

always been kept as a relic together with the book which was stained with his blood at the moment of his martyrdom. It is the oldest complete Latin New Testament in existence.

So much for the more ancient codices. A few words must next be said about editors and revisions.

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(*To be continued.*)

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ART. 2.—CHRISTIANITY AND THE IDEA OF PROGRESS

FOR almost two centuries the idea of Progress has dominated the mind of Europe. It has passed from the philosopher to the politician and the man in the street, and has become so much the settled creed of our whole society that any attempt to question it is viewed either as a paradox or a heresy. It is true that the years since the war have been marked, especially on the Continent, by a wave of doubt and pessimism, nevertheless the belief in Progress is still dominant, and so deeply has it entered into our mentality that we find it hard to realize how recent and how limited has been its acceptance.

Yet when we look at the history of other ages and other civilizations we find a complete absence of any such conception. To the vast majority of the human race change has always seemed evil, and the Age of Gold lies in the distant past. The familiar lines of Horace—

Aetas parentum peior avis tulit
nos nequiores mox daturus
progeniem vitiosorem

express a sentiment that is as old as humanity, and which we can hear to-day on the lips of any elderly peasant. And this attitude is not confined to the unsophisticated type, which follows unthinkingly the traditions of a primitive way of life; it is far more strongly marked in the peoples of advanced culture. The higher the achievement of a civilization, the greater is the measure of its disillusionment.

The great civilizations of the past have tended, not merely to deny Progress, but to deny life itself. To the thinkers of ancient India, sensible existence, and the whole temporal process, is a web of illusion, which man must break through if he is to escape the growing accumulation of inherited ill. And the same pessimism may be traced more than a thousand years earlier in the ancient literature of Egypt and Babylonia.

"Death is before me to-day," writes an Egyptian poet of the third millennium B.C., "like a sick man going forth into a garden after his illness."

"Death is before me to-day, like the smell of myrrh, like sitting in the shade of the sail of a boat on a breezy day. Death is before me to-day, like the longing of a man to see his home, after many years' captivity."

If there is any civilization other than our own in which we might expect to find the idea of Progress dominant it is surely that of ancient Greece, for the Greeks seem to have possessed all the necessary foundations for such a belief.

Nowhere else in the history of the world was the actual advance of culture more rapid and triumphant, nowhere else has man had so clear a perception of the value of life and the possibilities of social development.

Hellenism is, in fact, the source of all the subsequent achievements of our European culture. It was the great creative force in art, literature, in science and philosophy, and the rise of modern European thought, from the sixteenth century onwards, was based directly on the recovery of the Hellenic heritage. Yet in this great heritage the idea of Progress has no place. It appears, early in the eighteenth century, as a spontaneous creation of the modern mind without any obvious links with the earlier development of European thought.

Not that the Greeks ignored it altogether. There is a long passage in the fifth book of Lucretius, no doubt derived in some measure from older Hellenic sources, which describes the progress of humanity under the stimulus of the struggle for existence from the purely animal conditions of its origin up to the highest achievements of civilized life, and which almost seems to anticipate the modern doctrines of evolutionary progress. But this idea does not dominate the thought of the poet. Behind it lies the sombre pessimism of the Lucretian world-view, in which the whole life of mankind is a momentary spark kindled and extinguished in the blind rush of material forces through infinite space and time. And even this qualified recognition of progress is exceptional; elsewhere it is almost completely absent.

What is the reason of this state of things? It was not due, as with the Indians, to any inherent pessimism in the minds of the Greeks, still less to any deficiency in their knowledge. On the contrary, it sprang from the very nature of the Greek scientific ideal. Greek thought was utterly unlike the science of the modern world, which seeks to unravel the secrets of nature, one by one, by a laborious process of experimental research. It was impatient of partial solution. It aspired to comprehend the innermost nature of reality and to know the cosmic process as a whole. The Greek universe, like the Greek statue, was a perfect and harmonious unity. From the time when Pythagoras first attempted to subject the changing appearances of the external world to mathematical laws and to view it as an intelligible harmony, this conception dominated all Greek thought. It found its completest expression in the Platonic cosmology with its picture of the world as "a sensible God, who is the image of the intelligible, greatest, best, most beautiful and most perfect—the one only-begotten universe."

