creed, and this latitudinarianism enables them to smooth off many of its angles, and use language which, in their mouths, could have no real meaning. Nevertheless the creed is there, though hundreds have read Epictetus and Marcus without perceiving it.

The Stoic theory of knowledge was very similar to that of Locke. What we know is, firstly, a constant stream of sensations, which is poured into us from

without ; secondly, those general conceptions which we form from sensations, such as a man, a cow ; thirdly, propositions or judgments, which the mind infers from these conceptions. Sensations are the whole raw material of thought : there is nothing in the mind which does not come into it through the inlet of the senses. All the mind contributes is the power of remembering, grouping, distinguishing. The mind, they said, is "like a sheet of paper that works." Sense writes letters upon it, and it shakes these letters together into syllables, words, and sentences. Like the stomach, it receives food and digests it, but, in the Stoic view, contributes nothing of its own.

Nevertheless the Stoic, again like Locke, was a realist. He did not doubt the truth of his senses, but believed "that it is the actual receiving of ideas from without, that gives us notice of the existence of other things, and makes us know that something doth exist at that time without us, which causes that idea in us, though perhaps we neither know nor consider how it does it." But he carried his principle further than Locke, and maintained that the objects of which we have cognizance by sense are the only real existences ; that nothing can be said to be unless it is apparent to sense.

The two great questions of ancient, and indeed of all philosophy, are What is that which is ? and What is that faculty (criterion) by which we know that it is ? Here, accordingly, the Platonist joined issue with the Stoic. The Platonist insisted that sense knows nothing but sensations, and can tell us nothing what-

ever about the object that produces the sensations, just as the sight of the bright picture on the screen tells us nothing about the magic lantern behind the screen. "It is most wonderful," says Plotinus, "that the Stoics, who prove everything by sense, should assert that that is, which sense has no power to grasp." In fact, the Stoic realism is untenable, unless we are justified, on the ground of mere experience, in asserting that everything must have a cause. According to the Platonist, the word *must* introduces a law not of matter but of mind. Experience cannot guarantee a universal. We are here on the great dividing line of thought, where the two main schools part company. The Stoic compared the mind to a sheet of paper "that works," but did not accurately explain how it works, whether it does, or does not, bring something of its own to the work. Upon this all turns.

Still more vehemently did the Platonist object to the Stoic tenet, that the cause of sensation is that which really, and therefore that which alone, exists. "They put in the forefront," says Plotinus again, "that which has but a hypothetical existence ( $\tauὸ μὴ ὄν$ ; not the non-existent), as if it were the real and true existence, and put the last first. The reason is that sense is their guide, and they rely upon it for the foundation of their principles, and everything else." According to the Platonist the marks of true existence are eternity and unchangeableness. But the object of sense is for ever shifting. As you put out your finger to touch it, it has become something else. Hence the one thing that exists, and can be known, is mind. All else

exists, only in so far as it "participates" in the true life of thought. It can be known, only in so far as it is knowable, that is to say, in so far as it is ordered and prepared for our knowledge by the indwelling mind. In itself it is neither Being nor Not-being, but something that hovers between the two, the  $\mu\eta\ \delta\upsilon\nu$ . It is shapeless and formless, infinite, without qualities of any kind. We know that it exists in a sense, but only by "a bastard reasoning." It must be there, but we know nothing about it.

Thus to the Platonist the object of knowledge is mind, to the Stoic it is matter. The Stoic expressed mind "in terms of matter," the Platonist almost, but not altogether, expressed matter "in terms of mind." Spinoza regarded thought and extension as different modes of one substance, but the Stoic was an absolute materialist. "Whatever acts or is acted upon," he said, "is a body." Both Theism and Deism are excluded by this theory of Being. Accordingly the Stoic was a Pantheist.

God, the absolute Being, is Himself material. He is aether, the finest air, or "spirit," that is "breath," but still has extension and shape, and is tangible. His shape is the sphere, the perfect shape. The Stoics distinguished in Him an active and a passive, force and the manifestation of force, *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*, but both were material. Out of God at fixed intervals all things are evolved; into Him, when the cycle is accomplished, all things are absorbed by a great "conflagration." He is immanent in the world, and is to the world what the soul is to the body. "Mens

agitat molem et magno se corpore miscet." The mode of creation or evolution was explained by the Logoi, or "words," which are a modification of the Platonic Idea. The Idea was at first conceived as a pattern or shape, which the Creator impressed upon matter, as a seal upon wax. The Word is a force, or principle of life, a sort of seed (hence the "spermatic" Word), which fructifies matter and moulds it from within. God Himself is the Word of words, the sum-total of all vital forces. This mode of expression was afterwards adopted by all Platonists, though the heathen writers use it only in a physical sense. In Philo and Christian literature, and in a few non-Christian writers like Hermes Trismegistus, who show distinct traces of Christian influence, the Word is used as a Divine title, in a sense very unlike its Stoic meaning.

To the Stoic, in fact, God was Natural Law, and his other name was Destiny. Thus we read in the famous hymn of Cleanthes: "Lead me, O Zeus, and thou too, O Destiny, whithersoever ye have appointed for me to go. For I will follow without hesitation. And if I refuse I shall become evil, but I shall follow all the same." Man is himself a part of the great world-force, carried along in its all-embracing sweep, like a water-beetle in a torrent. He may struggle or he may let himself go, but the result is the same, except that, in the latter case, he embraces his doom, and so is at peace.

The Stoics often use personal language of God. He is Father, King, our Escort in life. He cares for His martyr and servant. Epictetus sings the praises

of God: "For what else can I do, a lame old man? If I were a nightingale I would play the part of a nightingale, if a swan that of a swan. But now I am a reasonable being. I must sing praises to God." But all this is to be understood in the sense of Cleanthes. Such language, like much that we read at the present day on the adoration of Nature, merely testifies to the impossibility of religion, or indeed of morality, without emotion. But emotion is personal, and we may say of Epictetus, what Epictetus said of the Sceptics, that his own words proclaim the truth which his theory denies. Plotinus said of the Stoics, that "they only brought God in, in order to be in the fashion." They did not really want Him. When Justin Martyr set out on the quest after truth, he applied himself first to a Stoic, "but," says he, "when I found I could learn nothing from him about God (for he knew nothing himself, and maintained that this doctrine was unnecessary), I quitted him and went to another."

The religious language of the Stoics is deceptive again in another way, because by God they often mean the God within, the intelligence, which is to every man as a "demon," or guardian angel. Indeed, they made no real difference between God and the soul. The soul was "a fragment," "a bit broken off" God, a piece of the extended and divisible Deity. Such a part would be the same in kind as any other part, and hence the Stoic maintained that the wise man was in no way inferior to Zeus. "Dion," they said, "does as much for God as God for Dion." Thus worship becomes egotism.

Like God himself, the soul of man in the opinion of the Stoics was material. Some called it an exhalation of the blood. They could hardly hold that it was in any true sense immortal. One of the signs of the times was the craving for a future life, but the Pantheist could not satisfy it. Indeed the later Stoics are more sceptical than their forerunners. Cleanthes held that all souls lived on till the cyclic conflagration, when they would be absorbed into the divine substance, the Heraclitean fire. Chrysippus confined this limited immortality to the souls of the wise; but Epictetus passes the subject over without a word. Man dies; the pitcher that went so often to the well is broken. Aurelius doubts, but does not actually deny. At one time he speaks of the soul as absorbed at death into the Seminal Word, the World Spirit; at another he calls death "perhaps an extinction, perhaps a change of abode."

It is obvious that in such a system there is no place for aspiration, or for humility. Another way of expressing the same defect is to say that Stoicism leaves no room for Revelation. Locke too felt this difficulty. He was no Pantheist, but his sensational principles leave the human reason no other office than that of verifying the credentials of the divine message. God's mind is different from our mind. If we are sure that He has spoken, we must accept the utterance as a mystery, though it has no vital relation to the painful inductions of experience. But the Pantheist made man's mind a homogeneous sample of God's mind. There could be no mystery at all.

This to the Platonist was the great offence of Stoicism.

The disputed question, whether Stoicism is to be called a religion, depends therefore on the prior question, whether there can be a religion without worship.

Pantheism cannot be hedonic, because it holds the stern belief in a present God; it cannot be altruistic, because its God is within. Hence this system, which seems to attain to an absolute unity, no sooner touches morality than it splits into two. God is the world; but practically the world is against God, because God is also the I, and the world is against the I.

Hence Stoicism issued in defiance of the world, or, as they often called it, "the flesh." We may discern in it the first Western philosophy of suffering, for its bent was clearly decided by that purpose. Man must find happiness, so the argument runs. If so, happiness must be absolutely in his own power. But pleasure he cannot command; pain he cannot avoid; therefore he must renounce pleasure, and bear pain without wincing. Externals are neither good nor evil; happiness and misery depend entirely on our own will. We can think this if we choose, and, if we think so, it is so.

It is just here that Buddhism joins hands with Stoicism. One regards the world as real, the other as unreal; but both are Pantheistic, and both are systems of resistance. "Whosoever," said Buddha, "shall adhere unweariedly to this law and discipline, he shall cross the ocean of life, and make an end of sorrow."

And again: "Rise up! sit up! what advantage is there in your sleeping? To men ailing, pierced by the darts of sorrow, what sleep indeed can there be? Sloth is defilement, to be ever heedless is defilement. By earnestness and wisdom root out your darts of sorrow" (Rhys Davids, *Buddhism*, pp. 79, 132). The resistance to pain implies the avoidance of pleasure, which inevitably, and most inevitably in its highest form of love, leads to pain. This policy of defiance can only be carried out by withdrawing into the citadel of self. Hence both systems are strongly individualistic. "Be lights unto yourselves," says Buddha. "Look within," says the Stoic. Both were Pantheists, and Pantheism seems to destroy individuality. Yet both issue in extreme self-assertion. Both refused to bear the burden of life, and life will not thus be flouted. But the Buddhist accepted the punishment of his mistake with the amiable melancholy of the Oriental, while the Stoic fought against it with the defiant self-reliance of the European. The difference is seen most clearly in the patience, with which the Buddhist waited for a Nirvana to be attained only after many lives. The Stoic was always prepared to make his own Nirvana with his own knife. "The door is always open," says Epictetus again and again. One of the worst features of Stoicism is not so much suicide in itself, as the theatrical effects with which the last great act of defiance was deliberately surrounded.

The Stoics had no grace, but they taught the manly virtues of self-reliance, fortitude, justice, purity, truth,

and, in a way, renunciation with splendid emphasis. But the rift in their system makes itself felt at every turn. "They teach," said Plutarch, "that man should live according to Nature. Yet all that we mean in ordinary speech by Nature, all the play of our material and social environment, they rank among things indifferent. And if these external circumstances, which in themselves are of no import, turn against a man, he is justified in killing himself. Surely Nature is not indifferent, but stupid, if she places thinking beings in a scene that can in no way contribute to their felicity, and may lead to their self-destruction."

Again, evil in the Stoic theory is according to Nature. If there were no evil, there would be no good; both are necessary to the constitution of the whole. "Yet," remarks the sage of Chaeronea, anticipating a well-known saying of Goethe, "they spend their time in trying to jump off their own shadow."

Or again, "Man they teach is a part of God; yet some men are evil. As if the Deity were an animal whose legs should walk different ways."

Epictetus insists on the sociability of man, but Stoicism is the most unsociable doctrine ever preached. Pleasure can hardly be tasted without a friend, but tranquillity stands absolutely alone. The Stoic used magnificent language about the World-City, the dear city of Zeus, which is full of friends; and their words bore much fruit in the enactments of the great Stoic lawyers. But to him, as to Carlyle,

mankind were "mostly fools." Epictetus speaks of children as "snivelling brats." The Stoic allowed no weak hands to cling round his neck ; he would suffer, but for himself alone. He set a high value on social duties, and discharged them faithfully ; but he taught that they are mere "relations," chance juxtapositions. A man must perform them, because it is the will of God, but they have no vital affinity to happiness. They give experience, but nothing more. For the sorrows or sins of others the Stoic consoled himself very easily. "Such men," says Marcus Aurelius, "do such things of necessity." He heard with the same placid smile of the infidelity of his wife, the martyrdom of Blandina, or the revolt of a province. Had he believed in the immortality of the soul, he would have thought more of the souls of others.

The Stoics were in theory determinists, but in practice they insisted in the most strenuous language that the will is free, to this extent at least, that it can always, and at any moment, choose what is right. "Not Zeus himself," says Epictetus, "can conquer the will." "Like a good king, a true father, he has given us a will untrammelled, uncompelled ; he has put it wholly in our own control, and not left even himself the power to thwart or hinder it."

It is curious to note the many points of similarity between Stoicism and Calvinism. The Stoics believed in instantaneous conversion. "What," asks Chrysippus, "if Lichas passed from vice to virtue while hurled into the sea by Hercules like a stone from a sling?" The words remind us of the knight

who found mercy "between the stirrup and the ground." They divided mankind into two classes: the "fool" who could do nothing right, and the "wise man" who could do nothing wrong. They taught that all sins are equal. "As well," they said, "be a mile under water as an inch." They disparaged literature and art, and had disputes about assurance and final perseverance. Some of them were antinomians; all of them may be called solifidians.

In its finer traits, as has often been remarked, Stoicism bears a striking, though superficial, resemblance to the Epistles of St. Paul, and it is, perhaps, more than a historical coincidence that its chief stronghold was Tarsus. Few, if any, of its great professors were Greeks, and its whole tone was anti-Hellenic. But it was admirably suited to the rigid integrity of the Roman character, and to the thin abstractions of the old Roman religion. Under the early empire it was the philosophy of the political dissenters; it was framed for rebellion, and could not bear the sunshine; it ruined Seneca, and was itself stifled by the purple of Aurelius.

Stoicism left behind it many enduring results, chief of which, for our purposes, are the Logos doctrine in physics, and in morals the conviction that man's happiness must be sought in the perfection of his moral and intellectual nature. They inherited this conviction from Socrates, but they deepened it immensely, though in a one-sided way. Their gospel is that of the Strong Man, but it may be said that this

harsh evangel has never been better preached in ancient or in modern times.

Their fault is that they refused to accept the teaching of facts. Pantheism insists on finding perfect unity in this world, and the force with which it pulls together the subject and object results in their springing more violently apart. Hence it became evident that the point of union must be sought above, in the conception of a God who made both the I and the Not-I, who therefore is higher than either, and yet in both. Thus the craving of thought for the One is satisfied, and the opposition of mind and sense is made susceptible of reconciliation ; there remains a difference, but no longer a contradiction.

This is the philosophical statement of the task attempted by the Platonists. All the objections which they urged against the Porch, its individualism, its rigorism, its moral inconsistency, its incompatibility with religion in general, and with Hellenism in particular, flow from the same source.

## II

### THE PYTHAGOREANS

THE reaction against Stoicism was the work partly of the Pythagoreans, partly of the Platonists. The names are not easy to distinguish. Plato himself "pythagorized," and, towards the end of the second century after Christ, the two schools melt into one another. The distinctive features of Pythagoreanism were the love of sacred numbers and the ascetic life.

Pythagoras flourished in the sixth century before Christ, and Diogenes Laertius tells us that the last philosophers of his school were "those whom Aristoxenus knew," the disciples of Philolaus and Eurytus of Tarentum. Philolaus was one of the teachers of Plato, and the mystic arithmetic of the *Timaeus* probably comes from him. Another famous name is that of Lysis, the tutor of Epaminondas. Aristotle wrote a treatise, no longer extant, on the Pythagoreans, and down to the end of the second century B.C. the sect attracted the attention of writers, among whom were Aristoxenus, Neanthes, Dicaearchus, and Hermippus.

When we are told that the school disappeared, we must understand that it renounced the lecture-hall, and ceased to write. The Pythagorean life maintained an apparently unbroken existence.

The earliest distinct traces of this ascetic discipline meet us in the literature of the fourth century before Christ, but they are at first connected rather with the name of Orpheus than with that of Pythagoras. Herodotus tells us, that the Egyptian priests would not wear woollen garments in the temple, and were never buried in woollen, "agreeing in this with those that we call Orphics and Pythagoreans." Woollen garments were forbidden from some mystic dread of animal contamination. The Hippolytus of Euripides, the stepson of the wicked Phaedra, eats no flesh, and lives in virgin chastity, because he takes Orpheus for his king. Plato knew a crowd of books ascribed to Orpheus and Musaeus. Some thought that they were compiled, or interpolated, or invented by Onomacritus, who tampered with the text of Homer, and was banished from Athens by Hipparchus for forgery.

It is curious that Aristophanes had nothing to say about these ascetics. They can hardly have been numerous in his day. A hundred years later the Pythagoreans, as they are now distinctively called, afford great sport to the comic writers. "The Pythagoreans," says one of the characters in the *Tarentines* of Alexis, "as we hear, neither eat kitchen-stuff, nor anything that has life, and they alone drink no wine." "Well, but," the other replies, "Epicharides is a Pythagorean, and he eats dogs." "Aye, but not till

he has killed them, and then they are no longer alive." "Eating dogs" may be meant for "demolishing cynics." The wits amused themselves with the meagre diet, the silence, the subtle disquisitions of the Pythagoreans, and even scoffed at them as "the unwashed." This was hard, for they washed oftener than most people.

Again after a long interval we come across new evidence of the Life. In Judaea it is thought by Zeller and Schürer to have contributed to the rise of Essenism. In the West, Cato heard Nearchus, a Pythagorean, lecture at Tarentum in 209 B.C. Ennius translated the works of Epicharmus of Megara, a comic poet of the fifth century, who interlarded his jokes with a dash of heavy philosophizing.

Towards the end of the second or beginning of the first century before Christ, the school broke once more into literary productiveness. About ninety Pythagorean treatises belonging to this period are enumerated by Zeller. They were nearly all pseudonymous. Many bore on their title-page names that belong to the ancient history of the school, that of Pythagoras himself, of Brontinus his father-in-law, Theano his wife, Telauges his son. A great mass were attributed to the old mathematician Archytas. The best known is the *Golden Verses*, a brief collection of moral precepts in seventy-one hexameter lines. Another famous treatise is that of Ocellus Lucanus, in which a brief sketch of a pantheist system is succeeded by some quaint rules for the ensurance of a beautiful progeny. Ocellus handed down to the later

Platonic school the Aristotelian tenet of the eternity of creation.

In the first century B.C. we find the school existing in Rome. One of its adherents was P. Nigidius Figulus, praetor and Pompeian, who was a voluminous writer, and enjoyed repute as astrologer, prophet, and magician. Vatinius is charged by Cicero with calling himself a Pythagorean, and sacrificing little boys. If he really did this, he was a mere necromancer. Cicero himself wrote a *Timaeus*, in which Nigidius figures as one of the *dramatis personae*. The learned Varro made frequent mention of Pythagoreanism, and the no less learned Alexander Polyhistor, who flourished at Rome between B.C. 80 and B.C. 62, has left us an account of certain *Pythagorean Commentaries*, which are of particular value, because they are thought to have been known to Aristotle, and in that case reach back beyond the apocryphal literature.

Pythagoras taught his disciples every evening, when they came back home, to say: "What have I done amiss? What duty have I done? What have I left undone?" Not to offer victims to the gods, but to worship only at bloodless altars; not to swear by the gods, but to live so that all men would believe their word. To revere elders; to honour gods before heroes, and heroes before men, and parents before all other men. To live so with one another as to make friends of enemies, and never to make enemies of friends. To call nothing their own; to support the law; to resist lawlessness; to destroy no cultivated plant, nor any beast that is not hurtful to man. That

modesty and discretion consist neither with uproarious laughter, nor with a sullen face. To avoid fullness of flesh ; to practise the memory ; neither to say nor do anything in a passion ; to respect all (or not at all) kinds of augury ; to sing hymns to the lyre, and cherish a grateful remembrance of good men. To avoid beans because they are windy, and so near akin to things that have soul. Wind and soul, it should be noted, may be expressed by the same word (*πνεῦμα*) in Greek.

In respect of doctrines, Polyhistor tells us, his book taught that Monad was the beginning of all things, and that out of the Monad came into being the Indefinite Dyad, which is, as it were, the matter for the Monad, the Cause, to work upon. The Monad is the One God ; it is a phrase which constantly reappears in this sense. The Indefinite Dyad, or Two, is matter not yet shaped and ordered. It will be noticed that Polyhistor's authority speaks of it as evolved out of the One, which is Pantheism and not Platonism. Out of the One and Two spring the other numbers, and from these points, lines, superficies, and solids. Hence the world we know, which is animated, intelligent, and spherical. In the middle of it is the earth, which is also spherical and inhabited all round, so that what to us is down, is to the antipodes up.

Thus all science, physical and mental, is resolved into arithmetic and geometry. The Pythagoreans had observed the numerical relations of musical sounds, and found in them the explanation of everything, just as a modern savant finds the clue to eternity in

evolution. They would have been immensely interested in the combination formulae of modern chemistry. Like ourselves, they measured the great unknown by the little known. They regarded number not as the manifestation of law, but as the law itself. To the Platonist law was the Idea, the thought of God. Both numbers and ideas are immaterial, and thus they were readily confused. But the numbers were not only mathematical and scientific, they were also religious, and had a life of their own derived from Judaea and Babylonia. They were tricky sprites, and we shall see what they made of Platonism in the end.

The soul, the *Commentaries* proceed, is a "bit broken off" the aether, "cold aether" ( $\psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\eta}$  being supposed to come from  $\psi\acute{\upsilon}\chi\omega$ ), but it is immortal, because the aether is immortal. It is divided into three parts, situated in different parts of the body; the intelligence, which inhabits the brain, is alone properly immortal. After death the soul still wears the shape of the body. Pure souls are conducted by Hermes to "the Highest"; impure souls dwell in solitude, each by itself, cut off from all communion with their kind, "bound by the Furies in adamantine chains." The whole air is full of souls; these are called demons and heroes, and by them are sent dreams and prognostications of health and sickness to man and beast. To them appertain lustral and propitiatory rites, augury, and omens.

The *Commentaries*, as they stand, show signs of Stoic influence, quote the *Golden Verses*, and give to

God a Hebrew title, "the Highest." Their exact nature and date are uncertain, but we may accept them as perhaps the oldest existing monument of Pythagoreanism. Like the *Golden Verses*, they form a sort of catechism or manual adapted to be learned by heart; the philosophy is archaic, confused, and imperfect. The Pythagoreans were spiritualists, yet, from the "cold soul," it can be seen that they had only imperfectly grasped what is meant by spirit. Their system was more a religion than a philosophy; in fact, it was not a system, but a handful of leading ideas, which were allied through the doctrine of numbers to Pantheism, yet could readily be adapted to Platonism, and were finally absorbed by that school. They believed in immortality, in transmigration, in communion with God; they believed in the unity of all, in One God as the author of all. They had taken the Eleatic One, a mere abstraction of the schools, and made it an object of worship, that is to say, they had grasped the relation of science to faith. But with this deity of the reason, not of the conscience, they combined all the gods and demigods of Polytheism, the "created gods" of Plato, a long range of beings of mixed nature, ranging from seraphic goodness to devilish maleficence. All were to be worshipped and propitiated, though not in the same way. "Equal honours must not be paid to gods and heroes. The gods are to be worshipped at all times with holy words, white garments, and purity; the heroes only in the afternoon." Purity is to be attained by baths and sprinklings, and by avoiding things that

defile—the touch of a corpse, unclean food, and so forth. Flesh, wine, and marriage are not absolutely prohibited, but abstinence is to be understood as a counsel of perfection. We observe further a love of music, a pitifulness, a tendency to socialism and to mysticism, generally a touch of art, of affection, of romance, that lead us very far away from the rigid common sense of Stoicism. The Pythagorean was in contact with the unseen, and his morality was “touched with emotion,” or in other words, was religious. This was, naturally, the ground on which Paganism elected to do battle with the Church. The agnosticism of the Porch, with its utter lack of enthusiasm, had no chance at all.

Pythagoreanism seems to have had no existence in Rome itself during the first or even the second century after Christ, though it made great progress elsewhere. Its chief records come to us from a later date, but with a little careful sifting they yield a clear picture of the ideas that were coming into vogue between the times of Augustus and Marcus Aurelius. We have to do with two romances of markedly anti-Christian character, the lives of Pythagoras and of Apollonius of Tyana.

There were scores of lives of Pythagoras, of which three are extant by Diogenes Laertius, Porphyry, and Iamblichus. The last is perhaps the very worst biography in existence. The truth is, that scarcely anything is known about this famous man. It is probable that he himself never put pen to paper, but even this is disputed.

He was born about 580 B.C., son of Mnesarchus, a Samian, or, as some said, a Tyrrhenian ; domiciled at Samos, taught by Pherecydes of Syros, initiated in all the Greek mysteries, and a great traveller. That he visited Egypt in the time of King Amasis is certain ; in later times he was said to have made acquaintance with Arabs, Chaldees, Hebrews, Indians, Galatians, in a word, all the inspired peoples of the East. From his long-continued voyage, he returned to Samos, but, disgusted with the tyranny of Polycrates, and finding by experience that a prophet has no honour in his own country, he emigrated to Croton in South Italy, a flourishing city, famous in particular for its school of medicine and for its athletes. There his teaching, enforced by his striking personality, produced an electric effect. Men flocked to hear him, adopted his practices, and formed themselves into a sect, or brotherhood. The result was a widespread and passionate moral reformation, "incontinence disappeared, luxury became discredited, and women hastened to exchange their golden ornaments for the simplest attire" (Grote, iv. p. 541). A change so violent would excite many enemies, and hostility was embittered by the political activity of the new sect. A popular insurrection was headed by Ninon and Kylon ; the Pythagoreans were attacked in the temple of Apollo, or the house of Milo ; the building was set on fire, and many perished in the flames. What became of Pythagoras himself no man knew, but in the time of Cicero his tomb was shown at Metapontum. The sect never again attained to power, though, as

we have seen, it continued in a way to exist both in Italy and elsewhere.

That Pythagoras was regarded in very early times as endowed with miraculous powers there can be no doubt. Hermippus treats him as an impostor on this very account, and by so doing testifies to the belief of his followers. Pythagoras not only taught the transmigration of souls, but professed to know what had happened to himself and to others in previous existences. Xenophanes of Elea tells us, that once seeing a dog beaten, he desired the striker to forbear, saying, "It is the soul of a friend of mine, whom I recognize by the voice." Another story tells that the soul of Pythagoras had inhabited the body of Hermotimus, and in that shape recognized in Apollo's temple at Branchidae the shield which, as Euphorbus, he had wielded in the Trojan war. He had a golden thigh, like Pelops, which he once showed to Abaris as a proof of his divine mission. Later writers added greatly to his supernatural character. Some said that he was son not of Mnesarchus, but of Apollo and Parthenis, the "virgin mother," and there was a widespread belief that he was, at any rate, an avatar of the sun-god. On one occasion, when he had retired to pray on Mount Carmel, the sailors, waiting for him in the boat below, saw him return to them floating over rocks and precipices. He began his ministry by causing a miraculous draught of fishes, cured diseases by incantations, appeared at one and the same time at Metapontum and Tauromenium, and died after a fast prolonged for forty days. He was a

brother to the birds and beasts; an ox, into the ear of which he had whispered, never ate beans any more, and a wild eagle perched upon his wrist, and allowed him to stroke its feathers. He was lord even of inanimate nature, and when he was crossing the river Nessus, or Caucasus, the waters cried to him, "Hail, Pythagoras." Iamblichus professes to doubt some of these miracles, and tells his brethren that they went too far, in believing that of a god nothing was incredible. The impression he wishes to leave is, that such things were possibly true of Pythagoras, but certainly not true of our Lord. However, the stories were current.

To the first century may probably be ascribed the received account of the constitution of the Pythagorean sect. Diogenes Laertius says nothing about it, but other writers represent it as a strictly organized body consisting of two or three distinct classes. Of these the highest alone, after a novitiate of five years' silence, were admitted to the inner secrets of the school. The initiated are said to have recognized one another by secret signs, like those of the Freemasons. The account rests upon an idea, which had long been gaining ground, that philosophy was like the mysteries, and that every great teacher must have esoteric as well as exoteric doctrines,—doctrines, that is to say, which are not merely more difficult, but more sacred than others, so that it is a sin to reveal them to the outer world. That the school had a compact form is highly probable from its history; that it had the particular form ascribed to it in im-

perial times, is exceedingly dubious. The statements of Iamblichus and Porphyry have probably no other foundation than the fact, that Pythagoras delighted to clothe his moral teaching in a parabolic form, in "symbols" as they were called. Such were the maxims, "not to jump over the steelyard," "not to sit upon a bushel," "not to admit swallows into the house," "not to poke the fire with a sword," "not to turn one's face back upon a journey," the explanation of which may be commended to the ingenious reader. But the classes which never did exist, and the *disciplina arcani* which to a certain extent did, were useful weapons against the Church, which had a somewhat similar organization in the division into baptized and catechumens, and guarded the Eucharist from all but the first.

Two of the most attractive features of Pythagoreanism, on which the biographers with justice lay great stress, are the high value it sets upon friendship, and its respect for women. The romantic story of Damon and Phintias is too well known to need repetition; but many similar, if less beautiful, anecdotes were current in the school; how Clinias of Tarentum collected a large sum of money, and sailed to Cyrene to rescue Prorus from bankruptcy; how another brother rewarded the good innkeeper, who had nursed and piously buried a destitute traveller. Pythagoras was reputed to have taught, that "friends have all in common," and that "a friend is another self," and he bequeathed a generous brotherly spirit to his disciples. Women, too, were the object of special care. The

Pythagoreans held chastity in great esteem, and looked upon celibacy as a special grace. It was no doubt a consequence of their regard for sexual purity, that they treated women with a reverence and tenderness unknown otherwise in the ancient world. They believed them to be as capable of inspiration as men. They numbered women among their martyrs, such as Timycha, who bit her tongue out rather than betray her husband; and seventeen women are included in what we may call the calendar of saints given by Iamblichus. Down to the last women continued to occupy a conspicuous place in the history of the school.

The biography of Apollonius of Tyana is very similar to that of Pythagoras. Here also it is impossible to discriminate fact from fiction. The long and tedious life composed by Philostratus, in obedience to the command of Julia Domna, the wife of the Emperor Severus, quite early in the third century, is what Germans call a *Tendenz Roman*, a novel with a purpose. Hierocles, early in the fourth century, expressly sets Apollonius against Christ, and there can be no doubt that this comparison was in the mind of Philostratus also.

Epictetus quotes a fine saying of Apollonius: "When you wish to discipline yourself, and it is hot and you are thirsty, take a mouthful of cold water and spit it out, and tell nobody." This is the sole notice by a contemporary of this remarkable man. He is said to have died about 98 A.D., at the age of a hundred. He wrote books on Sacrifice, and on

Astrological Prediction, which are lost with the exception of a few lines. A collection of letters attributed to him remains, but is of doubtful authenticity. All that we know with certainty is, that he was regarded as a perfect model of the Pythagorean life, and that he was credited with miraculous powers. For this last fact we can quote the testimony of his enemies. Moeragenes charged him with bewildering Euphrates the Stoic, and Lucian classes him as an impostor with Alexander of Abonoteichos.

We may notice here a point of some importance. The Pythagoreans, though they believed in witchcraft, or magic, like that of Horace's Canidia, regarded the black art with a certain aversion. The miraculous powers, which they claimed for their most eminent men, depended, like those of the Buddhists, on extreme asceticism, and were never harmful. Hence it was possible for the Platonist Celsus, though a believer in miracles, to write "against magicians," and to sympathize with the Epicurean Lucian, who delighted in running down a charlatan. It is easy to see how Origen was led into the mistake of regarding Celsus as himself an Epicurean. What was asserted by some against Apollonius and Alexander, and by others against our Lord, was that their signs and wonders were the proof not of *iddhi*, of white and beneficent art, but of the black magic of the *magus*, or the prestidigitation of the *goes*. The distinction is subtle, for though black magic might not be used to do harm, it was held lawful to employ it against the black magic of wicked people.

The clearest glimpse that we obtain of Apollonius, is afforded by a passage from his book "on Sacrifices," quoted by the learned Eusebius in his *Praeparatio Evangelica*. "If a man wishes to pay fitting service to the Deity, and by that means to be singled out as an object of divine grace and goodness, he must offer to that God, whom we called the First, who is One and above all, after whom only can the other deities be recognized, no sacrifice at all; he must kindle no fire, nor promise any earthly thing. For He needs nothing, not even from beings that are higher than we; nor is there any plant, any creature, produced or nourished by earth or air, which is free from pollution. To Him man must offer only the better word, I mean that which is not uttered by the lips, and ask good things from the most Beautiful of all, by the most beautiful faculty that we possess. This faculty is intelligence, which needs no organ. Therefore to the great and supreme God no sacrifices at all must be offered."

The writer distinguishes, in a way that is already familiar to us, between the One God and the lower gods, heroes, and demons. Inferior deities might be propitiated with the reek of sacrifice. The Lord of All gives all, but receives nothing. Here we have the sublimest conception of Theism, united to what the Fathers of the Church rightly regarded as devil-worship, yet soaring above the paganism out of which it sprang.

But observe the price at which the heathen bought this high vision. The Father has become the Ineffable, the Absolute, who "needs nothing," and cannot

be thought, can only be seen, as a bright light, by the rapt intelligence, that is, by the intuitive power of the mind. The prayer offered to Him is no spoken petition, but "the better word," the voiceless gaze of ecstatic communion, in which all consciousness is suspended as in a trance.

Compare this with the language of the Psalmist: "For Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it Thee; but Thou delightest not in burnt offerings. The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, shalt Thou not despise." The Pagan God desired no sacrifice; but he knew nothing of troubled spirits. For broken hearts there was Cybele, or Isis, or Demeter, with the wild frenzy of their mysteries. It was their function to deaden for a time, for they could not cure, the anguish of the trembling soul.

How far Apollonius was deceived, and how far deceiver, it is needless to inquire. He lived habitually in that borderland of imagination, which is peopled with the creatures of fancy, and where nothing but the strong curb of Christian morality can save men from delusion. We need not recount his fictitious life, which is very much a replica of that of Pythagoras. One scene only deserves notice, that of his Passion. When Domitian began to persecute the philosophers, Apollonius sailed to Italy to beard the tyrant. He was denounced by Euphrates, the Stoic Pharisee, and charged with having sacrificed a boy, with pretending to be God, and with speaking against Caesar. He was not betrayed by a disciple—Celsus treated the

treachery of Judas as a proof of the impotence of Our Lord, who had not succeeded in persuading even His nearest adherents—but Damis and Demetrius, two apostles who fill the place of St. Peter and St. Thomas, who doubt but do not deny, follow him to see the end. Apollonius appears before the Emperor, is mocked and ill-treated, and challenged to save himself by a miracle. He accepts the challenge, and vanishes from sight. Such, thinks Philostratus, should have been the behaviour of our Lord. The cross was impossible. A crucified Saviour was to the heathen mind the same thing as an ass-headed God.

Some time after the accession of Nerva, Apollonius ascended into heaven. At what precise date he received divine honours we cannot say, but that he received them is certain. Caracalla built him a shrine, and Aurelian was prevented from destroying Tyana by a vision of Apollonius, who came to intercede for his birthplace. The Emperor recognized his visitor, because he had seen his statue in so many fanes.

The romance of Philostratus is marked by great bitterness against the Stoics, and attacks the heathen priesthood for their blind, unreforming obstinacy. Its purpose is to advocate a new paganism, the programme of which was the union of Church and State under the Emperor as God's vicegerent, the abolition of bloody sacrifices, and Apollonius for Messiah. All mythologies were to be recognized, and if Christianity would come in, a place should be found for it.

To the Pythagoreans of the first century belong

also the names of Moderatus of Gades in Spain, and Nicomachus of the Arabian Gerasa. The latter was a mathematician of some note, and speculated largely in the religious significance of numbers. Perhaps the reader will like to know exactly what this means. One denotes God, Intelligence, Form, and in religion Apollo ( $\acute{\alpha}\text{-}\pi\omicron\lambda\lambda\acute{\alpha}$  = not many), the Sun, or Atlas. But as all is evolved from the One, it also signifies Matter, Darkness, Chaos. In the first aspect it is the male, in the second the female element in creation; hence the Supreme is masculo-feminine. With Two begins multiplicity, the antithesis of the many to the one; hence, this again stands for Matter, and, in religion, for Isis or Aphrodite. Three is the first true number, because it exhibits the proportionate harmony of beginning, middle, and end; hence the sacred triplets which we see everywhere, in art, in science, and in theology. Four was also a mystery; are there not four quarters of the sky? So was Five, for there are five fingers and five senses; and Seven, for this is the number of the planets. Greatest of all these sacred emblems was the Tetractys, by which the Pythagoreans swore, but whether it was four, ten, or thirty-six is uncertain. To us all this seems incredibly childish, but at any rate it gave a zest to the arid science of numbers. In pursuit of this will-of-the-wisp the Pythagorean discovered geometry and the laws of music, as alchemists lighted upon chemistry, and astrologers on the science of the stars. Thus men find kingdoms while searching for asses.

One other freak of Nicomachus is worth a word.

The Babylonians, he says, and Ostanes, and Zoroaster call the stars "flocks," ἀγέλαι. Change the gender of this noun, and add a second g, and we have "angels," ἄγγελοι, and archangels the name of the stars and of the demons. Angel is, of course, the Greek word for "messenger," but this was far too simple an explanation for the Pythagorean.

But, as a name for heavenly beings, angel was used only in the New Testament, and in the Greek version of the Old. It is from one of these sources, probably from the Septuagint, that the word had come to the knowledge of Nicomachus. Perhaps it had reached the ears even of Epictetus, for he says that "the Cynic is sent to man as an angel from Zeus."

Here we seem to catch a glimpse of one of the little hidden pipes, through which a knowledge of the Bible was trickling into heathen thought. We see also the sensitiveness to Oriental influences, which marked Pythagoreanism from first to last. This is the explanation of the Neoplatonist dualism. The philosophy of Plotinus was purely Greek ; his religion only was hybrid.

### III

#### THE PLATONISTS, ATTICUS, ETC.

WE must now turn to those men whose work it was to revive, though with considerable differences, the distinctive teaching of Plato.

The revolt against the sceptical conclusions of the Academics was begun by Antiochus of Ascalon, whose lectures Cicero attended at Athens in 79 B.C. From him dates the reaction in favour of dogmatism, that is, of the inculcation of definite systematic teaching. He taught the Platonists once more to believe in the attainability of truth, and gave them a creed, the creed of the master whose name they professed.

It was long before the reaction gained a footing in Rome itself. Epictetus knew no readers of the *Republic* except a few ladies of the "emancipated" type, who prattled about the marriage arrangements of the ideal state, much as their modern sisters do about the dramas of Ibsen. Down to the end of the Flavian dynasty Roman society, or such part of it as cared to have a creed at all, was divided between Epicureans who denied, Academics who doubted, and

Stoics who affirmed but hardly reasoned. The last numbered in their ranks all the best and strongest characters.

Even in the Greek-speaking provinces, before Flavian times, we meet with no Platonist of eminence except the Alexandrian Philo, and the influence of this remarkable man did not make itself felt till late in the second century, when a school of Christian scholars had arisen in his native town, and his Judaism was no longer absolutely unintelligible to a certain section of the Neoplatonists. The names of Thrasyllus, Dercyllidas, Moderatus, Areios, Didymus, and Eudorus, are of little importance except for the student of literary history, and the dates of the two last are uncertain. Theon of Smyrna (A.D. 20—140) belongs rather to the roll of mathematicians. But, after the middle of the first Christian century, we begin to meet with a number of distinguished names. Plutarch was born in A.D. 48; Dion Chrysostom about A.D. 50. To the palmy days of the Antonines belong Favorinus, Calvisius Taurus, Nigrinus, Celsus, Atticus, Maximus Tyrius, and the famous physician Galen. About the middle of the second century, the idéas, which gave birth to Neoplatonism, emerge in Albinus, or Alcinous (there is some doubt as to his true name), and Apuleius, and take more and more distinct shape in Numenius and Ammonius Saccas.

We have already observed the point of view from which the Platonist opposed Stoicism. On the great moral points of the sufficiency of virtue for happiness and the brotherhood of man the two schools were almost

in complete accord. Even in physics, so far as their roads lay together, there was a certain agreement. The Platonist added the transcendence to the immanence of God, and hence arose a considerable religious difference. But, in all that touched what we call natural science, he borrowed very freely the language of his rival. What he complained of was, that Stoicism could give no sufficient reason for its own conduct that it had no religion, and was unable to explain the moral obligations that it insisted upon with such vehemence.

A remarkable passage of Atticus, preserved by Eusebius in his *Praeparatio Evangelica* (xv. 4—9), will show the reader the attitude of Platonism towards another great system of thought. Atticus belongs probably to the middle of the second century, and he is writing against the Peripatetics, the school of Aristotle. The main charge which he presses against Aristotle is, that his morality is commonplace; and the causes of this defect he finds in Deism, and in the vagueness of his teaching as to the immortality of the soul.

Aristotle regarded virtue as the mean between two emotional extremes attained by habit under the guidance of reason. Happiness, he taught, was the supreme object of man's endeavour, and virtue is the chief cause of happiness. But he allowed also a certain weight to external goods, birth, wealth, health, beauty, and fortune generally. No one would call king Priam a happy man, and he would doubtless have added, no one could give the name to St. Paul. This the Platonist regards as a "poor, low, vulgar, womanish" idea of

happiness. It "takes away from virtue its crown and royal sceptre;" it does not fire the heart, and cannot help the young and ardent. Virtue is no longer the "way to heaven," but a dull, earthly track, in which the fox has as much chance as the eagle. Happiness itself becomes the sport of fortune; a stroke of the clock gives it, and takes it away.

The Platonist is here in very close agreement with the Stoic. Virtue is happiness. Earth can neither make, nor mar, the true life of the soul. On this position, that righteousness is its own sufficient reward, that where the mind is right all is right, there was no difference between the two schools. It was the teaching of Plato himself. Readers of the *Republic* will remember the famous passage, where he insists, that the just man will be happy, though he should be crucified for his justice. In ethics as in physics, the difference lies not in the fact, but in the way in which the fact was linked on to a higher truth. To the Platonist virtue is the "way to heaven," to the Stoic it is not.

The criticism of Atticus, it may be added, is just as far as it goes. The morality of Aristotle is commonplace, and, because commonplace, untrue. Doing a thing ten times over will not make us like it, if the thing is disagreeable. But Atticus does not state the objection in the precise form that suggests itself at once to the Christian reader of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. The initial fault lies in the very attempt to define Happiness, that is, Perfection. For no man can define that which he has not attained, nor can we fathom the capacities of our nature, until they have received their utmost

expansion. The Platonist saw this, for he placed happiness in the vision of God, but he did not see it clearly, for he attempted to define God Himself, and so brought back the limitation. And further, he omitted to notice that the righteous man, of whom Plato spoke, might be happy not in spite, but in consequence, of his crucifixion.

The reason for this low-pitched morality Atticus discerned, and here again he was right, in the Deism of Aristotle. Deism regards God as creating and equipping the world, and then leaving it to itself. Nature is, as it were, a watch, which He sends forth from His hands so perfectly adjusted that it needs no further interference. Man is furnished with reason; and this is his only and sufficient guide. Like Epicurus, says Atticus, Aristotle represents the gods as "spectators in a theatre." Nay, he is worse; for while Epicurus "turned the gods out of the world altogether," Aristotle "imprisons them in the world," brings them close enough to see and hear, and yet teaches that they do not care. This may be a harsh judgment, but it was the general opinion. The Christian fathers, no doubt, gathered from writers like Atticus the view, which with one accord they express, that, according to Aristotle, providence "reaches down to the moon," but no further, and takes no count of what from them we have learned to call "sublunary" affairs. Deism is of course materialistic, because it limits God locally, and it was therefore abhorrent to the Platonist. Pantheism he could speak of with equanimity, for though he would not allow that God was in Nature,

he insisted very strongly that Nature was in God. But Deism turns the Infinite into "an absentee landlord."

The criticism of Atticus may be hostile, but it is not practically unjust, for Aristotle, "the scribe of nature," is certainly the author of that divorce from religion, which has so often left morality barren. Nor is it unjust to say that Aristotle in effect denies the immortality of the soul. His expressions are obscure and uncertain. The soul, which is in his view merely sentient and emotional, is an "entelechy," a form, or, as we should say, a function of the body, though it may bear to the body the relation of "a sailor to his boat." The Intelligence (*νοῦς*) "comes in afterwards from out of doors," and is imperishable and divine. But, whatever these enigmatic utterances may mean, no use is made of them. Rewards and punishments, aspiration, grace, the hope of infinite perfection in a future life, lie wholly outside of the Peripatetic system. The soul might as well be mortal, there is no "friendship" between it and God. To Atticus this indifference seemed dreadful. The belief in the soul's immortality is "the cement that holds together the Platonic school;" all that is "great and bright and ardent" in virtue flows from this faith. If the soul truly is, it never can die, and must be in constant contact with the world of life, truth, and beauty, to which by its nature it belongs. To doubt its immortality is to doubt its existence, and such a doubt is a practical denial of all fellowship between God and man.

Thus Deism was found as unsatisfying as Pantheism.

These two systems are philosophies, but not religions. The first has no grace, and the second has no righteousness. But the second century was anxiously groping about for grace and righteousness; and the spread of Platonism was due not more to its speculative power, than to the spiritual cravings of the age. It was a time of wild religious emotion. Heathenism is generally passionate; and the world's nerves were strained by physical misery, which in some districts was very acute, by the influx of maddening Oriental fanaticisms, and no doubt also by antagonism to Christianity.) In the time of Hadrian, Oenomaus wrote a book against the Oracles, entitled *The Charlatans Unmasked*, a little later Demonax scoffed at the mysteries, and Lucian scoffed at everything. But these are isolated phenomena. The decadence of the Oracles, which Plutarch lamented, was merely accidental, caused by the shifting of population and political change. Men were not less anxious to pry into the future, but they had found out cheaper, safer, and baser methods for the satisfaction of their curiosity.

It is commonly said that the second century exhibits a marked advance in the direction of monotheism. This is by no means true. Philosophers spoke of One God, as they always had done, but they found at the same time excellent reasons for worshipping every deity and every demon known to mythology. In the world at large polytheism had never been so rampant or so degraded. The deification of men was one of the signs of the times. Not to reckon the Caesars, Apollonius, Neryllinus, Antinous, and Alexander of

Abonoteichos, of whom the two last were infamous characters, all received divine honours. Peregrinus, another bad man, aspired to the same dignity. The mother of Dion Chrysostom was worshipped, and probably there were many similar instances. Men addicted themselves to particular divinities, but merely as to the biggest and strongest of the supernatural powers. Naturally they were unable to distinguish one deity very accurately from another. Each nation had its own hierarchy, and these hierarchies were regarded as identical. The Zeus of Greece was confused with the Jupiter of Rome, the Osiris of Egypt, the Baal of Phœnicia, and the minor gods were interchanged in the same way. Mythologies were mixed but not simplified.

The true characteristic of the age is to be found in the eager craving for some kind of divine grace and some kind of divine righteousness. To the heathen mind these ideas necessarily assumed the shape of lustral purifications, frenzied possession, and a ceremonial moral law. For these purposes the old Roman religion was absolutely useless. It lived on in Caesar-worship, which was no new thing—Roman history begins with the apotheosis of Romulus—and was as devoid of spiritual significance as our own ceremony of drinking the Queen's health. Caesarism typified the blessings of political unity, and the ancient Roman deities were all moral emblems of the same kind. They were not persons but abstractions, as Mommsen has admirably shown. But in any case they were dead and gone. The gods of Horace and Virgil are

Greek gods, though they bear Latin names, and under the Empire the real character of the indigenous Roman worship was known only to the antiquarian. This singular religious revolution was effected quite noiselessly, and even the writers, by whom it was accomplished, do not seem to know what they were doing. They brought about for the two mythologies of Greece and Rome the same kind of fusion, that was being applied to all known mythologies under the reign of the Antonines.

The religion of the old Romans had fewer fables and more morality than that of any of the ancient peoples. They worshipped the domestic, economic, and political virtues. Heaven was an exact copy of the earthly state and household. Jupiter and Juno presided over all as Lord and Lady, Ops gave plenty, the Penates watched over the store-closet, Janus guarded the door. Every act and every condition of life, good or evil, great or insignificant, had its heavenly superintendent. Salus sent health, and Febris fevers. But these thin abstractions neither lent themselves to art nor ministered emotions. Hence came the peculiar charm of Stoicism for the Roman mind; it was, in fact, the philosophic expression of the national religious bent. But art and emotion, dangerous as they may be, are inseparable in the long run from worship. As civilization broadens, the feelings and the imagination are quickened and demand nutriment, and, if this necessity cannot be supplied from native sources, it must be met by importations from abroad. The influx of Greek and

Oriental ideas, that is to say, of art and of enthusiasm, into Rome, was in one sense a deterioration, for it certainly lowered the moral tone. But in another aspect it may be regarded as an essential step in the education of the race. ✓

Emotion, as was natural in times when man's passions were far more violent and rapid than now, was sought for in its keenest forms, and these came mainly from the far East. Cybele, with Atys and her frantic Galli, was brought from Phrygia, by decree of the Senate itself, in the agony of the Hannibalian war. In 186 B.C. the Bacchic orgies took root in Rome, produced the most intolerable wickedness of all kinds, and were suppressed by the police with the most sanguinary rigour. From Egypt, in the latter days of the Republic, came Isis, Osiris, and Serapis. Virgil expresses the old Roman contempt for the brute gods of the Nile, and their intrusion met with vehement opposition on the part of the authorities. On one occasion the emperor Tiberius was so exasperated by a disgusting scandal, that he crucified the priests of Isis, pulled down the sanctuary, and threw the statue of the goddess into the Tiber. But early in the second century the struggle was abandoned, and temples of Isis were erected without let or hindrance, even within the limits of the sacred *pomoerium*, that is to say, in the heart of the city of Rome. About the same time the worship of the Persian Mithra attained to great popularity.

