GLOVER TERROT REAVELEY

THE CONFLICT OF RELIGIONS IN THE EARLY ROMAN EMPIRE

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Содержание

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PREFACE

A large part of this book formed the course of Dale Lectures delivered in Mansfield College, Oxford, in the Spring of 1907. For the lecture-room the chapters had to be considerably abridged; they are now restored to their full length, while revision and addition have further changed their character. They are published in accordance with the terms of the Dale foundation.

To see the Founder of the Christian movement and some of his followers as they appeared among their contemporaries; to represent Christian and pagan with equal goodwill and equal honesty, and in one perspective; to recapture something of the colour and movement of life, using imagination to interpret the data, and controlling it by them; to follow the conflict of ideals, not in the abstract, but as they show themselves in character and personality; and in this way to discover where lay the living force that changed the thoughts and lives of men, and what it was; these have been the aims of the writer, – impossible, but worth attempting. So far as they have been achieved, the book is relevant to the reader.

The work of others has made the task lighter. German scholars, such as Bousset, von Dobschütz, Harnack, Pfleiderer and Wernle; Professor F. C. Burkitt and others nearer home who have written of the beginnings of Christianity; Boissier, Martha and Professor Samuel Dill; Edward Caird, Lecky, and Zeller; with the authors of monographs, Croiset, de Faye, Gréard, Koziol, Oakesmith, Volkmann; these and others have been laid under contribution. In another way Dr Wilhelm Herrmann, of Marburg, and Thomas Carlyle have helped the book. The references to ancient authorities are mostly of the writer's own gathering, and they have been verified.

Lastly, there are friends to thank, at Cambridge and at Woodbrooke, for the services that only friends can render – suggestion, criticism, approval, correction, and all the other kindly forms of encouragement and enlightenment.

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CHAPTER I
ROMAN RELIGION

On the Ides of March in the year 44 B.C. Julius Cæsar lay dead at the foot of Pompey's statue. His body had twenty three wounds. So far the conspirators had done their work thoroughly, and no farther. They had made no preparation for the government of the Roman world. They had not realized that they were removing the great organizing intelligence which stood between the world and chaos, and back into chaos the world swiftly rolled. They had hated personal government; they were to learn that the only alternative was no government at all. "Be your own Senate yourself"[1] wrote Cicero to Plancus in despair. There was war, there were faction fights, massacres, confiscations, conscriptions. The enemies of Rome came over her borders, and brigandage flourished within them.

At the end of his first *Georgic* Virgil prays for the triumph of the one hope which the world saw – for the preservation and the rule of the young Cæsar, and he sums up in a few lines the horror from which mankind seeks to be delivered. "Right and wrong are confounded; so many wars the world over, so many forms of wrong; no worthy honour is left to the plough; the husbandmen are marched away and the fields grow dirty; the hook has its curve straightened into the sword-blade. In the East, Euphrates is stirring up war, in the West, Germany: nay, close-neighbouring cities break their mutual league and draw the sword, and the war-god's unnatural fury rages over the whole world; even as when in the Circus the chariots burst from their floodgates, they dash into the course, and pulling desperately at the reins the driver lets the horses drive him, and the car is deaf to the curb."[2]

Virgil's hope that Octavian might be spared to give peace to the world was realized. The foreign enemies were driven over their frontiers and thoroughly cowed; brigandage was crushed, and finally, with the fall of Antony and Cleopatra, the government of the whole world was once more, after thirteen years of suffering, disorder and death, safely gathered into the hands of one man. There was peace at last and Rome had leisure to think out the experience through which she had passed.

The thirteen years between the murder of Cæsar and the battle of Actium were only a part of that experience; for a century there had been continuous disintegration in the State. The empire had been increased, but the imperial people had declined. There had been civil war in Rome over and over again – murder employed as a common resource of politics, reckless disregard of the sacredness of life and property, and thorough carelessness of the State. The impression that England made upon Wordsworth in 1802 was precisely that left upon the mind of the serious Roman when he reflected upon his country. All was "rapine, avarice, expense."

> Plain living and high thinking are no more:
> The homely beauty of the good old cause
> Is gone; our peace, our fearful innocence,
> And pure religion breathing household laws.

Such complaints, real or conventional, are familiar to the readers of the literature of the last century before Christ. Everyone felt that a profound change had come over Rome. Attempts had been made in various ways to remedy this change; laws had been passed; citizens had been banished and murdered; armies had been called in to restore ancient principles; and all had resulted in failure. Finally a gleam of restoration was seen when Julius began to set things in order, when he "corrected the year by the Sun" and gave promise of as true and deep-going a correction of everything else. His

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[1] Cic. *ad fam.* x, 16, 2, *Ipse tibi sis senatus.*

[2] *Georgic* i, 505-514 (Conington's translation, with alterations).

murder put an end to all this at the time, and it took thirteen years to regain the lost opportunity – and the years were not altogether loss for they proved conclusively that there was now no alternative to the rule of the "Prince."

The cause of Rome's decline

Accordingly the Prince set himself to discover what was to be done to heal the hurt of his people, and to heal it thoroughly. What was the real disease? was the question that men asked; where was the root of all the evil? why was it that in old days men were honest, governed themselves firmly, knew how to obey, and served the State? A famous line of Ennius, written two centuries before, said that the Roman Commonwealth stood on ancient character, and on men. —

Moribus antiquis stat res Romano, virisque.

Both these bases of the national life seemed to be lost – were they beyond recall? could they be restored? What was it that had made the "ancient character"? What was the ultimate difference between the old Roman and the Roman of the days of Antony and Octavian? Ovid congratulated himself on the perfect congruity of the age and his personal character —

hæc ætas moribus apta meis —

and he was quite right. And precisely in the measure that Ovid was right in finding the age and his character in agreement, the age and national character were demonstrably degenerate. It was the great question before the nation, its statesmen, patriots and poets, to find why two hundred years had wrought such a change.

It was not long before an answer was suggested. A reason was found, which had a history of its own. The decline had been foreseen. We are fortunately in possession of a forecast by a Greek thinker of the second century B.C., who knew Rome well – Polybius, the intimate of the younger Scipio. In the course of his great summary of the Rome he knew, when he is explaining her actual and future greatness to the Greek world, he says: – "The most important difference for the better, which the Roman Commonwealth appears to me to display, is in their religious beliefs, for I conceive that what in other nations is looked upon as a reproach, I mean a scrupulous fear of the gods, is the very thing which keeps the Roman Commonwealth together; (*synéchein tà rhômaíôn práumata*). To such an extraordinary height is this carried among them (*ektetragóetai kaì pareisêktai*) both in private and public business, that nothing could exceed it. Many people might think this unaccountable, but in my opinion their object is to use it as a check upon the common people. If it were possible to form a state wholly of philosophers, such a custom would perhaps be unnecessary. But seeing that every multitude is fickle and full of lawless desires, unreasoning anger and violent passion, the only resource is to keep them in check by mysterious terrors and scenic effects of this sort (*tois adélois phobois kai tê toiaute tragôdia*). Wherefore, to my mind, the ancients were not acting without purpose or at random, when they brought in among the vulgar those opinions about the gods and the belief in the punishments in Hades: much rather do I think that men nowadays are acting rashly and foolishly in rejecting them. This is the reason why, apart from anything else, Greek statesmen, if entrusted with a single talent, though protected by ten checking-clerks, as many seals and twice as many witnesses, yet cannot be induced to keep faith; whereas among the Romans, in their magistracies and embassies, men have the handling of a great amount of money, and yet from pure respect to their oath keep their faith intact."[3] Later on Polybius limits his assertion of Roman honesty to "the majority" – the habits and principles of Rome were beginning to be contaminated.[4]

The political value of religion

This view of the value of religion is an old one among the Greeks. Critias, the friend of Socrates, embodied it in verses, which are preserved for us by Sextus Empiricus. In summary he holds that

[3] Polybius, vi, 56, Shuckburgh's Translation.

[4] Polybius, xviii, 35.

there was a time when men's life knew no order, but at last laws were ordained to punish; and the laws kept men from open misdeeds, "but they did many things in secret; and then, I think, some shrewd and wise man invented a terror for the evil in case secretly they should do or say or think aught. So he introduced the divine, alleging that there is a divinity (*daimôn*), blest with eternal life, who with his mind sees and hears, thinks, and marks these things, and bears a divine nature, who will hear all that is said among men and can see all that is done, and though in silence thou plan some evil, yet this shall not escape the gods." This was a most pleasant lesson which he introduced, "with a false reason covering truth"; and he said the gods abode in that region whence thunder and lightning and rain come, and so "he quenched lawlessness with laws."[5]

This was a shallow judgement upon religion. That "it utterly abolished religion altogether" was the criticism of Cicero's Academic.[6] But most of the contemporary views of the origin of religion were shallow. Euhemerism with its deified men, and inspiration with its distraught votaries were perhaps nobler, a little nobler, but in reality there was little respect for religion among the philosophic. But the practical people of the day accepted the view of Critias as wise enough. "The myths that are told of affairs in Hades, though pure invention at bottom, contribute to make men pious and upright," wrote the Sicilian Diodorus at this very time.[7] Varro[8] divided religion into three varieties, mythical, physical (on which the less said in public, he owned, the better) and "civil," and he pronounced the last the best adapted for national purposes, as it consisted in knowing what gods state and citizen should worship and with what rites. "It is the interest," he said, "of states to be deceived in religion."

So the great question narrowed itself to this: – Was it possible for another shrewd and wise man to do again for Rome what the original inventor of religion had done for mankind? once more to establish effective gods to do the work of police? Augustus endeavoured to show that it was still possible.

On the famous monument of Ancyra, which preserves for us the Emperor's official autobiography, he enumerates the temples he built – temples in honour of Apollo, of Julius, of Quirinus, of Juppiter Feretrius, of Jove the Thunderer, of Minerva, of the Queen Juno, of Juppiter Liberalis, of the Lares, of the Penates, of Youth, of the Great Mother, and the shrine known as the Lupercal; he tells how he dedicated vast sums from his spoils, how he restored to the temples of Asia the ornaments of which they had been robbed, and how he became Pontifex Maximus, after patiently waiting for Lepidus to vacate the office by a natural death. His biographer Suetonius tells of his care for the Sibylline books, of his increasing the numbers, dignities and allowances of the priests, and his especial regard for the Vestal Virgins, of his restoration of ancient ceremonies, of his celebration of festivals and holy days, and of his discrimination among foreign religions, his regard for the Athenian mysteries and his contempt for Egyptian Apis.[9] His private feelings and instincts had a tinge of superstition. He used a sealskin as a protection against thunder; he carefully studied his dreams, was "much moved by portents," and "observed days."[10]

Rome's debt to the gods

The most lasting monument (*ære perennius*) of the restoration of religion by Augustus consists of the odes which Horace wrote to forward the plans of the Emperor. They were very different men, but it is not unreasonable to hold that Horace felt no less than Augustus that there was something wrong with the state. His personal attitude to religion was his own affair, and to it we shall have to return, but in grave and dignified odes, which he gave to the world, he lent himself to the cause of

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5 Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. mathematicos*, ix, 54.

6 Cicero, *N.D.* i, 42, 118.

7 Diodorus Siculus, i, 2.

8 Quoted by Augustine, *C.D.* iv, 27; vi, 5; also referred to by Tertullian, *ad Natt.* ii, 1.

9 Suetonius, *Augustus*, 31, 75, 93; Warde Fowler, *Roman Festivals*, p. 344.

10 Suet. Aug. 90, 92.

reformation. He deplored the reckless luxury of the day with much appearance of earnestness, and, though in his published collections, these poems of lament are interleaved with others whose burden is *sparge rosas*, he was serious in some degree; for his own taste, at least when he came within sight of middle life, was all for moderation. He spoke gravely of the effect upon the race of its disregard of all the virtues necessary for the continuance of a society. Like other poets of the day, he found Utopias in distant ages and remote lands. His idealized picture of the blessedness of savage life is not unlike Rousseau's, and in both cases the inspiration was the same – discontent with an environment complicated, extravagant and corrupt.

> Better with nomad Scythians roam,
> Whose travelling cart is all their home,
> Or where the ruder Getæ spread
> From steppes unmeasured raise their bread.
>
> There with a single year content
> The tiller shifts his tenement;
> Another, when that labour ends,
> To the self-same condition bends.
>
> The simple step-dame there will bless
> With care the children motherless:
> No wife by wealth command procures,
> None heeds the sleek adulterer's lures.[11]

Other poets also imagined Golden Ages of quiet ease and idleness, but the conclusion which Horace drew was more robust. He appealed to the Emperor for laws, and effective laws, to correct the "unreined license" of the day, and though his poem declines into declamation of a very idle kind about "useless gold," as his poems are apt to decline on the first hint of rhetoric, the practical suggestion was not rhetorical – it was perhaps the purpose of the piece. In another famous poem, the last of a sequence of six, all dedicated to the higher life of Rome and all reaching an elevation not often attained by his odes, he points more clearly to the decline of religion as the cause of Rome's misfortunes.[12]

The idea that Rome's Empire was the outcome of her piety was not first struck out by Horace. Cicero uses it in one of his public speeches with effect and puts it into the mouth of his Stoic in the work on the Nature of the Gods.[13] Later on, one after another of the Latin Apologists for Christianity, from Tertullian[14] to Prudentius, has to combat the same idea. It was evidently popular, and the appeal to the ruined shrine and the neglected image touched – or was supposed to touch – the popular imagination.

Mankind are apt to look twice at the piety of a ruler, and the old question of Satan comes easily, "Doth Job serve God for naught?" Why does an Emperor wish to be called "the eldest son of the church?" We may be fairly sure in the case of Augustus that, if popular sentiment had been strongly against the restoration of religion, he would have said less about it. We have to go behind the Emperor and Horace to discover how the matter really stood between religion and the Roman people.

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11 Horace, *Odes*, iii, 24, 9-20, Gladstone's version.

12 Horace, *Odes*, iii, 6, Delicta maiorum.

13 *De Haruspicum Responsis*, 9, 19; *N.D.* ii, 3, 8.

14 E.g. *Apol.* 25, with a serious criticism of the contrast between Roman character before and after the conquest of the world, – before and after the invasion of Rome by the images and idols of Etruscans and Greeks.

We may first of all remark that, just as the French Revolution was in some sense the parent of the Romantic movement, the disintegration of the old Roman life was accompanied by the rise of antiquarianism. Cicero's was the last generation that learnt the Twelve Tables by heart at school *ut carmen necessarium*; and Varro, Cicero's contemporary, was the first and perhaps the greatest of all Roman antiquaries. So at least St Augustine held. Sixteen of his forty-one books of Antiquities Varro gave to the gods, for "he says he was afraid they would perish, not by any hostile invasion, but by the neglect of the Roman citizens, and from this he says they were rescued by himself, as from a fallen house, and safely stored and preserved in the memory of good men by books like his; and that his care for this was of more service than that which Metellus is said to have shown in rescuing the sacred emblems of Vesta from the fire or Æneas in saving the penates from the Fall of Troy."[15] He rescued a good deal more than a later and more pious age was grateful for; Augustine found him invaluable, but Servius, the great commentator on Virgil, called him "everywhere the foe of religion."[16] The poets, too, felt to the full the charm of antiquity. Propertius[17] and Ovid both undertook to write of olden days – of sacred things ("rooted out of ancient annals"[18]), and of the names of long ago. Virgil himself was looked upon as a great antiquary. Livy wrote of Rome's early history and told how Numa "put the fear of the gods" upon his people "as the most effective thing for an ignorant and rough multitude";[19] his history abounds in portents and omens, but he is not altogether a believer. As early as a generation before Rome was burnt by the Gauls it was remarked, he says, that foreign religion had invaded the city, brought by prophets who made money out of the superstitions they roused and the alien and unusual means they employed to procure the peace of the gods.[20]

Primitive Roman ritual

Nowhere perhaps is antiquarianism more fascinating than in the sphere of religion. The *Lupercalia* had once a real meaning. The sacrifice of goats and young dogs, and of sacred cakes that the Vestals made of the first ears of the last year's harvest; the *Luperci*, with blood on their brows, naked but for the skins of the slaughtered goats; the *februa* of goatskin, the touch of which would take sterility from a woman – all this is intelligible to the student of primitive religion; but when Mark Antony, Consul though he was, was one of the runners at the Lupercalia, it was not in the spirit of the ancient Latin. It was an antiquarian revival of an old festival of the countryside, which had perhaps never died out. At all events it was celebrated as late as the fifth century A.D., and it was only then abolished by the substitution of a Christian feast by Pope Gelasius.[21] Augustus took pains to revive such ceremonies. Suetonius mentions the "augury of safety," the "flaminate of Juppiter," the "Lupercal rite," and various sacred games.[22] Varro in one of his books, speaks of the Arval Brothers; and Archæology and the spade have recovered for us the *acta* of ninety-six of the annual meetings which this curious old college held at the end of May in the grove of Dea Dia. It is significant that the oldest of these *acta* refer to the meeting in 14 A.D., the year of Augustus' death. The hymn which they sang runs as follows: —

> Enos Lases iuvate Neve lue rue Marmar sins incurrere in pleores Satur fu fere Mars limen sali sta berber Semunis Alternis advocapit conctos Enos Marmor iuvato Triumpe.

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15 *Augustine C.D.* vi, 2.

16 On *Æneid*, xi, 785.

17 Propertius, v, 1, 69.

18 Ovid, *Fasti*, i, 7.

19 Livy, i, 19.

20 Livy, iv, 30.

21 Plutarch, *Romulus*, 21; *Cæsar*, 61, Warde Fowler, *Roman Festivals*, p. 310 f.

22 Suetonius, *Aug.* 31, Warde Fowler, *op. cit.* p. 190.

The first five lines were repeated thrice, and *Triumpe* five times.[23] Quintilian tells us that "the hymns of the Salii were hardly intelligible to the priests themselves,"[24] yet they found admirers who amused Horace with their zeal for mere age and obscurity.[25]

But an antiquarian interest in ritual is not inconsistent with indifference to religion. Varro, as we have seen, was criticized as an actual enemy of religion in spite of the services he claimed to have rendered to the gods – and the very claim justifies the criticism. So far as the literature of the last century B.C. and the stories current about the leading men in Rome allow us to judge, it is hard to suppose there has ever been an age less interested in religion. Cicero, for example, wrote – or, perhaps, compiled – three books "On the Nature of the Gods." He casts his matter into the form of a dialogue, in which in turn an Epicurean and a Stoic give their grounds for rejecting and for accepting the gods, and an Academic points out the inadequacy of the reasoning in both cases. He has also written on the immortality of the soul. But Cicero's correspondence is a more reliable index to his own beliefs and those of the society in which he moved. No society could be more indifferent to what we call the religious life. In theory and practice, in character and instinct, they were thoroughly secular. One sentence will exhibit Cicero's own feeling. He wrote to his wife from Brundusium on 30th April 58 B.C., when he was on his way to foreign exile: "If these miseries are to be permanent, I only wish, my dearest (*mea vita*), to see you as soon as possible and to die in your arms, since neither gods, whom *you* have worshipped with such pure devotion, nor men, whom *I* have always served, have made us any return."[26] Even when his daughter Tullia died, no sign of any hope of re-union escaped him in his letters, nor did Servius Sulpicius, who wrote him a beautiful letter of consolation, do more than merely hint at such a thing. "If the dead have consciousness, would she wish you to be so overcome of sorrow?" Horace, whose odes, as we have seen, are now and then consecrated to the restoration of religion, was every whit as secular-minded. He laughed at superstition and ridiculed the idea of a divine interest in men, when he expressed his own feeling. No one was ever more thoroughly Epicurean in the truest sense of the word; no one ever urged more pleasantly the Epicurean theory *Carpe diem*; no one ever had more deeply ingrained in him the belief *Mors ultima linea rerum est*. His candour, his humour, his friendliness, combine to give him a very human charm, but in all that is associated with the religious side of man's thought and experience, he is sterile and insufficient. And Horace, like Cicero, represents a group. Fuscus Aristius, it is true, declined to rescue the poet from the bore on the ground that "it was the thirtieth Sabbath – and Horace could not wish to offend the Jews?" but we realize that this scruple was dramatic. Fuscus is said to have been a writer of comedies.[27]

The childhood of a pagan

But the jest of Fuscus was the earnest of many. If men were conscious of decay in the sanction which religion had once given to morality, there was still a great deal of vague religious feeling among the uneducated and partially educated classes. Again and again we read complaints of the folly of grandmothers and nurses, and it was from them that the first impressions of childhood came. Four centuries later than the period now under discussion it was still the same. "When once vain superstition obsessed the heathen hearts of our fathers, unchecked was its course through a thousand generations. The tender hope of the house shuddered, and worshipped whatever venerable thing his hoary grandsires showed him. Infancy drank in error with its mother's milk. Amid his cries the sacred meal was put between the baby's lips. He saw the wax dripping upon the stones, the black *Lares* trickling with unguent. A little child he saw the image of Fortune with her horn of wealth, and the sacred stone that stood by the house, and his mother pale at her prayers before it. Soon himself too,

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[23] Mommsen, *History*, i, p. 231, who translates the hymn.

[24] Quintilian, i, 6, 40. See specimen in Varro, *L.L.* vii, 26.

[25] *Epp.* ii, 1, 20-27, 86.

[26] Cicero, *ad fam.* xiv, 4, 1.

[27] Hor. *Sat.* i, 9, 69: Porphyrion is the authority for the comedies.

raised high on his nurse's shoulders, he pressed his lips to the stone, poured forth his childish prayers, and asked riches for himself from the blind rock, and was sure that, whatever one wished, that was where to ask. Never did he lift his eyes and his mind to turn to the citadel of reason, but he believed, and held to the foolish custom, honouring with blood of lambs the gods of his family. And then when he went forth from his home, how he marvelled at the public festivals, the holy days and the games, and gazed at the towering Capitol, and saw the laurelled servants of the gods at the temples while the Sacred Way echoed to the lowing of the victims." So wrote Prudentius.[28] So too wrote Tibullus – "Keep me, *Lares* of my fathers; for ye bred me to manhood when a tender child I played at your feet."[29]

How crowded the whole of life was with cult and ritual and usage, how full of divinities, petty, pleasing or terrible, but generally vague and ill-defined, no one will readily realize without special study, but some idea of the complexity of the Roman's divine environment can be gained from even a cursory survey of Ovid's *Fasti*, for example, or Tertullian's *Apology*, or some of the chapters of the fourth book of Augustine's *City of God*. "When," asks Augustine, "can I ever mention in one passage of this book all the names of gods and goddesses, which they have scarcely been able to compass in great volumes, seeing that they allot to every individual thing the special function of some divinity?" He names a few of the gods of agriculture – Segetia, Tutilina, Proserpina, Nodutus, Volutina, Patelana, Lacturnus, Matuta, etc. "I do not mention all."[30] "Satan and his angels have filled the whole world," said Tertullian.[31]

Fauns, trees, and wells

Gods of this type naturally make little figure in literature though Proserpina, in consequence of her identification with the Greek Persephone, achieved a great place and is indeed the subject of the last great poem written under the Roman Empire. But there were other gods of countryside and woodland, whom we know better in art and poetry. "Faunus lover of fugitive Nymphs" is charming enough in Horace's ode, and Fauns, Pans and Satyrs lend themselves readily to grotesque treatment in statue and gem and picture. But the country people took them seriously. Lucretius, speaking of echoes among the hills, says: – "These spots the people round about fancy that goat-footed Satyrs and nymphs inhabit; they say that they are the Fauns, whose noise and sportive play breaks the still silence of the night as they move from place to place… They tell us that the country people far and wide full oft hear Pan, when, nodding the pine-cap on his half-bestial head, he runs over the gaping reeds with curved lip… And of other like monsters and marvels they tell us, that they may not be thought to inhabit lonely places, abandoned even by the gods."[32] Cicero makes his Stoic say their voices are often to be heard.[33] Pliny, in his *Natural History*, says that certain dogs can actually see Fauns; he quotes a prescription, concocted of a dragon's tongue, eyes and gall, which the Magi recommend for those who are "harassed by gods of the night and by Fauns";[34] for they did not confine themselves to running after nymphs, but would chase human women in the dark.

