

THE RELIGIONS AND PHILOSOPHIES OF THE EAST

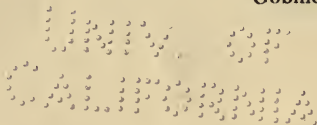
BY

J. M. KENNEDY

Author of "THE QUINTESSENCE OF NIETZSCHE"

"Tout ce que nous pensons, et toutes les
manières dont nous pensons, ont leur origine en
Asie."

Gobineau.



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PREFACE

AMONG the comparatively few people in England who take any interest in philosophy, religion, metaphysics and allied subjects, it is certain that Nietzsche's works have during the last year or two been studied with increasing attention. It is not, perhaps, surprising that his views should have been at first received with astonishment and impatience ; for England seems fated to be separated from the Continent, wherever thought is concerned, by a distance which it takes a quarter of a century to traverse. Again, the absurd methods of teaching foreign languages adopted in our schools cut us off from communication with many an excellent book or review article which shows the trend of the times abroad, particularly in Germany and Italy, the two countries where the philosophy of morality has been for some years in its most flourishing condition.

Nietzsche and his school, however, have come to stay ; and I merely mention these matters by way of showing that, if any views on the moral side of religion expressed in the following pages should seem strange to the less advanced section of the British public, they are nevertheless founded on a basis which has the authority of most of the best Continental thinkers of repute : the Nietzschean standard of good and bad.

What is good ? Everything that increases the feeling of power, the will to power, power itself, in man.

What is bad ? All that proceeds from weakness.

What is happiness ? The feeling that power is increasing, that resistance is being overcome.

The pages that follow, then, do not merely record the main principles of the most important religions of the East, but they also indicate an attempt to apply to those religions the standards of moral values referred to above. I believe I am correct in saying that no such attempt has hitherto been made. In the bibliography at the end of the book I have named about a third of the works to which I am mainly indebted ; but I have also had the advantage of a

sufficiently long period of residence in the East to enable me to observe personally certain characteristics which I have referred to here and there. For several interesting suggestions concerning Mohammed, I have to thank Dr Oscar Levy ; while Mr A. R. Orage, Editor of *The New Age*, who deserves to be better known for the keen psychological insight he has brought to bear on Oriental problems, has communicated to me his views upon the sources of the Laws of Manu. Lastly, Mr A. M. Ludovici has reminded me of some points, usually forgotten, in connection with Greek art. As the views expressed are entirely my own, however, none of these gentlemen is to be saddled with the responsibility for any of the statements, controversial or otherwise, which I have made.

J. M. KENNEDY.

THE RELIGIONS AND PHILOSOPHIES OF THE EAST

CHAPTER I

Primitive civilisation—Origin of religion—Influence of politics on religion—Meaning of the word.

WITHIN the last fifty years probably more light has been thrown, directly and indirectly, on the problem of the origin of civilisation and society than on any other subject within the range of science. Geology, for example, has enabled us to gauge, with something resembling accuracy, the age of the earth. The fossil remains of animals which we find it difficult even to name, provide us with a means of ascertaining what kind of living creatures the earth actually supported millions of years ago. To these we must add the discoveries made in the domains of philology and archæology. Even so conservative a philologist as Prof. Henry Sweet, for example, estimates that the Aryan language

was spoken in a pure form not less than 12,000 years ago. Fragments of monuments and inscriptions, portions of the ruins of long-buried cities, have enabled us to construct the history of past nations and empires. More than all, the enormous impetus given to psychological investigations, first by Nietzsche, and continued by his followers, more especially the younger school of Italian psychologists, represented by Sera, has led us to read history and study sciences in an entirely new frame of mind. To take another branch of the subject, until comparatively recently the morality of religion was inextricably confused with its dogma. The former is all-important, the latter of trifling and ephemeral value. Kant, Schopenhauer, Hegel, Darwin, Huxley, Spencer, and their numerous followers and imitators, spent a great part of their energies in consciously or unconsciously disproving Christian dogma, while all the time leaving its morality, its values of good and evil, unharmed. For centuries, ever since the establishment of Christianity as the religion of Western Europe, all the views of eminent scientists, even those who turned against the Christian religion and sought to disprove it, were subconsciously influenced by Christian morality. It is only

since the advent of Nietzsche (for Goethe, when he referred to this matter, did so in cautious sentences, not meant for general perception) that scientists have begun to see their errors in this respect, and it is only since the beginning of the nineteenth century that the dawn of a new era in thought may be said to have appeared. For the first time in nineteen long centuries—centuries of bigotry and superstition never before equalled in the history of the world—men have an opportunity of considering scientific and ethical problems with their minds untrammelled by the Christian values of good and evil. But the Goddess of Wisdom has been imprisoned in an underground dungeon since the dawn of the Christian era, and she still feels ill at ease in the light of day.

When we endeavour to trace the origin of civilisation as a stepping-stone to the origin and formation of religions, we find the backward path even more difficult than might have been expected. China, India, and Egypt are the three great strongholds of ancient learning, and in these countries the records go back something like 6000 years. But what we can now know of, say, China in the year 4000 B.C., is sufficient to show us that even at that time a portion of the country was highly civilised,

possessing all the arts of a progressive community, including even a fully-developed system of handwriting. In India the story is the same. The further we trace back what we conceive to be the primitive origins of society, we find that we are not engaged in a study of primitive origins at all, but of something highly complex, something which has evolved scientifically in the course of thousands of years. To return to Professor Sweet again, we know, as every philologist knows, that the Aryan language dates from at least 10,000 B.C. But the very fact that such a language could be in existence one hundred centuries before the birth of Christ is sufficient to show us that it must have been spoken and inscribed on rocks and cavern-roofs hundreds of years before that, and that those who spoke it in such a manner as to make it endure for a long time must have been a highly-organised body of men—an early society, in fact; the ancestors of those who were destined in later ages to found the first great Indian Empire. The mind may well become appalled when contemplating the consequences of what has happened in the world during a period of 12,000 years; but a close psychological examination of the question makes it clear that the change which

has taken place in the essential nature of man between 10,000 B.C. and the present day is so slight as to be almost imperceptible. Some instinct has always actuated animals and men from the beginnings of life on earth. Darwin and the evolutionists called it the struggle for existence ; Schopenhauer named it the Will to live ; Nietzsche designated it more correctly by the term Will to Power. In any case, all three definitions connote the idea of a ceaseless struggle, in which the fittest, though doubtless not always the best, survive.

In the case of the human kind this struggle led to the elimination of those who were unfitted to stand the ruthless competition—the weak, the degenerate, the crippled, the physically and mentally defective. To trace how the weak gradually assured their safety by influencing the sacerdotal classes, and little by little formed religions of their own, which they sedulously upheld, cultivated and propagated, forms one of the most fascinating studies a psychologist can undertake. Such a religion, as Nietzsche and others have conclusively demonstrated, is Christianity ; such also, but, as will be seen later on, to a much less extent, is Buddhism.

In entering upon the investigation of any Eastern religion, however, the student will

find himself in difficulties if he wishes to make an impartial study of the question through books written in English. It has, unfortunately, happened that nearly all the English works dealing with this question have been written either by missionaries or by travellers and Government officials without any psychological insight. As a consequence, nearly every book by these people is written with a conscious or unconscious prejudice—that Christianity is the final word in religion, and that all other faiths must necessarily be inferior. When endeavouring to examine into the origin of religions, and to ascertain the distinctions between the different faiths of the East and the West, I was unable to find any English book which did not, in some chapter or another, read like a tract. One cannot but marvel at the impudence and conceit of the Christian missionary who goes to, say, India, after a short course of training and straightway proceeds to confute with specially-prepared arguments the doctrines of a belief devised by a much superior class of men—a belief, indeed, to which Christianity itself can easily be traced.

Two world-wide religions owe their huge followings and development to the hazard of politics. The first in order of time is Buddhism,

which was adopted by the Indian king, Asoka, about 250 B.C. to keep his turbulent subjects quiet in order that he might consolidate the fruits of his victories. The second was Christianity, elevated to a State religion by Constantine the Great in 324 A.D., though the Roman emperor himself did not show any particular eagerness to be baptised. But, if Christianity suits the people of Europe, it does not follow that it suits the people of India, any more than we can say that Buddhism is a good religion for Burmah, and is therefore suitable for England. But we must come back to Nietzsche's outlook again. A religion, or a system of morals, which comes to the same thing, is invented by a certain type of people in order that they may propagate and preserve their race. What tends to their preservation, *i.e.*, what helps them to attain to power over their competitors will be, to them, "good"; what hinders them from attaining their object will be "bad." It naturally follows that the "good" of Buddhism will not necessarily correspond to the "good" of Judaism, and *vice versa*. We can thus perceive, to some extent, the mistake made by the Christian missionaries who proceeded to write about and criticise other religions. They neglect the

early history of Christianity and the influence upon Christ's teaching of the Ebionites and the Essenes.

Before we proceed further, however, what is religion? Possibly we might define it briefly as that which endeavours to bring man into contact with a higher power; but the actual meaning of the word has varied from century to century. Religion may now mean faith, cult, morality, hope, terror, ecstasy, fear of the gods. A Central African negro kneels down before some fetish and would understand by the "religion" the instinct which urges him to do this. For Kant, on the other hand, religion simply means morality. The Brahman has one form of religion in his youth, when he offers up his little sacrifices at daybreak and prays "Enlighten us, we beseech thee," and another in his old age when, looking upon prayer and sacrifice as useless, he retires to some solitary spot and gives himself up to meditation. Fichte regards religion merely as a science. Schleiermacher knows it as "the knowledge of our absolute dependence, something which determines us and which we cannot determine in return." Hegel defines it as "unconstrained liberty." "For," he says, "if it is dependence which makes religion, then the

dog is the most religious of all beings." For Feuerbach, again, religion is love of one's self. "For the feeling which is at the base of all the feelings, desires and actions of man is the satisfying of the human being and human egoism : it is the sick heart of man which is the source of all religion and all misery."

In tracing the development of religions, we find that they are always associated with one powerful mind : a mind which interprets the inarticulate aspirations and desires of a race or a nation and formulates them into a series of rules which, in order that their value may not be doubted, are ascribed to some supernatural source. Around such personalities it is but natural that numerous legends should grow up, not only rendering the theologian's path more difficult, but leading many critics, particularly Germans, to incline to the belief that such personages did not exist at all, but were merely the assumptions of daring poets and soothsayers endeavouring to explain the origin of their faith. Another common characteristic of such great teachers is the fact that, while history has with more or less accuracy recorded their performances and sayings in middle and later life, we find very little material dealing with their youth. The

critics are rapidly becoming fewer in number, however, who hold that this very fact is sufficient to confirm the theory that all these great teachers were made and not born. In regard to the Buddha, for example, the tales about his youth are purely traditional: he only really comes into prominence at twenty-nine or thirty. The same remark applies to Moses, to Zarathustra, to Mohammed, and, in a lesser degree, to Christ. But it is surely evident that men like these would not be likely to come into much prominence in youth, and history would not need to consider them at such a time.

CHAPTER II

The Aryans—Early wanderings—Brahma—Aryan and Semitic mythology—The caste system—The Aryans in Europe—The priestly caste—Early Brahmanical writings—Law codes—The Vedas—Literary development—Gods.

THE remote antiquity of the Aryan language has already been referred to. In regard to the tribe itself the direct evidence now at our disposal is scanty, and it is only by the patient investigations of various scientists, assisted by the recent progress in the applications of psychological principles to historical affairs, that we have been able to trace the probable development of the Aryans. No doubt, however, remains as to the descent of the fair-skinned tribes from the Pamir plateau into the lower plains of India and the great empire which they succeeded in founding there. Racial pride naturally raised a barrier between these conquerors and the aborigines whom they subdued, another barrier separating the ruling nobles from the lower classes of the tribes, and in the course of time the priestly caste managed, after many

generations of bitter controversy and struggle, to secure the supreme spiritual power. Thus the insurmountable, or almost insurmountable, barriers of caste gradually came into being, and upon them the religious order of the community was based.

Philological and ethnological discoveries have led to the conclusion that the Englishman and the Hindoo had a common ancestor, the one belonging to the Eastern and the other to the Western branch of the Aryan race. It is probable, in view of the length of time which it is calculated a race needs in order to develop, that the Aryans cannot have originated much less than 60,000 years ago in the territory which we now know as Persia, Afghanistan, and Asia Minor. Generations afterwards the increased population would have overspread all North-western India and probably encroached upon what is now known as the Punjab. Then would naturally begin the descent of the warriors upon Middle and Southern India, while the western division of the huge tribe would be making its way through Southern Russia into what is now Poland and Austria. After centuries of residence in the different climates, the descendants of the original stock would become

entirely unlike their forbears, and thousands of years after their first wanderings it is left to the philologist to put words and fragments of words together and gradually trace back the prehistoric origin of the race. Thus, in the Rig-Veda (a book, the contents of which will be explained later in this chapter), we find the chief of a tribe referred to as "vis-pati," *i.e.*, "ruler of settlers," the same meaning being seen in the old Persian "vis-paiti," and also in the modern Lithuanian "wiesz-patis," one of the numerous links which establishes the connection between East and West.

As an Indian writer has pointed out,¹ the Hindoos alone, of all the Aryan-speaking peoples, seem to have preserved some recollection of having been foreign settlers in the country of their adoption. Few nations forgot their origin sooner than did the Greeks, who considered themselves as the original inhabitants of the Hellenic peninsula, although they unconsciously preserved some traditions which suffice to indicate their foreign origin, as a reference to Homer and the famous catalogue of ships will show. The mythological account of the war between gods and demons is common to all the Aryan nations, and the

¹ M. Venkata Ratnam : *The Hebrew Origin of the Brahmins.*

Greek legend of the war between the Titans and the gods is paralleled in Indian mythology by the tales of the conflicts between the Suras and the Asuras, *i.e.*, between the gods and the demons, which is described in the earliest remnants of Indian literature we possess. The Trojan war, again, is but the legendary Greek version of the struggle described in the Ramayana.

Undoubtedly one of the halting-places of the Aryans on their journey towards the East was Meru (modern Merv) in Turkestan, which occupies much the same place in Hindoo mythology as does Olympus in the case of the Greeks. The researches of Prof. Sayce and other eminent investigators in this field have thrown much light on the relation of Assyria to the Aryans ; but a discussion of this question belongs more to a purely ethnological work. There is no doubt that this part of Western Asia bore the seeds from which sprang every religion on the face of the earth ; but to so great an extent did the travelling Aryans split up into different nations and religious groups, that an extended enquiry into the common origin of their faiths would be of little value for an interpretation of their subsequent development.

As for Brahma himself, who gave his name to the religion of the Hindoos, there seems to be good reason for supposing that the name originally referred to the Biblical Abraham. While the modern Hindoo looks upon Brahma, plus Krishna, as "God," and, the Eastern mind naturally running to pantheism, sees "Brahma" in everything, the ancient Hindoos regarded Brahma as the Greeks did Zeus (Jupiter), as a being possessing a human form. It has been pointed out that a comparison of the legend concerning Zeus and Brahma tends to show that they were one and the same person, the western branch of the Aryans taking the legend with them to Greece, and the ancestors of the Hindoos bearing it towards India. Zeus, the king of the gods, married his sister Hera and made her queen. Brahma, according to the old Sanskrit chronicle, married his daughter Sarasvati. Compare this with the old Jewish legend (Gen. xix. 33-38). Again, the word Brahman comes from the root *brih*, meaning to increase, while Abraham would appear to signify "father of a multitude." Brahma (masculine) was at first Brahman (neuter), which to some extent parallels the Biblical statement that Abraham's name was at first Abram, "the high father." Abraham, too, was the "Father

of the Israelites," and Brahma is often referred to as Pitra-maha, "the great father." (*Cf.* Jupiter, which is made up of Jovis plus pater.) Finally, the name of Brahma's wife, Sarasvati, was originally written Sarada, from the same root as the name of Abraham's wife, Sarah. Other analogies could readily be quoted, but these will be sufficient to show the reader the close connection between the Greeks, the Semites, and the Hindoos.

Thousands of years before the Christian era the Aryans developed their wandering instinct already referred to ; and it is recorded that when the tribes moved from place to place they invariably drove their cattle with them. From time immemorial the cow has been considered as sacred in India, doubtless because to it was largely due the prosperity of the white-skinned invaders. Strangely enough, the early settlers, as we can see from references in the sacred books, ate meat and drank a liquid resembling beer, contrary to the modern practice. The vitality of the Hindoo seemed to leave him when he gave up his meat for rice. Little by little the Aryans made their way east of the Indus, through the Punjab, and into the central plains. This was a slow process, and during the time it was proceeding whole nations

had sprung up from among the original tribe of invaders. A similar development was going on in the West, where the Aryans gradually became the ruling castes throughout Europe ; but a survey of this long and complicated process would be rather out of place in the present work.

It may be interesting, however, to mention one point. It has virtually been established, for instance, that the present upper or governing classes throughout Europe are the descendants of the invading western Aryans, the menials (*i.e.*, the so-called "working" classes) being the descendants of the uncivilised and ill-developed aborigines. The caste system did not develop in Europe to the same extent as in Asia, and not even feudalism could prevent constant intermarrying between the Aryans and the natives. The result is that at this day the two races, the higher and the lower, appear to the superficial eye to have fused, more especially as common advantages and necessities have long since developed what, for want of a better term, we may call a semi-instinct, "patriotism." Nevertheless, when great moral (not political) crises occur, the difference between the high and low races becomes apparent. Christianity, for instance, was seized upon by the lower

classes with delirious joy at the time of its introduction into Europe as an excuse for rendering themselves morally independent of their rulers. The process of weakening the power of the strong by every conceivable means has proceeded steadily for nineteen hundred years, and is fast reaching its culminating point. The less-developed masses, that is to say, the lower castes of northern European countries, cannot understand or appreciate beauty, though, as Nietzsche indicated, the world can be justified only as an æsthetic phenomenon. Hence, as early Christianity had fortunately borrowed many beautiful symbols from paganism (many of which may be seen in the modern Roman Catholic Church), these barbarously-minded people made several attempts to deprive the religion of its beauty, since beauty can be understood and created only by the aristocratic castes, though it may be highly valued by lower castes which have come through a long period of evolution, such, for example, as are to be found in Italy and France. The result was Huss, the Lollards, Luther, and the "Reformation." Happily, the aristocratic Church of England was left uninfluenced, so far as its symbols were concerned, though a few unimportant changes were made

in its dogma. But the Lutheran Church, which, in Germany, corresponds to the Dissenters in England and Scotland, spread an appalling, thick blanket of dreariness, ignorance, and bigotry over millions of Europeans which subsists to this day. The consequence has been an endeavour to carry into practice the extreme tenets interpolated into the New Testament by the Essene and Ebionite sects ; hence in Teutonic countries we see beauty disregarded and even looked on with suspicion, the dissemination of the most ridiculous of modern movements, humanitarianism, which would almost compel man by law to be responsible for his neighbour, socialism, and the pampering of the lower classes to the detriment of the higher castes.

To return to our Hindoo brethren, we find the single race of Aryans separated in the course of time into distinct nations, but always preserving the essential characteristic of caste : first, the priests, or Brahmans ; secondly, the nobles and warriors, known in ancient times as the Kshatriyas, and at present as Rajputs ; thirdly, the husbandmen and merchants ; and, fourthly, the lowest caste, the Sudras, who formed the descendants of the conquered aborigines. They are often referred to in

the Brahmanical writings by many contemptuous epithets.

The priesthood was the last of the castes to be formed. In very early times, indeed, we can easily see from passages in the Rig-Veda that the caste system was almost unknown. The warrior is naturally separated from his dependents and servants ; but the head of each family acted as his own priest. In later times the ruler of a tribe would perhaps select some person of great Vedic learning to prepare a sacrifice to the local god, and in time such men came to form an important section of a warrior's retinue. Years afterwards, by their appropriation of the sacred books and the increase in their numbers, they endeavoured to arrogate to themselves the supreme power in the Aryan community. But this pretension was at once disputed by the warrior caste, and a long struggle ensued for the mastery. Dr Sera has concisely summed up this warfare :—

The primitive relationships between masters and servants were those which necessitated muscular and brute force, and violent physical superiority, for it was precisely by their physical supremacy and warlike gifts that aristocrats arose. The share of intelligence in mastering men began with the rise to power of the clergy. It may even be said that the clergy were the first thinkers, and as such were at first reviled by the strong men and the warriors. . . . The clergy, however, with their

cunning, their indirect and equivocal manners, and the seduction of their spirituality, knew how to possess themselves of power as well as the fierce aristocrats, by whom, although at first looked upon with suspicion, they were at length considered almost as equals. The succession of these stages appears to be an inherent rhythm in human society, and the effect of laws which are to be found identically the same almost everywhere, for we observe the same phenomena in the East and particularly in India. Thus Indian tradition speaks of a terrible battle which took place between the Brahmans—the higher orders of the clergy—and the ancient race of warriors, although both classes sprang from the nation of Aryan conquerors which descended into India and there founded their civilisation. What is even more noteworthy is that this battle between the religious and aristocratic classes ended in the defeat, even in the annihilation, of the latter ; but after a short time the priests saw that they had committed a grave error, and were compelled to gather together the bastard lines of the ancient stock to save Indian society from utter dissolution.¹

Having laid claim to religion and philosophy as their special subjects, the Brahmans lost no time in securing their social supremacy by law. Early legal Brahmanical writings are found in the Vedas ; and about 400 B.C. and 200 A.D. they formulated their code of laws in two great digests, upon which all later Hindoo jurisprudence has been founded. The first of these is the law book of Manu, and shows us the social organisation of the Brahmans shortly after their supremacy in the community had been undisputedly made to prevail. The Brahmans,

¹ Dr L. G. Sera ; *On the Tracks of Life*, chap. ix,

indeed, claimed Divine origin for these laws, and ascribed their written form to Manu, the first Aryan man, who had lived some 30,000,000 years before. In reality, however, the laws of Manu are but an attempted codification of the customs of the Brahmans in Northern India, handed down orally through generations, and finally condensed into a written form.

The second great digest is that of Yajna-
valkya. It represents the legal side of the great controversy between Brahmanism and Buddhism, when the latter faith had dislodged the former in many parts of India.

00. B.C. In both codes we find three great divisions of Hindoo law. The first applies to domestic matters and the rights and duties of the various castes; the second relates to the administration of justice; and the third to religious observances. It is obvious that the Brahmans, although professing to codify certain hitherto unwritten usages of the race, took care to carry out the task in such a way as to assure their own predominance. The exact boundaries of the castes are clearly specified. Each has certain hereditary duties allotted to it, and intermarriage between them is prohibited. It is hardly necessary to add that the Brahmans reserve for their own caste

the sole spiritual power in the commonwealth. Nevertheless, from the penalties prescribed in the codes, it is apparent that even in early times there were illicit connections between the castes by marriage. Provision is also made for "mixed" castes and tribes, so that the four great divisions—Brahmans, warriors, husbandmen, serfs—occasionally encroached upon one another. The lowest caste, or Sudras, hopelessly cowed down for generations, never made any attempt to rise from its state of servitude ; but there appear to be many instances of courageous and wealthy men of the third caste becoming members of the warrior caste, and it would likewise seem that the Brahmans occasionally admitted recruits from the warrior caste immediately below them. The Brahmans owed their constantly increasing power to the fact that they not only held the sacred books of the race, but, in addition, monopolised philosophy and science. For centuries they were the only teachers, and even the secular or "profane" literature had its origin among them.

It must not be assumed that the English occupation of India and the consequent different trend given to education, or the Buddhistic conquest a century or so before the Christian era, had any effect in undermining the authority

of the Brahmans. Their power was successively assailed by the rise of the Buddhists, the Greek invasion, the Mohammedan invasion, and the English occupation, but it was never altogether taken away from them. Buddhism, as will be seen in another chapter, was at one time spread throughout India, but, as its missionaries gradually made their way further afield—to Thibet, China, Burmah, and Japan—their faith seemed to leave India with them, and Brahmanism regained the ascendancy which it still holds. True, Buddhism left its traces, and modern Hinduism is partly an amalgamation of both religions, but the essential principles of the Brahmanical learning are still respected and followed. And this long-enduring power is chiefly the result of the plasticity of the law codes, and the subtlety with which the priests applied them. As the Brahmans multiplied and moved with the other divisions of the tribes throughout India, they brought their codes with them and established them on the conquered nations in much the same way as the Romans established not only their laws but their language also. In many instances, however, it was found necessary to adapt the formal digest to suit local conditions, and the codes fortunately lent themselves to such changes.

The collected writings of the Brahmans, the substance of which was handed down verbally from generation to generation, appear to date, in their written form, from about 3000 B.C. Although, of course, gradually compiled, memorised, and written down by the priests in the first instance, later generations came to look upon them as directly inspired by the gods, nor is this the only comparison which can be made between the writings of the Brahmans and the Old Testament. To all these Hindoo scriptures is applied the collective name Veda (knowledge) or, less commonly, Sruti (revelation). The collections (Sanhitas) of sacred writings (Mantras) comprise (1) the Rig-Veda, (2) the Saman or Samaveda, (3) the Yajush or Yajurveda, (4) the Atharvan or Atharvaveda. To each of these text-books or manuals of religion is attached a series of prose works (Brahmanas), the aim of which is to explain the text-books and the nature of the sacrificial rites mentioned in them. In some cases two much more modern commentaries are added, the Aranyakas and the Upanishads. The Aranyakas do little more than supplement the Brahmanas in a few points of little interest to Europeans, but the Upanishads are of somewhat greater value to us, since in

them we find the fruits of early Indian speculation on the problems of the universe. The Saman and the Yajush, dealing mainly with matters of ritual, and containing many quotations from the Rig-Veda, are of small importance to all but earnest theologians.

The hymns of the Rig-Veda, on the other hand, are of very great value. By a careful comparison of the different divisions of this work, philologists have shown conclusively that the interval between the writing of the first poem and the writing of the last cannot be much less than 1000 years. The actual date of the composition of the poems, however, is a question which it is now practically impossible to answer. They were handed down from father to son, from warrior to warrior, from Brahman to Brahman, for many generations, and they serve to a great extent to show us, in view of their descriptive passages, the routes taken by the Aryans in their wanderings throughout India. An analysis of the Iliad and Odyssey is simplicity itself as compared with an analysis of the Rig-Veda. It is easier to ascertain who wrote the Pentateuch than to find out who, at various times and places, drew up the Hindoo scriptures.

The period of Indian history represented by

the Vedas is the period of conquest, and corresponds in point of time to the invasion of the Aryans and the beginning of their long march through the Indian continent, until at last the tribes settled down in various districts. The Rig-Veda speaks of the natives of India as Dasyus, calling them "bull-faced" men, almost noseless, and with very short arms. These aborigines were probably allied ethnologically to the Mongolians: in the first place they were yellow-skinned;¹ and in the second they possessed the Chinese characteristic of never having evolved the idea of a God. This is a distinct trait of the yellow races, and it is seen in the success which Buddhism met with in China and Japan; for Buddha, too, makes no mention of God, and the Chinese philosophers contented themselves with building up a system of morals on a purely rationalistic basis.

With people like these, it was but natural that the Aryans should have nothing to do. The white conquerors were proud of their intellectual and physical superiority, and to such an extent did they leave their traces on India that, for sixty centuries, down to the

¹ A few of the northern aboriginal tribes seem to have been of a yellowish-black colour; in the centre and south they were quite yellow.

present day, we find that the word *Arya* always connotes nobleness and pre-eminence. It reappears—another tribute to the spread of the race—in the German *Ehre* (honour, nobleness), which forms part of the name of the German warrior whom the Romans found so redoubtable an antagonist, Arminius, *i.e.*, Ehrmann, a man of honour. The Aryans, not being afflicted with the Christian disease of humility, which is philosophically a sin and not a virtue, made no secret of the fact that they looked upon themselves as the salt of the earth *par excellence*. “The Pure,” “the White Race,” “the Sons of Light,” “the Noble Ones,” are a few of the terms by which they designated themselves, as we see by the literary works which have come down to us.

When we come to analyse the hymns, we find that the poetry of the Rig-Veda deals to a great extent with the ordinary life of the Aryans themselves. But, besides the recital of material facts, these works present us with a mass of symbolic conceptions. We find in the Rig-Veda a description of the places where the hymns were first sung (an invaluable guide in tracing the progress of the race), stories of natural phenomena, of the march of the conquerors through India, in spite of the resistance

of the aborigines, of birth, marriage, death and burial; and a fairly complete account of the Brahman cultus. We learn that the primitive Aryans lived under patriarchal rule, that they did not build towns, but led a wandering life with their herds of cattle, and that in times of danger they combined their forces to repel any common enemy. The father was the master of the household, his wife was his property: there was most decidedly no trace of a women's suffrage movement, and there were no "rights of man." The caste system had not developed to a very large extent when the early poems of the Rig-Veda were being written, and the head of the family was likewise its priest.

The form of worship was simple enough. Two pieces of wood were rubbed together; a fire was lighted; and a sacrifice of malted liquor and bread was offered up on a rude altar. This simple ceremony was performed thrice daily—at sunrise, noon, and sunset. The Vedas indicate that for a long time the Aryans possessed a kind of naturalistic religion which confined itself to invoking the forces of Nature: in other words, they were polytheists. Fire was worshipped under the name of Agni (observe the close connection with the Latin *ignis*), the sky

was adored as Indra (the god of rain), the sun as Surya, water as Varuna. For the Aryans the hymn was always a prayer. "It would appear," says the great Orientalist, Emile Burnouf, "that the prayer uttered from their hearts, of which the hymn was the outward expression, not only exercised its action on the variable movements of the rain and winds, but even accompanied and brought about the most constant and regulated natural phenomena." Lafont compares this with the Christian "rogations," and is not alone in thinking that they spring from the same belief.

"Our ancestors moulded the forms of the gods as the workman fashions a piece of iron," we read in the Vamadeva, startlingly clear proof, which the Brahmans afterwards kept out of sight as much as possible, of the terrestrial and non-supernatural origin of the gods and the god-idea. During long centuries, Vedism, to use the term now generally applied to the religion of the Vedas, slowly developed into a more deeply metaphysical faith and finally into Brahmanism. The great distinction is the fact that in time it came to be recognised that, in addition to a number of inferior deities, there was one supreme god, Brahma, and all Indian polytheism was sublimated in him.

The Indian mind, however, could not conceive of a single omnipotent god such as the Semitic Jehovah, and it was not long before the one superior Hindoo deity became pantheistic. Brahma was seen in everything—in an idol, in a tree, in a sword. The one great step had been taken in the development of Hinduism : there was one recognised god, Brahma, where there had formerly been twenty, and the highest caste, the Brahmans, were his interpreters and the keepers of his sacred books. With this conception once definitely established, there began a magnificent period of development. From this epoch, the beginnings of which may safely be placed at 3000 B.C., we have the splendid poems of the Mahabharata and the Ramayana ; the lore of centuries, including the Vedic hymns, was put into written form ; laws were coded ; the Indian drama was slowly formed, and a school of lyric poetry arose.

This great literary development was only possible, of course, when the intellectual power of the community was concentrated in the Brahmans, and to some extent also the warriors. The first two castes, even though weighed down under the load of a nihilistic religion, were able to display their creative faculty in spite of their pessimism, while the

lower castes had no right to an opinion on any subject at all. The Brahmans recognised clearly enough that, no matter how the lower classes of a society were "educated" in what would correspond to a modern board-school, they were unable, on account of their low descent (like our own lower classes) to enter into the lofty spirit of the nobler castes. To a modern philosophical enquirer, unbiassed by democratic heresies, this was a right and proper course to pursue; for there is no reason why the children of the working-classes (the modern serf caste) should be provided with free schools in which to acquire an exceedingly superficial knowledge of subjects that will never be of the slightest use to them in their journey through the world. The modern school of continental thought clearly recognises that the world has only one real "use" for the serf caste, whether they are plainly called serfs or disguise themselves as "noble sons of toil," or "honest workmen," and that is that they shall be employed as the basis of servitude upon which a noble and aristocratic culture may be founded. The Brahmans saw this, so did the pre-Platonic philosophers, and so also did Aristotle. The final touch of modern anarchy is shown by the

fact that in the "civilised" countries of the West the dregs of society are permitted to rule the whole community; for the principle of government is one man one vote, and it follows that the uneducated riff-raff must inevitably outnumber the cultured few. Parasites are always fecund. Little wonder that the better-educated classes of Indians protest emphatically against the introduction of these revolutionary forms of government into their country, and that the Chinese and Japanese look with justifiable suspicion on all "foreign devils."

