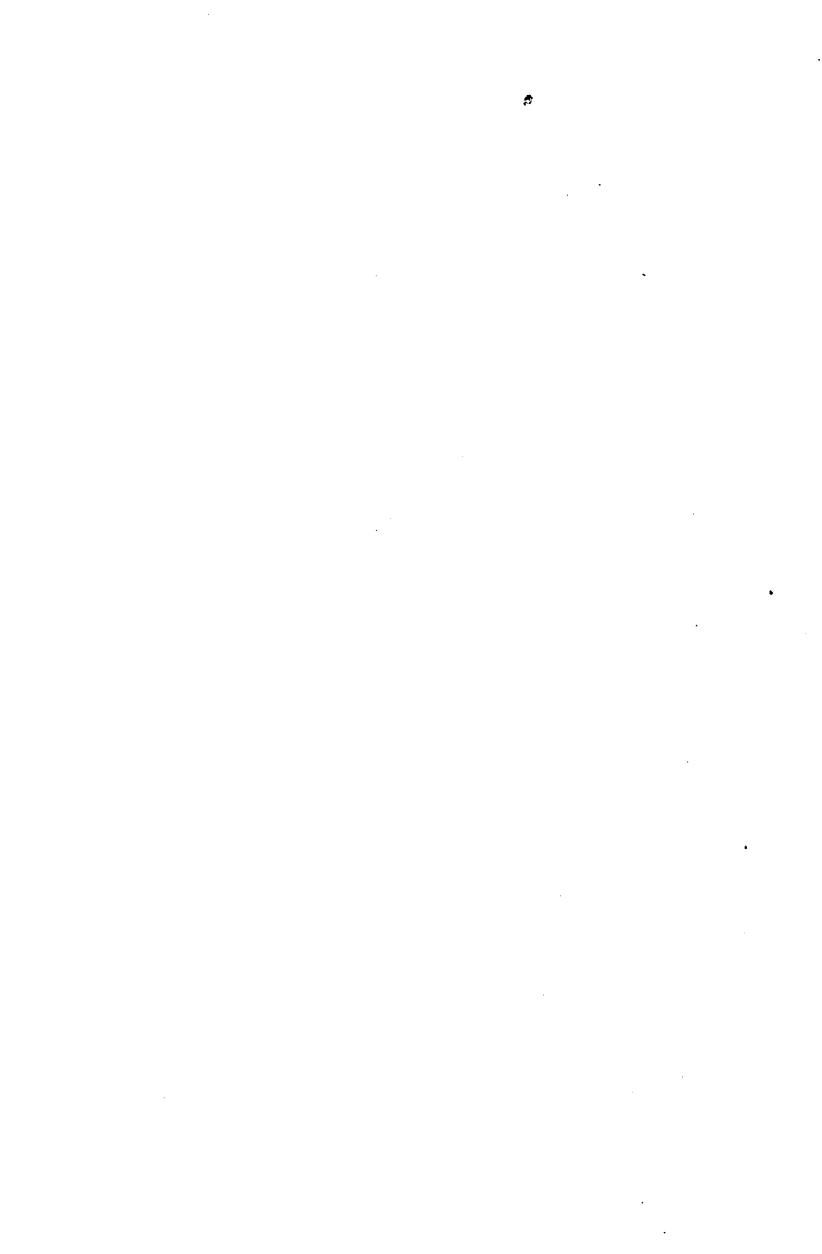


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POLYTHEISM AND FETISHISM

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Catholic Library of Religious Knowledge

XVIII

POLYTHEISM AND FETISHISM

THE REV. M. ^{author} BRIAULT, C.S.SP.

"

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PREFACE

THE subject of *Polytheism and Fetishism* winds up the list of questions treated in the Catholic Library of Religious Knowledge. But it is neither the last in importance, nor the easiest to expound, nor the least interesting in virtue of its conclusions.

In truth, the "problem of religion" has never been regarded as indifferent, even by those who say that the moral and theological issues it raises are entirely foreign to them: *Malgré nous vers le ciel il faut lever nos yeux!* In spite of ourselves, we must raise our eyes to heaven.

Religion has always had its faithful members, often its martyrs; but it has also its enemies. The contested areas, however, spread and change with times and circumstances. In the matter of Christianity, for instance, and specially of Catholicism, all the sciences are to-day being led to the assault of classical theology; the natural sciences, biology, ethnology, the history, criticism, and comparison of religions are all ranged against it. Against our scholastic theses facts are set, and we must advance facts in reply.

Can we do so? Some have seemed to doubt it. And, indeed, might it not seem an act of imprudence to leave the solid ground of our ancient theology to follow adversaries, often armed with the prestige

PREFACE

of erudition, into the tangle of contradictory expositions, of venturesome hypotheses, of religions insufficiently known? Risking itself in such dangerous pursuits the Catholic religion might only soil its stainless robe, and expose it to the danger of being sadly rent.

In such a spirit of mistrust, the first Louvain Congress of religious ethnology opened in 1912. It needed nothing less than the patronage of the great Cardinal Mercier to calm the uneasiness it caused.

The Congress closed, having revealed, even after such a modest beginning, that we had some answer to make to modern objections.

One of its members, Father de Grandmaison, had long been asking for and predicting a result of this kind. "The struggle is on the ground of facts," he had written in *Etudes*. "On that ground then we must join battle with the enemy, and find weapons to strengthen believers and convince doubters."

Since then the horizon has cleared. None of us now contests the importance of the study of religions. Continuous courses on the subject, given by specialists, have been instituted in most Catholic universities. Writings that must be reckoned with have appeared. Men able to get into direct touch with the natives have made investigations on the spot, and have victoriously replied to assertions that were purely bookish, and were advanced with the laborious purpose of propping new philosophic, social, or religious systems. And to those searchers, finding their way through the dark night of Fetishism, the truth has appeared, and shed a new light on the old positions of classical theology.

PREFACE

Opposition, of course, has not ceased, nor will it ever. But our opponents, unable to question the seriousness of our investigations and the reality of facts that could be submitted to the test of experience, generally pretend to ignore them and seek a new battle-ground. We shall follow them there.

What is represented by the two words, Polytheism and Fetishism, words at once convenient and unfitted to denote a whole array of different beliefs and practices?

Polytheism, it might be replied, means the entire Greek and Latin mythology as we find it in our ancient classics, the religion of the days

*Où le ciel sur la terre
Marchait et respirait dans un peuple de dieux,*

when Heaven walked and breathed on earth, a people of gods.

Quite so; but is not this Polytheism just one of the expressions, the latest one, of ancient paganism, and must it not be considered apart from the various forms assumed by Polytheism in Egypt, in Chaldea, in Iran, and down to our own times in India, China and Japan?

This treatise has not, fortunately, to expound all that is represented by those manifold conceptions of religion, whether religious or pseudo-religious. Volumes would be required for that.¹

The task of the present author was one of popularization, in keeping with the other manuals of this Library of Religious Knowledge. It might

¹ Consult the excellent work of Father Pinard de la Boullaye, *The Comparative History of Religions*. 2 vols. Paris. (Beauchesne.)

PREFACE

have consisted of an investigation of what has been written on those numerous matters that have long and continuously aroused the uneasy questioning of men.

The author has made this investigation, but of necessity only a summary one, as far as concerns what is included under the rubric of Polytheism.

As for Fetishism, Fathier Briault has seen it on the spot, has questioned and analysed it, and has put into this study that conscientious sincerity, precision, prudent investigation, I might add, that instinctive and salutary reserve to be found in his other writings. And this impartial and circumspect manner of exposition has a strength which would not be possessed by an apologetic tract, based on adventurous theories not all scrupulously verified.

What are his conclusions? It is a curious fact that most of our specialist opponents do not seem to have clarified their notions about this affair of religion, about which they talk so freely and abundantly. Religion is for them synonymous with religious sentiment, or ritual observance, is confounded in their minds with that mass of scruples and concerns inspired by fear, with mystical leanings, prelogical thought, sociological instinct, etc., in one word, with Fetishism. And thus religion, which is first of all a form of belief as a necessary foundation for a morality and a worship that have relation to the Deity, becomes assimilated with sentiment, which is merely its consequence, or worse still, with something which is a deviation from it, a counterfeit or caricature of itself.

There are in Polytheism and Fetishism, since we must use those terms, what Andrew Lang calls a mythological element and a religious element. It

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is a conclusion of this treatise that both elements are found together in every age and place.

Dominated by the idea of all-supreme evolution from an amorphous beginning, our adversaries like to represent to us primitive humanity developing little by little from the animal stage, rising gradually to certain rough notions of a religious kind, and only very slowly arriving at the conception of a superior Deity.

Voltaire, whom we should hardly have expected to be on our side, wrote in the eighteenth century: "I venture to think that mankind began with the knowledge of one God, and that human weakness subsequently adopted many."

The facts support Voltaire. In the religious conceptions of peoples so evolved as the ancient Romans, Greeks, Egyptians, Chaldeans, or contemporary Buddhists, the notion of a personal God almost disappears under a vast growth of more or less rationalized or poetical speculation and practice. It is far clearer among African blacks or islanders of Oceania, peoples of notably lower civilization. And when we come to the real savages, who have neither agriculture, nor industry, nor fixed villages, the African Pygmies, the Negritoes of the Andaman Islands and the Malay Peninsula, the natives of Terra del Fuego, we are surprised to find among them a family organization more regular than that of the tribes around them, a purer morality, a true, if elementary worship, expressing itself in prayer and sacrifice, a very definite belief in an omnipotent God, Master of life and death, Father of men, with no form the senses can perceive. Can it be that these poor primitive races, to all appearance so representative of our first ancestors, having less of

PREFACE

imagination and artificial needs than the civilized, have surpassed them in preserving the essential ideas of religion?

For there is only one religion, the universal or Catholic one. It began with the first man, and will end only with the last. Very simple in its beginnings, it developed without ever contradicting itself, descending lineally from age to age of humanity, which it has supported in an often toilsome journey, and sought to guide towards the goal.

But parasitic elements have clung to it from the first, disfiguring and perverting it. Of such kind are the various forms of Fetishism, whose traces are found in prehistoric tombs, which shows itself in complete expansion among millions of men of inferior civilization, has never been absent from any country or worship, and ever tends to resurgence under our eyes, even in our splendid cities. And such also are the numerous species of Polytheism, intractable shoots that have been thrown off in the course of ages from the primeval trunk, whose sap for all that gives them duration, long or short. There you have the entire history of religion.

✱ALEXANDRE LE ROY, *Archbishop of Caria.*
Formerly Superior-General, C.S.Sp.

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INTRODUCTION

ONE of the facts bearing an eminent character of universality is the mention of God. It is with deference, in many countries and circumstances, that the name of God is spoken. This holy name is even clothed in unusual forms of speech, specially intended to emphasize the homage paid to it.

Deference often reproves all familiar use of the divine name, as a sort of involuntary profanation and a violation of propriety that is to be condemned.

Anyway, the name of God turns up constantly, inadvertently, in our most customary ways of expression: *Thank God! God be thanked! God grant! God forbid!* . . . and in many other locutions proper to all languages. And many atheists, and people entirely indifferent to religion, make use of those phrases just the same as believers.

Even blasphemy reveals a remote homage to God. For the man who blasphemes God invokes Him. In associating God's name with the expression of anger, he does not treat God as non-existent. It is idle for certain books of studied atheism to avoid naming God and to substitute for Him the vague concept of Nature; nobody will ever take it into his head to blaspheme Nature, or insult or curse it. Neither has anyone ever addressed a prayer to it.

It is always God who is taken account of, by the man who forgets himself as well as by the man who hopes. No one has ever seemed to take deified Nature seriously.

INTRODUCTION

It is worthy of note that the name of God is readily used in the singular, or ordinary speech, and in countries other than Moslem or Christian. It would seem that man, in his most spontaneous thought, inclines to belief in an only God.

Sometimes, indeed, popular expression appeals to a particular god or hero. Thus, the characters of Plautus and of Latin comedy frequently exclaim: *Mehercle! Ecastor!* But the comic author uses for theatrical effect these repetitions analogous to our popular swear-words. In higher mood, even on the stage, the ancients often forgot Hercules, Bacchus, Castor and Pollux, to utter a cry of distress to the unknown God, to whom Athenian disquiet had raised a monument. The graver authors speak of the Deity as a personal, spiritual, unique principle. In the same passage, often, a philosopher or orator, who has just pluralized the gods, returns by his natural process of thinking to a single God without equal or rival, and often without any name other than that by which His divine nature is indicated.

So when mankind is not dishonestly posing, when its thought is not the mere reflex of convention, when its language seems sincerest, it names God and conceives of Him as a Being who uniquely and by Himself fulfils His category.

Is it not strange that men, possessed of so pure a truth and showing such obvious traces of internal belief in one God, should have drifted into the polytheistic error, in many lands and civilizations, in our own and in other times?

The study of those traces of truth, and of that grave error, presents an interesting field for straightforward and perhaps not fruitless investigation.

PART ONE
THE ANCIENT POLYTHEISTIC
RELIGIONS

CHAPTER I

THE GODS OF UR AND BABYLON

As far as history can discover, the belief in several gods has always come to lead astray the worship of ancient peoples.

The story of Israel mentions Abraham, if not as the first of men, at least as the remotest ancestor, supremely the father of the Hebrew people. And he goes forth from Ur in Chaldea. Now Ur, after many other Babylonian towns, has yielded its secrets and shown us that, before the time of the famous Hammurabi, Chaldea had already its triads of gods: *Anu*, the god of the heavens; *En-Lil* or *Bel*, lord of the earth; *Ea*, the god of the sea, spirit of wisdom, inspirer of civilization and art. And each of these gods has a goddess for spouse.

A further multiplication gives another group of divinities: *Sin* for the Moon, *Samas* or *Shamés* for the Sun, *Istar* for the phenomena of life and the fortune of wars.

They do not stop there. Next comes *Marduk*, a god with the special office of creation; *Nabu*, the god of knowledge; *Nergal*, god of the country of the dead; *Thammuz*, the Mesopotamian Adonis, whose godhead consists of endless resurrections, and who presides over the springtime renewal of Nature. Below these gods of primary or secondary order

POLYTHEISM AND FETISHISM

there is a multitude, a swarm of lesser divinities, of auxiliary goddesses, of *teraphim* or particular gods.