Now this vision of the world *sub specie aeternitatis* made it impossible to attach any ultimate importance to the changes of the temporal process. For though the earth was not itself eternal, it was modelled on an eternal pattern, and time itself "imitates eternity, and moves in a circle measured by number." For since the perfect motion of the heavenly spheres is always circular, the process of temporal change must be circular also. It is not only plants and animals that go through a cycle of growth and decay, all created things have their appointed numbers and revolutions, and the cycle of the world and of time itself is fulfilled in the perfect year, when the heavens have performed a complete revolution and the planets find themselves in the same relation to one another that they were at the beginning. Then the cosmic process begins anew and all things recur in their former order.

But the philosopher has no need to concern himself with the course of terrestrial change. It is his business to fix his attention on the intelligible forms from which the impermanent world of sense derives its existence, and to

raise himself by scientific knowledge to the contemplation of the "colourless, shapeless, intangible Reality" which abides for ever in unchanging perfection. This is the Platonic world-view, and that of Aristotle is essentially similar, in spite of the differences in his physical explanation of the universe. To him also the highest knowledge was to be found in the contemplation of the universe as a manifestation of perfect and unchanging Being. All progress is but a part of the process of generation and corruption, which is confined to the sublunary world—"the hollow of the Moon"—and which depends on the local movements of the heavenly spheres. All such change must necessarily be cyclic. "For if," he says, "the movement of heaven appears periodic and eternal, then it is necessary that the details of this movement and all the effects produced by it will also be periodic and eternal."* Nor is this to be understood solely of material changes, for Aristotle expressly states that even the opinions of the philosophers themselves will recur in an identical form, "not once nor twice nor a few times, but to infinity."†

On such an assumption the idea of progress must, of course, lose its meaning, since every movement of advance is at the same time a movement of return. Even the succession of time becomes a purely relative conception, as Aristotle himself very clearly shows. "If it is true that the Universe has a beginning, a middle, and an end, and that that which has grown old and reached its end has thereby returned anew to its beginning, and if the earlier things are those that are nearest to the beginning, what is there to prevent our being anterior to the men who lived in the time of the Trojan war? Alcmaeon has well said that men are mortal because they cannot join their end to their beginning. If the course of events is a circle, as the circle has neither beginning nor end, we cannot be anterior to the men of Troy and they

* *Meteora*, I, xiv. I owe these and the following quotations to P. Duhem, *Le Système du Monde*, vols. i and ii, in which the theories of Greek science regarding the Great Year are described in detail.

† *Met.*, I, iii.

cannot be anterior to us, since neither of us are nearer to the beginning."*

Not only is this point of view irreconcilable with a belief in progress, it seems to lead inevitably to the pessimistic fatalism of Ecclesiastes.[†]

"That which hath been is that which shall be; and that which hath been done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun. Is there a thing whereof men say, See, this is new? It hath been already, in the ages which were before us."

And the same spirit dominates the thought of the Roman Stoics, and inspires the fatalistic quietism of Marcus Aurelius. "The rational soul," he says, "traverses the whole universe and the surrounding void, and surveys its form and it extends itself into the infinity of time, and embraces and comprehends the periodical renovation of all things, and it comprehends that those who come after us will see nothing new, nor have those before us seen anything more, but in a manner he who is forty years old, if he has any understanding at all, has seen, by virtue of the uniformity that prevails, all things that have been and all that will be."† It is true that Aristotle tried to leave some room for contingency and free will, and denied the necessity of the numerical identity of mankind in the different cycles. But other thinkers were more thoroughgoing in their application of the theory. "According to the Pythagoreans," says Eudemus, "I shall be telling you the same story once more, holding the same staff in my hand, and you will be seated as you are at present, and all things will happen as before." And Stoics, like Zeno and Chrysippus, were equally uncompromising. When the cycle of the Great Year has completed its revolution, Dion will be here again, the same man in the same body, only excepting, says Chrysippus, such details as the wart upon his face! Indeed, the philosophers of the Hellenistic age went a step further, and taught that it was possible to foretell the next stage of the fated cycle

* *Problemata*, XVII, 3.

