

RELIGION & SEX

by Chapman COHEN

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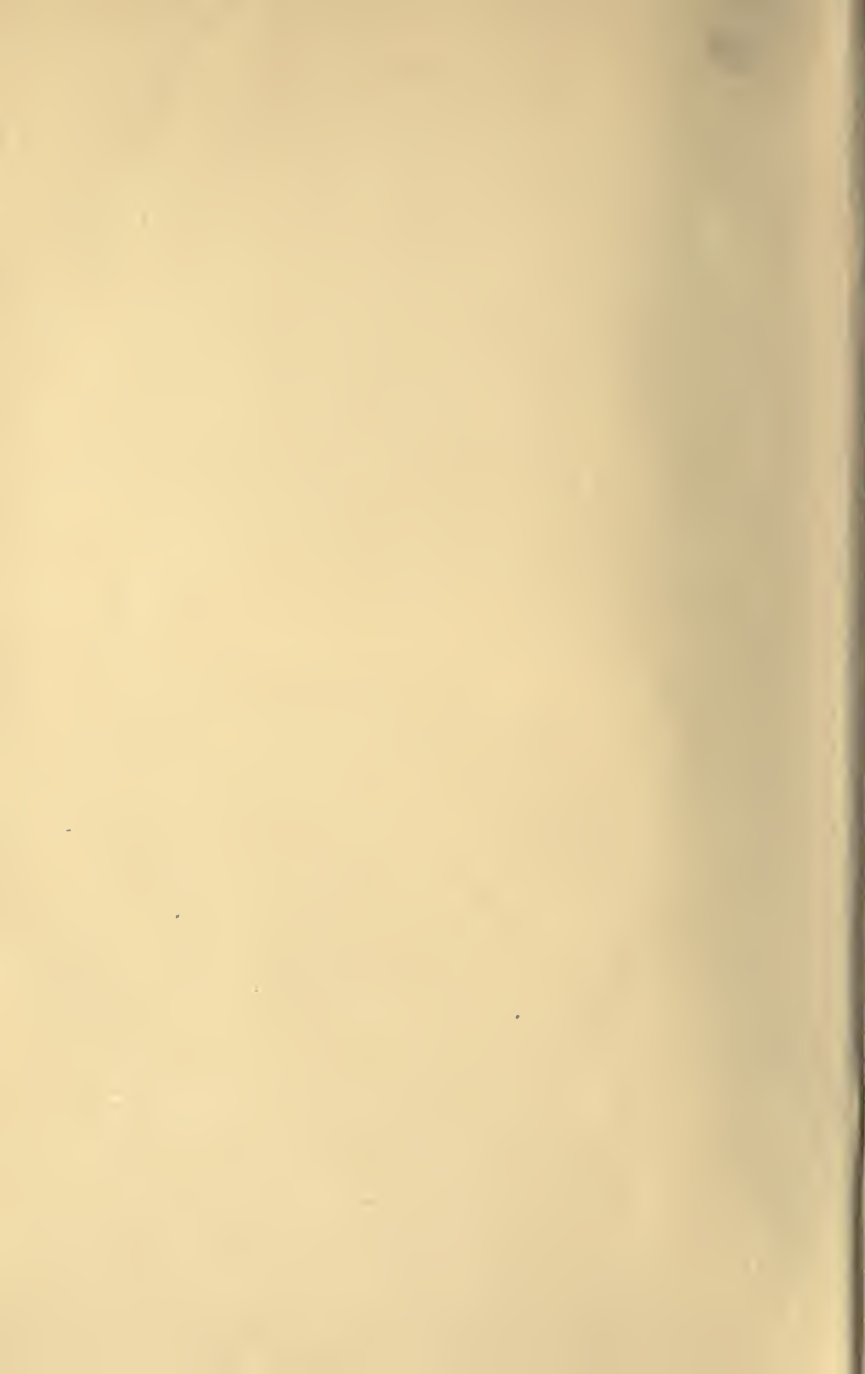
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BEING A SERIES OF WORKS DEALING WITH
QUESTIONS AS HANDLED BY DIFFERENT
SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT, IN RELIGION
ETHICS, PHILOSOPHY & PSYCHOLOGY

RELIGION & SEX

STUDIES IN THE PATHOLOGY
OF RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENT
BY CHAPMAN COHEN

T. N. FOULIS, PUBLISHER,
LONDON, EDINBURGH, & BOSTON

Published October 1919

Printed by MORRISON & GIBB LIMITED, Edinburgh

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PREFACE

IN SPITE OF ALL THAT HAS BEEN DONE in the way of applying scientific principles to religious ideas, there is much that yet remains to be accomplished. Generally speaking science has only dealt with the subject of religion in its more normal and more regularised forms. The last half-century has produced many elaborate and fruitful studies of the origin of religious ideas, while comparative mythology has shown a close and suggestive relationship between creeds and symbols that were once believed to have nothing in common. But beyond these fields of research there is at least one other that has hitherto been denied the attention it richly deserves. When the anthropologist has described those conditions of primitive culture amid which he believes religious ideas took their origin, and the comparative mythologist has shown us the similarities and inter-relations of widely separated creeds, religious beliefs have yet to submit to the test of a scientific psychology, the function of which is to determine how far the same principles apply to all phases of mental life whether religious or non-religious. Moreover, in addition to the normal psychical life of man, there is that vast borderland in which the normal merges into the abnormal, and the healthy state into a pathologic one. That there is a physiology of religion is now generally admitted; but that there is also a pathology of religion is not so generally recognised. The present work seeks to emphasise this last aspect. It does not claim to be more than an outline of the subject—a sketch map of a territory that others may fill in more completely.

From another point of view the following pages
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may be regarded as an attempt more completely to apply scientific principles to religious beliefs. And it would be idle to hope that such an attempt could be made without incurring much hostile criticism. In connection with most other subjects the help of science is welcomed; in connection with religion science is still regarded as more or less of an intruder, profaning a sacred subject with vulgar tests and impertinent enquiries. This must almost inevitably follow when one has to face the opposition of thousands of men who have been trained to regard themselves as the authorised exponents of all that pertains to religion, but whose training fails to supply them with a genuine scientific equipment. It should, however, be clear that an attitude of hostility to science, veiled or open, cannot be maintained. Mere authority has fallen on evil days, and in all directions is being freely challenged. There is increasing dislike to systems of thought that shrink from examination, and to conclusions that cannot withstand the most rigorous investigation. And if science really has anything of value to say on this question it cannot be held to silence for ever. Sooner or later the need for its assistance will be felt, and the self-elected authority of an order must give way. It is, moreover, impossible for science with its claim, sometimes avowed, but always implied, to cover the whole of life, to forego so large a territory as that of religion. For there can be no reasonable question that religion has played, and still plays a large part in the life of the race. Whatever be the nature of religion, science is bound either to deal with it or confess its main task to be hopeless.

Whether or not it is possible to apply known scient-

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ific principles to the whole of religion will be a matter of opinion ; but the attempt is at least worth making. So much that appeared to be beyond the reach of science has been ultimately brought within its ken, so many things that seemed to stand in a class by themselves have been finally brought under some more comprehensive generalisation, and so become part of the 'cosmic machine,' that one is impelled to believe that given time and industry the same will result here. And it should never be forgotten that one aspect of scientific progress has been the taking over of large tracts of territory that religion once regarded as peculiarly its own; and just as psychology and pathology were found to hold the key to an understanding of such a phenomenon as witchcraft, so we may yet realise that a true explanation of religious phenomena is to be found, not in some supernatural world, but in the workings of natural forces imperfectly understood.

The defences set up by theologians against the scientific advance may be summarised under two heads. It is claimed that the 'facts' of the religious life belong to a world of inner experience, to a state of spiritual development which brings the subject into touch with a super-sensuous world not open to the normal human being, and with which science, as ordinarily understood, is incompetent to deal. In essence this is a very old position, and contains the kernel of 'mysticism' in all ages, from the savage state onward. This position involves a very obvious begging of the question at issue. It assumes that all attempts to correlate religious phenomena with phenomena in general have failed, and that all future attempts are similarly doomed to failure. Of course nothing of the kind has

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been shown. On the contrary, the aim of the present work is to show that no dividing line can be drawn between those states of mind that have been and are classed as religious, and those that are admittedly non-religious. For various reasons I have dealt almost entirely with those conditions that are admittedly pathological, but I believe it would be possible to prove the same of all normal frames of mind and emotional states. Any human quality may be enlisted in the service of religion, but there are none that are specifically religious. It is a pure assumption that the religious visionary possesses qualities that are either absent or rudimentary in other persons. Human faculty is everywhere identical although the form in which it is expressed differs according to education, the presence of certain dominating ideas, and the general influence of one's environment. To admit the claim of the mystic is to surrender all hope of a scientific co-ordination of life. It is quite fatal to the scientific ideal and involves the re-introduction into nature of a dualism the removal of which has been one of the most marked advantages of scientific thinking.

Moreover, whatever views we may hold as to the ultimate nature of 'mind' the dependence of all frames of mind upon the brain and nervous system is now generally accepted. We may hold various theories as to the nature of mind, we may, with the late William James, treat the brain as merely a 'transmissive' organ, but even on that assumption—on behalf of which not a shred of positive evidence has been offered—the frames of mind expressed are determined by the nervous mechanism, and thus the laws of mental phenomena become ultimately the laws of the operation

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of the nervous system. The 'facts' of the religious life thus become part of the facts of psychology as a whole. Its 'laws' will form part of psychological laws as a whole, and religious experiences must be handed over for examination and classification to the psychologist who in turn relies for help and understanding on various associated branches of science.

Closely allied to the claim of the 'mystic' that his experiences bring him into touch with a world of super-sensuous reality, is the attempt to prove that science is incapable of dealing with anything but "in the first place, the endless ascertainment of facts and the physical conditions under which they occur, and in the second place to the criticism of error." Well, no one denies that it is part of the work of science to ascertain facts, or even that its work consists in ascertaining facts and framing 'laws' that will explain them. But why are we to limit science to *physical* facts only? All facts are not physical. If I have a headache, the unpleasant feeling is a fact. If I feel hot or cold, angry or pleased, think one thing ugly or another beautiful, my feelings are as much 'facts' as anything else that exists. Nay, if I fancy I see a ghost, or a vision, these also are 'facts' so far as my mental state at the time is concerned. So also are my beliefs about all manner of things, and often the most important facts with which I am connected. Facts may be objective or subjective. They may exist in relation to all minds normally constituted, or they may exist in relation to my own mind only; or, yet again, they may exist only in relation to certain states of mind, but they do not, nevertheless, cease to be facts.

Now the business of science is to collect facts—all

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facts—classify them, and frame generalisations that will explain their groupings and modes of operation. It talks of the facts of the physical world, the facts of the biological world, the facts of the psychological world, and so forth. This last group comprises all sorts of feelings and ideas, beliefs and experiences. Some of these facts it calls false, others it calls true—that is, they are true when they hold good of all men and women normally constituted, they are not true when they hold good of isolated individuals only, and can be seen to be the product of misinterpreted experience, or arise from a derangement—permanent or temporary—of the nervous system. But true or false they remain facts of the mental life. They must be collected, grouped, and explained exactly as other facts are collected, grouped, and explained. They fall within the scope of science, to be dealt with by scientific methods.

There is really no escape from the position that so far as religious 'facts' are parts of mental life, religion becomes logically a department of psychology. The substantial identity of all mental facts is quite unaffected by their being directed to this or that special object. As mental facts they are part of the material that it is the work of science to reduce to order. And as mental facts religious phenomena are seen to follow the same 'laws' that govern mental phenomena in general. It is perfectly true that we cannot test and measure the material of psychology with the same definiteness and accuracy that the chemist applies to the subject-matter of his department; but that may be due to want of knowledge, or to the extreme complexity and variability of the matter with which we are dealing. And

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if it were true that the same tests could not be applied in psychology that are applied elsewhere, this would be no cause for scientific despair. It would only mean that fresh tests would have to be devised for a new group of facts, as every other science has already, as a matter of fact, created its own special standard of value.

The second of the two lines of defence consists in the bold assertion that the religious interpretation of subjective phenomena is itself in the nature of a true scientific induction. The methods of science are not repudiated, but welcomed. But it is argued that the non-religious explanation of religious phenomena breaks down hopelessly, while the religious explanation fully covers and explains the facts. If this were true, nothing more remains to be said, and we must accept this dualistic scheme, however repugnant it may be to orthodox scientific ideas. But is it true? Is it a fact that the non-religious explanation breaks down so completely? Hitherto the course of events has been in the contrary direction. It is the religious explanation that has, over and over again, been shown to be unreliable, the non-religious explanation that has been finally established. Insanity and epilepsy, once universally ascribed to a supernatural order of being, have been reduced to the level of nervous disorders. All the phenomena of 'possession' are still with us, it is only our understanding of them that has altered. And before it is admitted that the phenomena described as religious can never be affiliated to the phenomena described as non-religious, it must be shown—beyond all possibility of doubt—that their explanation in terms of known forces is impossible. As I have said in the body of this work, the question at issue is essentially one of

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interpretation. The 'facts' of the religious life are admitted. Science no more questions the reality of the visions of the medieval mystic than it questions the visions of the non-mystic admittedly suffering from neural derangement. The crucial question is whether we have any good reason for separating the two, and while we dismiss the one as hallucination accept the other as introducing us to another order of being? I do not think there is the slightest ground for any such differentiation, and I have given in the following pages what I conceive to be good reasons for so thinking. And I hope that the fact of the explanations there offered running counter to the traditional one will not prevent readers weighing with the utmost care the proofs that are offered.

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CHAPTER

ONE

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ACCEPTING PROFESSOR TYLOR'S FAMOUS minimum definition of religion as "the belief in Spiritual Beings," it is safe to say that religious belief constitutes one of the largest facts in human history. No other single subject has occupied so large a share of man's conscious life, no other subject has absorbed so much of his energy. In very early stages of culture religious belief is universal in the fullest sense of the word. It shapes all primitive institutions; it dominates life from the cradle to the grave, and creates a shadow-land beyond the grave from which the dead continue to influence the actions of the living. At a later stage of culture we see a distinction being drawn between the natural and the supernatural, the secular and the spiritual, and the beginning of an antagonism that is still with us. Of all antagonisms conceived by the brain of man this is the deepest and the most irreconcilable. Each feels that the growth of the other threatens its own supremacy, with the result that advance from either side has been contested with the greatest obstinacy and determination. And although it is true that at present the supernatural is very largely "suspect," it is still powerful. Nor is its influence confined to the lower strata of European society. It has very many representatives among the higher culture, disguised it may be under various pseudo-philosophic forms. Altogether we may say that the supernatural has never been without its "cloud of witnesses." At all times there have been individuals,

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or groups of individuals, who have believed themselves, and have been believed by others, to be in touch with another order of existence than that with which people are normally in contact. And apart from these specially favoured persons, the wide vogue of the belief in good and evil portents, in lucky and unlucky days, the attraction of the "occult" in fiction and in fact, all serve as evidence that belief in the supernatural is still a force with which one has to reckon.

To what causes are we to attribute the persistence of this belief in the supernatural? It is useless replying that its persistence is evidence of its truth. That clearly begs the whole question at issue. Mere social heredity will doubtless count for much in this direction. Men do not start their thinking afresh with each generation. It is based upon that of preceding generations; it follows set forms, and is generally influenced by that network of ideas and beliefs into which we are born and from which none of us ever completely escapes. Still that is hardly enough in itself to account for the persistence of supernaturalism. Assuming that originally there existed what was accepted as good evidence for the existence of a supernatural, it is hardly credible that every subsequent generation went on accepting it merely because one generation received evidence of its existence. As organs atrophy for want of exercise, so do beliefs die out in time for want of proof. Some kind of evidence must have been continually forthcoming in order to keep the belief alive and active. It is not a question of whether the evidence was good or bad. All evidence, it is important to bear in mind, is good to some one. The "facts" upon which thousands of people were put to death

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for witchcraft would not be considered evidence to anyone nowadays, but they were once accepted as good ground for conviction.

What kind of evidence is it, then, that has been accepted as proof of the supernatural? Or, to return to Tylor's definition of religion, seeing that the belief in spiritual beings has persisted in every generation, upon what kind of evidence has this belief been nourished? Various replies might be given to this question, all of which may contain some degree of truth, or an aspect of a general truth. In the present enquiry I am concerned with one line of investigation only, one that has been strangely neglected, but which yet, I am convinced, promises fruitful results. In other directions it has been established that a great aid to an understanding of the human organism in times of health is to study its activities under conditions of disease. Abnormal psychology is now a recognised branch of psychology in general, and a glance through almost any recent text-book will show that the two form parts of a natural whole. The normal and the abnormal are in turn used to throw light on each other. And it appears to the present writer that in the matter of religious beliefs a much clearer understanding of their nature, and also of some of the conditions of their perpetuation, may be gained by a study of what has happened, and is happening, in the light of mental pathology.

To some, of course, the bare idea of there being a pathology of religion will appear an entirely unwarrantable assumption. On the other hand, the scientific study of all phases of religions having made so great headway it is hoped that a larger number will be pre-

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pared for a discussion of the subject from a point of view which, if not quite new, is certainly not common. Of course, such a discussion, even if the author quite succeeds in demonstrating the truth of his thesis, will still leave the origin of the religious idea an open question. For the present we are not concerned directly with the origin of the religious idea, but with an examination of some of the causes that have served to perpetuate it, and to trace the influence in the history of religion of states of mind, both personal and collective, that are now admittedly abnormal or pathological in character. The legitimacy of the enquiry cannot be questioned. As to its value and significance, that every reader must determine for himself.

One may put the essential idea of the following pages in a sentence:—Given the religious idea as already existing, in what way, and to what extent has its development been affected by forces that are not in themselves religious, and which modern thought definitely separates from religion?

Under civilised and uncivilised conditions we find religious beliefs constantly associated with various forces—social, ethical, and psychological. Very seldom is there any serious attempt to separate them and assign to each their respective value; nor, indeed, is the task at any time an easy one. The difficulty is made the greater by the way in which writers so enlarge the meaning of "religion" that it is made to include almost everything for which one feels admiration or respect. This practice is neither helpful nor accurate. Human nature under all aspects of intellectual conviction presents the same fundamental characteristics, and a definition to be of value, while of necessity

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inclusive, must also be decisively exclusive. It must unite, but it must also separate. And many current definitions of religion, while they may bear testimony to the amiability of those who frame them, are quite destitute of scientific value. In any case, the association of the religious idea with non-religious forces is a fact too patent to admit of denial; and the important task is to determine their reciprocal influence. In actual life this separation has been secured by the development of the various branches of positive thought—ethics, psychology, etc., all of which were once directly under the control of religion. What remains to be done is to separate in theory what has already been separated in fact, with such additions as a more critical knowledge may suggest as advisable.

Far more suggestive, however, than the association of religion with what we may call the normal social forces, is its connection with conditions that are now clearly recognised as abnormal. From the earliest times we find the use of drugs and stimulants, the practice of fasting and self-torture, with other methods of depressing or stimulating the action of the nervous system, accepted as well-recognised methods of inducing a sense of religious illumination, or the feeling that one is in direct communion with a supernatural order of existence. Equally significant is the world-wide acceptance—right up to recent times—of purely pathological states as evidence of supernatural intercourse. About these two sets of facts there can be no reasonable doubt. Over and over again we can observe how the promptings of disease are taken for the voice of divinity, and men and women who to-day would be handed over to the care of the physician hailed as an

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incarnation of deity. In modern asylums we find one of the commonest of delusions to be that of the insane person who imagines himself to be a specially selected instrument of deity. In such instances the causal influence of pathological conditions is admitted. On the other hand, we have belonging to the more normal type the person who claims a supernatural origin for many of his actions and states of mind. And between these two extremes lie a whole series of gradations. They exist in all stages of culture, and it is difficult to see by what rule of logic or of experience one can say where the normal ends and the abnormal begins. If we assume the inference of the normal person concerning the origin of his mental states to be correct, it seems difficult to deny the possibility of those of the insane person having a similar origin, although distorted by the influence of disease. If, on the other hand, we say the insane person is wholly wrong as to the origin of his mental states, may we not also assume that the normal person has likewise erred as to the cause of his emotions or ideas?

Two considerations may be urged in support of this conclusion. In the first place, there is the fact of the fundamental identity of human qualities under all conditions of their manifestation. It is too often assumed—sometimes it is explicitly claimed—that one with what is called “a strong religious nature” possesses some quality of mind absent or undeveloped in those of an opposite type. This assumption is quite unwarrantable. The religious man is marked off from the non-religious man, not by the possession of distinct mental qualities, but solely by holding different ideas concerning the cause and significance of his men-

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tal states. There is no such thing as a religious "faculty," but only qualities of mind expressed in terms of the religious idea. If I am conscious of a strong desire to work on behalf of the social betterment of my fellows, I may account for this either by attributing it to having inherited a nature modified by generations of social intercourse, or on the hypothesis that I am an instrument in the hands of a superhuman personality. But in either case the qualities manifested remain the same. Love and hatred, fear and courage, honesty and roguery, with all other human qualities, may be expressed in terms of religion, or they may be expressed in non-religious terms. It is the cause to which they are attributed, or the object to which they are directed, that marks off the religious from the non-religious person.

The second point is that the whole issue arises on a conflict of interpretations. If I question the reality of the visions or states of illumination experienced by Santa Teresa, I am not questioning that, so far as the saint herself was concerned, these states of exaltation were real. All mental states—whether arising under normal or abnormal conditions—are quite real to those who experience them. The visions of the hashish-eater are real, while they last; so are those of the victim of delirium tremens. All I question is their genuineness as corresponding to an objective reality. Over the mind of the subject these visions may exercise an absolute sway. As to their occurrence, he or she is the final and absolute authority. There can be no question here. But when we proceed from the occurrence of these visions to the question of their causation, then we are on entirely different ground. Here

it is not a question of their genuineness, or of their power, but a question of how we are to interpret them. The honesty and singlemindedness of these "inspired" characters may be admitted, but honesty or singlemindedness is no guarantee of accuracy. We do not need to ask whether the peasant girl of Lourdes experienced a vision of the Madonna, but we do need to ask whether there was anything in her mental history, social surroundings, or nervous state that would account for the vision. All the "facts" of the religious life may be admitted; the sole question at issue is whether an adequate interpretation of at least some of them may not be found in terms of a purely scientific psychology.

Taking, then, the religious idea as already existing, the following pages will be devoted to an examination of the extent to which this idea has been associated with forces and conditions that were plainly pathological. In very many individual cases it will not be difficult to trace a vivid sense of the supernatural to the presence of abnormal nervous states, sometimes deliberately induced, at other times arising of themselves. And it is a matter of mere historical observation that such individual cases have operated most powerfully to strengthen the belief in the supernatural with others. The example of Lourdes is a case in point. All Protestants will agree that the peasant girl's vision was a sheer hallucination. And yet there can be no question that this vision has served to strengthen the faith of many thousands of others in the nearness of the supernatural. And it needs but little effort of the imagination to realise how powerful such examples must have been in ages when medical science was

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in its infancy, and the more subtle operations of the nervous system completely unknown.

This question, I repeat, is distinct from the much larger and wider enquiry of the origin of religion. A fairly lengthy experience of the capacity of the general mind for missing the real point at issue prevents my being too sanguine as to the efficiency of the most explicit avowal of one's purpose, but the duty of taking precautions nevertheless remains. And in elaborating an unfamiliar view of the nature of much of the world's so-called religious phenomena, the possibility of misconception is multiplied enormously. Still, a writer must do what he can to guard against misunderstanding, and in the most emphatic manner it must be said that it is not my purpose to prove, nor is it my belief, that religion springs from perverted sexuality, nor that the study of religion is no more than an exercise in pathology. Nothing is further from the writer's mind than so essentially preposterous a claim. Neither sexuality, no matter how powerful, nor disease, no matter how pronounced, can account for the religious idea. That has an entirely separate and independent origin. This should be plain to anyone who has but a merely casual acquaintance with the history of religion. It is, however, a very different thing to enquire as to the part played in the history of religion by morbid nervous states or perverted sexual feeling. That is an enquiry both legitimate and desirable; and it is one that promises to shed light on aspects of the subject otherwise very obscure. And certainly, if so-called religious feelings do not admit of explanation in terms of a scientific psychology, nothing remains but to recognise religion as something

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quite apart from normal life, to hand it over to the custody of word-spinning "Mystics," and so surrender all possibility of a rational understanding of either its nature or its history.

In saying what I have concerning the probability of misconception, I have had specially in mind the attack made by the late Professor William James on what he called the "medical materialists." In that remarkable piece of religious yellow-journalism, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, Professor James says of those who take up the position that a great deal of what has been accepted by the world as religious inspiration or exaltation can be accounted for as the products of disordered nervous states or perverted sexual feeling, "We are surely all familiar in a general way with this method of discrediting states of mind for which we have an antipathy. We all use it in some degree in criticising persons whose states of mind we regard as overstrained. But when other people criticise our own exalted soul-flights by calling them 'nothing but' expressions of our organic disposition, we feel outraged and hurt, for we know that, whatever be our organism's peculiarities, our mental states have their substantive value as revelations of the living truth; and we wish that all this medical materialism could be made to hold its tongue." Again, "Few conceptions are less instructive than this re-interpretation of religion as perverted sexuality. . . . It is true that in the vast collection of religious phenomena, some are undisguisedly amatory—*e.g.* sex deities and obscene rites in polytheism, and ecstatic feelings of union with the Saviour in a few Christian Mystics. But then why not equally call religion an

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aberration of the digestive functions, and prove one's point by the worship of Bacchus and Ceres, or by the ecstatic feelings of some other saints about the Eucharist?" Or, seeing that the Bible is full of the language of respiratory oppression, "one might almost as well interpret religion as a perversion of the respiratory function." And if it is pointed out that active interest in religion synchronises with adolescence, "the retort again is easy. . . . The interest in mechanics, physics, chemistry, logic, philosophy, and sociology, which springs up during adolescent years along with that in poetry and religion, is also a perversion of the sexual instinct." *

Excellent fooling, this, but little else. I do not know that anyone has ever claimed that religion took its origin in sexual feeling, or that this would alone provide an explanation of historical religion. All that anyone has ever urged is that a deal of so-called religious feeling, past and present, can be shown to be due to unsatisfied or perverted sexual feeling—which is a very different statement, and one of which the truth may be demonstrated from Professor James's own pages. But between saying that certain feelings are wrongly interpreted in terms of an already existing idea, and saying that the idea itself is nothing but these same feelings transformed, there is an obvious and important difference. In every case the religious idea is taken for granted. Its origin is a quite different subject of enquiry. But once the idea is in existence there is always the probability of evidence for its truth being found in the wrong direction. The analogy of the digestive and respiratory organs

* *Varieties of Religious Experience*, pp. 11-3.

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is clever, but futile. The belief that much which has passed for religious feeling is perverted sexuality is not based merely upon the language employed. The language is only symptomatic. The terminology of respiration and digestion when used in connection with religion is frankly and palpably symbolic. That of sexual love is as often frankly literal, and can be correlated with the actual state of the person using it. Digestion and respiration must go on in any case ; but it is precisely the point at issue whether with a different sexual life these so-called religious ecstatic states would have been experienced. When we find religious characters of strongly marked amorous dispositions, but leading an ascetic life, using toward the object of their adoration terms usually associated with strong sexual feeling, it does not seem extravagant to find here a little more than what may be covered by mere symbolism. Would the medieval monk have been tempted by Satan in the form of beautiful women had he been happily married? Would Santa Teresa or Catherine of Sienna have used the language they did use to express their relations to Jesus had they been wives and mothers? Such questions admit of one answer, which is, in its way, decisive. Professor James admits that modern psychology holds as a general postulate "there is not a single one of our states of mind, high or low, healthy or morbid, that has not some organic process as its condition."* The 'medical materialist' can ask for no more than this. But this being granted, on what ground are we to be forbidden finding in these same organic processes the condition of the visions and ecstatic

* *Varieties*, p. 14.

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states with which *The Varieties of Religious Experience* is so largely concerned?

Again, it may be granted that adolescence brings with it an awakening of the whole mental life, not of religion alone. But the analogy goes no further, and, in any case, it begs the question. The full significance of the connection will be seen when we come to deal with initiation in primitive times and conversion in the modern period. At present it suffices to point out that the interest in art, in science, in literature, in sociology, are ends in themselves, and one need go no further than the developing mental life for an explanation. But the essential question here is whether this growing life can or cannot find complete satisfaction quite apart from religion. A developing interest in the larger social life is common to all, and to some extent this is secured by the pressure of forces that are simply inescapable. On the other hand, an interest in religion only exists with some, and then it may usually be traced to a conscious direction of their energies. Moreover, those who show no special interest in religion evince no lack of anything—save in religious terms. In every respect they exhibit the same mental and emotional qualities as their fellows. The only discernible difference is that while in the one case adolescent nature is expressed in terms of religion, in the other case it is expressed in terms of a larger social life.

The question here might be put thus: Given a generation not taught to express its growing life in terms of religion, could adequate and satisfactory expression be found in the social life to which adolescence is unquestionably an introduction? Many

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would answer unhesitatingly, yes. They would argue that what are called the religious feelings, are normal social feelings exploited in the interests of the religious idea. They would deny that there is any such thing as a religious quality of mind. Any mental quality may be directed to a religious end, but all may find complete expression and satisfaction in a non-religious social life. This is the real question at issue, and yet Professor James never once, in the whole of his 500 pages, addresses himself to it.

Apart from sex, there is the important question of the relation between abnormal and morbid nervous states and religious illumination. How far has the one been mistaken for the other? To what extent have people accepted the outcome of pathological conditions as proofs of intercourse with an unseen spiritual world? There is no doubt that among uncivilised people this is usually, if not invariably, the case. And our knowledge of the relations between the nervous system and mental states—imperfect as it still is—is so recent, that it is not surprising that fasting, self-torture, solitary meditation, etc., because of the states of mind to which they give rise, have been universally valued as aids to the religious life. Dr. D. G. Brinton says:—

“When I say that all religions depend for their origin and continuation directly upon inspiration, I state an historic fact. It may be known under other names, of credit or discredit, as mysticism, ecstasy, rhapsody, demoniac possession, the divine afflatus, the gnosis, or, in its latest christening, ‘cosmic consciousness.’ All are but expressions of a belief that knowledge arises, words are uttered or actions performed not

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through conscious ideation or reflective purpose, but through the promptings of a power above or beyond the individual mind."*

The connection between very many, at least, of these inspirational moods and pathological states is too obvious to be ignored. Professor James admits that "we cannot possibly ignore these pathological aspects of the subject." His notice of them, however, reminds one of the preacher who advised his hearers to look a certain difficulty boldly in the face—and pass on. No serious attempt is made to deal with them. A huge mass of "religious experiences" is thrown at the reader's head without any adequate explanation. It is a glorified revival meeting in an expensive volume. The testimony of a crowd of religious enthusiasts of all ages is accepted at practically face value. Thus, a religious writer who experiences the fairly common feeling of exaltation during a storm at sea, and explains his carelessness of danger as resulting from his "certainty of eternal life,"† is gravely cited as evidence of the working of the religious consciousness. What, then, are we to make of those who experience a similar feeling, but who are without the certainty of eternal life? The declaration of St. Ignatius that a single hour of meditation taught him more of the truth of "heavenly things than all the teachings of the doctors" is given as evidence of mystic illumination.‡ So with numerous other cases. We are even informed that "nitrous oxide and ether, especially nitrous oxide, when sufficiently diluted with air, stimulate the mystical consciousness in an extraordinary degree."§

* *Religions of Primitive Peoples*, p. 50.

† Page 288.

‡ Page 410.

§ Page 387.

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There seems no reason why the same claim should not be made on behalf of whisky. If one were not assured to the contrary, one might conclude that Professor James wrote this volume to poke fun at the whole tribe of mystics and their followers.

The use made by Professor James of his long list of cases is the more remarkable, since he quite correctly points out that there are no religious feelings, only feelings directed towards a religious end. But if this be so, how are we justified in taking the accounts of religious visionaries as correct descriptions of the nature of their own mental states? Clearly, we need a study of these cases quite apart from the mystical interpretation of them. Instead of a study Professor James presents us with a catalogue—useful from a documentary point of view, but useless to any other end. And he is so averse to subjecting his examples to analysis that, when the extravagance of certain cases are glaring, he warns us that it is unfair to impute narrowness of mind as a vice of the individual, because in “religious and theological matters he probably absorbs his narrowness from his generation.”* Granted; only one would like to know what reason there is for not deriving virtues as well as vices from the same source? And, deeper enquiry still, may not the religious interpretation itself be a product of the special environment of the period?

The study of religious phenomena from the point of view above indicated is of first-rate importance. But although much has been said, parenthetically and inferentially, on the subject by various writers, the enquiry has never been exhaustively or systematic-

* Page 370.

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ally pursued. This is not due to any lack of material; that is abundant among both savage and civilised peoples. Perhaps it is because, while it has been considered permissible to point out that certain individuals have mistaken their own morbid states for evidence of divine illumination, too much ill-will would have been aroused had the powerful part played by this factor in religious development as a whole been pointed out. Still less admissible would it have been to point out, as will be done in succeeding chapters, that the deliberate culture of abnormal states of mind has been a part of the ritual of religions from the most primitive to the most recent times. In this connection it is worth noting that a very clear and shrewd essay on the connection between love and religious devotion by Isaac d'Israeli, which appeared in the first issue of the *Miscellanies of Literature*, was quietly eliminated from subsequent editions.

My purpose, therefore, is to give Professor James's query—"Under just what biographic conditions did the sacred writers bring forth their contributions to the holy volume? and what had they exactly in their several individual minds, when they delivered their utterances?"*—a widerscope. What are the conditions, biographic and social, under which certain persons have imagined themselves, and have been believed by others, to be specially favoured with divine illumination? The majority of people, it may safely be said, are conscious of no such experience. In what respect, then, do the favoured few differ from their fellows? Must we assume that by some rare quality of natural endowment, or by some unusual development of faculty,

* *Varieties*, p. 4.

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they are brought into touch with a wider and deeper reality? Or are we to seek a less romantic explanation with the aid of known tendencies and forces in human nature? And, further, as this minority are not conscious of divine illumination all the time, what is it that differentiates their normal state from their abnormal condition?

These are pertinent questions, and demand answer. But no answer of real value will be found in ordinary religious writings. Rhapsodical eulogies of religion tell us nothing; less than nothing that is useful, since theories that obtain in such quarters are based upon the absolute veracity of the phenomena under consideration. We may gather from this direction what religious people say or do, but not why they say or do these things. A description of the states of mind of religious people, such as is given by Professor James, is interesting enough, but it is their causation that is of fundamental importance. And their causation is only to be understood by associating them with other and more fundamental processes. Within recent years psychology owes much of the advance made to a closer study of the physiology of the nervous system, and if genuine advance is to be made in our understanding of religious phenomena we must adopt the same plan of investigation. We do not, for example, understand the nature of demoniacal possession by a mere collation of cases. It is only when we put them side by side with similar cases that now come under the control of the physician, and associate them with certain peculiar nervous conditions, and a particular social environment, that we find ourselves within sight of a rational explanation. Without adopting this plan

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we are in the position of one trying to determine the nature of a locomotive in complete ignorance of its internal mechanism. Yet this is precisely the position of the professional exponent of religion. As a student the budding divine has his head filled with historic creeds, and texts, and dogmas, and doctrines, none of which can possibly tell him anything of the real nature of religion. On the contrary, they act as so many obstacles to his acquiring real knowledge in later life. And it is a striking fact that while the professional astronomer, biologist, or physicist each adds to our knowledge of the subject that falls within his respective department, we owe little or nothing of our knowledge of the nature of religion to the professional theologian.

To put the whole matter in a sentence, the study of religion must be affiliated to the study of life as a whole. If possible, we must get at the determining factors that lead one person to expend his energy on religion and see supernatural influence in a thousand and one details of his life, while another person, with apparently the same mental qualities, finds complete satisfaction in another direction, and is conscious of no such supernatural influence. It is scientifically inadmissible to posit a "religious faculty" organically earmarked for religious use. Something of this kind is evidently in the minds of those who explain Darwin's agnosticism as due to atrophy of his religious sense, consequent on over-absorption in scientific pursuits, and who also argue that the "religious faculty," like a physiological structure, increases in efficiency with use and atrophies with disuse. There is no reason for believing that, had Darwin been profoundly re-

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ligious, his mental qualities would have been different to what they were. They would have been expressed in a different form, that is all. As I have already said, there are no such things as specifically religious qualities of the mind. There may be hope or fear or love or hatred or terror or devotion or wonder in relation to religion, but they are precisely the same mental qualities that meet us in relation to other things. The old "faculty" psychology is dead, and the religious faculty must go with it.* Mental qualities may be roused to activity in connection with a belief in the supernatural, or they may be expressed in connection with mundane associations. Even the belief in the supernatural is only an expression of the same qualities of mind that with fuller knowledge result in a scientific generalisation. Whatever be the exciting cause, mental qualities themselves remain unchanged.

In the present enquiry we are not concerned with a disproof of the religious idea, but with an examination of the conditions of its expression; less with the varieties of religious experience than with the nature of its manifestations. How far may religious experience be explained as a misinterpretation of normal non-religious life? To what extent have pathological

* "The hypothesis of faculties . . . must be regarded as productive of much error in psychology. It has led to the false supposition that mental activity, instead of being one and the same throughout its manifold phases, is a juxtaposition of totally distinct activities, answering to a bundle of detached powers, somehow standing side by side, and exerting no influence on one another. Sometimes this absolute separation of the parts of mind has gone so far as to personify the several faculties as though they were distinct entities."—Sully, *Outlines of Psychology*, p. 26.

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nervous states influenced the building up of the religious consciousness? There can be no question that the last-named factor is an important one. This is admitted by Professor James in the following passage:—

“You will in point of fact hardly find a religious leader of any kind in whose life there is no record of automatisms. I speak not merely of savage priests and prophets, whose followers regard automatic utterance and action as by itself tantamount to inspiration, I speak of leaders of thought and subjects of intellectualised experience. St. Paul had his visions, his ecstasies, his gifts of tongues, small as was the importance he attached to the latter. The whole array of Christian saints and heresiarchs, including the greatest, the Bernards, the Loyolas, the Luthers, the Foxes, the Wesleys, had their visions, voices, rapt conditions, guiding impressions, and ‘openings.’ They had these things because they had exalted sensibility, and to such things persons of exalted sensibility are liable.”*

The fact is unquestionable, but the question remains, “In what sense were these people exalted? Did their exalted sensibility really bring them into touch with a form of existence hidden from persons of a coarser fibre? Or did it belong to a class of cases which in a more violent form comes within the province of the physician? The subjects, says Professor James, “actually feel themselves played upon by powers beyond their will. The evidence is dynamic; the god or spirit moves the very organs of their body. . . . We have distinct professions of being under the direction of a foreign power, and serving as its mouthpiece.”

* *Varieties*, p. 478.

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Of course we have, but for diagnostic purposes such professions are quite valueless. What these people are conscious of, and all they are conscious of, is a series of feelings of a more or less unusual kind. Equally convinced was the medieval demoniac that a spirit moved the very organs of his body. Equally convinced is the modern spiritualist medium that his body is controlled by a disembodied spirit. It is not a question of the actuality of certain states, but of their origin. The intense conviction of the subject of the seizure is, as evidence, quite irrelevant. The subjective state is always real, whether it belongs to a saint in ecstasy or a drunkard in delirium tremens. There are no states of mind more "real" while they last than those due to opium or hashish. But it is never suggested that this is evidence of their veracity. In such cases the testimony of a skilled outsider is of far greater value than the conviction of the visionary. We are bound to appeal to Paul, and Loyola, and Fox, and Wesley to know what their feelings were, because here they are the supreme authorities. But we must consult others to discover why they experienced these feelings. An illusion is no more than a false interpretation of a real subjective experience; although many are inclined to treat the rejection of the interpretation as equivalent to a charge of imposture or deliberate lying.

It is also a matter of demonstration that these religious experiences are strictly determined by environmental conditions. Thousands of Christians have been favoured with visions of Jesus or of the Christian heaven in their dying moments. Millions of Jews and Mohammedans have lived and died without any such

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experience—the very persons to whom, from an evidential point of view—such visions would be most useful. The spiritual experience is determined by the pre-existing religious belief. When belief in a personal devil was general, visions of Satan were common. The evidence for personal conflicts with Satan is of precisely the same nature and strength as is the evidence for intercourse with deity. When the belief in Satan died out, visions and conflicts with him ceased. How can we discriminate between the two classes of cases? Why should the testimony of a great Christian character that he is conscious of intercourse with deity be more authoritative than the testimony of, perhaps, the same person on other occasions, of conflict with a personal devil? Moreover, visions and a sense of contact with a super-normal world are not peculiar to the religious character. It is a common feature of a general psychopathic condition. Medical works are filled with such instances. And it is only to be expected that when the psychopath is of a deeply religious nature the affection will find a religious expression. What is clearly needed is an explanation that will cover the phenomenon as it appears in both a religious and a non-religious form.

We may take as illustrative of what has been said the following case as given by Dr. W. H. Ireland. It is that of a Berlin bookseller who placed on record a clear description of his impressions while in ill-health, and which entirely ceased on recovery. His delusions mostly took the form of human figures; of these he says:—

“I saw, in the full use of my senses, and (after I had got the better of the fright which at first seized me,

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and the disagreeable effects which it caused) even in the greatest composure of mind, for almost two months, constantly and involuntarily, a number of human and other apparitions—nay, I even heard their voices. For the most part I saw human figures of both sexes; they commonly passed to and fro, as if they had no connection with each other, like people at a fair where all is bustle. Sometimes they appeared to have business with one another. Once or twice I saw amongst them persons on horseback, and dogs and birds; these figures all appeared to me in their natural size, as distinctly as if they had existed in real life, with the several tints on the uncovered parts of the body, and with all the different kinds and colours of clothes.” *

Here we have the case of a man who was under no misconception as to the nature of his visions. But it is safe to say that had he been of a less practical and analytic turn of mind, had he been, moreover, deeply interested in religious matters, we might have had an altogether different presentation of the facts.

In the next instance, also given by Dr. Ireland, we have a religious explanation given of somewhat similar experiences:—

“A poor woman complained to me that she was continually persecuted by the devils who let loose at her all sorts of blasphemies, and, indeed, all the worse the more she exerted herself not to attend to them; but often, also, when she was talking and active. She had already been to a clergyman who should exorcise the devil, and who had judiciously directed her to me. I asked in which ear the devil always talked to her. She

* *The Blot upon the Brain*, p. 4.

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was surprised at the question, which she had never started for herself, but now recognised that it always occurred in the left ear. I explained to her that it was an affection of the ear which now and then occurs, but she was doubtful.”*

Here we have a distinctly physical affection ascribed to supernatural agency. In this case the inference is promptly corrected by the physician. But given a different environment, an atmosphere permeated with a belief in the supernatural, an absence of adequate scientific advice, and the more primitive explanation is certain to prevail. In the next instance—that of Martin Luther—we have just this conjuncture of circumstances, with the inevitable result. Writing of his experience in 1530, Luther says:—

“When I was in Coburg in 1530, I was tormented with a noise in my ear, just as though there was some wind tearing through my head. The devil had something to do with it. . . . When I try to work, my head becomes filled with all sorts of whizzing, buzzing, thundering noises, and if I did not leave off on the instant I should faint away. For the last two or three days I have not been able to even look at a letter. My head has lessened down to a very short chapter; soon it will be only a paragraph, then only a syllable, then nothing at all. The day your letter came from Nuremburg I had another visit from the devil. . . . This time the evil one got the better of me, drove me out of my bed, and compelled me to seek the face of man.”†

There is no need to quote more of this class of cases,

* *The Blot upon the Brain*, p. 16.

† Cited by Dr. Ireland, p. 49.

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at least for the present. Their name is legion. One could, in fact, construct an ascending series of cases, all agreeing in their symptom, and differing only in the explanation offered. The series would commence with the explanation of a possessing spirit, and end with that of a deranged nervous system. Ignorant of the nature, or even of the existence, of a nervous system, primitive man explains abnormal mental states as due to a malignant spirit. Martin Luther, George Fox, or John Bunyan, living at a time when the activity of evil spirits was a firmly held doctrine, attribute their infirmities to satanic influence. We are in the true line of descent. To-day we have with us every one of the phenomena on which the satanic theory rested, but they are described, and prescribed for, in medical works instead of manuals of exorcism. The supernaturalist theory gives way to that of the expert neurologist. The exorcist is replaced by the physician. Instead of expelling an intruding demon, we have to repair a deranged system. We cannot argue that while these affections remain constant in character their causes may have been different in other ages from what they are now. That is pure absurdity. To claim that the religious mystic is in moments of exaltation brought into contact with a "deeper reality" is to invite the retort that one might make a similar claim on behalf of the inmates of a lunatic asylum. We cannot, with any pretence to rationality, accept the verdicts of both the neurologist and the exorcist. If we agree that certain states of mind to-day have their origin in neural disorder, on what ground can we believe that similar mental states occurring a thousand or two thousand years ago were due to supernatural

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stimulation? We may be told that there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in our philosophy. This may be true, and while it is an observation that would not occur to a fool, it needs no supreme wisdom for its excogitation, and as generally used it is an excuse for idle speculation and grotesque theory. Far more useful is the lesson, sadly needed, that there are few things in heaven or earth that will not yield their secret to a method of investigation that is sanely conceived and diligently employed.