Mithra, "the Unconquered Comrade," was an especial favourite with the army. The caves, in which

he was worshipped, are found wherever the Roman legions were stationed, in England and elsewhere. He belonged to the system of Zoroaster, which is still professed by the Parsees, and of all the ancient non-Biblical religions was the purest and most elevated. Zoroastrianism tolerated no idols, and its chief symbol was the sacred fire. Its governing idea is dualism. In this world we see an unceasing and universal conflict between Ormuzd the spirit of good, and Ahriman the spirit of evil. One day the good will triumph, and Mithra is the mediator, by whom the victory will be achieved. Hence he is represented on the monuments as a youth slaying a bull, and he was worshipped in caverns. The cavern is this dark world, and the bull typifies the power of evil. Mithraism had rites of initiation, sacraments, a hierarchy, and a society. It was widely diffused and strongly organized. But, except in the ecclesiastical writers, it is little heard of, probably because it gave rise to no scandals, was sober in its ritual, and made no noise in the streets. Zoroastrianism, with much barbarous superstition, combined a deep sense of moral evil, and of all the pagan influences at work in the second century, it was, as far as we can judge, the most wholesome.

Isis worship was far more stirring, and far more dangerous. It was built upon the well-known myth, which tells how Osiris was slain by the wicked demon Typhon, and how Isis his wife, with labour and sorrow, wandered over Egypt, gathering together the mutilated limbs of her murdered lord. Here again

we have the strife of good and evil, but in a far more sensuous and passionate form. Isis was represented with a rattle in her hand, because she stirred the mind to frenzy. Every point in her worship was calculated to rouse and excite. There were masquerading processions in the streets like those of a modern carnival, there were prolonged fasts and elaborate scenic representations by night. What these were we can only divine, but from our knowledge of the Egyptian Ritual of the Dead, and from such books as Mr. Le Page Renouf's *Hibbert Lectures*, we can form an idea, which will not be far wrong. The sorrows of Isis, the torments of the damned, the happiness of the blessed, would be exhibited, with all the resources of the stage, before the eyes of spectators, wrought up to the pitch of excitement by fasting and expectation. There they would see the crocodile lying in wait for the wretched soul that has not obeyed the directions of the priest, and there they would learn the magic words, that enable the faithful to escape from his jaws.

Besides the great mysteries, which had their gorgeous temples and crowds of worshippers in the great cities, there were a host of little ones, bringing the cup of frenzy to the lips of peasants in out-of-the-way corners. The vagabond priest of the Syrian goddess wandered from village to village, with an ass laden with his paraphernalia, and a couple of dancing boys. At each hamlet they set up their idol, performed a wild dance, gashing their arms with knives as they whirled madly about, and made a collection.

All these orgiastic worships inculcated the belief in a future life, as it presents itself to the mind of barbarians. That is to say, as a scene of woe where yet some kind of happiness may be procured by due payment. Isis, Adonis, Thammuz, Atys, Dionysus Zagreus are all of the same family. They rest upon the terror of the unseen and the tragedy of existence, and they express these awful thoughts in fables of hideous deaths and savage mutilations. They are all of great antiquity, belonging to the primary stratum of religious belief, and their renewed popularity in the second century must be regarded as a sort of volcanic upheaval of the hidden depths. They all played upon fear, and all were unable to turn fear to any moral end. They fulfilled the task which Aristotle assigns to tragedy, purging the breast from time to time of the swelling emotions of terror and pity, and so producing a temporary calm. They told of a suffering God, and promised a kind of atonement ; but what they taught men to bewail with frenzied lamentations was the suffering, not the sinfulness, of life. They testify to the deep unrest of the time and its readiness for better teaching, but what sort of character they tended to shape we see in the case of Apuleius.

These maddening Oriental deities were not artistic and were not reasonable, and their worship was generally regarded by the heathen themselves only as a kind of safety-valve, a means of discharging the perilous accumulation of religious melancholy in the shortest and safest way, by noise, and movement, and temporary insanity. On all these grounds they were

viewed by the educated Greek with a certain reserve, as upon the whole necessary and even salutary, yet not as possessing any high spiritual value. They belonged to demons, not to gods, and, though the demons must be propitiated, because they can do us harm, they are not the givers of the most precious gifts. These must be looked for in the reasonable service of the bright gods of Olympus.

Greece too had its mysteries. We know little about the rites of Eleusis; the secret was well kept. But they stood no doubt to those of Egypt in the same relation as the poetic tale of Demeter and Proserpine to the ghastly myth of Osiris. They had the same office, that of providing anodynes for affliction, remorse, and all those states of mental disquiet, which under Christian guidance lead to penitence. But what the educated Greek loved best were the serene and tranquil deities, who gave good things and never did harm, who presided with benignity over all the joys and interests of life, and were never hard upon their worshippers. Homer, and all the choir of poets, had sung of them. Pheidias, and artists innumerable, had made them live in marble. Everywhere their beautiful presence was visible, in the lecture-halls of the university, in the market-place of the town, by haunted grove and stream. They dispensed to all men wisdom, prosperity, and merriment.

Unfortunately men are not always wise, and disasters come thick and fast. The Homeric frame of mind suited the ideal temperament of the Greek and the bright days of life, but in times of distress

heathenism turned instantly into devil-worship. This was largely its character even in Greece, and almost universal elsewhere. When the beloved Germanicus died, the people cast the images of the Penates into the gutter. Such wild revolt against the injustice of heaven is not unknown in Roman Catholic countries, where civilization is backward. Renan has told us of a Breton blacksmith, who threatened to shoe the Virgin with red-hot iron, if his daughter did not recover. In heathenism it was an every-day incident. At Rome, on the tomb of a young girl, is found the following inscription—"Procope manus levo contra Deum qui me innocentem sustulit," "I, Procope, lift my hands against God, who cut short my innocent life." Below is a rude sculpture of two hands upraised in protest. Germanicus, the emperor Titus, Servianus in the time of Hadrian, and the emperor Julian, all died with the same indignant sense of injustice in their hearts and on their lips. Even professed sceptics, like Pliny the elder and Lucan, believed in the most hideous forms of magic. Human sacrifice was not unknown; the emperors Nero, Hadrian, Commodus, Didius Julianus, Heliogabalus, and Valerian were all charged with this crime. So universal was the belief in witchcraft, that every man of remarkable attainments was believed to have commerce with the infernal powers. In the fourth century St. Athanasius enjoyed a wide reputation among the heathen, and even among the Arians, for knowledge of the black art. In the second century people in country districts were as much afraid of demons, as the inhabitants of an African

kraal often are, with good reason, of lions or elephants. The air was full of these malignant beings, ever ready to burst forth and injure. Religion was in the main a device for escaping from their clutches, or for enlisting the aid of more powerful deities by arts which the priests could teach. This hag-ridden superstition was the necessary outcome of heathenism. It underlies all the art and poetry of the classic times. As soon as men left behind them the buoyant thoughtlessness of Homer, as soon as the charm of life wore off, and the question of the hereafter began to press, these frightful dreams arose. What we notice in the second century is, not the decay of faith, but the decline of other interests, by which the inevitable tendency to devil-worship had been kept in check. Reason was just strong enough to rob men of their hopes, but absolutely powerless to correct their fears.

There is no reason whatever for supposing that the people at large had ceased to believe in the gods. The world was producing new deities in shoals, and even saints were forthcoming. Such was the aged priestess of whom Dion Chrysostom gives a charming description, and the Bœotian shepherd who was discovered and exhibited by Herodes Atticus. Men called him Agathion, "the good angel," or Hercules, because he spent his life in destroying wild beasts, and supposed him to be the son of the demigod Marathon. He would touch no food that had been prepared by a woman, and could detect by the smell whether female fingers had drawn the milk.

There were no doubt plenty of sceptics to be found

in fashionable Roman society, especially during the first century, while the memory of the civil wars still endured, and Caligula, Nero, and Domitian reigned. But generally speaking, educated men felt towards the vulgar religion in much the same way as Rudyard Kipling's Baboo towards the Hindoo orgies, which he laughs at, though yet they drive him mad. Their infidelity was but skin deep, and they did not see how irreconcilable their Stoic, or Peripatetic, or Epicurean theories were with the very roots of the established worship.

In the second century this was clearly understood. Worship was felt to be a necessity, and the existing forms were thought to be so closely interlaced with the national life, that, if destroyed, they could not be replaced. The essential factors of true religion—providence, prayer, atonement, righteousness—were all to be found there. Could not a sounder philosophy purify all these ideas, and bind them together in a reasonable unity, without pulling down a single altar? Could not heathenism be moralized?

This was the problem of the Platonists, and ours is to ascertain where and why they failed.

## IV

### PLATONISTS, NIGRINUS, DION CHRYSOSTOMUS

THE Platonists of the latter half of the first and the earlier half of the second century were not marked by any striking originality of thought, and do not claim a high place in the history of philosophy. Their interest is almost entirely religious. We shall express the same thing better by saying, that they were the champions of Hellenism. Hellenism is a word very distinctive of these times: it means Greek habits of life and thinking. The Greek gods were inseparably associated with Greek culture. Their high priests were Homer, Solon, Pheidias, Demosthenes. They were the givers of civilization, the authors of all the arts, all the sciences, the inspirers of Attic elegance in thought, expression, dress, and manners. The age was not one of production; its most characteristic offspring was the rhetorician. But it was marked by a wide diffusion of what we may call intellectualism, and an ardent though tasteless admiration of the old classical models. The universities were crowded with students, new professorships were established and endowed, and a

succession of Emperors, from Nerva to Marcus Aurelius, vied with one another in condescension and liberality towards men of letters. The love of literature was amazingly widespread in the old Greek world. Even in a half-savage outpost like Olbia, on the shores of the Black Sea, the mass of the people are said to have known the *Iliad* by heart. Nor can there be much exaggeration in this statement, for the harangues of the rhetoricians were stuffed full of Homeric allusions and quotations, and these must have been perfectly familiar to the popular audiences to which they were addressed.

The revival of Hellenism is the distinctive feature of the second century, and with it went hand-in-hand the revival of Platonism, the most Hellenic of all philosophies. Epictetus knew no Platonists. Calvisius Taurus complains of the shoals of young men who wanted to plunge into idealism "with unwashed feet," that is, without realizing the necessity of preparatory study. For, as St. Justin found, the Platonist would not explain his doctrines to any one, that had not been through a regular training in abstract mathematical science. The task of the new philosophers was to regulate this movement by bringing philosophy into line with religion. They did not want to give up anything, not a single myth nor a single altar. They desired to purify morals, and hoped to effect this end not, like the Stoics, through rigid discipline, but by the spread of education. Hence art, science, literature are of far higher importance to them than to Epictetus, because it is through these means that

they proposed to make men better. But not through these alone. They held that the highest culture is inseparable from, does in fact kindle, faith in the divine ; and that this faith in turn quickens and deepens the insight of the thinker. Thus worship becomes the secret of life and the crown of philosophy. The student must approach his problem, as the priest enters his shrine, in the spirit of holiness and reverence. They saw no difficulty in the established Polytheism. All that was necessary was to graduate the gods, and explain away a few of the more revolting fables about them.

We shall discern their aims and methods best by taking a group of representative names. We will begin with Lucian's sketch of Nigrinus. It belongs to the age of the Antonines, but we may place it first, because it gives so clear a picture of the moral atmosphere of Platonism.

When Lucian was on a visit to Rome, he called to pay his respects to the distinguished professor. Though personally unknown, he was immediately admitted, and ushered into the presence of Nigrinus, whom he found seated in his library. On the table lay a sheet of geometrical diagrams and a globe ; round the room were book-cases surmounted by busts of the ancient sages. Nigrinus was in the talking vein, and began by lamenting to his bright young visitor the contrast between the vulgar bustle of Rome and the simplicity of his beloved Athens, much as a modern man of letters might compare Mayfair or Cheapside with the groves of Magdalen

or the lime-walk of Trinity. There is just this flavour of difference perceptible, that Nigrinus wanted to teach, and not to shut himself up with his books. Athens is the true home of the philosopher, and there the delight of the teacher is to mix with the throng of ardent youth, and mark the change that steals over the noisy freshman, as he takes his first bath in the mysteries of the absolute. The genial old professor passes on from the abstract to the concrete, and illustrates the restraining force of Attic taste by an anecdote of a rich undergraduate, who had passed under his eye in the old days. He came to the University with a host of slaves, dressed and bejewelled in the height of the mode, and strutted along the streets, thinking that all must admire and envy him. The Athenians set to work to teach him better, not harshly, nor by open contradiction,—for after all every one has a right to live as he pleases in a free city,—but by good-humoured jests and lightly glancing asides. If he went to the bath with a troop of attendants, he would hear a whisper: “He is afraid of being assassinated. But the bath is a very quiet place, there is no real need of an army here.” If he swaggered on the promenade in purple and gold, he would be pursued by a ripple of undertoned banter: “See, spring is here already,” or, “Where does this peacock come from?” or, “Perhaps they are his mother’s clothes.” And so gradually the rings were laid aside, the gorgeous raiment was exchanged for simpler attire, the flowing locks were soberly trimmed, and, before the young Fortunatus left the town, he

was "much better; the tone of the place had educated him."

This gay passage is interesting, because it helps to explain the intellectual change of the second century. It was a revival of Hellenism, a reaction against Romanism. The centre of thought was shifted from the banks of the Tiber to those of the Ilissus, as it was probably shifted again a little later on to those of the Nile. When Nigrinus quitted Athens for Rome, he felt as if he had left the light of the sun. The coarseness, the harsh vices, and shameless impudence of the capital disgusted him. The natural antithesis to Roman grossness is Stoicism, the religion of rugged wills and sceptical intelligences. Platonism appealed to the temperate, cultivated, docile nature of the Greeks; its breath is the pellucid air of Hellas, not the miasma of the Subura.

Another interesting figure is Dion of the Golden Mouth. Dion is far more of a rhetorician than of a philosopher, but on this very account he shows us more distinctly than anybody else the set of the times, the new-born zeal for religion, the awakening of a true and thorough-going religious morality. Nay, in Dion we behold a very singular phenomenon, the first gropings after the idea of a heathen church. He is almost the only writer of antiquity, who takes a keen, practical interest in social problems, and regards the elevation of the masses as a religious work. This is a church view, wholly different from the attitude of Stoicism, which taught that individual conversion

was the one thing needful, and that material circumstances did not signify in the least.

Dion was born about the middle of the first century in Prusa (now Brussa), a moderate town of Bithynia, situated on the northern slopes of Mount Olympus. He came of a wealthy equestrian family. His grandfather was a friend of the then reigning emperor, by whom he was presented with the Roman franchise. His father, Pasicrates, was recognized as the chief citizen of Prusa to the end of his life, and his mother was so beloved, that a statue and temple had been erected to her. He was at first a rhetorician or sophist, and, like other members of that curious profession, spent his life in wandering from town to town. The rhetorician was one of the signs of the times, a curious cross between an University Extension lecturer and an operatic singer.

We must remember, that in the second century there were hardly any topics for a popular lecturer. All the Sophist could offer, was an exhibition of brilliant extempore talk about anything and everything; the more trivial the subject the better. It was said of Swift, that he could have written finely about a broomstick. This was the ambition of the Sophist. Dion, in his younger days delivered "displays," as they were called, about a parrot and a gnat. The merit of the orator lay in his readiness, his copiousness, his grandiloquence, and the skill with which he could interweave high-flown metaphors, appropriate or inappropriate allusions to Homer, and a dash of philosophical or moral instruction. The Sophists

were full of stagey ways, and affected great splendour of apparel. They dressed in character, and on one occasion Dion, who was a thin little man, appeared in a lion-skin, no doubt to perorate about Hercules. Latterly his style became graver and more practical ; but he retained his sophistical mannerisms to the end, and could hardly make a speech without assuring his audience that it was quite extempore, and that he did not know what was coming next.

About this earlier stage in his career we have little information, unless we may accept as historical a scene described by Philostratus. According to this romancing author, Vespasian, just before starting on his expedition against Vitellius, gave audience at Alexandria to Euphrates the Stoic, Dion the Platonist, and Apollonius the Pythagorean, and begged the advice of the three philosophers on the delicate question, whether he should make himself emperor or not. Euphrates recommended him to re-establish the Republic ; Dion preferred an oligarchy, but urged Vespasian to leave the decision in the hands of the people ; Apollonius answered : " I care not about politics, for I am subject to the gods alone. But I do not wish the flock to perish for want of a just and moderate shepherd." Vespasian wished to show his gratitude by rich gifts to his three counsellors. Apollonius refused all reward ; Dion begged the discharge of a philosophic friend, Lasthenes, who in a rash moment had enlisted in the army ; Euphrates pulled out of his pocket a paper, which he had brought with him ready written, full of requests for himself and his

friends. The passage is intended as a cut at Stoicism for its impractical political intransigence and its inconsistent morality.

In the reign of Domitian, Dion was in Rome, enjoying the intimate friendship of an illustrious man nearly related to the Imperial family. This was probably Flavius Sabinus, who was put to death by Domitian, A.D. 82. After this tragedy Dion fled from Rome, whether banished by formal decree, or driven forth by horror and personal fear, is uncertain. What he calls his exile lasted thirteen years, and it is Dion's praise that the touch of misfortune brought out the real goodness and sincerity of a somewhat flighty nature. He faced his adversity with cheerful resignation. Often he had read, often he had preached, about the temptations of wealth and the blessings of poverty. Now if God allowed him, he would find out for himself, how the truth was. The Delphian Apollo in prose, for the prophet no longer spoke in verse, bade him "do what he was doing manfully till he had come to the ends of the earth." And, in reliance upon this behest, Dion set out to live the life of a wanderer, alone and in ragged garb, with nothing in his pocket but the *Phaedo* of Plato and a speech of Demosthenes. He found his support partly by manual labour as a gardener or a bathman, partly by the alms of the charitable.

During this time of wandering we get but an occasional glimpse of him. He tells us himself how, in obedience to Apollo's command, he roamed as far as Borysthenes or Olbia on the Black Sea, where the

men of the town crowded into the theatre to hear him discourse about the gods, though the battle-signal was flying from the walls, and their harness was on their backs ; how he followed in the train of the army on the expedition against the Getae ; how towards the end of the time he met a holy priestess in a country place in Greece, who prophesied the downfall of the tyrant, and the near end of his own sufferings. The death of Domitian delivered him from all apprehensions. At the moment Dion was near a large Roman camp, and the excitement of the soldiery at the news of the Emperor's assassination seemed likely to issue in mutiny and outrage. Dion cast off his cloak and sprang upon the altar, exclaiming, "But he, the wily Odysseus, stripped off his rags"—he was never without an appropriate verse of Homer—and succeeded in bringing the turbulent legions over to the side of Nerva.

Ill-health kept Dion in retirement during the short reign of Nerva ; but under Trajan he emerged again, and was treated with great distinction. On one occasion the soldier-emperor took him up in his triumphal chariot, and said to him, "I don't know what you mean, but I love you as myself." Dion no doubt set the compliment to his goodness of nature against the affront to his style. In truth he did not always quite know what he meant himself, and Trajan's civilities acted upon this uncertainty of purpose in a way that shortly caused him great chagrin.

About A.D. 100 he returned to his native town to look after his property, which had become sadly

dilapidated during his long absence. Dion was still a Sophist at heart, with all the love of magnificence that marked his class, and he allowed himself to be seduced by the dream of doing for poor little Prusa what Herodes Atticus had done for Athens. Only, while Herodes had spent lavishly of his own enormous wealth, Dion had little capital beyond his golden tongue. Unfortunately things were just ripe for the most chimerical schemes. The Asiatic towns were agitated by the most furious rivalries, and Prusa was determined not to be left behind in the race. The happy moment seemed to have arrived. There was the great Dion their townsman once more among them. What might not his influence with the Emperor effect? Trajan himself had said that he wished to favour their city in every way. Dion easily persuaded his townsmen to set about rebuilding Prusa—it was an age of architectural extravagance—on a scale of magnificence proportioned to the splendid destiny in store. The work was begun, and great expenses incurred, but all that Trajan could be induced to do was to make Prusa an assize town, to add a hundred members to the senate, and to establish there the central offices for the administration of the Bithynian revenues. This was a sad blow to their ambitious hopes. Those who had promised subscriptions refused to pay up, and the proconsul exacted the money from the township at large. The rate-payers were so exasperated by this unexpected turn of events, that they tried to set Dion's house on fire, and would have stoned the too per-

suasive orator to death, if they could have laid hands upon him.

Dion was evidently not a practical man, but he took this lesson too in good part. He discarded the ambition to lead a vestry, quitted Prusa, and contented himself with the affectionate admiration, that to the last attended upon his unquestioned literary and oratorical ability. He appears to have spent the last years of his life chiefly at Rome, where Plutarch was his friend and Favorinus his disciple, and died probably about A.D. 120.

Dion was a born sophist, and his orations are as a rule too abstract and vague, and too verbose, to please the modern reader. He is most interesting, when he himself probably thought he was least so, in those speeches where he tells the amusing tale of his vexations at Prusa. Among other misdeeds he had ordered the demolition of an old smithy, which his opponents insisted ought to have been preserved, as the workshop of the only distinguished artist in bronze, that the town had ever produced. Dion replied, that the place was so dilapidated, that every stroke of the hammer upon the anvil threatened to bring it down upon the workmen's heads. But it is amazing how little reality there is in his speeches. How much he could have told us! He knew Greek life from top to bottom, as no other man of his time did. Yet there are only five or six passages, that set before us what he saw. But it is due to Dion to add, that these few notices tell us more about the misery of the times, than we gather from anybody else. He had witnessed the terrible

poverty and depopulation of the country districts, and thought earnestly about a remedy for the evil. He speaks with manly indignation of the horrible cancer of sexual impurity, which sapped the life of the heathen world. He does not regard these frightful sins with the horror or the sternness of a Christian, but at any rate he points them out and condemns them. Indeed he is always wholesome and earnest. Many of his orations were delivered with the very practical object of restoring peace between neighbouring towns, and in his most complimentary harangues there is always some point of well-aimed admonition, as when he rebukes the Alexandrines for their scurrilous tongues.

Dion had in short a humane and philanthropic spirit. The ancients describe his later harangues as those of "a counsellor," "a statesman," and both epithets are deserved. He has many points of affinity with Stoicism, but his view is larger, more modern, more Christian we may almost say. He has caught the Stoic idea of the World-City, "the dear city of Zeus." "Philosophy tells us of a good and loving communion between demons and men, wherein all the benefits of citizenship and law are granted, not indeed to the brutes, but to all reasonable beings." It is far better and juster, he says, than the boasted polity of Lycurgus, which did not permit the Helots to become Spartans, and so fostered an undying enmity between the two. There is neither master nor slave in the city of God. He compares the world to the temple of Eleusis, in which, at one point in the celebration of the mysteries, the initiated danced round the novice with torches in

their hands. So in this beautiful universe, not men but the immortal Gods circle in rhythmic chorus round the whole race of man, bearing with them night and day, and all the lights of heaven. Dull is the heart that cannot see that celestial band, and Him above all, fairest among many fair, who governs and orders all the wondrous show.

To Dion this language meant more than it did to Epictetus. The Stoic after all cared little for any but the elect of his own conventicle. But Dion really loved the poor, and saw in their virtues the best philosophy. The most attractive of his speeches is the *Euboic*, in which he paints their simplicity, their generosity and trustfulness, their domestic affection and earnest piety. It is a picture of some poor folk who were good to him, when he was shipwrecked on the iron-bound coast of Eubœa, and it is meant to show, how love and goodness can sweeten the hardest lot. Nothing could be more tender than this charming prose idyll, and the feeling which inspires it, is undoubtedly genuine.

As regards slavery again, Dion repeats the usual Stoic commonplaces. The wise man alone is free, the bad man is always a slave. But here too he penetrates deeper into reality. He considers the different methods, in which men become slaves, and pronounces them all unjust. The time had not yet come for giving practical effect to such a truth as this, and Dion did not always quite mean what he said. He recommends the master not to pursue a runaway slave. If the slave, he asks, can be happy without a

master, who is supposed to be better than himself, why cannot the master do without the slave, who is supposed to be worse than himself? But, when on his return to Prusa he found that his own human chattels had taken the opportunity of absconding, he manifests some, perhaps not unnatural, vexation.

Dion was an orator differing from other orators of his time, not in method but in tone. After his exile he never again declaimed about parrots and gnats. All his utterances are marked by moral seriousness. On this account men called him a philosopher. But he had no disciples, and never discussed. He became in fact a preacher, and we have to gather his philosophical belief from those of his speeches, which most nearly approach to the type of sermon. Of these the most remarkable is the *Olympic*, delivered at Olympia in presence of the glorious statue of Zeus, the masterpiece of Pheidias, which is in fact the text of his discourse. The speech is one of the best expositions of Hellenism that we possess.

Dion enters upon his matter by an emphatic condemnation of Atheism and of Deism.

Many, he says, have set up a bad god, what they are pleased to call Pleasure, a womanish deity, whom they adore in the dark with cymbals and pipes. (This is what the Stoic Hierocles called "the harlot doctrine" of Epicurus, what in its modern garb of utilitarianism Carlyle scoffs at "as the worship of the frying-pan.") We should not grudge them their jollity if their heresy ended with their drinking songs. But they have taken away our gods and banished them

from the world, saying that there is no mind in the universe and no ruler over it ; no providence and no creator. They are worse than the Deistical Peripatetics, who at least have some sort of god, if only like a child, who starts his hoop, and then lets it bowl along by itself.

Where are we to look for sounder doctrine? First and foremost to the testimony of the soul itself, the belief that is born in every man. Secondly and thirdly, to the corroboration of poets and legislators, for there is no song, no justice, without the inspiration of God. Fourthly, to the teaching of Art. For whence comes the sense of beauty in form and colour, and to what conclusions does it lead us on?

But here a difficulty arises. What shall we say of the fair creations of the sculptor or the painter, of Pheidias or Zeuxis? For they do not deliver the same message as the verse of Homer, or the statutes of Solon. The poet's song introduces into Olympus the tumult of human passion ; the law-giver's code embodies the ideal of severe unbending right. The breathing marble, the glowing canvas, call up before us a figure which is pure, beautiful, unchanging, but human. Can this be a worthy representation of God?

Here we reach the burning question of the day. How was polytheism, idolatry, to be reconciled with the reasonable service of an intelligent and spiritual deity? To solve this problem we must call upon yet a fifth witness, the philosopher, whose office it is to explain and harmonize the superficial divergences of the other four ; we must have recourse, as we should

say in our modern jargon, to the higher criticism. This Dion proceeds to do in his oratorical fashion by calling up the spirit of Pheidias to answer for his statue. Thou noblest and best of artists, he says, no man will deny that thou hast wrought a vision of wondrous delight for all Greeks and all barbarians. The most toilworn of mankind, as he gazes on this statue of thine, would forget all the woes and hardships of life. But hast thou wrought for us a shape worthy of God? For great and lovely though it be, clothed in light and grace, it is still the shape of man.

Pheidias replies, that no human skill can adequately represent the majesty of the divine. The gods are in heaven; they are the sun, moon, and stars. But these bright orbs do not satisfy the cravings of the heart. They are too simple and too far. Man wants gods that he can touch. "As infants in the dark stretch forth their hands and cry for their father or mother, so men, loving the gods for their bounty and goodness, long to be with them, and speak to them." Hence the artless barbarians make gods of mountains or trees or shapeless stones. But the cultivated Greek needs some fitting image of the divine intelligence. "Hence we turn to the human body, attaching to God that which is for us the vessel of wisdom and utterance, striving to represent the invisible and formless by visible form, by the best symbol in our power." If the sculptor's art is limited in its vehicle of expressions, there is a gain even in its simplicity. Poetry is full of life and movement, but it is wild and turbulent. "Homer first showed to the Greeks many beautiful

images of all the gods, and of the great God of all, some clement, some fearful and terrible. But my Zeus is calm and ever mild, as befits the lord of peaceful Hellas. Him, by my art and the wise counsel of Elis, I set up here, tranquil and majestic in his unclouded beauty, giver of life and wealth and all that is good, father, saviour, guardian of all mankind, as perfect a counterfeit of the ineffable nature of God as mortal skill can engrave."

In this passage we have the most plausible exposition of the Platonism of the second century, or the reformed Paganism, as it is sometimes called, for they are one and the same thing. The Gods are many, but one is King. They are spiritual, just, and beneficent, and man must and can be like them. If Homer tells us shocking tales, these are the forgeries of the poet, who lives to please and to astonish. Reason and true art are safe and sufficient guides.

Dion's plea for images is not without justice; what he defends is not idolatry, but religious art. In this again he went further than his contemporaries, who for the most part admitted a real presence of the god in the statue. As for the masses, it cannot be doubted, that they actually worshipped not only the work of men's hands, but shapeless stones, mountains, trees, and in Egypt beasts.

On the subject of the demons he says little or nothing. Spiritual beings are all god-like and good. Here too he was in advance of his times, and here too he did not see the state of things quite clearly. A great part of the Greek ritual, and a still larger

part of the barbarian religions, was devil-worship, and this dark fact called imperatively for some sort of explanation. It was the necessary result of two causes, Polytheism and heathen notions of the divine wrath ; and the mode in which it was handled forms generally one of the most significant features in the religious thought of the second century.

## V

### PLUTARCH

PLUTARCH was as pure and amiable as Dion, and of a much higher order of ability. He was not an orator, and speaks of the Sophists with gentle dislike for their insincerity. He was not even a philosopher, in the sense in which we apply the term to Plato, or Aristotle, or Locke. Philosophy was not his first, nor by any means his only, concern, and his principles are not always clear, consistent, or developed. He belongs rather to the class of critics, or essayists, or men of letters, and in this he holds a foremost place. Every subject that interested the mind of his time, is discussed in his voluminous pages, but the motive is almost always moral or religious. All that he wrote is marked by a sincere and beautiful piety. He was the most learned, chatty, and agreeable of men, and never said an unkind thing of any one, except the historian Herodotus, who was as amiable as Plutarch himself, but angered the Bœotian sage by disparagement of the Bœotians. Plutarch loved his native soil, and deserted as it was in his time by gods and men, he would not allow the world to forget, that it

was the land of Cadmus, of Hesiod, of Pindar, of Corinna, and Epaminondas. His one unfortunate treatise, "on the Malignity of Herodotus," may be pardoned as a natural, if ill-aimed, outburst of indignation against the injustice of mankind, who spoke of his countrymen as "Bœotian swine."

His life, like that of most men of letters, is little known. Not that he courted obscurity. One of his shorter papers is on the maxim, "live forgotten." "The author of this adage," says Plutarch, "devised it, that he might not be forgotten." But the tranquil life of a man of the pen is marked by few incidents. He was born about A.D. 48, in the reign of Claudius, and died about A.D. 120, in the reign of Hadrian. He studied, no doubt at Athens, under "the good Ammonius," a Peripatetic and an Egyptian. He lectured at Rome as a young man, and visited the capital again in later years. He had seen Alexandria and Sparta; but the greater part of his long life seems to have been spent almost entirely in his little native town of Chæronea. There he was squire, mayor (or archon), and priest, attending to the welfare of his tenants, managing the affairs of the community, presiding at their sacrifices, passing the greater part of his time in his well-stored library, and making occasional excursions into the larger world. There is something very English about such a life. We may consider Plutarch as a sort of Greek Kingsley.

His family held a considerable position, and were rich in ability. His great-grandfather Nicarchus, his grandfather Lamprias, his father, whose name is not

recorded, his brothers Timon and Lamprias, were all men of intelligence. Notwithstanding his retired life, he knew everybody that was worth knowing. Trajan and Hadrian are said to have honoured him with public dignities, and, though this particular fact is uncertain, he appears to have enjoyed the esteem of both princes.

Plutarch is probably still best known by his *Parallel Lives*, a series of biographical sketches, in which he depicted and compared the great heroes of Greek and Roman history side by side. In our scientific age, which thinks more of the general movement and less of the individual life, which is highly impatient of all moral reflections, and is rather pleased when it can prove that a fine saying was never uttered, or a fine deed never done, the *Lives* have become a grammar-school text. But, from the revival of Greek to the time of Rousseau, they were one of the most popular books in existence. Montaigne delighted in them, Shakespeare drew the material for his Roman dramas from North's Translation, and Jeremy Taylor found in them an inexhaustible store of anecdote and illustration. There he read, how Lysimachus sold his kingdom for a draught of wine, and repented too late; how Phocion, when the populace applauded him, turned to his friends and asked, "What folly have I uttered?" how Alexander said, "Antipater knows not, that one tear of his mother blots out all the libels he has written against me"; how the dying Pericles, when his weeping friends were praising, some his eloquence, some his courage, some his victories,

raised his head from the pillow, and said, "What you admire are little things, or gifts of fortune; the greatest of all you forget, that no citizen ever wore black through me."

To Plutarch, as to Teufelsdröckh, the supreme interest of history was the humano-anecdotal. There he found human nature at work on the most picturesque and impressive scale, always the same human nature, always teaching the same lessons of piety, duty, magnanimity, moderation, and kindness. For our present purpose the *Lives* are of importance as showing not only the learning and amiability of their author, but the changing attitude of the thought of the time. If we contrast this broad, social, artistic view of life with the sour Puritanism of the Stoic, we shall find it wiser and more practical. To Epictetus Caesar is the corrupter-general, the devil; to Plutarch, as to St. Paul, he is a minister of God for good, though possibly a very unfaithful minister.

No other writer of antiquity handles the domestic affections with such insight as Plutarch. One of the best of his treatises is the dialogue called *Amatorius*. It is suggested by a comical incident of real life. A wealthy widow named Ismenodora, of great personal attractions and spotless character, became enamoured of a poor young gentleman, Bacchon. Her suitors were furious, and Bacchon, though not unwilling, was afraid of the ridicule of his companions. Things were at a deadlock, when Ismenodora boldly cut the knot by carrying Bacchon off and marrying him there and then. This gives rise to a discussion

whether a man ought to marry, whether he is justified in marrying a wife richer and a little older than himself, and how he ought to treat his wife. The dialogue is marked by its outspoken condemnation of that ghastly Greek vice, which cannot even be named by Christian lips, but still more by its exquisite treatment of the subject of conjugal love. "In marriage," says Plutarch, "it is better to love than to be loved." His tone is that of a modern gentleman. The wife is to be not the mistress only, but the friend and companion of the husband, and he overflows with anecdotes of the purity, the courage, the generosity of woman. Nor does marriage in his view altogether lack a sacramental character; it is under the special care, not of the earthly, but of the heavenly Eros. This goes to the root of the matter, and it is hardly too much to say, that the *Amatorius* is worth all other heathen writings on morality put together. Plutarch's life was in strict accordance with his professions.

This difference of moral tone implies of course a difference of moral theory, and in the *de virtute morali* Plutarch explains very clearly his scientific objections to Stoicism.

There are, he says, two great moral antitheses; the first is between the soul and the world, the second is in the soul itself, between reason and desire. The Stoics admit the first, but not the second. They regard the soul as practically one. Hence vice is an error of judgment. Marcus Aurelius taught that "all things are opinion," that is to say,

that moral evil consists in the mistaken idea that pleasure is good. Obviously then vice is a corruption of the soul itself; in other words, of the God within. Thus Pantheism not only, as we have seen, makes all bad men equally bad, but destroys all possibility of amendment. The whole soul is given up to evil, and there is absolutely nothing left, to which an appeal can be made.

Plutarch admits both antitheses, but in a much modified form. The world is neither evil nor indifferent. Being the work of God, it must be either a blessing or a scene of trial. Similarly, in the soul reason and desire are distinguished not as opposites, though they may become so, but as superior and inferior. The office of reason is not to extirpate affection, for this is impossible, but to control it. Affection is the matter, reason the form, and each moral virtue may be regarded as a mean between two extremes, the too much and the too little. Thus courage is a mean between foolhardiness and cowardice.

On this view each virtue becomes a kind of musical harmony; the tumult of sound is formed and regulated by the art of the composer. But now earthly music may be better or worse according to the ideal of the artist, and the skill whereby he realizes his ideal. Where the ideal is not absolutely master of the material, the result is always discord, pain, the accompaniment and sign of effort and uncertainty. So it is with virtue. Plutarch divides men into four classes, the Temperate (*σώφρων*), the saint, in whom

reason is so supreme that there is no longer any resistance on the part of the lower nature; the Continent and the Incontinent (ἐγκρατής, ἀκρατής), in whom good and evil are striving for the mastery, good predominating in the first and evil in the second; this is the region of free-will, as it is commonly called, of choice and its concomitants, shame, repentance, pain; and lastly the Intemperate, the bad, in whom evil is as absolute as goodness in the saint.

To the moral virtues the good things of the world, or, as Plutarch called them, the gifts of the gods, are necessary and helpful. The musician cannot play without an instrument, and he can make finer music with an organ than with a drum.

It is obvious to what practical differences the two theories lead. According to Plutarch a good wife is a blessing, according to Epictetus she is a thing indifferent. The latter looked upon a bad man with hopeless scorn as "a fool," the former cried to the weak and erring, "You are children of God; you know better." For the Platonist held that reason is never false; it "contemplates the first, abiding, unchanging truths," and always knows what is right. It may sleep; it may be violently overcome by desire, but it is never persuaded to assent to sin. The worst of men can be forced to give evidence against himself. The Platonist appeals to the *testimonium animae naturaliter Christianae*; the chief defect in his system is, that it is æsthetic and intellectual rather than moral.

The student will perceive, that in this analysis of

the practical virtues Plutarch has adopted bodily the teaching of Aristotle. The two agree again necessarily in setting the intellectual virtues above the practical. This is merely their way of saying that reason, or dogma, or faith must regulate conduct, a truth too obvious to need discussion. But here begins the difference between the Peripatetic and the Platonist. Plutarch held that the reason (*νοῦς*), which is not, properly speaking, in the body, because the body is in it, was in immediate contact with the divine, saw the divine nature, and possessed the divine thoughts. Thus reason, dogma, and faith are different names for the same thing.

Thus sound learning and true godliness are identified. Plutarch was almost more priest than philosopher. He would have said, that he was a philosopher, because he was a priest. Religion is to him the crown of life, the source of all harmony and unity. Against the Epicureans he maintains, that those, who make pleasure the end, cannot live pleasantly. There is no pure joy without a pious, grateful spirit. We have seen how he applied this maxim to the blessing of domestic happiness, but he learned it also from the performance of his own priestly duties in the temple of Apollo at Chaeronea. "Nothing that we see," he says, "nothing that we do, cheers the spirit more effectually than the sights and actions of our worship, when we celebrate a festival, or dance in a choir, or attend at a sacrifice. For there is a good hope and faith, that the god will be propitious and favourably allow our service." It is on

the comforting nature of the belief and on the natural desire for perfection, that he rests the immortality of the soul, though he found it also in revelation.

Without religion then society itself is impossible. "Belief in the gods is the first and chiefest thing, the cement of all society, the bulwark of all laws." Like virtue, religion appeared to Plutarch as a golden mean between the marsh of superstition and the precipice of atheism. Atheism he regarded as "a brutish way of thinking." Superstition was as bad as atheism. "For the crushing fear of the gods is inseparable from the wish, that there were no gods." But elsewhere he takes a wiser view. "Few men fear the gods so much, that it were better they should not fear them at all." "Most men, being unlearned, yet not wholly bad, worship the gods with a certain dread, which is called superstition; yet the fear is immensely outweighed by hope and joy, and the filial feeling with which they pray for and receive good things as the gift of the gods."

Superstition here means craven fear of the unseen. It tells a man that the gods act towards him like tyrants, "by wrath or favour." This is not true. God is good. "As it is the property of fire not to chill but to warm, so it is the property of the good to benefit not to harm." Hence Plutarch was shocked by the Old Testament, of which he had a little indirect knowledge, because it speaks of the wrath of Jehovah. God is beneficence pure and simple. Thus Hellenism, intellectualism, recoiled from the popular devil-worship to the opposite ex-

treme of geniality. But Plutarch was a firm believer in the divine government by rewards and punishments, both in this world and in the world to come. God renders to every man what he deserves. "Those who are incurable He slays at once, because they harm others, and themselves most of all. To others He allows a space for repentance. For there is no fear, lest any should escape His hands."

By gods Plutarch meant the gods of Greece, though each man, he thought, was bound to worship the deities of his native land. It was not lawful to explain away their personality. "You see what a gulf of impiety gapes for us, if we turn the gods into affections, or natural forces, or virtues." Nor were they to be questioned. "If you are going to ask for proof about each one, you will shake with your sophistry every temple and every altar, and leave nothing free from cavil." No Hellenist was a monotheist, not even the Stoics, who for all their Pantheism were as superstitious as anybody else. Like all his school, Plutarch contented himself with teaching that all gods were pure, reasonable, and good, and that One above all was Father, Ruler, and Creator. Thus the minor deities became dependent and inferior beings, as indeed they are in the *Timæus*, acting as vicegerents of the Supreme. Celsus compares them to proconsuls, and Nicomachus of Gerasa calls them "archangels," a name which he must have borrowed from the Bible.

Plutarch generally thinks and speaks of God under the old royal and paternal forms. But at times he

adopts the modern Pythagorean view, and identifies the Supreme with the absolute. One of the most interesting of his dialogues is on the letter E, which was fixed on the walls in three different places of the Delphic temple. The letter was shaped much as in our English alphabet, but it was called Ei, and this diphthong may mean "Thou art." Ammonius takes the name of the letter as a symbol of the Deity, and explains it to mean "Thou art One." God is the one substance, the Eternal, the All-sufficient. In this adoption of the Pythagorean doctrine we find the first distinct step in the transition from Platonism to Neoplatonism. But like Plato himself, Plutarch did not admit the eternity of creation as a necessary self-evolution of God. Another closely related doctrine, that of Ecstasy, has not yet attained in his mind the definite position, which it occupies in the teaching of Plotinus. But he was a firm believer in inspiration and revelation of every kind. God manifests Himself by the heavenly graces of love and genius, by predictions, omens, dreams, by what we call possession, and by the ecstatic trance. Physical aids, the fumes of a sacred fountain, or the steam of the Pythian cleft are sometimes useful, and indeed ordained; but the great help is the preparation of the soul by quiet and detachment. Plutarch in fact believes in revelation in the Christian sense, and in enthusiasm and trance in the Pagan sense, as he saw them actually manifested, especially in his own land of Bœotia, but hardly touches on the philosophic trance of Plotinus, and exhibits no taint of the mesmerism of the later

Neoplatonists. Mysticism in the lower sense of the word is not yet welded into his system. But he carefully laid the fuel for others to kindle.

We shall certainly not blame Plutarch for believing in revelation, which is the necessary corollary of belief in a God, who is wiser and better than man. But what we have to notice is, that ecstasy is not, as Zeller seems to have thought, a necessary complement of the doctrine of the absolute. It is, as Plutarch shows, much older than that doctrine, and quite independent of it. All that Neoplatonism did, was to make ecstasy absolutely sterile by divesting God of all relation to the world.

Down to this point Plutarch's creed is pure and elevating. It is intellectual, yet in the fine saying, "It is better to love than to be loved," it is unconsciously at one with the teaching of our Lord: "it is more blessed to give than to receive." Noble and even holy lives might be inspired by his teaching, and in fact were so inspired. Nor so far does there seem to be any great difficulty in his way. The immoral myths, which Homer weaves about the persons of the Olympian gods, admitted of explanation. Plutarch compares them to the rainbow, which colours yet refracts the light of the sun. They might be gently put aside as the fancies of a crude, semi-barbarous anthropomorphism, or they might be treated as moral allegories. Nevertheless there was a great difficulty; Plutarch's doctrine was not a reform but a revolution, and a conservative revolution, which is a contradiction in terms. He wanted to keep the whole ritual, and

yet transfigure it ; to put a Christian head on a heathen body. This could not be done, for there was that in the ritual itself, which made the junction impossible. What he wanted to get rid of was Magic. But the belief in Magic is the root from which Polytheism sprang, and dies only with the death of Polytheism.

There were myths which could not be allegorized, and rituals which could not be brought under the general doctrine of the unmixed beneficence of God. They were the frantic orgiastic cults which were connected with the names of Cybele, Dionysus Zagreus, Isis, Adonis, and many others. They had a certain religious meaning, in so far as they gave barbarous expression to two great religious facts, the sense of sin and the need for an atonement. Platonism could not account for either of these facts, and was rather shocked by them. Nevertheless there they were in Hellenism itself, and some kind of explanation must be provided. This difficulty was met by the doctrine of Demons.

Plutarch approaches this subject several times from different points of view. In his *Commentary on the Timæus* he maintains that God, the Supreme Intelligence, the One Word, as he elsewhere calls Him, did not create either body or soul. Chaos, Matter, the Indefinite Dyad, already possessed both. What God did, was to infuse reason and form into this tumultuous disorderly life. His work is compared to that of a musician, who does not create sound, but harmonizes it. Thus in the World-animal, which is a deity, there is, as in man, a double principle, the infused divine

intelligence side by side with lawless desire. This last is the Evil Soul of Plato's laws.

Another remarkable treatise is that *On the Failing of the Oracles*. The decay of the ancient seats of prophecy lay heavy on the pious mind of Plutarch. How could God so change, he asked, as to withdraw from man this special mark of His favour, through which so many blessings had been showered on Greece in the great old days?

The decline was unmistakable. Bœotia had been a land of inspiration; now her glory was all but departed. The oracle of Teiresias at Orchomenos had been dumb since the great plague. At Ptous and Tegyra sheep browsed on the site of the fane. Desolation had fallen on the famous oracles of Mopsus and Amphiloclus in Cilicia. Even at Delphi one Pythia did the work of the ancient three, and the responses were given no longer in verse but in bald prose. What was the reason? The rough-tongued Cynic said that the gods "had packed up and gone," in wrath at the wickedness of those who consulted them. Others sought a cause in the depopulation of Greece, which was so terrible, that the whole country could with difficulty send three thousand hoplites into the field, the same number that the single state of Megara had despatched in the old days to fight the Persians at Plataea.

Plutarch himself cannot accept either of these explanations. To him they seemed irreverent. But what will be thought of his own answer? He held that oracles were given not by the gods at all, but by

the demons who wait upon them. Their cessation might be accounted for either by subterranean catastrophes diverting those earthy fumes, which at Delphi and elsewhere excited the convulsions of the priestess, or by the death of the Demon himself. For these beings, though long-lived, are not eternal. In the reign of Tiberius Caesar a mysterious voice had sounded from Paxae, an islet of the Echinades group, bidding an Egyptian mariner spread the news, that "great Pan was dead." And Demetrius, a Roman officer, while on duty in an island on the coast of England, had witnessed a wild tumult in the sky, which, the people told him, betokened the death of one of the princes of the air.

The demons, he tells us in this strange dialogue, are the agents of Providence, and especially of the divine retribution. Such work befits not the higher gods, whom Hesiod calls "chaste givers of wealth." To the Demons belong the mysteries, and all the dark side of religious life. "Black and ill-omened days, on which men devour raw flesh, obscene cries at sacred altars, fasts, and beatings of the breast do not belong to the worship of any god, but are propitiatory rites to keep off evil demons." So with human sacrifices, and tales of barbarous lust, and stories of painful expiation, like that of Apollo after he had slain the python. All these belong to the "hard gods," the Alastors.

The same idea recurs in the dialogue *On the Face in the Moon*. In the moon are both heaven and hell. There the good, after their appointed time of purgation,

become pure spirits, and dwell in the Elysian plain on the side next the sun. Thither go the evil to be tormented in the shadow of that awful Face, which is the face of Proserpine. But the good return again to the spaces below the air as demons. Some of them sin and abuse their powers; these must once more endure the trial of life as man.

The *Isis and Osiris* is remarkable chiefly for its repetition in another shape of the doctrine of the Evil Soul. The wild Egyptian myth of the murder of Osiris by Typhon is meant to teach, that the world is the work, not of one author, but of two. Typhon fights against Isis and Osiris, as Ahriman in Parsee theology against Ormuzd.

Plutarch traces the belief in demons all through Greek literature and all over the world. He finds it in Hesiod, in Plato, in Empedocles, in Xenocrates, in the Stoic Chrysippus, and in the Atomist Democritus; in Persia, in Thrace, in Phrygia, in Egypt, in Britain. He might have added Rome, which worshipped Fever and Mephitis. It was everywhere. The most sceptical wits who believed in nothing else believed in devils. Lucan and Pliny the Elder are just as vulnerable on this point as Apuleius. For the vulgar there was no other faith. "They sacrificed," the Apostle says, "to devils."

These facts do not alter our estimate of Plutarch's own character, but they are absolutely ruinous to his system. With what effect could he denounce those vices, which Astarte claimed as her tribute, when by the side of the holy gods he himself enthroned these

spirits of darkness, who must be placated lest they should do harm. It was through this breach that the Christian apologists stormed irresistibly in.