Plutarch has a story of King Numa drugging a spring from which "two dæmons, Picus and Faunus," drank – "creatures who must be compared to Satyrs or Pans in some respects and in others to the Idæan Dactyli," beings of great miraculous power.[35] A countryside haunted by inhabitants of

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28 Prudentius, *contra Symmachum*, i, 197-218.

29 Tibullus, i, 10, 15.

30 *C.D.* iv, 8. "To an early Greek," says Mr Gilbert Murray, "the earth, water and air were full of living eyes: of *theoi*, of *daimones*, of *Kêres*. One early poet says emphatically that the air is so crowded full of them that there is no room to put in the spike of an ear of corn without touching one." —*Rise of Greek Epic*, p. 82.

31 *de Spect.* 5; cf. *de Idol.* 16; *de cor. mil.* 13, gods of the door; *de Anima*, 39, goddesses of child-birth.

32 Lucr. iv, 580 f. Virg. *Æn.* viii, 314.

33 Cic. *N.D.* ii, 2, 6: cf. *De Div.* i, 45, 101. Warde Fowler, *Roman Festivals*, pp. 256 ff. on the Fauni.

34 Pliny, *N.H.* viii, 151; xxx, 84.

35 Plutarch, *Numa*, 15; *de facie in orbe lunæ*, 30; Ovid, *Fasti*, iii, 291.

more or less than human nature, part beasts and part fairies or devils, is one thing to an unbeliever who is interested in art or folk-lore, but quite another thing to the uneducated man or woman who has heard their mysterious voices in the night solitude and has suffered in crop, or house, or herd from their ill-will.[36] What the Greek called "Panic" fears were attributed in Italy to Fauns.[37]

"Trees," says Pliny, "were temples of divinities, and in the old way the simple country folk to this day dedicate any remarkable tree to a god. Nor have we more worship for images glittering with gold and ivory than for groves and the very silence that is in them."[38] The country people hung rags and other offerings on holy trees – the hedge round the sacred grove at Aricia is specially mentioned by Ovid as thus honoured.[39] The river-god of the Tiber had his sacred oak hung with spoils of fallen foes.[40]

Holy wells too were common, which were honoured with models of the limbs their waters healed, and other curious gifts, thrown into them – as they are still in every part of the Old World. Horace's fount of Bandusia is the most famous of these in literature.[41] It was an old usage to throw garlands into springs and to crown wells on October 13th.[42] Streams and wells alike were haunted by mysterious powers, too often malevolent.[43]

Ovid describes old charms to keep off vampires, *striges*, from the cradles of children.[44]

In fact the whole of Nature teemed with beings whom we find it hard to name. They were not pleasant enough, and did not appeal enough to the fancy, to merit the name "fairies" – at least since *The Midsummer Night's Dream* was written. Perhaps they are nearer "The little People" – the nameless "thim ones."[45] They were neither gods nor demons in our sense of the words, though Greek thinkers used the old Homeric word *daimôn* to describe them or the diminutive of it, which allowed them to suppose that Socrates' *daimónion* was something of the kind.

The genius

But these Nature-spirits, whatever we may call them, were far from being the only superhuman beings that encompassed man. Every house had its *Lares* in a little shrine (*lararium*) on the hearth, little twin guardian gods with a dog at their feet, who watched over the family, and to whom something was given at every meal, and garlands on great days. Legend said that Servius Tullius was the son of the family *Lar*.[46] The *Lares* may have been spirits of ancestors. The Emperor Alexander Severus set images of Apollonius, Christ, Abraham and Orpheus, "and others of that sort" in his *lararium*.[47] Not only houses but streets and cross-roads had *Lares*; the city had a thousand, Ovid said, besides the *genius* of the Prince who gave them;[48] for Augustus restored two yearly festivals in their honour in Spring and Autumn. There were also the *Penates* in every home, whom it would perhaps be hard to distinguish very clearly from the *Lares*. Horace has a graceful ode to "Phidyle" on the sufficiency

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36 Horace's ode attests the power of the Fauns over crops and herds.

37 Dionys. Hal. v, 16.

38 Pliny, *N.H.* xii, 3.

39 Ovid, *Fasti*, iii, 267. *Licia dependent longas velantia sæpes, et posita est meritæ multa tabella deæ.*

40 Virgil, *Æn.* x, 423.

41 Horace, *Odes*, iii, 13.

42 W. Warde Fowler, *Roman Festivals*, p. 240.

43 Cf. Tertullian, *de Baptismo*, 5. *Annon et alias sine ullo Sacramento immundi spiritus aquis incubant, adfectantes illam in primordio divini spiritus gestationem? Sciunt opaci quique fontes, et avii quique rivi, et in balneis piscinæ et euripi in domibus, vel cisternæ et putei, qui rapere dicuntur, scilicet per vim spiritus nocentis. Nympholeptos et lymphaticos et hydrophobos vocant quos aquæ necaverunt aut amentia vel formidine exercuerunt. Quorsum ista retulimus? Ne quis durius credat angelum dei sanctum aquis in salutem hominis temperandis adesse.*

44 Ovid, *Fasti*, vi, 155 f.

45 Cf. (Lucian) *Asinus*, 24. *poî badixeis aôría talaipôre; oudè tà daimónia dédoikas.*

46 Pliny, *N.H.* xxxvi, 204.

47 Lampridius, *Alex. Sev.* 29. 2.

48 *Fasti*, v. 145. Cf. Prudentius, *adv. Symm*, ii, 445 f.

of the simplest sacrifices to these little gods of home and hearth.[49] The worship of these family gods was almost the only part of Roman religion that was not flooded and obscured by the inrush of Oriental cults.

"The Ancients," said Servius, "used the name *Genius* for the natural god of each individual place or thing or man,"[50] and another antiquary thought that the *genius* and the *Lar* might be the same thing. For some reason men of letters laid hold upon the *genius*, and we find it everywhere. Why there should be such difference even between twin brothers,

> *He* only knows whose influence at our birth
> O'errules each mortal's planet upon earth,
> The attendant genius, temper-moulding pow'r,
> That stamps the colour of man's natal hour.[51]

The idea of this spiritual counterpart pervades the ancient world. It appears in Persia as the *fravashi*.[52] It is in the Syrian Gnostic's Hymn of the Soul, as a robe in the form and likeness of a man. —

> It was myself that I saw before me as in a mirror;
> Two in number we stood, but only one in appearance.[53]

It is also probable that the "Angel" of Peter and the "Angels of the little children" in the New Testament represent the same idea. The reader of Horace hardly needs to be reminded of the birthday feast in honour of the *genius*, —*indulge genio*. December, as the month of Larentalia and Saturnalia, is the month welcome to every *genius*, Ovid says.[54]

The worship of all or most of these spirits of the country and of the home was joyful, an affair of meat and drink. The primitive sacrifice brought man and god near one another in the blood and flesh of the victim, which was of one race with them both.[55] It was on some such ground that the Jews would not "eat with blood," lest the soul of the beast should pass into the man. There were feasts in honour of the dead, too, which the church found so dear to the people that it only got rid of them by turning them into festivals of the Martyrs. It was not idly that St Paul spoke of "meat offered to idols" and said that the Kingdom of God was not eating or drinking.

In addition to all these spirits of living beings, of actions and of places, we have to reckon the dead. There were *Manes*– a name supposed to mean "the kindly ones," a caressing name given with a purpose and betraying a real fear. There were also ghosts, *larvæ* and *lemures*.[56] It was the thought of these that made burial so serious a thing, and all the ritual for averting the displeasure of the dead. The Parentalia were celebrated on the 13th of February in their honour,[57] and in May the *Lemuria*. It is,

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[49] *Odes*, iii, 23. *Farre pio*.

[50] On *Georgic* i, 302, See Varro, *ap.* Aug. *C.D.* vii, 13. Also *Tert. de Anima*, 39, *Sic et omnibus genii deputantur, quod dæmonum nomen est. Adeo nulla ferme nativitas munda, utique ethnicorum*.

[51] Hor. *Ep.* ii. 2, 187 f. Howes' translation. Cf. *Faerie Queene*, II, xii, 47.

[52] See J. H. Moulton in *Journal of Theological Studies*, III, 514.

[53] Burkitt, *Early Eastern Christianity*, p. 222.

[54] *Fasti*, iii, 57; Seneca, *Ep.* 18. 1, *December est mensis: cum maxime civitas sudat, ius luxuries publicæ datum est … ut non videatur mihi errasse qui dixit: olim mensem Decembrem fuisse nunc annum*.

[55] Cf. Robertson Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, lect. xi.

[56] Warde Fowler, *Roman Festivals*, pp. 106 f.

[57] Ovid, *Fasti*, ii, 409 f. Warde Fowler, *op. cit.* pp. 306 f.

we are told, for this reason that none will marry in May.[58] Closely connected with this fear of ghosts and of the dead is that terror of death which Lucretius spends so much labour in trying to dissipate.

"I see no race of men," wrote Cicero, "however polished and educated, however brutal and barbarous, which does not believe that warnings of future events are given and may be understood and announced by certain persons,"[59] and he goes on to remark that Xenophanes and Epicurus were alone among philosophers in believing in no kind of Divination.[60] "Are we to wait till beasts speak? Are we not content with the unanimous authority of mankind?"[61] The Stoics, he says, summed up the matter as follows: —

"If there are gods and they do not declare the future to men; then *either* they do not love men; *or* they are ignorant of what is to happen; *or* they think it of no importance to men to know it; *or* they do not think it consistent with their majesty to tell men; *or* the gods themselves are unable to indicate it. But *neither* do they not love men, for they are benefactors and friends to mankind; *nor* are they ignorant of what they themselves appoint and ordain; *nor* is it of no importance to us to know the future – for we shall be more careful if we do; *nor* do they count it alien to their majesty, for there is nothing nobler than kindness; *nor* are they unable to foreknow. *Therefore* no gods, no foretelling; but there are gods; therefore they foretell. Nor, if they foretell, do they fail to give us ways to learn what they foretell; nor, if they give us such ways, is there no divination; therefore, there is divination."[62]

: Omens

All this reasoning comes after the fact. The whole world believed in divination, and the Stoics found a reason for it.[63] The flight of birds, the entrails of beasts, rain, thunder, lightning, dreams, everything was a means of Divination. Another passage from the same Dialogue of Cicero will suffice. Superstition, says the speaker, "follows you up, is hard upon you, pursues you wherever you turn. If you hear a prophet, or an omen; if you sacrifice; if you catch sight of a bird; if you see a Chaldæan or a *haruspex*; if it lightens, if it thunders, if anything is struck by lightning; if anything like a portent is born or occurs in any way – something or other of the kind is bound to happen, so that you can never be at ease and have a quiet mind. The refuge from all our toils and anxieties would seem to be sleep. Yet from sleep itself the most of our cares and terrors come."[64] How true all this is will be seen by a moment's reflexion on the abundance of signs, omens and dreams that historians so different as Livy and Plutarch record. Horace uses them pleasantly enough in his Odes – like much else such things are charming, if one does not believe in them.[65] But it is abundantly clear that it took an effort to be rid of such belief. A speaker in Cicero's *Tusculans* remarks on the effrontery of philosophers, who *boast* that by Epicurus' aid "they are freed from those most cruel of tyrants, eternal terror and fear by day and by night."[66] When a man boasts of moral progress, of his freedom from avarice, what, asks Horace, of other like matters?

> You're not a miser. Good – but prithee say,
> Is every vice with avarice flown away? …
> Does Superstition ne'er your heart assail
> Nor bid your soul with fancied horrors quail?

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58 Ovid, *Fasti*, v, 490.

59 *De Divinatione*, i, 1, 2.

60 *ib.* i, 3, 5.

61 *ib.* i, 39, 84.

62 *De Divinatione*, i, 38, 82, 83. Cf. Tertullian, *de Anima*, 46. *Sed et Stoici deum malunt providentissimum humanæ institutioni inter cetera præsidia divinatricum artium et disciplinarum somnia quoque nobis indidisse, peculiare solatium naturalis oraculi.*

63 Panaetius and Seneca should be excepted from this charge.

64 Cic. *de Div.* ii, 72, 149, 150. Cf. *de Legg.* ii, 13, 32. Plutarch also has the same remark about sleep and superstition.

65 Cf. *Odes*, iii, 27.

66 *Tusculans*, i, 21, 48.

Or can you smile at magic's strange alarms,
Dreams, witchcraft, ghosts, Thessalian spells and charms?[67]

Horace's "conversion" is recorded in one of his odes, but it may be taken too seriously.

That superstition so gross was accompanied by paralysing belief in magic, enchantment, miracle, astrology[68] and witchcraft generally, is not surprising. The historians of the Early Empire have plenty to say on this. It should be remembered that the step between magic and poisoning is a very short one. Magic, says Pliny, embraces the three arts that most rule the human mind, medicine, religion and mathematics – a triple chain which enslaves mankind.[69]

We have thus in Roman society a political life of a highly developed type, which has run through a long course of evolution and is now degenerating; we have a literature based upon that of Greece and implying a good deal of philosophy and of intellectual freedom; and, side by side with all this, a religious atmosphere in which the grossest and most primitive of savage conceptions and usages thrive in the neighbourhood of a scepticism as cool and detached as that of Horace. It is hard to realize that a people's experience can be so uneven, that development and retardation can exist at once in so remarkable a degree in the mind of a nation. The explanation is that we judge peoples and ages too much by their literature, and by their literature only after it has survived the test of centuries. In all immortal literature there is a common note; it deals with the deathless and the vital; and superstition, though long enough and tenacious enough of life, is outlived and outgrown by "man's unconquerable mind." But the period before us is one in which, under a rule that robbed men of every liberating interest in life, and left society politically, intellectually and morally sterile and empty, literature declined, and as it declined, it sank below the level of that flood of vulgar superstition, which rose higher and higher, as in each generation men were less wishful to think and less capable of thought.

Universal religions

But our theme is religion, and so far we have discussed nothing but what we may call superstition – and even Plutarch would hardly quarrel with the name. That to people possessed by such beliefs in non-human powers, in beings which beset human life with malignity, the restoration of ancient cult and ritual would commend itself, is only natural. To such minds the purpose of all worship is to induce the superhuman being to go peaceably away, and sacrifice implies not human sin, but divine irritation, which may be irrational. To the religious temperament, the essential thing is some kind of union, some communion, with the Divine; and sacrifice becomes the means to effect the relation of life to a higher will, – to a holier will, we might say, if we allow to the word "holy" a width of significance more congenial to ancient than to modern thought. And this higher will implies a divinity of wider reach than the little gods of primitive superstition, a power which may even be less personal if only it is great. Religion asks for the simplification of man's relations with his divine environment, for escape from the thousand and one petty marauders of the spirit-world into the empire of some strong and central authority, harsh, perhaps, or even cruel, but at least a controlling force in man's experience. If this power is moral, religion is at once fused with morality; if it is merely physical, religion remains non-moral, and has a constant tendency to decline into superstition, or at least to make terms with it.

In the hereditary religion of Rome, the only power that could possibly have been invested with any such character was Jupiter Capitolinus, but he had too great a likeness to the other gods of Italy – the gods with names, that is, for some of the more significant had none – Bona Dea and Dea Dia

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[67] Hor. *Ep.* ii, 2, 208; Howes.

[68] Tertullian, de *Idol.* 9, *seimus magiæ et astrologiæ inter se societatem*.

[69] Pliny the elder on Magic, *N.H.* xxx, opening sections; *N.H.* xxviii, 10, on incantations, *polleantne aliquid verba et incantamenta carminum*.

for example. Jupiter had his functions, but on the whole they were local, and there was very little or nothing in him to quicken thought or imagination. It was not till the Stoics made him more or less the embodiment of monotheism, that he had a chance of becoming the centre of a religion in the higher sense of the word, and even then it was impossible; for first, he was at best little more than an impersonal dogma, and, secondly, the place was filled by foreign goddesses of far greater warmth and colour and activity. *Stat magni nominis umbra*.

Cybele and her priests

It was during the second Punic War that Cybele was brought from Asia Minor to Rome and definitely established as one of the divinities of the City.[70] The Great Mother of the gods, she represented the principle of life and its reproduction, and her worship appealed to every male and female being in the world. It inspired awe, and it prompted to joy and merriment; it was imposing and it was mysterious. Lucretius has a famous description of her pageant: —

"Adorned with this emblem (the mural crown), the image of the divine Mother is carried nowadays through wide lands in awe-inspiring state. Different nations after old-established ritual name her Idæan Mother, and give for escort Phrygian bands… Tight-stretched tambourines and hollow cymbals thunder all round to the stroke of their open hands, and horns menace with hoarse-sounding music, and the hollow pipe stirs their minds with its Phrygian strain. They carry weapons before them, emblems of furious rage, meet to fill the thankless souls and godless breasts of the rabble with terror for the Divinity of the Goddess. So, when first she rides in procession through great cities and mutely enriches mortals with a blessing not expressed in words, they straw all her path with brass and silver, presenting her with bounteous alms, and scatter over her a snow-shower of roses, over-shadowing the mother and her troops of attendants. Here an armed band, to which the Greeks give the names of Phrygian Curetes, join in the game of arms and leap in measure, all dripping with blood, and the awful crests upon their heads quiver and shake."[71]

The invariable features of the worship of Cybele are mentioned here, the eunuch priests, the tambourines, the shouting and leaping and cutting with knives, and the collection of money.[72] There is no indication of any control being exercised over these priests of Cybele by a central authority, and little bands of them strolled through the Mediterranean lands, making their living by exhibiting themselves and their goddess and gathering petty offerings. They had a bad name and they seem to have deserved it. In the book called *The Ass*, once ascribed to Lucian, is a short account of such a band. The ass, who is really a man transformed, is the speaker. "The next day they packed up the goddess and set her on my back. Then we drove out of the city and went round the country. When we entered any village, I, the god-bearer (a famous word, *theophóretos*[73]) stood still, and the crowd of flutists blew like mad, and the others threw off their caps and rolled their heads about, and cut their arms with the swords and each stuck his tongue out beyond his teeth and cut it too, so that in a moment everything was full of fresh blood. And, I, when I saw this for the first time, stood trembling in case the goddess might need an ass' blood too. When they had cut themselves about in this way, they collected from the bystanders obols and drachmas; and one or another would give them figs and cheeses and a jar of wine, and a medimnus of wheat and barley for the ass. So they lived upon these and did service to the goddess who rode on my back."[74]

The *Attis* of Catullus gives a vivid picture of the frenzy which this worship could excite. Juvenal complains of the bad influence which the priests of Cybele, among others, had upon the minds of Roman ladies. St Augustine long afterwards says that "till yesterday" they were to be seen in the streets

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70 Livy, xxix, 11, 14; Ovid, fasti, iv, 179 f. The goddess was embodied in a big stone.

71 Lucretius, ii, 608 f.

72 Cf. Strabo, c. 470; Juvenal, vi, 511 f.

73 See Ramsay, *Church in the Roman Empire*, p. 397. The Latins used the word *divinus* in this way – Seneca, *de teata vita*, 26, 8.

74 (Lucian) Asinus, 37. The same tale is amplified in Apuleius' *Golden Ass*, where the episode of these priests is given with more detail, in the eighth book. Seneca hints that a little blood might make a fair show; see his picture of the same, *de beata vita*, 26, 8.

of Carthage "with wet hair, whitened face and mincing walk." It is interesting to note in passing that the land which introduced the Mother of the Gods to the Roman world, also gave the name *Theotokos* (Mother of God) to the church.

Egypt also contributed gods to Rome, who forced themselves upon the state. The Senate forbade them the Capitol and had their statues thrown down, but the people set them up again with violence.[75] Gabinius, the Consul of 58 B.C., stopped the erection of altars to them, but eight years later the Senate had to pass a decree for the destruction of their shrines. No workman dared lay hand to the work, so the consul Paullus stripped off his consular toga, took an axe and dealt the first blow at the doors.[76] Another eight years passed, and the Triumvirs, after the death of Cæsar, built a temple to Isis and Serapis to win the goodwill of the masses.[77] The large foreign and Eastern element in the city populace must be remembered. When Octavian captured Alexandria, he forgave the guilty city "in honour of Serapis," but on his return to Rome he destroyed all the shrines of the god within the city walls. In time Isis laid hold of the month of November, which had otherwise no festivals of importance.

Isis and Serapis

Isis seems to have appealed to women. Tibullus complains of Delia's devotion to her, and her ritual. There were baths and purifications; the worshippers wore linen garments and slept alone. Whole nights were spent sitting in the temple amid the rattling of the sistrum. Morning and evening the votary with flowing hair recited the praises of the goddess.[78] Isis could make her voice heard on occasion, or her snake of silver would be seen to move its head, and penance was required to avert her anger. She might bid her worshippers to stand in the Tiber in the winter, or to crawl, naked and trembling, with blood-stained knees, round the Campus Martius – the Iseum stood in the Campus as it was forbidden within the City Walls; or to fetch water from Egypt to sprinkle in the Roman shrine. They were high honours indeed that Anubis claimed, as, surrounded by shaven priests in linen garments, he scoured the city and laughed at the people who beat their breasts as he passed.[79] The "barking" Anubis might be despised by Virgil and others, but the vulgar feared him as the attendant of Isis and Serapis.[80] Isis began to usurp the functions of Juno Lucina, and women in childbed called upon her to deliver them.[81] She gave oracles, which were familiar perhaps even so early as Ennius' day,[82] and men and women slept in the temples of Isis and Serapis, as they did in those of Æsculapius, to obtain in dreams the knowledge they needed to appease the god, or to recover their health, or what not.[83] It is not surprising that the shrines of Isis are mentioned by Ovid and Juvenal as the resorts of loose women.[84]

The devotion of the women is proved by the inscriptions which are found recording their offerings to Isis. One woman, a Spaniard, may be taken as an illustration. In honour of her daughter she dedicated a silver statue to Isis, and she set forth how the goddess wore a diadem composed of one big pearl, six little pearls, emeralds, rubies, and jacinths; earrings of emeralds and pearls; a necklace of thirty-six pearls and eighteen emeralds (with two for clasps); bracelets on her arms

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[75] Tertullian, *ad Natt.* i, 10; Apel. 6. He has the strange fancy that Serapis was originally the Joseph of the book of Genesis, *ad Natt.* ii, 8.

[76] Valerius Maximus, i, 3, 4.

[77] Dio C. xlvii, 15.

[78] Tibullus, i, 3, 23 f. Cf. Propertius, ii, 28, 45; Ovid, *A.A.* iii, 635.

[79] Juvenal, vi, 522 f.