In dealing with Hinduism or Brahmanism it is almost an impossible task to disentangle and to bring into some sort of order the confused mass of Indian gods, demons, deified mortals, household gods, local gods, tribal gods, and so on. Theoretically a Hindoo is one who believes in the Brahmanic scriptures as expounded for centuries by the Brahmans. This teaching was influenced to some extent by Buddhism and later on by Mohammedanism, not to speak of the natural changes which one would expect to find in any religion which had lasted for from four to five thousand years. It may be convenient to take the three periods

into which Hinduism is generally divided, viz., Vedic, Epic, and Puranic. What we know of the first period is learnt from the Vedas, of the second from the two great epic poems, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, and of the third from certain theological works known as Puranas or Tantras. Amongst the numerous deities referred to in the Vedas may be mentioned Agni, the god of fire, lightning, and the sun ; Indra, the god of the firmament ; Varuna, who corresponds in general to the Greek Uranus, and Soma, who corresponds to Bacchus. We also find the Maruts, or winds, and Ushas, the dawn.

Besides being the god of wine, Soma is also the name given to the juice of the soma plant. In the early stages of Vedism this juice seems to have been the sole sacrifice offered up by the Aryans, and it has been ingeniously conjectured that, having at first been the object with which the deities were propitiated, it was afterwards deified itself. Soma is conceived of as a powerful deity who inspires men to deeds of arms, as well as being the bestower of health, and one who assists his worshippers against their enemies ; witness the Rig-Veda :

This Soma is a god ; he cures
The sharpest ills that man endures.

He heals the sick, the sad he cheers,
 He nerves the weak, dispels their fears,
 The faint with martial ardour fires,
 With lofty thoughts the bard inspires,
 The soul from earth to heaven he lifts
 So great and wondrous are his gifts.¹

While the worship of Soma was associated chiefly with Bacchanalian feasts, a perusal of the Vedic hymns shows the high state of culture at which even the primitive Aryan settlers in India had arrived, and the researches into the mysteries of the creation which they had begun to make. Take, for example, the hymn from the Rig-Veda addressed to Varuna, excellently translated by Muir :

He, righteous Lord, the sceptre wields,
 Supreme, of universal sway ;
 His law both men and gods obey ;
 To his decree the haughtiest yields.

He spread the earth and water waste ;
 He reared the sky, he bade the sun
 His shining circuit daily run ;
 In him the worlds are all embraced, . . .

The path of ships across the sea,
 A soaring eagle's flight he knows,
 The course of every wind that blows,
 And all that was or is to be.²

¹ J. Muir : *Translations from the Vedas*.

² Muir, *Ibid.*, p. 20, from Rig-Veda, xxv. 7, 9, 11. Cf. Proverbs xxx. 18 ff. : "There are three things which are too wonderful for me. . . . The way of an eagle in the air ; the way of a serpent upon a rock ; the way of a ship in the midst of the sea. . . ."

To thoughtful men who truth discern,
 And deeply things divine explore,
 The god reveals his hidden lore ;
 But fools his secrets may not learn.¹

Part of the prose form of this has been given by Petersen, in his selections from the Vedic Hymns :—

Though we break thy law daily, men as we are, O
 God Varuna :

Yet give us not over to the deadly stroke of our enemy ;
 give us not over to the wrath of our foe.

Varuna knows the way of the birds that fly in the air ;
 he knows the way of the ship on the sea :²

He knows the track of the wide, high, and great wind :³
 he knows them that sit thereon.⁴

My prayers go up to him like kine to their pasture-
 lands, seeking him whose eyes are over all.⁵

Come now and let us talk together : here me call, O
 Varuna, and to-day have mercy on me : I am needy, and
 call upon thee.⁶

Rig-Veda i. 25 (Petersen's ed.).

The same high standard is maintained in the
 hymns addressed to Agni, the god of fire :—

Great Agni, though thine essence be but one,
 Thy forms are three ; as fire, thou blazest here,
 As lightning flashest in the atmosphere,
 In heaven thou flameest as the golden sun.

¹ From Rig-Veda 7, lxi. 5. Cf. Matt. xiii. 11-12, and Prov. xiv. 6 :
 "A scorner seeketh wisdom and findeth it not : but knowledge is easy
 to him that understandeth."

² Cf. Song of Solomon, v. 10-11, and Prov. xxx. 19.

³ Cf. St John, iii. 8.

⁴ Cf. 2 Sam., xxii. and Psalms civ. 3.

⁵ Cf. Psalms, xlii. 1.

⁶ Cf. "Come now let us reason together" (Isaiah i. 18 ; Psalms
 xl. 17 ; and Psalms lxxxvi. 1.)

Sprung from the mystic pair, by priestly hands ¹
 In wedlock joined, forth flashes Agni bright ;
 But—oh, ye heavens and earth, I tell you right—
 The unnatural child devours the parent brands.

But Agni is a god ; we must not deem
 That he can err, or dare to reprehend
 His acts, which far our reason's grasp transcend ;
 He best can judge what deeds a god beseem.²

Thou art the cord which stretches to the skies,
 The bridge that spans the chasm, profound and vast,
 Dividing earth from heaven, o'er which at last
 The good shall safely pass to Paradise.

No god, no mortal is stronger than thee, O mighty
 Agni : Come, Agni, with the Maruts (Storm-Gods).

Bright, fearful to look upon, strong rulers, devourers of
 their foes : Come, Agni, with the Maruts.

Who sit as gods in the sky on the bright vault of
 heaven : Come, Agni, with the Maruts.

Rig-Veda, i. 19 ; (Petersen's ed.).

Again, compare the prose and poetic form
 of the hymn to Ushas, the Dawn :—

Hail, Ushas, daughter of the sky,
 Who, borne upon thy shining car,
 By ruddy steeds from realms afar,
 And ever lightening, drawest nigh :—

Thou sweetly smilest, goddess fair,
 Disclosing all thy youthful grace,
 Thy bosom bright, thy radiant face,
 And lustre of thy golden hair. . .

¹ This refers to the two pieces of wood from which fire is obtained when they are rubbed together. In the Vedas they are represented as husband and wife (Muir's Note).

² A sentiment which may be commended to all democrats.

But closely by the amorous sun
 Pursued and vanquished in the race,
 Thou soon art locked in his embrace,
 And with him blendest into one.
 (Muir, *Translations from the Vedas*, p. 28.)

“Oh, Ushas, rich in blessing, wise and bountiful, accept the song of thy worshipper : for now thou comest in due time, goddess ever old, ever young, and bringest with thee all good things. Shine out, O Dawn, a goddess and immortal, on thy golden car ; awaken the sweet nature of the birds : let thy well-managed horses, whose splendour spreads all around, bring thee, O golden goddess, to us.

The holy goddess has been awakened by the songs of the sky, and her glory spreads over the fruitful worlds : the shining Dawn is coming : Agni, go forth to meet her, and ask for us the wealth which we desire.”

Rig-Veda, iii. 6.

The powers of Indra are shown in the following :—

Thou, Indra, art a friend and brother,
 A kinsman dear, a father, mother.
 Though thou hast troops of friends, yet we
 Can boast no other friend than thee. . .
 With faith we claim thine aid divine,
 For thou art ours and we are thine.
 Thou art not deaf though far away,
 Thou hearest all, whate'er we pray.

Ibid., pp. 15-16.

The fierce god who, so soon as he was born their chief, surpassed all the gods in strength, from before whose breath heaven and earth trembled, he, O men, is Indra :

Who fixed fast the quivering earth, who made the moving mountains rest, who measured out the wide sky, who propped up heaven, he, O men, is Indra :

On Whom call heaven and earth, who are joined, and all enemies, high and low : he, O men, is Indra :

Heaven and earth bow down before him : at his very breath the hills are in fear.

Rig-Veda, ii. 12 (Petersen's ed.).

Beyond a doubt, however, the two most exquisite hymns in Vedic literature are those dealing with the Origin of Things and the Death of the First Man, King Yama. The first hymn, dealing with the creation, probably marks the beginning of philosophic Vedism, when the Hindoos not only worshipped the elementary powers of Nature but were beginning to form conceptions of a Supreme Deity, who, in addition to having certain attributes of his own, would be powerful enough to rule all the other gods.

There then was neither Naught nor Aught,

No air, no sky beyond.

What covered all ? where rested all ?

In watery gulf profound.

Nor death was then, nor deathlessness,

No change of night and day.

That One breathed calmly, self-sustained :

Naught else beyond It lay.

Who knows, who ever told, from whence

This great creation rose ?

No gods had then been born—then who

Can e'er the tale disclose ?

Whence sprang this world, and whether framed

By hand divine or no,—

Its Lord in Heaven alone can tell—

If even He can show.

Muir, *Ibid.*, p. 36.

The second poem shows a still later development :—

To great King Yama homage pay,
Who was the first of men that died,
That crossed the mighty gulf and spied
For mortals out the heavenward way.

No power can ever close the road
Which he to us laid open then,
By which in long procession men
Ascend to his sublime abode.

By it our fathers all have passed ;
And that same path we too shall trace,
And every new succeeding race
Of mortal men, while time shall last . . .

First must each several element
That joined to form thy living frame
Fly to the regions whence it came,
And with its parent source be blent.

Thine eye shall seek the solar orb
Thy life breath to the wind shall fly,
Thy part ethereal to the sky ;
Thine earthly part shall earth absorb.

Thy unborn part shall Agni bright
With his benignant rays illume,
And guide it through the trackless gloom
To yonder sphere of life and light.

Muir, *Ibid.*, p. 32.

The translator compares Euripides (Supp.
532 ff.) :

"Οθεν δ' ἕκαστον εἰς τὸ σῶμ' ἀφικετο,
'Ενταυθ' ἀπελθεῖν, πνεῦμα μὲν πρὸς αἰθέρα,
Τὸ σῶμα δ' εἰς γῆν.

("But each element of the body has departed to the quarter whence it came, the breath to the other, the body itself to the earth.")

After this we come to the period of the Epics and Puranic philosophy. This period may be said to witness the early development of the six orthodox systems of Indian Philosophy, mentioned in a subsequent chapter, and doubtless also the Bhagavad-Gita, which will be referred to shortly. This period is chiefly noted for the rise of two gods to the highest rank, viz., Vishnu and Siva, who with Brahma form the Hindoo Trinit, or Triad. These three gods are usually represented as one body with three heads. In the middle is that of Brahma, at its right of Vishnu, and at its left that of Siva. The symbol of this triad is the mystic syllable OM. This is a Sanskrit word which acquired much importance in the early development of the Hindoo religion. While at first simply meaning assent or solemn affirmation, it later became an auspicious word of prayer which had to be uttered by the teachers before beginning to read the sacred writings. At length it came to be looked upon as the abbreviated method of naming the Hindoo Trinity, without taking the trouble to repeat the names of three gods. The syllable was

even adopted by the Buddhists, and forms the first word of the prayer which is taught to Buddhist children, but which no one has yet succeeded in interpreting—"Om Mani Padme hum."

CHAPTER III

Later Brahmanism — The Bhagavad-Gita — Krishna—
Development of Krishnaism—Krishna and the New
Testament—Religious system of the Bhagavad-Gita
—Chandals—Pariahs.

ONE of the most popular books in India, the Bhagavad-Gita, is read by practically all castes and creeds of Hindoos ; for it forms the basis of popular Hinduism — modern Hinduism being a corrupt form of the ancient Vedism, influenced to some small extent by the cult of the Buddhists. The word “Bhagavad-Gita” means “The Song of the Adored One” or the “Divine Lay,” Bhagavad, “the Adored One,” being a term applied to Krishna, when he is identified with the deity—hence the expression “Krishnaism,” which is so often used when speaking of the faith outlined in the Bhagavad-Gita. Although nominally a part of the epic poem, the Mahabharata, there is no connecting-link between the Bhagavad-Gita and the other works which go to make up this long epic. Modern critics are therefore inclined to believe that it was added at a relatively late date to give it the authority of divine inspiration and antiquity. The name of

the author is not known ; but the book was probably written—or, at all events, parts were added to it—about the first century of our era. Many of the thoughts and ideas in it are to be found in the New Testament, from which some scholars have concluded that the later additions to the work were taken from the Christian gospels ; though others, with much more evidence to justify their views, hold that parts of the New Testament were borrowed from the Bhagavad-Gita. Krishna says, for example : “ Whatever thou doest, whatever thou eatest, whatever thou sacrificest, whatever thou givest away, whatever mortification thou performest, do all as if to me ” (ix. 27), with which compare 1 Cor. x. 31 : “ Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” Again, Krishna says : “ I am the beginning, the middle, the end, the eternal time, the birth, the death, of all.” Compare this with Christ’s words in Revelation i. 17-18 : “ And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not ; I am the first and the last : I am he that liveth and was dead ; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen, and have the keys of hell and of death.” “ Be not sorrowful ;

from all thy sins I will deliver thee," says Krishna. "Be of good cheer ; thy sins be forgiven thee," we read in Matt. ix. 2. Then, too, the transfiguration of Krishna in the eleventh book of the Bhagavad-Gita is described in terms not unlike those used in connection with the Transfiguration of Christ. Another remarkable coincidence is Krishna's description of Heaven : "In which neither sun nor moon has need to shine ; for all the lustre it possesses is mine." The heaven described in Revelation xxi. 23, is a city which "had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it ; for the glory of God did lighten it."

Since the main theme of the Mahabharata is the war between the Indian tribes of the Kurus and Pandus, the author of the Bhagavad-Gita, in order that his poem might appear to form an integral part of the great epic, began it with a description of the battlefield and the warriors. It is worthy of note that the scene of the struggle is laid at Kurukshetra, east of the Jumna, and in the upper part of the district called Doab, the capital of which was Hastinapura, identified with the modern Delhi—in other words, it was at that time one of the strongholds of Buddhism. The opening scene of the poem is the battlefield, and long

colloquies take place among the leaders to put the reader in possession of the rather complicated births, deaths and intermarriages leading up to the main theme. Another New Testament analogy occurs in these preliminary speeches ; for some Indian Herod is described as having put to death all the first-born in a certain district. Then the two principal personages are introduced, Krishna and his disciple Arjuna, and their subsequent dialogue develops the conception of the supreme deity, Krishna himself being, broadly speaking, the god turned man who created the world.

Krishna, according to the Bhagavad-Gita, is the supreme god. He is above all other gods, such as Brahma, Vishnu and Siva : further, he is the "only existence, the only real substance of all things." "I am the cause of the production and destruction of the whole universe." "There exists nothing superior to me." "I am the origin of all gods, the great Lord of the world without beginning." "I am the eternal seed of all things that exist." "I have established and continue to establish the universe by one portion of myself."¹

On the other hand the Vishnu-Purana, one

¹ I quote these sentences from Maurice Phillips' *The Bhagavad-Gita*, Madras, 1893.

of the sacred books of the Hindoos, represents Krishna from two aspects: (1) as a warrior-king; and (2) as the incarnation of Vishnu, although in the course of the book Krishna explicitly claims superiority over Vishnu. As a boy, it appears, Krishna was very unruly, and many of his pranks remind us of the story of Hercules and the serpents. Later on he urged the cowherds to leave off worshipping Indra, the god of rain, and to worship the cows which supported them, instead of the grass on the mountain that supported the cows. Angered at this, Indra opened the gates of heaven and would have deluged the whole earth, had not Krishna lifted the mountain, Govardhana, and held it above his head like an umbrella. Later events in his career include his marriage with 16,000 women, by whom he had 180,000 sons, an attack on the gods, whom he defeated, and the destruction of the city of Benares, after which latter feat he was accidentally shot dead by a hunter in somewhat similar circumstances to those in which William Rufus met his fate. Such was Krishna the warrior, and in the minds of the devout he is always distinguished by the qualities of Vishnu, which, it may be added, was formerly one of the names of the sun.

According to the Bhagavad-Gita, the

world is not a creation, but was produced by Krishna from his own nature (Prakriti). He says : " All things exist in me. Supported by my material essence, I cause this entire system of existing things to emanate again and again, without any power of their own, by the power of this material essence. When a devotee recognises the individual essence of everything to be comprehended in one and to be only an emanation from it, he then attains to the supreme spirit. Earth, water, fire, wind, ether, heart, intellect, and egoism ; into these eight components is my nature (Prakriti) divided. This nature is an inferior one ; but learn my superior nature other than this, of a vital kind, by means of which this universe is sustained. Understand that all things are produced from this latter, or higher, nature." In its complete development the doctrine adds fifteen component parts to the eight mentioned above, designating the inferior nature as *avyakta*, or non-developed matter, which is turned into *vyakta*, or developed matter, by the superior nature.

Such is a brief outline of the explanation of the origin of the world given in the *Bhagavad-Gita*, but it must be remembered that almost as many Indian commentaries have been written

upon it as on the New Testament, and to as little purpose.

Man, according to this Hindoo Bible, is composed of an eternal immortal soul, an emanation from Krishna's superior nature, and of a mortal and perishable body, derived from Krishna's inferior nature. The soul is subject to transmigration from body to body (as in Buddhism or Brahmanism) until it is finally absorbed again into Krishna's "essence," which, of course, is but another conception of Nirvana. The only real existence is spirit, which is eternal. What we call matter does not exist at all; it is only the delusion of Maya, the mystic power by which Krishna, the supreme god, has created an ephemeral world, which *seems* to be but *is* not. "Krishna" is indestructible. "As a man abandons worn-out clothes and dons new ones, so the soul leaves worn-out bodies and enters other new ones."

Nature (Prakriti) is composed of three qualities (Gunas), goodness, passion, and ignorance (Sattwa, Rajas, and Tamas), and the soul, being united with nature, comes under their influence. Hence these qualities mentioned unite the soul with illusion and bring about transmigration. And God (Krishna) is responsible for all our actions, good or evil; for "all

qualities (Gunas), whether goodness (Sattwa), passion (Rajas), or ignorance and darkness (Tamas) proceed from me." Thus is the question of free-will disposed of.

The caste system is divine according to the teaching of the Bhagavad-Gita; "Krishna is the creator of the institution of the four castes according to the distribution of natural qualities and actions. The Brahman has a preponderance of goodness, the Kshatriya (warrior) of goodness and passion, the Vaisya (*i.e.*, the merchant and husbandmen-class) of passion and darkness (*i.e.*, ignorance), and the Sudra of darkness alone." The actions of the first are knowledge, prayer, inspiration, and self-restraint; of the second, sovereignty and protection of the people; of the third, commerce and agriculture; of the fourth, servitude.¹ Such is the system, admirable at all events in theory, of Indian society. The main objection made to it by the Christian missionaries is a characteristic one; that it is contrary to the "brotherhood of man"—and this, in the eyes of a modern thinker, is its chief advantage and salient merit. Men are not born equal, they do not grow up equal, they never become

¹ Maurice Phillips has given the most concise summary of this section of the Bhagavad-Gita in his book already quoted.

equal ; and a religious system which is based on the equality of mankind is naturally founded on an essential fallacy from the very beginning.

To the author of the Bhagavad-Gita, salvation is the release of the soul from the bond of illusory matter and from the influence of the three "qualities" mentioned above. The best way of effecting this release is by meditation ; a man is to go about his business as usual, but at the same time he should constantly meditate on the supreme being until he is fit to be absorbed into him. The writer of the Bhagavad-Gita endeavoured to reconcile the ascetic Inanayoga of Kapila and the Yoga of Patanjali with action, for the nature of asceticism proved so attractive to the Hindoos that everyone wanted to become an ascetic and thus society for a time threatened to be entirely disorganised. The Bhagavad-Gita shows that it is impossible for a man to live without action, and imposed upon all the castes the obligation of regularly performing their prescribed duties, while at the same time renouncing the world as much as possible. To this end the passions should be subdued, and certain rules are given to show how this may be done : " A devotee should always exercise himself, remaining in seclusion and solitude,

restraining his thoughts, without indulging hopes and without possessions, keeping a couch for himself in an undefiled spot, not too lofty or too low. Then, fixing his heart on the supreme being, restraining his thoughts, senses, and actions, he should practise devotion for the purification of his soul. Holding his body, head, and neck, all even and immovable, firmly seated ; regarding only the tip of his nose, and not looking round in different directions, the devotee should remain quiet with passionless soul, free from anxiety, and intent on me [Krishna]. . . . Hear my supreme words, most sacred of all. Thou art very much beloved of me, and therefore I will tell thee what is good. Place thy affections on me, worship me, sacrifice to me, and reverence me. Seek me as thy refuge, and I will deliver thee from all sin."

Pantheism, of course, is an essential doctrine of this book. All things are emanations from God (Krishna): therefore, no matter what things may be worshipped, he is worshipped in them. The teachings, however, apply only to the four castes mentioned, and leave altogether out of account the Pariahs and Chandalas, the outcasts who are altogether beyond the pale.¹

¹ Chandal, or Chandala, is the name of a caste which was said to have sprung from the union of a Sudra man and a Brahma woman.

Such, then, is a condensed summary of the remarkable Bhagavad-Gita. We may compare it to some extent with the Koran : it was devised in a fairly later period of religious history to satisfy the pressing needs of a certain large class of people ; it clearly originated in an aristocratic source, as did Mohammed ; written by a man, it was ascribed to, and believed to be the work of, God ; and many of its texts and incidents are taken from older works. But the analogy will not go much further. The Bhagavad-Gita is nihilistic, and the faith outlined in it suffers from the lack of a single concentrated deity to superintend a host of minor gods. Then again the magnificent fighting spirit of Mohammed is absent, and the glowing Arabic frenzy of the Prophet of Allah is ill-compensated by transmigration, Nirvana, and finally extinction.

As this was regarded as the worst possible form of pollution, all the descendants of the couple were regarded as outcasts. The Laws of Manu refer to the Chandala as the lowest of mankind, and ordain that he shall live strictly apart from the four regular castes, his clothes to be those of dead men, and his sole possession dogs and asses. In some places, e.g., Bengal, the Chandala is employed for labouring work, but sleeps and eats by himself, while they are also to be found as palanquin-bearers and gardeners. Pariah is a corruption of the Tamil word Paraiyan, applied to a man practically corresponding to the Sanskrit Chandala. The original occupation of these outcasts was that of beating the *parai*, or tom-tom, at funerals or other solemn occasions. Chandala must not be confused with Chandel, the name of a Rajput tribe, with Chandeli, a fine sort of cotton cloth, or with Chandla, a small ornament usually worn on the forehead.

CHAPTER IV

The rise of Buddhism—Religion in theory and practice—
Birth of the Buddha—His early years—Studies and
temptations—His system of propagating the faith—
Illness and Death—Character of the Buddha—Euro-
pean Influence of Buddhism

THE position of the Brahman domination about 600 B.C. may not unreasonably be compared to that of the Roman Empire in the first century of our era. A superabundance of energy extending over a long period of time seemed to have spent itself, and an age of mediocrity had set in. Life had become more complicated. The beautiful nature-worship of a pagan time had given place to an intricate system of gods. Faith had yielded to cynicism ; an age of creative minds was replaced by an age of commentators ; grammarians and pedants had taken the place of poets and dramatists. The spiritual rout of the Roman Empire was completed by the introduction of Christianity, which, acting up to its essential principle of upholding the weak against the strong, overawed the relatively few wealthy and energetic Roman nobles who remained by solemn tales of their eternal dam-

nation in the world to come. Women were little by little exalted to the level of men, the slave was as good as his master, the wretched cripple, the imbecile, the dunce, were equal in the sight of God to the strong, the mentally and physically creative, the energetic, and the powerful.

A somewhat similar narcotic was injected into Brahmanism in the sixth century B.C. True, the Brahman and the Roman noble differed in their vitality, their creativeness, and their outlook on life to an almost infinite extent; but the Indian system of faith had at all events one enormous advantage: it upheld the caste system under the severest penalties. But for the religious poison which caused the highest caste to look forward to extinction, with the most profound pessimism, as the final boon, the last refuge, it might have been recorded to the credit of the Brahmans that they continuously upheld a society which was almost perfect in its organisation. We have the broad basis of servitude, upon which, as Nietzsche justly remarks, all culture must be founded. Next in the scale come the merchants, farmers, and skilled workmen. Then, still ascending, we have the kings and warriors, the ruling and the military caste. But, instead of the highest

caste of all being creative, constantly engaged in forming fresh moral values, as Nietzsche suggests in *Der Antichrist*, we have a caste which commits the greatest of crimes by denying life—not merely life on this earth, in accordance with Christian moral values ; but all life. There is to be no future existence except in the form of transmigration, and, if our deeds in our present state are “good,” we may expect to go through life again in a “better” form ; but the ultimate aim held out by the Brahman is utter extinction. We have no soul. We have nothing to look forward to. Life is a burden which it is not worth while to bear ; and our sole aim should be to get entirely rid of it as quickly as we possibly can.

No religion, of course, works out exactly in practice as it does in theory ; and in spite of all this depressing teaching battles were fought, literature of a sort was gradually formed, and merchants cheated one another just as they do in Christian countries at the present day. Kings and warriors kept clients and followers, and the Brahman himself was often a welcome guest at the table of the great man belonging to the caste immediately beneath him. Certain religious rites had been invented, which, though not obligatory, were held to be efficacious in

securing the Hindoo's speedy annihilation. These ceremonies necessitated the presence of representatives of the priestly caste, and, if we may trust the commentators on the Vedas, they were not performed without a series of feasts, extending, in some cases, over three weeks, or without sums of money changing hands. (The analogy in the Roman Catholic religion of paying for masses, which, though not essential, are desirable in order that release from Purgatory may be secured sooner than would otherwise be the case, will at once occur to the reader.) Less elaborate rites were apportioned to the merchant class; and thus for thousands of years the natural vitality of the race, due, in the first instance to the warrior caste, enabled the development of the tribe to be carried on for many generations. The seizure of the supreme power by the Brahmans, however, gradually checked this development in the course of ages, and it wanted but the overthrow of the caste system to degrade Brahmanism to as low a level as it was possible for it to reach. An assailant of the old order of things was soon destined to appear.

One of the ruling chieftains of the numerous tribes into which the Aryans were now split up was the Rajah Suddhodana. His people,

known as the Sakyas, occupied the district of Kapilavastu, not far from Benares. The two principal wives of the Rajah, both of whom were the daughters of a neighbouring chieftain, were long thought to be barren; but the elder sister, Mahamaya, when just over forty years of age, bore her husband a son. It is related that she was on her way to her parents' home, where she wished to give birth to the child, when, as the party halted on the way under the shade of some trees, her son, the future Buddha, and deadly opponent of the Brahmans, unexpectedly came into the world—that world and life which he afterwards came to look upon with loathing and contempt, and from which, by diligent study and learning, he endeavoured to save his own and succeeding generations.

The *Lalita-Vistara*, an old Sanskrit work containing an account of Buddha's life, gives a long list of the qualities of the teacher's mother; but these may merely form part of the legends which grew up around his name a few years after his death. "The ravishing wife of Suddhodana," so begins the narrative, "is one of a thousand, for she has attained perfection. Bewitching the hearts of all who see her, like some queen of an illusive fairyland,

she is known as Mahamaya or Maya-Devi, the queen of illusion. Her beauty is perfect, like that of a child of the gods; the shape of her body is faultless. She is carried away by affection, and at times aroused with anger; but throughout she remains ever amiable, sweet, just, and good. Modest and chaste, she observes the Law. She exhibits neither pride nor frivolity; lying and deceit are unknown to her. The faults that may easily be found in other women do not exist in her. She practises the penances called for by the Law. With the consent of the king, she has obtained the privilege of not submitting to sexual intercourse with him for the period of thirty-two months. . . . No man can look upon this woman with amorous desire; and on account of the good works of the queen the great family of the king continues to prosper."

The qualities ascribed to the mother of Buddha may be compared by the curious with those ascribed five centuries later to the Virgin Mary, and for purposes of comparison a few of the other legends which were circulated concerning the Buddha from time to time are well worth giving. One tradition states that the queen died seven days after having given birth to the child, "For alas! having once been the

primary dwelling-place of the Buddha, the good queen's body was too sacred a place to bear another human burden on any future occasion." The young prince was said to be provided with the thirty-two characteristics of a great man, and with the eighty secondary characteristics. A few of these are chronicled in the *Lalita-Vistara*. "The young Siddhartha possesses a large skull. His forehead is broad, his eyes dark. His forty teeth are equal and beautifully white, his skin is fine and of the colour of gold. His limbs are like those of Ainaya, the king of the gazelles ; his hands and feet are small and delicate. His head is well shaped ; his hair black and curly." Other legends, obviously inventions based on some greatly exaggerated truth, inform us that the Buddha was born with a full set of teeth, and that he spoke from his mother's womb seven days before birth.

The child's family name was Gautama, by which the saint was usually known in his lifetime, the name Siddhartha mentioned in the tradition given above being prefixed by the family. We also find him referred to as Sakya-muni, from the tribe over which his father ruled. When nineteen years of age Gautama married his cousin Yasodhara, and for several

years, in the intervals of deep studies, lived the customary life of pleasure usually associated in the western mind with Oriental princes. Then we come to the well-known anecdote concerning the awakening of his religious instinct. We learn that, in his thirtieth year, as he was being driven through his estates, he caught sight of an infirm man bent down by extreme old age. On another occasion, soon afterwards, he beheld a man who was suffering from some loathsome disease, and a few months later his attention was drawn to the spectacle of a decomposing corpse. On each occasion his charioteer, a man named Channa, who seems to have been something of a lugubrious philosopher, told him that this was the fate of all living things. Some weeks after having seen the corpse, it is said, he met with an ascetic, who explained to him the ascetic philosophy of the Brahmans.

There is a certain amount of variation in these anecdotes, numbers of which were invented and circulated about the Buddha from time to time. A few chronicles, for example, add that on the three occasions mentioned above it was really an angel who appeared to Gautama in the guise of an old man, a corpse, etc. The general trend of such stories, however, is

sufficient to show that, when about twenty-nine or thirty years of age, Gautama's mind was suddenly, or, it may be, gradually, awakened to the influence of religion. When bathing in the river after an earnest conversation with the ascetic Brahman, news was brought to him that his wife had given birth to a son, and he is said to have muttered something about having now a stronger bond to break. During the remainder of the evening he found himself obliged to take part in the rejoicings to which the event gave rise ; but at midnight, having taken a final look at his wife and child, he ordered Channa to saddle his horse. Then, with his charioteer as his sole companion, he left his palace, saying, it is related, that he would not return until he had become the Buddha—*i.e.*, the enlightened one. This flight is chronicled as having taken place in midsummer.

The next event recorded of Gautama is one which cannot fail to remind us of a somewhat similar incident in the New Testament. The Tempter, Mara, appears to him and urges him, with many blandishments and promises, to return. Although the attempt fails, Mara consoles himself with the thought that he will obtain complete control over the prince when

the latter is seized with some sensual feeling or angry wish. On the following morning a halt was made on the bank of the Anoma, and here the prince cut off his flowing hair—one indication of his high rank—and took off his ornaments, sending them back to his father's palace in charge of his servant Channa, together with his horse. A shrine was afterwards erected at this spot. A visit to two Brahman teachers, Alara and Udraka, followed, and when Gautama, in the course of the seven years prescribed by the custom of the period, had learnt all that was known about Hindoo philosophy, he retired to the jungle of Uruvela in the Vindhya mountains and led the life of a strict ascetic for six years. So severe was the treatment he meted out to himself that his fame as an ascetic spread "like the sound of a huge bell suspended in the belfry of heaven." This led to a breakdown, and for some time the teacher felt constrained to live more rationally.

And now came Gautama's great period of temptation. It lasted less than twenty-four hours; but the whole event has become almost obliterated under a heap of legends and incredible stories. Briefly, Gautama seems to have reasoned with himself in an endeavour to weigh what he had given up, what he had gained by

it, and whether the one balanced the other. He had lost home, wife, child, wealth, princely rank ; but, although he had almost killed himself by severe penance, deep studies, and intense thinking, he had not yet attained to the wisdom which raised man above the gods. Even five young disciples who had joined him in the jungle left him when his health broke down. The Brahman philosophy had taught him that everything—the earth itself, and every man and animal on it—carried within itself the germs of bitterness and impermanency ; but now he felt the want of the power and comforts he had given up, and he began to doubt the value of what he had actually accomplished. All this meditation took place on the banks of the Nairanjara, under a tree which was known long afterwards as the sacred Bo tree, or tree of wisdom. As the sun was setting, however, the religious instinct of the man prevailed, and he decided against the joys of the earth.

Henceforth Gautama's way of life was definitely established : when he rose he was the Buddha, the Illuminated ; and it was now his task to spread among the rest of mankind the happiness he had acquired. If the traditions recorded in the Buddhist writings can be trusted,

Gautama was at this period a little over forty years of age.