This part of Plutarch's doctrine is interesting also in other aspects. It shows us that Gnosticism, of which the characteristic feature is the belief in an evil creator, was not so late in its appearance as is commonly supposed, and this remark has an important bearing on the authenticity of certain of the letters of St. Paul. It shows us again, that Hellenism could do nothing better with religious emotion than provide a sort of sink to carry it off. The explanation of this fact goes down to the very root of the difference between Hellenism and the Gospel.

## VI

### CELSUS

SUCH was the Platonism of the second century. It has shaken itself free from the scepticism of the Academy, and offers to the world a definite body of dogmatic teaching.

Its teaching is that of Plato, with a difference. In one aspect the difference is that between the original inspiration of genius, and the plodding industry of the commentator or professor. Platonism has passed from the free open air to the library. We see no Socrates quickening the spark of divine truth in dull souls, like that of Menon's slave, by his art of "midwifery," but Nigrinus musing among his books and globes. We hear no longer the inimitably graceful "myths" of the *Phaedrus* or the *Republic*, those parables, as we may call them, in which dialectic divination, sober earnest, and airy fancy are blended together like the hues of the rainbow. We miss the rare personality of Plato, so richly endowed both on the philosophic and on the sensuous side. We miss the poetry and the sense of humour, and these influences have a serious bearing on the reality, the practicality of speculation. What Plato gave as

a tale told by ancient sages, as a vision, a possibility, the allegory of the Charioteer, the story of Er, the son of Armenius, the poetical cosmogony of the *Timaeus*, has become part and parcel of the cut-and-dried teaching of the school. Philosophy has become impersonal, methodical, in a sense less real. Yet in another respect it is more real. The great charm of Plato is that he binds men to nothing. But definiteness of thought is after all a necessity for men who want to live and not to drift. Hence the later Platonists were driven, by the nature of things, to ask their master precisely what he meant, to seize and define his leading thoughts, and as far as they could to bring his idealism into an orderly whole. Plato used vague language even of the Ideas. His followers explained them to mean not only the great spiritual laws of beauty, goodness, and truth, but the actual patterns of existing things. They regarded God in the old-fashioned way as intelligent and good, yet at the same time they spoke of Him as "beyond existence," and as "wanting nothing," the first of these phrases implying that He does not think, and the second that He has no consciousness of the world, so that He could really be neither intelligent nor good. Again, they conceived of the ideas as existing outside the mind of God, like "golden statues," as Plotinus says, so that when the Deity wished to create He must first look about for the pattern, and perhaps not recognize it when He found it. All these crudities are found in Plato himself, often side by side with hints of a different complexion.

What his followers did, down to the middle of the second century, was to select, reiterate, and harden them, and in this way to bring to light their inherent confusion. They were more real again in another manner. They could no longer play with ideal republics. The deluge was upon them, and the question was, how the existing State could be saved. Hence their zeal for the conservation of the established religion. This is why, by the side of the two deities of their philosophy, the Supreme Intelligence and the World-Spirit, they introduced the whole Pantheon of the popular mythology, the lower gods and the demons. This also they found in Plato. What distinguishes them here from their master, is the clear perception, that the influence of the schools so far had been antagonistic to religion, that religion itself was imperilled, and that with it morality and general culture were in danger of perishing. What they desired was to consolidate the various mythologies, to retain the whole fabric of Polytheism, and to guard the self-respect of the philosopher, by giving him, not instead but in addition, a more enlightened creed of his own.

How far was this possible? How far could men hope on these lines to build a system that might pretend to rival the Gospel? The question will be answered for us by one of these very men. The *True Word* of Celsus was an elaborate attack upon Christianity from precisely this position; and it is still to be found almost entire in the treatise which Origen wrote in reply.

It is uncertain who Celsus was, nor is it possible to fix the date of his book with absolute accuracy. He mentions the apotheosis of Antinous, and seems to speak of the devastation of Judaea after the suppression of Barcochba's revolt towards the end of the reign of Hadrian, though his words may apply to the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus. Beyond these facts there is no very certain note of time. But persecution was raging against the Christians, and the ship of the state was apparently in danger. Hence Keim supposes that he wrote about 178 A.D., just after the persecution of Vienna, when Marcus Aurelius was preparing for his expedition against the Quadi. In this case he was probably the Celsus to whom Lucian dedicated his exposure of the famous quack, Alexander of Abonoteichos.

He was undoubtedly a Platonist, though Origen fell into the error of regarding him as an Epicurean. But he was rather a cultivated man of the world, than a philosopher. There is a tone about him, keen, scornful, positive, practical, which seems to denote familiarity with affairs on a large scale and in high position. He writes like a clever pro-consul. There is a ring of menace in his words. Like many another magistrate in those days, he condescends to argue and even to implore, but ends by pointing to the altar, and bidding the trembling Christian burn incense or die. But it is characteristic of the man, that he saw with the eye of a true statesman the dangers to which Aurelius was blind. To this resolute, clear-sighted man, the meek pertinacity of the

down-trodden Church was ominous of catastrophe; and his diatribe resolves itself into a sort of fierce appeal to the Christians to have mercy on the Empire. They must make concessions like everybody else; they must if necessary be forced to make them, for the unity and very existence of the State are in jeopardy.

Celsus insists that he knew all about Christianity, and his information is indeed extensive, though it does not penetrate to a real appreciation of the points at issue. He was awake to the distinction between "the great" or Catholic Church and the heretics, though he sometimes confuses properly Christian teaching with the vagaries of an obscure Gnosticism, of which he knew more than Origen himself. He had read the books of Genesis and Exodus, of Jonah and of Daniel. He had studied the four Gospels, and possessed besides a general acquaintance with the phraseology of the whole Bible, which he may have acquired by reading or in conversation, for he had talked with Christian priests. There is a highly interesting point involved here. Celsus tells us enough about the Catholic Church of his time to assure us, that it was in all essentials the same then as now. The only articles in the Creed, with which he explicitly deals, are the Incarnation, the Descent into Hell, and the Resurrection; but as far as this enlightened and bitter antagonist is aware, there was not, and never had been, any difference in the Church on these points. He knew the four Gospels, and the four only, he alludes to the Epistles of St. Paul, and his

silence is no proof that he did not possess the rest of the New Testament as well, because he mentions no book that he could not strike. Thus this trenchant heathen critic becomes one of the most effective of apologists, and his evidence is all the more important, because there is really no strong ground for dating his book much after the Barcochba revolt. Widely read as he was, he knew of none but ignorant Christians, and had never heard of Justin, Tatian, Athenagoras, Melito, Miltiades, or Apollinaris. And he does not refer to the infamous charges of child-murder and debauchery, which in the time of Aurelius were alleged currently against the Christians.

The *True Word* falls into two divisions, of which the first is put into the mouth of a Jew, while in the second Celsus speaks in his own voice. To the Jew is ascribed the task of attacking the person of our Lord. Part of what is here to be read, for instance, the Panthera legend, still exists in the Talmud, and Celsus is no doubt guided by what he had actually heard from the lips of Jews. The arrangement gave him a double advantage. It enabled him to assail the moral character of our Lord under cover. When he speaks in his own person he is much more temperate and conciliatory, "willing to wound, and yet afraid to strike." Again, Celsus hated and scorned the Jews beyond the power of expression. To him they were "runaway Egyptian slaves, who had never done anything worth speaking of;" their sacred books were mean and ridiculous to the last degree. He scoffs at Egyptian beast-worship; the Jews were infi-

nitely beneath the Egyptians, and the Christians were renegade Jews, at whom their own kinsmen made a mock. This is why the Jew is called in to demolish the Gospel, before Celsus takes up his parable, and, in a much less acrid tone, undertakes to show the Christians the real truth, which they had missed though not wholly—which they had missed precisely because of their Jewishness.

The point insisted upon by the Jew is the weakness, the baseness, and the failure of the life of Jesus. He was the son of Panthera. The prophets foretold "a great prince, lord of all the earth, all nations, all armies; not a pestilent fellow like this." Compare His passion with that of Bacchus in Euripides. King Pentheus, who had dared to imprison the god, was torn in pieces for his impiety. But Pontius Pilate suffered nothing. Why did not Christ then, at any rate, if not before, show His divine power, save Himself from this shame, and punish those who were outraging Himself and His Father? See how on the Cross He craved for drink, unable to bear thirst with the commonest fortitude. And do ye reproach us, ye faithful ones, because we do not count Him a god, nor agree with you that He bore all this for the good of man, that we too might learn to bear chastisements? The truth is, that after He had failed in life to persuade anybody, even His own disciples, He was punished thus. You will not surely say, that after He had failed to persuade men here, He went to Hades to persuade men there. You may invent absurd apologies for Him; but, if they are to be heard, what is to prevent us from regard-

ing any one, who has been condemned and died a miserable death, as a divine messenger? It needs but sufficient impudence to say of any executed robber or murderer: "He was no robber but a god, for he foretold his fellow-robbers, "what he was to suffer."

The evidence of miracles the Jew derides, on the ground that our Lord Himself confessed that evil men could perform them; the evidence of prophecy, on the ground, that if He had known what He was to endure, He would have avoided it.

It has been said that the gospel leaves us with the dilemma *Aut Deus aut homo non bonus*. Celsus distinctly adopts the second alternative—Christ was not a good man. The later Platonists, Porphyry and Hierocles, had learned to use very different language, and preferred to argue, that the Church was unworthy of its Founder. But the *True Word* is valuable on this very account, because it points so sharply the radical, inherent antagonism between Hellenism and Christianity. Hellenism was always aesthetic, dignified, aristocratic, and abhorred suffering as a personal degradation. Christ could not be God, just because He was crucified. It is curious to notice to what a depth of perplexity the clever Celsus was here reduced. If Christ had failed, why was he writing his book?

There was no beauty in our Lord, that any Platonist should desire Him. It was still commonly believed in the Church, that our Lord's figure was plain and unattractive; and this was a ground of offence, for personal grace had come to be regarded as a necessary

adornment for the philosopher. Socrates was ugly as a Satyr ; but the Greek Alexander traded largely on his good looks. But the want of "wisdom" was even more repulsive to Celsus than the want of dignity. On this point he will speak for himself.

"This is their cry : Let no educated man enter in, none wise, none prudent, for these things we count evil. But if any be ignorant, any foolish, if any untaught, if any childish, let him come boldly. These they count worthy, just as they are, of their God, and it is therefore obvious, that they can, and will, persuade only fools, and baseborn, and dullards, and slaves, and silly women and children. But why is it wrong to be educated, and trained in the best thoughts, and to be, and be known to be, wise? How does all this prevent a man from knowing God? Why, does it not rather help him in the attainment of truth? We all know the jugglers, who display their abominable tricks in the market-place, and then send round the hat ; they would not dare to come into a company of sensible men, and there play their pranks ; but wherever they see lads, or a group of slaves, or a gathering of foolish fellows, thither they shoulder their way, and there they show their wonders. Just so we see in private houses wool-carders, cobblers, fullers, the most ignorant and the rudest fellows, never daring to open their lips in the hearing of grave elders or sensible masters. No ; but they get the children and foolish wenches into a corner, and tell them wonderful things ; ' Do not listen to your father or your tutor, but to me ; they talk nonsense, they are dotards, so stuffed

up with idle prejudices, that they neither know, nor do, anything right. We alone know how one ought to live. Listen to us, and you will be happy, and the house will prosper.' And while they are talking in this way, should the tutor or the father pass by, if they are prudent they run away, but the hot-headed ones egg the children on to rebellion. 'We cannot tell you what is good,' they whisper, 'while father or the tutor is here, because they are bad men and will punish us. Come away with us into the women's apartments, or the cobbler's, or the fuller's shop, and then we will tell you all about it.'

“‘The priests of other mysteries,’ he proceeds, ‘cry, Come, ye that are clean of hand and discreet of tongue, ye that are pure of all stain, whose spirit knows no guile, and whose life has been good and just.’ But whom do these Christians invite? The sinner, the foolish, the childish, the unhappy. These the Kingdom of God will admit. The sinner! that is the unjust, the thief, the burglar, the prisoner, the robber of temples and tombs. Why, it is a robber’s invitation! God sent to sinners! Not to the sinless? Why, what harm is there in being without sin? The unjust man then, if he brings himself low through his wickedness, God will receive, but the just, who practises virtue, and looks up to Him from the first, He will not receive. Men, who rightly administer justice, compel the prisoner to cease from wails and laments, lest justice should be warped by pity. But God, as it seems, is guided in His judgments, not by truth, but by flattery.”

Few things in ancient literature are more striking than the picture, which Celsus gives us here, of the manner in which Christianity was burrowing its way into the most guarded recesses of pagan life. There were shoals of these obscure missionaries, many of them doubtless very ignorant and very narrow, though many were neither one nor the other. Hermas and Blandina were slaves; so were the popes Pius and Callistus; so possibly was the great Clement of Rome. So indeed were a multitude of distinguished heathen philosophers, including Epictetus. The "sensible men," of whom Celsus speaks with admiration, denounced these humble servants of God to the magistrate, and clapped their hands, when they were torn in pieces by wild beasts in the arena. What a commentary is afforded by his fierce scorn of the Kingdom of God upon the high-flown pagan phrases about the dear city of Zeus!

Celsus makes the mistake of supposing, that all Christian teachers were ignorant. But he makes the still graver mistake of not asking what it was, that gave fullers and cobblers a power of persuasion denied to the schools? Why did what he thought their parrot cry, "Believe, and thou shalt be saved," go home, where the doctrine of the Absolute passed unheeded? Celsus himself supplies the answer. He believed, that "a sensible man" wants no Redeemer, that a wicked man must not come near God, that God cannot forgive or pity, and that religion is an abstruse science, which no "cobbler" can understand. The nature of evil, the nature of God, could only be

explained to philosophers: if the mechanic, "the unhappy," wanted to be saved, let them first learn geometry, astronomy, and the theory of ideas. Then, and not till then, they might hope "to see God."

Origen cuts through all this intellectual system with one quotation from the Gospel, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Justin Martyr's Platonism was knocked to pieces by one question from the old man, whom he met on the sea-shore: How can the intelligence of man see God, except it be adorned with the Holy Spirit? Of human nature the wise Greek was more ignorant than a child. The heart was an unexplained riddle to him, a mere source of disturbance to the abstract laws of motion. To this day our knowledge of it is based upon that mystery of the Cross, which Celsus derided.

The Platonists were therefore wholly wrong in their favourite contention, that there was nothing new in Christianity. To the heathen world sin was a new idea, meekness a new virtue, and love a new law. Even if it were true that there is no saying in the Gospel to which some sort of parallel cannot be found elsewhere, it would not follow that the Gospel as a whole is not new. A watch is a new thing, though cog-wheels, chains, and springs were all known before the first watch was made. If it were permissible to speak of our Lord for one moment as a scientific discoverer, we might say that He found the supreme law of spiritual life in a set of phenomena, which the Greek had wholly neglected, and which even the Jew did not

understand, and that He thereby revolutionized all philosophy and all ethics.

The same unlovely spirit of scorn guides Celsus in his treatment of the subject of revelation. Here he differed from the Christian first of all as to the position of man in nature.

"The race of Jews and Christians," he says, "is like a string of bats, or ants coming out of a hole, or frogs squatting together round a pond, or worms met in church in a corner of the mud, disputing which are the more sinful, and saying: 'God foretells everything to us. He leaves the whole world, the moving heavens, and neglects the broad earth to live amongst us alone. To us alone He sends messengers without cease, always scheming that we may be with Him.' They are like worms who say, 'There is a God, and next to Him are we, His children and His likeness. He has made us lords of all, earth, water, air, stars. All is for our sake; all is appointed to minister to us.' And now the worms go on to say, 'Because some of us are sinners, God will come and burn up the unjust, in order that the rest may have eternal life with Him.'"

Celsus more than once speaks of Christians and Jews as "worms," but his language is something more than a mere outburst of Roman contempt. His point is, that the Bible makes the whole universe revolve round man as its centre, and that this is wrong. He would not even allow that man is chief of the animals; they eat him, with as much right as he eats them. The bee is equal to him in social wisdom, the

elephant in conscientiousness, the stork in filial piety, and the phoenix is altogether more wonderful. The All, he concludes, is not made for man any more than for lions, eagles, or dolphins, but in order that this world, as God's work, may be complete in all its parts. And from this he draws the inference, that God is no more angry with man than with apes or flies.

Origen was so staggered by this language, that he thought Celsus could be nothing but an Epicurean, that is, an Atheist. Indeed, Celsus is altogether wrong. He misapprehends the position of his antagonists, and he coarsely exaggerates one element of the Platonic theory, while leaving out of sight the considerations by which it was laboriously corrected.

The Bible does not say that all was made for man, but it does regard man as the chiefest of all God's visible works, by virtue of the reason and conscience with which he is endowed. He is the interpreter, and in a limited sense the ruler of nature. The Almighty created all things for His own good purposes. He governs and cares for all; He feedeth the young lions that call upon Him. Yet it is written of man, that "he is a little lower than the angels," and that "all things are put under his feet." Man is the crown and king of the world, but we do not therefore affirm that the world was made for him, or that his happiness is the one sole object, for which the world exists. Just so we say that the Czar is the Emperor of Russia, without meaning that Russia was called into existence for his good pleasure.

No true Platonist could flatly deny all this. They allowed that man was the image of God,—a phrase that Celsus ridicules,—that he alone possessed intelligence, that he alone was immortal.

But if man by virtue of his reason and conscience is the chief of creation, it follows, that the whole must be ordered with some regard to the training and development of those faculties. Each part has a meaning and value of its own, yet all strive towards the perfect fruit, and minister to its formation and nutriment, sometimes by their own destruction. This is the sole ground on which modern science can justify vivisection.

This again no true Platonist could flatly deny, though the school never attained to a consistent view of its own meaning. The subordination of nature to man was involved in their opposition to Stoicism, and in their belief in Providence. The Stoics maintained that nature was indifferent, and had nothing at all to say to man. Plutarch replied, as we have seen, that this was not true, that the world was a proper training-ground for human virtue; and it is obvious that the school must be constructed with a view to the needs of the scholar. The same thing follows from any conception of Providence. God cares for all the world, but He must care principally for that which is principal. He cannot have flung reason into an alien world and left it to shift for itself. But the Platonists were hampered on many sides. They held that the world is good, and yet that matter is evil; and it seemed to them to follow that life, though a

school, is only a reformatory school, into which souls are sent to expiate the sins of a previous existence. Again, the conception of God as Absolute was every day gaining the upper hand of the conception of God as Father. God the Absolute "wants nothing," and therefore knows and cares for nothing. Here Platonism differs from Atheism only by its contention, that, though God neither knows nor cares for the world, the world knows and cares for God. But the Absolute, as Celsus rightly maintains, can feel neither love nor wrath. He got over this difficulty, like Plutarch, by assigning the administration of Providence entirely to the demons, "the masters of the prison-house," as he calls them. Thus Polytheism becomes a vital part of his monotheism, and the chief offence of Christianity is its crowning saying, that God is Love.

Celsus held in common with all his school that the world, being the work of the perfect and unchangeable God, is itself perfect and unchangeable. Evil was not of God; it was the resistance of matter to the divine thought. Hence the quantity of both good and evil in the world was invariable. He could not therefore admit any kind of evolution. All truth has been known from the first, and the world can never be either better or worse. Hence there never can be any reason for God to come and set it right.

This is the only serious point that he makes against the Incarnation. He scoffs at the idea of God "coming down," and leaving heaven vacant, in order to find out what He knew already. He scoffs again

at the flesh of Our Lord, though Homer compelled him to admit that the gods had often appeared in human shape. But, without giving up his philosophy, he could not admit that there was any need for the Incarnation.

Origen held that the world was growing worse, a view which at that particular period of history was by no means without foundation. This lends some appearance of force to the assertion of Celsus, that the Bible represents God as perpetually interfering with His own work, issuing new and ever more stringent appeals to sinners, and issuing them in vain. But the Christian teacher also saw how God's purpose broadens down through the Old Testament into the New, how the light waxes brighter and clearer through the long line of prophets and symbols to the rising of the dayspring from on high. There is a deeper philosophy in the opening verses of the *Epistle to the Hebrews*, than any that Celsus had grasped. He could not admit, that truth grows or is increased. He hoped for revelations like all Platonists, but to him revelation signified not the gift of knowledge or new strength, but the mere sight of a Deity.

So much has been said of the influence of Greek philosophy upon the Church, that we should not omit to notice that evolution is a purely Christian idea. To the Greek unity implied fixity, to the Christian it involved the idea of a living and growing whole. It was thus that the Church answered the Gnostics, who regarded the Old Testament as false; it was thus that Athanasius explained the Incarnation. From theology

this fruitful conception has passed into science, and from science it has made its way into philosophy. The Church need not be afraid of its own child.

The Resurrection of the Body Celsus rejects with profound disdain. Here again he labours under difficulties. The doctrine of the Church was not altogether what he makes it, nor does he fairly represent the state of opinion on his own side. Homer ascribes to the dwellers in Hades a material though shadowy existence. Plato in the story of Er, the son of Armenius, represents the spirits as coming in bodily shape, to cast lots for their new lives upon earth. The demons, who play so large a part in the system of Celsus, were corporeal. The gods, the sun, moon, and stars, had proper bodies of their own, and could assume human shape when it so pleased them. It was generally allowed, that, till the spirit was finally purified from all taint of uncleanness, according to Empedocles for 30,000 "hours," or cycles, it retained its corporeity in some sense. Many Platonists speak of a "fifth body" or element besides the recognized four, air, earth, fire, and water, of which the super-terrestrial organism is composed. But here again Celsus allows his scornful spirit to run away with him. He makes one brief gibe at the "seed," or glorified body, of the *Epistle to the Corinthians*, and directs his artillery solely against the belief in the resurrection of "this flesh." He insists on the absurdity of supposing, that the tissues once dissolved can ever again be brought together. But his chief point is the shamefulness of the belief. The body is unclean, disgusting,

“a miasma.” That God should ever unite Himself with such a mass of corruption is the inconceivable thing; that man should hope to see God with “these eyes” is “the hope of worms.” “They say,” he adds, “that with God nothing is impossible. But He cannot do what is shameful, nor will He do what is against nature.”

The argument of Celsus rests upon the deep-seated belief, that the flesh is a devilish thing, and to Christians who have learned to look upon the body as a worthy tabernacle of the Divine spirit, this calls for no answer. But we must notice, that here too, in the Resurrection of the Body, as in Revelation, the Church dogma enfolded the germ of a philosophy absolutely antagonistic to the whole current of Greek thought, and yet deeper and truer. The way to that unity, which the Hellenist sought in vain, lay through a right appreciation of his own flesh and blood. This Celsus might have learned from Christianity, in which he could find “nothing new.”

Christianity, in fact, was something absolutely new. Its morality rested on new motives, and implied new standards; its doctrines, though not as yet explained or co-ordinated, were destined to issue in a new philosophy. Celsus felt this, and he taunts the Christians with being “revolutionists.” And what is a revolution if not new? But he was too passionate to see it clearly. He forgot that, though a thing may be stupidly put by “fullers and cobblers,” it is not necessarily stupid in itself. He forgot also that every religion is an inarticulate philosophy; indeed he did

not in the least understand this, or he would never have thought it possible to unite the Absolute with the demons, or the religion of Greece with that of Egypt.

As it was, he thought it must surely be possible to convince these simple men of the error of their ways. They could not persist in the infatuation of worshipping "an impostor," "a dead man," now that they had listened to the *True Word*. They must give up Jesus, and then the only question that could arise between himself and them, was the lawfulness of demon-worship. This accordingly he proceeds to make as simple as possible.

You say, he tells them, that you may not serve two masters. But you are already doing so; for you set Christ beside, and even above, God. You say, that you may not eat at the demon's table. But you cannot help it. They send you corn and wine; theirs is the water you drink, the air you breathe. They bless your marriages, and comfort you in trouble. You cannot refuse their benefits, unless you go out of the world they govern. How, then, can you refuse them due honour. It is true, that God is to be worshipped above all. But He permits and requires due observance to His agents, just as Caesar expects men to reverence his own majesty in the person of his pro-consuls.

If the Christian shrank from idolatry, Celsus comforted him with the assurance, that the statue was a mere symbol. But even here he cannot abstain from a cruel scoff. Many of the hot-headed Christians,

eager for the martyr's crown, would strike the images of the gods, crying: "See, I stand before your Zeus or your Apollo, I curse him and buffet him, and he can do me no harm." "Yes," answers Celsus; "and do you not see that we stand before your demon, and not only curse Him, but banish Him from land and sea? And you, His consecrated image, we bind and crucify, and your demon, Son of God as you call Him, cannot defend you." It was too true; the demons had been fed with Christian blood, and the time for argument was surely past. Celsus dwells on the bright side of Hellenism, and no doubt it had a bright side; but the persecuted Church knew too well that murder, lust, and malice belonged to the worship of the Greek gods as truly as feasting and music.

It is a strange sight, to see this proud Roman appeal to the patriotism of those, whom he was ready to crucify for the Name's sake. He must have credit for discerning how dangerous the Church might become; but, if he had looked a little deeper, he would have realized the futility of the compromise he proposed. In the last sentence of the *True Word* he professes his intention to write a sort of catechism for those Christians who listened to his reasoning, as he makes no doubt that many would. But this treatise does not appear to have been called for.

## VII

### THE NEOPLATONIC TRINITY

SOMEWHERE about the middle of the second century a change came over Platonism in its two main articles—the doctrine of God and the doctrine of the Ideas. Out of this change sprang Neoplatonism in the strict sense of the term.

Plato distinguishes between two worlds, the invisible and the visible, the spiritual and the material. The first is the eternal pattern of the second; the second exists only as it “participates in,” reproduces, the first. The first is the world of Being, the second of Becoming; because here all things are born, grow, decay, and die.

How does a carpenter make a bed? He does not make the idea, the notion. All the beds in the world are built with one purpose, express one thought, participate in one ruling conception. The carpenter does not make the idea—that is given to him; but he makes the bed in accordance with the idea.

But whence did he get the idea? It was given to him from above. There are two beds, the ideal and the actual; and two makers of beds, God and the carpenter,

Ideas are not separable in the same way as things that we can see or touch. They run into one another. A bed is a piece of furniture on which to take sleep. Sleep is useful; usefulness is good. Thus all ideas culminate in the sovereign idea of the Good, the fountain of all knowledge and all existence. Of this "wonder of beauty which is the author of science and truth, and yet surpasses them in beauty," Socrates speaks in the sixth book of the *Republic*. It cannot be described, for it is far above the reach of mortal words. Long training in abstract science leads on to the "hymn" of dialectics, to the metaphysical faculty, that is to say, in which reason blends with the vision of the poet and divination of the saint. It can only be expressed dimly in a figure. It is like the sun. The sun is "the child of the Good, whom the Good begat in his own likeness, to be in the visible world, in relation to sight and the things of sight, what the Good is in the intellectual world in relation to mind and the things of mind." But in itself it is beyond the sun, and "beyond all being in majesty and power."

These last words form the definition which Plotinus gives of the supreme God. To him God is the Good. The same thought must surely have crossed the mind of Plato himself, but for some reason he refrained from adopting it. This we see in the *Timaeus*, the Platonic Book of Genesis. Jowett called the *Timaeus* "the most obscure and repulsive to the modern reader of all the writings of Plato," and the reader, who does not mind obscurity, is puzzled by a further difficulty, whether the dialogue is to be taken seriously

or regarded as a mere *jeu d'esprit*. But there can be no doubt that the later Platonists took it very seriously indeed. They found in it the keystone of the Platonic system; and if Plato had a system at all it is certainly here that its leading principles should make themselves felt, for the subject is nothing less than the relation of God to the world and to man. Now in the *Timaeus* God is expressly distinguished from the ideas. They are the "eternal pattern," to which God looked when He created the world.

It is obvious what a difficulty arises from this curious bit of psychological archaism. If we are to press the point, God thinks as man thinks. His thoughts are suggested by an external object, and He has no ideas of His own. We can scarcely understand, how such a notion can ever have arisen. Plato abhorred sensationalism; yet it might be said, he has only translated sensationalism into heaven. But this strange defect adhered to the school for centuries, and Plutarch even assigns a definite local habitation to the ideas. There are a hundred and eighty-three worlds, he tells us, arranged in a vast triangle. The space within is called the Plain of Truth, and here dwell the eternal Forms.

Plutarch, however, tells us also, that some held intelligence to be the place of Forms. A little later Alcinous (or Albinus) calls the Ideas the thoughts of God. Yet later still Porphyry opposed Plotinus on this very point, insisting that the Ideas were "outside of the mind." But Porphyry was already behind the times. It had become evident, that this grotesque conception was not tenable. Henceforth men held

that God thinks His own thoughts, and that the world, in which we live, is a copy of the Divine Mind. The former of the two propositions is in fact the Aristotelian doctrine that God "thinks Himself." Perhaps this is the best instance of the sense, in which the Neoplatonists were eclectic. It is evident how greatly their native system gained in simplicity and coherency by this adaptation of a Peripatetic formula.

Side by side with this change, by which the Ideas became finally the contents of the Divine Intelligence, another was in progress, by which the number of the divine Beings were increased from two to three. In the *Timaeus* there are two, the Creator and the World-Spirit. The latter is called "the only begotten and created heaven," "a blessed god," and is said to have received soul and intelligence through the providence of God. This is still in the main the position of Plutarch. But shortly afterwards we find the soul of the World-Spirit distinguished from its Intelligence. Thus we get a triplet—Soul, Intelligence, and a higher Intelligence. The last is spoken of as One, as a point, as neither good nor evil because above both, as having no differences, no qualities, and wanting nothing, yet at the same time as mind and as self-conscious. It is the Pythagorean Monad, the Absolute Cause, and yet it is the Aristotelian Deity. This is the position of the Second Platonic Epistle (which is quoted by Justin Martyr, but cannot have been known to either Philo of Alexandria or Plutarch, and probably came into existence not very early in the

second century), apparently of Albinus and Apuleius, and certainly of Numenius of Apamea.

Numenius was the first to speak distinctly of Three Gods. He was a Syrian, and possibly a Jew; for he was well acquainted with the Old Testament, quoted and allegorized the prophets, spoke of the Book of Genesis as a prophecy, and called Plato "an Atticizing Moses." By this phrase, which would have shocked Celsus unutterably, he meant that all Platonism could be evolved by skilful interpretation out of the Pentateuch. It becomes therefore not impossible, that Numenius was acquainted with the works of Philo of Alexandria, which were written with this very purpose. There is, however, no clear proof that he was, and a strong argument on the other side is to be found in the fact, that he did not give his second Deity the distinctively Philonian title of Logos. This is why it has not been judged necessary to give in this little volume any account of the famous Alexandrian Jew. Philo lies altogether outside the line of development of heathen Platonism; though he anticipated by more than a hundred years that onward step by which Alcinous identified the intelligible world with the mind of God.

One further step was needed, before this physical and intellectual trinity could be brought into a satisfactory shape. Two divine intelligences might have been possible, if they had been endowed with mutual desire. This, however, was altogether repugnant to the Platonic notion of Deity. God wants nothing. He is Cause of All in a very peculiar sense, not as

man is cause of his own actions, but as a magnet is cause of movement in iron filings ; not an impelling, but an attracting cause. He is that, towards which all things strive. Hence there could not possibly be two equal or similar intelligences in the Divine world. One "moves" (all thought is "movement"), and therefore the other cannot "move," it is the stable point towards which the other's movement is directed, a point and nothing more. Hence it cannot be an intelligence ; it cannot be anything at all. It is as it were an ideal spot outside the whole realm of existence, towards which the whole realm of existence is drawn. It has no name ; but we may call it the One, the Good, two names which express different ways of regarding the same mysterious fountain of all life.

This idea was present to the minds of Alcinous and Numenius, but it was not clearly grasped. The extreme elaboration with which Plotinus argues that the One could neither think nor exist, shows that the conception was strange and repellent to his own disciples. It was no doubt that philosopher, who gave final shape to the Platonic Trinity—Soul, Mind, and the One.

We might say without absolute error that these three represent the Platonic World-Spirit, the Aristotelian Deity, and the Pythagorean Monad, and that we find here at the top of Neoplatonism a fusion of three schools of thought. Yet it is to be observed, that there is not a single element in the new combination, which is not to be found in Plato himself. Plotinus merely defined and arranged in logical sequence, what the *Timaeus* tells us about the Creator

Mind, and the God of Nature, and what the *Republic* tells us about the Child of the Good, and the Good, which is "beyond all being." The Neoplatonists were eclectic only in that sense, in which all learned and historical thinkers must be so. They developed their own system by the aid of hints derived from other schools.

As regards their philosophy, they were purely Greek. Mommsen indeed regards it as a transformation of Western thought in the spirit of the East. Tennemann, Ritter, and Harnack take much the same view. On the other hand, Richter pronounces it "essentially a creation of Greek thought, on which the spiritual forces of the time naturally exercised an influence." And Vacherot, while noticing that Plutarch dabbled in Oriental speculations such as Zoroastrian dualism, finds in Plotinus "an energetic reaction of the Greek mind against the influences of the East."

It is a question not of individual thoughts, but of balance and temperament. The leading Neoplatonists were not Greeks; but this is true also of the Stoics. Again a certain impalpable tinge of Orientalism lies possibly at the very root of both Pythagoreanism and Platonism in the doctrine of metempsychosis, and in a general leaning towards mysticism, which in the former is strongly marked. But in Neoplatonism as a system there is not one single idea, that does not flow in a straight line from the dialogues of Plato himself. Plotinus is a metaphysician rather than a moralist, that is to say, he has moved on to a new field, but at no point has he lost

touch with his master. His modes of reasoning, his phraseology, the character of his intelligence, his precision, his aestheticism, are all intensely Greek. He moves among the clouds; but, if he does not succeed in introducing scientific exactness among the airy forms that surround him, it is not for want of a desperate struggle.

It is not in their thought, but in their mysticism that we must seek for Oriental influences if they are to be found at all. Even here there was a Greek root. Mysticism is of all countries and all times. But there is a vast difference between Hermes tripping out of a wood to meet Odysseus, or even the Pythoness raving on her tripod, and the ecstatic vision of the Absolute. The one grew out of the others; but no doubt the growth was fostered and quickened by the increasing influence of the Mysteries; and of these the most powerful form was the Egyptian superstition of Isis.

Here arises the question, whether Mysticism in the shape given to it by the Neoplatonists, was essential to their system, or whether it was really a foreign adjunct, a branch at which they caught, when they felt their logic begin to shake beneath their feet. Upon this depends largely the view, which the reader will take, as to the value of their contribution to the thought of the world. But we must postpone the point, till Plotinus has shown us what the Neoplatonic mystic was at its best.

Vacherot, as we have seen, regards Neoplatonism as an energetic reaction of Hellenism against foreign influences. These were no doubt of many kinds; but

the most menacing were either directly Christian or set in motion by Christianity. We have seen the angry alarm of Celsus at the growth of the Church. But the ship of the faith, as it ploughed its way onward, disturbed the waters far and wide. Many men watched the new movement with curious eyes, attended Church, as we learn from the *Shepherd* of Hermas, to see what went on there, and, without becoming converts, assimilated so much Christian thought as made them very bad Hellenists. The result was a cluster of systems, in which heathenism is so jumbled up with Christianity, that it is often difficult to say which predominates. They are what we know as Gnosticism. Gnosticism was in no case properly speaking Christian; it formed a *tertium quid* between the Church and other ways of thinking, and it forced upon both sides the necessity of closing their ranks and defining their position. Neither Christian nor Hellenist would have anything to do with it. Plotinus is just as emphatic in his condemnation of the Gnostic mingle-mangle as Irenæus.

In this way a peculiar interest attaches to the wild rhapsody, that goes by the name of the *Poemander* of Hermes Trismegistus. It belongs probably to the second century, and contains a most singular farrago of Pythagorean pantheism and Egyptian quasi-philosophy drawn from the Book of the Dead. The style is that of an opium-dreamer, of whom we can just say, that he was once a reasonable being. But it is dotted throughout (not, as Zeller thought, in only two of the thirteen chapters) with Christian phrases,

uttered as in sleep ; and it is the only pagan work, in which the second person of the Platonic Trinity is entitled the Logos. We see in it the absolute breakdown of philosophy in face of the new problems of the age. We see Christianity, like the fig-tree rooted in the walls of a Greek temple, loosening the joints of the masonry, and helping on the work of secular decay. But we learn from it also to appreciate the real power of Plotinus, by whose strong hand the battle was once more set in array, and the forces of disintegration checked, at any rate for a time.

It is not necessary to treat at any length of the writings of Apuleius of Madaura. He was an orator and a romancer ; but not an original thinker. Indeed, even his "Milesian tale" of the Golden Ass is not original ; the framework and most of the incidents of the story are borrowed, and the reputation of Apuleius rests chiefly on his style, which, with all its elaborate euphuism, is not unpleasing. He was a man of peculiarly vile character ; and any one, who is inclined to agree with Dr. Hatch in thinking that the immorality of heathenism has been exaggerated, cannot do better than read through the *Metamorphoses*, and compare it with *Tom Jones*. The book is all the more instructive, because it was not meant to be instructive at all. Apuleius simply narrates and never moralizes, but the picture of life, which he gives, is several degrees darker than that of Juvenal, a professed satirist.

The book, however, has one redeeming feature, in the charming story of Cupid and Psyche. This has more than once been clothed in an English dress.

Mr. R. Bridges has turned it into graceful verse, and Thomas Taylor and William Adlington into plain prose. The latter version has been edited by Mr. A. Lang, with a learned preface on folk-lore. But this artistic composition has very little indeed to do with Hottentots or Zulus. It is really a very elaborate piece of allegory, metaphysics without tears.

Psyche, the youngest, fairest, and sweetest daughter of a king, was beloved by Cupid, yet knew not that she was beloved. By the God's command Zephyr bore her on his wings down the hideous mountain precipices to his palace in a fairy glade beneath. It was the most beautiful palace ever seen, full of all kinds of glorious things. "There is nothing, that was not there."

Here she was married to Cupid. But the heavenly bridegroom visited her only in the darkness of the night. He was loving and good as heart could desire, but straitly charged her never more to look upon the two sisters she had left behind. "Otherwise," said he, "thou wilt bring upon me the most poignant grief, and on thyself utter destruction."

Nevertheless poor Psyche could not rest content, and teased until she gained an unwilling consent. The two sisters came, full of spite and envy, and poured into her yielding ears the forgeries of their own malice. Psyche listened, and was lost. Resolved to break through the mystery of her life, she took into her bridal chamber a covered lamp and a knife. In the dead of night she bared the light, and beheld on the couch not the monster she feared, but the winged

son of Venus, in all the radiance of his divine beauty. But, as she hung enraptured above him, a drop of scalding oil fell upon Cupid's shoulder, and awakened him from his sleep. The god upbraided her sorrowfully with her fatal treachery, and flew out of sight on his golden pinions.

Psyche, who had wounded her thumb with one of Cupid's arrows, now loved Love with her whole heart. In her despair she would have drowned herself; but Pan, the shepherd god, who bestows the gift of divination, soothed her grief with hope, bidding her pray.

So she sets out on her lonely pilgrimage in quest of Love, widowed, but no longer despairing. First she avenges herself on her two sisters, whom she drives to self-destruction. But the way is long, and helpers there are none. She turns to Ceres, the Queen of the Mysteries, she adores Juno, the goddess who softens the birth-pangs, but neither will protect her against the wrath of Venus, who is bent upon destroying the mortal bride of her son. At last, seeing all other refuge vain, she makes submission, and casts herself at the feet of her mighty enemy. She is received at the palace gate by a handmaid named Habit, and scourged by Anxiety and Sorrow. Yet here she is at least under the same roof with her beloved lord.

Venus sets her hard tasks to do. She shows her a huge heap of all sorts of grain, and bids her separate them before nightfall according to their kinds. But a legion of little ants come to her relief, and the work is done.

Again she is commanded to bring a handful of wool from the golden fleeces of the sheep beyond the river. Here a whispering reed helps her. "Before noon," it says, "the sheep are fierce, and will rend thee to pieces. Wait till the cool of the day, when they fall asleep. Then thou canst cross the water in safety, and gather the tufts of wool, that thou wilt find sticking on the branches of the neighbouring grove."

Again she is to fetch water from the dismal cataract of Styx. Here the eagle befriends her; he fills her crystal vase and gives it back into her hand.

Last and hardest of all her labours, she is ordered to go down to Hades, and bring back from Proserpine a box of beauty. A tower, whose battlements she had climbed with the intention of flinging herself down, and so ending her woes, takes pity upon her; the friendly stones begin to talk; they warn her of all the perils of the way, and enjoin her not to open the box. She goes, and returns through perils unnumbered; but no sooner does she emerge into the light of day, than curiosity overcomes her. She lifts the lid; forth flies not beauty but a deadly sleep, and Psyche falls fainting to the ground.

But here her trials end. Cupid, now healed of his wound, came, and kissed her, and roused her from her swoon. Jove himself appeased Venus, and sanctioned the wedlock. And when the tale of months was run, Psyche bore a fair child, a daughter, whom men call Pleasure.

Shall we interpret the allegory? Psyche is the Soul; Cupid is the love of the Ideal, the desire of the soul

for God. His palace, stored with all manner of beautiful things, is Heaven, the Intelligible World, the Divine Mind filled with the radiant Ideas, the eternal patterns of all that is. But the Soul, prompted by its two ugly sisters Anger and Desire, rebels ; it will not be content with the darkness of celestial light ; it craves for visible sensual beauty, and is exiled to this earth to atone for its folly.

Then begins the upward path, for this is a choice soul which still feels the prick of the heavenly dart, and cannot make its home below. It is saved from despair by Pan the Deimon, the spirit of prophecy, who tells it, that heaven may be regained by prayer ; and the first impulse of repentance is to cast off the hateful influence of Anger and Desire.

But the ordinary consolations of ordinary religion are insufficient for the gifted soul, which aspires to climb the heights. Neither the mysteries nor the gods can help. Psyche must submit perforce to Venus, the mother of her darling, the patron lady of philosophic training, by which the heavenly love is brought to the birth. By Venus, her enemy and yet her friend, she is first chastened in the hard school of Habit, Anxiety, and Sorrow, that is, of moral discipline, for the practical virtues are the necessary purgation of the aspiring soul. Then she is trained in intellectual tasks. The heap of many kinds of grain is the multifarious pageant of sensation, which the busy ants, the senses, arrange and discriminate. The golden wool is the higher reflecting morality, which cannot be garnered till the heat of the day is passed, till the storm

and stress of youth is over. The water of Styx is Dialectic, of which the fitting symbol is the eagle, which alone of all creatures can gaze unabashed upon the sun. Then comes the descent into hell, and the deadly sleep. What is this? Is it that anguish of spirit, which St. John of the Cross called the Dark Night of the Soul, the black and horrible darkness which precedes the mystic's vision? Or is it death? Perhaps it is both, for one is twin brother of the other. At any rate, in the awakening that follows, the soul clasps again the lover, to whom it once proved faithless; and the issue of that embrace is not a mortal but an immortal child, not base earthly Pleasure, but that Joy which can dwell in heaven.

## VIII

### “HELLENISM”

WE have now traced the history of Platonism down to the eve of the advent of Plotinus, and at this point it may be well to pause, and cast a glance upon its great rival, the Christian Church. The two systems were in many important points wonderfully alike, and Platonism on its religious side was remarkably catholic or eclectic. Yet it did not adopt one single lesson from the Gospel. It remained to the last in its tone of mind purely aesthetic and intellectual, in its morals predominantly egotistic, in its modes of worship purely heathen. Was it the same with the Church, or are we here to recognize a distinct influence of Greek ideas? And if so, is it an influence that plays upon the surface only, or does it reach inwards, and effect more or less of a transformation?

The question is embarrassed by the fact, that the word Hellenism is used by two different classes of writers in two different senses. To the one it signifies that which is true and permanent in Greek thought, to the other that which is local, heathenish, and transitory.

Both rest upon philosophy, and on antagonistic philosophies, the former on Hegel, the latter on Kant ; and the opposition of principle leads to different conceptions of history and different rules of criticism. To the former belong the Tübingen school, Baur and Pfeleiderer ; to the latter the Ritschlian school, Harnack and Hatch. Both claim Christianity as their property, and undertake to show by their own special methods how it came into existence, and how and in what order its documents were produced. The reader will see why Renan said, that “few people have a right to disbelieve.” Before we can settle the date of St. John, it would seem to be necessary to regulate Hegel and Kant. All we can attempt here is to convey some idea of the difference between these two points of view.

For the first we may take a well-known passage from the philosophy of Clothes. “Highest of all symbols are those wherein the Artist or Poet has risen into Prophet, and all men can recognize a present God and worship the same ; I mean religious Symbols. Various enough have been such religious Symbols, what we call *Religions* ; as a man stood in this stage of culture or the other, and could worse or better body-forth the Godlike ; some Symbols with a transient intrinsic worth ; many with only an extrinsic. If thou ask to what height man has carried it in this manner, look on our divinest Symbol ; on Jesus of Nazareth, and His Life, and His Biography, and what followed therefrom. . . . But, on the whole, as Time adds much to the sacredness of Symbols, so likewise in his progress he at length defaces, or even desecrates

them; and Symbols, like all terrestrial garments, wax old."

"In the dogmas and rites of all the Churches," says Pfeiderer, "Carlyle recognized the natural products of the historical stage of culture reached by the peoples; to him they were the symbols in which the eternal idea must clothe itself for the consciousness of every age."

All this is in fact modern Neoplatonism, a Neoplatonism which differs from the ancient by the assimilation of the scientific doctrine of evolution, and by the partial assimilation of the Christian doctrine of character. Hence there are divergencies in the midst of a strong general resemblance. The view of Carlyle, of Dr. Pfeiderer, of the Master of Balliol, rests upon metaphysics, on the possibility of knowing God by reason; it regards religion as a whole, as the natural evolution of capacities implanted in the soul of man; it denies all miraculous interference; it regards all religion as imperfect and transitional; and all dogmas as mythical presentations, symbols (*Vorstellungen*) of the eternal truth (*Begriff*); yet it is optimistic, and believes that there are new and better things in store.

On this view Hellenism is precisely Idealism.

There are many difficulties in such a conception of Christianity, which we may at least point out. It is evolutionary, and makes of our Lord "the product of the age." Yet the Jews rejected Him, and Judaism has gone on evolving itself along its own lines. And the "higher criticism" is making this evolution more

and more difficult. Formerly we regarded the Promise as succeeded by the Law, and this by the Prophets, and it was possible to regard the light as "broadening slowly down." But modern writers treat first of "prophetism," then of the "night of legalism," and the development is gone. Again, Hegel spoke of Christianity as "the absolute religion." But this is not the language of evolution. Notions propounded almost two thousand years ago cannot be regarded as final by a Darwinian, either in dogma or in morals. Dr. Pfeiderer criticizes and corrects even what he allows to have been the genuine teaching of our Lord. But if Christianity is not absolute, in what direction is the advance to be made? Those who have rejected dogma must now attack morality in order to justify their own principles. And will this better things? Dr. Pfeiderer holds that his view is optimistic. But evolution is not optimist. It may issue in degradation, and actually did so in the case of Judaism.

But the main difficulty of this, as indeed of the rival hypothesis, is that of accounting for the peculiar dignity attributed to our Lord. It cannot explain why He was crucified, because, apart from His personal claims, His teaching was not more subversive of the ruling ideas than that of the Essenes. But still less can it explain why the Church regarded Him as God. There is agreement upon this point, that unless Jesus had been deified, Christianity could never have been more than a Jewish sect. Yet the Divinity must be held to be an illusion, a mere symbol of the eternity and universality of the truth which Jesus taught. This

illusion is generally regarded as originating with St. Paul, who shows few, if any, traces of Hellenism, and completed by St. John, who had perhaps heard of Philo. We can permit ourselves only one remark on this most singular view. Dr. Pfeleiderer builds not indeed the truth, but the whole power of Christianity, on a natural and beautiful but wholly false mythology, and proposes to retain the power while abolishing the mythology that created it. Or may we hazard a second remark. According to Dr. Pfeleiderer, the deification of a man secured the triumph of Christianity. Yet the Platonists deified Apollonius, and nothing happened.

Idealism has the graces of breadth and sympathy. It sees in rites and dogmas "clothes," beautiful forms of still more beautiful truths, which in their abstract form would never have won their way into the hearts of men. Renan and Victor Hugo adore Catholicism, and would leave it intact as the religion of the common sort, just as the Platonist did not in the least want to interfere with the mysteries of Eleusis. Ritschlianism, on the other hand, regards these same rites and dogmas as stupid or cunning distortions, by which a primitive Protestantism was turned into Catholicism. For this reason it seems to be finding favour with English Nonconformists, who welcome it as an ally against "Sacerdotalism," as the horse called in the man to help him against the stag, without adequately weighing the consequences.

Those who shrink from the difficulty of grappling with Ritschl's own writings, will find a lucid summary of his teaching in a pamphlet by G. Mielke, *das*

*System Albrecht Ritschls.* Or they may be referred to Kaftan's *Truth of the Christian Religion*, which has been translated in Clark's series. Ritschlianism is a free school, and there are differences of detail among its adherents. But its general position is well defined.

