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MODERN SAINTS AND SEERS

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF

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BY

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PREFACE

THE FOREST OF ILLUSIONS

"Listen within yourselves, and gaze into the infinity of Space and Time. There resounds the song of the Stars, the voice of Numbers, the harmony of the Spheres."—HERMES TRISMEGISTUS.

In these days the phenomenon of religion, which we believed to have receded into the background of human life, is reappearing among us, more vigorous than ever. The four years' desolation into which the world was plunged has rendered the attraction of "the beyond" irresistible, and man turns towards it with passionate curiosity and undisguised longing. The millions of dead who have vanished from mortal sight seem to be drawing the present towards the unsounded deeps of the future. In many cases their loss has taken all joy and colour from the lives of those who survive them, and tear-stained faces are instinctively turned towards the portals of the Great Mystery.

Occultism is triumphant. In its many different forms it now emerges from obscurity and neglect. Its promises excite our deepest thoughts and wishes. Eagerly we examine the strength of the bridge that it has built between this world and the next; and though we may see our hopes slip down between the crevices, though we may find those who have been disappointed in a more despairing state than before—what matter? We still owe thanks to occultism for some cherished moments of illusion.

The number of its followers increases steadily, for never before has man experienced so ardent a desire for direct contact with the Unknowable. Science will have to reckon with this movement which is carrying away even her own high-priests. She will have to widen her frontiers to include the phenomena that she formerly contemned.

The supernatural world, with its abnormal manifestations, fascinates modern humanity. The idea of death becomes more and more familiar. We even demand, as Renan happily expressed it, to know the truth which shall enable us not to fear, but almost to love, death: and an irresistible force urges us to explore the depths of subconsciousness, whence, it is claimed, may spring the desired renewal and intensification of man's spiritual life.

But why is it that we do not return to the old-established religions? It is because, alas, the Great Agony through which the world has passed has not dealt kindly with any form of established faith. Dogmatic theology, which admits and exalts the direct interference of the divinity in our affairs, has received some serious wounds. The useless and unjustifiable sacrifice of so many innocent lives, of women, of old men, of children, left us deeply perplexed. We could not grasp the reason for so much suffering. Never, at any period in the past, have the enemies of humanity and of God so blasphemed against the eternal principles of the universe—yet how was it that the authors of such crimes went unpunished?

Agonising doubts seized upon many faithful hearts, and amid all the misery with which our planet was filled we seemed to distinguish a creeping paralysis of the established faiths. Just at the time when we most had need of religion, it seemed to weaken and vanish from our sight, though we knew that human life, when not enriched and ennobled by spiritual forces, sinks into abysmal depths, and that even any diminution in the strength of these forces is fatally injurious to our most sacred and essential interests.

Attempts to revive our faith were bound to be made sooner or later, and we shall no doubt yet witness innumerable pilgrimages towards the source of religion.

The psychology of the foundations of the spiritual life; the mysterious motives which draw men towards, or alienate them from, religious leaders; the secret of the influence exercised by these latter upon mankind in the mass—all these things are now and always of intense interest. Through the examination of every kind of disease, the science of medicine discovers the laws of health; and through studying many religions and their followers we may likewise arrive at a synthesis of a sane and wholesome faith. The ever-increasing numbers of strange and attractive places of worship which are springing up in all countries bear witness to man's invincible need to find shelter behind immediate certainties, even as their elaborate outer forms reflect the variety of his inward aspirations.

In the great forest of ecstasies and illusions which supplies spiritual nourishment to so many of our fellow-humans, we have here confined ourselves to the examination of the most picturesque and unusual plants, and have gathered them for preference in the soil of Russia and of the United States. These two countries, though in many respects further apart than the Antipodes, furnish us with characteristic examples of the thirst for renewal of faith which rages equally in the simple soul of an uncultured peasant and in that of a business man weary of the artificialities of modern life.

Many of us held mistakenly that our contemporaries were incapable of being fired to enthusiasm by new religions, whose exponents seemed to us as questionable as their doctrines. But we need only observe the facts to behold with what inconceivable ease an age considered prosaic and incredulous has adopted spiritual principles which frequently show up the lack of harmony between our manner of life and our hidden longings.

The religious phenomena which we see around us in so many complex forms seem to foreshadow a spiritual future whose content is illimitable.

Such examples of human psychology, whether normal or morbid, as are here offered to the reader, may well recall to mind some of the strangest products of man's imagination. The tales of Hoffmann or of Edgar Allan Poe pale before these inner histories of the human soul, and the most moving novels and romances appear weak and artificial when compared to the eruptions of light and darkness which burst forth from the depths of man's subconsciousness.

These phenomena will interest the reader of reflective temperament no less than the lover of the sensational and the improbable in real life.

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MODERN SAINTS AND SEERS

PART I

THE SALVATION OF THE POOR

A. THE ORGANISED SECTS

The tragic death of the monk Rasputin made a deep impression upon the civilised world, and truth was lost to view amid the innumerable legends that grew up around his life and activities. One leading question dominated all discussions:—How could an individual so lacking in refinement and culture influence the life of a great nation, and become in indirect fashion one of the main factors in the struggle against the Central Powers? Through what miracle did he succeed in making any impression upon the thought and conduct of a social order infinitely superior to himself?

Psychologists are fascinated by the career of this adventurer who ploughed so deep a furrow in the field of European history; but in seeking to detach the monk from his background, we run the risk of entirely failing to comprehend the mystery of his influence, itself the product of a complex and little understood environment. The misery of the Russian people, combined with their lack of education, contributed largely towards it, for the desire to escape from material suffering drove them to adopt the weirdest systems of salvation for the sake of deliverance and forgetfulness.

The perception of the ideal is often very acute among the uneducated. They accept greedily every new "message" that is offered them, but alas, they do not readily distinguish the true from the false, or the genuine saint from the impostor.

The orthodox clergy of the old Russian régime, recruited under deplorable conditions, attained but rarely the moral and intellectual eminence necessary to inspire their flock with feelings of love and confidence; while, on the other hand, the false prophets and their followers, vigorously persecuted by official religion, easily gained for themselves the overwhelming attraction of martyrdom. Far from lessening the numbers of those who deserted the established church, persecution only increased them, and inflamed the zeal of its victims, so that they clung more passionately than ever to the new dogmas and their hunted exponents.

These sects and doctrines, though originating among the peasantry, did not fail to spread even to the large towns, and waves of collective hysteria, comparable to the dances of death of the Middle Ages, swept away in their train all the hypersensitives and neurotics that abound in the modern world. Even the highest ranks of Russian society did not escape the contagion.

We shall deal in these pages with the most recent and interesting sects, and with those that are least known, or perhaps not known at all. Beginning with the doctrines of melancholia, of tenderness, of suffering, of exalted pietism, and of social despair—which, whether spontaneous or inspired, demoniac or divine, undoubtedly embody many of the mysterious aspirations of the human soul—we shall find ourselves in a strange and moving world, peopled by those who accomplish, as a matter of course, acts of faith, courage and endurance, foreign to the experience of most of us.

These pages must be read with an indulgent sympathy for the humble in spirit who adventure forth in search of eternal truth. We might paraphrase on their behalf the memorable discourse of the Athenian statesman: "When you have been initiated into the mystery of their souls you will love better those who in all times have sought to escape from injustice."

We should feel for them all the more because for so long they have been infinitely unhappy and infinitely abused. Against the dark background of the abominations committed by harsh rulers and worthless officials, the spectacle of these simple souls recalls those angels described by Dante, who give scarcely a sign of life and yet illuminate by their very presence the fearful darkness of hell; or

those beautiful Greek sarcophagi upon which fair and graceful scenes are depicted upon a background of desolation. These "pastorals" of religious faith have a strangely archaic atmosphere, and I venture to think that my readers will enjoy the contemplation of such virgin minds, untouched by science, in their swift and effortless communings with the divine.

The mental profundities of the *moujik* exhale sweetness and faith like mystic flowers opening under the breath of the Holy Spirit. In them, as in the celebrated *Psychomachy* of Prudence, the Christian virtues meet with the shadows of forgotten gods, Holy Faith is linked to Idolatry, Humility and Pride go hand in hand, and Libertinism seeks shelter beneath the veils of Modesty.

This thirst for the Supreme Good will in time find its appeasement in the just reforms brought by an organised democracy to a long-suffering people. Some day it may be that order, liberty and happiness shall prevail in the Muscovite countries, and their inhabitants no longer need to seek salvation by fleeing from reality. Then there will exist on earth a new paradise, wherein God, to use Saint Theresa's expression, shall henceforth "take His delight."

CHAPTER I

THE NEGATIVISTS

The most propitious and fertile soil in which collective mania can grow is that of unhappiness. Famine, unjust taxation, unemployment, persecution by local authorities, and so on, frequently lead to a dull hatred for the existing social, moral and religious order, which the simple-minded peasant takes to be the direct cause of his misfortunes.

Thus it was that the Negativists denied everything—God, the Devil, heaven, hell, the law, and the power of the Tsar. They taught that there is no such thing as right, religion, property, marriage, family or family duties. All those have been invented by man, and it is man who has created God, the Devil, and the Tsar.

In the record of the proceedings taken against one of the principal upholders of this sect, we find the following curious conversation between him and the judge.

"Your religion?"

"I have none."

"In what God do you believe?"

"In none. Your God is your own, like the Devil, for you have created both. They belong to you, like the Tsar, the priests, and the officials."

These people believe neither in generosity nor in gratitude. Men give away only what is superfluous, and the superfluous is not theirs. Labour should be free; consequently they kept no servants. They rejected both trade and money as useless and unjust. "Give to thy neighbour what thou canst of that of which he has need, and he in turn will give thee what thou needest." Love should be entirely free. Marriage is an absurdity and a sin, invented by man. All human beings are free, and a woman cannot belong to any one man, or a man to any one woman.

Here are some extracts taken from some other legal records. Two of the believers were brought before the judge, accompanied by a child.

"Is this your wife?" the judge inquired of the man.

"No, she is not my wife."

"How is it then that you live together?"

"We live together, but she is not mine. She belongs to herself."

Turning to the woman, the judge asked:

"Is this your husband?"

"He is not *mine*. He does not belong to me, but to himself."

"And the child? Is he yours?"

"No, he is not ours. He lives with us; he is of our blood; but he belongs to himself."

"But the coat you are wearing—is that yours?" demanded the exasperated judge.

"It is on my back, but it is not mine. It belonged once to a sheep; now it covers me; but who can say whose it will be to-morrow?"

The Negativists invented, long before Tolstoi, the doctrine of inaction and non-resistance to evil. They were deceived, robbed and ruined, but would not apply to the law, or to the police. Their method of reasoning and their way of speaking had a peculiar charm. A solicitor who visited one of the Siberian prisons reports the following details concerning a man named Rojnoff. Arrested and condemned to be deported for vagabondage, he escaped repeatedly, but was at length imprisoned. The inspector was calling the roll of the prisoners, but Rojnoff refused to answer to his name. Purple with rage, the inspector approached him and asked, "What is your name?"

"It is you who have a name. I have none."

After a series of questions and answers exchanged between the ever more furious official and the prisoner, who remained perfectly calm, Rojnoff was flogged—but in spite of raw and bleeding wounds he still continued to philosophise.

"Confess the truth," stormed the inspector.

"Seek it," replied the peasant, "for yourself, for indeed you have need of it. As to me, I keep my truth for myself. Let me be quiet—that is all I ask."

The solicitor visited him several months later, and implored him to give his name, so that he might obtain his passport and permission to rejoin his wife and children.

"But I have no need of all that," he said. "Passports, laws, names—all those are yours. Children, family, property, class, marriage—so many of your cursed inventions. You can give me only one single thing—quietness."

The Siberian prisons swarmed with these mysterious beings. Poor souls! Their one desire was to quit as soon as possible this vale of injustice and of tears!

CHAPTER II

THE WHITE-ROBED BELIEVERS

Sometimes this longing for a better world, where suffering would be caused neither by hunger nor by laws, took touching and poetic forms.

About the month of April, 1895, all eyes in the town of Simbirsk were turned upon a sect founded by a peasant named Pistzoff. These poor countryfolk protested against the injustices of the world by robing themselves in white, "like celestial angels."

"We do not live as we should," taught Pistzoff, an aged, white-haired man. "We do not live as our fathers lived. We should act with simplicity, and follow the truth, conquering our bodily passions. The life that we lead now cannot continue long. This world will perish, and from its ruins will arise another, a better world, wherein all will be robed in white, as we are."

The believers lived very frugally. They were strict vegetarians, and ate neither meat nor fish. They did not smoke or drink alcohol, and abstained from tea, milk and eggs. They took only two meals daily—at ten in the morning, and six in the evening. Everything that they wore or used they made with their own hands—boots, hats, underclothing, even stoves and cooking utensils.

The story of Pistzoff's conversion inevitably recalls that of Tolstoi. He was a very rich merchant when, feeling himself inspired by heavenly truth, he called his employés to him and gave them all that he had, including furniture and works of art, retaining nothing but white garments for himself and his family.

His wife protested vehemently, especially when Pitzoff forbade her to touch meat, on account of the suffering endured by animals when their lives are taken from them. The old lady did not share his tastes, and firmly upheld a contrary opinion, declaring that animals went gladly to their death! Pitzoff then fetched a fowl, ordered his wife to hold it, and procured a hatchet with which to kill it. While threatening the poor creature he made his wife observe its anguish and terror, and the fowl was saved at the same time as the soul of Madame Pitzoff, who admitted that fowls, at any rate, do not go gladly into the cooking-pot.

The number of Pitzoff's followers increased daily, and the sect of the "White-robed Believers" was formed. Their main tenet being *loving-kindness*, they lived peacefully and harmed none, while awaiting the supreme moment when "the whole world should become white."

For the rest, the white-robed ones and their prophet followed the doctrines of the *molokanes*, who drank excessive quantities of milk during Lent—hence their name. This was one of the most flourishing of all the Russian sects. Violently opposed to all ceremonies, they recognised neither religious marriages, churches, priests nor dogmas, claiming that the whole of religion was contained in the Old and New Testaments. Though well-educated, they submitted meekly to a communal authority, chosen from among themselves, and led peaceful and honest working lives. All luxuries, even down to feminine ornaments or dainty toilettes, were banned. They considered war a heathen invention—merely "assassination on a large scale"—and though, when forced into military service, they did their duty as soldiers in peace-time, the moment war was in view it was their custom to throw away their arms and quietly desert. There were no beggars and no poor among them, for all helped one another, the richer setting aside one-tenth of their income for the less fortunate.

Hunted and persecuted by the government, they multiplied nevertheless, and when banished to far-away districts they ended by transforming the waste, uncultivated lands into flourishing gardens.

CHAPTER III

THE STRANGLERS

A sect no less extraordinary than the last was that of the Stranglers (*douchiteli*). It originated towards the end of 1874, and profited by a series of law cases, nearly all of which ended in acquittal. The Stranglers flourished especially in the Tzarevokokschaisk district, and first attained notoriety under the following circumstances.

A large number of deaths by strangling had been recorded, and their frequency began to arouse suspicion. Whether they were due to some criminal organisation, or to a series of suicidal impulses, the local police were long unable to decide, but in the end the culprits were discovered.

Were they, however, in reality culpable?

The unfortunate peasants, after much reflection, had come to the conclusion that death is not terrible, but that what is indubitably to be feared is the last agony—the difficult departure from terrestrial life. They decided, therefore, to come to the assistance of the Death Angel, and, when any sufferer approached the final struggle, his neighbours or relatives would carry him off to some isolated spot, tie up his head firmly but kindly in a cushion—and soon all was over.

Before, however, they had recourse to such drastic measures, they would inquire from the wizards (or *znachar*) of the district, doctors being almost unknown, whether the invalid still had any chance of recovery, and it was only after receiving a negative reply that the pious ceremony took place. We say "pious" because there is something strangely pathetic in this "crowning of the martyrs," as the peasants called it. Arising in the first place from compassion, the motive for the deed was, after all, a belief in the need for human sacrifice. The invalid who consents to give up his life for the honour of heaven accomplishes thereby an act of sublime piety; but what merit has he who dies only from necessity?

The corpses were buried in the forest and covered with plants and leaves, but no sign was left that might betray them to the suspicious authorities. When a member of the community disappeared, and the police made inquiries, they always had the greatest possible difficulty in finding his remains. Sometimes even his nearest relations did not know where the "saviours of his soul" had hidden him.

But there was one thing that marked the discovery of a dead Strangler. His body never bore any trace

of violence, and as dissection always proved, in addition, the existence of some more or less serious disease, the sham "murderers" were eventually left in peace. A small local paper, the *Volgar* (April, 1895), from which these facts are taken, reports that several actions brought against them ended in their acquittal.

Lord Avebury recounts that certain cannibal tribes kill those of their members who have reached the stage of senile decay, and make them the substance of a more or less succulent repast. These savages act, no doubt, whether consciously or unconsciously, from some perception of the misery and uselessness of old age, but the Russian peasants cannot be compared to them. The Stranglers are not moved by any unconscious sentiment. Their belief is the logical application of a doctrine of pessimism, whose terrible consequences they have adopted, although they know not its terminology. What is the life of a *moujik* worth? Nothing, or nearly nothing. Is it not well, then, to accelerate the coming of deliverance? Let us end the life, and, snapping the chains that bind us to mortals, offer it as a sacrifice to heaven! So reason these simple creatures, inexorable in their logic, and weighed down by untold misery.

CHAPTER IV

THE FUGITIVES

The suffering of a people nourishes the spirit of rebellion, enabling it to come to birth and to survive. There are some religious sects based exclusively upon popular discontent. The *biegouny*, or Fugitives, did nothing but flee from one district to another. They wandered throughout Russia with no thought of home or shelter. Those who joined the sect destroyed their passports, which were considered a work of Satan, and adopted a belief in the Satanic origin of the State, the Church and the Law. They repudiated the institution of marriage, the payment of taxes, and all submission to authority. Their special imagery included, among other things, the devil offering a candle to the Tsar, and inviting him to become the agent for Satanic work upon earth. Sometimes their feelings led them to commit acts of violence; one, for instance, would interrupt divine service; another would strike the priest. A peasant named Samarin threw himself upon the priest in a Russian church, forced him away from the altar, and, having trampled the Holy Sacraments under foot, cried out, "I tread upon the work of Satan!"

When arrested and condemned to penal servitude for life, Samarin was in despair because the death sentence had not been passed, so sure was he that he would have gone straight to heaven as a reward for his heroic exploit.

CHAPTER V

THE SOUTAÏEVIZI

The Soutaïevtzi (founded in 1880 by a working-man of Tver, named Soutaïeff) scoffed at the clergy, the ikons, the sacraments, and military service, while upholding the principle of communal possession. They very soon became notorious. Soutaïeff travelled all over the country preaching that true Christianity consists in the love of one's neighbour, and was welcomed with open arms by Tolstoi himself. He taught that there was only one religion, the religion of love and pity, and that churches, priests, religious ceremonies, angels and devils, were mere inventions which must be rejected if one wished to live in conformity with the truth.

As to Paradise, when all the principles of love and compassion were realised upon earth, earth itself would be Paradise. Private ownership being the cause of all misery, as well as of crimes and lies, it must be abolished, together with armies and war. Further, Soutaïeff preached non-resistance to evil, and the avoidance of all violence. One of his sons, when enrolled as a conscript, refused to carry a rifle. Arguments and punishments had no effect. He proved that heaven itself was opposed to the bearing of arms by quoting the Gospel to all who tried to compel him; and in the end he was imprisoned.

Neither did Soutaïeff allow that a man should be judged by his neighbour. "Judge not, that ye be not

judged," was his motto, and his life filled his followers with enthusiasm, and many besides with astonishment. This uncultured peasant, who had the courage to throw on the fire the money he had earned as a mason in St. Petersburg, who carried the idea of compassion to such lengths that he followed thieves in order to give them good flour in place of the bad that they had stolen from him by mistake—this simple-minded being, whose only desire was to suffer for the "truth," possessed without doubt the soul of a saint and a visionary.

CHAPTER VI

THE SONS OF GOD

The "sons of God" held that men were really gods, and that as divinity is manifested in our fellows and in ourselves, it is sufficient to offer prayers unto—our neighbours! Every man being a god, there are as many Christs as there are men, as many Holy Virgins as there are women.

The "sons of God" held assemblies at which they danced wildly, first together and then separately, until the moment when the women, in supreme ecstasy, turned from the left, and the men from the right, towards the rising sun. The dance continued until all reached a state of hysterical excitement. Then a voice was heard—"Behold the Holy Spirit!"—and the whole company, emitting cries and groans, would pursue the dizzy performance with redoubled vigour until they fell to the ground exhausted.

Their sect originated in the neighbourhood of a great hill, where dwelt a man named Philipoff with his disciples. He had retired there to work against the influence of anti-Christ, and it was there that God appeared to him, and said, "Truth and divinity dwell in your own conscience. Neither drink nor marry. Those among you who are already married should live as brothers and sisters."

Women were held in high esteem by the "sons of God," being venerated as "mothers or nieces of the Saviour."

CHAPTER VII

THE TOLSTOYANS

The numerous admirers of Count Tolstoi will find in his writings some derivations, whether conscious or unconscious, from the principles elaborated by many of the Russian sects. The doctrine of non-resistance, or inaction, the abolition of the army, vegetarianism, the defiance of law, and of dogmatic Christianity, together with many other conceptions which either scandalised or enraptured his readers, were already widespread among the Russian peasantry; though Tolstoi was able to give them new forms of expression and an original, if disquieting, philosophic basis.

But even as the products of the earth which we consume return to earth again, so do ideas and doctrines ever return to the source from which they sprang. A great reformer usually gathers his ideas from his environment, until, transformed by the workings of his brain, they react once more upon those to whom they actually owed their origin.

Renan has traced very accurately the evolution of a religious leader, and Tolstoi passed through all its logical phases, only stopping short of the martyrdom necessary ere he could enter the ranks of the prophets.

Imbued with the hopes and dreams that flourished all around him, he began, at a ripe age and in full possession of his faculties, to express his philosophy in poetic and alluring parables, the hostility of the government having only served to fire his enthusiasms and embitter his individual opinions. After first declaring that the masters of men are their equals, he taught later on that they are their persecutors, and finally, in old age, arrived at the conclusion that all who rule or direct others are simply criminals!

"You are not at all obliged to fulfil your duties," he wrote, in the *Life and Death of Drojine*, 1895, dedicated to a Tolstoyan martyr. "You could, if you wished, find another occupation, so that you would

no longer have to tyrannise over men. . . . You men of power, emperors and kings, you are not Christians, and it is time you renounced the name as well as the moral code upon which you depend in order to dominate others."

It would be difficult to give a complete list either of the beliefs of the Tolstoyans, or of their colonies, in many of which members of the highest aristocracy were to be found.

"We have in Russia tens of thousands of men who have refused to swear allegiance to the new Tsar," wrote Tolstoi, a couple of years before his death, "and who consider military service merely a school for murder."

We have no right to doubt his word—but did Tolstoi know all his followers? Like all who have scattered seed, he was not in a position to count it. But however that may be, he transformed the highest aspirations of man's soul into a noble philosophy of human progress, and attracted the uneducated as well as the cultured classes by his genuine desire for equality and justice.

Early in June, 1895, several hundreds of *verigintzi* (members of a sect named after Veregine, their leader) came from the south of Russia to the Karsk district. The government's suspicions were aroused, and at Karsk the pilgrims were stopped, and punished for having attempted to emigrate without special permission. Inquiries showed that all were Tolstoyans, who practised the doctrine of non-resistance to evil on a large scale. For their co-religionists in Elisabethpol suddenly refused to bear arms, and nine soldiers also belonging to the sect repeated without ceasing that "our heavenly Father has forbidden us to kill our fellowmen." Those who were in the reserve sent in their papers, saying that they wished to have nothing more to do with the army.

One section of the *verigintzi* especially distinguished themselves by the zeal with which they practised the Tolstoyan doctrines. They revered their leader under the name of "General Tolstoi," gave up sugar as well as meat, drank only tea and ate only bread. They were called "the fasters," and their gentleness became proverbial. In the village of Orlovka they were exposed to most cruel outrages, the inhabitants having been stirred up against them by the priests and officials. They were spat upon, flogged, and generally ill-treated, but never ceased to pray, "O God, help us to bear our misery." Their meekness at last melted the hearts of their persecutors, who, becoming infected by their religious ardour, went down on their knees before those whom they had struck with whips a few minutes before.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SPIRITUAL CHRISTIANS

The Slavonic atmosphere exhales an intense longing for the ideal and for heaven. Often a kind of religious ecstasy seems to sweep over the whole length and breadth of the Russian territories, and Tolstoi's celebrated doctrines reflected the dreamy soul of the *moujik* and the teachings of many Russian martyrs. It would, however, be a mistake to suppose that it is only the peasants buried in the depths of the country who provide favourable soil for the culture of the religious bacillus. It is the same with all classes—merchants, peasants, labourers and aristocrats.

The working-classes, especially those of the large towns, usually offer more resistance to the influence of religious fanatics, but in Petrograd and Moscow they are apt to follow the general current. Lack of space forbids us to study in all their picturesque details the birth and growth of religious sects in these surroundings. We must confine ourselves to one of the more recent manifestations—that of the mysterious "spiritual Christians."

In 1893, a man named Michael Raboff arrived in St. Petersburg. Peasant by birth, carpenter by trade, he immediately began to preach the tenets of his "spiritual Christianity." He became suspect, and with his friend Nicholas Komiakoff was deported to a far-distant neighbourhood; but in spite of this his seed began to bear fruit, for the entire district where he and Komiakoff were sent to work was soon won over to the new religion. The director himself, his wife, and all his workmen embraced it, and though the workshops were closed by the police, the various members distributed themselves throughout the town and continued to spread Raboff's "message." Borykin, the master-carpenter, took employment under a certain Grigorieff, and succeeded in converting all his fellow-workers. Finally Grigorieff's house was turned into a church for the new sect, and an illiterate woman named Vassilisa became their prophetess. Under the influence of the general excitement, she would fall into trances and give extravagant and incomprehensible discourses, while her listeners laughed, danced and wept

ecstatically. By degrees the ceremonial grew more complex, and took forms worthy of a cult of unbalanced minds.

At the time when the police tried to disperse the sect it possessed a quite considerable number of adherents; but it died out in May, 1895, scarcely two years after its commencement.

The "spiritual Christians" called themselves brothers and sisters, and gave to Raboff the name of grandfather, and to the woman Vassilisa that of mother. They considered themselves "spiritual Christians" because they lived according to the spirit of Christianity. For the rest, their doctrine was innocent enough, and, but for certain extravagances and some dangerous dogmas borrowed from other sects, their diffusion among the working-classes of the towns might even have been desirable. Sexual chastity was one of their main postulates, and they also recommended absolute abstention from meat, spirits, and tobacco. But at the same time they desired to abolish marriage.

When the police raided Grigorieff's workshops, they found there about fifty people stretched on the ground, spent and exhausted as a result of the excessive efforts which Raboff's cult demanded of them. At their meetings a man or woman would first read aloud a chapter from Holy Scripture. The listeners would make comments, and one of the more intelligent would expound the selected passage. Growing more and more animated, he would finally reach a state of ecstasy which communicated itself to all present. The whole assembly would cry aloud, groan, gesticulate and tear their hair. Some would fall to the ground, while others foamed at the mouth, or rent their garments. Suddenly one of the most uplifted would intone a psalm or hymn which, beginning with familiar words, would end in incoherency, the whole company singing aloud together, and covering the feet of their "spiritual mother" with kisses.

CHAPTER IX

A LABORATORY OF SECTS

We will now travel to the south of Russia, and examine more closely what might be called a laboratory of sects, or in other words a breeding-ground of religions whose idealism, whether foolish or sublime, is often sanctified by the blood of believers, and descends like dew from Hermon into the midst of our busy civilisation.

The mystical tendencies of the popular soul sometimes develop in a fashion little short of prodigious, and to no country do we owe so many remarkable varieties of religious faith as to that portion of Russia which lies between Kherson and Nicolaïev. There is seen in full activity the greatest religious laboratory in the world; there originate, as a rule, the morbid bacilli which invade the rest of Russia; and there do sects grow up like mushrooms, only to disappear with equal rapidity.

An orthodox missionary named Schalkinsky, who was concerned especially with the erring souls of the region of Saratov, has published a work in which he gives a fantastic picture of the events of quite recent years. He was already the author of several books dealing with the sect of the *bezpovtzi*, and his high calling and official position combine to give authority to his words.