As might have been expected, a crop of legends grew up around the subject of the temptation to which the Buddha had been exposed under the Bo tree; and Mara, the supreme tempter, was said to have made several final efforts to seduce him from his high ideal. This led to as great an explosion of wrath as a Buddhist could be expected to reach. "Soon shall I vanquish thee!" cries the saint; "the passions are thy first army, discontent the second, hunger and thirst the third, avarice the fourth. Idleness and indolence form the fifth; fear is the sixth, doubt the seventh, anger and hypocrisy the eighth. Ambition and praise, the admiration of men, falsely-acquired renown, glorification of self and depreciation of others: all these combine to form the allied forces of the demon, and this is thine army that conquers the world. But I will crush it by means of wisdom, as a lump of clay crumbles to pieces when washed by the rolling stream."

Having tried all other means in vain, Mara as a last resort sends a bevy of young women, ideally beautiful, to surround the saint and tempt his virtue, in the hope that, as Gautama

must be greatly weakened in body and mind by long fasting and meditation, he will yield to feminine charms when all other means of temptation have proved unavailing. The *Lalita-Vistara* describes at almost wearisome length the beauty of the nymphs, the songs they sing, their dances, and the calm words in which the saint replies to them. "Ah! between griefs and passions the difference is not great, and the passions are at the roots of all the griefs which little by little destroy contemplation, that supernatural power. Impossible, say the sages, to satisfy one's desire for women. But I, by means of wisdom, can satisfy this desire in myself and others. The passions, left to themselves, go on increasing, like the thirst of a man who has drunk salt water, and a man who gives himself up to them is useful neither to himself nor to others."

Heedless of the sage's refusal to yield to them, the nymphs continue their song in praise of lust. "What man is there who could refuse to be tempted by so much beauty? Behold our long hair, perfumed by the sweetest scents, our dark eyes, our beautiful teeth, our ornaments of gold . . ."

But the saint interrupts: "The passions

are inconstant and impermanent, like the drop of dew on a blade of grass. Your bodies, beautiful to you, are in my sight unclean and impure, soon to be eaten by worms, filled with grief: while wisdom will assure me all that imperishable dignity held in reverence by the wise."

The end of this temptation is spoken of in the *Lalita-Vistara*, in the very words used by the Buddha himself to his disciple, Ananda. "Since it was impossible for Mara to tempt me with beautiful women, he endeavoured to make me stray from my path by appearing himself in a different form, and trying to make me believe that I had already entered into Nirvana. Standing upright beside me, Ananda, Mara spoke thus: 'Now, O sublime one, enter into Nirvana! Now has Nirvana come to thee, thou perfect one.' But when I heard these words, O Ananda, I answered: 'I will not enter into Nirvana, O Mara, until I have gained disciples for myself, and wise monks, who will gradually come to understand my doctrine, and who will be able to spread and propagate in distant lands what they have heard from the lips of their master. Then, O tempter, will I enter into Nirvana, but not before.'"

After the departure of the angry Mara, the Buddha fell into a reverie on the subject of penance, and was not comforted until the archangel Brahma came and explained away his doubts. We learn, at all events, that he ever afterwards declared to his disciples and followers that such great self-mortification as he had passed through was unnecessary, and that extreme penance was of but little value. Having fasted in the neighbourhood of the Bo tree for seven days and nights, his wants being supplied by the angel Brahma, the Buddha set out to preach his gospel. As might naturally be expected, he met with but poor success at first, but neither the ill-concealed contempt of his former disciples nor the scoffing of his old acquaintances was sufficient to damp his prophetic ardour.

Having spent some time near Benares and gathered around him fifty or sixty followers, the Buddha fell in with the five disciples who had accompanied him for some time in the jungle. They now rejoined him, with many protestations of devotion, and were selected, together with a few others, to travel through different parts of the country and spread the new teaching. This selection and distribution of disciples was a plan which the Buddha

adopted every year, a certain number of the more advanced and intelligent pupils being chosen, specially instructed, and despatched as missionaries to distant towns and provinces.

After the Buddha had spent a year or two in teaching his new doctrine, it came to the ears of his father the Rajah Suddhodana, that his son had forsaken his ascetic life to become a teacher. He therefore sent for the former prince and begged him to return home. An affecting interview took place on the outskirts of Kapilavastu between Gautama and the various members of his family ; but it ended in the teacher's starting to beg his bread as usual, in accordance with the custom he had laid down for himself. Ashamed of this, the Rajah urgently begged his son to come to the palace, if only to see his wife and child. Apparently this wish was acceded to, and we learn that a pathetic scene took place between Gautama and his wife. The latter, it seems, long afterwards became one of the Buddhist nuns when the founder of the religion was persuaded, somewhat against his own views, to establish such an order for females.

We do not possess very complete records of what happened at the palace after Gautama's return ; nor, indeed, so far as the development

of his faith is concerned, is this of very great importance. It would appear that he took full advantage of the liberty offered him to make further converts, including in the number his own son. This greatly distressed his father, who thus saw himself shorn of any hope of a successor to the throne. By way of securing other families from a similar calamity, he obtained an assurance from the Buddha that in future no young person would be admitted to membership of the society without the consent of his parents.

From this time forward, unfortunately, we have no very connected accounts concerning the future career of the teacher. Several alleged sayings of his have been recorded, and there are numerous anecdotes about him ; but it is now difficult, after the lapse of twenty-four centuries, to distinguish the true from the false, except in a very few cases. These confused accounts, however, grow clearer when we come to the last few weeks of the Buddha's life, though even then little is reported beyond the bare facts. When nearly eighty-two years old (about 420 B.C.), he set out from Pawa to travel to Kusinagara, 120 miles to the north-west of Benares. Several stoppages had to be made on the way, owing to the teacher's

declining health, and it was some days before the River Hiranyavati, close to their destination, was reached. Here the party rested again, and Gautama had a long conversation with his disciple Ananda regarding certain rules to be observed by the Society of Buddhists. In the course of this conversation, however, Ananda observed that a brilliant light seemed to be surrounding his master, and a garment of golden cloth offered earlier in the day by another fervent disciple of the Buddha seemed to lose colour by comparison. Astonished, Ananda referred to the phenomenon, and the sage said quietly: "What you observe is right and proper, Ananda. The Buddha is twice transfigured in his earthly career: once on the evening of the day he attains supremest wisdom, and a second time in the night when he enters into eternal peace. And it is now, Ananda, in the third hour of the night, that the Buddha is going to enter into eternal peace." During the night, as the teacher lay dying, celestial hymns were heard from afar, and strange forms were visible in the heavens. At the last moment Gautama summoned his disciples, and, finding they had no further questions to ask him, he uttered the words: "Always remember what I

have told you ; everything that is born is perishable. Endeavour, therefore, to act in such a way as to merit deliverance." These were his last words. When Ananda softly approached the couch to see whether his master slept or lay awake, he found that the Buddha "had fallen into the profound ecstasy of the elect from which no man returns or is born again : no, not one."

Gautama the Buddha was a man of an unusually high order of intellect, but his goodness and charity, as Lafont and others have pointed out, far outweighed his merely intellectual qualities. His long years of study and meditation led him to the conclusion that penance was useless and that science was available only to a few select minds. Then, with the object of setting common mortals on the road to "salvation" (in the Buddhist sense of this word, *i.e.*, Nirvana, or utter extinction), and of sparing them as much as possible from the sufferings which are necessarily inflicted by life in this world (or in our next existence after our reincarnation), he established his system of morality on the basis of a material life ; the repression of the senses, the purity of body and "soul," and a spirit of universal charity, developing human sensitiveness to the extent

of making his followers respect the lives of even the most insignificant animals—because, of course, even a mouse or a flea might once have been a fellow-creature, reincarnated in this form owing to his misdeeds in a former life. If, therefore, we do not find the metaphysics of Buddhism developed to the same extent as the metaphysics of Brahmanism, or even of Christianity, we must remember that this is not due to insusceptibility of development, but merely because the founder of the Buddhist faith paid more attention to certain other qualities which he deemed of greater benefit for the human race.

Nor does Buddha think it necessary to concern himself about the Cosmos: it is not worth while, in his opinion, trying to find out how the world came into existence. He would sternly restrict himself to an explanation of his belief. "My law is a law of mercy for all. And what kind of a law is this? It is a law under which the very beggars can become saints." (A far cry, this, from the stringent, aristocratic caste system of the Brahmans, who refused to be polluted with the lower orders!) But even the beggar must first show himself capable of self-control. "Let him not despise what he has received, or ever envy others: a

mendicant who envies others does not obtain peace of mind.”¹ “For self is the law of self, self is the refuge of self; therefore curb thyself as a merchant curbs his horse.”²

At other times the Buddha's disciples torment him with questions about eternity and definitions of the ego. But he refuses to be drawn. “Why has not the Buddha taught his followers whether the world is finite or infinite, whether the saint continues to live or not in the Beyond? Because the mere knowledge of these things does not lead to any progress in sanctity, because such knowledge does not necessarily conduce to spiritual peace and illumination. But the Buddha does teach that which leads to spiritual peace and illumination: he teaches the truth about pain, the truth about the origin of pain, about the suppression of pain, about the path leading to the suppression of pain. Hence, let that which has not been revealed by me remain unrevealed, and that which has been revealed by me remain revealed!” No explanation of the ego can be had from him. “The mind has come into existence by means of unfathomable mystery, and it is useless to try to discover what this

¹ *Dhammapadha*: Beal's translation, p. 22.

² *Ibid.*, page 24.

mystery is. The monk who is striving to secure the safety of his soul has something else to do."

Indeed, this attitude of the teacher partly serves to explain the success of Buddhism among different races. Gautama's aim was to found a practical morality on the basis of material existence and self-control. There are many differences in the principles upon which professedly Buddhistic nations have erected their own religious structure ; but in all cases the faith seems to have exercised a remarkable influence for good in the populations among which it penetrated. The activity of the Buddhist missionaries has only within recent years become properly known. Not long after the master's death earnest disciples were spreading the faith in Thibet. In a generation or two converts had been made in Ceylon, Burmah, China, and Tartary. In later years the Chinese carried the new doctrine into Japan, where, as we shall see, it absorbed the old gods. The activity of these enthusiasts, however, did not end here. With all the zeal and none of the intolerance displayed by the Jesuits after the founding of their order, the Buddhist disciples spread over the known world. The faith was propagated so far away

as Egypt and Abyssinia ; and Léon de Rosny, Lafont, and other eminent authorities, are inclined to hold that traces of it were found long afterwards among the natives of Mexico. Places so far apart as Australia and the Balkans appear to have fallen under the influence of the Buddhists even so early as the time when Pontius Pilate was just setting out for the East to take up his appointment as fifth Roman Procurator of Judæa and Samaria.

If the metaphysical part of Buddhism, however, was not fully developed by the founder, there is no doubt that it has exercised a powerful influence on men of different calibre. The "intellectuals" of Siam and Japan look upon Buddhism at the present day as a philosophy rather than as a faith ; but the best-known example of intellectual Buddhism is, of course, the German philosopher, Arthur Schopenhauer.

CHAPTER V

Buddhism continued. Nirvana — Transmigration — Commandments for monks and laymen—Relics of Buddha — Distinction between Buddhism and Christianity—King Asoka the Buddhist—The Edicts of Asoka—Bureaucracy foiled—Buddhistic writings.

ACCORDING to the Buddhist teaching, everything corporeal is material. It is, therefore, non-permanent, carrying within itself as it does the elements of dissolution. So long as man is linked to the material world he will be possessed of constantly unsatisfied desires, weariness, pain, and care. All this cannot be overcome by a form of penance which merely punishes the body ; it is a man's evil heart which binds him down to this bodily life. Nor yet does it make much difference if he endeavours to follow a virtuous path ; for a certain proportion of evil is left, and this fact itself ensures that a virtuous man will merely lead a higher form of material life after his re-birth. What is necessary is to free man entirely from all evil, which alone will enable him to attain Nirvana, *i.e.*, complete annihilation. The bases of the Buddhist creed, drawn up by the founder himself, are contained in the "four great

truths," which have been summed up by various authorities :—

- (1) Misery invariably accompanies existence.
- (2) Every type of existence, whether of man or of animals, results from passion or desire.
- (3) There is no freedom from existence but by the annihilation of desire.
- (4) Desire may be destroyed by following the "eight paths" leading to Nirvana.

These "eight" paths are right views, right feelings, right words, right behaviour, right exertion, right obedience, right memory, and right meditation. The natural state of the individual, as has been mentioned a few pages before, is to be born again and again, each time in a fresh incarnation, but seeing that misery invariably accompanies all existence, the great object of the individual should be to act in such a way in his present life as not to necessitate his being born again. The only thing permanent is the individual's "karma," *i.e.*, his actions and thoughts in this life, which decide which form his incarnation shall take in his future existence. This notion, which is common to Brahmanism and Buddhism, though greatly accentuated in the latter faith,

may well explain to us why Eastern peoples, like the Hindoos, Chinese, and Japanese, show so little fear of death and set so little value upon life ; for they cherish the belief that the soul, if taken away from its present dwelling, will at once find another, and there is always the possibility that the new one will be better than the old.

When developing these eight theoretical paths to Nirvana into a set of precepts applicable to everyday life, the Buddha looked upon men as being divided into two classes, the monks and teachers (Sramanas) and the laymen engaged in ordinary employment. Although the latter have too many ties to life to secure emancipation from it at the end of their present existence, there are nevertheless certain rules which are binding upon them as well as upon the monks. They may not kill, steal, lie, commit adultery, or become intoxicated. The monks, in addition to obeying these five commandments, must bear in mind five others : to abstain from all food after midday, from songs and dances, etc., from personal adornments, from luxurious couches, and from accepting presents of gold and silver for their personal use. There are also many severe monastic rules. The Buddhist monks must dress in rags, which they must sew together

themselves, and for a part of the year they are compelled to live in forests, sitting on a carpet under the shadow of a tree, being forbidden by the regulations even to lie down to sleep. They must also exhibit charity, benevolence and kindness to animals.

Although the Buddha is supposed by his followers to have attained to Nirvana and thus to be no longer in existence, statues of him form the central object of all Buddhist temples. Here he continues to be worshipped, and incense, flowers and fruits are offered to him daily. This does not necessarily mean idolatry of any kind, however, for the disciples of the great teacher never actually looked upon him as a god. Gautama was merely the latest Buddha, the Buddha of the present cycle. It is believed that there were twenty-four Buddhas previously to his appearance on earth, and that, when at the end of the present cycle of existence all things are reduced to their primal elements and another world springs up, a further Buddha will be born to preach the gospel of Nirvana in a new universe. It follows therefore that the service celebrated in the Buddhist temples is not worship in the Christian or Judaic sense of the word, but is merely commemorative, the sight of the

numerous relics of the Illuminated One serving as an encouragement for men to follow in the path which he trod centuries ago. Among these relics, by the way, is said to be one of Buddha's teeth. This is a piece of ivory about an inch long. It is preserved in Ceylon and is very rarely exhibited.

It is clear from the Buddha's own writings and sayings, and from the traditions which have come down to us respecting him, that his learning, however it may have been acquired, was superior to that of most men of his age. His works show traces of profound study ; similes, metaphors, analogies come aptly to him. Whatever the modern philosopher may think of Buddhism as a stage in the solution of world-problems, it must not be overlooked that every religion does not represent the highest form of a philosophical system, but the lowest form ; for, in order to succeed and gain ground, it must appeal to the unintelligent and unthinking masses. "Every law-giver," says Lafont, "must make an abstract of his intelligence and wisdom to find a formula applicable to all, and it is in this sense that he must be judged superior to his doctrine."

It is easy to see that the salient characteristic of

Gautama is goodness. Touched by compassion for the misfortunes of humanity, he gave up his *rôle* of philosopher and reasoner; greatly affected by the sight of the low castes, the innumerable woes they had to endure in this life, and their long successions of painful transformations in lives to come, this Brahman and prince endeavoured to find a formula which should save all men. In this he bears a striking resemblance to the Christ of five centuries later, and the likeness between the two is increased when we remember that Buddha called round him, not the rich men and the nobles, but the poor and lowly. Unlike Christ, however, Buddha did not openly and covertly appeal to the cupidity of the poor and their envy of the rich, thus starting a class warfare which has endured in Christian countries to this day. It may possibly, for example, be as difficult for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven as for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle; but Buddha saw no reason for mentioning this fact and using it as a weapon of religious propaganda. The fewer man's wants, the better, was the doctrine of the Indian teacher, and he preached it with such good effect that the Buddhist monks beg their bread even at the present time, and are

not permitted to hold any personal property beyond what is absolutely necessary for the purposes of their religion. A state of things in which the Church would be allowed to hold the best of the land, and to play a foremost part in things political in addition to things spiritual, as in modern Spain and mediæval England, would be impossible under Buddhism.

Where spiritual matters are concerned, indeed, the Buddhist is stronger than the Christian. The introduction of a Saviour into a faith to perform tasks for the followers of the faith which they are unable to carry out for themselves, is always a decided symptom of psychological weakness. The Christian cannot "save" himself—his salvation can be ensured only through the medium of his Saviour. The Buddhistic doctrine, on the other hand, depends entirely on the self-reliance of the man. No outside intervention or pleading is of the slightest avail: the Buddhist must save himself; he must, and can, attain to Nirvana through his own unaided efforts. This striking distinction between the two beliefs has been clearly summed up by the greatest psychologist and philosopher since Aristotle:

BUDDHA *versus* CHRIST.—Among the Nihilistic religions, Christianity and Buddhism must always be

sharply distinguished. Buddhism is the expression of a fine evening, perfectly sweet and mild—it is a sort of gratitude towards all that lies hidden, including that which it entirely lacks, viz., bitterness, disillusionment, and resentment. Finally, it possesses lofty intellectual love ; it has got over all the subtlety of philosophical contradictions, and is even resting after it, though it is precisely from that source that it derives its intellectual glory and its glow as of a sunset (it originated in the higher classes).

Christianity is a degenerative movement, consisting of all kinds of decaying and excremental elements : it is not the expression of the downfall of a race, it is, from the root, an agglomeration of all the morbid elements which are mutually attractive and which gravitate to one another. It is therefore not a national religion, not determined by race : it appeals to the disinherited everywhere ; it consists of a foundation of resentment against all that is successful and dominant : it is in need of a symbol which represents the damnation of everything successful and dominant. It is opposed to every form of intellectual movement, to all philosophy : it takes up the cudgels for idiots, and utters a curse upon all intellect. Resentment against those who are gifted, learned, intellectually independent : in all these it suspects the element of success and domination.¹

Another contrast between Buddhism and Christianity is well put by Nietzsche :—

In Buddhism this thought prevails : “All passions, everything which creates emotions and leads to blood, is a call to action”—to this extent alone are its believers warned against evil. For action has no sense, it merely binds one to existence. All existence, however, has no sense. Evil is interpreted as that which leads to irrationalism : to the affirmation of means whose end is denied. A road to nonentity is the desideratum, hence all emotional impulses are regarded with horror. For

¹ Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, i. Aph. 154.i

instance : "On no account seek after revenge ! Be the enemy of no one !" —The Hedonism of the weary finds its highest expression here. Nothing is more utterly foreign to Buddhism than the Jewish fanaticism of St Paul : nothing could be more contrary to its instinct than the tension, fire and unrest of the religious man, and, above all, that form of sensuality which Christianity sanctifies with the name "Love." Moreover, it is the cultured and very intellectual classes who find blessedness in Buddhism : a race wearied and besotted with centuries of philosophical quarrels, but not beneath all culture, as those classes were from which Christianity sprang. In the Buddhistic ideal, there is essentially an emancipation from good and evil : a very subtle suggestion of a Beyond to all morality is thought out in its teaching, and this Beyond is supposed to be compatible with perfection—the condition being, that even good actions are only needed *pro tem.*, merely as a means,—that is to say, in order to be free from all action.¹

The philosophical side of a religion consists of a number of doctrines, which form its dogma ; and there is also a certain ritual to be carried out at regular intervals, which forms the cult of the religion. At the inception of a faith its cult is extremely simple and its dogmas few in number. Then, by a regular process, new theories are developed, the ritual is modified accordingly, and learned priests bring about changes in the metaphysical side. As the result of such constant progression, a religion in time differs a great deal from its original form. We have only to turn

¹ *The Will to Power*, i. Aph. 155.

to Christianity for an example of this continual process of transformation.

After Buddha's death, too, various changes were made in the form of his doctrines. Disciples wrangled with one another as to the precise meaning to be attached to the master's parables and definitions, and the faith, scarcely able for a few years to hold its own against Brahmanism in Gautama's own district, seemed in danger of being split up into a number of jarring sects, like Christianity at the present day. Immediately after the Buddha's death a council was held and a certain number of doctrines standardised, these proceedings being confirmed by a second council held about a century later. But, even then, Buddhism might have flickered out had it not been for the exertions of a ruler who is venerated even to-day wherever Buddhists are to be found. To King Asoka belongs the credit of having elevated Buddhism from the position of a sect to the position of a state religion.

This King Asoka was the grandson of the famous Chandragupta, who is known to historians as the founder of the Northern Empire of India. He was a contemporary of Alexander the Great. A warrior and Brahman, uniting the virtues of the two

higher castes, Asoka, after a series of brilliant campaigns, added the kingdoms of Bengal and Orissa to his dominions shortly after having ascended his own throne of Magadha (the modern Behar) in 273 B.C. Determined to let nothing stand in the way of his ambition, he had his brothers assassinated in order that he might enjoy the sole power, and he is charged with other crimes of an equally serious nature.

As in the case of Gautama, however, Asoka, towards middle life, seems to have been overcome by a feeling of pessimism. After long meditation on the sins, iniquities, and vanities of the world, he was converted to Buddhism, and at once proceeded to summon a council—the third—in order that the essential doctrines of the faith might be properly defined. As Mr Vincent A. Smith, his best biographer, has pointed out,¹ King Asoka confined his efforts to drawing up a practical code of morals, and did not base his teaching upon any metaphysical or theological principle. The council appears to have been called together about 260 or 259 B.C., *i.e.*, nearly two centuries after the Buddha's death. About 257 B.C. King Asoka began his practice of inscribing his

¹ See his *Asoka, the Buddhist Emperor* (Oxford Univ. Press, 1909), chaps. i. and ii.

Buddhistic precepts upon rocks and pillars, and it is from these edicts that we have gained a great deal of information regarding practical Buddhism. The Rock and Pillar Edicts of the Buddhist emperor are found principally in Rajputana, Southern Behar, Mysore, Peshawar, Madras, Delhi (U.P.), and Northern Behar. The Sarnath Pillar Edict was discovered a few years ago at Sarnath, about three miles to the north of Benares. Inscriptions on the roofs of caves have also been discovered in the Barabar Hills of the Gaya district of Southern Behar. Mr V. A. Smith, the author of the biography of King Asoka just referred to, has edited what is probably the best edition of the Edicts, and a few typical quotations cannot fail to be of interest :

Even by the small man who exerts himself, immense heavenly bliss may be won. (Minor Rock Edicts, I.)

Here in the capital no animal may be slaughtered for sacrifice, nor may holiday feasts be held, because his sacred and gracious Majesty the King sees manifold evil in holiday feasts, although holiday feasts in certain places are meritorious in the sight of his Majesty the King. (Rock Edict I., entitled : "The Sacredness of Life.")

Everywhere in his dominions his sacred and gracious Majesty the King has made two kinds of curative arrangements, to wit, curative arrangements for men and curative arrangements for beasts. Medicinal herbs also, medicinal for man and medicinal for beast, wherever they were lacking, have been imported and planted ; roots also and fruits, wherever they were lacking, everywhere have been

imported and planted. On the roads both wells have been dug and trees planted for the enjoyment of man and beast. (Rock Edict II.)

Everywhere in my dominions the officials and the commissioners for five years must proceed on circuit as well as for their other duties as for this special purpose, namely, to proclaim the Law of Piety, to wit: a meritorious thing is the hearkening to father and mother; a meritorious thing is liberality to friends, acquaintances, relatives, Brahmans, and ascetics; a meritorious thing it is to abstain from slaughter of living creatures; a meritorious thing it is to spend little and store little. (Rock Edict III.)

People perform ceremonies on occasions of sickness, the weddings of sons, the weddings of daughters, the birth of children, the departure on journeys. On these and other similar occasions people perform various ceremonies. But at such times the womenkind perform many, manifold, trivial, and worthless ceremonies.

Ceremonies certainly have to be performed, although that sort bears little fruit. This sort, however—the ceremonial of piety—bears great fruit. In it are included the proper treatment of slaves and servants, honour to teachers, gentleness towards living creatures, and liberality towards ascetics and Brahmans. These things, and others of the same kind, are called the ceremonial of piety. . . . By what sort of ceremonies is the desired end attained? for the ceremonial of this world is of doubtful efficacy; perchance it may accomplish the desired end; perhaps it may not, and its effect is merely of this world. The ceremonial of piety, on the contrary, is not temporal; for, even if it fails to attain the desired end in this world, it certainly begets endless merit in the other world. (Rock Edict IX.)

The Kalingas were conquered by his sacred and gracious Majesty the King when he had been consecrated eight years. One hundred and fifty thousand people were thence carried away captive, one hundred thousand were there slain, and many times that number perished. Directly after the annexation of the Kalingas began his

sacred Majesty's zealous protection of the law of piety, his love of that law, and his giving instruction in that law (dharma). Thus arose his sacred Majesty's remorse for having conquered the Kalingas, because the conquest of a country previously unconquered involves the slaughter, death and carrying away captive of the people. That is a matter of profound sorrow and regret to his sacred Majesty. . . . And for this purpose has this pious Edict been written, in order that my sons and grandsons, who may be, should not regard it as their duty to conquer a new conquest. If, perchance, they become engaged in a conquest by arms, they should take their own patience and gentleness, and regard as the only true conquest the conquest won by piety. That avails for both this world and the next. Let all joy be in effort, because that avails for both this world and the next. (Rock Edict XIII.)

All men are my children, and just as I desire for my children that they may enjoy every kind of prosperity and happiness in both this world and the next, so also I desire the same for all men. (Kalinga Edict I.)

With certain natural dispositions, success [towards a religious end] is impossible, to wit, envy, lack of perseverance, harshness, impatience, want of application, laziness, indolence. You must desire that such dispositions be not yours. (Kalinga Edict II.)

This world and the next are hard to secure save by intense love of the Law of Piety, intense self-examination, intense obedience, intense dread and intense effort. (Pillar Edict I.).

After I had been consecrated twenty-six years, the following species were declared exempt from slaughter, to wit : parrots, starlings, ducks, geese, bats, queen-ants, female tortoises. . . . The living must not be fed with the living. (Pillar Edict V.)

After I had been consecrated twelve years I caused pious Edicts to be written for the welfare and happiness of mankind, with the intent that they, giving up their old courses, might attain growth in piety one way or another. Thus, aiming at the welfare and happiness of mankind,

with that object I devote my attention alike to my relatives, to persons near, and to persons afar off. . . . For all denominations are revered by me with various forms of reverence.¹ Nevertheless, this personal adherence to one's own creed is the chief thing, in my opinion. (Pillar Edict VI.)

The growth of piety . . . has been effected by two-fold means, to wit, pious regulations and meditation. Of these two means, however, pious regulations are of small account, whereas meditation is superior. (Pillar Edict VII.)

King Asoka, however, was not content with merely setting forth the Buddha's doctrines in a permanent form. He advanced the faith enormously, as already mentioned, by making it a state religion; but his enthusiasm did not stop here. By his orders trained missionaries were sent to all parts of India and Ceylon, and he extended his operations even further. Antiochus Theos, King of Syria; Ptolemy Philadelphus, King of Egypt; Magas, King of Cyrene; Antigonus Gonatas, King of Macedonia, and Alexander, King of Epirus, were all courteously invited to give up their false gods in favour of the new faith expounded by the Indian emperor, though, unfortunately, records are wanting to show in what precise spirit this invitation was received.

When on the subject of King Asoka, it should not be forgotten that to his reign

¹ This instance of toleration, two centuries and a half before the beginning of our era, is surely worthy of notice.

belongs the first recorded attempt at bureaucratic Socialism. In order that the "rules of piety" might be properly enforced, a swarm of officials—as mentioned in one of the Edicts just quoted—were appointed to visit every household in the name of the emperor and to see that the religious functions ordered were duly carried out. This, however, caused even the mild Hindoo to turn ; for scenes, it would appear, took place resembling that which led to Wat Tyler's memorable dispute with a tax-collector, and after the emperor's death in 232 B.C. there was an insurrection which put an end for ever to the odious system of personal inspection. It may be worth while mentioning this two-thousand-year-old incident as a warning to the socialistically inclined.

Apart from King Asoka's propagation of the faith, we have a collection of sacred Buddhistic writings, known as the Tripitaka, or the Three Baskets.

(1) The Sutra-Pitaka, containing the Sutras. This is the essential part of the Buddhist teaching, which is set forth in maxims, apophthegms, short sermons and parables. This book may be in the hands of either the monks or the laity.

(2) The Vinaya-Pitaka, containing the rules of conduct of members of the Order.

(3) The Abhidharma, or writings dealing with the more profound metaphysical doctrines of Buddhism.

Buddhism is distinguished from all other religions, especially, of course, Judaism, Christianity, and Mohammedanism, by the fact that all these writings do not profess to be inspired from a supernatural source. Buddhism entirely rejects the doctrine that there is any such source. The rules of conduct set forth by the master are the results of long study and meditation, and they may be followed by any one. Unlike Christianity, as has previously been mentioned, there is no Saviour: man must depend upon himself alone to attain supreme moral perfection, and when he has done so he himself becomes a Buddha, an enlightened one. Truth is eternal; and it is by his own intuition that a Buddhist knows when he has arrived at the highest stage of perfection. Hence, possibly, the eagerness with which the Chinese and Japanese welcomed Buddhism, and the ease with which they adapted themselves to it and it to themselves. For these yellow nations are noted for having passed through years of evolution without having formed the conception of a supernatural deity, basing their conduct merely on reason and codes of morals in accord-

ance with rules laid down by a long line of thinkers, of whom Confucius, for example, far from being the first or even one of the earliest, is merely the representative type.

Without setting science aside or frowning upon it, Gautama's teaching rests on the principle that virtue is superior to it ; that virtue consists in doing good, and that it is the same for all men, independently of riches or poverty, knowledge or ignorance, suited equally to the practical affairs of life and to preparations for Nirvana. This principle was a radical departure from the teaching of the Brahmans, in that it proclaimed every man to be equal before the moral law (as Christianity proclaimed every man to be equal in the sight of God), together with the superiority of the virtuous man over the man of wisdom—another resemblance to Christianity.

Virtue, of course, included sexual chastity. Life was miserable for every one, and the best way to escape it was to abolish it as far as possible. But women's temptations induced men to carry life onwards, and the Master disliked the female sex accordingly. Buddha's great European disciple, Schopenhauer, shows numerous traces of this hatred of womenkind. The great pessimist's bitterness on this particular

point is well known, yet his great predecessor was just as bitter, though in Buddha's case the bitterness is scattered rather than concentrated. Buddha had a keen eye for female beauty, but the sight of it merely awoke sad thoughts in him, instead of provoking his passions. Parables are not wanting to express the impermanency of beauty as well as of everything else.

Once when the Buddha was residing on the Gridhrakuta mountain, near Rajagriha, there was a certain famous courtesan in the city, called Pundari, or Padma, most beautiful in form and incomparable for grace. This woman wearied of her mode of life, and resolved to join herself to Buddha, and to become a Bhikshuni. Accordingly she proceeded to the place where he was, and, having half ascended the mountain, she halted a while at a fountain to drink. Whilst lifting the water to her mouth, she saw her face reflected in the fountain, and she could not but observe her own incomparable beauty, the delicacy of her complexion, her rosy hair, her graceful figure. On seeing herself thus, she altered her mind and said : " Shall one born so beautiful as I am go out of the world and become a recluse ?—no ! rather let me have my fill of pleasure and be satisfied,"—on this she made ready to turn back and go home. But in the meantime Buddha, seeing the circumstance, and knowing that Pundari was in a condition to be converted, transformed himself at once into a beautiful woman, infinitely more charming than Pundari. Meeting as they went, the courtesan was amazed at the beauty of the strange woman, and asked her : " Whence come you, fair one ! And where dwell your kindred ? and why do you travel thus alone, without attendants ? " On which the stranger replied : " I am returning to yonder city, and though we be not acquainted let us join company and go together." On this they went on their way till

they came to a certain fountain on the road, where they sat down. At length, the conversation having ceased, the strange beauty, resting herself against the knees of Pundari, fell asleep. After a time the courtesan, looking down at her friend, was amazed to behold her form entirely changed ; she had become loathsome as a corpse, her face pallid, her teeth gone, the hair fallen from her head, hateful insects feeding on her flesh. Frightened and aghast at the sight, Pundari hastened away from the spot, and as she exclaimed, "How transient is human beauty !" she hurried back again in the direction of Buddha's dwelling-place, and, having arrived, cast herself prostrate at his feet, and related to him what she had seen, on which Buddha addressed her thus : "There are four things, Pundari, which must ever cause sadness and disappointment. That one, however beautiful, must yet become old ; that one, however firmly established, must die ; that one, bound in closest ties of friendship and affection, must yet be separated from those one loves ; and that wealth, heaped up in ever such profusion, must yet be scattered and lost."

