

in a carnal warfare. For the weapons of our campaigning are not carnal, but they are mighty enough by divine appointment for the destruction of fortresses and we overturn human reasonings and every form of high-mindedness exalting itself against the knowledge of God, and we bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of the Christ. And we are prepared to punish every disobedience, as soon as your own obedience is thorough.' (Fr Spencer, O.P. Trans. 2 Cor. 10.)



GREEK AND JEW

CONRAD PEPLER, O.P.

IN the last few centuries before the coming of Christ the Greek influence began to make itself felt. It reached Judea through Egypt where there was a great number of Jews centred round Alexandria. But there was also a direct influx of the non-sacramental hellenic view of religion from the cities which Alexander himself founded in Palestine. The Jews were introduced to the families of the gods, and the Machabees revolted against this attack on their allegiance to Jahwe, for the hellenic familiarity with the gods naturally offered its attractions. But it was not from the Greek myths that the greatest influence was felt. These were rejected. But the intellectualization of Greek philosophy was spreading all over the near East, and it was this that was wedded to Jewish thought in the Wisdom literature. There was no wavering about the transcendence and uniqueness of Jahwe; the Jewish faith and outlook remained untouched yet the Greek influence emphasized the 'interior' aspect of their religion and gave a new approach to Jahwe as the God of Creation. Man was seen still as a part of that divinely organized world, but in the Wisdom literature he views the organization and orderliness of it all and he is less bound up in its inevitable functioning by means of the ritual of sacrifice, and more directed towards the contemplation of God's working in nature—more of the beholder and

the participator. 'The second type of wisdom found an easy contact with the prophetic conception of Jahwe as the controller of nature. . . . It encouraged an interest in cosmic phenomena and in the contemplation of God's work in nature. It asserted that there was no break in consistency within God's world, so that contemplation of nature became a remedy against scepticism or despair.' (Scholfield, *op. cit.*, p. 194.) It is Wisdom who now says: 'Whoso findeth me findeth life and shall obtain favour of the Lord'. (Prov. 8, 35.) Life becomes more associated with hearing instruction and in finding knowledge (Prov. 8, 9-12) and less with the blood-stream. Nevertheless Jahwe still speaks 'out of the whirlwind', thunder is his voice (Job. 40, 6-9) and Job's comforters are bidden to offer seven bullocks and seven rams in propitiation for their sins (Job. 42, 8). But the introduction of Wisdom theology opened the way eventually to the idealizing of the whole Jewish religion, as will be seen in Alexandria itself in the person of Philo.

Enough has been written on the Kingdom of God as the fulfilment of original Jewish conception of the tribe of Israel, the race chosen by God to fulfil his will on earth. Here we have only to insist on the salient features of this fulfilment as the essential foundation of the true Christian life. We have to insist at this stage that our Lord was primarily fulfilling all the simple straightforward religion of the Chosen race. His preaching, though it obviously had its bearing upon the 'Wisdom literature' of the Bible, was immediately concerned with the common life of the people he had come to save. It was to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, or to to Moses that he turned the eyes of his hearers when he wanted to show that he was the Expected One. He did not call himself the Word of God—that he left to the disciple whom he loved—but he did call himself the Son of Man, the Son of Adam. 'Ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven' (Mark 14, 62) and the new community is to be gathered into one through his blood. He spoke primarily to the simple, primitive Jewish people who could not have been very much affected by Greek intellectual influences. He selected fishermen for his apostles and preached constantly to the crowd. It might almost be said, though it can only be stated with reservations, that he presented in the first place a challenge to the hellenized elements of Judaism, to the intel-

lectualizers like the Sadducees who had robbed religion of its true corporate and physical nature. The Pharisees and Scribes who knew all the answers and how to explain away and interpret at will—it was they who undermined the true Jewish religion which our Lord had come to fulfil. They, purposely or because their habit of mind was such, could not take a symbol as a symbol; it had to become a matter of clear conceptions: 'We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that was made with hands and in three days I will build another not made with hands.' (Mark 14, 58.) Parables and signs and sacraments were a scandal to these men.

Perhaps the easiest way of summarizing the effect of Christ's fulfilment of the true Jewish religion would be to take the words of St Peter after the Ascension; St Peter, that simple fisherman who had inherited the simple attitude to Jahwe as God of Creation and of the Nation, Parent-God, Krator-God.