† *M. Aurel. Anton.*, XI, 1, Long's translation. Cf. Seneca, *Ep. ad Lucilium*, 24; *De tranquillitate*, 1 and 2.

from the study of the movements of the stars. We are so accustomed to think of astrology as a popular superstition that we are apt to forget how closely it was bound up with ancient science and philosophy. The astrological fatalism of Manilius is nearer in spirit to modern scientific determinism than to popular superstition, and the Aristotelian theory that the movement of the heavens is the efficient cause of earthly change, seemed to provide a scientific basis for the most ambitious claims of the astrologers. Even the Neoplatonists, who were far less determinist than the other schools and preserved a high ideal of moral freedom and responsibility, did not deny the pre-established harmony between the events of the world below and the order of the heavens, though Plotinus conceived the stars not as causes, but as signs and ministers of the Eternal Mind.*

It is difficult to exaggerate the importance of these ideas in the history of ancient thought. They were not confined to a single age or to a single school. From the age of Pythagoras and Heracleitus down to the last days of the School of Athens under the Christian Emperors, the doctrine of the Great Year, and the recurrent cycle of cosmic change, dominated the Greek mind. Nor was it limited to Hellas. It was the common possession of all the great civilizations of the ancient world, and it is probable that the whole system springs from a common origin in Mesopotamia, where astronomy and astrology reached a high pitch of development during the Neo-Babylonian period. In addition to Babylonia, we find it in Syria and Persia and India, and even as far east as China, where it has remained current down to the present day. Indeed, the Chinese astrologers surpass the Greeks in the exactitude with which they have calculated every phase of the cosmic cycle.†

There remained, however, one people whose attitude

* Cf. his long discussion of the subject in *Enn.*, II, iii, 7.

† The Chinese Great Year consists of twelve months or "Confluences," each of which is as long as the Great Year, which the Greeks ascribed to Heracleitus, i.e., 10,800 years. We have now reached the year 68,943 of the whole cycle, and in the following Great Month the period of the decline of Heaven and Earth will begin.

to the world was fundamentally different. To the Jews, history possessed a unique and absolute value, such as no other people of antiquity had conceived. The Eternal Law, which the Greeks saw manifested in the movement of the heavenly spheres, was embodied for the Jews in the vicissitudes of human history. While the philosophers of India and Greece were meditating on the illusoriness or the eternity of the cosmic process, the Prophets of Israel were affirming the moral government of the universe and interpreting the passing events of their age as the manifestation of a divine purpose. From the beginning the eyes of Jahweh had been fixed on this little Palestinian people, which was his chosen vehicle, and the great world empires, whose clash destroyed the independence and the very national existence of Israel, were but the instruments of this transcendent purpose. Thus all history was moving towards a great consummation, the revelation of the power and the glory of Jahweh through his servant Israel, and the eternal reign of justice in the Messianic Kingdom of God.

Here then we have a conception of history which is clearly progressive, but it is a progress which fulfils itself only through the interposition of supernatural forces, not through the natural course of human development. It is, in fact, essentially eschatological. The eschatological idea was not, of course, exclusively Jewish. It had already appeared in early Zoroastrianism. But while in Persia it became subordinated to the cyclic theory, among the Jews it was inseparably connected with the realities of national history.

It is true that the idea of the world-cycle had become so universal that the Jews could not altogether escape its influence, and we find in the later Jewish apocalyptic literature frequent references to the æon or world-age. But the æon in Jewish apocalyptic is not a cycle, it is a period or dispensation of a single, unique process.

And with the appearance of Christianity the Jewish world-view and the Jewish eschatology acquired a new and wider development. To the Christian, and above all to St. Paul, the key to world history was found in the

Incarnation, which was viewed not merely as the realization of the Messianic hope of the Jewish people, but as the restoration of mankind and of the whole material creation. Christ is the head of this restored humanity, the firstborn of the new creation, and the life of the Church consists in the gradual incorporation of mankind into this higher unity.