And then the World-Honoured added these lines and said :

"Old age brings with it loss of all bodily attraction ; through decay and disease a man perishes ; his body bent, and his flesh withered, this is the end of life. What use is this body when it lies rotting beside the flowings of the Ganges ? It is but the prison-house of disease, and of the pains of old age and death. To delight in pleasure, and to be greedy of self-indulgence, is but to increase the load of sin, forgetting the great change that must come, and the inconstancy of human life."

The courtesan having heard these words was able to see that life is but as the flower, that there is nothing permanent but Nirvana, and so she requested permission to become a Bhikshuni, which was readily granted.¹

“How,” said his disciple, Ananda, to him on one occasion, “how should we conduct ourselves towards women?”—“Turn away your head!”—“But if we should see her?”—“Not speak to her!”—“But if we should happen to speak to her?”—“Then you must be very watchful, Ananda!”

“Women are the worst enemies of wise men; guard yourselves from them as from a poisonous snake,” was another piece of advice to his followers.

“Lewdness,” he once declared, “clings to women like filth!”—an exaggerated statement of the unconsciously sexual or child-bearing nature of all real women, and a characteristic which has been observed by every keen critic of human nature, from Juvenal to Weininger. It is likewise a characteristic, however, which all men of thought seem to detest when in the company of such women, because it interferes with their own child-bearing—their books.

¹ Texts from the Buddhist Canon (*Dhammapadba*) Beal's translation, pp. 42-3.

CHAPTER VI

The early Arabs—Their religious system—Birth of Mohammed — His early studies — the Hanifs—Mohammed's alleged "epilepsy"—His lonely meditations—His first revelation—Early converts—Quarrels with the Meccans—Flight to Medina—Progress of Islamism—Capture of Medina—Death of the Prophet—His successors.

ABOUT 500 A.D. the Persians secured a firm footing in Arabia through helping the native princes to expel the Christians from the Northern frontier. Their influence, however, did not extend to the Western or Southern part of the Peninsula, and in the Nejd, the Hijaz and the Yemen, the wandering bands of Arabian hunters and even the village communities were left comparatively unmolested. The religious state of these tribes presents a strong analogy to that of the Jews before the appearance of Moses. It may best be described as Pagan pantheism, though, out of the numerous gods, Allah was after a time recognised as the supreme power, the remaining gods being looked upon as his children. It would appear that the subordinate deities were the special protectors of individual tribes and

families, in the same manner as the Italians even at the present day carry about the images of certain saints : but all oaths were sworn in the name of Allah. It by no means follows, however, that Allah was specially feared or revered, for in worship or sacrifice the last place was allotted to him, in order that the other deities, representing as they did certain specific interests, might be worshipped first.

The Arab of ancient times, however,—and the trait is seen to a great extent even in his modern descendant — was an extreme individualist. Most of his time was spent in hunting, varied by wine, gambling, and love, together with an occasional feud. These hardy fighters endeavoured to perform noble deeds, and to sustain and raise the prestige of their family or tribe ; but in doing so they trusted to themselves alone. They appeal to no supernatural power, and in times of danger they rely upon their swords.

From the time they come within the ken of history the Arabs seem to have been influenced by the deities mentioned above, but about the fifth or sixth century of our era the want of a new religion began to be felt. As they were partly allied to the Jews from an ethnological standpoint, it may have been thought that the

Arabs would have come under the sway of the Old Testament. But it must be recollected that at this period Judaism was represented merely by commentators, grammarians and subtle casuists. The fighting spirit of Judaism was applied intellectually and not physically in an endeavour to maintain the race, which was now without a country and scattered among many hostile populations. The once agricultural Hebrews had become merchants and money-lenders, and were despised by a fighting people like the Arabs accordingly. A faith was wanting which should unite the scattered Arab tribes and mould them into a great nation by means of a firm spiritual discipline.

Among the numerous Arab tribes one in particular early came into prominence. This was the Beni-Kinana, and one branch of it, the Koraish, who had settled in and about Mecca, were noted for their long trading journeys, and, for that time, wide knowledge of the world. Their culture, we learn, was naturally superior to that of the nomadic tribes, and even to that of the more agricultural inhabitants of Medina, a city some 240 miles off. Among the most powerful and influential families of Mecca were Beni-Omayya, the Beni-Makhsum and the Beni-Hashim, and from a branch of the

latter, the Abdilmottalib, was born Mohammed ben Abdullah, on 29th August 570. The Prophet's father died before his son's birth, and his mother, Anina, died when he was still comparatively young. Mohammed's grandfather, Abdilmottalib, then took charge of the boy for a time, and he was afterwards taken under the protection of his uncle, Abu Talib ben Abdilmottalib. The family had been wealthy at one time, but a series of misfortunes had reduced their worldly resources, though their influence was still very powerful.

When twenty-four years of age Mohammed entered the business house of a rich widow named Khadija, and in her behalf he made several trading journeys in Palestine and Syria, thus gaining some knowledge of the world and coming into contact with foreign learning, customs, and religions. Although the widow was several years his senior, he married her, after having been in her employment for some time, and several children resulted from the union. Mohammed's two sons died in childhood, and of his daughters one in particular, Fatima, afterwards became well known in connection with the promulgation of her father's faith.

At the age of thirty-four or thirty-five

Mohammed began to be influenced by the religious movement already referred to. Among those who felt the narrowness of the beliefs generally prevailing and the need for something better, were Omayya ben abi'l-Salt, Zaid ben Amur, Abu Kais and Abu Amir, the first two belonging to Mecca and the latter two to Medina. These men were known as Hanifs, which is generally supposed to mean penitents, though hardly in the Christian sense of the word. They devoted their time chiefly to reflection and meditation upon the actual religion of the Arabs ; but they were not possessed of the genius of the man who was soon to join them.

Mohammed in early life was subject to fits resembling epilepsy, though the exact nature of his disease has long been a matter of dispute. As it is also fairly evident that he possessed the faculty of seeing visions, we shall not be straining a point in deciding that his supposed epilepsy or ecstasy was simply the result of his strong religious fervour, which was merely waiting to be drawn forth and developed to become a potent instrument. The future prophet proceeded to study the Hanifs and their beliefs, but found that they were merely ascetics, acknowledging Allah and resigning themselves to his will, being at the same time

much more interested in saving their own individual souls than in planning a widespread movement for the benefit of the Arabian race as a whole. Following the example of these ascetics, however, Mohammed withdrew for long periods to a remote part of the mountains, in order that he himself might meditate. Undoubtedly his thoughts were influenced by the teachings of the Hanifs, though who actually influenced the Hanifs is a matter of some doubt. Tradition and written evidence tend to show that they had come into contact with both Jews and Christians, and in particular with members of the Essene sect. In spite of all this, however, an impartial enquirer will admit that, no matter what superficial analogy there may seem to be between Mohammedanism and Judaism, or even Mohammedanism and Christianity, the main features of the faith were entirely original. No doubt, however, many Islamic sayings may be found in the Old Testament, and even some in the New, as we shall see when we come to consider the Koran.

A well-known tradition says that one night, as Mohammed was meditating on Mount Hira, the Angel Gabriel appeared to him as he lay sleeping, and, although the prophet could not read, compelled him to study a sentence written

on a silken scroll. This was the first appearance on earth of a text from a heavenly volume, out of which other prophets, such as Moses and Jesus, had, through inspiration, derived their knowledge. The words are repeated in Sura¹ xcvi. of the Koran : "Read ! in the name of thy Lord who created man from a drop of blood ! For thy Lord is the Most High, who hath taught by the pen, hath taught to man what he knew not. Know truly man walketh in delusion when he deems that he sufficeth for himself ; to thy Lord they must all return." Weil has pointed out that this vision experienced by Mohammed (Sura xcvi. 1, 2) was based upon the traditional conception of revelation and prophecy which he had learnt to expect as the result of his experiences with the Hanifs, and compares Sura lxxxvii. 6 : "We will cause thee so to read that thou mayest forget nothing save what God will." Isaiah's lips are, it may be remembered, "touched" to purge them of sin (Is. vi. 7) ; Jeremiah's are "touched" by the Lord to put the words in his mouth (Jer. i. 9) ; Ezekiel

¹ Sura. As Rodwell points out, the word "Sura" occurs nine times in the Koran, but it is not easy to determine whether it means a whole chapter or only part of a chapter, or whether it is used in the sense of "revelation." It is understood by the Mohammedan commentators to have a primary reference to the succession of subjects or parts.

receives the revelation as the roll of a book which he has to swallow (Ezek. iii. 2). The central ideas of Mohammedanism are contained in the early Suras, in which category we may include those just referred to. "Man lives on content with himself; but he must one day return to his Creator and Lord and account to him for his actions on earth." This is an old Arabic principle; but Mohammed made it supreme by having it written down from the revelation which he received direct from on high.

Having collected his thoughts after the angel had disappeared, Mohammed descended the mountain and communicated the news to his wife, Khadija. Apparently he was perturbed and dazed, hardly able to believe what he had read and heard. Khadija consoled him and endeavoured to dispel his doubts. But the Prophet was still anxious. Day after day he would ascend Mount Hira and often thought of casting himself from the summit. After two or three years of mental anguish he suddenly rushed into his wife's presence, crying: "Wrap me up! Wrap me up!" This time, it is said, he fell into a swoon, and when any further revelations were vouchsafed him, he seems to have had an attack

resembling epilepsy. On his recovery he dictated Sura lxxiv. beginning, "Oh! thou enveloped one!" From this time onward revelation regularly followed revelation, and Mohammed became convinced of his Divine mission, although before he had experienced many doubts (Sura xciii.):

By the noon-day BRIGHTNESS,
And by the night when it darkeneth!
Thy Lord hath not forsaken thee, neither hath
he been displeased.
And surely the Future shall be better for thee
than the Past,
And in the end shall thy Lord be bounteous to
thee and thou be satisfied.
Did he not find thee an orphan and gave thee a
home?
And found thee erring and guided thee,
And found thee needy and enriched thee.
As to the orphan therefore wrong him not;
And as to him that asketh of thee, chide him not
away;
And as for the favours of thy Lord tell them
abroad.

The process of conversion then began. The first to yield to the solicitations of the Prophet was his wife Khadija, then his freedman, Zaid ben Haritha, his cousin Ali, and his friend Abu Bekr or Abubekr ben Abi Kohafa. Owing to the influence of the latter, several influential men were induced to embrace the doctrines of Mohammed, among them being Othman

ben Affan, Zobair ben al-Awwam, Abdul Rahman ben Auf, and Sad ben Abi Wakkas, whose names occur frequently in the history of the great religious movement. Mohammed himself at this period did not think he was founding a new religion, but that he was merely reminding his brethren of old truths and duties which had long been forgotten. His conviction that he was a second Moses and had a Divine mission to promulgate the commands of the Almighty on earth, urged him to make a public profession of his faith and to secure converts, and in order that suitable meetings might be held, one of his disciples offered him a house in the centre of the town of Mecca. Here prayers were made and the deity worshipped in accordance with the teachings of the Prophet ; but many of the influential Arabs held aloof from the proceedings on the ground that, although Mohammed himself had come from the upper classes of Arabian society, most of his followers came from the lower elements. It seems to have been chiefly on this account that the enthusiasm of the Prophet did not appeal to them ; and Mohammed appears to have felt considerable irritation at their attitude. In Sura lxxx., for example, we find him rebuked

by God for having thrust aside a beggar who addressed him as he was engaged in trying to convert a man of a higher order of society :

HE FROWNED, and he turned his back,
Because the blind man came to him !
But what assured thee that he would not be
cleansed *by the Faith*,
Or be warned, and the warning profit him ?
As to him who is wealthy—
To him thou wast all attention :
Yet is it not thy concern if he be not cleansed :
But as to him who cometh to thee in earnest,
And full of fears—
Him dost thou neglect.
Nay ! but it (the Koran) is a warning ;
(And whoso is willing beareth it in mind)
Written on honoured pages,
Exalted, purified,
By the hands of Scribes, honoured, righteous.
Cursed be man ! What hath made him un-
believing ?
Of what thing did God create him ?
Out of moist germs.
He created him and fashioned him,
Then made him an easy passage *from the womb*,
Then causeth him to die and burieth him ;
Then, when he pleaseth, will raise him again
to life.
Ay ! but man hath not yet fulfilled the bidding
of his Lord.
Let man look at his food :
It was We who rained down the copious rains,
Then cleft the earth with clefts,
And caused the upgrowth of the grain,
And grapes and healing herbs,
And the olive and the palm,

And enclosed gardens thick with trees,
 And fruits and herbage,
 For the service of yourselves and of your cattle.
 But when the stunning trumpet-blast shall arrive,
 On that day shall a man fly from his brother,
 And his mother and his father,
 And his wife and his children ;
 For every man of them on that day his own
 concern shall be enough.
 There shall be faces on that day radiant,
 Laughing and joyous :
 And faces on that day with dust upon them :
 Blackness shall cover them !
 These are the Infidels, the Impure.

As has already been stated, the Arabs were polytheists and worshipped several minor gods besides Allah. Mohammed's teaching, on the contrary, was, like that of Moses in the case of the Hebrews, entirely monotheistic : and as he found himself and his divine mission more and more neglected, he accentuated his diatribes against the polytheism of his fellow-countrymen. Furthermore, he threatened the Meccans with punishment on account of their neglecting God's chosen messenger. Attack after attack followed upon various Meccan customs and superstitions, so that finally the irritated inhabitants appealed to Mohammed's uncle to withdraw his protection, or else to desire his nephew to cease from what they naturally regarded as unjustified slanders. This

the uncle refused at first to do, but another strong deputation of the townspeople induced him to send for his nephew and explain matters. The Prophet, however, was unmoved. "Though they give me the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left to entice me away from my undertaking, yet will I not pause till the Lord carry my cause to victory, or till I die for it," was his reply, saying which he wept and turned away. His uncle, however, went after him and solemnly promised never to abandon him.

While Mohammed himself suffered no serious injury (largely due, it must be admitted, to the protection of his uncle), his followers, especially those in the lower ranks of society, were so much harassed by insults and cruel treatment that many of them fled to Abyssinia, for this latter country had merely become Christian by accident, and a bond, which might almost have been called racial, united its inhabitants with the Arabian refugees.

When the Prophet heard of this, he took instant steps to effect a reconciliation. One of his best-known attempts was that of meeting the heads of the Koraish tribe and beginning to recite to them Sura liii. When he came to one passage—"What think ye of al-Lab?"

the adverse influence caused him to interpret the passage favourably to the old Arabian deities. Pleased at this, the tribesmen expressed their willingness to recognise the teaching of Mohammed ; but in the evening of the same day the angel Gabriel appeared to the prophet and reproached him with what he had done. When Mohammed proceeded to circulate the revised version of the text, the Koraish chiefs angrily repudiated him, and the old state of things was once more in evidence. Several of the Arabian emigrants to Abyssinia, who had returned to Mecca in the hope of finding some improvement in the condition of the Mohammedans there, were disappointed, and soon afterwards a second emigration took place.

Throughout all this, however, the prophet never lost faith in himself ; and his confidence in his mission was to some extent rewarded by two important conversions ; one of his uncle and the other of Omar ben al-Khattab, a young man of good family. About this time, too, the Mohammedans irritated their fellow-townsmen still more by praying in public and making no secret of their faith, as they had hitherto been compelled to do. The continued sneers and gibes of the Meccans drew from the

seer further prophecies of the downfall of the city; but the longer this "downfall" was postponed, the more did the people mock him.

From the commentators on the Koran, whose writings have been so carefully examined by Weil, we can judge that Mohammed was at this period in close touch with the Jews; and this may well have been one reason why his countrymen did not attach any importance to his mission; for at times they taunted him with the human sources of the revelations which he professed, and, we may be sure, sincerely believed, to have received through inspiration.

But the struggle between Mohammed and the Meccans now broke out into open warfare. The Prophet's followers were practically excommunicated; they could neither buy nor sell, except among themselves, and this drastic treatment soon had its effect. Mohammed's more lukewarm converts fell off by degrees, and it would appear that he had some difficulty in retaining even his more attached supporters. To add to his troubles at this time, his wife, Khadija, fell ill and died. He therefore resolved to abandon Mecca, for a time at least, and to carry his propaganda in another direction.

His first visit was to the neighbouring tribe inhabiting the Taif country, but he had scarcely begun to explain his doctrines before he was attacked by a mob, who drove him out of the city of Taif to the accompaniment of showers of stones, and he was glad to take refuge in a vineyard belonging to two friendly Meccans. Fearing the reception which might await him in Mecca, Mohammed did not venture near his native city for two months more, and even then he would not enter the precincts of the town without having first assured himself that he would be under the protection of a wealthy and influential citizen, Mot'im ben Adi. Shortly after having once more taken up his quarters at Mecca, he married a second time, his new wife being Sanda bint Zama, the widow of one of the emigrants who had returned from Abyssinia.

On the numerous occasions when fairs were held in Mecca, Mohammed made a point of going among the visitors and preaching to them. As a rule he did not meet with much success ; but in the year 619 of our era he fell in with a party of traders from Medina, who seemed not only disposed to listen to the new teaching, but quick to grasp its essential doctrines. This meeting, which was purely

accidental, led to Mohammed's eventual success. He enquired from the visitors whether they thought their fellow-townsmen would be equally ready to hear the word of Allah, and they promised to tell him when they returned the following year. Accordingly, at a feast which was celebrated early in 620, twelve of the leading citizens of Medina met the prophet at Akaba, and, after having heard his exposition of his revelations, they solemnly promised to observe no god but Allah, and to carry out the other commandments laid down. This meeting was ever afterwards known as the First Homage on the Akaba; and it resulted in the twelve citizens returning to Medina as propagandists of Mohammedanism. They were accompanied by one of the prophet's Meccan followers, whose duty it was to instruct the inhabitants of Medina how to read the Koran, and also to help to teach and explain the doctrines in the book.

According to an agreement made, the pilgrims returned in the following year (621), and reported good progress, some seventy men and women, who came with them, having been converted to Islamism. This was known as the Second Homage on the Akaba, and at this interview it was definitely settled that, in view

of Mohammed's ill-success in Mecca, and the probabilities of securing a much larger number of converts in Medina, he should go to the latter city and take up his residence there, together with his Meccan disciples. They swore to guard the Prophet, and he in his turn promised to look upon himself as one of their community.

Although all the arrangements in connection with this emigration were kept as secret as possible, it soon came to the knowledge of the Meccans that many of their fellow-citizens were taking flight, seduced from the true faith by one whom they continued to consider as a hypocritical impostor. Steps were at once taken to prevent the departure of the visitors from Medina, but the discovery was made too late for this purpose. Failing this, the Meccans turned their attention to the Moslems who wished to emigrate. Some of them were imprisoned and others bullied into disavowing Mohammed's teachings. Neither threats nor imprisonment, however, had any effect in postponing the crisis, and in April, 622, the emigrants started, about 150 reaching Medina within two months. From this date, so momentous in the annals of the new faith, the Mohammedan calendar was reckoned, and

April 622 was recognised as the first month of the Year of the Flight (the Hijra).

To the last the Prophet remained behind, doubtless hoping against hope for some change in the attitude exhibited towards him of the inhabitants of his native place. Abubekr and Ali remained with him; but when they heard that a plot had been laid for assassinating Mohammed, a hurried departure was taken. Ali remained in Mecca for a short time; but for three days the two fugitives, Mohammed and Abubekr, remained hidden in a cave on Mount Thaur. At times they could hear the muffled thuds of the horses' feet as their pursuers vainly searched for them overhead, and Abubekr expressed his fears to the Prophet lest they should be captured. "We are only two against a multitude," he added. "But," answered the prophet sternly, "is there not a Third with us?" And, thus reminded that Allah was aiding them, the fears of the Prophet's companion gave place to joy. This flight is referred to in the Koran (Sura ix. 40):—

If ye assist not your Prophet . . . God assisted him formerly, when the unbelievers drove him forth, in company with a second only when they two were in the cave; when the Prophet said to his companion: "Be not distressed; verily, God is with us." And God sent down his tranquillity upon him, and strengthened him with

hosts ye saw not, and made the word of those who believed not the abased, and the word of God was the exalted ; for God is Mighty, Wise.

Having returned to its owners certain property entrusted to Mohammed for safe keeping, Ali likewise started for Medina, where he arrived unmolested. His two friends had eluded pursuit and preceded him by a few days. It was a tradition afterwards that the Prophet was born, arrived at Medina, and died on the 12th day of the month of Rabi ; but although his death did actually take place on this day (corresponding to 8th June 632), it is not probable that his birth and arrival in Medina also fell on the same day of the month.

Well might the Mohammedan calendar date from the Hijra ; for with Mohammed's arrival in Medina the real history of the movement he inaugurated may be said to have begun. From his new headquarters in the village of Koba, near Medina, the prophet carried his cause to victory, and lived to see a great and powerful state founded upon his religious doctrines. For this he has been blamed by Christian historians, who see in his efforts to use his religion for the founding of a commonwealth a "want of spirituality," and several other heinous offences. The modern

student, however, will be inclined to think differently. Such a religion was obviously wanted for the preservation of the Arab race, however scattered and hostile to each other the various tribes might be. Far from exhibiting a lack of perspicacity and low spiritual ideals, Mohammed perceived with an insight which cannot be too highly praised the opportunities which it was necessary to seize in order to attain his object. If the Arabs could only be saved by the founding of a state upon his doctrines, no present-day thinker would seriously deny that the Prophet was right in adapting means to ends. Once the facts of the case were properly grasped by himself and his intimate associates, Islamism spread with astonishing rapidity throughout the land; and in a relatively short time the Arab soldiers had proved the prowess of their arms to the entire satisfaction of all those who had the misfortune to come into contact with them, from the Persian Gulf to the Iberian Peninsula.

Two circumstances combined to render Mohammed's task fairly easy — easy, that is, when compared with the difficulties with which he had previously been obliged to cope. In the first place, the Arabs in and around Medina, although merely two different branches of the

same tribe, were almost continuously at loggerheads with each other. At times each in turn sought the aid of the Jews, who had occupied the district before the Arabs succeeded in partly dislodging them. It was clear that this would be splendid raw material if brought under the control of a great individuality who would know how to use it; and Mohammed was exactly the man to rule the tribes with a firm hand. In the second place, both tribes were in the habit of laying their grievances before their Kahins, a body of men who might be described as half-priest, half-sage; but when Mohammed, with his magnetic personality and imposing presence, came into the midst of them, it was unanimously agreed forthwith that his reputation entitled him to a final decision in all matters which were formerly submitted to the Kahins. This gave him the supreme spiritual power over the Arabs; but it must never be overlooked, in dealing with the religion which he founded, that the people he was now ruling over were not likely to be deluded by a mere impostor, which some Christians have accused him of being. Again, his judgments, so far as we can trace the history of his life at this period, appear to have been invariably sound, and the veneration felt

for him as a prophet would not have protected him to any great extent if they had been otherwise. In short, wherever we endeavour to consider his life in an impartial spirit, Mohammed must inevitably strike us as a man of far more than average insight, energy, tact, and command over his fellows, all these qualities being tinged with that spirit of ecstasy and reverence which animated Moses, Buddha, and the other great seers of antiquity. It is on minute points like these that Sir William Muir's bias in favour of Christianity leads him astray. His *Life of Mohammed*—a work which exhibits much research and industry—is spoiled from the outset by the defect of nearly every English thinker, viz., a prejudice in favour of his country in philosophy and religion, the two subjects of which English writers have notoriously always been the worst possible exponents.

While Mohammed's decision on any matter brought before him for judgment was taken as final, he was at first looked upon by the Medinians as merely exercising a privilege when giving such pronouncements. After a time, however, the Prophet claimed this procedure as a right; and no objection seems to have been made. Indeed, a rebuke may be

noted in Sura iv. 63, of the Koran, obviously levelled at a few Arabs who took their complaints before the Kahins instead of bringing them to him : "Hast thou not taken note of those who professed to be believers, yet wish to carry on their suit before the false gods ?" In short, Mohammed was not long in Medina before he became the foremost man in the community, his revelations and prophecies not merely giving him a special status as spiritual adviser, but the exercise of his practical common-sense showing him to be the wisest ruler a state could have when dealing with affairs of everyday life. As soon as he had made himself the indisputable master of the bodies and souls of the inhabitants of Medina, Mohammed used his power to carry out a thorough reform of the legal and religious systems prevailing. The law (Sunna) grew naturally out of his decisions, as the Torah grew out of the decisions of Moses ; Exod. xviii. may be compared as proof of the analogy :—

And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses sat to judge the people ; and the people stood by Moses from the morning unto the evening.

And when Moses' father-in-law saw all that he did to the people, he said, What is this thing that thou doest to the people ? why sittest thou thyself alone, and all the people stand by thee from morning unto even ?

And Moses said unto his father-in-law, Because the people come unto me to enquire of God :

When they have a matter, they come unto me ; and I judge between one and another, and I do make them know the statutes of God, and his laws. (Verses 13-16.)

Mohammed devoted himself chiefly to the rights of property, and made many salutary laws in this connection. He also paid some attention to the position of married women ; and retained for himself the right of permitting or withholding capital punishment, thus putting an end at one stroke to the blood feuds which had been the curse of Arabia for centuries. That all these various measures were unhesitatingly accepted by the community in general well testifies to his powers as an administrator and law-giver.

When Mohammed had settled in Medina for a short time, he began to entertain great expectations from the Jews, from whom he had previously—sometimes deliberately, but more often without knowing it—adopted many religious practices in connection with the less important parts of his system. He gradually came to see, however, that his hopes were bound to be disappointed in the long run. While religion had the effect of bringing the Arabs together in a political sense, it had not this effect on the Jews, and their mutual

quarrels and recriminations were of much assistance to the Prophet in developing and strengthening his own position. But as the Arabs gradually became welded together into a single organic, political body, they found themselves unable to tolerate foreign elements within their regions, and a spirit of hostility against the Jews was not long in making itself felt.

As this feeling of revolt against the presence of the Jews became stronger and stronger, the prophet made a few alterations in his system to correspond to it. Hitherto the Arabs had prayed with their faces turned towards Jerusalem ; now they were directed to face Mecca. For the Jewish fast held on the 10th of Tishri there was substituted the month of Ramadan. While the Jews recognised Mohammed's authority as a kind of omnipotent judge, they were not satisfied with the development of a civil kingdom out of religion ; so in Sura ii. we find a long diatribe against them, doubtless brought about by some indiscreet protest which had come to the ears of the Prophet. Other minor features of the Moslem ritual, which had hitherto had a Jewish tinge, were also changed. The alteration in the direction of prayer (kibla), when Mohammedans

were directed to face Mecca instead of Jerusalem, was one of the most important.

As the result of these various changes the basic principle of Islam (*i.e.*, the Unity of God) was accentuated, and the remaining four of the five Islam precepts were gradually evolved, viz., prayer at stated times, almsgiving to the poor, the fast of Ramadan, the observance of the festival of Mecca. The prayers, each of which at first consisted of two and afterwards of four protestations, were to be said five times daily—at sunrise, noon, afternoon, sunset, and late in the evening. No matter what occupation the Moslem might be engaged upon, when the hour came round for prayer he must cease it and fulfil his religious duties. The almsgiving was a device of Mohammed's for introducing a spirit of fellowship among the Moslems. The moneys appear to have been paid to Mohammed himself in the first instance, and distributed by him among the needy, but they afterwards became a sort of tithe, forming the foundation of the Moslem fiscal system.

By these five regulations Mohammed seems to have made his personal influence very strong. *La ilah illa 'llah* (no god but the one God) was the rule of life; but upon this short

summing up of the faith followed the corollary: "and Mohammed is His Prophet." When the Prophet spoke he spoke in the name of the Almighty; when he gave a command, the command was an injunction from God and must be obeyed. Hence the terse sentence in one of the commentaries on the Koran: "Brother would have slain brother, had Mohammed willed it." Formerly the head of the family had ruled undisputably over the family; but now God, in the person of His only Prophet, ruled over all; anarchy gave place to order; a heterogeneous confusion of different tribes became a homogeneous and compact mass of warriors. Every Moslem was the brother of every other Moslem, so far at all events as related to his protection from injury at the hands of a non-Moslem. There was no law outside of Islam; and the followers of Mohammed were under the watchful care of Allah.

It is worth while devoting so much space to an account of Mohammed's procedure and success in Medina, for it was the turning of his religion into a political and warlike state that may be reckoned almost a miracle, and not the fact that this state within a state afterwards developed into a world-wide empire.

The nominal brotherhood of all the Moslems—which some writers have grotesquely suggested would have led to Communism—was reconciled in practice with strict obedience to the leaders of the commonwealth, and respect for the higher spirits in the people on the part of the lower. The almost uncanny ability of the Asiatic to recognise a man of a superior order of mind and to follow him unswervingly, has already been referred to by Mr Meredith Townsend; and, though the Arabs are undoubtedly slower in this respect than the Hindoos, it is evident that they did recognise Mohammed's genius in a comparatively short time, apart altogether from his position as Allah's only Prophet. While the trait mentioned holds good in regard to the Asiatic even at the present day, it would be practically impossible for this recognition to be extended to any superior mind in our modern Europe—the sneers at Schopenhauer and Nietzsche for example, from the men who should in the ordinary course of events be entitled to no opinions at all, are enough to assure us of this. The moral and artistic chaos into which the one-man, one-opinion spirit of democracy is landing us makes one feel a large measure of sympathy for the English bishop who said

about a century ago : "The common people have nothing to do with the laws except to obey them."

Having thoroughly organised his community, Mohammed now proceeded to utilise his forces. From this time onward the history of Islam is political rather than religious, for it refers principally to the numerous campaigns (maghazi) waged by the apostle of God against the unbelievers. When the Prophet's reputation had extended beyond Medina to the neighbouring villages, a few allied tribes became converts and made common cause with him. Such tribes were the Johaina, Mozaina, the Ghifar, and the Aslam. Thus reinforced, Mohammed determined to show that he rather than Christ had come with a sword and not with peace. It was almost inevitable that the first holy war (jihad) should be against the Meccans. True, the prophet had been born amongst them ; but faith was stronger than blood.

As Medina was situated on a mountain ridge on the long highway from the Yemen to Syria, Mohammed took advantage of this position to plunder the Meccan caravans. The first attempt, which proved entirely successful, was made in the autumn of 623. Mohammed sent out a band of his followers

under sealed orders, and a caravan returning from Taif was attacked in accordance with the instructions of the Prophet. Many Meccans were killed in the struggle, but the men who were sent out to perform this work had to be disavowed by the Prophet afterwards, as an attack during the sacred month of Rahab was far from finding favour with the inhabitants of Medina. Another expedition soon followed in the month of Ramadan, 623 (which in that year would correspond to December). An important caravan was expected to return from Syria. Mohammed set out to meet it to the north of Medina, having with him three hundred and eight men. The leader of the caravan, Abu Sofyan, heard of the attack which had been planned against him, and sent a special messenger to the Koraish in Mecca for help. In response to this appeal some nine hundred men were soon on their way to Bedr, near where Mohammed was lying in wait. The caravan took a circuitous route and arrived safely; but the Koraish advanced to defend the honour of their city. When they came in sight of Bedr Mohammed's party mistook them for the caravan for which they had been waiting, and a short period of anxious excitement ensued when they learned the truth. Confident in the ability of their

leader, however, they awaited the onslaught of the enemy.

The battle took place on Friday, the 17th or Ramadan. At first single combats were fought, and the accounts describing them resemble not a little the Homeric stories of the Trojan War. Although outnumbered by three to one, the Mohammedans had the advantage in two respects. In the first place the Meccans saw no particular reason for shedding the blood of their fellow-countrymen, and in the second place Mohammed's followers were animated by that intense religious fervour with which Asiatics always fight for new ideas, but which Europeans, who do not understand new ideas, call fanaticism. The struggle came to an end late in the day, when the heads of many well-known Meccan families had been slain. Two of the prisoners, the Prophet's deadly enemies when he was in Mecca, were put to death in cold blood by his orders. The others were permitted to depart on payment of a heavy ransom, though Mohammed afterwards regretted this clemency, saying that they all deserved to be sent to hell.