The student of old Oriental theogonies, especially in our own time, instinctively seeks to class them and endow them with logical order. Gods and goddesses of the past appear to us in a kind of synoptic tableau, in which we seek to delimit the rank and functions and importance of each. It could not be otherwise, but we may question whether this fair order truly corresponds to things as they were in those far-off ages. There are many indications of inherent contradiction in the Assyro-Babylonian theology. The functions of all those gods are often varied. We note, for instance, that it was found difficult to reserve creation for one god and wisdom for another, for creation demands wisdom and wisdom is shown by external operation. A demarcation between the god of the sun and the god of spring is no easy matter, the sun being the cause of spring.

It is wise to make a large allowance for what are called the citizen gods. In these ancient pantheons the gods, whose worship became widespread, often began by being tribal or town deities. If the tribe prospers, and absorbs the others, if the town becomes a city, a metropolis, the local god grows in power. This was the case with Marduk, the god of the Babylonians, when in the time of Hammurabi (2100 B.C.) their town reached the status of a political and religious capital. Such also was the lot of Assur, at first a local divinity, and then the national god of the Assyrians, eclipsing the more ancient deities.

This leads to another remark. The formation of a pantheon, such as the Assyro-Babylonian, seems to be a result of popular creation. Not theologians nor

THE GODS OF UR AND BABYLON

philosophers nor men of high intellectual speculation are to be looked for as founders of such doctrines. We must rather consider them to be the work of priests, of middling or poor mental equipment, closely attached to the fortunes of a temple or town, and desirous to add to the renown of both. Add thereto the work of citizens and believers devoted to their particular god, heaping up his prerogatives, twisting his legend, overloading the personality without stopping to think whether the excess of detail would be harmful to the system as a whole. Apparently it was only after the event that a work of unification was performed on these scattered and dissimilar data, a work of reason and philosophy, a task not for the ministers at provincial shrines, but for learned men and doctors at the court of a centralized empire. These men put into the religious system such clearness and logic as it was capable of. There remained many mysteries and contradictions, but that is to be ascribed to the popular conceptions with which polytheistic dogma nearly always began; indeed, the rock is one on which polytheism in its natural course is bound to split.

CHAPTER II

THE GROUPS OF ANCIENT EGYPTIAN GODS

ANOTHER source of very early religious information is supplied by Egypt.

But the history of Egypt illustrates a strange fact. The great religious ideas, inspiring the most perfect forms of art, coincide with the immeasurably ancient periods, with the epochs of the fourth, fifth and sixth dynasties, the time of the pyramids. The middle period of the Sesostris and Amenemhat dynasties (c. 2000 B.C.) and the late empire of the Rameses and Thothmes, the centuries following the twentieth dynasty, and the Egypt of the Ptolemies, all these are stages in a progressive and continuous decadence.

Going back to the very first beginnings, we might speak of Egyptian monotheism. From *Nun*, the chaos of primeval water, the god *Atum* arises in the form of *Ra*, the sun, supreme and not begotten.

But from him are straightway born four divine pairs, *Shu* and *Tepnnet*, *Geb* and *Nut*, *Osiris* and *Isis*, *Set* and *Nephtys*. The last four are rather Egyptian than world gods, for *Osiris* and *Isis* symbolize the fertility that springs from the Nile, and *Set* the outer desert that encloses the strip of fruitful land.

To this first group of nine succeeds another con-

GROUPS OF ANCIENT EGYPTIAN GODS

taining *Horus*, son of *Isis*, *Thoth*, *Anubis*, *Hathor* and some lesser gods.

Elsewhere triads are enough, and the gods are different. We find *Ptah* and *Sekhmet* at Memphis, with the child-god *Nephertum*; *Amon* and *Mut* at Thebes, with the child-god *Khorsu*; *Khnum* at Elephantine, with two goddesses, incarnations of the cataracts.

The civic character of the gods is thus very marked. Everywhere we find traces of the great primitive nine of Heliopolis, but the place of the chief god, Atum Ra, is mostly usurped by a local god who has come to the forefront. The religious thought of Egypt, like that of Babylon, is influenced by popular worship; the rational tendency towards monotheism is borne down by the current of idolatry, by a pantheism that parcels the divine power into countless objects of faith.

One peculiarity of the religious thought of Egypt is its hesitation regarding the unity of the human soul. Besides a body and a soul, the human being possessed a third element called the *Ka*, which we render by the word "double." This double, like the soul, was immaterial, but after death still had needs like those of the body, claiming for their appeasement offerings of food from the faithful. But the concept of the double remained shadowy, with only a vague definition and slight systematization. It also has the appearance of a popular idea which religious science could not overthrow, and just fitted in a makeshift way into its psychological theory. We shall meet it again.

CHAPTER III

THE RELIGION OF IRAN

THE high plains of Iran are also a religious source of prodigious antiquity, contemporaneous with an epoch when Sanskrit, a mother-tongue for almost all the Indo-European world, was still alive, side by side with old Persian.

There are in Iran two religious currents. The more ancient one has left traces outside the country of its origin; we find them again in the languages of the Greeks and Latins. From this source came the word *Deus*, in Sanskrit *Dyaus* or *Dyeus*, with the title of Father often added; *Dyaus Pitar* is very close to the *Zeus pater* of the Greeks, and to the Roman *Ju-piter*. It is a sign of monotheism, this coupling of the divine name with the concept of a supreme God.

The unity and supremacy of the ancient *Dyaus* were soon attacked. The name has a singular form, but side by side with it the form *deva* is applied, almost adjectively, to a group of secondary gods. They divide among them creation, the elements, the forces of the world, the protection or punishment of men.

Lastly, below these secondary gods are a class of beings that leave us in doubt if they really possess divine character. Though objects of worship, their origin is none the less human. They are the souls

THE RELIGION OF IRAN

of former living beings that seem not to have found the great peace of death. The whole Indo-European world was acquainted later, under different names, with these larvæ, which are analogous with the Latin *lares*, and with the whole tribe of goblins, dwarfs and elves of the mythologies of Northern Europe.

Another concept of the Indo-European family is the quasi-personification of Destiny, turning up sometimes in the form of *share*, sometimes in that of *lot*, with derivations of a more personal character such as the Latin *Parcæ* and the medieval fairies.

All this system of theogony, containing so many ideas familiar to us through our Western classics, is the Iranian current that flowed ceaselessly towards Europe from distant Bactria.

But there is in Iran another form of religion more distinctively Persian and more Oriental in its notions, namely, Mazdeism.

It is the great dualist religion. There is a good principle, *Ormuzd* or *Ahura-Mazda*, the source of the good, of the beautiful, of life, fertility, happiness, and a bad principle, *Ahriman*, symbolizing death, evil, destruction, misfortune, pain. Between the two there is from eternity a struggle with forces that are equal in every detail of the battle, a struggle to end with the final victory of Ormuzd, the principle of good, and with the annihilation of his adversary.

The two rival principles have partisans in the shape of good and evil spirits, their respective creatures, more or less deified according to the periods of Mazdeist theology.

The good spirits are the *Amschespands*, or *Amesha Spenta*, the "Holy Immortals," the *Yezeds* or *Yazatas*, the "Venerable Ones," the

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Ferwers or *Fravashis*, genii according to some texts, and ghosts in others, admitted by all to be intelligences higher than human, and animated by goodwill. The Amesha Spenta are often deified virtues, such as Justice, Wisdom, Truth. The Yazatas have rather the meaning of vital principles; among them are *Atar*, the spirit of fire, *Anahita*, the spirit of water. But the chief of them is *Mithra*, a god or sub-god of Vedic origin, imported from India, who watched over the sanctity of contracts, became later the protector of warriors, was confused with the Sun or substituted for solar divinities, and destined, outside Persia however, to a brilliant career.

The groups of evil spirits are equally and symmetrically opposed to the sub-gods of Ormuzd, and bear the names of *Daévas* or demons, *Yatus*, and *Perikas*, the Peris of Oriental folk-lore, female demons of temptation and seduction.

In Mazdeism, just as easily as in many other ancient religions, even more so, we can recognize much fundamental rehandling, the fruit of philosophic attempts at reconciliation made by priests and magi who worked on popular materials created by simple believers. In its actual state, Mazdeism is one of the religions which possess, relatively speaking, the purest, or at any rate the severest kind of morality. Is that the reason of its long survival and its adaptation to contemporary forms of civilized life? It is hard to say, but it is well known that this ancient worship of fire, of the sacred *Naoma* and the law of Zoroaster, has to-day in Persia, and in Western India, at Bombay, Surat, and Baroda, a membership of nearly a hundred thousand.

CHAPTER IV

THE RELIGIONS OF INDIA

INDIA seems to have been originally peopled by a negro race of small stature, ancestors probably of the *Negritos* of to-day, who are pygmies scattered here and there among the Dekkan mountains, in Pegu and in the islands of the Gulf of Bengal. Their mixture with yellow races is believed to have resulted in the Dravidian peoples of Southern India, whose fairly elementary grammatical forms appear to indicate a stock of great antiquity.

Very far back, between 2000 and 1500 B.C., the north of India was invaded by the Aryan expansion, by peoples who had come from the sources of the Oxus in Bactria, and who spread and prospered in the plain of the Indus and the Ganges.

These migrations took place in a pre-Vedic period whose political state or religious system cannot be described with certainty. It is only through the Vedic hymns we are permitted to form any idea of them. But the Veda had already modified primitive beliefs; here as elsewhere the work of priests is superposed on the popular substratum.

VEDISM

Primitive Vedism was a rather vague deification of the forces of Nature.

POLYTHEISM AND FETISHISM

Agni (cf. *ignis* in Latin) is the god of fire, at least of earthly fire, and *Indra* appears as a deity of the air, master of rain and lord of thunder. *Soma* is libation deified. *Dyos* (cf. *deus* in Latin) is the Sky, the Father of the gods, husband of *Prithivi*, the Earth, or of *Adyti*, Space. *Varouna* (cf. *Ouranos* in Greek, *Uranus* in Latin) is the Night Sky. *Souriya*, alias *Savitar*, alias *Mitra*, is the solar god. *Rudra*, the god of storm, combines with this rather baneful function the unexpected one of guardian of flocks. The list runs to some length, but we must not omit the *Asvins* or *Adityas*, the Indian Dioscuri. All these personages are included under the designation of *devas*, which originally meant the "shining ones" (cf. *divi* in Latin). They all have partaken of the drink *Amrita*. (the *ambrosia* of the Greek Olympus), which gives immortality.

The Vedic pantheon is completed, if we may say so, by demons, *Assuras*, forces of evil at strife with the divine powers.

A code of observance of a relatively high standard of morality and decency, and a social condition which was patriarchal, complete the description of this religion before the modifications which Brahminism made it undergo.

BRAHMINISM

Brahminism succeeds by slow evolution to Vedism between 1200 and 700 B.C. This we learn from the *Brahmanas*, prolix commentaries on the Vedas, from the *Upanishads* (or *Upnekhats*), another collection of Vedic commentaries, rather liberal

THE RELIGIONS OF INDIA

and pantheistic in tendency, and from the *Sutras* and *Sastras*, collections of precepts in verse, of which the most important is the *Manava Dharma Sastra*, the celebrated Law of Manu.

Brahminism starts with a divine principle that is one with the universal soul of creation; this is called Brahm or Brahma (in the neuter), and is analogous to the vague Prajapati of the Veda, the primal principle of all things. The separation of Brahm from matter is not very clear. The same applies to the divine essence in regard to the individual souls of men or of created beings; everything floats in a universal pantheism of abiding confusion.

The account of creation is a curious one. A gigantic egg emanates from Brahm and floats on the ocean of chaos. It opens, and separates into two bowls, of which one becomes the heavens and the other the terrestrial universe. Between the two is born Brahma (in the masculine), the demiurge, creator of heaven and earth, of the *devas* or gods of heaven, and of the *assuras* or demons.

Next appear the castes, the expression of India's social ideas. They are not altogether peculiar to India, but India alone has brought them to such extraordinary and permanent degree of exaggeration. She regards them as a check on dangerous individualism, a kind of moral police force. As usual, the multitude has lost sight of the profound purpose, and concentrated on the punctilious observance.

HINDUISM AND TANTRISM

From the third century B.C., Brahminism degenerated and got crossed with Buddhist ideas or with fetishist concepts of Dravidian origin,

POLYTHEISM AND FETISHISM

The universal soul of things, Brahm or *Paramantman*, remains part of the doctrine; but we discern the rise of the *Trimurti*, an Indian Trinity in which Brahm becomes Brahma, and joins with himself a preserving principle, *Vishnu*, and a destroying principle, *Siva*. We say preserving and destroying with all reserve, for these gods readily change their functions, whether remaining themselves or in their incarnations or *avatars*; Vishnu changes into *Krishna* or *Rama*, Siva into the wicked goddesses *Parvati*, *Kali*, and *Durga*.

The mythology was peopled by a crowd of sub-gods, genii and heroes. The caste system developed more and more, became a regular hatchery of social demarcations. On the moral side, the one idea of the transmigration of souls dominates everything, a continuous metempsychosis that finally dissolves in universal pantheism.

Those relatively recent books, the *Puranas*, show persistent change in Hindu doctrine. The Sivaïte goddesses *Kali* and *Durga*, the *Saktis*, inspire a new kind of religion contained in secret books, the *Tantras*, which are a prodigious collection of fables and of magical formulæ. In so-called Brahminist India this Tantrism has become the religion of the lower castes and of the populace; its worship constitutes a triumph of obscenity and its morality is very debased.

BUDDHISM

In the most ancient books of India, such as the *Rig-Veda*, rather frequent mention is made of the existence of ascetics or *Mounis*, scornful and silent

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contemplatives, considered by the crowd as saints or madmen.

The name *Mouni* is related to the Greek *monos* and the English *monk*. One of their number, the Indian prince, Gautama, became about 500 B.C. the founder of a new religion known as Buddhism.