The utter uselessness of accepting at its face value anyone's explanation of the nature of his subjective experience, is well shown by the once universal belief in witchcraft. If there is a single belief on behalf of which a mass of apparently unimpeachable evidence could be produced, it is this one. It has run its course throughout the whole world. It is still accepted by probably half the human race. In our own country eminent men, not alone theologians, but doctors, lawyers, statesmen, and men of letters, have given their solemn testimony in its favour. Thousands of people have been bewitched, and their symptoms described by thousands of others. More remarkable still, those accused have often enough confessed their guilt. Every possible corroboration has been given to this belief, and yet it is now scouted by educated persons all over the civilised world. Even religious teachers accept the explanation that these witchcraft cases were due to distinctly pathological conditions, and to the power of suggestion operating upon uninformed minds during an unenlightened age. But communications with spiritual beings rest on no better foundation than communication with Satan. Whether the al-

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leged illumination be diabolic or angelic, the evidence for either, or both, is the same. The testimony of a man like the Rev. R. J. Campbell that he is conscious of a divine influence in his life is of no greater value than that of the medieval peasant who felt himself tormented by Satan. The one person is no better authority than is the other on such a topic. Both are the heirs of the ages, inheritors of a superstition that goes back to the most primitive ages of mankind, only modified in its expression by the culture of contemporary life.

There is nothing new under the sun, and human nature remains substantially unchanged generation after generation. All the phenomena on which the belief in witchcraft was based, remain. Cases of delusion are common, and the power of suggestion is an established fact in psychology. All that has happened is this: taking the facts on which the belief was based, modern science has shown them to be explainable without the slightest reference to the supernatural. And this is the principle that must be applied in other directions. Old occurrences must be explained in the light of new knowledge. This is the accepted rule in other directions, and it is of peculiar value in relation to religious beliefs. To know what religious people have thought and felt and said gives us no more than the data for a scientific study of the subject. To know *why* they thought and felt and spoke thus is what we really need to understand. But if we are to do this we must relate phases of mind that are called religious to other phases of a non-religious character. I believe it is quite possible to do this. From medical records and from numerous biographies it is possible

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to parallel all the experiences of the religious mystic. We can see the same sense of exaltation, the same conviction of illumination, the same belief that one is the tool of a superior power. Take, as merely illustrative of this, the case of J. Addington Symonds, as narrated by Professor James, who cites it as an example of a "mystical experience with chloroform." Symonds tells us that until he was twenty-eight years of age he was liable to extreme states of exaltation concerning the nature of self. (It is worth while pointing out that Sir James Crichton-Browne expresses the opinion that Symonds's higher nerve centres were in some degree enfeebled by these abnormal states.) In addition to this confession he placed on record an interesting experience while under the influence of chloroform. He says:—

"After the choking and stifling had passed away, I seemed at first in a state of utter blankness; then came flashes of intense light, alternating with blankness, and with a keen sense of vision of what was going on in the room around me, but no sensation of touch. I thought that I was near death; when suddenly my soul became aware of God who was manifestly dealing with me, handling me, so to speak, in an intense personal reality. I felt him streaming in like light upon me. . . . I cannot describe the ecstasy I felt. Then, as I gradually awoke from the influence of the anæsthetic, the old sense of my relation with the world began to return, the new sense of my relation to God began to fade. . . . Only think of it. To have felt for that long dateless ecstasy of vision the very God, in all purity, tenderness, and truth, and absolute love, and then to find that I had after all had no revelation,

but that I had been tricked by the abnormal excitement of my brain."

With a slight variation of expression this confession might have come direct from the lips of the most pronounced mystic. There is no question of the intense reality of the experience. That was as vivid as anything that ever occurred to any saint in the calendar. Still, no one will dream of claiming that the way to get *en rapport* with the higher mysteries is by way of a dose of chloroform. The distinction here is that Symonds knew and described the cause of his experience. And no one will question that the phrase "tricked by the abnormal excitement of my brain" covers the ground. Of course, there is always the easy retort that saints and mystics did not use chloroform to produce their visions. True, but chloroform is not the only agent by means of which a person may be thrown into an abnormal state. Other means may be used; and as a matter of fact, the use of herbs and drugs, as methods of producing ecstatic states, have obtained in religious ceremonies from the most primitive times. As we shall see later, tobacco, hashish, coca, laurel water, and similar agents have been largely utilised for this purpose. And when this plan is not adopted—although very often the two things run side by side—we find fasting and other forms of self-torture practised because of the abnormal conditions produced.

It is not argued or implied that in all this there was of necessity deliberate imposture. That would imply the possession of greater knowledge than actually existed. But it was known that ecstatic states followed the use of certain drugs, or were consequent on

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certain austerities, and they were valued because they were believed to bring people into communion with a hidden spiritual world. In this way there has always been going on a more or less deliberate culture of the supernatural, in more primitive times by crude and easily recognisable means, later by methods that are more subtle in character and more difficult of detection. But the method of inducing a sense of "spiritual" illumination by means of practices alien to the normal life of man remains unchanged throughout. The collation of the conditions under which mystical states of mind are experienced among savages with similar experiences among the higher races, proves at once that this statement contains no exaggeration of the facts.

The continuity of the phenomena is, indeed, of profound significance, and is too often ignored. It is often asserted that we have to explain the lower by the higher, and we can only understand the significance of religion in its lower forms by bearing in mind the higher manifestations. This is sheer fallacy. In nature the higher develops out of the lower, of which it is compounded. In biology, for example, it is now generally conceded that the secret of animal life lies in the cell. This may be modified in all kinds of directions, the resulting organic structure may be of the utmost complexity, but the basis remains unchanged. So, too, with a great deal of so-called religious phenomena. The story is not only continuous, but the same elements remain unchanged with only those modifications initiated by a changed environment. And just as we are driven back to the cell to explain organic structure, so for an understanding of the phenomena under con-

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sideration we must study their primitive elements. Analysis must precede synthesis here as elsewhere.

A survey of the subject is not at all exhausted by a study of abnormal conditions, so far as these have entered into the life of religion. There still remains the study of perfectly normal frames of mind that are misinterpreted and diverted into religious channels. The importance of this will be seen more clearly when we come to deal with the subject of conversion. That "conversion" is a phenomenon of adolescence is now settled beyond all reasonable doubt. Statistics are conclusive on this point. But the advocate of revivalism quite misses the true significance of the fact. Current religious literature is full of quite meaningless chatter concerning the change of view, the larger and more unselfish activities, that arise as a consequence of conversion. There is really no evidence that the changes indicated have any connection with conversion. All that does happen can be more simply and more adequately explained as resulting from physiological and psychological changes in terms of racial and social evolution. The whole significance of adolescence lies in the bursting into activity of feelings hitherto dormant, and the quickening of a desire for communion with a larger social life. The individual becomes less self-centred, more alive to, and more responsive to the claims of others; he displays tendencies towards what the world calls self-sacrifice, but which mean, in the truest sense, self-realisation. That these changes are often expressed in terms of religion is undeniable. This, however, may be no more than an environmental accident, quite as much so as was the case when epilepsy was explained in terms of possession.

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So far as one can see, there are no feelings or impulses characteristic of adolescence that could not receive complete satisfaction in a rationally ordered social life. To-day it usually happens that the strongest expressed influences brought to bear upon the individual are of a religious kind, with the result that adolescent human nature is most apt to express itself in religious language. It must always be borne in mind that we are all as dependent upon our environment for the form in which our explanation of things is cast, as we are for the language in which we express those ideas. The whole enquiry opened is a very wide one, with which I can only deal parenthetically. It is really an enquiry as to how far the religious theory of human nature rests upon a wrong interpretation of perfectly normal feelings, or to what extent supernaturalistic ideas are perpetuated by the exploitation—innocent exploitation, maybe—of man's social nature. It is extremely probable that a deeper knowledge, a more accurate analysis of human qualities, will disclose the truth that man is a social animal in a much more profound sense than has usually attached to that phrase, and the expression of these qualities in terms of religious beliefs, or in terms of non-religious beliefs, is wholly determined by the knowledge current in the society in which he moves.

I conclude this chapter with one more attempt to avoid misunderstanding. For purposes of clarity it will be necessary to consider various factors out of relation to other factors. But it should hardly need pointing out that in actual life such a separation does not obtain. The organism functions as a whole; each part acts upon and is acted upon by every other part.

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Life in action is a synthesis, and one resorts to analysis only for the purpose of more adequate comprehension. It is not, moreover, pretended that any one of the factors described in the following pages will explain religion, nor even that all of them combined will do so. The origin of the religious idea is a quite different enquiry, and is adequately dealt with in the writings of men like Tylor, Frazer, Spencer, and other representatives of the various schools of anthropologists. My present purpose is of a more restricted kind. It is that of tracing the operation of various processes, some normal, but most of them abnormal, that have in all ages been accepted as evidence for the supernatural. That the religious idea has been associated with these processes, and that for multitudes they have served as strong evidence of its truth, cannot be denied. And an examination of this aspect of the history of religion ought not to be ignored, however unpalatable such a study may be to certain supersensitive minds.

ITIVE MIND & ITS ENVIRONMENT

EVER SINCE THE TIME OF ARISTOTLE it has been an accepted truth that man is a social animal. Not only is individual human nature such that it craves for intercourse with its kind, but it can only be effectively understood in the light of those thousands of generations of associated life that lie behind us all. As an isolated object, considered, that is, apart from his fellows, man is more or less of a myth. At any rate, he would not be the man we know and so may well be left out of account. Man as we know him is essentially a member of a group; he is a part of a really organic structure inasmuch as the characteristics of each part are determined by its relations to the whole, and the characteristics of the whole determined by a synthesis of the qualities of the parts.

But while there is agreement in the fact, there is a considerable divergence of opinion as to its nature. What is the nature of this fact of sociability? What is the character of the force that binds the members of a group so closely together? By some, the cause of sociability is found in the pressure exerted upon all by purely external forces. The need for protection, it is said, drives human beings together, and thus in course of time the feeling of sociability is developed. This seems much like mistaking a consequence for a cause. It certainly leaves unanswered the question *Why* should people have drawn together in the face of danger? Most certainly collective action strengthens the capacity for defence; and it also increases the certainty of obtaining the means of subsistence. Such consequences furnish a justification, so to speak, of group life, but they disclose neither its nature nor its

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cause. And most certainly they do not bring us into touch with the fundamental qualities of *human* society. The need for food, shelter, or protection will not differentiate the gregarious from the non-gregarious forms of life, nor the social from the merely gregarious. All forms of life require food, protection, and shelter; they are part of animal economics. There is nothing specifically human about them.

We may reach what I conceive to be the truth in another way. Environment is to-day almost a cant word. It is very largely used, and, as one might expect, largely misunderstood. Without actually saying it in so many words, a vast number of people seem to conceive the environment as consisting of the purely material surroundings of man. This is to overlook a most important fact. Even in the lowest stages of human society, where man's power over natural forces is of the poorest kind, it is not an exact statement of the case, and it is profoundly untrue when we take society in its higher developments. If we take the lowest existing savage race we find that its attitude towards life, what it does, and what it refrains from doing, is the product of a certain mental attitude, which is itself the outcome of a number of inherited ideas and customs. A number of white people, placed in exactly the same material environment and faced with exactly the same external circumstances, bring a different psychological inheritance into play, and act in an entirely different manner. If we transport a Chinaman into England, or an Englishman into China, we find that both of them possess the same biological and material needs whether in their native country or elsewhere. Yet this community of needs does not make

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the Chinaman a member of English society, nor an Englishman a member of Chinese society. They are one in virtue of certain broad human characteristics; they are divided by certain qualities characteristic of their special groups. Each society is marked by the possession of certain psychological characteristics—a number of specific beliefs and emotional developments—without which its distinctive group character disappears. This is true of groups within the State; it is true of the State as a whole; it is true, on the most general scale of all, of the race.

In other words, the distinguishing feature of human society is the possession of a psychological medium. The adaptations that the human being must make are mainly of a psychological character. Their *form* may be partly determined by external conditions, but this does not affect the general truth. Whether we take man in a civilised or in an uncivilised state we find the important thing about him to be his relations to his fellows. He is not merely a member of a tribe or a society, but he thinks that society's thoughts, he feels their emotions, his individual life is an expression of the psychical life of the group to which he belongs. And his transactions with nature are an expression of the ideas and beliefs current in the society of which he is a part.

The recognition of this truth was one of the outstanding contributions of Herbert Spencer to the science of sociology. Whereas other writers had stressed the power of the environment, as a purely material thing, in shaping human institutions, Spencer placed chief stress upon the emotional and intellectual life of primitive man as determining their beginnings. He showed

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how man's feelings and beliefs about himself, and about his fellows, and about the world of living forces with which he believed himself to be surrounded, were the all-important factors of social evolution. And the subsequent history of society has been such that scientific sociology is very largely the study of the growth and elaboration of an essentially psychical environment. The lower animal world—except so far as we allow for the operation of instincts—has, broadly, only the existence of other animals and the physical surroundings for its environment. With man it is vastly different. Owing primarily to language, the environment of the man of to-day is made up in part of the ideas of men who lived and died thousands of years ago. The use of clothing and the invention of tools would alone make mind a dominant fact in human life. But apart from these things, the great fact of social heredity, in virtue of which one generation enjoys the acquired culture of preceding generations, and without which civilisation would have no existence, is a great and dominant *mental* fact. Our institutions, our customs, are transmitted to us as so many psychic facts. Every new invention, every fresh culture acquisition, is helping to strengthen and broaden the psychical environment of man. Each newcomer is born into it; it moulds his nature and determines his life, as his own career and his own acquisition help to mould the life of his successors. Whether the phenomena be simple or complex, whether we are dealing with man in a civilised or in an uncivilised state, there is no escape from the general truth that man is everywhere under the domination of his mental life.

So far as this enquiry is concerned, we need only

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deal with one aspect of the psychological medium in which primitive human life moves. And so far as primitive mankind seeks to control the movements of social life, there can be no question that this is done under the impulsion of that class of beliefs which we call religious. The operation of religious belief in savage society is neither spasmodic nor local. It is, on the contrary, universal and persistent. It influences every event of daily life with a force that the modern mind finds very difficult to appreciate. In almost every action the savage feels himself to be in touch with a supersensual world of living beings that exert a direct and inescapable influence. And any study of human evolution that is to be of real value must take this circumstance into consideration to a far greater extent than is usually done. Professor Frazer, dealing with the origin of various social institutions, rightly observes that "we are only beginning to understand the mind of the savage; and therefore the mind of our savage forefathers who created these institutions and handed them down to us," and warns us that "a knowledge of the truth may involve a reconstruction of society such as we can hardly dream of." He also warns us that we have at all times, in dealing with social origins, to "reckon with the influence of superstition, which pervades the life of the savage and has contributed to build up the social organism to an incalculable extent."*

In emphasising this it must not be taken to imply that because social institutions and human actions are in primitive times moulded by religious beliefs, they stand to them in a relation of complete dependence

* *Lectures on the Early History of the Kingship*, pp. 36-7.

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It only means that the psychological medium is of such a character that supernaturalistic reasons are found for doing things that are susceptible to a totally different explanation. The facts of life are expressed in terms of supernaturalism. Birth, marriage, death, social cohesion, leadership, health and disease, are all natural facts, and the mere play of social selection determines the weeding out of practices that are sufficiently adverse to tribal well-being to threaten its security. But in primitive times all these facts are allied with religious beliefs, and to the primitive mind the religious belief becomes the chief feature connected with them. As a matter of fact, this is far from an uncommon feature of social life to-day. The amount of supernaturalism current is still very large; and one still finds people explaining some of the plainest facts of social life in terms of supernaturalistic beliefs. It is all part of the truth that man is always under the domination of the psychological forces.

This being granted, the enquiry immediately presents itself, How comes it that the facts of social life should be expressed in terms of supernaturalism? Why do these facts not immediately present themselves in their true nature? To answer this question one must bear in mind a yet further truth. This is that the explanation which man offers to himself or to others of phenomena must always be in terms of current knowledge. A modern called upon to explain a storm, an eclipse, or a disease, does so in terms of current physical or biological science. This is done in virtue of a mass of prepared knowledge, slowly accumulated by preceding generations, and which forms part of his social heritage. Primitive man likewise explains things

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in terms of current knowledge, but in his case the amount of reliable information is of a very scanty and generally erroneous description. The inherited knowledge which enables a modern schoolboy to start life with what would have been an outfit to an ancient philosopher, had yet to be created. Instead of finding, as we find, tools ready to hand, replies prepared to questions that may arise, primitive mankind must create its own tools and prepare its own answers. And in consequence of this the social environment, which at all times determines the form of man's mental output, is with primitive man radically different from our own. But however the form varies there is agreement on this one point—in both cases phenomena are explained in terms of known forces; the reasoning of each is determined by the knowledge of each. The laws of mental life remain the same in all stages of culture. The brain functions identically whether we take the savage or the scientist. In a general way the savage intelligence is as rational as that of a modern thinker. The difference is dependent upon the accuracy and extent of the information possessed by each. Hence the vital difference in the conclusions reached. Hence, too, the dominance of supernaturalism in primitive times.

The great distinction between primitive and scientific thinking may be expressed in a sentence—the modern mind explains man by the world, primitive thought explained the world by man. In the one case we move from within outward, in the other from without inward. We are not now concerned with semi-metaphysical idealistic theories that would reduce the “whole choir of heaven and furniture of earth” to the creation of mental activity, but with the plain, under-

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standable truth that the human organism is fashioned by the environment in which it dwells. And there is amongst those capable of expressing an authoritative opinion—an agreement supported by evidence that has simply nothing against it—that the world of primitive man is overpoweringly animistic. In the absence of that mass of scientifically verified knowledge which forms part of our social heritage, humanity commences its intellectual career by endowing natural forces with the qualities possessed by itself. The forces conceived are living ones. They are to be dreaded exactly as human beings are to be dreaded; to be appeased or circumvented by the same methods that man applies to his fellows. The problem before the savage is thus a very real one. In essence it is the problem that is ever before humanity—that of subjugating forces to its own welfare. Primitive man is not, however, concerned with the elaboration of theories; nor is he consumed with vague ‘spiritual yearnings.’ His difficulty is how to control or placate those invisible but very real powers upon which he believes everything depends. He would willingly ignore them if he could, and would cheerfully dispense with their presence altogether if he believed that things would proceed as well in their absence. But there they are, inescapable facts that have to be reckoned with.

The general outlook of the primitive mind is well put by Miss Mary Kingsley in the following passage:—

“To the African the Universe is made up of matter permeated by spirit. Everything happens by the direct action of spirit. The thing he does himself is done by the spirit within him acting on his body . . . everything

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that is done by other things is done by their spirit associated with their particular mass of matter. . . . The native will point out to you a lightning-stricken tree and tell you that its spirit has been killed. He will tell you, when the earthen cooking pot is broken, it has lost its spirit. If his weapon fails him, it is because someone has stolen its spirit or made it weak by means of his influence on spirits of the same class. . . . In every action of his life he shows you how he lives with a great spirit world around him. You see him before he starts out to fight rubbing stuff into his weapon to strengthen the spirit that is in it; telling it the while what care he has taken of it. . . . You see him leaning over the face of the water talking to its spirit with proper incantations, asking it when it meets an enemy of his to upset his canoe and destroy him. . . . If a man is knocked on the head with a club, or shot by an arrow or a bullet, the cause of death is clearly the malignity of persons using these weapons; and so it is easy to think that a man killed by the falling of a tree, or by the upsetting of a canoe in the surf, or in a whirlpool in the river is also a victim of some being using these things as weapons. For a man holding this view, it seems both natural and easy to regard disease as a manifestation of the wrath of some invisible being, and to construct that intricate system which we find among the Africans, and agree to call Witchcraft, Fetish, or Juju.”*

Miss Kingsley is here dealing specifically with West Africa, but her description applies in a general way to uncivilised people all over the world. There is much closer resemblance between the beliefs of uncivilised peoples than between civilised ones, because

* *West African Studies*, pp. 394-6.

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the conditions are much more alike. And under substantially identical conditions the human mind has everywhere reached substantially identical conclusions. The philosophy of the savage is simple, comprehensive, and, given the data, logical. He does not divide the world into the natural and the supernatural; it is all one. At most, he has only the seen and the unseen. The supernatural, as a distinct category, only appears when a definite knowledge of the natural has arisen to which it can be opposed. He has no such distinction as that of the material and the immaterial; so far as he thinks of these things, the invisible is only a finer form of the visible. Of one thing, however, he is perfectly convinced, and this is that he is at all times surrounded by a host of invisible agencies to which all occurrences are due, and with whom he must come to terms. Even death wears a different aspect to the primitive mind from that which it presents to the modern. To us death puts a sharp and abrupt termination to life. To the primitive mind death involves no such ending.* Death is no more of a break than is sleep; and at all times the conception of an annihilation of personality requires a marked degree of mental power. So with the savage—the ‘dead’ man simply goes on living. He may be incarnated in some natural object, or he may simply go on living as one of the innumerable company of tribal ghosts. But he remains a force to be reckoned with, and the need for dealing with these ghostly personages is one of the ever-present problems of primitive sociology, and

* See an interesting article on this point by W. H. R. Rivers on “The Primitive Conception of Death,” in *The Hibbert Journal* for Jan. 1912.

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brings us very near the beginnings of all religious beliefs and ceremonies—if it does not form their real starting-point.

On one point all modern schools of anthropologists are agreed. This is that man's first conception of the supernatural—or what afterwards ranks as such—is derived from a purely mistaken interpretation of natural phenomena. In this they have returned to the standpoint of Hobbes, that "fear of things invisible" forms the "natural seed of religion." One source of origin of this belief in a supernatural world is certainly found in the phenomena of dreaming. To the savage his dreams are as real as his waking experiences. He does not *dream* he goes to distant places; he goes there during his sleep. He does not *dream* that people visit him; they actually come. If a West African wakes up in the morning with a tired, bruised feeling, this arises, as Miss Kingsley says, from his 'soul' having been out fighting and got ill-treated. The only philosophy of dreaming amongst savage races is that of the excursions and incursions of a 'soul' or double.

Another powerful factor in the development of belief in the supernatural is that of man's attempt to explain natural happenings. Why do things happen? Why does the sun rise and set, why does rain fall, thunder crash, rivers flow? Note the way in which a child answers similar questions, and one is on the track of the primitive intelligence. If man's own movements are caused by a 'soul' or double, then other things must also move because they possess a 'soul.' If an answer is to be found at all, it is only along these lines that the primitive mind is able to

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find it. And, once the answer is given, there are a thousand and one things occurring that lend it apparent support. Resemblances in nature, coincidences, echoes, shadows, etc., all give their support to this primitive hypothesis—the only one possible in the circumstances, and the one still endorsed by the majority of the world's population.

Particularly strong endorsement of this belief is supplied by disease and abnormal nervous states. Instances to illustrate this are innumerable, but from the numerous cases cited by Spencer I select the following: Among the Amazulus convulsions are believed to be caused by ancestral spirits. With Asiatic races epileptics are regarded as possessed by demons. With the Kirghiz the involuntary muscular movements of a woman in childbirth are believed to be caused by a spirit taking possession of the body. The Samoans attribute all madness to possession. The Congo people have the same notion of epilepsy. The East Africans believe that falling sickness is due to spirits.* In Rajputana, says Mr. W. Crook, disease is generally attributed to Khor or the agency of offended spirits. The Mahadeo Kolis of Ahmadnager believe that every malady or disease that seizes man, woman, or child, or cattle, is caused either by evil spirits or by an angry god. The Bijapur Veddhas have a yearly feast to their ancestors to prevent the dead bringing sickness into the house.† “A Catholic missionary,” says Professor Frazer, “observes that in New Guinea the *nepir*, or sorcerer, is everywhere. . . Nothing happens without the sorcerer's intervention; wars, marriage, death, ex-

* *Principles of Sociology*, vol. i.

† *Popular Religion and Folklore of Northern India*, i. p. 124.

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peditions, fishing, hunting, always and everywhere the sorcerer.”*

In Ancient Egypt, Chaldea, and Assyria there is ample evidencethat the same belief flourished. Everywhere we find the exorcist and the witch-doctorexisting as natural consequents of the belief that disease has a supernatural origin. We see it in both the teaching and practice of the early Christian Church. That great father of the Church, Origen, says: “It is demons which produce famine, unfruitfulness, corruption of the air, and pestilence.” St. Augustine said that “All diseases of Christians are to be ascribed to demons.” The Church of England still retains in its Articles an authorisation for the expulsion of demons; and a number of charms yet in wide use amongst civilised nations show how persistent is this belief. For centuries there existed all over Europe sacred pools, wells, grottos, etc., all bearing eloquent witness to the deep-seated belief that disease was of supernatural origin, and was to be conquered by supernatural means.

Enough has been said to indicate the kind of environment in which primitive man moves, and also to understand why ideas concerning the supernatural exert such an enormous influence in early society. In a world where everything was yet to be learned, man’s first attempts at understanding himself and his fellows were necessarily blundering and tentative. His first attempts at explanation are expressed in terms of his own nature. He sees himself, his own passions, strengths, and weaknesses reflected in the nature around him. This is the outstanding, dominating fact in primitive life. Leave out this consideration and

* *Golden Bough*, 3rd ed., i. 337.

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primitive sociology becomes a chaos. Admit it, and we see the reason why social institutions assumed the form they took, and also a key to much that happens in subsequent human history. In primitive life religious beliefs are not something separate from other forms of social life; so far as man seeks consciously to shape that life they are to him an essential part of it. And the mistake once made is perpetuated. The initial blunder once committed, daily experience seems to give it constant justification. In the absence of knowledge concerning natural forces every event,—particularly if unusual,—every case of disease, endorses and strengthens the mistake made. A psychological fatality drives the human race along the wrong path of investigation, and only very slowly is the mistake rectified. One cannot see how it could have been otherwise. The only corrective is knowledge, and knowledge is a plant of slow growth. This psychological first step was man's first attempt to frame a theory of things satisfactory to his intellect—an attempt that, beginning in the crude animism of the savage, ends in the verifiable laws of modern science.

From the point of view of our present enquiry two things are to be noted. The first is that man's conviction of the nearness of a supernatural world began in his lack of knowledge concerning the nature of natural forces. Of this there can be little doubt. One can take all the facts upon which primitive mankind built, and still builds, its theories of supernaturalism, and show that they may be explained in a quite different manner. The movements of the planets, the rush of comets, the presence of disaster, the thousand and one operations of natural forces no longer suggest

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to educated minds the action of personal beings. The whole data of the primitive theory of things have been rejected. The premises were false, and the conclusions necessarily false also.

The second point is that from the earliest times one of the strongest proofs of human contact with a supernatural world has been found in the existence of abnormal or pathological states of mind. These may have sometimes arisen quite naturally; at other times they have been deliberately induced. How much the perpetuation of religious beliefs as a whole owes to this factor has never yet been adequately realised. That it has had a very great influence seems beyond dispute. For it seems certain that had not "proofs" of a supernatural world been offered in the shape of visions, ecstatic states, etc., religious beliefs would hardly have exercised the power that has been theirs. The number of people who are able to maintain a strong consciousness of the truth of religion, merely looking at it as a philosophy of existence, is naturally very few. The great majority require more tangible evidence if their belief is to be kept alive and active. And curiously enough, the very growth of a naturalistic explanation has driven a great many to find the evidence they desired in those abnormal states of mind that seemed to defy scientific analysis. In succeeding chapters evidence will be given to show to what extent this kind of evidence for the supernatural has been offered and accepted. It will be seen, as Professor Tylor points out, that the line of religious development is continuous. The latest forms stretch back in an unbroken line to the earliest. And if this proves nothing else, it at least proves that consequences do

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not always die out with the conditions that gave them birth. It was the world of the savage that gave birth to the supernatural. But the supernatural is still with us, even though the world that gave it birth has disappeared. We retain conclusions based on admittedly false premises.

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"IT IS AN INTERESTING PROBLEM," says Professor J. H. Leuba, "to determine what influences have led theologians to anchor their beliefs upon the proposition that religious experience differs from other forms of consciousness in that it gives one an *immediate* knowledge of the external existence of certain objects of belief, although they do not fall under the senses, and an immediate knowledge of the truth of certain historical facts." * This is, indeed, an interesting problem, and, we may add, one of growing importance, since there is a pronounced tendency on the part of present-day exponents of religion to rest their case almost entirely upon the immediacy of their religious consciousness. This conception of a certain order of experience, however, is not and cannot have always existed. A belief may be so widely and so generally diffused that it is accepted without resistance, and, as it would almost seem, in the absence of evidence. But its intuitive character is only superficial, and disappears on careful examination. The mere vogue of a belief constitutes in itself a kind of evidence, and for many people the most powerful kind of evidence. But the conviction itself has a history, and it is in the unravelling of that history, in the discovery of the class of facts upon which the conviction has been built, that the work lies. And when this is done it will be found that our intuitions are invariably based upon a continuous—even though partly unconscious—appeal to facts. Sometimes it will, of course, be found that a renewed and deliberate appeal to the facts in question will justify the conviction.

* *A Psychological Study of Religion*, p. 234.

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tion. At other times it will be found that the facts demand an altogether new interpretation. For centuries all the observed facts supported a conviction that the earth was flat. It was a fresh scrutiny of the facts in the light of a new conception that revolutionised human opinion on the subject.

What, then, is the history, and what are the facts upon which the belief that religious experience brings man into contact with a kind of existence not given in ordinary experience, is based? The kind of answer that will be given to this question has already been indicated. Religious beliefs are in their origin of the nature of an induction from an observed order. The induction is not the result of that careful collection of facts, leading up to an equally careful generalisation and subsequent verification, which is a characteristic of modern science, but it is an induction none the less. The primitive mind is not so much engaged in seeking an explanation of certain experiences, as it has an explanation forced upon it. To picture the savage as inventing a theory in the sense in which Darwin propounded the theory of Natural Selection is to quite misconceive the nature of the savage intelligence. But to conceive the savage as having a certain explanation suggested by the pressure of repeated experiences, and that this explanation subsequently assumes the character of a fixed belief, is well within the scope of the facts known to us. In this stage of culture the existence of supernatural beings is as much a deduction from experience as any modern scientific generalisation. Certain things are seen, certain feelings are experienced, and the conclusion is that they are the products of supernatural agency.

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From this point of view religion is no more than a primitive science. It is the first stage of that long series of generalisations which, beginning with crude animism, ends with the discoveries of a Copernicus, a Newton, a Darwin, or a Spencer. It is a history that begins with vitalism and ends with mechanism. We commence with a world in which there exists a chaotic assemblage of independent personal forces, and end with a universe that is self-acting, self-adjusting, self-contained, and in which science makes no allowance for the operation of intelligence save such as meets us in animal organisation.

Now amongst the facts that suggest to the primitive intelligence the operation of 'spiritual' forces are those connected with the human organism itself in both its normal and abnormal states. But it is important to note—particularly so for the understanding of the part played by ecstatic religious phenomena in comparatively recent times—that once the occurrence of a certain state of mind is conceived as the product of intercourse between man and spirits, there is every inducement to cultivate these frames of mind whenever renewed intercourse is desired. This does not imply, at least in the earlier stages, conscious imposture. Generally the operator imposes on himself as much as he imposes on others. Noting that privation of body, or torture of mind, or the use of certain herbs is followed by visions or ecstasy, it is believed, not that the vision is the product of the practice, but that the practice is the condition of illumination.

This attitude of mind is fairly paralleled by what takes place at the ordinary spiritualistic *seance*. Those attending are advised that the chief condition of a

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communication with the inhabitants of the other world is a passive state of mind. This passivity cannot exclude expectancy, since it is only assumed in order that something may occur. If nothing occurs, if no communications are received, it is because the requisite conditions have not been fulfilled, and the sceptic is met with much semi-scientific jargon as to conditions being necessary to every scientific investigation. The fact that this passivity and expectancy, with other attendant circumstances, not the least of which is the contagious influence of a number of people with a similar mental disposition, opens the way to self-delusion is ignored. Then when the expected and desired result follows, the mental attitude cultivated is taken as the condition of communication with the spiritual world, instead of its being, in all probability, the true cause of what is experienced. In this way the story of supernatural intercourse runs clear and unbroken from primitive savagery to its survival in modern civilisation. When Professor Tylor says, "The conception of the human soul is, as to its most essential nature, continuous from the philosophy of the savage thinker to that of the modern professor of theology,"* he makes a statement that is true of the whole story of supernatural intercourse in all its varied manifestations.

The chief distinction between primitive and modern man lies in the consideration that in the first case the blunder is inevitable, in the latter case the remedy lies to hand. How could primitive man be aware of the real connection between the use of certain drugs or herbs and an excitation or depression of the activities

* *Primitive Culture*, i. p. 501.

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of the nervous system? He does observe consequences, but he is quite ignorant of causes. Even to-day their full consequences are unknown; and it is absurd to expect that savage humanity should have been better informed. And even when a more rational theory exists, the practice persists under various forms. This is a principle that receives vivid illustration from the history of religions. The modern believer in mystical states of consciousness no longer advocates the use of drugs, and even fasting is going out of fashion. But we still have a continuation of the primitive practice in the shape of insistence on the cultivation of abnormal frames of mind if we are to experience a consciousness of communion with an alleged supersensible reality. That is, we are to achieve by a mental discipline what the savage or the medieval monk achieved by coarser and more obvious methods. To withdraw the mind from the normal influence of everyday life is to expose it to the play of hallucination and delusion. There is really no vital difference between unhealthy, solitary brooding on a given subject and drugging the mind with hashish. This class of modern mystic is one with the savage in an inability to recognise that the illumination is the product of the discipline, not the mere condition of its possession. Between the drug of the savage, the fasting and self-torture of the medieval monk, and the prayerful meditation of the modern mystic, the difference is only that of changed times and altered conditions. The method is the same throughout.

The truth of this has been well put by Tylor:—

“The religious beliefs of the lower races are in no small measure based on the evidence of visions and

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dreams, regarded as actual intercourse with spiritual being. From the earliest stages of culture we find religion in close alliance with ecstatic physical conditions. These are brought on by various means of interference with the healthy action of body and mind, and it is scarcely needful to remind the reader that, according to philosophic theories antecedent to those of modern medicine, such morbid disturbances are explained as symptoms of divine visitation, or at least of superhuman spirituality. Among the strongest means of disturbing the functions of the mind so as to produce ecstatic vision, is fasting, accompanied, as it usually is, with other privations, and with prolonged solitary contemplation in the desert or in the forest. Among the ordinary vicissitudes of savage life, the wild hunter has many a time to try involuntarily the effects of such a life for days together, and under these circumstances he soon comes to see and talk with phantoms which are to him invisible spirits. The secret of spiritual intercourse thus learnt, he has thenceforth but to reproduce the cause in order to renew the effects." *

As a means, then, of strengthening and perpetuating a consciousness of intercourse with the spiritual world, we have to reckon with, not merely the accidental occurrence of abnormal nervous conditions, but with their deliberate cultivation. The practice is world-wide, and persists in some form or other in all ages. Thus we find the Australians and many tribes of North American Indians use tobacco for this purpose. In Western Siberia a species of fungi, the 'fly Agaric,' so called because it is often steeped and the solution used

* *Primitive Culture*, ii. p. 410.

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to destroy house flies, is used to produce religious ecstasy. Its action on the muscular system is stimulatory, and it greatly excites the nervous system.* An early Spanish observer says of the ancient Mexicans that they used a kind of mushroom, "which are eaten raw, and on account of being bitter, they drink after them, or eat with them a little honey of bees, and shortly after they see a thousand visions."† The mushroom was called the "bread of the gods." The Californian Indians give children tobacco, in order to receive instruction from the resulting visions. North American Indians held intoxication by tobacco to be supernatural ecstasy, and the dreams of men in this state to be inspired. The Darien Indians use the seeds of the *Datura Sanguinea* to induce visions. In Peru the priests prepared themselves for intercourse with the gods by partaking of a narcotic drink from the same plant. In Guiana the priest was prepared for his functions by fasting and flagellation, and was afterwards dosed with tobacco juice.‡ In India the Laws of Manu give explicit instructions as to the means of producing visions. Chief of these is the use of the 'Soma' drink. This is prepared from the flower of the lotus. The sap of this, says De Candolle, would be poisonous if taken in large quantities, but in small doses merely induces hallucination. Opium and hashish, a preparation of the hemp plant, have been in general use among Eastern peoples, as a means of producing ecstasy from remote antiquity. Opium, it is well known, produces an ex-

* Some very curious information concerning the use of this and other fungi is given by Dr. J. G. Bourke in his *Scatologic Rites*, pp. 69-75.

† Cited by Bourke, p. 90.

‡ Tylor, ii. pp. 417-9.

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traordinary state of exaltation, intensifying the sense of one's personality, and inducing a pleasurable consciousness of mental strength and clarity. Under its influence, as De Quincey said, time lengthens to infinity and space swells to immensity.* Belladonna, a drug much used by medieval witches and sorcerers, has also had its vogue for purely religious purposes.

* For a clear account of the effects of hemp preparations, calculated to produce a feeling of religious ecstasy, the reader should consult Dr. Hale White's *Text-Book of Pharmacology*, 1901, pp. 318-22. The effects of opium are thus described by another writer: "Opium, in those who are capable of stimulation by it, gives rise to a pleasurable feeling, something like that which is produced by wine in not excessive doses; but the excitement derived from it, instead of tending to some highest point, remains stationary for hours, and in place of the slight incoherence of thought always present in those who are exhilarated with wine, the most perfect harmony is established among all the conceptions. There is an extraordinary stimulation of the pure intellect, and not merely of the power of expression. The opium-eater seems to have had the eyes of his spirit opened, to have acquired a gift of insight into things that to mere mortals are inexplicable. The most remote parts of consciousness come into clear light; the finer shades of personality, those that had been unknown even to the opium-eater himself, are brought into view and become distinct; the smallest details of the things around take new significance, and are seen to be profoundly important; their analogies with other phenomena of nature are revealed. It is the same with the moral as with the intellectual being; that also becomes indefinitely exalted. An absolute balance of the faculties seems to have been attained. The whole man *is* what in his ordinary state he only tends to be; he has realised the highest perfection of which he is capable; only his 'best self' now remains; his lower self has been left behind without need of the purgatorial fire of contention with the environment to destroy it."—T. Whittaker, *Essays and Notices, Psychological and Philosophical*, p. 367.

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With the Greeks the laurel was sacred to Æsculapius. Those who wished to ask counsel of the god appeared before the altar crowned with laurel and chewing its leaves. Before prophesying, the Greek priestesses drank a preparation of laurel water. This contains, although it was, of course, unknown to them, two toxic substances—prussic acid and the volatile oil of laurel. The first would induce convulsions, the second, hallucinatory visions. The two combined were calculated to produce with both subject and observer a profound impression of spiritual illumination and possession.

It is unnecessary to multiply examples of the action of various drugs or herbs on the nervous system, or to cite the people who use them. Enough has been said to indicate how widespread is the practice, and the consequences are not hard to foresee. A very moderate development of intelligence would enable men to associate certain consequences with the use of particular drugs, but a very considerable amount of knowledge would be required to explain why these consequences were produced. In a social environment saturated with superstition the explanation lies ready to hand, and is accepted without question. A people that sees spiritual agency in all the familiar phenomena of nature are certainly not less likely to trace its influence in the mysterious and unaccountable effects of narcotics and stimulants. And each repeated experiment provides additional proof. Man thus not only believes himself to be surrounded by a spiritual world; he is actually able to enter into communication with it by methods that are defined in the clearest possible manner. Every repetition strengthens the delusion and

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even when the delusion, as such, is exploded, the temper of mind induced by it persists.

Various other methods are employed to induce a feeling of religious exaltation. Prominent among these are dancing and singing. Dancing in connection with religious ceremonies is now generally outgrown in the civilised world, but singing is still the vogue. That is, singing is not, it must be remembered, practised from any desire to cultivate a love of music, although it may appeal to music-lovers. Still, its avowed purpose is to induce a feeling of devoutness in the congregation. The hypnotic consequences of a body of people singing in unison, or the soothing, mystical effect of certain airs from a choir upon a congregation, are recognised in practice if not in theory. This is a phenomenon that is not, of course, exclusively associated with religion. In this as in other instances religion only utilises the ordinary qualities of human nature. But in all cases the purpose and the result are the same. That is, the subject is placed for the time being in a supernormal condition, and the mild state of passivity or enthusiasm created makes him more susceptible to the influence brought to bear upon him. This is true of religious singing and chanting, from the forest gatherings of the primitive savage down to the more sedate and elaborate assemblages in church or chapel.

Primitive dancing had both a sexual and religious significance, although, as will be seen later, in the primitive mind the sexual functions themselves are very closely associated with supernatural agency. Tylor is of opinion that originally men and women dance in order to express their feelings and wishes,*

* *Anthropology*, p. 296.

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but it is certain it very early and universally became associated with religious ceremonies, and that because of the ecstasy induced. In some cases drug-taking and dancing go together. In others, reliance is placed on dancing alone. This latter is the case with the 'devil dancers' of Ceylon. In Africa the witch doctor discovers who has been guilty of sorcery by the aid of inspiration furnished during a dance. The whirling dance of the Eastern dervish is well known. Dancing also figures in the Bible. The Jews danced around the golden calf (Ex. xxxii. 19) in a state of nudity. David, too, danced naked before the Lord. Dancing was also part of the religious ceremonies attendant on the worship of Dionysos or Bacchus.* Along with the drinking of certain vegetable decoctions, dancing formed an important part of the witches' saturnalia during the medieval period. When in a state of frenzy, partly drug induced and partly the product of exhilaration caused by wild dancing, visions of Satan followed. In the dancing mania of the fourteenth century, the sufferers saw visions of heaven opened, with Jesus and the Virgin enthroned. Dancing was one of the prominent characteristics of the French Convulsionnaires in the eighteenth century. In more recent times we have the dancing and singing connected with the Methodist revival. In modern instances the dancing seems to have been consequent on religious excitement rather than precedent to it, but in earlier times there is no doubt that it was deliberately practised as a means of producing a state of exaltation.

Among the commonest methods of inducing a sense

* For a general account of religious dances, see Major-General Forlong's *Faiths of Man*, art. "Dancing."

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of religious exaltation is the practice of fasting. In various guises, this is the most persistent form of religious self-torture. Amongst more civilised people the reason given for fasting is that it is a form of repentance, the genuineness of which is attested by voluntary punishment. But originally there seems little reason to doubt that it was adopted for a different purpose. It was valued not because the fasting person felt that he had done anything for which it was necessary to repent, but because it was believed to bring people into closer touch with the spiritual world. There is, of course, a very obvious reason for this belief. A lowered vitality is favourable to hallucinations of every description. A shipwrecked sailor is placed, by no act of his own, in precisely the same condition as is the primitive medicine man or the medieval saint by his own volition. It has always been recognised, and by none more readily than by the great religious teachers of the world, that a well-nourished body is inimical to what they chose to term "spiritual development." The historic Christian outcry against fleshly indulgence has much more in it than a revolt against mere sensualism. A well-fed body has been deprecated because it closed the avenue to spiritual illumination. Hence it is that fasting has found such favour in all religious systems. The ascetic saw more because, by reducing the body to an abnormal state, he provided the conditions for seeing more. The Zulu maxim, "A stuffed body cannot see secret things," really expresses in a sentence the philosophy of the matter.

Among the Blackfoot Indians of North America, when a boy reaches puberty he is sent away from

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his father's lodge in search of a spiritual protector or totem. Seeking a secluded spot, he abstains from food until he is favoured in a dream with a vision of some animal or bird, which is at once adopted by him.* This custom obtains with most of the North American tribes. Among these tribes, also, the sooth-sayer prepares himself by fasting for the ecstatic state in which the spirits give their messages through him. The ordinary member of the tribe who wants anything will fast until he is assured in a dream that it will be granted him. Similarly, the Malay, to procure supernatural intercourse, retires to the jungle and abstains from food. The Zulu doctor prepares for intercourse with the tribal spirits by spare diet or solitary fasts. Fasting is part of the ordinary regimen of the Hindu yogi. Of certain Indian tribes we are told that before proceeding on an expedition they "observe a rigorous fast, or rather abstain from every kind of food for four days. In this interval their imagination is exalted to delirium; whether it be through bodily weakness or the natural effect of delirium, they pretend to have strange visions. The elders and sages of the tribe, being called upon to interpret these dreams, draw from them omens more or less favourable to the success of the enterprise; and their explanations are received as oracles, by which the expedition will be faithfully regulated."† Amongst the Samoans, when rain was required, the priests blackened themselves all over, exhumed a dead body, took the skeleton to a cave and poured water over it. They had to fast and remain in the cave until it rained. Sometimes they

* Catlin, *North American Indians*, i. p. 36.

† Cited by Frazer, *Taboo and the Perils of the Soul*, p. 161.

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died under the experiment, but they generally chose the showery months for their rain-making.*

In both the Old and New Testaments fasting figures largely. The encounter of Jesus with Satan is preceded by a forty days' fast. St. Catherine of Sienna began regular fasts at a very early age. Santa Teresa kept lengthy fasts every year. The fasting of the monks and nuns during the epidemic period of monasticism is too well known to call for more than a mere reference. Perhaps the most curious religious reason given for fasting is that cited by a writer from a monkish chronicler:—

"As a coach goes faster when it is empty, a man by fasting can be better united to God; for it is a principle with geometers that a round body can never touch a plane except in one point. . . . A belly too well filled becomes round, it cannot touch God except in one point; but fasting flattens the belly until it is united with the surface of God at all points."†

George Fox, the founder of the Society of Friends, confesses that he "fasted much" and "walked abroad in solitary places," and "frequently in the night walked about mournfully by myself." After much brooding and fasting, he heard a voice which said, "There is one, even Jesus Christ, that can speak to thy condition." Such an experience is not at all surprising, seeing the method pursued to acquire it. Less fasting and brooding, with more genial intercourse with his fellows, might easily have prevented Fox, as it has prevented others, hearing heavenly voices proffering him counsel. Such an experience is well within the reach of any

* Turner's *Samoa*, p. 345-6.

† Brady, *Clavis Calendaria*, vol. i. p. 223.

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one who cares to acquire it. Tylor has well said that "So long as fasting is continued as a religious rite, so long the consequences in morbid mental exaltation will continue the old savage doctrine that morbid phantasy is supernatural experience. Bread and meat would have robbed the ascetic of many an angel's visit; the opening of the refectory door must many a time have closed the gate of heaven to his gaze." No one will question the truth of this principle, so long as we are dealing with uncivilised mankind. Many, however, shrink from acknowledging that the practices current in more civilised times are disguised illustrations of the same principle of interpretation, which descends direct from savages, and but for them would never have existed.