Hence, in spite of the Christian opposition between "this world" and "the world to come," there could be no tampering with the reality and uniqueness of the historical process. The irreconcilability of Christianity with the dominant theory of cosmic cycles is obvious, and was stated uncompromisingly by the early Fathers. If we accept that theory, says Origen, "then Adam and Eve will do in a second world exactly as they have done in this; the same deluge will be repeated; the same Moses will bring the same people out of Egypt, Judas will a second time betray his lord, and again Paul will keep the garments of those who will stone Stephen."*

And it was on this very ground that the Church had to fight its earliest battles, for Gnosticism was essentially an attempt to combine the belief in spiritual redemption with the theory of world-æons and of the illusory nature of earthly change, and consequently the whole anti-Gnostic apologia of St Irenæus is directed to the defence of the value and reality of the historical development. "Since men are real, theirs must be a real establishment. They do not vanish into non-existence, but progress among existent things." "There is one Son who performs the Father's will, and one human race in which the mysteries of God are realized" (*Iren. adv. Her.*, V, 36, 1).† "God arranged everything from the first with a view to the perfection of man, in order to edify him and reveal His own dispensations, so that goodness may be made manifest, justice made perfect, and the Church may be fashioned after the image of His Son. Thus man may eventually reach maturity, and being ripened by such privileges, may see and comprehend God" (IV, 37, 7).

* *Peri archon*, lib. II, ch. iii, 4-5. Cf. St Aug., *De Civ. Dei*, XII, 13.

† Tr. F. M. Hitchcock.

This strong emphasis on what Bousset calls the *Evolutionsgedanke* in Irenæus, was carried by Tertullian beyond the bounds of orthodoxy, since it led him to deny the final character of the Christian revelation. "There is growth," he says, "in everything. We see it in nature with the quickening of the seed, the growth of the plant, and the ripening of the fruit, and so also it is in the spiritual world, for it is the same God that works in both. The development of humanity begins with the fear of God; the Jewish dispensation is the age of childhood, with the Gospel it bursts forth into youth, and finally maturity comes with the Age of the Spirit, who is henceforth the sole master of humanity" (*de Virgin.*, I).

This evolutionary millennialism with its scheme of the three Ages of Humanity was destined to have a long career in the history of human thought, and it even contributed directly, as we shall see, to the formation of the modern idea of Progress. But the conception of Progress was equally present in orthodox thought and found its fullest expression in the writings of St Augustine. His *City of God* is the first attempt to write a Christian philosophy of history, and its influence has dominated the thought of Western Christendom ever since.

He views the whole course of history as the result of the development and conflict of two societies—the City of God, animated by divine charity, and the city of This World, based upon materialism and self-love—both growing together until the final consummation, in which the City of God will be established for ever. Thus out of the evil and disorder of human history an ultimate harmony is being evolved, for "God is the unchangeable governor, as he is the unchangeable Creator of all mutable things, ordering all events in His Providence, until the beauty of the completed course of time, the component parts of which are the dispensations adapted to each successive age, shall be finished, like the perfect melody of a great musician" (*Ep. to Marcellinus*, 138).

But this ultimate optimism and belief in spiritual progress is combined with a definitely pessimistic attitude towards the present world. To some extent this is due to

the circumstances of the age to the decline of the Roman Empire and the belief in the approaching end of the world. But it has a deeper cause in that "otherworldliness" which is an essential part of the Christian attitude to life. Men have here no continuing city. They are strangers and pilgrims on the earth. Their true home is in heaven. The progress of material civilization is not an absolute end. Indeed, in so far as it distracts men's minds from their true goal, it may be positively harmful.

Thus the idea of Progress was absent from the Christian Middle Ages, no less than from pagan antiquity. It only began to make its appearance with the growing secularization of European culture that took place after the Renaissance. Nevertheless, it was not a new original creation, like modern science or Renaissance art. It arose spontaneously from the survival of the Christian ethical and teleological view of human development in a secularized environment: it was the natural faith of a society which had inherited the tradition of Christian thought, but had lost its belief in the Christian revelation.

For a civilization cannot strip itself of its past in the same way that a philosopher discards a theory. The religion that has governed the life of a people for a thousand years enters into its very being, and moulds all its thought and feeling. When the philosophers of the eighteenth century attempted to substitute their new rationalist doctrines for the ancient faith of Christendom, they were in reality simply abstracting from it those elements which had entered so deeply into their own thought that they no longer recognized their origin. Eighteenth-century Deism was but the ghost or shadow of Christianity, a mental abstraction from the reality of a historical religion, which possesses no independent life of its own. It retained certain fundamental Christian conceptions—the belief in a beneficent Creator, the idea of an overruling Providence which ordered all things for the best, and the chief precepts of the Christian moral law, but all these were desupernaturalized and fitted into the utilitarian rational scheme of contemporary philosophy. Thus the