Strictly speaking, the original Buddhism was hardly a religion, for it took no account either of the gods or of prayer. Neither was it a social reformation; it was simply a philosophic sect and a system having for its end the freeing of men from the endless transmigrations of Brahminism. We may justly add that it is hardly possible to-day to give a unified presentation of the dogma, worship and morality to which the name of Buddhism applies. For there is little unity among that vast membership. Quite the contrary, there is nothing but variety, ranging from the high speculation of a kind of intellectual élite to low kinds of popular belief encumbered with superstition and magic.

Buddhism in itself was a method. Sakya-Mouni preached to his Vikkhus or disciples the art of reaching in this life the quiet of Nirvana. Buddhism has never fully elucidated this final end of its efforts, nor made it clear whether Nirvana is equivalent to annihilation or leaves a remnant of consciousness abiding after death. The ascetic procedure consists in self-restraint, abandonment of the ego, solitude, more and more complete indifference.

There are but few articles of belief. An eternal cosmic matter exists, indestructible, obeying natural laws, unREFERRED to any divine power or will. The divine beings are always named with respect in Buddhist writings, but man's life has no real

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dependence on them, and hence prayer and sacrifice are idle.

But after the death of Sakya-Mouni, who acquired for himself the title of Buddha, i.e., the Sage or Enlightened One, his disciples began to practise a worship of him and his relics, such as teeth, hair, etc., and to build temples (*dagobas, stupas*) in his honour. But as Nirvana had made Buddha insensible to such glory, the worship ran the risk of not reaching its object. The Buddhist clergy have cut the knot. These honours are addressed not to Buddha, but to other heavenly personages, superior beings called Bodhisattvas, who are Buddhas with potency of human reincarnation and whose cycle is not yet accomplished. The *Mahayana*, or Buddhist *Credo* of Northern India, has multiplied these Bodhisattvas or Maitreyas in such boundless fashion as to create a pantheon almost as crowded as the Hindu Olympus. And it has gradually substituted for the original Nirvana a more sensual paradise, *Sukhavati*, vivified by *Amithaba*, an emanation of Buddha. The way was thus opened to a multitude of deviations; with the old rigorous contemplation were mingled the worship of relics, pilgrimages to shrines, magic formulæ, prayers and prayer-wheels, a whole religion of extravagances.

CHAPTER V.

CHINESE RELIGION

It is hard to say what people lived between the Altai Mountains and the Yellow Sea before the arrival of the first Chinese towards 3000 B.C. It is likewise impossible to know with certainty whence came this yellow race which later received the epithet of "celestial." Was it really Semitic, even?

It is presumed that the pre-Chinese natives, or *Mios*, were fetish-worshippers. On safer ground, it is said that the early Chinese paid divine honours to the Sky and the Shades. Without clearly affirming anything about creation, they held that the Sky or Sublime Ruler was the Master of existence, the Judge of men, the cause of all the relations of beings. The Sky, in their texts, is different from the vault of the heavens; the word is figuratively used. The Sky receives sacrifices, and smoking altars send up to it the homage of men.

In a secondary way, ancient China also worshipped certain shades of illustrious people, as a kind of demigods, or patrons with a general character of propitiousness. The shades seem to have been considered, in this homely worship, as bringers of luck.

Let us add to this plainly recapitulatory information that the Chinese, rather ceremonious than truly

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religious, had a morality of a rather commonplace kind, were unacquainted with expiatory rites or with high Indian contemplation, and were not inquisitive about the immortality of the soul or the sanctions of a life beyond the grave.

TAOISM

Almost simultaneously, about the sixth century B.C., two new systems came to modify the religious notions of the Chinese. The first was that of Lao-Tse, and is known as Taoism.

The doctrine of Lao-Tse seems to show marks of Indian origin. A unique principle, without personality or clearly definite name, acting by emanations, produces the sky, the earth, the air, and everything in them. The fertilizing sky and the bearing earth, forces that work for good (*chen*), and even forces that work for evil or work awry (*kui*), are all expressions of this pantheistic naturalism. The great secret of the Tao is that *all is one*; the difference between good and evil becomes very precarious, and can be deduced only by giving a bias and a twist to the system.

Further, this philosophic Taoism quickly degenerated. The vulgar mind wished to endow these various emanations of the first principle with concrete shape. Heroes, learned men, hermits were in turn deified and transmuted into beings whose power and glory were celestial but not immortal. The intervention of such genii in the affairs of men gave rise to a great many rites for which it is difficult to find a settled mode of classification. But they opened the door to practices of

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astrology, alchemy and sorcery, under forms which fully vie in complexity with Indian Yogism.

CONFUCIANISM

Confucius, who died in 479 B.C., was a social legislator rather than a religious teacher. He taught a *via media* of domestic, practical, and opportunist morality. He does not base it on new dogmas, nor indeed on any precise ones; nor does he connect it with sanctions of another life. His principles led him gradually to make moral worth and virtue a part of that respect for ancestors which had grown to the dimensions of worship.

Towards the end of the thirteenth century of our era, the system of Confucius was reformed by Chu-Hi. It was a free-thinker's reformation, clearing out all that the "Sage" had retained of religious dogma, such as a sovereign God, divine control of conscience, and Providence. Chu-Hi reduced the universe to two principles, Rule and Matter, co-eternal and distinct, yet strictly inseparable. Beings "come forth from the All, and return to it, like the pockets of an endless mill-wheel." Man is provided with two souls, both material, and both dissipated at death like the smoke of a fire that has gone out. Goodness is a convention, and evil exists only as absence of good.

By this code of respectability, disseminated by her men of learning, China has lived a patient, laborious, disillusioned, unelevated life for centuries of obscure history, before waking to the anarchy of present-day revolutions.

CHAPTER VI

RELIGION IN JAPAN

A CURIOUS thing about the religious history of Japan is that the country has fully accepted Western civilization while keeping a polytheistic religion. And another strange fact is that the ancient polytheistic religion, Shinto, became in course of time closely bound up with Buddhism, a Chinese importation of Indian origin. The association grew from the seventh century of our era till the eighteenth, and ended in an absorption of Shinto by the religion of Buddha, a phenomenon which recalls, with differences, the absorption of Egyptian or Syrian deities by the Roman pantheon.

SHINTOISM

Going back to Shintoism, or *The Way of the Gods*, in its most ancient form, we find ourselves in presence of an extremely primitive religion, so primitive as to be reminiscent of the theogony of an Oceanian tribe. It is a mass of crude, contradictory, improbable, silly fables, which the Japanese of our time prefer not to dwell on.

The first personal deity to emerge from the con-

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fusion appears in the form of twins, *Izanagi* and *Izanami*, brother and sister, as well as husband and wife. These two beings first create the islands, that is, Japan, on the ocean of chaos; but this geographical parturition is accompanied by a simultaneous procreation of gods and goddesses who appear to be divinizations of the forces of Nature. Wind, rivers, mountains, light, fire, are so many divinities known as *Kami*. The combination of *Izanagi* and *Izanami* is far from having a peaceful existence; it goes through a series of adventures, among which are death, resurrection, struggle with certain gods, a journey to the underworld and return to the regions above. From the purification of *Izanagi*, in the course of one of these adventures, was born the solar goddess, *Amaterasu*, who was the grandmother of an incarnate god, *Ninigi*. And this same *Ninigi* begot the earliest Mikado, the hero *Jimmu-Tenno*.

Japan of to-day retains these fabulous narratives. They are devoid of any kind of proof or probability, but they are kept as national traditions and as means of furthering the patriotic loyalty of the Mikado's subjects.

The great goddess *Amaterasu*, ancestress of the imperial family, has benefited by this fusion of naturalistic theology with national worship of deified kings. Although by her legend *Amaterasu* is sprung from one god and dependent on others, she has been promoted in Japan to the highest place in heaven.

Just as in India, ancient Shinto tended in an excessive way to subdivide characters and attributes among the gods. The gods of the sky, earth, light, growth, generation, life, nature, all generally

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designated as *Kami*, are hieroglyphed in old Japanese annals by numbers multiplying myriads, intended to mean infinity. The *Kami* dwell in heaven, but their spirits, the *Mitama*, live in their temples.

The fusion of naturalistic and national conceptions, which had already brought about the apotheosis of the Mikados, has continued in the deification of a host of historic personages, ancient and even modern. A prime minister of our times, Ito, passed to the rank of *Kami* shortly after his assassination. A few years ago a brigand was executed at Tokio, who showed great courage in face of death. It was concluded that he had the soul of a *Kami*, and a group of believers made a god of him. There is a word, *Kampeisha*, for official deification and assigning of a temple to an historical character who becomes *Kami*. *Kampeisha* does not alone create national gods; there are humbler deifications, by decision of a provincial council, or of a municipal assembly, or even of a family. And Japanese authors, such as Motoori, the modern regenerator of Shinto, speak of these recently declared *Kami* as equals in every respect of the gods of thunder, ocean, storm, and harvest. Shinto worship, in correspondence with this double belief, is given both to the gods and to the dead.

The priests, or *Kannushi*, no longer form a hereditary caste. To-day they are rather temple ministers, styled *Jinkwan*. They act as liturgical custodians, as oracles, healers, sellers of amulets; but they are married, and do not live cloistered and tonsured like the bonzes. They offer sacrifices, chiefly the fruits of the earth. They preside over prayers and purifications, and their functions have somewhat of a national and official character.

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The worship of the dead is based on the belief that the spirits of the dead (*mitama*) return to haunt the sacred tablet on which each family inscribes the names of its deceased members. These, as soon as they have quitted the visible world, become Kami, and in this capacity have sacrifice offered to them. A strong tie is thus established between living and dead, but the idea of divinity suffers thereby serious degradation.

COALESCENCE OF SHINTO AND BUDDHISM

The Mahayana doctrine of North Indian Buddhism came to Japan through China. This conversion of Japan to Buddhism was contemporaneous with the early expansion of Islam, about A.D. 620.

Shinto, a poor doctrine, gave but little development to the Japanese. Buddhism, on its arrival from China, brought them arts, industry, writing, a kind of philosophy, a literary culture, a political sense. We may fittingly compare with its effect that of Roman civilization on Gaul. Just as the Celtic gods were unable to retain their personality side by side with those of the Roman Olympus, so the Shinto deities were transformed into incarnations of Buddha. The multiplicity of the Shinto gods was no obstacle, as the Mahayana was already overrun with countless generations of Buddhas when it came to Japan, and was largely alloyed with polytheism of Tantrist origin.

But while Shinto remained obscure and uncertain about human destiny beyond the grave, Japanese Buddhism conceived a Nirvana not of annihilation

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but of happiness, a paradise filled with all that the heart of man desires. And at the same time Buddhism fixed the moral law, gave men a code of relations and duties, commandments and virtues, showing numerous traces of Confucianist wisdom.

Yet if Buddhism confiscated Shinto to the point of making a Buddha of the radiant sun-goddess Amaterasu, ancestress of the early Mikados, its conquest did not go as far as extinction of the ancient worship. Shinto, in spite of its absorption by Buddhist religion, continued to live its trivial and attenuated, yet national life. Towards 1700 it had even a real renaissance of a Puritan kind, under the influence of commentators such as Mabushi, Motoori and Hirata; and its renewal was further strengthened by the Meiji revolution of 1868.

This Shinto revival, for all its powerful support, did not result in dissociating Shinto from Buddhism any more than it succeeded in transforming its dogmas into a rational system or into a real vital doctrine. Many attempts have been made to reconcile the primitive Shinto or even the popular or doctrinal Buddhism with material progress. But the rapid advance of the Empire of the Rising Sun has been only in the material order. Its cultivated classes are still seeking a true religion, and sinking, while they wait, into a distressful agnosticism.

CHAPTER VII

RELIGIONS OF ANCIENT EUROPE: THE GERMANS AND THE GAULS

CONCERNING the religion of the ancient Germans, our sources are late, confused and scanty. We have only the two Eddas, and some fragmentary legends. We can expect but little light on such a subject, for the epic form under which we learn about it is full of systematizations which add to the difficulty. The subject itself recalls us to the Indo-European world, whose principal religious ideas we may expect to find here again, namely, a monotheistic tendency marked by the supremacy of a central god, and a counter-movement of polytheism with an assemblage of deities symbolizing the forces of Nature.

These German gods seem to succeed to a very ancient anarchic state of things, a reign of giants and monsters of the winds, the sea, fire, even chaos. The gods were called into being by the Norns, Scandinavian *Parcæ* of Necessity and Doom, and they intervene as vanquishers and organizers in the chaos that preceded them. Like all gods of Indo-European paganism, they are in couples; each has a goddess for wife.

Which is the central god, the master of this foggy Olympus of the North? It is fairly hard to fix his name, but we know that though names vary, the

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concept of a supreme god is constant. Tacitus is definite on this point. In paragraph 39 of the *Germania*, he relates of the Semnones, who were ancestors of the Suabians and regarded as the noblest of the Germans: *Eoque omnis superstitio respicit, tamquam inde initia gentis, ibi regnator omnium deus, caetera subjecta atque parentia.* (Thither, i.e., to the wood, all their superstition tends, as though the origin of the race were from thence, as though the god who rules all were there, and other things were subject and obedient to him.) Wotan or Odin takes, in a less remote period, the place of the ruling God, both God and Providence, arbiter of victory, and master of the sanctions of a future life. However, Wotan is not thus accepted by all the Germanic world. The northern peoples pay homage to Thor or Donner, a kind of Scandinavian Mars and Hercules combined, who was more ancient and more popular. The worship of Wotan or Odin is particularly marked in the scalds and poets.

These scalds, poets, and singers of love give considerable importance to spirits, fairies, dwarfs and giants. Here as elsewhere, it is impossible to give a distinct theological outline of the true nature of such intermediaries. Some of their prerogatives seem to make them sharers of divinity, and man has reason to fear them; but not seldom in their legends we find them conquered and at the mercy not alone of the magician, but also of the champion of the warlike Germans.

What has been said about our sources of information on ancient German religion applies also to the religion of the ancient Celts. These have left us but few monuments. What we know of them has

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come to us through the testimony of Cæsar or other Latin authors; and we receive the information of those writers with instinctive reserve, for they are more or less consciously affected by their imperialistic notions, and held communication only with deserters of the cause of the vanquished. There were in medieval times monks and laymen, such as Eochaidh Ó Flainn, who died in 1003, and these have told us in Gaelic poems the ancient pagan legends of Erin. But we may ask ourselves to what degree these faithful Christians respected their subject, because when they name the ancient deities of their country, they take the curious precaution of warning us that "they do not adore them." From this scruple of faith it may be legitimate to deduce a certain absence of scientific scruple in these honest men of letters, who by no means took the point of view of the science of religions, and who, when treating of paganism, were much afraid of not appearing sufficiently Christian.