Commenting on the practices of certain savage medicine-men, a missionary remarks:—

"It always appeared probable to me that these rogues, from long fasting, contract a weakness of brain, a giddiness, a kind of delirium, which makes them imagine that they are gifted with superior wisdom, and give themselves out for physicians. They impose upon themselves first, and afterwards upon others."*

This is shrewdly said, and is a good example of the readiness with which obvious truths are recognised when they do not clash with religious prepossessions. The difficulty for others is to discern any real line of demarcation between the practices of civilised and uncivilised. So far as one can see, the only real distinction is that the method employed by savages is open. That followed by civilised people is more or less disguised. But derangement of function is derange-

* Cited by Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, ii. pp. 412-3.

ment of function, no matter how produced. And if we decline to believe that a savage holds genuine intercourse with a spiritual world, as a consequence of this derangement, in what way are we justified in accepting the testimony of a Christian visionary to similar intercourse, when the derangement is in his case no less clear? It is a case of accepting both, or neither. The sane and scientific conclusion seems to lie in the following from Dr. Henry Maudsley:—

“Now that the mental functions are known to be inseparably connected with nervous substrata, disposed and united in the brain in the most orderly fashion, superordinate, co-ordinate, and subordinate—the whole a complex organisation of confederate nerve centres, each capable of more or less independent action—a natural interpretation presents itself. The extraordinary states of mental disintegration evince the separate and irregular function of certain mental nerve tracts, or grouped nerve tracts with which goes necessarily a coincident suspension, partial or complete, of the functions of all the rest; the supernatural incubus, therefore, neither demoniac nor divine, only morbid. Thus the strange nervous seizures, with their mental concomitants, not being outside the range of positive research, but interesting events within it, become useful natural experiments to throw an instructive light upon the intricate functions of the most complex organ in the world—the human brain. Steadily are the researches of pathology driving the supernatural back into its last and most obscure retreat; for they prove that in the extremest ecstasies there is neither *theolepsy* nor *diabolepsy*, nor any other *lepsy* in the sense of possession of the individual by

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an external power; what there is truly is a *psycholepsy*."*

States of exaltation produced by the aid of drugs, fasting, or other forms of self-torture come naturally under the category of deliberately induced states of mind, owing to the conviction that spiritual knowledge may be gained in this way. But there are other states that arise naturally and which foster the same conviction. It has already been pointed out that the generally accepted theory with uncivilised peoples is that all disease is due to the action of malevolent spirits. There is no need now to repeat proof of this, and in any case it lies to hand in any work that deals with uncivilised life. Nor need we go back to uncivilised times for evidence. One requires only to look but a very little way into the history of any country to find the supernaturalistic theory of disease in full swing, and even to-day one may discover indications of its once general rule. Its importance to the present enquiry lies in the part it has played in building up in the religious consciousness a general conviction of religious truth that does not disappear even when it is seen that the evidence upon which it rests is faulty. Just as the inhabitants of a Welsh village have their general belief in religion strengthened by the semi-hysterical speeches of an Evan Roberts, and the convulsive capers of a whole congregation, so in all ages people have found endorsement of their belief in a supernatural world in the existence of cases the pathological nature of which admits of no doubt. Belief in the supernatural character of specific nervous conditions or mental states may disappear, but the fact

* *Natural Causes and Supernatural Seemings*, p. 277.

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that this belief has been general for a time leaves behind a certain psychological residuum in favour of supernaturalism in general.

The connection between the priest and the physician is naturally a very ancient one. The priest, indeed, is the primitive physician, the belief that diseases are supernaturally caused indicating him as the agent of their cure. And it is only to be expected that when the attempt is made to divert the treatment of disease from priestly hands the effort should be met with determined opposition. Quite naturally, too, the first gropings after a scientific theory of disease show a curious mixture of rationalism and superstition. Thus, in Greece, the temple hospitals devoted to the mythical Æsculapius, which were situated at Epidaurus, Pergamus, Cyrene, Corinth, and many other places, served as colleges, hospitals, and places of worship. Sufferers slept in the temples in the hopes of receiving messages from the gods, and the priests themselves professed to have ecstatic visions which enabled them to prescribe for those afflicted.* Great emphasis was placed on bathing, light, air, and food, and it is pretty clear that the priests had begun to mix both faith and physic in a most perplexing manner.

The definite separation of medicine from magic and religion begins with Hippocrates. His theory of disease was simple. He did not deny that there might be a supernatural side to disease; he insisted that there was always a natural one, and that this was the side with which we should be concerned. Each disorder,

* A very good account of the methods followed in these places will be found in Miss Hamilton's *Incubation, or the Cure of Diseases in Pagan Temples and Christian Churches*, 1906.

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he said, had its own physical conditions, and he laid down the rule that we "ought to study the nature of man, what he is with reference to that which he eats and drinks, and to all his other occupations and habits, and to the consequences resulting from each."* In Egypt, also, very considerable advance was made in the same direction. Probably a good deal of their knowledge resulted from the practice of embalming, in spite of the priestly interdict on dissection. At all events, there is no doubt that considerable advance had been made. Herophilus and Erasistratus wrote of the structure of the heart, and described its connection with the veins and arteries. The two kinds of nerves, motor and sensory, were described, and the influence of foods, etc., as influencing health, dwelt on. Insanity was also dealt with as due to natural and controllable causes, and the effects of colour and music in dealing with mania noted.† Had this advance been followed, the history of European civilisation might have been different from what it was. Plagues, epidemics, and diseases, with their far-reaching social and political consequences,—consequences that are too little noted, or even understood, by historians,—might have met with adequate resistance, and some would never have occurred.

* Grote, *History of Greece*, vol. i. p. 359 and vol. v. p. 232.

† "The ancient Egyptians and Greeks," says Dr. Maudsley, "used humane and rational methods of treatment; it was only after the Christian doctrine of possession by devils had taken hold of the minds of men that the worst sort of treatment, of which history gives account, came into force" (*Pathology of Mind*, p. 523). For a general account of Egyptian medicine see the chapter on Egypt in Dr. Berdoe's *Origin and Growth of the Healing Art*.

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The Pagan schools of medicine came to an untimely, although in some cases a lingering, end. "The introduction of Christianity," says a medical writer, "had an undoubted influence on the course of medical science; for the Christian was taught to recognise, in every bodily infirmity, the dispensation of the Almighty, and in the calm, abstracted pursuits of those holy men who passed their time in prayer and meditation, a propitiation: hence medicine fell into the hands of monks and anchorites, who assumed to themselves, exclusively, the power of interpreting all natural phenomena as indications of the Divine Will, and pretended to possess some occult and supernatural means of curing disease."* Reversing the natural order of things, the physician was replaced by the priest. The supernaturalistic theory was revived, and held its own for well on a thousand years. For every complaint the Church provided a specific in the shape of a charm, an incantation, or a saint. St. Apollonia for toothache, St. Avertin for lunacy, St. Benedict for stone, St. Clara for sore eyes, St. Herbert for hydrophobia, St. John for epilepsy, St. Maur for gout, St. Persel for agues, St. Genevieve for fevers, St. Sebastian for plague, etc.† The height of absurdity was reached when, in spite of the monopoly of the treatment of disease by the priesthood, the Council of Rheims (1119) actually forbade monks to study medicine. This was followed by the Council of Beziers (1246) prohibiting Christians applying for relief to Jewish physicians, at a time when practically the only doctors of ability in Christendom were Jews. In 1243

* Meryon, *The History of Medicine*, vol. i. p. 67.

† *Ibid.*, vol. i. p. 104.

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the Dominicans banished all books on medicine from their monasteries. Innocent III. forbade physicians practising except under the supervision of an ecclesiastic. Honorius (1222) forbade priests the study of medicine; and at the end of the thirteenth century Boniface VIII. interdicted surgery as atheistical. The ill-treatment and opposition experienced by the great Vesalius at the hands of the Church, on account of his anatomical researches, is one of the saddest chapters in the history of science.*

When the sight of bodily disease strengthened and confirmed belief in the supernatural, mental disease must have offered still more convincing evidence. Among uncivilised people we know that this is so. To quote again from the indispensable Tylor:—

“The possessed man . . . rationally finds a spiritual cause for his sufferings. . . . Especially when the mysterious unseen power throws him helpless on the ground, jerks and writhes him in convulsions, makes him leap upon the bystanders with a giant’s strength and a wild beast’s ferocity, impels him with distorted face and frantic gesture, and voice not his own nor seemingly even human, to pour forth wild incoherent raving, or with thought and eloquence beyond his sober faculties to command, to counsel, to foretell—such a one seems to those who watch him, and even to himself, to have become the mere instrument of a spirit which has seized him or entered into him, a possessing demon in whose personality the patient believes so implicitly that he often imagines a personal name for it, which it can declare when it speaks in

* See Sir Michael Foster’s *Lectures on the History of Physiology*, chap. i.

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its own voice and character through his organs of speech.”*

It was this conception of insanity, universally current in the uncivilised world, that was revived with fearful intensity in the early Christian Church, and which certainly served its purpose in intensifying the genuine belief in supernaturalism. Jesus had given His followers power to expel demons “In My name,” and this power of exorcism was one upon which the early Christians specially prided themselves. It is with unconscious sarcasm that Dean Trench puts the question, If one of the disciples “were to enter a madhouse now, how many of the sufferers there he might recognise as ‘possessed’?”† One may safely say that he would regard all as under the dominion of evil spirits. No other cause of insanity appears to have been recognised, and the Church devised the most elaborate formulæ for casting out demons. The assumed demoniac was prayed over, incensed, and evil-smelling drugs burned under his nose. A set form of objur-gation then followed:—

“Thou lustful and stupid one. . . . Thou lean sow, famine-stricken and most impure. . . . Thou wrinkled beast, of all beasts the most beastly. . . . Thou bestial and foolish drunkard. . . . Thou sooty spirit from Tartarus. . . . I cast thee down, O Tartarean boor, into the infernal kitchen. . . . Loathsome cobbler . . . filthy sow . . . envious crocodile. . . . Malodorous drudge . . . swollen toad . . . lousy swineherd,” etc. etc.‡

* *Primitive Culture*, ii. 124.

† *On the Miracles*, p. 168.

‡ Cited by White, who gives original authorities, *Warfare of Science with Theology*, ii. 107.

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Then followed the exorcism proper:—

“By the Apocalypse of Jesus Christ, which God hath given to make known unto His servants those things which are shortly to be . . . I exorcise you, ye angels of untold perversity. . . . May all the devils that are thy foes rush forth upon thee and drag thee down to hell! . . . May the Holy One trample on thee and hang thee up in an infernal fork, as was done to the five kings of the Amorites! . . . May God set a nail to your skull, and pound it with a hammer as Jael did to Sisera! . . . May Sother break thy head and cut off thy hands, as was done to the cursed Dagon! . . . May God hang thee in a hellish yoke, as seven men were hanged by the sons of Saul!”*

Marcus Aurelius mentions as one of his debts to the philosopher Diognetus that he had taught him “not to give credit to vulgar tales of prodigies and incantations, and evil spirits cast out by magicians or pretenders to sorcery, and such kind of impostors.”† What would have been the thoughts of the great emperor, could he have revisited the earth two centuries after his death and seen the then civilised world enveloped in a mental atmosphere in which such ideas as those above described could live?

All over Europe for centuries lunatics were whipped, and otherwise ill-treated, in the hopes of expelling the demons that were troubling them. The seventy-second Canon of the Church of England still provides that no unlicensed person shall “cast out any devil or devils” under pain of penalties prescribed. A Bishop of Beauvais, in the fifteenth century, not only caused five devils to come out of one person, but

* White, ii. 108.

† *Meditations*, bk. i.

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actually induced them to sign a document promising not to molest this particular sufferer again. Tremendous, again, were the labours of the Jesuit Fathers of Vienna, who boasted that they had cast out no less than 12,652 'living devils.' Such arithmetical exactitude silences all hostile comment. In some parts of Scotland, as late as 1783, lunatics were left all night in the churchyard, with a holy bell over their heads. In Cornwall, St. Nun's pool was famous for the cure of lunatics. The poor devils were tied hand and foot and doused in the water until they were cured—or killed. Even the embraces of prostitutes, for some peculiar reason, were recommended as a cure for insanity.* In 1788, in Bristol, a drunken epileptic, one George Larkins, was brought into church, and seven clergymen solemnly set themselves to the task of exorcising the possessing demon. Whereupon Satan swore 'by his infernal den'—an oath, says the chronicler, nowhere to be found but in Bunyan. Under date of October 25, 1739, John Wesley also relates how he was sent for and assisted at the expulsion of a demon from the body of a young girl.

Of all nervous diseases that of epilepsy appears to have been most favourable to the encouragement of a belief in spiritual agency. One medical authority whose experience enables him to speak with a peculiar degree of authority has pointed out that with epilepsy there is often an exaltation of the religious sentiments.† A more recent writer, Dr. Bernard Holl-

* Fort's *Medical Economy during the Middle Ages*, p. 345.

† Dr. Howden, Medical Superintendent of the Montrose Lunatic Asylum, in *Journal of Mental Science*, 1873.

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ander, asserts that epileptics are "highly religious."* Sir T. S. Clouston also points out that strong religious emotionalism often accompanies epilepsy.† Another eminent physician, while pointing out that "a high degree of intelligence, amounting even to genius, has in some cases been associated with epilepsy," observes that "the epileptic is apt to be influenced greatly by the mystical and awe-inspiring, and he is disposed to morbid piety."‡

Every medical man is acquainted with the close relation that exists between epilepsy and all kinds of hallucinations and delusions, and it would be more than surprising if in an environment where the religious interpretation of things is paramount, or with a patient of strong religious convictions, these delusions did not take a religious form. And of all nervous disorders epilepsy seems most favourable for producing this. Under its influence hallucination attacks everyone of the senses with a varying degree of intensity. "The patient hears voices, and generally words expressing definite ideas, though he is often unable to properly refer them to any speaking person. Sometimes instead of external sounds or voices, the patient has a consciousness of an internal voice that may be as real to him as any external auditory perception. At first the voices may be indistinct, but upon constant repetition and evolution from subconscious thought they acquire intensity, eventually dominating the life of the individual."§ Dr. Ball says:

* *First Signs of Insanity*, p. 293. † *Clinical Lectures on Mental Diseases*, p. 428. The whole of chapter xi. is very pertinent. ‡ Dr. R. Jones, in Allbutt's *System of Medicine*, vol. viii. p. 335. § Dr. Hollander, *First Signs of Insanity*, pp. 64-5.

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"One patient perceives at the beginning of the attack a toothed wheel, in the middle of which there appears a human face making strange contortions; another sees a series of smiling landscapes. In some cases it is the sense of hearing which is affected;—the patient hears voices or strange noises. Others are warned by the sense of smell that the fit is going to commence."*

Sometimes these hallucinations of sight and hearing are in curious contrast with each other. "Not rarely," says Dr. Connolly Norman, "a patient has visual hallucinations of a cheering kind—as of God or angels; yet his auditory hallucinations are full of blasphemy, mockery, and insult."†

Dr. Maudsley thus describes the general symptoms accompanying an epileptic attack:—

"The patient's senses are possessed with hallucinations, his ganglionic central cells being in a state of what may be called convulsive action; before the eyes are blood-red flames of fire, amidst which whoever happens to present himself appears as a devil or otherwise horribly transformed; the ears are filled with a terribly roaring noise, or resound with a voice imperatively commanding him to save himself; the smell is one of sulphurous stifling, and the desperate and violent actions are the convulsive reaction to such fearful hallucinations."‡

If anyone will bear in mind the numerous descrip-

* Cited by Ireland, *The Blot on the Brain*, p. 39. † Allbutt's *System of Medicine*, viii. 395. ‡ *Physiology of Mind*, p. 251. See also Dr. Mercier's *The Nervous System and the Mind*, p. 55.

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tions of religious visions, written in all good faith, and the behaviour of many an assumed 'inspired' character, he will have little difficulty in realising how easily, to a people unacquainted with the real character of such phenomena, epilepsy lends itself to a religious interpretation. It must also be borne in mind that the consequences of vivid hallucinations experienced during epilepsy do not always disappear with the attack to which they were originally due.

It is certain that from the earliest times cases of what are undoubtedly epilepsy have been taken as positive indications of supernatural influence. "There is," says Emanuel Deutsch, "a peculiar something supposed to inhere in epilepsy. The Greeks called it a divine disease. Bacchantic and chorybantic furor were God-inspired stages. The Pythia uttered her oracles under the most distressing signs. Symptoms of convulsion were ever needed as a sign of the divine."* Much of the evidence for the supernatural in the New Testament rests upon cases that are obviously pathological in character. A man brings his son to Jesus and describes how "ofttimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water" (Matt. xvii. 15), and in another place (Mark ix. 18) the same patient is described as having a dumb spirit, "and wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him; and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away." The response to the father's appeal for help is an exorcism of the possessing spirit such as one meets with in all savage culture. Between possession by a malignant spirit and domination by a god, the difference is clearly

* *Literary Remains*, p. 83.

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one of terminology alone. And at the side of the New Testament case just cited one may place this account from Polynesia, written by a very competent observer, and a missionary:—

“As soon as the god was supposed to have entered the priest, the latter became violently agitated and worked himself up to the highest pitch of apparent frenzy; the muscles of the limbs seemed convulsed, the body swelled, the countenance became terrific, the features distorted, the eyes wild and strained. In this state he often rolled on the earth, foaming at the mouth, as if labouring under the influence of the divinity by whom he was possessed, and in shrill cries, and often violent and indistinct sounds, revealed the will of the god.”*

Advancing to a higher culture stage than that indicated in the last passage, there is much evidence that Mohammed was subject to hallucinations, and many authorities have indicated epilepsy as their source. There is a tradition that someone who saw Mohammed while he was receiving one of his revelations observed that he seemed unconscious and was red in the face. Mohammed himself said:—

“Inspiration descendeth upon me in two ways. Sometimes Gabriel cometh and communicateth the revelation unto me, as one man unto another, and this is easy; at other times it affecteth me like the ringing of a bell, penetrating my very heart, and rending me as it were in pieces; and this it is which grievously afflicteth me.”

Emanuel Deutsch, although, in a passage al-

* W. Ellis, *Polynesian Researches*, ii. 235-6.

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ready cited, recognising the religious significance attached to epilepsy, has the following curious comment:—

“Mohammed was epileptic; and vast ingenuity and medical knowledge have been lavished upon this point as explanatory of Mohammed’s mission and success. We, for our own part, do not think that epilepsy ever made a man appear a prophet to himself or even to the people of the East; or, for the matter of that, inspired him with the like heart-moving words and glorious pictures. Quite the contrary. It was taken as a sign of demons within—demons, ‘Devs,’ devils to whom all manner of diseases were ascribed throughout the antique world.”

This seems very largely to miss the point at issue. Of course, no one would claim that Mohammed’s success was due to epilepsy, or even that the very severe forms of epilepsy were favourable to inducing a conviction of revelation. But the disease assumes various forms, and in some cases it is expressed in the form of a period of mental excitement and general irritability. All that is claimed is that, given the complaint in its less severe forms in one with whom religious beliefs are strong, there are present all the conditions for attributing the resulting hallucinations to personal revelation or ecstatic vision. And it is also true that while some patients after emerging from a fit of epilepsy are in a dazed or confused condition, others have a very clear recollection of all they have seen and heard. Mohammed simply took the current explanation of cases of nervous derangement, and being a man of strong religious feeling, naturally gave his visions a religious interpretation. All the rest has to be

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explained in terms of the innate genius of the man and of the circumstances of his time.

A similar case to the above is that of Emanuel Swedenborg. His followers naturally resent the ascription of his visions and voices to a pathologic origin, and point to his pronounced mental ability. And certainly no one who is at all acquainted with the writings of Swedenborg will question his great mental power, amounting at times to positive genius. But here, again, we have strong religious conviction in alliance with pathological conditions. Swedenborg's communications with celestial beings were of a more frequent and more ordered character than Mohammed's, but there is the same generallikeness between them. Of his first revelation he writes :—

“ At ten o'clock I lay down in bed and was somewhat better; half an hour after I heard a clamour under my head; I thought that then the tempter went away; immediately there came over me a rigor so strong from the head and the whole body, with some din, and this several times. I found that something holy was over me. I thereupon fell asleep, and at about twelve, one, or two o'clock in the night there came over me so strong a shivering from head to foot, as if many winds rushed together, which shook me, was indescribable, and prostrated me upon my face. Then, while I was prostrated, I was in a moment quite awake, and saw that I was cast down, and wondered what it meant. And I spoke as if I was awake, but found that the word was put into my mouth, and I said, ‘ Omnipotent Jesus Christ, as of Thy great grace Thou condescendest to come to so great a sinner, make me worthy of this grace!’ I held my hands together and prayed,

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and then came a hand which squeezed my hands hard; immediately thereupon I continued in prayer."*

Swedenborg confessed to repeated walks and talks with celestial visitants, and, of course, all thought of imposture must be put on one side. What one has to consider is whether we are to accept these experiences as hallucinations or not. On the one side no further evidence seems possible than the profound faith of the man himself, his recognised mental ability, and the belief of his followers. And against this it must be urged that the most complete honesty is no guarantee against self-deception, while ability and even genius are not at all incompatible with a pathologic strain. And in addition it must be borne in mind that these hallucinations are, after all, part of a very large class. Men of very little ability and influence experience substantially the same visions; they occur all over the world, under all conditions of culture, and always express the personal idiosyncrasies of the subject and reflect the character of his social environment. One may safely say that had Swedenborg lived a century later, while he might still have gone through the same mental and physical experiences, he himself would have given a very different interpretation of them.

St. Paul, Professor James points out, "certainly had once an epileptoid, if not an epileptic seizure." One need to add to this that this seizure occurred at the one critical moment of his life which eventuated in his conversion from Judaism to Christianity. Mary Magdalene, the first who brought tidings of the resurrection,

* Dr. H. Maudsley has gone fully into the case of Swedenborg in an article in the *Journal of Mental Science* for July and October 1869, since reprinted in his *Body and Mind*.

had been delivered of seven devils. Luther's religious opinions were, of course, quite apart from his physical state, sound or unsound. Still, even with him the reality of supernatural intercourse became intensely vivid as a result of nervous affections. His latest biographer points out that as a youth while in the monastery he was seized with something that might well have been an epileptic fit, and that although there is no record of a return of this, he did suffer from ordinary fits of fainting.* He confesses to have been much troubled, at twenty-two years of age, with giddiness and noises in the ear, which he attributed to the devil. And right through his life he attributed similar experiences to the same source. Bunyan confesses that even during childhood the Lord "did scare and affright me with fearful dreams, and did terrify me with dreadful visions." George Fox, founder of the Society of Friends, describes how, in the middle of winter, when approaching Lichfield, "the Word of the Lord was like a fire in me," and as he went through the town, "there seemed to me to be a channel of blood running down the streets, and the market-place appeared like a pool of blood." Reflecting on the meaning of the vision, he remembered that, "In the Emperor Diocletian's time a thousand Christians were martyred at Lichfield. So I was to go without my shoes through the channel of their blood in the market-place, that I might raise up the blood of these martyrs which had been shed above a thousand years before." †

* See *Luther*, by H. Grisar, 1913, vol. i. pp. 16-7.

† For other cases, and a general account of the relations between pathologic states and religious delusion, see Lombroso, *Man of Genius*, chap. iv. pt. iii.

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In none of these cases could it be fairly claimed that the religious conviction, as such, was the consequence of the hallucinations experienced. But it can scarcely be questioned that these served to strengthen it to an enormous extent. These trances, ecstasies, visions, were accepted by the subjects as proofs of their 'divine mission,' and were so accepted by multitudes of their followers. In their absence religion would most probably have failed to be the fiercely irruptive force in life that it has been. The religious idea has, so to speak given hallucination a standing and an authority in life it would not have possessed in its absence. In the case of men of ordinary capacity these visions possess little authority. But in the case of men of extraordinary capacity, men like Luther, Mohammed, Fox, Swedenborg,—who must in any case have stood superior to their fellows,—these hallucinations are then under favouring social conditions invested with enormous authority. And there is no doubt about the fact that religious leaders have been peculiarly subject to these psychical variations. This is pointed out by Professor James in the following passage:—

“Even more perhaps than other kinds of genius, religious leaders have been subject to abnormal psychical visitations. Invariably they have been creatures of exalted emotional sensibility. Often they have led a discordant inner life, and had melancholy during a part of their career. They have known no measure, been liable to obsessions and fixed ideas; and frequently they have fallen into trances, heard voices, seen visions, and presented all sorts of peculiarities which are ordinarily classed as pathological. Often, moreover, these pathological features in their career have

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helped to give them their religious authority and influence."*

Well, in what way are we to discriminate between the visions of a religious person, admittedly of an abnormal disposition, subject to fits of melancholy, etc., and presenting "all sorts of peculiarities ordinarily classed as pathological," and the hallucinations of an admittedly pathologic subject? Why should the ordinary classification break down at this point? Dr. Granger, dealing with this aspect of the question, says: "The religious genius is not proved to be morbid by the extent to which he diverges from the average type."† Quiteso, genius *must* depart from the average type in order to be genius. But the statement is quite beside the point at issue. It is not a mere divergence from the average type that warrants one in assuming that much passing for divine illumination owes its origin to pathological conditions, but the fact that it is possible to affiliate certain cases of religious exaltation with these conditions. Hallucinations are common to all forms of ecstasy, and ecstasy is not confined to religion. Given a one-sided mental activity, intense concentration on one or a few analogous ideas, combined with a lowered nervous sensibility, and we have all the conditions present favourable to hallucination.‡ These hallucinations may occur in connection with any topic that engrosses the subject's mind. In every other direction their true nature is recognised and admitted. In connection with religious belief alone, it is held that they bring the subject into touch with a

* *Varieties of Religious Experience*, pp. 6-7. † *The Soul of a Christian*, p. 13.

‡ See Parish's *Hallucinations and Illusions*, pp. 38-9.

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supersensual world of reality. What possible scientific warranty is there for any such distinction?

Let us take, as an example, one of James's own cases, which he admits is 'distinctly pathological,' but without allowing this admission to disturb his general conclusion. The case is that of Suso, a famous fourteenth-century mystic. As a young man he wore a hair shirt and an iron chain next the skin. Later he had made a leathern garment studded with one hundred and fifty nails, points inward. The garment was made very tight, and he used it to sleep in. To prevent himself throwing it off during sleep he procured a pair of leather gloves studded with tacks, so that if he attempted to get rid of the dress the tacks would penetrate his flesh. Next he had made a wooden cross, with thirty protruding nails, to emulate the sufferings of Jesus. He procured an old door to sleep on. In winter he suffered from the frost. His feet were full of sores, his legs became dropsical, his knees bloody and seared, his loins covered with scars, his hands tremulous. During twenty years he fed scantily upon the coarsest food, slept in the most uncomfortable places, and during the whole of the time never took a bath. No wonder that after his fortieth year he was favoured with a series of visions from God. Would not one be surprised if any other result than this had been achieved? And Suso's case is only one of thousands, many of not so extreme a character, others quite as bad.

In the case of Catherine of Sienna the austerities began earlier than with Suso. As a child she flogged herself, and was favoured with visions before she reached her teens. Santa Teresa, as a young woman, prayed

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to God to send her an illness, and describes how she remained for days in a trance, during which time her tongue was bitten in many places. She describes how, during these trances, her body became to her light, and she remained rigid. "It was altogether impossible for me to hinder it; for my world would be carried absolutely away, and ordinarily even my head, as it were, after it."* These are typical examples from a very large number of cases. The annals of monasticism are filled with accounts of self-inflicted tortures, with the one end in view, and in serious belief that their experiences brought them into touch with a reality denied them under normal conditions. The practice not only quickened their own sense of the reality of religion, it served the same purpose for thousands of others pursuing the course of ordinary social existence. "Religious teachers," says Francis Galton, "by enforcing celibacy, fasting, and solitude, have done their best towards making men mad, and they have always largely succeeded in inducing morbid mental conditions among their followers."†

The phenomenon is thus continuous and, in its essentials, unchanging. From the most primitive times there has been a close association between the belief in divine illumination and spiritual intercourse, and mental states that are unquestionably pathological. Following this there has been a more or less deliberate cultivation of these states in the desire to renew communion with a spiritual world hidden from man's normal senses. In this there need be no deliberate imposture. When imposture does occur, it

* *Saint Teresa*, by H. Joli, pp. 25, 26, and 58.

† *Inquiries into Human Faculty*, 1883, p. 68.

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would be at a later culture stage. At the beginning there is nothing but misunderstanding. First in order of time comes the crude animistic interpretation of almost every phase of human activity. So far as primitive life is concerned, the evidence of this is simply overwhelming. Next, as Tylor has pointed out, from believing that the occurrence of certain mental states provides the conditions of communication with an unseen world to the deliberate creation of those states is a natural and an easy step. There is thus set on foot a deliberate culture of the supernatural. This cultivation of abnormal states of mind once initiated persists, now in one form, now in another, but is substantially the same throughout. Whether we are dealing with the crude practices of the savage, the less crude, but still obvious methods of solitary living and bodily maceration of the medieval monk, or the morbid and unhealthy dwelling upon a single idea which remains one of the conditions of 'illumination' to-day, we are confronted with the same thing. In every case the object—unconscious, maybe—is the provision of conditions that render hallucination and illusion a practical certainty. In connection with non-religious matters the unhealthiness of mind, distortion of vision, and unreliability of judgment induced by methods akin to those named is now generally recognised. We have yet to see the same thing as generally recognised in connection with religious beliefs. We see in addition that a great many of those experiences, once accepted as clear evidence of supernatural communication, are more properly explainable in terms of nervous derangement. In such cases there is neither celestial illumination nor diabolic communion, neither—to use

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Maudsley's phrase—theolepsy nor diablepsy, only psycholepsy. In the present chapter we have been striving to apply this principle to a little wider field than is usual. We have been studying the misinterpretation, in terms of religion, of abnormal or pathological states of mind, and observing how far these have contributed to building up and perpetuating a conviction of the possibility of supernatural intercourse. We have yet to trace the same principle of misinterpretation in the sexual and social life of mankind.

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feeling and religious belief is ancient, intimate, and sustained. It has impressed itself on many observers who have approached the subject from widely different points of view. Some have treated the connection as purely accidental, and as having no more than a mere historical interest. Others have used it as illustrating the way in which so sacred a subject as religion may suffer degradation in degenerate hands. Others of a more scientific temper have dealt with the relations between sexualism and religion as illustrations of a mere perversion. A deal may be said in favour of this last point of view. We know, as a matter of fact, that such cases of perversion do exist, in what form and to what extent will be discussed later. We are also aware that strong feeling which cannot find vent in one direction will secure expression in another. The annals of Roman Catholicism contain accounts of numerous persons who have sought refuge in a monastery or a nunnery as the result of disappointment in love, and it would be foolish to conclude that strong amorous feelings are annihilated because there is a change in the object to which they are directed. Paul was not a different man from the Saul of pre-conversion days, but the same person with his energies directed into a new channel. Protestantism is without the obvious outlets for unsatisfied sexual feeling such as is provided by Roman Catholicism, but it provides other outlets. Religious service as a whole remains, and intense religious devotion may very often owe its origin to sources undreamt of by the devotee.

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Between religious beliefs and sexual feelings the connection is, however, wider and deeper, than the relation expressed by mere perversion. Neither is the relation one of mere accident. An examination of the facts in the light of adequate scientific knowledge, combined with a due perception of primitive human psychology and sociology, have shown that the two things are united at their source. One eminent medical writer asserts that "in a certain sense, the history of religion can be regarded as a peculiar mode of manifestation of the human sexual instinct." * Another writer substantially endorses this by the remark that "in a certain sense the religious life is an irradiation of the reproductive instinct." † How easily one glides into the other very little observation of life or study of history will show. The language of devotion and of amatory passion is often identical, and seems to serve equally well for either purpose. The significance of this fact is often obscured by our having etherealised the conception of love, and so losing sight of its physiological basis. And, having hidden it from sight, we, not unnaturally, fail to give it due consideration. This is, in its way, a fatal blunder. The sex life of man and woman is too large a fact and too pervasive a force to be ignored with safety. Ignorance combined with prudery conspires to perpetuate what ignorance alone began; and the sex life, in both its normal and abnormal manifestations, has been perpetually exploited in the interests of supernaturalism.

The evidence that may be adduced in favour of what has been said is vast, and covers a wide range.

* Dr. Iwan Bloch, *The Sexual Life of Our Time*, p. 97.

† E. D. Starbuck, *The Psychology of Religion*, p. 401.

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Historically it covers such facts as the relations between primitive religious beliefs and the sexual life, and the multiplication of sects of a markedly erotic character during periods of religious enthusiasm. "Even the most casual students of religion," says Professor G. B. Cutten, "must have observed an apparently intimate connection between religious and sexual emotions, and not a few have read with amazement the abnormal cults which have had the sexual element as a foundation for their denominational dissent."* A phenomenon so striking as to force itself on the notice of the most 'casual students' raises the presumption that the relation between the two sets of facts is rather more than that of 'apparent' intimacy. When in the course of history two things appear together over and over again, one is surely justified in assuming that there is some underlying principle responsible for the association. The search for this principle leads to the next class of evidence—the psychological. In this we are concerned with the relation between the sexual feelings and the religious idea, an association not always expressed through the comparatively harmless medium of language. And, finally, we have the evidence derived from pathology, where we are able to discern a perverted sexuality masquerading as religious fervour.

In a previous chapter there has been pointed out the kind of mental environment in which primitive man moves. As one of the earliest forms of systematised thinking, religion dominates all other forms of mental activity. In savage culture there is hardly a single event into which religious considerations do

* *The Psychological Phenomena of Christianity*, p. 419.

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not enter. The savage does not merely believe in a supernatural world, he lives in it; it is as real to him as anything around him, and far more potent in its action. Above all, it is important to bear in mind that although one is compelled to speak of the natural and the supernatural when dealing with early beliefs, no such separation is present to the primitive intelligence. The division between the natural and the supernatural in the external world is the reflection of a corresponding division in the world of thought, and this arises only at a subsequent stage. What is afterwards recognised as the supernatural pervades everything. In a sense it is everything, since most of what occurs is by the agency or connivance of animistic forces.

In such a world, where even the ordinary events of life have a supernatural significance, the strange and sometimes terrifying phenomena of sexual life carry peculiarly strong evidences of supernatural activity. Events which are to the modern mind the most obvious consequences of sex life are to the primitive mind proofs of supernatural or ghostly agency. Nothing, for example, would appear less open to misconception than the connection between sexual relations and the birth of children. Yet, on this head, Mr. Sidney Hartland has produced a mass of evidence, gathered from all parts of the world, and leading to the conclusion that in the most primitive stages of human culture, conception and birth are ascribed to direct supernatural influence. Setting out from a study of the world-wide vogue of the belief in supernatural birth—contained in the author's earlier work, *The Legend of Perseus*—Mr. Hartland finds in this a survival of a

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culture stage in which all birth is believed to be supernatural. Survivals of this belief that birth is a phenomenon independent of the union of the sexes are found in the existence of numerous semi-magical devices to obtain children, still practised in many parts of Europe, and which were practised on a much more extensive scale during the medieval period; in the ignorance of man concerning physiological functions in general, the existence of Motherright which appears to have universally antedated Fatherright—the origin of which he traces to economic causes, and to the animistic nature of primitive beliefs in general.*

Such a conclusion is not without verification from the beliefs of existing savages. The Bahau of Central Borneo have no notion of the real duration of pregnancy, and date its commencement only from the time of its becoming visible. The Niol-Niol of Dampier Land in North-Western Australia hold birth to be independent of sexual intercourse. It is engendered by a pre-existing spirit through the agency of a medicine man. The North Queenslanders have a similar belief. They believe a child to be sent in answer to the husband's prayer as a punishment to his wife when he is vexed with her. On the Proserpine River the Blacks believe that a child is the gift of a supernatural being called Kunya. In South Queensland the Euahlayi believe that spirits congregate at certain spots and pounce on passing women, and so are born. On the Slave Coast of West Africa the Awunas say that a child derives the lower jaw from the mother; all the rest comes from the spirits. Among these people and others that might be named paternity exists in

* *Primitive Paternity*, 2 vols., 1909-10.

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name, but it implies something entirely different to what it afterwards connotes. Mr. Hartland gives numerous instances of this curious fact, and points out that "the attention of mankind would not be early or easily fastened upon the procreative process. It is lengthy, extending over months during which the observer's attention would be inevitably diverted by a variety of objects, most of them of far more pressing import. . . . The sexual passion would be gratified instinctively without any thought of the consequences, and in an overwhelming proportion of cases without the consequence of pregnancy at all. When that consequence occurred it would not be visible for weeks or months after the act which produced it. A hundred other events might have taken place in the interval which would be likely to be credited with the result by one wholly ignorant of natural laws."

There seems, therefore, fair grounds for Mr. Hartland's conclusion that:—

"for generations and æons the truth that a child is only born in consequence of an act of sexual union, that the birth of a child is the natural consequence of such an act performed in favouring circumstances, and that every child must be the result of such an act and of no other cause, was not realised by mankind, that down to the present day it is imperfectly realised by some peoples, and that there are still others among whom it is unknown."

This, however, is but one of the ways in which supernatural beliefs become associated with sexual phenomena. In truth, there is not a stage of any importance in the sexual life of men and women where the same association does not transpire. There is, for example,

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the important phenomenon of puberty—important from both a physiological and sociological point of view. Pubic ceremonies of some kind are found all over the world, and in all forms, from those current amongst savages up to the contemporary practice of confirmation in the Christian Church. At all stages the period of puberty is the time of initiation. With uncivilised peoples a very general rule is the separation of the sexes, with fasting. Mr. Stanley Hall in his elaborate work on *Adolescence* has dealt very exhaustively with these customs, with which we shall be more closely concerned when we come to deal with the subject of conversion. At present it is only necessary to point out that the governing idea is that at puberty the boy and the girl are brought into special relationship with the tribal spirits, the proof of which relationship lies in the sexual functions originated.

With boys, once puberty is attained, the sexual development is orderly and unobtrusive. In the case of girls certain recurring phenomena make the essential fact of sex much more impressive to the primitive mind, with far-reaching sociological consequences. "Ignorance of the nature of female periodicity," says A. E. Crawley, "leads man to consider it as the flow of blood from a wound, naturally, or more usually, supernaturally produced."* In Siam an evil spirit is believed to be the cause of the wound. Amongst the Chiriguanas the girl fasts, while women beat the floor with sticks in order to drive away "the snake that has wounded the girl." Similar beliefs are found very generally among people in a low stage of culture, and customs and beliefs still surviving among people more

* *The Mystic Rose*, p. 191.

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advanced point to the conclusion that convictions of the same kind were once fairly universal. It is this function, combined with the function of childbirth, that brings woman into close contact with the supernatural world, makes her an object of fear and wonder to primitive man, accounts for a number of the customs and beliefs associated with her, and finally helps to determine her social position. It is because her periodicity is taken as evidence of her communion with spiritual forces that special precautions have to be taken concerning her. She becomes spiritually contagious. Thus, the natives of New Britain, while engaged in making fish-traps, carefully avoid all women. They believe that if a woman were even to touch a fish-trap, it would catch nothing. Amongst the Maoris, if a man touched a menstruous woman, he would be taboo 'an inch thick.' An Australian black fellow, who discovered that his wife had lain on his blanket at her menstrual period, killed her, and died of terror himself within a fortnight. In Uganda the pots which a woman touches while the impurity of childbirth or menstruation is on her, are destroyed. With many North American Indians the use of weapons touched by women during these times would bring misfortune. A menstruating woman is with them the object they dread most. In Tahiti women are secluded. In some cases she is too dangerous to be even touched by others, and food is given her at the end of a stick. With the Pueblo Indians contact with a woman at these times exposes a man to attacks from an evil spirit, and he may pass on the infection to others.*

* See Frazer's *Taboo and the Perils of the Soul*, pp. 145-63, and Crawley's *Mystic Rose*.

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It is needless to multiply instances; the same general reason governs all, and this has been clearly expressed by Dr. Frazer:—

“The object of secluding women at menstruation is to neutralise the dangerous influence which is supposed to emanate from them at such times. The general effect of these rules is to keep the women suspended, so to say, between heaven and earth. Whether enveloped in her hammock and slung up to the roof, as in South America, or elevated above the ground in a dark and narrow cage, as in New Zealand, she may be considered to be out of the way of doing mischief, since being shut off both from the earth and from the sun, she can poison neither of these great sources of life by her deadly contagion. The precautions thus taken to isolate and insulate the girl are dictated by regard for her own safety as well as for the safety of others. . . . In short, the girl is viewed as charged with a powerful force which, if not kept within bounds, may prove the destruction both of the girl herself and all with whom she comes in contact. To repress this force within the limits necessary for the safety of all concerned is the object of the taboos in question.”

The savage is far too logical in his methods to allow such an idea to end here. If a woman is so highly charged with spiritual infection as to be dangerous at certain frequently recurring periods, she may be more or less dangerous between these periods. As Havelock Ellis says: “Instead of being regarded as a being who at periodic intervals becomes the victim of a spell of impurity, the conception of impurity becomes amalgamated with the conception of woman; she is, as Tertullian puts it, *Janua diaboli*; and this is the attit-

ude which still persisted in medieval days." * This is to be expected from what one knows of the workings of the primitive intelligence, but it is surprising to find Mr. Ellis continue by saying, on apparently good grounds, that "the belief in the periodically recurring impurity of women has by no means died out to-day. Among a very large section of the women of the middle and lower classes of England and other countries it is firmly believed that the touch of a menstruating woman will contaminate; only a few years since, in the course of a correspondence on this subject in the *British Medical Journal* (1878), even medical men were found to state from personal observation that they had no doubt whatever on this point. Thus, one doctor, who expressed surprise that any doubt could be thrown on the point, wrote, after quoting cases of spoiled hams, etc., presumed to be due to this cause, which had come under his own personal observation: 'For two thousand years the Italians have had this idea of menstruating women. We English hold to it, the Americans have it, also the Australians. Now, I should like to know the country where the evidence of any such observation is unknown.'" Evidently animism is a more persistent frame of mind than most people are inclined to believe.

It is certain, however, that this conception of woman's nature is dominant in the lower stages of culture. She is spiritually dangerous, and the principle of 'taboo' is made to cover a great many of her relations to man. In Tahiti a woman was not allowed to touch the weapons or fishing implements of men. Amongst the Todas women are not permitted to touch the cattle. If

* *Man and Woman*, p. 15.

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a wife touches the food of her husband, among the Hindus, the food is unfit to be eaten. An Eskimo wife dare not eat with her husband. In New Zealand wives were not allowed to eat with the males lest their taboo should kill them. Many tribes are careful to refrain from contact with women before going to fight. They believe that this would rob them and their weapons of strength. Other practices followed by savages before going to war forbid one assuming that this abstinence is due to any rational fear of dissipating their energies. Instead of conserving their strength they weaken themselves by the many privations they undergo before fighting, in order to ensure victory. Professor Frazer well says:—

“When we observe what pains these misguided savages took to unfit themselves for the business of war by abstaining from food, denying themselves rest, and lacerating their bodies, we shall probably not be disposed to attribute their practice of continence in war to a rational fear of dissipating their bodily energies by indulgence in the lusts of the flesh.”*

The conception of woman as one heavily charged with supernatural potentialities, and, therefore, a source of danger to the community, seems to lie at the basis of the widespread belief in the religious ‘uncleanness’ of women. The real significance of the word ‘unclean’ in religious ritual has been obscured by our modern use of it in a hygienic or ethical sense. In reality it is but an illustration of the principle of ‘taboo,’ and ‘taboo’ may extend to anything, good or bad, useful or useless, hygienically clean or unclean.

* *Taboo*, pp. 163-4.

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The primary meaning of 'taboo,' a Polynesian word, is something that is set aside or forbidden. The field covered by this word among savage and semi-savage races is, as Robertson Smith points out, "very wide, for there is no part of life in which the savage does not feel himself surrounded by mysterious agencies and recognise the need of walking warily." * Anything may thus become the object of a 'taboo.' Weapons, food, animals, places, special relations of one person to another at certain times and under certain conditions. It is enough that some special or particular degree of supernatural influence is associated with the object in question. The ancient Jews, for example, in prohibiting the eating of swine's flesh, were as far as possible removed in their thought from any connection with dietetics. They were simply following the well-known savage custom that the totem of a tribe is sacred. The pig was a totem with many of the Semitic tribes, and must not, therefore, be eaten.† It was not an unclean animal, in the modern sense, it was a 'holy' animal. With the Syrians the dove was so holy that even to touch it made a man 'unclean' for a whole day. No North American Indian will eat of the flesh of an animal that is a tribal totem, except under grave necessity, and even then with elaborate religious ceremonies. So, "a prohibition to eat the flesh of an animal of a certain species, that has its ground not in natural loathing but in religious horror and reverence, implies that something divine is ascribed to every animal of the

* *Religion of the Semites*, p. 142.

† A long list of animals that were sacred to various Semitic tribes has been compiled by Robertson Smith, *Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia*, pp. 194-201.

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species. And what seems to us to be a natural loathing often turns out, in the case of primitive peoples, to be based on a religious *taboo*, and to have its origin not in feelings of contemptuous disgust, but of reverential dread.”*

The real significance of ‘unclean’ in connection with religious ritual is ‘holy,’ something that partakes in a special manner of supernatural influence and therefore involves a certain danger in contact. As the writer just cited observes:—

“The acts that cause uncleanness are exactly the same which among savage nations place a man under taboo. . . . These acts are often involuntary, and often innocent, or even necessary to society. The savage, accordingly, imposes a taboo on a woman in childbed, or during her courses . . . simply because birth and everything connected with the propagation of the species on the one, and disease and death on the other hand, seem to involve the action of supernatural agencies of a dangerous kind. If he attempts to explain, he does so by supposing that on these occasions spirits of deadly power are present; at all events the persons involved seem to him to be sources of mysterious danger, which has all the characters of an infection, and may extend to other people unless due precautions are observed. . . . It has nothing to do with respect for the gods, but springs from mere terror of the supernatural influences associated with the woman’s physical condition.”†

* Robertson Smith, *Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia*, pp. 306-7. † *Religion of the Semites*, pp. 427-9. For a fuller discussion of the subject, see *Studies on the Psychology of Sex*, by Havelock Ellis, 1901.