[80] Lucan, viii, 831, *Isin semideosque canes.*

[81] Ovid, *Am.* ii, 13, 7.

[82] Unless *Isiaci coniectores* is Cicero's own phrase, *de Div.* i, 58, 132.

[83] Cicero, *Div.* ii, 59, 121. For *egkolmesis* or *incubatio* see Mary Hamilton, *Incubation* (1906)

[84] Clem. Alex. Pædag. iii, 28, to the same effect. Tertullian on the temples, *de Pud.* c. 5. Reference may be made to the hierodules of the temples in ancient Asia and in modern India.

and legs; rings on her fingers; and emeralds on her sandals.[85] There is evidence to show that the Madonna in Southern Italy is really Isis re-named. Isis, like the Madonna, was painted and sculptured with a child in her arms (Horus, Harpocrates). Their functions coincide as closely as this inscription proves that their offerings do.[86]

Die Mutter Gottes zu Kevlaar
Trägt heut' ihr bestes Kleid.

At first, it is possible that Egyptian religion, as it spread all over the world, was little better than Phrygian, but it had a better future. With Plutarch's work upon it we shall have to deal later on. Apuleius, at the end of the second century worshipped an Isis, who identified all the Divinities with herself and was approached through the most imposing sacraments. She was the power underlying all nature, but there was a spiritual side to her worship. Two centuries or so later, Julian "the Apostate" looks upon Serapis as Catholics have done upon St Peter – he is "the kindly and gentle god, who set souls utterly free from becoming or birth (*genéseos*) and does not, when once they are free, nail them down to other bodies in punishment, but conveys them upward and brings them into the ideal world."[87] It is possible that some hint of this lurked in the religion from the first, and, if it did, we need not be surprised that it escaped Juvenal's notice.

It was not merely gods that came from the East, but a new series of religious ideas. Here were religions that claimed the whole of life, that taught of moral pollution and of reconciliation, that gave anew the old sacramental value to rituals, – religions of priest and devotee, equalizing rich and poor, save for the cost of holy rites, and giving to women the consciousness of life in touch with the divine. The eunuch priests of Cybele and the monks of Serapis introduced a new abstinence to Western thought. It is significant that Christian monasticism and the coenobite life began in Egypt, where, as we learn from papyri found in recent years, great monasteries of Serapis existed long before our era. Side by side with celibacy came vegetarianism.

No polytheistic religion can exclude gods from its pantheon; all divinities that man can devise have a right there. Thus Cybele and Isis made peace with each other and with all the gods and goddesses whom they met in their travels – and with all the *dæmonia* too. Their cults were steeped in superstition, and swung to and fro between continence and sensuality. They orientalized every religion of the West and developed every superstitious and romantic tendency. In the long run, they brought Philosophy to its knees, abasing it to be the apologist of everything they taught and did, and dignifying themselves by giving a philosophic colouring to their mysticism. But this is no strange thing. A religion begins in magic with rites and symbols that belong to the crudest Nature-worship – to agriculture, for instance, and the reproductive organs – and gradually develops or absorbs higher ideas, till it may reach the unity of the godhead and the immortality of the soul; but the ultimate question is, will it cut itself clear of its past? And this the religions of Cybele and Isis never satisfactorily achieved.

In the meantime they promised little towards a moral regeneration of society. They offered men and women emotions, but they scarcely touched morality. To the terrors of life, already many enough, they added crowning fears, and cramped and dwarfed the minds of men.

Lucretius

"O hapless race of men!" cried Lucretius, "when they attributed such deeds to the gods and added cruel anger thereto! what groanings did they then beget for themselves, what wounds for us, what tears for our children's children! No act of piety is it to be often seen with veiled head turning toward a stone, to haunt every altar, to lie prostrate on the ground with hands outspread before the

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85 *Corp. Inscr. Lai.* ii, 3386. The enumeration of the jewels was a safeguard against theft.

86 Flinders Petrie, *Religion of Ancient Egypt*, p. 44; Hamilton, *Incubation*, pp. 174, 182 f.

87 Julian, *Or.* iv, 136 B.

shrines of gods, to sprinkle the altars with much blood of beasts and link vow to vow – no! rather to be able to look on all things with a mind at peace."[88] And a mind at peace was the last thing that contemporary religion could offer to any one. "Human life," he says, "lay visibly before men's eyes foully crushed to earth under the weight of Religion, who showed her head from the quarters of heaven with hideous aspect lowering upon men," till Epicurus "dared first to uplift mortal eyes against her face and first to withstand her… The living force of his soul gained the day; on he passed far beyond the flaming walls of the world and traversed in mind and spirit the immeasurable universe. And thence he returns again a conqueror, to tell us what can and what cannot come into being; in short on what principle each thing has its powers defined, its deep-set boundary mark. So Religion is put under our feet and trampled upon in its turn; while as for us, his victory sets us on a level with heaven."[89]

It was the establishment of law which brought peace to Lucretius. In the ease of mind which we see he gained from the contemplation of the fixity of cause and effect, in the enthusiasm with which he emphasizes such words as *rationes*, *fœdera*, *leges*, with which he celebrates *Natura gubernans*, we can read the horrible weight upon a feeling soul of a world distracted by the incalculable caprices of a myriad of divine or dæmonic beings.[90] The force with which he flings himself against the doctrine of a future life shows that it is a fight for freedom. If men would rid themselves of "the dread of something after death" – and they could if they would, for reason will do it – they could live in "the serene temples of the wise"; the gods would pass from their minds; bereavement would lose its sting, and life would no longer be brutalized by the cruelties of terror. Avarice, treachery, murder, civil war, suicide – all these things are the fruit of this fear of death.[91]

Religion, similarly, "often and often has given birth to sinful and unholy deeds." The illustration, which he uses, is the sacrifice of Iphigenia, and it seems a little remote. Yet Pliny says that in 97 B.C. in the consulship of Lentulus and Crassus, a decree of the Senate forbade human sacrifice —*ne homo immolaretur*. "It cannot be estimated," he goes on, "what a debt is owed to the Romans who have done away (in Gaul and Britain) with monstrous rites, in which it was counted the height of religion to kill a man, and a most healthful thing to eat him."[92] Elsewhere he hints darkly at his own age having seen something of the kind, and there is an obscure allusion in Plutarch's life of Marcellus to "unspeakable rites, that none may see, which are performed (?) upon Greeks and Gauls."[93] "At the temple of Aricia," says Strabo, "there is a barbarian and Scythian practice. For there is there established a priest, a runaway slave, who has killed with his own hand his predecessor. There he is, then, ever sword in hand, peering round about, lest he should be attacked, ready to defend himself." Strabo's description of the temple on the lake and the precipice overhanging it adds to the impressiveness of the scene he thus pictures.[94] If human sacrifice was rare in practice, none the less it was in the minds of men.

Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum

concludes Lucretius, and yet it was not perhaps his last thought.

M. Patin has a fine study of the poet in which he deals with "the anti-Lucretius in Lucretius." Even in the matter of religion, his keen observation of Nature frequently suggests difficulties which are more powerfully expressed and more convincing than the arguments with which he himself tries

88 Lucr. v, 1194.

89 Lucr. i, 62-79.

90 See Patin, *La Poésie Latine*, i, 120.

91 Lucr. iii, 60 f.

92 Pliny, *N.H.* xxx, 12, 13. Warde Fowler, *Roman Festivals*, pp. 111 f. on the *Argei* and the whole question of human sacrifice. For Plutarch's explanation of it as due not to gods but to evil demons who enforced it, see p. 107.

93 Pliny, *N.H.* xxviii, 12; Plutarch, *Marcellus*, 3, where, however, the meaning may only be that the rites are done in symbol; he refers to the actual sacrifice of human beings in the past. See Tertullian, *Apol.* 9 on sacrifice of children in Africa in the reign of Tiberius.

94 Strabo, c. 239. Strabo was a contemporary of Augustus. Cf. J. G. Frazer, *Adonis Attis Osiris*, p. 63, for another instance in this period.

to refute them. "When we look up to the heavenly regions of the great universe, the æther set on high above the glittering stars, and the thought comes into our mind of the sun and moon and their courses; then indeed in hearts laden with other woes that doubt too begins to wake and raise its head – can it be perchance, after all, that we have to do with some vast Divine power that wheels those bright stars each in his orbit? Again who is there whose mind does not shrink into itself with fear of the gods, whose limbs do not creep with terror, when the parched earth rocks under horrible blow of the thunderbolt, and the roar sweeps over the vast sky? … When too the utmost fury of the wild wind scours the sea and sweeps over its waters the admiral with his stout legions and his elephants, does he not in prayer seek peace with the gods? … but all in vain, since, full oft, caught in the whirlwind, he is driven, for all his prayers, on, on to the shoals of death. Thus does some hidden power trample on mankind… Again, when the whole earth rocks under their feet, and towns fall at the shock or hang ready to collapse, what wonder if men despise themselves, and make over to the gods high prerogative and marvellous powers to govern all things?"[95]

That Lucretius should be so open to impressions of this kind, in spite of his philosophy, is ra measure of his greatness as a poet. It adds weight and worth to all that he says – to his hatred of the polytheism and superstition round about him, and to his judgment upon their effect in darkening and benumbing the minds of men. He understands the feelings which he dislikes – he has felt them. The spectacle of the unguessed power that tramples on mankind has moved him; and he has suffered the distress of all delicate spirits in times of bloodshed and disorder. He knows the effect of such times upon those who still worship. "Much more keenly in evil days do they turn their minds to religion."[96]

We have now to consider another poet, a disciple of Lucretius in his early years, who, under the influence of Nature and human experience, moved away from Epicureanism, and sought reconciliation with the gods, though he was too honest with himself to find peace in the systems and ideas that were yet available.

Virgil

Virgil was born in the year 70 B.C. – the son of a little self-made man in a village North of the Po. He grew up in the country, with a spirit that year by year grew more sensitive to every aspect of the world around him. No Roman poet had a more gentle and sympathetic love of Nature; none ever entered so deeply and so tenderly into the sorrows of men. He lived through forty years of Civil War, veiled and open. He saw its effects in broken homes and aching hearts, in coarsened minds and reckless lives. He was driven from his own farm, and had, like Æneas, to rescue an aged and blind father. Under such experience his early Epicureanism dissolved – it had always been too genial to be the true kind. The Epicurean should never go beyond friendship, and Virgil loved. His love of the land in which he was born showed it to him more worthy to be loved than men had yet realized. Virgil was the pioneer who discovered the beauty, the charm and the romance of Italy. He loved the Italians and saw poetry in their hardy lives and quiet virtues, though they were not Greeks. His love of his father and of his land opened to him the significance of all love, and the deepening and widening of his experience is to be read in the music, stronger and profounder, that time reveals in his poetry.

Here was a poet who loved Rome more than ever did Augustus or Horace, and he had no such speedy cure as they for "the woes of sorrowful Hesperia." The loss of faith in the old gods meant more to him than to them, so his tone in speaking of them is quieter, a great deal, than that of Horace. He took the decline of morals more seriously and more inwardly, and he saw more deeply into the springs of action; he could never lightly use the talk of rapid and sweeping reformation, as his friend did in the odes which the Emperor inspired. He had every belief in Augustus, who was dearer to him

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[95] Lucr. v, 1204-1240. We may compare Browning's *Bp. Blougram* on the instability of unbelief: —Just when we are safest, there's a sunset-touch,A fancy from a flower-bell, some one's death,A chorus-ending from Euripides —And that's enough for fifty hopes and fearsAs old and new at once as nature's self,To rap and knock and enter in our soul,Take hands and dance there, a fantastic ring,Round the ancient idol, on his base again, —The grand Perhaps! We look on helplessly.

[96] Lucr. iii, 53.

personally than to Horace, and he hoped for much outcome from the new movement in the State. But with all his absorbing interest in his own times – and how deep that interest was, only long and minute study of his poems will reveal – he was without scheme or policy. He came before his countrymen, as prophets and poets do in all ages – a child in affairs, but a man in inward experience; he had little or nothing to offer but the impressions left upon his soul by human life. He had the advantage over most prophets in being a "lord of language"; he drew more music from Latin words than had ever been achieved before or was ever reached again.

He told men of a new experience of Nature. It is hardly exaggeration to say that he stands nearer Wordsworth in this feeling than any other poet. He had the same "impulses of deeper birth"; he had seen new gleams and heard new voices; he had enjoyed what no Italian had before, and he spoke in a new way, unintelligible then, and unintelligible still, to those who have not seen and heard the same things. The gist of it all he tried to give in the language of Pantheism, which the Stoics had borrowed from Pythagoras: – "The Deity, they tell us, pervades all, earth and the expanse of sea, and the deep vault of heaven; from Him flocks, herds, men, wild beasts of every sort, each creature at its birth draws the bright thread of life; further, to Him all things return, are restored and reduced – death has no place among them; but they fly up alive into the ranks of the stars and take their seats aloft in the sky." So John Conington did the passage into English. But in such cases it may be said with no disrespect to the commentator who has done so much for his poet, the original words stand to the translation, as Virgil's thought did to the same thought in a Stoic's brain.

Deum namque ire per omnis
Terrasque tractusque maris cælumque profundum;
Hinc pecudes, armenta, viros, genus omne ferarum,
Quemque sibi tenues nascentem arcessere vitas;
Scilicet huc reddi deinde ac resoluta referri
Omnia, nec morti esse locum, sed viva volare
Sideris in numerum atque alto succedere cælo.

(Georgics, iv, 221.)

The words might represent a fancy, or a dogma of the schools and many no doubt so read them, because they had no experience to help them. But to others it is clear that the passage is one of the deepest import, for it is the key to Virgil's mind and the thought is an expression of what we can call by no other name than religion. Around him men and women were seeking communion with gods; he had had communion with what he could not name – he had experienced religion in a very deep, abiding and true way. There is nothing for it – at least for Englishmen – but to quote the "lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey" —

I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean, and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.

Virgil's experience did not stop here; like Wordsworth, he found

Nature's self
By all varieties of human love
Assisted.

He had been a son and a brother; and such relations of men to men impressed him – they took him into the deepest and most beautiful regions of life; and one of the charms of Italy was that it was written all over with the records of human love and helpfulness. The clearing, the orchard, the hilltop town, the bed of flowers, all spoke to him "words that could not be uttered." His long acquaintance with such scripts brought it about that he found

in man an object of delight,
Of pure imagination and of love —

and he came to the Roman people with a deep impression of human worth – something unknown altogether in Roman poetry before or after. Lucretius was impressed with man's insignificance in the universe; Horace, with man's folly. Virgil's poetry throbbed with the sense of man's grandeur and his sanctity.

This human greatness, which his poetry brought home to the sympathetic reader, was not altogether foreign to the thought of the day. *Homo sacra res homini*[97] was the teaching of the Stoics, but man was a more sacred thing to the poet than to the philosopher, for what the philosopher conceived to be a flaw and a weakness in man, the poet found to be man's chief significance. The Stoic loudly proclaimed man to be a member of the universe. The poet found man knit to man by a myriad ties, the strength of which he realized through that pain against which the Stoic sought to safeguard him. Man revealed to the poet his inner greatness in the haunting sense of his limitations – he could not be self-sufficient (*autárkês*) as the Stoic urged; he depended on men, on women and children, on the beauty of grass and living creature, of the sea and sky. And even all these things could not satisfy his craving for love and fellowship; he felt a "hunger for the infinite." Here perhaps is the greatest contribution of Virgil to the life of the age.

He, the poet to whom man and the world were most various and meant most, came to his people, and, without any articulate expression of it in direct words, made it clear to them that he had felt a gap in the heart of things, which philosophy could never fill. Philosophy could remove this sense of incompleteness, but only at the cost of love; and love was to Virgil, as his poetry shows, the very essence of life. Yet he gave, and not altogether unconsciously, the impression that in proportion as love is apprehended, its demands extend beyond the present. The sixth book of the *Æneid* settles nothing and proves nothing, but it expresses an instinct, strong in Virgil, as the result of experience, that love must reach beyond the grave. Further, the whole story of Æneas is an utterance of man's craving for God, of the sense of man's incompleteness without a divine complement. These are the records of Virgil's life, intensely individual, but not peculiar to himself. In the literature of his century, there is little indication of such instincts, but the history of four hundred years shows that they were deep in the general heart of man.

These impressions Virgil brought before the Roman world. As such things are, they were a criticism, and they meant a change of values. In the light of them, the restoration of religion by Augustus became a little thing; the popular superstition of the day was stamped as vulgar and trivial in itself, while it became the sign of deep and unsatisfied craving in the human heart; and lastly the current philosophies, in the face of Virgil's poetry, were felt to be shallow and cold, talk of the lip and trick of the brain. Of course this is not just to the philosophers who did much for the world, and without whom Virgil would not have been what he was. None the less, it was written in Virgil's poetry that the religions and philosophies of mankind must be thought over anew.

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[97] Seneca, *Ep.* 95, 33.

This is no light contribution to an age or to mankind. In this case it carries with it the whole story that lies before us. Such an expression of a common instinct gave new force to that instinct; it added a powerful impulse to the deepest passion that man knows; and, in spite of the uncertainties which beset the poet himself, it gave new hope to mankind that the cry of the human heart for God was one that should receive an answer.

CHAPTER II
THE STOICS

"I am entering," writes Tacitus,[98] "upon the history of a period, rich in disasters, gloomy with wars, rent with seditions, nay, savage in its very hours of peace. Four Emperors perished by the sword; there were three civil wars; there were more with foreigners – and some had both characters at once… Rome was wasted by fires, its oldest temples burnt, the very Capitol set in flames by Roman hands. There was defilement of sacred rites; adulteries in high places; the sea crowded with exiles; island rocks drenched with murder. Yet wilder was the frenzy in Rome; nobility, wealth, the refusal of office, its acceptance – everything was a crime, and virtue the surest ruin. Nor were the rewards of informers less odious than their deeds; one found his spoils in a priesthood or a consulate; another in a provincial governorship; another behind the throne; and all was one delirium of hate and terror; slaves were bribed to betray their masters, freedmen their patrons. He who had no foe was destroyed by his friend."

It was to this that Virgil's hope of a new Golden Age had come —*Redeunt Saturnia regna*. Augustus had restored the Republic; he had restored religion; and after a hundred years here is the outcome. Tacitus himself admits that the age was not "barren of virtues," that it "could show fine illustrations" of family love and friendship, and of heroic death. It must also be owned that the Provinces at large were better governed than under the Republic; and, further, that, when he wrote Tacitus thought of a particular period of civil disorder and that not a long one. Yet the reader of his Annals will feel that the description will cover more than the year 69; it is essentially true of the reigns of Tiberius, Gaius, Claudius and Nero, and it was to be true again of the reign of Domitian – of perhaps eighty years of the first century of our era. If it was not true of the whole Mediterranean world, or even of the whole of Rome, it was true at least of that half-Rome which gave its colour to the thinking of the world.

The Imperial court

Through all the elaborate pretences devised by Augustus to obscure the truth, through all the names and phrases and formalities, the Roman world had realized the central fact of despotism. [99] The Emperors themselves had grasped it with pride and terror. One at least was insane, and the position was enough to turn almost any brain. "Monarchy," in Herodotus' quaint sentence,[100] "would set the best man outside the ordinary thoughts." Plato's myth of Gyges was fulfilled – of the shepherd, who found a ring that made him invisible, and in its strength seduced a queen, murdered a king and became a tyrant. Gaius banished his own sisters, reminding them that he owned not only islands but swords; and he bade his grandmother remember that he could "do anything he liked and do it to anybody."[101] Oriental princes had been kept at Rome as hostages and had given the weaker-minded members of the Imperial family new ideas of royalty. The very word was spoken freely – in his treatise "On Clemency" Seneca uses again and again the word *regnum* without apology.

But what gave Despotism its sting was its uncertainty. Augustus had held a curiously complicated set of special powers severally conferred on him for specified periods, and technically they could be taken from him. The Senate was the Emperor's partner in the government of the world, and it was always conceivable that the partnership might cease, for it was not a definite institution – prince followed prince, it is true, but there was an element of accident about it all. The situation was

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98 *Hist.* i, 2.

99 Tac. *Ann.* iv, 33, *sic converso statu neque alia re Romana quam si unus imperitet.*

100 Hdt. iii, 80. Cf. Tac. *A.* vi, 48, 4, *vi dominationis convulsus et mutatus.*

101 Suetonius, *Gaius*, 29.

difficult; Senate and Emperor eyed each other with suspicion – neither knew how far the other could go, or would go; neither knew the terms of the partnership. Tiberius wrote despatches to the Senate and he was an artist in concealing his meaning. The Senate had to guess what he wished; if it guessed wrong, he would resent the liberty; if it guessed right, he resented the appearance of servility. The solitude of the throne grew more and more uneasy.

Again, the republican government had been in the hands of free men, who ruled as magistrates, and the imperial government had no means of replacing them, for one free-born Roman could not take service with another. The Emperor had to fall back upon his own household. His Secretaries of State were slaves and freedmen – men very often of great ability, but their past was against them. If it had not depraved them, none the less it left upon them a social taint, which nothing could remove. They were despised by the men who courted them, and they knew it. It was almost impossible for such men not to be the gangrene of court and state. And as a fact we find that the freedman was throughout the readiest agent for all evil that Rome knew, and into the hands of such men the government of the world drifted. Under a weak, or a careless, or even an absent, Emperor Rome was governed by such men and such methods as we suppose to be peculiar to Sultanates and the East.

The honour, the property, the life of every Roman lay in the hands of eunuchs and valets, and, as these quarrelled or made friends, the fortunes of an old nobility changed with the hour. It had not been so under Augustus, nor was it so under Vespasian, nor under Trajan or his successors; but for the greater part of the first century A.D. Rome was governed by weak or vicious Emperors, and they by their servants. The spy and the informer were everywhere.

To this confusion fresh elements of uncertainty were added by the astrologer and mathematician, and it became treason to be interested in "the health of the prince." Superstition ruled the weakling – superstition, perpetually re-inforced by fresh hordes of Orientals, obsequious and unscrupulous. Seneca called the imperial court, which he knew, "a gloomy slave-gaol" (*triste ergastulum*).[102]

Reduced to merely registering the wishes of their rulers, the Roman nobility sought their own safety in frivolity and extravagance. To be thoughtful was to be suspected of independence and to invite danger. We naturally suppose moralists and satirists to exaggerate the vices of their contemporaries, but a sober survey of Roman morals in the first century – at any rate before 70 A.D. – reveals a great deal that is horrible. (Petronius is not exactly a moralist or a satirist, and there is plenty of other evidence.) Marriage does not thrive alongside of terror, nor yet where domestic slavery prevails, and in Rome both militated against purity of life. The Greek girl's beauty, her charm and wit, were everywhere available. For amusements, there were the gladiatorial shows, – brutal, we understand, but their horrible fascination we fortunately cannot know. The reader of St Augustine's *Confessions* will remember a famous passage on these games. The gladiators were the popular favourites of the day. They toured the country, they were modelled and painted. Their names survive scratched by loafers on the walls of Pompeii. The very children played at being gladiators, Epictetus said – "sometimes athletes, now monomachi, now trumpeters." The Colosseum had seats for 80,000 spectators of the games, "and is even now at once the most imposing and the most characteristic relic of pagan Rome."[103]

"Despotism tempered by epigrams"

Life was terrible in its fears and in its pleasures. If the poets drew Ages of Gold in the latter days of the Republic, now the philosophers and historians looked away to a "State of Nature," to times and places where greed and civilization were unknown. In those happy days, says Seneca, they enjoyed Nature in common; the stronger had not laid his hand upon the weaker; weapons lay unused, and human hands, unstained by human blood, turned all the hatred they felt upon the wild beasts;

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[102] Sen. *de ira*, iii, 15, 3.