moral law was divested of all ascetic and otherworldly elements and assimilated to practical philanthropy, and the order of Providence was transformed into a mechanistic natural law. Above all this was the case with the idea of Progress, for while the new philosophy had no place for the supernaturalism of the Christian eschatology, it could not divest itself of the Christian teleological conception of life. Thus the belief in the moral perfectibility and the indefinite progress of the human race took the place of the Christian faith in the life of the world to come as the final goal of human effort. This idea lies at the root of the whole philosophic movement, and it was fully formulated long before the days of the Encyclopædist propaganda. And it is quite in accordance with what I have said regarding the origins of this circle of ideas, that its author should have been a priest—the first of that long line of sceptical and reforming clerics, such as Mably, Condillac, Morelly, Raynal, and Sieyès, who were so characteristic of the Age of Enlightenment.

The Abbé de St Pierre was a prophet who received little honour in his own country. He had the reputation of a crank and a bore. It was for his statue that Voltaire wrote the lines:

ce n'est là qu'un portrait.
L'original dirait quelque sottise.

Yet his fertile brain originated most of the projects that were to be realized or attempted by the liberals of the next two centuries—international arbitration and the abolition of war, free education and the reform of female education, the establishment of a poor rate and the abolition of pauperism, not to mention other inventions peculiar to himself such as the social utilization of sermons. But underlying all this was his fundamental doctrine of the "perpetual and unlimited augmentation of the universal human reason," which will inevitably produce the golden age and the establishment of paradise on earth. Nor would this happy consummation be long delayed. All that was necessary was the conversion of the powers that be to the Abbe's principles, for St Pierre shared the

beliefs of his age as to the unlimited possibilities of governmental action.

And this doctrine became the ruling conception of the new age, for while the God of the Deists was but a pale abstraction, a mere *deus ex machina*, the belief in Progress was an ideal capable of stirring men's emotions and arousing a genuine religious enthusiasm. Nor was it limited to the followers of the French philosophic rationalism. It played an equally important part in the formation of German idealism and English utilitarian Liberalism. In England, its derivation from theological presuppositions is particularly clear. Its chief exponents, Price and Priestley, were Nonconformist ministers, and the earlier theorists of progress in Great Britain, Turnbull and, above all, David Hartley, rested their whole argument on a theological basis. The turbid flood of English Puritanism had spread in the eighteenth century into the wide and shallow waters of Liberal Protestantism, and the visionary millennialist ideas of the earlier period had been transformed into a rational enthusiasm for moral and material progress. Even the economic doctrines of Adam Smith rest on a foundation of religious optimism, which remained a characteristic feature of later British Liberalism.

At first sight the contemporary movement in France is the diametrical opposite of this, since it was marked by a bitter hostility to Christianity. But we must not be misled by the anti-religious diatribes of the French philosophers. Real scepticism is usually tolerant, and the intolerance and iconoclasm of the eighteenth-century philosophers, like that of the sixteenth-century Reformers, was the fanaticism of the sectaries of a new gospel. The French Enlightenment was, in fact, the last of the great European heresies, and its appeal to Reason was in itself an act of faith which admitted of no criticism. Even materialists like Helvetius and Holbach shared the Deist belief in the transcendence of Reason and the inevitability of intellectual and moral progress, though there was nothing in their premisses to warrant such assumptions.

Moreover, the movement of philosophic rationalism was only one side of the French eighteenth-century development. No less important was the social idealism of Rousseau, which was far more pronouncedly religious in spirit. Rousseau was at once a revolutionary and a reactionary of the type of Tolstoi. He turned away from modern civilization and the creed of scientific progress towards the simplicity of an idealized state of nature, and though he believed no less intensely than Diderot or Condorcet in the perfectibility of man and society, he looked for its realization, not to Reason and external organization, but to the inner light of conscience and to obedience to the eternal laws of nature that are written in the human heart.