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It is interesting to observe the manner in which this notion of the sacramentally 'unclean' nature of woman has affected her religious status, and by inference, her social status likewise. Among the Australians women are shut out from any part in the religious ceremonies. In the Sandwich Isles a woman's touch made a sacrifice unclean. If a Hindu woman touches a sacred image the divinity is destroyed. In Fiji women are excluded from the temples. The Papuans have the same custom. The Ainus of Japan allow a woman to prepare the sacrifice, but not to offer it. Women are excluded from many Mohammedan mosques. Among the Jews women have no part in the religious ceremonies. In the Christian Church women were excluded from the priestly office. A Council held at Auxerre at the end of the sixth century forbade women touching the Eucharist with their bare hands, and in various churches they were forbidden to approach the altar during Mass.* In the gospels Jesus forbids the woman to touch Him, after the resurrection, although Thomas was allowed to feel His wounds. "The Church of the Middle Ages did not hesitate to provide itself with eunuchs in order to supply cathedral choirs with the soprano tones inhering by nature in women alone."† The 'Churching' of women still in vogue has its origin in the same superstition that childbirth endows woman with a supernatural influence which must be removed in the interests of others. This ceremony was formerly called "The Order of the Purification of Women," and was read at the church door before the woman entered the

* Westermarck, *Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas*, p. 666. † Westermarck, p. 666.

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building. Its connection with the ideas indicated above is obvious. The Tahitian practice of excluding women from intercourse with others for two or three weeks after childbirth, with similar practices amongst uncivilised peoples all over the world, led with various modifications up to the current practice of churching. They show that in the opinion of primitive peoples "a woman at and after childbirth is pervaded by a certain dangerous influence which can infect anything and anybody she touches; so that in the interests of the community it becomes necessary to seclude her from society for a while, until the virulence of the infection has passed away, when, after submitting to certain rites of purification, she is again free to mingle with her fellows."* The gradual change of this ceremony, from a getting rid of a dangerous supernatural infection to returning thanks for a natural danger passed, is on all fours with what takes place in other directions in relation to religious ideas and practices.

The important part played by this conception of woman's nature may be traced in the fierce invective directed against her in the early Christian writings. Of course, by that time society had reached a stage when the primitive form of this belief had been outgrown, but ideas and attitudes of mind persist long after their originating conditions have disappeared. In this particular case we have the primitive idea expressed in a form suitable to altered circumstances, and the primitive feeling seeking new warranty in ethical or social considerations. But in the main the old notion is there. Woman is a creature threatening danger

* Frazer, *Taboo*, p. 150.

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to man's spiritual welfare.* In this connection we may note an observation of Westermarck's during his residence among the country people of Morocco. He was struck, he says, with the superstitious fear the men had of women. They are supposed to be much better versed in magic, and therefore one ran greater danger in offending them. The curses of women are, generally, much more feared than those of men. To this we have a parallel in Christianity which so often revived and strengthened the lower religious beliefs. During the witch mania an overwhelming proportion of those charged with and executed for sorcery were women. As a matter of fact, women were more prone than men to credit themselves with possessing supernatural power. But the theological explanation was that the devil had more power over women than men. This was, obviously, a heritage from the primitive belief above described.†

Another way in which religion becomes closely associated with sexualism is through the widely diffused phallic worship. The worship of the generative power in the form of stones, pillars, and carved representations of the male and female sexual organs plays an unquestionably important part in the history of religion, however hardly pressed it may have been by some enthusiastic theorists. "The farther back we go," says Mr. Hargrave Jennings, "in the history of every country, the deeper we explore into all religions,

* See the Rev. Principal Donaldson's *Woman: her Position and Influence in Ancient Greece and Rome, and among the Early Christians*, bk. iii. † For the general influence of these beliefs about woman in determining her social position, see note at the end of this chapter.

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ancient as well as modern, we stumble the more frequently upon the incessantly intensifying distinct traces of this supposedly indecent mystic worship.”*

On the lower Congo, says Sir H. H. Johnston:—

“Phallic worship in various forms prevails. It is not associated with any rites that might be called particularly obscene; and on the coast, where manners and morals are particularly corrupt, the phallus cult is no longer met with. In the forests between Manyanga and Stanley Pool it is not rare to come upon a little rustic temple, made of palm fronds and poles, within which male and female figures, nearly or quite life size, may be seen, with disproportionate genital organs, the figures being intended to represent the male and female principle. Around these carved and painted statues are many offerings, plates, knives, and cloth, and frequently also the phallic symbol may be seen dangling from the rafters. There is not the slightest suspicion of obscenity in all this, and anyone qualifying this worship of the generative power as obscene does so hastily and ignorantly. It is a solemn mystery to the Congo native, a force but dimly understood, and, like all mysterious natural manifestations, it is a power that must be propitiated and persuaded to his good.”†

The Egyptian religion was permeated with phallicism. In India phallic worship is widely scattered. In Benares, the sacred city, “everywhere, in the temples, in the little shrines in the street, the emblem of the Creator is phallic.” Symbols of the male and female sexual organs, the Lingam and the Yoni, have been ob-

* *The Worship of Priapus*, Pref. p. 9.

† *The River Congo*, p. 405.

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jects of worship in India from the earliest times. With the Sakti ceremonies, Hindu religion dispenses with symbols, and devotion is paid to a naked woman selected for the occasion.* This worship of a nude female is a very familiar phenomenon in the history of religion. Some of the early Christian sects were said to have practised it, and it is a feature of some Russian religious sects to-day. The subject will be dealt with more fully hereafter.

In ancient Rome, in the month of April, "when the fertilising powers of nature begin to operate, and its powers to be visibly developed, a festival in honour of Venus took place; in it the phallus was carried in a cart, and led in procession by the Roman ladies to the temple of Venus outside the Colline gate, and then presented by them to the sexual part of the goddess."† In the Greek Bacchic religious processions huge phalli were carried in a chariot drawn by bulls, and surrounded by women and girls singing songs of praise. Phallic worship was also associated with the cults of Dionysos and Eleusis. It is met with among the ancient Mexicans and Peruvians, and also among the North American tribes. The famous Black Stone of Mecca, to which religious honours are paid, is also said by authorities to be a phallic symbol. The stone set up by Jacob (Gen. xxviii. 18-9) falls into the same category. References to phallic worship may be found in many parts of the Bible, and authoritative writers like Mr. Hargrave Jennings and Major-General Forlong have not hesitated to assert that the god of the

* A description of the Sakti ceremony is given by Major-General Forlong, *Faiths of Man*, iii. pp. 228-9. † Westropp, *Primitive Symbolism*, p. 30.

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Jewish Ark was a sexual symbol. Seeing the extent to which phallic worship exists in other religions, it would be surprising did this not also exist in the early Jewish religion.

In Christendom we have evidence of the perpetuation of the phallic cult in the decree of Mans, 1247, and of the Synod of Tours, 1396, against its practice. Quite unsuccessfully, however. Indeed, the architecture of medieval churches bear in their ornamentation numerous evidences of the failure at suppression. Of course, much of this ornamentation may have been due to mere imitation, but often enough it was deliberate. "The scholar," says Bonwick, "who gazed to-day at the roof of Temple Church, London, had the illustration before him. A symbol there, repeatedly displayed, is the popular Hindu one to express sex worship."* The belief found expression in other ways than ornamentation. When Sir William Hamilton visited Naples in 1781 he found in Isernia a Christian custom in vogue which he described in a letter to Sir William Banks, and which admitted of no doubt as to its Priapic character. Every September was celebrated a festival in the Church of SS. Cosmus and Damianus. During the progress of the festival vendors paraded the streets offering small waxen phalli, which were bought by the devout and placed in the church, much as candles are still purchased and given. At the same time, prayers are offered to St. Como by those who desire children. In Midlothian, in 1268, the clergy instructed their flock to sprinkle water with a dog's phallus in order to avert a murrain. The same practice existed in Inverkeithing, and in Easter week

* *Egyptian Belief and Modern Thought*, p. 256.

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priest and people danced round a wooden phallus.* Mr. Westropp, quoting an eighteenth-century writer,† says: "When the Huguenots took Embrun, they found among the relics of the principal church a Priapus, of three pieces in the ancient fashion, the top of which was worn away from being constantly washed with wine." The temple of St. Eutropius, destroyed by the Huguenots, is said to have contained a similar figure. From Mr. Sidney Hartland's collection of practices for obtaining children I take the following:—

"At Bourg-Dieu, in the diocese of Bourges, a similar saint" (similar to the priapean figure previously described) "was called Guerlichon or Greluchon. There after nine days' devotions women stretched themselves on the horizontal figure of the saint, and then scraped the phallus for mixture in water as a drink. Other saints were worshipped elsewhere in France with equivalent rites. Down to the Revolution there stood at Brest a chapel of Saint Guignolet containing a priapean statue of the holy man. Women who were, or feared to be, sterile used to go and scrape a little of the prominent member, which they put into a glass of water from the well and drank. The same practice was followed at the Chapel of Saint Pierre-à-Croquettes in Brabant until 1837, when the archæologist Schayes called attention to it, and thereupon the ecclesiastical authorities removed the cause of scandal. Women have, however, still continued to make votive offerings of pins down almost, if not quite, to the present day. At Antwerp stood at the gateway to the Church of Saint Walburga in the Rue des Pêcheurs a

* Forlong, *Faiths of Man*, iii. p. 66. † *Primitive Symbolism*, p. 36.

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statue, the sexual organ of which had been entirely scraped away by women for the same purpose.”*

From what has been said, it will not be difficult to understand the existence of the custom of religious prostitution. Considering the sexual impulse as specially connected with a supernatural force, man pays it religious honour, and comes to identify its manifestations as an expression of the supernatural and also as an act of worship towards it. In India the practice existed, when most temples had their ‘bayadères.’ In ancient Chaldea every woman was compelled to prostitute herself once in her life in the temple of the goddess Mylitta—the Chaldean Venus. This custom existed elsewhere, and by it the woman was compelled to remain within the temple enclosures until some man chose her, from whom she received a piece of money. The money, of course, belonged to the temple.† In Greece, Carthage, Syria, etc., we find the same custom. Among the Jews, so orthodox a commentary as Smith’s *Bible Dictionary* admits that the ‘Kadechim’ attached to the temple were prostitutes. The frequent references to the service of the ‘groves’ surrounding the temple irresistibly suggest their likeness to the groves around the temples of Mylitta, and their use for the same purpose.

* *Primitive Paternity*, i. pp. 63-4.

† Major-General Forlong agrees with many other authorities in tracing our custom of kissing under the mistletoe to this ancient practice. “The mistletoe,” he says, “marks in one sense Venus’s temple, for any girl may be kissed if caught under its sprays—a practice, though modified, which recalls to us that horrid one mentioned by Herodotus, where all women were for once at least the property of the man who sought them in Mylitta’s temple.”—*Rivers of Life*, i. p. 91.

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There is no necessity to prolong the subject,* nor is it necessary to my purpose to discuss the origin of phallic worship. It is enough to have shown the manner in which, from the very earliest times, religious belief and sexual phenomena have been connected in the closest possible manner. In this respect it is only on all fours with the relation of religion to phenomena in general, but here the attitude of mind is accentuated and prolonged by the startling facts of sexual development. The connection becomes consequently so close it is not surprising to find that the association has persisted down to the present time, and moods that have their origin in the sexual life are frequently attributed to religious influences. The primitive intelligence, frankly seeing in the phenomena of sex a manifestation of the supernatural, sees here a continuous endorsement of religious life. The more sophisticated mind raised above this point of view continues, with modifications, the primitive practices, and in ignorance of the physiological causes of its own states is only too ready to interpret ebullitions of sex feeling as evidence of the divine.

NOTE TO PAGE 104.

It is strange that so little attention has been paid to these primitive beliefs as important factors in determining the social position of women. It is too generally assumed that because woman is physically weaker than man it is her weakness that

*Those who desire further and more detailed information may consult Forlong's great work, *The Rivers of Life*, Payne Knight's *Worship of Priapus*, Westropp and Wake's *Phallicism in Ancient Religion*, Brown's *Dionysiac Myth*, Westropp's *Primitive Symbolism*, R. A. Campbell's *Phallic Worship*, Hargrave Jennings's *Worship of Priapus*, etc.

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has determined her subordination. Both the advocates and the opponents of 'Woman's Rights' appear to have reached a common agreement on this point. During some of the debates in the House of Commons, for example, it was openly stated by prominent politicians, as an axiom of political philosophy, that all laws rest upon a basis of force, and if men say they will not obey woman-made laws there is no power that can compel them to do so. On the other side, women, while appealing to what they properly call higher considerations, themselves dwell upon the physical weakness of woman as the reason for her subordination in the past. Both parties are helped in their arguments by the facile division of social history into two periods, an earlier one in which club law plays the chief part, and a later period when mental and moral qualities assume a dominating position. The consequence is, runs the argument, that each sex has to battle with the dead weight of tradition and custom. The woman is oppressed by the tradition of subordination to the male; the man is inspired by that of dominance over the female.

It is when we ask for evidence of this that we see how flimsy the case is. Social phenomena in either civilised or uncivilised society furnishes no proof that institutions and customs rest upon a basis of physical force. The rulership of a tribe often rests with the old men of a tribe; with some tribes the women are consulted, and invariably custom and tradition plays a powerful part. The notion that the primitive chief is the primitive strong man of the tribe is as baseless as the belief in an original social contract, and owes its existence to the same kind of fanciful speculation. As Frazer says, "it is one of those facile theories which the arm-chair philosopher concocts with his feet on the fender without taking the trouble to consult the facts." The primitive chief may be a strong man. The tribal council or chief may use force or rely upon physical force to enforce certain decrees, just as the modern king or parliament may call on the help of policeman or soldier, but this no more proves that their rule is based upon force than Mr. Asquith's premiership proves his physical superiority to the rest of the Cabinet.

All political life, and to a smaller degree all social life, involves the direction of force, but neither appeal

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to force for an ultimate justification, nor do social institutions originate in an act of force. It is one of the commonplaces of historical study that when an institution is actually forced upon a people it very quickly becomes inoperative. Other things equal, one group of people may overcome another group because of physical superiority, but the conquest over, the question as to which group shall really rule, or which set of institutions shall survive, is settled on quite different grounds. The history of almost any country will give examples of the absorption of the conqueror by the conquered, and the bringing of imported institutions into line with native life and feeling. Fundamentally the relations binding people together into a society are not physical, but psychological. Society rests upon the foundations of a common mental life—upon sympathy, beliefs, the desire for companionship, etc. As Professor J. M. Baldwin puts it, the fundamental social facts are not *things*, but *thoughts*.* As a member of a social group man is born into an environment that is essentially psychological, and his attitude not only towards his fellow human beings, but towards nature in general, is determined by the psychological contents of the society to which he belongs.

Now if the relation of one man to another is not determined by physical superiority and inferiority, if the relations of classes within a society are not determined in this manner, why should it be assumed that as a sex woman's position is fixed by this means? It seems more reasonable to assume that some other principle

* A good discussion of the topic will be found in this author's *Social and Ethical Interpretations in Mental Development*.

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than that of club law, a principle set in operation very early in the history of civilisation, fixed the main lines upon which the relations of the sexes were to develop, however much other forces helped its operation. I believe this desired factor is to be found in the superstitious notions savages develop concerning the nature and function of woman, and which society only very slowly outgrows. For, as Frazer says: "The continuity of human development has been such that most, if not all, of the great institutions which still form the framework of a civilised society have their roots in savagery, and have been handed down to us in these later days through countless generations, assuming new outward forms in the process of transmission, but remaining in their inmost core substantially unchanged."

In considering the play of primitive ideas as determining the lines of human evolution several things must be kept clearly in mind. One is that the course of biological development has made woman, as a sex, dependent upon man, as a sex, for protection and support. This is true quite apart from economic considerations or from those arising from the relative physical strength of the sexes. The prime function of woman, biologically, is that of motherhood. She is, so to speak, mother in a much more important and more pervasive sense than man is father. In the case of woman, her functions are of necessity subordinated to this one. With man this is not the case. It is with the woman that the nutrition of the child rests before birth, and a large portion of her strength is expended in the discharge of this function. The same is true for some period immediately after birth. Again to use a

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biological illustration, during the period of child-bearing and child-rearing the relation of the man to the woman may be likened to that which exists between the germ cells and the somatic cells. As the latter is the medium of protection and the conveyer of nutrition in relation to the former, so it falls to the male to protect and in some degree to provide for the woman as child-bearer. It would not, of course, be impossible for woman to provide for herself, but it would detract so considerably from social efficiency that any group in which it was done would soon disappear. It is the nature and supreme function of woman that makes her dependent upon man. And even though the dreams of some were realised, and society as a whole cared for woman in the discharge of this function, the issue would not be changed. It would mean that instead of a woman being dependent upon one man she would be dependent upon all men. Nor is the substantial facts of the situation changed by anyone pointing out that all women do not and cannot under ordinary circumstances become wives and mothers. Human nature will always develop on the lines of the normal functions of men and women, and there can be no question in this case as to what these are.

I have used the word 'dependence,' but this does not, of necessity, involve either subordination or subjection. It may provide the condition of either or of both, but the dependence of the woman on the man is, as I have said, biologically inescapable. Her subjection is quite another question. Dependence may be mutual. One class of society may be dependent upon another class, but the two may move on a perfect level of equality. And with uncivilised peoples

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the evidence goes to prove that, while the spheres of the sexes are more clearly differentiated than with us, this difference is seldom if ever expressed in terms of superior and inferior. Savages would say, as civilised people still say, there are many things that it is wrong for a woman to do, and they would add there are also things that a man must not do. They would be as shocked at woman doing certain things as some people among ourselves were when women first began to speak at public meetings. Their disapproval would not rest on the ground that these things were 'unwomanly,' nor upon any question of weakness or strength, of inferiority or superiority, but for another and, to the savage, very urgent reason.

One can very easily exaggerate the extent of the subjection of women among uncivilised people. As a matter of fact, it usually is exaggerated. Not all travellers are capable of accurate observation, and very many are led astray by what are really superficial aspects of savage life. They are so impressed by the contemplation of a state of affairs different from our own that they mistake mere lines of demarcation for a moral valuation. Many travellers, for example, observing that women are strictly forbidden to do this or that, conclude that the woman has no rights as against the man. As in nearly all these cases the man is as strictly forbidden to encroach on the woman's sphere, one might as reasonably reverse the statement and dwell upon male subjection. As a matter of fact, both furnish examples of the all-powerful principle of 'taboo.' Some things are taboo to the man, others to the woman. And the key to the problem lies in the nature and origin of these taboos. But taboo does not

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extinguish rights; it confirms them. Under its operation, far from its being the truth that women are without status or rights or power, her position and rights are clearly marked, generally recognised, and quickly enforced. Some examples of this may be noted.

A Kaffir woman when ill-treated possesses the right of asylum with her parents, and remains there until the husband makes atonement. The same thing holds of the West African Fulahs. In the Marquesas a woman is prohibited the use of canoes; on the other hand, men are prohibited frequenting certain places belonging to the women. In Nicaragua no man may enter the woman's market-place under penalty of a beating. With most of the North-American tribes a woman has supreme power inside the lodge. The husband possesses no power of interference. In most cases the husband cannot give away anything belonging to the lodge without first getting the consent of his wife. With the Nootkas, women are consulted on all matters of business. Livingstone relates his surprise on finding that a native would not accompany him on a journey because he could not get his wife's consent. He found this to be one of the customs of the tribe to which the man belonged. Among the Kandhs of India nothing public is done without consulting the women. In the Pellew Islands the head of the family can do nothing of importance without consulting the oldest female relative. Among the Hottentots women have supreme rule in the house. If a man oversteps the line, his female relatives inflict a fine, which is paid to the wife. With the Bechuanas the mother of the chief is present at all councils, and he can hardly decide anything without her consent. These are only a

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few of the cases that might be cited, but they are sufficient to show that the common view of women among savages as without recognised status, or power, needs very serious qualification. Of course, ill-treatment of women does occur with uncivilised as with civilised people, and she may suffer from the expression of brutal passion or superior strength, but an examination of the facts justifies Starcke's opinion that "we are not justified in assuming that the savage feels a contempt for women in virtue of her sex."

In primitive life, in short, the dominant idea is not that of superiority in relation to woman, but that of difference. She is different from man, and this difference involves consequences of the gravest character, and against which due precautions must be taken. Superiority and inferiority are much later conceptions; they belong to a comparatively civilised period, and their development offers an admirable example of the way in which customs based on sheer superstitions become transformed into a social prejudice, with the consequent creation of numerous excuses for their perpetuation. What that initial prejudice is—a prejudice so powerful that it largely determines the future status of woman—has already been pointed out. Her place in society is marked out in uncivilised times by the powerful superstitions connected with sexual functions. Not that she is weaker—although that is, of course, plain—nor that she is inferior, a thought which scarcely exists with uncivilised peoples, but that she is dangerous, particularly so during her functional crises and in childbirth. And being dangerous, because charged with a supernatural influence inimical to others, she is excluded from

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certain occupations, and contact with her has to be carefully regulated. I agree with Mr. Andrew Láng that in the regulations concerning women amongst uncivilised people we have another illustration of the far-reaching principle of taboo (*Social Origins and Primal Law*, p. 239) she suffers because of her sex, and because of the superstitious dread to which her sex nature gives birth.

Of course, at a later stage other considerations begin to operate. Where, for example, as amongst the Kaffirs, women are not permitted to touch cattle because of this assumed spiritual infection, and where a man's wealth is measured by the cattle he possesses, it is easy to see that this would constitute a force preventing the political and social equality of the sexes. The pursuits from which women were primarily excluded for purely religious reasons would in course of time come to be looked upon as man's inalienable possessions. And here her physical weakness would play its part; for she could not take, as man could withhold, by force. Even when the primitive point of view is discarded, the social prejudices engendered by it long remains. And social prejudices, as we all know, are the hardest of all things to destroy.

A final consideration needs to be stated. This is that the customs determined by the views of woman (above outlined) fall into line, in a rough-and-ready fashion, with the biological tendency to consecrate the female to the function of motherhood and conserve her energies to that end, leaving other kinds of work to the male. It would be an obvious advantage to a tribe in which woman, relieved from the necessity of physical struggle for food and defence, was

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able to attend to children and the more peaceful side of family life. Children would not only benefit thereby, but the home with all its civilising, humanising influences would develop more rapidly. Assuming variations in tribal life in this direction, there is no question as to which tribe that would stand the better chance of survival. The development of life has proceeded here as elsewhere by differentiation and specialisation; and while the tasks demanding the more sustained physical exertions were left to man, and to the performance of which his sexual nature offered no impediment, woman became more and more specialised for maternity and domestic occupations. This, I hasten to add, is not at all intended as a plea for denying to women the right to participate in the wider social life of the species. I am trying to explain a social phase, and neither justifying nor condemning its perpetuation.

IN THE PRECEDING CHAPTER WE HAVE been concerned with the various ways in which the phenomena attendant on the sexual life of man and woman become associated with religious beliefs. As a force that arises in the life of each individual, and intrudes, as it were, into consciousness, the phenomena of sex fill primitive man with an amazement that is not unmixed with terror. In strict accord with primitive psychology sexual phenomena are conceived as more or less connected with the supernatural world, and becoming thus entwined with religious convictions are made the nucleus of a number of superstitious ceremonies. The connection is close and obvious so long as we restrict our survey to uncivilised humanity. The only room for doubt or discussion is the exact meaning of certain ceremonies, or the order of certain phases of development. It is when we take man in a more advanced stage that obscurity gathers and difficulties arise. The sexual life is no longer lived, as it were, openly. Symbolism and mysticism develop; a more complex social life provides disguised outlets for primitive and indestructible feelings. Sexualism, instead of being something to be glorified, and, so to speak, annotated by religious ceremonies, becomes something to be hidden or decried. Ignored it may be. Decried it may be; but it will not be denied. That is a practical impossibility in the case of so powerful and so pervasive a fact as sex. We may disguise its expression, but only too often the disguise is the equivalent of undesirable and unhealthy manifestations.

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The modern history of religion offers a melancholy illustration of the truth of the last sentence, and it is quite clearly exhibited in the history of Christianity itself. From the beginning it strove to suppress the power of sexual feeling. It was an enemy against whom one had to be always on guard, one that had to be crushed, or at least kept in subjection in the interests of spiritual development. And yet the very intensity of the efforts at suppression defeated the object aimed at. With some of the leaders of early Christianity sex became an obsession. Long dwelling upon its power made them unduly and unhealthily conscious of its presence. Instead of sex taking its place as one of the facts of life, which like most other facts might be good or bad as circumstances determined, it was so much dwelt upon as to often dwarf everything else. Asceticism is, after all, mainly a reversed sensualism, or at least confesses the existence of a sensualism that must not be allowed expression lest its manifestation becomes overpowering. Mortification confesses the supremacy of sense as surely as gratification. Moreover, mortification of sense as preached by the great ascetics does not prevent that most dangerous of all forms of gratification, the sensualism of the imagination. That remains, and is apt to gain in strength since the fundamentally healthful energies are denied legitimate and natural modes of expression. Thus it is that we find developing social life not always providing a healthy outlet for the sexual life, and thus it is that the intense striving of religious leaders against the power of the sexual impulse has often forced it into strange and harmful forms of expression. So we find throughout the

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history of religion, not only that a deal of what has passed for supernatural illumination to have undoubtedly had its origin in perverted sexual feeling, but the constant emergence of curious religio-erotic sects whose strange mingling of eroticism and religion has scandalised many, and offered a lesson to all had they but possessed the wit to discern it.

Although there is an understandable disinclination, amounting with some to positive revulsion, to recognise the sexual origin of much that passes for religious fervour, the fact is well known to competent medical observers, as the following citations will show. More than a generation since a well-known medical authority said:—

“I know of no fact in pathology more striking and more terrifying than the way in which the phenomena of the ecstatic—which have often been seized upon by sentimental theorists as proofs of spiritual exaltation—may be plainly seen to bridge the gulf between the innocent foolery of ordinary hypnotic patients and the degraded and repulsive phenomena of nymphomania and satyriasis.”*

Dr. C. Norman also observes:—

“Ecstasy, as we see in cases of acute mental disease, is probably always connected with sexual excitement, if not with sexual depravity. The same association is seen in less extreme cases, and one of the commonest features in the conversation of acutely maniacal women is the intermingling of erotic and religious ideas.”†

* Article in *The Lancet*, Jan. 11, 1873.

† Article in Tuke's *Dictionary of Psychological Medicine*.

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This opinion is fully endorsed by Sir Francis Galton:—

“It has been noticed that among the morbid organic conditions which accompany the show of excessive piety and religious rapture in the insane, none are so frequent as disorders of the sexual organisation. Conversely, the frenzies of religious revivals have not infrequently ended in gross profligacy. The encouragement of celibacy by the fervent leaders of most creeds, utilises in an unconscious way the morbid connection between an over-restraint of the sexual desires and impulses towards extreme devotion.”*

Dr. Auguste Forel, the eminent German specialist, points out that—

“When we study the religious sentiment profoundly, especially in the Christian religion, and Catholicism in particular, we find at each step its astonishing connection with eroticism. We find it in the exalted adoration of holy women, such as Mary Magdalene, Marie de Bethany, for Jesus, in the holy legends, in the worship of the Virgin Mary in the Middle Ages, and especially in art. The ecstatic Madonnas in our art galleries cast their fervent regards on Jesus or on the heavens. The expression in Murillo’s ‘Immaculate Conception’ may be interpreted by the highest voluptuous exaltation of love as well as by holy transfiguration. The ‘saints’ of Correggio regard the Virgin with an amorous ardour which may be celestial, but appears in reality extremely terrestrial and human.”†

Another German authority remarks:—

“I venture to express my conviction that we

* *Inquiries into Human Faculty*, pp. 66-7.

† *The Sexual Problem*, pp. 354-5.

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should rarely err if, in a case of religious melancholy, we assumed the sexual apparatus to be implicated."*

Dr. Bevan Lewis points out how frequently religious exaltation occurs with women at puberty, and religious melancholia at the period of sexual decline. And Dr. Charles Mercier puts the interchangeability of sexual and religious feelings in the following passage:—

"Religious observances provide an alternative, into which the amatory instinct can be easily and naturally diverted. The emotions and instinctive desires, which finds expression in courtship, is a vast body of vague feeling, which is at first undirected. . . . It is a voluminous state of exaltation that demands enthusiastic action. This is the state antecedent to falling in love, and if an object presents himself or herself, the torrent of emotion is directed into amatory passion. But if no object appears, or if the selected object is denied, then religious observances yield a very passable substitute for the expression of the emotion. Religious observances provide the sensuous atmosphere, the call for self-renunciation, the means of expressing powerful and voluminous feeling, that the potential or disappointed lover needs. The madrigal is transformed into the hymn; the adornment of the person that should have gone to allure the beloved now takes the shape of ecclesiastical vestments; the reverence that should have been paid to the loved one is transformed to a higher object; the enthusiasm that would have expanded in courtship is expressed in worship; the gifts that would have been made, the services that

* Cited by Havelock Ellis, *Psychology of Sex*, pp. 233-4.

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would have been rendered to the loved one, are transferred to the Church.”*

Dr. Kraft-Ebing, after dwelling upon the substantial identity of sexual love and religious emotion, summarises his conclusions by saying:—

“Religious and sexual hyperæsthesia at the acme of development show the same volume of intensity and the same quality of excitement, and may, therefore, under given circumstances interchange. Both will in certain pathologic states degenerate into cruelty.”†

Even so orthodox a writer as the Rev. S. Baring-Gould points out that—

“The existence of that evil, which, knowing the constitution of man, we should expect to find prevalent in mysticism, the experience of all ages has shown following, dogging its steps inevitably. So slight is the film that separates religion from sensual passion, that uncontrolled spiritual fervour roars readily into a blaze of licentiousness.”‡

No useful purpose would be served by lengthening this list of citations. Enough has been said to show that the point of view expressed is one endorsed by many sober, competent, and responsible observers. There exists among them a general, and one may add a growing, recognition of the important truth that the connection between religious and sexual feeling is of the closest character, and that one is very often mistaken for the other. Asceticism, usually taken as evidence to the reverse, is on the contrary, confirmative. The ascetic often presents us with a flagrant case of eroto-mania, expressing itself in terms of religion.

* *Conduct and its Disorders*, pp. 368–9. † *Psychopathia Sexualis*, pp. 9–11. ‡ *Lost and Hostile Gospels*, Preface.

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It is highly significant that the biographies of Christian saints should furnish so many cases of men and women of strong sensual passions, and whose ascetic devotion was only the reaction from almost unbridled sensualism. No wonder that in the temptations experienced by the monks the figures of nude women so often appeared before their heated imaginations. Sexual feeling suppressed in one direction broke out in another. Feelings, in themselves perfectly normal, became, as a consequence of repression and misdirection, pathologic. And one consequence of this was that many of the early Christian writers brought to the consideration of the subject of sex a concentration of mind that resulted in disquisitions of such a nature that it is impossible to do more than refer to them. The sexual relation instead of being refined was coarsened. Marriage was viewed in its lowest form, more as a concession to the weakness of the flesh than as a desirable state for all men and women. Nor can it be said, after many centuries, that these ideas are quite eradicated from present-day life.

A field of investigation that yields much illuminating information is the biographies of the saints and of other religious characters. In many of these cases the acceptance of sexual feeling for religious illumination is very clear. Thus of St. Gertrude, a Benedictine nun of the thirteenth century, we read:—

“One day at chapel she heard supernaturally sung the words, ‘*Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus.*’ The Son of God, leaning towards her like a sweet lover, and giving to her soul the softest kiss, said to her at the second *Sanctus*, ‘In the *Sanctus* addressed to My person, receive with this all the sanctity of My divinity and of

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My humanity.' . . . And the following Sunday, while she was thanking God for this favour, behold the Son of God, more beauteous than thousands of angels, takes her to His arms as if He were proud of her, and presents her to God the Father, and in that perfection of sanctity with which He had endowed her."*

Of Juliana of Norwich, who was granted a revelation in 1373, we are told that she had for long 'ardently desired' a bodily sight of the Lord upon the cross; and that finally Jesus appeared to her and said, "I love thee and thou lovest Me, and our love shall never be disparted in two."† So, again, in the case of Sister Jeanne des Anges, Superior of the Convent of Ursulines of Loudon, and the principal character in the famous Grandier witchcraft case, we have a detailed account, in her own words, of the lascivious dreams, unclean suggestions, etc.—all attributed to Satan—and alternating with impressions of bodily union with Jesus.‡ Marie de L'Incarnation addresses Jesus as follows:—

"Oh, my love, when shall I embrace you? Have you no pity on the torments that I suffer? Alas! alas! My love! My beauty! My life! Instead of healing my pain, you take pleasure in it. Come, let me embrace you, and die in your sacred arms."§

Veronica Juliani, beatified by Pope Pius II., took a real lamb to bed with her, kissed it, and suckled it at her breasts. St. Catherine of Genoa threw herself on the ground to cool herself, crying out, "Love, love, I

* Cited by James, *Varieties*, pp. 345-6. † Inge, *Christian Mysticism*, pp. 201-9. ‡ See Ellis, *Psychology of Sex*, pp. 240-2. § Parkman's *Jesuits of America*, p. 175.

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can bear it no longer." She also confessed to a peculiar longing towards her confessor.*

The blessed Mary Alacocque, foundress of the Sacred Heart, was subject from early life to a number of complaints—rheumatism, palsy, pains in the side, ulceration of the legs—and experienced visions early in her career. As a child she had so vivid a sense of modesty that the mere sight of a man offended her. At seventeen she took to wearing a knotted cord drawn so tightly that she could neither eat nor breathe without pain. She compressed her arms so tightly with iron chains that she could not remove them without anguish. "I made," she says, "a bed of potsherds, on which I slept with extreme pleasure." She fasted and tortured herself in a variety of ways, and the more her physical disorders increased the more numerous became her visions. Before she was eighteen years of age, in 1671, she entered a nunnery. From the time she donned the habit of a novice she was 'blessed' with visions. "Our Lord showed me that that day was the day of our spiritual wedding; He forthwith gave me to understand that He wished to make me taste all the sweetness of the caresses of His love. In reality, those divine caresses were from that moment so excessive, that they often put me out of myself." "Once," says one of her biographers, "having retired into her chamber, she threw off the clothes with which she had bedecked herself during the day, when the Son of God showed Himself to her in the state in which He was after His cruel flagellation—that is, with His body all wounded, torn, gory—and He said to her that it was her vanities that had brought Him into that condi-

* Kraft-Ebing, *Psychopathia-Sexualis*, p. 8.

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tion." In one of these visions Jesus took the head of Mary, pressed it to His bosom, spoke to her in passionate words, opened her side and took out her heart, plunged it into His own, and then replaced it. He then explained His design of founding the Order of the Sacred Heart. Ever after, Mary was conscious of a pain in her side and a burning sensation in her chest—two plain symptoms of hysteria.*

Santa Teresa, who died at the early age of thirty-three, and in whose family more than one case of well-developed neurasthenia can be traced, was favoured with 'messages' at a very early age. She believed some of these were temptations from the devil suggesting an 'honourable alliance.' A nervous breakdown followed directly after entrance into a convent. She was then twenty years of age, was subject to fainting fits and longed for illness as a sign of divine favour. She was subject to convulsions, and soon after taking the veil fell into a cataleptic trance, which lasted three days. She was thought to be dead, but at the end of the time sat up and told those around that she had visited both heaven and hell, and seen the joys of the blessed and the torments of the damned. It is at least suggestive that, in spite of the longing for personal communion with Jesus, her first experience of the ecstasy of divine love was experienced after discovering a 'very realistic' picture of a martyred saint—St. Joseph. The significance of the intense contemplation of a tortured body—possibly made by one whose sexual nature was

* See L. Asseline's *Mary Alacoque and the Worship of the Sacred Heart of Jesus*.

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undergoing a process of suppression—is unmistakable.*

On these and similar cases Professor William James makes the following comment:—

“To the medical mind these ecstasies signify nothing but suggested hypnoid states, on an intellectual basis of superstition, and a corporeal one of degeneration and hysteria. Undoubtedly these pathological conditions have existed in many and possibly in all the cases, but that fact tells us nothing about the value for knowledge of the consciousness which they induce. To pass a spiritual judgment upon these states, we must not content ourselves with superficial medical talk, but enquire into their fruits for life.” †

Now the question is really not what these ecstasies suggest to the ‘medical mind,’ as though that were a type of mind quite unfitted to pass judgment. It is a question of what the facts suggest to any mind judging the behaviour of a person under the influence of strong religious emotion exactly as it would judge anyone under any other strong emotional pressure. And if it be possible to explain these states in terms of known physiological and mental action, what warranty have we for rejecting this and preferring in its stead an explanation that is both unprovable and unnecessary? And one would be excused for thinking that cases which certainly involve some sort of abnormal nervous action are precisely those in which the medical mind should be called on to express an opinion. What is meant by passing ‘a spiritual judg-

* See *St. Teresa of Spain*, by H. H. Colvill, and *Saint Teresa*, by H. Joli.

† *Varieties*, p. 413.

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ment' upon these states is not exactly clear, unless it means judging them in terms of the historic supernatural interpretation. But that is precisely the interpretation which is challenged by the 'medical mind.'

I do not see how any enquiry "into their fruits for life" can affect a rational estimate of the nature of these mystical states. Mysticism adds nothing to the native disposition of a person. It merely gives their energies a new turn, a new direction. What they were before the experience they remain, substantially, afterwards. That is why we find religious mystics of every variety. Some energetically practical; others dreamily unpractical. Professor James admits this in saying that "the other-worldliness encouraged by the mystical consciousness makes this over-abstraction from practical life peculiarly liable to befall mystics in whom the character is naturally passive and the intellect feeble; but in natively strong minds and characters we find quite opposite results."* And when it is further admitted that "the mystical feeling of enlargement, union, and emancipation has no specific intellectual content whatever of its own," but "is capable of forming matrimonial alliances with material furnished by the most diverse philosophies and theologies, provided only they can find a place in their framework for its peculiar emotional mood," mysticism seems reduced to an emotional development on all fours with emotional development in other directions. It is not peculiar to religious minds because "it has no specific intellectual content." It is amorphous, so to speak. And it may form diverse 'matrimonial alliances' precisely because it does not point to a

* *Varieties*, p. 413.

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hidden world of reality, but is merely indicative of tense emotional moods. In the face of nature the non-theistic Richard Jeffries experiences all the feelings of mental enlargement and emotional transports that Mary Alacoque or Santa Teresa experienced in their visions of the 'Risen Christ.'

It is idle, then, to sneer at 'medical materialism,' and stigmatise it as superficial. Many people are constitutionally afraid of words, and there is nothing that arouses prejudices so quickly as a name. But it is really not a question of materialism, medical or non-medical. It is a mere matter of applying knowledge and common sense to the cases before us. Are we to take the subject's explanation of his or her mental states as authoritative, so far as their nature is concerned; or are we to treat them as symptoms demanding the skilled analysis of the specialist? If the former, how can we differentiate between the mystic and the admittedly hysterical patient? If the latter, what ground is there for placing the mystic in a category of his own? Rational and scientific analysis will certainly take far more notice of the nature of the feelings excited than of the object towards which they are directed. Here is the case of a young lady, given by Dr. Moreau, in his *Morbid Psychology*:—

"During my long hours of sleeplessness in the night my beloved Saviour began to make Himself manifest to me. Pondering over the meditations of St. François de Sales on the *Song of Songs*, I seemed to feel all my faculties suspended, and crossing my arms upon my chest, I awaited in a sort of dread what might be revealed to me. . . . I saw the Redeemer veritably in the flesh. . . . He extended Himself beside me, pressed me

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so closely that I could feel His crown of thorns, and the nails in His feet and hands, while He pressed His lips over mine, giving me the most ravishing kiss of a divine Spouse, and sending a delicious thrill through my entire body.”*

Getrid of the narcotising effect of theological associations by eliminating the name of Jesus and other religious terms from this case, and from the others already cited, and no one would have the least doubt as to their real nature. Given a condition of physical health in these cases, with conditions that favoured social activity, healthy intercourse with the opposite sex, culminating in marriage and parenthood, can there be any doubt that this species of religious ecstasy would have been non-existent? If, as Tylor says, the refectory door would many a time have closed the gates of heaven, happy family life would in a vast number of cases have prevented those religio-erotic trances which have played so powerful a part in the history of supernaturalism. Most people will agree with Dr. Maudsley:—

“The ecstatic trances of such saintly women as Catherine Sienne and St. Theresa, in which they believed themselves to be visited by their Saviour and to be received as veritable spouses into His bosom, were, though they knew it not, little better than vicarious sexual orgasm; a condition of things which the intense contemplation of the naked male figure, carved or sculptured in all its proportions on a cross, is more fitted to produce in young women of susceptible nervous temperament than people are apt to consider. Every experienced physician must have met with in-

* Cited by J. F. Nisbet, *The Insanity of Genius*, p. 248.

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stances of single and childless women who have devoted themselves with extraordinary zeal to habitual religious exercises, and who, having gone insane as a culmination of their emotional fervour, have straight-way exhibited the saddest mixture of religious and erotic symptoms—a boiling over of lust in voice, face, gestures, under the pitiful degradation of disease. . . . The fanatical religious sects, such as the Shakers and the like, which spring up from time to time in communities and disgust them by the offensive way in which they mingle love and religion, are inspired in great measure by sexual feeling; on the one hand, there is probably the cunning of a hypocritical knave, or the self-deception of a half-insane one, using the weaknesses of weak women to minister to his vanity or his lust under a religious guise; on the other hand, there is an exaggerated self-feeling, often rooted in the sexual passion, which is unwittingly fostered under the cloak of religious emotion, and which is apt to conduct to madness or to sin. In such cases the holy kiss owes its warmth to the sexual impulse, which inspires it, consciously or unconsciously, and the mystical religious union of the sexes is fitted to issue in a less spiritual union.”*

Many manuals of devotion will be found to furnish the same kind of evidence as biographical narratives concerning the intimate relations that exists between sexuality and religious feeling. What has just been said may be repeated here, namely, that if the religious associations were dispelled, there would be no mistaking the nature of feelings that originated much

* *Pathology of Mind*, p. 144. Also Mercier, *Sanity and Insanity*, pp. 223, 281.

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of this class of writing, or the feelings to which they appeal. The serious fact is that the appeal is there whether we recognise it or not, and it is a question worthy of serious consideration whether the unwary imagination of the young may be not as surely debauched by certain books of devotion as by a frankly erotic production. It is not without reason that d'Israeli the elder, in an essay omitted from all editions of his book after the first, remarked that "poets are amorous, lovers are poetical, but saints are both."* Take, for example, the following from a collection of old English homilies, dating from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries:—

"Jesus, my holy love, my sure sweetness! Jesus, my heart, my joy, my soul-heal! Jesus, sweet Jesus, my darling, my life, my light, my balm, my honey-drop! . . . Kindle me with the blaze of Thy enlightening love. Let me be Thy leman, and teach me to love Thee. . . . Oh, that I might behold how Thou stretchedst Thyself for me on the cross. Oh, that I might cast myself

* *Miscellanies*, 1796, p. 365. From the same essay I take the following: "Even the ceremonies of religion, both in ancient and in modern times, have exhibited the grossest indecencies. Priests in all ages have been the successful panders of the human heart, and have introduced in the solemn worship of the divinity, incitements, gratifications, and representations, which the pen of the historian must refuse to describe. Often has the sensible Catholic blushed amidst his devotions, and I have seen chapels surrounded by pictures of lascivious attitudes, and the obsolete amours of saints revived by the pencil of some Aretine. . . . Their homilies were manuals of love, and the more religious they became, the more depraved were their imaginations. In the nunnery the love of Jesus was the most abandoned of passions, and the ideal espousal was indulged at the cost of the feeble heart of many a solitary beauty" (pp. 369-70).

between those same arms, so very wide outspread. . . . Oh, that I were in Thy arms, in Thy arms so stretch-edst and outspread on the cross."

Or this, from the same collection:—

"Sweet Jesus, my love, my darling, my Lord, my Saviour, my balm, sweeter is the remembrance of Thee than honey in the mouth. Who is there that may not love Thy lovely face? Whose heart is so hard that may not melt at the remembrance of Thee? Oh! who may not love Thee, lovely Jesus? Jesus, my precious darling, my love, my life, my beloved, my most worthy of love, my heart's balm, Thou art lovesome in countenance, Thou art altogether bright. All angels' life is to look upon Thy face, for Thy cheer is so marvellously lovesome and pleasant to look upon. . . . Thou art so bright, and so white that the sun would be pale if compared to Thy blissful countenance. If I, then, love any man for beauty, I will love Thee, my dear life, my mother's fairest son."*

The language of erotic piety figures much more prominently in Roman Catholic medieval writings than in Protestant literature. This is not because an appeal to the same feelings is absent from the religious literature of Protestantism, it is mainly due to the fact that more modern conditions leads to a less intense religious appeal, while the broadening of social life encourages a more natural outlet for all aspects of human nature. Still, the following expression of a young lady convert of Wesley's offers a fair parallel to the specimen given above. It is taken from Southey's *Life of Wesley*:—

* From a collection published by the Early English Text Society, 1868, pp. 182-4, 268.

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"Oh, mighty, powerful, happy change! The love of God was shed abroad in my heart, and a flame kindled there with pains so violent, and yet so very ravishing, that my body was almost torn asunder. I sweated, I trembled, I fainted, I sang. Oh, I thought my head was a fountain of water. I was dissolved in love. My beloved is mine, and I am His. He has all charms; He has ravished my heart; He is my comforter, my friend, my all. Oh, I am sick of love. He is altogether lovely, the chiefest among ten thousand. Oh, how Jesus fills, Jesus extends, Jesus overwhelms the soul in which He lives."