When we consider the immense variety of these sects, we can easily imagine what takes place in every small village that becomes possessed of the craving for religious perfection. Prophets, gods and demi-gods, holy spirits and apostles, all kinds of saints and mystics, follow thick and fast upon one another's heels, seeking to gain the ascendancy over the pious souls of the villagers. Some are sincere and genuinely convinced believers; others, mere shameless impostors; but all, manifesting the greatest ardour and eloquence, traverse the countryside, imploring the peasants to "abandon their old beliefs and embrace the new holy and salutary dogmas." The orthodox missionaries seem only to increase the babel by organising their own meetings under the protection of the local authorities.

Some of the sectarians will take part in public discussions, either in the open air or in the churches, but most of them content themselves with smiling mockingly at the assertions of the "anti-Christian faith" (i.e. the orthodox official religion). With the new régime conditions may undergo a radical change, but in former times religious doubts, when too openly manifested by the followers of the "new truths," were punished by imprisonment or deportation.

Sometimes the zeal of the missionaries carried them too far, for, not content with reporting the culprits to the ecclesiastical authorities, they would denounce them publicly in their writings. The venerable Father Arsenii, author of fifteen pamphlets against the *molokanes*, delivered up to justice in

this way sufficient individuals to fill a large prison; and another orthodox missionary crowned his propaganda by printing false accusations against those who refused to accept the truth as taught by him.

In a centre like Pokourleï, which represented in miniature the general unrest of the national soul, there were to be found among the classified sects more than a dozen small churches, each having its own worshippers and its own martyrs. An illiterate peasant, Theodore Kotkoff, formed what was called the "fair-spoken sect," consisting of a hundred and fifty members who did him honour because he invented a new sort of "Holy Communion" with a special kind of gingerbread. Another, Chaïdaroff, nicknamed "Money-bags," bought a forest and built a house wherein dwelt fifteen aged "holy men," who attracted the whole neighbourhood. Many men in the prime of life followed the example of the aged ones, and retired to live in the forest, while women went in even greater numbers and for longer periods. Husbands grew uneasy, and bitter disputes took place, in which one side upheld the moral superiority of the holy men, while the other went so far as to forbid the women to go and confess to them. One peasant claimed to be inspired by the "Holy Ghost," and promenaded the village, summer and winter, in a long blouse without boots or trousers, riding astride a great stick on which he had hung a bell and a flag, and announcing publicly the reign of Anti-Christ. In addition the village was visited by orthodox missionaries, but, as the Reverend Father Schalkinsky naïvely confesses, "the inhabitants fled them like the plague." They interviewed, however, the so-called chiefs of the new religions, who listened to them with gravity and made some pretence of being convinced by the purveyors of official truth.

CHAPTER X

THE DOUCHOBORTZI

The religious ferment of South Russia was due to some special causes, its provinces having served since the seventeenth century as lands of exile for revolutionaries of all kinds, religious, political and social. Dangerous criminals were also sent there, and a population of this nature naturally received with open arms all who preached rebellion against established principles and doctrines.

About the year 1750, a Prussian non-commissioned officer, expatriated on account of his revolutionary ideas, appeared in the neighbourhood of Kharkov. He taught the equality of man and the uselessness of public authority, and was the real founder of the *douchobortzi*, who believed in direct communion with the divinity by aid of the spirit which dwells in all men. The sparks scattered by this unknown vagabond flared up some time later into a conflagration which swept away artisans, peasants and priests, and embraced whole towns and villages.

The beliefs of the sect were that the material world is merely a prison for our souls, and that our passions carry in themselves the germs of our punishments. Nothing is more to be decried than the desire for worldly honour and glory. Did not Our Lord Himself say that He was not of this world? Emperors and kings reign only over the wicked and sinful, for honest men, like the *douchobortzi*, have nothing to do with their laws or their authority. War is contrary to the will of God. Christ having declared that we are all brothers and sisters, the words "father" and "mother" are illogical, and opposed to His teachings. There is only one Father, the Father in Heaven, and children should call their parents by their Christian names.

Except for these leading tenets, their doctrine was variable, and they not only gave rise to about a hundred other sects, but were themselves in a continual state of evolution and change. At one time it was their custom to put to death all children who were diseased in mind or body. As God dwells in us, they said, we cannot condemn Him to inhabit a body that is diseased. One leader of the sect believed himself to be the judge of the universe, and terrorised his co-religionists. Another ordered all who betrayed the doctrines of the sect to be buried alive, and legal proceedings which were taken against him and lasted several years showed him to be responsible for twenty-one "religious murders."

CHAPTER XI

THE MOLOKANES

A sect of considerable importance, that of the *molokanes*, owed its origin to the *douchobortzi*. It was founded by a sincere and ardent man named Oukleïne, about the end of the eighteenth century. *Moloko* means milk; hence the name of the sect, whose adherents drank nothing else.

Improving upon the principles of liberty professed by the *douchobortzi*, the *molokanes* taught that "where the Holy Ghost is, there is liberty"; and as they believed the Holy Ghost to be in themselves they consequently needed neither laws nor government. Had not Christ said that His true followers were not of this world? Down, then, with all law and all authority! The Apostle Paul states that all are equal, men and women, servants and masters; therefore, the Tsar being a man like other men, it is unnecessary to obey him.

The Tsar has ten fingers and makes money; why then should not the *molokanes* make it, who also have ten fingers? (This was the reply given by some of them when brought up for trial on a charge of manufacturing false coinage.) War is a crime, for the bearing of arms has been forbidden. (It is on record that soldiers belonging to the sect threw away their arms in face of the enemy in the Crimean War.) One should always shelter fugitives, in accordance with St. Matthew xxv. 35. Deserters or criminals—who knows why they flee? Laws are often unjust, tribunals give verdicts to suit the wishes of the authorities, and the authorities are iniquitous. Besides, the culprits may repent, and then the crime is wiped out.

The *molokanes* have always been led by clever and eloquent men. Uplifted by a sense of the constant presence of the Holy Ghost, they would fall into ecstatic trances, fully convinced of their own divinity and desiring only to be transported to Heaven.

Of this type was the peasant Kryloff, a popular agitator who inflamed the whole of South Russia at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Intoxicated by the success of his oratory, he grew to believe in his own mission of Saviour, and undertook a pilgrimage to St. Petersburg in order to be made a priest of the "spiritual Christians." Poor visionary! He was flogged to death.

Another *molokane* leader was one Andreïeff, who long preached the coming of the prophet Elijah. One fine day, excited by the eloquence of his own discourses, he set forth with his followers to conquer the "promised land," a rich and fertile district in the neighbourhood of Mount Ararat, but accomplished nothing save a few wounds gained in altercations with the inhabitants. On returning to his own country, he was deported to Siberia for having hidden some dangerous criminals from justice.

As the number of *molokanes* increased, they decided to emigrate *en masse* to the Caucasus. Their kind actions and enthusiastic songs attracted crowds of the poor and sick, as well as many who were troubled by religious doubts. At their head marched Terentii Bezobrazoff, believed by his followers to be the prophet Elijah, who announced that when his mission was accomplished he would ascend to Heaven to rejoin God, his Father, Who had sent him. But alas, faith does not always work miracles! The day being fixed beforehand, about two thousand believers assembled to witness the ascension of their Elijah. By the prophet's instructions, the crowd knelt down and prayed while Elijah waved his arms frantically. Finally, with haggard mien, he flung himself down the hillside, and fell to the ground. The disillusioned spectators seized him and delivered him up to justice. He spent many years in prison, but in the end confessed his errors and was pardoned.

Many other Elijahs wished to be transported to heaven, but all met with the same fate as Bezobrazoff. These misfortunes, however, did not weaken the religious ardour of the *molokanes*. A regular series of "false Christs," as the Russians called them, tormented the imaginations of the southern peasantry. Some believed themselves to be Elijah, some the angel Gabriel; while others considered themselves new saviours of the world.

One of these latter made his début in the rôle of Saviour about 1840, and after having drained the peasants of Simbirsk and Saratov of money, fled to Bessarabia with his funds and his disciples. Later he returned, accompanied by twelve feminine "angels," and with them was deported to Siberia.

But the popular mind is not discouraged by such small matters. Side by side with the impostors there existed men of true faith, simple and devout dreamers. Taking advantage of freedom to expound the Gospel, they profited by it for use and abuse, and it seemed to be a race as to who should be the first to start a new creed.

Even as the *douchobortzi* had given birth to the *molokanes*, so were the latter in turn the parents of the *stoundists*.

CHAPTER XII

THE STOUNDISTS

This sect believed that man could attain to perfection of life and health only by avoiding the fatigue of penance and fastings; and that all men should equally enjoy the gifts of Nature, Jesus Christ having suffered for all. Land and capital should belong to the community, and should be equally divided, all men being brothers, and sons of the same God. Wealth being thus equalised, it was useless to try to amass it. Trade was similarly condemned, and a system of exchange of goods advocated. The *stoundists* did not attend church, and avoided public-houses, "those sources of disease and misery." The government made every effort to crush them, but the more they were persecuted, the more they flourished. The seers and mystics among them were considered particularly dangerous, and were frequently flogged and imprisoned—in fact, the sect as a whole was held by the Russian administration, to be one of the most dangerous in existence. It originated in the year 1862, and from then onwards its history was one of continuous martyrdom.

Like the *molokanes*, the *stoundists* refused to reverence the ikons, the sacraments, or the hierarchy of the orthodox church, and considered the Holy Scriptures to be simply a moral treatise. They abominated war, referring to it as "murder *en masse*," and never entered a court of law, avoiding all quarrels and arguments, and holding it to be the most degrading of actions for a man to raise his hand against his fellow. All their members learnt to read and write, in order to be able to study the Scriptures. They recognised no power or authority save that of God, refused to take oaths, and protested against the public laws on every possible occasion. Their doctrine was really a mixture of the *molokane* teachings and of Communism as practised by the German colonists, led by Gutter, who settled in Russia about the end of the eighteenth century and were banished to New Russia in 1818.

Strengthened by persecution and smacking of the soil, it was no wonder that *stoundism* became the religion *par excellence* of the Russian *moujik*, assuming in time proportions that were truly disquieting to the authorities.

CHAPTER XIII

THE MERCHANTS OF PARADISE

Side by side with these flourishing sects whose followers could be numbered by millions, there existed other communities, founded upon naïve and child-like superstitions, strange fruits of the tree of faith. The members of one of these believed that it was only necessary to climb upon the roofs in order to take flight to heaven. The deceptions practised on them by charlatans, the relentless persecution of the government, even the loss of reason, all counted for nothing if only they might enjoy some few moments of supreme felicity and live in harmony with the divine! To experience such ecstasy they despoiled themselves of their worldly goods, and gave away their money to impostors in exchange for pardon for their sins.

The famous sect called the "Merchants of Paradise" was founded by a peasant, Athanasius Konovaloff. Together with his son Andrew, he preached at Osikovka, from 1885 to 1892, the absolution of sins in return for offerings "in kind." There was need for haste, he declared. Time was flying, and there were but few vacant places left in Paradise. These places were of two kinds—those of the first class, at ten roubles each, which enabled the purchaser to repose upon a celestial sofa; and those of the second class, at five roubles, whose occupiers had to spend eternity seated upon footstools. The credulous peasants actually deprived themselves of food in order to procure their places.

In 1887, a man who was much respected in the village sold his crops, and went to buy himself one of the first-class places. His son heard of it, and was in despair over this lavish expenditure of ten roubles. Why, he demanded, could not his father be content with a second-class place, like so many of their neighbours?

The dispute was brought into the courts, and the old man loudly lamented the criminal indifference of his son.

"In my poor old age," he cried, "after having worked so hard, am I to be condemned to sit for ever on

a footstool for the sake of five roubles?"

Then, addressing his offspring—"And you, my son, are you not ashamed so to disregard the future life of your parent, who maintained you throughout your childhood? It is a great sin with which you are burdening your soul."

Places in Paradise were promised not only to the living, but also to those who had omitted to secure them before departing on their eternal journey. The relatives would apply to the prophet, who fixed the price according to the fortune left by the deceased.

A curious ceremonial always accompanied the payment of money to Konovaloff. It was first placed upon the ground; Konovaloff would lift it with his teeth and lay it on the table; and it was finally put in his pocket by his son, Andrew. He was also assisted in his operations by two old women.

CHAPTER XIV

THE JUMPERS AND THE HOLY BROTHERS

The Jumpers, or *sopouny*, founded by one Petroff, considered it their duty to blow upon one another during Divine Service. This arose from a misinterpretation of the ninth verse of the fortieth psalm. It was also their custom to pile benches one upon another and pray from the top of them, until some hysterical female fell to the ground in a religious paroxysm. One of those present would then lean over her and act the scene of the resurrection. Petroff was a great admirer of King David, and would sing his psalms to the accompaniment of dancing, like the psalmist before the Ark. His successor, Roudometkin, reorganised the Jumpers, and gave their performances a rhythmic basis. Foreseeing the near advent of the Saviour, he caused himself to be crowned king of the "spiritual Christians" in 1887, and married a "spiritual" wife, though without discarding his "material" one. His successors all called themselves "Kings of the spiritual Christians," but they had not the authority of poor Roudometkin, who had been removed to prison in Solovetzk.

We may class with the Jumpers the Holy Brothers, or *chalapouts*, who believed in the indwelling presence of the Holy Ghost. They were visionaries of a more exalted kind, and often attained to such a state of religious enthusiasm that in their longing to enter heaven they climbed to the roofs of houses and hurled themselves into space.

CHAPTER XV

THE LITTLE GODS

The sect of the "little gods," or *bojki*, was founded about 1880 by a peasant named Sava. Highly impressionable by nature, and influenced by the activities of at least a dozen different sects that flourished in his native village (Derabovka, near Volsk), Sava ended by believing himself to be God.

Though naturally aggressive, and of an irascible temperament, he soon became as serious as a philosopher and as gentle as a lamb. His intelligence seemed to increase visibly. He discoursed like a man inspired, and said to the inhabitants of Derabovka:—

"If there be a God in Heaven, there must also be one on earth. And why not? Is not the earth a creation of Heaven, and must it not resemble that which created it? . . . Where then is this earthly God to be found? Where is the Virgin Mary? Where are the twelve apostles?"

The dreamer wandered about the village, uttering his thoughts aloud. At first men shrugged their shoulders at his strange questions. But he continued to hold forth, and in the end the peasants gathered round him.

It was the sweetest moment of his life when the villagers of Derabovka at last found the deity who had been sought so eagerly. For whom could it be, if not Sava himself? . . . Thus Sava proclaimed

himself God; gave to his kinsman Samouil the name of Saviour; to a peasant-woman of a neighbouring village that of the Virgin Mary; and chose the twelve Apostles and the Holy Ghost from among his acquaintance. The nomination of the latter presented, however, some difficulties. The Holy Ghost, argued the peasants, had appeared to Jesus by the river Jordan in the form of a dove, and how could one represent it by a man? They refused to do so, and decided that in future all birds of the dove species should be the Holy Ghost.

The authorities began to seek out the "gods," as they were called locally. Samouil was arrested and charged with being a false Saviour, but defended himself with such child-like candour that the tribunal was baffled. The movement therefore continued, and was indeed of a wholly innocent nature, not in any way menacing the security of the government, and filling with rapture all Sava's followers.

It was the custom of the "little gods" to gather in some forest, and there to hide the "Virgin Mary" in a leafy glade, and await her "apparition." Sava himself, and Samouil, the "Saviour," would be concealed close at hand, and she would emerge from her hiding-place in their company. The lookers-on then gave vent to loud cries of joy, and all united in glorifying the goodness of Heaven. The "Virgin" wore on these occasions a rich and beautiful robe in which all the colours of the rainbow were blended. The company would gather round her, while the "Apostles" reverently kissed her feet. Sacred hymns were then sung, and the worshippers dispersed filled with unbounded ecstasy.

CHAPTER XVI

THE FOLLOWERS OF GRIGORIEFF

The forms taken by religious mania are not always as harmless as in the case of the "God Sava." Ivan Grigorieff, founder of the Russian Mormons, began by preaching that God created the world in six days, but by degrees he came to attack established religion as well as the existing social order. According to him, the *molokanes* were "pestilent," the *douchobortzi* were "destroyers of the faith," and the *chlysty* were "mad cattle." There was only one truth, the truth of Grigorieff!

The Bible should be interpreted "according to the spirit," and as the Apostle Paul had said that Christ was to be found in those who believed in Him, then Grigorieff could be no other than Christ. He went to Turkey, returned in the rôle of "Saviour," and preached the necessity for a "spiritual life." Several women were chosen to share his life and that of the twelve "Apostles" whose duty it was to "glorify" him.

Passing from one hallucination to another, he insisted on a general cessation of labour. "Work not," he said, "for I will be gentle and merciful to you. You shall be like the birds who are nourished without need to till the earth: Work not, and all shall be yours, even to the corn stored away in the government granaries."

And so the peasants of Gai-Orlov left their fields unfilled, and cultivated nothing save hymns and prayers. They seemed to be uplifted as by some wave of dreamy, poetic madness. Even the unlettered imitated Grigorieff in composing psalms and hymns, some specimens of which are to be found in Father Arsenii's collection. They breathe an almost infantile mysticism.

"The dweller in heaven,
The King Salim,
Saviour of the world,
Shall descend upon earth.
The clouds flee away,
The light shines. . . ."

"We will climb the mountain,
It is Mount Sion that we climb,
And we will sing like angels."

When Grigorieff's mind began definitely to fail, and, forgetful of divine service, he passed his time in the company of his "spiritual wives," doubt seized upon the members of his church, and they composed a melancholy psalm which was chanted to Grigorieff by his "Apostles."

"Father, Saviour,
Hope of all men . . .
Thou gavest us the spark,
The spark of faith.
But to-day, little father,
Thou hidest the light,
Thou hidest the light. . . .

Our life is changed.
We weep for thy faith,
Lost and deranged,
We weep for thy holy life.
Upon the Mount Sion
There grew a vine of God. . . ."

Grigorieff appeared to be touched, and replied with a psalm which explained, in rhymed couplets, how the Holy Ghost (that is to say, Grigorieff) was walking in a garden when brigands appeared, and tried to carry him off—an allusion to some of his followers who had caused dissension by proclaiming themselves to be "Holy Ghosts." But the sun descended upon the Garden of Paradise, the celestial garden . . . and so on.

One day, however, "Anti-Christ," in the person of a travelling magistrate, descended upon Gai-Orlov and carried off Grigorieff. He was sent to prison, where he died of poison administered by one of his "spiritual wives," who was jealous of her rivals. But his teachings did not die with him. His work was continued by the peasant Verestchagin, with the help of twelve venerable "apostles."

CHAPTER XVII

THE NAPOLEONITES

Imagination can scarcely conceive of some of the strange forms under which the thirst for religious truth in Southern Russia was revealed. In this great laboratory of sects, all the dreams of humanity had their more or less "inspired" representatives. Even the smallest town was in the same case as, for example, the prison of Solovetz, which was usually inhabited by large numbers of sectarian leaders. A Mr. Sitzoff, who spent some time there, has published a description of this modern Tower of Babel.

It harboured, among others, a *douchoboretz*; a "god" of the Sava persuasion, with his wife, representing the "Holy Ghost"; a *chlyst*, who rotated indefatigably round a tub of water; a captain who claimed the honour of brotherhood with Jesus Christ; a man named Pouchkin, who supposed himself to be the Saviour reincarnated; a *skopetz* who had brought a number of people from Moscow to be initiated into the sect of the Russian eunuchs; and the *staretz* Israël, a famous seer, who desired to found a "Church Triumphant" among the inhabitants of the prison.

These ardent reformers of religion made a terrible uproar during the hours for exercise, each one wishing to convert the rest, and frequently the warders had to intervene, to save the terrified "Holy Ghost," for example, from the "brother of Christ" or the prophet Elijah.

Before taking leave of these and other equally bizarre products of the "great laboratory," we must mention the sect of the Napoleonites, some few members of which were still to be found recently in Southern Russia. William Hepworth Dixon, who visited the country in 1870, claims to have met some in Moscow, and according to him they were then rapidly increasing in numbers.

The *douchobortzi* and the *molokanes* were deeply impressed by the advent of Napoleon the First. It seemed to them that a man who had taken part in so many heroic adventures must be an envoy of the Deity. They conceived it his mission to re-establish the throne of David and to put an end to all their misfortunes, and there was great joy among the "milk-drinkers" when the "Napoleonic mystery" was expounded to them by their leaders. It was arranged to send five *molokane* delegates to greet the "heavenly messenger," and five old men set forth, clad in garments white as their beards. But they arrived too late. Napoleon had left Russia after the disaster of 1812, and when the *molokanes* tried to follow him they were arrested on the banks of the Vistula and thrown into prison.

The popular imagination, however, refused to abandon its idol, and the idea of Napoleon ascending into heaven continued to arouse much enthusiasm. Many of the Napoleonites lamented the wickedness of his enemies, who had driven him out of Russia, thus depriving mortals of a saviour from on high.

At their meetings they spoke of Napoleon's heroic exploits, and knelt before his bust. It was said that when he entered Russia a star had appeared in the sky, like that which heralded the birth of Christ; that he was not dead, but had escaped from St. Helena by sea and was living in Irkutsk; that one day the heavens would be torn open by a great storm, and Napoleon would appear as leader of the Slavonic people; that he would put an end to all discord and, surrounded by angels and brave soldiers, would re-establish justice and happiness on earth to the sound of trumpets.

"The hour draws near!" This cry of supremest hope was ever upon the lips of the members of the Napoleonite church.

But to become almost God was a promotion of which the "little corporal" had surely never dreamed!

CHAPTER XVIII

THE DIVINE MEN

The origin of this sect seems to be lost in the mists of the past. Some connect it with the teachings of Vishnu, some with mysterious practices of antiquity; but the "divine men" were certainly children of the Slavonic soil.

Those who seek for resemblances may find certain analogies between these adepts of "virginal virginity," or of "the great garden of the Tsar"—for both these names were applied to them—and the *adamites* or *aryanists*; for eager minds seeking supreme salvation are apt to meet upon the great road that leads to deliverance.

The rather sarcastic name of *chlysty* (or flagellants, by which they were also known) indicates one of the methods used by them in their desire to please the Lord.

A life-and-death struggle, lasting for some centuries, took place between Russian orthodoxy and this sect whose socialistic ideas threatened to overthrow the aristocratic dogmas of the official church.

The real founder of the sect was a man named Philipoff, who lived about the middle of the seventeenth century. According to him, Jesus Christ was only one of many Christs who have come to the succour of humanity during the course of ages. The divine spirit incarnates in men of high morality, so that Christs appear and disappear, living with and among us from time to time.

The chlysty, therefore, might always have one or more Christs among them; but all were not of equal standing. Some were great and some small!

Philipoff was convinced that he was the great Christ, having the right to choose the twelve Apostles and the Holy Mother. By degrees he came to think himself God the Father, and adopted a "divine son" in the person of a peasant named Sousloff, who succeeded him as leader of the sect after his death.

Another "Christ," named Loupkin, who bestowed the title of "Holy Virgin" upon his wife, Akoumina, gave a great impetus to the growth of the sect. His followers proclaimed him their spiritual Tsar, and received him everywhere with imposing ceremonies. He allowed his feet and hands to be kissed and obeisances to be made to the "Virgin." As a result of his propaganda many prominent members of the orthodox church were won over.

On the death of Akoumina, the rôle of Holy Virgin was taken by the Canoness Anastasia, of the convent of Ivanoff, and as time went on many of the aristocracy of Moscow and other parts came to swell the ranks of the believers in the "living Christs."

Philipoff's doctrines differed to some extent from those of Loupkin. Branches of his church were to be found in most of the Russian provinces, and as time went on these emancipated themselves and became independent, and many new "Christs" made their appearance. In 1903, nearly every Russian province was said to be seriously affected by the doctrines of the "divine men."

Apart from the secondary articles of faith which differentiated the churches, their main principles

may be epitomised as follows:—

There are seven heavens, and the seventh is the Paradise of the "divine men." There dwell the Holy Trinity, the Mother of Jesus, the Archangels, and various Christs who have visited our planet. It is not a question of material bodies, but of spiritual principles. God incarnates in good men whenever He feels it to be necessary, and those who are chosen for this divine honour become Christs. The Christ of the Gospels died like all the rest. His body is interred at Jerusalem, and his resurrection only meant the deliverance of his spirit. His miracles were merely symbolical. Lazarus was a sinner; Christ cured him and made him a good man; hence the legend of the raising from the dead. The Gospels contain the teachings of the Christ of that epoch, but the Christs of our time receive other teachings appropriate to the needs of the present day.

The orthodox religion of Russia is a material religion, lacking the Spirit, whose presence is only to be found in the creed of the "divine men." In order that their truth shall triumph, these latter may belong nominally to the official religion. They may even attend its churches, but must leave their souls on the threshold. A "divine man" must guard his soul from the "infidels," the "wicked," the "voracious wolves"—thus were the orthodox believers designated. The human soul was created before the body. (A "divine mother," questioned as to her age in a court of law, declared that though her body was only seventy years old, her soul had lived through nearly as many centuries.) Metempsychosis was one of their beliefs. Souls change their habitations, and work upwards to supreme perfection. That of a Christ on earth becomes an angel after death; that of an imperfect man requires repeated incarnations. The body is the source of evil, and the soul the source of good. The body, therefore, with all its instincts and desires, must be dominated by the soul. "Divine men" must abstain from meat and alcoholic drinks, and also from marriage in the material sense. By a singular misapprehension of the idea of dominating the body, they looked upon marriage as a spiritual institution, believing that the soul of a man who had lived with his wife in any but a fraternal relationship would enter that of a pig after his death, and that children coming into the world through marriage were the joy of Satan. But love between men and women should exist outside the bonds of marriage, the sins of the flesh being then redeemed by the virtues of the spirit. Adultery was thus tolerated, and even held in high honour, by many branches of the sect, who believed that the vulgar relations between the sexes were thus spiritually purified, and that men and women who loved under these conditions were like the doves and turtle-doves favoured by heaven. They avoided having children, and abortion was not only tolerated but encouraged.

Rasputin, who borrowed largely from the doctrines of the "divine men," made great use of this strange idea of "spiritual love" in bringing about the triumph of debauchery in the highest ranks of Russian society.

The multiplicity of "Christs" caused some regrettable misunderstandings, and at times actual duels took place. The difficulty was resolved, however, by some of the churches in admirably simple fashion—for, in spite of all, many of these strange people were inspired by the Gospel teachings. The opponents exchanged blows, and he who longest continued to offer his cheek to the other was considered to have proved himself a superior Christ.

The *chlysty* were divided into sections, each having its angels, its prophets, and its Christ. They met in their "Jerusalem," which was usually a cellar, and their services took place at night, the participants all wearing white robes. The ceremonies consisted chiefly of graceful movements—first a solo dance, then evolutions in pairs, after which a cross would be formed by a large number of dancers, and finally the "dance of David" took place, in imitation of the Biblical King before the Ark. The dancers then fell exhausted to the ground, their tired bodies no longer opposing the manifestation of their souls, and the prophets and prophetesses gave voice to divine inspirations.

Once a year the "high ceremonial" was held. A tub filled with water was placed in the middle of the room, and lit up by wax candles, and when the surface of the water became ruffled the ecstatic watchers believed God to be smiling upon them, and intoned in chorus their favourite hymn—

"We dance, we dance,
And seek the Christ who is among us."

In some of the churches this ceremony concluded with the celebration of universal love.

On account of its numerous ramifications, the sect presented many divergent aspects. The *teleschi*, following the example of Adam and Eve in Paradise, performed their religious rites in a state of nature; and there were other branches whose various dogmas and practices it would be impossible to describe.

CHAPTER XIX

THE RELIGION OF RASPUTIN

The career of Rasputin provides one of the most disquieting chapters in the history of sexual and religious emotions, and furnishes remarkable proof of the close relationship which exists between these two sides of human life, to all appearances diametrically opposed.

The supposed monk had undoubted hypnotic powers, and through his success in sending people to sleep in his native Siberian village (in the neighbourhood of Tomsk), he earned the reputation of being a "holy man." As they had never heard of either suggestion or hypnotism, the Siberian peasants were all the more impressed by his miracles. Before long he decided to make use of his mysterious power on a larger scale, and departed for St. Petersburg, where the news of his exploits had preceded him. The Tsarina, who suffered from insomnia, sent for him, and—thanks also to certain qualities which it is best not to specify—Rasputin's fortune was made in a day.