[103] Lecky, *European Morals*, i, 275; Epictetus, *D.* iii, 15.

they knew quiet nights without a sigh, while the stars moved onward above them and the splendid pageant of Night; they drank from the stream and knew no water-pipes, and their meadows were beautiful without art; their home was Nature and not terrible; while our abodes form the greatest part of our terror.[104] In Germany, writes Tacitus, the marriage-bond is strict; there are no shows to tempt virtue; adultery is rare; none there makes a jest of vice, *nec corrumpere et corrumpi seculum vocatur*; none but virgins marry and they marry to bear big children and to suckle them, *sera invenum venus eoque inexhausta pubertas*; and the children inherit the sturdy frames of their parents.[105]

But whatever their dreams of the Ideal, the actual was around them, and men had to accommodate themselves to it. In France before the Revolution, men spoke of the government as "despotism tempered by epigrams," and the happy phrase is as true of Imperial Rome. "Verses of unknown authorship reached the public and provoked" Tiberius,[106] who complained of the "circles and dinner-parties." Now and again the authors were discovered and were punished sufficiently. The tone of the society that produced them lives for ever in the *Annals* of Tacitus. It is worth noting how men and women turned to Tacitus and Seneca during the French Revolution and found their own experience written in their books.[107]

Others unpacked their hearts with words in tyrannicide declamations and imitations of Greek tragedy. Juvenal laughs at the crowded class-room busy killing tyrants, – waiting himself till they were dead. The tragedies got nearer the mark. Here are a few lines from some of Seneca's own: —

> Who bids all pay one penalty of death
> Knows not a tyrant's trade. Nay, vary it —
> Forbid the wretch to die, and slay the happy. (*H.F.* 515.)
>
> And is there none to teach them stealth and sin?
> Why! then the throne will! (*Thyestes* 313.)
>
> Let him who serves a king, fling justice forth,
> Send every scruple packing from his heart;
> Shame is no minister to wait on kings. (*Phædra* 436.)

But bitterness and epigram could not heal; and for healing and inward peace men longed more and more,[108] as they felt their own weakness, the power of evil and the terror of life; and they found both in a philosophy that had originally come into being under circumstances somewhat similar. They needed some foundation for life, some means of linking the individual to something that could not be shaken, and this they found in Stoicism. The Stoic philosopher saw a unity in this world of confusion – it was the "Generative Reason" – the *spermatikós logos*, the Divine Word, or Reason, that is the seed and vital principle, whence all things come and in virtue of which they live. All things came from fiery breath, *pneûma diapuron*, and returned to it. The whole universe was one polity —*politeia tou kósmou*– in virtue of the spirit that was its origin and its life, of the common end to which it tended, of the absolute and universal scope of the laws it obeyed – mind, matter, God, man, formed one community. The soul of the individual Roman partook of the very nature of God —*divinæ particula auræ*[109] – and in a way stood nearer to the divine than did anything else in the world, every detail

104 Seneca, *Ep.* 90, 36-43.

105 Tacitus, *Germany*, cc. 18-20.

106 Tac. *A.* i, 72. Suetonius (*Tib.* 59) quotes specimens.

107 See Boissier, *Tacite*, 188 f.; *l'opposition sous les Cesars*, 208-215.

108 Persius, v, 73, *libertate opus est.*

109 Horace, *Sat.* ii, 2, 79.

of which, however, was some manifestation of the same divine essence. All men were in truth of one blood, of one family, – all and each, as Seneca says, sacred to each and all.[110] (*Unum me donavit* [*sc. Natura rerum*] *omnibus, uni mihi omnes*.)

Harmony with nature

Taught by the Stoic, the troubled Roman looked upon himself at once as a fragment of divinity, [111] an entity self-conscious and individual, and as a member of a divine system expressive of one divine idea, which his individuality subserved. These thoughts gave him ground and strength. If he seemed to be the slave and plaything of an Emperor or an imperial freedman, none the less a divine life pulsed within him, and he was an essential part of "the world." He had two havens of refuge – the universe and his own soul – both quite beyond the reach of the oppressor. Over and over we find both notes sounded in the writings of the Stoics and their followers – God within you and God without you. "Jupiter is all that you see, and all that lives within you."[112] There is a Providence that rules human and all other affairs; nothing happens that is not appointed; and to this Providence every man is related. "He who has once observed with understanding the administration of the world, and learnt that the greatest and supreme and most comprehensive community is the system (*systema*) of men and God, and that from God come the seeds whence all things, and especially rational beings, spring, why should not that man call himself a citizen of the world [Socrates' word *kosmios*], why not a son of God?"[113] And when we consider the individual, we find that God has put in his power "the best thing of all, the master thing" – the rational faculty. What is not in our power is the entire external world, of which we can alter nothing, but the use we make of it and its "appearances"[114] is our own. Confine yourself to "what is in your power" (*tà epí soi*), and no man can hurt you. If you can no longer endure life, leave it; but remember in doing so to withdraw quietly, not at a run; yet, says the sage, "Men! wait for God; when He shall give you the signal and release you from this service, then go to Him; but for the present endure to dwell in this place where He has set you."[115]

To sum up; the end of man's being and his true happiness is what Zeno expressed as "living harmoniously," a statement which Cleanthes developed by adding the words "with Nature." Harmony with Nature and with oneself is the ideal life; and this the outside world of Emperors, freedmen, bereavements and accidents generally, can neither give nor take away. "The end," says Diogenes Laertius, "is to act in conformity with nature, that is, at once with the nature which is in us and with the nature of the universe, doing nothing forbidden by that common law which is the right reason that pervades all things, and which is, indeed, the same in the Divine Being who administers the universal system of things. Thus the life according to nature is that virtuous and blessed flow of existence, which is enjoyed only by one who always acts so as to maintain the harmony between the dæmon (*daimôn*) within the individual and the will of the power that orders the universe."[116]

This was indeed a philosophy for men, and it was also congenial to Roman character, as history had already shown. It appealed to manhood, and whatever else has to be said of Stoics and Stoicism, it remains the fact that Stoicism inspired nearly all the great characters of the early Roman Empire, and nerved almost every attempt that was made to maintain the freedom and dignity of the human soul.[117] The government was not slow to realise the danger of men with such a trust in themselves and so free from fear.

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110 See Edward Caird, *Evolution of Theology in the Greek Philosophers*, vol. ii, lectures xvii to xx, and Zeller, *Eclectics*, pp. 235-245. Seneca, *B.V.* 20, 3.

111 Epictetus, *D.* ii, 8, *su apóspasma eî tou theoû*.

112 Lucan, ix, 564-586, contains a short summary of Stoicism, supposed to be spoken by Cato.

113 Epictetus, *D.* i, 9 (some lines omitted).

114 *phantasíai*, impressions left on the mind by things or events.

115 Epictetus, *D.* i, 9.

116 Diogenes Laertius, vii, 1, 53; see Caird, *op. cit.* vol. ii, p. 124.

117 See Lecky, *European Morals*, i, 128, 129.

On paper, perhaps, all religions and philosophies may at first glance seem equally good, and it is not till we test them in life that we can value them aright. And even here there is a wide field for error. Every religion has its saints – men recognizable to everyone as saints in the beauty, manhood and tenderness of their character – and it is perhaps humiliating to have to acknowledge that very often they seem to be so through some happy gift of Nature, quite independently of any effort they make, or of the religion to which they themselves generally attribute anything that redeems them from being base. We have to take, if possible, large masses of men, and to see how they are affected by the religion which we wish to study – average men, as we call them – for in this way we shall escape being led to hasty conclusions by happy instances of natural endowment, or of virtues carefully acquired in favourable circumstances of retirement or helpful environment. Side by side with such results as we may reach from wider study, we have to set our saints and heroes, for while St Francis would have been tender and Thrasea brave under any system of thought, it remains that the one was Christian and the other Stoic. We need the individual, if we are to avoid mere rough generalities; but we must be sure that he is representative in some way of the class and the system under review.

As representatives of the Stoicism of the early Roman Empire, two men stand out conspicuous – men whose characters may be known with a high degree of intimacy. The one was a Roman statesman, famous above all others in his age, and a man of letters – one of those writers who reveal themselves in every sentence they write and seem to leave records of every mood they have known. The other was an emancipated slave, who lived at Nicopolis in Epirus, away from the main channels of life, who wrote nothing, but whose conversations or monologues were faithfully recorded by a disciple.

"Notable Seneca," writes Carlyle, "so wistfully desirous to stand well with Truth and yet not ill with Nero, is and remains only our perhaps niceliest proportioned half-and-half, the plausiblest Plausible on record; no great man, no true man, no man at all… 'the father of all such as wear shovel-hats.'" This was in the essay on Diderot written in 1833; and we find in his diary for 10th August 1832, when Carlyle was fresh from reading Seneca, an earlier judgment to much the same effect – "He is father of all that work in sentimentality, and, by fine speaking and decent behaviour, study to serve God and mammon, to stand well with philosophy and not ill with Nero. His *force* had mostly oozed out of him, or corrupted itself into *benevolence*, virtue, sensibility. Oh! the everlasting clatter about virtue! virtue!! In the Devil's name be virtuous and no more about it."

Even in his most one-sided judgments Carlyle is apt to speak truth, though it is well to remember that he himself said that little is to be learnt of a man by dwelling only or mainly on his faults. That what he says in these passages is in some degree true, every candid reader must admit; but if he had written an essay instead of a paragraph we should have seen that a great deal more is true of Seneca. As it is, we must take what Carlyle says as representing a judgment which has often been passed upon Seneca, though seldom in such picturesque terms. It is in any case truer than Mommsen's description of Cicero.

Seneca's early life

Seneca was born at Cordova in Spain about the Christian era – certainly not long before it. His father was a rich man of equestrian rank, a rhetorician, who has left several volumes of rhetorical compositions on imaginary cases. He hated philosophy, his son tells us.[118] Seneca's mother seems to have been a good woman, and not the only one in the family; for his youth was delicate and owed much to the care of a good aunt at Rome; and his later years were spent with a good wife Pompeia Paulina, who bore him two little short-lived boys.

In one of his letters (108) Seneca tells us of his early life in Rome. He went to the lectures of Attalus, a Stoic teacher, who laid great stress on simplicity of life and independence of character and was also interested in superstition and soothsaying. The pupil was a high-minded and sensitive

[118] *Ep.* 108, 22, *philosophiam oderat.*

youth, quick then, as he remained through life, to take fire at an idea.[119] "I used to be the first to come and the last to go; and as he walked I would lead him on to further discussions, for he was not only ready for those who would learn, but he would meet them." "When I heard Attalus declaim against the vices, errors and evils of life, I would often pity mankind; and as for him I thought of him as one on high, far above human nature's highest. He himself used to say he was a king [a Stoic paradox at which Horace had laughed]; but he seemed to me more than king, – the judge of kings. When he began to commend poverty, and to show that whatever is more than need requires, is a useless burden to him that has it, I often longed to leave the room a poor man. When he attacked our pleasures and praised the chaste body, the sober table, the pure mind, I delighted to refrain, not merely from unlawful pleasures, but from needless ones too. Some of it has stuck by me, Lucilius, for I made a good beginning." All his life long, in fact, he avoided the luxuries of table and bath, and drank water. He continues, "Since I have begun to tell you how much more keenly I began philosophy in my youth than I persevere with it in my old age, I am not ashamed to own what love of Pythagoras Sotion waked in me." Sotion recommended vegetarianism on the grounds which Pythagoras had laid down. "But you do not believe," he said, "that souls are allotted to one body after another, and that what we call death is transmigration? You don't believe that in beasts and fishes dwells the mind (*animum*) that was once a man's? … Great men have believed it; so maintain your own opinion, but keep the matter open. If it is true, then to have abstained from animal food will be innocence; if it is false, it will still be frugality."[120] So for a year Seneca was a vegetarian with some satisfaction and he fancied that his mind was livelier than when he was "an eater of beef."[121] It is as well not to quote some contemporary methods of preparing meat.[122] However, after a while some scandal arose about foreign religions, and vegetarianism was counted a "proof of superstition," and the old rhetorician, more from dislike of philosophy than from fear of calumny, made it an excuse to put a little pressure on his philosophic son, who obediently gave up the practice. Such is the ardour of youth, he concludes, – a good teacher finds idealists ready to his hand. The fault is partly in the teachers, who train us to argue and not to live, and partly in the pupils too, whose aim is to have the wits trained and not the mind. "So what was philosophy becomes philology – the love of words."[123]

There is a certain gaiety and good humour about these confessions, which is closely bound up with that air of tolerance and that sense of buoyant ease[124] which pervade all his work. Here the tone is in keeping with the matter in hand, but it is not always. Everything seems so easy to him that the reader begins to doubt him and to wonder whether he is not after all "The plausiblest Plausible on record." We associate experience with a style more plain, more tense, more inevitable; and the extraordinary buoyancy of Seneca's writing suggests that he can hardly have known the agony and bloody sweat of the true teacher. Yet under the easy phrases there lay a real sincerity. From his youth onward he took life seriously, and, so far as is possible for a man of easy good nature, he was in earnest with himself.

Like other youths of genius, he had had thoughts of suicide, but on reflexion, he tells us, he decided to live, and his reason was characteristic. While for himself he felt equal to dying bravely, he was not so sure that his "kind old father" would be quite so brave in doing without him. It was to philosophy, he says, that he owed his resolution.[125]

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[119] With these passages compare the fine account which Persius gives (*Sat.* v) of his early studies with the Stoic Cornutus.

[120] Plutarch, *de esu carnium*, ii, 5.

[121] Plutarch, *de esu carnium*, i, 6, on clogging the soul by eating flesh. Clem. Alex. *Pæd.* ii, 16, says St Matthew lived on seeds, nuts and vegetables, and without meat.

[122] Plutarch, *de esu carnium*, ii, 1.

[123] Sen. *Ep.* 108, 3, 13-23.

[124] This is a quality that Quintilian notes in his style for praise or blame. Others (Gellius, *N.A.* xii, 2) found in him *levis et quasi dicax argutia*.

[125] *Ep.* 78, 2, 3, *patris me indulgentissimi senectus retinuit*.

Apart from philosophy, he went through the ordinary course of Roman education. He "wasted time on the grammarians,"[126] whom he never forgave, and at whom, as "guardians of Latin speech"[127] he loved to jest, – and the greatest of all Roman Grammarians paid him back in the familiar style of the pedagogue. Rhetoric came to him no doubt by nature, certainly by environment; it conspicuously haunted his family for three generations.[128] He duly made his appearance at the bar – making more speeches there than Virgil did, and perhaps not disliking it so much. But he did not like it, and, when his father died, he ceased to appear, and by and by found that he had lost the power to plead as he had long before lost the wish.[129]

On the accession of Claudius to the Imperial throne in 41 A.D., Seneca, now in middle life, was for some reason banished to Corsica, and there for eight weary years he remained, till the Empress Messalina fell. A little treatise, which he wrote to console his mother, survives – couched in the rhetoric she knew so well. If the language is more magnificent than sons usually address to their mothers, it must be remembered that he wrote to console her for misfortunes which he was himself enduring. The familiar maxim that the mind can make itself happy and at home anywhere is rather like a platitude, but it loses something of that character when it comes from the lips of a man actually in exile. Another little work on the subject, which he addressed later on to Polybius, the freedman of Claudius, stands on a different footing, and his admirers could wish he had not written it. There is flattery in it of a painfully cringing tone. "The Emperor did not hurl him down so utterly as never to raise him again; rather he supported him when evil fortune smote him and he tottered; he gently used his godlike hand to sustain him and pleaded with the Senate to spare his life… He will see to his cause… He best knows the time at which to show favour… Under the clemency of Claudius, exiles live more peacefully than princes did under Gaius."[130] But a little is enough of this.

It is clear that Seneca was not what we call a strong man. A fragile youth, a spirit of great delicacy and sensibility, were no outfit for exile. Nor is it very easy to understand what exile was to the educated Roman. Some were confined to mere rocks, to go round and round them for ever and never leave them. Seneca had of course more space, but what he endured, we may in some measure divine from the diaries and narratives that tell of Napoleon's life on St Helena. The seclusion from the world, the narrow range, the limited number of faces, the red coats, the abhorred monotony, told heavily on every temper, on gaoler and prisoner alike, even on Napoleon; and Seneca's temperament was not of stuff so stern. We may wish he had not broken down, but we cannot be surprised that he did. It was human of him. Perhaps the memory of his own weakness and failure contributed to make him the most sympathetic and the least arrogant of all Stoics.

Nero

At last Messalina reached her end, and the new Empress, Agrippina, recalled the exile in 49 A.D., and made him tutor of her son, Nero; and from now till within two years of his death Seneca lived in the circle of the young prince. When Claudius died in 54, Seneca and Burrus became the guardians of the Emperor and virtually ruled the Empire. It was a position of great difficulty. Seneca grew to be immensely rich, and his wealth and his palaces and gardens[131] weakened his influence, while they intensified the jealousy felt for a minister so powerful. Yet perhaps none of his detractors guessed the limits of his power as surely as he came to feel them himself. Some measure of the situation may be taken from what befell when the freedwoman Claudia Acte became the mistress of Nero. "His older friends did not thwart him," says Tacitus, "for here was a girl, who, without harm

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126 *Ep.* 58, 5.

127 *Ep.* 95, 65

128 His nephew Lucan, Quintilian severely says, was "perhaps a better model for orators than for poets."

129 *Ep.* 49, 2. Virgil made one speech.

130 *ad Polybium*, 13, 2, 3.

131 Juvenal, x, 16, *magnos Seneca prædivitis hortos*.

to anyone, gratified his desires, since he was utterly estranged from his wife Octavia."[132] Later on, we learn, Seneca had to avail himself of Acte's aid to prevent worse scandals.

In February 55 A.D. the young prince Britannicus was poisoned at Nero's table. He was the son of Claudius and the brother of Octavia – a possible claimant therefore to the Imperial throne. Nero, not more than eighteen years old, told the company quite coolly that it was an epileptic seizure, and the feast went on, while the dead boy was carried out and buried there and then in the rain – in a grave prepared before he had entered the dining-hall.[133] Ten months later Seneca wrote his tractate on Clemency. Nero should ask himself "Am I the elected of the gods to be their vice-gerent on earth? The arbiter of life and death to the nations?" and so forth. He is gently reminded of the great light that fronts the throne; that his anger would be as disastrous as war; that "Kings gain from kindness a greater security, while their cruelty swells the number of their enemies." Seneca wanders a good deal, but his drift is clear – and the wretchedness of his position.

That Burrus and he had no knowledge of Nero's design to do away with his mother, is the verdict of Nero's latest historian, but to Seneca fell the horrible task of writing the explanatory letter which Nero sent to the Senate when the murder was done. Perhaps to judge him fairly, one would need to have been a Prime Minister. It may have been a necessary thing to do, in order to maintain the world's government, but the letter imposed on nobody, and Thrasea Pætus at once rose from his seat and walked conspicuously out.

From the year 59 Nero was more than ever his own master. His guardians' repeated condonations had set him free, and the lad, who had "wished he had never learned writing" when he had to sign his first death-warrant, began from now to build up that evil fame for which the murders of his brother and his mother were only the foundation. For three years Seneca and Burrus kept their places – miserably enough. Then Burrus found a happy release in death, and with him died the last of Seneca's influence.[134] Seneca begged the Emperor's leave to retire from the Court, offering him the greater part of his wealth, and it was refused. It had long been upon his mind that he was too rich. In 58 a furious attack was made upon him by "one who had earned the hate of many," Publius Suillius; this man asked in the Senate "by what kind of wisdom or maxims of philosophy" Seneca had amassed in four years a fortune equal to two and a half millions sterling; and he went on to accuse him of intrigue with princesses, of hunting for legacies, and of "draining Italy and the provinces by boundless usury."[135] There was probably a good deal of inference in these charges, if one may judge by the carelessness of evidence which such men show in all ages. Still Seneca felt the taunt, and in a book "On the Happy Life," addressed to his brother Gallic, he dealt with the charge. He did not claim to be a sage (17, 3); his only hope was day by day to lessen his vices – he was still in the thick of them; perhaps he might not reach wisdom, but he would at least live for mankind "as one born for others,"[136] would do nothing for glory, and all for conscience, would be gentle and accessible even to his foes; as for wealth, it gave a wise man more opportunity, but if his riches deserted him, they would take nothing else with them; a philosopher might have wealth, "if it be taken forcibly from no man, stained with no man's blood, won by no wrong done to any, gained without dishonour; if its spending be as honest as its getting, if it wake no envy but in the envious."[137] The treatise has a suggestion of excitement, and there is a good deal of rhetoric in it. Now he proposed to the Emperor to put his words into action, and Nero would not permit him – he was not ready for the odium of despoiling his guardian, and the old man's name might still be of use to cover deeds in which he had

132 *Ann.* xiii, 12, 2.

133 Tac. *Ann.* xiii, 15-17.

134 Tac. *Ann.* xiv, 51.

135 Tac. *Ann.* xiii, 42.

136 *B.V.* 20, 3.

137 *B.V.* 23, 1.

no share. Seneca was not to resign his wealth nor to leave Rome. Nero's words as given by Tacitus are pleasant enough, but we hardly need to be told their value.[138]

Seneca's last days

It was merely a reservation of the death sentence, and Seneca must have known it. The only thing now was to wait till he should receive the order to die, and Seneca occupied the time in writing. If what he wrote has a flushed and excited air, it is not surprising. The uncertainty of his position had preyed upon him while he was still Minister – "there are many," he had written, "who must hold fast to their dizzy height; it is only by falling that they can leave it."[139] He had fallen, and still he had to live in uncertainty; he had always been a nervous man.

The end came in 65, in connexion with the conspiracy of Piso. Tacitus is not altogether distinct as to the implication of Seneca in this plot, but modern historians have inclined to believe in his guilt – if guilt it was.[140] Mr Henderson, in particular, is very severe on him for this want of "gratitude" to his benefactor and pupil, but it is difficult to see what Nero had done for him that he would not have preferred undone.[141] Perhaps at the time, and certainly later on, Seneca was regarded as a possible substitute for Nero upon the throne;[142] but he was well over sixty and frail, nor is it clear that the world had yet decided that a man could be Emperor without being a member of the Julian or Claudian house. Seneca, in fact any man, must have felt that any one would be better than Nero, but he had himself conspicuously left the world, and, with his wife, was living the philosophic life – a vegetarian again, and still a water-drinker.[143] Seneca was ready for the death-summons and at once opened his veins. Death came slowly, but it came; and he died, eloquent to the last —*novissimo quoque momenta suppeditante eloquentia*.