When, therefore, Latin witnesses speak of an assimilation of Gaulish gods with Roman, we must not be tempted to found too much on the analogy. We get the names anyway. Tarann is not perhaps the same as Jupiter, but he wields the thunder. Teutates has some features of Mars. Lug approximates to Mercury, but also to Apollo and solar gods in general. The Irish god Manannan Mac Lir rules the ocean like a northern Neptune. And so on for many others.

These gods are clearly of Indo-European fashion; they do not represent moral perfections, but symbolize forces, beginning with those of Nature. They are mated with goddesses, and these divine families

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form no exception through freedom from quarrels, separation, or abduction. More than elsewhere, perhaps, they admit the presence of heroes and demigods, who are sometimes hostile, sometimes favourable.

As for the Druids, recent scientific investigations have deprived them of the character of priests, in the consecrated sense of the word, and have left them only the rôle of sages, learned men, spiritual counsellors of kings or of the people. And it has been remarked that their presence is not co-extensive with the Celtic world. Some have even thought them foreign to it, and seek their origin among the races who inhabited Europe before the first Celtic invasions. This would make the Druids companions in prehistoric night of the mysterious builders of our dolmens and cromlechs, our megalithic duns and ramparts, the monuments of a people, a civilization, and a religion all alike unknown.

CHAPTER VIII

GREEK RELIGION

It seems commonplace enough to distinguish in the religion of the Greeks a primitive period, a florescence, and a time of decay. The reason for so doing is that the florescence is one of extraordinary splendour, and that at the same time we are led to remark in this people a painful lack of proportion and harmony between its mental gifts and the slightness of its religious feeling.

There is something disconcerting in the golden age of Greek civilization. Here we have statues that have lost arms and heads, and whose lifelike bodies yet hold the attention of artists. Here we have architecture brought to the perfection of harmony, by turns grandiose or light, always so simple as to provoke imitation, and yet so skilful in its simplicity and so rigorous in its lines as to discourage imitators. And here we have masterpieces in every department of letters, inscribed by posterity in the canon of imperishable works, great dramas of the tragedians, immortal strophes, speeches and pleadings which from a narrow agora have commanded a hearing from the centuries, complete and various systems of philosophy, sometimes so elevated in doctrine as to be second only to Christianity. The more we consider, the more

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we are dumbfounded at the astonishing fortune of this people, weak in numbers and restricted in territory, and yet appearing to win for itself, for the space of two centuries, the sum total of all glory.

But one happiness was denied it. The religion of so gifted a people was not at the level of its thought. That is the conclusion we come to from a study of the religious forms of Greek civilization. Nevertheless this study is important, for polytheism was long identified in the minds of Western peoples with the mythology of the Greeks, and with that of the Romans which is only a derivative from it.

ANCIENT GREECE

It would not be altogether correct to identify Greek religion with the forms it assumed in the classic period, in the climax reached during the fifth and fourth centuries before Christ. It would even be erroneous not to go back farther than Hesiod or Homer. The most recent excavations bring us to an earlier period, and pre-Hellenic times, otherwise called the Mycenaean epoch, introduce us to forms of religion closely bordering on those of the Thracian or the Scythian world.

These primitive kinds of worship tend in a spontaneous and very usual way towards the things and the forces of Nature. The old Greek geographers tell us of the worship of stones in many parts of ancient Greece. These were aeroliths, or brilliant and uncommon pyrites, unhewn or roughly hewn stones which apparently had a history. Another kind of belief held in reverence the mighty

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rock, the cavern whose depth and echo inspired fear. They were revered in their naked state, without the shelter or addition of a temple. Indeed there are few traces of temples from these far-off times, which have left us only walls of cities, sacred enclosures, and rustic altars.

When the gods of Hellas had acquired their anthropomorphic character, the oak became dedicated to Zeus, the laurel to Apollo, the olive to Athena, the leaves of the vine to the joyous Dionysus. Likewise, in the animal kingdom, the eagle was ascribed to Zeus, Father of the gods, the dove to Aphrodite, the dog and the vulture to Ares, the serpent to Æsculapius.

Some have jumped at the conclusion that these objects were totems. Our knowledge of totemism shows us that this name must be reserved to objects chosen by a clan, sacred for it alone, but profane for the neighbouring clan. These plants and animals, attached to the personality of a god, have a more universal character. Are we to see in them traces of ancient worship of trees and animals, a kind of religious homage to the general utility of the olive and the vine? That is possible, and even fairly natural to the human mind. However, the note of utility is not constantly in evidence; in the case of the laurel it does not appear at all.

It is a different matter if we substitute the idea of analogy for that of utility. There is something royal about the eagle and the oak, and also about the myth of Zeus, something noble in the elegant and decorative foliage of the laurel, and also in the person of the god of the arts. And if the serpent is associated with the worship of the god of healing, that is because primitive peoples have often only

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one word (e.g., *pharmakon*) for the two concepts of poison and remedy. These objects of the natural world are hardly to be regarded as totems; it is more exact to consider them as religious emblems, perhaps as traces of an ancient worship incorporated in a later one.

Ancient Hellas borrowed perhaps more definitely from the worship of natural forces when it began to deify the elements. The earth was the goddess Gé, a goddess with a progeny. Kronos was the god of Time. The underworld was deified under the name of Tartaros, and darkness under that of Erebos. The Sky was Ouranos, and the Sea was Pontos. Life was identified with deified Love. A place was given to Chaos, a negative deity representing the unknowable state of the uncreated world. The part of Destiny was played by *Moirá*, that un pitying Fatality acknowledged to possess divine power, a power even more than divine since Zeus himself was in dread of it.

Midway between the elements and natural forces thus deified, and the subsequent precise anthropomorphism, we may place those multitudinous beings whose separate personality is scarcely obvious, such as titans, giants, nymphs and monsters. Do these names refer to forces or to individuals, to mysteries or to living beings? Nobody can tell us what exactly the primitive Greeks thought concerning this question, but there is more than one example of the process by which such names were transferred from the world of ideas to that of supernatural beings.

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HOMERIC RELIGION. GODS OF THE SOIL AND GODS OF OLYMPUS. THE CULMINATION

When was the first appearance of the brilliant assembly of gods and goddesses who make up the Greek pantheon? It is hard to determine, and it is more credible that the manifestation did not take place all at once. Most of those gods had already names, and biographies of a kind, before Homer. Eight centuries before Christ, Homer qualifies them with epithets which seem stereotyped, and which he repeats without imaginative effort. Zeus is the Thunderer, Phoebus the god of the silver bow, Hera is *Leukolenos*, the white-armed, Pallas Athena is *Glaukopis*, the grey-eyed. These were so many appellations fixed by long usage and understood by the public without explanation or surprise. By the details of their personality the Homeric gods are much more definite than those represented by the primitive statuettes of budding anthropomorphism.

It is true that certain gods are frequently named in Homer's poetry, and that the mention of others is rarer. Had the great Ionian poet his preferences? Possibly, and mythologists can give us a reason for it. Homer follows Greco-Asiatic devotion, whose principal gods are those of Olympus, namely, Zeus, Phoebus, Hera, Pallas Athena, the noble deities of celestial origin. Another tendency, of Dorian or Thessalian source, was the worship of the gods of the soil, whose attributes had relation to the earth, such as Hermes, Demeter, Persephone, even Aphrodite. The myths of these latter gods are less etherealized; they hardly get away from the

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round of Nature, and seek to explain the mystery of birth, life and death.

Plato, in his *Republic*, is very severe on Homer, Hesiod, and the other tellers of fables as he calls them. He makes curious provisions to limit at least the reading of their works, which he regards as dangerous for young people. In truth, the gods of Hesiod and of Homer are rather poor conceptions. Doubtless the *Iliad* tells us, concerning a god wounded by a man, that his blood is not such a coarse mixture as ours. The gods have the immortality which ambrosia gives them, and their power seems great when compared to that of men. Yet all these gods, even including Zeus, have had a beginning, a birth, and sometimes a harassed youth. They suffer, grow tired, receive blows even from men, as Aphrodite did from Diomed at the siege of Troy. As to morals, they are rather sorry characters. Olympus is full of their adulteries, incests, jealousies, vengeance and crimes. Zeus himself does not wear his majesty well when we have heard of his drunken escapades and his household disputes. And we are justly astonished that the clear Greek mind should have so little of sane logic, or even of simple decency, in religious matters.

It is true that some philosophers, momentarily and in flashes, speak more rationally of the Deity. Are we not moved when we hear Plato declare in the *Republic* that "at the ultimate limits of the intelligible world, the Idea of Good appears; we arrive at it only with difficulty, but we cannot perceive it without concluding that it is the first cause of all that is beautiful and good in the world"? And in the same treatise, Socrates comes

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to this conclusion in a discussion with Adeimantos: "God, being essentially good, is not the *cause* of all things as is commonly said. And since among men good and evil are mixed in such a way that evil preponderates, God is the cause of only a small portion of what happens to men, and not of the remainder. To Him alone we must attribute the good; for the evil we must seek a cause other than God." Aristotle calls God "an eternal and perfect being." And listen to the Stoic Epictetus: "If I were a nightingale, I would act as does the nightingale, and if I were a swan, I would act as does the swan. But I am a reasonable being, and my rôle is to praise God."

And although the same Epictetus, some lines farther on, names Zeus instead of continuing to speak of a more ideal God, yet when we hear sentences of such excellence, we seem to watch the effort of spirits who are emancipating themselves. For a moment they lose contact with the vulgar crowd, and their thought is refined and quits that dwelling of turpitude and violence, the Olympus of popular religion. Behind the discreet and reticent words we catch a glimpse of souls which a childish and brutal polytheism leaves unsatisfied. The doctrine is so near to the Biblical one of the Only Infinite that the question has with good reason been asked whether there is not a Jewish infiltration, a far-off breath from Jehovah, among those finest pages of Greek philosophy.

Unfortunately, they are only exceptional splendours. While the poets sang this lovely Ideal, and while Phidias, Mnesicles and Ictinos realized it in statues and temples the purity of whose lines has never been equalled, the religion of this artistic

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people accepted all confusions, mingled together the legends of two or three gods, and opened the heavens to a host of secondary or inferior deities, such as the unclean Priapus, the goat-footed Fauns, the ignoble Satyrs, the Centaurs, the Harpies, the Furies. Ultimately men were deified. After the myths of Heracles and Prometheus came those of Theseus, Achilles and Diomed, and mortals, with the title of Heroes, had adorers and temples.

THE DECADENCE

These stray expressions of monotheism, selected by us out of many others in the writings of Plato, Aristotle, Epictetus, are not the only indications of divergence between the religion of the Greeks and their philosophy. In the Hellenic city, philosophy is not as elsewhere a monopoly of the priests and a close ally of their religion. Thought had more freedom in Greece, and used it to carve out a way for itself independent of official tradition. This state of affairs indeed was not without dangers, but it is important to know that the priesthood did not control ideas. There was scarcely any hierarchy of priests and priestesses; they did not preach, and held no school. They were merely in charge of the temple, in the service of the altar, in a ministry of worship; apart from that, they played but little part in society.

But the best thinking minds were enrolled under the banners of the philosophic systems, whether of the Academy, the Lyceum, or the Porch. These doctrines developed not only outside religious tradition, but often in opposition to it. The Sophists of

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the fifth century declared themselves agnostics. Xenophanes of Colophon, in his poem on the *Nature of Things*, is a forerunner of Lucretius. And if Æschylus in his plays appears to be a conservative, and Sophocles wrapped in prudent reserve, Euripides does not hide his unbelief, and Aristophanes indulges in aggressive free thought.

Socrates, convicted of impiety, drank the hemlock, and other despisers of the gods were banished. But most writers, orators and artists, who were often important citizens of towns, took care not to be definite in their attacks and limited themselves to "Platonic" daring. They respected public worship, and at the price of that illogicality were allowed freedom of teaching and public discourse. We may note among them signs of that compromise made once more by our philosophers of the eighteenth century, leaving the common people undisturbed in their religion for the good of society.

Apparently the people wanted no more and were not particularly scandalized. Superstition has never been addicted to logic, and all kinds of paganism have clung to practices of worship regarded as bringing help from on high against the ills of life. From these they glide more and more towards practices that show the first signs of side-tracking, such as divination, dream-reading, oracles and magic. Certain religions of the soil, especially that of Demeter, the Good Goddess, became centres of mystery-worship. We mean thereby that a part of the doctrine was secret, and revealed only to the initiated, who were recruited in all ranks of society. Initiation proceeded by purifications and ceremonies of startling theatrical effect. The adept was ensured

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certain privileges and benefits; and according to many, a veil of piety was thrown over outlandish scenes of debauchery.

However, it was only after Alexander's time that the decadence of Greek religion showed itself plainly. The political empire, which Alexander's conquests gave to Greece, was very ephemeral. It is true that Greek influence in Egypt and Asia survived the conquest; a city like Alexandria had nothing Egyptian about it externally. But in return Asia and Egypt reacted powerfully on the morals and religion of the Greek world.

In the time of Pericles, the gods of Greece had shone with incomparable splendour. While their features were being fixed in marble as in a canon of identity, their personality became clearly outlined in men's minds; and in men's souls they were associated with the salvation, greatness, and hopes of the fatherland. But during the struggles which followed the death of Alexander, the distinct physiognomy of the Greek gods was lost through progressive assimilation with the gods of conquered countries. The myths of Isis were mingled with those of Demeter or of Aphrodite. An attempt was made to fuse together the worship and legends of Dionysus, Adonis and Osiris. Serapis was identified with Zeus, and on some occasions with Æscupalius. Artemis sometimes merged with Hecate, sometimes with Persephone. But when we speak of fusion of gods and forms of worship, we express ourselves, about what must have happened, in a way that is summary and probably inexact. Such assimilations never please everybody. There may be reformers, but there are conservatives in equal number, and then

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you have disputes, schisms, anathemas, in the midst of which dogma goes down. No step was made towards rational monotheism, which had perhaps been caught sight of from the summits of Hellenic thought. The Stoic school turned some souls towards pantheism, the forerunner of Gnostic heresy. The majority of minds went in the direction of listless doubt.