The village of his origin had an undesirable reputation, for its inhabitants were loose-livers, and the scandal of the surrounding countryside. But even in this environment the monk's family had made themselves conspicuous by their low and unmentionable customs. The young Gregory, known by the diminutive of Gricha, began his exploits at a very tender age, and earned the sobriquet of Rasputin, which means "debauched." He was mixed up in all kinds of dubious affairs—for instance, thefts of horses, the bearing of false witness, and many acts of brigandage. He was even sentenced more than once to be flogged—a penalty of which the local law-courts made generous use in those days. One of his boon companions, a gardener named Vamava, later became Bishop of Tobolsk through his influence.

But the time came when Gricha thought it well to abandon his small misdoings, and take up a more lucrative trade. He discarded his peasant costume, and adopted a robe similar to that worn by monks. Grave and serious, declaring that he was ranged "on the side of the Lord," he went about begging importunately, on the pretext of wishing to build a church. In this way he succeeded in amassing a very considerable sum of money, and subsequently founded a new sect whose bizarre nature surpassed that of any others that had recently seen the light.

Its chief doctrines were borrowed from the *chlysty*, with some modifications to suit the decadent atmosphere of the Russian Court. It taught that none could be saved without first having repented; and none could repent without first having sinned. Therefore to sin became a duty, and it may be imagined how full of attraction was this "religion of sin" for those who had neither the will nor the desire to practise virtue.

Rasputin began proceedings in his native province. He was a marvellous preacher, and easily attracted many followers, though some of the forms taken by the new religion were indescribable. The believers of both sexes were in the habit of assembling in an open field, in the midst of which a bonfire was lighted. They would form a chain and dance round the fire, praying for their sins to be forgiven, as they had repented of them. Gradually the fire would die out, and the leader then launched his command—"Now, my children, give yourselves up to sin!" The sequel may be left untold, but truly the *saturnalia* of ancient Rome grow dim before the spectacle of the ceremonies established by Rasputin.

His hypnotic practices, combined with the attractions of his "religion," only served to augment his popularity, and, burdened with past glory, he arrived in the capital to win the favour not only of ladies of high degree, but also of many prominent members of the established church.

Father John of Cronstadt, whom he first visited, was deeply impressed when Rasputin revealed to him the extent of his "intimacy with the Lord," and introduced him to the Archbishop Theophanus, almost as great a celebrity as himself.

Finding it impossible to establish the Siberian practices openly in St. Petersburg, Rasputin made great use of hypnotism. The fascination that he wielded over all in his vicinity gave authority to his words, and he devoted himself to exorcising the demons that slept in the bodies of the pretty sinners of high society. In this, scourging played a considerable part, and as all sorts of illnesses and unsatisfied desires were attributed to the "demons," the number of cases treated by the "holy man" was almost incalculable.

Even the prelates whom Rasputin ousted from their positions in some cases still continued to believe in him after his death. The Bishop Hermogen, whom he disgraced at Court, declared, the day after the assassination, his conviction that Rasputin possessed "a spark of godhead" when he first arrived in Petrograd.

CHAPTER XX

THE INSPIRED SEERS

The official clergy, finding it incumbent on them to defend the articles of the orthodox faith, were themselves frequently swept away by the storm of religious mania. Before the war the fortress of Solovetzsk sheltered quite an army of these harmless rebels, who, troubled by the general desire for human perfection, had ended in blasphemy. Especially from the monasteries were they recruited. It seemed as though their souls were violently assaulted by devils, like those of the anchorites of olden days. Monks and nuns alike were equally discontented, equally eager to uproot evil, whether real or imaginary, by seeking out new ways of salvation.

One such was the unfortunate Israïl, originally head of the monastery of Selenginsk, later a prisoner at Solovetzsk. He preached eloquently and fervently the renunciation of property, and persuaded his mother and sisters to abandon their worldly goods and devote themselves to the service of the Virgin. "To a nunnery!" he cried, with all the conviction of Hamlet driving Ophelia from this world, and they sang psalms with him and went to conceal their misery in a convent. Then, with a staff in his hand, he traversed Russia, and visited many *staretz*, or holy men. They taught him "the beginning and the middle of the end which does not exist," but poor Israïl was still conscious of an emptiness in his heart. In the pursuit of truth he retired to a virgin forest on the banks of the river Schouïa, near the desert of Krivoziorsk, and remained there for years engaged in prayer, until at last, touched by such piety, the Lord gave peace to his soul. Surrounded by holy books, he practised meditation, and God manifested His love by sending him visions and dreams which, coming direct from Heaven, promised salvation to himself and to all who should follow him. In one dream he saw a great temple above the cave where he was praying. Millions of people sought to enter it, but could not, and shed bitter tears of disappointment. One man alone could approach the altar. It was Israïl, the beloved of the Lord. He went straight through the great doors, and all the rest followed him.

The holy man then decided that he must act as guide to his fellows who, like himself, were possessed by the fever for eternal salvation. He knew how to distinguish between dreams sent by heaven, and those emanating from the infernal regions.

It was a great day for the new religion which was to be born in the desert of Krivoziorsk when the Father Joseph came to join Israïl, the tale of whose glory by this time resounded throughout the whole neighbourhood. They remained on their knees for whole weeks at a time, praying together. Israïl painted sacred pictures, and Joseph carved spoons, for the glory of the Lord. An inexplicable emotion filled their souls; they trembled before the Eternal, fasted, and shed scalding tears; then, overcome by fatigue, fell fainting to the ground. Israïl beheld the heavens descending upon earth. They had no dread of wild beasts, and, disregarding the need for food or sleep, they thus dwelt far from the haunts of men, in the light of Eternity.

One day Israïl rose abruptly in an access of religious frenzy, climbed a hill, saluted the East three times, and returned radiant to his companion.

"The burden which lay at the door of my heart," he cried, "the burden which hindered my spirit from soaring heavenwards, has disappeared! Henceforward the Kingdom of Heaven is in me, in the depths of my soul, in the soul of the Son of my Father!"

He proceeded to share this kingdom with the brothers Warlaam, Nikanor, and others who had been "touched by the finger of God." Unbelievers were gradually won over, and a community was formed whose members lived on prayers and celestial visions, and obeyed the rules laid down for them by Israïl. The sick were cured by his prayers, and the incredulous were abashed by the holiness of his appearance.

His fame spread, and ever greater crowds were attracted, so that while the faithful rejoiced in the triumph of "the beloved," Israïl himself deemed the time to be ripe for his promotion in the ranks of sanctity. He proclaimed himself to be Jesus Christ.

On Holy Thursday he washed the feet of his disciples, blessed the bread and wine, and distributed it to the assembled believers.

But, alas, by this time dreams of a strangely sensual nature had seized upon him, and seemed to pervade his whole being.

In one of these dreams he found himself in an empty temple, and on approaching the altar, perceived a dead woman lying there. He lifted her up, and as he touched her she showed signs of life. Suddenly,

slipping from his grasp, she leapt upon the altar, and, radiating heavenly beauty, threw herself into his arms. "Come, come, my spouse!" she said. "Come, that I may outpour for thee the wine of my love and the delights of my Eternal Father!"

On hearing these words from the Queen of Heaven, Israïl dissolved into tears. He was filled with boundless rapture, and in his excitement could not forbear from sharing this joyful experience with his disciples.

His Golgotha was drawing near. The new religion was openly denounced, and rigorously suppressed. The apostles were imprisoned, and the Jesus Christ of Krivoziorsk was sent for to the town of Kostroma, that he might give account of himself, his visions, and his crimes. Ultimately he was condemned to a spell of confinement, and forced to perform the most humiliating duties. His asceticism, his many virtues, his fasting and prayers, the love which God had manifested for him—all were forgotten, and Israïl, who had held the Queen of Heaven in his arms, was in future obliged to clean out the stables of the monastery of Makariev, to light the fires, and prepare the brothers' baths for them.

The "beloved of the Lord" fully expected to see the earth open and engulf his impious judges in its yawning depths—but no such thing happened. His spirit grew uneasy, and, taking advantage of the Russian Government's appeal for missionaries to convert the Siberian peoples, he set forth to preach his own religion to them instead of that of Tsarism. Arrived at Irkutsk, he sought first of all to save the souls of the chief authorities, the Governor-General and the Archbishop. But his efforts beat in vain against the indifference of these high dignitaries.

"Happy are those who follow me," he assured them, "for I will reveal to them the secrets of this world, and assure them of a place in my Father's kingdom."

However, they did not heed him, and horrified at such lack of faith, Israïl presented the Governor-General with a formal document on "the Second Coming of Our Saviour Jesus Christ." Still the souls of his contemporaries remained closed to the revelation, and while he meditated upon their blindness and deplored their misfortune, he was suddenly seized by their equally faithless representatives and transported to the farthest limits of the country.

There he found many of his old disciples, and proceeded to form the sect of the "inspired seers." He taught them with all earnestness that they would shortly see the Lord, Saint Simeon, and the Queen of Heaven, and soon after this, when in a state of ecstatic exaltation, they did, as by a miracle, behold God surrounded by His saints, and even the Infant Jesus.

But a new era of persecution was at hand for Israïl. Heaven was merciful to him, but the powers of the earth were harsh. However, the more he was persecuted, the more his followers' ardent belief in his "divinity" increased, and their enthusiasm reached a climax when the police had the audacity to lay hands on "the son of the Lord." But Israïl was quite unmoved by the fate of his earthly body, or by the prospect of earthly punishment. His soul dwelt with God the Father, and it was with the profoundest disdain that he followed the representatives of evil.

During the trial his disciples loudly expressed their belief in him, and what seemed to strengthen their faith was the fact that Israïl, like the Divine Master, had been betrayed by a "Judas." They believed also that his death would be followed by miracles.

Israïl himself desired to be crucified, but Heaven withheld this supreme grace, and also denied his followers the joy of witnessing miracles at his graveside. The Holy Synod contented itself with sentencing him to lifelong imprisonment at Solovetzk.

We may add that the founder of the "inspired seers" left, at his death, several volumes of verse. Unhappy poet! In the west he might have been covered with honour and glory; in the far north his lot was merely one of extreme unhappiness.

CHAPTER XXI

THE RELIGION OF SISTER HELEN

Sister Helen Petrov, of the convent of Pskov, declared in a moment of "divine illumination" that the Church had no hierarchy, that priests were harmful, that God had no need of intermediaries, that men

should not communicate, and should, indeed, absolutely refrain from entering churches.

It was the vision of an inspired soul, or of a diseased mind—for the two extremes may meet. A pure religion, based upon the direct communion of man's spirit with God, free from false and artificial piety, having no churches or ceremonies, but exhaling the sentiment of brotherly love—what a "vision splendid" is this, so often sought but never yet attained!

In the age preceding the birth of Christ many of the finer spirits were already rebelling, like Sister Helen, against the use of agents between the human soul and God. Simeon the Just, Hillel, Jesus, son of Sirach, and many others, like Isaiah of old, besought men to cease importuning God with offerings of incense and the blood of rams. "What is needed," they said, "is to have a pure heart and to love virtue." No one, however, succeeded in formulating this teaching in so sublime a fashion as Christ Himself. For what is pure Christianity, as revealed by Him, if not the divine aspiration towards Heaven of all men as brothers, without fetters of creed and dogma, and without intermediaries?

In the name of the Divine Messenger, Sister Helen protested against the errors of men. She reproached them with their sins and their mistakes. But though the same teachings eighteen centuries before had brought about a moral renaissance, repeated by Helen they only caused untold miseries to descend upon her head. Driven from the Church and threatened with a prison-cell, her heart grew bitter within her, and her once pure spirit was clouded over.

A vision came to her, in which she learnt that the end of the world was drawing near, Anti-Christ having already made his appearance.

"We must prepare for the Last Judgment," she declared. "All family life must be renounced, wives must leave their husbands, sisters their brothers, and children their parents. The Day of God is at hand!"

After being expelled from the convent, the beautiful Helen—for she was beautiful when she first gave herself to God—carried her sacred message to the simple-minded peasants. By them she was understood and venerated, and their admiration filled her with ecstasy.

Two priests and several other nuns were attracted by the reports of her sanctity, and came to join her. She still repeated that Anti-Christ was already upon earth, and that the end was near. One day she saw him face to face and tried to kill him, for the glory of Heaven, but he escaped. However, she remembered his appearance, and was able to describe him to her followers.

"He is no other," she said, "than Father John of Cronstadt who, although a great worker of miracles, is in fact an evil genius in the service of Satan."

And all her hearers rejoiced, and paid homage to Helen's clairvoyant powers. Their enthusiastic adulation, together with the conviction of the love Christ bore her, threw the good sister into a frenzy of intense excitement, until she, who formerly had only desired to ameliorate the lot of mankind, suddenly perceived in herself an incarnation of the divine. But she sought, nevertheless, to resist the idea, and said to her followers, "I am only a poor daughter of the Lord, and He has chosen me to spread the truth about His sufferings, and to proclaim the great punishment of mankind—the end of the world."

She spoke with such emotion that her hearers, visualising the agony to come, shed tears abundantly, and prayed and fasted. But now the prophetess had another vision, for on the night before Good Friday Christ Himself appeared to her.

"Weep not, *Helenouchka* (little Helen)," He said. "The end of the world approaches for the wicked, and for those who knew Me not—the pagans, Jews, and priests. But you, my faithful Bride, shall be saved, and all who follow you. On the day when the world is darkened and all things crumble into ruins, the true kingdom of God shall dawn for the beloved children of heaven."

Another time Helen was overcome with joy because her heavenly Spouse visited her by night.

"Dost thou not see," said the divine Lover, "with what brilliance the sun is shining, how the flowers are opening, and every face is illumined with joy? These are the 'last rays' bidding farewell to life. But thou, Helen, shalt peacefully enjoy the raptures of love. On the appointed day thy celestial Spouse, accompanied by His angels, shall come to rescue thee, and thou shalt dwell with Him three hundred years."

One of the priests who had adopted Helen's religion composed numerous hymns in her honour, and these were chanted in chorus by the believers. The opening line of one which was sung to greet her when she awoke each morning, ran as follows: "Rejoice, Saint Helen, fair Bride of Christ, rejoice!"

Poor Saint Helen! She was not allowed to enjoy her heavenly idyll for long. Just when the new religion promised consolation to so many, the believers and their prophetess were delivered up to the rigours of the justice of this world, which called down upon their heads in turn the catastrophe of the "day of judgment."

CHAPTER XXII

THE SELF-MUTILATORS

The thirst for perfection, the ardent desire to draw near to God, sometimes takes the form of an unhappy perversion of reason and common sense. The popular soul knows no hesitation when laying its offerings upon the Altar of the Good. It dares not only to flout the principles of patriotism, of family love, and of respect for the power and the dogmas of the established church, but, taking a step further, will even trample underfoot man's deepest organic needs, and actually seek to destroy the instinct of self-preservation. What even the strictest reformers, the most hardened misanthropists, would hardly dare to suggest, is accomplished as a matter of course by simple peasants in their devotion to whatever method of salvation they believe to be in accordance with God's will. Thus came into existence the self-mutilators, or *skoptzi*, victims, no doubt, of some mental aberration, some misdirected sense of duty, but yet how impressive in their earnestness!

The sect having been in existence for more than a century ought perhaps to be excluded from our present survey; but it has constantly developed, and even seemed to renew its youth, so merits consideration even if only in the latter phases of its evolution.

The *skoptzi* were allowed, at the beginning of the twentieth century, to form separate communities, and the life of these communities under quite exceptional social conditions, without love, children, marriage or family ties, offers a melancholy field for observation. Indeed, these colonies of mutilated beings, hidden in the depths of Siberia, give one a feeling as of some monstrous and unfamiliar growth, and present one of the most puzzling aspects of the religious perversions of the present age.

After being denounced and sentenced, and after performing the forced labour allotted to them—a punishment specially reserved for the members of sects considered dangerous to orthodoxy—the *skoptzi*, men and women alike, were permitted to establish their separate colonies, like those of Olekminsk and Spasskoïe.

The forced labour might cripple their limbs, but it did not weaken their faith, which blossomed anew under the open skies of Siberia, and seemed only to be intensified by their long sufferings in prison.

The martyrs who took refuge in these Siberian paradises were very numerous. It has been calculated that at the end of the nineteenth century they numbered more than sixty-five thousand, and this is probably less than the true figure, for, considering the terrible ordinances of their religion, it is not likely that they would trouble much about registering themselves for official statistics. We may safely say that in 1889 there were about twelve hundred and fifty in the neighbourhood of Yakutsk who had already accomplished their term of forced labour. They formed ten villages, and it would be difficult to specify their various nationalities, though it is known that in Spasskoïe, in 1885, there were, among seven hundred and ten members of the sect, six hundred and ninety-three Russians, one Pole, one Swede, and fifteen Finns.

To outward view their colonies were rather peculiar. Each village was built with one long, wide street, and the houses were remarkable for the solidity of their construction, for the flourishing gardens that surrounded them, and for their unusual height in this desolate land where, as a rule, nothing but low huts and hovels were to be seen. A house was shared, generally, by three or four believers, and—perhaps owing to their shattered nervous systems—they appeared to live in a state of constant uneasiness, and always kept revolvers at hand. The "brothers" occupied one side of the building, and the "sisters" the other; and while the former practised their trades, or were engaged in commerce, the women looked after the house, and led completely isolated lives. On the arrival of a stranger they would hide, and if he offered to shake hands with one of them, she would blush, saying, "Excuse me, but that is forbidden to us," and escape into the house.

The existence of the "sisters" was indeed a tragic one. Deprived of the sweetness of love or family life, without children, and at the mercy of hardened egoists, such as the *skoptzi* usually became, their sequestered lives seemed to be cut off from all normal human happiness.

According to the author of an interesting article on the *skoptzi* of Olekminsk, which appeared in 1895 in the organ of the then-existing Russian Ethnographical Society, these women were sometimes of an astonishing beauty, and when opportunity offered, as it sometimes did (their initiation not always being quite complete), they would marry orthodox settlers, and leave their so-called "brothers." Cases are on record of women acting in this way, and subsequently becoming mothers, but any such event caused tremendous agitation among the "brothers" and "sisters," similar to that provoked in ancient Rome by the spectacle of a vestal virgin failing in her duty of chastity.

Platonic unions between the self-mutilators and the Siberian peasant-women were fairly frequent, so deeply-rooted in the heart of man does the desire for a common life appear to be.

The *skoptzi* loved money for money's sake, and were considered the enemies of the working-classes. Although drawn for the most part from the Russian provinces, where ideas of communal property prevailed, they developed into rigid individualists, and would exploit even their own "brothers." Indeed they preyed upon one another to such an extent that in the village of Spasskoïe there were, among a hundred and fifty-two *skoptzi*, thirty-five without land, their portions having been seized from them by the "capitalists" of the village.

Their ranks were swelled chiefly by illiterate peasants. As to their religion, it consisted almost exclusively in the practice of a ceremony similar to that of the Valerians, the celebrated early Christian sect who had recourse to self-mutilation in order to protect themselves from the temptations of the flesh.[1]

The lot of the *skoptzi* was not a happy one, but they were upheld and consoled by their belief in the imperial origin of their faith. According to them, Selivanoff, the prophet and founder of the sect, was no other than the Tsar Peter the Third himself (1728-1762). They did not believe in his assassination by the Empress Catherine, but declared that she, discovering to what initiation he had submitted, was seized by so violent a passion of rage that she caused him to be incarcerated in the fortress of Petropavlovsk. From there they believed that he had escaped, with the help of his gaoler, Selivanoff, and had assumed the latter's name. What strengthened them in this belief was the marked favour shown by the Tsar Alexander I for Selivanoff. Alexander being naturally inclined to mysticism, was impressed by this strange character, and requested him to foretell the issue of the war with Napoleon. He was equally well disposed to the sect of Madame Tartarinoff, which closely resembled that of the self-mutilators, and, influenced by his attitude, all the Russian high officials felt themselves bound to pay court to the new religions. One of the Imperial councillors, Piletzky, who was supposed to be writing a book refuting the doctrines of the *skoptzi*, defended them, on the contrary, with such warmth that his volume—obviously inspired by the opinions of the Court—was prohibited by the Bishop Filarete as Anti-Christian.

But though they could talk volubly of the illustrious origin of their leader Selivanoff, "the second Christ," and of their "divine mother," Akoulina Ivanovna, their doctrines were in fact obscure and nebulous, and they avoided—with good reason—all religious argument. They insisted, however, upon the sacredness of their initiation ceremony—which invariably ended in deportation for life, or the delights of the prison-cell.

From the physiological point of view, the *skoptzi* resembled the Egyptian eunuchs, described by M. Ernest Godard. Those who had undergone the initiation at the age of puberty attained extraordinary maxillary and dental proportions. Giants were common among them, and there was frequently produced the same phenomenon that Darwin discovered in the animal world—enlargement of the pelvic regions.

This doctrine, which ought to have repelled the populace, attracted them irresistibly. The young, the brave, and the wealthy, in the full flower of their strength, abandoned at its call the religion of life and yoked themselves to that of death. It seemed to fascinate them. After conversion they despised all human passions and emotions, and when persecuted and hunted down they took their revenge by expressing profoundest pity for those who were powerless to accomplish the act of sacrifice which had brought them "near to divinity."

They often let this pity sway them to the extent of running into danger by preaching their "holy word" to "infidels." Like the ascetics of Ancient Judea, who left their retreats to make sudden appearances in the midst of the orgies of their contemporaries, these devotees of enforced virginity would appear among those who were disillusioned with life, and instruct them in the delights of the supreme deliverance. In their ardent desire to rescue all slaves of the flesh, some rich merchants of Moscow, who had adopted the doctrine, placed the greater part of their fortunes at the disposal of their co-religionists, and in this way the sect was enabled to extend its influence throughout Russia, and even into neighbouring countries.

At one time in Bucharest and other towns certain carriages drawn by superb horses attracted much admiration. These were some of the strange presents—the price of a still stranger baptism—with which the "Church of the Second Christ" rewarded its members!

[1] Valerius, passionate and devout at the same time, was the first to sacrifice himself thus on the altar of purity, following the example of Origen, who had used this heroic method to safeguard the virtue of the women of his *entourage*. But while Origen was rewarded for his action by the Patriarch of Jerusalem, Valerius was expelled from the church, and retired to Arabia, where his sect flourished in the third century (A.D.).

B. THE NON-SECTARIAN VISIONARIES

In addition to the sects having their prophets and leaders and a certain amount of organisation, almost every year in Russia saw—and probably still sees—the birth of many separate heresies of short duration. For instance, in one part a whole village would suddenly be seized by religious ardour, its inhabitants deserting the fields and passing their time in prayer, or in listening to the Gospel teachings as expounded to them by some "inspired" peasant. Or elsewhere, the women would all leave their husbands and depart into the forests, where in the costume of Mother Eve they would give themselves up to meditating upon the sins of humanity and the goodness of God.

On the outskirts of a village near Samara, in East Russia, a forester was one day attracted to a cabin by the resounding cries and groans that issued from it. On entering, a strange sight met his eyes—three women, completely naked, praying and weeping. They were like skeletons, and one of them died soon after being forcibly brought back to the village. In spite of all entreaties she refused to let the orthodox priest come near her, and begged that no cross should be placed over her grave.

The police searched the forest, and found several other women in a similar condition. Inquiry revealed that they had left their homes in the neighbourhood of Viatka in order to expiate the sins of their fellows. For nourishment they depended on herbs and strawberries, and prayer was their sole occupation. Their unquenchable desire was to be allowed to die "for the greater glory of Jesus Christ." They belonged to no sect, and did not believe in sacred symbols or in priests. In order to get into direct communication with God, they discarded their garments and lived in a state of nature, eating nothing but what they could find by the wayside. Thirty or forty of these women were gathered in and sent back to their homes.

The peasants of the Baltic Provinces, although better educated than those of Southern Russia, became victims of religious mania just as frequently. It was in the Pernov district that the cult of the god Tonn was brought to light. The chief function of this god was to preserve cattle and other livestock from disease, and to gain his favour the peasants brought him offerings twice a year. His statue was placed in a stable, and there his worshippers were wont to gather, praying on bended knee for the health of their cows and horses. In time, however, the statue was seized by the police, to the great grief of the peasants of the district.

In another part there dwelt a magician who was said to cure all bodily ills by the aid of the sixth and seventh books of Moses.

The tribunal of Kaschin, near Tver, once had occasion to judge a peasant named Tvorojnikoff who, as a result of his private meditations, had succeeded in evolving a new religion for himself and his friends. After working for six months in St. Petersburg as a mechanic, and studying the "vanity of human affairs," he came to the conclusion that orthodox religious observances were an invention of the priests, and that it was only necessary to believe in order to be saved.

An action was brought against him, whereupon his mother and sister, who were called as witnesses, refused to take the oath, that being "only an invention of men." Tvorojnikoff described his doubts, his sufferings, and the battle which had long raged in his soul, and declared that at last, on reaching the conclusion that "faith is the only cure," he had found happiness and peace.

"What have I done to be punished?" he demanded. "What do you want with me? Instead of sending me to prison, explain how I have sinned. Read the Gospel with me!"

But his entreaties were ignored. The "religious expert," who was present in the person of a delegate of the ecclesiastical authorities, thought it beneath his dignity to discuss eternal truths with a peasant, and the poor dreamer received a sentence of imprisonment.

The Russian legal records are full of the misdeeds of many such, whose sole crimes consisted in dreaming with all sincerity, and in spite of cruel deceptions and disappointments, of the day when man should at last attain perfection upon earth.

CHAPTER I

THE BROTHERS OF DEATH

From time to time this thirst for the ideal, this dissatisfaction with the actual, gave rise to a series of collective suicides. We may recall the celebrated propaganda of the monk Falaley, who preached that death was man's only means of salvation. He gathered his unhappy hearers in a forest, and there expounded to them the emptiness of life and the best method of escaping from it. His words bore fruit, and the simple peasants who heard them decided to have done with "this life of sin."

One night eighty-four persons congregated in an underground cavern near the river Perevozinka, and began to fast and to pray. The peasants gathered round their improvised camp, built of straw and wood, ready to die when the signal was given. But one woman, taking fright at the idea of so horrible a death, fled and warned the authorities. When the police arrived, one of the believers cried out that Anti-Christ was approaching, and the poor creatures then set fire to the camp and died—as they thought—for Christ.

A few fanatics who were saved received sentences of imprisonment and deportation, but one of them—Souchkoff—succeeded in escaping, and continued to spread "the truth of God." Whether it was his own eloquence or the misery and despair of the people that helped his doctrine, it bore at any rate such fruits that soon afterwards sixty families in one locality made up their minds to die *en masse*, believing that simple murder—the murder of the faithful by the faithful—would hasten the day of supreme deliverance. A peasant named Petroff entered the house of his neighbour, and killed the latter's wife and children, afterwards carrying his blood-stained hatchet in triumph through the village. In the barn of another a dozen peasants gathered with their wives, and the men and women laid their heads upon the block in turn, while Petroff, in the rôle of the angel of death, continued his work of deliverance. He then made his way to a hut near by where a mother and three children awaited his services, and finally, overcome with fatigue, he laid his own head on the block, and was despatched to eternal glory by Souchkoff.

But the kind of death recommended by Chadkin about the year 1860 was even more terrible. In this case it was not a question of a wave of madness that came and passed, but of the prolonged torture of death by voluntary starvation.

Chadkin's teaching was that as Anti-Christ had already come, there was nothing left to do but escape into the forests and die of hunger. When he and his adherents had reached a sufficiently isolated spot, he ordered the women to prepare death-garments, and when all were suitably arrayed, he informed them that in order to receive the heavenly grace of death, they must remain there for twelve days and nights without food or water.

Frightful were the sufferings endured by these martyrs. The cries of the children, as they writhed in agony, were heartrending, but Chadkin and his followers never wavered. At last, however, one of the sufferers, unable longer to face such tortures, managed to escape, and Chadkin, fearing the arrival of the police, decided that all the rest must die at once. They began by killing the children; next the women and the men; and by the time the police appeared on the scene there remained alive only Chadkin and two others, who had forgotten in their frenzy to put an end to themselves.

CHAPTER II

THE DIVINITY OF FATHER IVAN

It seems enough, in Russia, when a single individual is obsessed by some more or less ridiculous idea, for his whole environment to become infected by it also. The ease with which suggestions make their way into the popular mind is amazing, and this reveals its strong bias towards the inner life, the life of dreams. The actual content of the dreams is of small importance, provided that they facilitate the soul's flight to a better world, and supply some link in a chain which shall attach it more firmly to the things of eternity. Consequently, those who have any supernatural experience to relate are almost sure to find followers.