It is based on the philosophy of Kant, who insisted upon the relativity of all knowledge. Sense, he taught, perceives what it is constructed to grasp; reason thinks as it is made to reason. We cannot get behind and correct either our perceptions or our reasonings. We must believe them; but cannot tell whether they correspond to objective realities or not. Yet to this destructive criticism Kant admitted, or seemed to admit, one exception. While the understanding and the speculative reason tell us nothing but what is open to doubt, the practical moral reason grasps the eternal law of right, the imperative command, or "categorical ought," of conscience. Here, then, Kant found the one thing certain, the one road up from the world of appearance to the world of reality, the one proof of God, freedom and immortality.

But why this one? If it is generally wrong to argue from effect to cause, why should it be permissible in this all-important case? Readers of Heine will recollect his wicked scoff at this sublime inconsistency. Kant's followers endeavour to be more thorough-going. Kaftan, for instance, makes conscience as contingent as anything else. When we say that men "ought" to do right, we mean simply, that the world is so built, that they cannot be happy without doing what we call right. Nevertheless, the

Ritschlian also must have a way up. 'This he finds in Faith, which guarantees the being, nature and purpose of God and the soul. Thus the Kantian metaphysics come back again, but only in a religious shape, only to religious men, and only by direct communication to the individual.

The proof of Faith's message Kaftan finds, in conformity with his general principles, not in speculation of any kind, but in History. We know, from History, that Jesus Christ brought to man the full revelation of the Father's loving will, and planted it on earth in the doctrine of the Atonement and in the institution of the Church, or "Kingdom of God." We know, also from History, that this doctrine and this institution do make men free. They include the sum of the highest knowledge attainable, that is to say, of moral and religious belief, the only kind of knowledge that brings man into his true relation to God. Thus all that is supernatural, æsthetical, mystical or speculative, can be brushed aside as of no religious value. But the Ritschlians regard all these elements in common Christianity also as unhistorical, that is to say, as later importations.

Like a man who disarms the robber by going naked, Ritschlianism makes peace with science by excluding from the Kingdom of God all that science can possibly dispute. Yet, after all, it makes the work of Christ consist in Revelation, in the imparting of some kind of knowledge, not in "satisfaction"; and this moralizing of the Atonement is precisely what Dr. Pfleiderer regards with approbation as

"Hellenism." But, with this far-reaching limitation, it holds a high view of the Person of Christ. "In Him," says Kaftan, "faith has, and recognizes, God." Christ has for us "the value of God." Such language is not to be taken to mean that He is God, nor indeed that He is not. If pressed upon this point the Ritschlian would reply: "Do not ask. We cannot know; and, if we could know, it would not avail. Knowledge is not religion."

In this austere system Hellenism means, firstly, the setting of knowledge above faith, or the co-ordination of knowledge with faith; secondly, all externalism or legalism in doctrine, in the sacraments, in ritual or discipline. The Church is the kingdom of God, the body of those who have absolute faith in Christ, and there is a tendency to deny that the significant Parable of the Tares and the Wheat was really uttered by our Lord.

It will be seen that we have here an entirely different, indeed a contradictory, sense of the word Hellenism. To the Idealist this word signifies Platonism, regarded as true. To the Ritschlian it signifies partly Platonism, regarded as false, but mainly the influence of the unregenerate, or half-regenerate, world, which is always striving to get hold of the pure gospel and pull it down to its own dead level. By this agency the simple kingdom of God was transformed into the Catholic Church. There is no doubt a germ of truth in this. Worldliness is a *vera causa* of deterioration, else there would have been no Reformation. Ritschlianism is a truly religious mode of thought, and is right again

in maintaining that the grace of God in Jesus Christ is the one thing that makes the Christian. But what difficulties arise when these two truths are made the foundation of a system !

Ritschlianism will have nothing to do with intellectual belief. "God," says Dr. Hatch, "did not reveal metaphysics," because Kant taught that the knowledge of the *Ding an Sich* is impossible. We must leave this point to be fought out by the rival schools. But Kant himself is a metaphysician, and so is Dr. Hatch. They limit metaphysics, in what Heine and others think an arbitrary fashion, but they believe in God, a soul, a revelation. They believe above all in the moral law, and the moral law belongs to the essence of Deity. And if metaphysics are no help to faith, we may ask, without entering on disputed points, why Christ revealed the Father, or why St. Paul in the Epistle to the Philippians drew the lesson of humility, a lesson new to the heathen world, from the doctrine of the pre-existence of Christ ?

Again, the Ritschlian minimizes all sacramental or disciplinary aids to faith. Here again we observe an extraordinary difference of view between the two schools. The "legalism," which Baur called Jewish, becomes on the Ritschlian theory mainly or entirely Hellenic. But the truth is, that this vein of thought is in the Gospels, in the undoubted teaching of our Lord Himself. We believe that He instituted the Catholic sacraments. But at any rate "Catholicism" is to be found wherever He spoke of the Father as King or Master, and of His reward as "wages."

But finally, the Ritschlian view is, as Dr. Pfeleiderer rightly insists, pessimistic. It teaches that God is Father, but, like the Greek Plutarch, it denies that He is holy. It sees in St. Bernard much more to lament than to admire. It regards St. Athanasius as having saved Christianity from complete Hellenization by a definition which is radically absurd. It represents the Church as the product of dull scholasticism and uninspired moralism, the creation of the pedant, the bureaucrat, and the man in the street. And to the scientific world the remedy, which it proposes, will appear even worse than the disease. It invites men to go not forward, but back to a Gospel, of which hardly any two of the critical school give the same account, a Gospel which had from the first so little vitality, that it degenerated into an alien type in the very days, when such life as it possessed was at the strongest.

The theology of the Church was not Hellenic. This Celsus shows beyond the possibility of doubt. Even Dr. Hatch does not assert that it is. What he maintains in his curiously oblique *Hibbert Lectures* is, that whatever may be said as to the definitions in themselves, the "tendency" to define, and the further "tendency" to insist upon the definitions as affecting conduct, is Hellenic. But it seems unreasonable to call the process by one name, when we must call the result by another. Even the process was not that of the Greek schools, as was shown by Mr. Gore in his *Bampton Lectures*. And lastly, the insistence on agreement in dogma was the very antipodes of Hellenism.

What the Greek claimed was liberty of thought. The very reason why Christians were persecuted was that they were exclusive.

We must use the word Hellenism in its proper sense, which is rather that of the Idealist than that of the Ritschlian, to denote that which is distinctively Greek in thought, conduct, and religion. What we are to ask is how, and to what extent, properly Greek ideas affected the Church? But we must confine ourselves to the region of speculation. Organization, discipline, and ritual lie outside the limits of our investigation.

## IX

### THE Gnostics AND APOLOGISTS

PLATONISM is to be found even in the New Testament. St. John gives to the Saviour the title of Logos, a title borrowed most probably, though through what channels we know not, from the Alexandrines. It answers to the creative Intelligence of Plotinus, but Word was not used by the heathen Platonists except in the baser Stoic sense of natural force. Platonic Philonism may be detected also in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Some commentators have fancied that Platonism underlay even a famous passage of St. Paul (Phil. ii. 6, 7), where the Apostle speaks of the "form" of God, the "shape" of man. Form belongs, at any rate in the usage of Plotinus, to the ideas, and to the second though not to the first god, shape only to visible things. But St. Paul goes on to speak of the "form of a slave," and the resemblance appears to be purely accidental.

It would be most strange, if it were otherwise. Some of the Christians were educated men, and why should they not express themselves in educated language, so far as it lent itself to their purpose? Philosophy is a

mode of reason, and much of what Greek philosophy taught was true. The Gospel was given not to destroy reason, or the language of reason, but to fulfil. In applying to Christ the Jewish Platonic title of Logos, St. John was following the example of St. Paul at Athens, when he preached upon the Unknown God—"Whom ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you."

When Hellenism endeavoured to thrust into the creed notions at variance with its living import, the Church resisted. It cast out Gnosticism.

The history of this struggle, in spite of the dullness of the details, is most instructive. Gnosticism was an attempt to capture the Church in the interests of Hellenism, and would have resulted, if successful, in the destruction of Christianity. About this there is no dispute. But the Gnostics have been called "the first theologians," on the ground, that they only attempted to do in a hurry, what the Fathers succeeded in doing in more leisurely fashion, that is, to foist upon the Church an alien and destructive system of metaphysics. Yet they certainly would have destroyed the Church, and the Fathers certainly did not.

The history of Gnosticism extends from an uncertain date, somewhere about the Christian era to the end of the second century. After this time it ran off into other forms, especially Manichæanism, which had a long life, and was known to St. Thomas Aquinas. It originated partly in the vast and shifting mass of Babylonian, Syrian, and Jewish angel lore, partly in the Zoroastrian doctrine of an evil and a good god.

The phantasmagoria resulting was tinged more or less deeply with Greek philosophy, mainly Pythagorean or Platonist. Pythagoreanism had Oriental affinities to begin with, and the foggy Eastern intellect saw no difference between the abstract conceptions of the schools and the concrete shapes of its own mythology. Even the later Platonists hardly kept the two apart; the triads of Iamblichus and Proclus are barely distinguishable from the Gnostic emanations. If we add to these considerations, what we learn from the *Shepherd of Hermas*, or Lanciani's *Pagan and Christian Rome*, that there were numbers of people, who regarded the Church with an intelligent and not unfriendly curiosity as the last new thing, who attended the Christian services and yet lived Gentile lives, we have all the conditions out of which Gnosticism arose. It produced a multitude of arbitrary systems, which defy classification, because they are so arbitrary. They stretch away in a long line from the doors of the Church to the vestibule of the pagan schools. None was properly Christian, and none was properly philosophical. They were opposed at the one end by Irenaeus and Hippolytus, at the other by Plotinus and Amelius. Zostrianus and Aquilinus, against whom the Neoplatonists wrote, are not otherwise known to us, but they belong to the same family as Basilides and Valentinus. The former were excommunicated by the schools and the latter by the Church.

The Gnostics started from the Platonic axiom, that God is good and nothing else, and from a fact of observation, that man's works are often evil. Like

Platonism, indeed like all the Greek schools, they would not admit that man makes his own evil. Evil therefore must come from matter, and is the operation of the wicked spirit, who created the sensible world. This is, in fact, the Persian Ahriman. Even Plato had hinted at the possibility of a "bad soul," and Plutarch, as we have seen, held the same belief. It is the most permanent and characteristic feature of Gnosticism. Indeed, in Marcion it is almost the only one that survives.

That it is not a Christian doctrine goes without saying. It is not even Greek, difficult as it may seem to draw the line between the Platonic theory of Matter and the Gnostic tenet of a god of matter. But it made a dogma of that, which to the Platonist was a difficulty. Whatever might be the explanation of evil, it could not possibly be a god; of this the Platonist felt no doubt. And the world is the work of God, and therefore cannot be bad, though it may fall short of the divine plan. Further, the perceptions of sense are the condition of the higher intellectual knowledge. We gather our first ideas of God from the world itself. What then becomes of either religion or philosophy, if the first step of the ladder is broken away? "You cannot become good," says Plotinus, "by despising the world, and the gods that are therein, and all beautiful things. The bad man despises God, and if he is not wholly bad, by despising God he will become so." The Gnostic, others said, wanted a sixth sense, for his natural five senses showed him nothing but the devil.

To the Gnostic, theoretically, salvation meant enlightenment, or knowledge. But, from the point of view of practical religion, it meant deliverance from the clutches of a hostile external power. By the Christianizing sects this was held to be the work of Jesus, who brought to light the hidden mysteries of Wisdom, including all the cosmogonies. Yet not by His death, for they more or less denied the reality of the Passion, and not for all. There were three classes of men—the earthly, or hylic, the psychic, and the spiritual; the publican and sinner belong to the first, and must perish eternally. Their dualism led naturally to a harsh asceticism, for which also it is curious to notice that Plotinus, an ascetic himself, reprovèd them. There are indeed two kinds of asceticism, and what the Platonist says is entirely in harmony with the sharp remark of Clement, who observes of Basilides, that he hated the Creator though he ate His food, breathed His air, and in His world had the strange gospel of Gnosis preached to him. Gnostic asceticism ought to have led to prompt starvation, but like all fanaticism, it tended to produce a result exactly opposite to its principles. It issued frequently in the most disgusting antinomianism, in which the rites of Aphrodite Pandemos were known as “spiritual communion.” Porphyry notices this fact as well as the Christian Fathers. Yet further, the belief in a devil-god leads inevitably to magic. Plotinus charges them with this also, not only because they “cast out devils,” but because they thought to command the divine favour by “hymns, noises, breathings,

and whistlings" of a "technical" description. What the technique was is not difficult to guess, and Gnostic amulets remain in plenty to illustrate. What Irenaeus tells us about Marcus is by no means mere Christian prejudice, and is not to be compared, as Dr. Harnack compares it, to the Christian doctrine of the Eucharist even in its mediæval shape. Indeed there is nothing more surprising in the history of the Church than the slightness of the degree, in which the prevalent belief in art-magic infected the sacraments. This alone is sufficient to show, how correct and thorough was the moral teaching of the Church.

The Gnostics were the first regular commentators on the New Testament. Indeed they could not help themselves. Valentinus found in the plural word æons, of which St. Paul is rather fond, the name which in his system belongs to the hierarchy of Emanations. Heracleon the Basilidian discovered in the husband, that was not a husband, of the Samaritan Woman her Pleroma or guardian angel. Books that contained such mysteries obviously required to be turned over word by word; the rebus was no good without a key. The Gnostics were aided in their search for the non-existent by allegorism, that fatal engine devised by pagans, who were ashamed of their mythology, yet would not give it up. The Christians adopted it not from the Gnostics, but from Philo, or the spirit of the age. They wasted much time over it; but they used it mainly to "discover what they already possessed," to find, that is to say, the New Testament in the Old, and in this they were not altogether wrong.

The Gnostics appealed also to a secret tradition handed down from the Apostles. Against this the Church very naturally opposed her own tradition. What else could she do?

The Gnostics were also the first practitioners of "the higher criticism," the first, that is, who applied subjective canons to find "interpolations" in documents that did not happen to suit their theory or "pragmatism." Thus Marcion mutilated the Gospel of St. Luke. They were the first to find "Hellenism"—they called it Judaism—in the teaching of our Lord and the Apostles (Iren. iii. 2, 2), and to set "Paulinism" against "Catholicism," and to take philosophy as the norm of what is possible or impossible for God, and to hold that belief in the facts of the creed is not necessary for a Christian man. Whether the Church or the Kantians are their natural and lawful issue the reader may decide.

But, for all these reasons, the Gnostics were not the first theologians. Those, who call them so, mean that they were the first, who attempted to spoil the pure Gospel, by setting knowledge above faith. But it is surely allowable to ask, of what kind was their knowledge, and what fruits it bore? The answer must be, that their Gnosis does not even pretend to be derived from the New Testament. The evil god comes from a foreign and hostile source. And certainly it cannot be denied, that Gnosticism had a tendency to express itself in forms of life, that were heathen and not Christian. At best it may be regarded as a half-way house, through which many pagans, like

Ambrosius or St. Augustine, found their way into the Church.

The second century is the age of the Apologists. They were men who, living in a time when everybody, even emperors, professed to honour philosophy, that is to say truth, and when yet Christians were put to death for their truth, thought that they might venture to plead for toleration. Christians, they maintained, were moral men and good citizens, and their dogmas were not so unlike the conclusions of the schools as to call for their extermination by fire and sword. "What we are punished for," they said, "is merely the Name. You think that the Name is a cover for horrid crimes, but this, if you will listen to reason, is not the case." Their object was to present Christianity from the common-sense point of view, without using arguments that a heathen would not recognize, and without going into needless details. Hence the view, which they present, of the life of the Church is by no means complete. In particular they give us only the merest outline of the Liturgy.

With one exception they abhorred the very name of philosophy. To them it meant rationalism. "The Greeks," says Aristides, "who profess to be wise are more foolish than the Chaldæans." Hermias wrote a treatise full of bitter mockery of the schools. "They contradict one another," cries Tatian, "each utters just what comes into his head; they hate each other; they receive large salaries from the Emperor in order that they may not wear their long beards for nothing." Theophilus could not find the most ordinary truth in

their writings, "for, if any of their sayings seem to be true, it is mingled with error." "Among us," says Athenagoras, "you might find laymen, artisans, old women, showing by deed the benefit of their profession, even if they cannot explain by word the good the word has done them." Irenaeus charges the schools with calling ignorance knowledge; if they had really known the truth, the Incarnation would have been needless. Tertullian regards the philosophers as "patriarchs of heresy," "friends of error."

Justin is an exception. He had been a philosopher, before he became a Christian, and was no more ashamed of his philosophy, than he was of his Christianity. Even after his conversion he wore the garb of the schools, the blanket-cloak or pallium. He saw in Greek science part of the great *Praeparatio Evangelica*. Reason is the handmaid of faith. It teaches men to love truth and to discern it. It gives truth, and sharpens that hunger and thirst for divine knowledge, which can only be satisfied by Him, who is the Light of the world. This is the general position of Justin, and it leads him to dwell with predominant emphasis on the Johannine doctrine of the Logos, which is the golden bridge between dialectic and revelation. The Word made all men, is in all men, speaks truth to them, and saves them, if they will but follow His guidance. "They who have lived with the Word are Christians, even though they have been counted godless, such as Socrates, Heraclitus, and those like unto them among the Greeks." Since the proclamation of the Gospel, he held, that none could

be saved, unless he accepted Jesus as the Christ, that is, as the promised Messiah. Still he was inclined to go so far as to extend the name of Christian to those who, while they accepted Jesus as Christ, yet denied His eternal pre-existence and His miraculous birth, because these could not be "demonstrated," could not, that is to say, be proved exactly from the Old Testament. "For there are some," he says, "of our race, who confess that He is Christ, but insist that He is man born of man. With them I do not concur; and the majority agree with me, and would not say so either, since we have been commanded by Christ Himself not to believe in the doctrines of man, but in those things which were preached by the blessed prophets and by Himself." That is to say, Justin regards the belief in the divinity of our Lord as resting on the authority of Christ Himself, and as not capable of absolute proof from the words of the Jewish Scripture. He is thinking of the Ebionites, some of whom, though not all, held that Jesus was mere man. He judged that they might "perhaps be saved," provided that with their observance of the law they united the confession of "the Christ of God," and did not insist upon binding the law on Gentile converts.

The belief of Justin himself was that of the Church at large, and it was built upon the Gospels. But here there arises a question. Is Hellenism to be found in the belief in our Lord's Divinity, or in its disbelief? Again, did Hellenism cause the tolerance of Justin, or the intolerance of other Christian teachers? According to Celsus, neither the belief nor the intolerance

was Hellenic. According to Dr. Hatch, both were. But Celsus is right. The belief is Christian; the tolerance is Christian also; but it marks the man trained in the free atmosphere of the Hellenic schools.

In one respect, however, the Apologists undoubtedly philosophized. They are the first exponents of the modern doctrine of the Freedom of the Will. Dr. Hatch found the same teaching in Epictetus and the later Stoics, but in this he did not display his usual accuracy. No Greek school ever held the same language as the Christian Church.

The Platonists did not regard the Will as a distinct faculty. They considered it as an inclination of character. To them we may say there were two wills, or instinctive desires: that of the mind for truth, that of the flesh for gratification. Aristotle made Will an independent mental act, but confines its operation to the selection of means towards a given end; how the end is given, the all-important question, he does not attempt to decide. The later Stoics, in spite of their fatalism, went a step beyond this. The sensual man, they held, is the slave of his delusive fancies, and has no freedom at all. Yet there is such a thing as freedom. It is right judgment, and this is absolutely in our power at any time. We are always free to be free, because the one end is open to choice.

The Apologists, in their recoil from the Fatalism of the Stoics and Gnostics, went further still. Will, they taught, is the independent faculty of choice; it selects not the means only, but the end, and not one end only but both. Life and death are clearly set

before men in God's Word, and each deliberately chooses for himself either one or the other, either good or evil. Freewill in this sense belongs to men and angels. For God, the end is fixed by the goodness of His Divine nature, but even He selects means.

The origin of this doctrine is undoubtedly Biblical. It is found in both Testaments. It was held as a necessary corollary of the belief in Divine rewards and punishments. But it is absolutely un-Greek. In the light of this conception, moral evil is no longer a disease, the view of all Hellenic schools without exception, but a rebellion. This is an entirely different point of view, and its moral consequences are immense.

No one seems ever to have suggested that the counter doctrine of Grace is Hellenic, though it has an obvious resemblance to the Platonic theory of the heavenly Eros. Both are Biblical ; but Freewill is more Jewish, and Grace is more Christian. The former, we may say, is more ethical, the latter more religious. The predominance of one or the other gives rise to two different aspects of Christianity, which are sometimes, though improperly, called by the names of Catholicism and Paulinism. Both exist side by side in the Gospels. We find them in the titles of God as King, as Father ; in the offices of our Lord as Saviour, as Judge ; in the conception of heaven as a hope deferred, as "wages," or as a present kingdom, as the peace and joy of the Holy Spirit ; in the view of the Christian life as a new law, or as freedom ; in fear and love as motives ; in the antithesis of works and faith. It is probable that

St. Peter and the majority of the Twelve inclined to the more ethical view. St. John insists upon love almost to the destruction of Freewill, and St. Paul carries the doctrine of Grace to the very verge of individualism.

The history of the Church has been marked by reactions of the one tendency against the other. The spirit of discipline is the first and most obvious need of the Church, but it leads to dryness and formalism. When these evils appear, the Christian mind turns instinctively to the love of St. John, the grace of St. Paul, and fills once more the empty bottles with wine. And as these again issue in their characteristic defects of vagueness of belief and disunion, the need of the law, which guarantees the freedom, again asserts itself. The first great revival of Paulinism or Johanninism is to be found at the end of the second century in Irenaeus and the Alexandrines; the next in the theology of Athanasius; the next in that of Augustine; another at the Reformation; and we are living at the close of yet another. In all these crises we can detect the influence of the *literae humaniores*, of cultivated sympathetic thought, of poetry, philosophy; in our own time of science also, acting in unison with the Spirit of God to break the fetters of conventionalism, and lift men into nearer communion with their Father and with one another. If Hellenism may be taken to mean the love of truth and beauty for their own sakes, and of all kinds of truth and beauty—and this is, in fact, the noblest part of its meaning—this has been its appointed task, to remind the Church from time to time that her

dogmas spring from, and are intimately connected with, the great laws of physical and human nature. ' But Hellenism also tells the Church, that those laws are all-sufficient without any " metaphysical " explanations, and in this it is a bad counsellor.

## X

### THE ALEXANDRINES

CLEMENT, or we may call him St. Clement, lived from about 150 to about 213 ; Origen from about 185 to 254. The first was born in the middle of the reign of Antoninus Pius ; the second died in consequence of his sufferings in the persecution of Decius. Clement would remember well the philosophic Emperors. Origen died just before the shameful disasters of the reign of Gallienus. There were general persecutions under Aurelius and Severus, and every now and again the governors of particular provinces lighted the flame, as Arrius Antoninus under Commodus in Asia, Scapula at Carthage under Caracalla, Serenianus in Cappadocia under Maximin. But upon the whole, as Lanciani shows, Christian and heathen got on amazingly well together. The Ostian potter did not care in the least whether his lamps should be decorated with Bacchus or with the Good Shepherd ; it was for his customers to decide. The profession of the Gospel was not more dangerous than many other things ; it offered considerable prospect of gain to the poor who could get upon the church-roll ; to the clever

who might hope for office; to all travellers, who by means of "commendatory letters" could secure free and comfortable quarters wherever they went. The Church was already a powerful and munificent corporation, and numberless parasites fed upon its simple-minded charity, like Peregrinus, whom Lucian took for one of his butts. Peace had led to laxity and corruption. Numbers flocked into the Church who brought their heathen ways with them. Long before the end of the second century the Church had become a landowner. Pope Victor enjoyed influence at the Imperial Court, and from the time of Severus, perhaps from that of St. Paul, there were many Christians about the palace. Caracalla was "suckled on Christian milk." Alexander Severus awarded to the Church a piece of land that was claimed by the guild of licensed victuallers, quoted Christian maxims, thought highly of their mode of electing bishops, and set up a bust of Christ in his private chapel. The Emperor Philip is said to have been a Christian, and to have submitted to Christian reproof.

It was the age of Gnosticism, of Noetianism, of Artemonite Unitarianism, of the Puritan revolts of Montanism and Novatianism, of the Easter and Penance disputes. These exciting topics called forth a host of learned writers, whose names are recorded in the pages of Eusebius, from Hegesippus to Hippolytus. They insisted on the authority of the Scriptures and of ecclesiastical tradition; they shaped the liturgy and formed the canon; they regulated the calendar with a view to the due observance of Easter; they

reduced prophecy under rule; they established the theory and practice of the sacrament of penance, and of infant baptism; and they brought the Episcopacy into its final shape. The law that bishops should be consecrated by bishops was made good even at Alexandria in Clement's time. Monasticism had not yet begun, but its principles were already at work. It is hardly an exaggeration to say, that there was no essential difference between the Church of Origen's time and that of the Middle Ages. Transubstantiation was the prevalent belief, though the doctrine was not as yet, of course, expressed in the technical language of the Latin schoolmen.

At this crisis began the activity of the great Alexandrines. It was conditioned by a liberal education received in the famous catechetical school founded, under the Bishop, possibly by the Apologist Athenagoras, but more probably by Pantaenus, a converted Stoic philosopher, and by a double reaction, against Gnosticism or semi-heathen intellectualism on the one hand, and, on the other, against the formalism of those whom Clement calls the "Orthodoxasts," and Origen "the simpler brethren." The object is to show that true philosophy and pure faith are not enemies, but friends, and to bring back to the Church the right understanding of St. Paul and St. John.

The School of St. Mark produced many eminent names, notably the great Dionysius, in whom the blessed spirit of peacemaking, the crown of true learning, shone with the purest lustre. But we must confine ourselves to the two most striking figures, those

of Clement and Origen. Both were learned men, and possessed a good acquaintance with Greek literature, down to the time of Numenius, Cronius and Harpocration. Origen had possibly been a pupil of Ammonius Saccas, who began life as a Christian and a porter on the quays, and ended it as a heathen and the most famous lecturer of the time. Clement was, to some extent, under the influence of Philo, the Jew Platonist of the first century, who distinguished the First Ineffable God from the Second, and to the latter gave the title of Logos or Divine Intelligence. For a fuller account of this eminent man the present writer may, perhaps, venture to refer to his *Christian Platonists of Alexandria*. But Philo's importance may easily be overrated. Both before and after Clement the philosophy of churchmen was drawn from heathen writers, and Clement's own mind was shaped by teachers, whom he had learned to respect, before he ever heard of the metaphysical Jew.

In temperament the two great doctors were strongly opposed. Clement was a Greek, Origen a native Egyptian. Clement appears to have been at first a heathen. Origen was son of the martyr Leonidas, and, like Timothy, learned the Scriptures as a child. Clement was a born orator and friend of the Muses, delighting in apt anecdotes and fine sayings, loving everything in the shape of literature, from the Rabelaisian comedy of Athens to the austere eloquence of the Schools; loving indeed everybody and everything, except perhaps labour. Yet he was a diligent reader, and a prolific though unmethodical writer.

The chief of his extant works is the *Stromateis*, Carpet-bags, or Miscellanies. This was a favourite book-title at that time, used by many authors from Plutarch to Origen. Its object is to present the contrast between Gnosticism and the true Gnosis or Knowledge of the Catholic Church. It flows on in sinuous meanders like a river through flat and flowery meadows, and is left unfinished at last.

Origen, on the other hand, was the prince of schoolmen and scholars, as subtle as Aquinas, as erudite as Routh or Tischendorf. He is a man of one book, in a sense. The Bible, its text, its exposition, furnished him with the motive for incessant toil, and he cared for nothing except in so far as it could be bent to this end. The charm of Hellenism, its *belles lettres*, its art, did not touch him. Even its philosophy he regarded with a certain disfavour. As a boy he coveted martyrdom; he died a confessor. The first part of his spiritual course he spent in the austerest asceticism, and his days and nights to the last were devoted to labours of which no Greek writer had any conception. There was iron in his mould, and it had been heated in the furnace. But there was also a grandeur and a tenderness, which gave him an extraordinary hold on the mind of his contemporaries. We know hardly anything of Clement, but almost all that Origen did was chronicled by friends or foes.

We must not attempt to give the long list of his works, or the details of his well-known career. For our purpose it is sufficient to say, that he was infinitely more laborious than Clement, that he had passed

through deeper experiences, and that his intellect was bolder, keener, more comprehensive, and more disciplined. Clement is apt to catch at anything that strikes him as what we call "suggestive." Origen never forgets the relation of the part to the whole, never slurs over a difficulty, and his boldest flights are generalizations. It may be on this account that he is much less liberal and much more ecclesiastical than Clement. Learning, with its load of facts, is the ballast of speculation.

Like Justin, Clement found in the Gospel the true philosophy. Truth, he held, is one shape under many names. "There is one river of truth, but many streams fall into it on this side and on that." Truth is like the corpse of Pentheus, torn asunder by the Bacchants; each seizes a limb, and each thinks she has the whole; a famous simile borrowed from the Platonist Numenius. Philosophy must not be judged by the sins of the heathen, any more than Christianity by the defects of Churchmen. It is the gift of the Word, and its natural fruit is not iniquity, but righteousness. It was a true covenant, and justified those whom it led to renounce idolatry and live chaste lives. Further, Clement held that it has abiding utility. Man must dedicate his whole nature, the best efforts of his noblest faculties, to God. He can neither understand the Scriptures, nor give a reason for the faith that is in him, nor do his duty in the world, without cultivated thought. Hence Clement calls upon men and women alike to "philosophize," that is to think, and if they can, to study.

They are not to "fear bogies," not to fancy that any truth can hurt them. It is the ghost of knowledge that does harm, not the reality. True knowledge, Gnosis, belongs not to the Gnostics, or Knowalls, nor to the schools, but to the Church, which has received the One Body in the Incarnation of the Divine Word.

Thus philosophy becomes something more than a *praeparatio Evangelica*. Clement not only blesses its past work, but promises it a place of high dignity in the future, if it will take service in the army of Christ. Regarding the Creed as the expression of ultimate truth, he saw rays shoot out from it in all directions to the furthest limits of human capacity. Two great thoughts are combined in this view, the slow growing of light towards the perfect day (this was Justin's idea, and is the first germ of what we call Evolution), and an infinite growth of knowledge from a fixed and stable centre. The Incarnation is the sum of all the past, and the promise of all the future.

Clement's view was perhaps a little too optimistic. He did not allow sufficiently for the love of battle, which cleaves to the old Adam even in matters of research. Nor did he see clearly how variety of belief issues in variety of character. "One righteous man, in so far as he is righteous," he says, "does not differ from another." He hardly recognized any distinction between a good Stoic and a good Christian, though he himself makes love the secret of righteousness. Origen, on the other hand, was a pessimist. He thought that the world was growing worse, and this view increased, as it must always do, the positiveness

of his disposition. He sets the Bible much higher, and philosophy much lower, than Clement. "Few," he says, "have taken of the spoils of the Egyptians and made of them the furniture of the tabernacle." He knew Celsus, and looked upon Hellenism as a hostile power to be conquered and stripped. He took the gold and used it; but it must first be cast into the melting-pot. This rule is a necessary safeguard against the silliest eclecticism; but Origen puts it a little harshly.

The influence of Hellenism on these two distinguished men may be summed up under three heads. 1, the Notion of God; 2, the Morality of God; 3, the life of man in the Church.

1. As regards the Notion of God, Platonism rendered them signal service. It taught them what is meant by the words, "God is a Spirit." To the Stoics, and to the popular understanding, the Deity was material, and this opinion prevailed for some time in the Church. We find traces of it in Irenaeus, in Tertullian, in the Clementine *Homilies*, perhaps in Melito, and in the anthropomorphism of the Egyptian monks. It leads logically either to Tritheism, or to Unitarianism. That which is material is divisible. Three material things cannot be one. But God is One.

The Platonists held that the Divine Being is of the nature of thought, which is timeless and indivisible. Three thoughts may very easily be really and truly one. For instance, Justice, Wisdom, and Fortitude are all the knowledge of the Good. Wisdom is the knowledge in itself; Justice the knowledge as applied

to the distinction of mine and thine; Fortitude the same knowledge regarded as resisting the impact of fear. They differ, according to the Platonist, not only in their contact with matter, in their mode of dealing with circumstance, but in themselves; they are distinct, yet they are one. This is the great service of Platonism to the Church. It is in fact the one step from the Baptismal Formula to the Nicene Creed.

Platonism thus supplied the wanted explanation of the unity and co-eternity of the Divine Persons, but it could not be used to express the co-equality. Whether the subordination of Origen is traditional or metaphysical may be open to question; but there is no doubt whatever that to the Pagan schools the word "homousios" did not imply equality. Indeed in the case of Deity this notion was expressly excluded. The Intelligence was inferior to the One, the Soul to the Intelligence, in virtue of the rule that "the child is always worse than the father." The definition of Athanasius was in no sense Greek. It rested on Scripture, on the religious experience, on the Christian doctrine of redemption; in a word, on a wholly different cycle of thought.

But Clement was not content with "spoiling the Egyptians." In his lazy eclectic way he borrowed from the schools the whole definition of the First and Second Persons. The Father is the Monad, the Pythagorean One, the Absolute; the Son is the consciousness of the Father, the One become self-reflecting. Others had used the same kind of language before him. The doctrine of the Monad was not

quite so abstract in the mind of Numenius and his contemporaries, as it afterwards became ; but the main difference was that they did not as yet discern clearly what it amounted to. The Monad is a Cause, but not a God ; it has great physical but no religious import ; it shapes a mystical philosophy, yet raises no barrier, as we shall see, against the most abject idolatry. Clement could not, and did not, really believe in this self-contradictory Deity, who has no consciousness of the world. But he tried hard to believe in it, and it affected seriously his view of the religious life. Origen was far more clear-sighted. He held that man has in Jesus, and from the world, a true though imperfect knowledge of the Father, and he could not allow that the Supreme was "apathetic" ; "God," he writes, "has the passion of love."

2. The sight of sin and suffering led the Gnostics to believe in an evil God, to whom they attributed also the absurd function of punishing the evil that he has caused. The true God, they thought, is good, but not just. The Alexandrines maintained that He is both good and just, that His severity is merely the reverse of His fatherly love. And, as a corollary of this, they adopted the famous Platonic axiom, that the object of all punishment is to amend. There they fell into a grave inconsistency. They held, like all the Church, that the seat of evil is in the will. But the Platonic axiom is the outcome of a system, which teaches that sin has nothing to do with will, that the soul itself never chooses wrong, and that vice is nothing but a form of bodily disease.

These two theories of evil are wholly different, and lead to two wholly different theories of punishment. If evil is disease, the cure is chastisement, and chastisement is cure. By way of medicine or by way of surgery the sufferer can be healed, if sufficient time is allowed, and *ex hypothesi* the soul is immortal. On the other view, evil is rebellion against a law, the revolt of one will against another. Ignorance is not sin, though it may be the punishment of sin. Evil begins when the "I will" of the bad man sets itself against the "Thou shalt not" of the ruler. In this case the object of the Sovereign, the personified Law, in inflicting penalties is self-preservation. Punishment is the safeguard of Law, that is to say, of the unity, life, and welfare of the whole, and of the individual in and through the whole. It does not aim at amendment, but at the maintenance of that law, which alone can amend. That this is so is evident from the fact that, if the sufferer refuses to acknowledge the justice of the law, his punishment only makes him worse.

The inadequacy of the Platonic theory seems obvious. It teaches us that we have no right to punish a man unless we are sure that he will amend; and that, if he will not amend, we must go on increasing the penalties *ad infinitum* for the smallest offence, until we have broken him down. Mild as it seems, it leaves no place for either repentance or forgiveness. Sin is ignorance, and ignorance is eternal, because the soul is inferior to God. And so long as ignorance endures, punishment must endure. But, if sin

is rebellion, then submission is peace. No further punishment can be needed, except for the sake of example, a consideration that may weigh with the State, whose laws are uncertain in their operation, but not with Almighty God.

Further, experience teaches us that the punishments of God are not curative. Shame and remorse indeed are so, but these must be considered rather as the pangs of returning life. Nor again is discipline, the loving severity of the Holy Spirit, to be regarded as punitive. The proper penalty of sin as such is hardness and indifference. "God," it is written, "hardened Pharaoh's heart." These words shocked Origen inexpressibly. He felt that they could not be brought within the circle of his ideas; but he could not see, that this stubborn verse contained the very truth he wanted.

In this particular point a mistaken theory has been productive of great disasters. It led the Church to that "debtor and creditor" theory of sin, in which Luther discovered the taproot of all the mediæval corruptions. It made Forgiveness unmeaning. The Christian was forgiven once in Baptism, because all previous sins had been committed "in ignorance"; but now that he had received the Light, he could never be forgiven again. Further, it made the Cross, the fountain of pardon, an absolutely unintelligible mystery. For why did the spotless Lamb suffer if all suffering is medicinal?—or how could His sorrows profit those who can be healed only through their own?

These remarks apply more or less to the ante-Nicene Church at large. The peculiar work of Clement and Origen was merely to enlarge the prevalent belief in Purgatory into that of Universal Salvation, which is found in Clement, but was elaborated into a system by Origen. It rests partly on the corrective Platonic theory of punishment, partly on the Aristotelian axiom, that justice binds God to deal equally with all men, which is quite as untenable. Origen saw clearly, that in this world no such equality rules, and could find no way of escape but by importing into Christian theology the whole Platonic account of the origin and destiny of man. Antenatal sin and birth upon earth as its punishment, the descent of "the purer souls" who come freely down to help the spirits in prison, the resurrection of an ethereal body created for itself by the "spermatic logos" of the soul, the gradual rise through æons and æons of further trials, the final consummation—all this is Neoplatonic, and all this Origen read into Scripture by his method of allegorism. Origen's after eternity falls under the warning "not to be wise above that which is written." His prior eternity is demolished by a passage in Justin's *Trypho*—"Are the souls aware," asks the old man, "that this is the reason why they are in fleshly bodies, and that they sinned before birth?" "I think not," replies Justin. "Then it would seem, that they cannot profit by the chastisement. Nay, I should not even say, that they are chastised, if they do not perceive the chastisement."

Yet Origen used his Hellenism to defend a purely Christian thesis, the morality of God.

3. Both Clement and Origen were firm believers in the Creed, which they had received. Every article of it is to be found in Clement, and Origen wrote out his *regula fidei* in the beginning of the *De Principiis*.

But they were both, though Origen in a less degree, tinged with intellectualism. To both the supreme end of human effort is the knowledge of God, and heaven presents itself as that ideal world in which all mysteries will be explained, and reason, the noblest part of man, will attain to perfect satisfaction. They added that the road lay through Love, and in this the Platonist agreed. They added also, "through Jesus Christ," and from this the Platonist would not have dissented, provided that by Christ he might have been allowed to understand the pure, divine, unembodied intelligence, which he recognized as a distinct Personality. The question is, what is meant by knowledge, by love, and by Jesus Christ? The Alexandrines held that love is of the ideal, not of the material; this is Platonic; and that Jesus Christ is the ideal, and that His Flesh was merely the veil of Godhead, a necessary screen to prevent men's eyes from being blinded; this again is half Platonic. As to knowledge, there was a very broad, practical difference. The Christians held that the Gospel was a philosophy, yet it was within the reach of "old women." The Platonist maintained, that no one could know God, unless he had taken a University degree, and studied geometry and the laws of music. There is plainly a

great difference of spirit here. Both sides insist upon "contemplation," "recollection," but the Christian type is that of Thomas à Kempis, with the Bible on his knees; the heathen that of Nigrinus, with his diagrams and his Euclid. Nevertheless it is clear, that neither knowledge nor love could be rightly understood, till Athanasius destroyed for ever the old Hellenic philosophic aversion to "the flesh."

But in many points intellectualism is in agreement with the purest spirituality. The Alexandrines taught not only that God is our Father, but that the believer is already His son. The kingdom is within, though not as yet perfectly. In this they were in harmony with the general sentiment of the Church, which was already praying, not for the coming, but for "the delay of the end," that the Divine Will might have time to realize itself upon earth. The view that perfect life is "wages," "a crown," "a beatific vision," they had no wish to alter, because it is evidently just; but they destroyed the gross, sensual conceptions of the "heavenly banquet," which attended what is known as Chiliasm. With the general frame and discipline of the Church, as it existed in their time, they had no desire to meddle. Their sense of the need of unity was as strong as it well could be. They were not Protestants. But within the creed and within the discipline they insisted on freedom as the heritage of every true Christian. They held that in the Sacraments (here again their Platonism comes in), it is not the matter that profits, but the spirit. They acknowledged the three orders,

and did not in any way interfere with their official position. But Clement regards the "Gnostic," the true Christian, as the only earthly sacrificer, because he brings to the Father the offering of his own spirit, and ascribes to the Gnostic the judgment of souls, whether he be ordained or not. Even Origen did not admit that the priest could exercise the power of the Keys, unless he were a holy man. Indeed this view is to be found in Cyprian and the *Constitutiones Apostolicæ*. Yet they were not Protestants, and probably, even if they had lived in the days of Tetzels, would have stood rather with Contarini than with Luther. For they were content to buy freedom at the price of reserve, and recognized different types of Churchmanship. Both, but Clement more especially, divided the Christian experience into two kinds of life. In modern times we have divided it into two kinds of Church.

In this the Alexandrines were, from one point of view, restricting the doctrine of Freewill. From another they were attempting to harmonize the teaching of the whole Canon of the New Testament; or perhaps we should rather say, to assign their rightful influence to the teaching of St. Paul and St. John. They pursued this aim in true eclectic fashion, not by grasping the inner harmony of Freewill and Grace, but by putting the latter on the top of the former, so as to make it grow out of it.

The inherent difficulty of combining two such antitheses, which is already very great, was vastly increased by Platonism. Clement really takes his

start from the current distinction between practical and contemplative, or moral and intellectual, virtue. The philosophers, whom he followed, regarded the former as merely negative or purificatory. They break the hold of desire, and set the soul free. Affection must be thus exterminated, the spirit must become "apathetic," before it can really see and love the divine light of the Monad. This heathen intellectualism threw over the imagination of Clement the same sort of glamour, as scientific phraseology sometimes exercises at the present time. It led him to a mode of talking, which is a Christianized form of the fairy tale of Apuleius.

The two Lives are opposed, as law and freedom, fear and love, symbol and truth, negative holiness and positive righteousness, freewill and grace, heaven as a reward, and heaven as a frame of spirit. The lower begins with faith in the sense of submission, it is fostered by grace, in the sense of the external favour or help of God, and issues in holiness, or purification from desire. It is a life of struggle, sacrifice, postponed desire, "reasonable self-love," and its scriptural basis is the Parable of the Talents.

But now, through obedience and growing reflection we learn to understand and to love. Gradually the servant becomes a son. Temptations fall away, and the light grows, till at last the believer is "one spirit with the Lord." Henceforth he is filled with, upborne by, grace, which in this Life is no longer favour or power, but loving communion. He attains to perfect Apathy, because no thought stirs against the Saviour's

mind. He does God's will, because he cannot help doing it; he knows, because love is the key to all secrets. He has sacrificed even the consciousness of sacrifice, and there is absolutely nothing left for him to desire, because in Christ he has all. This is the Disinterested Love so famous in later mysticism. It expresses itself in the "mystic paradox," that it is better to be with Christ in hell, than without Him in heaven. The true mystic demands nothing but to be allowed to love, and will not pray the Beloved even to cast a glance or a thought upon him.

Like all mystics, Clement speaks of "silent prayer," but at this point he stopped short, and left the dreaming of dreams to the heathen Neoplatonists and the Christian monks. The reason is to be found partly in the brightness of his disposition, but still more in that spirit of godly fear, which tinged so deeply the devotion of the early Church. Men did not venture to grasp at the Beatific Vision, till their heads had been fired by sensuous allegorisms of the Song of Songs.

No one can help loving Clement, yet it is difficult not to be angry with him. If he had hunted through the dictionary of scientific jargon on purpose, he could hardly have picked out a more disastrous word than Apathy. But his Two Lives are the "outer" and "inner way" of all the Mystics, and the Church would have been poorer without Thomas à Kempis.

We may say that he has drawn the Lower Life in a spirit of charity and tolerance, not of worldly compromise. He wanted to find a place in the Kingdom of God for those to whom their Christian pilgrimage

is a battle, those who are in the just sense of the word "apathetic," who feel sadly their own lack of fire and joy. To most of us probably Miss Rossetti's words go home—

"We are of those who tremble at Thy Word,  
Who faltering walk in darkness towards our close  
Of mortal life, by terrors curbed and spurred,—  
We are of those.

Not ours the heart Thy loftiest love hath stirred,  
Not such as we Thy lily and Thy rose,  
Yet, Hope of those who hope with hope deferred,—  
We are of those."

Of the Higher Life may we not say that, with all his Platonic affectation, Clement is a true child of St. John? His Apathy after all is the Love of the Last Supper, whereof the love between the Father and the Eternal Word is the archetype and fountain. Or rather, what Clement calls Apathy,—it has been termed Detachment in later times,—is its concomitant.

The monks held it to lead not to the sanctification, but to the renunciation, of all earthly ties. Here the Platonic taint crept in again. Clement held the Platonism, but shrank from its extreme conclusions. He was the most amiable and sociable of mankind.

Nevertheless, that love is unearthly. Its loins are girded, its ear is uplifted for the heavenly summons, and it shrinks not only from caresses and endearments, but even from all labour which is not directly spiritual, from engrossing study, from the "questions of the day." Its type is Mary, not Martha; Clement, not Origen; and its work is to fill the reservoir, not to irrigate the fields.

The main fault in Clement's description is that it is too systematic. Many illustrious Christians do not really belong to either of his categories. The Two *Lives* lie side by side in the world, as they do in the Gospels, and interlock. There is love in fear, and fear in love. Probably no one ever attained to "sonship" without passing through the discipline of the "servant," like Luther, or Origen, or Wesley. But the conception of the Higher Life is at once too ideal—love never can be "disinterested"; it is not its nature—and too narrow. It seems to exclude those who, with the fullest sense of the Fatherhood of God, combine the deepest fear of His Kingship. It does not really explain the cry of St. Paul, "Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel!"—and it does scant justice to those whom we may call practical saints, the great scholars, rulers, missionaries, organizers, philanthropists of the Church.

The work of the Alexandrines must be considered rather as a reformation, a reaction against materialism and formalism, than as an advance into hitherto unexplored regions.

The reaction was conditioned by enlightenment. Whence did this enlightenment come? In form it was Platonic, in substance it was Evangelical. Partly it harmonized with the Gospel, partly it did not. The reader must now decide for himself where their Platonism was in fact the voice of the Holy Spirit, where it aspired beyond the limits of revelation, where it led astray.

They put knowledge above faith, but even this is

not wrong unless the New Testament is wrong, for Wisdom is the fruit, and not the seed. They may, perhaps, have erred in attributing too high a value to the intellectual factor of Wisdom, and in depreciating to the same extent the other elements of the Christian character. It is a question of degree.

It is not their fault, but their crowning merit, that they welcomed knowledge as the ally of faith, and saw in God's children not one type, but several. "In My Father's House are many mansions."

# XI

## PLOTINUS

WE may exhibit in tabular form the chronology of Plotinus as given by Porphyry—

Emperor.	Regnal Year.	A.D.	Age of Plot.	
Severus ...	13 ...	(205-6)	27	Plotinus born. Becomes student of philosophy at Alexandria; attaches himself to Ammonius, and remains with him 11 years.
			38	Joins expedition of Gordian against the Persians. After the Emperor's defeat escapes to Antioch.
Philip ...	1 ...	(244-5) ...	40	Settles in Rome.
„	3 ...	(246-7) ...		Amelius joins him, and remains with him 24 years, till the first year of Claudius.
Gallienus ...	1 ...	(253-4) ...	...	Ten years after his settlement in Rome, Plotinus begins to write.
„	10 ...	(262-3) ...	58	Porphyry, who had already been some little time in Rome, is introduced to Plotinus; remains with him six years. At this date Plotinus had written 21 <i>Enneads</i> . While Porphyry was with him he wrote 24 more.

Emperor.	Regnal Year.	A.D.	Age of Plot.	
Gallienus ...	15 (ab.)	(267-8 about)		Porphyry retires to Sicily.
Claudius ...	1 ...	(268-9) ...	...	Plotinus sends him thither five more <i>Enneads</i> .
„	2 ...	(269-70) ...	66	Plotinus sends Porphyry the remaining four <i>Enneads</i> , and dies towards the end of the year.

The dates do not fit with exact precision. Porphyry got at the birth-year by calculating backwards from the death. Either he placed the birth a year too late, or he added a year to his master's age. He did not know the day, nor even the month. Plotinus would never speak upon the subject, though he kept as festivals the birthdays of Plato and Socrates. "He seemed to be ashamed of his body," and would not allow his portrait to be painted. There was, however, a likeness of him, taken by Carterius, a famous artist, who was secretly introduced into the lecture-room by Amelius, and stole the shy philosopher's features.

Origen tells us, that in the Scriptures none but bad men are recorded to have kept their birthdays as a feast. The trait is quite Platonic. But it is surprising that Porphyry does not even tell us where Plotinus was born. According to Eunapius and Suidas he was a native of Lycopolis, in Egypt. Porphyry possibly left this bit of information out designedly. He wanted to convey a touch of mystery, and in this he succeeded, for the learned Empress Eudocia, in her *Bed of Violets* written in the eleventh century, says,

“Plotinus appears to have been of no country, but some say he was a Lycopolite.”