The general and in a certain sense automatic deification of kings, Ptolemies, Seleucids, Attalids, increased the evil. The respect for these new gods was too obviously the result of compulsion and successful manipulation; it expelled all confidence and every vestige of faith, beginning with the most righteous and the proudest souls. A new deity, Fortune, had won the people. The giddy goddess of Chance, foot on wheel, took the place of the grave Destiny of ancient times.

Two centuries after Christ and a century before Theodosius, Greek religion, a prey to magic and thaumaturgy, and absorbed by Roman paganism, could be reanimated neither by the efforts of Porphyry nor by the will of Julian. Other kinds of worship have survived; but that of Greece, in spite of its many-sided brilliance and the marvellous beauty it brought to its service, sank and never rose. For all its lustre, it could not attain the divine, and ignored all spiritual holiness. The gods of Greece, fundamentally, were never anything but perfect statues.

CHAPTER IX

ANCIENT ROMAN RELIGION

THE Latin classics, which were so useful in forming the thought and taste of modern society, seem responsible for a fairly common error concerning the history of religions. For lack of a distinction which they had grown accustomed not to make, they have little by little led us to confound the gods of Rome with those of Greece, Jupiter with Zeus, Ceres with Demeter, Neptune with Poseidon, Mercury with Hermes. That confusion held at a rather late period, but things were different originally.

We cannot boast of being able to throw all the light that is needed on that far-off epoch. Yet the primitive Roman world has an originality of its own. Its most ancient tradition, profane as well as religious, has a fairly definite form. We begin to get some inkling of it from the eighth century B.C. The first thing we learn is the existence, at the foot of the tufa hill of the Palatine and beside the stream of *Rumo*, of several bands of Latin shepherds who established themselves there under the rule of an energetic and brutal chief, Romulus. On the steep hill of the Capitol opposite lived a population of Sabine farmers. And by the Quirinal was another

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group, Etruscans (*Luceres*), who lived by manufacture and trade.

We must not exaggerate the specifically Roman character of these first companions of Romulus. Even in such remote times, a fusion of Roman, Sabine and Etruscan blood had taken place. And many other fusions were to happen later. Further, we must not seek to compare the city, which these ancient shepherds of Latium built, with an encampment of savages. The old walls of Servius Tullius make us think of a city which was a vast one very early, and built with that solidity and care which was later to be proverbially described as a *Roman's work*. History may tell us of rude customs, but it shows us at the same time a people that was reasonable, sober-minded, using for the realization of schemes an intelligence more practical than brilliant, persevering, self-confident, and animated from the moment of its first successes with an ardent civic spirit—an imperialist people, we should call it to-day.

This imperialist people was a religious one. Like many primitive peoples we find it turning first towards the forces of Nature, but there is no proof that it was restricted to a purely magical set of rites. Magic artificially satisfies the need of supplication proper to man, but it poorly suits the religious sense, the spirit of adoration, reverence and confidence so noticeable among simple peoples whose life is hard and whose existence depends on the clemency of the sky.

In presence of the superior forces that make harvests grow and multiply flocks, and govern winds and storms, the ancient Roman, going back from effect to cause, saw the *numen*, the divine power.

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In fact that was the only aspect of the nature of God he seems to have retained. The Greeks had made of the divine nature a theme of beauty; he saw in it only a power, to which he gave a name, but without troubling to give it form, or even personality, or sex. His mind paid a sort of penalty by not being able to refrain from indefinitely parcelling those powers, and he imagined the famous deified functions which were a butt for so many writers, even before the Fathers of the Church. There was a god for leaving the house and another for entering it; a god to keep away rats, and another, not the same, to protect mice; a god for every detail of conception, birth, breast-feeding of children. Having started on this road, the piety of the Quirites had no means of stopping; at times, as though out of breath, it addressed itself to deities plurally grouped, without individual name, such as Lares, Penates, good and evil genii of places and persons.

One point remains obscure. Are these higher beings gods? Are they only demigods? And what is the difference between a demigod and a genius, or between a demigod and a spirit? Could it not be maintained that the admission of multiple character, the deprivation of unity and undivided essence, takes away from these beings the rank of real gods, and reduces them to the part of intermediary spirits between God and men? Logic seems to say so, but rigorous science of that kind, with its subdistinctions and formulæ, came only long afterwards. The primitive Roman, unembarrassed by such philosophic precision, ordinarily gave the name of *dii* to these higher influences. Perhaps he did not intend to regard them as real gods. Perhaps

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he considered them, in comparison with more personal deities such as Jupiter or Mars, as spiritual beings of an order higher than man. At any rate, these objects of belief were not wrapt in mystery and did not assume the secret character of magical things. Their recognition was an act of public worship, open to everyone, proclaimed by domestic, rural and civic feasts scattered through the seasons of the year.

Side by side with this religion of spirits of the higher kind, there was among the Romans a worship of the Shades. Rome always believed in the survival of souls, and respected the resting-places of the dead. Her folk were so familiarized with the idea of death that they placed tombs by the public roads, and the Appian Way became a prolonged graveyard. The Latin mind believed that the ghosts of the dead haunted the dwellings and the daily round of the living. They were endowed with a power greater than that of mortals, and yet their return among them was in order to prolong a rather precarious existence by the offerings of food they received. They could do harm if neglected. The honours paid them were intended to prevent that, but at the lowest possible price. Ultimately they seem to have inspired less fear, but the Roman family always liked to live in the neighbourhood and under the protection of its departed relations.

Although the worship of the Roman gods did not flourish to its full extent till the splendid years of the Republic, the great personal deities were known from the beginning. Their Latin names were often accompanied by epithets descriptive of their functions, which gave them a relationship to the *numina*,

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and were indications of the same kind of religious mind at work. The worship of Vesta is perhaps an intermediate stage between the deities of Nature and the great personal gods. This goddess of Fire had a name, altars, temples, but no images.

Jupiter, on the contrary, was the god whose representations were most widespread. Was he specifically Roman? He was more of an Italian god at first, but was exalted by Roman sway, and served to unite under one religious law the annexations and conquests of Rome in Italy. He was the god of the shining sky and the phenomena of the heavens, and held in his power the thunder and the fertilizing rain. The sky was always pre-eminent over the world of the senses, and therefore Jupiter was recognized as the Lord of Olympus, and though himself begotten, as the Father of the gods. With this prerogative of sovereignty, he was to be subsequently assimilated to the *principal* god of each new worship which Rome added to her ancestral religion.

The Roman *Juno*, sister and wife of Jupiter, later to become one with the Hera of the Greeks, was the goddess of marriage, regarded as the foundation-stone of the family and of society. She was ordinarily called *Lucina*, the bringer of children to birth. The military mind of Rome made a war-god of *Mamers* or *Mars*, who originally had a less special character, and who was afterwards identified with the Hellenic Ares.

Another Latin deity, *Minerva* or *Menerva*, whose name derives from *mens*, the mind, was the goddess of mental operations, industry and the arts. She was honoured by the Etruscans, and was identified

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with Athena at the time of the Punic wars. *Venus* was also Italian, and seems to have been, like *Flora*, a goddess of the fruitfulness of crops. She became the goddess of love, and in that capacity became one with the Greek Aphrodite, keeping all the time her Roman appellations, such as Murcia, Libentina, Genitrix, Verticordia.

Except Janus, whose worship remained, and Quirinus, whose divinity slowly faded, the other gods of the Latin pantheon were a gradual importation from Greece. Magna Græcia was close at hand, and Roman arms were soon in evidence there. The gods at once ceased to be rustic. Their legends grew, and their temples became magnificent. It was no longer enough to carve Jupiter in the base of an oak, or two-faced Janus in an olive trunk. Henceforth the gods could not do with a simple sheath, vaguely sculptured and staked in earth. They had their statues according to Hellenic fashion, and each city under Roman domination made it a point of honour to build temples, also on the Greek model.

Early Roman worship had made piety, *pietas* in the pagan sense, consist in the exact, assiduous, punctilious observance of rites. Little by little this worship also grew anthropomorphic. On feast days the "couch of the gods" was prepared; that is to say, beds of repose on which were laid, sometimes in pairs, sometimes in threes or pairs of threes, the images of the gods, in order to let them hear the prayers and acclamations of the crowd.

Two currents were now in evidence in Roman religion. On the one hand, there was progressive Hellenization; Artemis, Athena, Aphrodite, Demeter, Hermes, Poseidon, Dionysus were either

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adapted to the catalogue of the gods or got a new place in it. On the other, the old conservative spirit continued to deify civic or warlike virtues, such as Concord and Good Faith, or events such as Peace and Victory, or Rome itself as the glorified Fatherland.

Soon, also, there were currents of another kind in the religious faith of Rome. Its upholders, the Pontifical bodies (*collegia*), had shown a perilous liberalism in the admission and assimilation of Greek gods and rites, and had forgotten the psychological law, that devout souls do not like to see religion changed. Furthermore, the mind of Greece had contributed a portion of the novelties, and that mind, as we know, was airy, mocking and sceptical, a thorough leaven of dissolution. The result was a cleavage between the social classes, a kind of schism. The populace remained, for a time, faithful to the worship of the gods, whose feasts were for them a source of amusement, pastime, enthusiasm, comforting reassurance, and occasionally of riotous good cheer, or of orgy. The cultivated, elegant folk, the refined intellectuals, began to look disdainfully on this rout of gods who invaded one-another's prerogatives, and on the gross, materialized worship that continually laid itself open to objection through the wildest unreason. But those same philosophers and orators and statesmen who treated the ancestral religion so lightly, declared it good for the populace, on whom it served as a check. In this spirit we find Cicero, who was a sceptic in his letters to Atticus, changing tone in those he wrote to Terentia, his middle-class pious wife. He cannot, for instance, tell her he has happily recovered from a bilious

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attack without exhorting her to thank Æsculapius for him. But further, these good citizens sincerely lament the progress of irreligion, and speak disconsolately of the growing *impietas*. They were of the kind which Horace describes in a phrase, which he applies to himself: *Parcus deorum cultor et infrequens*, a worshipper of the gods, but sparingly and seldom. And yet, as a counter-weight to impiety, they did not hesitate to accept priestly and pontifical offices, and to preside over the sacrifices of a worship which they secretly disbelieved in.

In another of his odes, Horace had warned his contemporaries of the dangers of irreligion:

*Delicta maiorum immeritus lues,
Romane, donec templa refeceris. . . .*

(Innocent of the sins of your fathers, you shall yet pay for them, Roman, till you have rebuilt the temples.) Irreligious decadence had sought to check itself, and the civil power, which had become imperial with Augustus, issued several measures to restore among the people some of the ancient virtues. A closer union between the godhead and the Empire was aimed at, a kind of religious nationalism. Nothing, apparently, was lacking for the purpose, neither the splendour of festivals, nor the aid of eloquence, nor the profusion of sanctuaries, nor fabulously expensive sacrifices. To these, games were a profane addition that soon became an obligatory one.

But in spite of the best intentions, this attempt at restoration took a new direction that soon developed harmfully. The hereditary Empire was

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personified in the Emperor, and the Emperor was called *divus*. A participation in godhead was thereby understood. And as the nature of this participation remained obscure, some emphasized it, as, for instance, Caligula, who did not scruple to describe himself on monuments as the *Divine Caius, the Son of the Divine Jupiter*. The prince, by apotheosis, was placed among the gods after his death. The custom of divine honours soon extended to empresses; in A.D. 141 Antoninus Pius thus deified his wife Faustina. This new series of gods had their temples, their worship, their priestly bodies, but there can hardly be any illusion about the kind of conviction or devotion they excited. The discredit thus thrown on the most worthy of human acts recoiled on the ancient deities. Rome and the Empire had a national, provincial and municipal religion from which faith was finally absent, and in which nothing counted but a vain formalism. It was to this vain formalism, in last analysis, that millions of Christian martyrs were sacrificed.

Let us consider Rome in the middle of the imperial era, when she had ruled in the East for three centuries. Egypt, Asia Minor, Persia were Roman provinces. Just as the gods and the spirit of Greece had invaded the Latin pantheon, so the religions of the East flowed in turn Romewards, brought there by traders, by soldiers, by women, among the latter several empresses. To the languishing faith of the people they brought only legends that were still more confused than those of the Greek decadence. Such were the myths of Isis and Osiris, or those of Cybele with her unclean company of sacerdotal eunuchs. Later and by

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another road arrived the worship of Mithra, a god of war and of the sun. He came from Asia, and had but little success in Greece, but the Roman legions were to spread his worship to the ends of the West.

The worship of the Romans had anciently been of the family kind, austere and somewhat arid. Now it became a religion of complex rites, secret symbols, fixed rallying signs, repeated ablutions and purifications, mysteries in which magic at once found a place. It was a complete system of classifications and gradations, of progressive initiations, spread over numerous liturgical services. There was plenty of theatrical effect and appeal to sentiment. There were easy sacrificial rites, and moral requirements were small. Under cover of religion, especially of the rites of Isis and of Mithra, there was great sensual liberty. Religion was principally a frame for superstition. There was something more, however; here again, we must note the particular liking for mystery in Eastern forms of religion. Religions they are, perhaps, but they are chiefly secret societies that show the public only what they want to reveal. Their method is that of gradual initiations. By their precautions, pass-words, double meanings, emblems and signs, they take care not to let much be known; and they surround with an atmosphere of uneasiness and menace even those who are drawn to them.

What of the souls of men, in the midst of this religious downfall? It is sad to note that the errors and illogicalities of polytheism did not lead the minds of men and of Rome, by a salutary reaction, towards a religion savouring somewhat

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of monotheism. Lactantius tells us that Cicero, after the Stoics, professed "to acknowledge that the world was under the rule of an only God." That is perhaps truer still of Seneca, who so readily writes the name of God in the singular: *Deus ille bonorum amantissimus qui illos quam optimos et excellentissimos vult*—that God, most loving towards the good, who desires them to be as excellent and perfect as possible. Take again the admirable words he puts in the mouth of Demetrius in the treatise on Providence: *Nihil cogor, nil patior invitus, nec servio Deo, sed assentio*—I am compelled to nothing, endure nothing against my will; not service, but rather a yielded assent to God is my lot. These words seem almost Christian. But in the same work Seneca ascribes the government of the world unreservedly to the traditional gods. Elsewhere, in his Epistle to Lucilius, he gives an altogether pantheistic explanation of human reason.