An illiterate woman named Klipikoff one day proclaimed the good news of the divinity of Father Ivan of Cronstadt. The incredulous smiles of her fellow-citizens were gradually transformed into enthusiastic expressions of belief, and Madame Klipikoff proceeded to found a school. About twenty women began to proclaim openly throughout Cronstadt that Father Ivan, the miracle-worker, was divine, and he had difficulty in repudiating the honours that the infatuated women tried to thrust upon him. According to the priestesses of this "unrecognised" cult, Father Ivan was the Saviour Himself, though he hid the fact on account of the "Anti-Christians"—that is to say, the priests and the church authorities. Those who were converted to the new doctrine placed his portrait beside that of the Divine Mother, and prayed before it. They even fell on their knees before his garments, or any articles belonging to him, and though the old man expressed horror at such idolatry, he nevertheless permitted it. One of the local papers described a ceremony that took place in one of the houses where the pilgrims, who journeyed to Cronstadt from all parts of Russia, were lodged. Father Ivan deigned to give his benediction to the three glasses of tea that the hostess proffered him, and after his departure she divided their contents among the assembled company, in return for various offerings.

There were, however, cases in which, instead of kneeling before the garments of miracle-workers or committing suicide, the visionaries strove to reach heaven by offering up the lives of their fellow-men in sacrifice.

In the law-courts of Kazan a terrible instance of one of these religious murders was brought to light. It was revealed that the inhabitants of a neighbouring village had suspended by the feet a beggar named Matiounin, and then, opening one of his veins, had drunk his blood.

There are throughout Russia many records of proceedings brought against such murderers—for instance, the tragic case of Anna Kloukin, who threw her only daughter into an oven, and offered her charred body to God; and that of a woman named Kourtin, who killed her seven-year-old son that his mortal sins might be forgiven.

The vague remembrance of Abraham, who offered up his only son, and the conviction that Anti-Christ, "born of a depraved woman, a Jewess," travels the earth in search of Christian souls—these are the most obvious motives for murders such as we have described. Their real cause sprang, however, from the misery of the people and their weariness of life.

By a kind of reaction these murders—whose perpetrators often could not be found—frequently gave rise to even stranger crimes and disturbances. Suspicion was apt to fall upon any Jews dwelling in the district, and there resulted trials, such as that of Beilis, or Jewish *pogroms* which filled the civilised world with horror.

CHAPTER III

AMONG THE MIRACLE-WORKERS

The pilgrims and "workers of miracles" who wander through Russia can always find, not only free lodging, but also opportunity for making their fortunes. Their gains mount, often, to incredible figures, and the faith and piety that they diffuse have both good and bad aspects. There are places, for instance, like Cronstadt, which, at one time inhabited mainly by drunkards, became before the war a "holy town." Apart from Father Ivan and his peculiar reputation, there were hundreds of other pilgrims who, though quite unknown on their arrival, soon gained there a lucrative notoriety.

One of these was the *staretz* (ancient) Anthony, who in three or four years amassed a considerable fortune. His popularity attracted representatives of all classes of society. People wrote for appointments in advance, and went in order of precedence as to a fashionable doctor. It was quite

common to have to wait ten or fifteen days for the desired interview. In Petrograd, where the population belonged half to the twentieth and half to the sixteenth century, Anthony was quite the mode. The *salons* literally seized upon him, and, flattered and fondled, he displayed his rags in the carriages of fashionable women of the world, while the mob, touched by the spectacle of his acknowledged holiness, gave him enthusiastic ovations. His journey from Petrograd to Cronstadt was a triumphal progress. The crowds pressed around him and he walked among them barefooted, in spite of this being expressly forbidden by law. Finally, however, the police were roused, and one fine day he set forth at the government's expense for the "far-off lands"—of Siberia.

Cronstadt, town of drunkards and of miracle-workers *par excellence*, boasted about two hundred *staretz*. The most famous among them were the four brothers Triasogolovy—Hilarion, James, Ivan and Wasia.

The crowds, who had formerly visited Cronstadt only on Father Ivan's account, became ever greater, and were divided up among the various saints of the town, one of the most popular being Brother James, who undertook to exorcise demons.

His methods were simple. A woman once came to him, begging to be delivered from the numerous evil spirits that had taken possession of her soul. In view of their numbers, Brother James felt it necessary to have recourse to heroic measures. He rained blows upon the penitent, who emitted piercing shrieks, and as this took place in the hotel where the "holy man" was living, the servants intervened to put an end to the sufferings of the "possessed" one. But Brother James, carried away by enthusiasm in a good cause, continued to scourge the demons until the woman, unable to bear more, broke the window-pane and leapt into the street. Crowds gathered, and the Brother, turning to them, prophesied that shortly he would be—arrested! Thereupon the police made their appearance and removed him to the lock-up, and the crowds dispersed, filled with admiration for Brother James, who not only coped with demons, but actually foretold the evil that they would bring upon him.

In addition to the genuine visionaries, there were many swindlers who took advantage of the popular credulity. Such was the famous pilgrim Nicodemus, who travelled throughout Russia performing miracles. In the end the police discovered that he was really a celebrated criminal who had escaped from prison.

But Nicodemus was, as a matter of fact, better than his reputation, for, in granting absolution for large numbers of sins, his charges were relatively small. He is said to have assured whole villages of eternal forgiveness for sums of from twenty to a hundred roubles.

Frequently some out-of-work cobbler would leave his native village and set forth on a pilgrimage in the character of a *staretz*; or some "medical officer," unable to make a living out of his drugs, would establish himself as a miracle-worker and promptly grow rich. When one *staretz* disappeared, there were always ten new ones to take his place, and the flood mounted to such an extent that the authorities were often powerless to cope with it. Persecution seemed only to increase the popular hysteria, and caused the seekers after truth to act as though intoxicated, seeing themselves surrounded by a halo of martyrdom.

C. THE RISING FLOOD

CHAPTER I

THE MAHOMETAN VISIONARIES

The flood of religious mania reached even beyond the borders of European Russia, and its effects were seen as much among the followers of other religions as among the Christians.

Mahometanism, although noted for its unshakable fidelity to the dogmas of Mahomet, did not by any means escape the mystic influences by which it was surrounded. To take one example from among many: in the month of April, 1895, a case of religious mania which had broken out among the Mahometan inhabitants of the south of Russia was brought before the law-courts at Kazan. It concerned a set of Tartars called the *Vaisoffzi*, which had been founded in 1880 by a man named *Vaisoff*, whose existence was revealed in unexpected fashion. A lawyer having called at his house, at the request of one of his creditors, Vaisoff showed him the door, explaining that he did not consider himself under any obligation "to repay what had been given to him." The other returned later, however,

accompanied by several policemen, and Vaisoff's adherents then attacked the latter, while chanting religious hymns and proclaiming the greatness of their leader. They next barricaded themselves into the house, which was besieged by the police for some days, during which prayers issued from it towards heaven and stones towards the representatives of the law. Finally the rebels were overpowered, and sentenced to several years' imprisonment.

The police had a similar experience on another occasion when they tried to arrest one of the *Vaisoftzi*, but in the end they got the upper hand, and several Tartars were delivered up to justice.

After being judged and sentenced, they presented themselves before the Court of Appeal, but when the usual questions were put to them, all began to pray and sing loudly. Silence was at last reestablished, and the judge again asked one of them for his name and profession. "Who are you, that you should question me?" was the reply, and once again all chanted together in chorus. The Tartars who had crowded into the court seemed deeply impressed by this attitude, and the judge thought it well to dismiss the prisoners while the case was considered. They were brought back to hear the sentence, and again began to sing their prayers and hymns, while one of them cried out: "I am the chief of the heavenly regiment; I am the representative of Vaisoff upon earth; and you, who are you that you should take upon yourself the right to judge me?" The others then calmly continued their interrupted song to the Lord, but they were all condemned to a period of forced labour, and their spokesman, in addition, to twenty-five strokes with the birch.

CHAPTER II

THE RELIGION OF THE POLAR MARSEILLAIS

Let us now travel to the extreme north, to the land where dwell the Yakuts, the Marseillais of the Polar regions. Living a life of gay and careless vagabondage in this snowy world, they took part in one of the most characteristic episodes of the general religious upheaval.

At Guiguiginsk, a straggling village on the borders of the Arctic Ocean, lived a Yakut tribe already converted to Christianity. Their new faith had not in any way modified the happy-go-lucky nature of the inhabitants of this frozen land; neither had it in any way clarified their religious conceptions. "There are many gods," said they, "but Nicholas is the chief"—and no matter how miserable their life, they danced and sang, remembering no doubt how in their ancient home in the far-off south, their ancestors also sang, filling the whole world with their gaiety. Theirs was a fine climate and a fine country! The sun often shone, the grass grew high, and the snow only lasted for six months in the year. So everyone talked and danced and sang. There were orators who held forth for whole days; there were dancers who danced for weeks and weeks. From father to son these two ruling passions have been handed down even to the Yakuts of the present day. Now, as in former times—as when Artaman of Chamalga "so sang with his whole soul that the trees shed their leaves and men lost their reason"—the Yakuts sing, and their songs disturb the "spirits," who crowd around the singer and make him unhappy. But he sings on, nevertheless; though the whole order of nature be disturbed, still he sings.

Now, as in former times, the Yakut believes in "the soul of things," and seeks for it everywhere. Every tree has a soul, every plant, every object; even his hammer, his house, his knife, and his window. But beyond these there is *Ai-toen*, the supreme, abstract soul of all things, the incarnation of being, which is neither good nor bad, but just *is*—and that suffices. Far from concerning himself with the affairs of this world, *Ai-toen* looks down upon them from the seventh heaven, and—leaves them alone. The country is full of "souls" and "spirits," which appear constantly, and often incarnate in the shadows of men. "Beware of him who has lost his shadow," say the Yakuts, for such a one is thought to be dogged by misfortune, which is always ready to fall upon him unawares. Even the children are forbidden to play with their shadows.

Those who desire to see spirits must go to the *Shamans*, of whom there are only four great ones, but plenty of others sufficiently powerful to heal the sick, swallow red-hot coals, walk about with knives sticking into their bodies—and above all to rejoice the whole of nature with their eloquence. For the Yakuts consider that there is nothing more sacred than human speech, nothing more admirable than an eloquent discourse. When a Yakut speaks, no one interrupts him. They believe that in the spoken word justice and happiness are to be found, and in their intense sociability they dread isolation, desiring always to be within reach of the sound of human voices. By the magic of words, an orator can enslave whole villages for days, weeks and months, the population crowding round him, neglecting all its usual

occupations, and listening to his long discourses with unwearied rapture.

Sirko Sierowszewski, who spent twelve years in the midst of these people, studying them closely, affirms in his classic work on the Yakuts (published in 1896 by the Geographical Society of St. Petersburg) that their language belongs to a branch of the Turko-Tartar group, and contains from ten to twelve thousand words. It holds, in the Polar countries, a position similar to that held by the French tongue in the rest of the world, and may be described as the French of the Arctic regions. The Yakuts are one of the most curious races of the earth, and one of the least known, in spite of the hundreds of books and pamphlets already published about them. Their young men frequently appear as students at the University of Tomsk, though they are separated from this source of civilisation by more than three thousand miles of almost impassable country. The journey takes from fifteen months to two years, and they frequently stop *en route* in order to work in the gold mines, to make money to pay for their studies. These are the future regenerators of the Yakut country.

About thirty years ago there arrived among these care-free children of nature a Russian functionary, a sub-prefect, who took up his residence at Guiguiguinsk, on the shores of the Arctic Sea. He was a tremendous talker, though it is impossible to say whether this was the result of his desire to found a new religious sect, or whether the sect was the result of his passion for talking. At any rate, he harangued the populace indefatigably, and they gathered from all quarters to listen to the orator of the Tsar, and were charmed with him.

In one of his outpourings he declared that he was none other than Nicholas, the principal god of the whole country, and his listeners, who had never before beheld any but "little gods," were filled with enthusiasm at the honour thus bestowed upon their particular district. The sub-prefect ended by believing his own statements, and accepted in all good faith the homage that was paid to him, in spite of Christianity. A writer named Dioneo, in a book dealing with the extreme north-east of Siberia, tells us that even the local priest himself was finally converted, and that after a year or so the Governor of Vladivostock, who had heard rumours, began to grow uneasy about his subordinate, and despatched a steamer to Guiguiguinsk to find out what had become of him. Upon arrival the captain hastened to fulfil his mission, but the people suspected that some danger threatened their "god" and took steps to hide him, assuring the inquirers that he had gone away on a visit and would not return for a long time. As navigation is only possible in those parts for a few weeks in the year, the captain was obliged to return to Vladivostock. Another year passed, and still there was no news of the sub-prefect. The captain returned to Guiguiguinsk, and having received the same reply as before to his inquiries, made pretence of departure. He came back, however, the next day, and with his sailors, appeared unexpectedly among the Yakuts.

An unforgettable spectacle met their eyes.

The little town was *en fête*, church bells ringing, songs and reports of firearms intermingling. Great bonfires flamed along the seashore, and a solemn procession was passing through the streets. Seated on a high throne in a carriage, the sub-prefect, the "great god" of Guiguiguinsk, was haranguing the crowds, with partridges' wings, ribbons, tresses of human hair and other ornaments dear to the Yakuts, dangling round his neck. To his carriage were harnessed eight men, who drew it slowly through the town, while around it danced and sang *shamans* and other miracle-workers, accompanying themselves on tambourines. Thus did the believers in the new religion celebrate the happy escape of their "god" from danger.

The appearance of the captain and his armed men produced a sensation. The "great god" was seized and carried off, and forced to submit, subsequently, to all kinds of humiliations.

CHAPTER III

THE RELIGION OF THE GREAT CANDLE

On the outskirts of Jaransk, in the Viatka district, a race called the *Tcheremis* has dwelt from time immemorial. While Russian scholars, like Smirnov, were employed in unveiling all the mysteries of their past, the authorities were endeavouring to imbue them with Russian conceptions of religion and government. But these people were not easily persuaded to walk in the right way, and from time to time there arose violent differences of opinion between them and the representatives of officialdom.

In 1890, at the time of the Scientific and Industrial Exhibition at Kazan, an appeal was made to the

Tcheremis to send some objects of anthropological and ethnographical interest. They responded by sending those representing their religion, for, having rejected orthodoxy, they wished the beauties of their "new faith" to be admired. They therefore exhibited at Kazan large spoons and candles, drums that were used to summon the people to religious ceremonies, and various other articles connected with their mysterious beliefs, and the Committee of the Exhibition awarded them a medal for "a collection of invaluable objects for the study of the pagan religion of the Tcheremis."

The natives, knowing nothing of the complicated organisation of scientific awards, simply concluded that the medal had been given to them because their religion was the best, and the leader of their community wore it round his neck, and recounted everywhere how "out of all the religions that had been examined at Kazan, only that of the 'Great Candle' had been found to be perfect." All the believers rejoiced over the prestige thus won by their faith, and a wave of religious ecstasy swept over the country. Three of the fathers of the church affixed copies of the medal to their front doors, with the inscription: "This was given by the Tsar to the best of all religions," and the people made merry, and gave themselves up to the bliss of knowing that they had found the true and only way of salvation, as acknowledged by the representatives of the Tsar himself.

Poor creatures! They were not aware of the contents of Article 185 of the Russian criminal code, which ordained that the goods of all who abandoned the orthodox faith should be confiscated, until they expressed repentance and once more acknowledged the holy truths of the official church. So it came about that in spite of the triumph of their religion at the Exhibition of Kazan, legal proceedings began, and in 1891 and 1892, as many as fourteen actions were brought against the adepts of the Great Candle, and numbers of them were sentenced to imprisonment and to the confiscation of their goods. All this in spite of the fact that their beliefs did not in any way threaten to undermine the foundations of society.

"There are six religions contained in the books which the Tsar has given to his people"—they said, when brought before the tribunal—"and there is a seventh oral religion, that of the Tcheremis. The seventh recognises neither the sacraments nor the gospel. It glorifies God in person, and the faith which has been handed down from father to son. It has been given to the Tcheremis *exclusively*, because they are a poor, unlettered people, and cannot afford to keep up priests and churches. They call it the religion of the Great Candle, because in their ceremonies a candle about two yards in length is used; and they consider Friday a holiday because on it are ended the prayers which they begin to say on Wednesday."

When questioned by the judge, the accused complained that the orthodox clergy expected too many sacrifices from them, and charged them heavily for marriages and burials, this being their reason for returning to "the more merciful religion of their forefathers."

According to the *Journal of the Religious Consistory of the Province of Viatka*, the Tcheremis were guilty of many other crimes. They did not make the sign of the cross, and refused to allow their children to be baptised or their dead to be buried with the rites of the orthodox church. Truly there is no limit to the heresies of men, even as there is none to the mercies of heaven! Further, the missionaries complained with horror that, in addition to seven principal religions, the Tcheremis acknowledged seventy-seven others, in accordance with the division of humanity into seventy-seven races.

"It is God," they said, "who has thus divided humanity, even as He has divided the trees. As there are oaks, pines and firs, so are there different religions, all of heavenly origin. But that of the Tcheremis is the best. . . . The written Bible, known to all men, has been falsified by the priests, but the Tcheremis have an oral Bible, which has been handed down intact, even as it was taught to their forbears by God. . . . The Tsar is the god of earth, but he has nothing to do with religion, which is not of this world."

The prayers of these dangerous heretics, who were punished like common criminals, mirror the innocence of their souls. They implored God to pardon all their sins, great and small; to grant good health to their cattle and their children. They thanked Him for all His mercies, prayed for the Tsar and all the Imperial family, for the soldiers, for the civil authorities, and for all honest men; and finally for the dead "who now labour in their celestial kingdom."

The tribunal, however, implacably brought the law to bear upon them, and thinking their punishment too great for their crimes, they had recourse to the Court of Appeal, where they begged to be judged "according to the good laws of the Tsar, not the bad ones of the Consistory." But the sentence was ratified, and the religion of the Great Candle procured for its followers the martyrdom that they had so little desired.

CHAPTER IV

THE NEW ISRAEL

Although most of the sects of which we have spoken sprang from the orthodox church, the *molokanes* and the *stoundists* were indirect fruits of the Protestant church, and even among the Jews there were cases of religious mania to be found.

Leaving out of account the *karaitts* of Southern Russia, formerly the *frankists*—who ultimately became good Christians—we may remark from time to time some who rejected the articles of the Jewish faith, and even accepted the divinity of Christ. Such a one was Jacques Preloker, founder of the "new Israel," a Russian-Jew philosopher who discovered the divine sermon on the Mount eighteen hundred and seventy-eight years after it had been delivered. This was the beginning of a revolution of his whole religious thought, which resulted in 1879 in the founding of a new sect at Odessa. The philosopher desired an intimate relationship with the Christian faith, and dreamed of the supreme absorption of the Jewish Church into that of Christ. In his new-found adoration for the Christian Gospel, he tried by every means in his power to lessen the distance between it and Judaism, but, though some were attracted by his ardour, many were repelled by the boldness of his conceptions.

Towards the end of his life, the bankrupt philosopher, still dignified and serious, although fallen from the height of his early dreams, made his appearance on the banks of the Thames, and there endeavoured to continue his propaganda and to explain to an unheeding world the beauties of the Jewish-Christian religion.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

It is as difficult to pick out the most characteristic traits of the innumerable Russian sects as it is to describe the contours of clouds that fleet across the sky. Their numbers escape all official reckoning and the variety of their beliefs renders classification very difficult. In these pages the sectarian organism has been presented in its most recent and most picturesque aspects, and its chief characteristic seems to be that it develops by a process of subdivision. Each existing sect divides itself up into various new ones, and these again reproduce themselves by breaking apart, like the first organisms in which life was manifested on the earth. Every separated portion of the parent becomes an offspring resembling the parent, and the number of divisions increases in proportion to the number of adherents. As in the protozoa, multiplication commences with a mechanical rupture, and with the passage of time and the influence of outside elements, the sects thus born undergo visible modifications. By turns sublime or outrageous, simple or depraved, they either aspire heavenwards or debase the human spirit to the level of its lowest passions.

Making common use of the truths of the Gospel revelations, they include every phase of modern social life in their desire for perfection. Liberty, equality, wealth, property, marriage, taxes, the relation between the State and the individual, international peace, and the abolition of arms—all these things, even down to the very food we eat, become the prey of their reformatory ardour.

The sects that abound in Anglo-Saxon countries do little but copy one another in evolving new and amazing variations of Bible interpretation. Confined within these limits, they rarely even touch upon the serious problems that lie outside the text of the Gospels, and we might say of them as Swift said of the religious sects of his day—"They are only the same garments more or less embroidered."

But the Russian sects vividly reveal to us the secret dreams and aspirations of millions of simple and honest men, who have not yet been infected by the doctrinal diseases of false science or confused philosophy; and further, they permit us to study the manifestation in human life of some new and disquieting conceptions. In their depths we may see reflected the melancholy grandeur and goodness of the national soul, its sublime piety, and its thirst for ideal perfection, which sometimes uplifts the humble in spirit to the dignity and self-abnegation of a Francis of Assisi.

The mysticism which is so deep-rooted in the Russian national consciousness breaks out in many different forms. Not only poets and writers, painters and musicians, philosophers and moralists, but

statesmen, socialists and anarchists are all impregnated with it—and even financiers and economic reformers.

Tolstoi, when he became a sociologist and moralist, was an eloquent example of the mental influence of environment; for his teachings which so delighted—or scandalised, as the case might be—the world, were merely the expression of the dreams of his fellow-countrymen. So was it also with the lofty thoughts of the philosopher Soloviev, the *macâbre* tales of Dostoïevsky, the realistic narratives of Gogol, or the popular epics of Gorky and Ouspensky.

The doctrines of Marx took some strange shapes in the Russian *milieu*. Eminently materialistic, they were there re clothed in an abstract and dogmatic idealism—in fact, Marxism in Russia was transformed into a religion. The highly contestable laws of material economics, which usually reduce the chief preoccupations of life to a miserable question of wages or an abominable class-war, there gained the status of a veritable Messianic campaign, and the triumphant revolution, imbued with these dogmas, strove to bring the German paradox to an end, even against the sacred interests of patriotism. The falling away of the working-classes and of the soldiers, which so disconcerted the world, was really nothing but the outer effect of their inner aspirations. Having filled out the hollow Marxian phraseology with the mystic idealism of their own dreams, having glimpsed the sublime brotherhood which would arise out of the destruction of the inequality of wages and incomes, they quite logically scorned to take further part in the struggle of the nations for independence. Of what import to them was the question of Teutonic domination, or the political future of other races?

It is much the same with the peasant class. The partition of the land is their most sacred dogma, and they can scarcely imagine salvation without it. This materialistic demand, embellished by the dream of social equality, has become a religion. Mysticism throws round it an aureole of divine justice, and the difficulty—or the impossibility—of such a gigantic spoliation of individuals for the sake of a vague ideal, has no power to deter them.

The land—so they argue—belongs to the Lord, and the unequal way in which it is divided up cannot be according to His desire. The kingdom of heaven cannot descend upon earth until the latter is divided among her children, the labourers.

The far-off hope of victory faded before these more immediate dreams, and the continuation of a war which seemed to involve their postponement became hateful to the dreamers; while the emissaries of Germany took advantage of this state of affairs to create an almost impassable gap between the few who were clear-sighted and the mass who were blinded by visions.

The extreme rebelliousness which characterises the Russian religious visionaries is manifested to an almost equal extent by all political parties and their leaders. Consequently the spirit of unity which prevailed (during the war) in other countries met with insuperable difficulties in Russia.

The whole nation seems to have been driven, by the long suppression of free thought and belief, added to the miseries brought about by the old régime, to take refuge in unrealities, and this has resulted in a kind of deformity of the national soul. It was a strange irony that even the aristocracy should end by falling victim to its own environment. Exploited by miracle-mongers, thrown off its balance by paroxysms of so-called mysticism, it disappeared from view in a welter of practices and beliefs that were perverse and childish even at their best.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

It seems appropriate to call attention here to an article from the pen of Prince Eugène Troubetzkoy, Professor of Law at the University of Moscow, which appeared in the *Hibbert Journal* for January, 1920. Writing apparently in the autumn of 1919, the Prince declared that the civil war then in progress in Russia was "accompanied by a spiritual conflict no less determined and portentous," and pointed out that the doctrine of Bolshevism was a deliberate distortion of Marxism, *immediate revolution* having been substituted by the Bolsheviks for the *evolution* preached by Marx. He went on to say that one of the most striking characteristics of Bolshevism was its pronounced hatred of religion, and especially of Christianity, the ideal of a life beyond death being "diametrically opposed to the ideal of Bolshevism, which tempts the masses by promising *the immediate realisation of the earthly paradise*." And, Bolshevism's practical method for realising its Utopia being "the armed conflict of classes . . . the dream of the earthly paradise, to be brought into being through civil war, becomes instantly the reality

of hell let loose." After dwelling in detail on various aspects of the situation, the writer makes some statements which will be of special interest to readers of M. Finot's study of pre-war religious conditions in Russia. He speaks of the growth of unbelief among the masses, and declares that "the empty triumph of Bolshevism would have been impossible but for the utter enfeeblement of the religious life of the nation"; but—and this is the point of interest—"thanks to the persecutions which the revolution has set on foot, there has come into being a genuine religious revival. . . . The Church, pillaged and persecuted, lost all the material advantages it had hitherto enjoyed: in return, the loss of all these relative values was made good by the absolute value of spiritual independence. . . . This it is that explains the growing influence of the Church on the masses of the people: the blood of the new martyrs won their hearts. . . . These awful sufferings are becoming a source of new power to religion in Russia." The Prince then describes the complete reorganisation of the church which was carried through at Moscow in 1917-18, and the restoration of the patriarchal power in the person of the Archbishop Tykone (now Patriarch), a man of great personal courage, high spirituality, and remarkable sweetness of disposition. The people rallied round him in enormous numbers, attracted by his courageous resistance to the Bolshevik movement—(a resistance which had then frequently endangered his life, and may since have ended it)—and by his determined avoidance of all pomp and ostentation. In the great religious processions which took place at that time, hundreds of thousands passed before him, but he had no bishops and very few clergy in his retinue, only one priest and one deacon. When urged to adopt more ceremony and display in his public appearances, he replied, "For the love of God, don't make an idol of me." He was always ready with a humorous word, and filled with a serene and unshakable confidence, even in the most dangerous situations. The people looked upon him as "Holy Russia" personified, and said that "the persecutors who would have buried her for ever had brought her back to life."

In an appendix to the above-quoted article appears a statement "from a responsible British source in Siberia" to the effect that "a strong religious movement has begun among the laity and clergy of the Russian Church. . . . The *moujiks* are convinced that Lenin is Anti-Christ;" and an urgent appeal for Russian Testaments and Bibles to be sent from England, the writer having been told by a prominent ecclesiastic that "Russian Bibles are now almost unprocurable."

Thus, having long revolted from orthodoxy in the day of its material prosperity, the masses seem, in the day of adversity, to be returning to it. Further developments may, of course, take place in almost any direction, but we may rest assured of one thing—that no changes of government, however drastic, will ever succeed in stamping out the mystical religious strain which is so deeply embedded in the soul of the Russian people.

PART II

THE SALVATION OF THE WEALTHY

A. RELIGION AND ECONOMY

CHAPTER I

THE MORMONS, OR LATTER-DAY SAINTS

In the American of the United States there exist two distinctly opposed natures: the one positive and practical, the other inclined to mysticism. The two do not clash, but live, on the contrary, on perfectly good terms with one another. This strange co-existence of reality and vision is explained by the origin of the race.

The American is, to a very great extent, a descendant of rigorous Puritanism. The English, who preponderated in numbers over the other elements of the European immigration into North America, never forgot that they had been the comrades of Penn or of other militant sectarians, and never lost the habit of keeping the Bible, the ledger, and the cash-book side by side. They remained deeply attached to their religion, which they looked upon as a social lever, although for many of them their faith did not go beyond a conviction of the immanence of the supernatural in human life. Thus it was that their spirits were often dominated by a belief in miracles, all the more easily because their intellectual culture was not always as highly developed as their business ability, and consequently the clever manufacturers of religious wonders were able to reap incredible harvests among them.

There is perhaps no country where the seed sown by propagandists springs up more rapidly, where an idea thrown to the winds finds more surely a fertile soil in which to grow. A convinced and resolute man, knowing how to influence crowds by authoritative words, gestures and promises, can always be certain of attracting numerous followers. In America the conditions are without doubt propitious for the founders of new religions.

I

How is a new religion started in the United States? Joe Smith wakes up one morning with the thought that the hour has come for him to perform miracles, that he is called thereto by the Divine Will, that the existence and the secret hiding-place of a new Bible printed on sheets of gold have been revealed to him by an angel, and that its discovery will be the salvation of the world. He proclaims these things and convinces those who hear him, and the Book of the Mormons which he produces becomes sacred in the eyes of his followers.