The Roman name Plotinus was possibly inherited from Plotina, the wife of Trajan. The philosopher may have been a Copt, descended from a freedman of the Empress.

At the age of twenty-seven, having no doubt run through the ordinary preparatory course, he entered the University of Alexandria, for the definite study of philosophy. Here he listened to one famous teacher after another, but “went away full of sorrow, with head hanging down.” At last a friend introduced him to the class-room of Ammonius Saccas. At the end of the lecture Plotinus exclaimed, “This is the man I was looking for.” For eleven years he remained the attached disciple of this famous teacher. Our readers will remember that in the tale of Cupid and Psyche the golden wool could only be gathered after the heat of noonday, and Aristotle thought young men “unfit to hear moral philosophy.” These words were seriously meant. No one was thought ripe for the discussion of first principles until he had attained the age of thirty, at which he was eligible for the consulate in the state, or the priesthood or the episcopate in the Church.

Plotinus was released from his allegiance to Ammonius, probably by the death of the latter; but his *Wanderjahre* were not yet completed. With the view of perfecting his experience by personal acquaintance with the wisdom of the Persians and Hindoos, he attached himself to the expedition of the ill-starred

Gordian. Gordian was murdered at the very outset of the campaign by Philip, and Plotinus returned immediately to Antioch. Hence after a brief stay he made his way to Rome. In the capital he spent the remainder of his life, leaving it only to die.

At Alexandria he had acquired a knowledge of all forms of Greek thought, of Christianity, for Ammonius was a renegade, and of those bastard systems that we know as Gnosticism. What he had deliberately chosen, out of all this seething flood of opinion, was the teaching of the inspired porter, the new Platonism, the idealist religion, to be hereafter expanded by the patient labour of his devout and original mind. Rome was exile to a student like Nigrinus ; but it was the fitting post for an apostle like Plotinus. Athens was impossible, because it was the seat of the *Diadochus*, the high-priest of conservative Platonism, and in any case was too far distant from the centre of life. Plotinus was drawn to the banks of the Tiber by the same motives as St. Paul.

At Rome he lived for twenty-six years the life of a priest-philosopher. He did not preach the gospel to the poor, nor was it possible for him to found a Church ; but in life and in thought he was true to his high idealist creed. Knowledge he regarded as but the means to communion with a personal God, and to the fuller performance of the Divine Will. He lived in privacy, disliking politics, and dissuading his friends from taking part in them, and exercised the strictest self-discipline. When he lay dying he refused to take "treacle," a popular nostrum composed of the flesh of

adders, saying that he had never used the meat even of domesticated animals; and his sleep was of the shortest. His friends were numerous and devoted, and included the Emperor Gallienus (who tolerated Christianity), and his wife Salonina. At one time he is said to have obtained from his imperial patrons permission to refound a deserted town in Campania, which was to be called Platonopolis, and governed as an ideal state. Fortunately the project fell through, and Plotinus escaped the unpleasant experiences of Dio Chrysostom, and indeed of Plato himself. But the fascination of his priestly character is best illustrated by the story of his Wards.

“Many,” says Porphyry, “of the noblest men and women, when death drew near, brought to him their boys and girls, and property, and entrusted all to him as to a holy and divine guardian. His house was full of boys and maidens, among whom was Polemo, for whose education he was so careful that he would listen to his school-boy verses. He endured even to go through the accounts of his wards’ possessions, and was most accurate and business-like, saying that, until they became philosophers, their property and revenues ought to be kept intact and secure.”

When they became philosophers, he hoped that they would renounce their wealth, like Rogatianus the senator, who gave away all his possessions, emancipated his slaves, resigned the praetorship, and did not keep even a roof to sleep under.

Like a true priest again he was a peacemaker, and many a feud between the hot-blooded Roman nobles

was composed by his influence. Among the official class, says Porphyry, he had no enemy. But this popularity with the great raised him up adversaries among the "philosophers," who were for the most part a self-seeking race. Olympius, who had also been a pupil of Ammonius, and envied the success of his old class-mate, tried to bewitch him. But his sorceries recoiled upon his own pate, and finding that he was more likely to suffer than to do harm, he desisted. Plotinus revenged himself by comparing Olympius to an empty purse, a body without a soul.

The meaning of the story is, that Plotinus, as the chosen servant of the One God, could not be hurt by the demons who were at the beck and call of Olympius. In many ways he enjoyed special marks of the Divine favour. Four times, while Porphyry was in Rome, did Plotinus attain to the beatific vision. To Porphyry himself this grace was but once vouchsafed, and then not till his sixty-eighth year. Once, in the temple of Isis, an Egyptian priest summoned a demon to appear in the presence of Plotinus; but to the great alarm of the enchanter, a god revealed himself. Plotinus could read the secrets of the soul. Once he detected a thief by looking on the faces of a crowd of slaves. He foretold that Polemo would live a brief and stormy life. He divined Porphyry's intention to commit suicide; told him the cause of his depression, and ordered him to travel.

He died of a disease in the throat, at the country house of Zethus, in Campania, six miles from Minturnae. When the end was at hand, he sent for

✓ Eustochius, who was living not far off at Puteoli. Eustochius was long in coming, and when at last he entered the room Plotinus said, "I was waiting for you. The divine in me is struggling to go up to the Divine in all." Thus he closed his life, repeating, as it were, the ideal creed. As he drew his last breath, a serpent crawled from under the bed, and vanished in a crevice of the wall.

He had always been a delicate man, suffering much from indigestion. He had a defective articulation, and stumbled over awkward words. When he spoke he perspired freely. He was as shy as a girl, and on one occasion broke down in his discourse, because the famous Origen (the heathen) was present. He had the autocratic ways of shy men. When Diophanes read a paper in defence of impurity, Plotinus ordered Porphyry to reply to it. He seldom condescended to defend himself.

For ten years after his arrival in Rome he taught orally, having, it is said, made a pact with Erennius and Origen not to vulgarize the doctrines of Ammonius by publication. During this period his lectures seem to have been of a loose conversational kind, "with no order, and a good deal of nonsense," says Amelius, "as if he were provoking his hearers to think for themselves." In this temporary abstention from writing, we find a trace of the *disciplina arcani*, or Economy, which from the Platonic schools crept into the Church.

Such reserve is, of course, impossible in an age of books. Erennius and Origen broke the pact, and

Plotinus followed their example. Porphyry gives a curious account of his literary method. He could not spell correctly, wrote a very bad hand, and ran the words into one another. His sight was so weak that he could never bear to read over what he had written. He did not put pen to paper, till he had clearly arranged in his own mind all that he meant to say. Then he wrote as if copying from a book, and if interrupted would go on again from the point where he left off, as if nothing had happened. Porphyry speaks of the terseness, the pregnancy, the passion, and enthusiasm of his style. We shall convey the best impression to an English reader by saying that it is remarkably like the style of Browning in its subtlety and lack of grammar. There is no difficult word, but the whole is infinitely hard.

His school was more like a literary society than a class-room. Generally the course was to read a passage from some standard author, Severus, Cronius, Numenius, Gaius, or Atticus among the Platonists; Aspasius, Alexander, or Adrastus among the Peripatetics. Upon this text there would be free discussion, and the master would expound his views. Sometimes one of the disciples read an essay. Sometimes one of them would request the master to lecture on a special point, such as the union of the soul with the body. Occasionally distinguished visitors, like Origen or Thaumasius, would attend, and there would be a sort of field-day. Out of these discussions grew the *Enneads*, so called from the six groups of nine in which Porphyry arranged them.

His most constant friends were Amelius Gentilianus, a Tuscan, who quoted St. John, and wrote many volumes against the Gnostics; Paulinus of Scythopolis or Bethshan; Eustochius, an Alexandrine physician; Zethus, an Arabian, another physician; Zoticus, a critic and poet; Castricius Firmus, Marcellus Orrontius, Sabinillus, and Rogatianus, four Roman nobles; Serapion of Alexandria, a rhetor turned philosopher; and a number of ladies, Gemina, her daughter of the same name, Amphicleia, Chione.

Chief of the band, though late in joining, was Porphyry or Malchus (King), a Tyrian. Plotinus called him "poet, philosopher, and priest," saved him from self-destruction, told him as much of his own life as he chose to make known, and appointed him his executor. Porphyry wrote a famous book "against the Christians." There is a taint of superstition, contentiousness, and inaccuracy about him, and he stands on a much lower intellectual level than his master. But he was not an unworthy disciple, and fills a respectable place in the history of his school.

Plotinus was a man of reading and of wide experience. He had surveyed all the schools, and learned much from Stoics and Peripatetics. But all his ideas, whatever the source from which they emanated, have been transformed and welded into new relations by the fire of his own creative genius. His system is Platonism, though it has absorbed all the best fruits of Greek thought. Further, it is Hellenism in substance, form, and method. Through his residence in Alexandria, Plotinus was no doubt

familiar with many forms of Orientalism, but no trace of Eastern opinion is to be found in the *Enneads*. Everything flows in a direct line from the teaching of his Greek predecessors. He was himself an Eastern, but if his intellectual activity was in any way modified by his origin, it can only have been through the sentiments, and the result must be looked for simply in the profoundly religious cast of all his speculations. In this, as in other points, he represents the culminating point of a tendency universal among the Greeks themselves. But when we observe how many of his nearest adherents were Eastern, like himself, it is possible to think, that the fervour of his devotion was intensified by his Coptic blood. Much the same thing is true of Stoicism also. The Orient has always been the land of inspiration.

Plotinus was charged with filching the ideas of Numenius. His friends repelled the attack with a heat that we cannot quite understand, for there was certainly a connection between the two. Nor do they explain the difference, further than by maintaining that Plotinus was far superior in "accuracy." What they mean probably is, that the One of Numenius still possesses attributes, and is not absolutely unconditioned. But they may mean, that Numenius was a Jew.

According to Porphyry and his circle, the spiritual father of Plotinus was Ammonius Saccas. Ammonius left no writings, and the brace of quotations that bear his name must be regarded with doubt. Hence we have no means for estimating the exact relationship

between him and his great disciple. But it must have included the two leading points, the final definition of the Absolute, and the identification of the Ideas with the Intelligence of God. Neither was in a strict sense the creation of Ammonius, but his must have been the mind which brought them into clear relation, and stamped them with that coherency which is the life of doctrines. With what difficulty these conceptions won their footing is evident from the facts, that both Porphyry and Longinus opposed the new theory of ideas, and that Plotinus spends page after page in arguing that the One cannot think. Here then we find the dividing line between the Conservative and the New Platonism, and the debt of Plotinus to Ammonius.

Both conceptions are of the highest importance. They form the bridge between ancient and modern metaphysics. And whatever may be thought of the Neoplatonist One, the new theory of ideas is now so firmly rooted that we can hardly believe that there was once a time when it was not accepted.

## XII

### THE WORLD OF SENSE—I

LIKE all the Greek Idealists, Plotinus drew a very sharp distinction between the World of Sense and the World of Intelligence.

The World of Sense is in itself manifold, impermanent, half-real, and therefore imperfectly knowable. It is marked—

1. By Multiplicity. What it offers to us is an interminable host of sensations, of sight, sound, touch, taste, smell. These we can in no way grasp or understand, till we have reduced them to order. We observe their recurrence in more or less fixed combinations, we gather them into groups, and these again into still larger groups. From the conception of a horse we rise to that of an animal, and from a comparison of all animals with all plants and all inorganic things to that of sensible existence. We generalize; we unify; and, in proportion as we succeed in laying hold of a principle of unity, we begin to know. The unity is in the things themselves. "All things that are, are, because they are one. There could be no army, no chorus, no flock of

sheep, if each were not one; no house, no ship; for, if the house or the ship loses its unity, it is no longer a house or a ship." But in a higher sense it is in Mind. It is imparted to the things by the Divine Mind, and we perceive it because our minds are akin to the Divine.

2. By Change. The Platonists had learned from Heraclitus that all things "flow" like a stream of water. "You cannot step twice into the same river." God alone can say "I am." The man who goes to bed at night is not the same man who rose in the morning. All that we see is like a drifting cloud; before you can point your finger at it, it has taken a different shape. Perpetual mutability is the law of life; "peace," Heraclitus said, "belongs only to the dead." From this again it follows that the sensible world cannot in itself be known. For knowledge is enduring, and its object must endure also.

3. By Strife. Here again Heraclitus taught the Platonist that the condition of existence is the ceaseless play of antagonisms. Life begets death, and death life. "War," said Heraclitus, "is the father of all things, and the king of all," and on this ground he found fault with Homer for praying "that strife might perish from among gods and men." In the philosopher's judgment the poet had unwittingly cursed the world, "for all things are the children of strife." This idea was a commonplace among the Platonists. They were not dismayed so much by the apparent harshness of the world's march, by the laws of life-in-death, of competition and survival of

the fittest. Whatever is lawful seemed to admit of some kind of explanation, though not a wholly satisfactory one. The main difficulties they found in lawlessness, in imperfection of type, and above all, in moral evil. How they grappled with these perplexities we shall see later on; here it is sufficient to notice that in the sensible world they discerned everywhere traces of inadequacy, a weakening of the ideal, as in a picture that only partially realizes the artist's conception. But the power to recognize imperfection depends on the knowledge of the perfect. It is by the law that we condemn the lawless. Now law, says Plotinus, does not make lawlessness, neither does lawlessness make law. Disorder is due to the fact, that order is superimposed by a higher intelligence upon things or creatures, that are for some reason or another imperfectly receptive of it. Here again then the sensible world cannot be understood in itself. We must look to the ideal of which it is the image, the shadow; and we claim to possess this ideal by the very fact that we can venture to pass judgment on the deficiencies of the shadow.

4. By Necessity. Here everything is bound in the iron chain of causality. Everything has a cause; the cause is outside it, and yet determines its nature. Even man himself, so far as he is an animal, is not free. His reasonings depend on sensations, and these on external objects. His will is limited by circumstances; even his virtues are called into existence by the nature of the peculiar difficulties with which he has to contend. Nevertheless an

universal, and therefore true, belief tells him that he is free. Where then is freedom to be found? Not in this material contingent world, where all depends on something else, but in the realm of thought. Thought is cause and not effect, determined only by the laws of truth and goodness, which are itself, therefore self-determined, therefore free. Thus again we are led to believe in the existence of another world higher and better than the world of sense.

From these considerations it followed that the world we live in is a world of half reality, a world of becoming, not of being, apprehended by opinion, not by true knowledge. The facts of sense, which we think most certain, are really least certain. We do not even know that they are not purely subjective. They are a stepping-stone to understanding; we must begin with them; but they play us sad tricks, because they make it most difficult for us to avoid attributing to spiritual existence the qualities which we are accustomed to recognize in finite objects. Those who have read the *Republic* of Plato will recollect the famous allegory of the men in the Cave. The favourite simile of Plotinus is that of St. Paul. The world is like a mirror, in which a man sees the shadows of realities. "Only," he adds, "you see the mirror, and you do not see Matter."

If we look closely at the world of sense, we discover that it is a combination of two factors—(i.) Matter and (ii.) Qualities.

I. The reader must distinguish carefully between Matter and Material or Stuff.

+ According to the *Timæus* of Plato, the Cosmos was made by God out of Necessity or Chaos, primeval stuff that is, already possessing certain attributes, including, no doubt, solidity and extension, but piled together without order, and heaving to and fro with a discordant, unintelligent movement. This view is represented in later times by Plutarch, whom it led to the belief in an evil creator side by side with the good. For this determined material is already a "manufactured article," and, as it is not moulded by Ormuzd, it must owe its nature to Ahriman.

But the later Platonists, as Albinus (or Alcinous) and Plotinus, follow on this point the teaching of the Peripatetics and Stoics. Aristotle was the first to use the word Matter (in Greek *Hyle*, wood; in Latin *Materia*, building stuff), as a term of the schools, to denote the impalpable, invisible substratum of things, in contradistinction from the visible Form. From him these two famous phrases passed to the Stoics, and from them to Neoplatonism. Plotinus differs from Aristotle in some minor details, but practically what he did was to clear the idealist use of the word from any sort of ambiguity. Strip off from any finite existence all attributes of every kind; take away from it colour, taste, smell, warmth, texture, solidity, shape, extension, and the residuum is matter. The necessity of such a residuum was established partly by appeal to the universal belief of the schools, partly by the scientific axiom that nothing can come out of nothing, and nothing can return into nothing. Suppose a case of complete change,

such as that of the grub into the butterfly. There has been complete alteration, yet no death, no breach of continuity. Something has persisted; the Form has been entirely renewed, but the Matter subsists unaffected.

Hence Matter is called the nurse, receptacle, vehicle, substratum of the Form. It must not be supposed that the Matter becomes the Form, or that it acquires qualities by union with the Form. It is merely the principle of the Form's cohesion, the condition of its manifestation. "It receives shape, yet is not shaped." It remains always exactly what it was, absolutely undefined. For modern readers there is a trap in the word we have borrowed from the Latin. We call it Matter, but to the Greek matter itself is immaterial; it has "no body." It has no parts or divisions; it is "one, continuous, unqualified." The nearest approach we can make to it is to be found in that intangible aether, which physicists speak of as pervading all space.

It cannot be said either to exist or not to exist. Actually it is nothing; potentially, if it be joined to Form, it is all things. Its existence is a future, a promise of being. The subtle Greek marked the distinction by one of its exquisite turns of expression. Matter is not Nothing ( $\text{o}\tilde{\upsilon}\kappa \tilde{\upsilon}\nu$ ), but No Thing ( $\mu\eta \tilde{\upsilon}\nu$ ).

But, if it has no qualities, what can we know about it? In the night all colours are black, says Plotinus, and so, when the mind strips its object of all definiteness, no light is left, and it sees nothing but the darkness. Can it be said even to see the darkness,

for it can see it only as solid, and matter has no solidity? Is thinking about Matter, then, the same as thinking about Nothing? No; when we think about Nothing, the mind is blank, but when we think about Matter, we have a kind of impression of the shapeless. So Plato said that we conceived of it by a "bastard reasoning."

It will be seen that the Neoplatonist went very near to denying the existence of matter. If, as he defined it, it was not nothing, it was, at any rate, next to nothing. Sometimes Plotinus seems inclined to blot it out altogether, as Bishop Berkeley did, and Carlyle; but this is merely due to his love of starting every possible hypothesis. The eternity of matter lies at the root of his whole system, and it lands him in two grave difficulties. If matter is eternal, it ought, on his own most cherished principles, to be perfect, yet he regards it as the cause of evil. And, if it has no qualities, it ought to be a perfectly indifferent medium for the form. Yet, as we shall see, there was much in the world for which he could only account by supposing that matter had a certain power of resistance, a sort of imperfect transparence, so that the form often succeeded only partially in suffusing the matter with its light.

This is the fundamental difficulty of Platonism. It does not succeed, after all, in attaining that unity towards which all philosophy aspires. It issues in a dualism. Matter is distinguished from God, and therefore limits God both physically and morally. This explains why the Platonist was so anxious to

reduce the conception of Matter to the lowest possible term, why he ascribed to it a merely hypothetical existence. If he could show that Matter was all but nothing, he could also show that God was all but almighty. He narrowed the gulf to a mere chink, but could not close it altogether.

If Plotinus had done what modern philosophers are inclined to do, if he had set the human mind on the same plane with bodily existence, and found in God the common and sole cause of both, he would have been compelled to distinguish between finite and infinite spirits, and this he thought impossible. But, further, he would have imported moral evil and physical imperfection into the self-evolution of the divine, and thus again have limited God. In some shape or another the dualism must always remain. We cannot leap off our own shadow, as Goethe said. No philosophy can solve the insoluble. The best philosophy is that which approaches nearest to a solution, and explains the most, and the most important, phenomena of life.

It is worth while to dwell upon the definition of Matter, for it is one of the most interesting words in language. Endless controversies, philosophical and theological, have centred round it; the doctrine of transubstantiation, for instance, with all its momentous consequences, hinges upon the definition of Plotinus, which in words agrees with, but in substance absolutely differs from, that of Aristotle. Yet Aristotle was not a Christian, and Plotinus was an antagonist of Christianity. But the word has received a more

immediate and practical interest in our own times.  
 ✕ For the Matter of Plotinus is, in fact, the Infinite, the God, of the modern Agnostic.

Agnosticism begins by setting the Finite against the Infinite, and endeavours to grasp the Infinite by throwing on one side all those properties or limitations which make the Finite. This is precisely the method, the *via negativa*, pursued by Plotinus in his hunt after matter. Naturally the result is the same. The Infinite is a presupposition of all knowledge, but in itself it is a mere negation, involved in our perception of all finite things, yet in itself No Thing. We must believe in it; yet cannot know it, because it is like a vast sheet of grey paper stretched across the sky, with no lines or divisions upon which the eye can rest. We have a sort of consciousness of it, an impression, as Plotinus said, of the shapeless. It is, in fact, the  
 † Matter, the Infinite, of the Platonist; but, what the  
 † Agnostic calls good, the Platonist called evil. This startling contradiction depends on the view that is taken as to the nature of qualities. If the Infinite is the perfect, the finite is imperfect; and if this imperfection comes from its finitude, finitude as such is bad. Hence the qualities which define and limit and negate the Infinite are in themselves evil. But to the  
 † Platonist the qualities are precisely that which gives existence, life and beauty. They are the reality, so far as reality is to be found in this world. It is true that they are but shadows, imperfect copies of the heavenly realities, but the imperfection is due precisely to their contamination by the Infinite.

Things would have been a great deal clearer, if the Platonist had only used the word Law in its modern sense. When he spoke of law, he meant convention; what we call law, he called Idea. But, if we may translate his teaching into our own familiar phraseology, it amounts to this, that where there is law there is good, and where there is no law there is evil. "Liberty," says Mr. Ruskin, "whether in the body, soul, or political estate of man, is only another word for Death, and the final issue of Death, Putrefaction; the body, soul, and political estate being healthy only by their bonds and laws." This is Platonism pure and simple. Liberty here is the indefinite, infinite, material, which in itself is no good and no thing. Law is neither finite nor infinite, though both terms may be applied to it with equal impropriety. It is the reality and the life, and qualities are the scintillations, the bubbles on the stream, by which we ascertain the presence and the nature of the life.

## XIII

### THE WORLD OF SENSE—II

II. THE leading passages on the subject of Qualities are *Enn.* ii. 6 throughout : vi. 3, 8, 9, 10, 15.

All sensible existence Plotinus considered to be an aggregate of Matter and Qualities. He devoted much labour and space to a thorough and exceedingly keen-sighted criticism of the Categories of Aristotle, which no student of the history of philosophy ought to neglect. But for our present purpose it is sufficient to notice one of the most important of his conclusions. All Qualities, whether of what we call in the narrower sense of the word quality, such as colour, warmth, and so forth, or of quantity, or of movement, or of relation, may be divided from another point of view into those which are complementary to the existence, and those which are not.

By those which are not, he means acquired or fortuitous dispositions, such as virtue, beauty, health, disease ; or transient affections, such as blushing ; or the operations of one body upon another, such as the warmth of a garment which has been placed near the fire and then removed. These do not concern the

existence of the thing. They come and go, and make no real difference. A man is neither more nor less a man because he is bad, and iron is neither more nor less iron because it happens to be red-hot. The last instance is not well chosen from a modern point of view ; but to the ancient physicist, heat was a property of fire, was caused by fire, and belonged to fire. Hence when found in other things it was a mere accident, a quality gone astray, as it were, from its proper habitat.

The really important qualities are the complementary, those which belong to a particular thing, which make it what it is, and with the matter constitute its sensible existence. A particular man produces in us a particular group of impressions ; he has a certain height, shape, colour, carriage ; these define him, and mark him off from all other objects of perception. We cannot analyze the sensations that he causes in us ; they are ultimate facts. But can we account for them in any way ? Can we explain how they come to be there for us to perceive, and to be there in that peculiar combination ? Plotinus thought that we could, and looked upon the complex group of sensations produced by an individual object as the energies of a Logos, by which that individual object was made.

Logos is another famous term of the schools. It requires to be distinguished from Idea, and from Eidos, or Form.

The Idea is the Divine Thought in its highest and most abstract expression. It is the ultimate cause of all that exists in this world. Before God could

create, there must have been in His intelligence a distinct notion or idea of what He meant to create. "How was it possible that He should first wish to form a horse, and then invent the type of a horse? Obviously, the type of a horse must have existed first" (vi. 7, 8).

Form is sometimes used as practically synonymous with Idea. Where they are distinguished it is in this way, that Idea belongs to the Intelligence, the second person of the Neoplatonist Trinity, while Form resides in the Soul, the third person. The Soul is busy with the world of becoming, over which it presides. Hence the ideas which it has received from above have become forms; they have taken shape as it were; they are more concrete. Forms, Plotinus says, are all "sensible." They are nearly what we mean by Natural Kinds or Types.

The Form is still a thought, but it is on the point of plunging into material existence. It is the general about to become the particular. At this stage it changes into or evolves the Logos, which is no longer a thought, but a power or energy.

Logos is generally translated "Word," owing to the influence of the English version of St. John's Gospel, and we may render it in accordance with general usage by this expression. Yet it should be noticed that the usage is inaccurate and misleading. Logos signifies not "Word" but "speech," "an account or description of anything." Hence it acquired the sense of definition, reasonable explanation. From this again it came by a natural transition to denote that which

forms the basis of the explanation, the cause, the living force or energy which brings the thing into being, and makes it what it is. In this last acceptance it is a coinage of the Stoics, from whom it was borrowed by the Neoplatonists. The difference between its usage by the two schools depends on the difference between their respective conceptions of God. The Stoics were Pantheists; their deity was the soul of the world, and the indwelling Word was therefore a first cause, an immediate operation of the creative mind. But the Neoplatonists were Theists and Transcendentalists, and in their teaching accordingly the Word is a secondary cause, and approaches very nearly to what we mean by physical law. Only the law is regarded as a living force, proceeding from, and inseparably connected with, a thought in the Divine mind, of which it is the likeness, the shadow. Nor is this force wholly unintelligent, though its operation resembles rather instinct, and it bears to the Idea or the Form the relation of the sleeping to the waking mind.

And now we can see what Qualities are. The Word is often called "spermatic" (from the Greek *sperma*, "seed"), because it is like the seed which carries implicit within itself all the properties of the developed plant. The texture, colour, fragrance, shape of the rose all come from the seed. They must therefore have lain in the seed as hidden powers or laws of life, which manifest themselves to our perception in this way. This of course is but an analogy, for the seed itself is material. What we are to understand is, that

whenever the Word, shot out as it were from the divine soul, comes into contact with matter, it "makes a thing." All its manifold activities come into play ; it produces "bodiness," solidity, and extension, and all the phenomena that go with these. It creates, we may say, the ox or the horse as we see them. Not that it moulds or qualifies the Matter. The Matter is in no case anything but a sort of reflecting surface on which the Form is able by means of the Word to project a picture of itself, a sensible picture adapted to our modes of sensible apprehension. Hence though the Word as such is always combined with Matter (*ἀχώριστος*), being in fact life as we see it at work, we are able to abstract it (*χωρίζειν*), and consider it in the Form or the Idea.

It will be gathered from what has been said that Idea, Form, and Word belong properly to the works of God. They bring down life. It should be noticed, however, that on the one hand every natural thing shares in life so far as it is capable. Even a stone has energies, is a cause in some limited degree, because it has a word. On the other hand, certain exceptions were admitted, abnormalities, things contrary to nature. There was no idea of fever. As to the products of human art, there was a divergence of opinion. Most Platonists, according to Albinus (or Alcinous), would not allow that a house, a shield, a picture had any idea. They were works of man, not of God. In the view of Plotinus (v. 9, 11), all creations of art and industry are ideal in a secondary sense, in so far that is as they embody the thoughts of the derived intelligence of

man. Thus he is able to speak of the form of a house, as Plato spoke of the idea of a bed. These instances will help the reader to grasp the general meaning of the doctrine of Form. What we recognize when we see a house is the plan, the mind of the builder. It is a concrete thought, and could not have been there unless the thought had preceded it. Doors, windows, chimneys, the arrangement of the rooms, the brick, or stone, or mud, or marble, of which the walls are composed, are all expressions of the word of the man who dwelt under this roof, and tried to make himself as comfortable as his material surroundings would allow. In one building we discern his poverty, in another his love of art, in another his political condition, in another his religious aspirations. Everywhere, so far as we can grasp the idea, the generating purpose, we understand. Where the meaning is illegible, the order confused, knowledge stumbles. So it is in the world at large. The effect is always a symbol of the cause, the thing of the mind that called it into being.

Thus we arrive at the idealist position as first distinctly formulated by the great Neoplatonist. The external world is none other than the thought of God transmuted into vital law. What we cognize or recognize therein are the traces, imitations, shadows of intelligence. We know them in so far as they are shadows; we do not know them in so far as they are only shadows. The modern way of expressing the same view is that there is no object without a subject, no thing without a thinker. Nothing can exist,

nothing be known, except in so far as it is made, arranged, brought into definite relation with other things by an ordering reason.

There still remain for consideration two important phenomena of the sensible world, which we call Space and Time.

The same general considerations, that rule all the conditions of sensible existence, apply here also. Space and Time are half real, because they are the shadows of realities. It is with them as with all qualities. Colour does not belong to the idea, yet there is something in the idea, which ultimately produces colour. It is just the same with Space and Time.

It will assist the reader, if we translate here the two most instructive passages on the subject of Space.

The first is *Ennead* v. 5, 9—

“Every effect is either in its cause or in something else, if there is anything after that which caused it (any secondary cause, that is). For inasmuch as it is brought into being by something else, and wanted that something else in order that it might come to be, it wants it absolutely ; wherefore it is *in* it. The last things therefore are in the last before them ; these again in those before them ; and one thing is in another up to the first principle of all. But the first principle, inasmuch as it has nothing before it, cannot be in anything else ; and since it cannot be in anything, it embraces in itself all those things that are in what precedes them. But, though it embraces

them, it is not dissipated among them, and contains without being contained. Since it contains, then, yet is not contained, there is nowhere where it is not. Otherwise it does not contain. And if it is not contained, it *is* not. So that it is, and is not; is not because it is not limited, but able to be everywhere, because free from all restraint. For if it is unable, it is bounded by something else, and what lies beyond that boundary does not share in it, and God reaches to that boundary and no further, and will be no longer independent, but subject to the things that lie beyond Him. Things, therefore, which are in something, are where they are; but those things which are nowhere are everywhere."

The other passage is *Ennead* vi. 8, 11—

"The whole difficulty, that besets us in the consideration of the world of sense, arises from our first assuming Space, as a kind of chaos, and then, when we have set up this notion of Space in our imaginations, bringing God into it. Then when we have brought Him in, we begin to ask whence and how did He come, and, as if He were a new arrival, we have been wondering how He got here, and what He is, as if He had suddenly emerged from some abyss, or dropped down from the clouds. It is needful, then, to cut away the cause of all this perplexity, and cast Space away altogether from our thought of Him, and not suppose that He is in anything, or lies, or is seated in anything, or that He 'came' at all, but just that He is, as He is, and as reason proves Him to be, and that Space, like everything else,

is after Him—that Space indeed is after everything else.”

Rather more has been translated here than is requisite for our immediate purpose, but it will all help the reader on his way. Space, it will be seen, is explained by the general doctrine of causality. The effect is always *in* the cause. When the Word makes bodies, it gives them extension, and so makes space. Space is the last of all things; it is made by bodies, which are made by words, which come from the mind. Everything is in that which precedes it; all therefore is in mind, which is in God, who is in nothing, and therefore is everywhere and nowhere.

If the reader is a little startled by this abrupt conclusion, he must remember that existence, according to Plotinus, is thought, and then ask himself how thoughts exist in the mind. What, for instance, are the length and breadth of the idea of justice, or how is it parted off from other ideas? What is true of these abstract notions is obviously true also of conceptions derived from material things, if we can reason about them as Plotinus held that we could, without forming a picture of them. Even if we do form some sort of picture, what is the size of our imaginative presentation of an ox, or how is it separated from the thought of an animal, or in which particular pigeon-hole of the mind is it stored away? And where is the mind itself? These questions help us at any rate to understand what Plotinus means.

We commonly speak of the world as “in space.”

According to the Neoplatonist, space is in the world and nowhere else. Space, in fact, is extension. If bodies are limited by space, they are limited by their own space or shape; the limit is from within, and not from without. Thus space, place, room, bulk, are only different names for the same property of corporeal existence. It is in the body, or rather about the body, and this distinction shows us what is really meant by "in." Bodies cannot be "in" bodies; they may be adjacent, or circumjacent, but never injacent, if that word may be coined. The wine is surrounded by the pitcher, but it is not "in" the pitcher in the same sense in which a thought is "in" the mind, as a part which implies the whole, and is inter-penetrated by every other part, as an energy of the undivided life. } 213

Thus Space turns out to be a mere mode of earthly existence, a rough similitude of the true spiritual existence. Carefully interrogated, the little word "in" will lead us up from things "here" to things "yonder." From the materialized ideas flattened out into length and breadth so as to become visible, we can rise to the conception of the same ideas as they exist, one in all and all in one, in the Divine Mind.

It is the same with Time, to the treatment of which a special book of the *Enneads* (iii. 7) is devoted. The subject is a commonplace with the later Platonists. They set Time over against Eternity as its counterpart, but not as its contradictory. They are not distinguished as finite and infinite. Time is not

a piece snipped off from Eternity and measured out. It is just as eternal in the vulgar sense of the word as Eternity itself. It is "an image of Eternity"—Eternity made visible.

Eternity is defined as the life of Being, that is of the Divine Intelligence; and here, therefore, we must to some extent anticipate the doctrine of God. Conceive of a geometer who is absolute master of his science, so that all Euclid is present at once to his mind's gaze as an articulated system, a host of propositions ordered in unity. Conceive of him further as making no immediate use of his knowledge, but sitting with eyes closed contemplating it. Think next of the Intelligence of God as the fullness of all abstract thoughts. Each idea is perfectly distinct and conscious, yet they melt into one another, and they are felt as the powers of one life, and the consciousness of their unity is as clear as that of their disparateness. In such an Intelligence, says Plotinus, there will be sameness and yet difference, rest and yet movement. There will be life but no change, because nothing can be added to it and nothing taken away. Hence it will have no past or future, only present.

The Divine Intelligence is unity in diversity, it is the One-Many, and Eternity is its property, its nature. We are not far from a correct definition if we say that Eternity is life, which is infinite because it includes all life, and never loses any part of itself. We may even say that Eternity is the same as God.

In the Divine Soul the unity is weakened and the diversity is increased. It is no longer One-Many, but One and Many. Reasoning has taken the place of contemplation, and creation has begun. With it begins Time. Time is born of the soul, and does not exist out of the soul. It is the movement of the reasoning faculty, which grasps one thought after another, and passes from one perception to another. It is not to be confused with the successive changes of external things, such as the stars; these are in time; they do not create time, but reveal it. Time is, in brief, the property of the lower life, as Eternity is of the higher. These two stand in the relation of cause and effect, of substance and shadow.

Thus while Space is a fact of sensible existence, Time is purely subjective. Both may be called Laws of Thought, but only of the lower regions of thought. It is possible, not indeed for all, but certainly for some—for those in whom the higher faculty of intelligence is awake—to deal with pure Being, with ideas, divested of these and all other sensible limitations.

## XIV

### THE INTELLIGIBLE WORLD

ABOVE, around, within the World of Sense, which is not unreal because it partakes of reality, yet is but a shadow, a semblance, stands the World of Intelligence, which truly exists, and can be truly known. It is characterized by Unity, Eternity, Goodness, Beauty, Truth, Freedom, and Life. All these things we see "here," as in a glass darkly, but "yonder" face to face. "Here" and "yonder" are the words by which Plotinus most commonly marks the difference between the two worlds.

Two features of the Intelligible world call for especial notice. It is Many, yet it is One.

1. It is Many. For it is the archetype, the pattern of the world of sense. Whatever is "here" is also "yonder," though not in exactly the same sense, because its mode of existence is different. There is no matter yonder, yet there is something which corresponds to it. Ideas are not compound and divisible like bodies, yet some are lower and more complex, "after" others. The idea of animal is simpler, earlier than that of man, and intelligence stands to soul in the relation of form. Soul is a child

of intelligence and "in" it. There are no qualities yonder, yet there are powers which issue in qualities. There is no room, yet mind is the room of the ideas. There is no time, yet time, the moving life of the soul, is the child and image of eternity.

For this aspect of intelligence the most speaking name is Life. Here again we will translate Plotinus (vi. 7, 12)—

"For since we say that this All is framed after the Yonder, as after a pattern, the All must first exist yonder as a living entity, an animal; and since its idea is complete, everything must exist yonder. Heaven, therefore, must exist there as an animal, not without what here we call its stars, and this is the idea of heaven. Yonder too of course must be the Earth, not bare, but far more richly furnished with life; in it are all creatures that move on dry land and plants rooted in life. Sea, too, is yonder, and all water ebbing and flowing in abiding life; and all creatures that inhabit the water, and all the tribes of the air are part of the all yonder, and all aerial beings, for the same reason as Air itself. For how should that which is in the living not live itself, seeing that even here it lives? Surely then every animal must of necessity be yonder. For as each of the great parts of the world *is*, so of necessity *is* the nature of the creatures that it contains. As then heaven itself exists yonder, so yonder exist all the animals that dwell in heaven, and it is not possible that it should be otherwise."

The word "animals" in this passage embraces not only sentient creatures, but plants and inorganic

substances. All share in a kind of life in so far as they are moulded by a word. They answer to a thought, and therefore it cannot be beneath the dignity of the Divine Intelligence to contemplate their ideas.

Existence in one of its aspects is life, or has life, and life is teeming, prolific, manifold. This real and fertile conception is the main avenue through which Plotinus endeavours to reach the notion of Deity. Life begets all the infinite variety of qualities, even opposite and warring qualities, such as heat and cold. It makes our bodies ; it makes the world in which they move and act. Plotinus speaks, with something approaching to contempt, of logic, as a mere system of barren rules, and professes to be guided by a truly scientific method. It was his misfortune and not his fault, that, in his time, there was scarcely anything deserving the name of science, except in the way of mathematics, and to some extent of surgery. But his abstractions were not mere abstractions. He does not attempt to get at the unconditioned by leaving out the conditioned. In this way we make God merely the Great Denial ; He is not this and not that, and so we banish Him altogether, building up a high wall, as it were, round the verge of the world. The difficulty remains unsolved and unsolvable, because no number of negatives will make an affirmative ; ten thousand ignorances will not create knowledge. The method of Plotinus is the exact opposite. He starts with an affirmative, with a fact, with something that we know. God is, and is Life. Here we have a seed-thought, a word full of powers capable of separate

and diversified manifestations. What we have to do next, is to view this life in itself, as perfect and free. This we can achieve, because its earthly limitations lend us a hand, as it were; they are "traces," which mark out the upward path. Hence we must by no means deny them, or leave them out of count, but simply transform them. We dismiss the particular, but carry with us the general. We leave the thing, but grasp the energy that causes the thing. God is God, not because He is nothing, but because He embraces all those energies. He is absolute, but not unconditioned. And this *Anagoge* or upward path Plotinus held to be open to us, because the human mind is a copy, and may become an exact copy, of the mind of God.

Intelligence, therefore is Many, because it is the fullness of thought (*κόρος*). The sum-total of the Ideas exists in the Divine Nous, not outside of it, "like golden statues," which God must search for and look up to, before He can think. It is not to be supposed that He must needs run about in search of notions, perhaps not finding them at all, perhaps not recognizing them when found. This is the lot of man, whose life is spent often in the search, sometimes in the vain search, after truth. But to the Deity all knowledge is always equally present. This, as we have already seen, was the master-thought, which gave birth to Idealism as a coherent whole, and clinched it into an intelligible system.

2. But it is also One.

"Suppose," says Plotinus, "that thou hadst the eyes of Lynceus, who could see into the inside of

things. Suppose (v. 8, 9) that thou couldst view the world from without, and it was a great sphere of transparent glass full of light, so that thou couldst see at a glance all that is in it. Keeping this supposition in mind, conceive another sphere divested of bulk, of place, of the notion of matter that is in thee. Do not try to make the second sphere merely smaller than the first, but call God to thy aid, who made the sphere of which thou hast an imagination. And may He come bringing with Him His own world with all the gods that are in it, being one and all, and all in each, all blending into one, and in their powers being different, but in the one sovereign power all being one, or rather all being the One."

Let us observe how Plotinus struggles to define the idea of immaterial existence.

He was the first writer who fairly grappled with this task. He was confronted by the usual difficulty, that all words are coined to express the visible and tangible, and do not apply exactly to anything that does not fall under the grasp of the senses. Hence the nature of mind can only be expressed in negatives. We say, for instance, that life is immaterial or infinite. We know exactly what we mean; the negative word has a positive sense. But "the notion of matter is in thee," and has enlisted all language in its service, so that, though the other notion of life is "in thee" too, it cannot find a faithful interpreter. We can think what it is; we can only say what it is not.

The general habit of Plotinus is to couple a positive with a negative. Thus, when he speaks of an idea as

part of the mind, he will say, "a part, yet not a part," because the word part applies properly only to things that we can break in pieces; yet a notion may be said to have parts inasmuch as it is complex, and can be defined, though it is incapable of physical division. Similarly, for omnipresence, which has no equivalent in Greek, he will say, "everywhere and yet nowhere." In the passage just quoted, "immaterial sphere," he begs the reader to notice, does not mean "a smaller sphere." Size does not come in at all. What he wants to get at is the pure idea of a sphere. Most men being unapt for abstract thought, have only "an imagination," can only grasp the notion by forming an actual picture or image of it. Such pictures are too concrete, they bring out the lines of division too clearly; they belong to the soul, but not to the intelligence. We want not exactly to obliterate these lines, but to see through them. But for this we want the help of God, who alone can teach us to think about that which transcends experience.

Intelligence, the Intellectual World, then, is One (*ἐν ὁμοῦ πάντα*) in all its diversity, because all its thoughts form a living whole. Each carries with it all the others; if we know one perfectly, we know all. They are like the rays of a circle shooting out from one point, like the manifold virtues immanent in one seed. Yet even these similes are too material. It has been said of "the flower in the crannied wall"—

" . . . if I could understand  
What you are, root and all, and all in all,  
I should know what God and man is."

For the whole world went to the making of that wind-blown plant. If we knew exactly how it came to be there, we should know how the Almighty created the universe. The roots of everything spring from the Divine Mind, and these roots are thoughts of which each lies in, and interpenetrates every other, in a manner past expression, yet intelligible, because it is the commonest experience of life. But we cannot adequately express it, because to speak is to divide. "Express" means to "flatten out."

Intelligence again is One, because in it the thinker, the act of thought, the object of thought, are all one. The Soul, the lower reasoning faculty, sees itself as Another. To use the modern phrase, the I is conscious of a not-I. The raw-stuff of its knowledge is imported from abroad; its office is to manufacture it by judging, combining, discriminating the materials supplied by sense. It is busy about external things, and therefore does not "think itself," though, in order to perform its work correctly, it must be helped by knowledge supplied to it from above. But the Eternal Intelligence does not need to run to and fro in search of information. It possesses all the ideas, it does not want to discover them, because it sees them, and always sees them. In this act of contemplation the distinction of subject and object is really lost; they are merely phases of the same thing; the thought is the self.

Thus the Divine Intelligence, in Aristotelian phrase, "thinks itself," sees all knowledge in itself, and itself in all knowledge. It is perfect self-consciousness,

Mind withdrawn into itself, and seeing all life in its cause—that is to say, in itself. This is the highest conception of Existence; the Intelligence is Being, is God.

To this height the human reason can attain, though not without preparation, and not without prayer. But there is still a further step needed, before the system is complete. All things exist, because they are one. But unity is a word of many different meanings. Creatures have it; a chorus, a ship, a horse are each one; but their parts are separable and the combination is evanescent. Thoughts have it, yet we can analyze and distinguish thoughts. Still more emphatically Intelligence has it. Yet even here we can take note of the difference between thinker and thought, if only as phases of the same energy. In all these cases, then, even in the highest, the unity is derived; they are One, but not the One; they have unity, but are not unity. Hence above the Many we must set the One; above Existence, the Cause of Existence; above the Conceivable, the Inconceivable.

According to Plotinus, Being requires for its adequate explanation two hypostases, or, as we translate the word in English theology, Persons that Are—Soul and Intelligence—and one Person that Is Not, the One, or the Good. These three constitute the Neoplatonic Trinity.

This is a topic of the highest interest. On the one hand, there can be no doubt that these speculations aided greatly in the clear formulation of Christian truth, to this extent that they made it possible to

understand how the Three Divine Persons of the Baptismal Formula should yet be One in Godhead. On the other, the place assigned by the heathen philosophers to the doctrine of the One, combined with the purely intellectual character of their system, was largely, though by no means entirely, the cause of the rapid degradation of Neoplatonism, and of the scornful judgment usually passed upon it by modern historians. Before we proceed, then, to the fuller consideration of the doctrine of God, it will be well to see, if we can, how Plotinus reached it, and what he meant by it.

Partly, as we have seen, the Neoplatonist Trinity was historical. It combines the Pythagorean One, and the Aristotelian Intelligence, with the Platonic Creator. But partly also it has a psychological basis.

The real method of Plotinus is undoubtedly based upon observation of the phenomena of human consciousness. He himself points out the importance of psychology. The soul occupies an intermediate position between the intelligible and the sensible. Hence (iv. 3, 1) it opens to us knowledge in both directions, upwards and downwards. How again, he asks (v. 3, 8), could we even talk about intelligence if we did not in some sort possess it? Again, all three hypostases belong to us (v. 1, 10). Often it is difficult to ascertain with precision whether he is speaking of the divine or of the human soul, so immediately does the knowledge of the one pass into that of the other. It is really then at this point that we ought to begin, if we are to grasp the mode in which his system was

developed, and avoid the temptation to mere barren criticism. Yet it must be acknowledged that this is not the method which Plotinus himself professes to follow. Or shall we say—for it is equally true—that he has no method?

What is it then that the human mind has to tell us? Can we discover there the “shadow” of the Plotinian Trinity? The answer to the question must be in the affirmative.

Other writers, both before and after the Neoplatonists, have distinguished between two modes of mental activity—the *Verstand* and the *Vernunft*—the Reason or Soul, and the Intelligence or Nous. They are generally differentiated in much the same way. In the first, the mind goes forth to discover or to act; in the second, it returns upon itself. In the first, the antithesis of subject and object is sharply defined; in the second, it is blurred or obliterated. In the first, the particular is compared with the general, and so understood; the second deals with generals only.

But beyond these two we may discern a third phase, when the mind withdraws into itself, and becomes as it were a mere point. So it is in sleep, or in waking moments, when no definite thought is present, and consciousness is a blank. Mind has contracted itself into its innermost source, and all its channels are dry. Then again it darts forth its energies in contemplation, in action, and life is once more in full flow. Consciousness is not strictly equable; it has pulsations, like the course of the blood, and sometimes the systole and diastole seem to stand still. Yet the life is un-

interrupted, and the hidden basis of the mind is always there.

But what is this hidden basis? It is neither thinker nor thought, for where one of these is, the other must be, and where there is no thought there can be no thinker. It is therefore neither, yet it is the cause of both, the ultimate power which, as the fountain of unity and life, is the Oneness, the Good of the individual.

It is not conscious, and has no name, because, though the root of all activity, it has as yet assumed no definite shape. We may say then, that it does not exist. Only in so saying, we are limiting the idea of existence to that of distinct thought. The One does not exist, not because it is beneath existence, but because it is above it.

Hidden though it be behind the light which it sheds forth (this is a favourite image with Plotinus), we yet know that it must be there, because of the light. This inexplicable mystery is precisely the thing in which we most certainly believe. No man doubts that he is one; that he is himself.

Plotinus said that the individuality cannot be known, but we must understand exactly what he means by knowledge. Ordinarily, in our English usage, we are said to know when we can describe, or when we feel, or when we can explain. The last is the only sense of the word admitted by the Greek philosopher.

Things composite can be described in language or by a drawing. Though the thing itself may never

have been seen ; it may be some strange animal ; yet the parts of it, the colour, lines, texture will be familiar, and those who see the drawing will know what it means.

Simple facts of sense, for instance the colour of redness, cannot be described in words ; they admit of presentation, but not of representation ; hence they cannot be conveyed to the blind. But those who have eyes can see them, and in that sense know them. Further, they can be explained by reference to a cause ; thus the sensation of redness is the effect of the vibration of a particular ray of light. This is the scientific, in the mind of Plotinus the only true sense of knowledge, and in this sense only is colour a real thing.

Now unity cannot be described, and cannot be explained, but it may be felt as we feel colour. It is a feeling, but it differs from all other feelings in two very remarkable features. It is from within and not from without, and it is inalienable. A man may have no sense of colour, and yet be a man ; but the moment the sense of his unity departs, he is a man no more.

Thus that which cannot be known, is not real, does not exist, is yet, in the view of Plotinus, the most certain, and the most important of all things.

## XV

### DOCTRINE OF GOD

PLOTINUS is by no means a methodical writer. He expands his conception of the Deity over and over again in many different parts of the *Enneads*, and in many different connections. It will be necessary, before we have done, to formulate what he has said, and explain its bearings. But, to begin with, we shall best consult the interests of the reader by translating, with occasional condensations, one of the more important passages, and thus putting him in a position to judge for himself.