Such is the story of Seneca. Even in bare outline it shows something of his character – his kindliness and sensibility, his weakness and vanity; but there are other features revealed in his books and his many long letters to Lucilius. No Roman, perhaps, ever laid more stress on the duty of gentleness and forgiveness.[144] "Look at the City of Rome," he says, "and the crowds unceasingly pouring through its broad streets – what a solitude, what a wilderness it would be, were none left but whom a strict judge would acquit. We have all done wrong (*peccavimus*), some in greater measure, some in less, some on purpose, some by accident, some by the fault of others; we have not stood bravely enough by our good resolutions; despite our will and our resistance, we have lost our innocence. Nor is it only that we have acted amiss; we shall do so to the end."[145] He is anxious to make Stoicism available for his friends; he tones down its gratuitous harshness, accommodates, conciliates. He knows what conscience is; he is recognized as a master in dealing with the mind at variance with itself, so skilfully does he analyse and lay bare its mischiefs. Perhaps he analyses too much – the angel, who bade Hermas cease to ask concerning sins and ask of righteousness, might well have given him a word. But he is always tender with the man to whom he is writing. If he was, as Quintilian suggests, a "splendid assailant of the faults of men," it is the faults of the unnamed that he assails; his friends' faults suggest his own, and he pleads and sympathizes. His style corresponds with the spirit in which he thinks. "You complain," he writes to Lucilius, "that my letters are not very finished in style. Who talks in a finished style unless he wishes to be affected? What my talk would be, if we were sitting or walking together, unlaboured and easy, that is what I wish my letters to be,

138 Tac. *Ann.* xiv, 52-56.

139 *de tranqu. animi*, 10, 6.

140 Tac. *Ann.* xiv, 65; xv, 45-65.

141 B. W. Henderson, *Nero*, pp. 280-3.

142 Tac. *Ann.* xv, 65; Juvenal, viii, 212.

143 Tac. *Ann.* xv, 45, 6.

144 This is emphasized by Zeller, *Eclectics*, 240, and by Dill, *Roman Society from Nero to Marcus*, 324, 326.

145 *ae Clem.* i, 6.

without anything precious or artificial in them."[146] And he has in measure succeeded in giving the air of talk to his writing – its ease, its gaiety, even its rambling and discursiveness. He always sees the friend to whom he writes, and talks to him – sometimes at him – and not without some suggestion of gesticulation. He must have talked well – though one imagines that, like Coleridge on Highgate Hill, he probably preferred the listener who sat "like a passive bucket to be pumped into." Happily the reader is not obliged to be quite so passive.

But we shall not do him justice if we do not recognize his high character. In an age when it was usual to charge every one with foulness, natural and unnatural, Dio Cassius alone among writers suggests it of Seneca; and, quite apart from his particular bias in this case, Dio is not a high authority, – more especially as he belonged to a much later generation. If his talk is of "virtue! virtue!" Seneca's life was deliberately directed to virtue. In the midst of Roman society, and set in the highest place but one in the world, he still cherished ideals, and practised self-discipline, daily self-examination. "This is the one goal of my days and of my nights: this is my task, my thought – to put an end to my old faults."[147] His whole philosophy is practical, and directed to the reformation of morals. The Stoic paradoxes, and with them every part of philosophy which has no immediate bearing upon conduct, he threw aside. His language on the accumulation of books recalls the amusement of St Francis at the idea of possessing a breviary. And further, we may note that whatever be charged against him as a statesman, not his own master, and as a writer, not always quite in control of his rhetoric, Seneca was fundamentally truthful with himself. He never hid his own weakness; he never concealed from himself the difficulty of his ideals; he never tried to delude himself with what he could not believe. The Stoics had begun long since to make terms with popular religion, but Seneca is entirely free from delusions as to the gods of popular belief. He saw clearly enough that there was no truth in them, and he never sought help from anything but the real. He is a man, trained in the world,[148] in touch with its problems of government, with the individual and his questions of character, death and eternity, – a man tender, pure and true – too great a man to take the purely negative stand of Thrasea, or to practise the virtue of the schools in "arrogant indolence." But he has hardly reached the inner peace which he sought.

The story of Epictetus can be more briefly told, for there is very little to tell.[149] He was born at Hierapolis in Phrygia: – he was the slave of Nero's freedman Epaphroditus, and somehow managed to hear the lectures of the Stoic Musonius. Eventually he was set free, and when Domitian expelled the philosophers from Rome, he went to Nicopolis in Epirus,[150] where he lived and taught – lame, neat, poor and old. How he taught is to be seen in the discourses which Arrian took down in the reign of Trajan, – "Whatever I heard him say, I tried to write down exactly, and in his very words as far as I could – to keep them as memorials for myself of his mind and of his outspokenness. So they are, as you would expect, very much what a man would say to another on the spur of the moment – not what he would write for others to read afterwards… His sole aim in speaking was to move the minds of his hearers to the best things. If then these discourses should achieve this, they would have the effect which I think a philosopher's words should have. But if they do not, let my readers know that, when he spoke them, the hearer could not avoid being affected as Epictetus wished him to be. If the discourses do not achieve this, perhaps it will be my fault, or perhaps it may be inevitable. Farewell."

Epictetus on children and women

Such, save for a sentence or two omitted, is Arrian's preface, – thereafter no voice is heard but that of Epictetus. To place, time or persons present the barest allusions only are made. "Someone

146 [Transcriber's note: this footnote missing from book]

147 *Ep.* 61, 1.

148 Lucian, *Nigrinus*, 19, says there is no better school for virtue, no truer test of moral strength, than life in the city of Rome.

149 Gellius, *N.A.* ii, 18, 10.

150 Gell. *N.A.* xv, 11, 5.

said … And Epictetus spoke." The four books of Arrian give a strong impression of fidelity. We hear the tones of the old man, and can recognize "the mind and the outspokenness," which Arrian cherished in memory – we understand why, as we read. The high moral sense of the teacher, his bursts of eloquence, his shrewdness, his abrupt turns of speech, his apostrophes – "Slave!" he cries, as he addresses the weakling – his diminutives of derision, produce the most lively sense of a personality. There is wit, too, but like Stoic wit in general it is hard and not very sympathetic; it has nothing of the charm and delicacy of Plato's humour, nor of its kindliness.

Here and there are words and thoughts which tell of his life. More than once he alludes to his age and his lameness – "A lame old man like me." But perhaps nowhere in literature are there words that speak so loud of a man without experience of woman or child. "On a voyage," he says, "when the ship calls at a port and you go ashore for water, it amuses you to pick up a shell or a plant by the way; but your thoughts ought to be directed to the ship, and you must watch lest the captain call, and then you must throw away all those things, that you may not be flung aboard, tied like the sheep. So in life, suppose that instead of some little shell or plant, you are given something in the way of wife or child (*antì bolbaríou kaì kochlidiou gynaikárion kaì paidíon*) nothing need hinder. But, if the captain call, run to the ship letting them all go and never looking round. If you are old, do not even go far from the ship, lest you fail to come when called."[151] He bids a man endure hunger; he can only die of it. "But my wife and children also suffer hunger, (*ohi emoì peinéousi*). What then? does their hunger lead to any other place? Is there not for them the same descent, wherever it lead? Below, is it not the same for them as for you?"[152] "If you are kissing your child, or brother, or friend, never give full licence to the appearance (*tèn phantasían*); check your pleasure … remind yourself that you love a mortal thing, a thing that is not your own (*ouden tôn sautoû*)… What harm does it do to whisper, as you kiss the child, 'To-morrow you will die'?" This is a thought he uses more than once,[153] though he knows the attractiveness of lively children.[154] He recommends us to practise resignation – beginning on a broken jug or cup, then on a coat or puppy, and so up to oneself and one's limbs, children, wife or brothers.[155] "If a man wishes his son or his wife not to do wrong, he really wishes what is another's not to be another's."[156]

As to women, a few quotations will show his detachment. He seems hardly to have known a good woman. "Do not admire your wife's beauty, and you are not angry with the adulterer. Learn that a thief and an adulterer have no place among the things that are yours, but among those which are not yours and not in your power,"[157] and he illustrates his philosophy with an anecdote of an iron lamp stolen from him, which he replaced with an earthenware one. From fourteen years old, he says, women think of nothing and aim at nothing but lying with men.[158] Roman women liked Plato's Republic for the licence they wrongly supposed it gave.[159] He constantly speaks of women as a temptation, nearly always using a diminutive *korásion*, *korasidíon*– little girls – and as a temptation hardly to be resisted by young men. He speaks of their "softer voices."[160] A young philosopher is

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151 Manual, J. I have constantly used Long's translation, but often altered it. It is a fine piece of work, well worth the English reader's study.

152 *D.* iii, 26. Compare and contrast Tertullian, *de Idol*, 12, *fides famem nan timet. Scit enim famem non minus sibi contemnendam propter Deum quam omne mortis genus*. The practical point is the same, perhaps; the motive, how different!

153 *D.* iii, 24; iv, 1; *M.* 11, 26.

154 *D.* ii, 24. He maintains, too, against Epicurus the naturalness of love for children; once born, we cannot help loving them, *D.* i, 23.

155 *D.* iv, 1.

156 *D.* iv, 5, *thélei tà allótrie mè eînai allótria*.

157 *D.* i, 18. This does not stop his condemning the adulterer, *D.* ii, 4 (man, he said, is formed for fidelity), 10. Seneca on outward goods, *ad Marciam*, 10.

158 *M.* 40.

159 Fragment, 53.

160 *D.* i, id.

no match for a "pretty girl"; let him fly temptation.[161] "As to pleasure with women, abstain as far as you can, before marriage; but if you do indulge in it, do it in the way conformable to custom. Do not, however, be disagreeable to those who take such pleasures, nor apt to rebuke them or to say often that you do not."[162] All this may be taken as the impression left by Rome and the household of Epaphroditus upon a slave's mind. It may be observed that he makes nothing like Dio Chrysostom's condemnation of prostitution – an utterance unexampled in pagan antiquity.

It is pleasanter to turn to other features of Epictetus. He has a very striking lecture on personal cleanliness.[163] In proportion as men draw near the gods by reason, they cling to purity of soul and body. Nature has given men hands and nostrils; so, if a man does not use a handkerchief, "I say, he is not fulfilling the function of a man." Nature has provided water. "It is impossible that some impurity should not remain in the teeth after eating. 'So wash your teeth,' says Nature. Why? 'That you may be a man and not a beast – a pig.'" If a man would not bathe and use the strigil and have his clothes washed – "either go into a desert where you deserve to go, or live alone and smell yourself." He cannot bear a dirty man, – "who does not get out of his way?" It gives philosophy a bad name, he says; but it is quite clear that that was not his chief reason. He would sooner a young man came to him with his hair carefully trimmed than with it dirty and rough; such care implied "some conception of the beautiful," which it was only necessary to direct towards the things of the mind; "but if a man comes to me filthy and dirty, with a moustache down to his knees – what *can* I say to him?" "But whence am I to get a fine cloak? Man! you have water; wash it!"

Fame of Epictetus

Pupils gathered round him and he became famous, as we can see in the reminiscences of Aulus Gellius.[164] Sixty or seventy years after his death a man bought his old earthenware lamp for three thousand drachmas.[165] Even in his lifetime men began to come about "the wonderful old man" who were hardly serious students. They wished, he says, to occupy the time while waiting to engage a passage on a ship – they happened to be passing (*párodós estin*) and looked in to see him as if he were a statue. "We can go and see Epictetus too. – Then you go away and say; Oh! Epictetus was nothing! he talked bad Greek – oh! barbarous Greek!"[166] Others came to pick up a little philosophic language for use in public. Why could they not philosophize and say nothing? he asked. "Sheep do not vomit up their grass to show the shepherd how much they have eaten – no! they digest it inside, and then produce wool and milk outside."[167] He took his teaching seriously as a matter of life, and he looked upon it as a service done to mankind – quite equivalent to the production of "two or three ugly-nosed children."[168] He has a warm admiration for the Cynic philosopher's independence of encumberments – how can he who has to teach mankind go looking after a wife's confinement – or "something to heat the water in to give the baby a bath?"[169]

These then are the two great teachers of Stoicism, the outstanding figures, whose words and tones survive, whose characters are familiar to us. They are clearly preachers, both of them, intent on the practical reformation of their listeners or correspondents. For them conduct is nine-tenths of life. Much of their teaching is of course the common property of all moral teachers – the deprecation of anger, of quarrelsomeness, of self-indulgence, of grumbling, of impurity, is peculiar to no school.

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161 *D.* iii, 12, classing the *korasidíon* with wine and cake.

162 *M.* 33.

163 *D.* iv, 11.

164 Gell. *N.A.* i, 2, 6; xvii, 19, 1.

165 Lucian, *adv. Indoct.* 13.

166 *D.* iii, 9.

167 *M.* 46.

168 *D.* iii, 22, *kakórygka*.

169 *D.* iii, 22. Lucian says Epictetus urged Demonax to take a wife and leave some one to represent him in posterity. "Very well, Epictetus," said Demonax, "give me one of your own daughters" (*v. Demon.* 55).

Others have emphasized that life is a campaign with a general to be obeyed, if you can by some instinct divine what he is signalling.[170] But perhaps it was a new thing in the Western World, when so much accent was laid on conduct. The terror of contemporary life, with its repulsiveness, its brutality and its fascination, drove men in search of the moral guide. The philosopher's school was an infirmary, not for the glad but for the sorry.[171] "That man," says Seneca, "is looking for salvation —*ad salutem spectat*."

Self-examination

Men sought the help of the philosopher, and relapsed. "He thinks he wishes reason. He has fallen out with luxury, but he will soon make friends with her. But he says he is offended with his own life! I do not deny it; who is not? Men love their vices and hate them at the same time."[172] So writes Seneca of a friend of Lucilius and his fugitive thoughts of amendment, and Epictetus is no less emphatic on the crying need for earnestness. The Roman world was so full of glaring vice that every serious man from Augustus onward had insisted on some kind of reformation, and now men were beginning to feel that the reformation must begin within themselves. The habit of daily self-examination became general among the Stoics, and they recommended it warmly to their pupils. Here is Seneca's account of himself.

"When the day was over and Sextius had gone to his night's rest, he used to ask his mind (*animum*): 'what bad habit of yours have you cured to-day? what vice have you resisted? in what respect are you better?' Anger will cease and will be more moderate, when it knows it must daily face the judge. Could anything be more beautiful than this habit of examining the whole day? What a sleep is that which follows self-scrutiny! How calm, how deep and free, when the mind is either praised or admonished, when it has looked into itself, and like a secret censor makes a report upon its own moral state. I avail myself of this power and daily try my own case. When the light is removed from my sight, and my wife, who knows my habit, is silent, I survey my whole day and I measure my words again. I hide nothing from myself; I pass over nothing. For why should I be afraid of any of my errors, when I can say: 'See that you do it no more, now I forgive you. In that discussion, you spoke too pugnaciously; after this do not engage with the ignorant; they will not learn who have never learned. That man you admonished too freely, so you did him no good; you offended him. For the future, see not only whether what you say is true, but whether he to whom it is said will bear the truth.'"[173]

Similar passages might be multiplied. "Live with yourself and see how ill-furnished you are," wrote Persius (iv, 52) the pupil of Cornutus. "From heaven comes that word 'know thyself,'" said Juvenal. A rather remarkable illustration is the letter of Serenus, a friend of Seneca's, of whose life things are recorded by Tacitus that do not suggest self-scrutiny. In summary it is as follows: —

"I find myself not quite free, nor yet quite in bondage to faults which I feared and hated. I am in a state, not the worst indeed, but very querulous and uncomfortable, neither well nor ill. It is a weakness of the mind that sways between the two, that will neither bravely turn to right nor to wrong. Things disturb me, though they do not alter my principles. I think of public life; something worries me, and I fall back into the life of leisure, to be pricked to the will to act by reading some brave words or seeing some fine example. I beg you, if you have any remedy to stay my fluctuation of mind, count me worthy to owe you peace. To put what I endure into a simile, it is not the tempest that troubles me, but sea-sickness."[174]

Epictetus quotes lines which he attributes to Pythagoras —

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170 Epict. *D.* iii, 24. *strateía tís estin ho bios hekástou, kaì aute makrà kai toikile. tereîn se deî tò stratiôtou prosneuma kaì toû strategoû prássein hekasta, ei oîon.*.

171 Epict. *D.* iii, 23.

172 Sen. *Ep.* 112, 3.

173 *de ira*, iii, 36, 1-4.

174 Sen. *de tranqu. animi*, 1.

Let sleep not come upon thy languid eyes
Ere thou has scanned the actions of the day —
Where have I sinned? What done or left undone?
From first to last examine all, and then
Blame what is wrong, in what is right, rejoice.[175]

These verses, he adds, are for use, not for quotation. Elsewhere he gives us a parody of self-examination – the reflections of one who would prosper in the world – "Where have I failed in flattery? Can I have done anything like a free man, or a noble-minded? Why did I say that? Was it not in my power to lie? Even the philosophers say nothing hinders a man from telling a lie."[176]

But self-examination may take us further.[177] We come into the world, he says, with some innate idea (*émphutos énnoia*) of good and evil, as if Nature had taught us; but we find other men with different ideas, – Syrians and Egyptians, for instance. It is by a comparison of our ideas with those of other men that philosophy comes into being for us. "The beginning of philosophy – with those at least who enter upon it aright – by the door – is a consciousness of one's own weakness and insufficiency in necessary things (*astheneías kaì adunamías*)." We need rules or canons, and philosophy determines these for us by criticism.[178]

This reference to Syrians and Egyptians is probably not idle. The prevalence of Syrian and Egyptian religions, inculcating ecstatic communion with a god and the soul's need of preparation for the next world, contributed to the change that is witnessed in Stoic philosophy. The Eastern mind is affecting the Greek, and later Stoicism like later Platonism has thoughts and ideals not familiar to the Greeks of earlier days. It was with religions, as opposed to city cults, that Stoicism had now to compete for the souls of men; and while it retains its Greek characteristics in its intellectualism and its slightly-veiled contempt for the fool and the barbarian, it has taken on other features. It was avowedly a rule of life rather than a system of speculation; and it was more, for the doctrine of the Spermaticos Logos (the Generative Reason) gave a new meaning to conduct and opened up a new and rational way to God. Thus Stoicism, while still a philosophy was pre-eminently a religion, and even a gospel – Good News of emancipation from the evil in the world and of union with the Divine.

The true worship of the gods

Stoicism gave its convert a new conception of the relation of God and man. One Divine Word was the essence of both – Reason was shared by men and gods, and by pure thought men came into contact with the divine mind. Others sought communion in trance and ritual – the Stoic when he was awake, at his highest and best level, with his mind and not his hand, in thoughts, which he could understand and assimilate, rather than in magical formulae, which lost their value when they became intelligible. God and men formed a polity, and the Stoic was the fellow-citizen of the gods, obeying, understanding and adoring, as they did, one divine law, one order – a partaker of the divine nature, a citizen of the universe, a free man as no one else was free, because he knew his freedom and knew who shared it with him. He stood on a new footing with the gods, and for him the old cults passed away, superseded by a new worship which was divine service indeed.

"How the gods are to be worshipped, men often tell us. Let us not permit a man to light lamps on the Sabbath, for the gods need not the light, and even men find no pleasure in the smoke. Let us forbid to pay the morning salutation and to sit at the doors of the temples; it is human interest that is courted by such attentions: God, he worships who knows Him. Let us forbid to take napkins

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175 Epict. *D.* iii, 10. I have here slightly altered Mr Long's rendering.

176 *D.* iv, 6.

177 Cf. Persius, iii, 66-72, causas cognoscite rerum, quid sumus aut quidnam victuri gignimur … quem te deus esse iussit et humana qua parte locatus es in re.

178 D. ii, 11. See Davidson, Stoic Creed, pp. 69, 81, on innate ideas. Plutarch, *de coh. ira*, 15, on Zeno's doctrine, *tò spérma súmmigma kaì kèrasma tôn tés phuchês dynaméon hyparchein apespasménon*.

and strigils to Jove, to hold the mirror to Juno. God seeks none to minister to him; nay! himself he ministers to mankind; everywhere he is, at the side of every man. Let a man hear what mode to keep in sacrifices, how far to avoid wearisomeness and superstition: never will enough be done, unless in his mind he shall have conceived God as he ought, as in possession of all things, as giving all things freely. What cause is there that the gods should do good? Nature. He errs, who thinks they *can* not do harm; they *will* not. They cannot receive an injury nor do one. To hurt and to be hurt are one thing. Nature, supreme and above all most beautiful, has exempted them from danger and from being dangerous. The beginning of worship of the gods is to believe gods are; then to attribute to them their own majesty, to attribute to them goodness, without which majesty is not, to know it is they who preside over the universe, who rule all things by their might, who are guardians of mankind; at times[179] thoughtful of individuals. They neither give nor have evil; but they chastise, they check, they assign penalties and sometimes punish in the form of blessing. Would you propitiate the gods? Be good! He has worshipped them enough who has imitated them."[180]

This is not merely a statement of Stoic dogma; it was a proclamation of freedom. Line after line of this fine passage directly counters what was asserted and believed throughout the world by the adherents of the Eastern religions. Hear Seneca once more.

Providence

"We understand Jove to be ruler and guardian of the whole, mind and breath of the Universe (*animum spiritumque mundi*), lord and artificer of this fabric. Every name is his. Would you call him fate? You will not err. He it is on whom all things depend, the cause of causes. Would you call him Providence? You will speak aright. He it is whose thought provides for the universe that it may move on its course unhurt and do its part. Would you call him Nature? you will not speak amiss. He it is of whom all things are born, by whose breath (*spiritu*) we live. Would you call him Universe? You will not be deceived. He himself is this whole that you see, fills his own parts, sustains himself and what is his."[181]

Some one asked Epictetus one day how we can be sure that all our actions are under the inspection of God. "Do you think," said Epictetus, "that all things are a unity?" (*i. e.* in the polity of the cosmos). "Yes." "Well then, do you not think that things earthly are in sympathy (*sympathein*) with things heavenly?" "Yes." Epictetus reminded his listener of the harmony of external nature, of flowers and moon and sun. "But are leaves and our bodies so bound up and united with the whole, and are not our souls much more? and are our souls so bound up and in touch with God (*synapheis tô theô*) as parts of Him and portions of Him, and can it be that God does not perceive every motion of these parts as being His own motion cognate with Himself (*symphyoûs*)?"[182] He bade the man reflect upon his own power of grasping in his mind ten thousand things at once under divine administration; "and is not God able to oversee all things, and to be present with them, and to receive from all a certain communication?" The man replied that he could not comprehend all these things at once. "And who tells you this – that you have equal power with Zeus? Nevertheless, he has placed by every man a guardian (*epítropon*), each man's Dæmon, to whom he has committed the care of the man, a guardian who never sleeps, is never deceived. For to what better and more careful watch (*phylaki*) could He have entrusted each of us? When then you (plural) have shut your doors and made darkness

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[179] The qualification may be illustrated from Cicero's Stoic, *de Nat. Deor*, ii, 66, 167, *Magna di curant parva neglegunt*.

[180] *Ep.* 95, 47-50. Cf. *Ep.* 41; *de Prov.* i, 5. A very close parallel, with a strong Stoic tinge, in Minucius Felix, 32, 2, 3, ending *Sic apud nos religiosior est ille qui iustior*.

[181] *Nat. Quæst.* ii, 45. Cf. Tertullian, *Apol.* 21, on Zeno's testimony to the Logos, as creator, fate, God, *animus Iovis* and *necessitas omnium rerum*.