At first sight, it would seem that this pessimism and "otherworldliness" leaves little room for any belief in Progress, but Rousseau's appeal to the inherent rights of man and his belief in the possibility of an abrupt reconstitution of absolute principles aroused the enthusiasm of the men of his age and became the inspiration of the whole European revolutionary movement. If the earlier philosophic doctrine of Progress, with its dogmatic appeal to the authority of Reason and its reliance on an enlightened despotism, represents the secularization of the orthodox Christian view of life, the revolutionary idealism of Rousseau has an even closer affinity with the apocalyptic hopes of the earlier millennialists and Anabaptists. Indeed, it is often difficult to distinguish the descriptions of the social millennium of the revolutionaries from those of the religious apocalyptic. "In that blessed day," writes Godwin, the leading English representative of revolutionary idealism, "there will be no war, no crimes, no administration of justice, as it is called, and no government. Besides this, there will be neither disease, anguish, melancholy, nor resentment. Every man will seek with ineffable ardour the good of all. Mind will be active and eager, and yet never disappointed."*

So, too, Godwin's son-in-law and disciple, Shelley, in spite of his worship of Hellenic antiquity, unconsciously

* W. Godwin, *Inquiry concerning Political Justice*, II, 528.

derived his ideals from the religious tradition which he so bitterly attacked. What could be more Christian than the whole idea of *Prometheus Unbound*, the salvation of humanity by the suffering and love of an innocent victim? And in the same way, too, Shelley's ideal of liberty is utterly foreign to the tradition of Hellenism. It is nothing less than "the glorious liberty of the children of God," for which the whole creation groans, and the effects of which overflow from humanity to the external world, and transform the whole order of nature.

This milleniarist conception of Progress is specially characteristic of the early Socialists. It reaches its climax in Fourier, whose speculations surpass in extravagance the wildest dreams of Cerinthus and his followers. For according to Fourier all the present evils of the material world are bound up with our defective social arrangements. Nature is bad because man is bad. As soon as the new social order of the Fourierist gospel is introduced the earth will be transformed. The waters of the ocean will change to lemonade, and the useless and ugly marine monsters, which are the images of our own passions, will be replaced by useful and agreeable creatures. Human life will be extended to three or four centuries, and there will be 37,000,000 poets equal to Homer, and 37,000,000 philosophers like Newton.

In comparison with Fourier, Robert Owen and the St Simonians appear mere cautious rationalists, but nevertheless milleniarist ideals colour all their thoughts and were transmitted by them to the later political Socialism. The driving force of the Socialist movement, in fact, has always been its belief in a social apocalypse.

Karl Marx shared this belief with the Utopian Socialists, whom he criticized. He rationalized it by his scientific materialism, but he did not remove it. The main difference between the two conceptions lies in the fact that Marx, who inherited the Jewish religious attitude, looked for its realization to the inevitable working of eternal laws outside human control, whereas St Simon and Fourier, who were Christians at least by historical tradition, based their hopes on the conversion of the

individual will and the moral perfectionment of humanity.

But while the origin of Socialism is primarily due to the economic interpretation of the revolutionary idealism of Rousseau, it also owed much to the influence of German thought. Now in Germany the theory of Progress had developed on different lines to those that it followed in France, its original home. The German philosophers did not share the open hostility to Christianity that marked the French Enlightenment; indeed, some of them were deeply influenced by the mystical ideas of German Pietism. Moreover, they had a much wider and deeper appreciation of history than their French predecessors. Instead of emphasizing the contradiction between the Age of Reason and the Age of Faith, they brought Christianity and historical religion into their scheme of progress. Thus Lessing in his famous booklet "on the Education of the Human Race" bases his philosophy of history on a progressive religious revelation, which he assimilates to the doctrine of Tertullian and Joachim of Flora concerning the three world ages of the Christian dispensation.

The Third Age of the Reign of the Spirit and the Eternal Gospel was conceived by Lessing as the Age of Reason and of the self-realization of humanity, but it was the fulfilment, not the contradiction, of the Christian revelation.

The influence of Lessing's theory was extraordinarily deep and far-reaching. It lies at the root of the development of Liberal or Modernist Protestantism in Germany, it affected the St Simonian Socialists in France,* and even Comte's famous Law of the Three Stages was probably influenced by it. Above all, it was adopted with enthusiasm by all the great German idealist philosophers, each of whom interpreted it according to the requirements of his own system. Schelling conceives the Third Age in the spirit of the Abbot Joachim himself, as the restoration of all things in Christ. "We know not when that age

* *The Education of the Human Race* was translated by E. Rodriguez, the St Simonian, when Comte was still a member of the group.

will be," he says, "but when it will be, God will be." To Hegel, on the other hand, political history is the progressive revelation of God, and it is in the modern Prussian State that the Eternal Spirit attains its final realization.