Before inquiring into the manner in which our Lord fulfilled the Jewish life under Jahwe, we must go back to the origin of Greek thought and its effect upon the Near East and the West. For the original Greek mind was in fact much closer to the Jewish before the rise of the Ionian philosophers, despite the fact that the inhabitants of this other central spot between East and West seem to have had from the first a great distrust of chaos and an immense love for regularity and order. 'There is no people to whose mental outlook chaos was so repugnant as the Greeks. Their whole thought, not merely their aesthetic, moves towards an ideal of artistic and precise definition, repudiating the Oriental's admiration of mere size or the indefinite outlines of emotional mysticism.' (*Cambridge Ancient History*, vol. II, pp. 604-5.) It was strange, then, that they should have provided a bridge between the Oriental tradition of contemplation and the whole development of western mysticism. The Greeks themselves were originally as immersed in nature as any other primitive peoples. The traces of pre-hellenic religion in the Aegean reveal in their cave sanctuaries a great sense of their dependence upon the Great Mother, the earth, from whom their life sprang. Their fertility cults centred round bulls and trees and seem to have been connected with their special cult of the dead. The cave was the entrance into

the world of the dead and from that form of Sheol the great Mother sent forth the new life in the Spring. The dead, for instance, were burned in their caves so as to release the moist or watery soul, for the life was thought to reside in the body's moisture (including the blood, but more especially other life-liquids) and it could thus be sent out of the body back into the great river or ocean of life. (cf. Onions, *Origin of European Thought*, pp. 247 sqq.)

Then the Indo-European invaders brought with them their myths and their gods, which were to be transformed by the Greek mind. It would be impossible to explore the genesis of these religions which seem to have passed to and fro, beginning in the North and descending to India and back through the Dardanelles. But we may quote a page of Otto Karer to give a general background:

'The oldest Indian book, the *Rigveda*, which dates roughly from the second millenium before Christ, convinced . . . contemporary scholars that when they first entered India the Aryans, like their western congeners, "by thought and intelligence had made contact with the infinite". Their gods and heroes remind us at first sight of the primitive Teutonic religion. The intoxicating draught of the Soma, sacrificial offerings and incantations bestowed upon the children of earth supernatural strength for heroic deeds—enabling them to vanquish and permeate the aboriginal culture of the Dravidians. The social grades, priests, warriors, peasants, merchants and serfs, are clearly demarcated in accordance with the right of conquest. But it is not long before a dreamy lassitude overtakes these Aryan heroes. The tropical climate and the prodigality of nature produce their effect. Their gaze turns inward. "Contemplation" has begun, "absorption", the vision of the formless Brahma.' (Otto Karer, *Religions of Mankind*. English Trans. 1936, p. 267.)

But at first the movement was towards a personal and Supreme Being (as indeed it was in China); a desire to be reunited with the transcendent God was the source of their life. 'When shall I be at one with him? What offerings will he accept without indignation? When shall I behold his mercy with a glad heart? O that I might be free from sin and by adoration might attain the end of my prayer, to turn thy wrath from me.' (*Rigveda*, Karer, p. 27.) Perhaps because there was no true 'desert' or purification and

diversification, perhaps because the fertility of those lands was too easy so that there was no vigorous sense of dependence, the Indian thought seems to have turned quite quickly towards contemplating the undying principle within themselves, the Atman, and the undying undifferentiated power of the universe outside, Brahman, and discovering that these two are one and that the Yoga of self-knowledge will realize this unity and bring peace in Nirvana.

But at first in Greece there was still a true sense of a partnership in nature. The gods became very anthropomorphic and more like to holy ancestors, but especially with Henoeh the farmer who tended his flocks 'under holy Helicon'. He sees order generated from original chaos and this order is a divine one. Sky and Earth are parents of gods and men; Night begot Doom and Death and Sleep and so she bare the tribe of dreams. 'The natural process of procreation then supplied Henoeh with a scheme which allowed him to connect the phenomena and to arrange them in a comprehensible system' (*Before Philosophy*, p. 250). It is clear then that in the earliest Greek thought the primitive sense of being part of a whole without being entirely identified with it lay at the back of all their experience. Their conception of any dualism in nature was not pronounced. Only in the Orphic teaching about them and the Titans was there a suggestion of division which later was to become pronounced. 'The Titans had devoured Dionysos-Zagreus and were therefore destroyed by the lightning of Zeus, who made man from their ashes. Man, in so far as he consists of the substance of the Titans, is evil and ephemeral; but since the Titans had partaken of a god's body man contains a divine and immortal spark.' (*Ibid.*, pp. 248, 9.) The soul was still a thin sinewy substance or a vaporous watery effluence which remained after the death of the body and so there was still an unacknowledged companionship between man and the rest of material creation, a companionship which reached its height in association with these very anthropomorphic gods. But the seeds of idealism and self-consciousness were already present; man was separating himself from the totality of creation and standing apart from it all.