[182] Cf. Sen. *Ep.* 41, 1. Prope est a te deus, tecum est, intus est. Ita dico, Lucili, sacer intra nos spiritus sedet malorum bonorumque nostrorum observator et custos.

within, remember never to say that you are alone, for you are not; but God is within and your Dæmon (Greek: *ho hymeteros daímón*); and what need have they of light to see what you are doing?"[183]

Here another feature occurs – the question of the dæmons. Seneca once alludes to the idea – "for the present," he writes to Lucilius, "set aside the view of some people, that to each individual one of us a god is given as a pedagogue, not indeed of the first rank, but of an inferior brand, of the number of those whom Ovid calls 'gods of the lower order' (*de plebe deos*); yet remember that our ancestors who believed this were so far Stoics, for to every man and woman they gave a *Genius* or a *Juno*. Later on we shall see whether the gods have leisure to attend to private people's business."[184] But before we pursue a side issue, which we shall in any case have to examine at a later point, let us look further at the central idea.

The thoughtful man finds himself, as we have seen, in a polity of gods and men, a cosmos, well-ordered in its very essence. "In truth," says Epictetus, "the whole scheme of things (*tà hóla*) is badly managed, if Zeus does not take care of his own citizens, so that they may be like himself, happy."[185] The first lesson of philosophy is that "there is a God and that he provides for the whole scheme of things, and that it is not possible to conceal from him our acts – no, nor our intentions or thoughts."[186] "God," says Seneca, "has a father's mind towards the good, and loves them stoutly – 'let them,' he says, 'be exercised in work, pain and loss, that they may gather true strength.'" It is because God is in love with the good (*bonorum amantissimus*) that he gives them fortune to wrestle with. "*There* is a match worth God's sight (*pardeo dignum*) – a brave man paired with evil fortune – especially if he is himself the challenger."[187] He goes on to show that what appear to be evils are not so; that misfortunes are at once for the advantage of those whom they befall and of men in general or the universe (*universis*), "for which the gods care more than for individuals"; that those who receive them are glad to have them – "and deserve evil if they are not"; that misfortunes come by fate and befall men by the same law by which they are good. "Always to be happy and to go through life without a pang of the mind (*sine morsu animi*) is to know only one half of Nature."[188] "The fates lead us: what time remains for each of us, the hour of our birth determined. Cause hangs upon cause… Of old it was ordained whereat you should rejoice or weep; and though the lives of individuals seem marked out by a great variety, the sum total comes to one and the same thing – perishable ourselves we receive what shall perish."[189] "The good man's part is then to commit himself to fate – it is a great comfort to be carried along with the universe. Whatever it is that has bidden us thus to live and thus to die, by the same necessity it binds the gods. An onward course that may not be stayed sweeps on human and divine alike. The very founder and ruler of all things has written fate, but he follows it: he ever obeys, he once commanded."[190] To the good, God says, "To you I have given blessings sure and enduring; all your good I have set within you. Endure! herein you may even out-distance God; he is outside the endurance of evils and you above it.[191] Above all I have provided that none may hold you against your will; the door is open; nothing I have made more easy than to die; and death is quick."[192]

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183 Epict. D. i, 14. See Clem. Alex. Strom, vii, 37, for an interesting account of how *phthánei he theía dynamis, katháper phôs diidein tèn phychen*.

184 *Ep.* 110, 1, pædagogam dari deum.

185 *D.* iii, 24,

186 *D.* ii, 14.

187 *de providentia*, 2, 6-9.

188 *de Prov.* 4, 1.

189 *de Prov.* 5, 7. See Justin Martyr's criticism of Stoic fatalism, *Apol.* ii, 7. It involves, he says, either God's identity with the world of change, or his implication in all vice, or else that virtue and vice are nothing – consequences which are alike contrary to every sane *eeenoia*, to *logos* and to *noûs*.

190 *de Prov.* 5, 8.

191 Plutarch, *adv. Stoicos*, 33, on this Stoic paradox of the equality of God and the sage.

192 *de Prov.* 6, 5-7. This Stoic justification of suicide was repudiated alike by Christians and Neo-Platonists.

Epictetus is just as clear that we have been given all we need. "What says Zeus? Epictetus, had it been possible, I would have made both your little body and your little property free, and not exposed to hindrance… Since I was not able to do this, I have given you a little portion of us, this faculty of pursuing or avoiding an object, the faculty of desire and aversion and in a word the faculty of using the appearances of things."[193] "Must my leg then be lamed? Slave! do you then on account of one wretched leg find fault with the cosmos? Will you not willingly surrender it for the whole? … Will you be vexed and discontented with what Zeus has set in order, with what he and the Moiræ, who were there spinning thy nativity (*génesin*), ordained and appointed? I mean as regards your body; for so far as concerns reason you are no worse than the gods and no less."[194]

The holy spirit within us

In language curiously suggestive of another school of thought, Seneca speaks of God within us, of divine help given to human effort. "God is near you, with you, within you. I say it, Lucilius; a holy spirit sits within us (*sacer intra nos spiritus sedet*), spectator of our evil and our good, and guardian. Even as he is treated by us, he treats us. None is a good man without God.[195] Can any triumph over fortune unless helped by him? He gives counsel, splendid and manly; in every good man,

What god we know not, yet a god there dwells."[196]

"The gods," he says elsewhere, "are not scornful, they are not envious. They welcome us, and, as we ascend, they reach us their hands. Are you surprised a man should go to the gods? God comes to men, nay! nearer still! he comes *into* men. No mind (*mens*) is good without God. Divine seeds are sown in human bodies," and will grow into likeness to their origin if rightly cultivated.[197] It should be noted that the ascent is by the route of frugality, temperance and fortitude. To this we must return.

Man's part in life is to be the "spectator and interpreter" of "God"[198] as he is the "son of God";[199] to attach himself to God;[200] to be his soldier, obey his signals, wait his call to retreat; or (in the language of the Olympian festival) to "join with him in the spectacle and the festival for a short time" (*sympompeúsonta autô kaì syneortasonta pròs oligon*), to watch the pomp and the panegyris, and then go away like a grateful and modest man;[201] to look up to God and say "use me henceforth for what thou will. I am of thy mind; I am thine."[202] "If we had understanding, what else ought we to do, but together and severally, hymn God, and bless him (*euphemeîn*) and tell of his benefits? Ought we not, in digging or ploughing or eating, to sing this hymn to God? 'Great is God who has given us such tools with which to till the earth; great is God who has given us hands, the power of swallowing, stomachs, the power to grow unconsciously, and to breathe while we sleep.' … What else can I do, a lame old man, but hymn God? If I were a nightingale, I would do the part of a nightingale … but I am a rational creature, and I ought to hymn God; this is my proper work; I do it; nor will I quit my post so long as it is given me; and you I call upon to join in this same song."[203] Herakles in all his toils had nothing dearer to him than God, and "for that reason he was believed to be the son of God and he was."[204] "Clear away from your thoughts sadness, fear, desire, envy, avarice,

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193 *D.* i, 1.

194 *D.* i, 12. See also *D.* ii, 16 "We say 'Lord God! how shall I not be anxious?' Fool, have you not hands, did not God make them for you? Sit down now and pray that your nose may not run."

195 Cf. Cicero's Stoic, *N.D.* ii, 66, 167, *Nemo igitur vir magnus sine aliquo afflatu divino unquam fuit.*

196 Ep. 41, 1, 2. (The line is from Virgil, *Aen.* viii, 352.) The rest of the letter develops the idea of divine dependence. *Sic animus magnus ac sacer et in hoc demissus at propius quidem divina nossemus, conversatur quidem nobiscum sed hæret origini suæ, etc.*

197 Ep. 73, 15, 16.

198 Epictetus, *D.* i, 6.

199 *D.* i, 9.

200 *D.* iv, 1.

201 *D.* iv, 1.

202 *D.* ii, 16 end, with a variant between *sós eimi* and *ísos eimi*, the former of which, Long says, is certain.

203 *D.* i, 16. Contrast the passage of Clement quoted on p. 286.

204 *D.* ii, 16.

intemperance, etc. But it is not possible to eject all these things, otherwise than by looking away to God alone (*pròs mónon tòn theòn apobléponta*) by fixing your affections on him only, by being dedicated to his commands."[205] This is "a peace not of Cæsar's proclamation (for whence could he proclaim it?) but of God's – through reason."[206]

Humanity

The man, who is thus in harmony with the Spermaticos, Logos, who has "put his 'I' and 'mine'"[207] in the things of the will, has no quarrel with anything external. He takes a part in the affairs of men without aggression, greed or meanness. He submits to what is laid upon him. His peace none can take away, and none can make him angry. There is a fine passage in Seneca's ninety-fifth letter, following his account of right worship already quoted, in which he proceeds to deduce from this the right attitude to men. A sentence or two must suffice. "How little it is not to injure him, whom you ought to help! Great praise forsooth, that man should be kind to man! Are we to bid a man to lend a hand to the shipwrecked, point the way to the wanderer, share bread with the hungry? … This fabric which you see, wherein are divine and human, is one. We are members of a great body. Nature has made us of one blood, has implanted in us mutual love, has made us for society (sociabiles). She is the author of justice and equity… Let that verse be in your heart and on your lip.

Homo sum, humani nihil a me alienum puto"[208]

"Unhappy man! will you ever love? (*ecquando amabis*)" he says to the irritable.[209] A little before, he said, "Man, a sacred thing to man, is slain for sport and merriment; naked and unarmed he is led forth; and the mere death of a man is spectacle enough."[210] This was the Stoic's condemnation of the gladiatorial shows. Nor was it only by words that Stoicism worked for humanity, for it was Stoic lawyers who softened and broadened and humanized Roman law.[211]

Yet Stoicism in Seneca and Epictetus had reached its zenith. From now onward it declined. Marcus Aurelius, in some ways the most attractive of all Stoics, was virtually the last. With the second century Stoicism ceased to be an effective force in occupying and inspiring the whole mind of men, though it is evident that it still influenced thinkers. Men studied the Stoics and made fresh copies of their books, as they did for a thousand years; they borrowed and adapted; but they were not Stoics. Stoicism had passed away as a system first and then as a religion; and for this we have to find some reason or reasons.

It may well be true that the environment of the Stoics was not fit for so high and pure a philosophy. The broad gulf between the common Roman life and Stoic teaching is evident enough. The intellectual force of the Roman world moreover was ebbing, and Stoicism required more strength of mind and character than was easily to be found. That a religion or a philosophy fails to hold its own is not a sure sign that it is unfit or untrue; it may only be premature, and it may be held that at another stage of the world's history Stoicism or some similar scheme of thought, – or, better perhaps, some central idea round which a system and a life develop – may yet command the assent of better men in a better age. At the same time, it is clear that when Stoicism re-emerges, – if it does, – it will be another thing. Already we have seen in Wordsworth, and (so far as I understand him) in Hegel, a great informing conception which seems to have clear affinity with the Spermaticos Logos of the Stoics. The passage from the "Lines written above Tintern Abbey" (quoted in the previous chapter) may be supplemented by many from the "Prelude" and other poems to illustrate at once the likeness

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205 *D.* ii, 16.

206 *D.* iii, 13.

207 *D.* ii, 22.

208 *Ep.* 95, 51-53.

209 *de ira*, iii, 28, 1.

210 *Ep.* 95, 33, *homo sacra res homini.*

211 See Lecky, *European Morals*, i, 294 ff.: Maine, *Ancient Law*, p. 54 f.

and the difference between the forms the thought has taken. It is, however, a certain condemnation of a philosophic school when we have to admit that, whatever its apprehension of truth, it failed to capture its own generation, either because of some error of presentment, or of some fundamental misconception. When we find, moreover, that there is not only a refusal of Stoicism but a reaction from it, conscious or unconscious, we are forced to inquire into the cause.

The individual will

We shall perhaps be right in saying, to begin with, that the doctrine of the Generative Reason, the Spermaticos Logos, is not carried far enough. The immense practical need, which the Stoic felt, of fortifying himself against the world, is not unintelligible, but it led him into error. He employed his doctrine of the Spermaticos Logos to give grandeur and sufficiency to the individual, and then, for practical purposes, cut him off from the world. He manned and provisioned the fortress, and then shut it off from supplies and from relief. It was a necessary thing to assert the value and dignity of the mere individual man against the despotisms, but to isolate the man from mankind and from the world of nature was a fatal mistake. Of course, the Stoic did not do this in theory, for he insisted on the polity of gods and men, the "one city,"[212] and the duty of the "citizen of the universe" (*kósmios*) – a man is not an independent object; like the foot in the body he is essentially a "part."[213] In practice, too, Stoics were human. Seneca tells us to show clemency but not to feel pity, but we may be sure that the human heart in him was far from observing the distinction – he "talked more boldly than he lived," he says – he was "among those whom grief conquered,"[214] and, though he goes on to show why he failed in this way, he is endeared to us by his failure to be his own ideal Stoic. Yet it remains that the chapters, with which his book on Clemency ends, are a Stoic protest against pity, and they can be re-inforced by a good deal in Epictetus. If your friend is unhappy, "remember that his unhappiness is his own fault, for God has made all men to be happy, to be free from perturbations."[215] Your friend has the remedy in his own hands; let him "purify his dogmata."[216] Epictetus would try to heal a friend's sorrow "but not by every means, for that would be to fight against God (*theomacheîn*)," and would involve daily and nightly punishment to himself[217] – and "no one is nearer me than myself."[218] In the *Manual* the same thought is accentuated. "Say to yourself 'It is the opinion about this thing that afflicts the man.' So far as words go, do not hesitate to show sympathy, and even, if it so happen, to lament with him. Take care, though, that you do not lament internally also (*mè kaì ésôthen stenáxês*)."[219] We have seen what he has to say of a lost child. In spite of all his fine words, the Stoic really knows of nothing between the individual and the cosmos, for his practical teaching deadens, if it does not kill, friendship and family love.

Everything with the Stoic turns on the individual. *tà epí soi*, "the things in your own power," is the refrain of Epictetus' teaching. All is thrown upon the individual will, upon "the universal" working in the individual, according to Stoic theory, "upon me" the plain man would say. If the gods, as Seneca says, lend a hand to such as climb, the climber has to make his own way by temperance and fortitude. The "holy spirit within us" is after all hardly to be distinguished from conscience, intellect and will.[220] God, says Epictetus, ordains "if you wish good, get it from yourself."[221] Once the will

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[212] See, by the way, Plutarch's banter on this "polity" – the stars its tribesmen, the sun, doubtless, councillor, and Hesperus *prytanis* or *astynomus*, *adv. Sto.* 34.

[213] Epict. *D.* ii, 5; M. Aurelius, viii, 34.

[214] *Ep.* 63, 14.

[215] *D.* iii, 24.

[216] *D.* iv, 1.

[217] *ib.*

[218] *D.* iv, 6.

[219] *M.* 16.

[220] Cf. Theophilus (the apologist of about 160 A.D.), ii, 4, who, though not always to be trusted as to the Stoics, remarks this identification of God and conscience.

(*proaíresis*) is right, all is achieved.[222] "You must exercise the will (*thelêsai*) – and the thing is done, it is set right; as on the other hand, only fall a nodding and the thing is lost. For from within (*ésôthen*) comes ruin, and from within comes help."[223] "What do you want with prayers?" asks Seneca, "make yourself happy."[224] The old Stoic paradox about the "folly" of mankind, and the worthlessness of the efforts of all save the sage, was by now chiefly remembered by their enemies.[225]

All this is due to the Stoic glorification of reason, as the embodiment in man of the Spermaticos Logos. Though Nous with the Stoics is not the pure dry light of reason, they tended in practice to distinguish reason from the emotions or passions (*páthê*), in which they saw chiefly "perturbations," and they held up the ideal of freedom from them in consequence (*apátheia*).[226] To be godlike, a man had to suppress his affections just as he suppressed his own sensations of pain or hunger. Every human instinct of paternal or conjugal love, of friendship, of sympathy, of pity, was thus brought to the test of a Reason, which had two catch-words by which to try them – the "Universe" and "the things in your own power" – and the sentence was swift and summary enough. They did not realize that for most men – and probably it is truest of the best men – Life moves onward with all its tender and gracious instincts, while Analysis limps behind. The experiment of testing affection and instinct by reason has often been tried, and it succeeds only where the reason is willing to be a constitutional monarch, so to say, instead of the despot responsible only to the vague concept of the Universe, whom the Stoics wished to enthrone. They talked of living according to Nature, but they were a great deal too quick in deciding what was Nature. If the centuries have taught us anything, it is to give Nature more time, more study and more respect than even yet we do. There are words at the beginning of the thirteenth book of the "Prelude" wiser and truer than anything the Stoics had to say of her with their "excessive zeal" and their "quick turns of intellect." Carried away by their theories (none, we must remember as we criticize them, without some ground in experience and observation), the Stoics made solitude in the heart and called it peace. The price was too high; mankind would not pay it, and sought a religion elsewhere that had a place for a man's children.

Sin and salvation

Again, in their contempt for the passions the Stoics underestimated their strength. How strong the passions are, no man can guess for another, even if he can be sure how strong his own are. Perhaps the Stoics could subordinate their passions to their reason; – ancient critics kept sharp eyes on them and said they were not always successful.[227] But there is no question that for the mass of men, the Stoic account of reason is absurd. "I see another law in my members," said a contemporary of Seneca's, "warring against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity." Other men felt the same and sought deliverance in the sacraments of all the religions. That Salvation was not from within, was the testimony of every man who underwent the *taurobolium*. So far as such things can be, it is established by the witness of every religious mind that, whether the feeling is just or not the feeling is invincible that the will is inadequate and that religion begins only when the Stoic's ideal of saving oneself by one's own resolve and effort is finally abandoned. Whether this will permanently be true is another question, probably for us unprofitable. The ancient world, at any rate, and in general the modern world, have pronounced against Stoic Psychology – it was too quick, too superficial. The

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221 *D.* i, 29.

222 Cf. *D.* i, 1; iii, 19; iv, 4; iv, 12, and very many other passages.

223 *D.* iv, 9, end.

224 *Ep.* 31, 5.

225 Plutarch, *Progress in Virtue*, c. 2, 76 A, on the absurdity of there being no difference between Plato and Meletus. Cf. also *de repugn. Stoic.* 11, 1037 D.

226 "Unconditional eradication," says Zeller, *Eclectics*, p. 226. "I do not hold with those who hymn the savage and hard Apathy (*tén agrion kaì sklerán*)," wrote Plutarch. *Cons, ad Apoll.* 3, 102 C. See Clem. Alex. *Str.* ii, 110, on *páthê*; as produced by the agency of spirits, and note his talk of Christian Apathy. *Str.* vi, 71-76.

227 Justin Martyr (*Apol.* ii, 8) praises Stoic morality and speaks of Stoics who suffered for it.

Stoics did not allow for the sense of sin.[228] They recognized the presence of evil in the world; they felt that "it has its seat within us, in our inward part";[229] and they remark the effect of evil in the blunting of the faculties – let the guilty, says Persius, "see virtue, and pine that they have lost her forever."[230] While Seneca finds himself "growing better and becoming changed," he still feels there may be much more needing amendment.[231] He often expresses dissatisfaction with himself.[232] But the deeper realization of weakness and failure did not come to the Stoics, and what help their teaching of strenuous endeavour could have brought to men stricken with the consciousness of broken willpower, it is hard to see. "Filthy Natta," according to Persius, was "benumbed by vice" (*stupet hic vitio*).[233] "When a man is hardened like a stone (*apolithôthê*), how shall we be able to deal with him by argument?" asks Epictetus, arguing against the Academics, who "opposed evident truths" – what are we to do with necrosis of the soul?[234] But the Stoics really gave more thought to fancies of the sage's equality with God and occasional superiority – so confident were they in the powers of the individual human mind. Plutarch, indeed, forces home upon them as a deduction from their doctrine of "the common nature" of gods and men the consequence that sin is not contrary to the Logos of Zeus – and yet they say God punishes sin.[235]

Yet even the individual, much as they strove to exalt his capabilities, was in the end cheapened in his own eyes.[236] As men have deepened their self-consciousness, they have yielded to an instinctive craving for the immortality of the soul.[237] Whether savages feel this or not, it is needless to argue. No religion apart from Buddhism has permanently held men which had no hopes of immortality; and how far the corruptions of Buddhism have modified its rigour for common people, it is not easy to say. In one form or another, in spite of a terrible want of evidence, men have clung to eternal life. The Stoics themselves used this consensus of opinion as evidence for the truth of the belief.[238] "It pleased me," writes Seneca, "to inquire of the eternity of souls (*de æternitate animarum*) – nay! to believe in it. I surrendered myself to that great hope."[239] "How natural it is!" he says, "the human mind is a great and generous thing; it will have no bounds set to it unless they are shared by God."[240] "When the day shall come, which shall part this mixture of divine and human, here, where I found it, I will leave my body, myself I will give back to the gods. Even now I am not without them." He finds in our birth into this world an analogy of the soul passing into another world, and in language of beauty and sympathy he pictures the "birthday of the eternal," the revelation of nature's secrets, a world of light and more light. "This thought suffers nothing sordid to dwell in the mind, nothing mean, nothing cruel. It tells us that the gods see all, bids us win their approval, prepare for them, and set eternity before us."[241] Beautiful words that wake emotion yet!

Immortality

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228 Cf. Epict. *D.* iii, 25.

229 Sen. *Ep.* 50, 4.

230 Persius, iii, 38.

231 *Ep.* 6, 1.

232 e. g. *Ep.* 57, 3, he is not even *homo tolerabilis*. On the bondage of the soul within the body, see *Ep.* 65, 21-23.

233 Cf. Seneca, Ep. 53, 7, 8 – quo quis peius habet minus sentit. "The worse one is, the less he notices it."

234 *D.* i, 5.

235 Plut. *de repugn. Stoic.* 34, 105 °C. Cf. *Tert. de exh. castit.* 2.

236 Cf. Plutarch, *non suaviter*, 1104 F. *kataphronoûntes eautôn ôs ephêmérôn kthe–* of the Epicureans.

237 Cf. Plutarch, non suaviter, 1104 C. *tês aidiótetus elpìs kaì ho póthos tou eînai mántôn epótôn prespytatos ôn kaì melstos.* Cf. *ib.* 1093 A.

238 Sen. *Ep.* 117, 6.

239 *Ep.* 102, 2.

240 Ep. 102, 21; the following passages are from the same letter. Note the Stoic significance of *naturale*.

241 Compare *Cons. ad Marc.* 25, 1, *integer ille, etc.*

But is it clear that it is eternity after all? In the *Consolation* which Seneca wrote for Marcia, after speaking of the future life of her son, he passed at last to the Stoic doctrine of the first conflagration, and described the destruction of the present scheme of things that it may begin anew. "Then we also, happy souls who have been assigned to eternity (*felices animæ et æterna sortitæ*), when God shall see fit to reconstruct the universe, when all things pass (*labentibus*), we too, a little element in a great catastrophe, shall be resolved into our ancient elements. Happy is your son, Marcia, who already knows this."[242] Elsewhere he is still less certain. "Why am I wasted for desire of him, who is either happy or non-existent? (*qui aut beatus aut nullus est*)."[243]

That in later years, in his letters to Lucilius, Seneca should lean to belief in immortality, is natural enough. Epictetus' language, with some fluctuations, leans in the other direction: "When God does not supply what is necessary, he is sounding the signal for retreat – he has opened the door and says to you, Come! But whither? To nothing terrible, but whence you came, to the dear and kin [both neuters], the elements. What in you was fire, shall go to fire, earth to earth, spirit to spirit [perhaps, breath *hóson pneumatíon eis pneumátion*], water to water; no Hades, nor Acheron, nor Cocytus, nor Pyriphlegethon; but all things full of gods and dæmons. When a man has such things to think on, and sees sun and moon and stars, and enjoys earth and sea, he is not solitary or even helpless."[244] "This is death, a greater change, not from what now is into what is not, but into what now is not. Then shall I no longer be? You will be, but something else, of which now the cosmos has no need. For you began to be (*egénou*), not when you wished, but when the cosmos had need."[245]

On the whole the Stoic is in his way right, for the desire for immortality goes with the instincts he rejected – it is nothing without the affections and human love.[246] But once more logic failed, and the obscure grave witnesses to man's instinctive rejection of Stoicism, with its simple inscription *taurobolio in æternum renatus*.