Two important results to the benefit of Islam resulted from this. Mohammed was now in a strong enough position to break

down the influence and prestige of the Jews in Medina. He went about this task by calling upon the Beni Kainoka to accept Islam ; and on their refusal he declared war against them. A few short skirmishes settled the matter, and the Jews were able to escape with merely being banished from Medina. Again, the Meccans were greatly impressed — they could not be otherwise — by their defeat. They spent about a year in planning how they could best avenge themselves, and in January 625 they pitched their camp at the foot of Mount Ohod, to the north-east of Medina. Here another battle was engaged in, and after a long struggle the victory went in favour of the Meccans. Mohammed himself was wounded in the face and lay on the ground for some time as if dead, while his uncle was killed outright. The Meccans were too greatly weakened to follow up their victory, and returned home again as soon as they could collect their scanty forces. In order that the Moslems might not appear to be daunted by their defeat, Mohammed led a party of his followers after them the next day and cut down a few stragglers.

The summer of the same year witnessed the expulsion of a powerful Jewish family from

Medina, the Beni Nadir, their land being seized by Mohammed for his own personal use. The expelled tribe, angered at the drastic treatment which had been meted out to them, succeeded in bringing together the Bedouin tribes of Solaim and Ghatafan. The Beni Nadir arranged a compact between these tribes, the ultimate object being to attack and exterminate Mohammed and his followers. By March 627 they had succeeded so well that an army of ten thousand men was ready to march on Medina. Through his numerous spies, however, the Prophet learned of the arrangements which were being directed against him, and he was not long in making preparations for a siege. The houses of Medina sufficed in themselves to form a wall, except to the north-western part of the town, where there was an open space. Acting on the advice of his Persian freedman, Salman, Mohammed gave orders for a fosse to be dug, and here he entrenched his army. In spite of the efforts of the huge force opposed to them, the ranks of the Prophet's followers could not be broken, and the besiegers endeavoured to prevail on the only Jewish family left in Medina, the Koraiza, to help them from the inside of the town. In response to the appeal, the Jews made a half-hearted attempt at insur-

rection ; but the fear of Mohammed's power, and the still greater fear that the forces opposed to him would leave them in the lurch at the end of the fighting, nullified their efforts from the very beginning. Dissensions between the Ghatafan and the other tribes, coupled with the fact that provisions were beginning to run short, ended in the withdrawal of the attacking forces, after a siege lasting just two weeks. They had scarcely been out of sight for more than twenty-four hours when Mohammed called his followers together for the purpose of attacking the Jews—the unlucky Koraiza family which had endeavoured to assist his assailants. They were penned up in their own quarter of the city, and captured after a siege of several days. Offered the choice of Islam or death, they preferred the latter, and were duly executed. The clan numbered in all nearly seven hundred men, apart from the women and children. All the men were slain, the women and children being sold into slavery. A more magnificent martyrdom, as Weil justly remarks, has seldom been known in history.

Desirous now of bringing Mecca under his control, Mohammed in March 628, set out on one of the feast-days to visit his native place, taking with him the respectable bodyguard of

fifteen hundred men. He halted at Hodaibiya, on the borders of the town : but the Meccans refused him admission. The Prophet scarcely felt that he had a sufficient number of men with him to force his way, and some alarm was caused among his small army by a report that the Meccans intended to attack him suddenly and slay them to a man. This gave rise to an event which became famous in the early history of Islam ; the "Homage under the Tree." Mohammed made his followers swear, by striking hands, that they would support him through anything that might happen and die if necessary for his sake. The solemnity of the scene and the intense devotion shown to the Prophet by his followers were factors which greatly influenced such of the Koraish as happened to be present, and it was thought advisable to come to terms. It was agreed that the Prophet should not enter Mecca, in order that he might not have it to say that he actually forced his way into the town ; but that on the following year he was to return and be admitted to the precincts of Mecca for three days. After some deliberation this proposal was accepted and a treaty was drawn up accordingly.

Mohammed now led an expedition against the wealthy Jews of Khaibar, to the north of

Medina, in order to compensate his disciples for their set-back at Mecca. Taken by surprise, and being without capable leaders, no real resistance was offered to the forces of the Prophet, and Jewish executions were once more the rule.

The treaty which had been drawn up between Mohammed and the Meccans lasted for nearly two years, and in this time Islam began to spread with astonishing rapidity. Many of the tribes scattered about Medina and Mecca were amazed at the ease with which the Prophet's soldiers had routed hostile armies three or four times their number, and at their steadfast adherence to Mohammed himself. That faith was worth more than force was an axiom which the Arab tribes now began to observe, and as a consequence the ranks of the Moslems were swollen by thousands of new disciples in the course of a year. In many cases these new adherents of Allah were undoubtedly attracted by the booty which so often fell to the lot of the Moslem warriors. At the end of the first twelve months Mohammed took advantage of his treaty rights and visited Mecca with two thousand men, and he was successful in converting the heads of three very important Meccan families.

Everything was now ready for the Moslem invasion of Mecca, but an excuse was wanting. Fortunately this was soon supplied. An unimportant Koraish tribe attacked a tribe which was allied with the Moslems, and though little damage was done on either side, the Prophet seized the opportunity to declare war. An army of one hundred thousand men was soon mustered, and in January 630 (or the month of Ramadan A.H. 8) the campaign began. Indeed, so secret did Mohammed keep his movements until the last moment that his troops were almost at the gates of Mecca before the Koraish knew anything of the matter ; the first intimation they had being the glow of ten thousand camp fires a little to the west of the city. Abu Sofyan, who, although one of the principal Meccans, was secretly in the pay of the Prophet, was sent to negotiate. He returned to the citizens to say that their best course was immediate surrender, Mohammed having promised security to those who refrained from interfering with him. This was agreed to, and with the exception of one unimportant struggle the Prophet and his followers were able to enter Mecca with comparative ease. In order not to alienate the sympathies of the more important Arab tribes, Mohammed pro-

hibited his men from pillaging the city, and he also took an early opportunity of confirming all the old-established rights and privileges of Mecca. By destroying every sanctuary outside of Mecca, too, he made his native city an important centre of worship. About this time also he remodelled the Moslem Calendar and made certain alterations in the ceremonials connected with the feasts.

The submission of the Koraish was the signal for the neighbouring tribes to follow suit. Only one important tribe held aloof, the Howazin, and a short campaign soon made them willing to throw in their lot with the others. It was remarked after this that Mohammed did all in his power to soothe the Koraish chiefs. He left them with the property they had already owned before he took possession of Mecca, and, in addition, gave them a considerable share in the booty which had been captured elsewhere by the men of Medina. Indeed, the latter, who had done all the fighting and helped in the greatest degree to propagate the doctrines of Islam, felt slighted when they saw the Koraish reaping the fruits of the victory. The Prophet, however, assembled them together and made a touching speech, reminding them of the dangers

they had endured in the past, and of the fact that Allah might manifest himself in ways that would seem strange to them, whereupon "all the Moslems wept till their beards were wet," and said with one voice : "O Apostle of God, we are satisfied with our portions !"

In acting as he had done, however, Mohammed was influenced by his own political principles, and in this he was wise, however much theologians may be inclined to censure him. He saw that the future of Islam lay with the powerful Arab aristocracy, such as were to be found among the Koraish chiefs, hence the importance he attached to their friendship, and the steps he took to prepare the way for their sovereignty over the other tribes after his death.

The conquest of Mecca was followed by only one other great event in Mohammed's life. On hearing a rumour that the Greek emperor was about to march upon him, he gathered together the largest army that had ever been seen in Arabia, including twenty thousand foot soldiers and ten thousand horse. He led this force in person towards the Syrian borders, and the expedition resulted in the complete subjugation of all the Christian and semi-Christian tribes in the north. The Prophet's reputation was at its zenith, and from all parts deputations

came to him to do homage in the name of the various tribes, to such an extent that the years 8 and 9 of the Hijra were known as the Years of the Deputations. The last great tribe to yield was the Beni Amir, but it, too, was conquered, and in 630 the Prophet, now complete master of all Arabia, made his pilgrimage to Mecca with the knowledge that his divine mission had been successfully accomplished. He had, in twenty years, as Meredith Townsend justly says, lived a life which would have hardened the heart and ulcerated the temper of almost any man—a life such as that which in seven years turned Frederick the Great into a military despot; but Mohammed's serene character was proof against all the trials and temptations to which he had been subjected, and in his last address to the pilgrims from Mount Arafat, at Mecca, he was able to proclaim a universal brotherhood throughout Arabia and to exhort his disciples to righteousness and piety.

“Ye people! hearken to my speech and comprehend the same. Know that every Moslem is the brother of every other Moslem. All of you are on the same equality” (and as he pronounced these words, he raised his arms aloft and placed the forefinger of one

hand on the forefinger of the other), "ye are one brotherhood."

"Know ye what month is this?—What territory is this?—What day?" To each question the people gave the appropriate answer, viz., "The Sacred Month—The Sacred Territory—the Great Day of Pilgrimage." After every one of these replies Mohammed added: "Even thus sacred and inviolable hath God made the Life and the Property of each of you unto the other until ye meet your Lord."

"Let him that is present tell it unto him that is absent. Haply, he that shall be told, may remember better than he who hath heard it."

On his return to Medina Mohammed occupied himself with preparations for another expedition to Syria, but the time had arrived when he was soon to meet Allah face to face. He was seized with a dreadful fever, and was scarcely able to drag himself to the mosque, where, amidst the loud lamentations of the assembled congregation, he announced his approaching death. This exertion by no means helped him, and during the next few days he gradually sank. His wives insisted on dosing him with physic, and that he maintained his sense of humour to the last may be seen in the fact that he punished them by making them

take it also. On the 8th of June 862, he died peacefully, praying to Allah almost to the last.

Even while the body of Mohammed lay unburied, quarrels began to arise among his disciples as to his successor. Finally, however, Abu-Bekr, who was the father of Mohammed's favourite wife, Ayesha, received the homage of the principal chiefs at Medina, and his election was confirmed by an assembly of the Faithful in 632 as the first of the long line of Califs. Abu-Bekr led the Moslems in the war which had been declared against Syria. The triumph of the Mohammedan army was everywhere complete, for the Persians were routed in several battles and even a Roman imperial army was utterly annihilated. At his death Abu-Bekr named Omar as his successor, and under him Jerusalem was captured. Under his able leadership, too, Persia was utterly subjugated, Egypt invaded, and Alexandria captured. When Omar was assassinated in 644, a Council of Six appointed Othman, a son-in-law of the Prophet, to the Califate. It was under this sovereign that the text of the Koran was definitely established, but his rule was too weak to suit the warlike

race he had been appointed to command, and he was murdered at Medina in 656.

The various conquests made by the Moslems, however, belong henceforth to the province of history rather than of religion, and it only remains to mention the two sects into which the Faith was at an early period divided. Mention has already been made of one of the early converts of Mohammed, his cousin Ali. After the Prophet's death there was a large party which believed that Ali and not Abu-Bekr was entitled to the leadership of the Faithful, and they have ever since championed the descendants of Ali against the orthodox califs. The members of this sect are known as Shiites ("Sectaries"), as opposed to the Sunnites or Orthodox Moslems. Generally speaking, the Shiites are much stronger in Persia than elsewhere, but they are also found scattered through India, Egypt and Turkey to the number of ten millions. The theological differences of opinion, often mere quibbles, which divide the two sects, scarcely merit discussion here. Whatever other divergences there may be, both Shiites and Sunnites maintain firm and unaltered the essential principle of recognising Allah as the only God and Mohammed as his only Prophet.

CHAPTER VII

Mohammedanism continued. The Koran—Its form—
The psychology of Mohammed—Themes dealt
with in the Koran—The poetical Suras—Legal
decisions—Holy wars—The ethics of Islamism
—Commentaries on the Koran—Islamic fatalism—
Development of Mohammedanism — Sunnites —
Shiites—Babism—Behaism.

THE religion of some 200,000,000 Moslems all the world over is founded upon the Koran. This is a book about which there can be little “higher criticism.” The revelations in it came direct from Allah to Mohammed—revelations which are attested by hundreds of the Prophet’s contemporaries and confirmed by a long Arabic tradition. The Koran is probably entitled to the claim of the Mohammedans that it is the most widely-read book in existence ; for it enters into the life of the people even more than the Bible does in a country like England, and consequently much more, of course, than the Bible does in the countries on the continent of Europe. Besides, as an index to the spiritual development of a remarkable man, the Koran has a further claim upon our attention.

To state the case thus, however, is hardly putting the matter before the reader with sufficient emphasis. For something like three-quarters of a century both the Old and the New Testaments have been subjected to a strict investigation at the hands of scholars, philologists, archæologists, and historians, and this minute enquiry has not left the once powerful book altogether uninjured. We can now distinguish better between the mythological part of the Old Testament, such as the story of the Creation, and matters of actual fact, such as the particulars concerning Babylon. A psychological analysis shows us what a magnificent and virile race the Jews were about the time of their kings, and how they had gradually degenerated about the time when Jeremiah was permitted to lament with the enemy at the gates. On the other hand, the complete distinction between the strong and masculine morality of the Old Testament and the rather effeminate morality of the New, led Nietzsche to suggest that it was inadvisable to continue to mix oil and water by continuing to bind the two Testaments together.

The morality of even the later Jewish prophets, however, is masculine and aristocratic as compared with that of the Christian apostles, which is feminine and democratic.

Complaints of this nature cannot be laid against the Koran. It did not develop in the course of thousands of years, but was composed in the lifetime of one man. True, the impression left on the reader's mind by a first perusal of the Koran—it is somewhat shorter than the New Testament — may be one of chaos, but the book is nevertheless an organic unity. It represents the fundamental tenets of Islam, a healthy morality, an adequate rule of life. Since the quietism of the Buddhist is influencing Europe through the theosophists, since the modern Jews are neglecting the hardness of the earlier parts of the Old Testament for the weaker morality preached by the later prophets, since Christianity, as is natural, is inoculating as much of the world as it can reach with the degenerate principles of humanitarianism, let us be thankful that there are many millions of Moslems to show us a religion which is not afraid to acknowledge the manly virtues of war, courage, strength, and daring — a religion which does not seek new followers by means of cunning dialectics ; but which boldly makes converts with the sword.

How the Koran was developed is told in the book itself. The “mother of the book”—*i.e.*, the original text—is in Heaven. Section

by section it was conveyed to the Prophet by a process of "sending down" (tanzil). Sometimes the medium is an angel, called in Sura xxvi. 193, "the spirit," in Sura xvi. 104, "the holy spirit," and in Sura ii. 91 "Gabriel." The Prophet repeats the revelation after the angel and then communicates it to the world at large.

We will teach thee to recite the Koran, nor aught shalt thou forget. . . . Warn, therefore, for the warning is profitable: He that feareth God will receive the warning, and the most reprobate only will turn aside from it. (Sura lxxxvii.)

Nöldeke suggests that all this was but "Mohammed's own crude attempt to show how the ideas he put forth really took shape in his own mind." But, in the light of modern psychological research, this explanation is untenable, and smacks of the scholar who is but rarely troubled with visions of any sort himself. Mohammed was simply gifted with that extreme sensibility which, even in our own cold climate, has given to many a genius the outward aspect of a shy, stammering imbecile—not to mention the periods of nervous depression from which so many great men have been known to suffer. Standing in awe of the Almighty, Mohammed believed

that the divine commands came to him through a mediator. This, however, is far from the Christian concept of a Saviour, whose intercession is necessary to save the souls of his followers. Mohammed never claimed any of the qualities which are ascribed to Christ, who has probably suffered more through his disciples than any other ancient prophet.

It is explicitly affirmed in the Koran that the sacred book was revealed gradually and not all at one time. This is particularly clear in Sura xxv. 34, where we also find traces of the Jewish influence under which the Prophet had come, probably through the Hanifs :

We have given to every prophet an enemy from among the wicked ones—but thy Lord is sufficient guide and helper.

And the infidels say, "Unless the Koran be sent down to him all at once. . . ." But in this way We would stablish thy heart by it; in parcels have We parcelled out to thee ;

Nor shall they come to thee with puzzling questions, but We will come to thee with the truth and their best solution.

Heretofore We gave the law to Moses, and appointed his brother Aaron to be his councillor :

And We said : Go ye to the people who treat our signs as lies." And them destroyed We with utter destruction.

And as to the people of Noah ! When they treated their apostles as impostors, We drowned them ; and We made them a sign to mankind :—a grievous chastisement have We prepared for the wicked.¹

¹ The "We" is the Almighty, being often represented by the Prophet as using this royal form.

The revelations issued piece by piece were known singly as a "Koran," *i.e.*, a reading, a recitation, a "kitab," or writing, and a "Sura," the late Hebrew "shuran," meaning "series." The latter name even during Mohammed's lifetime, came to be given to the separate chapters of the work, the whole being known as the Koran. The very unequal length of the chapters has led critics to believe that the longer ones—since the short ones are complete in themselves—are merely several revelations strung together. It is often difficult for the student to decide how to pick out of the longer Suras the shorter sections which should really be placed separately; but Rodwell, in his excellent translation and re-arrangement of the Koran, has done this probably as well as it can ever be done. A few of the longer Suras, nevertheless, are undoubtedly homogeneous, such as xx, which deals with the history of Moses. In the different narrations, however, the Prophet sometimes passes carelessly from one branch of the subject to another, or, indeed, often to a totally different subject, and transitional clauses are often omitted. Both Weil and Nöldeke remind us that such abrupt transitions are also common in Arabic poetry.

For centuries men gravely disputed whether Mohammed was really inspired, whether he was a madman, or whether he was an impostor. In one of his most brilliant aphorisms, however, Nietzsche had dealt with the question of madness and its influence on religious spirits. Mohammed's prophetic ecstasy, like the prophetic ecstasy of Nietzsche himself, who also boldly claimed inspiration, must not be mistaken for the ordinary insanity of, say, an over-worked financier.

"If," says Nietzsche, "despite that formidable pressure of the 'morality of custom,' under which all human communities lived, new and divergent ideas, valuations, and impulses have made their appearance time after time, this state of things has been brought about only with the assistance of a dreadful associate: it was insanity almost everywhere that paved the way for the new thought and cast off the spell of an old custom and superstition. . . . In our own time we continually hear the statement reiterated that genius is tinctured with madness instead of good sense. Men of earlier ages were far more inclined to believe that, wherever traces of insanity showed themselves, a certain proportion of genius and wisdom was likewise present—something

‘divine,’ as they whispered to one another. . .
 ‘All the greatest benefits of Greece have sprung from madness,’ said Plato, setting on record the opinion of the entire ancient world. Let us take a step further : All those superior men who felt themselves irresistibly urged on to throw off the yoke of some morality or other, had no other resource—*if they were not really mad*—than to feign madness, or actually to become insane. And this holds good for innovators in every department of life, and not only in religion and politics.”

Mohammed corresponded in many respects to the type thus outlined ; and that such a man could be a comparatively late-comer in the domain of religions may be easily traced to his Arabic origin. Unmolested by the Greeks and Romans, and interfered with only very slightly by the missionaries of the early Christian churches, the Arabs maintained their healthy pagan state, as has already been indicated, until the fifth or sixth century of our era. The Arabs owed their good fortune in this respect to their purity of race—a purity which the Romans had lost, owing to the influx of the barbarians and the rise of the slave classes under the influence of Christianity. All the Prophet’s epileptic fits were but the

ecstasy of an inspired feeling, and in his later years he was able to make good use of this power to promulgate laws for the benefit of his subjects to which they might not otherwise have submitted so tractably — the common people never know what is good for them. When Mohammed, for instance, condemned the unlimited polygamy of the Arabs and directed that a man should not take more than four wives, and only then if he could treat them all with equal love and justice, he was effecting a tremendous revolution. But it was the Word of God ; and no complaints were made against the pronouncements of the Prophet of God.

As to the literary form of the work, it is fairly clear that Mohammed himself did not write down any part of it. It would appear that he always had someone ready at hand in Mecca to take down his later revelations shortly after he had "heard" them ; and this practice was kept up at Medina, where one of his followers was always summoned to write down the legal decisions given by the Prophet. Sometimes, indeed, Mohammed altered his early Suras by having certain passages erased and others added ; while at times, doubtless misled by his memory, he would dictate the same Sura in almost identical terms to two or three

different disciples. In Sura xvi. 103, we find that unbelievers sometimes taunted the Moslems with this: "And when we change one verse for another, and God knoweth best what he revealeth, they say: 'Thou art only a fabricator.' Nay! but most of them have no knowledge." And it may be remarked in passing that if Mohammed had been the mere hypocrite and impostor made familiar to us by the works of intolerant Christians, verses like these would scarcely ever have made their appearance in the Koran.

A ready answer is forthcoming from the Prophet when he is taunted with even changing the legal decisions given in certain parts of the Koran. God, he explains, is a despot, who varies his commands at pleasure, regarding right and wrong as merely relative and not absolute terms. Thus, God may prescribe one law for the Christians, another for the Jews, and a third for the Moslems, while, if it pleases him to do so, he will even alter his commands to the Moslems. Therefore, although a revelation might abrogate one which had gone before, Mohammed sometimes permitted the earlier one to stand, in order that his followers might be instructed and edified by both. It has been remarked

that Mohammed's foresight did not extend to the great empire which his teaching was destined to build up; but, on the other hand, his revelations easily kept pace with current events. The faithful in Medina used often to give utterance to loud expressions of admiration when a question of momentary urgency was answered by a revelation just at the right time. It would seem, too, that the revelation coincided at times with the opinions previously expressed by Mohammed's most attached disciples. "Omar would expound certain views," says a Moslem commentator with much naïveté, "and the Koran would be revealed in accordance therewith."

Like the books of the Bible, the different chapters of the Koran deal with varied themes. In some passages we find moral reflections, meditations on the greatness of God as manifested in nature and history, and condemnations of idolatry. Other passages depict the joys of Heaven and the terrors of Hell, and also the terror of the last day, when the world is to be judged. There are general directions for believers, rebukes for backsliders and the lukewarm, and there is a punishment for the enemies of Islam. The later Suras especially deal with legal decisions. Murder may be punished

with death or, in certain cases, by the payment of a fine to the family of the murdered man. Thefts were punished at first by mutilation, such as the cutting off of a hand or foot. But, in later times, the ordinary European punishment of imprisonment, or the more Oriental punishment of the bastinado, has been substituted. No punishment, however, was inflicted for theft if the property were easy of access to the thief, or if it consisted of food which a starving man took to satisfy his hunger. The poor, it may be remarked, are much better looked after among Mohammedans than among Christians, for each man gives up a fortieth part, that is $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., of his possessions to the poor. This money goes into the public treasury, and besides being used to help the needy, is applied to the redemption of slaves. Unchastity on the part of a woman was at first punished by imprisonment for life, but this penalty was afterwards altered to stoning in the case of a married woman, and a hundred stripes and a certain period of exile in the case of an unmarried woman. Slaves were punished less severely. Apostasy from Islam is, according to the Koran, to be punished with death unless the offender comes back to the fold after having

been thrice warned. Severe penalties are also inflicted for blasphemy, whether against God, Mohammed, Christ, Moses, or any other prophet.

Another injunction in the Koran which was for centuries carried out on an extended scale relates to the making of war against infidels. A Moslem slain while carrying out a holy war was looked upon as a martyr and admitted to the joys of Heaven, while it was prescribed that a deserter should forfeit his life not only in this world but also in the world to come. At first all prisoners taken in battle were slain on the spot, but later on it became the practice to give captives three choices : (1) To become followers of Mohammed, in which case they were at once freed and became entitled to all the privileges of Moslems ; (2) To pay an agreed tribute, in which case, if the religion of the unbelievers did not include gross idolatry, their spiritual affairs were left to themselves ; or (3) to decide the quarrel by a further combat, in which case, if the Moslems won, as they almost invariably did, the captive women and children were carried off as slaves, while the men had the alternatives of being slain or becoming Moslems. When in the course of time cases arose for discussion which could not

be settled by appealing to the Koran for a precedent, the few additional sayings of Mohammed not included in the Koran were sometimes used as the basis for a decision, though as a rule the pronouncement of the calif was binding. As a result of these post-Mohammedan decisions, however, certain contradictions, usually of little importance, are to be found between the actual practice of to-day and the spirit of the Moslem Bible.

It has often been remarked by critics, including even scholars so different in temperament as Sale, De Sacy, Muir, Burckhardt, and Nöldeke, that what has least changed about Islamism in the course of centuries is its ethics. The complete ethical system of the Koran cannot naturally be found summed up in two or three Suras, but must be judged from the spirit of the book taken as a whole. Injustice, lying, revengefulness, and avarice are all inveighed against in the Koran, as they are by Mohammedan preachers at the present day. The Mohammedans of the twentieth century, however, like the Mohammedans of the seventh, endeavour to act up to their professions.

Whether Mohammed really made use of written sources or not for his revelations is a question which it is scarcely possible to settle

now. But, in view of the many anachronisms and misquotations scattered through the stories, it would seem not. In one chapter, for example, Noah is made to declaim against the worship of certain false gods who, however, do not appear to have been adored by the early Jews at all, but by the inhabitants of Mecca and the neighbouring districts in Mohammed's own time. Many of the historical sections of the Koran deal with scriptural characters, but there are many divergences in the quotations concerning them. For example, Miriam, the sister of Moses, is identified with the Virgin Mary, from which we can only conceive that Mohammed entirely misunderstood some anecdote related to him by one of the Hanifs, or which is just as likely, that the Hanif himself had confused what he had heard or read. There are, however, a few passages in the Koran which directly resemble the text of the Old Testament. Compare, for example, Sura xxi. 105, with Psalms xxxvii. 29, where Mohammed quotes the sentence : " My servants, the righteous, shall inherit the earth." Again, Sura vii. 48, may be compared with Luke xvi. 24. But, even here, Mohammed might easily have picked up these texts in conversation with a Jew or a Christian, or even from some of the

Hanifs who had come into contact with Jews or Christians. It is undisputed that Mohammed became friendly with highly-cultured Jews when he had resided for some time at Medina, and it would appear that he had an opportunity of studying some of the later Jewish writings, such as the Talmud or the Mishna. In Sura iv. 46, for example, we find the verse: "If ye be sick or on a journey or have come from the unclean place or have touched a woman and ye find not water, then rub pure sand and bathe your face and your hands in it," which, as both Rodwell and Nöldeke point out, corresponds to one of the Talmudic ordinances. In regard to the style and æsthetic value of the Koran, it must be recognised that different parts of the book are of unequal value. The early Suras are distinguished by their passion and their vigorous imagination, interspersed with scraps of poetical phraseology, which enables us to perceive why a trading community, such as that of Mecca, should regard their eccentric fellow-citizen as a "possessed poet." While in places the style of the Koran is touching and impressive, much of it is decidedly stiff, prosaic. Of course one would scarcely expect to find the legal decisions set down with the passion of a Hebrew prophet, but

Mohammed made what would seem to most critics the grave mistake of employing a rhyming and poetical form when dealing with prosaic themes, such as the punishment of theft. But we must not forget that, however unsuitable this form of writing may seem to us now, it had quite a different effect when recited on Arabian soil twelve centuries ago. Both style and matter were necessarily new to the Prophet's hearers. Let it be agreed that many passages in the Koran are awkwardly composed, that the iterations are tiresome, that the rhymed prose ambles along in a jingling fashion now and then, these defects of language will hardly surprise us if we always bear in mind that beginnings are difficult, and that, however much poetry might have been written in Arabic before Mohammed's time, the Koran was the first prose work. Besides, if Mohammed's primary aim was to persuade and convince, as we must admit that it was, we cannot deny that that aim has been achieved on a scale undreamt of even by the Prophet himself.

Weil would divide the Koran chronologically into three distinct periods ; but it is not easy, even with the help of Rodwell's notes, to draw any sharp lines of demarcation between the divisions. A certain broad distinction between

the Suras given out at Mecca and those written down at Medina is tolerably clear. In Mecca Mohammed was merely a preacher of little importance, addressing a congregation of equally little importance. Hence the short early Suras are characterised by all the passion of the neglected prophet, the pent-up excitement of the man with a message. There are strange oaths and visions, powerful advocates of the joy or torments to be experienced in the next world. Then come the terrible imprecations against the Meccans for their sneers at the messenger of God. In the second period, as the Prophet began to gather a small congregation about him, the glowing imagination of the Suras gives way to arguments and proofs. References are made to the prophets of an earlier day, and the style gradually become less poetical. It is to the beginning of this period that the Moslem Lord's Prayer is assigned—a touching appeal :

IN THE NAME OF GOD, THE COMPASSIONATE THE MERCIFUL.

Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds !

The compassionate, the merciful !

King on the day of reckoning !

Thee only do we worship, and to thee do we cry for help.

Guide thou us on the straight path,

The path of those to whom thou hast been gracious—with
whom thou art not angry, and who go not astray.

Rodwell gives the following transliteration

of the Arabic characters as a specimen of the rhymed prose in which the Koran is written :—

Bismillahi 'rahhmani 'rahheem.

El-hamdoo lillahi rabi 'lalameen.

Arrahhmani raheem.

Maliki Yewmi-d-deen.

Eyaka naboodoo, waeyaka nestaeen.

Ihdina 'ssirat almostakeem.

Sirat alezeena anhamta aleihim, gheiri-'l nughdoobi alei-him, wala dsaleen. Ameen.

Many of the expressions in the original Arabic of the prayer are borrowed from Jewish sources, in particular the word "'rahhmani," meaning literally "compassioner," the Jewish word for God during the Talmudic period. Mohammed apparently thought of using it instead of Allah, the name of the supreme heathen deity worshipped by the Arabs, thinking possibly that, as the Arabic root "rhm," also meant pity, the new name would be better understood. He ultimately gave up this plan, but the Jewish word is often met with in the Suras of the second period.

The third division of the Koran is that in which we meet with the more logical arguments, legal decisions, etc. Nöldeke thinks it was largely instrumental in promoting the faith among the higher classes of Arabs, who were more inclined to listen to reasoned discourses

than to the fiery words of the early Suras.¹ There are also frequent outbursts against the Jews, with whom, as already remarked, Mohammed came into contact at Medina, but there is comparatively little concerning the Christians, who were few in number in the district.

After the Prophet's death began the task of collecting the scattered fragments of the Koran. The work was entrusted by the Calif Abu-Bekr to Zaid, a native of Medina, who had often acted as Mohammed's secretary. According to the account which has come down to us, and which is looked upon as being, on the whole, accurate, Zaid collected the revelations from copies written on flat stones, pieces of leather, the "ribs" of palm-leaves, and lastly "from the breasts of men," *i.e.*, memory. From all these materials he was able to compile a fair copy of the sacred book. This he handed over to the calif; but in the course of time, when other copies were made from this and divergences began to creep into the text, the necessity of having an authorised version, especially in view of political difficulties which were impending, was urged upon the Calif Othman. The services of Zaid were once more requisitioned,

¹ For a counter-argument, *vide* p. 168.

and with three Koraish chiefs he prepared a canonical edition of the Koran from as many different copies as they could gather. To prevent further disputes, all the earlier codices were burnt, an action which, however much later textual critics may regret it, effectually silenced all disputes as to the authenticity of this or that text.

When issuing this new version of the Koran, the Suras were not set down in any particular order. The short Moslem prayer just quoted was placed first, and is usually referred to as the first Sura, though Rodwell makes it the eighth in his edition of the Koran. The remaining chapters seemed to be arranged on the principle that the long Suras should be placed first and the shorter ones last, though even this plan was not adhered to in many instances. There is no doubt, however, that the editors were fully aware of the importance of their task, and that their version is genuine. No interpolations were made in the text, and apparently nothing that really belonged to it was excluded. When the edition had been prepared, four manuscript copies were at once written out. One copy was sent to Damascus, a second to Basra, and a third to Cufa, the fourth being retained at Medina. It is from these

four originals that all later copies have been derived.

There was a tradition afterwards among the Arabs that one codex had not been destroyed by Zaid and his assistants, viz., the Obay codex. From the few particulars we have concerning it, however, it was apparently composed of the same material as Zaid's edition, though the Suras were not arranged in the same order. A few of the different readings have been preserved, but they are of very little importance. The later history of the text of the Koran is principally concerned with the introduction of vowel signs which it was found necessary to add to the consonants as the Arabic alphabet became more developed. Previously to the use of these vowel signs, certain consonants, closely resembling one another in outline, would appear to have become confused.