But Hegel already stands at the parting of the ways. On the one hand, he is in contact with the mysticism of Schelling; on the other, with the historical materialism of Marx. In the earlier idealist movement the dependence on the Christian tradition is open and admitted, and consequently throughout the earlier part of the nineteenth century, alike in Germany and France, with St Simon and Comte, and Buchez and Leroux, as well as with Schelling and Schlegel, there is a tendency to emphasize the importance of religion, and to base the doctrine of Progress on a religious foundation. But from the middle of the century the intellectual atmosphere of Europe changes. There is a sharp reaction against the romantic idealism of the previous period, and at the same time a renewal of the eighteenth-century criticism of religion. This owed something to political disillusionment, and the failure of the revolutionary programme on the Continent; but it was due, above all, to the advance of science, and a more thorough-going application of the new scientific principles to the facts of human development.

The eighteenth-century philosophers, even when they were materialists, consciously placed man in a category above and apart from the rest of nature, and hypostatized human reason into a principle of world development. But the new evolutionary theory of the Origin of Species put man back into Nature, and ascribed his development to the mechanical operation of the same blind forces which ruled the material world. The eighteenth-century doctrine of Progress was, as we have seen, essentially Deist in origin, and depended on the belief in an overruling Providence. The new scientific outlook, on the other hand, eliminated all teleological conceptions. Science had no need of such an hypothesis, as Laplace said to Napoleon. The earlier theory of Evolution as formulated by Lamarck, who was a disciple of Condorcet, and founded on theological presuppositions, was dominated by the

optimist doctrine of Progress. Darwinism, however, arose under the influence of the objective and pessimistic views of Malthus. The theory of Natural Selection and the survival of the fittest was the Malthusian doctrine of the pressure of population upon food supply elevated to a cosmic law. It was a law of Progress, but a non-ethical progress in which suffering and death played a larger part than foresight or co-operation. In Darwin's words, "From the war of nature, from famine and death, the most exalted object that we are capable of conceiving, namely, the production of the higher animals, directly follows."

This view of evolution has been considerably modified by the post-Darwinian biologists, but in his own age it was the central doctrine of the new science. It was accepted by Darwin himself in a spirit of religious faith—the "O Altitudo" of the mystic, but to his rationalist followers it was profoundly disquieting, since it suggested an opposition not between Religion and Science, but between the law of human Progress and the law of natural development. Man with his high ethical ideals was the product and plaything of a "Nature red in tooth and claw." "Social Progress," says Huxley, "means the checking of the cosmic process at every step, and the substitution for it of another, which may be called ethical progress." But if this is so, how can man's puny efforts avail against the eternal course of nature? We are led inevitably to the defiant pessimism which Mr. Bertrand Russell has expressed so eloquently in one of his essays: "Brief and powerless is man's life; on him and all his race the slow sure doom falls, pitiless and dark. Blind to good and evil, reckless of destruction, omnipotent matter rolls on its relentless way; for man, condemned to-day to lose his dearest, to-morrow himself to pass through the gates of darkness, it remains only to cherish ere yet the blow falls the lofty thoughts that ennoble his little day; disclaiming the coward terrors of the slave of Fate, to worship at the shrine that his own hands have built; undismayed by the empire of chance, to preserve a mind free from the wanton tyranny that rules his outward life; proudly defiant

of the irresistible forces that tolerate for a moment his knowledge and his condemnation, to sustain alone, a weary but unyielding Atlas, the world that his own ideals have fashioned despite the trampling march of unconscious power.*

This is, after all, but the last effort of an expiring romanticism. If man has nothing else left, let him at least keep his heroic attitude. *Vive le panache!* But it is a poor substitute for the dogmatic certitude of the old belief in Progress, for Condorcet's vision of "mankind marching with a firm tread on the road of truth, virtue and happiness," with no limit to its hopes and no fear of disillusionment. So long as science was the servant of the optimistic Deist creed, it was itself optimistic; but as soon as science came into its kingdom, its optimism began to disappear. Nor was this solely due to the influence of the Darwinian version of the Evolutionary Theory; it lies in the very nature of the materialistic world-view. When once we abandon the theological doctrine of Creation, which is common both to orthodox Christianity and to the philosophic Deism, which is derived from it, we are left with an eternal cosmic process, which does not admit of ultimate and absolute progress. The development of our planet is but a momentary result of material laws, which working in infinite time and space must repeat themselves endlessly, and so we are brought back to the cyclic theory of the Return of All Things and once more we shall say with Lucretius

eadem sunt omnia semper.