The question of the gods

Lastly we come to the gods themselves, and here a double question meets us. Neither on the plurality nor the personality of the divine does Stoicism give a certain note. In the passages already quoted it will have been noticed how interchangeably "God," "the gods" and "Zeus" have been used. It is even a question whether "God" is not an identity with fate, providence, Nature and the Universe. [247] Seneca, as we have seen, dismisses the theory of dæmons or *genii* rather abruptly – "that is what some think." Epictetus definitely accepts them, so far as anything here is definite, and with them, or in them, the ancestral gods. Seneca, as we have seen, is contemptuous of popular ritual and superstition. Epictetus inculcates that "as to piety about the gods, the chief thing is to have right opinions about them," but, he concludes, "to make libations and to sacrifice according to the custom of our fathers, purely and not meanly, nor carelessly, nor scantily, nor above our ability, is a thing which belongs to all to do."[248] "Why do you," he asks, "act the part of a Jew, when you are a Greek?"[249] He also accepts the fact of divination.[250] Indeed, aside perhaps from conspicuous extravagances, the popular religion suffices. Without enthusiasm and without clear belief, the Stoic may take part in the ordinary round of the cults. If he did not believe himself, he pointed out a way to the reflective polytheist by which he could reconcile his traditional faith with philosophy – the many gods were like ourselves manifestations of the Spermaticos Logos; and he could accept tolerantly the ordinary

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242 The last words of the "Consolation." Plutarch on resolution into *pûr noeròn*, *non suaviter*, 1107 B.

243 *ad Polyb.* 9, 3.

244 *D.* iii, 13. Plutarch (*non suaviter*, 1106 E) says Cocytus, etc., are not the chief terror but *hê toû mè ontos apeilé.*

245 *D.* iii, 24.

246 See Plutarch on this, *non suaviter*, 1105 E.

247 Seneca, *N.Q.* ii, 45.

248 Manual, 31. Plutarch, *de repugn. Stoic.* 6, 1034 B, C, remarks on Stoic inconsistency in accepting popular religious usages.

249 *D.* ii, 9. In *D.* v, 7, he refers to "Galilaeans," so that it is quite possible he has Christians in view here.

250 *M.* 32; *D.* iii, 22.

theory of dæmons, for Chrysippus even raised the question whether such things as the disasters that befall good men are due to negligence on the part of Providence, or to evil dæmons in charge of some things.[251] While for himself the Stoic had the strength of mind to shake off superstition, the common people, and even the weaker brethren of the Stoic school, remained saddled with polytheism and all its terrors and follies. Of this compromise Seneca is guiltless.[252] It was difficult to cut the connexion with Greek tradition – how difficult, we see in Plutarch's case. The Stoics, however, fell between two stools, for they had not enough feeling for the past to satisfy the pious and patriotic, nor the resolution to be done with it. After all, more help was to be had from Lucretius than from Epictetus in ridding the mind of the paralysis of polytheism.

But the same instinct that made men demand immortality for themselves, a feeling, dim but strong, of the value of personality and of love, compelled them to seek personality in the divine. Here the Stoic had to halt, for after all it is a thing beyond the power of reason to demonstrate, and he could not here allege, as he liked, that the facts stare one in the face. So, with other thinkers, impressed at once by the want of evidence, and impelled by the demand for some available terms, he wavered between a clear statement of his own uncertainty, and the use of popular names. "Zeus" had long before been adopted by Cleanthes in his famous hymn, but this was an element of weakness; for the wall-paintings in every great house gave another account of Zeus, which belied every attribute with which the Stoics credited him. The apologists and the Stoics explained the legends by the use of allegory, but, as Plato says, children cannot distinguish between what is and what is not allegory – nor did the common people. The finer religious tempers demanded something firmer and more real than allegory. They wanted God or Gods, immortal and eternal; and at best the Stoic gods were to "melt like wax or tin" in their final conflagration, while Zeus too, into whom they were to be resolved, would thereby undergo change, and therefore himself also prove perishable.[253]

"I put myself in the hands of a Stoic," writes Justin Martyr, "and I stayed a long time with him, but when I got no further in the matter of God – for he did not know himself and he used to say this knowledge was not necessary – I left him."[254] Other men did not, like Justin, pursue their philosophic studies, and when they found that, while the Stoic's sense of truth would not let him ascribe personality to God, all round there were definite and authoritative voices which left the matter in no doubt, they made a quick choice. What authority means to a man in such a difficulty, we know only too well.

The Stoics in some measure felt their weakness here. When they tell us to follow God, to obey God, to look to God, to live as God's sons, and leave us not altogether clear what they mean by God, their teaching is not very helpful, for it is hard to follow or look to a vaguely grasped conception. They realized that some more definite example was needed. "We ought to choose some good man," writes Seneca, "and always have him before our eyes that we may live as if he watched us, and do everything as if he saw."[255] The idea came from Epicurus. "Do everything, said he, as if Epicurus saw. It is without doubt a good thing to have set a guard over oneself, to whom you may look, whom you may feel present in your thoughts."[256] "Wherever I am, I am consorting with the best men. To them, in whatever spot, in whatever age they were, I send my mind."[257] He recommends Cato, Lælius, Socrates, Zeno. Epictetus has the same advice. What would Socrates do? is the canon he recommends.[258] "Though you are not yet a Socrates, you ought to live as one who wishes to be a Socrates."[259]

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251 Plut. *de repugn. Stoic.* 37, 1051 C.

252 Tertullian, *Apol.* 12, *idem estis qui Senecam aliquem pluribus et amarioribus de vestra superstitione perorantem reprehendistis.*

253 See Plutarch, *de comm. not. adv. Stoicos*, c. 31, and *de def. orac.* 420 A, c. 19; Justin M. *Apol.* ii, 7.

254 Dial. *c. Tryphone*, 2.

255 Sen. *Ep.* 11, 8.

256 *Ep.* 25, 5.

257 *Ep.* 62, 2, cf. 104, 21.

258 *M.* 33, *tì nan epoíesen en toútô Sôkrates hè Zénôn.*

"Go away to Socrates and see him … think what a victory he felt he won over himself."[260] Comte in a later day gave somewhat similar advice. It seems to show that we cannot do well without some sort of personality in which to rest ourselves.

Plutarch's criticism

When once this central uncertainty in Stoicism appeared, all the fine and true words the Stoics spoke of Providence lost their meaning for ordinary men who thought quickly. The religious teachers of the day laid hold of the old paradoxes of the school and with them demolished the Stoic Providence. "Chrysippus," says Plutarch, "neither professes himself, nor any one of his acquaintances and teachers, to be good (*spoudaîon*). What then do they think of others, but precisely what they say – that all men are insane, fools, unholy, impious, transgressors, that they reach the very acme of misery and of all wretchedness? And then they say that it is by Providence that our concerns are ordered – and we so wretched! If the Gods were to change their minds and wish to hurt us, to do us evil, to overthrow and utterly crush us, they could not put us in a worse condition; for Chrysippus demonstrates that life can admit no greater degree either of misery or unhappiness."[261] Of course, this attack is unfair, but it shows how men felt. They demanded to know how they stood with the gods – were the gods many or one? were they persons or natural laws[262] or even natural objects? did they care for mankind? for the individual man? This demand was edged by exactly the same experience of life which made Stoicism so needful and so welcome to its followers. The pressure of the empire and the terrors of living drove some to philosophy and many more to the gods – and for these certainty was imperative and the Stoics could not give it.

It is easy, but not so profitable as it seems, to find faults in the religion of other men. Their generation rejected the Stoics, but they may not have been right. If the Stoics were too hasty in making reason into a despot to rule over the emotions, their contemporaries were no less hasty in deciding, on the evidence of emotions and desires, that there were gods, and these the gods of their fathers, because they wished for inward peace and could find it nowhere else. The Stoics were at least more honest with themselves, and though their school passed away, their memory remained and kept the respect of men who differed from them, but realized that they had stood for truth.

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[259] *M.* 50.

[260] *D.* ii, 18. The tone of Tertullian, *e. g.* in *de Anima*, 1, on the Phædo, suggests that Socrates may have been over-preached. What too (*ib.* 6) of barbarians and their souls, who have no "prison of Socrates," etc?

[261] Plut. *de Stoic. repugnantiis*, 31, 1048 E. Cf. *de comm. not.* 33.

[262] Plutarch, *Amat.* 13, 757 C. *horâs dépou tòn upolambánonta búthon hemâs atheótetos, an eis pathe kaì dynameis kaì aretàs diagraphômen ekaston tôn theôn.*

CHAPTER III
PLUTARCH

Stoicism as a system did not capture the ancient world, and even upon individuals it did not retain an undivided hold. To pronounce with its admirers to-day that it failed because the world was not worthy of it, would be a judgment, neither quite false nor altogether true, but at best not very illuminative. Men are said to be slow in taking in new thoughts, and yet it is equally true that somewhere in nearly every man there is something that responds to ideas, and even to theories; but if these on longer acquaintance fail to harmonize with the deeper instincts within him, they alarm and annoy, and the response comes in the form of re-action.

In modern times, we have seen the mind of a great people surrendered for a while to theorists and idealists. The thinking part of the French nation was carried away by the inspiration of Rousseau into all sorts of experiments at putting into hasty operation the principles and ideas they had more or less learnt from the master. Even theories extemporized on the moment, it was hoped, might be made the foundations of a new and ideal social fabric. The absurdities of the old religion yielded place to Reason – embodied symbolically for the hour in the person of Mme Momoro – afterwards, more vaguely, in Robespierre's Supreme Being, who really came from Rousseau. And then – "avec ton Être Suprême tu commences à m'embêter," said Billaud to Robespierre himself. Within a generation Chateaubriand, de Maistre, Bonald, and de la Mennais were busy refounding the Christian faith. "The rites of Christianity," wrote Chateaubriand, "are in the highest degree moral, if for no other reason than that they have been practised by our fathers, that our mothers have watched over our cradles as Christian women, that the Christian religion has chanted its psalms over our parents' coffins and invoked peace upon them in their graves."

Alongside of this let us set a sentence or two of Plutarch. "Our father then, addressing Pemptides by name, said, 'You seem to me, Pemptides, to be handling a very big matter and a risky one – or rather, you are discussing what should not be discussed at all (*tà akínêta kineîn*), when you question the opinion we hold about the gods, and ask reason and demonstration for everything. For the ancient and ancestral faith is enough (*arkeî gàr hê pátrios kaì palaià pistis*), and no clearer proof could be found than itself —

Not though man's wisdom scale the heights of thought —

but it is a common home and an established foundation for all piety; and if in one point its stable and traditional character (*tò bébainon autês kaì nenomismenon*) be shaken and disturbed, it will be undermined and no one will trust it… If you demand proof about each of the ancient gods, laying hands on everything sacred and bringing your sophistry to play on every altar, you will leave nothing free from quibble and cross-examination (*oudèn asykophánteton oud abasániston*)… Others will say that Aphrodite is desire and Hermes reason, the Muses crafts and Athene thought. Do you see, then, the abyss of atheism that lies at our feet, if we resolve each of the gods into a passion or a force or a virtue?'"[263]

Such an utterance is unmistakeable – it means a conservative re-action, and in another place we find its justification in religious emotion. "Nothing gives us more joy than what we see and do ourselves in divine service, when we carry the emblems, or join in the sacred dance, or stand by at the sacrifice or initiation… It is when the soul most believes and perceives that the god is present, that she most puts from her pain and fear and anxiety, and gives herself up to joy, yes, even as far

[263] *Amatorius*, 13, 756 A, D; 757 B. The quotation is from Euripides, *Bacchæ*, 203.

as intoxication and laughter and merriment… In sacred processions and sacrifices not only the old man and the old woman, nor the poor and lowly,

The thick-legged drudge that sways her at the mill,

but and household slaves and hirelings are uplifted by joy and triumph. Rich men and kings have always their own banquets and feasts – but the feasts in the temples and at initiations, when men seem to touch the divine most nearly in their thought, with honour and worship, have a pleasure and a charm far more exceeding. And in this no man shares who has renounced belief in Providence. For it is not abundance of wine, nor the roasting of meat, that gives the joy in the festivals, but also a good hope, and a belief that the god is present and gracious, and accepts what is being done with a friendly mind."[264]

Continuity of religion

One of Chateaubriand's critics says that his plea could be advanced on behalf of any religion; and Plutarch had already made it on behalf of his own. He looks past the Stoics, and he finds in memory and association arguments that outweigh anything they can say. The Spermaticos Logos was a mere Être Suprème – a sublime conception perhaps, but it had no appeal to emotion, it waked no memories, it touched no chord of personal association. We live so largely by instinct, memory and association, that anything that threatens them seems to strike at our life,

So was it when my life began;
So is it now I am a man;
So be it when I shall grow old,
Or let me die!
The Child is father of the Man;
And I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety.

Some such thought is native to every heart, and the man who does not cling to his own past seems wanting in something essentially human. The gods were part of the past of the ancient world, and if Reason took them away, what was left? There was so much, too, that Reason could not grasp; so much to be learnt in ritual and in mystery that to the merely thinking mind had no meaning, – that must be received. Reason was invoked so lightly, and applied so carelessly and harshly, that it could take no account of the tender things of the heart. Reason destroyed but did not create, questioned without answering, and left life without sanction or communion. It was too often a mere affair of cleverness. It had its use and place, no doubt, in correcting extravagances of belief, but it was by no means the sole authority in man's life, and its function was essentially to be the handmaid of religion. "We must take Reason from philosophy to be our mystagogue and then in holy reverence consider each several word and act of worship."[265]

Plutarch is our representative man in this revival of religion, and some survey of his life and environment will enable us to enter more fully into his thought, and through him to understand better the beginnings of a great religious movement, of which students too often have lost sight.

For centuries the great men of Greek letters were natives of every region of the eastern Mediterranean except Greece, and Plutarch stands alone in later literature a Hellen of the motherland – Greek by blood, birth, home and instinct, proud of his race and his land, of their history, their art and their literature. When we speak of the influence of the past, it is well to remember to how great a past this man looked back, and from what a present. Long years of faction and war, as he himself says,

264 *Non suaviter*, 21, 1101 E-1102 A.

265 *de Iside*, 68, 378 A.

had depopulated Greece, and the whole land could hardly furnish now the three thousand hoplites that four centuries before Megara alone had sent to Platæa. In regions where oracles of note had been, they were no more; their existence would but have emphasized the solitude – what good would an oracle be at Tegyra, or about Ptoum, where in a day's journey you might perhaps come on a solitary shepherd?[266] It was not only that wars and faction fights had wasted the life of the Greek people, but with the opening of the far East by Alexander, and the development of the West under Roman rule, Commerce had shifted its centres, and the Greeks had left their old homes for new regions. Still keen on money, philosophy and art, they thronged Alexandria, Antioch and Rome, and a thousand other cities. The Petrie papyri have revealed a new feature of this emigration, for the wills of the settlers often mention the names of their wives, and these were Greek women and not Egyptian, as the names of their fathers and homes prove.[267] Julius Cæsar had restored Corinth a century after Mummius destroyed it, and Athens was still as she had been and was to be for centuries, the resort of every one who loved philosophy and literature.[268] These were the two cities of Greece; the rest were reminders of what had been. In one of these forsaken places Plutarch was born, and there he was content to live and die, a citizen and a magistrate of Chæronea in Boeotia.

His family circle

His family was an old one, long associated with Chæronea. From childhood his life was rooted in the past by the most natural and delightful of all connexions. His great-grandfather, Nicarchus, used to tell how his fellow-citizens were commandeered to carry wheat on their own backs down to Anticyra for Antony's fleet – and were quickened up with the whip as they went; and "then when they had taken one consignment so, and the second was already done up into loads and ready, the news came that Antony was defeated, and that saved the city; for at once Antony's agents and soldiers fled, and they divided the grain among themselves."[269] The grandfather, Lamprias, lived long and saw the grandson a grown man. He appears often in Plutarch's *Table Talk*– a bright old man and a lively talker – like incense, he said, he was best when warmed up.[270] He thought poorly of the Jews for not eating pork – a most righteous dish, he said.[271] He had tales of his own about Antony, picked up long ago from one Philotas, who had been a medical student in Alexandria and a friend of one of the royal cooks, and eventually medical attendant to a son of Antony's by Fulvia.[272] Plutarch's father was a quiet, sensible man, who maintained the practice of sacrificing,[273] kept good horses, [274] knew his Homer, and had something of his son's curious interest in odd problems. It is perhaps an accident that Plutarch never mentions his name, but, though he often speaks of him, it is always of "my father" or "our father" – the lifelong and instinctive habit. There were also two brothers. The witty and amiable Lamprias loved laughter and was an expert in dancing – a useful man to put things right when the dance went with more spirit than music.[275] Of Timon we hear less, but Plutarch sets Timon's goodness of heart among the very best gifts Fortune has sent him.[276] He emphasizes the bond that brothers have in the family sacrifices, ancestral rites, the common home and the common

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266 *de def. orac.* 8, 414 A.

267 Mahaffy, *Silver Age of Greek World*, p. 45.

268 Horace is the best known of Athenian students. The delightful letters of Synesius show the hold Athens still retained upon a very changed world in 400 A.D.

269 Life of Antony, 68.

270 *Symp.* i, 5, 1.

271 *Symp.* iv, 4, 4.

272 *v. Ant.* 28.

273 *Symp.* iii, 7, 1.

274 *Symp.* ii, 8, 1.

275 *Symp.* viii, 6, 5, *hubristès òn kaì philogelôs physei. Symp.* ix, 15, 1.

276 *de fraterno amore*, 16, 487 E. Volkmann, *Plutarch*, i, 24, suggests he was the Timon whose wife Pliny defended on one occasion, *Epp.* i, 5, 5.

grave.[277] That Plutarch always had friends, men of kindly nature and intelligence, and some of them eminent, is not surprising. Other human relationships, to be mentioned hereafter, completed his circle. He was born, and grew up, and lived, in a network of love and sympathy, the record of which is in all his books.

Plutarch was born about the year 50 A.D., and, when Nero went on tour through Greece in 66 A.D., he was a student at Athens under Ammonius.[278] He recalls that among his fellow-students was a descendant of Themistocles, who bore his ancestor's name and still enjoyed the honours granted to him and his posterity at Magnesia.[279] Ammonius, whom he honoured and quoted throughout life, was a Platonist[280] much interested in Mathematics.[281] He was a serious and kindly teacher with a wide range of interests, not all speculative. Plutarch records a discussion of dancing by "the good Ammonius."[282] He was thrice "General" at Athens,[283] and had at any rate once the experience of an excited mob shouting for him in the street, while he supped with his friends indoors.

Plutarch had many interests in Athens, in its literature, its philosophy and its ancient history – in its relics, too, for he speaks of memorials of Phocion and Demosthenes still extant. But he lingers especially over the wonders of Pericles and Phidias, "still fresh and new and untouched by time, as if a spirit of eternal youth, a soul that was ageless, were in the work of the artist."[284] Athens was a conservative place, on the whole, and a great resort for strangers. The Athenian love of talk is noticed by Luke with a touch of satire, and Dio Chrysostom admitted that the Athenians fell short of the glory of their city and their ancestors.[285] Yet men loved Athens.[286] Aulus Gellius in memory of his years there, called his book of collections *Attic Nights*, and here and there he speaks of student life – "It was from Ægina to Piræus that some of us who were fellow-students, Greeks and Romans, were crossing in the same ship. It was night. The sea was calm. It was summertime and the sky was clear and still. So we were sitting on the poop, all of us together, with our eyes upon the shining stars," and fell to talking about their names.[287]

His travels

When his student days were over, Plutarch saw something of the world. He alludes to a visit to Alexandria,[288] but, though he was interested in Egyptian religion, as we shall see, he does not speak of travels in the country. He must have known European Greece well, but he had little knowledge, it seems, of Asia Minor and little interest in it. He went once on official business for his city to the pro-consul of Illyricum – and had a useful lesson from his father who told him to say "We" in his report, though his appointed colleague had failed to go with him.[289] He twice went to Italy in the reigns of Vespasian and Domitian, and he seems to have stayed for some time in Rome, making friends in high places and giving lectures. Of the great Latin writers of his day he mentions none, nor is he mentioned by them. But he tells with pride how once Arulenus Rusticus had a letter from Domitian brought him by a soldier in the middle of one of these lectures and kept it unopened till the end.

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277 *de frat. am.* 7, 481 D.

278 *de E.* 1, 385 B.

279 *v. Them.* 32, end.

280 Zeller, *Eclectics*, 334.

281 *de E.* 17, 391 E. Imagine the joys of a Euclid, says Plutarch, in *non suaviter*, 11, 1093 E.

282 *Symp.* ix, 15.

283 *Symp.* viii, 3, I.

284 *Pericles* 13.

285 Dio Chr. *Rhodiaca, Or.* 31, 117.

286 Cf. the *Nigrinus*.

287 Gellius, N.A. ii, 21, 1, *vos opici*, says Gellius to his friends – Philistines.

288 *Symp.* v, 5, 1.

289 *Polit. præc.* 20, 816 D.

[290] The lectures were given in Greek. He confesses to his friend Sossius Senecio that, owing to the pressure of political business and the number of people who came about him for philosophy, when he was in Rome, it was late indeed in life that he attempted to learn Latin; and when he read Latin, it was the general sense of a passage that helped him to the meaning of the words. The niceties of the language he could not attempt, he says, though it would have been a graceful and pleasant thing for one of more leisure and fewer years.[291] That this confession is a true one is shown by the scanty use he makes of Roman books in his biographies, by his want of acquaintance with Latin literature, poetry and philosophy, and by blunders in detail noted by his critics. *Sine patris* is a poor attempt at Latin grammar for a man of his learning, and in his life of Lucullus he has turned the streets of Rome into villages through inattention to the various meanings of *vicus*.[292]

But, as he says, he was a citizen of a small town, and he did not wish to make it smaller,[293] and he went back to Chæronea and obscurity. A city he held to be an organism like a living being, [294] and he never cared for a man on whom the claims of his city sat loosely – as they did on the Stoics.[295] The world was full of Greek philosophers and rhetoricians, lecturing and declaiming, to their great profit and glory, but Plutarch was content to stay at home, to be magistrate and priest. If men laughed to see him inspecting the measurement of tiles and the carrying of cement and stones – "it is not for myself, I say, that I am doing this but for my native-place."[296] This was when he was Telearch – an office once held by Epameinondas, as he liked to remember. Pliny's letters show that this official inspection of municipal building operations by honest and capable men was terribly needed. But Plutarch rose to higher dignities, and as Archon Eponymos he had to preside over feasts and sacrifices.[297] He was also a Boeotarch. The Roman Empire did not leave much political activity even to the free cities, but Plutarch loyally accepted the new era as from God, and found in it many blessings of peace and quiet, and some opportunities still of serving his city. He held a priesthood at Delphi, with some charge over the oracle and a stewardship at the Pythian games. He loved Delphi, and its shrine and antiquities,[298] and made the temple the scene of some of his best dialogues. "The kind Apollo (*ho phílos*)," he says, "seems to heal the questions of life, and to resolve them, by the rules he gives to those who ask; but the questions of thought he himself suggests to the philosophic temperament, waking in the soul an appetite that will lead it to truth."[299]

He does not seem to have gained much public renown, but he did not seek it. The fame in his day was for the men of rhetoric, and he was a man of letters. If he gave his time to municipal duties, he must have spent the greater part of his days in reading and writing. He says that a biographer needs a great many books and that as a rule many of them will not be readily accessible – to have the abundance he requires, he ought really to be in some "famous city where learning is loved and men are many"; though, he is careful to say, a man may be happy and upright in a town that is "inglorious and humble."[300] He must have read very widely, and he probably made good use of his stay in Rome. In philosophy and literature it is quite probable that he used hand-books of extracts, though this must not imply that he did not go to the original works of the greater writers. But his main interest lay in memoirs and travels. He had an instinct for all that was characteristic, or curious, or out-of-the-

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290 *de curiositate*, 15.