We will start with the first book of the Fifth *Ennead*, which is entitled "of the Three Principal Hypostases." Here the motive of the investigation is supplied by the question of moral evil. "What can it be that caused the soul of man to forget its Father, God, and to be ignorant both of itself and of Him? The root of the disaster must be sought in the manifold nature of the soul, in its audacity, and desire for independence. Like a child that has been long absent from home, and brought up abroad, it does not know its father, and therefore cannot per-

fectly know itself. It has learned to honour things that are below itself,—the pleasures of this world. But he who honours and admires, confesses himself by that very act to be inferior. And when the soul thus deliberately sets itself beneath the things of a day, it makes itself the least honourable, the most mortal of all things, and can form no idea of the nature or the power of God.

“There are two ways in which we may endeavour to raise the soul again from this miserable fall, by convincing it of the baseness of the attractions of earth, or by teaching it its own high birth and dignity. This latter method is by far the more important. For without it we cannot even make the former intelligible.”

Thus Plotinus places the New Birth before Repentance. But indeed in the intellectual system of Neoplatonism, what the New Testament means by Repentance will be sought for in vain. We are to rise first to the conception of the true Existence of God, and this knowledge will of itself cure the audacity of the soul.

“First then, let every Soul consider this; how by breathing life into them Soul made all animals, the creatures of earth, sea, air, the divine stars in heaven; made the sun, made the great firmament above us, and not only made but ordered it, so that it swings round in due course. Yet is this Soul a different nature from what it orders, and moves, and vivifies. It must needs then be more precious than its creations. For they are born, and, when the Soul

which ministers their life abandons them, they die ; but the Soul ever is, because it never abandons itself. And if it be asked how the life is ministered, in the whole or in the part, let us frame the answer thus. Let this great Soul be gazed upon by another soul, a human soul which itself is no small one, and is deemed worthy so to gaze, because it has escaped from all deceit, and from all that bewitches the soul of other men, and is calm and tranquil. Let such a Soul banish all that disturbs ; let the body that envelops it be still, and all the frettings of the body, and all that surrounds it ; let earth, and sea, and air be still, and heaven itself. And then let the man think of Soul as streaming, pouring, rushing, shining into him from all sides while he stands quiet. As the rays of the sun, striking upon some dark mass of cloud, make it shine with the splendour of gold, so also Soul, coming into the body of heaven, gave it life and immortality, and woke it up from sleep. Thus heaven, being moved with an everlasting movement by the wise guidance of Soul, became a happy creature, and the indwelling of Soul gave high dignity to heaven which was before dead stuff, earth, and water, or rather the darkness of matter and No Thing, and 'abhorred,' as the poet says, 'by the gods.'

"The nature and power of Soul will become still clearer and more distinct, if we consider how it embraces and guides the heaven by its will. For it gives itself to all this huge bulk, and there is no particle of space, great or small, that is not filled with Soul. Of the body one part is here, another

there; some parts are opposed, some are interdependent. But with the Soul it is otherwise. It is not cut up into little bits, so that each particle makes a different life, but all things live by the whole Soul, and it is all present everywhere, like to the father who begot it, both in unity and in ubiquity. Heaven is vast and disparate, but by virtue of Soul it is One and a god. The sun too is a god, because it has Soul, and so are the other stars, and so are we, if we are anything, 'for the dead are viler than dung.' Now what makes gods must be older than they. And our soul belongs to the same family, and, when you can see it purged from all accretions, you will find the same precious thing, Soul, more precious by far than anything that is corporeal. For all such things are earth. And if they be fire, what is that part of the fire which burns? It is the same with all that is compounded of the elements, even if you add to them water and air. And if the things of earth are worthy of desire, only because they have Soul, why should man forsake himself to desire another? When thou reverest the Soul in another, thou art revering thyself.

"Since then Soul is so precious and divine a thing, believing henceforth that thou hast a strong helper in thy quest after God, take this cause with thee, and go up to Him who is Yonder. And of a truth thou wilt find Him not far off, for there is not much between. Grasp then what is diviner than this Divine, the Soul's neighbour above, after whom and from whom the Soul is. For though the Soul is a thing

(*χρῆμα*), as our argument proved, it is an image of Intelligence. As the word, which is uttered, springs from the word in man's soul, so is the All-Soul, and the whole energy by which it shoots forth life to give existence to other things, a word of Intelligence. Just as in fire we can distinguish the essential heat from the sensible heat, which it sends forth; only in the world yonder we must think of the heat not as actually streaming forth, but as partly abiding in its source, partly coming into existence. Inasmuch, then, as it comes forth from Intelligence, the Soul is intelligent, and its intelligence shows itself in reasonings, and its perfection is derived from Him who is, as it were, the father who begot it, so that the child is not perfect as compared with the father. Its existence then is derived from Intelligence, and is the energizing word of the Intelligence, to which it looks up. For when it gazes on Intelligence, it possesses its ideas and activities from within, as its own property. And these are the only true activities of the soul, which it possesses intellectually, and by inheritance; the inferior movements come from another source, and are affections of an inferior soul. Intelligence then makes it doubly divine, because it is its father, and because it dwells within it. For there is nothing betwixt, save their essential difference, but the one is after and recipient, the other is Form. But even the matter of Intelligence is beautiful, because it is intelligent and simple as is the Intelligence itself. And even from this it is evident, that the Intelligence is better than the Soul, which is of such a nature."

The reader will here observe that Intelligence stands to Soul in the relation of Form to Word, hence of "father" and superior, because the higher and prior is giver always, and never receiver. Further, as Form may be analyzed, being a larger conception than Word, Soul may be spoken of as in a sense the "matter" of Intelligence. And it will be noticed that Plotinus speaks here of two souls. The first, which has no "affections," is the Divine; the soul second, and inferior, is that of Nature, of Heaven and Earth, and of the body generally. This too is "divine," but in a much lower sense. The distinction is one of the most difficult points in the system of Plotinus, but it will become a little clearer as we proceed. We resume the translation.

"The same thing may be seen in the following way. We admire this visible universe when we behold its vastness, and its beauty, and the order of its everlasting movement, and the gods that are therein—some visible, some invisible,—and the demons, and animals, and all the host of plants. It is well. But go up to the archetype, and true world, and yonder see the intellectual patterns of all, everlasting in their own right, in their native wisdom and life. See too their prince, the undefiled Intelligence and perfect Wisdom, the true Saturnian life of God, who is Fullness and Intelligence. For He embraces in Himself all that is immortal,—all intelligence, all God, all soul, ever-abiding. For why should He seek to change, being perfect? And whither need

He go, since He has all in Himself? And how can He grow, since He is absolutely complete?

“Wherefore also all that is with Him is perfect, that He may be absolutely perfect, having nothing which is imperfect, having nothing in Himself, which He does not think. And He need not search for His thoughts, because He has them. And His blessedness is not acquired, but all is in eternity, and this is the true Eternity, which Time counterfeits as it runs round the Soul, passing over some thoughts and attending to others. For to the soul belongs sequence of ideas; at one time it considers Socrates, at another a horse; always some one definite object. But Intelligence grasps all. It has then within itself all things abiding in the same state; it is; it is always ‘am,’ and never ‘shall be,’ never ‘have been.’ For yonder there is no future and no past; but all things abide, because they are the same, and satisfied with themselves as they are. And each of them is Intelligence and Being, and the sum-total is all Intelligence and all Being; Intelligence by thinking making Being, and Being by being thought giving to Intelligence the act of thought and Being.

“But the act of thought has a cause other than itself, which is cause also of Being. Both then have a cause. Things yonder co-exist, and never fail one another, but still here we have a duality which makes a unity, Intelligence and Being, Thinker and Thought; Intelligence corresponding to Thinker as Being does to Thought. Now there can be no thinking without difference or without identity. Hence we obtain as

our first conceptions Intelligence, Being, Difference, Identity. To these we must add Movement and Rest. Intelligence must have Movement to think, Rest to be changeless, Difference to be at once thinker and thought. If you take away the Difference it becomes one, and will keep silence. The several objects of thought also must be different from one another, yet the same, because each is one with itself, and there is something common in all, yet the differentia is an otherness. And these aspects of Intelligence, being many, make number and quantity, and the individuality of the ideas makes quality also, and these ideal distinctions are the principles from which sensible distinctions proceed."

The five attributes here ascribed to Intelligence are borrowed from the *Sophistes* of Plato, and are called by Plotinus, in his criticism of the Categories, the five *summa genera* of true existence, the five ultimate laws of Being. They have been explained in outline in the preceding chapter.

We have here three final antitheses, Thought and Being, Motion and Rest, Sameness and Difference. They must not be obliterated, because on them depend all life and all knowledge. They account for everything. If they do not exist, there is nothing for us to know. Yet again they must be reconciled, or knowledge itself is divided, and ceases to be knowledge.

Plotinus finds a reconciliation, though not an absolutely complete reconciliation, in the Intelligence of God. In Him thought can be seen as the cause

of Being. In Him, as indeed in all abstract contemplation, subject and object are identical; the thinker thinks himself. God ever thinks the whole of Himself, is absolutely conscious; there is therefore no change. Yet consciousness itself is an act, and therefore dual. It carries with it life, which is quick and diverse. Hence, even in this sameness there is motion, a play of activity. God is living thought. The unity is as nearly complete as anything that we can grasp; still it is not ideally perfect, and must therefore be regarded as given, as derived. What then is the ultimate cause of All?

Whence then came this Manifold God, this One-Many? We can see now the necessity of this diversity of Being, but we crave for some solution of the problem that has always vexed philosophy, how from the absolutely One anything at all came into existence, whether a multitude or a duality. Why did it not remain by itself?

“Let us seek an answer, calling God Himself to our aid, not with audible words, but reaching out in prayer with our soul, for that is the way in which we can pray, alone to Him alone.

“He then that would behold Him who dwells in the innermost shrine by Himself and remains tranquil beyond all, must fix his gaze on that which, in comparison with the statues in the outer shrine, abides, or rather on the first statue coming forth and revealing itself in this wise.

“All that is moved must have something towards which it moves. Now since He has nothing, we

must not suppose that He is moved. But whatsoever comes into being after Him must have come into being, because He turned Himself towards Himself. We must not really think of birth in time, when we are thinking of things that ever are, though in word we cannot help ascribing becoming to them, when we assign to them a cause and an order. And so we must say, that they became without His moving. For if He moved, the thing which became would be third in order; His movement being the first, and He Himself the second. If then the thing was second, it must have taken existence without His moving, or inclining, or wishing, or stirring in any way. How can this be, and what must we think about Him who abides? We may conceive, that though He abides, there is a shining round about Him like the bright light of the sun, which ever runs round about the sun, though the sun abides. Similarly, all things, so long as they abide, give forth necessarily an essence, which flows outwards and envelopes them, and depends upon the power that is present within, a sort of image of the archetypes from which they sprang. So fire gives forth its heat, and snow does not keep its coldness hidden within; and sweet-smelling things in particular show what we mean, for, as long as they exist, something goes forth from them and surrounds them, and this is an essence which all bystanders enjoy. So all things, so soon as they are perfect, beget. That then, which is always perfect, always begets an everlasting offspring, yet always something that is less than itself.

“What then shall we say of the most perfect of all? Nothing comes from Him, except the greatest things that follow Him. Now the greatest thing that follows Him, and is second, is Intelligence. For Intelligence looks to Him, and wants Him alone, but He does not want Intelligence. And that, which is begotten of Him that is better than Intelligence, is Intelligence, and Intelligence is better than all things, because all things are after it; for instance, even soul is a word, an energy of Intelligence, as Intelligence is of the One. But the word of Soul is dim, for it is a phantom of Intelligence, and must look up to Intelligence. And so Intelligence must look up to the One, that it may be Intelligence. But it sees Him not as disparate, but because it is after Him; there is nothing between, any more than there is between Soul and Intelligence. Now all that is begotten yearns for the begetter, and finds its satisfaction in Him, and especially so when begotten and begetter are unique. And when the best of all is begetter, of necessity the begotten is with Him, so that they are separated by their difference alone.”

How then does the One beget Intelligence, His image? Because, by turning Himself to Himself, He began to see, and this seeing is Intelligence. The One is the power of all things. Intelligence separates itself, as it were, from the power, and sees its effects.

Plotinus here expresses the kindly intention of “speaking more clearly,” and the reader will probably feel anxious for more light. But the text

suddenly breaks down into a gulf of corruption, and such part of it as might be translated does not greatly help. In some mystic way by "turning itself to itself," yet "without moving," the One became conscious, the Intelligence was filled with Ideas, the Soul with Forms, the Words shot forth to quicken matter, and the great stream of life began. Each looked up to the cause above it, to the light of the abiding Sun, and drank in life, meaning, power, according to the measure of its capacity.

The two great difficulties are, first, the notion of a cause acting by attraction, when there is nothing for it to attract; and second, the "becoming conscious." The first may be put aside for the present. As to the second, we have seen that it admits of explanation, in so far as it finds an analogy in the nature of human individuality. We do "become conscious." All that Plotinus asks of the reader is to put away the notion of becoming. The Divine Intelligence never faints or sleeps like ours, but as we have a oneness, so has He.

We will omit a passage of some length, in which Plotinus brings his teaching into relation with mythology and with the views of earlier philosophers, and proceed with the tenth chapter, which will show us how close was the link between his psychology and his metaphysics.

"We have shown that above Being must be the One, and after Him Intelligence and Soul. But now as these Three are in nature, so must they also be in us. Our soul then also is divine, and of another, not a

sensible nature, like all soul. And it is perfect when it has Intelligence. But there are two kinds of Intelligence, one which argues, one which gives the power of arguing. The arguing part of the soul then, which needs for the performance of its function no bodily organ, but possesses its energy in purity, so that it is able to argue purely, is separable, and not mixed with body; about this there can be no mistake. We must give it a home in the realm of the intelligible. We must not seek a place to fix it in; it is outside all place. For so alone can it be independent, external, immaterial, if it stands alone and owes nothing to the flesh. Therefore Plato saith of the world, "And further the Creator clothed it with the soul as with a garment," meaning that part of the soul which abides in the intelligible world; and of man he saith that he lifts up his head to heaven. And when we exhort men to "detachment," we do not mean that the soul is to be locally detached by physical separation; but we mean that it should not condescend—we are speaking of the imagination and of estrangement from the body—if it be possible to lead and carry upwards not only the higher form of the soul, but that also which has its abode in this world, which alone is the creator and moulder of the body, and is busied with the body."

Here we have the Platonic division of the soul itself into two parts, a higher and a lower. This will receive explanation further on.

"Since then there is a soul which reasons about things just and beautiful, and since there is a power of

reasoning which asks, 'is this just? is this beautiful?' the just must be an abiding thing, and from that thing the soul acquires the power of reasoning about it. How else could it reason about it? But the soul sometimes reasons about these things, and sometimes does not. There must then be in us an Intelligence which does not reason, but always has the idea of justice. Further, there must be in us the principle, the cause, the God of Intelligence. For He is not divisible, but abides, and, since it is not in space that He abides, is seen in many, according as each is able to receive Him as another self. So also the centre of a circle is in itself, and yet contains in itself every point that is in the circle, and the radii derive their peculiar nature from it. For, by that within us which is like the radius, we touch that centre, and are with it, and depend upon it. And those of us who bend thitherwards, are fast rooted in it.

“How is it, then, that though we possess such high faculties, we do not apprehend, but leave them, for the most part of our time, idle; nay, some never use them at all? The answer is, that the Intelligence and the One are always active, and thus the soul possesses everlasting movement. It does not follow, that when we have no sense of them, they are not there, for all that is the soul is not instantly sensible; faculties come to us when they come into consciousness. But when a faculty does not communicate with the perceptions of sense, it has not yet permeated the whole soul. In such a case we do not yet know, because not merely a part of the soul, but the whole

soul, is absorbed in sense perception. Furthermore every part of a thing that has soul, while it lives, discharges without intermission its own function. But knowledge does not begin, till there is communication and apprehension. If, then, there is to be apprehension of what is intellectually present, the apprehending faculty must turn inwards, and fix its attention yonder. Just as a singer, who wants to catch a note, must shut out all other notes, and strain his ear to catch the true note when it comes, so in this world we must shut out physical sounds, except so far as is necessary, and keep the apprehensive power of the soul clean, and ready to hear the voices from above."

The word rendered apprehension (*ἀντίληψις*) means both "grasping" and "help." Sense supplies the soul with a "type" (*τύπος*) or imprint of the thing as it is seen. Intelligence supplies (*μεταδίδωσι*) the soul with the idea or form of the thing, as it ought to be. By "grasping" the forms, the soul interprets the types, just as the singer, by means of the true note which his art supplies, recognizes, and if need be, corrects, the note emitted by his lyre or voice. Thus, without "apprehension" and "communication," there can be no real knowledge. Intelligence and sense-knowledge must chime together, as it were; and this correspondence of the two faculties is known as "co-perception" (*συναίσθησις*). "The understanding, criticizing the types supplied by sense, sees the forms, and sees them by what we may call co-perception" (i. 1, 9). If we conceive of an earthly clock with a

heavenly chiming apparatus, we shall get some idea of what Plotinus means. When the two are exactly together the time is right.

The chime is always there, but not always audible, because the clock has a will of its own, and goes its own way. Thus Eternity comes to differ from Time. But this is a point that must lie by till we come to consider the nature of moral evil.

## XVI

### GOD, HIS NATURE AND OPERATIONS

PLOTINUS, like all his school, admitted the existence of a number of lower deities,—Heaven, with its Stars, Nature, Earth, the Demons. All these in their degree are causes, and deserve worship. But the supreme cause, God in the proper sense of the word, stands far above all these created deities, and embraces in Himself a unity of Three Hypostases. Hypostasis is a Stoic word, which is generally used as equivalent to Ousia, or Being. But it signifies more exactly the underlying cause of the phenomenal manifestation. Hence it can be applied equally to all three Persons of the Platonic Trinity, while Being could only be used of the second and third. This, again, explains why the Eastern theologians adopted this word to denote persons of the Christian Trinity. For they also commonly speak of God the Father as “beyond Being.”

Each Hypostasis is a Person, but a purely intellectual person. All three are one, like three mutually enfolding thoughts, and where one is, there is the All in the fullness of its power. All are eternal, but the

second is inferior to the first, because "begotten," and the third to the second, for the same reason.

The first is the One, the Good. The two names mean the same thing. Unity is life, and fullness of life is the good towards which everything strives. The One is the Fountain of Life, the Power of all things, but for that very reason he is none of them. He has no Form, no Beauty, no Virtue, no Will, no Thought, no Consciousness, no Movement or Activity, no Being.

The second is Intelligence, the One-Many, the Intelligible World. Plotinus expressly refuses to apply to him the title Logos, which in his system means little more than physical force. Here life and thought are in full play. Here are all the Ideas, not stored away in memory, for God has no memory, but all always equally vivid, in infinite diversity and eternal sameness. Each thought of the Divine mind involves each and all the rest. Hence each idea is in a sense the whole mind (*νοῦς*). Yet each is separate, has a life, an energy of its own, is not Intelligence, but an Intelligence (*νοῦς τις*).

This is the highest conception of Being. Thought is Being, makes Being by thinking it. And on this plane the thinker is the thought, the thought is the thinker.

The third is Soul, the One and Many. The One abides, but the Many is increasing, and on the road to preponderance.

Plotinus insists on the importance of a just knowledge of Soul. It "gives us information in both

directions." On one side, it is in touch with Intelligence, on another with nature. Above it is day, beyond it is darkness. It is the outer ring of the circle; or like the moon, the two higher hypostases being as it were the Light and the Sun. It is the God that is nearest to us, the life that we know, the being that is most properly ourselves. The spirit within us, the beautiful world spread round about us, is Soul.

Yet it is precisely here that difficulties accumulate. The reason is obvious. Soul is the central knot in the system of Plotinus. Under this heading he has to grapple with the insoluble difficulty of all philosophy. Here, if anywhere, must be found the synthesis of all the antitheses, physical, intellectual, and moral, the One and the Many, Thought and Extension, Good and Evil, Time and Eternity, Freedom and Necessity, God and Man.

Part of the difficulty the Neoplatonists met, as we have seen, by the distinction between Mind and Matter. Matter is really No Thing, yet it is the cause of divisibility and sensible existence. This is the congenital defect of all Platonism; it admits a cause which is not a cause, and in spite of all its protests limits God by something that is not Himself.

It follows that when God draws near to Matter, He must undergo an evolution and differentiation. There are, in fact, two souls: one, that of God, which is pure thought; one, that of Nature, which is power. And in man these two come into contact, and even into antagonism.

On one side the divine soul gives off a stream of life which grows weaker as it flows onwards, which, though never wholly unintelligent, is instinct rather than reason. Soul becomes Nature; the Forms or thoughts become words, powers, forces. These words enter into partnership with Matter, and create bodies, including that of man.

On the other side, as Intelligence embraced the sum of separate intelligences, so Soul enfolds within itself all individual souls. They are it, and it is they. And these individual souls, led by natural desire, "come down" to guard and care for the bodies that the word has built for them, though never breaking away from their source. Thus man, and indeed all that lives, has a double soul; one which makes his visible frame, another which "rides upon it" and governs it, like the pilot of a ship; one which has sense and desire, another which regulates and controls the senses and the desires, bringing with it, to use again our former illustration, the right time from heaven, and so checking the aberrations of the earthly clock.

These souls are all distinct, yet they are also all one, and Plotinus constantly passes over from one to the other, especially from the soul of God to the soul of man, without warning the reader what he is doing. It is necessary to exercise the greatest caution, and even then it is only too possible to go wrong, on a point where such scholarly interpreters of Neoplatonism as Kirchner and Zeller are at variance. If we are to gather a clear conception of the Soul of God, we must keep in mind a passage where Plotinus

has expressed himself more distinctly than is his wont (v. 3, 9), "He who would know what Intelligence is, must understand Soul, and the divinest part of Soul. You may gain this understanding by stripping off, first, the body of man, your own body; next, the soul, which moulded this body. Sense must be laid aside with the greatest care, and desire and anger and all such absurd emotions, as inclining strongly to what is mortal. What is left is this Soul, which we called an image of Intelligence, guarding a portion of the light of that sun." The better Soul, then, has no emotions, no consciousness of the world below, no senses and no faculty that requires sense as the condition of its exercise. It is in fact nothing but a paler copy of Intelligence. It "thinks" (*νοεῖ*), but with a difference. What it thinks is Form, a weakened Idea, answering to our "general conception," only that it is derived from above and not from below, and is archetype, not type. The Forms are not its own, but given to it; hence subject and object are not identical. Soul thinks itself as another; the thought is recognized as coming, as imparted. Further, the soul is no longer the "fullness" of thought. All the Forms are there, but attention has begun; one object is more luminously present than another. In the passage translated in the last chapter Plotinus ascribes to the Soul a sequence of notions; at one time it looks on Socrates, at another on a horse, and so forth; but elsewhere (iv. 4, 1) it is explained that this sequence is of order, and not of time, as when we look upon the countenance of a friend we may be more distinctly

conscious of his eyes, though at the same time we see all the features. So too he speaks of it as "reasoning" (*λογιζόμενον*), but not like man when he schemes, contrives, or grapples with difficulties. The Soul has no practical difficulties to contend with; its reasoning is merely the endeavour to appropriate and identify itself with the ideas that it beholds in the Intelligence. It is not in Time, though Time is its offspring, being a concomitant of the lower forms of its activity, of those separate lives which succeed one another, and are some longer, some shorter. Nor is it divisible, though it has a nature which lends itself to the semblance of division. When it comes into contact with matter it assumes a limit, takes upon it a definite extension, as the indivisible light of the sun parts and distributes itself into the different chambers of a house.

It will readily be perceived, from this laborious and still obscure description, that the Divine Soul is of little intellectual or religious significance in the mind of Plotinus. But on the physical side Soul is all-important. It is the great reservoir from which flow all the minor conduits of life and force. It supplies the key to creation, and thus again enables us to comprehend, admire, rest satisfied with the world in which we live. In this way it comes to have even considerable religious weight, because it is the safeguard against pessimism. All things were made by God, and all are beautiful and good, so far as they can reflect the Divine idea, and can lead us up to their author.

The chief logical difficulty in the way of Plotinus is his conception of Cause. He regards it as drawing, not as pushing; as attracting like a magnet or gravitation, not as going forth to mould. There is but one movement; all things strive towards God; each looks up to that above it. Any other view in his opinion makes God dependent. He holds his theory consistently in all that concerns the moral or intellectual life. But it will not explain how things came to be. Involution cannot account for evolution. He meets the difficulty by maintaining that nothing "came to be," that all is in fact equally eternal. God cannot plan or scheme. Creation is as old as Himself. Where He is, there is life. The work of creation, if we may use the phrase, is compared to a full cup running over, to the evening light striking upon the clouds, to the scent diffused about a flower. But these are mere metaphors. When we turn towards the Real, we must put away the illusion of "becoming." In Him is no shadow of change. Change is the failure of matter to maintain its footing within the circle of light.

But the lower soul has "desire" (*ὄρεξις*), enters into the body, cares for it, guards it. Where then does this desire come from? Plutarch found it in matter, and believed accordingly in an evil god. Plotinus would on no account admit this. But then desire, like all else, must flow from the One, and this again he would not admit. Thus again he leaves an all-important word without any sort of explanation.

The Divine Soul is split into two. One half comes

straight down, the other runs round a corner, and when it reappears as Nature, has somehow got a new faculty. But how?

As a theory of life, then, the system of Plotinus is open to the grave objection, that it does not account for that desire of the soul for the body, which yet he regards as the basis of physical existence. As a theory of knowledge, the notion of an attracting, self-contained cause is intelligible enough. We commonly speak of the mind as seeking, as drawn onwards by the Truth, and the love of the soul for the One would be a sufficient explanation of mental activity, without our supposing that the Truth has any wish to be known. Even in the sphere of morality and the spiritual experience the notion is capable of consistent application, and it was consistently applied. But only at a tremendous cost. According to Plotinus, God is Goodness without love. Man may love God, but God cannot love man. Religion is the desire for the star. Man can reach the star, and cannot be happy unless he does; but the star does not know anything about him, and does not care whether he reaches it or not. We see here the full meaning of the derision which Celsus pours upon the Incarnation. According to the Platonist, God could not possibly "come down."

The words, "No man can come unto Me except the Father which hath sent Me draw him," are half Platonic, and half the contradiction of Platonism. The Deity of Plotinus "draws," but could neither "send," nor think of sending any one.

It is not easy to combine the belief in Providence, or the practice of prayer, with an absolute introverted Deity.

Man must approach the Supreme Intelligence, as we have seen, with prayer, that is with devotion, not supplication, with the unspoken prayer of Apollonius and Clement. The philosopher could not say, "O send out Thy light and Thy truth!" All he could do was to turn his soul towards the light and wait. Petitions, are addressed by those who are not philosophers, to the inferior gods, the sun and stars. Hence Plotinus treats prayer, in the proper sense of the word, under the heading of magic. The Sun being a god cannot see or hear or remember; but being involved in nature he comes under the general law of natural sympathy. A certain thrill may pass from the worshipper to him, just as one string of a lyre will vibrate when another is struck. Evil prayers cannot touch the gods at all.

Providence was one of the Platonist war-cries. The school regarded themselves as the champions of this belief against Epicurean Atheists, Aristotelian Deists, Stoic Fatalists, and Gnostic Dualists. Plotinus explains the subject at great length; but he spends his force mainly in accounting for evil, which he would not allow to be in any way connected with God. Particular providence, which Plutarch, Celsus, and Maximus Tyrius ascribed to the demons, he denies. It is irreconcilable with the eternity of creation, and implies "foreseeing" and "planning" in the Deity. All that is left, then, is the belief, that

the world as a whole is "in accordance with intelligence (*κατα νοῦν*)," and admits of a rational explanation. The difference between the Neoplatonist and the rival schools lies in the conception of God, and of His relation to the world. As against the Epicurean, Plotinus maintained that God "does nothing, but works great things;" as against the Gnostic, that He is the Good; as against the Stoic, that He is transcendent; as against the Peripatetic, that He draws men to Himself.

If the theology of Plotinus might be labelled with a phrase, we should call it Centripetal Theism.

## XVII

### MAN IN NATURE

PLOTINUS seldom touches upon physical science. He has been blamed for this, but hardly with justice. He was a metaphysician, and all we can ask of such an one is, that his speculations should neither be inconsistent with what is known, nor discourage further research. That he was not unscientific, as the word was then understood, is shown by the numbers of physicians, musicians, and mathematicians who were attracted by his teaching. Nor does there seem to be any reason why a modern chemist should not be a Neoplatonist if he chose.

To Plotinus, physical science could not mean the knowledge of matter, because matter was No Thing. Its field was the relation of God to the world, the mode of the combination of life with matter.

Two ideas were of great importance in his mind. The first is that causation excludes necessity. Everything has a cause, but there is a hierarchy of causes; of these all are in their degree intelligent, and the soul of man even possesses a certain power of self-determination. Whereas Fatalism reduces everything

to one; even the distinction of cause and effect is lost.

The second is that unity does not destroy individuality. The One is wholly everywhere, because life is not divisible. All souls are one because they come from the One, yet they are distinct numerically as "thoughts in the same mind," and they differ even in quality. "If Providence were all, there would be no providence, for there would be nothing for it to provide for." It must have an object; it comes to that object, for instance, to man, not to destroy him, but to co-operate with him, in such a way as to leave his manhood intact. Of individuality Plotinus says, that "nothing that is can perish."

These two propositions are in fact corollaries of the fundamental Platonic contention that Being is not one, but many.

In the world of Becoming there is endless multiplicity, things or bodies of every sort and kind. They are made not directly by the Soul of God, but by Nature, the World-spirit. Nature supplies the word which, as we have seen, imposes bulk, shape, and quality upon matter. Nature is the sum of words as the Soul is of Forms and the Intelligence of Ideas. She is life, a word, a creating power, a soul-offspring of the earlier soul. Compared with the Divine her consciousness is like that of sleep compared with waking. She is in fact a buffer-soul inserted to disguise the transition from the inward to the outward action of God, and from thought to desire, and for this latter purpose she creates yet

another buffer-soul. Her weakness is the reason why she creates. - Production, says Plotinus, is the result of insufficient power of contemplation, as we see in the case of the geometer, who is obliged to call sight to his aid, and draw his diagrams on paper, because his intelligence is not vivid enough to reason about them without this help. Thus Euclid writes a book, and Nature creates a world. Her "theory" externalizes itself and projects a "theorem."

The words or forces differ, and produce accordingly different kinds of bodies, inorganic and organic, stones, plants, animals, men. According to their different degree of receptivity, Nature supplies them with a natural soul, the "other soul," "shadow of a soul," "word of a soul," which brings with it the lower powers of life, the vegetative and the sentient. To each body God gives what it is capable of using, and no more. The union of this lower soul with the body makes the "compositum," the animal.

But man has also a higher soul, the true Ego. It comes to him straight from God, and is like God. To the lower belong the animal life, pleasure and pain, desire, anger, sense; the higher differs from the Divine only in this, that, while connected with the body, it possesses memory, imagination, discursive reasoning, and a finite will, faculties which form a link between the absolute and the conditioned intelligence.

The soul proper comes down to occupy the body which Nature has prepared and endowed for it. No force is needed. It comes "neither willingly nor

sent," but driven by natural instinct, because that to which it comes needs its fostering care. When men desire to secure the presence of a God, they build a temple or a statue fit for Him, capable of receiving Him, and then His power descends and dwells among them. So Nature makes an idol, and then places her handiwork under the patronage of the Divine.

Plotinus could not quite make up his mind, whether the coming down of the soul was a sin or not. It was a necessary part of his system. But the tradition of his school held that it was a chastisement, and worked out this view of the penal character of earthly existence, by the addition of the fanciful doctrine of the transmigration of the human soul into the body of brutes. This Plotinus could not bring himself to deny; it was part of his religion, though not of his philosophy. Hence he vacillates. At one time he speaks of the soul as coming down through "desire of being its own master," through "honouring things inferior to itself." At others soul joins body for the "perfection of the whole." It does good in coming down, because it shows in act its marvellous power. Had there been no souls, the infinite richness of the Ideal would have been unknown. Better for the soul to stay at home. Yet we must not be indignant with her for coming, even though on earth she gains the sad knowledge of evil; "for the experience of evil begets a clearer knowledge of the Good in those whose powers are too feeble to discern evil scientifically without experience" (*Enn.* iv. 8, 5—8). Here the philosopher speaks.

The current conception of the relation of soul to body was absolutely reversed by Plotinus. The soul is not in the body ; on the contrary, the body is in the soul like "a net in the sea," pervaded, yet transcended. Soul, the Ego, rides upon body, like a pilot on a ship. Man's feet are on earth, but his head is in heaven. The soul is never separated from the first cause. Each soul is in contact with all three of the Divine hypostases. But here again comes in the doctrine of receptivity. The union may be dormant. Man has only what he uses. Hence there will be three classes of men : those in whom Soul is operative, those in whom Intelligence, those in whom the Good. Man's demon or guardian angel is the faculty next above that which in his conduct he obeys.

The world, according to Plotinus, is not only the best possible world, but the only possible world, the self-evolution of the One, reflecting in all its parts the glory and wisdom of its Maker. It is the one face seen in many mirrors, the one voice heard in many ears, a copy, though a pale copy, of the eternal archetype. This Plotinus presses very strongly against the half-Christian Gnostics. They desire, he says, "a new earth," to which they hope to go. But why do they profess to love the pattern, when they disparage that of which it is the pattern? Against dualistic pessimism this argument is unanswerable. The Christian might reply, that on the showing of Plotinus himself the pattern is better, and thus he might justify his yearning for heaven. Plotinus would have retorted, that in the mystic vision the philosopher

possesses the All, the Archetype, even here upon earth. Hence his serene content is strongly contrasted with the divine discontent of the Christian. The question arises whether his mysticism is reasonable, and whether his vision is possible.

That the world is imperfect Plotinus knew full well. If it were perfect, it would be God. He grapples manfully with the problem of what is called physical evil. Partly he found a reason for it in the resistance of matter; the word cannot always control or penetrate the medium of its manifestation. Partly it is to be regarded as a chastisement for antenatal sin. Partly he denied that it was evil. It is necessary to the All. The part cannot be perfect in the same sense as the whole; the statue must have feet as well as a face. We must not take tears as a criterion of evil. Children weep over what is not harmful. Life is a drama. It has a unity though its parts are at war. One plays the hero, another the clown. The poet assigns to each his *rôle*, because he is what he is, and, as he plays well or ill, gives him a better or a worse place in other dramas. Hardship strengthens men, and makes them better. Life is a constant battle with difficulties, in which we may expect God's help if we take God's way, but not otherwise. Providence does not leave man to perish, but is always calling him to better things: the Divine law says that to the good, life shall be good, and *vice versâ*. Plotinus did not deny the difference between good and evil fortune, but he minimized it. "The nature of the whole is mixed, but if any one detaches his

soul, the rest is no great matter." In this cheerful, manly view we read the difference between Stoicism and Platonism. The former said that "the rest," that is to say, such part of our environment as we cannot control, did not matter at all. How Plotinus dealt with moral evil we shall see later on.

One very remarkable feature of the Plotinian view of Nature is expressed by the word Sympathy. Every part of the whole, by virtue of its provenance from the One, is set in the same key, and vibrates in unison. And this sympathetic affection does not require contact, but is capable of acting at a distance. By this thrill of affinity Plotinus explained sensation. He went so far as to affirm that, if there were another world, we should not be able to perceive it, even if it were exactly like our own, because the soul that made it would not be in touch with ours. But in this way he was able to defend astrology and magic. The stars do not cause good or evil fortune, yet as all nature is interdependent, their movements may prognosticate. Magic cannot affect the higher soul, but it has power over the lower, by subtle physical influences, which it has at its command. In this way even a good man may be bewitched, and in consequence may suffer disease or even death; nor can he ward off these baleful assaults, except by the use of counter charms. The demons have power over him to this extent. He is subject to their malefic influences, so far as his life is relative. Plotinus saw no essential difference between the art of the physician and that of the enchanter; both made use of natural powers.

In this way, as we have seen, and in this very connection, he explained the power of prayer to move at any rate the lower gods.

It is possible that he held proudly aloof from these vulgar superstitions; but at least he left the gate wide open. Yet we may notice that he does not seem to have made any use of mesmerism or artificial means to induce the mystic vision.

The position of man is therefore a double one. As regards his body and his irrational soul, he is entangled in the chain of physical causation, and has but a limited power of self-assertion. Only in his Ego can he be free.

## XVIII

### THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL

WE must content ourselves with setting before the reader an abstract of the famous argument of Plotinus on the Soul's immortality (*Enn.* v. 7).

The Platonist had to establish two propositions—

I. That the Soul is not a Body.

II. That it is not a Harmony or Form, or as we might say, Function of a Body. If he could demonstrate these two points, it follows that the soul must belong to the immaterial, intelligible world; that it is a real Being or *Ousia*, and therefore eternal.

1. The critique of materialism is based partly on the conception of life, partly on that of unity.

The soul has life of itself. This is not true of any material substance, not even of the four elements. They never exhibit life, except as something that has obviously been brought to them. But if no one material substance possesses life, no aggregate of such substances can generate it; "the unintelligent cannot beget the intelligent." Indeed no body can so much as exist without soul. Organism implies an organizing principle. For a word comes to the matter and

makes it a body, and the word can only come from soul.

Some, Leucippus Democritus, and Epicurus, built up the world out of atoms. An atom has no magnitude, and no qualities. Since it has no magnitude, no number of them will form a bulk. Since it has no qualities, it can never give birth to sympathy. But the characteristic of soul is, that each part is in sympathy with the others, and with the whole.

It cannot be, as the Stoics asserted, an affection of matter. For matter does not shape itself, or put life into itself. Where then does the affection come from? There must be some Giver of Life outside and above all material nature. For there could not be such a thing as a body, if there were no soul-power. Perhaps even matter itself could not exist, and all would go to wreck, if there were no order, no word, no intelligence.

Again, if it were a body, life would possess one definite set of attributes. Whereas life causes many and diverse,—heat and cold, colour, and others. It would have but one movement, that of gravitation, but again it has many. It is the cause of growth, yet it does not grow. It has no size, no parts.

Further, the immateriality of the soul results from a consideration of its powers.

From Sense.—The sentient subject is one. When we perceive an object, the eye reports one sensation; the ear, it may be, another. The sensations are combined; at the same time they are distinguished, because there is one percipient faculty, as it were, at

the centre of a circle, whose radii are represented by the different senses.

From Memory.—If the soul is a body, we must suppose that perception imprints a kind of stamp upon it. The imprint will decay, or later imprints will obliterate it; in either case there will be no memory.

From Pain.—The finger is hurt, and the Ego feels the smart. Some explain this fact by transmission. Are we to say then, that first the finger is pained, next the nerve, next the brain, and lastly the percipient? No; there is one pain, not many. Again, each link in the chain would know only what was reported to it by the last link. The mind would be aware that the brain was suffering, not that the finger was hurt. It follows that the soul must be in union with the whole body; it must be one and the same in every part.

From the power of abstract thought.—What thinks the immaterial, cannot be material. And from the capacity for aesthetic and moral ideas. If the soul is corporeal, is virtue a kind of spirit or breath? Granting that a spirit might be strong or beautiful, how could it be just or chaste? Virtue again comes and goes, but, if the soul be material, it must always remain as it is.

It was maintained by some in the time of Plotinus, that the soul was a physical force, analogous to heat. To this he answers that force is not material, and that forces of mind, thought, perception, desire, differ in kind from the forces of nature.

A further argument is based upon the impossibility of conceiving the mode of combination of soul and

body, if both are material. Lastly, Plotinus considers and rejects a peculiar Stoic view, which regarded mind as produced out of matter by a process of evolution. It is expressed by four words denoting four successive stages of existence, Condition, Nature, Soul, Intelligence, which correspond to the modes of being of a jelly, a jelly-fish, a monkey, and a man. Truly there is nothing new under the sun, and we have here the first rough draught of Darwinism struck out by some doctor of the Porch. Plotinus remarks upon this curious anticipation of our modern perplexities, that it puts the worst first, and makes the existence of God hypothetical. Again, that if Condition, or let us say inorganic nature, comes first, there is nothing to account for the evolution, nothing to set things going (*τὸ ἄγρον*). The jelly cannot evolve itself; it must have some definite goal; it cannot be thought of as sallying forth at random in quest of the unknown. The attracting cause must be there, before the evolution begins; that is to say, mind and intelligence must be prior to inorganic nature, and not posterior. The argument is directed primarily to establish the pre-existence of God, but the human soul is part of God, and so what is true of the one is true of the other. We may notice that Plotinus does not here deny the possibility of physical evolution; that is, the growth of more perfect out of less perfect bodies. What he traverses is the evolution of life. Physical evolution is not incompatible with his general view. He admitted a periodicity of Nature, a constant succession of youth, maturity, and death, in the whole as in the

parts, and any amount of phenomenal change he could account for. On the other hand, he believed in permanence of type. There is, however, a curious and obscure passage (v. 9, 13), in which it is argued that the contents of the ideal world may be larger than those of the phenomenal, and this might be applied to the alteration of existing types, or the emergence of new types. But the question had not yet arisen. The requisite knowledge of Nature did not exist. All we can say is, that Plotinus hit the root of the matter when he asserted that growth, without an ordering mind, is inconceivable.

2. Soul, then, is different from Body. But does it depend on the body? Is it, as many think, a function of the organism? In ancient times this view took two expressions. The Pythagoreans regarded Soul as a Harmony, the Peripatetics as a Form (Entelechy) of Body.

When the chords of a lyre are rightly strained, they acquire a certain relation, which we call harmony. So it has been held, a certain natural relation of the different elements, of which body is composed, generates life or soul.

But soul is a thing, harmony a relation. Again, the mind constantly resists the body. Again, if health is harmony, disease is discord, and the soul is changed or gone. Again, there must be another soul to make the harmony; the chords cannot tune themselves. Thus soul must come first, and strike the keynote. It is impossible to bring music out of discord, or life out of death.

The Peripatetic defined soul, in much the same way, as "the form of an organism capable of life." To this Plotinus answers by repeating, what is surely a conclusive argument, that there is, as a matter of fact, war between the spirit and the flesh. Form, again, is as divisible as matter. If you break off the leg of a statue, you take away a part of its form. But you may lop off the limbs of a man, and yet his Ego will remain as whole as ever. This is one of Butler's arguments, and it is not destroyed by the objection that if you hit the man with a stick on a particular spot of his head he will no longer be able to speak. If he loses a leg, the faculty of sense remains intact, though one of its organs is gone; and if he loses his brain the power of thought may remain, though no longer able to manifest itself by its material vehicle. Plotinus held that while form is inseparable, intelligence is separable from the body. This he thought was proved by the suspension of the faculties in sleep, and by the nature of abstract thought.

From all this the conclusion follows, that soul does not exist merely because it is the form of something. It is itself a thing, which does not receive being as a result of its establishment in a body, but has a life of its own, before it comes to belong to this or that animal. The body did not beget the soul.

What, then, is it? If it is neither a body nor an affection of the body, but a mode of moral and physical energy, containing many capacities, producing many results; it must be a kind of thing differing from all material existences. Clearly it is what we call a Being.

For all bodily existence must be called Becoming, not being, because it is ever becoming, ever perishing, and never truly is, but lives, while it lives, by participation in being, so far as it does participate.

Yet another argument for the soul's immortality Plotinus finds in its capacity for virtue, and in the nature of virtue, which reveals the Divine image within us. Nothing but evil makes us doubt, that we are of one substance (*ὁμοούσιος*) with the Divine. This fine argument we must leave to the reader's own power of divination.

The sum and substance of the whole matter is, that Soul is Life, and that Life is.

## XIX

### ETHICS

MAN, as we have seen, belongs to two worlds, and is partly the creature of circumstance, partly not. He has his feet in the water. Hence he is compared to a thete, or serf, who was half-slave, half-free; or more aptly still, to the dancer in a choir. The music has power over him, the measure also constrains him, but there are certain movements which are all his own. Plotinus insists very strongly and very often on individuality. "If God," he says, "were sole cause, all would be good." Yet everything has a cause, and, when the cause is outside the self, it becomes a kind of necessity.

What, then, is the sphere of freedom, and what of necessity?

There is an universal belief (*ἔννοια*) which tells us that we are free. Yet if we look more closely, it does not say that we are our own masters. Consciousness assures us only of this, that we are free in so far as we can carry out our wishes (vi. 8).

In truth, action is never free. It is at best of mixed nature, because always relative to circum-

stances. We do, not what we would, but what we can. The moment we go outside ourselves, we are caught in a stream of causes, over which we have no control. Success is not in our power, only right motive and right conduct.

Even the motive is not always free. In many cases, perhaps in most, it is a mere "imagination" (*φαντασία*) or opinion, dictated by our bodily needs. All bad men, and in some things even good men, are guided by sense, which is purely relative. Aristotle held that a man was a free agent, if he was acquainted with the particulars of his action; if he killed a man, for instance, and knew what he was doing. Plotinus considers that ignorance of the universal, of the moral law, "thou shalt do no murder," makes the deed involuntary. Aristotle held that the man ought to know this. "But," retorts Plotinus, "suppose he does not know, that he ought to know it."

Freedom, then, is to be found, not in the outward energy nor in sense-knowledge, but in the wish, and this runs up to Intelligence and the knowledge of the Good. This is the sole cause of liberty. Those, who by the practice of moral virtue have attained to a true understanding, are emancipated. They have a master, it is true, but they are that, which is their master.

God Himself is not to be called free, because He is the cause of freedom. For man, liberty is nothing else than "a living law." His will is free, when it is at one with the mind of God. The power of contraries is not freedom, "for to be able to do

things opposite is a sign of inability to cleave to the best."

Vice therefore, in the view of the Neoplatonist, is involuntary. It is in fact the sleep of the soul. The bad man uses his bodily faculties, but suffers his intelligence to lie dormant. "So in the assembly, when the elders are wrapt in thought, the unruly mob, craving food and complaining of its discomforts, casts the whole meeting into unseemly uproar. If they will keep quiet, and a word comes to them from some wise signor, the tumult is allayed, and the worse does not prevail. Otherwise, if the better remains silent, the worse prevails, because the clamouring throng cannot receive the word from above" (vi. 4, 15).

The soul itself is divine, and can suffer no contamination. But it nods and slumbers, and lets go the reins. The cure of this moral evil is to be found in philosophy, which wakes the dreamer, in the drawing of Providence, in love of the ideal. Whether the remedy is universally applicable, is dubious. It is a favourite idea with Plotinus, that men are divided into three classes. Some never rise above sense. Some mount a little towards heaven, but cannot sustain themselves; they drop again to earth, and are called virtuous. Some divine men climb up to heaven and stay there. He does not explain, whether it is possible for a man altogether to change his class. Celsus has shown us, that one cardinal sin of the Church, in the eyes of the philosopher, was, that it promised the Beatific Vision to cobblers. In any

case Plotinus thought it monstrous to suppose, that the suffering of one man could make another better. "For a bad man to ask some one else to become his saviour, by the sacrifice of himself, is not lawful even in prayer." This is probably a sly hit at Christianity; at any rate we have here in a nutshell the whole difference between the two systems.

Virtue is likeness to God. It has two grades, the "political" or practical, and the "greater" or intellectual (i. 2).

Of the former Plotinus seldom speaks, and always with clear reference to its provisional character. It is beautiful, "fairer than the morning star," yet but a stepping-stone to better things. It is contingent. The struggle with injustice makes a man stronger, but it would be better if there were no injustice. Again, the need of action is distracting. Consciousness and attention stand in inverse proportion; the more we have to attend to the act of reading, the less conscious we are of what is read.

Considered from an empirical point of view, the office of moral virtue is to "limit and measure the desires and affections in general, and to take away false opinions." Its work is mainly negative; it wipes away the mud of vice, and is a "purification." But it has also a positive effect. Virtue "intelligizes" the soul. The really important thing is, that it is a form, a law, and forms and laws come from God.

The Neoplatonist, as a rule, practised a rigid asceticism, but he was not ascetic in his demands upon others. There is even a tinge of antinomianism,

or perhaps we should say a touch of geniality about Plotinus. Little things do not matter, so long as they are not done on purpose. "Nothing of this kind is sin (*ἀμαρτία*), but rather right action. But we ought to aim not at being without sin, but at being God. If then a man does things of this kind without will, he is double, a god and a demon, or rather he has a companion at his side whose virtue is different from his own. But if he does them not, he is pure God."

The greater virtue springs out of the less. It is the turning or "conversion" (*ἐπιστροφή*) of the soul from sense to God. Man turns his face to the light, and sees the ideal beauty, not afar off, but in his soul. For even before conversion he possessed the ideas, though "thrust away in a dark corner." The greater virtue is free, and needs no action; it is communion with the Divine. The world does not give it, and cannot take it away.

Closely connected with virtue is happiness. The bad man is doomed to misery; "he behaves like a wolf, and he becomes a wolf." But for the good, life is good.

Happiness is not pleasure, though it is pleasant, for life and intelligence are beautiful, and beauty is crowned with grace which the soul seeks with love. It is "intensity of life," hence its good must come not from without, but from within and above. In details Plotinus is here almost completely Stoic. Sympathetic sorrow is a weakness of the soul. External blessings or misfortunes do not contribute to, or detract from, the felicity of the wise. The lyre

does not make the musician. If it is bad, the player will get a new instrument, or he will sing without one. But his general conception is the reverse of the Stoic. For he regards action as incompatible with happiness (i. 4).