From the first or second century of the Flight various commentators have applied themselves to the task of elucidating and developing the theological and ethical systems of the Koran. One famous early commentary was that of Tabari (839-923), who ably summed up the labours of his predecessors. Another is that of Zamakhshari (1075-1144), whose subtlety will no doubt remind the reader

of Duns Scotus. In the course of time a whole literature has naturally grown up around the book, a literature which it would almost be as difficult a task to classify as that which has grown up around the Bible. Two more commentaries may deserve to be mentioned—that of Baidawi (thirteenth century), which is practically an abridgment of Zamakhshari's, and that which was prepared under the patronage of Khalaf, a tenth-century calif. It runs to a hundred volumes.

The fatalism of the Mohammedans has been well summed up by Baron Carra de Vaux,¹ who divides it into three categories. The first he designates by the name "Moral Fatalism." Man is predestined to good or evil, Heaven or Hell. No matter what he may do, he is doomed to salvation or perdition, though, of course, this does not necessarily mean that God will save him if he commits a bad action or condemn him if he performs a good one. This doctrine has also been found among certain Christian sects, such as the Jansenists and the Calvinists. The doctrine itself is not, commentators are generally agreed, to be found in

¹ Art. *L'Islamisme in Religions et Sociétés*. Alcan, 1905.

the Koran ; but is much more likely a survival of the ancient paganism of the Arab tribes. This feeling of moral fatalism, however, does not seem to have any effect on the practical life of the Moslems. "The sects which are imbued with this feeling," says Carra de Vaux, "have communicated to the physiognomy of their adherents something bitter, sombre and restless, which we do not observe in the appearance of the other Moslems, who are calm in manner and who appear to be resigned to the will of God rather than perturbed by the mystery of his justice."¹

The second type of fatalism is the physical ; but this, too, is rather a popular superstition than a theological doctrine. It is principally concerned with the nature of the death reserved for us : whatever you may do you cannot avoid this fate. Take every precaution, if you will, keep away from danger as much as you may, at the destined hour, whatever has been predestined to kill you will kill you. Your precautions are vain. What is written is written. This physical fatalism has given rise to numerous anecdotes, and one of the tales is common to the *Arabian Nights* and to Russian folk-lore. A certain conqueror had a horse

¹ Art. *L'Islamisme* in *Religions et Sociétés*, p. 127. Alcan, 1905

which he greatly loved. One day a seer told him : " That animal will bring you your death." Alarmed at this, the warrior sent the horse to one of his most distant castles, and after a time news of its death was brought to him. Long afterwards he happened to be staying in this castle, and he was taken to a field to see the bones of the horse. The conqueror laughed at the Fates which had foretold his death through this animal, and, to show his contempt, kicked the head with his foot. The movement dislodged a serpent which was lying inside the horse's skull ; it bit the warrior, and he died from the effects of the poison.

But there is a third fatalism, one which is almost contained in the word Islam itself ("resignation"). This consists in viewing fatalism merely as a profound and intense abandonment of one's self to God and His Will. This is really the foundation of Mohammedanism, and may be noted not only in the Koran but in the works of Moslem poets and historians, and in the demeanour of the people at all times. As de Vaux points out at the conclusion of one of his lectures, this conception of fatalism is quite opposed to the outlook of Western civilisation, which has more and more, in spite of its religion, come

to look upon life as a struggle for existence, in which reliance cannot be placed on a Supreme Being, but on the concentrated efforts of the individual himself to survive.

While on this subject of fatalism, however, a strong distinction must be made between what is understood in Europe by this word and its signification to Orientals. It is generally believed in the West that a Hindoo or an Arabian thinks that all his acts are controlled by a destiny which he cannot avoid. The fact is that this "destiny" or "fate" is nothing more or less than the strongly developed Eastern will. It is this innate influence, and not an influence from any outside source, which a man must bow to and follow in spite of himself. It is this also that Nietzsche referred to when he made a distinction between strong wills and weak wills; but it is a distinction which it is almost impossible to convey to a European, whose will, owing to the influence of a degenerate religion and a degenerate philosophy, has almost disappeared. The traveller in Thibet, Burmah, or indeed India proper, cannot help observing Buddhist and other ascetics who perform marvellous feats solely owing to an enormously developed will-power. There are numerous instances of

religious men, who, in an endeavour to mortify the flesh, hold out one arm at right angles to the body and keep it in this position for years. There are instances of others who clench a fist, and by the exertion of their will-power keep it in this position until in time the nails grow through the back of the hand.

Again, the influence of an idea on the Oriental mind cannot be fully conceived by the Westerner, who is so much accustomed to rely merely upon his reason or dialectical arguments. Napoleon himself complained that he found it practically impossible to inspire his European soldiers with enthusiasm through ideas, and he more than once expressed a wish that he had gone further east when he invaded Egypt, put a turban on his head, and founded a new empire. It is for this reason that I am inclined to disagree with Nöldeke, who, as already mentioned, thought that the logical and legal divisions of the Koran were more likely to be listened to by the higher class of Arabs than the fiery words of the early Suras—the fact being that only the poetical portions of the book would have appealed to Arabs of any class, the legal divisions being looked upon as necessary evils.

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The Sunnites as we have seen, consider the califs from Abu-Bekr, Omar, and Othman as the true successors of the Prophet Mohammed, while the Shiites look upon these three califs as usurpers, and consequently their descendants also. The Shiites do not recognise the spiritual authority of the Sultan at Constantinople, and they believe that Mohammed's power passed at his death to his son-in-law Ali, whose followers were massacred by the forerunners of the Sunnites at Kerbela—a place to which the Shiites now make regular pilgrimages in order to visit the tomb of the Imam Hussain. Ali's authority descended to twelve Imams (priests), the last of whom disappeared about the year 940. The Shiites wept over his absence and awaited his return some day, just as the Christians await the second coming of Christ.

In 1844 (the year 1260 of the Mohammedan Calendar) a young man of twenty-five, known as Mirza-Ali-Mohammed, declared that he was the missing Imam Mahdi. He took the name of Bab, meaning, in Persian, a gate or door, *i.e.*, representing himself as the gate through which men would have to pass to acquire a knowledge of God. He was, in other words, the mediator between the Supreme Being and ordinary mortals. Little is known about the

early years of the Bab. He was born at Shiraz on 20th October 1819, belonging to a branch of one of those families which claimed descent from the Prophet himself, and are thus entitled to special privileges. We may safely pass over the numerous miracles which are attributed to him, contenting ourselves with the knowledge that when he was still young his father died, leaving him to be brought up by an uncle, who gave him some training in his business establishments at Shiraz and Bushire (Abu-Shehr), on the Persian Gulf. Having little aptitude for business, however, the future Bab left his uncle and visited the tomb of the Imam at Kerbela, where he fell in with a sect of Shiites, known as the Sheikhis, led by one Seyyed Kazim, who were known among the Shiites for the earnestness with which they looked forward to the second coming of their lost Imam. All their conversation bore upon this particular point, and their prayers were directed to this end, all of which no doubt influenced the mind of their new and enthusiastic disciple. Shortly afterwards Mirza became friendly with the well-known theological student Mullah-Hussain-Bushruzeh, another disciple of Seyyed Kazim.

On the death of Seyyed Kazim in a few

years' time, Mullah-Hussain-Bushruzeh sought out Mirza, who had returned to Shiraz, in order to talk over the position of the sect. It was then that Mirza said that he himself was the embodiment of the missing Imam, whose return had been awaited century after century, and he felt himself to be the man who was destined to abolish the ancient state of things and prepare the way for new examples of the divine power. The day was come, he held, when man should be freed from the tyranny of the priests and civil authorities and left to follow the dictates of his own conscience, apart from ancient commandments and superstitions. His friend was naturally alarmed at this display of what may very justly be called Moslem Protestantism, but the eloquence of the new prophet disarmed all his suspicions, and he began to read with much favour the different works which the Bab had composed during the previous two years. Amongst these a commentary on Sura xii. of the Koran, dealing with the history of Joseph, is one of the most celebrated. The connection between the new faith and the earlier forms of Christianity will seem to a modern student to be very close. Justice, liberty and equality were constantly on the lips of the few followers

whom the Bab had gathered round him, though, like the early Christians, they failed to see what the consequences of liberty and equality might be when carried out to their logical conclusions. It was not long before the faith began to spread with great rapidity. It appealed to what Nietzsche would have called the disinherited Moslems, and in a few months the Bab was surrounded by the Persian free-will men, who could "think for themselves" without the help of the priests, and by the usual crowd of penniless, landless, uninfluential and uncultured revolutionaries, who were charmed to hear that, after all, the priests and prophets were not better than they ought to be, and that they were all brothers in Allah. Had not the Bab said so, and was not he the missing Imam, whose appearance they and their forefathers had awaited with such anxiety for centuries? Charming!

In 1845 the Bab carried out one of the Moslem precepts by making his pilgrimage to Mecca, whence he returned, we are informed, more than ever determined to undermine the authority of the clergy and to establish "equality," *i.e.*, to abolish order and harmony and raise up chaos and disorder. While the sect had been making progress in his absence, the

authorities became alarmed, doubtless at the political animosities which the new theologian was raising in the minds of the lower classes. The command was therefore issued for the arrest of the Bab, who was pounced upon by a squad of infantry when he arrived from Mecca, and taken to Shiraz. The Shah was not particularly hostile to him, and sent a high dignitary of the palace clergy to speak to the young man and ascertain precisely what his doctrine actually meant. To his surprise, however, his messenger was persuaded by the Bab into becoming his follower ; a fact which seems to indicate that the young prophet was at all events well qualified dialectically. Irritated, not unnaturally, the Shah then ordered an assembly of Mullahs to be held, who, without, however, hearing the Bab's explanation, declared him to be a schismatic, and ordered him to be placed under arrest. His followers were also subjected to certain penalties, the most common being that of "ham-stringing," in order that they might not be in a condition to propagate the heresy further.

These precautions, however, proved ineffective. The Bab was imprisoned in a private house, but he succeeded in converting his guards and in escaping to Ispahan. Besides

this, his followers were scattered throughout the country, and it was therefore difficult for the Government to run them all to earth, and the imprisonment of their leader led to renewed agitation on the part of the Bab's followers. Matters were allowed to drag for a time until the death of the Shah, whose successor, being little more than a tool in the hands of the clergy, proceeded to adopt vigorous measures against the new faith. Mirza wrote to his Highness before the drastic measures proposed by the Government were put into execution, begging that he might be permitted to go to Teheran and discuss publicly with the Mullahs and the priests the theological questions at issue. This dialectical proposal, however, the invariable subterfuge of weak demagogues, was rejected by the aristocratic Mullahs, and the Shah, anxious lest the young agitator should create a disturbance in the capital, gave orders that he should be imprisoned in the fortress of Maku, in the north of Persia.

These commands, however, were given out too late to be effective. The Bab had carried his propaganda even into every village in the land, and the movement had gathered in force. One of the principal intellects which had been awakened by it was that of a woman belonging

to the peculiar type whose mentality has been partly explained to us by the investigations of psychologists like Weininger. She was known as Kurrat-ul-ayn (" the consolation of the eyes "), and was very beautiful and well educated ; but, it would seem, as is usual in such cases, without sexual feelings, her womanly passions having, in the words of a well-known German philosopher, " mounted into the brain." ¹

It was one of the doctrines of the Bab, as it was of his Christian forerunners, that women should be unsexed, dragged from the protecting seclusion of the harem, and put on an "equality" with man. Easily convinced of the truthfulness of the Prophet's mission, Kurrat willingly helped him, and undertook a propaganda among the women of Persia. Gobineau in his *Histoire des Religions et Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale* has given a lengthy account of the progress of the Bab, particularly from 1848 to 1850, when the sect was closely pursued by the Shah's troops, during which time the Bab was once more arrested and kept in close confinement. He was still able to communicate with his friends, however, and he also revised the greater portion of his works dealing

¹ The same characteristics will have been remarked by those who have come into contact with the English Suffragists or the "emancipated" American woman.

with the doctrines of his sect—the “Biyan,” or exposition. He explains that no revelation is final, but that each different prophet represents the amount of truth which the men of his time are capable of grasping. He believed that the time had come for his countrymen to live more strictly in accordance with the divine law, and he inveighed at length against the corruption of the priests. A modern thinker may find much to agree with in all this, but the fatal defect of the Bab’s doctrine is his putting of the lower orders on a level with the higher, and thus accentuating the chaos introduced into Europe by Christianity. The high position he allocates to women is also unwarranted by certain moral and physical factors which Goethe on one occasion referred to in rather blunt terms.

Determined to check the progress of the new sect, the Government had the Bab taken to Tabriz, where, after being tried, he was condemned to be shot on 9th July 1850. As Moslem soldiers were afraid to execute one who was in all likelihood a descendant of the family of the Prophet, the work was entrusted to Christians. The Bab and one of his disciples were bound to pillars and the word to fire was given. When the smoke cleared away, we are

told, the disciple was found to be dead, but the Bab had not been touched. More : as if by magic, the cords which bound him to the pillar had been cut through by the bullets, and the young prophet was free. If, as Hippolyte Dreyfus suggests in his lecture on Babism,¹ the Bab had had the presence of mind to walk towards the crowd, then overawed by what looked like a miracle, and urged them to follow him, there is no knowing what might not have happened. But he hesitated, and it was instinctively recognised by those who witnessed the scene that this was a sign of spiritual weakness. An officer sprang forward and cut down the young prophet with a single stroke of his sword, and the soldiers hastily tied the bleeding figure to the pillar again. Another volley was fired, but the bullets entered a corpse.

Later critics have suggested that the Government, having thus disposed of the leader of the sect, should not have troubled about his followers, when the movement would probably have died a natural death. But it is easy to be wise after the event, and doubtless the Shah's advisers acted for the best when they proceeded to inaugurate a campaign against the Babis. While the weaker spirits fell off, the stronger,

¹ *Religions et Sociétés.* Alcan, 1905.

as is always the case in such circumstances, remained firm, and the faith gradually spread to Turkey and Egypt. In 1852, however, someone attempted to assassinate the Shah. This outrage was traced to a Babi who wished to avenge the death of his leader. He had taken a friend into his confidence, and the two discharged their pistols at the Shah as he was coming out of his palace at Teheran. They were at once seized and put to death; and the incident afforded an excuse for a redoubled campaign of violence against the Babis. Amongst others who were tried and killed in the course of this campaign was the female disciple of the Bab, Kurrat-ul-Ayn.

When the Bab's execution became known throughout Persia, one of his best-known followers, Sobh-I-Ezel, was appointed to succeed him; but the latter's half-brother, Mirza-Hussain-Ali, was destined to exercise even greater influence on the sect and its progress. His father, although connected with the Court by several strong ties, took little interest in politics or worldly matters of any kind, and preferred to lead a quiet life, devoted to his books, and his studies, a

characteristic which did not descend to his children. Mirza-Hussain-Ali was one of the first to ally himself with the Bab when the young prophet began to preach, and he suffered imprisonment with his leader during the early stages of the propaganda. When the massacres in Persia grew to such a pitch as to call forth much disapprobation from Europe, certain prisoners, who would otherwise have almost certainly been executed, were exiled, and among them was Mirza. The Babis combined to form a little colony at Bagdad under the surveillance of the Ottoman Government, and in a short time Mirza had successfully proved his superiority over his half-brother, in spite of the belief of the members of the sect that all men were equal. Sobh-I-Ezel was only too willing to relinquish his authority as leader in favour of Mirza, under whom the little colony prospered exceedingly.

It is then that the new leader of the sect started to codify its principles, his object being to efface anything of an Oriental nature from the doctrine of the Bab, in order that a declaration or confession of faith might be drawn up to suit every nation in the world. He thus hoped that in time the doctrines promulgated by the Bab might spread through the five

continents and embrace the inhabitants of the universe in a single religion. This grandiose scheme was unfolded in two books, the MSS. of which may be seen in the British Museum. One is the Kitab-el-Ikan, or the "Book of Certainty," the other is the Kitab-el-Akdas, the "Book of Laws." They form a sort of Moslem New Testament, with all the defects that such a work might be expected to contain. They were not, however, long in procuring for the author the title which he has ever since borne, viz., Beha-Allah (the Glory of God).

In 1864 the Sultan deemed it prudent to have the Babis moved from Bagdad to Constantinople and afterwards to Adrianople. Being now in Europe instead of Asia, the religion was perceptibly changed in the direction desired by Beha-Allah, *i.e.*, it tended to throw off its Asiatic character. The Babis were gradually becoming Behais. But a schism took place. Those who viewed with some suspicion the "liberal" ideas advocated by Beha-Allah grouped themselves round his deposed half-brother, Sobh-I-Ezel, and from this moment the two sects became deadly enemies. The distinction, trivial and unimportant as it may seem to us, was clearly

visible to those concerned. The doctrines preached by the Bab tended to make Islam "liberal," as the New Testament tended to turn the degenerate Jews of the time of Julius Cæsar and Augustus into Christians. The Bab's faith, however, remained strongly Moslem and Shiite in character. A Holy War against unbelievers, for example, was still preached ; and infidels were still infidels and subject to the restrictions imposed by Mohammed himself. But Beha-Allah swept away these and other Oriental characteristics and endeavoured to give the religion a stamp of universality, hence the division in the ranks.

When the followers of the two sections began to disturb the peace of mind of the Ottoman Government, another removal was effected. Sobh-I-Ezel was sent with his followers to Famagusta, in the Island of Cyprus. Beha-Allah and his party were taken to Saint Jean d'Acre, where they arrived at the end of August 1868. They at once set themselves, under the direction of their energetic leader, to sink wells and to cultivate the then barren surrounding country as much as possible ; and in a short time the colony was once again thriving. They had pledged their word not to attempt to make converts in the Sultan's

dominions ; but, as they thought they would soon make their cause known much further afield, this did not seem to distress them. It is on record that orthodox Moslems of the neighbourhood did not view them with very great favour, but that their most bitter opposition came from the most intolerant of all people, the Christian foreign missionaries.

Beha-Allah died on 29th May 1892, leaving his power to his son, Abbas Effendi ; but not without having seen his faith spread into nearly every country in the world. The propaganda of the new religion was peaceful : indeed, the post-office must have benefited to a considerable extent, in view of the number of letters, tracts and pamphlets distributed hither and thither by the little colony at Saint Jean d'Acre.

It is as yet difficult to speak definitely on the future progress likely to be made by the faith : it is of too recent growth for us to do so. A small literature has grown up around it in England, France, and Germany ; and it would seem that, while Babism is practically extinct, Behaism has come to stay for some time yet.

The Behais, or neo-Babis, endeavoured to reconcile the different messages preached by the various prophets who have made their

appearance in the world. They believe that at the proper time humanity will be combined into one religious family, basing their conduct on one single law ; swords will be transformed into ploughshares, and the secret truths written in the different religious books will be revealed to us. To them Buddha, Moses, Christ, Mohammed, and Beha-Allah are all emanations from the same spirit, incarnated in successive human forms, bringing a new message on each occasion, but always a message based on the same eternal principles. God is represented in the works of Beha-Allah rather as an essence or infinite Spirit than a Supreme Being : an entirely indefinable something, which we can only know by His attributes, as we know certain things by their qualities when we cannot grasp their substance.

Everything on earth, according to the Behais, reflects the attributes of God, even if only to a slight degree, but as the prophets are the most perfect of His creatures, they reflect Him to the greatest extent. It is on certain principles such as these, which, broadly speaking, may be considered as common to Buddhism, Confucianism, Judaism, Christianity, and Mohammedanism that the Behais profess to appeal to the whole world, and not merely to one particular country

or continent. There are no special rites ; the religion must be manifested in a person's daily life and not in any special ceremonies. There is therefore no sacerdotal hierarchy, for, since all men are equal, they may all turn towards the Almighty and worship Him in any manner they may think fit. Since, too, all men are equal, all wars must in the course of time cease ; hence the invitation extended to the different nations to enter into reciprocal relations. Any difficult question which may crop up is to be settled by arbitration. Men and women are to be treated alike, and monogamy is to be insisted upon. The charming manner of the sects may be imagined from the Persian saying : " You cannot drink a cup of tea with a party of Behais without wishing to join their society."

It will thus be seen that Behaism is not so much a collection of dogmas as a rule of life, in which respect it may be compared to Confucianism ; but surely the ironical gods must have acted strangely indeed when they caused these curious principles to develop as an offshoot from Mohammedanism.

CHAPTER VIII

The Jews—Their condition under the Egyptians—Moses—Monotheism *v.* Polytheism—The Israelites leave Egypt—Sinai—The Ten Commandments—Jewish morality—Its aristocratic nature—The Promised Land—The kings—The Babylonian Captivity—Toleration.

The Jewish intellect resembles the Midas of mythology : whatever it touches it turns to gold.¹

THE recorded history of Egypt goes back to about 5000 B.C., so that when the Jews entered the land about 1600 B.C., they were looked upon as coarse aliens in a country which had already passed through several millennia of culture. The Egyptians had built large cities and erected huge temples, pyramids and tombs. The priests and higher castes had become masters of certain technical arts which the requirements of the country called for, such as geometry, architecture and hydraulics. Even before the Jewish immigration they had grasped the details of the processes connected with embalming, the artistic modelling of gold and silver, and the cutting of precious stones. The overflowing of the Nile at regular intervals had led to the

¹ Cornill : *Der Israelitische Prophetismus*, p. 15.

study of chronology and astronomy, and handwriting was practised. At first the priests appear to have employed columns of hieroglyphics to record on metals the deaths of their kings and heroes, and in later times the symbols were written on papyrus fibre. These educational factors were eagerly taken advantage of by the Israelites, but one Jewish tribe in particular distinguished itself in the higher regions of culture. This was the tribe of Levi, the members of which, by virtue of their superior knowledge and perspicacity, immediately made themselves masters of everything in the way of culture which Egypt had to afford. In particular they mastered the art of writing and the study of the Egyptian gods, thus raising themselves, with the approbation of the other tribes, to the position of a sacerdotal caste.

The Egyptians, however, resembled the Hindoos rather than the Semites by the fact that their religious system was polytheistic. Their climate led to sexual excesses, and this was naturally seen in their theology. Their gods were endowed with the shape of the more lascivious animals, such as the goat. The bull, the dog, the cat and the snake were also worshipped, and phallicism would appear to have been rampant. By witnessing the excesses of

the Egyptians the Israelities were influenced for the worse, and though they gained in culture they lost in so far as they were induced to become polytheistic and to forget the single God of their forefathers. When a century had passed, the Egyptians, grudging the emigrants certain privileges denied to their own people, declared them to be bondsmen, and set them to perform manual labour of the coarsest description. In order that their numbers might be decreased, a command was given that the male children should be drowned in the Nile and the females reserved for the licentiousness of the Egyptians. Formerly free in the Land of Goshen, the Jews were now beyond all doubt in the House of Bondage. The result was a still further forgetfulness of the God of their ancestors, and a greater amount of adoration for the gods of their actual masters. They worshipped the bull and the goat (*cf.* Levit. xvii. 7), and their daughters were compelled to sacrifice their virtue to the libidinous Egyptians (*cf.* Ezek. xxiii. 7, 8). The tribes were soon split into numerous divisions, and a historian of the period might have been justified in thinking that the emigrants in a few centuries would either become extinct or would have been absorbed into the lower classes of Egyptians.

The moulding of the scattered tribes into a single nation, which was to shake itself free from its oppressor and make its way across the Red Sea to a happier territory under its own leaders ; its century-long struggle with hostile peoples, its constant hankering after polytheism in spite of itself, its elevation to the higher stage of civilisation : all these things were to come, and were destined to be due, as all creative work is, to the single powerful mind of one man, acting on the minds of other men for their own benefit, exploiting, kneading, twisting, torturing the bodies of his fellow-countrymen, in order that they might, through him, reach the condition of existence which they vaguely looked for but could not attain by themselves alone.

Of Moses, one of the most powerful personalities in history, we have unfortunately but few definite particulars. Those who have looked at Michael Angelo's statue of him may judge from it the extent of his forcefulness, and may also appreciate the truth of Schopenhauer's saying that great men tower up above the little men and shake hands with each other across the centuries. Moses belonged to the highest Jewish caste, that of the Levi, the sacerdotal tribe ; the tribe which had longest pre-

served the memory of its monotheism, and was the last to be tainted with the corruption of the Egyptian polytheism. Endowed with a fine intellect and glowing imagination, Moses sedulously cultivated his natural gifts by such learning as Egypt could afford. As the actual condition of Israel became clear to him, he turned away in horror from the vices and idolatry of the Egyptians, and gave himself up to meditation as to how he could best deliver his countrymen from the yoke which bound them down. One day when he saw an Egyptian unjustly punishing a Jew, he slew the offender, overcome by passion and wrath. Fearing to be discovered, he fled into the desert and stopped at the oasis near Mount Sinai, dwelling for a time among the Kenites, a branch of the Midianite tribe. Here he tended the herds of his father-in-law at a spot between the Red Sea and the mountains. Influenced, like Mohammed later on, by his deserted surroundings, which accentuated and further heightened his imagination, the prophetic spirit of the man was gradually developed. "If ever the soul of a mortal was endowed with human prophetic foresight," writes Graetz, "this was the case with the pure inspiration and sublime soul of Moses." In the desert of

Sinai, at the foot of Mount Horeb, where the flocks of his father-in-law were grazing, Moses received his first divine revelation—in other words, long meditation on a single problem had blossomed into religious and prophetic ecstasy, the “epilepsy” and “insanity” of Mohammed. Aaron, his brother, had likewise received inspiration to go to Mount Horeb, there to prepare with Moses for the task of setting free the Hebrews, doubtless an early instance of telepathy. Both men relied on the support of God to proclaim their message to the tribesmen. The elders and those of the higher class eagerly supported Moses ; but the masses, actuated by their “reason,” were distrustful, and pointed out quite naturally that they might as well continue to be the slaves of the Egyptians as die in the desert whither Moses proposed to lead them. Appearing before the Egyptian king, the two leaders demanded the release of the Israelites in the name of Jehovah. The sovereign, however, was disinclined to liberate several hundred thousand slaves, who were so useful to his own subjects ; and, accordingly, in order to put the wish for freedom out of their heads, he had their hours of labour doubled. A chorus of reproaches was then directed against Moses as the cause of this

unpleasantness ; but about this time Egypt was suddenly afflicted by plagues. Apparently, in so far as we may judge from the particulars which have come down to us, the disease was leprosy, and Pharaoh was induced to believe that it was due to the anger of the strange God of the Jews. Successive outbreaks of the disease led the king to urge the departure of the Israelites, and on the 15th of Nizan (March) the slaves were permitted to set out.

Of this event several conflicting statements have come down to us. According to the Egyptian accounts, the Israelites were actually chased from Egypt, owing to the frequent outbreaks of leprosy, which were said to have occurred among them, and by which the Egyptians were contaminated. Flavius Josephus has endeavoured to refute the Egyptian version of the story, as set forth by Manethon, Cherimon, and Lysimachus, but without much success ; and it is further looked upon as being historically accurate by Diodorus (xxxiv.), Tacitus (*Hist.*, xv. 3-4), Justin (*Hist. Phil.*, xxxi. 2) and Voltaire. Readers of the Old Testament will be familiar with the many laws introduced to combat leprosy ; for example Levit. x., xiii. and xiv. ; Num., v. 2-3, and Deut. xxiv. 8. Again, as we find similar severe laws in

the Koran, which is of course, also the work of a Semitic race, and very little mention of leprosy in the books of the other religions of antiquity, it may be justifiable to assume that leprosy was much more common among the Semites, and that therefore there is some ground for believing that the departure of the Hebrews from Egypt was regarded as not altogether an unmixed blessing. The Egyptians, who are stated to have killed nearly one hundred thousand of their shepherds for spreading the dread disease, may not have pursued the Jews for the purpose of bringing them back as slaves, but rather in order to kill them to a man, and thus make sure of stamping out the disease for ever.

Once fairly on their way, the Jews were joined by other strange tribes of Semites, who had likewise become tired of Egyptian rule, and it was out of this mixed crew, partly savage and partly civilised, that Moses had to form a nation—seeking a home for them, drawing up a code of laws, and, in short, transforming confusion and anarchy into order and discipline. The only helpers he could count upon were the priests of the Levite tribe, for the men who were following him were too much under the influence of their slave mentality to do anything for themselves. At the least sign of

danger they would give way to terror and despondency; they would enquire with the sarcastic wit of the demagogue whether there were not graves enough in Egypt that they should be brought into the desert to die, and they raised the usual objections with which the herd always strives, often deliberately, more often unconsciously, to confound the superior intellect and drag it down to its own level.

The first destination of the wanderers was Mount Sinai, where they were to receive laws and precepts from the Almighty through Moses.¹ On their way, however, they were followed by Pharaoh, who had repented of his unwisdom in letting so many slaves leave the country. When the huge Egyptian host was seen approaching, the fugitives gave utterance to loud cries of despair, while the mind of their leader rather sought a means of escape. The party had now reached the shores of the Red Sea, and a hurricane from the north-east had driven the water to the south during the night, leaving part of the bed dry. Moses therefore urged his terrified followers across the bed of the sea, and a safe passage was made to the other side. The Egyptians soon hurried

¹ As Graetz points out, Sinai was situated near the Land of Edom, on the borders of the Desert of Paran, and not in the so-called Sinaitic Peninsula.

up to the spot to wade after them ; but the tempest had ceased, the waves rolled back, and most of Pharaoh's troops were engulfed. This entirely natural phenomenon is one of the most interesting coincidences on record, and it is hardly surprising that the old Jewish poets and bards should have given to it a supernatural interpretation, and ascribed the safety of the Israelites and the destruction of their pursuers to the alternate mercy and vengeance of Jehovah. The event, at any rate, confirmed the trust of the Jews in their leader, Moses ; but it did not prevent them from falling into despondency, as usual, at the sight of every new difficulty, a state of mind which did not leave them for a long time afterwards.

On their further journey towards the mountain ranges of Sinai the wanderers seemed to be threatened with famine ; but the place of their ordinary food was taken by manna, a substance which was found in such large quantities every morning that the Jews naturally came to look upon its presence as a miracle. Manna is the name given to the honey-like substance which was exuded from the tamarisk trees so common in that district. The little drops begin to form early in the morning, and attain

the size of peas before the sun's rays cause them to melt away.

It was in the third month of the exodus from Egypt that Moses led his party to the highest of the mountain ranges and prepared them, by working upon their sense of terror and superstition, for the strange event which was to take place in three days. Doubtless the early training which the prophet had received among the Egyptians enabled him to foretell what natural phenomena were likely to occur. On the third day, it is recorded, a heavy cloud covered the mountain-top; lightning enveloped the ridge in fire, and thunder echoed and re-echoed in the valleys below. But this was little as compared with the awful voice of God, conveying to Moses the Ten Commandments which He expected His chosen people to follow. A clear rule of life was laid down; and the trembling Israelites, who had been led to the top of the mountain as escaped bondsmen, descended to their tents as God's righteous people (Jeshurun). The Israelites were constituted the teachers of the human race, and through them all the nations of the earth were to be blessed. Never before in the history of the world had a few insignificant tribes been entrusted

with such a mighty task ; seldom indeed has any race influenced the universe so much. Whether we take the Christian view, bearing the later and somewhat degenerate Jewish morality in mind, and say that this influence has been good, or judge the matter from the Nietzschean standpoint and note the drawbacks, both Christians and anti-Christians will agree in saying that no race under the sun has ever accomplished more. There is little need to seek to prove the miracles recorded in the Old Testament when we recollect this fact, for surely it is a miracle in itself ; and another is the survival of the Jews for the last two thousand years. Without a country, weighed down by persecution, oppression, prejudice, and unjust laws, they have yet been able to maintain their existence as an aristocratic race in the midst of the most profound hostility which has ever been vented on any sect. The early Christians, persecuted by the Romans for a few short years, could find refuge among numerous sympathisers ; the persecuted Huguenots could fly to England, the persecuted Puritans could fly to America, the persecuted Irish Catholics could fly to France ; but no haven was ever open to the persecuted Jews ; for every man's hand was against them. Yet

that, in spite of all this, the race has been able to survive without being afflicted by that intellectual degradation which always accompanies a mere "survival" and nothing more, that this race has, in spite of persecution and moral boycotting, produced a series of brilliant authors, poets, lawyers, artists, and musicians, is surely entitled to be ranked as another wonder of the world, as worthy of admiration as the hanging gardens of Babylon or the Temple of Diana at Ephesus.

The aristocratic nature of the Jewish Commandments is shown in the fact that they were not meant for all men, but only for a select number. They were interpreted in the light of God's promise to Abraham to give him a posterity :

"In blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore,"¹ and also to consider the tribe of Abraham as His only children, and to bind all other nations in slavery, so that Israel should reign supreme over the world.