In ever-increasing numbers they hasten first to Illinois, then to Utah; and when Brigham Young, Smith's successor, presents the Mormon colony with religious and political laws which are a mixture of Christianity, Judaism and Paganism, and include the consecration of polygamy, they found a church which claims more than a hundred thousand adherents, and is ruled by twelve apostles, sixty patriarchs, about three thousand high priests, fifteen hundred bishops, and over four thousand deans.

After being dissolved by the decree of the 10th of October, 1888, the Church of the Latter-Day Saints seemed to be lost, without hope of revival. The State of Utah, where Brigham Young had established it in 1848, was invaded by ever-growing numbers of "Gentiles," who were hostile to the Mormons, but these latter, far from allowing the debris of their faith to bestrew the shores of the Great Salt Lake, succeeded, on the contrary, in strengthening the foundations of the edifice that they had raised. The number of its adherents increased, and the colony became more flourishing than ever. If, at one time, it was possible to speak of its dying agonies, those who visit it to-day cannot deny the fact of its triumphant resurrection.

Two principal causes have been its safeguard: the firm and practical working-out of the economic and philanthropic principles upon which its organisation has always rested, and the resolute devotion and capability of those who direct it as the heads of one great family. Every member is concerned to maintain the regular and effective functioning of its mechanism, and all work for the same ends in a spirit of religious co-operation.

We must not lose sight of the fact that in addition to the elements they borrowed from Buddhism, Christianity, Gnosticism and Islam, the Mormons introduced into their new Gospel a social ideal inspired by the Communistic experiments of the first half of the nineteenth century. The founders of Mormonism—Joseph Smith, Heber Kimball, George Smith, the brothers Pratt, Reuben Hedlock, Willard Richards, and Brigham Young—were not visionaries, but men risen from the people who desired to acquire wealth while at the same time bringing wealth to those who took part in their schemes. We find in their doctrine, and in their legal and religious codes, not only the idea of multiple union claimed by *Enfantin* and his forty disciples of *Ménilmontant*, but also the theories of *Buchez*, who desired to free labour from the servitude of wages, to bring about solidarity of production, and to communalise capital, after first setting aside an inalienable reserve. They followed the example of *Cabet* in making fraternity, which should guarantee division of goods, the corner-stone of their social structure, and, avoiding the delusions of *Considerant* and other Communists, they brought about, stage by stage, the rapid and lasting development which has characterised their successive establishments in Missouri, Illinois, and on the borders of California.

II

Militant as well as constructive, the Mormon leaders, like many other reformers, believed themselves to be charged with a mission from on high, and were quick to condemn as rebels all who failed to rally to the standard of the "Latter-Day Saints." Joe Smith was not content with making thousands of converts, but, after having turned his colony at Independence into an "Arsenal of the Lord," and surrounding himself with a veritable army, he proclaimed that, as the Bible gave the saints empire over all the earth, the whole State of Missouri should be incorporated in his "New Jerusalem." The "Gentiles" replied with a declaration of war, and Joe Smith and his twelve apostles were seized, publicly flogged, divested of their garments, tarred and feathered, and chased out of the State with shouts and laughter and a hail of stones.

The Mormons took up arms. The Governor of Missouri called out the militia. Vanquished in the encounter that followed, the Mormons had to abandon all their possessions and take flight. They then

founded a town called Far West, and remained there for three years, at the end of which time fresh aggressions and more battles drove them out of the State of Missouri into that of Illinois, where they built the large town of Nauvoo. Many thousands of fresh recruits were won over, but once again their designs for the acquisition of land—as well as of souls—stirred up a crusade against them. Joe Smith and the other leaders of the sect were taken prisoners and shot—a procedure which endowed Mormonism with all the sacredness of martyrdom. To escape further persecutions, the Saints decided on a general exodus, and the whole sect, men and women, old people and children, numbering in all about eighty thousand souls, set forth into the desert.

It was a miserable journey. They were attacked by Red Indians, and decimated by sickness; they strayed into wrong paths where no food was to be found; they were buried in snowdrifts; and many of them perished. But the others, sustained by an invulnerable faith, and by the undying courage of their leaders, pushed on ever further and further, until in the summer of 1847, after the cruel hardships of a journey on foot over nearly three hundred leagues of salt plains, the head of the column reached the valley of the great Salt Lake. Here Brigham Young's strategic vision beheld a favourable situation for the re-establishment of the sect. He himself, with a hundred and forty-three of his companions—the elite of the church—directed the construction of the beginnings of the colony, and then returned to those who had been left behind, bringing back a caravan of about three thousand to the spot where the New Jerusalem was to be built.

It was given the name of Utah, and Filmore, the President of the United States, appointed Brigham Young as governor. The latter, however, desired to become completely autonomous. He was soon in conflict with those under him, and his open hostility to the American constitution caused him to be deposed. His successor, Colonel Stepton, finding the situation untenable, resigned almost at once, and the Mormons, recovering their former militancy and independence, then sought to free themselves altogether from the guardianship of America, and to be sole masters in their own territory. In order to reduce them to submission, President Buchanan sent them a new governor in 1857 with some thousands of soldiers. The Mormons resisted for some time, and finally demanded admittance into the Union. Not only did Congress refuse this request, but it passed a law rendering all polygamists liable to be brought before the criminal courts. The War of Secession, however, interrupted the measures taken against the sect, which remained neutral during the military operations of the North and South. Brigham Young, who had remained the Mormons' civil and religious head, occupied himself only with the economic and worldly extension of his church, until in 1870, five years after the termination of the war, the attention of Congress was once more directed towards him. For the second time the Mormons were forbidden by law to practise polygamy, under penalty of deportation from America, but they resisted energetically and refused to obey. Defying the governor of Utah, General Scheffer, they rallied fanatically round Brigham Young, who was arraigned and acquitted—and the Mormon Church remained ruler of the colony.

After Young's death, government was carried on jointly by the twelve apostles, until on October 17th, 1901, George Smith was elected universal President of all branches.

A Frenchman, Jules Rémy, who visited the Mormons some time back, has given a striking description of them:—

"Order, peace and industry are revealed on every side. All these people are engaged in useful work, like bees in a hive, thus justifying the emblem on the roof of their President's palace. There are masons, carpenters, and gardeners, all carrying out their respective duties; blacksmiths busy at the forge, reapers gathering in the harvest, furriers preparing rich skins, children picking maize, drovers tending their flocks, wood-cutters returning heavily loaded from the mountains. Others again are engaged in carding and combing wool, navvies are digging irrigation canals, chemists are manufacturing saltpetre and gunpowder, armourers are making or mending firearms. Tailors, shoemakers, bricklayers, potters, millers, sawyers—every kind of labourer or artisan is here to be found. There are no idlers, and no unemployed. Everybody, from the humblest convert up to the bishop himself, is occupied in some sort of manual labour. It is a curious and interesting sight—a society so industrious and sober, so peaceful and well-regulated, yet built up of such divers elements drawn from such widely differing classes. . . .

All these people, born in varied and often contradictory faiths, brought up for the most part in ignorance and prejudice, having lived, some virtuously, some indifferently, some in complete abandonment to their lowest animal instincts, differing among themselves as to climate, language, customs, tastes and nationality, are here drawn together to live in a state of harmony far more perfect than that of ordinary brotherhood. In the centre of the American continent they form a new and compact nation, with independent social and religious laws, and are as little subject to the United States government that harbours them as to that, for instance, of the Turks."

Such they were, and such they have remained, ever developing their activities and industries, and—

as another traveller has said—having no aim save that of turning their arid and uncultivated "Promised Land" into a fertile Judea—an aim in which they have marvellously succeeded.

III

Mormonism owes its success chiefly to its practical interpretation of the Communistic ideals, and to its determination to encourage labour by means of religion and patriotism, setting before it as object the satisfaction of each individual's social needs, under the direction of those who have proved themselves capable and vigilant and worthy of confidence. It is a republic from which are banished the two most usual causes of social collapse—idleness and egotism; a hive, according to its founder, in which each bee, having his particular function, is always under the eye of those who direct individual activities in the interests of collective welfare. The President of the Mormon Church is its moving spirit. He surveys it as a whole, encourages or moderates its energies, according to circumstances, preserves order and regularity, and exercises his paternal influence over every cell of the hive, giving counsel when needed, redressing grievances, preventing false moves, yet leaving to every corporation not only its administrative freedom but its own powers for industrial extension.

Under these conditions the Church of the Latter-Day Saints unites the social and economic advantages of individual and collective labour. The corporations are like stitches that form a net, holding together through community of interests and a general desire for prosperity, yet each having its own separate formation and the power to enlarge itself and increase its activities without compromising the others or lessening their respective importance. One of the most remarkable is the "Mercantile Co-operative Society of Sion," the central department of wholesale and retail trade. It was founded in 1863 by Brigham Young, who was its first president, and is in direct relationship with the Mormon colonies all over the world, having a capital fund of more than a million dollars which belongs exclusively to the Mormons. Its organisation, like that of all Mormon institutions, is based upon the deduction of a tithe of all profits, which practically represents income tax. The "Sugar Corporation" has an even larger capital, and was founded directly by the church through the advice of Brigham Young, who recommended that Mormon industries should be patronised to the exclusion of all others. The salt industry also is of much importance, the Inland Crystal Salt Company having at great expense erected elaborate machinery in order to work the salt marshes around the Great Lake, and to obtain, under the best possible conditions, grey salt which is converted into white in their refineries. Other corporations under the presidency of the supreme head of the Mormon Church are the "Consolidated Company of Railway Carriages and Engines," the "Sion Savings Bank," the "Co-operative Society for Lighting and Transport," and the chief Mormon paper, the *Desert Evening News*, which is the official organ of the church, and has a considerable circulation.

IV

These corporations are not only commercial or industrial institutions, but are animated by a spirit that is pre-eminently fraternal. Their heads are concerned with the well-being of every member, and material, moral or intellectual assistance is given to all according to their needs.

To each corporation is attached a "delegate," whose functions do not appear to be of great importance, but who renders, in reality, services of considerable value. The man who holds this post is one of unimpeachable honesty and integrity, with a kind and conciliatory disposition, chosen for these qualities to act as intermediary between the bishop and the "saints" of all classes, from the highest to the lowest. He has free entry into the Mormon homes, and is always ready to give advice and counsel to any member of the church in his district; and he even penetrates into the houses of the Gentiles, wherever a Mormon, man or woman, may happen to be employed. Take, for instance, the case of a young Scandinavian servant-girl, living with "unbelievers." The mother, who had remained in Europe, wished to rejoin her daughter, but the girl had not been able to raise more than a third of the sum necessary to pay the expenses of the journey. The delegate took note of this and referred the case to the bishop, who, after inquiry, sent the old mother the required amount.

Again, two neighbours might be disputing over the question of the boundary between their respective properties. The delegate would do all in his power to settle the affair amicably, and to restore harmony; and failing in this would bring the two parties concerned before the bishop. Or there might be an invalid requiring medicine and treatment, an old person needing help, a layette to be bought for a newborn child—in all such cases the delegate sees that the needs are supplied, for the strength of this Church of the Latter-Day Saints lies in the fact that all the Mormons, from the President down to the humblest workman, call themselves brothers and sisters and act as such towards one another. Thanks to the delegate, who is friend, confidant and confessor in one, immediate help can be obtained in all instances, and no suffering is left unrelieved.

Thus it comes about that there are no poor among the Mormons, and very few criminals. The delegate has no need to search into the secrets of men's minds, for all are open to him. To a great extent he is able to read their innermost hearts, for men speak freely to him, without veils or reservations. As far as is possible he sees that their desires are granted; he notifies all cases of need to the Relief Societies; he conducts the sick and aged to the hospitals; he is the messenger and mouthpiece for all communications from the people to the bishop and from the bishop to his flock.

It is the delegate also who is charged with the duty of seeing that one-tenth of each person's income, whatever its total sum may be, is contributed for the upkeep of the Mormon faith and its church. He reminds the dilatory, and admonishes the forgetful, always in friendly fashion. In fact it is he, who—to use a popular expression—brings the grist to the mill. This contribution of a tenth part obviates all other taxation, and as it is demanded from each in proportion to his means, its fairness is disputed by none.

V

Brotherly co-operation also prevails in the Mormon system of colonisation. The leaders of the church have always been aware of the dangers of overcrowding, and at all times have occupied themselves with the founding of new settlements to receive the surplus population from the centres already in activity. It is for this reason that the church has been so urgent in seeking and demanding new territory to irrigate and cultivate, in Mexico, Colorado, Wyoming, Arizona, Idaho, and even as far afield as Canada. The transplanting of a swarm from the parent hive is undertaken with the greatest care. Let us take for example the colonisation of the Big Horn Valley, in the north of Wyoming. Before coming to a decision the apostles themselves inspected the locality, which had been recommended as suitable for a new colony of saints. Finding that it fulfilled all requirements, they published their resolve in the official Press, and invited all who desired to become members of the colony to present themselves before their bishop with the necessary guarantees. The President of the church then sought out a brother capable of organising the scheme, and this brother, proud and grateful at being chosen for such a mission, sold all his goods and took up his new responsibilities. On the appointed day the new colonists grouped themselves around their leader, with their wagons, baggages, provisions, agricultural tools, horses and cattle, and so on. One of the twelve apostles being appointed as guide, they set forth for the Big Horn Valley. Here they built their dwelling-places, dug a canal to provide water for the whole settlement, founded all kinds of co-operative societies, including one for the breeding of cattle—and prospered.

In this way, upon a Socialism quite distinct from that of the European theorists, and differing widely from that practised by the New Zealanders, are built up institutions, which have given proof, wherever started, of their power of resistance to human weaknesses. The Mormon colonies, fundamentally collectivist, like the sect from which they originally sprang, still bear the imprint given to them by the initiators of the movement. Each one becomes industrially and commercially autonomous, but all are firmly held together in a common brotherhood by the ties of religion. The Big Horn Mormons, although so far away, never for a single day forget their brothers of Salt Lake City, and all alike hold themselves ever in readiness to render mutual assistance and support.

VI

The Mormon considers activity a duty. Co-operation implies for him not only solidarity of labour but union of will, and these principles are applied in all phases of his public or private life—in politics, education, social conditions of every kind, and even amusements. He holds it obligatory under all circumstances to contribute personal help or money according to his means, knowing that his brothers and sisters will do likewise, and that he can rely upon them with absolute certainty.

Nevertheless, dissension does occasionally arise in the heart of this close-knit brotherhood. The authority of the President, or that of the apostles and bishops may be the cause of rivalries and jealousies, as in the case of Joseph Morris, Brigham Young's confidant, who wished to supplant his chief. He and his partisans were assaulted and put to death by Young's adherents. A spirit of discord also manifests itself at times in the national elections, and there are plottings and intrigues, especially when there seems to be hope of supremacy in Congress, or when one of the twelve apostles offers himself as candidate for the Senate without first consulting the Mormon Church.

Such shadows are inseparable from all human communities. What it is important to study in the Church of the Latter-Day Saints is the evolution of a communism which has more than half a century of activity to its credit, and which, in contrast to so many other fruitless attempts, has given marked proofs of a vitality that shows no sign of diminishing.

CHAPTER II

THE RELIGION OF BUSINESS

Joe Smith was, to speak plainly, nothing but an adventurer. Having tried more than twenty avocations, ending up with that of a gold-digger, he found himself at last at the end of his resources, and decided, in truly American fashion, that he would now make his fortune. He thereupon announced that he was in close communication with Moses, and that he had in his possession the two mosaic talismans, Urim and Thummim, and the manuscript of the Biblical prophet, Mormon—the latter having as a matter of fact been obtained from Solomon Spaulding, pastor of New Salem, Ohio, in 1812.

It was different with John Alexander Dowie, who with remarkable wisdom seized the psychological moment to appear in the United States as a Barnum and a Pierpont Morgan of religion combined. By what was an indisputable stroke of genius, he incorporated into his religion the most outstanding features of American life—commerce, industry, and finance, the tripod upon which the Union rests. What could be more up-to-date than a commercial and industrial prophet, business man, stock-jobber, and organiser of enterprises paying fabulous dividends? And—surely the crowning point of the "new spirit!"—the man who now declared himself to be the most direct representative of God upon earth was accepted as such because people saw in him, not only the Messianic power that he claimed, but an extraordinary knowledge of the value of stocks and shares side by side with his knowledge of the value of souls!

He was of Scottish origin, and had reached his thirtieth year before his name became known. As a child he was disinclined to take religion seriously, and had a habit of whistling the hymns in church instead of singing them. Later he was distinguished by a timidity and reserve which seemed to suggest that he would never rise above the environment into which he had been born. His studies and his beliefs—which for long showed no sign of deviating from the hereditary Scottish faith—were under the direction of a rigidly severe father. At the age of thirteen his parents, attracted by the Australian mirage of those days, took him with them to Adelaide, and he became under-clerk in a business house there, serving an apprenticeship which was to prove useful later on. At twenty he returned to Edinburgh, desiring to enter the ministry, as he believed he had a religious vocation, and plunged into the study of theology with a deep hostility to everything that was outside a strictly literal interpretation of the Scriptures. Full of devotion and self-abnegation in his desperate struggle with the powers of evil, he read the Holy Book with avidity, and was constant in his attendance at theological conferences. Thus, nourished on the marrow of the Scotch theologians, he returned to Australia and was ordained to the priesthood at Alma. Soon afterwards he was appointed minister to the Congregational Church in Sydney, where his profound learning was highly appreciated.

He who desires to attract and instruct the masses must have two gifts, without which success is impossible—eloquence and charm. Dowie had both. As an orator he was always master of himself, yet full of emotion, passionate in his gestures, and easily moved to tears.

We must admit that he did not, like so many others, owe his influence to his environment. In New South Wales, where he made his *début* as a preacher at Sydney, his eloquence and his learning made so great an impression—especially after he had emerged victorious from a controversy with the Anglican bishop, Vaughan, brother to the Cardinal—that the governor of the province, Sir Henry Parkes, offered him an important Government position. He refused to accept it, desiring, as he said, to consecrate his life to the work of God. Persuaded—or wishing to persuade others—that he had been personally chosen by God to fulfil the prophecy of St. Mark xvi. 17, 18, he took up the practice of the laying-on of hands, claiming that in this way, with the help of prayer, the sick could be cured. On these words of the evangelist his whole doctrine was based. Through assiduous reading he familiarised himself with medical science, as well as with hypnotism, telepathy and suggestion, his aim being to organise and direct a crusade against medicine as practised by the faculty. He gathered together materials for a declaration of war against the medicos, attacking them in their, apparently, most impregnable positions, and showing up, often through their own observations, the fatal inanity—in his eyes—of their therapeutics. At the same time he managed to acquire experience of commerce, finance and administration, and, thus equipped, he opened his campaign. Thaumaturgy, science, occultism, eloquence, knowledge of men and of the world—all these he brought into play. The prestige he gained was remarkable, and of course the unimpeachable truth of Bible prophecy was sufficient to establish the fact of his identity with the expected Elias!

"Logic itself commands you to believe in me," he said in his official manifesto. "John the Baptist was the messenger of the Alliance (which is the Scotch Covenant), and Elias was its prophet. But Malachi and Jesus promised the return of the messenger of the Alliance, and of Elias the Restorer. . . . If we are

deceived, it is God who has deceived us, and that is impossible. For the office with which we are charged is held directly from God, and those who have helped us in founding our Church, and who have given us their devotion, testify that they have been instructed to do so by personal revelations."

All the believers in Dowieism affirmed that John Alexander Dowie was Elias the Second, or Elias the Third (if John the Baptist were considered to be the Second), but Dowie himself went further still. He was too modern to base his influence on religion alone, and he actually had the cleverness to become not only a banker, manufacturer, hotel-keeper, newspaper proprietor, editor and multi-millionaire, but also the principal of a college and the "boss" of a political party which acknowledged him as spiritual and temporal pope and numbered over sixty thousand adherents. He had ten tabernacles in Chicago, and ruled despotically the municipal affairs of one of the suburbs of the city.

II

It is interesting to study closely the way in which Dowie gradually attained to such a powerful position. Up to his arrival in Chicago, and even for some years after it, his career differed little from that of the ordinary open-air evangelist with long hair and vague theories, such as may be seen at the street-corners of so many English and American towns. In New South Wales his excessive ardour at temperance meetings in the public squares caused such disorder that he was twice imprisoned, and he came to the conclusion that Melbourne would offer better scope for his mission. He went there to establish a "Free Christian Tabernacle," but almost immediately an epidemic of fever broke out, and he became popular through his intrepidity in visiting the sick, whom he claimed to be able to cure by a secret remedy, the use of which, as a matter of fact, only resulted in augmenting the lists of dead. But to his religious propaganda the Australians turned a deaf ear, and after persevering for ten years he gave up, partly because the authorities had intimated that he had best pitch his camp elsewhere, partly, perhaps, because he was glad to leave what he later referred to as "that nest of antipodean vipers."

We find him in San Francisco in 1888, preaching his new religion at street-corners, and once more causing almost daily disturbances by the vigour of his eloquence. Here again his hopes miscarried, and from thenceforward he fixed his eyes on Chicago, where he should "meet the devil on his own ground."

This final resolution bore good fruit, for Chicago is pre-eminently "the city of Satan," and those who desire to wage war against him can always be sure of plentiful hauls, whatever nets they use. It is that type of American town where all is noise and animation, where the population is cosmopolitan, and confusion of tongues is coupled with an even greater confusion of beliefs; where it is possible to pursue the avocations of theologian and pork-butcher side by side, and no one is surprised. Called "Queen of the West" by some, Porkopolis (from its chief industry) by others, it is a giant unique in its own kind. While its inhabitants, in feverish activity, climb or are rushed in lifts to the nineteenth and twentieth storeys of its immense buildings, there is heard from time to time a call from regions beyond this life of incessant bustle; the voice of a preacher dominates the tumult, and this million and a half of slaughterers of sheep and oxen, jam-makers and meat-exporters, factory-hands, distillers, brewers, tanners, seekers of fortune by every possible means, suddenly remembers that it has a soul to be saved, and throws it in passing, as it were, to whoever is most dexterous in catching it. In such a *milieu* Dowie might indeed hope to pursue his aims with advantage.

His personality had a certain hypnotic fascination. His eloquence, his patriarchal appearance, his supposed power of curing even the most intractable diseases, his use of modern catch-words, his talent for decorating the walls of his little temple with symbols such as crutches, bandages and other trophies of "divine healing," all combined to bring him before the public eye. He had a dispute with the doctors, who accused him of practising their profession illegally, and another with the clergy, who attacked him in their sermons; the populace was stirred up against him, and laid siege to his tabernacle, and he himself threw oil upon these various fires, and became a prominent personage in the daily Press.

It is true that the arrest of some Dowieists whose zeal had carried them beyond the limits of the law of Illinois was commented upon; that long reports were published of the death of a member of the Church of Sion who had succumbed through being refused any medical attention save that of the high-priest of the sect; that much amusement was caused by the dispersal of a meeting of Dowieists by firemen, who turned the hose upon them; and much interest aroused by the legal actions brought against Dowie for having refused to give information concerning the Bank of Sion. All these affairs provided so many new "sensations." But what is of importance is to attract the public, to hold their attention, to keep them in suspense. The time came when it was necessary to produce some more original idea, to strike a really decisive blow, and so Dowie revealed to a stupefied Chicago that he was the latest incarnation of the prophet Elijah. Then while the serious Press denounced him for blasphemy, and the comic Press launched its most highly poisoned shafts of wit against him, the whole of Sion

exulted in clamorous rejoicings. For the prophet knew his Chicago. Credulity gained the upper hand, and the whole city flocked to the tabernacle of Zion, desirous of beholding the new Elias at close quarters.

III

The definite organisation of Dowieism—or Zionism, as it is more usually called—dates from 1894. From this time forward Dowie ceased to be merely a shepherd offering the shelter of his fold to those desiring salvation, and, allowing evangelisation as such to take a secondary place, became the director, inspector and general overseer of a religious society founded upon community of both material and moral interests, and upon fair administration of the benefits of a commercial and industrial enterprise having many sources of revenue. In this society, political, sociological and religious views were combined, so that it offered an attractive investment for financial as well as spiritual capital. Dowie was not only the religious and temporal leader of the movement, but also the contractor for and principal beneficiary from this gigantic co-operative scheme, which combined selling and purchasing, manufacture and distribution, therapeutics, social questions and religion.

Like most founders of sects, the prophet of the "New Zion" was at first surrounded by those despairing invalids and cripples who try all kinds of remedies, until at last they find one to which they attribute the relief of their sufferings, whether real or fancied. Such as these will do all that is required of them; they will give all their worldly goods to be saved; and they paid gladly the tenth part which Dowie immediately demanded from all who came to him, some of them even pouring their entire fortunes into the coffers of the new Elias. The ranks of his recruits were further swelled by crowds of hypochondriacs, and by the superstitious, the idle, and the curious, who filled his temple to such an extent that soon he was obliged to hire a large hall for his Sunday meetings, at which he was wont to appear in great magnificence with the cortège of a religious showman.

These displays attracted widespread attention, and indeed Dowie neglected nothing in his efforts to make a deep and lasting impression on the public mind. Here is the account of an eye-witness:—

The prophet speaks. The audience preserves a religious silence. His voice has a quality so strange as to be startling. To see that broad chest, that robust and muscular frame, one would expect to hear rolling waves of sound, roarings as of thunder. But not so. The voice is shrill and sibilant, yet with a sonority so powerful that it vibrates on the eardrums and penetrates to the farthest corners of the hall.

Presently the real object of the sermon is revealed. The enemies of Zion are denounced with a virulence that borders upon fury, and the preacher attacks violently those whom he accuses of persecuting his church. He poses as a martyr, and cries out that "the blood of the martyr is the seed of faith"; he pours out imprecations upon other religious sects; calls down maledictions upon the qualified doctors, who are to him merely "sorcerers and poisoners"; consigns "the vipers of the press" to destruction; and, carried away by the violence of his anathemas, launches this peroration upon the ears of his admiring audience:

"If you wish to drink your reeking pots of beer, whisky, wine, or other disgusting alcoholic liquors; if you wish to go to the theatre and listen to Mephistopheles, to the devil, to Marguerite, the dissolute hussy, and Doctor Faust, her foul accomplice; if you wish to gorge yourselves upon the oyster, scavenger of the sea, and the pig, scavenger of the earth—a scavenger that there is some question of making use of in the streets of Chicago (*laughter*); if you wish, I say, to do the work of the devil, and eat the meats of the devil, you need only to remain with the Methodists, Baptists, or such-like. Zion is no place for you. We want only clean people, and, thanks to God, we can make them clean. There are many among you who need cleansing. You know that I have scoured you as was necessary, and I shall continue to do it, for you are far from clean yet."

Then, entering into a dialogue with his hearers upon the vital point of Zionism, he asks:

"Does America pay her tithes to God?"

The audience replies "No."

"Do the churches pay their tithes to God?"

"No."

"Do you yourselves pay your tithes to God? Stand up, those of you who do."

The listeners stand up in thousands.

"There are a number of robbers here who remain seated, and do not pay their tithes to God. Now I know who are the robbers. Do you know what should be done with you? I will tell you. There is nothing for you but the fire—the fire! Is it not villainy to rob one's brother?"

"Yes."

"Is it not villainy to rob one's mother?"

"Yes."

"Is it not the vilest villainy to rob God?"

"Yes."

"Well, there are some among you who are not ashamed of committing it. You are robbing God all the time. You are like Ahaz, the Judean king famed for his impiety, and if you remain as you are, you will be doomed to eternal death. To whom does the tithe belong? What is done with it? I am going to answer that. If anyone here says that what I possess is taken out of the tithes, he lies—and I will make his lie stick in his throat. The tithes and all other offerings go straight to the general fund, and do not even pass through my hands. But I have a right to my share of the tithes. Have I—or not?"

"Yes."

"Yes, and I shall take it when I have need of it. It is you whom I address—you vile robbers, hypocrites, liars, who pretend to belong to Sion and do not pay the tithe. Do you know what is reserved for you? You will burn in eternal fire. Rise—depart from Sion!"

But no one departs. All the defaulters hasten to pay, for the prophet inspires them with a terror very different from their dread of the tax-collector, and there is no single example of one sufficiently obstinate to brave his threats of damnation.

In other ways also Elias was all-powerful. He made a mock of political or ecclesiastical elections, holding that a leader's power should not be subject to suffrages or renewals of confidence. Thanks to these sermons, dialogues, and the general *mise en scène*, the autocracy of Dowie was beyond question.