The *Imitation of Christ* has been described by more than one writer as a manual of eroticism, and certainly the chapters "The Wonderful Effects of Divine Love," and "Of the Proof of a True Lover," might well be cited in defence of this view. In the following canticle of St. Francis of Assisi it does not seem possible to distinguish a substantial difference between it and a frankly avowed love poem:—

"Into love's furnace I am cast,
Into love's furnace I am cast,
I burn, I languish, pine, and waste.
Oh, love divine, how sharp thy dart!
How deep the wound that galls my heart!
As wax in heat, so, from above,
My smitten soul dissolves in love.
I live, yet languishing I die,
While in thy furnace bound I lie."*

It would certainly be possible to furnish exact parallels from volumes of secular verse that would be strictly 'taboo' among those who fail to see anything objectionable in verses like the above when written in con-

* G. A. Coe, *The Spiritual Life*, p. 210.

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nection with religion. Such people fail to recognise that their attractiveness lies in the hidden appeal to amatory feeling, and owe their origin to the suppressed or perverted sexual passion of their author. We must not allow ourselves to be blinded by the consideration as to whether the object of adoration be an earthly or a heavenly one. Men and women have not distinct feelings that are aroused as their objective differs, but the same feelings directed now in one direction, now in another. The direction of these feelings, their exciting cause, are sheer environmental accidents. How can one resist the implications of the following, from a devotional work widely circulated amongst the women of France:—

“Praise to Jesus, praise His power,
Praise His sweet allurements.
Praise to Jesus, when His goodness
Reduces me to nakedness;
Praise to Jesus when He says to me,
My sister, my dove, my beautiful one!
Praise to Jesus in all my steps,
Praise to His amorous charms.
Praise to Jesus when His loving mouth
Touches mine in a loving kiss.
Praise to Jesus when His gentle caresses
Overwhelm me with chaste joys.
Praise to Jesus when at His leisure
He allows me to kiss Him.”*

Against this we may place the following hymn, sung at an American camp meeting of some thousands of persons between the ages of fourteen and twenty-five:—

* *Les Perles de Saint François de Sales*, 1871. Cited by Bloch, p. 111.

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"Blessed Lily of the Valley, oh, how fair is He;

He is mine, I am His.

Sweeter than the angels' music is His voice to me;

He is mine, I am His.

Where the lilies fair are blooming by the waters calm

There He leads me and upholds me by His strong right arm.

All the air is love around me—I can feel no harm;

He is mine, I am His."*

Special significance is given to this reference by the age of those who composed the gathering. This period embraces the years during which sexual maturity is attained, and the organism experiences important physiological and psychological changes. The consequence is that the atmosphere is, so to say, charged with unsuspected sex feeling, and it is not surprising that many complaints have been made of immorality following such gatherings. The organism is then peculiarly liable to suggestion in all forms. Along with the imitateness of early years there is something of the decisive initiative of maturity. These qualities wisely guided might be turned to the great advantage of both the individual and of the community. Mere incitement by religious revivalism can result in little else than misdirection and injury. It should be the most obvious of truths that the attractiveness of hymns such as the one given, with the keen delight in the suggested pictures, lies in their yielding—all unknown, perhaps, to those participating—satisfaction to feelings that are very frequently imperious in their demands, and are at all times astonishingly pervasive in their influence.

Much valuable light is thrown upon this aspect of

* Davenport's *Primitive Traits in Religious Revivals*, p. 29.

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the subject by a study of human behaviour under the influence of actual disease. Of late years much useful work has been done in this direction, and our knowledge of normal psychology greatly helped by a study of abnormal mental states.* This is mainly because in disease we are able to observe the operation of tendencies that are unobscured by the restraints and inhibitions created by education and social convention. And one of the most striking, and to many startling, things observed is the closer relation existing between erotic mania and religious delusion. The person who at one time feels himself under direct religious inspiration, or who imagines himself to be the incarnation of a divine personage, will at another time exhibit the most shocking obscenity in action and language. Sir T. S. Clouston furnishes a very striking case of this character, which he cites in order to show "the common mixture of religious and sexual emotion."† I do not reproduce it here because of its grossly obscene character; but, save for coarseness of language, it does not differ materially from illustrations already given. Almost any of the text-books will supply cases illustrating the connection between sexualism and religion, a connection generally recognised as the opinions cited already clearly show.

Dr. Mercier, in dealing with the connection between sexualism and religion, which he says "has long been recognised, but never accounted for," traces it to a feeling of, or desire for self-sacrifice common to both.

* See, for example, *Conduct and its Disorders*, by Dr. C. Mercier; *Psycho-Pathological Researches*, by Dr. Boris Sidis; and *Abnormal Psychology*, by I. H. Coriat.

† *Clinical Lectures on Mental Diseases*, p. 584.

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Certainly sacrifice in some form—of food, weapons, land, money, or bodily inconvenience—is a feature present in every religion more or less. And it is quite certain that not merely the fact, but the desire for some amount of sacrifice, forms “an integral, fundamental, and preponderating element” in the sexual emotion. Dr. Mercier further believes that the benevolence founded on religious emotion has its origin in sexual emotion, which is, again, extremely likely. This community of origin would allow for the transformation of one into the other, and supplies a key to the language of lover-like devotion and self-abnegation which is so prominent in religious devotional literature. The importance attached to dress is also very suggestive; for here, again, the element of sacrifice expresses itself in the cultivation of a studied repulsiveness to the normal attractiveness of costume. “Thus,” says Dr. Mercier, “we find that the self-sacrificial vagaries of the rejected lover and of the religious devotee own a common origin and nature. The hook and spiny kennel of the fakir, the pillar of St. Simeon Stylites, the flagellum of the monk, the sombre garments of the nun, the silence of the Trappists, the defiantly hideous costume of the hallelujah lass, and the mortified sobriety of the district visitor, have at bottom the same origin as the rags of Cardenio, the cage of Don Quixote de la Mancha, and the yellow stockings and crossed garters of Malvolio.” *

Professor Granger, who at times comes very near the truth, says:—

“There is something profoundly philosophical in the use of *The Song of Songs* to typify the communion

* *Sanity and Insanity*, chap. viii.

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of the soul with its ideal. The passion which is expressed by the Shulamite for her earthly lover in such glowing phrases becomes the type of the love of the soul towards God."*

One fails to see the profoundly philosophic nature of the selection. *The Song of Songs* is a frankly erotic love poem, written with no other aim than is common to such poetry, and its spiritualisation is due to the same process of reinterpretation that is applied to other parts of the Bible in order to make them agreeable to modern thought. Had it not been in the Bible, Christians would have found it neither profoundly philosophical nor spiritually illuminating; and, as a matter of fact, similar effusions are selected by Christians from non-Christian writings as proofs of their sensual character. The real significance of its use in religious worship is that it gives a marked expression to feelings that crave an outlet. And the lesson is that sexual feeling cannot be eliminated from life; it can only be diverted or disguised. Some expression it will find—here in open perversion resulting in positive vice, there in obsession that leads to a half-insane asceticism, and elsewhere the creation of the unconsciously salacious with an unhealthy fondness for dabbling in questions that refer to the illicit relations of the sexes.

"One of the reasons why popular religion in England," says Professor Granger, "seems to be coming to the limits of its power, is that it has contented itself so largely with the commonplace motives which, after all, find sufficient exercise in the ordinary duties of life." Here, again, is a curious obtuseness to a plain

* *The Soul of a Christian*, p. 178.

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but important truth. With what else should a healthy religion associate itself but the ordinary motives or feelings of human life? With what else has religion always associated itself? Far from that being the source of the weakness of modern religion, it is its only genuine source of strength. If religion can so associate itself with the ordinary facts and feelings of life that these are unintelligible or poorer without religion, then religious people have nothing to fear. But if it be true, as Professor Granger implies, that life in its normal moods can receive complete gratification apart from religion, then the outlook is very different. From a merely historic point of view it is true that as men have found explanations of phenomena, and gratifications of feelings apart from religion, the latter has lost a deal of its power. This is seen in the growth of the physical sciences, and also, although in a smaller measure, in sociology and morals.

This, however, opens up the enquiry, previously indicated, as to how far the whole range of human life may be satisfactorily explained in the complete absence of religion or supernaturalism. And with this we are not now directly concerned. What we are concerned with is to show that from one direction at least supernaturalism has derived strength from a misinterpretation of the facts. These facts, once interpreted as clear evidence for supernaturalism, are now seen to be susceptible to a different explanation. But they have nevertheless played their part in creating as part of the social heritage a diffused sense of the reality of supernatural intercourse. It is not, then, a question of religion losing power because it has contented itself with commonplace motives, and because these have

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now found satisfaction in ordinary life. It is rather a question of the adequacy of science to deal with facts that have been taken to lie outside the scientific order. Has science the knowledge or the ability to deal with the extraordinary as well as with the ordinary facts of life? I believe it has. The facts we have passed in review *are* amenable to scientific treatment, for the reason that they belong to a class with which the physician of to-day finds himself in constant contact. And it is too often overlooked that the belief in the existence and influence of a supersensible world is itself only a theory put forward in explanation of certain classes of facts, and like all theories it becomes superfluous once a simpler theory is made possible.

THE STREAM OF TENDENCY

IT SHOULD HARDLY NEED POINTING out that the facts presented in the last chapter are not offered as an attempt at the—to use Professor William James's expression—"reinterpretation of religion as perverted sexuality." Nor, so far as the present writer is aware, has anyone ever so presented them. The expression, indeed, seems almost a deliberate mis-statement of a position in order to make its rebuttal easier. Obviously the idea of religion must be already in existence before it could be utilised for the purpose of explaining any group of phenomena. But if the biographic and other facts described have any value whatever, they are at least strong presumptive evidence in favour of the position that in very many cases a perverted or unsatisfied sexuality has been at the root of a great deal of the world's emotional piety. Of course, the strong religious belief must be in existence beforehand. But given this, and add thereto a sexual nature imperious in its demands and yet denied legitimate outlet, and we have the conditions present for its promptings being interpreted as the fruits of supernatural influence. It is not a reinterpretation of *religion* that is attempted, but a reinterpretation of phenomena that have been erroneously called religious. And on all sides the need for this reinterpretation is becoming clear. Over sixty years ago Renan wrote, "A rigorous psychological analysis would class the innate religious instinct of women in the same category with the sexual instinct,"* and since then a very much more detailed knowledge of both physiology and psychology

* *The Future of Science*, p. 465.

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has furnished a multitude of data for an exhaustive study of the whole question.

In the present chapter our interest is mainly historical. And for various reasons, chief amongst which is that interested readers may the more easily follow up the study should they feel so inclined, the survey has been restricted to the history of that religion with which we are best acquainted—Christianity. Moreover, if we are to form a correct judgment of the part played in the history of religions by the misinterpretations already noted, it is necessary to trace the extent to which they have influenced men and women in a collective capacity. For the striking fact is that, in spite of the purification of the sexual relations being one of the avowed objects of Christianity, in spite, too, of the attempts of the official churches to suppress them, the history of Christianity has been dogged by outbreaks of sexual extravagance, by the continuous emergence of erotic-religious sects, claiming Christian teachings as the authority for their actions. We need not discuss the legitimacy of their inferences. We are concerned solely with a chronicle of historic facts so far as they can be ascertained; and these have a certain significance of their own, as events, quite apart from their reasonableness or desirability.

A part cause of the movements we are about to describe may have been a violent reaction against an extravagant asceticism. Something may also be due to the fact that over-concentration of mind upon a particular evil is apt to defeat its end by the mere force of unconscious suggestion in the contrary direction. But in all probability much was due to the presence of certain elements inherited by Christianity from the

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older religions. At any rate, those whose minds are filled with the idea that sexual extravagance on a collective scale and under the cloak of religion is either a modern phenomenon, or was unknown to the early history of Christianity, would do well to revise their opinions in the light of ascertainable facts. No less a person than the Rev. S. Baring-Gould has reminded us that criticism discloses "on the shining face of primitive Christianity rents and craters undreamt of in our old simplicity," and also asserts "that there was in the breast of the newborn Church an element of antinomianism, not latent, but in virulent activity, is a fact as capable of demonstration as any conclusion in a science which is not exact."*

There would be little value in a study of these erotico-religious movements if they involved only a detection of individual lust consciously using religion as a cloak for its gratification. Such a conclusion is a fatally easy one, but it does little justice to the chief people concerned, and it is quite lacking in historical perspective. In most cases the initiators of these strange sects have put forward a philosophy of religion as a justification of their teaching, and only a slight knowledge of this is enough to prove that we are face to face with a phenomenon of much greater significance than mere immorality. This may be recognised even in the pages of the New Testament itself. It is not a practice that is there denounced; it is a teaching that is repudiated. And one sees the same thing at later periods. The conviction on the one side that certain actions are unlawful, is met on the other side with the conviction that they are perfectly legitimate.

* *Lost and Hostile Gospels*, Preface, p. 7.

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Conviction is met with conviction. Each side expresses itself in terms of religion; the ethical aspect is incidental or subordinate. It is a contest of opposing religious beliefs and practices.

The real nature of the conflict is often obscured by the fact of social opinion and the social forces generally being on the side of the more normal expression of sexual life. This, however, is no more than a necessity of the situation. The continuance of a healthful social life is dependent upon the maintenance of a certain balance in the relations of the sexes, and anything that strikes at this strikes at social life as a whole. In such cases we have, therefore, to allow for the operation of social selection, which is always on the side of the more normal type. From this it follows that although a small body of people may exemplify a variation that is in itself socially disastrous, the main forces of social life will prevent its ever assuming large dimensions. Moreover, a large body of people, such as is represented by a church holding a commanding position in society, will be forced to come to terms with the permanent tendencies of social life, and will either suppress undesirable variations or expel them. It thus happens that while the larger and more dominant churches have been on the side of normal, regularised expressions of the sexual life, abnormal variations have constantly arisen and have been denounced by them. But the significant feature is that they have arisen within the churches, and most commonly during periods of great religious stress or excitement.

These tendencies, as the Rev. S. Baring-Gould has pointed out, existed in the very earliest days of Christianity. It is quite apparent from Paul's writings that

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as early as the date of the First Epistle to the Corinthians some of the more objectionable features of the older Pagan worship had shown themselves in the Church. The doctrine of 'spiritual wifeness' appeared at a very early date in the Church, and its teachers cited even St. Paul himself as their authority. Their claim was based upon Paul's declaration (1 Cor. ix. 5) that he had power to lead about "a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord and Cephas." Curiously enough, commentators have never agreed as to what Paul meant by this expression. The word translated may mean either wife, or sister, or woman. Had it been wife in the ordinary sense, it does not appear that at that date there would have been any room for scandal. The clear fact is, however, that others claimed a like privilege; the privilege was not always restricted to one woman, and the practice, if not general, became not uncommon, and furnished the ground for scandal for a long period. Two epistles, wrongly attributed to St. Clement of Rome, and dating from some time in the second century, condemn the practice of young people living together under the cloak of religion, and specially warns virgins against cohabiting with the clergy and so giving offence. That the practice was difficult to suppress is shown by its being condemned by several church councils—Antioch in 210, Nicea in 325, and Elvira in 350.* At a later date a much more elaborate theory has been built on Paul's claim. The Pauline Church has found several expressions both in England and America within recent times.† These sects have claimed that

* See Baring-Gould's *Life of St. Paul*, pp. 450-1.

† See Hepworth Dixon's curious work, *Spiritual Wives*, 1888, 2 vols.

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both St. Paul and the woman with whom he travelled were in a state of grace, and, therefore, above all law. We do not mean the maintenance of an ascetic relationship, but the normal relation of husband and wife. It is really the doctrine of 'Free Love' with a spiritual warranty instead of a secular one.

This doctrine of religious 'Free Love' rests upon a twofold basis. First, it was held that, apart from a wife after the flesh, one might also have a wife after the spirit, and this spiritual union might exist side by side with the fleshly one, and with different persons. A great impetus appears to have been given to this theory from Germany, many of the originators of the American sects of Free Lovers being Germans. Secondly, it was held that a Christian in a state of grace was absolved from laws that were binding upon other people. His actions were no longer subject to the categories of right and wrong; as it was said, to one in a state of grace all things were lawful, even though all things might not be expedient. Some went the length of teaching that not only were all things lawful, but all things were desirable. Separating by a sharp division things that influenced the soul from things that influenced the body, it was openly taught by some of the early sects that nothing done by the body could injure the soul, and so could not affect its salvation. Reversing the practice of asceticism, which sought to crush bodily passions by a course of deprivation, it was taught that all kinds of forbidden conduct might be practised in order to demonstrate the soul's superiority. There is no question whatever that this tendency was very prominent in the early Christian Church. It was not there as something hidden, some-

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thing of which men ought to be ashamed; it was an avowed teaching, claiming full religious sanction. "The Church," says Baring-Gould, "trembled on the verge of becoming an immoral sect." The same writer also says:—

"This *teaching* of immorality in the Church is a startling feature, and it seems to have been pursued by some who called themselves apostles as well as by those who assumed to be prophets. In the Corinthian Church even the elders encouraged incest. Now, it is not possible to explain this phenomenon except on the ground that Paul's argument as to the Law being overridden had been laid hold of and elevated into a principle. These teachers did not wink at lapses into immorality, but defiantly urged on the converts to the Gospel to commit adultery, fornication, and all uncleanness . . . as a protest against those who contended that the moral law as given on the tables was still binding upon the Church." *

A certain detachment from modern conditions, and from modern frames of mind, is essential to an adequate appreciation of what has been said. Looking at these events through the distorting medium of an altogether different social atmosphere, one is apt to attribute them to the operation of lawless desire, and so have done with it. This, however, is to overlook the fact that we are dealing with a society in which sexual symbols were common in religious worship, and in which theories of the religious life were propounded and accepted which to-day would be regarded as little less than maniacal. Unquestionably even then, once the situation had established itself it

* *Study of St. Paul*, p. 458.

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would be utilised by those of a coarser nature for mere sensual gratification. But practices such as we know existed, on the scale we have every reason for believing they were, could never have been had they not taken the form of an intense conviction. To assume otherwise is equal to arguing that because men have entered the Church from mere love of power or lust for wealth, the Church owed its establishment to the play of these motives. It is true that those who opposed these religio-erotic sects accused them of immorality, but it is the form these teachings assumed to the members of the impeached sects, not how they appeared to their enemies, that is important. Eroticism taught and practised as a religious conviction—that is the essential and significant feature of the situation. Not to grasp this is to fail to realise the vital fact embodied in the phenomena under consideration. We are not dealing with mere sensualists, even though we may be dealing with what is largely an expression of sensualism. It is sensualism expressed as, and sanctioned by, religious conviction that is the vital fact of the situation.

One of the earliest Christian institutions around which scandals gathered was that of the *Agapæ*, or love-feasts. From the outset the Pagan writers asserted that these love-feasts were new versions of various old orgiastic practices, some of which were still current, others of which had been suppressed by the Roman government. There is no doubt that they were the grounds of very serious accusations against the Christians. On the other hand, it must be remembered that, at the outset at least, these charges were indignantly rejected by the Christians. The *Agapæ*

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pæ were called indiscriminately Feasts of Love and Feasts of Charity. Each member, male and female, greeted each other with a holy kiss, and the institution was described by Tertullian as "a support of love, a solace of purity, a check on riches, a discipline of weakness." These love-feasts were held on important occasions, such as a marriage, a death, or the anniversary of a martyrdom. Some churches celebrated them weekly. From the Acts of the Apostles we learn that the feasts began about nightfall, and continued till after midnight, or even till daybreak. It was only natural that mixed assemblies of men and women that gathered in this manner, and where there was eating and drinking, should create scandal. It is absolutely certain that some of this scandal had a basis in fact. The Rev. S. Baring-Gould confesses that "at Corinth, and certainly elsewhere, among excitable people, the wine, the heat, the exaltation of emotion, led to orgiastic ravings, the jabbering of disconnected, unintelligible words, to fits, convulsions, pious exclamations, and incoherent ravings." And unless St. Paul was deliberately slandering his fellow-believers worse things than these occurred.

Generally, even by non-Christian writers, it has been assumed that the Agapæ commenced as a perfectly harmless, even admirable institution, and afterwards degenerated, and so gave genuine cause for scandal. It is not easy to see that this opinion rests on anything better than a mere prejudice. It is true that there is no unmistakable evidence to the contrary, but no clear evidence is to be found in its behalf. The Agapæ was not, after all, an essentially Christian institution. Similar gatherings existed among the Pagans, more or less

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orgiastic in character. And even though at first some of the more extreme forms were avoided amongst the Christians, it is not improbable, on the face of it, that some kind of sexual extravagance or symbolism was present from the outset. At any rate, as I have said, the charges were made, first by Pagans, afterwards by Christians against other Christians. The charges were persistent, and were made in districts far removed from each other. Says Lecky: "When the Pagans accused the Christians of indulging in orgies of gross licentiousness, the first apologist, while repudiating the charge, was careful to add, of the heretics, 'Whether or not these people commit those shameful acts . . . I know not.' In a few years the language of doubt and insinuation was exchanged for that of direct assertion; and if we may believe St. Irenæus and St. Clement of Alexandria, the followers of Carpocrates, the Marcionites, and some other gnostic sects habitually indulged, in their secret meetings, in acts of impurity and licentiousness as hideous and as monstrous as can be conceived, and their conduct was one of the causes of the persecution of the orthodox." * Tertulian accused some of the sects of practising incestuous intercourse at the Agapæ. Ambrose compared the institution to the Pagan Parentalia. Clement says, probably referring to the Agapæ, "the shameless use of the rite occasions foul suspicion and evil reports." The first epistle on Virginité by the Pseudo-Clement (probably written in the second century) admits the existence of immorality by saying, "Others eat and drink with them (*i.e.* the virgins) at feasts, and indulge in loose behaviour and much uncleanness, such

* *History of European Morals*, i. p. 417.

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as ought not to be among those who have elected holiness for themselves." Justin Martyr, referring to certain sects, says more cautiously: "Whether or not these people commit these shameful acts (the putting out of lights, and indulging in promiscuous intercourse) I know not." Others are more precise in their charges. That the Agapæ became the legitimate cause of complaint is admitted by all. The only question is whether it was the institution itself or the public mind in relation to it that underwent a change. Eventually, on the avowed ground of evil conduct, the Agapæ were forbidden by the Council of Carthage, 391, of Orleans, 541, and of Constantinople, 680.

The whole subject is obscure, but the one certain and significant thing is that charges of licentiousness were connected with the Agapæ from the outset. These may at first have been unfounded or exaggerated. On the other hand, it is quite probable that just as Christianity continued Pagan ceremonies in other directions, so there was also a carrying over into the Church of some of the sexual rites and ceremonies connected with earlier forms of worship. And we know that the principle of Antinomianism, a prolific cause of evil at all times, was active amongst the Christians from the outset.

It is almost impossible to say at this distance how many sects exhibiting marked erotic tendencies appeared in the early Christian centuries. Many must have disappeared and left no trace of their existence. But there can be no question that they were fairly numerous. The extensive sect, or sects, of the gnostics contained in its teachings elements that at least paved the way for the conduct with which other Christians

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charged them, although the charges made may not have been true of all. To some of the gnostic sects belongs the teaching—quite in accord with the doctrine of the evil nature of the world, that liberation from the 'Law' was one of the first conditions of spiritual freedom. From this came the teaching, subsequently held by numerous other sects, that those born of the Spirit could not be defiled by any acts of the flesh, and that so-called vicious actions were rather to be encouraged as providing experience useful to spiritual welfare. Some branches of the gnostics had 'spiritual marriages,' similar to what existed in India in the Sakti rites already described. Thus the Adamites, a rather obscure gnostic sect of the second century, attempted to imitate the Edenic state by condemning marriage and abandoning clothing. Their assemblies were held underground, and on entering the place of worship both sexes stripped themselves naked, and in that state performed their ceremonies. They called their church Paradise, from which all dissentients were promptly expelled. The Adamites themselves claimed that their object was to extirpate desire by familiarising the senses to strict control. Their religious opponents gave a very different account of the practice, and it is not difficult to realise, whatever may have been the motive of the founders, the consequences of such a practice. It is curious, by the way, to observe how strong religious excitement seems to lead people to discard clothing. Thus, during the Crusade of 1203–42 the women crusaders rushed about the streets in a state of nudity.* During the wars of the League in France, men and women walked naked in procession

* Cutten, *Psychological Christianity*, p. 157.

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headed by the clergy.* Other examples of this curious practice might be given.

The Nicolaitanes, a second-century sect referred to in the New Testament (Rev. ii. 14), were accused of practising religious prostitution. So also were the Manichæans, a very numerous sect, against whom the charges were of a much more detailed character. With them the ceremonial violation of a virgin is said to have formed a part of their regular ritual, and that their meetings frequently ended in an orgy of promiscuous intercourse.† As both these acts are found in connection with other religious ceremonies, and, as will be seen later, have persisted until recent times, the story does not sound so incredible as otherwise it might. The difficulty of deciding definitely is intensified by the fact of the Manichæans being split into a number of sects, and statements true of some might be untrue of others. So we find St. Augustine, who had been a Manichæan, declaring that if all did not practise licentious rites, one sect (the Catharists) did, believing that they could only mortify the flesh by the exercise of bad instincts, since the flesh proceeded from demons. St. Augustine himself confesses to have taken part in various phallic ceremonies before his conversion. "I myself," he says, "when a young man used to go sometimes to the sacrilegious entertainments and spectacles; I saw the priests raving in religious excitement, and heard the choristers; I took pleasure in the shameful games which were celebrated in honour of gods and goddesses, of the Virgin Cœlestia, and of Berecynthia, the mother of all gods. And on the day con-

* Sanger, *History of Prostitution*, p. 116.

† See Blunt's *Dictionary of Sects*, art. "Manichæans."

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secrated to her purification, there were sung before her couch productions so obscene and filthy to the ear—I do not say of the mother of the gods, but of the mother of any senator or honest man—nay, so impure that not even the mother of the foul-mouthed players themselves could have formed one of the audience.”*

The Carpocratians, who claimed to be a branch of the Gnostics, taught that faith and charity were alone necessary virtues: all others were useless. There is nothing evil in itself, and life only becomes complete when all so-called blemishes are fully displayed in conduct. Their leader “not only allowed his disciples a full liberty to sin, but recommended a vicious course of life as a matter of obligation and necessity; asserting that eternal salvation was only attainable by those who had committed all sorts of crimes. . . . It was the will of God that all things should be possessed in common, the female sex not excepted.”†

A little later we have the sect of the Agapetæ. They rejected marriage as an institution, and permitted unrestrained intercourse between the sexes. St. Jerome, alluding to this sect, says: “It is a shame even to allude to the true facts. Whence did the pest of the Agapetæ creep into the Church? Whence is this new title of wives without marriage rites? Whence this new class of concubines? I will infer more. Whence these harlots cleaving to one man? They occupy the same house, a single chamber, often a single bed, and call us suspicious if we think anything of it. The brother deserts his virgin sister, the virgin despises her unmarried brother, and seeks a stranger, and since

* *De Civitate Dei*, ii. 4.

† Mosheim, *Cent.* 2, chap. v. sec. 4.

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they pretend to be aiming at the same object, they ask for the spiritual consolation of each other that they may enjoy the pleasures of the flesh." *

This form of extravagance does not appear to have been limited to a single sect. It was more or less general during the ascendancy of asceticism. Tertullian says that the desire to enjoy the reputation of virginity led to much immorality, the effects of which were concealed by infanticide. The Council of Antioch lamented the practice of unmarried men and women sharing the same room. In 450, the Anchorites of Palestine are described as herding together without distinction of sex, and with no garments but a breech-clout.† The practice of priests travelling about with women, mothers and wives, and the scandals created thereby, is referred to in regulation after regulation. Although legislated against, it never entirely disappeared, and eventually led to a recognised priestly concubinage—recognised, that is, by public opinion, although condemned by the Church.

There is no need to go over even the names of all the numerous sects that appeared during the early centuries manifesting curious features concerning sexual relations. When suppressed in one form they reappeared in another, and were unusually prominent during seasons of religious unrest. Many of the teachings already noted made their appearance again with the "Brethren of the Free Spirit" in the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries. Some of these sects took their stand on the Pauline teaching, "The law of the spirit of life in Jesus Christ hath made me free from

* *Dictionary of Sects*, p. 13.

† Lea, *Hist. of Sacerdotal Celibacy*, 1884, p. 42.

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the law of sin and death," and claimed freedom from sin, no matter what their actions. The "Brethren of the Free Spirit" carried women about with them, held midnight assemblies, and, according to Mosheim, attended these meetings in a state of nudity. The Ranters, the Spirituels of Geneva, the Berghards, the Flagellants, the Molinists, were all accused of sexual misconduct in their assemblies. One of the specific teachings of the last-named body, as condemned by the Inquisition, ran as follows: "God, to humble us, permits in certain perfect souls that the devil should make them commit certain acts. In this case, and in others, which without the permission of God, would be guilty, there is no sin because there is no consent. It may happen, that this violent movement, which excites to carnal acts, may take place in two persons, a man and a woman, at the same instant."*

It has been pointed out that the dominant Church made continuous efforts to suppress these sects, but the remarkable thing is that they should so often reappear, and always with strong claims to existence on the basis of religious conviction. That a number of men and women should seek gratification of their sensual feelings in ways not countenanced by the laws of normal life need not excite surprise. There always have been and always will be such. But to do this in the name of religion, and with a persistency as great as that of the religious idea itself, is a phenomenon that surely deserves more attention than it ordinarily receives. Nor can it be said with justice that these sects began in mere conscious lust. They ended there, true; more or less disguised, it may always have been pre-

* Cited by Michelet, *Priests, Women, and Families*, p. 130.

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sent, but those who initiated them believed that they were justified in doing so by religious principles, and appealed to those principles to justify their conduct. Why should this have been the case? Why should conduct of which men and women are ashamed in the social sphere, and which their social sense promptly condemns, in the religious sphere be crowned with the dignity of lofty principles and fought for with the fervour of intense conviction? So long as theologians leave that question unanswered, their arguments are simply wide of the real issue.

Naturally, the closer we get to our own day, and to times when religious feeling is more vigorously controlled by purely social forces, these manifestations of sexuality become less frequent, less widely spread, and more transient in character. Still they do occur. For reasons that do not concern us here, America has in recent years been a favourable ground for these religio-sexual developments. A sympathetic account of many of these American sects will be found in Hepworth Dixon's *Spiritual Wives*, with accounts of similar sects in Germany and England. In some cases many of the features of the early Christian sects were reproduced, even to the length of young women sharing the bedrooms of their spiritual guides. All took Paul as their principal authority. J. H. Noyes, one of the best known and most representative of these teachers, laid down the main principles of his teachings thus:—

“When the will of God is done on earth as it is in heaven, there will be no marriage. The marriage supper of the Lamb is a feast at which every dish is free to every guest. Exclusiveness, jealousy, quarrelling,

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have no place there, for the same reason as that which forbids the guests at a thanksgiving dinner to claim each his separate dish, and quarrel with the rest for his rights. In a holy community there is no more reason why sexual intercourse should be restrained by law, than why eating and drinking should be; and there is as little occasion for shame in the one case as in the other. . . . The guests of the marriage supper may have each his favourite dish, each a dish of his own procuring, and that without the jealousy of exclusiveness. I call a certain woman my wife; she is yours; she is Christ's; and in Him she is the bride of all saints. She is dear in the hands of a stranger, and according to my promise to her I rejoice."*

In a letter to Mr. Hepworth Dixon, J. H. Noyes claims the "right of religious inspiration to shape society and dictate the form of family life," and with probable accuracy says that the origin of these American sects is to be found in revivals:—

"The philosophy of the matter seems to be this: Revivals are theocratic in their very nature; they introduce God into human affairs. . . . In the conservative theory of revivals, this power is restricted to the conversion of souls; but in actual experience it goes, or tends to go, into all the affairs of life. . . . Religious love is very near neighbour to sexual love, and they always get mixed in the intimacies and social excitements of revivals. The next thing a man wants, after he has found the salvation of his soul, is to find his Eve and his Paradise. . . . The course of things may be restated thus: Revivals lead to religious love; religious love excites the passions; the converts, finding them-

* *Spiritual Wives*, ii. pp. 55-6.

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selves in theocratic liberty, begin to look about for their mates and their liberty."*

With regard to the beginnings of these modern movements of "Spiritual Wifehood," all involving the abrogation of the normal relations of the sexes, Hepworth Dixon writes:—

"It has not, I think, been noticed by any writer that three of the most singular movements in the churches of our generation seem to have been connected, more or less closely, with the state of mind produced by revivals; one in Germany, one in England, and one in the United States; movements which resulted, among other things, in the establishment of three singular societies—the congregation of Pietists, vulgarly called the Mucker, at Königsberg; the brotherhood of Princeites at Spaxton; and the Bible Communists at Oneida Creek. . . . They had these chief things in common: they began in colleges, they affected the form of family life, and they were carried on by clergymen; each movement in a place of learning and of theological study: that in Germany at the Luther-Kirch of Königsberg, that in England at St. David's College, that in the United States at Yale College. . . . These three divines, one Lutheran, one Anglican, one Congregational, began their work in perfect ignorance of each other. . . . Each movement was regarded by its votaries as the most perfect fruit of the revival spirit. In truth, the change which came upon the saints from their close experience of revival passion, was regarded by themselves as in some degree miraculous, equal in divine significance to a new creation of the world."†

* *Spiritual Wives*, pp. 176-7, 181.

† *Ibid.*, pp. 84-6.

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For an almost exact replica of the erotic extravagances of some of the early Christian sects, one may turn to Russia. The difficulties and dangers of political life in Russia are doubtless responsible for having made religion such a power among the mass of the people, and this will also explain the diversion into religious channels of energy that under more favourable conditions is expended in social agitation and activity. Many of these sects are, of course, of a harmless character, mostly originating in an even greater love for the past and a more slavish adherence to ancient formulas than is displayed by the orthodox Church. Some, however, present the wildest excesses of sexual theory and practice. Nothing seems too wild or too extravagant to become the originating point of a new sect. Theories of marriage and sexual relations generally are developed with a logical fearlessness peculiarly Russian. Among the Bezpopovtsi, a numerous sect split up into several branches, opinions on marriage vary between regarding it as a mere conventional affair, and denouncing it as a hindrance to spiritual development. "Between these two extremes," says Mr. Heard, "there is room for the wildest and most repulsive theories. Carnal sensuality is allied in monstrous union with religious mysticism. Free love, independence of the sexes, possession of women in common, have been preached and practised. Debauchery, as an incidental weakness of human nature, has been advocated as the lesser evil; libertinism as preferable to concubinage, and the latter as better than marriage. One of their most austere teachers cynically declares that 'it is wiser to live with beasts than to be joined to a wife; to frequent

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many women in secret, rather than to live with one openly.'”*

Another sect called ‘Eunuchs’ take their stand on Matt. xix. 12: “There are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother’s womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.” This sect believes in and practises emasculation as the surest way of attaining perfection. Man, they say, should be like the angels, without sex and without desire. This practice reminds one of an early Christian sect, the Valesians, which not only emasculated members of their own sect, but performed the same operation forcibly on those who fell into their hands.† The Khlysti, a sect which derives its name from the practice of flagellation, denounce marriage as unclean, and part of their religious ritual is, according to some writers, the worship of a naked woman. Baron Von Haxthausen, writing in 1856, gives the following description of their ceremonies on Easter night:—

“On this night the Khlysti all assemble for a great solemnity, the worship of the mother of God. A virgin, fifteen years of age, whom they have induced to act the part by tempting promises, is bound and placed in a tub of warm water; some old women come, and first make a large incision in the left breast, then cut it off, and staunch the blood in a wonderfully short time. During the operation a mystical picture of the Holy Spirit is put into the victim’s hand, in order that

* *The Russian Church and Russian Dissent*, p. 201.

† Lea, *Hist. of Sacerdotal Celibacy*, p. 40.

she may be absorbed in regarding it. The breast which has been removed is laid upon a plate and cut into small pieces, which are eaten by all the members of the sect present; the girl in the tub is then raised upon an altar which stands near, and the whole congregation dance wildly round it, singing at the same time. The jumping then grows madder and wilder, till the lights are suddenly extinguished and horrible orgies commence." *

The 'Jumpers,' an offshoot of the Khlysti, are much more pronounced in their sexual extravagances. They openly profess debauchery, for the usual reason, that of conquering the flesh by exhaustion and satiety. They meet usually by night, and after prayers are chanted and hymns sung, the leader commences a slow jumping movement, keeping time with a song. Then:—

"The audience, arranged in couples, engaged to each other in advance, imitate his example and join the strain; the bounds and the singing grow faster and louder as it spreads, until, at its height, the elder shouts that he hears the voices of angels; the lights are extinguished, the jumping ceases, and the scene that follows in the darkness defies description. Each one yields to his desires, born of inspiration, and therefore righteous, and to be gratified; all are brethren in Christ, all promptings of the inner spirit are holy; incest, even, is no sin. They repudiate marriage, and justify their abominations by the Biblical le-

* *Visit to the Russian Empire*, i. p. 254. Merejkowski, in his historical novel, *Peter and Alexis*, gives a more detailed account of the sexual ceremonies of this sect. See also Heard's description, *Russian Churches*, p. 258.

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gends of Lot's daughters, Solomon's harem, and the like." *

There are many other curious sects in Russia, many of which bring us back to the religious atmosphere of the European dark ages. But without pursuing a description of these to any greater extent, enough has been said to show the persistence of the stream of sexualism in the history of Christianity. Of course, this feature did not enter religion with Christianity. On the contrary, I have shown that it was present from the earliest times. The association of religion with sexual phenomena does not commence as a sexual aberration; it only assumes that form at a comparatively late stage in religious history. The origin of the connection has to be found in that atmosphere of the supernatural which envelops primitive life, moulds primitive conceptions, and more or less fashions all primitive institutions. The sexual side of religious belief and religious symbolism only becomes abnormal, and even morbid, when the development of social life makes possible a truer view of sexuality. In this the great churches have, perhaps, unconsciously assisted. Their position of social control has compelled them to set their faces against the sexual symbolism which is so closely associated with early religious history, while at the same time countenancing religious fervour in general. The consequence has been that small bodies of men and women, freed from the restraining influence of social responsibility, have developed to extravagant length certain phases of religious belief that have been generally discountenanced elsewhere. Their so doing certainly helps the present-day student

* *Russian Church and Russian Dissent*, p. 262.

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to make a more complete survey of all the factors that have played their part in religious history than would otherwise have been possible. Repulsive as some of these features now are, they have helped in their time to nourish the general belief in a supernatural order, and so to strengthen the general idea to which they were affiliated.

FROM WHAT HAS BEEN ALREADY SAID, it should be clear that a complete understanding of religious phenomena—whether legitimately or wrongly so called—involves acquaintance with a number of factors that are not usually called religious. Man's religious beliefs are usually a very composite product; they are built up from a number of states of feeling and mental convictions, some of which have only an accidental connection with the religious idea itself. Unfortunately, the training given to professional religious teachers rarely equips them for dealing with religion from the scientific point of view. Their training gives them a knowledge of several ancient languages, makes them acquainted with the rise and fall of certain doctrines, the nature of Church ritual and the like, all of which, while interesting enough in themselves, give little more genuine enlightenment than a knowledge of the dates of English monarchs provides of the character of genuine historic processes. One writer pertinently asks:—

“What does the ordinary seminary graduate know of the histology, anatomy, and physiology of the soul? Absolutely nothing. He must stumble along through years of trying experience and look back over countless mistakes before he understands these things even in a general way. What does the ordinary graduate understand about doubt? It is all classed together, whether in adolescents or in hardened sinners, and one dose is applied. What does the graduate know about sexuality, so closely allied with certain forms of religious manifestations? What about ecstasy, in its various forms, the numerous methods of faith cure thrust upon an illiterate but credulous people,

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or the significance or insignificance of visions and dreams?"*

It is, indeed, not too much to say that a theological training tends to prevent a rational comprehension of religion in both its normal and abnormal manifestations. Religious phenomena are not affiliated to phenomena as a whole; they are treated as quite distinct from the rest of life, possessing both an independent origin and justification. The consequence is that what are usually called studies of religion move round and round the same circle of ideas, and a revolution is mistaken for progress. Genuine enlightenment has come to us from men who have attacked the subject from a quite different point of view. They recognised that whether the religious idea was accepted as true or rejected as false, it could not be separated from that host of ideas and beliefs which make up the psychological side of the social structure. It was to be studied as a piece of natural history first of all. Whether it involved more than this they left to be settled later. It cannot be said that they belittled the *power* of religion; on the contrary, the investigations showed it to be one of the most potent of the forces that shape social institutions. But they demonstrated the absurdity of placing religion in a category of its own. As an objective fact, they showed that religion was subject to the same forces that determine the form of other objective facts. As a culture fact, they traced its connection with corresponding phases of social development; and as a psychological fact, they demonstrated its workings to be in harmony with workings of normal psychological

* Dr. G. B. Cutten, *The Psychological Phenomena of Christianity*, pp. 7-8.

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laws. Five thousand years of theological study had left the world as ignorant of the nature of religious phenomena as it was in the days of ancient Chaldea. Fifty years of scientific study has served to make at least a broad path through what was hitherto an impenetrable jungle.

What has been said holds with peculiar force of the subject of conversion. This is not a phenomenon peculiar to Christianity, for initiation and conversion accompanies religion in all its phases. I do not think that it is peculiar to religion even as a whole. A sudden discharge of feeling in a special direction leading to a changed attitude, more or less permanent towards life, may be seen in connection with the non-religious life, although it fails to receive the attention bestowed on changes that are connected with religion. But if conversion is not a peculiarly Christian phenomenon, one school of theologians, at least, has raised it to a position of peculiar eminence in connection with Christianity. They have taken it to be the mark of a person who has attained spiritual manhood, and have laid down elaborate rules for its achievement. Many theologians will agree that this has been almost wholly disastrous. On the one side, conversion has been dwelt upon as a cataclysmal epoch in a person's life, produced, negatively, by an act of self-surrender, and, positively, by a supernatural act of grace. This has had the effect of blinding people to the real nature of the process, and has led to certain evil consequences that must always accompany attempts at wholesale conversion. On the other hand, it has given rise to a class of professional evangelists who count their trophies in 'souls' as a Red Indian might count scalps, and who are ignorant

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of nearly everything except the art of working upon the emotions of a crowd of more or less uncultured people. Here, for instance, is an account of an American evangelist and ex-prize fighter, and evidently a great favourite with certain sections of the religious public in America. The account is cited by Dr. Cutten from a local paper, Illinois :—

“5843 converts, 683 in a day. Total gift to Mr. Sunday, \$10,431. Greatest revival in history. Will attract the attention of the religious world. Sermon on ‘Booze,’ the great effort of the revival! These are all headlines to the report of the meeting, which covers six columns—evidently a response to the interest shown in ‘Billy’ Sunday’s meetings. The sermon on ‘Booze’ is given in full, and the physical exertions of the preacher described in detail. He began with his coat, vest, tie, and collar off. In a few moments his shirt and undershirt were gaping open to the waist, and the muscles of his neck and chest were seen working like those in the arm of a blacksmith, while perspiration poured from every pore. His clothing was soaked, as if a hose had been turned on him. He strained, and twisted, and reached up and down. Once he was on the floor for just a second, in the attitude of crawling, to show that all crime crawled out of the saloon; then he was on his feet as quickly as a cat could jump. At the end of forty-five minutes he mounted a chair, reached high, as he shouted, then again was on the floor, and dropped prostrate to illustrate a story of a drunken man, bounded to his feet again as if steel springs filled that lithe, slender, lightning-like body. He generally breaks a common kitchen chair in this sermon, and this came after a terrible effort, with eyes

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flashing, face scowling, the picture of hate. He whirled the chair over his head, smashed the chair to the platform floor, whirled the shattered wreck in the air again, and threw it to the ground in front of the pulpit. In two minutes men from the front row were tearing the wreck to pieces and dividing it up—a round here, a leg there, a piece of the back to another, and so on. Later, men carried away in cheering could be seen in the audience waving those chair fragments in the air.”

This is, of course, an extreme case, although it is but an exaggeration of methods in common use among these professional revivalists. The whole aim and purpose of these men is to arouse in the audience a high emotional tension, and any means is acceptable that succeeds in doing this. On the part of the congregation a large portion go for the express purpose of indulging in an emotional debauch. Many attend revival after revival, living over again the debauch of the last, and treasuring lively expectations of the next. Between these and the victim of alcohol tasting again his last ‘burst,’ and seeking opportunities for another, there is really little moral or psychological distinction. The social consequences of these engineered revivals have never been fully worked out, but when it is done by some competent person, the conclusions will be a revelation to many. One thing is certain: to expect really useful social results from such methods is verily to look to gather grapes from thistles.

During recent years the phenomena of religious conversion have been studied in a more scientific spirit.* Statistics have been compiled and analysed, the

* The most elaborate study of this character known to the present writer is Mr. G. Stanley Hall’s *Adolescence*, in two vol-

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frames of mind attendant on conversion arranged and studied, with the result that the salient features are to be discerned by all who approach the study of the subject with a little detachment of mind. One outstanding feature of this more scientific enquiry into the nature of conversion has been to demonstrate that it is almost exclusively a phenomenon of puberty and adolescence. Mr. Hall has compiled a lengthy list of the ages at which noted religious characters experienced what is known as conversion.* From this I take the following examples. Religious conviction came to St. Thekla at the age of 18, to St. Agnes at 13, St. Antony at 18, Martin of Tours at 18, Euphrasia at 12, Benedict at 14, Cuthbert at 15, St. Bernard at 12, St. Dominic at 15, St. Collette at 20, St. Catherine at 7, St. Teresa at 12, St. Francis of Sales at 11. In his *Life of Jesus*, Keim also remarks that although some of the disciples may have been married, most of them were probably about twenty years of age.†

Professor Starbuck, placing on one side both historical and anthropological aspects, set himself the task of examining cases of the present day. A paper was sent out asking various questions as to age, state of health, frame of mind, before, during, and following conversion. The questions were sent to male and females. The bulk of the work is, however, terrifying to some, and the cost prohibitive to many. For the general reader of limited leisure and means, Professor Starbuck's smaller volume, *The Psychology of Religion*, presents the salient facts in a brief and satisfactory manner. It is lacking, however, on the anthropological side, a view that is well presented by Dr. Stanley Hall.