Monotheistic statements, either among the Latins or the Greeks, are never frank utterances. The thought seems to have taken refuge not in the words but in the style and tone. An only God seems to them possible, perhaps probable, but the concept is somehow only an underlying one. It never becomes a profession of faith, deliberate and free from ambiguity. The polytheistic turn of their thought was too anciently rooted, too deeply marked, to be got rid of by internal effort; Rome required the Revelation of Jesus Christ and the Gospel in order to know God.

PART TWO
FETISHIST RELIGIONS

CHAPTER I

A STUDY OF THE SOURCES

WE have reviewed in very broad outline what may be called ancient Polytheism. We have tried to examine the beliefs of the great peoples of Europe and Asia since the earliest periods of history. We have found therein, from time to time, traces of the notion of an only God, and oftener, of the notion of a principal God, the Master and Father of the other deities. We have seen those other deities blossom out, so to speak, from age to age, some appearing fully equipped with a legend of their own and first-hand attributes, others borrowed from some foreign worship, like translations of an imported theme, others the result of repeated subdivisions, fragmentary gods in a certain sense, subalterns of the army of heaven.

Our examination has perhaps shown us that those polytheistic religions have hardly improved by duration. As the population of their pantheon grew, less of majesty shone on the faces of the gods. Exposed to the competition of spirits, of heroes, of genii, of families and tribes of sub-gods wildly multiplied, the primitive deities lost somewhat of their power and prestige. We seem to notice everywhere an enormous retrograde movement as regards the matter proposed for belief, and also in the piety manifested by the peoples,

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which gradually becomes dominated by superstition and magic.

There are many possibilities of delusion in the study of ancient mythologies. Can we be sure of knowing what the contemporaries of Augustus thought concerning Jupiter or Diana? Have we exact knowledge about what the peasants of ancient Egypt adored in the depths of their hearts? The fact is that in such matters we are at the mercy of our informers. Some of them are religiously minded, some are sceptics. The monuments themselves do not tell the exact truth; they are often evidences of a faith more pompous than simple. We have no chance of transmitting a direct question across the ages. We are reduced to abridged information, provided for us by people who had not the same knowledge and critical requirements about the facts of religion as we have.

It would not be so bad if ancient writers had merely abridged, if we had nothing to reproach them with save excessive brevity. Unfortunately, in order to be brief and summary, materials have to be classed and ordered, and that constitutes another danger. Nothing is more difficult, even with the aid of epigraphy and language study, than to measure ancient religious phenomena by an exact and true standard. Willingly or unwillingly, the narrator of them substitutes a part of his own conceptions for those he is describing. When confronted with a confusion of ideas, he tries to present them clearly, but the very definiteness he gives them deprives them of part of their real nature. It may be that the whole of polytheism, past and present, has been the result of a series of

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deviations of thought and language. It may be that things, which were divine attributes in the thought of certain primitive men, became various gods, for whom a place had to be found, owing to popular interpretation of primitive thought, and to subsequent tradition. Those remarks are merely hypothetical, but it may boldly be said that antiquity has furnished modern religious science with but little information that can be called scientific in the objective and precise modern sense of the word. Hence in spite of the innumerable works written on the subject, there remained so many gaps and uncertainties that the question of the religious thought of the first men, the *Origin of Religions*, remained wrapped in almost impenetrable darkness.

By reason of this obscurity, it came to be considered that there remained in the study of human religions an almost unexplored field, which science could use with profit, namely, the non-civilized races. Since it was impossible to get in touch with the first men of history, might not the deficiency be remedied by consulting the savages? They, of course, are not the first men of historic chronology, since they are our contemporaries, but perhaps among the human species they are the least removed from the primitive type.

But if savages have the advantage of not living in the past, they have also the inconvenience of being very far removed from our capitals, universities and libraries. The regions they inhabit are sometimes terrible, on account of equatorial heat, or polar ice; and it is difficult to be prepared for the conditions of their life, even during the time of a short expedition.

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Further, when we speak of savages, primitives, uncivilized races, we speak of diversity itself. There can have been, admittedly, no communication between Eskimo and Sudanese negro. Papuan and prairie Indian have, apparently, nothing in common. We have to spread indefinitely our historical investigation of the religion of these primitive races, passing from one to another, and assembling in regard to each tribe a mass of information as discouraging in its vastness as the ancient mythologies all together.

And that is not all. These savages speak a multitude of languages; hence it is not enough to land on their banks and enter their tents or huts. We must enter into conversation with them, a very difficult thing, for the most of their tongues are not written, but only pass from speech to hearing.

A pause is here necessary to consider this important subject of native dialects. It must be admitted that they are not easy to learn.

In the first place, their sounds, clicks, aspirations, sibilants are not familiar to us, and sometimes constitute a veritable system of vocal gymnastics.

Secondly, they are poorly equipped. They are relatively rich in material designations; for instance, among certain races of equatorial Africa there are fifteen words to describe a banana at its various degrees of maturity! But for the purpose of expressing the simplest metaphysical ideas, their poverty is extreme. The Pahuan language has only the word *mvé* to signify *good, beautiful, a possession*. And the study of beliefs lands us in the midst of metaphysics.

Finally, these languages have to be understood

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and spoken perfectly, or at least with great ease. For the exchange of commodities, the savage, the African negro, does not require his own dialect to be used; all business can be done with a few words of a conventional lingo or of a local jargon. But to converse with us, to talk at leisure, seems to him quite a different thing from doing business. He will soon grow tired of interrupted discourse. Not much greater will his patience be with the talk of a man who has but a mediocre knowledge of the language, and obliges him to repeat his questions or his answers. He will have no pleasure in it, and only that would be capable of holding him and disposing him to be confidential.

That is not all. Even if you know the language well, that does not mean you will have no further trouble in collecting useful information in the savage man's country. There, just as in Europe, evidence has not always the same value. Some kinds of it are hasty, general, biassed by purpose. Some are vitiated through the petty glory of acting a part, and others falsified by the euphemisms of invincible distrust. When they speak in a negro district of a gathering where by all accounts *a large company* was present, you often end by finding out that there were, all told, *five* people there. Certain African regions have been called *the country of smoke without fire!* And such is scarcely the country of sure and easy information.

Remember also the leaning towards the marvellous. A natural explanation has never as much charm for a primitive man as an extraordinary fact. His turn of mind is in no way scientific, and leaves him an easy prey to sorcery and imposture.

You must not show him your objective. When

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the savage sees what you are after, what theory you would like to establish, instead of answering truthfully, he will often answer what he thinks will please you. For satisfaction for you and remuneration for him are convertible terms.

We have spoken of the savage's repugnance to interpreted conversations. Even when we succeed in getting the better of it, there still remains the danger of the interpreter. For those primitive races there are no interpreters except some of their own people who have a smattering of a European language, English, French, Portuguese or Spanish. Hence the interpreter will have a very limited exchange vocabulary, especially for metaphysical and moral subjects. But playing as he does the part of a learned man among his fellow-tribesmen, it often happens that he will not compromise his reputation by obliging his master to repeat a question badly understood. And, indeed, the question also may have been badly put, for the art of formulating questions supposes a long training. To make the right use of an interpreter, to make yourself well understood by him in a European language, to be able to control what he communicates and what he gets back, all that is a labour demanding efforts as difficult as that of learning the native tongue for yourself. It is easy to see that the latter solution is preferable.

All these conditions limit the possibilities of sound observation to a notable extent. Seamen and old discoverers accomplished splendid work on the geographical side, but they saw too many countries to be able to get a deep insight into their customs. Ethnology for them had no claims at all. Explorers, who crossed from sea to sea over

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continents or large islands, had more contact with the country, but what language did they speak? They had to get through at all costs, provide themselves an escort, make sure of guides and food supplies. Sometimes they had to be punitive, or they had to deal with fever and other maladies in countries where they were not settling permanently. All said, they too were only birds of passage. And they had so many scientific pursuits, geographical, geological, botanical, astronomical, etc., that in regard to this closely hedged ground of ethnology scarcely anything was to be expected of them but slight and often superficial information. It is a matter for regret, because these, many of whom were men of learning, passed through the lands of uncivilized man at a favourable time, before any trace of change.

Like difficulties have in like manner diminished the value of the contribution of many colonials, civil servants, officers, engineers, doctors, to religious ethnographical studies. We must say of those that most frequently they made no claim at all to learning, but rather intended to publish interesting recollections of travel in which the most varied kinds of information were jumbled. A very limited place in general was given to the study of religions; and if some, and especially doctors, were often excellent in direct physical observation, all or nearly all went wide when it was a question of indirect observation, of getting behind intentions, motives, symbols. Knowledge of the language was evidently lacking, and the interpreter had missed the point.

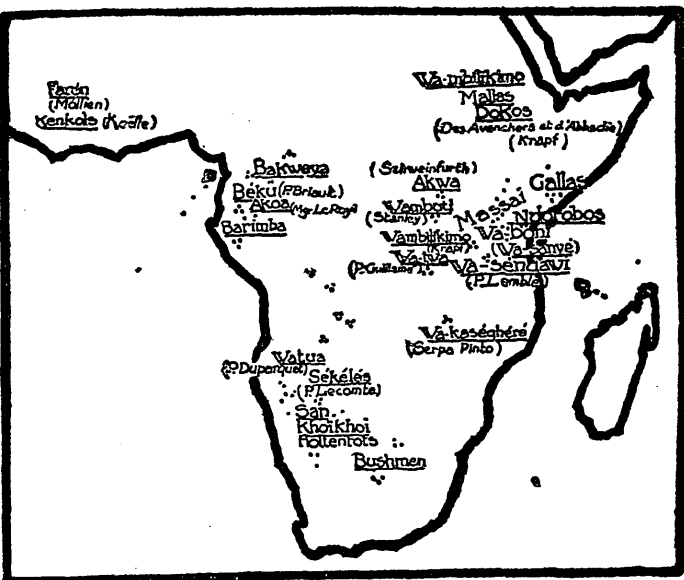
Something else, be it said, was wanting besides the language. No one can suitably treat a religious

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subject without having *scientific* possession of exact religious notions. Now the colonial writer was very often without them to an elementary degree, all the more extraordinary because his general culture was extensive. And thus many books of undoubted interest have been disfigured by childish false conceptions, hasty generalizations, excessive classifying, inductions made from reading rather than from facts on which light had been thrown.

We are reluctant to speak of certain influences and tendencies foreign to true science. Is it to be thought they are not met with? We have to say that, in general, colonial writers have not hesitated to unfold their entire thought when it pointed in the materialist, Darwinist, atheist direction. But if the observed facts favour a spiritual or Christian interpretation, the same witnesses are guardedly silent, and prefer leaving a gap in their narrative to facing the problem. A sincere study of ethnographical sources must note this failing; no clerical *suppressio veri* should be tolerated in these matters.

It may be gathered from all we have said that very few witnesses have been able to give an entirely serviceable account of what men, even uncivilized men, least readily reveal, namely, their religion. But there have been men who willingly settled among those people, learned their language, and thereby found a way to their hearts and consciences. And these men, Catholic and Protestant missionaries, have occurred to us as being the most capable witnesses, when we took up the study of primitive religions. They inspire confidence in the people about them by their manner of life. By reason of their apostolic purpose they are bound more than



AFRICAN POPULATIONS NOT INCLUDED IN THE CLASSIFICATION BY
NIGRITIAN AND BANTU TYPES

The negrillo peoples (of pure or crossed pygmy breed) are underlined, and the observers who have studied them are mentioned when possible. The details are taken from Mgr. Le Roy's book, *The Pygmies*.

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others to know the mentality of the pagans whose conversion they have undertaken. They have, furthermore, sufficient time to acquire complete and well-founded knowledge, and to revise their impressions.

Nevertheless, the evidence of missionaries is very far from being uniformly valuable. The school to which they belong unwittingly influences them. Thus Protestants, brought up to believe in the open mind, demand a relatively small effort on the part of the natives, and are indulgent to the defects of their moral code. Catholic missionaries, on the contrary, are not content with making adherents, but demand of the convert an almost total change of life; hence their judgment of pagan morals will be found on the whole more severe.

We must, besides, take account of differences of training and aptitude, often obvious from the bare reading of missionary narratives. There is a long-standing prejudice among Catholic missionaries against ethnographical observation and study, which seems a futile pastime to those men, harassed as they are by the labours of a more direct apostolate, overworked by the duties of their ministry. Hence they have treated such questions only in a passing and superficial manner. The Protestant missionaries, generally speaking, have written much more, but they have had very few Grenfells or Bentleys; and perhaps certain English and American ladies have not written without an eye to the successful sale of their books.

Be that as it may, there has been among Catholics and Protestants alike a common source of confusion. Instead of writing for scientific reviews, they pub-

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lished their evidence for the most part in periodicals devoted to edification and to the support of their work. Publications of this kind have a special set of readers, who must not be shocked or discouraged. That does not mean, of course, that they receive false information, but it explains why the journals neither could nor would tell them always the whole truth.¹ So when learned inquirers wished to draw from such documents, they naturally were the first to suspect that they could accept the knowledge supplied only on condition of being allowed to wait for complete confirmation. And we, too, before approaching the deeper study of the religions called primitive or fetishist, being about to meet on our way with so many learned names, systems and hypotheses, have felt the need of indicating exactly the value of each and all of our sources.

¹ Through consideration for their readers they threw a veil over the grossness of certain customs, and *à fortiori* over the turpitudes of slavery, pagan marriage, abduction, divorce. And they only gave just the slightest hint that pagan rites were often accompanied by scenes of "religious" lust. And it was hard for them, when they had proclaimed the good dispositions of certain tribes, to have to confess their frequent lapses to idolatry, or painful compromises between Christian faith and ancient immoral customs.