IV

The new Elias called himself "the divine healer," and, like Schlatter, he attracted all who believed in the direct intervention of God, acting personally upon the sufferer. In their eyes he was simply the representative of God, source of health and healing. It was not he who brought about the cures, but God, and therefore the payments that were made to him were in reality payments to God. This teaching was largely the source of Dowie's power.

There were two large hotels in Chicago which were continually filled to overflowing with pilgrims from all parts who came to seek "divine healing." These left behind them sums of money—often considerable—in token of their gratitude to God; not to the prophet, who would accept nothing.

It is obvious that if none of his cures had been effectual, Dowie, in spite of his power over credulous minds, could not have succeeded. Thaumaturgy must perform its miracles. If it fails to do so, it is a fraud, and its incapacity proves its ruin. But if it accomplishes them, its fame becomes widespread. These miraculous cures generally take place, not singly, but in numbers, because there are always people who respond to suggestion, and invalids who become cured when the obligation to be cured, in the name of God, is placed upon them. Thus Chicago saw and wondered at the miracles, and had no doubts of their genuineness.

There was the case of Mr. Barnard, one of the heads of the National Bank of Chicago, whose twelve-year-old daughter was suffering from spinal curvature. She grew worse, in spite of all the efforts of the most eminent doctors and surgeons, and it seemed that nothing could be done. The child must either die, or remained deformed for the rest of her life. The father and mother were overcome with grief, and after having gone the round of all the big-wigs of the medical profession, they tried first bone-setters, then Christian Scientists, without avail. Finally they went to Dowie, who had already cured one of their friends. Up till then they had not had confidence in him, and they only went to him as a counsel of despair, so to speak, and because a careful re-reading of the Bible had persuaded them that God could and would cure all who had faith in His supreme power. Dowie, perceiving that they and their daughter had true faith, laid his hands on the child and prayed. In that same moment the curvature disappeared, and the cure was complete, for there was never any return of the trouble.

In recognition of this divine favour Mr. Barnard, who had hitherto belonged to the Presbyterian Church, voluntarily joined the Zionists, and became their chief auxiliary financier. Dowie made him manager of the Bank of Zion, under his own supervision, and confided to him the financial administration of the church.

Similarly a Mr. Peckman, whose wife he cured, and who was leader of the Baptist Church of Indiana, gave thanks to God and to Dowie, His prophet, by founding a colony affiliated to Zionism which paid its tithes regularly.

There are many other examples of successful cures, but also many failures. These, however, did not lower the prestige of the modern Elias, who said to his detractors: "God has the power to cure, and all cures are due to Him alone. He desires to cure all who suffer, for His pity is infinite; but it may very well happen that the consumptives and paralytics who come to me after being given up by the doctors, are not always cured by God, however much I pray for them. Why is this? The reason is simple. Disease and death must be looked upon as ills due to the devil, who, since the fall of the rebellious angels, is always in a state of insurrection against God. And it is certain that whoever has not faith—absolute and unquestionable faith—is in the power of Satan. The Scripture tells us precisely, 'he that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; he that believeth not is condemned.' When a sufferer is not healed through my intercession, it means that in the struggle for that particular soul, the devil has been victorious."

So, supported by this thesis, Dowie triumphed over the objections of his critics, not only in the eyes of Zion, but of all Chicago. Even when he lost his only daughter, Esther, his authority was in no way affected.

Esther Dowie was twenty-one, and the pride of her father's heart. She had finished her studies at the University of Chicago, and a happy future seemed to be opening out before her. One day in the month of May she was preparing for a large reception which was being held in honour of young Booth-Clibborn, grandson of General Booth of the Salvation Army. The event was an important one, for it was hoped that this meeting would bring about an understanding between the Salvationists and the Zionists, and Miss Dowie wished to give the visitor the most gracious welcome possible. She was lighting a spirit-lamp, for the purpose of waving her hair, when a draught of air blew her peignoir into the flame. It caught fire, and the poor girl was so terribly burned that she succumbed soon afterwards, although her father and all the elders of the Church prayed at her bedside, and although Dowie permitted a doctor to attend her and to make copious use of vaseline. After her death, the jury decided that she must have been burnt internally, the flames having penetrated to her throat and lungs. Before she died she begged her father to forgive her for having disobeyed him—for Dowie strictly forbade the use of alcohol, even in a spirit-lamp—and implored the adherents of Zionism not to expose themselves to death through disobedience, as she had done.

The attitude adopted by the prophet under this blow was almost sublime. Letters of condolence and of admiration rained upon him. He wept over his daughter's dead body, and was broken-hearted, while, instead of drawing attention to the extenuating circumstances for his own inability to save her—as he would have done in all other cases—he fervently prayed to God to forgive her for having sinned against the laws of Zion. His grief was so sincere that not only the Zionists but the whole of Chicago joined in it.

Lack of faith was not the only thing that prevented cures. Omitting to pay the tithes could also render them impossible; for the tithes were due to God, and those who failed to pay them committed a voluntary offence against the divine power. When we remember that there were at least sixty thousand Zionists, it is obvious that these tithes must have amounted to an enormous sum—and of this sum Dowie never gave any account. His spiritual power was founded upon his moral power. It is certain that he tried to influence his followers for good in forbidding them alcoholic drinks and gambling, and in advising exercise and recreation in the open air, and the avoidance of medicaments and drugs which he believed did more harm than good. He said to them—"Your health is a natural thing, for health is the state of grace in man, and the result of being in accord with God, and disease has no other cause than the violation of law, religious or moral." He ordained that all should live in a state of cleanliness, industry and order, so that communal prosperity might be assured. And of this prosperity which they owed to God and to His representative, what more just than that a part of it should be given to God and to Dowie, His prophet? What more legitimate than that there should be no separation between the material life and the spiritual life?

He had a special machine constructed which registered, by a kind of clockwork, the intercessions made on behalf of the various applicants for healing. Each one would receive a printed bulletin, stating, for example—"Prayed on the 10th of March, at four o'clock in the afternoon, John A. Dowie." If the patient was not in Chicago, Dowie would pray by telephone, so that the immediate effect of the divine power might be felt. He also made use of a phonograph for recording his homilies, sermons and

prayers, and these records were sent, at a fixed price, to his adherents in all parts of the world.

V

The city of Sion lies between Chicago and Milwaukee, about forty-two miles to the north of the former. It comprises an estate of 6400 acres on the shores of Lake Michigan. This land—some of the best in Illinois—was let out in lots, on long lease, by Dowie to his followers, and brought in thousands of dollars yearly. At the same time that he created this principle of speculation in land, he was also engaged in founding a special industry, whose products were sold as "products of Sion." His choice fell upon the lace industry, and thanks to very clever management he was able to establish large factories modelled on those of Nottingham, employing many hundreds of workers whose goods commanded a considerable sale.

Before he undertook its organisation the possessions of the Church were few. Fifteen years afterwards, it had a fortune of more than a million pounds.

In order to carry out his plan of building a town in which neither spirits nor tobacco should be sold, and which should be inhabited only by Sionists, it was necessary that all the land should belong to him, and he had to reckon with the probably exorbitant demands of the sellers. To circumvent these his real intentions had to be hidden, and with the help of his faithful auxiliaries this was successfully accomplished.

I do not know what has become of Sionism during recent years. Will the dynasty be continued after the reign of John Dowie by that of his son William Gladstone Dowie; or will the death of the prophet, as stated by those who have seen the eclipse of other stars of first magnitude, be the signal for the dissolution of the sect?

What matters, however, is the genesis and not the duration of an enchantment which has united around one central figure, so many thousands who thirsted for the simultaneous salvation of their souls and of their purses.

CHAPTER III

THE ADEPTS OF THE SUN OF SUNS

Nearly all Communistic theories when applied in practice prove failures, but there seems to be one infallible safeguard—that supplied by religion. Faith, when mingled with the trials and disenchantments of life, appears to mitigate them, and communal experiments based on religious beliefs nearly always prosper. This applies to the half-religious, half-communal sects of modern Russia, and the principle has also been adopted by the American apostles of communism.

One of these, Dr. Teed of Chicago, understood it well, and his sect was, in fact, merely a religious sect based on the principle of communal possessions. Its adherents took the name of *Koreshans*, after the title *Koresh* (or the sun) boasted by its founder. He, *Koresh*, "Light of Lights," "Sun of Suns," was called by Heaven to teach the truth to mortals, and to show them which road to eternal salvation they should follow in order to prosper upon earth. Founded in Chicago, the sect moved recently to Florida, and there, from day to day, Teed had the satisfaction of seeing the number of believers steadily increase.

He had at first to put up with a good deal of ridicule, for his teaching, based upon that of Fourier, and incorporating some of the mystical ideas of Swedenborg, was not at all to the taste of his fellow-citizens. The doctor then evolved the brilliant idea of dividing his system into two doctrines—the way to heaven, or the mystical doctrine; and the way to earthly prosperity, or the economic doctrine. It was permissible to follow the second without adopting the first, and the result may easily be guessed. Attracted by the prospect of terrestrial benefits, believers flocked to the fold, and invariably ended by accepting the second half of the teaching also (the mystical doctrine), all the more willingly because their material happiness and prosperity depended on the degree of their "union" with the founder.

The mysticism of *Koresh* had some novel features, for the American doctor saw the wisdom of making use of some of the prestige lately gained by science. His religion, consequently, was essentially scientific. He, *Koresh*, was the "unique man," who, thanks to his "scientific studies" and to "celestial

inspiration," could understand the mysteries of nature. He had reached the summit of scientific knowledge and the greatest possible human perfection—that is to say, "sainthood"—and all who approached him were made participators in his "holiness." Thanks to this gift, pertaining only to *Koresh*, his followers could "enjoy the bliss of heaven upon earth"; for the Kingdom of God upon earth was near at hand, and *Koreshism* was preparing the way for its disciples.

But what had to be done in order to attain the higher degrees of salvation? Teed was a sufficiently clever psychologist to know that nothing fascinates the crowd so much as mysteries and things that cannot be understood, and he acted accordingly.

His doctrine is so obscure that only those claiming divine illumination could hope to find their way amid its cloudy precepts. Let us give an example:—

"In recognition of the principal source of the force of the intrinsic and innate life of the Christian revelation, the *Koreshan* doctrine elevates the founder of Christianity to the place of father, become perfect, thanks to the sacrifice of his son, which it has been given to us to understand by the flesh of Jehovah."

The believers could give it whatever meaning they liked, and for those who despaired of understanding this part of the *Koreshan* revelation, the prophet kept in reserve thousands of other dogmas, all equally enigmatic and equally obscure. We will not attempt to discuss them!

The teaching included the attainment of perfection through marriage, and claimed omniscience for *Koreshism*, which could throw new light upon all things, including such subjects as astronomy and philosophy. The earth is not round, light is not diffused, as science teaches, and man has not five senses, but seven—so said *Koresh*. He described his doctrine as communistic and co-operative. The use of money was forbidden, its place being taken by cheques representing the amount of services rendered to the community.

The colony founded at Estero, in Florida, was almost exclusively commercial and industrial, not agricultural like most communal settlements. Electric railways and factories were built—and are still being built—there, for steam, like money, is banned in the colony of *Koresh*; while being in possession of a seaport, the *Koreshans* propose to enter into commercial relationship with the whole world.

The Bureau of Equitable Commerce directs the business affairs of the community, and at its head is the chief of the Commonwealth (or public fortune). All the inhabitants share in the general prosperity, and in order to prevent the more capable individuals from developing into capitalists, the fortunes of all are carefully equalised by means of a progressive tax upon income. The land belongs to all, and is non-transferable, like the factories. No payment is demanded of new-comers; it is enough if they bring the moral capital of an irreproachable life, and are good workers; and any poor people who desire to seek salvation in the colony are enabled to travel to it by contributions from the public funds. Absolute tolerance of all beliefs forms the spiritual basis of the sect.

New Jerusalem, the capital of the colony, covers about eighty-six square miles, having streets four hundred feet in width, and separate industrial quarters. The business affairs of the community are undeniably prosperous.

B. RELIGION AND MIRACLES

"O men born upon earth, why abandon yourselves to death, when you are permitted to obtain immortality?"

HERMES TRISMEGISTUS.

CHAPTER I

THE CHRISTIAN SCIENTISTS

The marriage between Science and the Bible, brought about by Mary Baker Eddy, has given birth to a most prosperous sect. In this amalgam, the Christianity is not of the purest, and the Science appears

rather in the form of the negation of its own principles; but so great is humanity's desire for the union of revelation and experience that believers crowd from all parts to range themselves behind the new banner.

There is something almost disconcerting in the ardour and devotion of Mrs. Eddy's followers. Truly, in the success of Christian Science we see one more proof of the ease with which a new religion can be started if, in addition to faith, it concerns itself with man's earthly welfare.

The founder of the sect was a clever woman. Well aware of the power and fascination of the mysterious, she exploited it with a profound understanding of the human heart. She mingled the realities of life with the mysteries of thought, and the sun of her revelations is always veiled by intangible clouds. From her gospel one might cull at random scores of phrases that defy human understanding. "Evil is nothing, no thing, mind or power," she says in *Science and Health*. "As manifested by mankind, it stands for a lie, nothing claiming to be something." And again—"Mortal existence has no real entity, but saith 'It is I.'"

The nonsensicalness of her phraseology can find no comparison save in the inconceivable chaos of her teachings. She goes so far as to imply that the supreme effort of a woman's spirit should suffice to bring about conception. Jesus Christ having been conceived of the Holy Ghost, she suggests that man should follow this example, and renounce the lusts of the flesh. "Proportionately as human generation ceases, the unbroken links of eternal, harmonious being will be spiritually discerned"—and in another place, "When this new birth takes place, the Christian Science infant is born of the spirit, born of God, and can cause the mother no more suffering."

In the explanations of the Bible given in her *Key to the Scriptures* we are told that when we come upon the word "fire," we are to translate it as "fear," and the word "fear" as "heat"; while we must remember that Eve never put the blame for her sin upon the serpent, but, having "learnt that corporeal sense is the serpent," she was the first to confess her misdeed in having followed the dictates of the flesh instead of those of the spirit.

Like all prophets and saviours, Mrs. Eddy was crucified during her lifetime. She had to engage in a continuous struggle with the envy and jealousy of those who sought to misrepresent her teachings and bring her glory to the dust. But she was far from being an ordinary woman, and even in childhood seemed to be marked out for an exceptional career. At the age of eight, like Joan of Arc, she heard mysterious voices, and her mother, who was of Scottish origin and subject to "attacks of religion," remembered the story of the Infant Samuel and encouraged her to speak with the Lord. But Mary was alarmed by the voices, and wept and trembled, instead of replying to them like a good child.

About her forty-fifth year, however, being in the grip of a serious illness, she did hold converse with the Lord, who told her how she might be cured. She listened and obeyed, and was cured. This was her "great initiation." She then retired from the world, and spent several years engaged in meditation and prayer, while her study of the Bible revealed to her the key to all mysteries, human and divine.

The deductions of her philosophy are often characterised by an astonishing naïveté. "God being All-in-all, He made medicine," she tells us; "but that medicine was Mind. . . . It is plain that God does not employ drugs or hygiene, nor provide them for human use; else Jesus would have recommended and employed them in His healing."

She frequently makes use of ingenious statements whose very candour is disarming, but she had considerable dialectical gifts, and can argue persuasively, especially against spiritualism. In *Science and Health* she violently denies the authenticity of spiritualistic phenomena, "As readily can you mingle fire and frost as spirit and matter. . . . The belief that material bodies return to dust, hereafter to rise up as spiritual bodies with material sensations and desires, is incorrect. . . . The caterpillar, transformed into a beautiful insect, is no longer a worm, nor does the insect return to fraternise with or control the worm. . . . There is no bridge across the gulf which divides two such opposite conditions as the spiritual, or incorporeal, and the physical, or corporeal."

In the confusion of precepts and principles championed by Mrs. Eddy there are sometimes to be found thoughts worthy of a great metaphysician. Her teaching, when purified from admixture, does at any rate break away energetically from all materialistic doctrines.

Her literary output was considerable, for in addition to her gospel, *Science and Health*, she wrote *The Concordance of Science and Health*, *Rudimentary Divine Science*, *Christian Science versus Paganism*, and other works, including some verse.

The Christian Science churches, with their adherents, who number more than a million, are spread

all over the world, each having an independent existence. They are found chiefly in the United States, England, Germany, and the British Colonies. The number of "healers" exceeds several thousands, for the most part of the female sex. In France the first "Church of Christ, Scientist" has been founded in Paris, in the Rue Magellan, under the name of Washington Palace.

The Christian Science leader denounced the established churches and spared them no criticism, and her doctrine contained a seed of truth which enabled it to triumph even over its own lack of logic and coherence.

The world, submerged in matter, either denies spirit or turns away from it. Mrs. Eddy exalts the power of spirit above that of matter, the universal goddess, by means of statements which are heroic rather than scientific.

Matter does not exist. God is all, and God is spirit; therefore all is spirit. Matter is not spirit, but is a fiction which only exists for those who persist in believing in it against the evidence of facts. As matter does not exist, and is only a lie and the invention of Satan, the body, which we see in the form of matter, does not exist either. The suffering caused by the body is simply an "error of mortal mind," for since the body does not exist, there can be no such thing as bodily suffering. Therefore instead of concerning ourselves with the healing of the supposed body, with the prevention or cure of pain and suffering, we must go straight to spirit. Spirit is perfect, and the thought of pain or disease can have no place in it. Let us then leave the curing of our bodies, and seek to rectify our spirits.

Doctors and surgeons, on the contrary, follow the errors of centuries in concerning themselves with the body, and causing it to absorb drugs which, having no connection with disease, can neither cure nor relieve it. "Mind as far outweighs drugs in the cure of disease as in the cure of sin. The more excellent way is divine Science in every case. . . . The hosts of Aesculapius are flooding the world with diseases, because they are ignorant that the human mind and body are myths."

A follower of the "true doctrine," according to Mrs. Eddy, is never ill for the simple reason that he does not believe in the body or in any of its infirmities. If he should be overtaken by illness, it is because his spirit is ill, and his faith not sufficiently pure.

From this results a very simple method of healing. The "healer" merely seeks to re-establish the faith of the sufferer, and to convince him of the non-reality of his illness. No medicine is given, the treatment consisting of thoughts and suggestions from *Science and Health*. Christian Science healers need to have a robust and unshakable faith, for if they do not succeed in their task it is because their own spirit has been infected by doubt.

Mrs. Eddy declared that our concrete and practical age required, above all, a religion of reality; that men could no longer be content with vague promises of future bliss. What they needed was a religion of the present that would end their sufferings and procure for them serenity and happiness on earth. The title of "applied Christianity" has been adopted by Christian Science, which advises us to make use of the teachings of Jesus in our daily life, and to reap all the advantages of such a practice. We have need of truth "applied" to life just as we have need of telegraphs, telephones and electric apparatus, and now—say the Scientists—for the first time in man's existence he is offered a really practical religious machinery, which enables him to overcome misfortune and to establish his happiness, his health, and his salvation on a solid basis.

The Scientists claim to have recourse to the same spiritual law by means of which Jesus effected His cures, and they declare that its efficacy is undeniable, since all Mrs. Eddy's pupils who use it are able to heal the sick. One may suggest that Jesus performed miracles because He was the Saviour of the world. Mrs. Eddy replies that statements are attributed to Him which never issued from His lips; that He said (in the Gospel according to St. John) that it was not He who spoke or acted, but His Father; and stated elsewhere, that the Son could do nothing of Himself. Also that Jesus never sent His disciples forth to preach without adding that they should also heal. "Heal the sick," was His supreme command. And that He never counselled the use of drugs or medicines.

The healing of the sick, according to Mrs. Eddy, was one of the chief functions of the representatives of the Church during the first three centuries of Christianity, her subsequent loss of importance and power being largely due to the renunciation of this essential principle.

Healing is not miraculous, but merely the result of a normal spiritual law acting in conformity with the Divine Will. The leader of the new "Scientists" explains that Jesus had no supernatural powers, and that all He did was done according to natural law. Consequently everybody, when once brought into harmony with spiritual truth, can accomplish what He accomplished.

Some of Mrs. Eddy's statements have an undeniable practical value. For instance, she attacks "fear"

as one of the chief causes of human misery, and declares that it is wrong to fear draughts of air, or wet feet, or the eating and drinking of certain substances—and wrong, above all, to fear microbes.

But exaggeration is always harmful. The total suppression of fear would mean the suppression of often necessary and desirable precautions. In order to succeed, however, a religion has need of the absolute, for conditional truths are not likely to impress the public; and the founder of Christian Science was well aware of this.

Health, according to the Scientists, is truth. In order to enjoy existence, we must live in the truth and avoid sin, and ultimately death itself will disappear, being entirely superfluous. Jesus said that whoso believed on Him should never see death, and He would not have said this if death were necessary for salvation. Therefore believers are taught that humanity will in time conquer sickness and death, and that this blessed consummation will be reached when human beings attain to the heights of the Christian Science "gospel," and are guided by it in all the thoughts and actions of their everyday life. Other equally enchanting prospects are conjured up, like mirages in the desert, before the dazzled eyes of Mrs. Eddy's followers. Making use of the ancient conception of angels, she teaches that such beings are always close at hand, for angels are "God's thoughts passing to man; spiritual intuitions, pure and perfect." "These angels of His presence . . . abound in the spiritual atmosphere of Mind."

Thus Christian Science is seen to be a religion of health, longevity and happiness, the fruits of spiritual action; a religion which denies both the theoretical and practical existence of matter.

There are, however, occasions when the invocations of "science" prove powerless to deal with rebellious matter. But this does not embarrass Mrs. Eddy. She considers that her doctrine is in advance of the age, and that men themselves must progress in order to rise to its level. Their spirits will then become pure and perfect, and matter will have no more power over them. Man will be able to live quite differently, for hygienic conditions—even those considered most indispensable—will no longer be of any importance.

One of the most irresistible attractions of Christian Science lies in its declaration that it will be possible at some future time to overcome death—a dream that has been known in all epochs. Yet, for all our love of life, how unprofitably we squander it! Our normal life could be prolonged to a hundred and fifty, or even two hundred years,[1] but we have stupidly imposed upon ourselves an artificial barrier which we scarcely ever surpass!

Mrs. Eddy knew well what charm the possibility of destroying the "King of Terrors" would add to her doctrine, and she made effective use of it.

We may note that the idea of overcoming death can be traced back for some three thousand years or so. Hermes, the "Thrice Greatest One," taught that only "by error" had death become installed upon our planet, and that nothing in the world could ever be lost. "Death does not exist; the word 'mortal' is void of meaning, and is merely the word 'immortal' without its first syllable." He taught further that the world was the second God, immortal and alive, and that no part of it could ever die; that "the eternal" and "the immortal" must not be confused, for "the eternal" was God Uncreate, while the world which He had created and made in His own image was endowed with His immortality. Hermes also suggested that it was only necessary to send our bodily sensations to sleep in order to awake in God and rejoice in immortality!

There was a close relationship between Hermes, the Essenes of Egypt, and St. John, the author of *Revelation*. Indeed, if we search carefully, we find that the Gnostics of every school believed in the possibility of banishing death from the earth.

"Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." (St. John iv. 14).

And what superiority over the claims of Mrs. Eddy is shown by Hermes, when he declares that in order to reach the spiritual worlds we only need to free ourselves from sensation!

Unsuspected sources of inspiration, as yet unutilised, abound in the writings of the Pythagoreans, the Essenes, and even the Neo-Platonists. The creators of future religions are likely to draw much water from these wells, but Christian Science can lay claim to be the first to have made use of the mysticism of the past in a practical fashion, so that its adherents rejoice in the prospect of endless life, even as did the visionaries of former ages.

When one examines the doctrine closely, its lack of originality becomes apparent. The idea that matter does not exist has had numerous protagonists in the realms of philosophy, and is ardently

defended by Berkeley. In the dialogues of Hylas and Philonous, the latter speaks of the "absolute impossibility" of matter, which has no existence apart from spirit. But Mrs. Eddy succeeded in giving this purely metaphysical conception a concrete value in the affairs of every-day life.

She opened the first *School of Christian Science Mind-healing* in 1867 with one student; towards the end of the century her followers numbered close on a hundred thousand; while to-day the "Mother Church" can boast over a million adherents, to say nothing of its financial resources.

Without doubt suggestion is the basis of the miraculous cures which are the pride of Christian Science, but the prophetess and her followers have always denied this. As Jesus ignored the power of suggestion, they also must not only ignore it, but wage merciless war upon it. They deny both suggestion and matter, while making use of each—but neither the use of suggestion nor the doctrine of the non-existence of matter could alone or together have procured for the new sect its truly phenomenal success. That is due largely to ingenious methods of publicity, on the most modern lines (and is not advertisement itself one of the most effective forms of suggestion?). When one miraculous cure after another was announced, money flowed in, and Mrs. Eddy made use of it to increase the numbers of believers. Adapting herself to the mentality of her hearers, or readers, she demanded large fees for the manifestations of the "spirit" which was incarnated in herself and her helpers, and left behind her when she died, an immense personal fortune, and hundreds of prosperous churches. "Matter" does not seem to be altogether negligible, even for pure spirits who do not believe in its existence, and consider it an invention of the devil!

[1] See *La Philosophie de la Longevité* (Bibliothèque de Philosophie Contemporaine, Félix Alcan, 12th edition), by Jean Finot.

CHAPTER II

SCHLATTER, THE MIRACLE-MAN

The town of Denver, the "pearl of Colorado," was *en fête*. Hundreds of thousands of pilgrims were flocking to it from all parts of America, and all, immediately they arrived, made straight for the house of Alderman Fox, where dwelt Francis Schlatter, the greatest miracle-worker of the century. For two months Denver was able to contemplate an unparalleled variety of invalids with illnesses both rare and common, all—or nearly all—of whom departed reassured as to their progress, if not completely cured. The trains were overcrowded, the hotels overflowed with visitors, and all the States rang with hymns of praise in honour of Schlatter, the saint of Denver.

But perpetual joy is not of this world. On the 14th of November, 1895, there were still thousands of people outside Alderman Fox's house, but their grief and despair were pitiable to witness. The women sobbed, the men cursed, and all this, mingled with the woeful complaints of the sick, created an extraordinary atmosphere in the usually gay and cheerful town.

The cause of it was that Saint Schlatter had fled from Colorado without warning in the night—whether for a short time or for ever nobody knew. The news spread far and wide, the affair assumed the proportions of a public calamity, and the *Rocky Morning News* and other Colorado journals shed copious tears over the sad lot of the abandoned pilgrims. Even the American newspapers, which so often foresee events that never happen, had not been able to foresee this thunderbolt that had descended in the midst of their readers.

On the previous day the saint had, as usual, given his blessing to the thousands of pilgrims gathered from all quarters, and had appeared to be in his customary state of serene kindness. Nothing had suggested his desertion—for the disappointed crowds considered it a desertion indeed. Even Alderman Fox, deeply troubled as he was, could offer no consolation to his fellow-citizens. He, who was formerly stone-deaf, had gone one day to see Schlatter at Omaha, and when the latter took his hand his deafness had completely disappeared. Full of gratitude, he offered Schlatter a large sum of money, which was refused. He then offered the hospitality of his house at Denver, and this being accepted, Schlatter arrived there, preceded by the glory of his saintly reputation and his miraculous cures. Two months passed thus, and never had prophet a more devoted and enthusiastic disciple than the worthy alderman of Colorado's capital city. Then fell the blow!

When Alderman Fox had entered his guest's room the night before, the bed was empty. Dressed just as he had arrived, in his unique costume, Schlatter had disappeared, leaving behind him as sole trace of his visit this message:—"Mr. Fox—my mission is ended, and the Father calls me. I salute you. Francis Schlatter. November 13th."

After that he was sought for in vain. He who "intoxicated the weak soul of the people"—to quote one of the Colorado clergy—and made the land of sin ring with songs of heavenly triumph, had completely disappeared. In the words of another of them, "the plant that had grown up in barren soil was withered away by the wrath of God."

But the grief of those who had believed in him lasted for many years.

Schlatter was born in Alsace in 1855, and after his arrival in America he followed many avocations, finally adopting that of a "holy man." With head and feet bare, he traversed the States from one end to another, and proclaimed himself a messenger of heaven. He preached the love of God and peace among men. He was imprisoned, and continued to preach, and though his fellow-prisoners at first mocked at him, they ended by listening.

He only had to place his hand on the heads of the sick, and they were cured. After being released from prison, he went to Texas. His peculiar dress, bare feet, and long hair framing a face which seemed indeed to be illuminated from within, drew crowds to follow him, and he was looked upon as Elijah come to life again.