* See *Adolescence*, i. p. 528.

† Vol. iii. p. 279.

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male members of different religious denominations. In reply, 1265 papers were filled up and returned. One result of a scrutiny of these returns was to show that the age at which religious conversion was experienced began as early as 7 or 8 years, it increased gradually till 10 or 11, then a more rapid increase till 18 or 20, a decline increasing in rapidity to the age of 25, and its practical disappearance beyond the age of 30. In girls, the period of conversion antedates that of boys by about two years.* Starbuck's conclusion is the perfectly valid one that conversion "belongs almost exclusively to the years between 10 and 25," and is distinctly a phenomenon of adolescence.

This conclusion would be borne out by a study of almost any revival crusade. Thus a few years ago—1904—England received a visit from the American evangelist, Dr. Torrey. At the conclusion of his visit, Sir Robertson Nicol invited opinions from ministers in the towns visited by Torrey, and published the replies in his paper, *The British Weekly*, on October 27. There was no attempt whatever to elicit the ages of the reported converts; the enquiry was directed to the point of ascertaining whether these engineered missions had a beneficial effect on church life, or the reverse. But incidentally the ages of the converts were given in some cases, and one may safely assume that in the reports where no age was mentioned the facts, if disclosed, would not run counter to the generalisation above given. The Rev. T. Towers, Birmingham, noted that 16 out of 25 reported converts were

* *Psychology of Religion*, chap. iii. Hall's figures are given in the second volume of his work, pp. 288-92.

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children. Rev. A. Le Gros, Rugby, reported: "A number of our youngest members, especially amongst the young girls, were amongst those who professed conversion." Rev. H. Singleton, Smethwick, says: "The bulk of the names sent to me were those of children under thirteen years of age." Rev. W. G. Percival, Lozells Congregational Church, says of the 'inquiry' meeting held after the preaching: "The dear little things followed one another for inquiry until the place was a scene of utter confusion." Reports of a similar nature came from other places. The ages were pointed out quite incidentally; conversions of youths of 17 or 18 would not excite comment with these. Were the ages of all given, we should, without doubt, find them fall into line with Starbuck's and Hall's figures.

Professor James quite accepts this view of conversion. The conclusion, he says, "would seem to be the only sound one: conversion is in its essence a normal adolescent phenomenon, incidental to the passage from the child's small universe to the wider intellectual and spiritual life of maturity." * Conversion, in the sense of a change from "the child's small universe" to the large world of human society, may be a normal fact in life, but the really essential fact in the enquiry is not the fact of growth, but growth in a specific direction. Why should this normal change from childhood to maturity be the period during which *religious* conversion is experienced? This question is not only ignored by Professor James, it is made more confused by his method of stating it. Of course, if all people experienced this religious conviction, as all people undergo other changes at adolescence, the

* *Varieties*, p. 199.

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question would be simplified. But this is obviously not the case. A large number of people never experience it so long as they are only brought into contact with ordinary social forces. Special circumstances seem usually to be required to rouse this sense of religious conviction. Nearly every story of conversion turns upon something unusual, unexpected, or dramatic occurring as the exciting cause. The question is, therefore, why should the line of growth, general with all at adolescence, be, in the case of some, diverted into religious channels? A study of the subject from this point of view will, I think, show that conversion is only normal in the sense that in an environment where religious influences are powerful each person is normally exposed to it. Those on whom the religious influence fails to operate experience the change from childhood to adolescence, on to complete maturity, without their nature evincing any lack of completeness. This is the vital truth of which Professor James loses sight, and it is ignored by the vast majority of writers who treat of the subject.

Leaving, for a while, the statistical view of conversion, we may turn to its other aspects. By the more advanced of religious teachers to-day the developments attendant on adolescence are taken as supplying no more than a favourable occasion for directing mind and emotion to definite religious conviction. Here the connection is admittedly more or less accidental. But by the great majority of theologians there is assumed a direct supernatural influence in the states of mind developed during adolescence. In more primitive times the connection is of a yet closer character. Puberty does not at this stage represent what a

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modern would call an awakening of the religious consciousness, but a direct impingement of supernatural influence. From one point of view this conception still remains part of all religious systems, however overlaid it may be with modern ideas concerning sexual maturity. And we have, as a mere matter of historic fact, a whole series of customs commencing with the initiatory customs of savages and running right on to the modern practice of confirmation.

In a previous chapter it was pointed out what is the savage state of mind in relation to the beginnings of sex life as it is manifested in both boys and girls. Adolescence does not, to the primitive mind, serve as an occasion for the creation of an interest in the religious life, it is the sign of direct supernatural influence. One consequence of this is the rise of more or less elaborate ceremonials marking the initiation of youth into direct communion with the spiritual forces that govern tribal life.* Among the Polynesians tatooing forms part of the religious ceremony, and during the time the marks are healing the boy is taboo to the rest of the tribe, owing to his having been touched by the gods. With the North American Indians the following ceremony seems characteristic:—

“When a boy has attained the age of fourteen or fifteen years he absents himself from his father’s lodge, lying on the ground in some remote or secluded spot, crying to the Great Spirit, and fasting the whole time. During this period of peril and abstinence, when he

* An elaborate list of these ceremonies in both the savage and civilised worlds has been compiled by Mr. Hall, ii. chap. xiii.

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falls asleep, the first animal, bird, or reptile, of which he dreams, he considers the Great Spirit has designated for his mysterious protector through life.”* Similar ceremonies are described by Livingstone as existing among the South African tribes. These customs are too widespread, and bear too great a similarity to be described with reference to many races. The variations are unimportant, and such as they are they may be studied in the pages of Hall, Frazer, and numerous other writers. With girls the measures adopted are of a more elaborate character than is the case with boys, because, for reasons already stated, the occurrence of puberty in girls gives the supernatural act a more startling and significant character. Hence the strict seclusion of girls almost universally practised among uncivilised peoples. The precautions taken indicate, as Hartland points out, that they are at this period not merely charged with a malign influence, but are peculiarly susceptible to the onset of powers other than human. And with a modification of language the same idea has persisted down to our time, even amongst those who would reject with indignation the statement that savage ideas concerning the nature of puberty form the real basis of their own mental attitude.

This truth cannot be too strongly emphasised. To ignore it is to miss the whole significance of continuity in human institutions and ideas. The ceremonies described do, of course, gather round the fact of sexual development, but they are not concerned with the sexual life, as such. It is sex as a supernatural manifestation that is the vital feature of the situation. The

* Catlin, *North American Indians*, i. p. 36; see also ii. p. 347.

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governing idea is that puberty marks the direct association of the individual with a spiritual world to the influence of which the functional changes are due. As more accurate conceptions are formed, the older and inaccurate one is not altogether discarded. It has become incarnate in ceremonies, it is part of the traditional psychic life of the people, and the change is one of transformation rather than of eradication. In later cultural stages the physiological nature of the changes are seen, but they are expressed in terms of religion. Such expressions as "the soul's awareness of God," "the dawning consciousness of religion," etc., take the place of the earlier and more direct animistic interpretation. But the essential misinterpretation is retained, disguised from careless or uninformed people by the use of a modified terminology. But in substance the use made of puberty by organised religious forces remains the same throughout. We have the same absence of a rational explanation in both instances. In the one because the state of knowledge makes any other impossible; in the other because tradition, self-interest, and prejudice prevent its use. It is not only in his physical structure that man carries reminiscences of a lower form of life; such reminders are quite as plentiful in his mental life, and in social institutions.

Even with many who perceive the mechanism of conversion its real significance is often missed. For the important thing is, not that some people express the changes incident to adolescence in terms of religion, but that many do not, and also that these find complete satisfaction along lines of æsthetic, intellectual, or social interest. Yet one often finds it assumed

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that the difference between the two classes is explained by assuming a certain lack of 'spiritual' development in the non-religious class. As stated, this is often perilously near to impertinence, and in any case is little better than the language of a charlatan. In the same way, the use of amatory phraseology is often treated as the intrusion of the sex element in a sphere in which it has no proper place. Enough has already been said to furnish good grounds for believing that there is much more than this in the phenomenon, and that one is justified in treating it as symptomatic of the operation of forces of the nature of which the subject is quite unaware. The only explanation of the facts already cited is that a misinterpretation of sexual states lies at the heart of the question. No other hypothesis covers the facts; no other hypothesis will explain why the larger number of people should find complete development in activities that lie outside the field of religion.

How easy it is to see the truth and distort it in the stating may be seen in the following passage:—

"Passing over the fact that the period of adolescence is noticeably a period of 'susceptibility,' we may take as an example of the intrusion or the persistence of the sexual elements in conditions of a non-sexual kind the frequent association of sexual with religious excitement. The appeal made during a religious revival to an unconverted person has psychologically some resemblance to the attempt of the male to overcome the hesitancy of the female. In each case the will has to be set aside, and strong suggestive means are used; and in both cases the appeal is not of the conflict type, but of an intimate, sympathetic, and

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pleading kind. In the effort to make a moral adjustment, it consequently turns out that a technique is used which was derived originally from sexual life, and the use, so to speak, of the sexual machinery for a moral adjustment involves, in some cases, the carrying over into the general process of some sexual manifestations." *

The important questions, why religion should so powerfully appeal to people at adolescence, why its strength should reside so largely in the appeal to feelings associated with sexual development, and why conversion should be so rarely experienced when the period of sexual crisis is past, are quite ignored by Mr. Thomas. Yet it is precisely these questions that call most loudly for answers, and which, I believe, contain the key of the situation.

From many points of view adolescence is perhaps the most important epoch in the life of every individual. It is a time of great and significant organic growth, with the development of new organs and functions, and a corresponding transformation of both the emotional and intellectual output. So far as the brain, the most important organ of all, is concerned, one may safely say that before puberty its main function has been acquisition. After puberty vast tracts of brain tissue become active, and an era of rapid development sets in. There is a rapid growth of new nerve connections which occasions both physiological and psychological unrest.† An important point to bear in mind, also, is that all periods of rapid development involve

* W. I. Thomas, *Sex and Society*, pp. 115-6.

† For a good summary, see Donaldson's *Growth of the Brain*, pp. 21-48.

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conditions of relative instability—one is, in fact, only the obverse side of the other. Dr. Mercier says that with girls “more or less decided manifestations of hysteria are the rule,” and with both sexes this instability involves a peculiar susceptibility to suggestions and impressions. Accompanying the purely physical changes the mental and emotional nature undergoes what is little less than a transformation. There is less direct concern with self, and a more conscious concern with others. There is a craving for sympathy, for fellowship, a tendency to look at oneself from the outside, so to speak, a susceptibility to sights and sounds and impressions that formerly had little influence. Each one is conscious of new desires, new attractions, expressed often only in a vague feeling of unrest, with a desire, half shy because half conscious, for the company of the opposite sex. The childish desire for protection weakens; the more mature desire to protect others begins to express itself.

Now, the whole significance of these changes, physical and mental, is fundamentally sexual and social. Human life, it may be said, has a twofold aspect. As a mere animal organism, there is the perpetuation of the species, which nature secures by the mere force of the sex impulse. As a human being, he is part of a social structure, cell in the social tissue, to use Leslie Stephen's expressive phrase. And in this direction nature secures what is necessary by the presence of impulses and cravings as imperious as, and even more permanent than, those of mere sex. Of course, in practice these two things operate together. By a process of selection, the anti-social character is weeded out, and the two sets of feelings work together in harmony for

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the furtherance and the development of the life of the species. The species is perpetuated in the interests of society; society is perpetuated in the interests of the species. Further, it is part of the natural 'plan' that there shall be developed impulses and capacities suitable to each phase of life as it emerges. Thus it has been shown that the lengthening of infancy—that is, the prolongation of the time during which the young human being is dependent upon its parents for support and protection—is nature's method of developing to a greater degree the capacity of the human animal for more complex adjustment. Instead of being launched on the world with a number of instincts practically fully developed, and so capable of attending to its own needs almost as soon as born, man is born with few instincts, and a great capacity for education enabling him to adjust his conduct to the demands of an environment constantly increasing in complexity. In the same way it has been shown that the instinct for play, practically universal throughout the whole of the animal world, is nature's method of preparing the young for the more serious business of nature.* It is, therefore, only in line with what is found to be true elsewhere that the changes incident to puberty should receive their rational interpretation in the necessities of social life. That these necessities should be met largely by the play of unreasoning impulse is, again, quite in line with what occurs in other directions. The insistent pressure of social life for thousands of generations secures the emergence of needs of the true nature of which the individual may be ignorant. In no other

* See on this subject the two fine works by Karl Groos, *The Play of Animals*, *The Play of Man*.

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way, in fact, could the persistence of the species and of human society be secured.

The whole significance, then, of puberty and adolescence is the entry of the individual into the larger life of the race. It is, too, a statement beyond reasonable dispute that if we eliminate religion altogether from the environment there is not a single feeling experienced at adolescence, not a single intellectual craving, that would not undergo full development and receive complete satisfaction. The proof of the truth of this is that it occurs in a large number of cases. Sacrifice, the craving for the ideal, with every other feeling associated by many with religion, exist in connection with non-religious phases of life. It is idle to argue that some people have a craving for religion, and nothing but religion will satisfy them. Where an individual is in complete ignorance of the nature and significance of his own development, and those around him no better informed; where, moreover, there are others in a position of authority ready with a special interpretation, it is not surprising if the religious explanation is accepted as the genuine and only one. But in reality a sound judgment is formed, not on the basis of what some declare they cannot do without, but on the basis of what others actually do without, and suffer no observable loss in consequence. We do not estimate the value of alcohol on the basis of those who declare they cannot do without it. The true test is found in those who abstain from its use. So, also, in the case of religion. That some, even the majority, declare that religious belief is essential to their welfare, proves little or nothing. Human nature being what it is, and the history of society being what it is, it would be surpris-

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ing were it otherwise. There is much greater significance in so large a number of people finding complete satisfaction in purely secular activities.

After what has been said of the misinterpretation of mental and emotional states in terms of religious belief, it is not surprising to find a writer, a clergyman, and one with experience of growing boys, express himself as follows:—

“ My experience confirms the opinion of the psychologists that most boys of the public school age have a strongly mystical tendency. This is to be expected, on account of the great emotional development of that period of life. But it is obscured by the fact that the boy is both unwilling and unable to give any verbal expression to this tendency. He is unwilling because it is something very new and curious in his experience; he is often a little frightened of it, and he is exceedingly frightened of other people's contempt for it. And he is unable, because the words he is accustomed to use are valueless in this connection, and he feels priggish if he tries to use others. . . . But, though unexplained, the mystical tendency is there, and should be appealed to and developed.”*

Now, clearly, all that can be reasonably meant by saying that a boy of, apparently, from 12 to 16 has a mystical tendency, is that the physiological changes incident to puberty are accompanied by a mass of feeling of a vague and formless character. Naturally, his boyish experience is unable to furnish him with the means of giving adequate expression to his feelings. That can only come with the experience of maturity. And with equal inevitability he is at the mercy

* W. Temple, *Repton School Sermons*.

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of the explanation furnished him by those whom he regards as his teachers and guides. When he is told that this element of 'mysticism' is the awakening of religion in his soul, he accepts the explanation precisely as he accepts explanations of other things. That this 'mystical tendency' should be appealed to and developed is a statement open to very great doubt. It should rather be explained, not perhaps in a brutally frank manner, but in a way that would lead the boy to see himself as an organic part of society, with definite duties and obligations. If this were done, adolescence might provide us with the raw material for a much greater number of useful and intelligent citizens than it does at present. The true nature of the process, so elaborately misunderstood by Dr. Temple, is clearly outlined by Dr. Mercier:—

"In connection with normal development, a large body of vague and formless feeling arises, and, until experience gives it shape, the possessor remains ignorant of the source and nature of the feeling. If the circumstances are appropriate for the natural outlet and expression of the activities, they are expressed in affection, and are a source of health and strength to the possessor. But if no such outlet exists, the vague, voluminous, formless feelings are referred to an occasion that is vague, voluminous, and wanting in definite form, they are ascribed to the direct influence of the Deity, and assume a place in religious emotion."*

Leaving this aspect of the subject for a time, let us look more closely at the process of conversion. It has already been pointed out that one great feature of adolescence is susceptibility to impressions and sugges-

* *Sanity and Insanity*, p. 281.

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tions. One is not surprised to find, therefore, that in Starbuck's collection of cases 34 per cent. of the females and 29 per cent. of the males described their conversion as being directly due to imitation, social pressure, and example. If we were to add to these the cases where unconscious imitation and suggestion is at work, the proportion would be much greater. Religion, like dress, has its modes, and imitation will occur in the one direction as readily as in the other. Nothing is more striking in the records of conversion than the monotony of the language used to describe the feelings experienced. It is exactly as though the converts had been learning a regular catechism, as in a way they have been. Young boys and girls will confess their sinful state in language identical with that used by one who has actually lived a career of vice and crime. Others of an aggressively commonplace character will use the language of exalted mysticism suitable to an Augustine or a Jacob Boehme. In these cases we have not identity of feeling finding expression in identity of language; it is pure imitation and suggestion without the least regard to the fitness of the language employed.

The full power of suggestion would be more fitly considered in connection with waves of religious feeling that have assumed an epidemic form; but it will not be out of place here to call attention to this factor in such a recent case as the outbreaks in Wales under the leadership of persons such as Evan Roberts. Quite apart from the suggestion and imitation operating in the gatherings themselves, it is plain that many went to the meetings quite prepared to act in accordance with what had gone before. Newspapers had publish-

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ed elaborate reports of the 'scenes,' certain manifestations were recognised as signs of the "workings of the Spirit," with the result that all these operated as powerful suggestions, particularly with those of a hysterical disposition. And behind this particular revival there were the traditions of other revivals, all of which had created a heritage as coercive as any purely social tradition. A crowd of people in a state of eager expectancy, exposed to the assaults of a preacher skilled in rousing their emotion to fever pitch, is naturally ready to see and hear things that none would see and hear in their normal moments. No better field for the study of crowd psychology, particularly at the point at which it merges into the abnormal, could be imagined than the ordinary revival.

In America these revival outbreaks seem to assume a much more extravagant form than with us. Mr. Stanley Hall, for example, thus describes a Kentucky camp meeting in which the prevailing form of spiritual manifestation was that of 'jerking.' Quoting from an eye-witness, he says:—

"The crowd swarmed all night round the preacher, singing, shouting, laughing, some plunging wildly over stumps and benches into the forest, shouting 'Lost, lost!' others leaping and bounding about like live fish out of water; others rolling over and over on the ground for hours; others lying on the ground and talking when they could not move; and yet others beating the ground with their heels. As the excitement increased, it grew more morbid and took the form of 'jerkings,' or in others the holy laugh. The jerks began with the head, which was thrown violently from side to side so rapidly that the features were blurred

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and the hair almost seemed to snap, and when the sufferer struck an obstacle and fell he would bounce about like a ball. Saplings were sometimes cut breast high for the people to jerk by. In one place the earth about the roots of one of them was kicked about as though by the feet of a horse stamping flies. One sufferer mounted his horse to ride away when the jerks threw him to the earth, whence he rose a Christian. A lad, who feigned illness to stay away, was dragged there by the spirit and his head dashed against the wall till he had to pray. A sceptic who cursed and swore was crushed by a falling tree. Men fancied themselves dogs, and gathered round a tree barking and 'treeing the devil.' They saw visions and dreamed dreams, and as the revival waned, it left a crop of nervous and hysterical disorders in its wake." *

We have nothing quite so extreme as this in British revivals, but the home phenomena are not substantially different in nature. A medical observer of some of the earliest Methodist revivals thus describes the symptoms of those who were subject to 'divine' seizures under the influence of Wesley and his immediate followers:—

"There came on first a feeling of faintness, with rigor and a sense of weight at the pit of the stomach; soon after which the patient cried out as though in the agonies of labour. The convulsions then began, first showing themselves in the muscles of the eyelids, though the eyes themselves were fixed and staring. The most frightful contortions of the countenance followed, and the convulsions now took their course downwards, so that the muscles of the trunk and neck

* *Adolescence*, ii. pp. 286-7.

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were affected, causing a sobbing respiration, which was performed with great effort. Tremors and agitations ensued, and the patients screamed out violently, and tossed their heads from side to side. As the complaint increased, it seized the arms, and its victims beat their breasts, clasped their hands, and made all sorts of strange noises."

To the non-medical religious observer the scenes produced a different impression, thus:—

"When the power of religion began to be spoken of, the presence of God really filled the place... The greatest number of them who cried or fell were men; but some women and several children felt the power of the same Almighty Spirit, and seemed just sinking into hell. This occasioned a mixture of sounds, some shrieking, some roaring aloud. The most general was a loud breathing, like that of people half strangled and gasping for life; and, indeed, almost all the cries were like those of human creatures dying in bitter anguish.... I stood on a pew seat, as did a young man in the opposite pew, an able-bodied, fresh, healthy countryman; but in a moment, while he seemed to think of nothing less, down he dropt with a violence inconceivable. The adjoining pews seemed shook with his fall. I heard afterwards the stamping of his feet ready to break the boards as he lay in strong convulsions at the bottom of the pew.... Among the children who felt the arrows of the Almighty, I saw a sturdy boy, about eight years old, who roared above his fellows, and seemed, in his agony, to struggle with the strength of a grown man. His face was red as scarlet; and almost all on whom God laid His hand turned either very red or almost black."*

* Southey's *Life of Wesley*, chap. xxiv.

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In other instances connected with the same movement, a girl is described as "lying on the floor as one dead." One woman "tore up the ground with her hands, filling them with dust and with the hard-trodden grass"; another "roared and screamed in dreadful agony." A child, seven years old, "saw visions, and astonished the neighbours with her awful manner of relating them." John Wesley personally interviewed a number of the people seized in this manner, and was quite convinced of the supernatural nature of the attacks. He said that he had "generally observed more or less of these outward symptoms to attend the beginning of a general work of God," although he admitted that in some cases "Satan mimicked God's work in order to discredit the whole work." But whether of God or Satan there was no question of their supernatural character. Moreover, whatever may be one's opinion of these outbreaks, there is one fact that stands out clear and indisputable. This is that the Methodist revival owed a great deal of its vitality—as is also the case with other religious movements—to phenomena of a distinctly pathologic nature. Subtract from these movements all phenomena of the class indicated, and such phrases as 'the revival fire' become meaningless. Right through history religious conviction has been gained in innumerable cases by the operation of factors that a more accurate knowledge finds can be explained without any reference whatever to supernatural forces.

Lest the above examples be dismissed as belonging to an old order of things, I subjoin the following account—from a missionary—of a recent revival scene in India:—

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"There were people . . . on the floor fairly writhing over the realisation of sin as it came over them. . . . Saturday we were favoured with a wonderful manifestation of the Spirit. One of the older girls, who had had a remarkable experience, went into a trance, with her head thrown back, her arms folded, and motionless, except for a slight movement of her foot. She seemed to be seeing something wonderful, for she would marvel at it, and then laugh excitedly. . . . One girl rushed to the back of the vestibule and, lying across a bench, with her head and hands against the wall, she fairly writhed in agony for two hours before peace came to her."*

I do not know on what grounds we are justified in calling civilised people who chronicle these outbreaks as "a wonderful manifestation of the Spirit." Civilised in other respects, in relation to other matters, they may be. Civilised in relation to this particular matter they certainly are not. Their viewpoint is precisely that of the lowest tribe of savages. Savages, indeed, could not do more; our 'civilised' missionaries do no less. Tylor well says that "such descriptions carry us far back in the history of the human mind, showing modern men still in ignorant sincerity producing the very fits and swoons to which for untold ages savage tribes have given religious import. These manifestations in modern Europe indeed form part of a revival of religion, the religion of mental disease."†

The truth is that the appeals usually made to induce conversion, and the methods adopted, tend to develop a morbid state of mind, which very easily

* From *The Examiner* of September 6, 1906, cited by Cutten, p. 185. † *Primitive Culture*, ii. p. 422.

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passes into the pathological. A too insistent habit of introspection is always dangerous, and the danger is heightened when it takes the form of religious brooding. In Dr. Starbuck's collection of cases, seventy-five per cent. of the males and sixty per cent. of the females confessed to feelings of depression, anxiety, and sadness before conversion. This may be attributed partly to the harping upon a conviction of sinfulness, which in itself is wholly of an unhealthy character. It does not indicate moral health, and it is very far from indicating physiological health. The following confessions are pertinent, and will illustrate both points. I give in brackets the ages of the subjects where stated:—

"I felt the wrath of God resting on me. I called on Him for aid, and felt my sins forgiven" (13).

"I couldn't eat, and would lie awake all night."

"Often, very often, I cried myself to sleep" (19).

"Hymns would sound in my ears as if sung" (10).

"I had visions of Christ saying to me, Come to Me, My child" (15).

"Just before conversion I was walking along a pathway, thinking of religious matters, when suddenly the word H-e-l-l was spelled out five yards ahead of me" (17).

"I felt a touch of the Divine One, and a voice said 'Thy sins are forgiven thee; arise and go in peace'" (12).

"The thoughts of my condition were terrible" (13).

"For three months it seemed as if God's Spirit had withdrawn from me. Fear took hold of me. For a week I was on the border of despair" (16).

"A sense of sinfulness and estrangement from God grew daily" (15).

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"Everything went wrong with me; it felt like Sunday all the time" (12).

"I felt that something terrible was going to happen" (14).

"I fell on my face by a bench and tried to pray. Every time I would call on God something like a man's hand would strangle me by choking. I thought I would surely die if I could not get help. I made one final effort to call on God for mercy if I did strangle and die, and the last I remember at that time was falling back on the ground with that unseen hand on my throat. When I came to myself there was a crowd around praising God."

A crowd around praising God! For all substantial purposes this last might be the description of a state of affairs in Central Africa instead of an occurrence in a country that claims to be civilised. It is not surprising that so great an authority as Sir T. S. Clouston gives an emphatic warning against revival services and unusual religious meetings, which should "on no account be attended by persons with weak heads, excitable dispositions, and neurotic constitutions."* Unfortunately it is precisely these classes for whom they possess the greatest attractions, and from whom the larger number of chronicled cases are drawn. The excitement of the revival meeting is as fatal an attraction to them as the dram is to the confirmed alcoholic; and if the ill-consequences are neither so immediately discernible nor as repulsive in character, they are none the less present in a large number of cases. The emotional strain to which the organism is subjected occurs, as the ages of the converts show, precisely at

* *Clinical Lectures*, p. 39.

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the time when it is least able to bear it safely. The main characteristic of adolescence is instability, physical, emotional, and intellectual. It is a time of stress and strain, of the formation of new feelings and associations and desires that crave for expression and gratification. The instability of the organic conditions is evidenced by the large proportion of nervous disorders that occur during adolescence. Adolescent insanity is a well-known form of mania, although it is usually of brief duration. Sir T. S. Clouston, in his *Neuroses of Development*, gives a long list of complaints attendant on adolescence, and Sir W. R. Gowers, dealing with 1450 cases of epilepsy, points out that "three-quarters of the cases of epilepsy begin under twenty years, and nearly half (46 per cent.) between ten and twenty, the maximum being at fourteen, fifteen, and sixteen." Of hysteria, the same writer points out that of the total cases 50 per cent. occurs from ten to twenty years of age, 20 per cent. from twenty to thirty, and only 10 per cent. from thirty to forty.*

The peculiar danger, then, of the modern appeal for conversion is that it is couched in a form likely to do the minimum of good and the maximum of harm. Where religion exists as a normally operative factor of the environment—as in lower stages of culture—the danger is avoided, because no special machinery is required to bring about religious conviction. The general social life secures this. But at a later stage, when the religious and secular aspects of life become separated, with a growing preponderance of the latter, religion must be, as it were, specially and forcibly

* *Manual of Diseases of the Nervous System*, 1893, pp. 732 and 785.

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introduced. Whether for good or ill, it is a disturbing force. It strives to divert the developing organic energies into a new channel. To effect this, it plays upon the emotions to an altogether dangerous extent, in complete ignorance of the nature of the passions excited. In the older form of the religious appeal, that in which fear was the chief emotion aroused, it is now generally conceded that the consequences were wholly bad. But under any form the emotional appeal is fraught with danger, since the tendency is for it to bring out unsuspected weaknesses in other directions. Sir W. R. Gowers wisely points out that "mental emotion—fright, excitement, anxiety—is the most potent cause of epilepsy," which is accounted for by bearing in mind "the profoundly disturbing effect of alarm on the nervous system, deranging as it does almost every function of the nervous system." Persons with predispositions to nervous disorders may pass with safety through the period of adolescence so long as their circumstances provide opportunities for healthy occupation with no undue emotional strain. But let the former be lacking, and the latter danger is always present. The hidden weakness develops, and injury more or less permanent follows. There is hardly a qualified medical authority in the country who would deny the truth of what has been said, although many do not care to speak out in relation to religious matters. But all would doubtless agree with Dr. Mercier that "every revival is attended by its crop of cases of insanity, which are the more numerous as the revival is more fervent and long continued." *

Something must be said on the moral character of

* *Sanity and Insanity*, p. 282.

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conversions in general. This is, naturally, greatly exaggerated, often deliberately so. In the first place, confessions of 'sinfulness' in a pre-conversion state, when made by youths of both sexes, may be dismissed as quite worthless. They are merely using the language placed in their mouths by professional evangelists, and the similarity of the confessions carry their own condemnation. Leading a sinful, or even a vicious life, usually means no more than visiting a theatre, or a music hall, or playing cards, or non-attendance at church, or not troubling about religious doctrines. Very often the vague feeling of restlessness incident to adolescence is interpreted as due to sin or estrangement from God, and after conversion the convert is, for purposes of self-glorification, given to magnify the benefits and comforts derived from his religious convictions. The magnitude of the change increases the value of the convert, and with well-known characters there has been as great an exaggeration of vices before conversion as of virtues subsequently. The way in which evangelical Christianity has created a life of the wildest dissipation for the earlier years of John Bunyan is an instructive instance of this procedure.

So far as older converts are concerned, everyone of balanced judgment will regard stories of conversion from extreme vice to extreme virtue with the greatest suspicion. Character does not change suddenly, although there may be cases of 'sports' in the moral world as elsewhere. Where some modification of conduct, but hardly of character, results, the machinery is very obvious, and does not in the least necessitate an appeal to the intrusion of a supernatural influence for an explanation. The religious gathering opens—

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as any non-religious meeting may open—a new circle of associates with different ideals and standards of value. So long as the newcomer is desirous of retaining the respect of his fresh associates, so long he will try to act as they act and think as they think. There will be a change of conduct, but not, as I have said, of character. Those who look closely will find the same character still active. The mean character remains mean, the untruthful one remains untruthful. The only difference is that these qualities will be expressed in a different form. Moreover, the same thing may be seen occurring quite apart from religion. Every association of men and women exerts precisely the same influence. In the army, a regiment that has a reputation for steadiness and sobriety develops these qualities in all who enter it. Regiments with a reputation for opposite qualities do not fail to convert newcomers. A workshop, a club, a profession, exerts a precisely similar influence. One man finds inspiration in the Bible and another in the Newgate Calendar. A man will usually be guided by the ideals of his associates, whether these ideals be those of a thieves' kitchen or of a philanthropic institution. This only means that each individual is subject to the influence of the group spirit. For good and evil this is one of the deepest and most pregnant facts of human nature. The utilisation and distortion of this fact in the interests of religious organisations has served to prevent its general recognition and the wise use of it by the community at large.

Finally, it has to be borne in mind, in view of the data given above, that conversion is experienced by the individual at that period of life when the more social side of human nature is beginning to find ex-

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pression. In this way the natural growth from the small world of childhood to the larger world of adult humanity is taken advantage of by religion, and the process of inevitable growth is attributed to the influence of religious belief. In itself the phenomenon is in no degree religious, but wholly social. The process is well enough described by Starbuck in the following passage—although there are certain quite unnecessary theological implications:—

“Conversion is the surrender of the personal will to be guided by the larger forces of which it is a part. These two aspects are often mingled. In both there is much in common. There is a sudden revelation and recognition of a higher order than that of the personal will. The sympathies follow the direction of the new insight, and the convert transfers the centre of life and activity from the part to the whole. With new insight comes new beauty. Beauty and worth awaken love—love for parents, kindred, kind, society, cosmic order, truth, and spiritual life. The individual learns to transfer himself from a centre of self-activity into an organ of revelation of universal being, and to live a life of affection for and oneness with the larger life outside. As a necessary condition of the spiritual awakening is the birth of fresh activity and of a larger self-consciousness, which often assert themselves as the dominant element in consciousness.”*

Adolescence is the golden period of life, because it is the age in which the formative influences effect their strongest and most permanent impressions. But this susceptibility, while pregnant with promise, is because of this susceptibility likewise fraught with the poss-

* *Psychology of Religion*, pp. 146-7.

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ibilities of danger. The developing qualities of mind need to be wisely and carefully guided; and it is little short of criminal that at this critical juncture so many young people should be handed over to the ignorant ministrations of professional evangelism. The true sociological significance of the development is ignored, and it is small wonder that, having wasted this impressionable period, so many people should go through life with a quite rudimentary sense of social responsibility and duty. An American author, speaking of the connection between certain brutal manifestations in social life in the United States and religious teaching, says:—

“It is well known that lynching in the South is carried on largely by the ignorant and baser elements of the white population. It is also well known that the chief method of religious influence and training of the black man and the ignorant white man is impulsive and emotional revivalism. It is a highly dangerous situation, and deserves the earnest consideration of the ecclesiastical statesmen of all denominations which work in the South. It will be impossible to protect that part of the nation, or any other, from the epidemic madness of the lynching mob if the seeds of it are sown in the sacred soil of religion. . . . Their preachers are great ‘soul-savers,’ but they lack the practical sense to build up their emotionalised converts into anything that approaches a higher life.”*

The truth of this passage has a very wide implication. It is not alone true that so long as the lower kind of revivalism is encouraged, we are unconsciously perpetuating certain very ugly manifestations of

* *Primitive Traits in Religious Revivals.*

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social life; it is also true that while we give a supernaturalistic interpretation of phenomena that are wholly physiological and sociological in character, we can never make the most of the human material we possess. On the one side we have a deplorable encouragement of unhealthy emotionalism, and on the other a sheer misdirection and misuse of human faculty. The increase of self-consciousness, the craving for sympathy and communion with one's fellows, the impulse to service in the common life of the State, have no genuine connection with religion, although all these qualities are classified as religious, and are utilised by religious organisations. Actually and fundamentally they belong to the social side of human nature. As our hands are developed for grasping, and the various organs of the body for their respective functions, so mental and emotional qualities are developed in their due course for a rational social life. Biologically and psychologically, male and female are at adolescence entering into a deeper and more enduring relationship with the life of the race. There is no other meaning to the process.

Naturally enough, the vast majority of people express their developing nature in accordance with the fashion of their environment. If this environmental influence were rationally non-religious, the language would be that of a non-religious philosophy. As, however, supernaturalism, in some form or other, is still a potent force we have a contrary result. It is only here and there that one is found with the inclination or the wit to analyse his or her impulses, and few possess enough knowledge to make the analysis profitable. There is no wonder that concerning many of the most

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important phenomena of human life we are still little above the level of the fetish worshipper. We may have a more elaborate phraseology, but the old ideas are still operative. The consequence is that each newcomer finds certain ideas and forms of speech ready for his acceptance, and is handed over, bound hand and foot, to influences that are the least capable of sane direction. We do not merely sacrifice our first-born; we immolate the whole of our progeny. The ignorant past plays into the hands of the designing present; the present conspires with the past to rob the future of the good that might result from the growth of a wiser and a better race.

Were society really enlightened and genuinely civilised, the truth of what has been said would be recognised as soon as stated. It would, indeed, be unnecessary to labour what would then be a generally recognised truth. But the mass of the people are not genuinely enlightened, our civilisation is largely a veneer, and numerous agencies prevent our reaping the full benefit of our available knowledge. Thus it happens that in place of an explanation of human qualities in terms of biologic and social evolution, we find current an explanation that is based upon pre-scientific ideas. Because our less instructed ancestors accounted for various manifestations of human qualities as due to a supernatural influence, we continue to perpetuate the delusion. We teach youth to express itself in terms of supernaturalism, and then treat the language and the fact as inseparable. In this respect, sociology is passing through a phase from which some of the sciences have finally emerged. In physics and astronomy, for instance, the fact has been separated from the su-

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pernatural explanation, and shown to be independent of it. An exploitation of social life in the interests of supernaturalism is still in active operation. It is this that is really the central truth of the situation. And in ignoring this truth we expose a growing generation to the worst possible of educative influences, at a time when a wiser control would be preparing it for an intelligent participation in the serious and enduring work of social organisation.

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UNDER PRESSURE OF SCIENTIFIC ANALYSIS the old distinction between the individual and society bids fair to break down, or to maintain itself as no more than a convenience of classification. It is now being recognised that a society is something more than a mere aggregate of self-contained units, and that the individual is quite inexplicable apart from the social group. It is the latter which gives the former his individuality. His earliest impressions are derived from the life of the group, and as he grows so he comes more and more under the influence of social forces. The consequence is that the key to a very large part of the phenomena of human nature is to be found in a study of group life. We may abstract the individual for purposes of examination, much as a physiologist may study the heart or the liver apart from the body from which it has been taken. But ultimately it is in relation to the whole that the true significance and value of the part is to be discerned.

In this corporate life imitation and suggestion play a powerful part. With children, by far the larger part of their education consists of sheer imitation, nor do adults ever develop beyond its influence. Suggestion is a factor that is more operative in youth and maturity than in early childhood, and is exhibited in a thousand and one subtle and unexpected ways. Both these forces are essential to an orderly, and to a progressive, social life; but they may just as easily become the cause of movements that are retrogressive, and even anti-social in character. An epidemic of suicide or of murder is as easily initiated as an epidemic of philanthropy. Let a person commit suicide in a striking

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ing and unusual manner, and there will soon be others following his example. Given a favourable environment, there is no idea, however unreal, that will not find advocates; no example, however strange or disgusting, that will not find imitators. The more uniform the society, the more powerful the suggestion, the easier the imitation. That is why a crowd, acting as a crowd, is nearly always made up of people drawn from the same social stratum, each unit already familiar with certain ideals and belief. Under such conditions a crowd will assume all the characteristics of a psychological entity. As Gustave Le Bon has pointed out, a crowd will do collectively what none of its constituent units would ever dream of doing singly.* It becomes capable of deeds of heroism or of savage cruelty. It will sacrifice itself or others with indifference. Above all, the mere fact of moving in a mass gives the individual a sense of power, a certainty of being in the right that he can—save under exceptional circumstances—never acquire while alone. The intellect is subdued, inhibition is inoperative, the instincts are given free play, and their movement is determined in turn by suggestions not unlike those with which a trained hypnotist influences his subject.

In the phenomena of contagion words and symbols play a powerful part. They are both a rallying-point and an outlet for the emotions of a crowd. These words or symbols may be wholly incongruous with the real needs of a people, but provided they are sufficiently familiar they will serve their purpose. And the more primitive the type of mind represented by the mass of the people the more powerfully these sym-

* See *The Psychology of Peoples* and *The Crowd*.

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bols operate. Shakespeare's portrayal of the crowd in *Julius Cæsar* remains eternally true. The skilled orator, playing on old feelings, using familiar terms, and invoking familiar ideas, finds a crowd quite plastic to his hands. It is for these reasons that there is so keen a struggle with political and social parties for a monopoly of good rallying cries, and a readiness to fix objectionable titles on their opponents. Patriotism, Little Englander, Jingo, The Church in Danger, Godless Education, etc. etc. Causes are materially helped or injured by these means. There is little or no consideration given to their justice or reasonableness; it is the image aroused that does the work.

Psychological epidemics may in some cases be justly called normal in character. That is, they depend upon factors that are always in operation and which form a part of every social structure. A war fever or a commercial panic falls under this head. In other instances they depend upon abnormal conditions, upon the workings, perhaps, of some obscure nervous disease, and are of a pathological description. In yet other cases they represent a mixture of both. In such cases, for example, as that of the Medieval Flagellants or of the Dancing Mania, the presence of pathological elements is unmistakable. But neither of these epidemics could have occurred without a certain social preparation, and unless they had called into operation those principles of crowd psychology to which science has within recent years turned its attention, and which are normal factors in every society. These three classes of epidemics may be found in connection with subjects other than religious, but I am at present concerned with them only in that relation, and to point out that,

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in spite of their undesirable or admittedly pathologic character, they have yet served to keep supernaturalism alive and active.

During the Christian period of European history by far the most important of all epidemics, as it was indeed the earliest, was monasticism. This takes front rank because of its extent, the degree to which it prepared the ground for subsequent outbreaks, and because of its indirect, and, I think, too little noticed, social consequences. It may safely be said that no other movement has so powerfully affected European society as has the monasticism of the early Christian centuries. It cannot, of course, be urged that Christianity originated monasticism. India and Egypt had its ascetic practices and celibate priesthood long before the birth of Christianity, and indeed gave Christianity the pattern from which to work. But the main stream of social life remained unaffected to any considerable extent by this asceticism. The social and domestic virtues received full recognition from the upholders of the monastic life, and there is no evidence that asceticism ever assumed an epidemic form. It has often been the lot of the Christian Church to give a more intense expression to religious tendencies already existing, and this was so in the case before us. At any rate, it was left for the Christian Church to give to monasticism the character of an epidemic, to treat the purely social and domestic virtues as a positive hindrance to the religious life, seriously to disturb national well-being, and to come perilously near destroying civilisation.

The origin of ascetic practices has already been indicated in a previous chapter. It has there been

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pointed out that the deliberate torture of mind and body arose from the belief that the induced states brought man into direct communion with supernatural powers, and that this element has continued in almost every religion in the world. Says Baring-Gould:—

“The ascetic instinct is intimately united with the religious instinct. There is scarcely a religion of ancient and modern times, certain forms of Protestantism excepted, that does not recognise asceticism as an element in its system. . . . Brahminism has its order of ascetics. . . . Mohammedanism has its fakirs, subduing the flesh by their austerities, and developing the spirit by their contemplation and prayers. Fasting and self-denial were observances required of the Greeks, who desired initiation into the mysteries. . . . The scourge was used before the altars of Artemis and over the tomb of Pelops. The Egyptian priests passed their novitiate in the deserts, and when not engaged in their religious functions were supposed to spend their time in caves. They renounced all commerce with the world, and lived in contemplation, temperance, and frugality, and in absolute poverty. . . . The Peruvians were required to fast before sacrificing to the gods, and to bind themselves by vows of chastity and abstinence from nourishing food. . . . There were ascetic orders for old men and nunneries for widows among the Totomacs, monastic orders among Toltecs dedicated to the service of Quetzalcoatl, and others among the Aztecs consecrated to Tezcatlipoca.*

It was argued by Bingham, a learned eighteenth-century ecclesiastical historian, that although ascetic-

* *Origin and Development of Religious Belief*, i. pp. 343-8.

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ism was known and practised in individual cases from the earliest period of Christian history, it did not establish itself within the Church until the fourth century. It is not a matter of great consequence to the subject under discussion whether this be so or not. It is at least certain that Christian teaching contained within itself all the elements for such a development, which was bound, sooner or later, to transpire. The antithesis between the flesh and the spirit, the conception of the world as given over to Satan, the ascetic teaching of Paul, with the value placed upon suffering and privation as spiritually disciplinary forces, could not but create in a society permeated with a special type of supernaturalism, that asceticism which became so marked a feature of medieval Christianity. And it is certain also that in no other instance has asceticism proved itself so grave a danger to social order and security. Allowing for what Lecky calls the 'glaring mendacity' of the lives of the saints, a description that applies more or less to all the ecclesiastical writings of the early centuries, it is evident that the number of monks, their ferocity, and general practices, were enough to constitute a grave social danger. It is said that St. Pachomius had 7000 monks under his direct rule; that in the time of Jerome 50,000 monks gathered together at the Easter festival; that one Egyptian city mustered 20,000 nuns and 10,000 monks, and that the monastic population of Egypt at one time equalled in number the rest of the inhabitants. At a later date, within fifty years of its institution, the Franciscan Order possessed 8000 houses, with 200,000 members. In the twelfth century the Cluniacs had 2000 monasteries in France. In England, as late as 1546, Hooper,

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afterwards Bishop of Gloucester, declared that there were no less than 10,000 nuns in England. Every country in Europe possessed a larger or smaller army of men and women whose ideals were in direct conflict with nearly all that makes for a sane and progressive civilisation.

The general character of the monk during the full swing of the ascetic epidemic has been well sketched by Lecky. His summary here will save a more extended exposition:—

“There is perhaps no phase in the moral history of mankind of a deeper and more painful interest than this ascetic epidemic. A hideous, sordid, and emaciated maniac, without knowledge, without patriotism, without natural affection, passing his life in a long routine of useless and atrocious self-torture, and quailing before the ghastly phantoms of his delirious brain, had become the ideal of the nations which had known the writings of Plato and Cicero, and the lives of Socrates and Cato. For about two centuries, the hideous maceration of the body was regarded as the highest proof of excellence. St. Jerome declares, with a thrill of admiration, how he had seen a monk, who for thirty years had lived exclusively on a small portion of barley bread and of mouldy water; another who lived in a hole and never ate more than five figs for his daily repast; a third who cut his hair only on Easter Sunday, who never washed his clothes, who never changed his tunic till it fell to pieces, who starved himself till his eyes grew dim, and his skin like a pumice stone. . . . For six months, it is said, St. Macarius of Alexandria slept in a marsh, and exposed his naked body to the stings of venomous flies.