It is true that this belief no longer has the same scientific justification that is possessed for the Hellenic cosmologists. Indeed, it is not easy to reconcile their fundamental doctrine of the eternity of the universe with the principles of the modern science of thermodynamics, as established by Carnot and interpreted by Lord Kelvin.

The law of the Degradation of Energy suggests, as Kelvin pointed out, that the universe is slowly but inevitably travelling towards eternal death, since the energy

* B. Russell, "A Free Man's Worship" in *Mysticism and Logic*, p. 56.

that has once been dissipated or rendered inactive can never be reconstituted. The clock of nature is gradually running down, and so far as our knowledge goes, there is no natural process by which it can ever be wound up again. Thus the cosmic process is apparently not circular, as the Greeks believed, but moves in a single irreversible direction. It has a beginning, and must ultimately have an end, though in the intervening period there is room for an uncounted number of worlds and cycles. Change is not mere illusion, it is the ultimate reality of the physical universe.

Nevertheless, the idea of an absolute beginning or end is so repugnant to anyone who does not accept a theistic or non-mechanical world view, that it has never been fully assimilated by the modern scientific mind. From Herbert Spencer and Haeckel to Arrhenius and Becquerel there has been a whole series of attempts to provide new scientific justification for the mechanistic theory of an eternal recurrence; and though none of these has yet been successful, there is no reason to think that the cyclical theory has been finally abandoned.

However, the discussion of these problems has been confined to the scientific world, and has hitherto had no influence worth recording on the development of the doctrine of Progress.

Indeed, during the later nineteenth century the belief in progress became more widespread than ever before. But it was ceasing to be a philosophic doctrine, and had become an idol of the market-place. It now rested on the self-confidence of a prosperous society, which justified its high hopes for the future by the growth in wealth and population that had been actually realized. Our civilization was the only civilization, and its endurance and progress were unquestioned.

But this facile optimism has received a rude shock since the European War. The permanence of the European industrial scientific order is no longer unchallenged. We have witnessed the passing of the economic hegemony from Europe to America, the Russian revolution, and the reaction of the Oriental civilizations against the supremacy

of the West. Above all, we have seen in Europe itself the decay of the liberal tradition which was not merely responsible for the English Victorian compromise, but which has dominated the main current of European culture since the eighteenth century. Liberalism, with its optimistic faith in Progress and Enlightenment, is giving place either to Socialism or to a national dictatorship resting upon force. And even Socialism itself is losing its visionary hopes. The Communist Utopia has gone the way of the Utopia of the Jacobins, and the Socialism of the near future will be a realist Socialism, which will concern itself with the practical task of keeping the population clothed and fed, rather than with schemes for the perfecting of humanity.

In so far, therefore, as the creed of Progress rested on a belief in the growing material prosperity and security of our civilizations, its foundations are already shaken, and we are growing accustomed to the idea that our civilization is but one civilization among many, with no greater claim to permanence than those of past ages. On the Continent the application of the cyclic theory to the phenomena of cultural change has attained almost as great a popularity as the old theory of indefinite progress.

And as we have seen, the outlook of modern science affords no surer foundation for the theory.

The day of the Deist and liberal compromise is over, and we have come to the parting of the ways. Either the belief in Progress will be finally abandoned in favour of the old philosophy of eternal changeless change, or the European culture must return consciously to the Christian tradition from which it has sprung. The modern world has not lost the need for religion. The value and, indeed, the necessity of a religious interpretation of life is felt more strongly than ever, and science no longer attempts, as in the previous period, to deny its legitimacy. But the religious impulse must express itself consciously through religious channels, and not seek a furtive illegitimate expression in scientific or political theories to the detriment alike of religion and of science. The Judæo-Christian world-view, and that

alone, justifies a reasonable faith in human progress and in the unique value of human experience, but it must be recognized that this faith rests on religious foundations, and that it cannot be severed from historical religion and used as a substitute for it, as it has been during the last two centuries.

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