The reward of the good is fullness of life, the punishment of the evil is wolfishness. But what about the future? Plotinus says very little about this, and what he does say merely repeats the traditional doctrine of his school. The wicked are punished in Hades, or they come back to earth to expiate their sins in other and lower forms of life. The soul that is purified by philosophy returns to the intelligible world, and to it death is gain.

As to what becomes of the lower soul of man he felt great difficulty. If it is the life of the body, it passes into other bodies; if it belongs to the soul proper, it will go whithersoever that goes. But tradition affirmed that the eidolon of Heracles was in the Elysian Fields, while the soul of Heracles was a god in heaven. Here Plotinus leaves the question. With him, as with all his school, Homer stands side by side with philosophy, and polytheism with the Absolute.

The morality of the Neoplatonists is purely intellectual, and therefore purely individual. Sympathy plays a great part in their physics, but is wholly absent from their ethics. This is the main reason why they could not found a church, or even an enduring philosophy.

Again, there is no place in Neoplatonism for that

fear of God, which is the beginning of Wisdom. The man himself never sins. God is above man, and there is room for aspiration and adoration. But there is no remorse, or repentance, or humility, or dread. Little things do not matter. In other words, though the One is high, He is not high enough; He does not charge the angels with folly. Hence the road to Him is made too short and too easy.

Lastly, the Neoplatonic morals are entirely unpractical. Action purifies, but in itself it is mere distraction. The desire to do arises out of feebleness of intelligence. Conduct has no inner relation to moral perfection. The way to be happy is to think much and do nothing.

## ON BEAUTY

INTELLECTUAL Virtue is the Upward Path (*ἀναγωγή*), which leads us back to God. In the sleep of his soul man has forgotten his Father, yet he is drawn towards Him by a dumb impulse, "for all things crave for Him, and reach towards him by necessity of nature, as if divining, that without Him they cannot be." Two motives carry us upwards—the love of Beauty, and the love of Good. The desire for Good is universal, and is sweet. The love of Beauty is not universal; it is the new life, and its birth-pangs are sharp.

"The perception and the awe of Beauty (v. 5, 12), and the awakening of Love, come to men when they already, as it were, know, and are awake. But the Good, since it has always been an object of congenial desire, is with them even while they sleep, and does not awe them when they begin to see, because it ever attends them, and is not recollected at any particular moment. Nay, they do not see it, because they have it even in sleep. But the love of Beauty, when it comes, causes pain, because they must first see and then desire. This love therefore is second, and not till men begin to understand does it tell them that the Beautiful is.

But the older and unconscious desire testifies that the Good is older and prior to Beauty."

The love of Good is "older" and natural. Nevertheless, as Good is above Form or Being, the love of Good, as a distinctly moral motive, comes after, and reaches higher, than the love of Beauty. Hence the Upward Path falls into two sections. The love of Beauty carries a man up to the top of Being, and then hands him over to the love of Good.

We must consider, then, in this chapter the lower half of the way (i. 3, 1) over which presides the idea of Beauty; that is, the Divine Intelligence. It is the sphere of Art and Knowledge. Three classes of men are capable of the journey. Or the road, we may say, has three branches. The first is for the Musician, the second for the Lover, the third for the Philosopher. The beauty of sound, of shape and colour, and of reasoned truth all lead to the same goal. But all these pilgrims are lovers alike. All woo the same goddess, though with different gifts. What, then, is the Beautiful that they seek?

It is within us, and not without. It is the inner loveliness that we seek, though we often forget this, as Narcissus fell in love with his own reflection in the pool (v. 8, 2).

Beauty (i. 6 throughout) has many manifestations, in sights, in sounds, in virtue, in truth. What is it that is common to all these? What is it that makes them beautiful?

Let us begin with objects of sight, for in them we may find a key. What is their charm?

The common opinion is, that it resides in symmetry. Yet this will not suffice. For if it be so, the composite whole is beautiful, while the parts are not. But how can any number of uglinesses produce beauty? There must be beauty also in the part, the simple, the in-composite. Otherwise what becomes of beauty of colour? "How is gold beautiful, or lightning by night, or the stars?" What again of sound? The melody is sweet, but so is the note. What again do we mean by the symmetry of virtue or of intelligence? In these acts of mind there is no proportion, either geometrical or arithmetical. And if we say that there is harmony, it may be replied, that well-ordered falsehood is as harmonious as truth.

Why then are we attracted by the beautiful, and shocked by the ugly? It is because the soul belongs to the better nature. Hence whenever she discerns that which is akin to herself, or a trace of that which is akin, she rejoices and flutters with gladness, and takes it home to herself, and remembers herself and her parentage. Things are beautiful in so far as they partake of form, which gives them unity, the shadow of the One, and grace. They are beautiful by participation in a word that comes from the gods. They are ugly when the form, the word, has failed to control the matter; when they do not adequately represent the thought of the Creator.

Sense recognizes the presence or absence of form, and its judgment is valid, when the rest of the soul co-operates in its judgment. Or perhaps soul herself delivers this verdict, comparing the report of sense

with the form which she possesses, and using this as her canon. The Parthenon is but a concrete expression of the idea of Pheidias. When we behold it, we see how the shape given by the artist masters the alien material, and rides upon the other shapes. We grasp the whole, and welcome it, just as a good man rejoices over some trait of virtue in a child, because it harmonizes with the truth in himself. It is the same with colour. This too is a form, "a bodiless light."

"There are, however, higher beauties, which it is not given to sense to behold, but soul sees and expresses them without the aid of organs. These we must mount up and contemplate, leaving sense below. But now you cannot speak intelligibly about visible beauty to those who have never seen it, and do not perceive that it is beautiful ; for instance, to those who were born blind. And there is the same difficulty in describing moral loveliness to those who do not allow the beauty of habits, or sciences, or other things of the same nature, or the light of virtue to those who have no conception, how fair is the face of justice and self-control, fairer than the evening or morning star. Men must first have seen, and must be that eye with which the soul beholds the immaterial. And vision must have been followed by delight, and wonder, and rapture, far greater than what they felt over earthly things, because they are now laying hold of the true. For these feelings, awe, and sweet wonder, and craving, and love, and delicious rapture, must attend all that is beautiful. And these emotions are possible, and almost all souls do experience them, even about objects that are not

seen ; but especially those souls that are more susceptible of spiritual desire. It is the same with human passion ; all feel it, but the wound is far deeper with some than with others, and these are said to love."

What, then, is it which fills the lovers of the unseen with exultation when they behold the purity of temperance, the severity of fortitude, in themselves or in others ? They will tell you that virtue is the truth of truths, the eternally fair. But why does the truth clothe the soul in light ? Let us look at its opposite, and find the answer.

"Take, then, an ugly soul, intemperate and unjust, full of lusts, full of confusion, fearful through cowardice, envious through meanness, thinking nothing but what is mortal and base, crooked in all its parts, living a life of fleshly passion, and thinking ugliness delightful. Shall we not say that its ugliness came upon it as an evil from without, that it maimed it and has made it unclean, polluted with all that is bad, so that it has no pure life, no pure sensation, because its very life is dimmed by the mixture of evil, and contaminated by much death, so that it can no longer see what a soul ought to see, and is no longer permitted to abide in itself, because it is perpetually dragged outwards and downwards towards the darkness ? It is unclean then, and pulled in all directions by cords towards the objects that importune its senses ; it is soiled with the body, by the material ; it has received into itself an alien form, and is altered by a debasing mixture, just as when a man tumbles into mire or mud, so that he no longer shows his beauty, and nothing can be seen but the filth which

sticks to him. When then ugliness cleaves to a man by the plastering on of a foreign substance, and has become his work, he must wash and be clean, before he can again be what he was. If, then, we say that a soul is ugly by mixture and contamination and condescension towards the body and matter, we shall be right."

The remedy is to get rid of desire. "Cut the rope," says Zeller, "and the balloon will rise." Virtue is "purification," "detachment." The believer casts away every weight, and at once the Divine without catches hold of the Divine within, and lifts him up. Earthly beauty reveals the glory of the Soul by which it was made, and from this vantage ground the seeker, "if he do not turn his back upon the music," will hear the heavenly harmony of Intelligence.

Plotinus, it will be observed, does not resolve Goodness into Beauty, but as he empties Goodness of moral significance, he is compelled to use Beauty as his first and chief motive. To this accordingly he attaches whatever there is left in his system of repentance and awe. Repentance is the delicious anguish of first love.

The relation of art to morality, he would decide in summary fashion. Vice is ugliness. Ugliness is painful, and the more realistically depicted the more painful it will be. It is painful because it represents God's failures, the triumph of the amorphous over the ordering word, the power of darkness, the unknown and horrible.

## XXI

### VISION

INTELLECTUAL or aesthetic virtue leads men up to Intelligence, into the realm of truth, of beauty, and of freedom. Here the soul is truly free. It can do what it wishes, unimpeded by misleading desires, by hostile wills, or adverse circumstances. There is no law of God to be carried out at any cost of self-sacrifice in the salvation of the brethren or the improvement of the world. Providence can do all this for Himself. Man's duty is to unite himself with God by mounting upwards and leaving the world behind. The kingdom of God is meditation. "Sense is our messenger, Intelligence our king, and we are kings when we are like Him (κατ' ἐκεῖνον)." Life is happy there: "it is never weary when it is pure."

Still even in the intellectual life there are two stages. In the first, God's laws are written upon the soul (v. 3, 4). We know God, know Him perfectly, but we discern Him as a glorified image of ourselves, projected before the eyes as an object of contemplation (v. 8, 11). We know Him, but we know Him as another, as something that we possess, and therefore

that has been given. Even this is a high grace. The soul "sees God in painless travail and the birth of His Son."

We can understand this. Plotinus sits down in his arm-chair, closes his eyes, and with his inner vision sees the whole realm of knowledge spread out before him. It is a conscious, but not a vividly conscious, state, for he tells us in this connection, that in perception acuteness and agreeableness stand in inverse relation. The most pungent sensations are those of pain; the things that we know best and that are best worth knowing do not excite us like unfamiliar or less worthy objects (v. 8, 11). "The Ego has no senses."

But we ought not to be content to rest here. There is a higher stage in which we are "full of God," become the Beautiful and Intelligence, in which we leave all images, even the most glorious, return into ourselves, and see God there by direct vision, as the Second Person of the Trinity beholds the First.

To this subject Plotinus constantly recurs. It was to him the crown and keystone of all knowledge and all virtue, their perfection and their proof. If the One is a mere hypothesis, everything becomes uncertain. He must be in some sense knowable, and He could be known only by being seen or felt.

We will translate or condense the more important passages on this interesting topic.

First, as to the possibility of Vision (v. 3, 14). "We can tell what He is not, but what He is we

cannot tell, so that we are driven to describe Him by His operations. But there is no reason why we should not have Him, even if we cannot describe Him. Those who are inspired (*ἐνθουσιῶντες*), those who are possessed (*κάτοχοι*), know this much, that within them they have something greater than themselves, even if they do not know what. From what they feel, from what they speak, they have some conception of that which moves them, as of something different from themselves. So it is with us, when we use the pure Intelligence.”

It is illustrated by the act of sight (v. 5, 7). We see two things, the sensible form, and the light that makes it visible. But we should not know that we saw the light, unless we saw the form. So Intelligence sees Being, by light given by the One. It must turn away from all objects, and contemplate this light. But the analogy of the eye will carry us still farther. For the eye has light in itself—that light which you see when you squeeze your eyelids. The Intelligence must concentrate itself on this inner light.

“We must go up then further to the Good (i. 6, 7) for which every soul craves. Those who have seen it know what I say, how beautiful it is. For it is desirable as Good, and we yearn towards it. But we attain to it by climbing up and turning towards it, and stripping off the outer garments, that we put on in our downward course. Those who go up to holy shrines must cleanse themselves, and put off their old vesture, and enter in naked, till having left behind all that is alien to the god, with their pure selves they

see the pure deity, sincere, simple, clean, on whom all things depend, towards whom all things look, and in whom they are, and live, and think. For He is the cause of Life and Intelligence and Being. If we can but see Him, with what love shall we be filled, with what desire, longing to be united with Him! With what joy shall we exult!

“What, then, is the way? How shall one behold that ineffable beauty which abides in the inmost sanctuary, and comes not forth lest any profane eye should see it? Courage!—let him that is able, press into the holy place, leaving behind the sight of the eyes, and not turning back to gaze upon the bodily charms that once attracted him. For when we see material loveliness we ought not to run after it, but to know that it is an image, a trace, a shadow, and flee to that which is the archetype. For if one hastens to embrace as true the fair image reflected on the water, like Hylas, he sinks into the stream and is seen no more. So he who sets his affection on earthly beauty, and will not let it go, falls not with body but with soul, into abysses dark and horrible to the intelligence, where he is blind and abides in Hades, and will dwell with the shadows that he clung to here. Let us fly then to our dear fatherland; this is the exhortation of truth. But how fly, and how mount up? Even as the master (Plato) says, in a parable, that Odysseus flew from the witch Circe or from Calypso, willing not to stay for any visible delights or any sensual beauty. And our fatherland is the place from which we came, and our

Father is yonder. But what is the vehicle, and what is the track? Thou needest not go afoot; for feet carry men hither and thither from land to land. Nor shalt thou get thee ship or chariot. Leave all this and look not back, but close thy eyes as it were, and get thee a new sight. Wake up that vision which all have, but few employ.

“What, then, does the inner vision see? On first waking it cannot clearly discern those bright objects. Hence we must train the Soul by itself, first of all to see beautiful habits, then beautiful works; I do not mean works of art, but the works of good men. Then behold the soul of those that do beautiful works.

“Now how art thou to see the beauty of a good soul? Go to thyself and look, and if thou findest that thou art not yet beautiful, as the sculptor of a statue, that is to be beautiful, chips and files away, making this smooth and that pure, till he brings out a lovely face on his statue, so do thou chip off what is superfluous, straighten what is crooked, cleanse what is dark and make it bright, and cease not to labour at thy statue till the Divine radiance of virtue shine forth, till thou behold self-control mounted upon her holy pedestal. If thou hast become virtue, and hast seen thyself, and walked chastely with thyself; if thou hast nothing that hinders thee from in this way becoming one, naught foreign mingled with thy inner self, but art wholly true light, not measured by size, not limited by shape, nor yet swollen to infinitude, but without dimensions of any kind, as

being greater than every measure and better than aught that has quantity—if, I say, thou art this, and seest thyself and art sight, be of good cheer, mount up, for thou needest no guide, and look with all thy might.”

Elsewhere (v. 5, 3), the vision is compared to a royal procession.

“This nature (Intelligence) is God, a second God, who shows Himself before we can behold the first. The First sits above on Intelligence as on a glorious throne, which depends on Him. For it was right that He should be mounted, not on the soulless, nor immediately on soul, but that there should be an ineffable beauty to go before Him; as when some great king appears in state, first come those of less degree, then those who are greater and more dignified, then his body-guard who have somewhat of royalty in their show, then those who are honoured next to himself. After all these the great king himself appears suddenly, and all pray and do obeisance; all, that is, who have not gone away before, satisfied with the glorious pageant that preceded the king.”  
He is King of kings and Father of gods. +

Those, to whom this vision is granted, despise even thought (vi. 7, 35), which before they delighted in. For thought is a kind of movement, but in the vision is no movement. “One who had entered into a palace rich and beautiful through its richness, would gaze with wonder on all its varied treasures,” like Psyche in the palace of Cupid, “till he caught sight of the Master of the House. But when he beholds

Him who is far more lovely than any of His statues, and worthy of the true contemplation, he forgets the treasures and marks their lord alone. He looks and cannot remove his eyes, till by the persistence of his gaze he no longer sees an object, but blends his sight with the thing seen, so that what was object becomes sight, and he forgets all other spectacles."

The Vision is not to be regarded as unfruitful. It is contact (*ἐπαφή*) with the Divine, and in this union the perfect soul "begets"—like God Himself—beautiful thoughts and beautiful virtues. "All these things the soul conceives when filled with Him" (vi. 9, 9).

It is a special grace, and being the self-manifestation of the One, it can be given only by Him whom it reveals. The way is prepared by moral purity, by art and knowledge; but these things only lift us as it were out of the depths of a mine on to the plane of earth. The shining of the sun must come to us. All we can do is to fit ourselves for His coming, and wait patiently for the dawn. We cannot force God; we must be "quiet." "He is within, yet not within. We must not ask whence, for there is no whence. For He never comes, and He never goes; but appears, and does not appear. Wherefore we must not pursue Him, but wait quietly till He show Himself, only we must make ourselves ready to behold, as the eye awaits the dayspring. And He swims above the horizon—from the ocean, as the poets say—and gives Himself to our gaze" (v. 5, 8).

Several points may be noticed in this description of the Vision.

It is accompanied by a complete suspension of all external consciousness; the soul does not know whether it is in the body or not.

It comes suddenly. This is repeatedly emphasized. We are never told distinctly how long it endures; "as long as the soul will or can" is the most definite phrase employed. St. Theresa's trances are said to have lasted about half-an-hour.

It is rare. Plotinus tells us that he had "often" enjoyed it (iv. 8, 1). From Porphyry's account it would appear that he was entranced about once a year, at any rate towards the end of his life. Porphyry himself had seen the vision but once.

It was not attended by any sense of fear. St. John of the Cross passed through the direst anguish of soul before he beheld "the essential truth nakedly in itself." But Plotinus always speaks of the revelation as attended by joy unspeakable.

The Vision was not pictorial. It was the manifestation of the Formless One, and could not therefore come in any shape however majestic. In this it differs from the visions of the Old Testament Prophets, which often, as in the case of Isaiah and Ezekiel, presented definite forms and scenes to the eye of the soul. Some of the mediæval mystics regarded these definite and particular manifestations with great suspicion as possible delusions of the Evil One. They were aware that fasting and sleeplessness, with which they were only too familiar, will produce hallucinations, visits of the devil, or phantasms of sensuous and enticing delights, and were wisely on

their guard. The Neoplatonists of the Plotinian group were ascetic ; but not at all in the same sense as the Christian monks. Their diet was spare, but wholesome ; they were on friendly terms with the physician, and took reasonable care of their bodily health. They had little to fear from those airy fancies, whether seductive or horrible, which are bred of enfeebled nerves or a disordered stomach.

Lastly, no words were heard. There was no voice of the Lord saying, "Go, and tell this people." The revelation was not communicable. It was granted to the individual soul for his own comfort and edification. It is true that the seer became a witness. He could say thenceforth, "I have seen and know," and his vision made him a holier man. In this indirect sense, the manifestation of the spirit was given to profit withal. To some extent this is true of all prophecy. But on the Christian prophet revelation laid a burden : "Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel." Whereas the effect of the Neoplatonist vision was to draw the seer from the world of action. Preaching is just as contingent, just as unfree as any other mode of dealing with the external, and the wise man will avoid it. Christian mystics may have fallen into the same error, but only by denying their principles.

When Plotinus speaks of waiting for the revelation, he perhaps does not mean, that the man is to sit with eyes shut and hands folded. This of itself would be pressing God. What he seems to inculcate is that there should be absolutely no desire even for the all-

desirable. The believer must put himself absolutely into the hands of God. He is always meditating, and suddenly, when he least expects it, the palace-doors will be opened, and the King will step forth.

It has been said that the Agnostic Deity is really the same as the Platonist Matter or No Thing. And is not this equally true of the One?

Plotinus emphatically denied this. Matter and the One agreed in being formless, but in nothing else. The former is unreal, the latter is more real than all reality; the former is mere potentiality, the latter is power; of the former we have but a vague, disquieting sense as of something shapeless, horrible, lawless, and evil; the presence of the latter brings with it the sweetest rapture. If we cannot explain, we can see it, touch it, feel it. We can know it in this sense even better than other things, because it is our true self, our inmost personality; we are in it. It is the fullness of life. This also cannot be defined or communicated. What is perfect health? There is nothing vague or indefinite about it, yet it does not admit of description.

Revelation is the revelation of a Presence, of a Personality; and without denying the possibility of revelation altogether, we can hardly say that the vision of Plotinus is inconceivable.

But two questions force themselves upon us. Is what he says here sane or not sane? And is it a necessary part of his system?

The first is by no means easy to answer. Plotinus shared, though only to a limited extent, the super-

stition of his age. But his superstition, his belief in demons and in magic, has nothing whatever to do with his vision. In practice the two are wholly disconnected, and if there is any link between them it can only be one of historical sequence, of more or less remote causation.

His intellect was singularly acute and logical, and he was, as Porphyry tells us, by no means an unpractical man, so far as he chose to entangle himself in matters of business. Yet he was a visionary.

There can be no doubt that the experiences he describes are real. Nor are they unique. Nor do they betoken an unhealthy mind or body. Not to speak of St. Paul, who was as sane a man as ever lived, we find the same singular phenomenon in so thoroughly modern a book as the *In Memoriam*.

The great point is, that the trance of Plotinus was in no way mechanical or self-induced. If this be a fact, his vision stands in a different class from the torpor produced by whirling movement or gazing on a bright object, or any form of mesmerism. He himself believed it to be a Divine manifestation. The point may be left to the judgment of the reader. All that we will insist upon is, that Plotinus was by no means a besotted fanatic.

But did the Vision belong to his system, or is it a mere accretion whose roots are elsewhere? We may say with confidence, that it springs not from his philosophy, but from his religion. We have already seen something of the history of the doctrine. It rested upon facts. Philo found an instance of the

“divine intoxication” in the Hebrew prophets; Plutarch in the Pythoness or the Corybantes. The Pythagorean seized upon the idea as opening the only possible way in which the One could be known, and the Egyptian Plotinus fixed it in the forefront of his creed.

But it was not really necessary. This indeed is proved by the fact that Neoplatonism in all its essential features exists in our own days as Idealism; but without this mystical element. The modern disciple of Plotinus insists that the supreme unity, the synthesis of all antitheses, can be known in other ways.

But why then does Plotinus lay such stress on this particular kind of knowledge? To this it may be replied that he does not represent the Vision as an indispensable condition of the spiritual life. A man might dwell in the Divine Intelligence, where subject and object are one, might enjoy happiness, practise all virtues, and possess all knowledge, yet conceivably he might in this life never enjoy the Beatific Vision.

Yet he held it up before man's eyes as a hope that all ought to cherish, and whether the Vision as he conceived it be sane or not, there can be no doubt that “this way madness lies.” In individual cases it might be wholesome, but as a system it is necessarily deadly. A host of unclean spirits—sloth, presumption, self-delusion, imposture—come flocking in, and the very foundations of intelligence and even morality are destroyed.

The Christian Church also believes in a Beatific Vision, when the saints will see “face to face,” when

they will be like God, and "see Him as He is." But she keeps this hope against the Great Day, and while steadily asserting, that some holy souls have been privileged to see things unspeakable, she forbids her children to think that in this life they can scale the summit of all things. Here we see in a glass darkly. None knoweth the Father save the Son. For others the vision is "in Christ," not immediate; and even this conditioned vision who can exhaust?

But the strength of the Church lay in her possession of a revelation, and one, and probably not the least, among the motives of Plotinus was the desire to outbid her.

## XXII

### PORPHYRY

THE successors of Plotinus differ from their great master in many remarkable ways.

About Plotinus there is a high and fine enthusiasm, a noble conception of the Divine, and a grand faith in the possibilities of man. Man's feet are in the mud, but his head reaches up to the One. Hence it is possible for him to attain to perfect communion with the Fountain of Life. Later Neoplatonists took a less sanguine view. An illimitable hierarchy of beings extends from God to earth. Man may climb as high as the angels, but not beyond.

Plotinus, like all his school, is tinged with scholasticism, a commentator on sacred texts. But his method is singularly free. He follows the spirit, not the letter, and borrows nothing that he does not transform. Imagination in him is more than logic; his results are consistent and original. His followers become more and more eclectic and pedantic. They pride themselves on making Aristotle and Plato agree, even in their theory of Being, where they are poles asunder.

Plotinus holds fast to the conception of immateri-

ality with the intuition of true genius. Those who came after could not grasp this fine idea. It slips from their hands, as Eurydice from the embrace of Orpheus. The Plotinian Trinity begins at once to materialize and break up.

In Plotinus philosophy almost takes wing, and breaks loose to form a religion by itself. He left behind him a compact system of Idealism, and a lofty spiritual mysticism. Yet in the background of his thought lay the whole of polytheism, with all its hateful magic linked on to his philosophy by the doctrine of the sympathy of nature. He himself was a man of serene and fearless intelligence, who dwelt content in the realm of Ideas, a servant of the highest God, to whom the demons did homage. He could put them out of his mind; their hideous forms and noxious arts could do him no harm. For him the upward path seems to lie past the gates of hell, along a secure and happy track, where the spirits of evil have little or no power to molest the pilgrim.

But he left all the horrors of Graeco-Oriental superstition intact. He even strengthened their hold upon the imagination by supplying them with a sort of scientific basis. To minds of weaker mould these phantoms of the pit, the grotesque and ghastly creations of Egyptian and Syrian demonology, seemed the nearest and most pressing facts of the spiritual life. To them the way appeared to lead almost to its summit right through hell itself; and the most precious of all knowledge was that which explained the names of devils and angels, how to distinguish one from the other, by

what amulets or charms to purchase the aid of the ministers of light, and outwit the cunning of the foul fiend.

The most important of the immediate disciples of Plotinus was Porphyry. He was a Tyrian, though born perhaps in Batanea. His real name was Malchus, "King," which was turned into Greek by Amelius as Basileus, by Longinus as Porphyrius, "purple-clad." He was born probably in 232; studied at Athens under Longinus, famous as a critic, still more famous as the minister of Zenobia; went to Rome in 262 and attached himself to Plotinus. In 268 he retired to Sicily to get rid of a fit of hypochondria, which had plunged him into such depression, that he even contemplated suicide. From Sicily he visited Carthage, where, he tells us, he had a tame partridge that could all but talk. The rest of his life was spent in Rome. Late in life he married Marcella, a poor widow with many children. The union appears to have been purely formal, and was probably contracted to enable him to confer benefits without scandal. At Rome he died, late in Diocletian's reign, at an age somewhat above sixty-eight.

From Longinus, whom Eunapius calls "a living library and walking museum," he acquired his learning and his style, which is clear, elegant, and long-winded. He stood to Plotinus in the same relation as Dumont to Bentham; "for Plotinus, by reason of his heavenly-mindedness, and his twisty, enigmatic mode of expression, was thought to be laborious and hard. But Porphyry, like a Hermaic chain let down to man,

by his many sided culture made everything clear and straightforward."

"The most learned of philosophers," St. Augustine calls him, and this is the general estimate. His *Introduction* to the Categories of Aristotle, still extant, formed the basis of all treatises on formal logic through the middle ages to recent times. He wrote also on philosophy and the history of philosophy, grammar, rhetoric, mathematics, and religion. The most famous of his works was that *Against the Christians*, in fifteen books, in which he criticized the Scriptures from a rationalistic point of view, and maintained that the Book of Daniel was not written till the time of Antiochus Epiphanes. We possess the *Sentences* (*ἀφορμαί*), an abstract of Neoplatonism, of which a full analysis will be found in Vacherot, a *Life of Pythagoras*, a *Letter to his wife Marcella*, four books on *Abstinence from Flesh*, two little mythological treatises on *The Styx* and the *Grotto of the Nymphs*, and some considerable fragments of other treatises.

Philosophically he did not differ greatly from his master. He appears to have followed Amelius in dividing the Divine Intelligence into three terms, Being, Thought, and Life, and in regarding different classes of entities as proceeding from each. What he taught precisely is not clear, but he paved the way for the Syrian and Athenian schools. Zeller says that he denied the independence of matter and derived all from the One, but the passages quoted do not bear this out. He believed in transmigration, but, like

Iamblichus, did not allow that the soul of man could pass into the body of a brute.

The teaching is nearly the same, but the accent is shifted. The sense of moral evil is more oppressive. The way up is longer and more difficult. Plotinus held, that in its descent the soul puts on an ethereal body in heaven, the region of the fixed stars. Those who have lived a good moral life on earth, rise after death as far as the sun, but not higher, until after successive incarnations they have attained to perfect detachment. Thus all resurrections, till the last, were resurrections of a body. Porphyry went a step further, and held that the body was never wholly put off, that a corporeal envelope of finer or grosser texture (*πνεῦμα*) was essential to the permanence of a human soul. Moreover, the soul starts on its downward course from the fixed stars, and puts on its garments in the lower world of the planets. In this odd way everything was put a step lower, and the flesh becomes a permanent burden. It became necessary to add another round to the ladder of virtue. Of this Porphyry says there are four degrees, the political, the purificatory, the theoretic, and the paradeigmatic. Of these the third and the last correspond to the Divine Soul and Intelligence, and lie beyond the horizon of this life. It followed from all this that man cannot attain to perfect wisdom in this present life; his defects must be made good by the grace of God in the life to come.

In this deeper sense of sin, this view of the body, this postponement of the Beatific Vision, we may

trace a certain approximation to Christian teaching. Socrates tells us that Porphyry had been a Christian. In his younger days he himself tells us, that he had met Origen, and he certainly knew the Bible. There were renegades, like Ammonius Saccas. But it is generally thought doubtful that Porphyry was one. His acquaintance with the Scriptures proves little. None know them so well, as those who read to confute them.

He was a man of sombre, melancholy mood, and he was a fanatic. The austere puritan would stand aghast at the severity of Porphyry's morality. His treatise on Abstinence is directed not to men of the world—they are past praying for—but to philosophers. Some of his fellow-disciples, Castricius Firmus in particular, had returned after the death of Plotinus to a laxer mode of life, and allowed themselves to eat meat. Porphyry girds up his loins to deal faithfully with them. All pleasure is abominable. Horse-racing, the theatre, dancing, marriage, and mutton-chops are equally accursed. Those who indulge in these things are the servants of devils, not of God. But what was the reason for his horror of flesh food? Not transmigration. He did not regard it as cannibalism; this ground failed him; but he could allege "a most physical reason," which had been imparted to him by an Egyptian priest. The soul of the murdered lingers near the corpse from which it has been unjustly severed, and seeks to regain possession of it. This we know from the arts of the necromancer, from tales of ghosts, and from the fact

that the gift of augury may be acquired by eating the heart of a crow, a hawk, or a mole. Hence it is clear that the soul of the murdered sheep will enter into him who unlawfully assimilates its mutton. Here we seem to trace the influence of the Clementine *Homilies*, or some writing of the same school.

The most singular thing about him is, that he was a man of most sceptical mind, and saw the difficulties of polytheism quite as clearly as those of Christianity. His *Letter to Anebos* brings out all the contradictions, absurdities, immoralities of paganism with the keenest and cruellest candour. Yet he definitely cast in his lot with the untenable side.

His sentiments are admirable. He was a deeply religious man, of high, pure, and tender, if exaggerated, morality. A long list of fine sayings may be extracted from his writings. "God asks not sacrifice nor long prayers, but a pious life. He looks not on the lips, but on the life." "True religion is to know God, and to imitate Him." "The true temple is the soul of the wise; the wise man is the true priest." "One ought to offer sacrifice with a clean heart, not with costly gifts." He quotes the famous Epidaurian inscription: "He that would enter the fragrant shrine must be holy, and holiness is to think holy thoughts." Of the angels, to whom he gave a place in his hierarchy, he taught "that they should be imitated rather than invoked."

He was far from orthodox in his general principles. The established cults were, in his view, all wrong. What the ordinary man seeks by oracles, prayers,

sacrifices is nothing but the goods of the flesh, health, wealth, or the gratification of lust. Over these things the devils have power. Those who seek such blessings may worship the devils, and use the magic to which they respond. The sage has renounced all pleasure, and gives himself up to the contemplation of the ideal God.

Then surely he is safe? Not at all. The Demons bar his way to God. Hence Apollo once told the prophet, that, before his prayers could be heard, he must "pay ransom to the Evil One."

They crowd even the temples. Hence the Egyptians and Phœnicians, before they begin their worship, break symbolic fetters, sacrifice certain animals, and beat the air with branches of trees to expel the wicked spirits. Otherwise the God cannot appear.

They have power by magic even over the elect. Sosipatra, a Platonist saint, was bewitched by a love philtre administered to her by Philometor. The vile lust could not be driven out till Maximus summoned a more potent Demon to her aid.

Lastly, they have wonderful powers of deceit. Bad spirits can change their shape, and appear as angels. Thus they have misled individuals, states, and even philosophers.

Porphyry is the most devout believer in Hecate and her hell-dogs, in jinns, hobgoblins, spectres, amulets, spells, and can give most philosophical reasons for the most ridiculous superstitions. Everything that the Christian alleged against Polytheism he admits in the coolest way. It was true that the

Greek sacrificed to devils, not to God. It was true that the demons were corporeal, mortal, mostly maleficent. It was true that they were deceivers, and that philosophy was no safeguard. It was true that they demanded and received human sacrifice. He tells us that human blood was regularly poured upon the altars in his time in Arcadia and at Carthage, and that even at Rome Jupiter Latiaris was annually sprinkled with the blood of a gladiator.

What are we to say of this man, who found the New Testament incredible, and took the Arabian Nights as gospel? There is probably no one like him in the whole history of literature. All the Neoplatonists were two men, but no man that ever lived was at once so sane and so insane as Porphyry.

He shows us the extraordinary violence of the recoil against Christianity. These men hated the Church, and would believe anything rather than what it taught them. Yet what they hated was obviously neither its moral austerity nor its metaphysics. There remains only the doctrine of a suffering Christ, and all that this involves, the meekness, the toleration of ignorance, the discipline of service (see *de Civitate Dei*, x. 24, 28).

St. Augustine makes two observations that are worthy of notice. The Hellenism for which Porphyry fought was not Hellenism at all. It was as novel as Christianity. "Thou didst learn these things," says the saint, "not from Plato, but from thy Chaldæan masters."

Again, the curious arts of the Chaldæans were all

against the law, and Porphyry himself knew this. Human sacrifices and all noxious magic rites were capital crimes ; those found guilty of them were to be crucified or thrown to the beasts. Even the possession of magical books was fatal. “*Libros magicæ artis apud se neminem habere licet ; et penes quoscumque reperti sint, ambustis his publice bonisque ademptis, honestiores in insulam deportantur, humiliores capite puniuntur. Nec enim tantum huius artis professio, sed etiam scientia prohibita est.*”

Emperors themselves dabbled in the black art, and the law was not always strictly enforced. But nothing could be plainer or more severe than the language of the Roman code.

## XXIII

### IAMBlichus AND THE MEN OF JULIAN

IAMBlichus was the founder of what is commonly known as the Syrian school of Neoplatonism. It is not specially Syrian in a geographical sense, but it is marked by a fresh and stronger inrush of Syrian theology with its grosser conceptions, its wild and nonsensical trick of playing with numbers, and its craving for the baser forms of the supernatural. So far as it has any affinity with Greek thought, it may be called a Pythagoreanism run mad. But its true relations are to be sought rather in the lower forms of Gnosticism. During the predominance of this school Platonism becomes a mere adjunct, a mere excuse for theosophy.

Iamblichus belonged to a wealthy family of Chalcis in Coelesyria. He was a pupil of Anatolius, and afterwards of Porphyry. Later he lectured in his native town. The dates of his birth and death are not accurately known. He was alive in the reign of Constantine, but did not survive that emperor. His death may be placed about 330.

Like the Schoolmen, the great Neoplatonist doctors had their special names of honour. That of Iamblichus is "the Divine." Julian calls him "the famous hero," and in the spurious letters of Julian he is spoken of as "the precious treasure of all Greeks," "the saviour of Hellenism," "the benefactor of the whole world." This wonder and adoration—for hero means little less than God—he owed not to his intellectual ability, but to his fame for miracles. From this time forth knowledge was regarded as of little value, except in so far as it issued in supernatural powers. When the gulf was opening beneath its feet, miracles were the last arbitrament to which Paganism appealed.

"Why, O why," said his disciples to him on one occasion, "dost thou grudge us the more perfect wisdom?" They had been told that, when Iamblichus said his prayers, he was lifted to a height of ten cubits from the ground. This "more perfect wisdom," far more precious than dull mathematics or hazy Ideas, came from the Brahmins to Apollonius, from him to Iamblichus, and from him to our modern mediums. "Levitation" is one of its favourite manifestations. Iamblichus modestly disclaimed the grace, but his biographer Eunapius clearly means us to believe. At Gadara were two basins of warm water known as Eros and Anteros, Love and Love-for-Love. Iamblichus dipped his fingers in the pools, whispered some magic words, and straightway two charming little Cupids were seen kissing and embracing each other, as they played over the surface. An Egyptian called up

Apollo by his spells. A stern and savage figure appeared. "It is the soul," said Iamblichus, "of a gladiator, not the God."

Iamblichus renounced as futile the great task of the later Greek philosophy. How God created the world we cannot know. It is enough to believe that He is the cause of All, and that to Him nothing is impossible. But if in this he cherished a wholesome scepticism, in another he threw open the floodgates wide. Pythagoras, he says, rightly taught that we are not to disbelieve anything miraculous about the Gods or the divine dogmas. The Gods can do all things, and we are not to measure them by the limited power and intelligence that they have given to mankind (*Protrepticus*, xxi.). Hence we require a "science" that will teach us to disbelieve nothing about the Gods. "Be not faithless," is the same as saying, "Come and learn what will abolish thy unbelief."

It is possible to recognize here a certain approximation to the language, and even the ideas, of the Church. The object of Iamblichus is not being or thought, but God, and knowledge is merely a preparation for worship. God is Miracle. He is more than we are, and what He does we cannot understand, because we are not gods, and cannot do it ourselves. We know Him partly from ourselves, so far as our nature reflects His, partly from history and revelation. These two kinds of knowledge, inasmuch as both flow from the same source and have a common meeting-place, will harmonize with and supplement each other, but faith in

the larger personality from which both proceed will be above either.

Unfortunately history and revelation, as Iamblichus knew them, were composed of all the fables of all the mythologies ; his philosophy was not so much Platonism as Pythagoreanism, which explains everything by sacred numbers, and the "science" which was to cure disbelief was magic.

What Plato and Plotinus were concerned for was the inner essence of Paganism, the joyous, intellectual, thoroughly human life of Hellenism, the religion of poets, artists, legislators, thinkers, of the natural man at his best. To this Plotinus gave almost perfect expression. But life is not all intellectual and joyous, and his work fell to ruins like a house built upon the sand. What Iamblichus had next his heart was Hellenism as a practical system. Those sweepings of idolatry, which Plato cast aside as vile falsehoods against the Highest, became to him necessities of life, because in them too there was a truth. Such as they were, in their own villainous shapes, they conveyed all that the Greek knew of in the way of personal religious experience. Hence they could not be given up, nor could they be shoved into the background.

Such a change in the attitude towards religion was necessarily attended by a change equally great in the philosophic basis. It is difficult to grasp or expound the teaching of Iamblichus, partly because of its inherent confusion, partly because it has to be pieced together out of quotations made by other writers. In its main features it was reproduced and brought into

order by the keener intelligence of Proclus, and as the *Rudiments* of Proclus are extant and easily accessible in Didot's edition, we may defer what must be said on the subject, till we come to the school of Athens. For the present it will suffice to state, that Iamblichus puts philosophy entirely on one side, and sets the Gods in place of the Ideas. The philosophy is allowed to remain as a mental exercise, but all life, thought, and being are made to flow through the Gods, that is, through Zeus, Apollo, and the rest. Somehow the Ideas create the Gods, but it is with the Gods alone that we are really concerned. Now as the Gods were innumerable, Iamblichus wanted also innumerable ideas to account for them, and this he accomplished by splitting up the indivisible intelligence of Plotinus into three. Thinking, Thought, and the Thinker became three separate beings. Each of these begets another Triad, and so *ad infinitum*, and by the side of the Triads there is a Hebdomad. Thus he expanded the series of the over-worldly Gods. The inworldly Gods comprised Gods proper, Angels, Demons, and Heroes. The 12 Olympian Gods give birth to 36 other orders, these to 72 others, these again to 360 others. Besides these we have 21 world-rulers (*κοσμοκράτορες*), and 42 orders of Nature Gods. It is obvious what he is doing. He is dealing with the seven planets, the twelve signs of the zodiac, the 365 days of the year, not with laws of thought, except in so far as the triplet may have some basis in Psychology.

In his morality he hardens the pessimistic tendency of Porphyry. The outlook under Constantine was

hopeless. Persecution roused the Christian to ardour, and fired all his thoughts with the belief in the nearness of the End, and the coming of his Lord in triumph. But it took all heart out of the Pagan. Amid the dismal apprehensions of the time, the soul sinks further and further away from God. Iamblichus adds yet another round to the ladder of virtue. Above the four degrees of Porphyry he sets a fifth, the theurgic, hieratic, or priestly virtues. The soul is never without a body; it is definitely separated from the Divine Intelligence; the sense-powers are part of it; and it can never rise above the angels. Here on earth it dwells among foes, and in its utter helplessness it must look for salvation not to the Divine goodness or love, but to the constant interposition of Divine power. And this power must be invoked in God's own way, an inscrutable way, by the use of those sacramental means which He has ordained. In other words, by magic.

Here comes in by way of commentary the *de Mysteriis*, which, though not written by Iamblichus himself, represents the inner life of his school. It presents itself as a reply to Porphyry's sceptical *Letter to Anebos*, and professes to be the work of Abammon, the master of Anebos. It uses all the fine old language about the Gods; this the reader will kindly take for granted. But to what does it all amount? What was it that Julian really wanted to set up again in place of Christianity?

It was not knowledge, but revelation. All Greek wisdom is derived from the East. Plato and Pytha-

goras were mere interpreters, imperfect interpreters, of lessons learned in Egyptian temples. All religion comes from Osiris or Bel, all philosophy from Hermes Trismegistus. The author complains of the restless neologism of the Greeks, and appeals from the babel of the schools to the "faith once delivered" in Thebes and Nineveh.

The old proverb, "Know thyself," the watchword of the Socratic schools, means no longer "Know thy divine nature," but "Know thy weakness and need of help." And help can be vouchsafed only by means of apparitions.

But apparitions were dangerous things. Scarcely any man can distinguish the God that helps, from the Demon that destroys. It is therefore of vital importance to learn the rudiments of this saving lore, as handed down not by irresponsible individuals, but by learned and holy priests. A God always wears the same shape, and is always friendly. Demons are changeable—sometimes big, sometimes little, sometimes hideous, yet lovely when they choose. Angels are neither so changeable as demons nor so constant as Gods, but are sweeter and less awful than Archangels. Of Archons, those who rule the elements are more comely than the ugly sprites who preside over shapeless matter. Before the appearance of a Demon there is seen a lurid, smoky flame; good spirits are heralded by variously coloured glows of light. Some Demons are attended by fierce beasts. Demons do harm, or minister to sensual gratification; Angels give virtue and wisdom; Archangels perseverance,

spiritual strength, and the power of vision; the Gods alone impart love and joy.

Their coming may be invited, though not compelled, by use of the prescribed means, magic songs and potions, sacred characters written, perhaps with phosphorus, on a wall, by a glass of water, by a table, a staff, certain kinds of wood, stone, or grain, lastly by prayer.

And what was the prayer? Sometimes it was a threat. If the God lingered, the priest might menace him with consequences: "If thou dost not what I ask, I will unseal the stars, reveal the secrets of Isis, and give up the limbs of Osiris to Typhon." But in all cases the prayer was not an outpouring of soul to the Father, but the utterance of certain formulas. The words were a mere jargon, which had no reference to anything in particular, which had indeed no sense at all, yet brought an answer, God only knew why. When Ædesius was in perplexity he had recourse to "that prayer in which he had most confidence." Which particular abracadabra this was Eunapius does not inform us, but we have samples of these amazing liturgies. They consisted mainly of strings of barbaric names. Honest Greek was no good. One ran *Meu, Threu, Mor, Phor, Teux, Za, Zon, The, Lou, Ge, Ze*. The famous "Ephesian letters" were *Aski, Kataski, Aix (or Lix), Tetrax, Damnameneus, Aision. Sabaoth, Adonai, Cherubim, Seraphim, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob* furnished another equally potent and more intelligible invocation.

It is not easy to guess whether such ill-sounding

vocables as *Meu* and *Threu* are real names of demons, or mere hocus pocus, but these Neoplatonist prayers shed some light on what our Lord meant, when He warned His disciples against "vain repetitions." It will be observed, that though the Hellenists borrowed from the Old Testament, no one appears to have followed the example of the seven sons of Sceva. They spared the Crucified One this insult.

"A Christian old woman," says St. Augustine, "is wiser than these philosophers."

Such was the faith of the men by whom Julian was led captive, and on whose advice he relied, wholly in religious, and largely in political affairs. They are hardly to be called men, so utterly is the element of virility absent from their Eastern composition. It is curious to note, that in the fourth century the rhetor and the philosopher seem to have exchanged characters. In the second century the rhetor was the woman, in the fourth he is the man. Libanius, who was a *littérateur* and orator, and sat loose to philosophy, has more common-sense, force, and intelligence, than any other among the heroes of Eunapius. Indeed, if we compare the men of the time, Athanasius with Iamblichus, Basil and the two Gregories with Aedesius, Chrysanthius, Maximus, it is easy to see how hopeless was the voyage on which Julian embarked.

Maximus deserves special notice. He was the chief agent in the perversion of Julian, and he owed his success to magic of the most dubious kind. His brethren confined themselves mainly to telepathy

and thought-reading, but he could do things which the more sober regarded askance, as trenching upon the domain of Goetia or the black art. Eusebius gave Julian an ambiguous warning against him, perhaps only intended to whet the prince's curiosity. Chrysanthius, he said, was the real teacher; Maximus had commerce with hylic powers, who drive men to madness. Julian of course pressed for an explanation, and was then told how by burning a few grains of frankincense and repeating a hymn, Maximus had made the statue of Hecate first smile, then laugh outright. "When we were alarmed at the sight," continued the ingenuous narrator, "he cried, 'Do not be frightened; in a moment the torches in the hands of the goddess will light up.' And quicker than the word there they were, all aflame. But I think nothing of these things; no more should you; the great thing is purification by the word." Julian replied, "Farewell, and stick to your books (your books of magic); you have shown me the man I wanted." He kissed Chrysanthius, and flew off to Ephesus, where Maximus was.

When Julian became Emperor, he sent for Chrysanthius and Maximus. Chrysanthius refused the invitation, but Maximus hastened to court on the wings of desire, undeterred by the evil omens that met him on the road. His conduct was marked by pride, corruption, and greed. He retained his influence throughout the reign of Jovian, but under Valentinian and Valens fell into disgrace, was imprisoned, and treated with such severity that he

resolved upon suicide. His wife brought him poison, drank first to give him courage, and fell dead at his feet. But at this supreme moment his heart failed him, and he would not drink. He was released from prison, tried to get a living as a sophist, and failed; and finally made his way back to Constantinople, where his reputation as a wizard once more brought him money and success. But, towards the end of the reign of Valens, he suffered himself to overstep the narrow line, that parted theurgy from high treason. At a *séance*, held in a private house, the fatal question was propounded, who should be the next Emperor. A metal bowl, bearing within its rim the letters of the alphabet, was placed upon a table. Over it leaned the hierophant, holding between his fingers a ring suspended from a "Carpathian" thread. The ring vibrated within the bowl, and touched one letter after another. It spelled out THEO and stopped. The thing leaked out. It was undoubtedly a case of "inquiring against the life of the Emperor," and all concerned in it were put to death. Maximus had not been present, but he had heard and not reported the secret, and he perished with the others.

He deserves, as we said, special notice for two reasons. It is often urged that these men were not idolaters. They said that they were not; indeed no human being ever allowed that he was. But they one and all believed that the god or the demon dwelt in the image and animated it. The statue of Hecate could laugh, if it was rightly approached.

But there is a still graver question that meets us here. Was Maximus honest, or was he a rogue? The same doubt attaches to Eusebius, and indeed to the whole tribe that hung about Julian. When *Ædesius* displayed an oracle printed on his hand, was not this some kind of trickery?

At any rate the Syrian school has no living interest, either religious or scientific. They were not merely dissenters, but political dissenters. The same worldly ambitions, that degraded the Church during the bitter Arian controversy, acted upon the Pagans with ten times greater virulence. Intelligence and sanctity fly out of the window when party strife comes in at the door. The school of Athens had accepted its defeat, renounced the world, and settled down to peaceful industry.