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... His disciple, St. Eusebius, carried one hundred and fifty pounds of iron, and lived for three years in a dried-up well. ... St. Besarion spent forty days and nights in the middle of thorn bushes, and for forty days and nights never lay down when he slept. ... Some saints, like St. Marcian, restricted themselves to one meal a day, so small that they continually suffered the pangs of hunger. ... Some of the hermits lived in deserted dens of wild beasts, others in dried-up wells, while others found a congenial resting-place among the tombs. Some disdained all clothes, and crawled abroad like the wild beasts, covered only by their matted hair. The cleanliness of the body was regarded as a pollution of the soul, and the saints who were most admired had become one hideous mass of clotted filth. St. Athanasius relates with enthusiasm how St. Antony, the patriarch of monachism, had never, to extreme old age, been guilty of washing his feet. ... St. Abraham, the hermit, however, who lived for fifty years after his conversion, rigidly refused from that date to wash either his face or his feet. ... St. Ammon had never seen himself naked. A famous virgin, named Sylvia, though she was sixty years old, and though bodily sickness was a consequence of her habits, resolutely refused, on religious principles, to wash any part of her body except her fingers. St. Euphraxia joined a convent of one hundred and thirty nuns, who never washed their feet, and who shuddered at the mention of a bath." *

* *History of European Morals*, ii. pp. 107-10. For a careful description of the monastic discipline in its more normal aspects, see Bingham's Works, vol. ii. bk. vi. Gibbon gives his usual brilliant summary of the movement in chapter xxxvii. of the *Decline and Fall*. A host of facts similar to those cited by Lecky

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It is difficult to realise what it is exactly that some writers have in their minds when they praise the purity of the ascetic ideal, and lament its degradation as though society lost something of great value thereby. The examples cited realised that ideal as well as it could be realised, and its anti-social character is unmistakable. If it is intended to imply that an element of self-denial or self-discipline is essential to healthy development, that is admitted, but this is not the ascetic ideal; it is that of temperance as taught by the best of the ancient philosophers. What the ascetic aimed at was not self-development, but self-suppression. The discipline of the monk was only another name for the cultivation of a frame of mind unhealthy and anti-social. Eventually, the rapidity with which this mania spread, the fact that for several centuries it raged as a veritable epidemic, carried with it the germs of a corrective. The more numerous monks and nuns became, the more certain it became that many of them would develop passions and propensities they professed to despise. The love of ease and wealth, the lust of power and pride of place, was sure to find expression, and if by the degradation of the ascetic ideal is meant the fact that the preachers of poverty, and humility, and meekness, became the wealthiest, the most powerful, the most corrupt, and the most tyrannical order in Christendom, the reason is that not even monasticism could prevent ordinary

will be found in *The Book of Paradise*, 2 vols., trans. by Wallis Budge. Lea's *History of Sacerdotal Celibacy* gives the classical and authoritative account of the moral consequences of the practice of celibacy. For a vivid picture of the psychology of the ascetic, see Flaubert's great romance, *St. Antony*.

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human passions from finding expression. They might be suppressed in the case of a few; it became impossible with a multitude. That they found expression in so disastrous a form was due to the fact that the disciplinary agent of these passions, a developed social consciousness, played so small a part in the life of the monk.

It is no part of my present purpose to trace the full consequences of the ascetic epidemic. Some of these consequences, however, have a more or less direct bearing upon this enquiry, and it is necessary to say something upon them. One enduring and inevitable consequence of monasticism has not, I think, been adequately noted by many writers. This is its influence on the ideal of marriage, on the family, and on the domestic virtues. In India and Egypt celibacy had been closely associated with the religious life, but the ascetic was regarded as a man peculiarly apart from his fellows, and the family continued to be held in great honour, even by religious writers. Christianity provided for the first time a body of writers who made a direct attack upon marriage as obstructing the supreme duty of spiritual development. The Rev. Principal Donaldson, in his generally excellent book on *Woman*, professes to find some difficulty in accounting for the growth among the early Christians of the feeling in favour of celibacy. He remarks that "no one with the New Testament as his guide could venture to assert that marriage was wrong." Not wrong, certainly; but anyone with the New Testament before him would be justified in asserting marriage to be inferior to celibacy. It is at most taken for granted; it is neither commended nor recommended, and of its

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social value there is never a glimpse. And there is much on the other side. Paul's teaching is strongly in favour of celibacy, and marriage is only advised to avoid a greater evil. In the Book of *Revelation* there is a reference to the 144,000 saints who wait on "the Lamb," and who "were not defiled with women, but were virgins." Certainly the New Testament does not condemn marriage, but it is idle to pretend that those who preached the celibate ideal failed to find therein a warranty for their teaching.

The historic fact is, however, that the early Christian leaders were, in the main, ardent advocates of celibacy. The social importance of marriage being ignored, its functions became those of ministering to sexual passion and the perpetuation of the race. In view of the supposed approaching end of the world, the desirability of this last was questioned, and in the name of purity the former was strongly denounced. It is from these points of view that Tertullian describes children as "burdens which are to most of us perilous as being unsuitable to faith," and wives as women of the second degree of modesty who had fallen into wedlock. Jerome said that marriage was at best a sin, and all that could be done was to excuse and purify it. Epiphanius said that the Church was based upon virginity as upon a corner-stone. Augustine was of opinion that celibates would shine in heaven like dazzling stars. Married people were declared, by another authority, to be incapable of salvation. The most powerful and most influential of writers concurred that the sexual relation was an almost fatal obstacle to religious salvation.

Hardly any movement ever struck so hard against

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social well-being as did this teaching of celibacy. Wives were encouraged to desert their husbands, husbandsto forsake their wives, children their parents. Parents, in turn, were exhorted to devote their children to the monastic life; and although at first children who had been so condemned were allowed to return to the world, should they desire it, on reaching maturity, this liberty was taken from them by the fourth Council of Toledo in 633.* Some few of the Christian writers protested against children being taught to forsake their parents in this manner, but the general spirit of the time was in its favour.

"Children were nursed and trained to expect at every instant more than human interferences; their young energies had ever before them examples of asceticism, to which it was the glory, the true felicity of life, to aspire. The thoughtful child had all his mind thus preoccupied . . . wherever there was gentleness, modesty, the timidity of young passion, repugnance to vice, an imaginative temperament, a consciousness of unfitness to wrestle with the rough realities of life, the way lay invitingly open. . . . It lay through perils, but was made attractive by perpetual wonders. It was awful, but in its awfulness lay its power over the young mind. It learned to trample down that last bond which united the child to common humanity, filial reverence; the fond and mysterious attachment of the child and the mother, the inborn reverence of the son to the father. It is the highest praise of St. Fulgentius that he overcame his mother's tenderness by religious cruelty."†

* Cited by Lecky, ii. p. 131.

† Dean Milman, *Hist. of Latin Christianity*, ii. pp. 81-2.

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The full warranty for Dean Milman's stricture is seen in the following passage from St. Jerome:—

"Though your little nephew twine his arms around your neck; though your mother, with dishevelled hair, and tearing her robe asunder, point to the breast with which she suckled you; though your father fall down on the threshold before you, pass on over your father's body. Fly with tearless eyes to the banner of the cross. In this matter cruelty is the only piety. . . . Your widowed sister may throw her gentle arms around you. . . . Your father may implore you to wait but a short time to bury those near to you, who will soon be no more; your weeping mother may recall your childish days, and may point to her shrunken breast and to her wrinkled brow. Those around you may tell you that all the household rests upon you. Such chains as these the love of God and the fear of hell can easily break. You say that Scripture orders you to obey your parents, but he who loves them more than Christ loses his soul. The enemy brandishes a sword to slay me. Shall I think of a mother's tears?" *

Gibbon said of the ascetic movement that the Pagan world regarded with astonishment a society that perpetuated itself without marriage. Unfortunately this perpetuation was secured by the sacrifice of some of the dearest interests of the race. For, in general, one may say that idealistic teaching of any kind appeals most powerfully to those who are least in need of it. The world would at any time lose little, and might possibly gain much, were it possible to restrain a certain class from parentage. But there is no evidence that monasticism ever had its effect on that

* Lecky, ii. pp. 134-5.

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kind of people; the presumption is indeed in the contrary direction. The careless and brutal hear and are unaffected. The more thoughtful and desirable alone are influenced. And there can be little doubt that the Church in appealing to certain aspects of human nature dissuaded from parentage those who were most fitted for the task. There was a practical survival of the unfittest. Nothing is more striking, in fact, in the early history of Christianity than the comparative absence of home life and of the domestic ideals. Dean Milman remarked that in all the discussion concerning celibacy he could not recall a single instance where the social aspects appear to have occurred to the disputants. The Dean's remark applies to some extent to a much later period of Christian history than the one to which he refers. That much-admired evangelical classic, Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, for example, shows a curious obliviousness to the value of family and social life. But neglect of the socialising and refining influence of family life leads inevitably to a hardening of character and a brutalising of life in general. The ferocious nature of the theological disputes of the early Christian period never fail to arouse the comments of historians. But there was really nothing to soften or restrain them. Everything was dominated by the theological interest. And we owe it in no small measure to the vogue of the monk that the tolerance of Pagan times, with its widespread respect for truth-seeking, was replaced by the narrow intolerance of the medieval period, an intolerance which has never really been eradicated from any part of Christian Europe.

In counting this as one of the consequences of the

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Christian preaching of celibacy, I am supported by no less an authority than the late Sir Francis Galton. In his epoch-marking work, *Hereditary Genius*, this writer says:—

“The long period of the Dark Ages under which Europe has lain is due, I believe, in a very considerable degree, to the celibacy enjoined by the religious orders on their votaries. Whenever a man or woman was possessed of a gentle nature that fitted him or her to deeds of charity, to meditation, to literature, or to art, the social condition of the time was such that they had no refuge elsewhere than in the bosom of the Church. But she chose to preach and exact celibacy. The consequence was that these gentle natures had no continuance, and thus by a policy so singularly unwise and suicidal that I am hardly able to speak of it without impatience, the Church brutalised the breed of our forefathers. She acted precisely as if she had aimed at selecting the rudest portion of the community to be alone the parents of future generations. She practised the arts that breeders would use, who aimed at creating ferocious, currish, and stupid nature. No wonder that club law prevailed for centuries over Europe; the wonder rather is that enough good remained in the veins of Europeans to enable their race to rise to its very moderate level of natural morality.”*

The consequences of asceticism on morals were almost wholly disastrous. There is no intention of endorsing the vulgar Protestant prejudice of every convent being a brothel, and all monks and nuns as given over to a vicious life, but there is no question that a very widespread demoralisation existed amongst the

* *Hereditary Genius*, 1869, p. 357.

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religious orders, that this existed from the very earliest times, and that it was an inevitable consequence of so large a number of people professing the ascetic life. This is not a history of morals, and it is needless to enter into a detailed account of the state of morality during the prevalence of asceticism. But the absence of any favourable influence exerted by asceticism on conduct is well illustrated in the description of Salvianus, Bishop of Marseilles at the close of the fifth century, of the condition of society in his day. Gaul, Spain, Italy, and Africa are depicted as sunk in an overmastering sensuality. Rome is represented as the sewer of the nations, and in the African Church, he says, the most diligent search can scarce discover one chaste among thousands. And this, it must be borne in mind, was the African Church, which under the care of Augustine had been specially nurtured in the most rigid asceticism. Four hundred years later the state of monastic morals is sufficiently indicated by a regulation of St. Theodore Studita prohibiting the entrance of female animals into monasteries.* A regulation passed in Paris at a Council held in 1212 enforces the same lesson by forbidding monks or nuns sleeping two in a bed. The avowed object of this was to repress offences of the most disgusting description.† In 1208 an order was issued prohibiting mothers or other female relatives residing with priests, on account of the frequent scandals arising. Offences became so numerous and so open that it was with relief that laymen saw priests openly select concubines. That at least gave a promise of some protection to domestic life. In some of the Swiss cantons it actually became

* Lea, p. 109.

† Lea, p. 332.

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the practice to compel a new pastor, on taking up his charge, to select a concubine as a necessary protection to the females under his care. The same practice existed in Spain.*

There is, as Lea rightly says, no injustice in holding the Church mainly responsible for the laxity of morals which is characteristic of medieval society. It had unbounded and unquestioned power, and this, with its wealth and privileges might have made medieval society the purest in the world. As it was, "the period of its unquestioned domination over the conscience of Europe was the very period in which licence among the Teutonic races was most unchecked. A church which, though founded on the Gospel, and wielding the illimitable power of the Roman hierarchy, could yet allow the feudal principle to extend to the *jus primæ noctis* or *droit de marquette*, and whose ministers in their character of temporal seigneurs could even occasionally claim the disgusting right, was evidently exercising its influence, not for good, but for evil."

On civic life and the civic virtues the influence of asceticism was equally disastrous. "A candid examination," says Lecky, "will show that the Christian civilisation has been as inferior to the Pagan ones in civic and intellectual virtues as it has been superior to them in the virtues of humanity and chastity." One may reasonably question the latter part of this statement, bearing in mind the facts just pointed out, but the first part admits of overwhelming proof. Celibacy is not chastity, and it is difficult to see how the coarsening of character described by Lecky himself can be consist-

* See Lea, pp. 353-4.

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ent with a heightened humanity. But there can be small doubt that the growth of the Christian Church spelt disaster to the civic life and institutions of the Empire. Nothing the Romans did was more admirable than their organisation of municipal life. They avoided the common blunder of imposing on all a uniform organisation, and so gave free play to local feeling and custom so far as was consistent with imperial order and peace. Civic life became, as a consequence, well ordered and persistent. It was far less corrupt than administration in the capital, and freedom persisted in the provincial towns for long after its practical disappearance in Rome itself. Indeed, but for the antagonism of Christianity, it is probable that the urban municipalities might have provided the impetus for the rejuvenation of the Empire.*

From the outset, the early Christian movement stood as a whole apart from the civic life of the Empire, while the ascetic waged a constant warfare against it. "According to monastic view of Christianity," says Milman, "the total abandonment of the world, with all its ties and duties, as well as its treasures, its enjoyments, and objects of ambition, advanced rather than diminished the hopes of salvation." The object was individual salvation, not social regeneration. When people were praised for breaking the closest of family ties in their desire for salvation, it would be absurd to suppose that social duties and obligations would remain exempt. The Christian ascetic was ready enough to risk his own life, or to take the life of others, on account of minute points of doctrinal difference, but

* For a fine sketch of Roman municipal life, see Dill's *Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius*, chap. ii.

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he was deaf to the call of patriotism or the demands of civic life. Theology became the one absorbing topic; and as monasticism assumed more menacing proportions, the monk became the dominating figure, paralysing by his presence the healthful activities of masses of the people. Speaking of the Eastern Empire, although his words apply with almost equal truth wherever the Church was supreme, Milman says:—

“That which is the characteristic sign of the times as a social and political, as well as a religious, phenomenon, is the complete dominion assumed by the monks in the East over the public mind. . . The monks, in fact, exercise the most complete tyranny, not merely over the laity, but over bishops and patriarchs, whose rule, though nominally subject to it, they throw off whenever it suits their purposes. . . . Monks in Alexandria, monks in Antioch, monks in Constantinople, decide peremptorily on orthodoxy and heterodoxy. . . . Persecution is universal; persecution by every means of violence and cruelty; the only question is in whose hands is the power to persecute. . . . Bloodshed, murder, treachery, assassination, even during the public worship of God—these are the frightful means by which each party strives to maintain its opinions and to defeat its adversary. Ecclesiastical and civil authority are alike paralysed by combinations of fanatics ready to suffer or to inflict death, utterly unapproachable by reason.”*

Against such combinations of ignorance, fanaticism, and ferocity, the few remaining lovers of secular progress were powerless. Patriotism became a mere

* *Hist. of Latin Christianity*, i. pp. 317–8.

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name, and organised civic life an almost forgotten aspiration. What the Pagan world had understood by a 'good man' was one who spent himself in the service of his country. The Christian understood by it one who succeeded in saving his own soul, even at the sacrifice of family and friends. Vampire-like, monasticism fed upon the life-blood of the Empire. The civic life and patriotism of old Rome became a mere tradition, to inspire long after the men of the Renaissance and of the French Revolution.

Finally, asceticism exerted a powerful influence on religion itself. That it served to strengthen and perpetuate the life of religion there can be little doubt. However strongly some people may have resented the monastic ideal, it nevertheless gave increased strength and vitality to the religious idea. To begin with, it offered for centuries a very powerful obstacle to the development of those progressive and scientific ideas that have made such advances in all centres of civilisation during the past two or three centuries. To the common mind it brought home the supremacy of religion in a way that nothing else could. The mere sight of monarch and noble yielding homage to the monk, acknowledging his supremacy in what was declared to be the chief interest in life, the interference of the monk in every department of life, saturated society with supernaturalism. And although at a later period the rapacity, dissoluteness, and tyranny of the monkish orders led to revolt, by that time the imagination of all had been thoroughly impressed with the value of religion. Even to-day current theology is permeated with the monkish notions of self-denial, self-sacrifice, and contempt of the world's comfort and beauty as belong-

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ing to the essence of pure religion. The lives of the saints still remain the storehouse of ideals for the religious preacher. In spite of their absurd practices and disgusting penances, later generations have not failed to hold them up as examples. They have been used to impress the imagination of their successors, as they were used to impress the minds of their contemporaries. The fact of Thomas à Beckett wearing a hair shirt running with vermin has not prevented his being held up as an example of the power of religion. People fear ghosts long after they cease to believe in them; they pay unreasoning homage to a crown long after intellectual development has robbed the kingly office of its primitive significance; all the recent developments of democracy have not abolished the Englishman's constitutional crick in the neck at the sight of a nobleman. Nor is supernaturalism expunged from a society because the conditions that gave it birth have passed away. A religious epidemic is not analogous to those physical disorders which deposit an antitoxin and so protect against future attacks. It resembles rather those disorders that permanently weaken, and so invite repeated assaults. The ascetic epidemic passed away; but, before doing so, it thoroughly saturated with supernaturalism the social atmosphere and impressed its power upon the public mind. It gave supernaturalism a new and longer lease of life, and paved the way for other outbreaks, of a less general, but still of a thoroughly epidemic character.

LIGIOUS EPIDEMICS—(CONCLUDED)

IT IS NOT EASY TO OVERESTIMATE THE influence of monasticism on subsequent religious history. The lives of its votaries provided examples of almost every conceivable kind of self-torture or semi-maniacal behaviour. It had made the world thoroughly familiar with extravagance of action as the symptom of intense religious conviction. And its influence on social development had been such that the susceptibility of the public mind to suggestions was as a raw wound in the presence of a powerful irritant. Such an institution as the Inquisition could only have maintained itself among a people thoroughly familiar with supernaturalism, and to whom its preservation was the first and most sacred of duties.

A society habituated to the commanding presence of the monk, fed upon stories of their miraculous encounters with celestial and diabolic visitants, and so accustomed to regard the priesthood as in a very peculiar sense the mouthpiece of divinity, was well prepared for such a series of events as the crusades for the recovery of the Holy Land. Pilgrimages to the burial-places of saints, and to spots connected, by legend or otherwise, with Christian history, had long been in vogue, and formed a source of both revenue to the Church and of inspiration to the faithful. As early as 833 a guide-book had been prepared called the *Itinerary from Bordeaux to Jerusalem*, and along the route marked convents and shelters for the pilgrims were established. A lucrative traffic in relics of every description had also been established, and any interference with this touched the Church in its tenderest point. Added to which the expected end of the world in the

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year 1000 had the effect of still further increasing the crowd of pilgrims to the Holy Land, where it was firmly believed the second advent would take place.

In the eleventh century a tax was imposed on all Christians visiting Jerusalem. There were also reports of Christian pilgrims being ill-treated. Recent events in Europe have shown with what ease Christian feeling may be roused against a Mohammedan power, and it was considerably easier to do this in the eleventh century. Between them, Pope Urban II. and Peter the Hermit—the former acting mainly from political motives, the latter from a spirit of sheer fanaticism—succeeded in rousing Europe to a maniacal desire for the recovery of the Holy Land. And for nearly two hundred years the world saw a series of crusades on as absurd an errand as ever engaged the energies of mankind. Every class of society participated, and it is calculated that no less than two millions of lives were sacrificed.

Ordinary histories lean to representing the crusades as a series of armed expeditions, led by princes, nobles, and kings. But this gives a quite inaccurate conception of the movement, during its early stages, at all events. In reality it was a true psychological epidemic. No custom, however ancient, no duty, no law, was allowed to stand before the crusading mania. In every village the clergy fed the mania, promising eternal rewards to all who took up the burden of the cross. Old and young, the strong and the sick, the rich and the poor were enrolled. Urban had told them that “under their General, Jesus Christ,” they would march to certain victory. Absolution for all sins was promised to all who joined; and, as Gibbon says, “at the voice of

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their pastor, the robber, the incendiary, the homicide, arose by thousands to redeem their souls by repeating on the infidels the same deeds which they had exercised against their Christian brethren." Until experience had taught them better, little precautions were taken to provide food or arms. Huge concourses of people,* some led by a goose and a goat, into which it was believed the Holy Ghost had entered, set out for the Holy Land, so ignorant that at every large town or city they enquired, "Is this Zion?" Although a religious expedition, small regard was paid to decency or humanity. Defenceless cities *en route* were sacked. Women were outraged, men and children killed. The Jews were murdered wholesale. Almost universally the slaughter of Jews at home were preparatory to crusading abroad. Germany, Hungary, and Bulgaria, although providing contingents for the crusading army, suffered heavily by the passage of these undisciplined, lawless crowds. As one writer says:—

"If they had devoted themselves to the service of God, they convinced the inhabitants on their line of march that they had ceased to regard the laws of man. They considered themselves privileged to gratify every wish and every lust as it arose. They recognised no rights of property, they felt no gratitude for hospitality, and they possessed no sense of honour. They violated the wives and daughters of their hosts when they were kindly treated, they devastated the lands of friends whom they had converted into enemies, they resorted to wanton robbery and destruction in revenge for calamities which they had brought upon them-

* It is estimated that 275,000 people formed the van of the first crusade.

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selves. They believed that they proved their superiority to the Mohammedans by torturing the defenceless Jews; and this was the only exploit in which the first divisions of the crusaders could boast of success. . . . To the leaders, who could not write their own names, deception and treachery were as familiar as force; to their followers rapine and murder were so congenial that, in the absence of Saracens, Jews, or townsfolk, it seemed but a professional pastime to kill or to rob a companion in arms."*

And of the behaviour of the crusaders on the first capture of Jerusalem, 1099, Dean Milman writes:—

"No barbarian, no infidel, no Saracen, ever perpetrated such wanton and cold-blooded atrocities of cruelty as the wearers of the Cross of Christ (who, it is said, had fallen on their knees and burst into a pious hymn at the first view of the Holy City) on the capture of that city. Murder was mercy, rape tenderness, simple plunder the mere assertion of the conqueror's right. Children were seized by their legs, some of them plucked from their mother's breasts, and dashed against the walls, or whirled from the battlements. Others were obliged to leap from the walls; some tortured, roasted by slow fires. They ripped up prisoners to see if they had swallowed gold. Of 70,000 Saracens there were not left enough to bury the dead; poor Christians were hired to perform the office. Everyone surprised in the Temple was slaughtered, till the reek from the dead drove away the slayers. The Jews were burned alive in their synagogue."†

The most remarkable of all the crusades, and the

* L. O. Pike, *History of Crime in England*, i. pp. 164-9.

† *History of Latin Christianity*, iv. p. 188.

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one that best shows the character of the epidemic, was the children's crusade of 1212. It was said that the sins of the crusaders had caused their failure, and priests went about France and Germany calling upon the children to do what the sins of their fathers had prevented them accomplishing. The children were told that the sea would dry up to give them passage, and the infidels be stricken by the Lord on their approach. A peasant lad, Stephen of Cloyes, received the usual vision, and was ordered to lead the crusade. Commencing with the children around Paris, he collected some 30,000 followers, and without money or food commenced the march. At the same time an army of children, 40,000 strong, was gathered together at Cologne. The result of the crusade may be told in a few words. About 6000 of the French contingent, having reached Marseilles, were offered a passage by some shipowners. Several of the ships foundered, others reached shore, and the boys were sold into slavery. The girls were reserved for a more sinister fate. Thousands of the children died in attempting a march over the Alps. A mere remnant succeeded in reaching home, ruined in both mind and body. Well might Fuller say: "This crusade was done by the instinct of the devil, who, as it were, desired a cordial of children's blood, to comfort his weak stomach, long cloyed with murdering of men."*

On both the social and the religious side the consequences were important. For the first time large bodies of men, taught to regard all those who were outside Christendom as beneath consideration, came into contact with a people possessing an art, an industry, a

* *History of the Holy War*, bk. iii.

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culture far superior to their own. As Draper says: "Even down to the meanest camp follower, everyone must have recognised the difference between what they had anticipated and what they had found. They had seen undaunted courage, chivalrous bearing, intellectual culture far higher than their own. They had been in lands filled with prodigies of human skill. They did not melt down into the populations to whom they returned without imparting to them a profound impression destined to make itself felt in the course of time."* Hitherto Mohammedan culture had only influenced Christendom through the medium of the Spanish schools and universities. Now the influence became more general. A taste for greater comfort developed. Commerce grew; literature improved. We approach the period of the Renaissance, and to that new birth the crusades, despite their intolerance and brutality, offered a contribution of no small value.

On the other hand, and for a time, the power of the Church grew greater. The impetus given to superstitious hopes and fears made on all hands for the wealth of the Church. Much was made over to the Church as a free gift. Much was pawned to it. Much also was entrusted by those who went to the Holy Land, never to return, in which case the Church became the designated or undesignated heir. "In every way the all-absorbing Church was still gathering in wealth, encircling new land within her hallowed pale, the one steady merchant who in this vast traffic and sale of personal and of landed property never made a losing venture, but went on accumulating and still accumulating, and for the most part withdrawing the largest portion of

* *Intellectual Development of Europe*, 1872, p. 425.

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the land in every kingdom into a separate estate, which claimed exemption from all burthens of the realm, until the realm was compelled into measures, violent often and iniquitous in their mode, but still inevitable."*

Next, the crusades set their seal upon the justice of religious wars, and established an enduring alliance between militarism and religion. The military profession became surrounded with all the ceremonies and paraphernalia of religion, without being in the least humanised by the alliance. The knight received his arms blessed by the Church, he was sworn to defend the Church, and he was as ready to turn his weapons against heretics in Europe as against infidels in Syria. Military persecutions of heretics assumed the form of a mania. There were crusades against the Moors in Spain, against the Albigenses, and against other heretics. As Bryce remarks: "The religious feeling which the crusades evoked—a feeling which became the origin of the great orders of chivalry, and somewhat later of the two great orders of mendicant friars—turned wholly against the opponents of ecclesiastical claims, and was made to work the will of the Holy See, which had blessed and organised the project."† The expedition against King John by Philip of France was undertaken at the behest of the Pope, and was called a crusade. The attempt of Spain to crush the Netherlands was called a crusade. So was the Armada that was fitted out against England.

More than all, a stamp of permanency was given to popular superstition. For two centuries people had seen expedition after expedition fitted out to accom-

* Milman, iv. p. 199.

† *Holy Roman Empire*, p. 164.

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plish an avowedly religious purpose. They had been taught that to die in defence of religion, or in the attempt to achieve a religious object, was the noblest of deaths. They had seen the greatest in Europe setting forth at the command of the Church. Signs and wonders had abounded to prove the heaven-blessed character of the crusades. They had seen the Church growing steadily in power, and every possible means had been utilised to increase the flame of religious fanaticism. Expeditions might fail, but failure did not cure fanaticism. It fed it; the crusaders returned, chastened in some respects, but still sufficiently full of religious zeal to be ready to battle against the unbeliever and the heretic at the behest of the Church. And it was not the policy of the Church to allow this fanaticism to remain unemployed. Even though it might ultimately lose, the Church and superstition profited enormously by the crusading spirit. It strengthened the general sense of the supernatural, even while creating tendencies that were destined to limit its sway. Above all, it prepared the way for other religious epidemics. These were more circumscribed in area, and less lengthy in their duration; but their existence was made possible and easy by the centuries during which, first monasticism, and later the crusading mania, had dominated the public mind.

The crusades had hardly been brought to a close before continental Europe witnessed an outbreak, in epidemic form, of a practice that had been long associated with monastic discipline. The use of the whip as a form of religious discipline had always played a part in conventual and monastic life. On the one hand, it formed part of that insensate desire to tor-

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ture the body which went to make up the ascetic ideal; on the other hand, the fondness for whipping bare flesh and for being whipped has a distinctly pathologic character. The subject is rather too unsavoury to dwell upon, but it has long been established that there is a close connection between the whipping of certain parts of the body and the production of intense sexual pleasure.* And it is also clear that the life led by monks and nuns was such as to encourage sexual aberrations of various forms. Moreover, when once the practice of whipping became a public spectacle, and assumed an epidemic form, imitation, combined with intense religious faith, would operate very powerfully.

In the fourteenth century Europe was visited by the Black Plague. In countries utterly devoid of sanitation, where baths were practically unknown and personal habits of the filthiest, the plague found a fruitful soil. Nearly a quarter of the population died, and corpses were so numerous that huge pits were dug and hundreds buried together. It was amid the general terror and demoralisation caused by this visitation that the sect of the Flagellants arose. Calling themselves the Brotherhood of the Flagellants, or the Brethren of the Cross, wearing dark garments with red crosses front and back, they traversed the cities of the Continent carrying whips to which small pieces of iron were fixed. England appears to have been the only country in which they failed to establish themselves. Elsewhere their numbers grew with formidable rapidity. At Spire two hundred boys, under twelve years of age, influenced probably by the ex-

* See Bloch, *Sexual Life of our Time*, pp. 568-74.

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ample of the children's crusade, formed themselves into a brotherhood and marched through some of the German cities. In Italy over 20,000 people marched from Florence in one of these processions; from Modena, over 25,000. Some of them professed to work miracles. Everywhere, while the mania lasted, they were warmly welcomed, the inhabitants of towns and cities ringing the bells and flocking in crowds to hear the preaching and witness the whippings.

The proceedings of the Flagellants in all countries were very similar. They marched from town to town, men and women and children stripped to the waist—sometimes entirely naked—praying incessantly and whipping each other. "Not only during the day, but even by night, and in the severest winter, they traversed the cities with torches and banners, in thousands and tens of thousands, headed by their priests, and prostrated themselves before the altars." At other times they proceeded to the market-place, arranged themselves on the ground in circles, assuming attitudes in accordance with their real or supposed crimes. After each had been whipped, "one of them, in conclusion, stood up to read a letter, which it was pretended an angel had brought from heaven to St. Peter's Church, at Jerusalem, stating that Christ, who was sore displeased at the sins of man, had granted, at the intercession of the Holy Virgin and of the angels, that all who should wander about for thirty-four days and scourge themselves should be partakers of the Divine grace." In the end the movement became so obnoxious to the Church, and so troublesome to the civil authorities, that both combined to secure its suppression.

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Equally significant in the history of religion is the dancing mania, which broke out as the mania for flagellation was subsiding. The function of dancing in primitive religious ceremonial has been pointed out in a previous chapter. It is there a common and obvious method of both creating and expressing a high state of nervous excitability. In later times religious dancing becomes more purely hypnotic in character, and suggestion plays a powerful part. During the medieval period the conditions were peculiarly favourable to the prevalence of psychological epidemics. Plagues, more or less severe, were of frequent occurrence. Between 1119 and 1340, Italy alone had no less than sixteen such visitations. Small-pox and leprosy were also common. The public mind was morbidly sensitive to signs and portents and saturated to an almost incredible degree with superstition. The public processions of the Church, its penances, and practices were all calculated to fire the imagination, and produce a mixed and dangerous condition of fear and expectancy. Moreover, dancing mania, on a small scale, had made its appearance on several previous occasions, and the public mind was thus in a way prepared for a more serious outbreak.

The great dancing mania of 1374 occurred immediately after the revels connected with the semi-Pagan festival of St. John. Bacchanalian dances formed one of the accompaniments of the festival of St. John, and made, so to speak, a natural starting-point for the epidemic. Hecker, who gives a very elaborate account of the dancing mania as it appeared in various countries, thus describes the behaviour of those afflicted:—

“They formed circles, hand in hand, and, appear-

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ing to have lost control over their senses, continued dancing, regardless of all bystanders, for hours together, in wild delirium, until at length they fell to the ground in a state of exhaustion. . . . While dancing, they neither saw nor heard, being insensible to external impressions, but were haunted by visions, their fancies conjuring upspirits whose names they shrieked out; and some of them afterwards asserted that they felt as if they had been immersed in a stream of blood, which obliged them to leap so high. Others, during the paroxysm, saw the heavens open and the Saviour enthroned with the Virgin Mary.”*

At Aix-la-Chapelle, Cologne, and Metz, says the same writer:—

“Peasants left their ploughs, mechanics their workshops, housewives their domestic duties, to join the wild revels. Secret desires were excited, and but too often found opportunities for wild enjoyment; and numerous beggars, stimulated by vice and misery, availed themselves of this new complaint to gain a temporary livelihood. Girls and boys quitted their parents, and servants their masters, to amuse themselves at the dances of those possessed, and greedily imbibed the poison of mental infection. Above a hundred unmarried women were seen raving about in consecrated and unconsecrated places, and the consequences were soon perceived.”†

Once attacked, the hypnotic character of the complaint was shown by its annual recurrence. Again to quote Hecker:—

“Most of those affected were only annually visited

* *Epidemics of the Middle Ages*, pp. 87–8.

† Hecker, p. 91.

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by attacks; and the occasion of them was so manifestly referable to the prevailing notions of that period that, if the unqualified belief in the agency of saints could have been abolished, they would not have had any return of the complaint. Throughout the whole of June, prior to the festival of St. John, patients felt a disquietude and restlessness which they were unable to overcome. They were dejected, timid, and anxious; wandered about in an unsettled state, being tormented with twitching pains, which seized them suddenly in different parts, and eagerly expected the eve of St. John's Day, in the confident hope that by dancing at the altars of this saint they would be freed from all their sufferings. This hope was not disappointed; and they remained, for the rest of the year, exempt from any further attack."*

In addition to John the Baptist, the dancing disease was also connected with another saint—St. Vitus. He is said to have been martyred about 303, and a body, reputed to be his, was transported to France in the ninth century. It is said that just before he was killed he prayed that all who would commemorate the day of his death should be protected from the dancing mania. Whereupon a voice from heaven was heard to say, "Vitus, thy prayer is accepted." The fact that the prayer was offered a thousand years before the dancing mania appeared is a circumstance that to the eye of faith merely heightened its value.

Within recent times epidemics of dancing have been more local, less persistent, and of necessity not so public in their display, but nearly always their appearance has been in connection with displays of re-

* *Epidemics*, p. 105.

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ligious fervour. In most cases the dancing has tended more to a species of 'jumping,' and—although this may be due to more careful observation—has been accompanied by actions of a clearly epileptoid nature. One of the most famous of these outbreaks was that of the French Convulsionnaires, which lasted from 1727 to the Revolution. In 1727, a popular, but half-crazy priest, François de Paris, died. During his life Paris had fasted and scourged himself, lived in a hut that was seldom or never cleansed, showed the same lack of cleanliness in his person, and often went about half naked. Very shortly after his death, it was said that miracles began to take place at his grave in the cemetery of St. Médard. People gathered round the tomb day after day, and one young girl was seized with convulsions. (She is called a girl in the narrative, but she was a mature virgin of forty-two years of age.) Afterwards other miracles followed in rapid succession. Some fell in fits, others swallowed pieces of coal or flint, some were cured of diseases. From the description of the behaviour of some of these devotees there seems to have been a considerable amount of sexual feeling mixed up with the display. Sometimes, we are told, those seized "bounded from the ground like fish out of water; this was so frequently imitated at a later period that the women and girls, when they expected such violent contortions, not wishing to appear indecent, put on gowns made like sacks, closed at the feet. If they received any bruises by falling down, they were healed with earth taken from the grave of the uncanonised saint. They usually, however, showed great agility in this respect; and it is scarcely necessary to remark that the female sex es-

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pecially was distinguished by all kinds of leaping, and almost inconceivable contortions of body. Some spun round on their feet with incredible rapidity, as is related of the dervishes. Others ran with their heads against walls, or curved their bodies like rope dancers, so that their heels touched their shoulders."

Women figured very prominently among the Convulsionnaires, particularly when the epidemic passed from convulsive dancing to prophecy, and thence to various forms of self-torture. Women stretched themselves on the floor, while other women, and even men, jumped upon their bodies. Others were beaten with clubs and bars of iron. Some actually underwent crucifixion on repeated occasions. They were stretched on wooden crosses, and nails three inches long driven through hands and feet. Some of the occurrences remind one of what is now seen to take place under hypnotic influence. People labouring under strong excitement, it is known, become insensible to pain.

Outbreaks of jumping and dancing followed the introduction of Methodist preachers into country districts in the eighteenth century. In Wales, a sect of 'Jumpers' originated from this cause, and many of the American 'Jumpers' and 'Dancers' seem to have had their origin from this Welsh outbreak. In all such cases the spread of the mania was helped, if not made possible, by the preachers. They themselves looked upon these exhibitions as manifestations of the power of God, and so encouraged their hearers in their behaviour. Not every minister has the common sense of the Shetland preacher cited by Hecker. An epileptic woman had a fit in church, which a number of

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others hailed as a manifestation of the power of God. Sunday after Sunday the same thing occurred with other women, the number of the sufferers steadily increasing. The thing threatened to assume such proportions, and to become so great a nuisance, he announced that attendants would be at hand who would dip women in the lake who happened to be seized. This threat proved a most powerful form of exorcism. Not one woman was affected. Similar conduct might have been quite as efficacious in preventing many religious manifestations that have assumed epidemic proportions.

Unfortunately, the influence of preachers and religious teachers was most usually cast in the other direction. Very often, of course, they were no better informed than their congregations; at other times they undoubtedly encouraged the delusion for interested reasons. The most striking recent illustration of this latter behaviour was seen in the Welsh revival led by Evan Roberts. Of this man's mental condition there could be little doubt. Just as little doubt could there be that the behaviour of the congregations was wholly due to the power of suggestions upon weak and excitable natures. Yet scarcely a preacher in Britain said a word in disapproval. Hundreds of them used the outbreak to illustrate the power of religion. Many prominent preachers travelled down to Wales and returned telling of the great manifestations of 'spiritual power' they had witnessed. How little removed such behaviour is from that of the savage watching with awe the actions of one suffering from epilepsy or insanity, readers of the foregoing pages will be in a position to judge.

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From the middle of the third century onward, Europe had been subject to wave after wave of religious fanaticism. All along, religious belief had been verified and strengthened by the occurrence of phenomena that now admittedly fall within the purview of the pathologist. And from one point of view the secularisation of life served but to emphasise the dependence of religion upon the occurrence of these abnormal conditions. For the more surely the phenomena of nature and of social life were brought within the scope of a scientific generalisation, the more people began to look for the life of religion in conditions that were removed from the normal. But, above all, this long succession of waves of fanaticism served to permeate the general mind with supernaturalism. Each one cleared the way for a successor. And in the next chapter we have to deal with one that, in some respects, is the most remarkable of all, viz., that of the belief in witchcraft.

CHAPTER TEN THE WITCH MANIA

IN ALL STAGES OF RELIGIOUS HISTORY the witch and the wizard are familiar figures. It is of no importance to our present enquiry whether magic precedes religion or not. It is at all events certain that they are very closely connected, and that conditions which foster the belief in magic likewise serve to strengthen religious belief. Witchcraft, as Tylor says, is part and parcel of savage life. Death is very frequently attributed to the magical action of wizards, and the savage lives in perpetual fear lest some of his belongings, or some part of his person, should be bewitched by malevolent sorcerers. Sir Richard Burton says that in East Africa his experience taught him that among the negroes, what with slavery and what with black magic, no one, especially in old age, is safe from being burnt at a day's notice. When from savage life we mount to societies enjoying a higher culture, we still find the witch and the wizard in evidence. Both in Greece and Rome the belief in witchcraft existed. There were made direct laws against its practice, although neither the Greeks nor the Romans stained their civilisation with the judicial murder of thousands of victims such as occurred later in Christian Europe.

But the belief in witchcraft is continuous. So also are the methods practised, and the modes of detection. The proofs offered in support of sorcery in the seventeenth century are precisely similar to those credited by savages in the lowest stage of human culture. The power of transformation possessed by the accused, the ability to bewitch through the possession of hairs belonging to the afflicted person, the making of little effigies and driving sharp instruments into them, and

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so affecting the corresponding parts of people, transportation through the air, etc., all belong to the belief in and practice of witchcraft wherever found. Had a Fijian been transported to a seat on the judicial bench by the side of Sir Matthew Hale, when that judge condemned two old women to death for witchcraft, he would have found himself in a quite congenial atmosphere. Allowing for difference in language, he would have found the evidence similar to that with which he was familiar, and he would have been able to endorse the judge's remarks with tales of his own experience. On this point, the level of culture attained by savages, and that of the inhabitants of the overwhelming majority of European countries little more than two hundred years ago, were substantially the same. Even today cases are continually occurring which prove that advances in knowledge and civilisation have not left this ancient superstition without supporters.

In subscribing to the belief in witchcraft, the Christian Church thus fell into line with earlier forms of religious belief. The peculiar feature it represents is that it came into existence when the belief in witchcraft was losing its hold on the more cultured classes. Had it not allied itself with this tendency, no such thing as the witch mania of the medieval period could have existed. In sober truth, it brought about a veritable renaissance of the cruder theories of demonism, while its intolerance of opposition succeeded in stifling the voice of criticism for centuries. The primitive theory which holds that man is surrounded by hosts of spiritual agencies, mostly of a malevolent nature, was revived and fully endorsed by all Christian teachers. In the commonest, as well as in the rarest events of life,

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this supernatural activity was manifest. In both the Old and New Testament the belief in demoniacal agency was endorsed. Moreover, the fact that Christianity was not a creed seeking to live as one of many others, but a religion struggling for complete mastery, gave further impetus to the belief. An easy explanation for the miracles and marvels that occurred in connection with non-Christian beliefs was that they were the work of demons. The Christian felt himself to be fighting not so much human antagonists as so many embodiments of satanic power. And after the establishment of Christianity it is probable that much that went on under cover of witch assemblies, a more detailed knowledge than we possess would prove to be really the clandestine exercise of prescribed forms of faith. The old saying, "The sin of witchcraft is as the sin of rebellion," has more in it than meets the eye. There is little real difference between the magic that appears as piety and the magic that is denounced as sorcery, except that one is permitted and the other is not. And it is almost a law of religious development that the gods of one religion become the demons of its successor.

But while witchcraft has existed in all ages, it existed in a much milder form than that which we find in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. First of all, there is the fact to which attention has already been directed, namely, the concentration of the public mind upon various forms of supernaturalism. Every aspect of life was more or less under the direct influence of the Church, and no teaching was tolerated that conflicted with her doctrines. And it was to the interest of the Church perpetually to emphasise the reality of

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either angelic or diabolic activity. Even in the case of those who showed a tendency to revolt against Church rule there was no exception to this. If anything, the belief was more pronounced. Next, the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries saw a rising tide of heresy against which the Church was compelled to battle; and to ascribe this alleged perversion of Christian doctrines to the malevolence of Satan offered the line of least resistance—just as the heretics attributed the power of the Church itself to the same source. Whatever diminution ensued in the general flood of superstition, as a consequence of the quarrel between Protestant and Catholic, was, so far as the disputants were concerned, incidental and even undesired. On the one point of demonism there existed complete unanimity, and the sceptic fared equally hard with both parties. In such an environment the wildest tales of sorcery became credible; and nothing illustrates this more forcibly than the fact that many of those tortured and condemned for sorcery actually believed themselves capable of performing the marvels laid to their charge. Added to these factors, we have to note that social conditions were also extremely favourable. Moral ties were as loose as they could reasonably be; and the attitude of the Church towards the sexual relation had forced both the religious and the non-religious mind into wholly unhealthy channels. This last aspect of the subject has been little dealt with, but it is unquestionably a very real one. A German writer says:—

“Whilst in the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth centuries, as those well acquainted with the state of morals during this period can all confirm, a

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most unbounded freedom was dominant in sexual relations, the State and the Church were desirous of compelling the people to keep better order by the use of actual force, and by religious compulsion. So forced a transformation in so vital a matter necessarily resulted in a reaction of the worst kind, and forced into secret channels the impulse which it had attempted to suppress. This reaction occurred, moreover, with an elemental force. There resulted widespread sexual violence and seduction, hesitating at nothing, often insanely daring, in which everywhere the devil was supposed to help; everyone's head was turned in this way; the uncontrolled lust of debauchees found vent in secret bacchanalian associations and orgies, wherein many, with or without masquerade, played the part of Satan; shameful deeds were perpetrated by excited women and by procuresses and prostitutes ready for any kind of immoral abomination; add to these sexual orgies the most widely diffused web of a completely developed theory of witchcraft, and the systematic strengthening of the widely prevalent belief in the devil—all these things, woven in a labyrinthine connection, made it possible for thousands upon thousands to be murdered by a disordered justice and to be sacrificed to delusion.”*

To those who look closely into the subject of mediæval witchcraft the presence of a strong sexual element is undeniable. When we examine contemporary accounts of the ‘Sabbath,’ some of which are so gross as to be unprintable, we find a portion of the proceedings

* Cited by Bloch, *Sexual Life of our Time*, p. 120. Michelet has also dealt with this matter in his vivid and picturesque work, *The Sorceress*.

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tobe of a marked erotic character. The figure of Satan often enough reminds one of the pagan Priapus, and the ceremonies bear a strong resemblance to the ancient ones, with the mixture of Christian language and symbolism inevitable under such circumstances. Promiscuous intercourse between the sexes was said to occur at the witches' gatherings; and, indeed, unless some sort of sexual extravagance occurred, it is hard to account for both the persistency of the gatherings and of the reports concerning them. The most probable theory is, as I have just said, that these gatherings were covers for a continuance of the older sex worship. Many customs connected therewith lingered on in the Church itself, and it is not a wild assumption that they existed in a less adulterated and more extravagant form outside.