CHAPTER II

REFLEXIONS ON SOME GENERAL TERMS

It is doubtless for convenience in classifying that the name of *Primitives* has been adopted to denote peoples of inferior civilization. Certainly the word cannot be taken in an absolute sense, for it is evident that all races of men have, strictly speaking, the same age. And it is no less evident that *civilization* has only led us away from a primitive state about which we have no data. There is a hierarchy of peoples, when we view them under the aspect of civilization; some have it in a more complete form, others in a less advanced one. There is practical agreement in giving the name of Primitives to those who have lagged farthest behind. "They left the starting-point," says Monseigneur Le Roy, "at the same time as the others, but played on the way and lost the direction." Since they have evolved more slowly than the others, it is at least probable that in their customs and ways they have retained elements capable of putting us on the track of the earliest kind of religion.

It is fairly common to give those peoples of inferior culture another name, that of *Savages*. This term, derived from the Latin *silvaticus*, means "an inhabitant of the woods," or perhaps beings without cultivation, like trees that grow in the forest

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without the care of man. It is a name calling for distinctions and affected by degrees. To-day the purely savage state, or almost complete absence of civilization, can be predicated only of insignificant bands of negrilloes and negritoos, of some Australian aborigines, of some refractory Indian races, and of some out-of-the-way colonies of Eskimos. Elsewhere, the true savage, the absolute *Silvaticus*, is no longer met with. The case with which we are best acquainted is that of the man belonging to a tribe that is confined to a geographical area of greater or less extent, a tribe that shifts nomadically according as the fertility of the broken soil is exhausted, and that has in these times to reckon with the presence of the whites and their requirements. Nevertheless, it oftenest happens that what these savages have borrowed from the European element is limited to external and superficial things; there abides a primitive substratum, often almost intact.

A further remark on the impropriety of the term *aborigines* is hardly needed. The word has a look of absoluteness, and yet is constantly relative. Just as the aborigines of Italy came there from Phoenicia or Greece, so in many countries of Central Africa we are led by comparison to qualify as aboriginal or autochthonous certain races that surely have come from elsewhere, only their migration has left no historic traces.

We must now decide what peoples are to be included under the title of Primitives or Savages, under the rubric of inferior civilization. In truth this idea serves as the only bond by which we can link together very unlike groups situated in the five classic divisions of the world. There are Primitives

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in Europe within the Arctic Circle, and perhaps elsewhere as well. There are some in Asia, and not alone in Siberian regions. The enormous folds of the Tibetan, Himalayan, and Hindu-Koosh mountains, the plains of Central India, the Burman and Laotian Forest, still hold savage populations, and the Gulf of Bengal contains a group of the lowest Negritos, in the Andaman Islands. Even Japan has its Primitives, the mysterious Ainus whose totem is the bear.

Other savages live in America. In the frozen north of Canada there are Eskimo settlements that burrow under the snow. In the Rocky Mountains, and in the great American Prairie, are to be found the remnants of Indian tribes, the elect of totemism. In South America, beside the Christianized Quichuas and Aymaras, there still are numerous tribes of Indian braves almost untouched by progress, in the immense river basins of the Magdalena, the Orinoco, the Amazon, the Paraguay-Parana, and on the slopes of the Andes. The same is true of many racial groups of the extreme south of the American continent, in Patagonia and Terra Del Fuego.

There is a good mixture in Oceania. Certain tribes of Kanakas are considerably advanced; for instance, the Maoris, some peoples of the Hawaiian Islands, or the languorous compatriots of Rarahu at Tahiti and holy Raiatea. But on the atolls¹ of the Pacific and in many archipelagoes there remain really primitive populations, of the type described by R. L. Stevenson. And the Australian desert is inhabited by some groups that are assuredly at one of the lowest degrees in the human scale.

¹ Coral islands with a central lagoon.

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Still, it is in Africa that we have the biggest reserve of Primitives that survive on the earth. We must, of course, exclude Northern Africa, Egypt, and also Abyssinia, where we meet with Arab civilization and Mahometan religion, or Berber customs of distant Phœnician origin, or a survival of Ethiopian Christianity. To-day we must also take account of a fairly strong Christian development, Catholic or Protestant, in many African countries, such as Uganda, the Cameroons, Nigeria, Cubango, Basutoland. This religious evolution has taken place under the eyes of the missionaries, and has therefore given opportunity for study of the paganism to which it succeeded, and which, besides, is still far from having completely vanished before it. Perhaps we should take still greater account of regions which have evolved more in a political than a religious sense: certain English colonies, for example, in which the negro has tried, at least in the towns, to become Europeanized in his way of life, to the extent of no longer habitually using his mother-tongue. Here again, however, European manners are only a very thin veneer, no matter what those who adopt them may think. For they are not founded on needs, and there is no great difficulty in discovering ancestral custom under the slight disguise.

Although contemporary Africa (1929) is being transformed by an evolution which is very rapid as well as incomplete and superficial, it is far from having lost its character of "primitivism." Examine the peoples called by long agreement Sudanese, who inhabit the vast stretches from Senegal to the Nile, or take the tribes of the Upper African Forest, having

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the common designation of Bantu races, who spread from the northern elbow of Ubangui to the borders of the Transvaal; you will find that in their customs and social forms the negroes have retained elements that have no relation with the systems worked out in countries of historic civilization. It looks as if their ways of life had an older date than ours, and their simplicity, which does not always imply innocence or the spirit of harmony, sends us back in thought to the first ages of human society.

Needless to say, in such an extent of territory there is room for abundance and variety of customs and traditions. The Bantu world alone contains at least eight hundred tribes sharply divided by name, descent and language. Still, their differences are like the turns of their brushwood pathways; the pathway seems to wind all the time, while in reality it is straighter than you think. Difference and opposition between all these tribes are principally in matters of detail. Among themselves, whether for the purpose of distinction or of challenge, clans see fit to mark their individuality, but underneath this variety there is a common substratum of feeling, reasoning and expression, very often of proverbs, too, and sometimes of gestures. "There is only one negro," say the missionaries who have travelled most.

At the same time this multitude of tribes and idioms, which are as yet by no means uniformly charted and known, constitutes a great obstacle to any ethnological synthesis. It is quite impossible for an inquirer to find out for himself all about the customs of eight hundred tribes! But it is only right to recognize that a good knowledge of the

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language of one of them, and a long experience of life, travel and talk among one race of the kind, give a facility in determining both what is common and what is individual in many others. Such acquaintance fits us to pass sounder judgment on a good deal of evidence. When confronted with certain kinds of reasoning, we are reminded of our own youthful opinions and first feelings of astonishment after arrival, from which we have long since recovered and know what has cured us. The science we possess does not perhaps blow an erudite trumpet, but it has a crowd of practical advantages which nothing can replace. For ethnographical information as well as for everything else, nothing can be as good as seeing the thing for yourself, and *living* the thing for yourself is better still.

The Fangs² or Pahuans of the Gabonian Jungle are the tribe which has often supplied us with experimental material. We do not present them as a tribal type. In the Bantu world they are only a unit, and even a fairly unrepresentative unit, for their language is one of those in which the Bantu forms are most worn down. Yet such as they are, our Pahuans will often help us to understand other races, manners and accounts.

² *Fangs, Fans, Pamues* (of Spanish Guinea), *Pahuans* (of Gabon), are all names for one single people or racial branch. The branch is, of course, a very considerable one, and is subdivided into five or six hundred tribes.

CHAPTER III

WHAT IS RELIGION?

ETYMOLOGY, a valuable source of knowledge concerning abstract ideas, is in doubt about the word *religion*. It is of Latin origin, doubtless, but we do not know whether it is from *relegere*, which signifies *to re-read*, or from *re-eligere*, which would mean *to re-select*. Both interpretations are felt to be artificial and awkward. Hence a third derivation, from *religare*, meaning *to bind, to connect*, is commonly preferred.

Religion connects man with the supernatural world. This connexion is brought about by several acts, the first of which is *faith*. This is not the assent of the mind to evidence, such as is given in the case of sciences which for this reason are called exact. Tradition plays a considerable part in it. It contains a portion of mystery and of the unknown. Nevertheless, the decision to believe is made on reasons strong enough to bind the conscience, which cannot escape the obligation without self-reproach.

Another characteristic of religion is an attitude of respect or reverence, not necessarily accompanied by fear. In magic, on the contrary, fear is frequently present, but not reverence. When an act is religious, it is respectful; it can even momentarily transform

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what would at other times be accounted a sin or a crime. But in a magic operation we feel that there is on the part of man a guilty, interested, and therefore unreverential usurpation of the supernatural or the divine.

There is no religion without worship. If religion is a connexion, it is a connexion with things, beings and forces whose superiority is immediately felt by man. He feels also the need of acknowledging that superiority by acts, such as that of sacrifice, and by ceremonies, which are sometimes performed by the individual and sometimes in common, but are always marked by reverential forms, that remain visible in spite of even the worst aberrations.

Religion has further a character of authority which differentiates it sharply from an ordinary science and even from a system of pure philosophy. Philosophy and science rule only the intellect. Religion always claims to govern the will. It proclaims certain precepts. It lays down a code of things forbidden. It legislates on the sanctions of acts and on satisfaction for faults. And it links its own sanctions with those of the higher, eternal, divine authority in whose name it speaks. Just as there is no religion without worship, there is none without *morality*.

Those are the principal characteristics of what men call religion, whether as a rational idea or as the assemblage of religious facts noted by experience throughout humanity. We have seen how religion is distinguished from magic, which is an improper wooing of the supernatural, and about which we shall have more to say. Neither is it difficult to discern wherein religion differs from superstition. The latter has nothing of religion

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save the form, and is fundamentally, as its definition implies, vanity and nothingness.

Still, acts of superstition and of magic are often found mingled with religious acts properly so called. That is because of likeness of form, and of ritual usurpation of the supernatural. A little observation easily discovers the counterfeit, at least in the majority of cases, but the natives are deceived. It is even possible that the sorcerers religiously believe in a part of their jugglery, for they are the inheritors of a long tradition, about which they do not reason.¹

Some have wanted to liken religion to an assemblage of poetic sentiments and emotional states. This idea seems to apply to the religiosity of certain societies which have evolved to the point of decadence. But religion, especially that of the Primitives, with its respectful forms, its undisputed faith, its prescriptions and prohibitions, is far removed from such a concept. The same reply is to be made to those who tried to explain religious feeling by totemism, for a time a fashionable explanation. Totemism has some relation to heraldry, and is far from being universal. It must have originally arisen from the need of a rallying-sign. About this sign there grew a body of legend, interpretation, precept and ceremony, which was invested, in order to win it credit, with a character resembling that of religious forms.

A final characteristic of religion, though a less

¹ Sometimes the art of counterfeiting goes further. Among the *Fans*, the *ekis*, which are ritual prohibitions against eating certain meats or foods, or against going or coming in such and such conditions, are often imposed with the view of retaining the good portions, or of keeping the young people obedient. Among the elders this is an open secret, but the rite remains religious.

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intrinsic one, is its universality. The mention of this word necessarily brings us outside the world of the Primitives. It is really remarkable that all peoples, societies, groups of men, civilizations, ages of humanity, have shown religious feeling in one way or another. And certainly the Primitives or Savages do not contradict this assertion. The exceptions are individual cases, some numerically small groups, possibly, a few units or a few families. Even with regard to statements and reservations concerning these, it may not be amiss to reconsider the evidence and ways of investigation on which they rest. And making a large allowance for them, we may boldly maintain the old saying that calls man a *religious animal*.

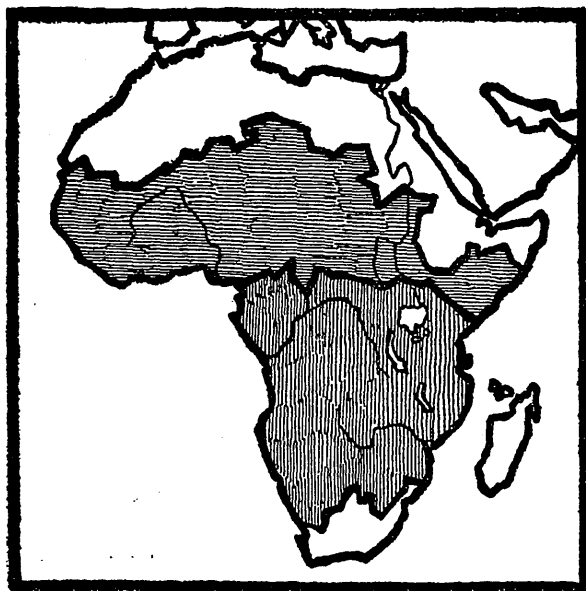
CHAPTER IV

NOTIONS OF GOD AMONG THE PRIMITIVES

THE main tendency of negro languages is towards designations of a material and practical order; they have no single word exactly meaning *religion*. But it would be wrong to argue from that against the existence of religious considerations among these Primitives. If they have no special name¹ for the totality of what we provisionally call supernatural relations, it is none the less true that those are closely mingled with all the actions of their lives.

Take first the knowledge of God. It is, in truth, a remarkable fact that God is known to the negroes from one end of Africa to the other. And they name Him. Even if there is no name for religion, there is always one for the Divine Being. It may not cause astonishment that travellers have omitted to notice this detail. But it was not without surprise that the missionaries found God known and named everywhere. The fact was for them a valuable indication.

¹ There are exceptions, and very curious ones. Thus the *Va-Nyanekeha* negroes of the Huilla plateau possess the word *Omalikuatelo*, which means exactly *the things by which man binds himself with (the spirits of his ancestors, understood)*. The word is broken up as follows: *Oma*, the plural of *Eoma*, a prefix used for big things; *li*, a reflexive pronoun, self; *kuatelo*, a noun from *kuatela*, a relative form of *kuata*, to seize, to bind. (Note of Father Felix Villain, C.S.Sp.)



THE TWO PRINCIPAL GROUPS OF NEGROES

The horizontal lines, in the northern portion, mark territory inhabited by Nigratian or Sudanese races; the vertical lines, in the centre and southern portion, indicate the countries of Bantu population.

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The following is a list of the *native* names for God, borrowed from the learned comparative studies of Father Charles Sacleux, C.S.Sp. It is very incomplete, but has the advantage of ranging between extremely distant points of the African continent.