The first philosopher, Thales, saw all things as water, because the psyche was a vapour of liquid come from the great Ocean from which sprang all life. But he had sought and found an

arche, a principle of being. He speaks of water, not of a water-god, and has removed philosophy from religion. It has been suggested that true philosophy was only born when the unique success of Greek civilization was the crest of the wave and indeed when the wave had begun to break and descend. Pressing forward towards success, men have the object before them and view the world more as a whole, as a complete thing to be conquered and absorbed. But when that object reveals its elusiveness and failure and frustration throw men back on themselves they become interested in the Kingdom of the soul and how it is ruled. (cf. Erdmann, *History of Philosophy*, vol. 1, c. 1.) It is significant that men point to Heraclitus as the first man to propound a theory of the intelligible universe in which thought rather than any material element is the principium of all things. "Wisdom is one thing. It is the thought by which all things are steered through all things." Here for the first time attention is centred, not on the thing known but on the knowing of it.' (*Before Philosophy*, p. 255; cf. Burnet Frey 19.) Heraclitus, who saw the transience of everything, may well have been driven out into a desert. But the desert for him with his roots in the mysticism of the Indian introspective contemplative has an effect opposite to that it had on the Jews. It turns him in upon thought, making him a Descartes pre-born two thousand years, and thought, *gnosis* and *logos*, open for him a new totality in which there is no distinction. 'The wise is one only. It is unwilling and willing to be called by the name of Zeus.' (Burnet, frag. 65.) 'The *Kosmos* which is the same for all, no one of the gods or men has made; but it ever was, is now and ever shall be an ever living fire.' (Burnet, frag. 20). The gods and the myth go by the board and Wisdom steps nobly into their place. It seems a wonderful transition, but in fact the Greek desert has removed all real distinction and the suggestion that the physical world is only the ephemeral and passing manifestation of the one realm of thought where all things changelessly change has done away with the sense of dependence which is essential to the virtue of religion. Gone is the importance of the Spring, gone is man's reliance upon the creative image, the external ritual, the waving of the Lulab and the pouring out of water upon the altar. 'In the writing of Heraclitus, to a larger degree than ever before, the images do not impose their burden of concreteness but are entirely subservient to the achievement of

clarity and precision.' (*Before Philosophy*, p. 257.) Already we hear the first whisper of that song which was to be most beautifully and movingly sung by St John of the Cross himself: 'Hearing, sight, smell, taste and touch—all those kinds of knowledge which the soul can form and make after this fashion, of all these forms and manners of knowledge the soul must strip and void itself and it must strive to lose the imaginary apprehension of them, so that there may be left in it no kind of impression of knowledge, no trace of aught soever, but rather the soul must remain barren and bare . . . total separation from all forms which are not God; for God comes beneath no definite form or kind of knowledge whatsoever.' (*Ascent of Mount Carmel*, bk III, c. 2, n. 4.) With Heraclitus the destruction of images had begun, and the great division between the divine realms of intellect as such and the vestigial world that reflects the intellect had first been made in the hellenic desert.

But Heraclitus had not abandoned all images and he followed the tradition of the 'myth' of the physical elements. Although he probably no longer considered the dependence of things upon the gods of water, air or fire, he used the great symbol of fire which had been the principal Egyptian god in the sun and which was to be transformed when St John the Baptist came as a burning and shining fire and our Lord himself came as the Light of the World. The symbol remained as a link between the world of the mind and the world of external phenomena; it was still a sacrament. Plato came finally to destroy the idols and the ikons, these shadowy illusions that only mimicked the true reality of the kingdom of ideas. Of course, in his way, he was right—the gods were too human, they did behave like a lot of jealous school-girls and it was high time somebody rescued the idea of God from such scandalous degradation. 'We must have nothing to do with the mistake of Homer or any other man', who made God hand out good to some, evil to others. 'And we shall not praise any one who says that Zeus and Athene were responsible for Pandarus's violation of the oaths and treaties, or that Themis and Zeus caused strife and division among the gods. . . . We must not allow the poet to say that those who were punished were miserable and that God made them so.' (*Republic*, 379-80.) The passage is famous.

But we can surely spare some sympathy for the followers of the mysteries who regarded such talk as impious. Any Christian who

continued to read that passage might be forgiven for thinking the atmosphere so icy in the cold air of pure intellect that the blood of the Word made flesh might indeed congeal in the frost. 'Do you think that any one, God or man, would deliberately make himself in any way worse than he was before?' No, indeed, that is the cold logic of it. But we must walk warily. The poets have something to tell us, and the mysteries from which man can never really escape. The magic of the spring may not make a pretty pattern in the pure light of Logos, but men children are conceived in April and the green corn thrusts up its first pointers towards the golden harvest. The tree stands steadily alive and protective, the bull has power though another thinks for him. All these phantoms in the cave, it would be holier to turn from them and look towards the light shining from the sun of reality, the orb of living and blazing wisdom. But this too, O Plato, is a desert, a desert not of rocks whence spring the living waters, but the desert of pure thought—the life of God the Non-creator cannot be shared by man, but only by the mind of man. And beware of that divine spark of supreme intellect; once it has been purified of myth and stands exposed by logic as having nothing to do with the battles of the Titans, it will as likely as not leap back into the cold blaze of the divine mind and all will be finally one without distinction.