Philosophy was never persecuted except by Julian, for the decrees, by which the Apostate in effect drove the Christians out of public schools, were blows at learning. Heathenism and magic were treated harshly enough, though, in the case of the latter, nothing was really done that went beyond the positive enactments of the old Roman law. Shortly before his death Constantine prohibited all sacrifices, and Constantius went further still, ordering all heathen worship to cease, and all temples to be closed under penalty of death and confiscation. These decrees, however, were not enforced with absolute uniformity. The ancient cult was still tolerated at Rome, at Alexandria, and to some extent at Athens, and probably elsewhere. In the year 368, five years

after Julian's death, the word "Paganism" first occurs in a law of Valentinian. By this time the towns were mainly Christian, and the old creed was driven back into the "pagi," or country districts. About the same time Gratian refused to wear the ornaments belonging to the Pontifex Maximus, but still retained the title. He was the last Emperor that stamped it on his coins. He it was, who removed from the senate house in Rome the statue and altar of Victory. The reign of Theodosius is marked by two notable events. In 391 the famous Serapeum at Alexandria was razed, and the sacred places of Hellenism delivered over to the black-robed monks, "men in shape," says Eunapius, "but their life is that of swine." In 394 the senate of Rome, the very stronghold of idolatry, was formally converted, and "cast the skin of the old serpent." These events were attended by new and more stringent decrees. In 415 Hypatia was murdered at Alexandria; and in 423 Theodosius the younger informs the world in an edict that Paganism is extinct. That this was not strictly accurate is evident from the facts, that Proclus made no disguise of his religious practices, that St. Augustine and Orosius wrote against those who regarded the invasion of the barbarians as a judgment on the national apostasy, and that Justinian was compelled to tolerate Damascius and his friends. From the time of Constantius to that of Theodosius the pagans appear to have enjoyed a precarious toleration, enforced by the external troubles of the empire. But, even under the sharpest

edicts, few if any appear to have lost their lives for their religious opinions. Known adherents of the old gods held high positions in the state, there was no restriction on their use of the pen, and they retained a practical monopoly of the schools.

Magic was a very different thing, and unfortunately it was the Siamese twin of heathenism. It was, as we have seen, condemned under penalty of death by the Roman law, which entirely ignored the nice distinction between Goetia and Theurgy, the black and the white arts. Themis sometimes slumbered. There were many magical books in Ephesus in St. Paul's time. But the penalties might be enforced. Our Lord was called a Goetia, and it is probable that many Christians were put to death on this charge. When a Christian mounted the throne, the old Jewish law against witchcraft came in to sharpen the severity of Roman jurisprudence. Eunapius tells us, that under Constantine Ædesius was obliged to dissemble his miraculous powers. Under Constantius there was a bitter prosecution, which issued in the imprisonment and torture of a number of persons, though no one appears to have actually lost his life. Ammianus complains that no one could wear an amulet round his neck to keep off the ague, or walk through a cemetery by night, without jeopardizing his life as a magician or necromancer. No sensible man, he adds, would deny that witchcraft deserved punishment, but severe penalties ought not to be enforced except in the case of offences against the life of the sovereign. This in fact had been the usual practice.

We have seen what was the fate of Maximus under Valens, but the danger was not confined to heathen philosophers. In 374 St. John Chrysostom nearly lost his life through fishing a book of magic out of the Orontes. Finally, in 394 Theodosius forbade magic of all kinds under pain of "maiestas, etiamsi nihil contra salutem principum aut de salute quaesierit." Yet even this did not prevent Proclus from enjoying a harmless reputation as a medicine man, and cabalistic books continued to find purchasers and students.

Upon the whole Paganism was not cruelly treated, and died almost a natural death. There was never any Inquisition. The adherents of Jupiter were never called upon to blaspheme their God. The Edicts did not extend beyond the prohibition of public observances, and were little more than *bruta fulmina*. Deplorable excesses, like the assassination of Hypatia, were rare, and were the work of popular fanaticism. As for magic, it suffered under the old heathen statutes, and if Christians ought not to have believed in witchcraft, at any rate they could find ample justification for their conduct in the writings of the enlightened Porphyry.

## XXIV

### THE SCHOOL OF ATHENS

PROCLUS was born in Constantinople on February 8, 412, if the calculation from his horoscope is correct; but possibly in 410, in the reign of Theodosius II.; three years before the murder of Hypatia, and twenty-one years after the demolition of the Serapeum. His father, Patricius, and mother, Marcella, were Lycians, and not long after his birth returned to Xanthus in that country. Like many of the famous Platonic teachers, he was wealthy, and he possessed, what in this flesh-hating but æsthetic school was regarded as one of the chief qualifications of a teacher, striking personal beauty. Nor was he devoid of a pardonable vanity. Marinus had seen numerous portraits of him.

While yet but a boy he was sent to Alexandria, where he studied under Leonas, a rhetorician, and Orion, a grammarian and priest. He learnt Latin also with a view to the law, his father's profession. But while on a brief visit to Constantinople, the goddess of the city appeared to him in a dream, and called him to philosophy. On his return to Alex-

andria he read Aristotle with the Peripatetic Olympiodorus, and mathematics with Heron, "a religious man."

Hence he passed at the age of nineteen to Athens, where the gods were still worshipped, and the most famous teachers of the day were to be found. Two incidents were related in after times as ominous of his future eminence. When he landed from his ship, he sat down for a moment's rest in the shrine of Socrates, not knowing where he was, and the first water he drank on Attic soil was drawn from the sacred well. Shortly after his arrival he went up to the Acropolis. It was late in the day, and the porter, who was just barring the gates, greeted him with the words, "Unless you had come, I should have shut up."

He arrived in Athens just in time to hear Plutarch, who died two years afterwards. Under Syrianus he read seven years, sharpening his intelligence with the study of Aristotle and Plato, and drugging it with the Oracles, the Orphic Verses, and Chaldæan books. But the teacher who left the deepest mark upon his character was Asclepigeneia, the daughter of Plutarch, from whom he acquired the whole art and practice of theurgy. On the death of Syrianus, about 438, he became head of the school, Diadochus or successor, and about the same time, at the age of twenty-eight, he published his *Commentary on the Timæus*, which he himself regarded as his masterpiece. At Athens he remained till his death, though once he was obliged to fly, probably on account of his religious opinions.

and remained for some time in shelter in his Lycian home.

He is described as a man of singular amiability and attractiveness. He remained unmarried, but took the liveliest interest in the welfare of his friends, their wives and children. His friendship with Archiadas was thought worthy of comparison with that of Damon and Phintias. Though a most laborious student, he took an active part in municipal affairs. He was a severe and diligent teacher, not sparing of rebuke, flashing out at times into anger, yet placable, watching the morals and progress of his pupils with a friendly but exacting eye. In his personal habits he was ascetic to an extreme degree, yet he would taste meat, if pressed to do so at a banquet, for courtesy's sake.

Every day, Marinus tells us, he delivered five lectures or more, and wrote 700 lines. The afternoons were generally spent in conversing on philosophic subjects as he took his exercise, and in the evenings he held a sort of *conversazione*. With all these occupations he managed to combine an unremitting round of religious observances. Three times a day—at dawn, at mid-day, and at evening—he worshipped the sun. A great part of every night was spent in singing hymns, sacrifice, and prayers, especially for sick friends. Every month he went down to the sea to perform his lustrations. He observed all the feasts and fasts of the Egyptian calendar, and many others, and once every year he held a solemn office for the repose of the dead.

For such a life at that time no small courage was

wanted. But Proclus did not lack resolution. When he paid his freshman's call upon Syrianus, it was the evening of the new moon, and the old professor dismissed him rather curtly, being anxious to get to his devotions as soon as possible, and not knowing what manner of man he had to deal with. But happening to cast a glance through the window, he saw Proclus take off his shoes, and do obeisance to the crescent moon in the open street. In later times the house of Proclus, apparently it was the official residence of the Diadochus or Rector, adjoined the temple of Asclepios, and lay just under the Acropolis. This was convenient, as he could pass to and from his devotions secure from prying and hostile eyes.

By study, maceration of the flesh, and careful observance of the rules of Asclepigeneia, Proclus attained through the political and purificatory to the theurgic virtues. This is the point of view from which Marinus, his pupil and successor, envisages his life. He became an "eyewitness." Rufinus saw a halo of light round his head as he lectured. The Gods honoured him with constant apparitions, especially in dreams. He was assured that he belonged to the "Hermaic chain," the Platonic apostolical succession, and that the soul of Nicomachus the Pythagorean inhabited his body. When the statue of Pallas was removed from the Parthenon, the goddess appeared to him, and declared her intention of taking up her abode under his roof. Machaon, Pan, Hecate, the Mother of the gods, were constant visitants, and Asclepios came to heal him of the gout. His vision

is no longer trance communion with the Absolute, but actual personal converse with bodily Gods, and his system aims at showing that these bodily Gods were the Absolute, and not, as Plotinus thought, inferior created beings.

He wrought miracles also, which Marinus tells us were beyond number. He could summon rain in time of drought, and also prevent earthquakes, though how this latter power was ascertained is hard to see. By prayer he restored to full health the daughter of Archiadras, who lay at the point of death. Before the exercise of his supernatural gifts he made use of all the usual magic paraphernalia—Chaldæan lustrations, the Chaldæan “strophalos,” a sort of teetotum, the “wryneck,” familiar to readers of Pindar and Theocritus, and the tripod.

His death was portended by an eclipse of the sun, which caused an extraordinary darkness, during which the stars were seen at noonday. He expired on April 17, 485, and was buried in the same tomb with Syrianus, in the eastern suburb of Athens, under Mount Lycabettus.

Proclus represents the expiring struggle of Polytheism. Plotinus found Paganism a shelter under the wings of his Platonism, but treated it as the religion of the vulgar. There is a certain tolerant scorn in his attitude, as in that of the Vedânta towards the Sanskrit mythology. This, however, was fatal. For as Porphyry showed only too clearly, the moment the Gods were seated below the Highest they became devils. Their figures must be carried back without a

moment's delay into the Holy of Holies, or the game was lost. It would never do to confess in the face of the Church that Hellas had two religions. This is what Proclus saw, and this is the danger he set himself to avert.

This religious object he achieved by the destruction of Neoplatonism.

The system of Plotinus is severely scientific. It is worked out with a single purpose on true idealist lines, and issues in an unity as complete as is attainable by the mind of man. Polytheism indeed is there, but it is smuggled in, if the expression may be used, and might be completely dropped without affecting the general result. The many Gods are but an expression for the Divine Intelligence which permeates all and holds all in sympathy. The object to which Plotinus himself aspires is the One, the Good, the Fountain of the one chain of life and reason, which reaches through all that is. Proclus breaks up this unity at every joint in its stem.

The distinctive feature of his method is its scholasticism. His *Rudiments of Theology* is modelled on Euclid, and proceeds, like the *Ethics* of Spinoza, in deductive catenation from one proposition to another. The distinctive feature of his scholasticism again is a tendency to divide everything into threes. For this a sort of justification may be found in what Vacherot calls "the Law of the Ternary." Every product being complex involves three principles—finite, infinite, and compositum; or has three moments—it remains in its cause, goes forth from its cause, and

returns to its cause. One can attach a meaning to this. But Proclus brings in his triads in most arbitrary fashion, and the result is a confusion which neither the learning of Zeller nor the lucidity of Vacherot can render intelligible.

Three leading points may be signalized.

1. Proclus denies expressly the independence of Matter. All comes from the One. Matter in the later Platonists is so vanishing a quantity, that its total disappearance makes little or no difference, except in regard to the origin of evil. When Proclus says, "the body is divine," he hardly contradicts Plotinus, for even according to that philosopher the body is form, and form is divine. Nevertheless the change left Proclus without any means whatever of accounting for moral evil. All that he says of bad men is that they are not "receptive," they "go out of the way of the divine light."

2. The three hypostases of the Platonic Trinity are incommunicable (*ἀμέθεκτα*). This is the most exasperating point in the systems of Iamblichus and Proclus, for it sounds like nonsense, yet there must surely be some rational explanation. It appears to rest entirely upon the arbitrary use of the system of Triads. If there is a Mind which participates and a mind which is participated in, there must also, Proclus thought, be a mind which is not participated in, which is incommunicable (*μετέχων, μετεχόμενος, ἀμέθεκτος*). But the result is that the Plotinian Good, Intelligence, Soul cease to be fountains of life or causes at all. The whole system of the *Enneads* becomes a mere

cabinet of curiosities, and nothing is left with any vitality except the Gods and individual souls. Probably this result is in fact the reason.

3. In Plotinus there is one great chain of Life. In Proclus there is an infinity of chains. This follows from what has been said. Each God is a cause and head of a separate family.

From the Incommunicable One spring—one knows not how—a host of Henads. Each has the character of absolute being, yet each has distinctive qualities. The Henads run down in long lines; the Intelligible are followed by the Intellectual, these by the Overworldly, these again by the Inworldly. From the Intelligible springs the family of Being, from the Intellectual that of Intelligence, from the Overworldly that of Soul, from the Inworldly that of Nature. These principal “chains” are mainly like brooks falling into one river; that which has a body may also have a soul and an intelligence; but they subdivide as they go down, there are different kinds of intelligences and different kinds of souls dependent on them, so that the river is perpetually branching off into other rivers. Further, there are chains in which the intermediate links are wanting; there may be soul without intelligence, and existence without form. Yet further, the principal chains have to be multiplied by the number of Henads; for each chain is a family depending on a God, and exhibiting throughout the characteristic of that God. It includes not only Angels, Heroes, Demons, and human beings, but stones, plants, animals, which bear the signature of

the deity, and have sacramental virtues with respect to him. But these divine characteristics are taken from the pagan liturgy, so that the simple intelligible divisions of philosophy are split up to suit the endless ramifications of Polytheism.

It is needless to perplex the reader with further details. Enough has been said to show the principal object that Proclus had in view, and the means whereby he sought to attain it. The fact is, that he did not want the philosophy, or wanted it only to justify his religion. He felt that the supreme entities of the school, the One, the Intelligence, the Soul, are not Gods at all. They do not feed the spiritual life nor minister to the formation of character. Hence he labels them "incommunicable," and puts them on the shelf. It is as easy to drop Platonism out of Proclus as Polytheism out of Plotinus.

How much depends here on our estimate of the character and ability of Proclus! Victor Cousin, no bad judge, rates him among the first of ancient thinkers, and there can be little doubt that he was a good and religious man. But if so, how powerful is his testimony to the fact that philosophy, even the best and noblest, cannot satisfy the instincts of the soul! The prejudices of the school were strong enough to force Proclus to deny the Incarnation; but though all the fruits of all the systems were before him, he could find none to quench the hunger and thirst after righteousness.

There is, however, another lesson. Proclus abandoned knowledge. God is known, he said, "neither

by opinion, nor by science, nor by reasoning, nor by intuition, but necessarily," that is, by affinity of nature. Each God is known to those who belong to his "chain" and share his character. "Necessarily" must mean by emotion, or some kind of unreasoning faith, for Proclus excludes all the operations of pure or mixed reason. He is a metaphysician, but he uses his metaphysics to destroy metaphysics. The ideas are "incommunicable," or, as Dr. Hatch says, "God does not reveal metaphysics." We know neither the finite nor the infinite, but the third term, the compositum. Is not this very much the position of Kantism? Yet this view did not save Proclus from the most abject superstition, and its evil effects have been witnessed more than once in the Church. It is nothing but a residuum of metaphysics that saves Schleiermacher or Kant from herding with the Anabaptists.

There remains, as Proclus might have seen if he had been willing to apply his triads here also, a third course. If philosophy by itself is barren, and faith by itself is unbridled, there may be here too a compositum. Faith may aid Reason, and Reason may establish Faith. This has always been the position of Christian theology.

The succession of the Diadochi ran on after the death of Proclus for forty-four years, through Marinus the Samaritan, Isidorus, Zenodotus (about this name there is some doubt), Hegias, and Damascius. But the most famous member of the expiring school was Simplicius, whose learned commentaries on Aristotle

furnish a rich mine of information to the student of Greek philosophy. The only glimpse we get of the personality of these men is afforded by the *Life of Isidore*, the work of Damascius. It is a catalogue of marvels of the most puerile description. Some of them are natural phenomena, which science has since learned to explain. Tiberius had a donkey, which could be made to give off sparks by rubbing his coat. The simple beast was thus used to prophesy his master's elevation to the purple; but we may regard him with equal truth as the first known ancestor of the electric telegraph. Ammonianus had another donkey, which was so fond of hearing poetry that it forgot to eat its hay. One could read the future by gazing into a glass of water; another by means of a crystal sphere; another by watching the shapes of the clouds—a new art. Asclepiodotus could read in the dark, and Eusebius cast out a devil by adjuring “the rays of the sun, and the God of the Hebrews.” And all the while the practitioners of these arts were being hunted down by the police, and often paid for their “curiosity” with their lives. Such was the martyrdom appointed for Neoplatonism.

In 528 Justinian ordained a new and more stringent persecution, in which Macedonius, Asclepiodotus, Phocas, and Thomas the Quaestor perished. In 529 came the final blow. The schools of Athens were closed and their endowments confiscated. By this time the income of the Platonic chair had risen by successive legacies from three pieces (*νομίσματα*), the rent of the garden in the Academe, bequeathed to his

disciples by Plato himself, to something more than a thousand. What became of the money we are not told. Doubtless it was not spent on the encouragement of letters.

One scene remains, half tragedy, half comedy. Driven from the temples and lecture-halls of Athens, a little band of seven sages, including Damascius, Simplicius, Eulalius, Priscian, Hermias, Diogenes, and Isidore, wandered across the desert to seek shelter in Persia. Persia was to them a sacred land, the home of the Zoroastrian mysteries. And Khosru Nushirvan was the friend and patron of Greek culture. He had caused Aristotle and Plato to be translated into Syriac, and accepted from Priscian the dedication of a learned treatise. There was this amount of foundation for their credulous belief, "that the republic of Plato was realized in the despotic government of Persia, and that a patriot king reigned over the happiest and most virtuous of nations." But they were soon undeceived. "Their repentance," adds Gibbon, "was expressed by a precipitate return, and they loudly declared that they had rather die on the borders of the Empire than enjoy the wealth and favour of the barbarian." After all, Christian Greece was less intolerable than the favoured land of Ormuzd and of Mithra. In 533 Khosru made his first peace with the Romans, and stipulated that the seven sages should be exempted from the penal laws, which Justinian enacted against his pagan subjects. The fact is greatly to his honour.

With this incident we may close our story. But

life knows no dates, which are but as landmarks on the banks of a river. The stream flows past them, sometimes lost in a swamp, sometimes gathering its waters again in a brimming channel. The Neoplatonist held that nothing perishes, and Neoplatonism is still alive, though broken to pieces like the body of Osiris, or still more aptly, like the image of gold and clay. Its table-rapping, its crystal spheres, its levitations, its telepathy, its materializations, are all in full play. Within two miles of the spot where these lines are written, in the depths of the English midlands, is a theurgist whom Damascius would have revered as a saint. Its mysticism has lived on in the bosom of the Christian Church. Its idealism can never die.

Time has pronounced its verdict. Heathenism is dead, and magic is the belief of fools. In their effort to save Polytheism, the ancient sages succeeded only, like Mezentius, in shackling a corpse to the living; the union could only infect with disease that which otherwise possessed the seeds of health. All the drivelling inanities of Neoplatonism spring from this fatal cause.

Knowledge of external nature they had almost none. It was not given to their time. But they dealt with those supremely interesting eternal questions to which science, after all, supplies no answer—the nature and the communion of God and Man. It is to the mind within us that we must look for their solution, so far as reason can hope to find a solution. The Neoplatonists believed that there is a mind, and their analysis of its operations, primitive and in some

respects fantastic as it may be, differs mainly in its dualism from that which is still largely held.

They were the first to attain to a clear and consistent view of what is meant by spiritual existence, of the nature of being, regarded as devoid of extension and divisibility. By this great advance they became the founders of theology, of metaphysics, of psychology, and of mental science in general. Their leading ideas are the common stock of mediæval schoolmen and of modern thinkers, down to Hegel and Carlyle.

But what judgment are we to pass on their practical results?

They taught, if we look at their doctrines and forget their practice, that there is One God, the fountain of life, thought, and beauty, whose highest name is the Good. He is above nature yet in nature, containing, not contained. By His word all things are, and have a meaning; in Him rest, and from Him flow, all existence, order, perfection, happiness; He is law, and to Him belongs eternity.

They taught that Nature, though changing as a wisp of vapour, is in type as eternal as the thought of God which it reflects. They taught that man is individually eternal, that in this world he is an exile from home, yet that God is in him, and ever draws him upwards by the golden cord of reason. They taught that the upward path lies through duty and thoughtfulness to conscious communion with the Divine; that this is the fullness of being, and happiness, which the world does not give, and cannot take away. They

taught that sin is alienation from God, and brings its own punishment; the sensual man is wolfish, and misery dogs his steps, in this life and in the life to come.

Even their crowning doctrine of the Ineffable One is not so irrational or so agnostic as it seems. Two of the Divine Hypostases could be known, and they included not only the Goodness, Wisdom, and Justice, but even the eternity of God. It was but the Personality itself, the ultimate root of the Divine Being, that the Neoplatonists held to be withdrawn from rational cognizance. Even this might be felt, as we feel the personality of one another. Jules Simon discerned in the Neoplatonist Trinity a sincere attempt to reconcile the results of pure speculation with those of the religious experience. The Supreme God of Plotinus is neither the Eleatic One, a mere abstract number, who is devoid of all power of creation; nor, on the other hand, the anthropomorphic deity, in any one of the forms under which He has been misconceived. He is the Head of all things, in whom the conflicting demands of reason and conscience, science and faith strive to find their satisfaction, the synthesis of all the antitheses.

How like is all this to Christianity! Yet the two systems are so unlike that no truce between them was possible. And after a struggle of little more than 200 years, "the Galilæan conquered."

What were the causes of this bitter hostility, and by what means did God thus pull down the high thoughts of the sons of Plato?

St. Augustine has given us the answer in the seventh book of his *Confessions*. He was led through Platonism to the Gospel, and well he knew of what he writes. Common-sense led him to reject astrology, and all the magical futilities that follow in its train. The cause of evil was a deeper and far more terrible problem, and long did he wrestle with it before he was led to see that moral evil, the real difficulty, springs not from matter, but from will, that it is not a disease but a rebellion. The last step was the Incarnation. He read in the books of the Platonists that the Word was God, and that by Him all things were made; but that the Word became Flesh and dwelt among us, this he did not read there.

That evil is not ignorance, but the cause of ignorance, the sullen resistance of the worse to the better; that God "came down," emptied Himself, took upon Him the form of a servant to heal this strife—these were the points.

According to the philosopher, whether ancient or modern, God cannot come down, the universal cannot embody itself in the particular. Not that the God of the Platonist was exactly loveless. He might be said to love with an unchanging love; but being unchanging, He could only draw all things unto Himself, He could not go forth upon the mountains to seek the lost sheep.

But observe. The Love which St. Augustine discovered was suffering love. Precisely in the suffering lies its difference from Platonic love. Thus the Incarnation can be understood only through the

Crucifixion. The distinctive emblem of Christianity is the Cross.

There are modern thinkers, who find the whole essence of the Gospel in Plato and Plotinus. There is even an influential school of theology, which inclines in the same direction, which stumbles over the notion of the just suffering for the unjust, and regards the word "vicarious" with a certain dread.

What we call Sanctification, the mode by which the forgiven sinner becomes one spirit with the Lord, is, if we may take it by itself, largely common to all Idealism. The idea of "sonship" belongs to all the later Greek schools, even to Stoicism. But how is the sinner forgiven? Is there such a thing as forgiveness? How is the penal ignorance enlightened, and the penal hardness softened, and the upward way made possible? The Church replied, "Through the sufferings of Christ," "through the sacrifice of His Death," as the wilfulness of the child is broken by the tears of his mother. This was what the Platonist denied, and denies.

What are known as "ethical theories" of the Atonement, are widely diffused in these vague and good-natured days. But they ignore the commonest fact of life, the law of vicarious suffering; they render the Gospel in the terms of Plato, and they may be held, and actually are held, by those who deny the Incarnation altogether.

## LATER INFLUENCE OF PLATONISM ON THE CHURCH

ORIGENISM, that is to say, the theodicy of Origen, was little more than an incident in the history of the Church. Origen's theory of creation vanished almost immediately. His tenet of Catharsis, or Purification, was absorbed by the growing belief in Purgatory ; but it was held that after death no repentance, no change of will, was possible. Universalism, though condemned, reappeared from time to time, but was generally based, as we shall see, on a different foundation. The learning of the great Alexandrine doctor is buried under the mountain of modern acquirements, like Typhoeus under Inarime, but he left to the Christian world, even though his heirs do not always know from whom the legacy is derived, his fearless spirit, his Allegorism, that is to say, the love of the spirit beneath the letter, his devotion to learning and his profound and cultivated belief in essential dogma. Like Augustus, he found his city of brick, and he left it of marble.

It is needless to dwell in detail on the influence of Platonism, or Neoplatonism, upon the main stream of theology after Origen. Even before Nicaea that

influence was almost wholly limited to the idea of timeless existence. It taught the Church that materialism is not consistent with true religion, nor with the right understanding of Scripture, but the interest in the full humanity of our Lord was much more than sufficient to save the Church, as a whole, from the opposite danger of identifying the God of conscience with the abstractions of the schools.

Idealism pointed out the direction in which the meeting point of religion and science must lie. No more than this can be accomplished, until science can rise from results to the first cause. As yet this has not been done, but so long as science lags behind, we might as well attempt to reconcile Euclid with Shakespeare, as faith with biology. Science must complete herself before she can enter upon the question. When she has discovered her God, we shall be in a position to judge whether her laws are akin, or not akin, to those of conscience enlightened by revelation. At present we can only insist that, at every turn, science presupposes Mind, which has so far eluded her grasp, that the Thing is a Thought, though how the Thought came to be a Thing we do not know.

Arianism, like other ante-Nicene heresies, was Aristotelic. Hence it insisted upon the solitary unity of the First Cause, and applied to every other form of being the Aristotelic distinction of potentiality and actuality, of matter and form. It followed that there could not be Two uncreated, that Begotten meant the same thing as Created, and that neither Son nor

Spirit could be "everlasting" (*αἰδιος*: the word *αἰώνιος* does not occur in Aristotle, and *αἰών*, in his diction, means simply "the sum of time"). All these positions Plotinus would have denied. "Begetting," indeed, is the very word that he employs to denote the relation of his timeless hypostases. Athanasius also denied them, but not for the same reasons as Plotinus. The ground of his faith is expressed in one sentence of the *De Incarnatione*. "The Word alone was able to recreate all, and sufficient to suffer for all, and to intercede for all with the Father." For the mediator of forgiveness, for the example of obedience, for the representative and High priest, he, like St. Anselm, wanted a Saviour, who was truly a Divine Person, not merely the Intelligence of God, not the mere unfolding of the Monad into consciousness. Athanasius taught the existence of Three Persons in one Deity. The three hypostases of the Neoplatonist really formed but one, and that an incomplete, because purely intellectual person. It was by no means Hellenism that saved the Church at Nicaea.

From this time philosophy becomes a mere name for Christian culture. Theology went its own way, and worked out its own destiny. Platonism, of the Plotinian or earlier stamp, was still, indeed, called in to illustrate the doctrine of the Trinity, or of divine providence, or to support, by a limited application of its arguments, the deathlessness of the soul. In this sense its traces are to be found in many of the Greek fathers down to the eighth century, when darkness settled on the Eastern Church, in the *lumina Cappa-*

*dociae*, in Eusebius, Cyril, Theodoret, Nemesius, Aeneas of Gaza. In the West, the idealist cast of thought found its noblest and most enduring expression in the theology of St. Augustine. This great divine knew the works of the Greek philosophers only in Latin translations and analyses, but his thought ran parallel to theirs. To him as to the Platonist "evil is a defect," and the reconciliation between God and man is brought about, not by effort, but by grace, that is, by love.

The emphatic proclamation of the power of love is St. Augustine's crowning merit. But the brightest light casts the darkest shadow. Love is given, not claimed or deserved. The cry of the beloved is always—"What didst Thou see in me?"

"Non sum tanti, Jesu, quanti  
Amor tuus aestimat."

Only by logical inconsistency can the exaltation of love be saved from determinism, and only by pantheism from the exaggeration of moral evil. Augustine was logical, and no pantheist. He drew a dark picture of fallen nature, but against a real sin he set a real love. Like all the great doctors, he builds his theology on conscience, not on the abstract reason. The love that he preaches is the love of Jesus, not of the Absolute; and this is, indeed, the main reason of his austerity. For Jesus is the most austere of masters, and John is the most austere of evangelists. From Augustine Platonism, if so it may be called, runs on through Luther, casting off in its course more and more of those

salutary restraining influences, that kept Augustinianism within the bounds of the Catholic Church.

We have said, that after Nicaea Platonism became little more than an accomplishment. There is, however, one remarkable exception to this statement ; it is Synesius of Cyrene, Bishop of Ptolemais in the Libyan Pentapolis. Readers of Kingsley know him well, and his biography has been written for this series by Miss Gardner. He was a burly, jolly, kindly, cultivated man ; the very ideal of a squire-parson ; famous for his genealogy, which ran back for seventeen hundred years, and began with the god Herakles,—“ the longest pedigree ever known ” Gibbon calls it— for his friendship with Hypatia, who was, by the way, at least a middle-aged woman, for his love of horses and dogs, and his hatred of oppression. An educated Tory gentleman, we may style him, who was honourably distinguished by his bold and statesmanlike championship of the poor in an age of great disorder and calamity. But he was also an exceedingly Broad Churchman. When Theophilus of Alexandria proposed to consecrate him Bishop, Synesius felt two great difficulties, his love for his wife and his theological opinions. Let us hear what he has to say on these points.

“ God and the law and the sacred hand of Theophilus gave me a wife. I do therefore give all men to know, and do solemnly protest, that I will neither be separated from her, nor will I live with her secretly as a paramour. But I shall will and pray, that many good children may be born to us.

“There is one other thing that Theophilus need not be told, because he knows it already. It is the chief point of all. It is difficult, indeed impossible, that those beliefs which the demonstrations of science have implanted in the soul, should be shaken. In many respects philosophy contradicts received dogmas. I shall never believe that the soul is born after the body. I shall not say, that the world and its parts are destined to perish together. The much preached-of Resurrection I look upon as a holy mystery, and I am far from agreeing with the opinion of the many. The philosophic intelligence, in short, while it beholds the truth, admits the necessity of lying. Light corresponds to truth, but the eye is dull of vision ; it cannot without injury gaze on the infinite light. As twilight is more comfortable for the eye, so, I hold, is falsehood for the common run of people. The truth can only be harmful for those who are unable to gaze on the reality. If the laws of the priesthood permit me to hold this position, then I can accept consecration, keeping my philosophy to myself at home, and preaching fables out of doors.”

Gibbon chuckles over Synesius with great delight, and thinks the love of a wife and the love of philosophy equally amusing in a prelate. Most readers will think, that his manly conjugal fidelity is a fine trait, and that it would have been better for the Church if there had been more bishops like him in this. But his orthodoxy leaves much to be desired. The date of the soul's creation was an open question ; and he does not say exactly what he believed about the Day of Judgment

and the Resurrection. But he puts philosophy above the creed, and seems to regard all dogmas as "lies" in the Platonic sense, that is to say, as allegories, or, to use Carlyle's expression, "clothes." There is, in fact, very little in any of his works that might not have been written by a heathen Neoplatonist, and neither Miss Gardner nor Vacherot can quite decide whether he was a Christian at all. But he was a good man, and a good Bishop, and he rode straight. He did not hold his tongue that he might hold preferment. What he sought in the Episcopacy was not lucre, but the opportunity of great and perilous work. Whether this is a sufficient excuse may be doubted; but there can be no doubt as to the immorality of Theophilus, who persecuted Chrysostom and consecrated Synesius.

We have been speaking of the influence of the older Neoplatonism, which was, upon the whole, by no means unhealthy. But in the sixth century, when the shadows of night were beginning to fall, we come into contact with a much more questionable phenomenon, the influence of Proclianism, which gathering up, and giving shape to, a phase of feeling never wholly absent from the Church, and already conspicuous in Clement and the Monks, gave birth to Mysticism. This begins for literature with Dionysius the Areopagite.

Who this author was is not known, but his date can be fixed with tolerable accuracy. His works were quoted in a conference, held at Constantinople under Justinian, in 532. On the other hand, they are steeped in the peculiar terminology of Proclus, and presuppose the *Rudiments* of that philosopher, a

work which cannot well have been composed before 440. He calls himself Dionysius the priest, and represents himself as the friend of Timothy and Titus, as the contemporary of the Apostles, as a disciple of Hierotheus the pupil of St. Paul; "my teacher," he calls him, "after Paul." He does not speak either of Athens or of the Areopagus, but, in the first mention that we have of him, he is styled "the Areopagite." Whether it was his intention to pass himself off as the converted Athenian judge may be doubted. He speaks of himself as having been at Heliopolis in Egypt on the day of the Crucifixion, and we should hardly expect to find an Areopagite there. In any case the domino may have been merely an odd piece of mystic self-denial. In the *Letter to Demophilus* it is dropped entirely; and possibly Dionysius himself would have been greatly surprised to learn that his harmless masquerade had been taken seriously. But it made him the patron saint of France.

Dionysius starts with the "chains," the "triplets" of Proclus. Above all stands the Trinity. Beneath this is the Celestial Hierarchy, a square of three triplets—

1. Thrones, Cherubim, Seraphim.
2. Powers, Dominions, Might.
3. Angels, Archangels, Principalities. (Cp. Eph. i. 21; Col. i. 16.)

Beneath this again comes the Earthly Hierarchy—

1. Three Sacraments; Baptism, Eucharist, Ointment.
2. Three Ecclesiastical Orders; Deacon, Priest, Bishop.

3. Three Lay Orders ; Non-communicants, Communicants, Monks.

In each of these triplets the lowest member is put first.

Right through the Hierarchies flows down the triple grace of Purification, Enlightenment, and Perfection ; the higher links of the chain passing it on to the lower.

With Dionysius as with Proclus, philosophy has no place at all in the religious life. The object of contemplation is purely ecclesiastical. Further it will be observed, how between the superessential Saviour and man is interposed a long-drawn procession, on earth of officers, symbols, rites ; in heaven of angels in interminable sequence. The object is to provide the soul with a staircase, up which it may climb from mystery to mystery, from star to star, till it reaches the very fount of light. The result is to shut out the penitent from his Redeemer, and to give the mystic so much to dream about, that he has no time to do anything.

The length of the Upward Path, spun out through "endless genealogies," is a common but not universal feature of Mysticism. It has no justification, either in Scripture or in philosophy. Nor has Mysticism any necessary connection, direct or indirect, with metaphysics properly so called. Sometimes, as in Plotinus, it has a direct connection, growing naturally out of the speculations. Sometimes it has a negative or indirect connection ; it is a recoil ; pious souls grow weary of the debates of the schools, and take

refuge in positive affirmations. But the great Mystics, the Hebrew and Christian prophets, knew nothing whatever about the perplexities of the intelligence. In fact, Mysticism appears to have but two essential features—the belief in the possibility of contact with the personality of God, and the denial of evil, which must be regarded, either as in itself non-existent, or as practically abolished before the contact takes place. Both the belief and the denial are common to all religious people; the question is only, *when* evil ceases to be.

The Areopagite starts with metaphysics, but only, like Proclus, to kick down the ladder by which he mounted. He is the prince of Mystics, because he expounds the rationale of his belief with perfect simplicity, without the least attempt to compromise with theology.

God Himself is a Trinity, whose first manifestations are Being, Life, and Wisdom (this again is a Proclian triplet). He is the Absolute, above all Essence, and all Knowledge. Such knowledge as we have of Him is derived entirely from Scripture. It has two branches, according as it is directed to His operations or His Self. Accordingly, we express our knowledge in two ways—by position or by abstraction; that is to say, by analogies, as when we call Him Father, King, Life, Light, Reason; or by negations, as when we call Him infinite, timeless, immaterial. The latter is the higher and better method; and the task of the perfected believer is to rise up, above all symbols and metaphors, to the bare idea, from ignorance draping

itself in words to ignorance confessed, to penetrate the "darkness," in which God dwells on the secret heights of Sinai. To Dionysius "darkness" means "formlessness" and is metaphysical, but with other Mystics it often bears a moral sense, and expresses the believer's impatience with the confusions, not of thought, but of life. The Upward Path is made possible by Love, the Inner Light, and the word for Love is no longer Agape, but Eros. Eros is a Platonic term, but in the mouth of the Mystic it is no longer purely ideal. It has become sensuous and passionate, and expresses the desire of one personality to merge into another. The change is marked by the famous phrase of Ignatius: "My Love is crucified," which Dionysius quotes at the expense of an anachronism; but, more distinctly still, by the free use of the Song of Songs, which inspired the *Amatory Hymns* of Hierotheus, and was always a favourite book with the Mystics.

Here we trace the same Syrian influences that shaped the thoughts of Iamblichus and Proclus. Hierotheus is probably to be identified with Barsudaili, an Edessan Monophysite abbot of the fifth century. The yearning of the soul for the Risen Lord is distinctively Christian; at the same time, it is the only result left of the Humanity of Jesus; for in the mind of Dionysius the sacraments, the Life, the Passion, are mere symbols. They belong to the Earthly Hierarchy, and must be left behind. This belief, that it is possible to mount above all ordinances, all law, all doctrine, is the common property of the

Mystics, and tended more and more, as discipline grew stricter and the Church more corrupt, to embroil them with the authorities. Indeed Mysticism is to be regarded, almost universally, as a revolt, not against difficulties of belief, but against the wickedness of the times, and the inability of the Church to bridle the world about her.

In Mysticism Eros is the only moral link left between God and man, in other words, the one point on which rests the personality of either.

For Evil, and with it Justice and Responsibility, are blotted out entirely from the mind of Dionysius. There cannot, he says, be two principles. All is of God ; the only difference is, that those things which partake more of God are nearer to Him. Evil is Nothing ; it cannot be, and therefore cannot act. The Greek philosophers, from Heraclitus downwards, thought that what we call physical evil might be necessary to the sum of things. But Dionysius denies this. Life may indeed be said to come out of death ; but, if you look closer, it is not the death, which produces life, but the living force enduring through, and fed by, the dissolution of the organism. There is no such thing as a bad nature. Take away from the lion its ferocity, and you rob the creature of the safeguard given to it by its Creator. Vice is mistaken virtue. All is good. What we call evil, is merely inability to discharge the proper functions of the divinely-fashioned nature. Hence Justice is that whereby God preserves each essence intact in its appointed station, and enables it to do its proper

work. This is pure Platonism, and Dionysius treats the theme without a single reference to the Atonement.

Thus the Mystic, as Plutarch said, "jumps off his own shadow."

Indeed Dionysius, like Proclus, does not think it possible that the Cross, or any other agency, can change the mind of God. We draw near to him, but He never draws near to us, because He is everywhere and changes not. Hence, in a well-known passage, Prayer is compared to a chain of light let down from heaven. As we climb up it, hand over hand, we seem to draw the chain down, but really draw ourselves up. Or again, to the cable of a ship. It is fastened to a rock and, as the mariner hauls upon it, he seems, but only seems, to pull the rock nearer to his boat. The beauty of the Areopagite's expression must not disguise from us the fact, that his whole view is Pantheistic.

Thus, by another road, we have come back to Universalism. Origen insists upon freedom; Dionysius abolishes it. Origen takes his start from Justice, which to Dionysius has little or no meaning. But to both God is End as well as Beginning, and the goal coincides.

But these dry abstracts of thought are no better than a *hortus siccus*, in which all the perfume of the flower is evaporated. Mysticism is the paradox of paradoxes. Nothing is easier to gibe at; yet, in all its extravagances, there is something that lies very close to the heart of Christianity. It seems so barren

yet, directly or indirectly, what force there was in Francis, or Bernard, or Bonaventura, or Grossetête, or à Kempis! Let us listen to the story of Carpus, and see what the real Dionysius was. Here we shall find the key to the contradiction.

Carpus was a man of Crete, so favoured by God, that he never celebrated the Eucharist without enjoying a vision of heavenly bliss. Yet once the saint had violated the law of love, and he told Dionysius how he had been chastised for his sin.

One of his converts had been seduced back into heathenism by an unregenerate comrade. There must have been something peculiarly distressing in the circumstances, for Carpus was so deeply shocked, that instead of praying for the two sinners, as he ought to have done, he was filled with wrath. In this agitation of mind he retired to rest, and after a brief and troubled slumber, rose at midnight to perform his usual devotions. But his anger was still hot within him, and on his knees he begged God to blast with His thunderbolt both the tempter and the tempted.

Scarce had he framed this dreadful petition, when the house seemed to be riven asunder, and a blaze of unearthly light shone all around. Raising his eyes, he saw Jesus, seated on the ridge of heaven, encompassed by angels in human form. But, looking down, he beheld the two wretches whom he had cursed, staggering on the brink of a hideous gulf. Out of the pit came serpents, and shadows as of men, who hauled and dragged, cozened and fascinated the

unhappy pair, so that, half-resisting, half-consenting, they were tumbling into the abyss.

Carpus gazed on their peril with fierce delight, and cursed them again, because they had not yet perished. But once more he raised his eyes. Jesus had stepped down from His throne in pity, and was holding out His arms ; the angels also were clinging to the two sinners, and pulling them back from the precipice.

Then the Lord spoke to Carpus : " Reach out thy hand, and smite Me. For I am ready once more to suffer for the salvation of men. Do thou see to it ; whether thou wouldest rather dwell with God, and the good and merciful angels, or with the dragons in the pit."

The works of Dionysius were translated into Latin by Scotus Erigena in the ninth century, and again by John of Salisbury in the twelfth. From this date his influence parts into two streams, one more philosophical, the other more religious.

1. His work fell in with those other causes, which produced the great Pantheistic outburst of the twelfth century. These were the streaming in from Sicily, and afterwards more fully from Spain, of the Arabian and Jewish Aristotelianism, which, under the influence of Neoplatonism and Orientalism, had assumed a strongly Pantheistic cast. With Aristotle came the *De Causis*, which is, in fact, the *Rudiments* of Proclus, and the *Fons Vitae* of the Jew Avicbron. The mixture of this perilous stuff with Mahomedanism had led everywhere to violent explosions. "The

doctrine of Avicenna," says Makrizi, "brought upon religion disasters too terrible for words. It served only to foster the errors of heretics, and added to their impiety fresh impiety." Gazali (Algazel) led the revolt, as the champion of orthodox mysticism, and succeeded in destroying philosophy in the East.

In Spain, the writings of Ibn-Rosch (Averroes) provoked another violent outbreak of persecution, and here too the licence of thought was suppressed by the arm of the law. From Spain the cyclone moved on through Provence into the French schools. Towards the end of the twelfth century, David of Dinan and Amaury of Chartres (or de Bennes) taught that God is all, and that all is God; a heresy which was traced back by Gerson to the audacious Scotus Erigena, "who had borrowed it from a monk named Maximus." Maximus was the well-known commentator on Dionysius. Amaury himself professed to have learned what he taught from the Epistles of St. Paul; but he was the disciple not only of Dionysius, but of another famous mystic, Joachim of Flora (Fiore in Calabria), who spoke of Rome as the Whore of Babylon, and prophesied the advent of the third age, the age of the Holy Ghost, when all sacerdotalism was to be swept away. The Pantheism of the Amalricians brought them into direct collision with the Church. It taught, that "the Holy Spirit was as truly in Ovid as in St. Augustine," and that all sacraments are dead forms. Nine of the disciples of Amaury were burnt by the Council of Paris in 1210, and the reading of the

Physics and Metaphysics of Aristotle was for a time prohibited. But Joachitism lingered long in the South of France, and the infection clung to the schools of Paris. As late as 1276 Étienne Tempier, Bishop of Paris, complains that some of his students maintained, "that things might be true in philosophy, though not true according to the Catholic faith; as if there were two truths, and as if, against the truth of scripture, there were truth in the sayings of damned Gentiles."

The danger to the Church was undoubtedly very great, and the danger to philosophy was hardly less. But it fell in the thirteenth century, an age not of decay but of regeneration, most fruitful in great men and great achievements. It was averted for the time, not by sword or fagot, though both were freely employed, but by the stirring life, which brought forth the great Dominican teachers, Albert and Thomas, and the powerful orders of the Friars. But those who wish to pursue the interesting, and in England little known, history of scholasticism, must be referred to the works of Vacherot, Jourdain, Hauréau, and Renan. (See also *History of the Inquisition in the Middle Ages*, by H. C. Lea. New York: Harper Brothers, 1888.)

2. Nor can we do more than point out authorities for the history of Mysticism. From the days of the New Testament prophets it has never been wholly absent from the Church. It has manifested itself at times in wild revolt. But for the strong hand of St. Paul the Corinthian prophets would have rent the

Church into pieces ; and the history of the Montanists, of the Fraticelli, of the Anabaptists shows how fiery and explosive the Inner Light may be, when heated by contagion and opposition. Mysticism is always a protesting spirit. But in our Western world it has shown, upon the whole, neither the taste nor the capacity for organizing multitudes ; it is too fastidious, too sensitive, too fond of reverie. The Church would be nothing without it ; for it is the spirit of the prophet and of the saint ; but it can neither form nor sustain a church, for this is the work of the priest. There is, properly speaking, no history of the Mystics ; only biographies. They are like a chain of stars, each separated from the other by a gulf. We can trace resemblances, even connections ; but they themselves tell us, that the light comes direct from the sun, and is not passed on at all. Yet the Mystic usually reads books ; and the beacon of Dionysius, or Joachim, or Tauler wakes the kindred soul across seas or centuries.

A dry history of the French Victorines will be found in Hauréau. The troubles of the spiritual Franciscans are recorded by Milman, Neander, and Lea. German Mysticism is the theme of many learned works which are enumerated in the *Dogmengeschichte* of Dr. Harnack ; and the lives of St. Bernard, à Kempis, Fénelon, Madame de Guyon, and Swedenborg are readily accessible. Those who are interested in the subject will not fail to read Vaughan's *Hours with the Mystics*. Two books within easy reach of English readers are the *Dark Night of the Soul*, by

St. John of the Cross, and the immortal *De Imitatione*; the former shows us Mysticism at its worst, the latter is above all praise. A good account of the relation of à Kempis to earlier Mystics will be found in the *Story of the Imitatio Christi*, by Mr. Leonard A. Wheatley.

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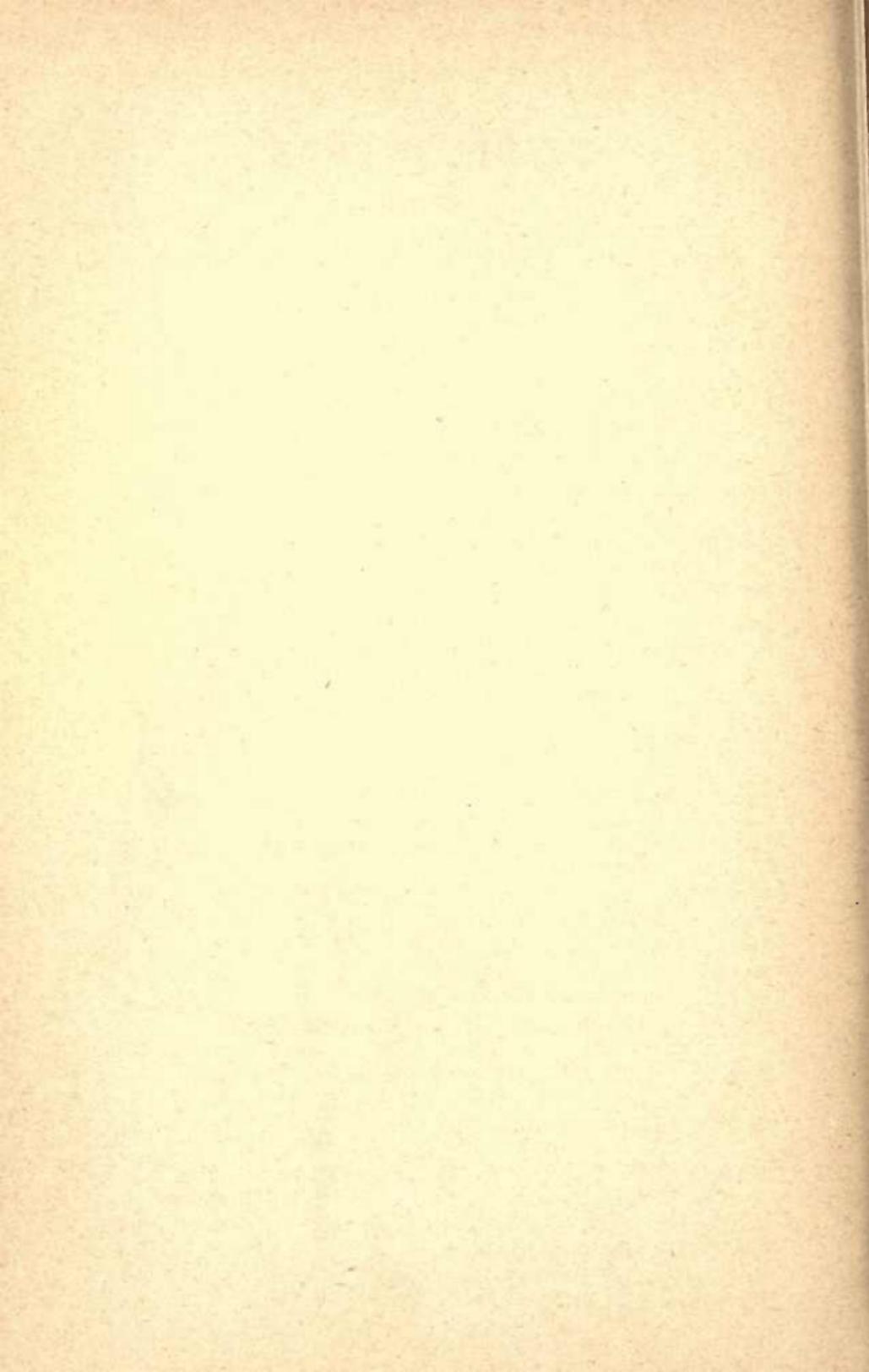
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