It was thus the task of the Hebrews to exterminate without pity all other peoples,

¹ Genesis xxii. 17.

to seize their lands and possessions, and to practise usury upon them (*cf.* Deut. vii. and xiv.). Other similar precepts are to be found in the Talmud, that stupendous book of the Jewish law and custom compiled by the great Rabbana ("Our Teacher") Ashi, between 380 and 420 A.D.: *e.g.*, "As man is superior to the other animals so are the Jews superior to all other men,"—"Those who are not Jews are dogs and asses." From some of the writings of the great teacher Maimonides, universally acknowledged by Jews all the world over as their second Moses in point of sagacity, penetration and wisdom, many similar maxims could be gathered, all tending to uphold Nietzsche's contention that there is one morality for the masters and another for the slaves; and the Jews have always, and with reason, although for the most part secretly, regarded themselves as the masters and aristocrats of the world.

The history of the Chosen People from leaving Sinai is well known to every Englishman through the medium of the Old Testament, a narrative which, from the historical and legal point of view is substantially accurate, although critics have long quarrelled, and will doubtless continue to quarrel, as to the inspiration, non-

inspiration and dates of composition of the particular books.

Under Joshua, the successor of Moses, the Jews reached the "Promised Land," the splendid pastoral region to the east of the Jordan, the natives either being slaughtered wholesale or forced to fly from the district. The Mosaic Law fell into neglect after the death of Joshua (about 1255 B.C.), and the Jews became hard pressed by various tribes, such as the Moabites, the Ammonites, the Amalekites, and the Philistines. The hour brought forth the men, and the efforts of Gideon, Jephthah, Samson, and Samuel helped in a great measure to free the harassed people from their oppressors.

About 1100 B.C. the Jews had practically reached the zenith of their prosperity and power, and they insisted upon "being like other nations" (1 Sam. viii. 5), and having a king. The first to exercise the regal authority was Saul, the Benjamite, who reigned from 1067 to 1055 B.C., followed by his renowned son-in-law, David, who held the throne (1055-1015 B.C.) during what was probably the most glorious period in the history of Israel. The reign of his equally famous son, Solomon, witnessed the complete subjugation of the

aboriginal inhabitants of Canaan, the boundaries of the kingdom being extended as far as the Euphrates and the Red Sea. Under Solomon's rule Jerusalem was captured and made the capital, the priesthood was re-organised on a more magnificent scale than before, while schools of poetry, architecture, and prophecy were started and flourished.

A succession of monarchs followed, but not even regal ordinances and the murmurs of the prophets could prevent the introduction of idolatrous practices. At last the power of the Hebrews was successfully assailed by the Egyptians, the Assyrians, and the Babylonians; and Nebuchadnezzar took Jerusalem by storm in 558 B.C., put out the eyes of King Zedekiah, and carried most of the inhabitants prisoners to Babylon. A large number of Israelites had previously been captured by the Babylonians in 722 B.C., and the ultimate fate of these early prisoners has long been a matter of vague conjecture. When Cyrus overthrew the Babylonian empire in 538 B.C., half a century after the fall of Jerusalem, he gave the Jews permission to return to their own country, but only some forty thousand took advantage of the conqueror's clemency. This would seem to show that the Jews were fairly well treated

during their period of captivity—indeed, the particulars which have come down to us bear testimony to this. Five and a half centuries before the beginning of our era Babylon had attained to an exceedingly high stage of civilisation, and the Jews apparently benefited by it as much as they had done centuries before when in Egypt. In fact, Babylon up to the year 1000 A.D., has often been referred to as “the Second Land of Israel.” Not only were the services in the synagogues considerably influenced by what was observed in the Babylonian temples, but the early division of the Talmud also began to take shape—the “oral law” which, as already stated, was compiled and edited by the Rabbana Ashi between 380 and 480 A.D.

Under the rule of Darius and Xerxes the Jews would appear to have prospered, and even Alexander the Great, when on his way to conquer the East, left the inhabitants of Jerusalem unmolested. After him came Ptolemy Soter, one of his generals, who had become King of Egypt. He invaded Syria, captured Jerusalem in 301 B.C., and carried off several thousands of the inhabitants, whom he compelled to settle at Alexandria. This was also to a great extent a fortunate matter

for the Jews, for they enjoyed equal rights with their Greek and Egyptian fellow-subjects, and came under the influence of Hellenistic thought. The first thing to which the Jews devoted themselves here resulted in the Greek translation of the Bible, known as the Septuagint, not to speak of a huge mass of apocryphal literature and a composite philosophy, half Greek, half Jewish, which was brought about by the union of Hellenism and Orientalism.

After this the discussion of the Jewish race belongs to the historian rather than to the theologian. The melancholy events of the Roman conquest, which was terminated by the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus in 70 A.D., and the demolition of the Temple, amid horrible scenes of carnage, are but too well known. The Jews, however, seem to have flourished fairly well under the late emperors until Christianity became the state religion under Constantine the Great, after which the era of persecution began. Even making all allowances for the hatred which may be engendered by religious differences, it would be difficult for the historian, without the aid of the psychologist, to explain the persecutions, tortures and outrages to which the Jews had to submit for many centuries in

Christian lands. The truth is that there can be no toleration without contempt. Toleration, in a word, springs from contempt. In Mohammedan countries Christians and Jews are seldom persecuted or attacked except for purely political reasons ; very rarely for merely theological reasons. In other words, the Moslem feels he is so strong in character that he can afford to despise the members of other creeds which may be settled near him. The Hindoo despises the Englishman in India for the same reason—a fact which, by the way, has already been noted by Mr Meredith Townsend. The physically or spiritually weak, however, invariably envy the stronger, hence we find that in Russia the millions of Christians belonging to the Orthodox Church cannot afford to tolerate the proportionately small number of Jews settled among them—merely because the Jews belong to a stronger race, and the Christians cannot look upon them with contempt, which is necessary for toleration, but only with envy, which invariably gives rise to intolerance. I am aware that this opinion may be contested by a few of the obsolete schools of thought to be found in England, but as it has the support of practically all Continental psychologists and philosophers, I feel on safe ground in expressing it.

CHAPTER IX.

Indian philosophy—The Jains—China—Confucius, his system of morals—Lao-Tze—Taoism—Mencius—Lack of poetry in China—Japan, its early religious system—Shintoism—Buddhism—Bushido—The Samurai.

WHEREVER we find a religious system well developed and capable of influencing almost every branch of even the everyday life of a nation, we find, as a rule, that there is comparatively little room or necessity for a supplementary system of philosophy. Thus, the Koran, for example, deals with so many minute points that we find very few Moslem philosophers setting up a different system of thought. In the case of India, where the wants of the people of almost every class are so few, and where Nature has for centuries supplied them so well, the higher castes have had little to do but to give themselves up for ages almost entirely to abstruse metaphysical meditation. As a result we find throughout India certain views and tenets which, on a superficial examination, almost appear to be philosophical systems. When examined more

closely, however, these systems almost always resolve themselves into commentaries on the Vedas or Buddhistic writings. The two principal systems of Indian philosophy are the Vedanta and the Sankhya. It is true that the Orthodox Hindoos recognised six philosophical systems (Darshana), but these six systems fall into three pairs so closely connected with one another that each pair may be said to form a common school of philosophy. These are (1) Mimamsa and Vedanta, (2) Sankhya and Yoga, and (3) Nyaya and Vaiseshika. Mimamsa, which is more properly known as Purva-Mimamsa, that is, preliminary enquiry, is an attempt at a systematic exposition of the principles of the interpretation of scripture, that is, of the Vedas ; or, to put its object in one word, exegesis. Its aim is to uphold the authority of the Vedas and to urge upon all Hindoos the necessity of performing the duties enjoined in them. Prof. Max Müller was apparently in some doubt as to whether the Mimamsa was entitled to be reckoned as a system of philosophy at all. The reputed founder of the school was a seer named Jaimini, who may possibly have flourished about the second or third century A.D. He might be said to hold the same position in

India as Thomas Aquinas does among the Schoolmen.

Vedanta, the second system, means literally "end of the Veda," while it is also known as Uttara-Mimamsa, that is, "later enquiry." Max Müller, in his *Three Lectures on the Vedanta*, has quoted a remark from a Hindoo writer which serves to sum up the science of this system. "Brahman is true, the world is false, the soul is Brahman and nothing else. There is nothing worth gaining, there is nothing worth enjoying, there is nothing worth knowing but Brahman alone, for he who knows Brahman is Brahman." In other words, according to this system, God, that is, Brahman, is the efficient and material cause of the world. He is both Creator and end. All things spring from him and in the course of time are again resolved into him. The soul of the individual is of his essence, but it, too, returns to him. The individual has no will of his own, his actions being predestined by Brahma, just as in the case of Bhagavad-Gita they are predestined by Krishna. About the eighth or ninth century of our era, the school of Vedantists appears to have broken up into two sects, the best known being that represented by a famous Indian theologian, Sankara-Acharya. While

according to one Indian tradition he was born about 200 B.C., he is assigned by the best authorities to the ninth century A.D. He was principally known for his commentary on the Vedanta-Sutras, and also for his interpretation of the Bhagavad-Gita. Although he died at the early age of thirty-one or thirty-two, his extraordinary learning gained for him a great reputation, and he was for many years looked upon as the incarnation of the god Siva. The other sect of Vedantists identifies the supreme spirit with Vishnu rather than with Siva.

The third or Sankhya system is ascribed to Kapila, and represents the materialistic school of Indian philosophy. The Sankhyaists ascribe the origin of the world to a material First Cause, devoid of all intelligence, out of which the universe has been developed by a process of unconscious evolution. From this it will be seen that the third system of Indian philosophy has much in common with the older school of English evolutionists.

The fourth or Yoga system generally accepts the speculations of the Sankhyaists, adding a 25th principle to the 24th laid down by their immediate predecessors, viz., Nirguna Purusha, that is "Self without attributes." This assumes evolution founded upon some

theistic principle, on which account the Yoga system is sometimes known as the theistic or Sesvara Sankhya. A characteristic feature of the Yogas is their exceedingly complicated system of ascetic practices in order that the senses and passions may undergo a process of mortification in such a way that a union may be formed with the supreme spirit during one's lifetime.

The remaining two systems, the Nyaya and Vaiseshika, differ from one another in a few points of little interest, but are usually considered as two branches of a single system of philosophy, supplementary to one another and hence generally studied together. Nyaya, which means literally, method or rule, is ascribed to one Gotama or Akshapada. It is principally remarkable for its complicated system of dialectics, which has gained for it the designation of the Hindoo science of logic. The Vaiseskiha derives its name from its main premiss, that is, each separate atom (Visesha) is possessed of its own individuality, and that the cosmos is formed from an agglomeration of such atoms. These latter two philosophical systems are generally thought to have arisen about the fourth or fifth century of our era, and if we had a few clear particulars

regarding the Vaiseshika system it would be interesting to compare it with the atomic theory set forth by Lucretius.

Among the numerous other systems and sub-systems of Indian philosophies, only one calls for any special notice, viz., that of the Charvakas or Lokayatikas, both of which names correspond approximately to materialists. Followers of this school admit perception alone as a source of knowledge, deny a supreme spirit or a soul apart from the body, and hold that man's only aim in life should be the enjoyment derived from sensuality.

There is another heterodox sect of Hindoos which calls for some passing mention. This is the Jains, who, although generally scattered throughout the Peninsula, are found chiefly in Upper India. They are comparatively few in number, but wealthy and influential. Like the Buddhists, they deny the divine source of the Veda and repudiate its authority. They agree with the Brahmanical Hindoos, however, in recognising the caste system and also some of the lesser Hindoo deities, but they differ from the Brahmans in certain sacrifices which involve the destruction of animal life. It is their belief that not only men have souls but animals and plants as well, and they exhibit

their kindness for the dumb creation so far as to provide hospitals for sick animals. The more strict members of the sect, indeed, refuse to drink water until it has been strained, in case they should unwittingly swallow some small insect with it. There are two classes of Jains, as of Buddhists : Firstly, the Sravakas, who are engaged in ordinary employment, and secondly, the Yatis, or monks. The latter chiefly reside in the Jain temples, of which there are large numbers, liberally decorated and provided with numerous images. Like the Buddhists, too, the Jains believe in a Nirvana, where the soul will be freed from the sorrows of transmigration. It seems almost impossible now to trace the origin of this sect. Its founder is reputed to be one Mahavira, of noble birth, who is said to have lived about the fifth or sixth century B.C., which would almost make him a contemporary of Buddha. Other authorities, however, declare that the sect did not come into existence until about a century after Buddha's death, forming their philosophical and religious systems partly out of the Buddhistic and partly out of Brahmanical tenets.

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Very obscure indeed is the early history of China. The people now known as the Chinese

seem to have invaded the country not later than 6000 B.C., and probably centuries earlier. Following the course of the Hoang-Ho River they gradually settled down as agriculturists, after having, like the Aryans in India, almost annihilated the native population. The first king of whom we have any connected historical account is Yao, who "flourished" about 2500 B.C. He and his successor Shun were good men—goody-goody perhaps; and it would appear that they set an example of moral perfection which all succeeding rulers who felt inclined endeavoured to emulate. But the dynasty died out after many years, and the sovereigns of later times appear, to say the least, to have been of a much more worldly disposition. About 1000 B.C. a certain emperor named Wu Wang divided his kingdom into seventy-two feudal states, but the jealousy between the different princes soon led to internecine warfare. The Tartars also began to make themselves troublesome, and it was in the midst of internal confusion and the sudden descents of daring and skilful foes that Confucius was born.

The date usually given for his birth is 551 B.C., a year when Buddha was in the prime of life, fifty years before Heraclitus propounded his theory of the flux, and more than a century

before the birth of Plato. The philosopher's clan name was Kung, and he was known to his fellow-countrymen as Kung-fu-tze, that is, Kung the Philosopher, Confucius being merely the Latinised form of the Chinese word. The Kung family had removed to the territory of the Lu, in the present province of Shantung, and it was here, in the village of Chueh, that the philosopher was born.

The death of his father left Confucius and his mother in somewhat straitened circumstances, but we know that the sage married at the age of nineteen. About this period of his life he held some minor municipal appointments. When he was about twenty-two or twenty-three years old he began his career as a teacher. He left his native place for a time and is said to have met the other famous Chinese philosopher, Lao-Tze, at Loh, the capital of the state. In 510 B.C. we find Confucius appointed to the governorship of Chung-tu, where his teachings and exemplary conduct led to a great reformation in the habits and manners of the people. The successful progress of the state under the guidance of Confucius, however, led to jealousy on the part of the neighbouring rulers, and the sovereign Duke of Chung-tu received from the Marquis of Chi a present of handsome

courtesans, fine horses, etc. The gift had the effect wished for, and the charm of the women drew the weak-minded duke's attention away from the philosopher and his reforms.


As a result, Confucius made up his mind to travel, and departed from Lu in 497 B.C. Accompanied by numerous disciples—he is said to have had about three thousand in all during his life—he visited many states, and his fame as a philosopher and teacher usually made him welcome. In 495 B.C. the Duke of Chung-tu died, and his successor invited the sage to return to his old surroundings, though Confucius does not seem to have done this until 485 or 484 B.C. His few remaining years were spent in editing certain Chinese Classics and in the composition of the only work which can be definitely assigned to him, the Chun-Chiu, an account of the history of Lu from 722 to 481 B.C. Two years after the last entry, or early in 479 B.C., the philosopher died.

After the death of Confucius his disciples compiled books of his sayings, anecdotes of his travels, and numerous reminiscences of his everyday life. We thus possess fairly complete information regarding the great Chinese sage, and from all that has been recorded it is a fairly simple matter to give an outline of his moral system.

→ It has been stated in a previous chapter that the Chinese were one of the peoples who evolved from barbarism to a state of high culture and civilisation without developing the idea of a god. This statement holds true, in spite of the fact that from very early times we find the heavens worshipped under the name of Tien or Ti, meaning ruler. No god, however, was ever devised like the Hindoo Brahma or the Arabian Allah. The worship of any superior power is vested in the emperor as the supreme sovereign and priest of his people, just as in Japan the Mikado is looked upon as a descendant of the gods.

The Chinese, even before they were conquered by the Manchus in the seventeenth century of our era, exhibited the typical Asiatic quality of amenability to superior minds, as may be judged from a saying which was current in China at least eighteen centuries before the beginning of the Christian era: "Heaven gives birth to the people with such desires that without a ruler they would fall into all kinds of disorder, and Heaven again gives birth to the man of intelligence to regulate them." The sovereign and the philosopher are thus both sent by Heaven, and we meet with them at every turn in Chinese history. How far Confucius was influenced by

his predecessors it is now impossible to say, but there is no doubt that he devoted an immense amount of attention to the works of those who had preceded him. "The ancients," he would say, "hesitated to give utterance to their thoughts; they were afraid that their actions might not be equal to their words." That he himself was not afraid to do so may easily be observed from the respectable collection of sayings attributed to him, no doubt justly, including one in particular recorded by a disciple: "Chu-wen-tzu used to reflect thrice before he acted. When told of this the Master said, 'Twice would do.'" The whole philosophy of Confucius may be said to be directed to one end: to influence people in such a way that they should recompense good with good and evil with justice, unlike Lao-Tze, who was hailed with delight by the descendants of the Ebionites because he elaborated the so-called very impractical Golden Rule: "Reward evil with good and good with better."

During his tenure of office as Governor of Chung-tu, Confucius took full advantage of the numerous opportunities he had to study men and things. Hence we find him  expressing shrewd opinions on what constitutes good government, the duties of the

people, the privileges of the rulers, etc. "The people," he says, for example, "can be made to follow a certain path, but they cannot be made to know the reason why." Although in general Confucius exhibits the vice common to all Chinese philosophers of relying upon "facts" and "reason" more than upon instinct, there is at least one instance in which he shows his disbelief in the strict type of morality which we might expect, say, from Socrates. The example I have in mind is the anecdote concerning the Duke of She, who addressed the sage, saying: "We have an upright man in our country. His father stole a sheep, and the son bore witness against him."—"In our country," Confucius replied, "uprightness is something different from this. A father hides the guilt of his son, and a son hides the guilt of his father. It is in such conduct that true uprightness is to be found." Again, the distinction between an aristocrat and a democrat when holding office is well summed up in the pithy remark: "The nobler sort of man is dignified but not proud; the inferior man is proud but not dignified"—obviously a reminiscence of some jack-in-office whom Confucius had observed in his

own or some other state. That he knew his own defects as a Socratican rather than as one of the earlier Greeks is seen in his saying : "There may be men, I daresay, who act rightly without knowing the reason why, but I am not one of them. Having heard much I sift out the good and practise it; having seen much I retain it in my memory. This is the second order of wisdom."

A surprisingly modern statement, and one which Christian commentators have apparently overlooked is : " It is the man that is able to develop his virtue, not virtue which develops the man." Another anti-socialistic opinion is found in the anecdote : " The Master wished to settle among the nine eastern tribes. Some one said : 'How can you? they are savages.' The Master replied : ' If a higher type of man dwelt in their midst, how could their savage condition last? ' " In modern times, of course, it is the lower spirits which are trying to drag down the higher to their own level, and in only too many cases, unfortunately, they succeed. Like the writings of all Chinese philosophers, the works of Confucius are set forth in an anarchical fashion ; there is no attempt at order or arrangement, and the student is left

to read through apophthegm after apophthegm to discover the kernel of the teaching. Apart from the good-for-good and justice-for-evil regulations already referred to, the wisdom of the great sage has been summarised by one of his followers almost as well as it is possible to do so : "The Master said : 'Shen, a single principle runs through all my teaching.' Tseng Tzu answered, 'Yes.' When he had gone out, the disciples asked, saying : 'What does he mean ?' Tseng Tzu said : 'Our Master's teaching simply amounts to this : loyalty to one's self and charity to one's neighbours : '""

So greatly have the maxims of Confucius on government and morals influenced the rulers of China that the reigning emperor does homage to him twice a year in the Imperial College at Peking, while the descendants of the great philosopher bear the title of Kung (Duke), and own a large amount of property. In spite of the attempts of the Student-Missionary Legge to saddle Confucius with a belief in a superior being and a future life, the fact remains that there is no justification for this. The sayings of Confucius have exercised a

¹ Mr L. Giles, in his *Sayings of Confucius* (Wisdom of the East series), was the first European to give a correct interpretation and translation of this apophthegm.

wide and profound influence throughout China and Japan for centuries; but they form a system of morality and not a religion in the modern sense of the word. Of course, for the purposes of a modern thinker, there is no difference between "religion"—by which is usually meant merely the ritual and dogmas of a faith—and the system of morality it advocates, and there is therefore no reason why Confucianism should not be treated as a religious system, but it certainly cannot be called a religion as we should apply this word to faiths in which deities are introduced, as, for example, Brahmanism or Mohammedanism.

Although Confucius was a man of a fairly high order of intellect, he nevertheless did not possess the creative faculty in any marked degree, but a Chinese philosopher who did, and who actually founded another "religion," was Lao-Tze, some of whose sayings, thrown at the reader in the usual haphazard Chinese fashion, are much more aristocratic than those of Confucius. Lao-Tze devised Taoism, or "the way," which, in a greatly corrupted form, shares with Buddhism and Confucianism the distinction of being one of the three great religions of China, and which at times is so subtle as almost to merit the praise of being

Machiavellian. Indeed, since Lao-Tze was born at Loh, not far from the present city of Loh-Yang in Ho-nan, in 604 B.C., it is not too much to imagine that some of his opinions may have circulated as far as Greece, in time to be picked up by Aristotle, who was not born until nearly two centuries later, and in whose works Machiavelli found many hints for his *Prince*. Among the numerous legends which were not long in gathering about Lao-Tze, the most remarkable is that he was carried in his mother's womb for eighty years, hence his name, which means Old Son, or, as at least one English critic has irreverently suggested, the Old Boy. Very few particulars of his life have come down to us, and we do not even know the date of his death. That he met Confucius about 517 B.C. seems to be tolerably well established.

Taoism as a system of morality at the present day has been, like Shintoism in Japan, greatly corrupted by Buddhism, and its pursuit of the philosopher's stone and the elixir of life, together with many other superstitions which have gathered round it, are very far removed indeed from the teaching of its founder. In form, Lao-Tze's doctrines resemble those of Confucius, except that they

are, as already mentioned, rather more aristocratic. Tao, a word which it is almost impossible to define fully and accurately, refers to "the way" in which things first came into being out of primordial nothingness, and how, without struggling or striving, the phenomena of nature still continue. There should also, according to Lao-Tze, be no striving in the life of man, in order that things may come to a successful issue without effort, which is the rule laid down for all human action, or rather inaction. The secret of government is to let men alone as much as possible. While undoubtedly the right ideal at which to aim, this is enough to drive the modern democratic sociologist quite frantic. "The empire has ever been won by letting things take their course. He who is always doing is unfit to obtain the empire." A very true saying, when properly considered; and how much above the grasp of a man like Herbert Spencer, with his "Life is activity"! "It is not," says Lao-Tze, "practise inaction, occupy yourself with doing nothing. Leave all things to take their natural course and do not interfere. Tao is entirely inactive, and yet it leaves nothing undone."

Truly Nietzschean is one of his last dicta:

“They who know me are very few, and on that account my honour is the greater.” Those who look forward to the extinction of evil will hardly be comforted by the apophthegm : “Among mankind the recognition of beauty, as such, implies the idea of ugliness, and the recognition of good implies the idea of evil.” What would a hard-headed Liberal say to this : “In ancient times those who knew how to practise Tao did not use it to enlighten the people, but rather to keep them in ignorance. The difficulty of governing the people arises from their having too much knowledge. Fishes must not be taken from the water : the methods of government may not be exhibited to the people. If the people do not fear the majesty of government a reign of terror will ensue.” But the Tory squire and the grasping capitalist employer should equally lay to heart the statement : “Do not confine the people within too narrow bounds ; do not make their lives too weary. For if you do not weary them of life, then they will not grow weary of you.” Another commentary on democracy and socialism, and the consequent fussiness and interfering which they inevitably bring about, may be found in the dictum : “As restrictions and prohibitions

multiply in an empire the people become poorer and poorer. When the people are subjected to overmuch government, the land is thrown into confusion. The greater the number of laws and enactments the more thieves and robbers there will be. Therefore the sage says : ' So long as I do nothing, the people will work out their own reformation. So long as I love calm, the people will right themselves. If only I can keep from meddling, the people will grow rich. ' ''

Only one other Chinese philosopher calls for special mention, viz., Meng-Tse, better known in his Latinised form of Mencius. He appears to have been born in the province of Shantung about 372 B.C., which would make him a contemporary of Plato and Aristotle. His mother, we are told, brought him up so well that she has ever since been held up as a model for Chinese women. From the little that is known about the life of Mencius, we gather that he studied Confucius and originated a very practical, almost Socratic, philosophy for the regulation of human conduct. When about forty years of age he led his followers from place to place in the endeavour to find a ruler who would put into practice his theoretic system of government. Not finding one,

however, he withdrew into retirement and died about 289 B.C. His conversations and sayings were collected by his disciples and circulated extensively after his death, and it must be acknowledged that in the last two or three centuries his doctrines have exercised much influence on Chinese ethics, though they are not very closely adhered to where the government of the country is concerned. His system is based on an almost ludicrously touching belief in the innate goodness of man. According to this teaching, man should collect and utilise the virtues of benevolence, wisdom, and propriety, which come out of his goodness ; for if this were done both individually and collectively the result would be a liberal and enlightened political system. There is one characteristic at least which Mencius shared with modern socialists and democrats — his intense desire for the education of the people, without considering the ultimate purpose of such a training, or how far it might be utilised for the benefit of the truly cultured and intellectual men, who must always be necessarily few in number.

It has often been asked why China has given

us no fine poetry or inspiring literature, but merely systems of morals based on more or less shrewd observations. The proper answer is doubtless that supplied by Gobineau, viz., that the Chinese have always been very materialistic in their requirements. With a few cotton rags as clothing, and a dish of rice as food, most of their physical and intellectual wants are satisfied. They have always been too lukewarm to design a high morality or creed, with the necessary accompaniment of a deity who punishes those who fail to live up to the noble ideal and rewards those who do, such as the Babylonian Bel, the Hebrew Jehovah, or the Mohammedan Allah. Their system of morals has never been tinged by anything resembling a deep faith. Its human origin was but too well known, and the maxims of Confucius or Lao-Tze might be taken or left at the will of those who heard or read them. There was no question in either case of reward or punishment from a supernatural source, and thus no great inducement either to heed or to show indifference. A superficial and lukewarm morality of this nature being purely atheistic, the conception of a deity was not necessary to enforce it upon the people. As a consequence, in all the long history of

China, we do not find a trace of religious wars, such as the Crusades, or of religious persecutions such as those which disgraced both Protestants and Catholics about the time of the Reformation and long afterwards, merely because in China there was no definitely-held faith, and therefore nothing to fight for. But the conception of a deity, or more than one, together with the high morality or moralities accompanying such a conception, is absolutely necessary for inspiring men with those deep feelings which find their expression in noble verse.

While also to some extent applicable to Japan, these remarks are not so entirely, for in the younger country the introduction of the Samurai caste, surrounded as it was by its almost mystic halo of nobility, may be said to have partly taken the place of a supernatural power, though of course on a very much lower plane, a plane which was not even high enough to produce a Japanese Calvin or a Melanchthon, much less a Mohammed or a Moses.

Japan is probably the youngest of the great Oriental nations, and, in view of the rather mechanical nature of the minds of the in-

habitants, one or two Continental thinkers have somewhat unkindly dubbed it "the England of the Far East." The earliest documents in Japanese pertaining to the history of the country date from the eighth century of our era; so that many Popes had filled the See of Rome long before a single historical Japanese document was in existence. It has virtually been established that the dominant Japanese tribe came from the Western Peninsula. Yamate (Island) was the district which gave birth to the tribe which by its skill and daring produced the Mikado system, and it was through this tribe that Japanese history assumed its present form. Like the Romans in Europe, the Yamate men advanced and conquered, actuated, as they believed, by a divine command. Their feudal system of organisation, and their well-planned campaigning arrangements, gave them an enormous advantage over the untrained hunters and fishermen whom they met, and they completed their conquest by imposing their superior religious system on the conquered nations. Their chief, or Mikado, was, they said, born of the gods, while their enemies were merely sprung from the earth. All worship was therefore concentrated upon the

Mikado, who was regarded as the earthly representative of the sun in heaven.

The religious system of this conquering tribe has always been somewhat loosely referred to as Shintoism. Shinto is the Chinese character representing the Japanese phrase Kami-no-Michi, meaning the "Way of the Gods," *i.e.*, theology. Shintoism in its pure form had no trace of an ethical code, idol worship, priestcraft, or any conception of a future state. Its principal divinity was the sun-goddess, Amaterasu, from whom the Mikado is supposed to have descended. The creed has no sacred books, and its temples are practically destitute of any adornment, although there is a certain amount of ritual. Trees, rivers, rocks, mountains, fire; and other natural objects are "worshipped," but the main feature of the creed is ancestor worship—if, indeed, we can use the words "creed" and "worship" in connection with what many critics deny to be a religious system at all. It has been pointed out, with some justice, that Shintoism is a means of government rather than a religion; and its chief purpose is the upholding of the Mikado dynasty. As one of its main features is the worship of the Mikado and his acknowledgment as the descendant of the gods, the faith

is naturally confined to Japan, or rather to Japanese subjects. This primitive belief held its ground in a pure form until about 550 A.D., when Buddhism was introduced into Japan from China. Shintoism almost at once came under the influence of the Indian religion, and is at present hardly distinguishable from it, more especially as there are no fewer than thirty-five sects of Japanese Buddhists.

Apparently it was not until the introduction of Buddhism in the middle of the sixth century of our era that an attempt was made to formulise the doctrines of Shinto, and to set them down in written form ; but these ancient documents concerning the creed can now only be read by special scholars, even among the Japanese themselves. They are :—

1. The Kojiki, or notices of ancient things, setting forth the doctrines in the style of the Bible. These documents may indeed be called a sort of Shinto Bible.

2. The Manyoshu, or Myriad Poems, expressing the thoughts and feelings of the ancient Japanese, and giving us a certain amount of information concerning their manners and customs, and describing a few important events depicted by poets and artists.

3. The Norito, which describes the active side of the religion.

While Shintoism is to some extent supported by the Japanese Government, the masses of the people are Buddhists. Indeed, the popular classes draw so slight a distinction between the two faiths that both Buddhist and Shinto temples are attended without discrimination. The higher classes are, generally speaking, atheistic, and endeavour to model their lives on the precepts of Chinese philosophers such as Confucius, Lao-Tze, and Mencius. One of the main reasons why Shintoism has retained its hold on Japan for so long is to be found in the love shown by the Japanese for the works of nature and for their own country. When the people, through Shintoism, are worshipping a rock or a stream or a tree, they are worshipping at the same time nature, their fatherland, and their emperor. The simplicity of the ceremonial may be seen in the only instrument of worship in a Shinto temple, viz., a mirror. It typifies the heart which, if calm and peaceful, is the image of the deity — although, indeed, it is thought that even this was an innovation introduced by Buddhists shortly after the arrival of the monks from China.

Critics, however, are not unanimous on this point.

What Europeans usually associate with Japan is not Shintoism, Buddhism, or Taoism, which is also one of the minor Japan religions, but Bushido. Bu-shi-do means literally Military Ways, that is, the manners which the fighting nobility are called upon to observe in their daily life. In other words, the regulations of Bushido are simply the precepts of knighthood, the *noblesse oblige* of the Japanese warrior caste. It may, perhaps, be best compared to the chivalry existing in Europe in the Middle Ages. When Bushido was definitely inaugurated in Japan, about the twelfth century, a class of professional warriors naturally came into prominence, as was also the case in Europe with the introduction of feudalism. In Japan these warriors were known as Samurai, *i.e.*, guards or attendants. As the result of numerous and severe campaigns of fighting, the weak and degenerate succumbed, thus leaving only the strong and healthy warriors to carry on the Samurai caste, so that the way was paved for a certain Samurai philosophy, viz., Bushido. There is no written code, but there is on the other hand a long oral tradition. Much of this warrior philosophy has been traced to the

sayings of the three Chinese philosophers already referred to in this chapter. Continual stress is laid upon justice, courage, the ability to bear pain and misfortune. Bushido was never sought by the Samurai as an end in itself, but as a means to the attainment of wisdom. This was conceived of as identical with its practical application to life, summarised in the maxim : "To know and to act are one and the same thing." The training tended to inculcate politeness and truthfulness, so much so that the mere word of a Samurai was assumed to be a sufficient guarantee for the truth of an assertion. It also encouraged mercy, especially among equals ; but there was no weakness or humanitarianism. It was among the Samurai that the legalised mode of suicide, Hari-Kari, first came into prominence, though this, since the abolition of feudalism in 1868, has become practically obsolete. While commonly looked upon as merely suicide, accomplished by disembowelling, Hari-Kari was really more than this, as it was a kind of religious and legal ceremony. The practice hardly calls for discussion here, being merely an offshoot from a system of philosophy for which there is now no further need, but the student who is interested in customs of this nature may find it worth

while to compare the views on suicide held by the ancient Greeks, and also Nietzsche's chapter in "Thus spake Zarathustra" regarding voluntary death.