"Hearken and come to me," he said. "I am only a humble messenger sent by my Heavenly Father."

And thousands came. He cured the incurable, and consoled the inconsolable. Once he was shut up in a mad-house, but emerged more popular than ever. Then he went on a pilgrimage through the towns of Mexico, preaching his "Father's" word among the adulterers of goods and the Worshippers of the Golden Calf. An object of reverence and admiration, he blessed the children and rained miracles upon the heads of the sick, finally arriving at San Francisco in 1894. From there, still on foot and bare-headed, he crossed the Mohave Desert, spent several weeks at Flagstaff, and then continued his wanderings among the Indian tribes. They recognised his saintliness and came out in crowds to meet him, amazed at the power of the Lord as manifested by him. He spent five days in the company of the chief of the Navajos, performing many miracles, and filling with wonder the simple souls who crowded round to touch his hands. After having traversed several other districts, he stopped at Denver, which became his favourite residence. In this paradise of the New World his most startling miracles took place. It became known as his special town, and from all parts there flocked to it believers and unbelievers, good, bad and indifferent, attracted by the fame of the heavenly messenger. Women and men followed in his train, expressing their admiration and gratitude; even the reporters who came to interview him were impressed by his simplicity, and described in glowing terms the miracles accomplished by the "prophet of Denver."

The American journals which thus put themselves at his service throw a strange light upon this twentieth-century saint. For Schlatter the Silent, as some called him, only became eloquent when in the presence of newspaper reporters. He took heed to "sin not with his tongue," as the psalmist sings, and "kept his mouth with a bridle" and "held his peace," as long as "the wicked" were before him; but when confronted by reporters his thoughts became articulate, and it is only through them that his simple "Gospel" has been handed down to us. "I am nothing," he would say to them. "My Father is all. Have faith in Him, and all will be well." Or—"My Father can replace a pair of diseased lungs as easily as He can cure rheumatism. He has only to will, and the sick man becomes well or the healthy one ill. You ask me in what does my power consist. It is nothing—it is His will that is everything."

One day when a crowd of several thousands was pressing round him, Schlatter addressed a man in his vicinity.

"Depart!" he said to him, with a violence that startled all who heard. "Depart from Denver; you are a murderer!"

The man fled, and the crowd applauded the "saint," remarking that "it was not in his power to heal the wicked."

Faith in him spread even to the railway companies of New Mexico, for one day there appeared a placard of the Union Pacific Railway stating that those of the employees, or their families, who wished to consult Schlatter would be given their permits and their regular holiday. Following on this announcement, the *Omaha World Herald* describes the impressive spectacle of the thousands of men, women and children, belonging to all grades of the railway administration, who went to the holy man of Denver to ask pardon for their sins, or to be healed of their diseases.

Thus did the transport systems, combined with the newspapers, pay homage to the exploits of the new prophet.

And still the miracles continued. The blind saw, the deaf heard, and the cripples walked. The lamp of faith lighted in New Mexico threw its beams over the whole of America, and the remarkable charm of Schlatter's personality influenced even the most incredulous.

The fame of his deeds reached Europe, and some of the English papers told of cures so marvellous that New Mexico bade fair to become the refuge of all the incurables in the world.

In the *Omaha World Herald* a long article by General Test was published, in which he said: "All those who approach him find consolation and help. Dr. Keithley has been cured of deafness. . . . I have used spectacles for many years, but a touch of his hand was enough to make me have need of them no longer."

One of the officials of the Union Pacific Railway, a Mr. Sutherland, after an accident, could neither walk nor move his limbs. He was taken to Denver, and returned completely cured, not only of his inability to walk, but also of deafness that had troubled him for fifteen years.

A Mr. Stewart, who had been deaf for twenty years, was also completely cured by the saint. Nothing seemed able to resist his miraculous powers. Blindness, diphtheria, phthisis, all disappeared like magic at the touch of his hand; and gloves that he had worn proved equally efficacious.

A Mrs. Snook, of North Denver, had suffered from cancer for some months, when, worn out by pain, she sent to the holy man for the loan of one of his gloves. He sent her two, saying that she would be cured—and she was cured. The same thing happened with John Davidson of 17th Street, Denver; with Colonel Powers of Georgetown; and a dozen others, all of whom had suffered for years from more or less incurable maladies.

An engineer named Morris was cured of cataract instantaneously. A totally blind wood-cutter was able to distinguish colours after being touched by Schlatter. A Mrs. Holmes of Havelock, Nebraska, had tumours under the eyes. She pressed them with a glove given her by the prophet, and they disappeared. (This case is reported in the *Denver News* of November 12th, 1895.)

Gloves began to arrive from all parts, and lay in mountains on Schlatter's doorstep. He touched them with his hand, and distributed them to the crowd. *Faith* being the sole cause of the cures, it was unnecessary, he said, to lay hands on the sick. When he did so, it was only in order to impress the souls of those who had need of this outer sign in order to enjoy the benefits sent them by the Father through His intermediary. This explains how Schlatter was able to treat from three to five thousand people every day. He would stand with outstretched hands blessing the crowds, who departed with peace in their souls.

And the "pearl of Colorado" rejoiced, seeing how the deaf heard, the cripples walked, the blind saw, and all glorified the name of the Saint of Denver.

His disinterestedness was above suspicion, and the contempt that he showed for the "almighty dollar" filled all the believers with astonishment and admiration.

"What should I do with money?" he said. "Does not my Heavenly Father supply all my needs? There is no greater wealth than faith, and I have supreme faith in my Father."

Gifts poured in upon him, but he refused them all with his customary gentleness, so that at last people ceased to send him anything but gloves. These, after having touched them with his hands, he distributed among the sick and the unfortunate.

His fame increased with the ardour of his faith. Suspicion was disarmed, and great and small paid him homage. Out of touch as he was with modern thought, and reading nothing but the prophets, he attained to a condition of ecstasy which at last led him to announce that he was Christ come down from heaven to save his fellow-men. Having lived so long on the footing of a son of God, he now was convinced of his direct descent, and his hearers going still further, were filled with expectation of some great event which should astonish all unbelievers.

Under the influence of this general excitement he proceeded to undergo a forty days' fast. He announced this to his followers, who flocked to see the miracle, preceded by the inevitable reporters; and while fasting he still continued to heal the sick and give them his blessing, attracting ever greater crowds by his haggard visage and his atmosphere of religious exaltation.

Then, having spent forty days and forty nights in this manner, he sat down at table to replenish his

enfeebled forces, and the beholders gave voice to enthusiastic expressions of faith in his divine mission.

But the famished Schlatter attacked the food laid before him with an ardour that had in it nothing of the divine. The onlookers became uneasy, and one of them went so far as to suggest that his health might suffer from this abrupt transition.

"Have faith," replied Schlatter. "The Father who has permitted me to live without nourishment for forty days, will not cease to watch over His Son."

The town of Denver formed a little world apart. Miracles were in the air, faith was the only subject of conversation, and everyone dreamed of celestial joys and the grace of salvation. In this supernatural atmosphere distinctions between the possible and the impossible were lost sight of, and the inhabitants believed that the usual order of nature had been overthrown.

For instance, James Eckman of Leadville, who had been blinded by an explosion, recovered his sight immediately he arrived at Denver. General Test declared that he had seen a legless cripple *walk* when the saint's gaze was bent upon him. A blind engineer named Stainthorp became able to see daylight. A man named Dillon, bent and crippled by an illness several decades before, recovered instantaneously. When the saint touched him, he felt a warmth throughout his whole body; his fingers, which he had not been able to use for years, suddenly straightened themselves; he was conscious of a sensation of inexpressible rapture, and rose up full of faith and joy. A man named Welsh, of Colorado Springs, had a paralysed right hand which was immediately cured when Schlatter touched it.

All New Mexico rejoiced in the heavenly blessing that had fallen upon Denver. Special trains disgorged thousands of travellers, who were caught up in the wave of religious enthusiasm directly they arrived. The whole town was flooded with a sort of exaltation, and there was a recrudescence of childishly superstitious beliefs, which broke out with all the spontaneity and vigour that usually characterises the manifestation of popular religious phenomena.

What would have been the end of it if Schlatter had not so decisively and inexplicably disappeared?

It would be difficult to conceive of anything more extraordinary than the exploits of this modern saint, which came near to revolutionising the whole religious life of the New World. The fact that they took place against a modern background, with the aid of newspaper interviews and special trains, gives them a peculiar *cachet*. Indeed, the spectacle of such child-like faith, allied to all the excesses of civilisation, and backed up by the ground-work of prejudices from which man has as yet by no means freed himself, is one to provide considerable food for reflection for those who study the psychology of crowds in general, and of religious mania in particular.

The case of Schlatter is not a difficult one to diagnose. He suffered from "ambulatory automatism," the disease investigated by Professor Pitres of Bordeaux, and was a wanderer from his childhood up. Incapable of resisting the lure of vagabondage, he thought it should be possible to perform miracles because it was "God his Father" who thus forced him to wander from place to place. "All nature being directed according to His Will," said Schlatter, "and nothing being accomplished without Him, I am driven to warn the earth in order to fulfil His designs."

Being simple-minded and highly impressionable, the first cure that he succeeded in bringing about seemed to him a direct proof of his alliance with God. As Diderot has said, it is sometimes only necessary to be a little mad in order to prophesy and to enjoy poetic ecstasies; and in the case of Schlatter the flower of altruism which often blossoms in the hearts of such "madmen" was manifested in his complete lack of self-seeking and in his compassion for the poor and suffering which drew crowds around him. As to his miracles, we may—without attempting to explain them—state decisively that they do not differ from those accomplished by means of suggestion. The cases of blindness treated by Schlatter have a remarkable resemblance to that of the girl Marie described by Pierre Janet in his *Psychological Automatism*.

This patient was admitted to the hospital at Havre, suffering, among other things, from blindness of the left eye which she said dated from infancy. But when by means of hypnotism she was "transformed" into a child of five years of age, it was found that she saw well with both eyes. The blindness must therefore have begun at the age of six years—but from what cause? She was made to repeat, while in the somnambulistic state, all the principal scenes of her life at that time, and it was found that the blindness had commenced some days after she had been forced to sleep with a child of her own age who had a rash all over the left side of her face. Marie developed a similar rash and became blind in the left eye soon afterwards. Pierre Janet made her re-live the event which had had so terrible an effect upon her, induced her to believe that the child had no rash, and after two attempts succeeded in making her caress her (imaginary) bedfellow. The sight of the left eye returned, and Marie awoke—

cured!

The saint of Denver could not, of course, make use of methods adopted by doctors in the hospitals, but he had something much stronger and more effective in his mysterious origin, his prophet-like appearance, and his airs as of one illuminated by the spirit. Suggestion, when acting upon those who are awake, spreads from one to another like an attack of yawning or of infectious laughter. Crowds are credulous, like children who look no further than their surface impressions.

The case of W. C. Dillon, who had been bent and crippled for years, but was able to straighten his limbs at once under Schlatter's influence, recalls that of the young sailor in the household of Dr. Pillet, who for several weeks was bent forward in a most painful position. He had received a severe blow at the base of the chest, after which he seemed unable to stand upright again. He was put into a hypnotic sleep, and asked if he could raise himself.

"Why not?" he replied.

"Then do so," said the doctor—and he rose from his bed completely cured.

A remarkable thing with regard to Schlatter's cures is that they were so frequently concerned with cases of paralysis. Now Charcot has proved that such cases are usually found in hysterical subjects suffering from amnesia or anaesthesia (general or partial loss of sensation), and according to modern medical research paralysis and anaesthesia are almost identical. We know, further, with what ease hypnotic suggestion can either provoke or dispel partial or general anaesthesia, and this applies equally to partial or general paralysis.

Paralysis is often, if not always, due to a simple amnesia—forgetfulness to make use of certain muscles—which can be overcome by suggestion. Schlatter, with his undeniable hypnotic power, had consequently small difficulty in accomplishing "miracles"—that is to say, in producing incomprehensible and inexplicable phenomena.

His custom of dealing with people in crowds gave him greater chances of success than if he had merely treated individual cases. "Faith is the only thing that cures," he declared—and, as if by magic, his hearers became possessed of faith and intoxicated by the benefits obtained from his divine intervention.

Truly the life of this impulse-ridden vagabond, so lacking in self-interest, so devoted to the needs of the sick and poor, throws a new light upon the souls of our contemporaries. There seems to exist in every human being, no matter how deeply hidden, an inexhaustible desire for contact with the Infinite. And this desire can be as easily played upon by the tricks of impostors as by the holiness of saints, or the divine grace of saviours.

PART III

THE DEPTHS OF THE SUBCONSCIOUS MIND

CHAPTER I

SECTS IN FRANCE AND ELSEWHERE

During the second half of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, scarcely a single country has been free from religious manifestations of the most varied kind, all concerned with new ways and means of attaining salvation; and if one were to include all the different phases of occultism as well, one would be astounded at the mystical ardour of which modern humanity is possessed.

From the spiritualists and the theosophists to the crystal-gazers and the palmists, all these occult practices are, in reality, merely the result of a more or less intensified desire to communicate with the spiritual worlds.

France, although considered a country pre-eminently sceptical, has not escaped the general tendency, for even in what appeared to be the most rationalistic epoch—that of the Revolution—the "Cult of Reason" was founded, to be succeeded by the "Religion of the Supreme Being" introduced by Robespierre. And what numbers of new sects and religions can be recorded since then!

There was, first of all, the *Theophilanthropy* of Jean-Baptiste Chemin and Valentine Haüy, representing the faith of those who love man in God, and God in so far as He loves man. The Empire, in persecuting this doctrine, only added to its vitality, for it has not even yet completely died out.

The religion of Father Enfantin, which had a great vogue in the last century, conformed in many respects to the name of its founder. Man and woman, united by religion, were to form priests "in duplicate" for the guidance of their flock, young and old, lovers and married couples alike. The Saint-Simonites—so admirable in some ways—allied themselves to this doctrine, and succeeded in attracting a number of sympathisers.

The life of French sects has always been of short duration, though there have existed among them many that in other countries would certainly have won for their founders the laurel-wreath of fame. Such was, for instance, the *Church of France*, inaugurated by the Abbé Chatel, whose idea was to entrust sacerdotal functions to the most worthy among his followers, by means of a public vote. The sect prospered for a time, but soon disappeared amid general indifference, and the Abbé ended his days as a grocer.

The doctrine of Fabre Palaprat had more success, being drawn from the esoteric teachings of the Gospel of St. John. He either suppressed or modified many of the Catholic dogmas, abandoned the use of Latin and inaugurated prayers in French.

The *Fusionists* were founded by Jean-Baptiste de Turreil. After a divine revelation which came to him in the forest of Meudon, near Paris, he broke with Catholicism and preached the intimate union of man and nature. He anticipated to some extent the naturalist beliefs which spread through both France and England at the beginning of the present century, and his posthumous work entitled *The Fusionist Religion or the Doctrine of Universalism* gives an idea of his tendencies. There was an element of consolation in his doctrine, for the harmony between man and the universe, as taught by him, renders death only a prolongation of life itself, and makes it both attractive and desirable.

The *Neo-Gnostic Church* of Fabre des Essarts was condemned by Leo XIII with some severity as a revival of the old Albigensian heresy, with the addition of new false and impious doctrines, but it still has many followers. The Neo-Gnostics believe that this world is a work of wickedness, and was created not by God but by some inferior power, which shall ultimately disappear—and its creation also. While the Manichaeans teach that the world is ruled by the powers of both good and evil, God and Satan, the Neo-Gnostics declare that it is Satan who reigns exclusively upon earth, and that it is man's duty to help to free God from His powerful rival. They also preach the brotherhood of man and of nations, and it is probably this altruistic doctrine which has rendered them irresistible to many who are wearied and disheartened by the enmities and hatreds that separate human beings.

In 1900, after a letter from Jean Bricaut, the patriarch of universal Gnosticism in Lyons, the Neo-Gnostics united with the Valentinians, and their union was consecrated by the Council of Toulouse in 1903. But some years afterwards, Dr. Fugairon of Lyons (who took the name of Sophronius) amalgamated all the branches, with the exception of the Valentinians, under the name of the *Gnostic Church of Lyons*. These latter, although excluded, continued to follow their own way of salvation, and addressed a legal declaration to the Republican Government in 1906 in defence of their religious rights of association.

In the Gnostic teaching, the Eons, corresponding to the archetypal ideas of Plato, are never single; each god has his feminine counterpart; and the Gnostic assemblies are composed of "perfected ones," male and female. The Valentinians give the mystic bride the name of Helen.

The Gnostic rites and sacraments are complicated. There is the *Consolamentum*, or laying on of hands; the breaking of bread, or means of communication with the *Astral Body of Jesus*; and the *Appareillementum*, or means of receiving divine grace.

In peculiarities of faith and of its expression some of our French sects certainly have little to learn from those of America and Russia.

The *Religion of Satanism*—or, as it was sometimes called, the *Religion of Mercy*—founded by Vintras and Boullan, deserves special mention. Vintras was arrested—unjustly, it seems certain—for swindling, and in the visions which he experienced as a result of his undeserved sufferings he believed himself to be in communication with the Archangel Michael and with Christ Himself. Having spent about twelve years in London, he returned to Lyons to preach his doctrine, and succeeded in making a number of proselytes. He died in 1875. Some years afterwards a doctor of divinity named Boullan installed himself at Lyons as his successor. He taught that women should be common property, and preached the union with inferior beings (in order to raise them), the "union of charity," and the "union of wisdom." He

healed the sick, exorcised demons, and treated domestic animals with great success, so that the peasants soon looked upon him as superior to the curé who was incapable of curing their sick horses and cattle.

Vintras had proclaimed himself to be Elijah come to life; Boullan adopted the title of John the Baptist resurrected. He died at the beginning of the twentieth century, complaining of having been cruelly slandered, especially by Stanislas de Guaita, who in his *Temple of Satan* had accused Boullan of being a priest of Lucifer, of making use of spells and charms, and—worst of all—of celebrating the Black Mass.

The founder of the *Religion of Humanity* had a tragic and troublous career. Genius and madness have rarely been so harmoniously combined for the creation of something that should be durable and of real value. For one cannot doubt the madness of Auguste Comte. It was manifested in public on the 12th of April, 1826, and interrupted the success of his lectures, which had attracted all the leading minds of the time, including Humboldt himself. After a violent attack of mania, the founder of the philosophy of Positivism took refuge at Montmorency. From there he was with difficulty brought back to Paris and placed under the care of the celebrated alienist, Esquirol. He was released when only partially cured, and at the instigation of his mother consented to go through a religious marriage ceremony with Madame Comte, after which he signed the official register *Brutus Bonaparte Comte!* The following year he threw himself into the Seine, but was miraculously saved, and, gradually recovering his strength, he recommenced his courses of lectures, which aroused the greatest interest both in France and abroad.

The Positivist leader had always shown signs of morbid megalomania. His early works are sufficient to prove that he was the prey to an excessive form of pride, for he writes like a Messiah consciously treading the path that leads to a martyr's crown. His private troubles aggravated the malady, and the escapades of his wife, who frequently left his house to rejoin her old associates, were the cause of violent attacks of frenzy.

Later the philosopher himself was seized by an overwhelming passion for Clotilde de Vaux, a writer of pretensions who was, in reality, distinguished neither by talent nor beauty. The feeling that she inspired in him has no parallel in the annals of modern love-affairs. After some years, however, she died of consumption, and the germ of madness in Comte, which had been lying latent, again showed itself, this time in the form of a passionate religious mysticism. His dead mistress became transformed, for him, into a divinity, and he looked upon everything that she had used or touched as sacred, shutting himself up in the midst of the furniture and utensils that had surrounded her during her life-time. Three times a day he prostrated himself, and offered up fervent prayers to the spirit of Clotilde, and he often visited her grave, or sat, wrapped in meditation, in the church that she had frequented. He sought to evoke her image, and held long conversations with it, and it was under her influence that he founded a new religion based chiefly on his *Positivist Catechism*. In this cult, Clotilde symbolised woman and the superior humanity which shall proceed from her.

Although a profound and original thinker, Comte was like the rest in considering himself the High Priest of his own religion. He sought to make converts, and wrote to many of the reigning sovereigns, including the Tsar; and he even suggested an alliance, for the good of the nations, with the Jesuits!

But to do him justice we must admit that he led an ascetic and saint-like life, renouncing all worldly pleasures. An Englishman who saw much of him about 1851 declared that his goodness of soul surpassed even his brilliancy of intellect.

Though he had so little sympathy for the past and present religions upon whose grave he erected his own system, he himself reverted, as a matter of fact, to a sort of fetishism; and his "Humanity," with which he replaced the former "gods," manifested nearly all their defects and weaknesses.

In his *Sacerdoce* and *Nouvelle Foi Occidentale* the principal ideas are borrowed from inferior beliefs of the Asiatic races. He incorporated the arts of hygiene and medicine in his creed, and declared that medicine would reinstate the dominion of the priesthood when the Positivist clergy succeeded in fulfilling the necessary conditions.

The remarkable success of this religion is well known. Numerous sects based on Comte's doctrines were founded in all parts of the world, and his philosophy made a deep impression on the minds of thinking men, who assisted in spreading it through all branches of society. Even to-day believers in Positivism are found not only in France, but above all in North and South America. In Brazil, Comte's influence was both widespread and beneficial, and the very laws of this great Republic are based on the theories of the Positivist leader.

The value of certain of his fundamental doctrines may be questioned, equally with the ruling ideas of his religion, his Messianic rôle, and his priesthood. But there is nevertheless something sublime in the

teaching that individual and social happiness depends upon the degree of affection and goodwill manifested in the human heart. This is no doubt one reason why the adherents of the Positivist Church are so often distinguished by their high morality and their spirit of self-sacrifice.

In addition to purely local sects and religions, France has always harboured a number of *Swedenborgians*, whose beliefs have undergone certain modifications on French soil. For instance, thaumaturgy was introduced by Captain Bernard, and healing by means of prayer by Madame de Saint-Amour. But Leboys des Guais, the acknowledged leader of the sect about 1850, reverted to the unalloyed doctrines of the founder, and thanks to Mlle. Holms and M. Humann, and their church in the Rue de Thouin, the Swedenborgian religion still flourishes in France to-day.

The *Irvingites*, founded in Scotland towards the end of the eighteenth century, also made many French converts. Irving preached the second coming of Christ, and believed that the Holy Ghost was present in himself. He waited some time for God the Father to endow him with the miraculous gifts needed for establishing the new Church, and then, finding that many of his followers were able to heal the sick with surprising success, he concluded that heaven had deigned to accept him as the "second Saviour." He organised a Catholic Apostolic Church in London, and proclaimed himself its head; while in Paris the principal church of the sect, formerly in the Avenue de Ségur, has now been moved to the Rue François-Bonvin. Woman is excluded from the cult, and consequently the name of the Virgin is omitted from all Irvingite ceremonies, while the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption of the Virgin are denied.

But many other sects exist in addition to those already mentioned. Often their life is short as a summer night, and they appear and disappear, leaving no trace behind them save a passing exaltation in the hearts of their followers. Those who join them seem for a time to be satisfied with dreams and illusions, but usually end by returning to the bosom of the established Church—or by being confined in an asylum.

These innumerable sects with their illusory pretensions serve to demonstrate the truth of our thesis—that the most ardent desire of present-day humanity is for the renewal or transformation of the faith to which it has grown accustomed.

A well-known critic has claimed that it is possible for all the dramatic or comic incidents that have been played in all theatres of all ages to be reduced down to thirty-six situations from the use of which not even a genius can escape. To how many main variations could we reduce the desire for reform displayed by our religious revolutionaries? The search for salvation takes on so many vague and incalculable shapes that we can only compare them to clouds that float across the sky on a windy day; but there are, all the same, signs of kinship to be discovered even between the sects that appear to be furthest apart.

The *Chlysty*, from whom the religion of Rasputin was partly derived, show some resemblance to the "Shakers," and to the Christian Scientists, both of whom have evolved along lines diametrically opposed. The "Shakers," direct descendants of the Huguenots, teach that the end of the world is at hand, and that all men should repent in preparation for the coming of the heavenly kingdom. Their meetings have always been characterised by visions and revelations, and they sing and dance for joy, leaping into the air and trembling with nervous excitement—to which fact they owe their name.

In tracing out their history we find many striking analogies with the sects of our own day. It was in 1770 that the "Shakers" believed Christ to have reincarnated in the body of Anne Lee, the daughter of a Manchester blacksmith. Although married, she preached—like Mrs. Eddy a hundred years later—the benefits of celibacy, the only state approved by God. Her convictions were so sincere, and her expression of them so eloquent, that when charged with heresy she succeeded in converting her accusers. The cult of virginity was adopted by her followers, who considered her their "Mother in Christ," inspired from on high; and when she counselled them to leave England and emigrate to the New World, they followed her unquestioningly, even to embarking in an old and long-disused vessel for the Promised Land. Arrived there, however, their lot was not a happy one, for they met with much persecution, and Anne Lee herself was imprisoned. But after her release she preached with greater force and conviction than ever the end of sexual unions and the near approach of the Kingdom of God. Her eloquence attracted many, and even today her religion still has followers. Among their settlements we may mention that of Alfred, Maine, where a number of "spiritual families" live harmoniously together, convinced that the Kingdom of God has already descended upon earth, and that they are existing in a state of celestial purity like that of the angels in heaven. They refuse to eat pork or to make use of fermented drinks, and dancing still plays a part in their religious services. Sometimes, in the midst of the general excitement, a sister or a brother will announce a message that has been delivered by some unseen spirit, whereupon all the hearers leap and dance with redoubled vigour.

To-day, even as a hundred years ago, the "Shakers" affirm, not without reason, that Heaven and Hell are within ourselves, and that that is why we must live honestly and well in order to share in the heavenly kingdom from which sinners are excluded. Just so do Christian Scientists declare that we may be led by faith towards heaven, happiness and health.

Even murder, that most extreme perversion of all moral feeling, has been adopted as a means of salvation by several Russian sects as well as by the Hindus, evolving in widely contrasted environments. The general desire to gain, somehow or other, the favour of the "Eternal Principle of Things," thus expresses itself in the most varied and the most unlikely forms, one of the most striking being that of the "religion of murder," which throws a lurid light upon the hidden regions of man's subconscious mind.

CHAPTER II

THE RELIGION OF MURDER

There are certain periodical publications which as a rule are neither examined nor discussed. Yet their existence dates back for many years, and in this age of filing and docketing they must by now provide a regular gold-mine for the study of human psychology. What increases their value is that they avoid all attempt at "literary effect." No picked phrases, no situations invented or dramatised to suit the taste of the author; nothing but facts taken from real life and recorded by the functionaries of His Majesty the Emperor of India. We are referring to those very interesting *Reports of the Indian Government* to which we owe practically all our knowledge of fakirism and its miracles, of the artificial conservation of human life in the tomb, and of the strangulation rites of the Thugs. They are indeed a valuable contribution to the study of the perversions of religious faith—that most alluring and yet least explored section of psychology.

A librarian at the British Museum showed me some years ago one of the most suggestive documents that the art of cartography has ever produced. It was the famous map prepared by Captain Paton, about 1890, for the British Government, showing the various neighbourhoods in which the Thugs had strangled and buried their victims. Drawn up according to precise information furnished by several leaders of the sect, it indicated every tomb in the province of Oudh, where the majority of the worshippers of the goddess Kali were to be found. The written descriptions that accompanied the map were particularly interesting, for—like Swift, when he enumerated the benefits that would accrue to the starving Irish people if they killed their children like sheep and ate them instead of mutton—Captain Paton felt himself compelled to record the glorious deeds of some of the most valiant of the Thugs. He gave details which would have rejoiced the imagination of a de Quincey or an Edgar Allan Poe. About 5200 murders had been committed by a company of forty people, all highly thought of and commanding general respect. At their head was the venerable Buhram, who laid claim to 931 assassinations during his forty years of religious activity in the province of Oudh. The second in merit, one Ramson, had strangled 608 people. The third, it is true, could only claim about 500, but he had reached this figure in thirty years, and had made a record of 25 murders in one year. Others had to their credit 377, 340 and 264 assassinations respectively, after which one dropped from these heights to figures of twenty, ten or even only five annual murders in honour of Kali. This record undoubtedly represented the supreme flower of the religion of this goddess, who not only taught her followers the art of strangulation, but also succeeded in hiding their deeds from the suspicious eyes of unbelievers.