291 *Demosthenes*, 2.

292 See Volkmann, i, 35, 36; *Rom. Qu.* 103; *Lucullus*, 37, end.

293 *Demosthenes*, 2.

294 *de sera*, 15, 559 A.

295 *de Stoic. rep.* 2, 1033 B, C.

296 *Pol. Præc.* 15, 811 C.

297 *Symp.* ii, 10, 1; vi, 8, 1.

298 Reference to Polemo's hand-book to them, *Symp.* v, 2, 675 B.

299 *de E.* 384 F.

300 *Demosthenes*, 2; and 1.

way; and all sorts of casual references show how such things attached themselves to his memory. Discursive in his reading, as most men of letters seem to be, with a quick eye for the animated scene, the striking figure, the strange occurrence, he read, one feels, for enjoyment – he would add, no doubt, for his own moral profit; indeed he says that he began his Biographies for the advantage of others and found them to be much to his own.[301] He was of course an inveterate moralist; but unlike others of the class, he never forgets the things that have given him pleasure. They crowd his pages in genial reminiscence and apt allusion. There is always the quiet and leisurely air of one who has seen and has enjoyed, and sees and enjoys again as he writes. It is this that has made his Biographies live. They may at times exasperate the modern historian, for he is not very systematic – delightful writers rarely are. He rambles as he likes and avowedly passes the great things by and treasures the little and characteristic. "I am not writing histories but lives," he says, "and it is not necessarily in the famous action that a man's excellence or failure is revealed. But some little thing – a word or a jest – may often show character better than a battle with its ten thousand slain."[302]

But, after all, it is the characteristic rather than the character that interests him. He is not among the greatest who have drawn men, for he lacks the mind and patience to go far below the surface to find the key to the whole nature. When he has shown us one side of the hero, he will present another and a very different one, and leave us to reconcile them if we can. The contradictions remain contradictions, and he wanders pleasantly on. The Lives of Pericles and Themistocles, for instance, are little more than mere collectanea from sources widely discrepant, and often quite worthless. Of the mind of Pericles he had little conception; he gathered up and pleasantly told what he had read in books. He had too little of the critical instinct and took things too easily to weigh what he quoted.

Above all, despite his "political" energy and enthusiasm, it was impossible, for a Greek of his day to have the political insight that only comes from life in a living state. How could the Telearch of Chæronea under the Roman Empire understand Pericles? Archbishop Trench contrasts his enthusiasm about the gift of liberty to Greece by Flamininus with the reflection of Wordsworth that it is a thing

which is not to be given
By all the blended powers of Earth and Heaven.

Plutarch really did not know what liberty is; Wordsworth on the other hand had taken part in the French Revolution, and watched with keen and sympathetic eyes the march of events throughout a most living epoch. It is worth noting that indirectly Plutarch contributed to the disasters of that epoch, for his *Lycurgus* had enormous influence with Rousseau and his followers who took it for history. Here was a man who made laws and constitutions in his own head and imposed them upon his fellow-countrymen. So Plutarch wrote and believed, and so read and believed thinking Frenchmen of the eighteenth century, like himself subjects of a despotism and without political experience.

Besides Biographies he wrote moral treatises – some based on lectures, others on conversation, others again little better than note-books – pleasant and readable books, if the reader will forgive a certain want of humour, and a tendency to ramble, and will surrender his mind to the long and leisurely sentences, for Plutarch is not to be hurried. Everything he wrote had some moral or religious aim. He was a believer, in days of doubt and perplexity. The Epicurean was heard at Delphi. Even in the second century, when the great, religious revival was in full swing, Lucian wrote and found readers. Men brought their difficulties to Plutarch and he went to meet them – ever glad to do something for the ancestral faith. Nor was he less ready to discuss – or record discussions of – questions much less

301 *Timoleon*, pref.

302 *Alexander*, 1.

serious. Was the hen or the egg first? Does a varied diet or a single dish help the digestion more? Why is fresh water better than salt for washing clothes? Which of Aphrodite's hands did Diomed wound?

It is always the same man, genial, garrulous, moral and sensible. There are no theatricalities in his style – he is not a rhetorician even on paper.[303] He discards the tricks of the school, adoxography, epigram and, as a rule, paradox. His simplicity is his charm. He is really interested in his subject whatever it is; and he believes in its power of interesting other men, too much to think it worth while to trick it out with extraneous prettinesses. Yet after he has discussed his theme, with excursions into its literary antecedents and its moral suggestions, we are not perhaps much nearer an explanation of the fact in question,[304] nor always quite sure that it is a fact. Everything interests him, but he is in no hurry to get at the bottom of anything; just as in the *Lives* he is occupied with everything except the depths of his hero's personality. It remains that in his various works he has given us an unexampled pageant of antiquity over a wide reach of time and many lands, and always bright with the colour of life – the work of a lover of men. "I can hardly do without Plutarch," wrote Montaigne; "he is so universal and so full, that upon all occasions, and what extravagant subject soever you take in hand, he will still intrude himself into your business, and holds out to you a liberal and not to be exhausted hand of riches and embellishments." What Shakespeare thought of him is written in three great plays.[305]

His wife and children

But so far nothing has been said of Plutarch's own home. The lot of the wife of a great preacher or moralist is not commonly envied; and the tracts which Plutarch wrote upon historic women and their virtues, and on the duties of married life, on diet and on the education of the young, suggest that Timoxena must have lived in an atmosphere of high moral elevation, with a wise saw and an ancient instance for every occurrence of the day. But it is clear that he loved her, and his affection for their four little boys must have been as plain to her as to his readers – and his joy when, after long waiting, at last a little girl was born. "You had longed for a daughter after four sons," he writes to her, "and I was glad when she came and I could give her your name." The little Timoxena lived for two years, and the letter of consolation which Plutarch wrote her mother tells the story of her short life. "She had by nature wonderful good temper and gentleness. So responsive to affection, so generous was she that it was a pleasure to see her tenderness. For she used to bid her nurse give the breast to other children and not to them only, but even to toys and other things in which she took delight. She was so loving that she wished everything that gave her pleasure to share in the best of what she had. I do not see, my dear wife, why things such as these, which gave us so much happiness while she lived, should give us pain and trouble now when we think of them."[306] He reminds her of the mysteries of Dionysus of which they were both initiates. In language that recalls Wordsworth's great Ode on the Intimations of Immortality, he suggests that old age dulls our impressions of the soul's former life, and that their little one is gone from them, before she had time to fall in love with life on earth. "And the truth about this is to be seen in the ancient use and wont of our fathers," who did not observe the ordinary sad rites of burial for little children, "as if they felt it not right in the case of those who have passed to a better and diviner lot and place… And since to disbelieve them is harder than to believe, let us comply with the laws in outward things, and let what is within be yet more stainless, pure and holy."[307]

Two of the sons had previously died – the eldest Soclaros, and the fourth, "our beautiful Chæron" – the name is that of the traditional founder of Chæronea. The other two, Autobulus and

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303 *de tranqu. animi*, i, 464 F, *ouk akroáseôs héneka therôménês kalligraphían*– a profession often made, but in Plutarch's case true enough as a rule.

304 See, *e. g.*, variety of possible explanations of the E at Delphi, in tract upon it.

305 Stapfer, *Shakespeare and Classical Antiquity* (tr.), p. 299. "It may be safely said he followed Plutarch far more closely than he did even the old English chroniclers."

306 *Cons. ad Ux.* 2-3, 608 C, D.

307 *Cons. ad Ux.* 11, 612 A, B. Cf. *non suaviter*, 26, 1104 C, on the loss of a child or a parent.

Plutarch grew up. Some of these names appear in the *Table Talk*, while others of his works were written at the suggestion of his sons.

His slaves

From the family we pass to the slaves, and here, as we should expect, Plutarch is an advocate of gentleness. In the tract *On Restraining Anger* a high and humane character is drawn in Fundanus, who had successfully mastered a naturally passionate temper. It has been thought that Plutarch was drawing his own portrait over his friend's name. A naïve tendency to idealise his own virtues he certainly shares with other moralists. Fundanus urges that, while all the passions need care and practice if they are to be overcome, anger is the failure to which we are most liable in the case of our slaves. Our authority over them sets us in a slippery place; temper here has nothing to check it, for here we are irresponsible and that is a position of danger. A man's wife and his friends are too apt to call gentleness to the slaves mere easy-going slackness (*atonían kaì rhathumían*). "I used to be provoked by such criticism myself against my slaves. I was told they were going to pieces for want of correction. Later on I realized that, first of all, it is better to let them grow worse through my forbearance than by bitterness and anger to pervert oneself for the reformation of others. And, further, I saw that many of them, through not being punished, began to be ashamed of being bad, and that forgiveness was more apt than punishment to be the beginning of a change in them – and indeed that they would serve some men more readily for a silent nod than they would others for blows and brandings. So I persuaded myself that reasoning does better than temper."[308] It will be remarked that Fundanus, or his recording friend, does not here take the Stoic position that the slave is as much a son of God as the master,[309] nor does he spare the slave for the slave's sake but to overcome his own temper. So much for theory; but men's conduct does not always square with their theories, and in life we see men guilty of kind-heartedness and large-mindedness not at all to be reconciled with the theories which they profess, when they remember them.

It is curious that one of the few stories of Plutarch that come from outside sources should concern this very tract and the punishment of a slave. Gellius heard it from the philosopher Taurus after one of his classes. Plutarch, Taurus said, had a worthless slave and ordered him a flogging. The man loudly protested he had done no wrong, and at last, under the stimulus of the lash, taunted his master with inconsistency – what about the fine book on controlling Anger? he was angry enough now. "Then Plutarch, slowly and gently" asked what signs of anger he showed in voice or colour or word? "My eyes, I think, are not fierce; nor my face flushed; I am not shouting aloud; there is no foam on my lip, no red in my cheek; I am saying nothing to be ashamed of; nothing to regret; I am not excited nor gesticulating. All these, perhaps you are unaware, are the signs of anger."[310] Then turning to the man who was flogging the slave, he said, "In the meantime, while I and he are debating, *you* go on with your business."[311] The story is generally accepted, and it is certainly characteristic. The philosopher, feeling his pulse, as it were, to make sure that he is not angry, while his slave is being lashed, is an interesting and suggestive picture, which it is well to remember.

How long Plutarch lived we do not know. He refers to events of the year 104 or 105, and in his *Solon* he speaks of Athens and Plato each having an unfinished masterpiece, so that he cannot have known of the intention of the Emperor Hadrian to finish the temple of Zeus Olympics.[312] All that this need imply is that the *Solon* was written before 125 A.D. As to his death, it is certainly interesting when we recall how full of dreams and portents his Biographies are, to learn from Artemidorus' great work on the Interpretation of Dreams (written some forty years later) that Plutarch, when ill,

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308 *de coh. ira.* 11, 459 C; cf. *Progress in Virtue*, 80 B, 81 C, on *epieíkeia* and *praotês* as signs of moral progress.

309 Cf. Sen. *Ep.* 47; Clem. Alex. *Pæd.* iii, 92.

310 A curious parallel to this in Tert. *de Patientia*, 15, where Tertullian draws the portrait of Patience – perhaps from life, as Dean Robinson suggests – after Perpetua the martyr.

311 Gellius, *N.A.* i, 26.

312 *Solon*, 32.

dreamed that he was ascending to heaven, supported by Hermes. Next day he was told that this meant great happiness. "Shortly after he died, and this was what his dream and the interpretation meant. For ascent to heaven means destruction to a sick man, and the great happiness is a sign of death."[313] Plutarch might well have accepted this himself.

Such was Plutarch's life – the life of a quiet and simple-minded Greek gentleman, spent amid scenes where the past predominated over the present, —*nullum sine nomine saxum*, where Antiquity claimed him for her own by every right that it has ever had upon man. The land of his fathers, the literature, the art, the philosophy, the faith, and the reproduction of the good old life in the pleasant household[314] – everything conspired to make him what he was. We now come to his significance in the story of the conflict of religions in the Roman Empire.

Plutarch not a philosopher

A good deal has been written about Plutarch's philosophy. His works are full of references to philosophy and philosophers, and he leaves us in no doubt as to his counting himself a disciple of Plato; his commentaries on Platonic doctrines give him a place in the long series of Plato's expositors. But no one would expect a writer of the first century to be a man of one allegiance, and Plutarch modifies the teaching of Plato with elements from elsewhere. It has then been debated whether he should, or should not, be called an Eclectic, but not very profitably. The essential thing to note is that he is not properly a philosopher at all, much as the statement would have astonished him.[315] His real interest is elsewhere; and while he, like the Greeks of his day, read and talked Philosophy interminably, as men in later ages have read and talked Theology, it was not with the philosophic spirit. Philosophy is not the mistress – rather, he avows, the servant of something else; and that means that it is not Philosophy. His test of philosophic thought and doctrine was availability for the moral and religious life – a test which may or may not be sound, as it is applied. But Plutarch was an avowed moralist, didactic in every fibre; and everything he wrote betrays the essential failure of the practical man and the moralist – impatience, the short view. From his experience of human life in its manifold relations of love and friendship, he came to the conclusion that "the ancient faith of our fathers suffices." It is also plain that he was afraid of life without religion. So far as a man of his training would – a man familiar with the history of philosophy, but without patience or depth enough to be clear in his own mind, he associated truth with his religion; at all events it was "sufficient," for this he had found in his course through the world. Definite upon this one central point, he approached philosophy, but not with the true philosopher's purpose of examining his experience, in accordance with the Platonic suggestion[316]; rather, with the more practical aim of profiting by every serviceable thought or maxim which he could find. And he certainly profited. If he started with preconceptions, which he intended to keep, he enlarged and purified them – in a sense, we may say, he adorned and enriched them. For whereever he found a moving or suggestive idea, a high thought, he adopted it and found it a place in his mind, though without inquiring too closely whether it had any right to be there. In the end, it is very questionable whether the sum of his ideas will hold together at all, if we go beyond the quick test of a rather unexamined experience. We have already seen how he protested against too curious examination. "There is no philosophy possible," wrote John Stuart Mill, "where fear of consequences is a stronger principle than love of truth."

But to such criticisms a reply is sometimes suggested, which is best made in the well-known words of Pascal – "the heart has its reasons which the reason does not know."[317] The experience which led Plutarch to his conclusion was real and sound. There is an evidential value in a good father,

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313 Artemidorus, *Oneirocritica*, iv, 72. On this author see chapter vii.

314 See *non suaviter*, 17, 1098 D, on the unspeakably rich joy of such a life of friendly relations with gods and men.

315 *Progress in Virtue*, 4, 77 C, Love of Philosophy compared to a lover's passion, to "hunger and thirst."

316 Plato, *Apology*, 38 A, *ho dè anexétastos bíos ou biôtos anthrópô.*

317 *Pensées*, Art. xxiv, 5.

in wife and children – even in a telearchy with its tiles and cement – which is apt to be under-estimated. For with such elements in life are linked passions and emotions, which are deeply bound up with human nature, and rule us as instincts – blind reasons of the heart. Like all other things they require study and criticism if they are not to mislead, and those who most follow them are sometimes the worst judges of their real significance. On the other hand the danger of emotion, instinct and intuition as guides to truth is emphasized enough, – it was emphasized by the Stoics; and a contribution is made to human progress, when the value of these guides to truth is re-asserted, even to the extent of obvious exaggeration, by some one, who, like Plutarch, has had a life rich in various human experience. It remains however, in Plutarch's case as in all such cases, the fundamental question, whether the supposed testimony of instinct and intuition is confirmed. If it is not confirmed, it may be taken to have been misunderstood.

Keeping the whole life of this man in view, and realizing its soundness, its sweetness and its worth, we must see what he made of the spiritual environment of man's life in general – laying stress on what in his system, or his attempt at a system, is most significant, and postponing criticism. It should be said once for all that a general statement of Plutarch's views cannot be quite faithful, for he was a man of many and wandering thoughts, and also something of an Academic; and whatever he affirmed was with qualifications, which in a short summary must be understood rather than repeated.

The knowledge of God

Our knowledge of God and of things divine comes to us, according to Plutarch, from various sources. There is the consensus of mankind. "Of all customs first and greatest is belief in gods. Lycurgus, Numa, Ion and Deucalion, alike sanctified men, by prayers and oaths and divinations and oracles bringing them into touch with the divine in their hopes and fears. You might find communities without walls, without letters, without kings, without houses, without money, with no need of coinage, without acquaintance with theatres and gymnasia; but a community without holy rite, without a god, that uses not prayer nor oath, nor divination, nor sacrifice to win good or avert evil – no man ever saw nor will see… This is what holds all society together and is the foundation and buttress of all law."[318]

This evidence from the consensus of mankind is brought to a higher point in the body of myth inherited from the past, and in custom and law – and is so far confirmed by reason. But we can go further and appeal to the highest and best minds of antiquity, who in their own highest moments of inspiration confirmed the common view. "In the matter of belief in gods, and in general, our guides and teachers have been the poets and the lawgivers, and, thirdly, the philosophers – all alike laying down that there are gods, though differing among themselves as to the number of the gods and their order, their nature and function. Those of the philosophers are free from pain and death; toil they know not, and are clean escaped the roaring surge of Acheron."[319] "It is likely that the word of ancient poets and philosophers is true," he says.[320] Plutarch was a lover of poetry and of literature, and he attributed to them a value as evidence to truth, which is little intelligible to men who have not the same passion.[321] Still the appeal to the poets in this connexion was very commonly made.

But men are not only dependent on the tradition of their fathers and the inspiration of poets and philosophers, much as they should, and do, love and honour these. The gods make themselves felt in many ways. There was abundant evidence of this in many established cases of theolepsy, enthusiasm (*éntheos*) and possession. Again there were the oracles, in which it was clear that gods communicated

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[318] *Adv. Coloten* (foe Epicurean), 31, 1125 D, E. For this argument from consensus, see Seneca, *Ep.* 117, 6, *Multum dare solemus præsumptioni omnium hominum et apud nos veritatis argumentum est aliquid omnibus videri: tanquam deos esse inter alia hoc colligimus, quod omnibus insita de dis opinio est, nee ulla gens usquam est adeo extra leges moresque projecta ut non aliquos deos credat*. This consensus rests (with the Stoics) on the common preconceptions of the mind, which are natural. For ridicule of the doctrine of consensus, see Lucian, Zeus Tragædus, 42.

[319] *Amatorius*, 18, 763 C. Cf. view of Celsus *ap.* Orig. *c. Cels.* vii, 41.

[320] *Consol. ad Apoll.* 34, 120 B.

[321] *Quomodo Poetas*, 1, 15 E, F, poetry a preliminary study to philosophy, *prophilosophêteon toîs poiémasin*.

with men and revealed truths not otherwise to be gained – a clear demonstration of the spiritual. Men were "in anguish and fear lest Delphi should lose its glory of three thousand years," but Delphi has not failed; for "the language of the Pythian priestess, like the right line of the Mathematicians – the shortest between two points, makes neither declension nor winding, has neither double meaning nor ambiguity, but goes straight to the truth. Though hard to believe and much tested, she has never up to now been convicted of error, – on the contrary she has filled the shrine with offerings and gifts from barbarians and Greeks, and adorned it with the beautiful buildings of the Amphictyons."[322] The revival of Delphi in Plutarch's day, "in so short a time," was not man's doing – but "the God came here and inspired the oracle with his divinity." And Delphi was not the only oracle. The Stoics perhaps had pointed the way here with their teaching on divination, but as it stands the argument (such as it is) is said to be Plutarch's own.[323] Lastly in this connexion, the mysteries offered evidence, but here he is reticent. "As to the mysteries, in which we may receive the greatest manifestations and illuminations of the truth concerning dæmons – like Herodotus, I say, 'Be it unspoken.'"[324]

Absolute being

Philosophy, poetry, tradition, oracles and mysteries[325] bring Plutarch to belief in gods. "There are not Greek gods and barbarian, southern or northern; but just as sun, moon, sky, earth and sea are common to all men and have many names, so likewise it is one Reason that makes all these things a cosmos; it is one Providence that cares for them, with ancillary powers appointed to all things; while in different people, different honours and names are given to them as customs vary. Some use hallowed symbols that are faint, others symbols more clear, as they guide their thought to the divine."[326] This one ultimate Reason is described by Plutarch in terms borrowed from all the great teachers who had spoken to the Greeks of God. The Demiurge, the One and Absolute, the World-Soul and the rest all contribute features.[327]

"We," he says, "have really no share in Being, but every mortal nature, set between becoming and perishing, offers but a show and a seeming of itself, dim and insecure"; and he quotes the famous saying of Heraclitus that it is impossible to descend into the same river twice, and develops the idea of change in the individual. "No one remains, nor is he one, but we become many as matter now gathers and now slips away about one phantasm and a common form (or impress)… Sense through ignorance of Being is deceived into thinking that the appearance is. What then indeed is Being? The eternal, free from becoming, free from perishing, for which no time brings change… It is even impious to say 'Was' or 'Will be' of Being; for these are the varyings and passings and changings of that which by nature cannot abide in Being. But God *is*

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322 *de Pyth. orac.* 29, 408 F. Cf. the pagan's speech in Minucius Felix, 7, 6, *pleni et mixti deo vates futura præcerpunt … etiam per guietem deos videmus…*

323 So Volkmann, *Plutarch*, ii, 290 n. Cf. a passage of Celsus, Orig. *c. Cels.* viii, 45.

324 *de def. or.* 14, 417 C, *empháseis* and *diapháseis.*

325 Tertullian sums up the pagan line of argument and adds a telling criticism in his book *adversus Nationes*, ii, 1: *adversus hæc igitur nobis negotium est, adversus institutiones maiorum, auctoritates receptorum, leges dominantium, argumentationes prudentium, adversus vetustatem consuetudinem necessitatem, adversus exempla prodigia miracula, quæ omnia adulterinam istam divinitatem corroboraverint… Maior in huiusmodi penes vos auctoritas litterarum quam rerum est.*

326 *de Iside*, 67, 377 F-378 A

327 Oakesmith, *Religion of Plutarch*, p. 88 – a book which I have found of great use.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.