There is no need to dwell at length on Plato's thought; it is sufficiently well-known. We should be reminded, perhaps, not only of his contempt of the Sophist's images but also of his notion of the soul. His attitude to the soul may be summed up in a short conversation between Socrates and Alcibiades:

Socrates: What then is man?

Alcibiades (ingenuously): I cannot say.

Soc.: You can at least say that the man is that which uses the body.

Alcib.: True.

Soc.: Now does anything use the body but the mind?

Alcib. (playing up to Socrates): The mind alone.

Soc.: The mind is therefore the man.

There we have the great Greek division in a nutshell. A mind piloting a body through the troubled waters of sense, or riding this only half-broken-in steed that has to be reined-in to prevent its galloping off to the lush green meadows and the frisky mare.

The souls resided first in the stars but were degraded through some fault of their own to this unhappy fate. For the soul is condemned to this association, and from this point of view the body is a prison. The body drags the soul down into the stream of Becoming, so that its pure intellectual nature becomes greatly disfigured. In this grave the soul becomes forgetful of the beautiful kingdom of ideas in which it had once lived.

Here then is another kind of desert; a desert full of the plenty of physical fertility, a desert that attacks the soul by surfeiting the body. Without the tension of expectancy, looking to the God who sends the rain in time of drought or the quails in time of hunger, the external ritual of dependence upon the Powers falls back into rubricism and the stage is set for the great 'spiritual' reformer who will rescue the soul from its starvation. The desert of death offers now a new fulfilment. The soul yearns for death to release it from this prison. The true man longs for incorporeal existence (cf. *Phaedo* 62, sq.). If he has lived a truly spiritual life death will lead him straight to bliss; for this mind which is the man will return to its association with the Ideas where alone true reality is to be found. No Sheol here; no ancestors whose blood and physical inheritance was so precious. The Ideal, the final goal is reached only through various purifications, and the pattern of ascent is full of beauty. Yet the purifications and the passage to God are not those of the Jews either together or alone in their wilderness. The community of the idealist has difficulty to retain the real distinction among its members. The purer and higher the individual mounts towards the idea of the Good, the more identified he becomes with all good. Truly Plato, while praising the Contemplative Life as the state of perfection (*Theaetetus*, 172-177), does not neglect the State. For him perhaps the eternal bliss of the ideal order and the State on earth were not mutually exclusive—on earth the State is the higher good, in eternity assimilation to the idea of the Good. But in both lurks the danger of a totalitarianism or a nirvana. Once man, the conjunction of spirit and matter, is cleft into two separate parts the two worlds fall apart into two complete and undifferentiated unities.

We wrote just now of the religious 'reformer', but 'revolutionary' would have been a better word. Professor Gilson, in contrasting the Platonist with the Aristotelian, has made the shrewd distinction between the two: 'Begotten in us by things

in themselves, concepts are born *reformers* that never lose touch with reality. Pure ideas, on the other hand, are born within the mind and from the mind, not as intellectual expressions of what is, but as models or patterns of what ought to be; hence they are born *revolutionists*. And this is the reason why Aristotle and Aristotelians write books on politics, whereas Plato and Platonists always write Utopias.' (Gilson, *Unity of Philosophic Experience*, p. 68.) The revolutionary sets the heart yearning for a Paradise, a life which is eternal and unclouded by suffering or misunderstanding, a life that is not here and now, of man the brute and the hero, but a life that is ideal, fabricated in the mind. Those who live for the future, live for the ideas in their minds, they strain forward always at tension, always in a desert of rejection of the present and of the community of things as they are, always tormented by the ideas in their heads. It was this religion of rejection, the sacred revolution of the Idea of the Good, that moved forward across the intervening centuries to meet the perfected Judaism of the Christian reformation.



POINTS OF VIEW

'FRIENDSHIP'

TO THE EDITOR, 'THE LIFE'

Dear Sir,

In answer to the letter of Miss Kaye Wells concerning Christian friendship, one surely finds many references in Scripture. Our Lord himself mentions the subject quite frequently, both in parable, 'If a man asketh his friend', etc., etc., and directly: 'I have called you friends', etc., etc. From which latter, incidentally, all his conversation with the Disciples is conversation with friends and therefore teaching for us on this subject. Examples of our Lord's attitude to friendship can surely be seen in his dealings with Mary, Martha and Lazarus. We can also find in the Old Testament accounts of friendship, for example David and Jonathan--'David's heart was knit to the heart of Jonathan by a close bond and Jonathan loved him dearly as his own