Murders followed thick and fast, one upon another, but though thousands of Hindus, rich and poor, young and old, were known to disappear, their terrified families scarcely dared to complain. English statisticians go so far as to say that from thirty to fifty thousand human lives were sacrificed every year on the altar of this fatal goddess, who, desiring to thwart the growth of the too prolific life-principle in the universe, incited her worshippers to the suppression and destruction of human beings. But while using her power to shelter her followers from suspicion and discovery, Kali expected them, for their part, to take care that none witnessed the performance of her duties. One day misfortune fell upon them. A novice of the cult had the daring to spy upon the goddess while she was occupied in destroying the traces of her rite, and Kali's divine modesty being wounded, she declared that in future she would no longer watch over the earthly safety of her followers, but that they themselves must be responsible for concealing their deeds from the eyes of men. Thus, after having worshipped her with impunity for centuries, the Thugs all at once found themselves exposed to the suspicions of their fellow-countrymen, and above all, of the British Government. Captain Sleeman played the part of their evil genius, for in his

anger at their abominable deeds he decided, in spite of the resistance offered by the heads of the East India Company, to wage war to the knife against the religion of Kali. Such alarming reports were received in England that at last the home authorities were aroused, and in 1830 a special official was appointed to direct operations (the General Superintendent of Operations against Thuggee). Captain Sleeman was chosen to fill the appointment, and he dedicated to it all his courage and practically his whole life. The tale of the twenty years' struggle that followed would put the most thrilling dramas of fiction in the shade.

In the works founded on Captain Sleeman's reports, and above all in his own official documents, are found remarkable accounts of the ways in which the Thugs lured their victims to their doom.

A Mongol officer of noble bearing was travelling to the province of Oudh accompanied by two faithful servants. He halted on his way near the Ganges, and was there accosted by a group of men, polite in speech and respectable in appearance, who asked permission to finish their journey under his protection. The officer refused angrily and begged them to let him go on his way alone. The strangers tried to persuade him that his suspicions were unjust, but, seeing his nostrils inflate and his eyes gleam with rage, they finally desisted. The next day he met another group of travellers, dressed in Moslem fashion, who spoke to him of the danger of travelling alone and begged him to accept their escort. Once more the officer's eyes flashed with rage; he threatened them with his sword, and was left to proceed in peace. Many times again the brave Mongol, always on his guard, succeeded in thwarting the designs of his mysterious fellow-travellers, but on the fourth day he reached a barren plain where, a few steps from the track, six Moslems were weeping over the body of one who had succumbed to the hardships of the journey. They had already dug a hole in the earth to inter the corpse, when it was discovered that not one of them could read the Koran. On their knees they implored the Mongol officer to render this service to the dead. He dismounted from his horse, unable to resist their pleadings, and feeling bound by his religion to accede to their request.

Having discarded his sword and pistols, he performed the necessary ablutions, and then approached the grave to recite the prayers for the dead. Suddenly cloths were thrown over his own and his servants' heads, and after a few moments all three were precipitated into the yawning hole.

It may be asked why so much cunning was needed in order to add a few more members to the kingdom of the dead. The reason is that the Thugs were forbidden to shed human blood. The sacrifice could only be accomplished through death by strangling. It might often be easy enough to fall upon solitary travellers, but woe to the Thug who in any way brought about the shedding of blood! Consequently they had to have recourse to all sorts of ingenious methods for allaying suspicion, so that their victims might be hastened into the next world according to the rites approved by their implacable goddess. They believed in division of labour, and always acted collectively, employing some to entice the victim into the trap, and others to perform the act of strangulation, while in the third category were those who first dug the graves and afterwards rendered them invisible.

The murders were always accomplished with a kind of cold-blooded fanaticism, admitting neither mercy nor pity, for the Thug, convinced that his action would count as a special virtue for himself in the next life, also believed that his victim would benefit from it.

Feringhi, one of the most famous of Indian stranglers, who also held a responsible official position, was once asked if he was not ashamed to kill his neighbour.

"No," he replied, "because one cannot be ashamed to fulfil the divine will. In doing so one finds happiness. No man who has once understood and practised the religion of Thuggee will ever cease to conform to it to the end of his days. I was initiated into it by my father when I was very young, and if I were to live for a thousand years I should still continue to follow in his footsteps."

The Thugs of each district were led by one whom they called their *jemadar*, to whom they gave implicit obedience. The utmost discretion reigned among them, and they never questioned the plans of their superiors. We can imagine how difficult it was to combat a fanaticism which feared nothing, not even death; for when death overtook them, as it sometimes did, in the performance of their rites, they merely looked upon it as a means of drawing nearer to their goddess.

The origin of this extraordinary religion seems to be hidden in the mists of the past, though European travellers claim to have met with it in India in the seventeenth century. We may note that during the Mahometan invasion all sorts of crimes were committed in the name of religion, and possibly the murders in honour of Kali were a survival from this time. As years went by the sect increased rapidly, and many of the most peaceable Hindus were attracted by it, and joined it in the capacity of grave-concealers, spies, or merely as passive adherents who contributed large sums of money. In Sleeman's time about two thousand Thugs were arrested and put to death every year, but nevertheless their numbers, towards the end of the nineteenth century, were steadily increasing. (Of recent years,

however, a considerable diminution has been shown.) In 1895 only three are recorded to have been condemned to death for murder; in 1896, ten; and in 1897, twenty-five; while travellers in Rajputana and the Hyderabad district speak of much higher figures. The Thugs always bear in mind the maxim that "dead men tell no tales," and their practice of killing all the companions of the chosen victim, as well as himself, renders the detection of their crimes extremely difficult; while their mastery of the art of getting rid of corpses frequently baffles the authorities. Further, the terrified families of the victims, dreading reprisals, often fail to report the deaths, so that the sect has thus been enabled to continue its murderous rites in spite of all measures taken to stamp it out.

They avoid killing women, except in the case of women accompanying a man who has been doomed to death, when they must be sacrificed in order to prevent their reporting the crime. Stranger still, they admit that murder is not always a virtuous action, but that there are criminal murders which deserve punishment.

"When a Thug is killed," said one of them to the celebrated Sleeman, "or when one does not belong to the sect, and kills without conforming to the rites, it is a crime, and should be punished."

They seem to experience a strange and voluptuous pleasure when performing their rites of strangulation—a pleasure increased, no doubt, by the knowledge that their goddess looks on with approval. Yet even the most hardened among them is capable of the greatest chivalry when women are concerned, and a rigorous inquiry into the details of thousands of their crimes has failed to reveal any single attempt at violation. A Thug returning from one of his ritualistic expeditions may show himself to be a good and affectionate husband and father, and a charitable neighbour. Apart from numerous acts of assassination, on which he prides himself, his conduct is usually irreproachable. No wonder that he fills the English magistrates with stupefaction, and that justice does not always dare to strike when it can act more effectively by persuasion or seclusion.

All things evolve with the passage of time, and in the twentieth century even the rite of strangulation has undergone changes. From the main sect of Thuggee, other branches of a new and unlooked-for type have sprung. These, instead of strangling their neighbours, prefer to poison them, the virtue being the same and the method easier and more expeditious. Their proceedings, though more difficult to control, are quite as lucrative for Kali, the devourer of human life, and if they have made their goddess less notorious than did the Thugs, they certainly worship her with equal ardour.

CHAPTER III

THE REINCARNATIONIST'S PARADISE

Amid luxuriant vegetation, in an enchanting position overlooking the Pacific Ocean, flourishes the religion of reincarnation "without beginning and without end." Its followers, gathered there from all parts of the world, steep themselves in the atmosphere of fraternal love and general benevolence which is exhaled by this doctrine of the evolution of souls, leading to ultimate perfection.

The scenes which greet the dazzled eyes of the visitor are of such extreme beauty that he might well believe himself to have been miraculously transported to ancient Hellas. Greek theatres and temples gleam whitely in the shade of majestic palm-trees, and groups of young people dressed like the youths and maidens of ancient Athens may be seen taking part in rhythmic dances and elaborate processions.

Amid the dirt and chaos of our modern world this Grecian city seems to have sprung up as by a miracle, fully reconstituted not only in its outer appearance but also in its inner life of harmony and peace. Theosophists of every degree, who in other lands seem so often to lose themselves in a mist of vague dreams and metaphysical speculations, have here succeeded in expressing their ideals in concrete form.

Why postpone the paradise promised by Karma, the fundamental law of life? Why not seek to enjoy it now, without delay? So a number of the scattered disciples of Madame Blavatsky, following their new guide, Catherine Tingley, set to work to construct their holy city in California, on the shores of the Pacific, like the Jews who followed Moses to the Promised Land.

These teachings, handed down through untold ages, rejoice to-day in a setting that would surely have astonished their Hindu or Egyptian progenitors; and the revelations which came to Madame Blavatsky after her discovery of the forgotten truths of a dim and distant past bid fair to revivify our time-worn

planet. Since the war there has been a tremendous revival of theosophical propaganda in allied and neutral countries, in the Old World and in the New, and without doubt Theosophy, together with Christian Science—to which it is in many ways opposed—is destined to undergo striking developments.

The new theory of metempsychosis saw the light about fifty years ago. It was brought to the United States by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, a Russian lady of noble birth and high educational attainments, whose thought had been influenced partly by the esoteric wisdom of the past and partly by the religious unrest of her native land.

The doctrine of reincarnation has been accepted in India and Egypt for at least three thousand years. It was taught secretly in the Eleusinian mysteries. The philosophy of Pythagoras and of Plato is deeply impregnated with it. The Early Christian Church, as well as the Gnostics, admitted it tacitly, but in the fourth century it was condemned by the Fathers of the Church and banished from orthodox Christianity. Nevertheless it has always had an irresistible attraction for thoughtful minds, and many of the greatest thinkers, artists and poets of all ages have been firmly convinced of its truth.

Once installed in New York the Russian prophetess sowed far and wide the seeds of her new faith, whose consolatory doctrine attracted many who were saddened by the phenomenon of death, while at the same time it brought her many enemies.

After a time she departed for India, where her teachings became considerably enriched and widened by local and historical influences. She died in London in 1891.

We will pass in silence over the calumnious and dishonourable accusations which poisoned her years of triumph, and with which it has been sought to tarnish her memory. In these days we slander our prophets instead of killing them—a procedure which may cause them greater suffering, but has no effect upon the spread of their doctrines.

Madame Blavatsky's philosophy is set forth in a series of elaborate works of which the chief are *The Secret Doctrine*, the *Key to Theosophy*, and *Isis Unveiled*, constituting, according to the author, a key to the mysteries of ancient and modern science and theology. To this medley of thoughts and facts drawn from the mystical wisdom of all countries and all ages, the magic of the writer's style gives a peculiar force and flavour, and though she may not always convince, she certainly offers food for thought and speculation—which is, perhaps, even more essential.

Her frequent lack of precision and clearness seems only to enhance the effect of her affirmations and revelations. A prophet who could easily be understood by intelligences of all grades would soon come to grief, for religious teachers, like philosophers and metaphysicians, seem to be esteemed and admired largely in proportion to the vagueness of their doctrines. The works of Madame Blavatsky are worthy of being classed among the most obscure, and for that very reason have every chance of endurance.

In spite of the differences that arose among the principal Theosophists (who included Colonel Olcott, William Q. Judge, and Annie Besant) after their leader's death, Catherine Tingley succeeded in rallying large numbers of the American believers to her banner, and founded a colony at Point Loma, California, under the name of "the universal and theosophical brotherhood," which was approved by the Theosophical conferences held in New York and Chicago in 1898.

Theosophy is in fact a philosophy of altruism, whose main tenets are brotherly love and justice. By following truth the soul becomes purified, and after a life consecrated to others and guided by the laws of justice, the individual may hope to reincarnate in some higher form. As the poet of Sakuntala has said—"In other existences we all have loved and wept"—but the divine Kalidasa teaches that past lives should not be spoken of, "for the mystery of rebirth is sacred."

The duality of our being is shown, on the one hand, in our earthly sins and failures, and on the other in the spiritual aspirations which ever urge us on to greater heights. The law of Karma affirms the relationship between cause and effect, and teaches that "as a man sows, so shall he also reap"—and consequently, the better our thoughts and actions now, the greater our advancement in the next life.

It is in the teachings of the divine Krishna that we find the original source of the greater part of modern Theosophy. His precepts are full of consolation for restless minds, and have the power to reconcile us not only to death, but to life.

In the vast store-house of the world's legends there is none more beautiful than that of the immaculate maiden Devaki, who in a divine ecstasy, amid strains of celestial music, brought forth the child of Mahadeva, Sun of Suns, in perfect serenity and bliss; while the story of Krishna's life, his dangers and temptations, his virtues and his beauty, his wisdom and his final supreme initiation, has

provided the Hindu world with conceptions of a grandeur, originality and depth rarely met with elsewhere. To this well of wisdom came Plato and Pythagoras, and drew from it the chief ingredients of their philosophies; and here, too, we receive from the lips of Krishna, thirty centuries before the birth of Christ, the first faint intimations of the immortality of the soul.

He taught his disciples that man, living upon earth, is triple in essence, possessing spirit, mind and body. When he succeeds in harmonising the two first, he attains the state of *Sattva*, and rejoices in wisdom and peace. When he succeeds in harmonising mind and body only, he is in the state of *Raja*, which is unstable and dangerous. When the body preponderates, he is in the state of *Tamas*, "that bindeth by heedlessness, indolence and sloth." Man's lot depends therefore on the correlation of these three states. When he dies in the state of *Sattva*, his soul rises to regions of the utmost purity and bliss, and comprehends all mysteries, in close communion with the Most High. This is true immortality. But those who have not escaped from *Raja* and *Tamas* must return to earth and reincarnate in mortal bodies.

In later years Hermes Trismegistus, the Thrice-Greatest One, further developed these principles, adding to them the mystical treasures of Egyptian wisdom. It has been said by Lactance that "Hermes, one knows not how, succeeded in discovering nearly all the truth." During the first few centuries of the Christian era his works enjoyed a considerable vogue, and he also had a very great influence on the Renaissance period. The Hermetic books, with all their mysteries, have become part of the theosophical gospel, as well as the doctrines of Plato and of the Neo-Platonists, Plutarch's treatises on Isis and Osiris, the philosophies of Plotinus and Iamblichus, the teachings of Philo and of the Gnostics, and the works of innumerable others, who in seeking to throw light on the super-physical realms seem often only to have succeeded in plunging them into greater darkness. Augmented by all these obscure products of philosophy and metaphysics, the new Theosophy gives the impression of a gigantic and impenetrable maze, but it must be admitted that its followers have drawn from it maxims whose justice and high morality are beyond question.

The general trend of its teachings is indicated by the following sublime passages from the Bhagavad Gita, or Lord's Song:—

"He attaineth Peace, into whom all desires flow as rivers flow into the ocean, which is filled with water, but remaineth unmoved—not he who desireth desires. Whoso forsaketh all desires and goeth onwards free from yearnings, selfless and without egoism—he goeth to Peace. . . . Freed from passion, fear and anger, filled with Me, taking refuge in Me, purified in the fire of wisdom, many have entered into My Being. However men approach Me, even so do I welcome them, for the path men take from every side is Mine, O Pârtha."

But the many imitations and variations of this wonderful Song have despoiled it of some of its freshness and beauty, so that in these days it is rather like the airs played on barrel-organs whose original tunefulness is forgotten through wearisome repetition.

Theosophists are also concerned, with studying the sevenfold nature of man and of the universe, with the existence of invisible worlds, the graduated stages of death and rebirth, and the attainment of divine wisdom through perfect purity of life and thought. They are opposed to racial prejudices, social classifications, and all distinctions that separate and divide mankind, and they inculcate the greatest possible respect for, the widest possible tolerance between, the world's different religions. Like Christian Scientists they do not believe in the practice of hypnotic suggestion, but they disagree with the materialism of the Scientists, holding that, in the search for truth, purity of life is the one essential, and worldly prosperity of small importance.

In 1912 and 1913 Mrs. Tingley visited Europe and made numerous converts in England, Italy, France, Germany and the Scandinavian countries, while the Theosophical Conference held at Point Loma in 1915, in the interests of peace and universal brotherhood, was an immense success. The Theosophists have always been ardent workers in the cause of international peace, and while awaiting the dawn of a New Age when war shall be unknown, they strive to forestall its advent in their Californian paradise.

Dramatic and musical performances are given in theatres built in the Greek style; there is a college of Raja-Yoga, where thousands of pupils of all races are initiated into the mysteries of Karma and Reincarnation; a School of Antiquity, "temple of the living light," where the secret of living in harmony with nature is taught; frequent lectures, conferences, sports and games; while animated conversations concerning memories of past lives have an undying fascination for the adherents of this doctrine which sends so many missionaries out into the world every year.

Unlike other sects, the Theosophists do not seem anxious to publish their numbers abroad—whether

because they make too many converts, or too few, it is impossible to say!—but there must certainly be hundreds of thousands scattered throughout the United States, India, and the Anglo-Saxon countries.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

The foregoing chapter scarcely seems complete without some reference to the other two centres where an attempt has been made to express the ideals of Theosophy in concrete form—one in the East, at Adyar, Madras, the other in the West, at Krotona, near Los Angeles, California. The former came into being in 1882 under Madame Blavatsky's own leadership, and has grown from a small property of only 27 acres to one of 263 acres. With its many fine buildings it has a river-frontage (on the Adyar river) of one mile, and a sea-frontage of two-fifths of a mile. Here Mrs. Besant—World-President of the Theosophical Society, apart from Mrs. Tingley's followers—makes her home, leaving it only for periodical lecturing tours throughout India, or for visits to London and other European centres. Her lectures at Queen's Hall, London, in the years immediately preceding the war, and again in 1919, were remarkable for the crowds who flocked to listen to one who, whether her views find agreement or not, is universally admitted to be in the front rank of living orators. Adyar possesses an excellent library, with many valuable books and manuscripts relating to the ancient religions of India; a publishing house, the Vasanta Press, whence are issued yearly numerous theosophical books, pamphlets and magazines, for purposes of study and propaganda; a lecture hall which seats 1500 people, but into which as many as 2300 have found admittance on special occasions; a Masonic temple; an extensive building for the housing of resident students; and very beautiful grounds with a palm-grove and an ancient banyan tree, in whose shade many of the most important theosophical lectures and conferences are held, and around which more than 3000 people of all nationalities have often been gathered to hear the discourses of the President and her colleagues. A striking feature of the grounds is the massive sculptured trilithons, about 2000 years old, brought from a ruined temple in southern India, and erected here in picturesque surroundings.

The colony at Krotona is of more recent origin, and its environment is similar in some respects to that of Point Loma. Founded in 1912 by A. P. Warrington, the head of the American section of the Theosophical Society under Mrs. Besant's leadership, it stands on high ground on the outskirts of Hollywood, a suburb of Los Angeles, with magnificent views of the Santa Monica Mountains and of the valley leading to the sea twelve miles away. This "Institute of Theosophy" takes its name from the School of Science, Art and Philosophy founded by the great Pythagoras, and aspires to be to-day what his Krotona was in the past—a centre of spiritual enlightenment. It is run on co-operative lines, and on a non-profit basis. There are no "servants" in the community, and the means of support is from a ground-rent or tax charged to each house-builder, from the renting of rooms, and from voluntary donations. The buildings are in picturesque Moorish or Spanish style, their white walls gleaming amid the brilliant flowers and luxuriant greenery of this favoured climate. They include a fine Lending Library and Reference Room, a scientific research laboratory, a publishing house, an administration building, and many pretty villas and cottages. There is also a temple, in whose auditorium religious ceremonies, meetings, lectures and concerts take place, and an open-air stadium where each year a miracle play is to be produced, the one first chosen being a dramatisation of Sir Edwin Arnold's "Light of Asia," which ran for three weeks in the summer of 1918.

The English Headquarters of the Society are now at 23 Bedford Square, London.

CONCLUSION

"Tell us then, Mary, what hast thou seen upon thy way?"

"I have seen the shroud and the vestments and the angelic witnesses, and I have seen the glory of the Resurrected."

Saints and prophets of all lands and all ages bear an unconscious resemblance one to another. The

craving for truth, the unquenchable desire to escape from reality, leads them into realms of mystery and dream, where simple peasants and labourers, religious men and agnostics, philosophers and mystics, all meet together. Their unsuspecting minds are easily dazzled by the least ray of light, and deceived by the most unlikely promises, and it is not surprising that they are often imposed upon and led to accept false ways of salvation.

Many of the mystics show a desire to revert to the Esoteric Christianity dear to Saint John, the disciple whom Jesus loved; or to that of Mani, whose doctrine—unjustly distorted by his detractors—was concerned with direct initiation and final mergence in the Divinity. But it is not easy to progress against the stream of the centuries, and with the Catharists of Hungary, the Albigenses of Provence, and the Templars massacred in the name of St. Augustine—that ancient Manichean who became the worst enemy of his fellow-believers—Esoteric Christianity seemed to have died out. Nevertheless the desire for it has never been destroyed, and continues to inspire the teachings of all those who revolt against dogmas that tend to restrict the soul's activities instead of widening them.

Logically, all viable religious evolution is a departure from the Christianity which has moulded our present-day thought and morality and is the centre of all our hopes. But every new revival has to reckon with it. Madame Blavatsky, for instance, made Gautama Buddha—the king's son who became a beggar by reason of his immense compassion for mankind—the central pivot of her esotericism, which was Buddhist rather than Christian in essence; but Annie Besant, the spiritual leader of modern Theosophy, has returned to Christianity and acknowledges the divinity of the Son of Man. This symbolic example should reassure Christian believers, showing how even those who depart from Christianity contribute, in spite of themselves, to its continuous growth.

Crowds of new phenomena are now demanding entry into the divine city of religion. There is, first of all, science, undertaking to present us with a morality conforming to the Gospel teachings, which it claims have become a dead letter. But if twenty centuries of Christianity have not transformed human nature, neither has science. Materialism and commercialism have failed just as the Church, with her spirit of exclusion and domination, has failed. The fact that all these have worked separately and in hostility to one another is perhaps the reason, for mutual understanding and respect, once established between them, might well result in a new revelation worthy of the new humanity which shall emerge from this tragic age. A superior idealism, at once religious, social and scientific, must sooner or later bring new light and warmth to the world, for a world-crisis which has shaken the very foundations of our existence cannot leave intact its logical corollary, faith, in whose vicinity threatening clouds have long been visible. As at the dawn of Christianity, the whole world has seemed to be rent by torturing doubts and by the menace of an approaching end. After having been preserved from destruction by Christ for two thousand years, it suddenly found itself in the throes of the most appalling upheaval yet experienced, with the majority of its inhabitants engaged in a murderous war. The dream of human brotherhood, glimpsed throughout the centuries, seemed to be irretrievably threatened, and once more arose the age-old question as to how the Reign of Love was to be introduced upon earth.

The present era shows other striking analogies to the early days of Christianity, as, for instance, in the democratic movement tending to establish the sovereignty of the people. But it is no longer exceptional men, like prophets, who proclaim the dawn of the age of equality, but the masses themselves, under the guidance of their chosen leaders. In the book of Enoch the Son of Man tears kings from their thrones and casts them into Hell; but this was only an isolated seer daring to predict misfortune for those who built their palaces "with the sweat of others." The old-time prophets desired to reduce the rich to the level of the poor, and a man denuded of all worldly goods was held up as an ideal to be followed. This naturally necessitated mendicity, and it was not till some centuries had passed that the Church herself became reconciled to the possession of riches. Our own age, however, desires to uplift the poor to the level of the rich, and a more generous spirit is manifested, in accordance with the progress made by the science of social reform. Still it is, at bottom, the same spirit of brotherhood, enlarged and deepened, which now seeks to level from below upwards instead of from above downwards. Distrust and suspicion are directed chiefly towards the "New Rich," products of the war, who have built up their fortunes on the ruin and misery of others, and to these might be addressed the words of Jesus to the wealthy of His time—"Be ye faithful stewards"—that is to say, "Make good investments for the Kingdom of God in the interests of your fellow-men."

We are witnessing a revival of the "good tidings for the poor," in whom may be included the whole human community. For the revolution of to-day differs from that of the simple Galileans, and is of grave and universal portent, proceeding, as it does, from men who have thought and suffered, and profited by the disorder and misery of thousands of years.

The Gospel is in process of being renovated. All these new churches and beliefs can only serve to strengthen the great work in which the "Word" is incarnated. Whether produced by deliberate thought

or by unconscious cerebration, whether professed by "saints" or practised by "initiates," they hold up a mirror to the soul of contemporary humanity with all its miseries and doubts; and for this reason, whatever their nature or origin, they are deserving of sympathetic study.

There are great religions and small ones, and as with works of art, we are apt to find in each, more or less, what we ourselves bring to it. Jeremiah, when travelling through Ancient Egypt, felt indignation at the sight of gods with hawks' or jackals' heads; while the touching confessions of the dead, consigned to papyrus—"I have not killed! I have not been idle! I have not caused others to weep!"—only drew from him exclamations of anger and contempt. Herodotus, a century later, also understood nothing of this world of mysterious tombs, with its moral teachings thousands of years old, or of the great spiritual revelation with which the land of the Pharaohs is impregnated. Both alike—Jeremiah, unmoved by the cruelty and hardness of Jehovah, Herodotus, oblivious to the sensuality and immorality of his own gods, who, according to Xenophon, were adepts at thieving and lying—shook their heads in dismay before the Egyptian symbols. But Plato, on the contrary, was able to appreciate the harmonious beauty of a divine Trinity, sublime incarnation of that which is "eternal, unproduced, indestructible . . . eternally uniform and consistent, and monoeidic with itself."

There are, no doubt, many Jeremiahs to-day, but there are also understanding souls capable of taking an interest in even the most bizarre manifestations of religious faith. These throw a revelatory light upon some of the most painful problems of our time, as well as upon the secret places of the human soul where lurks an ever eager hope, often frustrated, and alas, often deceived.

All religious sects and reformers since the time of Christ have only succeeded in modifying, renovating, uplifting or debasing the eternal principles already enunciated by the Son of Man. He it was who founded the integral religion for all time, but as it permits of the most varied interpretations, innumerable and widely divergent sects have been able to graft themselves upon its eternal trunk. After Him, said Renan—who has been wrongly considered an opponent of Christ—there is nothing to be done save to develop and to fertilize, for His perfect idealism is the golden rule for a detached and virtuous life. He was the first to proclaim the kingdom of the spirit, and has established for ever the ideal of pure religion; and as His religion is a religion of *feeling*, all movements which seek to bring about the kingdom of heaven upon earth can attach themselves to His principles and to His way of salvation.

Further, any religious movement which appeals to our higher instincts must eventually contribute to the triumph of human brotherhood and to the beautifying of human life—which increases the interest of studying all attempts at revival and reform. Such a study will prevent us from being overwhelmed by the uglinesses of life, or from becoming sunk in a morass of material pleasures, and will open up ways of escape into the heavenly realms.

The true teaching of Jesus has, as a matter of fact, never yet been realised in practice. It holds up an ideal almost unattainable for mortals, like the light of a fixed star which attracts us in spite of its unthinkable distance. But we may, perhaps, by roundabout ways, ultimately succeed in giving a definite form to the Platonic dreams which ever hover around the shores of our consciousness. Among the "saints" and "initiates" who work outside the borders of accepted dogma, there are often to be found some whose originality and real spiritual worth is not generally recognised, and instead of turning away from their "visions" and "revelations," we should rather examine them with close attention. Even if our faith gains nothing, we shall be sure to pick up psychological treasures which could be turned to the profit of science.

We have been re-living, in these recent years, the "desolation" of the prophets, only that the suffering of the few in former times became with us the suffering of all. There is the same difference between the troubles of ancient Judea and those of the modern world, as there is between her miniature wars and the colossal conflict whose aftermath is with us still.

Yet now, as in the time of Isaiah, the nations long for eternal peace, and the desire for a world more in harmony with man's deepest thoughts and wishes is one of the dominant causes of religious schism and revolt.

Let us hope that the world-wide catastrophe that we have witnessed may yet lead to the realisation of the ideal expressed by Jesus, and by the ancient prophet before Him:—

"And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." And again—"The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever. And my people shall dwell in a

peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places."

Many are being stirred to new life and action by dreams which hold, in almost every case, some fragment of the longed-for truth, however foolish or illogical in expression; and we should in consequence approach the dreamers with all the sympathy of which we are capable. Often their countenances are made beautiful by love, and they will, at the least, provide us with a golden key to the fascinating mysteries of man's subconscious mind. What though their doctrines vanish from sight under the scalpel of analysis? It is no small pleasure to contemplate, and even to examine closely, such delightful phantoms.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK MODERN SAINTS AND SEERS ***

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