As for the remarkable influence of Bushido on the national life of the Japanese, an observation by Nitobe in his work on Bushido is worthy of note in these democratic days: "As England owes all her liberty, law, art, and literature to the upper classes, so does Japan owe everything to the Samurai. They were not only the flower of the nation, but its right hand as well. All the gracious gifts of Heaven flowed through them. Though they kept themselves socially aloof from the populace, they set a moral standard for them and guided them by their example."

CHAPTER X

Minor Asiatic Religions—The Babylonians—
Zoroaster—Parsees—Hittites—Mithraism

So far as diversity of population is concerned, Babylonia, the Shinar, Babel, and "land of the Chaldees," of the Bible, and now the modern Arabian province of Irak-Arabi, may be described as the U.S.A. of ancient Asia, and evidence to this effect is forthcoming from both sacred and classical writers. From the earliest of the inscriptions hitherto discovered, which date back to about 7000 B.C., it would appear that the most primitive inhabitants of the country belonged to the Ugro-Finnic branch of the Turanians, and, in addition to the linguistic evidence, statues which have recently been unearthed show that the early inhabitants had the true Tartar type of features. It would seem, too, that a Semitic element was soon introduced into the population. According to the Biblical narrative, Noah begat Shem about 2448 B.C., but the Semites date from a much earlier period than this ; for the race emigrated from Arabia into Mesopotamia about 4500 B.C.

But numerous wars and extended commercial development introduced many other elements, and certainly about 4000 B.C., Babylon itself was a famous, highly-civilised, and prosperous city. How far this civilisation dates back before the period mentioned can now only be conjectured, though the patient researches of antiquaries are bringing forward fresh evidence year by year. The expedition sent to Babylonia in 1888, under the auspices of the University of Pennsylvania, unearthed a temple which was shown to have been erected not later than 7000 B.C. But a temple presupposes a highly-developed religion. The stone whorl in the British Museum, inscribed with the name of Sargon I., King of Akkad, is generally assigned to a much later date, 3800 B.C. Other tablets testify to a well-thought-out form of government about 6000 B.C., and, apart from the evidence afforded by Herodotus—whose veracity is more and more sustained by every fresh discovery which has been made—sufficient stones and tablets remain to give us a very fair conception of the essentials of the life of the people who inhabited this part of Asia fifty centuries ago.

Apart from Babylon, other celebrated towns and cities had come into existence in Babylonia

at a very early stage. One of the most ancient is Eridu or Eri-dugga (" holy city "), which in early times was a part of the Persian Gulf, though alluvial deposits have in the course of centuries filled up much of the northern part of the Gulf. Probably Eridu came into prominence even earlier than Babylon, for it was doubtless here that some wandering tribe entered Chaldea from the East. The most primitive indications of the spiritual side of the people show us that fetishism was the sole nature of their worship, but, with the arrival of the invaders from the East, water-gods came into notice. We find deities referred to in inscriptions as " Lord of the waves," " King of the ocean," " God of rivers," and later on these titles vary to " Lord of wisdom," " the All-knower," and " God of Laws." The supreme divinity of the sea was the God Ea, a legend concerning whom is recorded by Berosus, a Babylonian priest, who flourished about 200 B.C., and wrote in Greek a history of his country, several fragments of which have come down to us. Ea, the legend runs, arose from the sea, to teach man the elements of civilisation. He appeared regularly every morning, his bright halo dispelling the mists and driving away the darkness, and every

evening, when his task was done, he returned to his throne far away on the horizon, giving place once more to obscurity and gloom. The god held no direct communication with the people, but they heard his voice in the waves as they dashed upon the beach, and they felt his breath in the breezes. A remarkable analogy is suggested to us by an inscription saying that people sitting in their gardens at even-tide heard the god talking to them in the wind; for it at once suggests Gen. iii. 8: "And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day." In the old hymns we find traces of Ea communicating with mankind through his son, Mardugga ("holy son"), a name afterwards corrupted into Merodach or Marduk. Ea, too, had a consort, Dav-Kina, who personified the earth as her lord personified the sea; and water and earth were the elements out of which the entire cosmos arose. The couple had a son Tammuz ("the soul begotten"), who is identical with the Merodach just referred to. Tammuz also had a consort, Istar, and the worship of these four deities continued throughout many generations. The serpent is mentioned in the hymns of the early Babylonians as he is in Genesis. There is

perpetual conflict between the day and the night. The serpent holds the earth in his coils. Then the bright god rises in the east and darts a ray of light like an arrow—the arrow of Apollo being an analogy which will readily occur to the student. The serpent is struck and a golden-red blood begins to flow. The coils which have held the world in darkness slowly unfold, admitting the bright sun-god. “The victor,” says the old chronicle, “crushes in the head of the serpent.” Hours elapse and the victor makes his way towards the west, while the serpent again appears. It is his turn this time, and the horizon is once more stained with blood as the setting sun sinks slowly out of sight. “It shall bruise thy head,” says the writer of Genesis, centuries later, “and thou shalt bruise his heel.”

As civilisation advanced throughout the country other and more local gods arose. We find, for instance, a certain Mul-lil, the older Bel of the Semites, sacred to the city of Nipur (the modern Niffer). One of his descendants is the moon-god, whose sacred city was Ur, and his worship spread even to Syria and Arabia. It is in Ur (“light”) that we find the first traces of the Semites in Babylonia, and the city will always be held sacred as the

home of Terah, the father of Abram, the father of the Jews.

We find the moon-god worshipped under various names, the most important being "Aku," the disc, "Nannar" or "Nannak," the bright one, and "Sin," the bright—this root being also found in Sinai and the wilderness of Sin. The worship of the moon, as is generally the case among wandering tribes, preceded the worship of the sun, so in early Semitic mythology we find the moon represented as the father of the sun. Recently-discovered fragments have enabled us to decipher the hymns sung and the liturgy employed in some renowned temple which was probably used as a place of worship even by the ancestors of Terah. Many phrases occur in them which were repeated twenty centuries later by the Hebrew psalmists. The sun, for example, "comes out of his chamber" in old Babylonia "like a wife pleased and giving pleasure," as he does in almost similar words in Psalm xix. 5. He spreads bright light, "his name is in all mouths," he is a "banner," and his strength, like Samson's, lies in his bright locks and beard.

Many of these local deities disappeared in 3800 B.C. when Sargon I. became king and

endeavoured to unite the different cities into one compact empire. This consolidation was triumphantly carried out by one of his successors, Cammurabi, who proclaimed himself King of North and South Babylonia and made Babylon his capital about 2200 B.C. From this time Babylon flourished more than ever : schools, libraries, and observatories were built, and scholars, priests, and jurists made the city their headquarters. But more important still, from a religious point of view, was the fact that the local god of Babylon was elevated into the position of a national deity, as King Asoka was destined to elevate Buddhism two thousand years later. The local god was Merodach ; but he now assumed the attributes of Ea and of Bel, "the Lord of the world," being henceforth known as Bel-Merodach. We shall find him referred to as Belus in our Herodotus, while Strabo and Diodorus also make mention of him. But from now on we have more information about the history of Babylon than about its religion. Despite many revolts and successive captures, we know that until about 560 B.C. Merodach was worshipped and revered by the Babylonians, but about this time the people seemed to become careless in their religious beliefs. Inscription after inscription

bears the phrase "Bel came not forth," tending to show that the images of the gods were no longer brought out for the annual procession.

Nabonidus, the father of Belshazzar, and the last of the native Babylonian kings, was of a vacillating and easy-going disposition, and, like the Ahasuerus mentioned in the book of Esther, cared more for voluptuousness and antiquarian research than for attending to his nominal duties as a ruler. In his zeal for forming large collections of antiquities, he secured for the great temple of Bel in Babylon various statues from the smaller cities representing local deities. From the point of view of the modern historical and philological student, this was an admirable practice; but at the time it had two very bad effects. In the first place, the local priests were indignant at the loss of their idols, accompanied, as it naturally was, with a diminution of their local prestige, while the priests of Bel-Merodach in Babylon were incensed at the introduction into the temple of a number of strange idols and gods—their anger extending in course of time to Bel-Merodach himself, who, when forced into competition with other deities, withdrew his protection from the city. The immediate

result of this was a spirit of revolt which gradually spread through the country and caused the Babylonians to look for some one to free them from their unpopular king. The anger of the god extended to his son, Belshazzar, who was also marked out for destruction, and was in fact assassinated in 538 B.C., when Babylon fell into the hands of the great Persian, Cyrus. Nabonidus himself died a week afterwards, and the conqueror was hailed as the restorer of the old religion, to which it appears Cyrus was tactful enough to lend his countenance.

In connection with this revolt and the entry of Cyrus into Babylon, the student will be struck with a curious fact, one of those numerous incidents where we see history repeating itself. The Persian king wanted money for the expedition, and before the war could be undertaken a great Babylonian banking house was appealed to for funds. This is, of course, the modern procedure also; but the remarkable analogy is the fact that twenty-five centuries ago, as at the present day, the bankers thus appealed to were Jews, just as the modern conqueror might find it necessary to consult the Rothschilds. The Babylonian firm concerned was that of Ikibi

Bros., which name is the exact equivalent of Yakob, *i.e.*, Jacob. Among the numerous bonds connecting the East and West, I have thought it worthy to put on record this curious historical fragment of such human interest.

While the influence of the Babylonians on the Jews is dealt with more particularly in the chapter on Judaism, one analogy between the peoples may be mentioned here. Merodach, as will have been observed from the withdrawal of his protection from Babylon when other deities were brought into the city, was a jealous god like Jehovah. The Babylonian temples corresponded in a great measure to the synagogue, and even the Babylonian feast-days bore a great resemblance to the Jewish feast-days. Indeed, even the arrangement and decoration of the temples corresponded; and the Jewish rite of circumcision was long a Chaldean custom. Lenormant and Sayce, in their various works dealing with the monuments of antiquity, have thrown much light on another item connecting the Babylonians with the Jews, *viz.*, the Tower of Babel. Babel is the Assyrian Bab-ili, "the gate of God," the Semitic rendering of the name of the Accadian town Ca-Dimira, "Ca,"

meaning "gate," and "Dimira," "God".¹ While Berosus makes no mention of the story, George Smith, the well-known Assyriologist, found a cuneiform inscription which, when deciphered, appeared to be almost identical with the narrative in Genesis xi. The "Father of the Gods," whose anger is aroused against the builders, is Bel in this inscription; and it is conjectured, with much plausibility, that the story of the Giants and Titans of Greek mythology has been derived from this Assyrian story of the Tower of Babel, the essential facts of the legend being doubtless conveyed to Greece by the Phœnicians. It is at all events practically certain that the site of the tower was somewhere in or near Babylon. Most critics regard it as being identical with the ruins of Birs Nimroud in Borsippa, a suburb of Babylon, which was dedicated to the God Nebo, mentioned in Isaiah. This temple or tower had remained unfinished for many generations until Nebuchadnezzar at one time proposed to complete it. A legend would naturally grow up around the half-built tower, and the number of languages spoken in the Mesopotamian plain would be easily

¹ Before philology began to be properly studied, the explanation of Babel was that it came from the Hebrew *babel*, meaning to confound; but no scholar would now put forward this derivation.

accounted for by saying that the god had confounded the original tongue spoken by the people to punish them for attempting to scale the lofty path leading to his throne.

When we come to sum up the religion of Babylonia, we are somewhat at a disadvantage. We have, from the records of classical writers and recently discovered inscriptions, a fairly large mass of material dealing with the history of the people; but we cannot answer the question which Nietzsche would have asked: What were their standards of moral values? The few particulars we have about their local deities and their supreme god tell us very little. We can judge from their having so much in common with the Jews that they were originally a strong and noble race, but they undoubtedly declined, and Gobineau, who has probably studied the question of races more thoroughly than any man before him or since, has given us the reason in one word: intermixture. It is useless for theologically-minded critics to point to long years of prosperity and immorality as the reason why a race should begin to degenerate: Gobineau insists, and rightly, that sexual

immorality may be a sign of strength as much as of weakness, and that prosperity will not spoil a nation so long as the blood remains pure ; but once let the castes become mixed, or lower races become allied to the higher through marriage, and the end is in sight.

Among the minor religions and philosophies of Asia, Zoroastrianism, the religion of the Parsees, claims a prominent place. Its teaching is contained in the Avesta, which, like the Rig-Veda, is a collection of documents of uncertain age, such as the Gathas, the Yendidad, the Yashts, etc. Of these the Gathas seem to be the oldest, but, as in them the Creator of Nature is worshipped as well as Nature herself, it would seem that they were not written down until the ancient Parsees, whose religion they represent, had reached a high degree of culture. Zoroaster¹ himself appears as an historical personage in the books of the Avesta, and he is said to have "flourished" about 2500 B.C. At first the teaching seems to have been monotheistic, and only one deity is mentioned, the Ahura-Mazda (Ormuzd), but the principle of the philosophy arising out of this teaching was dualism. There were said to be two

¹ The Greek form of the Persian name Zarathustra.

primordial causes of the real and spiritual world, the Vohu Mano, *i.e.*, Good Mind or Reality (Gaya), and the Akem Mano, or Non-Reality (Ajoyaiti.) The teaching of Zoroaster flourished throughout Upper Thibet, Persia, and the north-western provinces of India until the time of Alexander the Great, when it declined rapidly, and is now confined principally to a few classes of Hindoos. The followers of this creed are "enjoined to be liberal in thoughts and deeds, pious and religious in ceremonial rites, truthful and honest in their dealings, active in destroying evil, industrious in cultivating land, persevering in the education of themselves and others."¹ The Parsee must not eat anything which is cooked by a person of another religion, and marriages must be contracted within the limits of their own castes. As Ahura-Mazda is the origin of light, his symbol is the sun, or, in default of the sun, the moon and the stars, or, if all these are wanting, fire of any kind. All Europeans who have had any dealings with Parsees in India or Persia pay the highest testimony to their character for honesty, industry, and peacefulness; while they are well known in

¹ *The Teachings of Zoroaster*, by S.A. Kapadia.

the East for their benevolence and charitable works. One of their characteristic features is the strikingly handsome appearance of both men and women, indicating a long period of evolution.

Another faith of some importance in the history of the East is that of the Hittites, but unfortunately we possess as yet few definite particulars of them beyond what can be gleaned from the Old Testament, and the few fragmentary Hittite inscriptions which the researches of archæologists have so far brought to light. We know, at all events, that the Hittites waged war against the Egyptians and the Assyrians for more than a thousand years; and they seem to have moved with the Israelites from the time of Abraham to the period of the Babylonian captivity. By putting together the results of the various inscriptions discovered, it would seem that the Hittites ruled over what was, for that epoch, a mighty empire, as early as 3500 B.C.—an empire which did not come to an end until 717 B.C., when Sargon II., the Babylonian king, captured their city of Samaria. While there is something to be said about the Hittites from the point of view of the historian, there is, unfortunately, little

to be learned for the information of the theological student, although Prof. Sayce, Mr Thomas Tyler, the Revd. W. Wright and others give good reasons for thinking that the name of the Hebrew God Jehovah came originally from a Hittite source. It would appear, however, that the sun was worshipped, and also, but not to so great an extent, the moon. A strange feature of this religious creed, however, is the worship of the eagle, for that there was a cult of the eagle among the Hittites has been virtually established from the most recently discovered inscriptions and coins. Another strange emblem observed on Hittite stone tablets is a triangle, which, a few critics have conjectured, not without some plausibility, represented the conception of a Trinity, each corner standing for some particular deity. Until further inscriptions are discovered, however, and what is even more to the point, accurately deciphered, it would be very unwise to push conjecture further.

A third faith which deserves a paragraph or two is Mithraism. It is particularly interesting to the classical student in that it appears to have been introduced into Rome in 68 B.C. by some prisoners whom Pompey

had taken in battle. It rapidly spread through the whole empire, as is amply proved by the large number of Mithraic statues, inscriptions, and bas-reliefs discovered at various times. Mithra, who appears in many Persian inscriptions as Mithras, and in the Rig-Veda as Mitra, is generally taken to represent the sun-god or god of light, and is usually looked upon as invariably fighting on the side of what is right, against certain other gods who struggle on behalf of evil. Take, for example, the following quotation from the Rig-Veda.

It is the voice of Mitra that leads us men, Mitra sustains earth and heaven ; Mitra, with eyes that close not, watches over our tribes, to Mitra pour the fat oblation.

That man is blessed, O Mitra, who duly serves thee : none can slay him, none can overcome him ; whom thou dost guard, evil shall not reach him from far or near.

Approach with reverence the great Aditya, the leader of men, who is so kind to the sinner ; to him, Mitra the Wonderful, pour into the fire the loved oblation.

To Mitra our five tribes go for help, and he sustains the gods.

Rig-Veda, iii. 59.

We usually find Mithra represented on statues as a handsome youth, generally sitting on a bull, into whose neck he is plunging a dagger. A scorpion, a serpent, a raven and a dog are also represented in these scenes, all with their allegorical meaning, which un-

fortunately, owing to the destruction of all the documents connected with the creed by the followers of Mohammed, we cannot now decipher. Indeed, traces of Mithraism have been discovered in England, where it was doubtless introduced by the Roman soldiery. The followers of this faith were undoubtedly a serious menace to the propagation of Christianity throughout the Roman Empire, as is evident from the writings of the early Fathers. At length, in the year 378, it was ordered to be suppressed, and, although Saint Jerome, writing several years later, speaks of it as still being practised, it was not long before the last trace of it had been swept away from both the eastern and western divisions of the later Roman Empire.

CHAPTER XI

Summary and conclusion—East and West—The influence of Asia on Europe.

THE connection between religion and government may be well observed in one of our great Eastern possessions. England holds and administers India ; but, all politics apart, a great mistake has been made in endeavouring to rule an Eastern possession in accordance with Western and so-called “ Liberal ” principles. The Asiatic differs from the European in almost everything ; but there are few more striking differences than the respective views of the two continents on government. Japan has to some extent Europeanised herself ; but it must not be inferred from this that the Japanese are satisfied with European methods of government, or that Indians would likewise be satisfied with them.

It will not be denied that English thinkers have influenced European forms of government to a very great extent. It is to Locke, for instance, rather than to Voltaire and Rousseau that we must really ascribe the French Revolu-

tion ; for the two French writers were profoundly influenced by the English one. But the democratic principles advocated by English thinkers, while admirably adapted to the slow, careful English temperament, resulted in scenes of extraordinary horror and butchery when carried out to their logical conclusions by the more ardent and impetuous Frenchmen. Similarly, the modern Englishman, having been brought up under a constitutional government, and being accustomed to elect members to represent his interests in a House of Commons, thoughtlessly believes that this is the ideal system, and cannot conceive that millions of people would prefer to be ruled by an autocrat if they had their own way in certain other directions. "Gouverner," says a witty French writer, Henri Maret, "c'est embêter le monde" (to govern is simply to annoy everybody). In other words, Western methods of government inevitably tend to interference in the domestic concerns of the governed ; the government becomes a system of petty annoyance. The Curfew edict can be more than matched in the England of our own day with the laws which prohibit children from entering a public-house, which forbid the selling of tobacco to boys under sixteen, which

call upon parents to send their children to school, which examine our houses to make sure that they are sanitary, and which, amidst hundreds of other items, call for the registration of births, marriages and deaths.

Now, to an Indian, all this sort of fussy legislation is anathema. The Oriental cares nothing for his neighbour, and it is simply impossible to explain to him the Christian law that he shall love his neighbour as himself. He cannot understand why this should be so, and with some reason. In the case of a common enemy, such as a tiger impelled by hunger to approach the nearest village, he will willingly agree to join his neighbours for the purpose of defence. He will likewise join them for purposes of attack, if it be to his advantage to do so. Here, however, his relationship with his neighbour comes to an end. Every man is master in his own house. If he thinks it necessary to send his children to school he will do so ; if not, he will keep them at home. But he cannot understand that, in Western countries, thousands of men whom he would never see should, by the simple process of voting, which also puzzles him, send men to a place called a House of Commons, there to decide on matters intimately connected with

his own family, such as the schooling of his children and his own hours of labour. In all matters of this sort, indeed, the Oriental is actuated by the most aristocratic individualism it is possible to conceive. He is willing to tolerate any form of government but an interfering one, *i.e.*, a "reforming" government. How is this seen in his religion?

After all, the view set forth by Nietzsche must never be lost sight of: religions are invented for the purpose of protecting and perpetuating a certain type of man. Moham-medanism was obviously invented for the benefit of the virile; Christianity for the benefit of the weak. But it may be just possible that, as the Greeks were forced to restrain their exuberance by the most tragic drama in all literature, so may the Indians have been compelled to curb their military ardour by the invention of a nihilistic religion. Obviously the primitive Aryans must have been one of the greatest races of conquerors the world has ever known, else how could they have travelled thousands of miles and subjected every nation they met with, finally establishing on a firm foundation a system of government and religion which has endured for thousands of years?

The difference between the two great nihi-

listic religions, Buddhism and Christianity, has already been touched upon, but it deserves to be reiterated. The European critic may say that Christianity has succeeded in brightening the lives of millions of men and women and helping them in their struggle through the world, *i.e.*, the doctrines of the Christian faith have secured the preservation of a certain type of man. The modern biologist, however, who considers the matter from a philosophical point of view, will be inclined to ask, Was this type worth preserving, more especially at the cost of the restrictive penalties imposed on higher minds by the logical outcome of Christianity? What is there to compensate for the rise of a slave caste in Europe, with the resultant elevation of all the lower elements above the higher, or for the sentimental frame of mind engendered to such an appalling extent, especially in the northern countries, by "love," which is purely a Christian invention? The rise of the slaves under Christianity, to which was due, even more than to the influx of the barbarians, the fall of the Roman Empire, is surely hardly atoned for by the production of democratic upstarts, temperance societies, and foreign missionaries. Still, this religion of ours came from the East and is one of the

influences exercised upon Europe by Asia. Christianity springs from two Jewish sects, the Essenes and the Ebionites, and, as the latter name comes from a Hebrew word meaning "poor," it may easily be guessed where all the sneering sayings at rich men in the New Testament originated. Few teachers, indeed, have suffered more from their disciples and followers than Christ, for whose real opinions—some of which are very unlike those in the authorised books of the New Testament—we must go to the writers of the Apocrypha. But this religion, derived from late Jewish sources, has been counteracted even in Europe by a Hellenic influence, to which we owe the preservation of men like Dryden, Voltaire, Shakespeare, Goethe and Schopenhauer, to pick out only a few names at random ; and it may seem strange to suggest that the people who fought unweariedly to keep Hellenism alive in Europe were the Jews ; but such is nevertheless the fact. We know that thousands of Jews were forced to settle in Alexandria three centuries before the beginning of the Christian era. There they came under the influence of Greek culture, and when in later times Alexandria became the seat of Greek learning, the Jews were destined to make this

culture their own, and to uphold the noble traditions of Greece against the nihilistic doctrines of the Christian Church.

From the aristocratic standpoint, as opposed to the democratic outlook and the equality of man laid down by Christianity, what we owe to the Jews must never be forgotten. While Christian teachers were mistaking the nature of philosophy and making it a mere appendage to theology,¹ the Jewish thinkers were deep in the study of Aristotle and the pre-Platonists. It was from Maimonides, for example, that Thomas Aquinas, who might almost be called the re-creator of the aristocratic Roman Catholic Church, obtained the main principles of his famous *Summa*, although in this borrowing the aristocratic nature of the Jewish ecclesiastical polity was necessarily transformed into a more democratic one. The beneficent influence of Judaism is still further shown by Spinoza, the direct philosophical descendant of Maimonides, to whom men like Disraeli and Heine owe much, and of whom Goethe and Nietzsche have both spoken in warm terms of gratitude.

Another great teacher who exercised an

¹ On this point see more particularly *Anti-Pragmatisme*, by Albert Schinz, Paris, 1909 ; and *Aspects of the Hebrew Genius*, Art. *Aristotle and Jewish Thought*, by Dr A. Wolf.

enormous influence on the Christian Church was the Mohammedan, Averrhoes (Ibn Roshd), born in Spain in 1126. He translated and annotated Aristotle, and his doctrine of the Universal Reason certainly shows the influence of Alexandrian and neo-Platonic teaching. His pantheistic doctrine of the unity of the active principle in the universe caused quite a controversy in the fourteenth century, and astrology, which seems to have been much associated with his name, has added to our language the word Averrhoism. When on the subject of Arabian influence in Europe, it may also be worth while reminding the reader that it is to the Arabs that we are indirectly indebted for our numerals, though these undoubtedly came to us from India.

Apart from the Mohammedans and Jews, however, India has undoubtedly exercised an enormous though indirect influence on European thought. The works of several Greek philosophers who lived five or six centuries before the Christian era—such as Thales, Pythagoras and Heraclitus—show us that problems connected with the origin of the universe and the development of man were discussed with much critical acumen on the shores of the Mediterranean even before the

birth of Buddha or Confucius. One remarkable doctrine which is worthy of especial notice is that laid down by Thales about 600 B.C., viz., that water is the original principle of all things, from which everything proceeds, and into which everything is again dissolved. A pupil of Thales, Anaximander, whom we can trace as having "flourished" about 570 B.C., said that all living things had developed out of non-living slime, and that there was a time when man was a fish. Again, Empedocles definitely stated so early as 450 B.C., that innumerable forms were engendered by the crystallisation of the primitive elements, and that of these a large number perished because they were unfitted to survive—an old anticipation of the doctrine, which seems so modern to us, of the struggle for existence. Not long afterwards we find Leucippus putting forward the atomic theory, viz., that the universe is built up of tiny particles. The origin of all these theories, however, does not seem to have been Greek, but Indian; for we certainly find traces of them in old Indian and Persian literature; so that even Darwin has been anticipated by some nameless and unknown Brahmanic thinker who may have lived thirty or forty centuries ago. In this connection it must not

be overlooked that Pythagoras certainly wrote about the doctrine of the transmigration of souls about 560 or 550 B.C., and this is a theory which is certainly not Greek, but Indian, in its origin.

Those of us who have read through the fragments of the early Greek historians will have observed numerous references to the curious race known as the Scythians, upon whom the researches of modern investigators have thrown comparatively little light. It was long believed by ethnologists that they were of Mongolian origin, but the latest investigations certainly tend to show that they were Aryans. They evidently wandered from the north of Persia to the shores of the Black Sea and thence into Greece, while about 700 B.C. we find traces of them in Egypt. There seems to have been also an Asiatic branch of the huge tribe, which, it is significant to note, was a firm supporter of Buddhism in the early stages of the faith, from which many critics have sought to prove that Buddha himself was of Scythian descent. On this point, however, no definite statement can be made, but there seems to be no doubt that the Scythians brought with them into Europe a great deal of the Brahmanical learning, which probably exercised no little

influence on the minds of those Greek thinkers who came into contact with them.

The influence of Egyptian culture on Europe has never yet been fully appreciated.¹ There is no doubt that the Jews of Alexandria were strongly influenced by all branches of Egyptian learning, which itself, in its later stages, was likewise considerably influenced from Eastern sources. While, unfortunately, Egypt has left us no literature which can be compared with that of Greece or Rome, there is no doubt that the sculpture and art developed on the banks of the Nile were much superior to those arts as developed in Greece. In view of the fact that Englishmen have for generations been brought up to look upon Greek sculpture as the highest of all types, such a statement will no doubt sound heretical, but it has already been strongly advocated by competent critics in Germany and Italy, and an Egyptian Renaissance, if Englishmen can ever be induced to take an interest in it, will undoubtedly upset many of our pet theories regarding sculpture and art.

It is difficult to say with certainty what influence the idea of a Messiah had in buoying up the Jews in the course of their long struggle, but no doubt it was very great. So profound is their

¹ "Egypt : the Alma Mater of civilisation," says Lafont.

belief that a Deliverer will one day be sent by Jehovah to restore their country to the power and splendour which it exhibited during the reign of David and Solomon, and to compel the Gentiles to acknowledge the superiority of the Chosen People, that not all the discoveries of modern science or all the mass of learning which goes by the name of the Higher Criticism can eradicate this fixed belief from their souls. This Deliverer is to be sent to the Chosen People, and to them only, which tends in a great measure to explain why the Jews refrain from making converts among other races. No people has ever striven so hard to keep its type pure, and this is one great lesson which modern European nations fail to learn. It is clear that even the downfall—or what practically amounted to the downfall—of the Brahmans at the time of Buddha was due to their neglecting this precaution. Probably the most illuminating sentence in the Brahmanic writings, and one upon which many a moral text could be hung, is this : “The castes became mixed.” In other words, the higher classes intermarried with the lower, the Aryans with the aborigines, and the result was a degradation of the race. Though this had not gone very far, however, is shown by the fact that Brahmanism was able

to reassert its superiority and finally to drive Buddhism out of India. But the priests were now allied for purposes of defence and not attack. No ethnologist can read through the Laws of Manu and fail to be impressed by the penalties imposed for the crime of marriage between the higher and lower castes. Comparatively gentle at first, the punishment increases in severity; and we can see that through long centuries every effort was made to check what, even in those early times, was clearly recognised as race degeneracy. There is a modern assumption, particularly prevalent in the United States of America, that by inter-marriage among different nationalities a new and strong nation will eventually arise. The wish in this case is certainly father to the theory; for a more noxious combination of races, or rather tribes, than those in the United States of America it would be difficult to find. This theory, however, is merely an echo of the exploded assumptions underlying the views of the English evolutionists of the nineteenth century, all of which amounted to saying that if people were left to develop themselves, no matter in how chaotic a manner, the best would nevertheless come to the surface, and were, in fact, already there; a view which set at rest

for ever the consciences of grasping landlords and sweating capitalists. The more scientific investigations of Continental thinkers, however, have shown that evolution must be directed towards some clearly-defined end—though this is hardly a matter which calls for discussion in this work.

To sum up our investigations, it will have been observed that religion is largely a matter of temperament and environment, and that, as temperaments change in a race, owing to degeneracy or other causes, the religion of the race will also undergo certain modifications. It is impossible to hold up one form of religion and to say that it suits all men equally well. All the struggles between the Catholics and Protestants in the north and south of Europe have simply been due to the fact that the Southern temperament cannot and will not put up with the asceticism, anti-sexuality, and so on, which are so well suited to the cloudy and muddier spirits to be found in the Northern countries. It has also happened many thousands of times that individuals are born in Christian countries who, when the effects of their own particular heredity make themselves felt, develop temperaments which are diametrically opposed to the average of the

temperaments by which they are surrounded, although they may belong to families which are nominally Christian. All rarely gifted spirits are possessed of these exceptional temperaments, and they are naturally acutely disliked under the intolerant *régime* of Christianity. Such men were Napoleon, who has long been a victim to misrepresentation and slander on account of his very natural amorous propensities, and also Shakespeare, who suffered the terrible fate of being mutilated by Dr Bowdler. Another victim was Byron, to whom burial in Westminster Abbey was refused (although it was granted to Darwin, who had led the English upper classes of his time to believe that everything was for the best in this best of all possible worlds); Shelley, who was expelled from Oxford merely because his opinions were three-quarters of a century in advance of those held by the authorities of the University; Gibbon, who has been severely censured for venturing to hint that Mohammed was more worthy of admiration than Christ, and—but the list might be extended indefinitely.

What, then, is our final word? Shall we strain the vocabulary a little and say, with Pythagoras, our *'αντίχθων*? Merely this: that

the religion of men of inferior intellects must be prescribed for them by the higher order of men, and not, as is usually the case at present, *vice versa*. The Roman Catholic priest, who thinks for his flock, is a much more noble figure than the Methodist preacher whose congregation "think for themselves." It is gratifying to observe that the Church of England is every year approaching more and more closely to the Church of Rome in this particular respect. But Christianity itself must not be imposed on higher spirits who do not want it. If only the Brahmanical caste system could be introduced into Europe and maintained in a pure form for three or four thousand years, as was the case in India, then indeed would it be time for us Europeans to apply to ourselves the words—written in a spirit of irony, perhaps—of a famous English poet :—

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

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