Universal as the belief in witchcraft has been, it was not until the close of the fifteenth century that it assumed what may be justly called an epidemic form. The famous Bull of Pope Innocent VIII. was not unconnected in its origin with the growth of heresy. This precious document, issued in 1484, declares:—

“It has come to our ears that very many persons of both sexes, deviating from the Catholic Faith, abuse themselves with demons, Incubus and Succubus; and by incantations, charms, and conjurations, and other wicked superstitions, by criminal acts and offences, have caused the offspring of women and of the lower animals, the fruits of the earth, the grape, and the products of various plants, men, women, and other animals of different kinds, vineyards, meadows, pasture land, corn and other vegetables of the earth, to perish, be oppressed, and utterly destroyed; that they torture

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men and women with cruel pains and torments, internal as well as external; that they hinder the proper intercourse of the sexes, and the propagation of the human species. Moreover, they are in the habit of denying the very faith itself. We, therefore, willing to provide by opportune remedies, according as it falls to our office, by our apostolical authority, by the tenor of these presents, do appoint and decree that they be convicted, imprisoned, punished, and mulcted according to their offences."

It was this Pope who commissioned the inquisitor, Sprenger, to root out witches. Sprenger, with two others, acting on the authority of the Popes, drew up the famous work, *The Witch Hammer*, which provided the basis for all subsequent works on the detection and punishment of witches.* The folly and iniquity of the book is almost unbelievable, although it is quite matched by subsequent productions. It even provides for the silence of people under torture. If they confess when tortured, the case is complete. But if they do not confess, this diabolic production lays it down that this is because witches who have given themselves up to the devil are insensible to pain. Even the evidence of children was admitted. And although in ordinary trials the evidence of criminals was barred, it was to be freely allowed in trials for sorcery. Everything that ingenuity could suggest or brutality execute was provided for.

From the issue of *The Witch Hammer* until the middle of the seventeenth century, a period of about one hundred and fifty years, an epidemic of witchcraft

* A lengthy account of this work is given by Enenmoser in his *History of Magic*, vol. ii.

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raged. People of all ages and of all classes of society became implicated, and for some time, at least, accusation meant conviction. An almost unbelievably large number were executed. Says Lecky:—

“In almost every province of Germany, but especially in those where clerical influence predominated, the persecution raged with a fearful intensity. Seven thousand witches are said to have been burned at Trèves, six hundred by a single bishop in Bamberg, and nine hundred in a single year in the bishopric of Würzburg. . . . At Toulouse, the seat of the Inquisition, four hundred persons perished for sorcery at a single execution, and fifty at Douay in a single year. Remy, a judge of Nancy, boasted that he put to death eight hundred witches in sixteen years. . . . In Italy, a thousand persons were executed in a single year in the province of Como; and in other parts of the country the severity of the inquisitors at last created an absolute rebellion. . . . In Geneva, which was then ruled by a bishop, five hundred alleged witches were executed in three months; forty-eight were burned at Constance or Ravensburg, and eighty in the little town of Valery in Saxony. In 1670, seventy persons were condemned in Sweden, and a large proportion of them burnt.”*

In England, from 1603 to 1680, it is estimated that seventy thousand persons were put to death for sorcery.† Grey, the editor of *Hudibras*, says that he had himself seen a list of three thousand who were put to death during the Long Parliament. The celebrated witch-finder, Mathew Hopkins, hung sixty in one year in the county of Suffolk. In Scotland, for thirty-nine

* *Rise and Influence of Rationalism*, i. pp. 3-6.

† A. Williams, *The Superstition of Witchcraft*, p. 214.

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years, the number killed annually averaged about two hundred. This, of course, does not take into account the number who were hounded to death by persecution of a popular kind, or whose lives were made so wearisome that death must have come as a release. But the most remarkable, and the most horrible, of witchcraft executions occurred in Würzburg in February 1629. No less than one hundred and sixty-two witches were burned in a succession of *autos-da-fé*. Among these, the reports disclose that there were actually thirty-four children. The following details give the actual ages of some of them:—

Burning.	Number.	Children.
7th	7	1 Girl, aged 12.
13th	4	1 Girl of 10 and another.
15th	2	1 Boy of 12.
18th	6	2 Boys of 10, girl of 14.
19th	6	2 Boys, 10 and 12.
20th	6	2 Boys.
23rd	9	3 Boys, 9, 10, and 14.
24th	7	2 Boys, brought from hospital.
26th	8	Little boy and girl.
27th	7	2 Boys, 8 and 9.
28th	6	Blind girl and infant.*

The vast majority of those executed for sorcery were women. At all times witches have been more numerous than wizards, owing to their assumed closer connection with the world of supernatural beings. It was said, "For one sorcerer, ten thousand sorceresses," and Christian writers were ready to explain why. Woman had a greater affinity with the devil from the

* T. Wright, *History of Sorcery and Magic*.

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outset. It was through woman that Satan had seduced Adam, and it was only to be expected that he would employ the same instrument on subsequent occasions. *The Witch Hammer* has a special chapter devoted to the consideration of why women are more given to sorcery than men, and quotes freely from the Fathers to prove that this follows from her nature. James I. in his *Demonologia* follows Sprenger in accounting for the number of witches. "The reason is easy. For as that sex is frailer than man is, so it is easier to be entrapped in the gross snares of the devil, as was overwell proved to be true by the serpent's deceiving of Eve at the beginning, which makes him the homelier with the sex sensine." To be old, or ugly, or unpopular, to have any peculiar deformity or mark, was to invite persecution, and, in an overwhelming majority of instances, conviction followed accusation.

It is a significant comment upon the popular belief that Protestantism, as a form of religious belief, was the product of an enlightened rational life, that it was only with the advance of Protestantism that the belief in witchcraft assumed an epidemic form. This may be partly due to the greater direct dependence upon the Bible, in which satanic influence—particularly in the New Testament—plays so large a part. In the Roman Church, exorcism remained a regular part of the functions of the priest; the Church was filled with accounts of satanic conflicts, but diabolic intercourse seems to have been mainly limited to saintly characters and priests. Protestantism which, theoretically, made every man his own priest, raised the belief in satanic agency to an obsession. And wherever Protestantism established itself there was an immediate

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and marked increase in the number of cases of witchcraft. In England, if we omit a doubtful law of the tenth century, there existed no regular law against witchcraft until 1541. It remained a purely ecclesiastical offence. Seventeen years later, the year of Elizabeth's accession, Bishop Jewell, preaching before the Queen, drew attention to the increase of sorcery. "It may please Your Grace," he said, "to understand that witches and sorcerers, within these last few years, are marvellously increased within Your Grace's realm. Your Grace's subjects pine away even to the death, their colour fadeth, their flesh rotteth, their senses are bereft. I pray God they never practise further than upon the subject." And he added, "These eyes have seen most evident and manifest marks of their wickedness." A measure was passed through Parliament the same year, making enchantments and witchcraft felony. The first year of James I. saw the passing of the 'Witch Act,' under which subsequent executions took place, and which remained in force until nearly the middle of the eighteenth century.

With scarce an exception, the leaders of Protestantism encouraged the belief in witches and urged their extermination as a religious and civil duty. With Luther, in spite of the sturdy common sense he manifested in some directions, belief in the activity of Satan amounted to an obsession. He saw Satan everywhere in everything. The devil appeared to him while writing, disturbed his rest by the rattling of pans, and prevented his pursuing his studies by hammering on his skull. When a storm arose, Luther declared, "'Tis the devil who has done this; the winds are nothing else but good or bad spirits." Suicides, he said, were often

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those strangled by the devil. Moreover, "The devil can so completely assume the human form when he wants to deceive us, that we may very well lie with what seems to be a woman of real flesh and blood, and yet all the while 'tis only the devil in the shape of a woman." The devil could also become the father of children. Luther says that he knew of one such case, and added, "I would have that child thrown into the Moldau at the risk of being held its murderer."*

In America, Protestantism manifested the same influence. Of course, the settlers took the superstition of witchcraft with them, but it underwent no diminution in a new land. Increase Mather and his celebrated son, Cotton Mather, were the principal agents in stirring up the belief to frenzy point, and a commission was appointed to rout out witches and suppress their practices. There was soon a plentiful supply of victims. One woman was charged with "giving a look towards the great meeting-house of Salem, and immediately a demon entered the house and tore down part of it." It seems that a bit of the wooden wainscoting had fallen down. In the case of Giles Corey, who refused to plead guilty, torture was used. He was pressed to death, and when his tongue protruded from his mouth the sheriff thrust it back with his walking-stick. Many people were executed, and the ministers of Boston and Charlestown drew up an address warmly thanking the commission for its zeal, and expressing the hope that it would never be relaxed.

Certainly the commission did what it could to earn the thanks given. A shipmaster making for Maryland with emigrants encountered unusually rough

* Michelet, *Life of Luther*, chap. vi.

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weather. An old woman, one Mary Lee, was accused of raising the storm, and drowned as a witch. A woman walked a long distance over muddy roads without soiling her dress. "I scorn to be drabbled," she said, and was hanged as a reward. George Burroughes could lift a barrel by inserting his finger in the bung-hole. He was hanged for a wizard. Bridget Bishop was charged with appearing before John Louder at midnight and grievously oppressing him. Louder's evidence against the woman also included the fact that he saw a black pig approach his door, and when he went to kick it the pig vanished. He was also tempted by a black thing with the body of a monkey, the feet of a cock, and the face of a man. On going out of his back door he saw the said Bridget Bishop going towards her house. The evidence was deemed quite conclusive. Another witness said that being in bed on the Lord's Day, he saw a woman, Susanna Martin, come in at the window and jump down on the floor. She took hold of the witness's foot, and drawing his body into a heap, lay upon him for nearly two hours, so that he could neither move nor hear. In most of these cases torture was applied, and confessions were obtained. These confessions often implicated others, but when the witches took to accusing those in high places, and even ministers of religion, the need for discrimination was realised. Once a critical judgment was aroused, the mania began to subside—Cotton Mather fighting manfully for the belief to the end.

The impetus given by Protestantism to witch-hunting in Scotland was most marked. Scotch witchcraft, says Lecky, was the offspring of Scotch Puritanism, and faithfully reflected the character of its parent.

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The clergy nowhere possessed greater power, and nowhere used it more assiduously to fan the flame against witchcraft. Buckle says:—

“Of all the means of intimidation employed by the Scotchclergy, none was more efficacious than the doctrines they propounded respecting evil spirits and future punishments. On these subjects they constantly uttered the most appalling threats. The language which they used was calculated to madden men with fear, and to drive them to the depths of despair. . . . It was generally believed that the world was overrun by evil spirits, who not only went up and down the earth, but also lived in the air, and whose business it was to tempt mankind. Their number was infinite, and they were to be found in all places, and in all seasons. At their head was Satan himself, whose delight it was to appear in person, ensnaring or terrifying everyone he met. With this object he assumed various forms. One day he would visit the earth as a black dog; another day, as a raven; on another, he would be heard in the distance roaring like a bull. He appeared sometimes as a white man in black clothes, and sometimes he appeared as a black man in black clothes, when it was remarked that his voice was ghostly, and that one of his feet was cloven. His stratagems were endless. For, in the opinion of divines, his cunning increased with his age, and, having been studying for more than 5000 years, he had now attained to unexampled dexterity.”*

Witchcraft was declared by the Scotch Parliament in 1563 to be punishable by death. And, naturally, the more zealous and active the search for witches,

* *History of Civilisation*, chap. xix.

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the more numerous they became. In the search the clergy and the kirk-sessions led the way. In 1587 the General Assembly, having before them a case of witchcraft in which the evidence was insufficient, deputed James Melville to travel on the coast side and collect evidence in favour of the prosecution. It also ordered that the presbyteries should proceed in all severity against such magistrates as liberated convicted witches. As in England so here, a body of men came into existence whose business it was to travel the country and detect witches. Anonymous accusations were invited, the clergy "placing an empty box in church, to receive a billet with the sorcerer's name, and the date and description of his deeds."* In 1603 "at the College of Auld Abirdene" every minister was ordered to make "subtill and privie inquisition," concerning the number of witches in his parish, and report the same forthwith. Nothing that could whet the appetite for the hunt was neglected. William Johnston, baron, bailie "of the regalitie and barronie of Broughton," was awarded the goods of all who should be "lawfullie convict be assyses of notorious and common witches, haunting and resorting devilles and witches."† The lives of thousands of people were rendered unbearable, and the complaint of one, Margaret Miall, that "she desyres not to live, because nobody will converse with her, seeing she is under the reputation of a witch," must have represented the feelings of many.

It was not only for working ill that people were accused of witchcraft and executed; ill or well made little difference. In Edinburgh in 1623 it was charged

* Dalyell, *Darker Superstitions of Scotland*, p. 623.

† Dalyell, p. 628.

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against Thomas Grieve that he had relieved many sicknesses and grievous diseases by sorcery and witchcraft. "He took sickness off a woman in Fife, and put it upon a cow, which thereafter ran mad and died." He also cured a child of a disease "by straikeing back the hair of his head, and wrapping him in an anointed cloth, and by that means putting him asleep," and thus through his devilry and witchcraft, cured the child. Other charges of a similar kind were brought against Grieve, who was found guilty and hanged on the Castle Hill.* At the same place, a year previous, Margaret Wallace was also sentenced to be hanged and burned, on the same kind of charge, and for "practising devilry, incantation, and witchcraft, especially forbidden by the laws of Almighty God, and the municipal laws of this realm."

The following bill of costs for burning two women, Jane Wischert and Isabel Cocker, in Aberdeen, has a certain melancholy interest:—

	£	s.	d.
Item for 20 loads of Peatts to burn them	.	2	0 0
„ for ane boll of colles . . .	.	1	4 0
„ for four tar barrells . . .	.	0	6 8
„ for fir and win barrells . . .	.	0	16 8
„ for a staick and the dressing of it	.	0	16 0
„ for four fathoms of towis . . .	.	4	0 0
„ to Jon Justice for their execution	.	0	13 4

In England, no less than in Scotland, America, and on the Continent, much learned testimony might be cited in defence of witchcraft. The great Sir Thomas Browne said in the most famous of his writings: "For my part I have ever believed, and do now know, that there are witches. They that doubt of these do not only

*|Pitcairn's *Criminal Trials*, vol. iii.

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deny them, but spirits; and are obliquely and upon consequence, a sort, not of infidels, but atheists."* Henry More, the great Platonist, asserted that they who deny the agency of witches are "puffed up with nothing but ignorance, vanity, and stupid infidelity." Ralph Cudworth, one of the greatest scholars of the latter part of the seventeenth century, said that they who denied the possibility of satanic intercourse "can hardly escape the suspicion of some hankering towards atheism."† Writing nearly a century later, when the English law merely prosecuted as rogues and vagabonds those who pretended to witchcraft, Blackstone thought it necessary to point out that this alteration did not deny the possibility of the offence, and added:—

"To deny this would be to contradict the revealed word of God in various passages both of the Old and New Testaments; and the thing itself is a truth in which every nation in the world hath in its turn borne testimony; either by examples seemingly well attested, or by prohibitory laws which at least suppose the possibility of a commerce with evil spirits."‡

About the same time Wesley gave the world his famous declaration on the subject:—

"It is true likewise that the English in general, and indeed most of the men of learning in Europe, have given up all accounts of witches and apparitions as mere old wives' fables. I am sorry for it, and I willingly take this opportunity of entering my solemn protest against this violent compliment which so many who believe the Bible pay to those who do not believe it. I owe them

* *Religio Medici*, pt. i. sec. 30. † *True Intellectual System*, ii. p. 650. ‡ *Commentaries*, Stephen's Edition, i. p. 238.

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no such service. I take knowledge that these are at the bottom of the outcry which has been raised and with such insolence spread through the land in direct opposition, not only to the Bible, but to the suffrage of the wisest and best of men in all ages and nations. They well know (whether Christians know it or not) that the giving up of witchcraft is in effect giving up the Bible." *

The evidence upon which the convictions for witchcraft rested were almost incredibly stupid, as the punishments were almost unbelievably brutal. If the crops failed, or the milk turned sour; if the head of a local magnate ached, or a minister of the gospel fell sick; if a woman was childless, or a child taken with a fit; if a cow sickened, or sheep died suddenly, some poor woman was pretty certain to be seized, and tortured until she confessed her alleged crime. A mole or wart on any part of the body was a sure sign of commerce with the devil. It was believed that on the body of every witch was a spot insensible to pain. To discover this she was stripped, pins were run into the body, and when excess of pain had produced numbness, some such spot was pretty certain to be found. Men regularly took up with this work in both England and Scotland, and their fame as 'prickers' depended upon the number of witches they unearthed. If a suspected witch kept a black cat, did not shed tears, or could not repeat the Lord's Prayer correctly, these were pretty sure signs of guilt. A more serious test was the ordeal by water. This was a favourite and general test, and was highly recommended by that learned fool, James the First. In this the right hand was tied to the left

* *Journal*, 1768.

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foot, the left hand to the right foot. She was then thrown into a pond. If she floated she was a witch, and was either hanged or burned. If she sank, she was innocent—and was drowned. Another test was to tie a woman's legs across, and she was so seated on them that they bore the entire weight of her body. In this position she was kept for hours, and on the first sign of pain condemned as a witch.

If none of these tests were adopted, torture was used. There was the boot—a frame of iron or wood in which the leg was placed and wedges driven in until the limb was smashed. A variation of this was to place the leg in an iron boot and slowly heat it over a fire. There was the thumbscrew, an instrument which smashed the thumb to pulp by the turning of a screw. More barbarous still was the bridle. This was an iron hoop passing over the head, with four prongs, two pointing to the tongue and palate, and one to either cheek. The suspected witch was then chained to the wall, and watchers appointed to prevent her sleeping. The slightest movement caused the greatest torture, and in the vast majority of cases a confession was secured. In obstinate cases pressing between heavy stones was adopted.

One of the most famous of these witch-finders was the celebrated Mathew Hopkins before referred to. He was appointed to the work by Parliament during the time of the Commonwealth, and styled himself 'witch-finder general.' Hopkins travelled round the country, much like an assize judge, putting up at the principal inns, and at the expense of the local authorities. His charge was twenty shillings a visit, whether he found witches or not. If he discovered any, there was a further charge of twenty shillings for every witch

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brought to execution. His favourite method of detection was that of floating. But another of Hopkins's tests was the following: The suspected witch was placed cross-legged on a stool in the centre of the room. She was closely watched and kept without food for four-and-twenty hours. Doors and windows remained open to watch for the entrance of some of the devil's imps. These might come in the form of a fly, a wasp, a moth, or some other insect. The work of the watchers was to kill every insect that came into the room. But if one escaped, it was clear proof that this was one of the witch's familiars.

Wherever Hopkins travelled numerous convictions followed. These were so numerous that suspicion was aroused, not of the genuineness of the convictions, but of Hopkins's knowledge concerning the locality of the witches. In defence he published in 1647 a tract entitled "The Discovery of Witches; in answer to several Queries lately delivered to the Judge of Assize for the County of Norfolk; and now published by Mathew Hopkins, Witchfinder, for the benefit of the whole Kingdom." The charge against Hopkins was that he had been supplied by the devil with a memorandum of all the witches, and so was able to find them where others failed. Absurd as the charge was, it found credence, and although his end is wrapped in obscurity, it is said that he was finally seized himself on a charge of sorcery, tried by his own favourite water test—and floated. One cannot but hope that tradition is in this case trustworthy.

It is difficult, nowadays, to realise the gravity with which these trials were undertaken. An outline of a very famous witch trial, before an eminent judge in the

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latter part of the seventeenth century, will best serve as an illustration. Before me there lies a little tract of some sixty pages, printed "for William Shrewsbury at the Bible in Duck Lane," and bearing on the title page the following description:—

"At the Assizes and general gaol delivery, held at Bury St. Edmunds for the County of Suffolk, the Tenth day of March, in the Sixteenth Year of the Reign of our Sovereign, Lord King Charles II., before Matthew Hale, Knight, Lord Chief Baron of His Majesties Court of Exchequer; Rose Callender and Amy Duny, Widows, both of Leystoff, in the county aforesaid, were severally indicted for bewitching Elizabeth and Anne Durent, Jane Bocking, Susan Chandler, William Durent, Elizabeth and Deborah Tacy and the said Callender and Duny, being arraigned upon the same indictments, pleaded not guilty; and afterwards upon a long evidence, were found guilty, and thereupon had judgment to dye for the same."

Both the women charged were old. The charges were as follows: The mother of the infant, William Durent, sworn and examined in open court, deposed that about the 10th of March, having special occasion to go from home, left her child in the care of Amy Duny, giving her special occasion not to give her child the breast. Nevertheless, Amy Duny did acquaint her mother on her return that she had given the child the breast, and on being reprimanded "used many high expressions and threatening speeches towards her; telling her that she had as good have done otherwise than to have found fault with her . . . and that very night her son fell into strange fits of swoounding . . . and so continued for several weeks." Much troubled, the

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mother consulted a Dr. Jacob, of Yarmouth, who advised her to hang up the child's blanket, at night to wrap the child in it, and if she found anything therein to throw it in the fire. A very large toad was found, which on being put in the fire "made a great and horrible noise, and after a space there was a flashing in the fire like gunpowder . . . and thereupon the toad was no more seen or heard." More wonderful still, "the next day there came a young woman and told this deponent that her aunt (meaning the said Amy) was in a most lamentable condition, having her face all scorched with fire." And on the mother enquiring of Amy Duny how this had happened, Amy replied, "she might thank her for it, for that she was the cause thereof, but that she should live to see some of her children dead, or else upon crutches." It was further alleged "that not long after this deponent was taken with lameness in both her legges, from the knees downwards, and that she was fain to go upon crutches . . . and so continued till the time of the Assizes, that the witch came to be tried."

Concerning the bewitching of Elizabeth and Deborah Tacy, aged eleven and nine, their father declared that Deborah was suddenly taken with lameness. One day while the girl was resting outside the house, "Amy Duny came to the deponent's house to buy some herrings; but, being denied, she went away discontented. . . . But at the very same instant of time, the said child was taken with most violent fits, feeling extreme pain in her stomach, like the pricking of pins, and shrieking out in a dreadful manner like unto a whelp." As the result of this and other ailments from which the child suffered, the father accused Amy Duny of being a

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witch, and she was placed in the stocks. Being placed in the stocks, further threats were uttered, and both children were afflicted with fits. Upon recovery they "would cough extremely, and bring up much phlegm and crooked pins, and one time a twopenny nail with a very broad head; which pins (amounting to forty or more), together with the twopenny nail, were produced in court, with the affirmation of the said deponent that he was present when the said nail was vomited up, and also most of the pins. . . In this manner the said children continued for the space of two months, during which time, in their intervals, this deponent would cause them to read some chapters from the New Testament. Whereupon he observed that they would read till they came to the name of Lord or Jesus or Christ, and then, before they could pronounce either of the said words, they would suddenly fall into their fits. But when they came to the name of Satan or Devil, they would clap their fingers upon the book, crying out, 'This bites, but makes me speak right well!'"

Much more evidence of a similar kind was offered during the course of the trial, with details of a too indelicate character for reproduction concerning the search made on the women's bodies for devil's marks. During the whole of the trial there were present in court a number of distinguished people, amongst them Sir Thomas Browne. The latter, being "desired to give his opinion, what he did conceive of him; was clearly of opinion that the persons were bewitched, and said that in Denmark there had lately been a great discovery of witches, who used the very same way of afflicting persons, by conveying pins into them, and crooked as these pins were, with needles and nails. And his

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opinion was that the devil in such cases did work upon the bodies of men and women as on a natural foundation, to stir up and excite such humours superabounding in their bodies to a great excess, whereby he did in an extraordinary manner afflict them with such distempers as their bodies were most subject to, as particularly appeared in these children."

Sir Mathew Hale, one of the greatest lawyers of his day, in directing the jury, told them "he would not repeat the evidence unto them, lest by so doing he should wrong the evidence one way or the other. Only this acquainted them. First, whether or no these children were bewitched? Secondly, whether the prisoners at the bar were guilty of it? That there were such creatures he made no doubt at all. For, first, the Scriptures had affirmed as much. Secondly, the wisdom of all nations had provided laws against such persons, which is an argument of their confidence of such a crime. And such had been the judgment of this kingdom, as appears by that Act of Parliament which had provided punishments proportionable to the quality of the offence. And desired them strictly to observe their evidence, and desired the great God of Heaven to direct their hearts in this weighty thing they had in hand; for to condemn the innocent and let the guilty go free were both an abomination before the Lord." The jury took no more than half an hour to consider their verdict, and brought in both women guilty upon all counts. The judge expressed his complete satisfaction with the verdict, and sentenced them to be hanged—a sentence duly carried out a fortnight later.

This is the last notable trial in English history. A

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witch was burned later than the date of this trial, and the last one actually condemned was in 1712. But in this case, on the representation of the judge who tried the issue, the verdict was formally set aside. By that time people were beginning to realise the wisdom of Montaigne's counsel, written at the commencement of the witch epidemic:—

“How much more natural and more likely do I find it that two men should lie than one in twelve hours should pass with the winds from east to west? How much more natural that our understanding may, by the volubility of our loose, capering mind, be transported from its place than one of us should, flesh and bones as we are, by a strange spirit be carried upon a broom through a tunnel or a chimney.”

In England the Witch Act of 1604 was not formally repealed until 1736. In Scotland the last witch legally executed was in 1722. Captain Ross, Sheriff of Sutherland, has the doubtful honour of having condemned her to the stake. But fifty years later than this—1773—the Associated Presbytery passed a resolution deploring the fact that witchcraft was falling into disrepute. In Germany the last witch was executed in 1749, by decapitation. The last trial for witchcraft in Massachusetts was as late as 1793. These dates refer, of course, to legal proceedings. Examples of the existence of this belief are continually being recorded in newspapers, although they now only rank as solitary reminiscences of one of the most degrading and brutalising beliefs that European history records.

I have not aimed at giving a history of the witch mania—indeed, a scientific history of witchcraft, one that will make plain the nature of the various factors

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involved, has yet to be written. I have only dwelt upon it for the purpose of enforcing the lesson of how materially such an epidemic must have contributed to give permanence to religious belief in general. It is certain that such an epidemic could not occur save in a society saturated with supernaturalism. It is equally certain that once such an epidemic occurs it must in turn strengthen the tendency towards supernaturalistic beliefs. Thanks to the long reign of the religious idea, and to the overwhelming influence of the Church, the people of Europe were prepared for such an outbreak. And it should be clear that the prevalence of such beliefs, even though they may be afterwards discarded, favours the perpetuation of religious belief as a whole. The particular form of a belief that is prevalent for a time may disappear, but the temper of mind induced by its reign remains. And absurd as the belief in witches capering through the air on broomsticks, changing themselves into black cats, raising storms, and causing sickness—absurd though all this may be, it yet serves to keep alive the temper of mind on which supernaturalism lives.

SUMMARY & CONCLUSION

THE STUDY OF RELIGION FALLS NATURALLY and easily into two parts. The first is a question of origin. Under what conditions did the hypothesis that supernatural beings control the life of man come into existence? We know that in civilised times religious beliefs are in the nature of an inheritance. A member of any civilised society finds them here when he is born, he grows up with them, generally accepting them without question, or effecting certain modifications in the form in which he continues to hold them. If we treat religion as a hypothesis, advanced as other hypotheses are advanced, to account for a certain class of facts, then we can safely say that religion is one of the earliest in the history of human thought. And its antiquity and universality preclude us from seeking an explanation of its origin in the mental life of civilised humanity. Whether the religious hypothesis can or cannot be justified by an appeal to civilised intelligence, it is plain it did not begin there. Its beginnings are earlier than any existing civilisation; and in its most general form may be said to be as old as mankind itself. Consequently, if any satisfactory explanation of the origin of the religious idea is to be found, it must be sought amid the very earliest conditions of human society.

Now whatever the differences of opinion concerning matters of detail, there is substantial agreement amongst European anthropologists upon one important point. They all agree that the conception of supernatural, or 'spiritual,' beings owes its beginning to the ignorance of primitive man concerning both his own nature and the nature of the world around him. The

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beginnings of human experience suggest questions that can only be satisfactorily answered by the accumulated experience of many generations. These questions do not materially differ from those that face men to-day. The why and wherefore of things are always with us; life propounds the same problem to all; it is the replies alone that vary, and the nature of these replies is determined by the knowledge at our disposal. The difference is not in nature but in man. The answers given by primitive man to these eternal questions are a complete inversion of those of his better informed descendants. The conception of natural force, of mechanical necessity, is as yet unborn, and the primitive thinker everywhere assumes the operation of personal beings as responsible for all that occurs. This is not so much the product of careful and elaborate philosophising, it is closer akin to the *naïve* thinking of a child concerning a thunderstorm. Primitive thought accepts the universal operation of living and intelligent forces as an unquestionable fact. Modern thought tends more and more surely in the direction of regarding the universe as a complex of self-adjusting, non-conscious forces. Primitive thought assumes a supernatural agency as the cause of disease, and seeks, logically, to placate it by prayer or coerce it by magic. Modern thought turns to test-tube and microscope, searches for the malignant germ, and manufactures an antitoxin. The history of human thought is, as Huxley said, a record of the substitution of mechanical for vitalistic processes. The beginning of religion is found in connection with the latter. A genuine science commences with the emergence of the former.

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With this aspect of the matter I have not, however, been specially concerned. It has been left on one side in order to concentrate attention upon another and a more neglected aspect of the subject—that of the conditions that have served to perpetuate the religious idea. Grant, what cannot be well denied in the face of modern investigation, that ideas of the supernatural began in primitive delusion. How comes it that this idea has not by now disappeared from civilised society? What are the causes that have given it such a lengthy lease of life? Experience has shown that all really verifiable knowledge counts as an asset of naturalism, and is so far opposed to supernaturalism. Moreover, the history of science has been such that one feels justified in the assumption that, given time and industry, there are no phenomena that are not susceptible to a naturalistic explanation. Why, then, has not supernaturalism died out? Even the religious idea cannot persist without evidence of some kind being offered in its behalf. This evidence may be to a better instructed mind inconclusive or irrelevant, but evidence of some sort there must have been all along, and must still be. Granted that the religious idea began with primitive mankind, granted also that it was based on a mistaken interpretation of natural phenomena, these reasons are quite insufficient to explain why thousands of generations later that idea is still with us. “Our fathers have told us” offers to the average mind a strong appeal, but surely the children will require some further proof than this. What kind of evidence is it that throughout the ages religious people have accepted as conclusive? A study of primitive psychology shows clearly enough how the religious idea vitalised

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the facts. What we next have to discern is the class of facts that have kept the religious idea alive.

The foregoing pages constitute an attempt to answer this question. The need for some such investigation was clearly shown by the publication of the late Professor William James's *Varieties of Religious Experience* and its reception by the religious press of the country as an epoch-marking work. As a mere collection of documents, the work is interesting enough. But its critical value is extremely small. How religious visionaries have felt, or what has been their experiences, can only furnish the mere data of an enquiry, and *their explanation of the cause of their experiences is a part of the data*. This, apparently, Professor James overlooked; and it will be noted by critical readers of his book that it proceeds on the assumption that the statements of religious visionaries are to be taken, not only as true concerning their subjective experiences at a given time, but also as approximately true as to the causes of their mental states. This, of course, by no means follows. A scientific enquiry cannot separate mental conditions from the subject's interpretation of their causation. Whether this interpretation is genuine or not must be decided finally by an appeal to what is known of the laws of mental life, under both normal and abnormal conditions. If these are adequate to explain the "*Varieties of Religious Experience*," there is no need whatever to assume the operation of a supernatural agency. Nor does calling this agency 'transcendent' or 'supermundane' make any substantial difference. For, in this connection, these are only names that serve to disguise a visitant of a highly undesirable character.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The evidence on behalf of a naturalistic explanation of religious phenomena has been purposely stated in a suggestive rather than in an exhaustive manner. The main lines of evidence are threefold. First, there is the indisputable fact that in the lower stages of culture all mental and bodily diseases are universally attributed to spiritual agency. This explanation holds the field; it is the only one possible at the time, and it is not replaced until a comparatively late stage of human history. But of special importance is the fact that a belief does not die out suddenly. It is only destroyed very slowly, and even after the facts upon which the belief was originally based have been otherwise interpreted, the attitude of mind engendered by the long reign of a belief remains. It has by that time become part of the intellectual environment. Theories of a quasi-philosophic or quasi-scientific character are elaborated, and give to the original belief something of a rational air. Even to-day the extent to which superstitious practices still gather round the subject of disease is known only to the curious in such matters. Not that the original reason is given for the practice. In nearly every case a different one is invented. To take only a single example. We still find saffron tea largely used in cases of measles. All medical men are aware that it possesses not the slightest curative value. Students of folklore are aware that it has its origin in the theory of sympathetic cures. Its redeeming feature is that it is harmless; so we find it still in common use, and the recovery of a child from measles is often enough attributed to the potency of the concoction. So with the relation of disease to the persistence of the belief in the supernatural. The conclusion that dis-

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ease—whether bodily or mental—is due to the agency of spirits is one that follows from the existence of the religious idea; but in turn the observed facts react and strengthen the religious belief. Every case of disease becomes to the primitive mind an unanswerable proof in favour of the original hypothesis. The disease is there, and the only explanation possible is in terms of the animistic idea. And all the time the religious idea is becoming more deeply embedded in the social consciousness, more firmly established as a social fact.

The next line of evidence is that furnished by what I have called the culture of the supernatural. By some means or other—probably by accident in the first instance—it is discovered that certain herbs and vegetable drugs have a peculiar effect on one's mental state. Those who use them see or hear things other people do not normally hear or see. Abstention from food and other bodily privations produce similar results. What is the inevitable conclusion? The only one possible under the existing conditions is that communication has been set up with an invisible world from which one is shut off under normal conditions. From this to the next step is obvious and easy. If a drug, or a fast, brings one into communication with the supernatural world, one has only to repeat the conditions in order to repeat the experience. And repeated they are in all religions, with, at most, those modifications induced by changed times and circumstances. This is why fasting and other forms of 'fleshly mortification' play so large a part in the history of religion. The savage medicine man, the Hindu fakir, the medieval saint, all create their ecstasies by the simple plan of disturbing the normal operations of the nervous

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system. It is not, of course, implied that this is done with a full consciousness of all that is involved in the practice. The derangement is to them the condition of the supernatural manifestation, not the physiological and psychological cause of the experience.

The third main line of evidence is connected with the phenomena of sexuality. It has been shown that in early stages of culture man everywhere connects the phenomena of the sexual life with the activity of supernatural forces. Following the lines of investigation indicated by Mr. Sidney Hartland, we saw reason to believe that the primitive conception of procreation is not that afterwards prevalent, but that of assuming the birth of a child to be due to the direct action of spiritual beings on the mother. Proofs of this are found in existing beliefs among primitive peoples, in the magical practices so widely current to obtain children, and in numerous other customs connected with childbirth. The phenomenon of puberty in the male and of menstruation in the female gives a terrifying reality to this belief. But still more important is the fact that a great deal of assumed religious feeling is found on analysis to be little more than masked sexuality. The connection between eroticism and piety has been noted over and over again by medical observers in the cases that have been brought professionally under their notice. And it is hardly less marked in a large number of instances that are usually classed as normal. Thus great religious teachers have often emphasised the value of a celibate life as a means of furthering religious devotion, and nearly all have treated it with marked respect. The reason given for this is that marriage involves a greater absorption in material or worldly

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cares, while celibacy leaves one free to full devotion to the spiritual. But the bottom reason for it is that sexual and domestic feelings, lacking their proper outlet in marriage and family life, run with greater force in the outlet provided by religion. So it happens that we find unmarried men and women, devoted to the religious life, expressing themselves towards Jesus or the Virgin in language which, separated from its religious associations, leaves no doubt as to its origin in unsatisfied sexual feeling. In these cases we are dealing with a perversion of one of the deepest of human instincts. And it is one of the commonest of observations in psychology that when a feeling is denied outlet through its proper channel it finds vent in some other direction, and is to that extent masked or disguised.

Allied to the fact of perversion is that of misinterpretation. In the chapter on *Conversion* we have seen how largely this occurs at the period of adolescence. The significant features of adolescence are a development of the sexual nature and an awakening of a consciousness of race kinship. Connected with these, and flowing from them, is a more or less rapid development of what are called the altruistic feelings, the individual becoming less self-centred and more concerned for the well-being of others. From an evolutionary point it is easy to read the fundamental meaning of these transformations, although in the course of social development they have become overlaid with a number of secondary characteristics. Still, in a completely rationalised social life, with adequate knowledge concerning the nature of adolescence, every care would be taken to direct these developing energies into

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purely social channels. Adolescence is the great formative period; it is then that imitation and suggestion play their most important parts, and it is then that the foundations may be laid of a really good and useful citizenship. If we fail then, we fail completely.

In a society where supernaturalism still exerts considerable power another, and a more disastrous, policy is pursued. Every endeavour is made by religious organisations to exploit adolescence in their own interest. Thousands of priests, often, no doubt, with the best of motives, are engaged in impressing upon the youthful mind an entirely erroneous notion of the character and the direction of the feelings experienced. The sense of restlessness, consequent upon a period of great physiological disturbance, is utilised to create an unhealthy 'conviction of sin,' or the need of 'getting right with God.' Social duties and obligations are made incidental rather than fundamental. Activities that should be consciously directed to a social end are diverted into religious channels, and one consequence of this, as we have seen, is a large crop of nervous disorders that might be avoided were a healthier outlet provided. In this the modern priest is acting precisely as his savage forerunner acted. As the savage medicine man associates sexual phenomena with the activity of the tribal ghosts, so the modern priest often associates the psychological conditions that accompany adolescence with a supernatural influence. The distinction between the two is a purely verbal one. In neither case is there a recognition of the nature of the processes actually at work; in both cases the phenomena are used to emphasise the reality and activity of the supernatural. In both cases the

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social feelings are disguised by the religious interpretation given, with the result that instead of adolescence being, as it should be, the period of a conscious entry into the larger social life, it only too often marks the beginning of a lifelong servitude to retrogressive forces.

These are the main lines along which, I conceive, the study of the pathologic elements that enter into the history of religion must be studied. And so long as we restrict our study to the lower culture stages the evidence is clear and unmistakable. It is when we reach the higher stages of civilisation that the problem becomes more difficult. For although it is possible to detect the same factors at work they are expressed in a different way, and affiliated to current philosophic and even scientific ideas. Thus, it would be readily admitted by most people nowadays that visions seen by a fasting man, or by a taker of drugs, or by one suffering from some nervous disorder, were wholly inadmissible as evidence. So far we have advanced beyond the point of view of primitive races. But the testimony of one who by constantly dwelling upon a single idea, and by excluding rational and corrective influences, has brought about a quite abnormal state of mind, is still counted of value by theologians. Much of the current cant concerning 'mysticism' may be cited in illustration of this. Exactly what mysticism is no one appears to know. Definitions are numerous and varied. So far as most mystics are concerned the definition of Harnack—"Mysticism is rationalism applied to a sphere beyond reason"—appears to hit the mark, although how reason can be used in a sphere to which it does not apply is precisely one of those un-

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intelligible statements that so delights those with yearnings after the ineffable. The normal mind will probably find more satisfaction in John Stuart Mill's description of mysticism as being "neither more nor less than ascribing objective existence to the subjective creations of the mind, and believing that by watching and contemplating these ideas of its own making, it can read what takes place in the world without."

But the general claim of 'mystics,' and, indeed, of supernaturalists generally, is that they are, in virtue of the exercise of certain qualities or 'faculties,' either inoperative at certain times, or absent in the case of normal folk, able to perceive a truth not perceptible to people less fortunately endowed. And these claims, I have no hesitation in saying, are wholly false. There are all degrees of development of human faculty, but it is substantially the same with all. There is no royal road to truth in this direction more than in others. Truth is reached in the same way by all, and although an induction may in the case of certain well-dowered individuals be so rapid as to rank as an 'intuition,' a careful analysis destroys the illusion.

When we clear away from the claims of the 'mystic' all the superfluities of language that are there, and so reduce these claims to their lowest and plainest terms, we find ourselves face to face with the claim of the supernaturalist as it has existed from savage times onward. The method remains true to itself. In the first instance, we have the claim to illumination based upon direct interference with the normal workings of the mind. In the next stage, we find this interference still marked, but less direct. Finally, we have the unhealthy operation of fixed ideas, and the exclusion of all con-

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ditions that would prevent the operation of hallucination or illusion. But the method remains the same throughout, and it is equally sterile throughout. In all history these mystical states of illumination have discovered no verifiable truth; they have never at any time advanced human knowledge in the smallest degree. And the reason for this is plain. The brain of the mystic, like that of the non-mystic, can only work on the basis of its acquired knowledge or experience. It can create nothing new; it can declare no truth that is not in the nature of an induction from existing knowledge. All that the religious mystic can accomplish after brooding upon inherited religious beliefs is to create new combinations, or effect certain modifications or developments of them, and by continued contemplation endow his subjective creations with an objective existence. That is why the Christian mystic remains a Christian. The Mohammedan mystic remains a Mohammedan. The 'supersensible reality' is always of the kind consonant with their inherited beliefs and their social environment. That is also why mysticism has its fashions like all other forms of religious extravagance. And as he is "applying rationalism to a sphere above reason," the mystic may give full vent to his imaginative powers. That which is above reason may defy reasonable disproof. To some, however, it has the disadvantage of not admitting of reasonable verification. There is nothing here but the primitive delusion operating under changed conditions.

In addition to the lines of investigation followed in the foregoing pages, a great deal might be said as to how far the religious idea has been perpetuated by an

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exploitation of purely social qualities. It must be obvious to even the cursory student that a great deal of what is now being put forward as religious is really no more than a sociology with a religious label. The feeling for truth, beauty, justice, the desire for social intercourse, are all treated as expressions of religious conviction. All sorts of social reforms are urged in the name of religion, and the degree of success achieved dwelt upon as fruits of the religious spirit. But in no legitimate sense of the word can these things be called religious. They may or may not be consonant with the existing religion, but in themselves they are very clearly the outcome of man's social nature, and would exist even though religion disappeared entirely. The appeals made to man's moral sense, to his sense of justice, to his sympathies, are thus fundamentally appeals made to his social nature, and so far as the religious appeal is placed upon this basis it becomes an exploitation of the social consciousness. Unfortunately, the long association of religious forms with social life and institutions, due ultimately to the immense power of supernaturalism in early society, this, combined with early education, makes it a matter of no small difficulty for the average man or woman to separate the two things.

Finally, let us imagine for a moment that the course of human history had been different to what it actually has been. Suppose that by some miracle humanity had started its career in full possession of that knowledge of nature which has been so laboriously accumulated. In that case, would the belief in the supernatural have ever existed? Would the thousand and one 'spiritual beings' of primitive society have ever had being?

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And if not called into being then, from what other source could they have been derived? Is there anything in later scientific knowledge that would ever have suggested the supernatural? We know there is not; we know that the whole of modern science is an emphatic protest against its existence. Unfortunately the scientist does not come first, but last; and by the time he appears, the supernatural has made good its foothold; it has permeated human institutions, and has bitten so deeply into habits of thought as to make its eradication the most difficult of all tasks.

Let us carry our imagining yet a step further. Imagine that even after primitive ignorance had created the supernatural, it had come to an abrupt stop when man had emerged from the purely savage stage. Suppose a generation born, not without knowledge of what their progenitors believed, but with a sufficient knowledge of their own to correct their ancestor's errors. Suppose that generation in a position to recognise disease, insanity, delusion, hysteria, hallucination for what they are. Assume them to be under no delusion concerning the nature of man, physically or mentally. Would the religious idea have persisted in the way that it has done? Granted religion would still have continued to exist as an ultimate philosophy of nature that appealed to some minds, as other systems of philosophy number their disciples, would it have been the dominating power it has been? What under such conditions would have become of that evidence for the supernatural, accepted generation after generation, but which is now rejected by all educated minds? Where would have been that long array of seers, prophets, illuminants, whose credentials have been found

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in states of mind that are now seen to have been pathological in character? For remember it was not always—very seldom, in fact—the justice, or the reasonableness of the teachings set forth, that won support, but generally the ‘signs and wonders’ that were pointed to as evidence of the divine commission of the teachers. Assume, then, that these ‘signs and wonders’ had been wanting, and that for thousands of years people had looked at natural phenomena from the point of view of the educated mind of to-day, what would have been the present position of the religious idea? Would it not have been like a tree divorced from the soil?

Well, we know that the course of history has been far different from what I have assumed to be the case. We know that the savage dies out very slowly, and that even in civilised States to-day he is honoured in the existence of a whole army of representatives. Each generation moves along the road marked out by its predecessors, and broadens or lengthens it to but a small extent. For many, many generations people went on adopting the conclusions of the savage concerning man and the universe, and finding proofs of the soundness of those conclusions in exactly the same kind of experiences. The beliefs thus engendered were wild and absurd—admittedly so, and many of such a nature that educated people are now ashamed of them. But such as they were, they served the purpose of perpetuating the belief in the supernatural, and so served to strengthen the general religious idea. Of that there can be no reasonable doubt. For the influence of beliefs that have been long held does not end with the intellectual perception of their falsity. A belief such

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as witchcraft dies out, but by that time it has done its work in familiarising the general mind with the reality of the supernatural, and so prepares the ground for other harvests. These long centuries of superstitious beliefs have left behind in society a psychological residuum that is at all times an obstacle and is sometimes fatal to scientific thinking. We are like men who have obtained freedom after almost a lifetime of slavery. We may be no longer in any real danger of the lash, but fear of the whip has become part of our nature, and we shrink without cause. So with all those now admitted delusions that have been described in the foregoing pages, and which for generations were asserted without question. They bit deeply into social institutions; the temper of mind they induced became part of our social heritage. They perpetuated the long reign of supernaturalism, and still interpose a serious obstacle to sane and helpful conceptions of man and the universe.

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