<i>Nyambeh</i> in the country of the	<i>Ba-Rotseh</i> , Zambesi.
<i>Nzambi</i> or <i>Njambi</i>	„ <i>Ba-Vili</i> , Loango.
<i>A-Nyambeh</i>	„ <i>Ponguays</i> , Gabon.
<i>Nzame</i>	„ <i>Pahuans</i> , Gabon.
<i>Mu-umba</i>	„ <i>Swahilis</i> , Zanzibar.
<i>Umbumbi</i>	„ <i>Matabelays</i> , South Zambesi.
<i>Mbumbi</i>	„ <i>Shonas</i> , Mashonaland.
<i>Muvangi</i>	„ <i>Adumas</i> , Upper Ogoway.
<i>Owangi</i>	„ <i>Ndumus</i> , Upper Ogoway.
<i>Kalunga</i>	„ <i>Kwanyamas</i> , South Angola.
<i>Karunga</i>	„ <i>Hereros</i> , South Coonen.
<i>Katonda</i>	„ <i>Gandas</i> , Uganda.
<i>Mwinyezi</i> (2nd form)	„ <i>Swahilis</i> , Zanzibar.
<i>Leza</i>	„ <i>Balubas</i> , S.E. Belgian Congo.
<i>Lezi</i>	„ <i>Nyandjyas</i> , Nyassaland.
<i>Redza</i>	„ <i>Mbundu</i> dialect, Angola.
<i>Nengolo</i> or <i>Nkwangolo</i>	„ Lower Congo.
<i>Nzamo mpuo</i>	„ <i>Batehehs</i> , Leopoldville.
<i>Nya'mpamvu zentzeh</i>	„ <i>Teteh</i> , Zambesi.
<i>Mukulo Nzambi</i>	„ <i>Lunda</i> , Angola.
<i>Molimo</i>	„ <i>Matabeleland</i> .
<i>Mungu</i> , in about forty idioms of the East Coast, from the Victoria Nyanza to the middle of Mozambique.	

All these words can be broken up; and when we do so, we find a small number of root-words. The first names, *Nyambeh*, *Nzambi*, etc., come from the Bantu root *mba*, which means *to make, arrange, fashion*, and which turns up again in the names *Mbumba*, *Mbumbi*. The formation of *Muvangi*, *Kalunga*, *Katonda* is from equivalent roots *vanga*, *lunga*, *tonda*, all meaning *to fabricate*. For all these peoples, God is the Great Artisan.

The root *eza*, meaning *power, authority*, has prevailed in the group *Mwiyezi*, *Leza*, *Redza* or *Redja*. In these languages of the centre and

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south of the Bantu country, God is denoted by the attribute of His power.

Molimo, the name of God in the language of the Matabelays, is derived from the root *ima*, which means *life*. The same root has given to this language a word for the soul, another for the ghosts of the dead, a third for the spirits or inferior gods, but all these are common nouns and have a plural. *Molimo* has grammatical agreement of its own, and remains in the singular.

A similar remark applies to *Mungu*, the name of God among the peoples beside the Indian Ocean. The root of the word means *the sky*, the place above,² but the laws of grammar are such as to leave no possibility of confusion between the celestial phenomena and *Mungu*, who remains isolated in a rank all His own. And we find the same curious precaution south of Victoria Nyanza, where the name of God is related to the root of the word for *sun*. This word is *Izuwa* or *Liuwa*, God is called *Kazowa* or *Dikuweh*; we see that a special prefix indicates the difference.

Possibly, at the time when those languages were formed, belief was purer than it is now when superstitions have been piled on it for long centuries, often so as to become clearly preponderant. Still, if you question the negroes to-day, provided you do it in some village of theirs which is far from centres

² It is to be noted that the savage, whatever his dialect, always raises his eyes or points towards the sky when speaking of God. Such gestures are common to humanity. Ovid wrote:

*Os homini sublime dedit, cœlumque tueri
Jussit et erectos ad sidera tollere vultus—*

He gave to man the uplifted face, and bade him gaze on the heavens and look upward at the stars.

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influenced by modern change, you will be surprised by many of their replies.

They say, for instance, that God is *not a man like us*. I should have been chary of drawing a conclusion if the Pahuan who gave me this answer had followed it by saying that God is solely a spirit. In that case I should readily have suspected an infiltration of the ideas of our own catechism. But *not being a man like us* clearly meant having a nature different from ours. As to the spirituality of God, it was a conclusion reached through the fact that His presence was everywhere felt while He remained invisible.

Now this kind of invisible omnipresence was for the people of the Pahuan country a characteristic of the spirits of the dead, the shades, the *Be-Koun*. Was God one of these dreaded *Koun*? Was He, in fact, their chief and the first among them? The suggestion was denied, not without a feeling of scandal. The distinguishing quality of the shades was a vain, unhappy and, to put it shortly, inferior existence, and because of that they are angry and take vengeance. God was not like that.

Neither is He the same as the demigod, the spirit who is intermediary between heaven and ourselves, and is distinguished pretty clearly from the shades by certain tribes of East Africa. Monseigneur Le Roy, whose evidence is direct in this case, tells us that it would be gravely disrespectful to speak of *Mulungu* (God) as a *pepo* or spirit.

We have seen that He is not the Sky. He is not the Sun, nor the Thunder, though these things tell of Him and manifest Him. He is more, He is higher placed, and above all He is unique. The idea of two supreme Gods, which I one day submitted to

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a group of *benya bu mve* (notables) in the Pahuan country, was rejected in my presence in peremptory fashion. "Two equal Gods," said an elder, "are impossible. They would have made war on each other, and the world would have been smashed up." And when I used to ask: "Will God come to an end? Will He die one day?" the men of the Great Forest, who are often redoubtable leg-pullers, would answer, not without irony, by a question bearing the stamp of their mother-wit: "Who will you put in His place?"

The negroes ascribe sovereign power to God, and likewise omnipresence. The latter is compared to that of the air in which all nature is immersed. Neither have they any hesitation in proclaiming the goodness of God; and yet those poor savages are acquainted with war, famine, disease. They consider in spite of all that it is sweet to live, and that they are indebted to God for the gift of life.

Along with all these judgments we must take the way in which they are made. The way of the negroes is to find these notions about God *very simple* and quite natural. Their fables and legends are quite a different affair; in them complexity and improbability are the rule. Besides, these legends and fabulous tales form the material of endless storytelling by the fireside, the favourite evening entertainment of the negroes, while they are seldom heard talking about God and what relates to Him. When they do so, there is no familiarity in their tone, no jocoseness or drollery. God is principally mentioned in proverbs full of respect, which are quoted to the young for their education, or used in the talk-meetings when there is question of a higher justice or providence.

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We add, by way of termination of this summary of the notion of God among the African Primitives, that nowhere do we find any representation of this God under the designation of Mulungu, Mungu, Nzambi, Nzame, or any other. There exist innumerable little figures in baked earth, ivory, wood, but none of these is thought to be the divine effigy. Perhaps we may see therein a precaution against disrespect or blasphemy. In any case, God is never blasphemed in a society of uncorrupted Primitives, and wherever blasphemy exists, it is, alas, imitative. And another and not the least significant consequence of the nature of primitive faith in God is that He is not subject to any human constraint. In that He differs from the spirits and the shades, who can be summoned or influenced by magical practices, by formulæ of incantation and conjuration. Sacrifice, which is sometimes offered to God, is a mark of respect for His sovereign will. The act whereby the Primitive approaches Him subordinates interest and profit to a sentiment bordering on what we call piety.

CHAPTER V

THE WORSHIP OF SPIRITS AND SHADES

IN seeking to arrive at a clear notion of the Primitives' concept of God, we have had several times to mention the Spirits. There is hardly any other word to denote that assemblage of beings which negro thought places between heaven and earth, between Man and God. It supposes them to possess power far exceeding that of man, and attributes to them an immateriality which they depart from only during momentary apparitions. But it refuses to identify them with Him who is the Creator and Master of the Universe. They have but a secondary place, no matter what their power and the fear they cause.

Whence do they come? The negroes of East Africa, who are more spiritual in their beliefs than those of the Atlantic coast, but are perhaps influenced unknown to themselves by concepts derived from the Arab world, give them a name that puts them in relationship with the Latin *spirits*. This name has the forms *Pepo*, *Ombepo*, *Peho*; it is onomatopœic, and analogous to the *spiritus* of the Latins and the *pneuma* of the Greeks. The meaning is the same, the wind, which men have always con-

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sidered as the best image of what eludes their grasp, though it is not the only one. The name Pepo, besides, differentiates them from the other category of spirits designated by these peoples as *mzimu*. Everything bearing the name of *mzimu* was once a part of the composite human being; the *mzimu* are souls of departed mortals, of some of them at any rate. They are therefore to be classed among the shades, and spirits not of human origin are distinct from them. Some peoples, principally in the east and south of Africa, have words of the same derivation for spirits of non-human origin and for the others. But in those cases, the difference is marked by a change of prefix.

These spirits of extra-human origin, analogous to the demons and genii of paganism, rarely play a beneficial part. They are located in certain dark caves, on the tops of mountains, in the whirlpools of rivers, in islands of small extent, on promontories or peaked rocks. They are chiefly a menace, and can be exploited indefinitely for superstitious purposes. This exploitation, treating them as shades which have to be appeased continually, has ended among certain tribes by depriving them, partially at least, of their primitive character. On the west coast of Africa, in Gabon for example, in Loango, the Cameroons, Angola, the part played by a spirit, which is not a shade or ghost, has almost, if not entirely, vanished from the minds of the negroes.

Dr. R. H. Nassau doubtless assures us that in Gabon there still remain the Ombwiri (singular) and the Nkinda (plural), protective or hostile genii. We should like to believe him, for he lived a long time

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on the spot. But investigations have been made after him which leave us less certain. Shade-worship and magic have won the ground which has been lost by the pure spirits. Popular language still preserves their names, and their images are kept in the form of little statues much sought after by collectors. From time to time a personage with a mask and horns, accoutred with hay and bunches of tow, goes howling through the villages. Yet the doings of the spirits have begun to enter the domain of legend. The demons and genii, who used to be dreaded as much as the ghosts, have come more and more to resemble goblins and fairies, elves and Korrigans and other fictions, honorary deities, belief in which has greatly diminished. Their place in worship is slightly greater, but there also their importance has suffered usurpation.

It may be that spirits of this kind never played a very large part in the *religion* of the African Primitives. In many places to-day, especially among the western Bantus, we find but the merest traces of such a part, recollections that have not been tracked to their source.

But the shades have held their ground much better. Throughout Africa they wander, especially at night, on the pathways of the plantations, around the sleeping villages, spreading disease and mishap, causing drought in one place and floods in another, bringing bad luck to the fisher and the hunter, laying spells on the animals and disturbing the seasons. They are exigent, tyrannical, unreasonable in the extreme, and are constantly mixed up with the poor negro's life, which but for them would flow like a relatively quiet pastoral.

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Their name is so often pronounced, their intervention so habitual, the fear of them so universal, the systems of worship and morality inspired by them so numerous and varied, that travellers and even ethnologists have fancied them to constitute the sole religion of the negroes, and made fashionable for a time the name of Shade-worship. It is easy, however, to distinguish them from the Spirits properly so called. Every shade, in fact, is of human origin. It is a disembodied soul which was once the companion of a body, and so we see that the African system hardly tends in the direction of metempsychosis or successive transmigration. Thus disembodied, the soul comes back to the living, and lingers round their dwellings at least for a time and at intervals.

It is a great human fact, universal if any ever was, this belief of men in *ghosts*. Is it based on happenings that are certain and have been observed? That is not our business to investigate. We agree that seeing a ghost is infinitely less frequent than hearing of one. But it may be right to inquire what reasons, apart from sure and noted facts, can have urged the African Primitives in the direction of this universal belief.

All of them have a word for the soul, and if we ask them where the soul goes when the body is dead and cold, they raise a finger and say it has returned to God. Sometimes they assure us it has rejoined the other departed souls, those of the ancestors of the tribe, but there is no contradiction between reunion with the ancestors and passing first through God.

The negroes give but little precise information

THE WORSHIP OF SPIRITS AND SHADES

about the nature of the abode assigned to these souls after death. Their minds, ill-fitted for speculation, at once lazy and practical, have not investigated that point. The only thing they hold about it is that the life beyond is a continuance of the earthly life, not only in duration, but also in position and rank. After death, a chief is still a chief, a warrior still wages war, a sorcerer still continues to cast lots, and so on.

It would appear that the happiness of the other life is not enough for these souls, and that a kind of boredom sends them back here. Also, the recollection which the living have of them, whether affectionate or fearful or antipathetic, keeps their memory alive, at least while the death is still recent. They are associated with the lucky events, but more especially with the unlucky ones, that have happened in the meantime. We need not say that fetishism and superstition were soon at work on those data, and elaborated systems which have completely overrun what may have been originally the object of simple and sincere belief.

Let us add that there are departed souls which no one seems to bother about, and which, if they are shades in the sense of *reappearing spirits*, operate without being identified. They form, if we may say so, a part of *the common of the dead*, and are, for example, souls of little children, slaves, women, unimportant people, strangers. An exception may occur when the death of such a one is marked by some particular circumstance or coincides with an unexpected event. Apart from unusual cases of this kind, no shades are identified except those of important people, former chiefs of a tribe or of a

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village, male ancestors whose decease is rarely more than one or two generations back.¹

Is the function of the shades simply to work harm? Our remarks have implied as much, and in a certain sense it is true, for they are spoken of only with a view to appeasing their readily roused anger. When they are favourable, they just let people alone; just as well, then, not to speak of them. The negro who is let alone does not seek to know why, and secretly thinks it rather dangerous to inquire.

The worship of the shades has given rise to very varied and sometimes very complicated forms of burial, particularly for distinguished persons. In some cases the corpse is kept till its complete decomposition. In others there is a sacrifice of women, young girls, slaves, who are destined for the service of the deceased in the other life. Elsewhere libations of palm wine and milk are poured on the freshly made graves. Pretty generally there are sacrifices of food and drink, which are placed near the graves for the needs of the dead. These sacrifices are renewed in the event of an epidemic, a war, drought, a bad hunting-season or harvest. The shades are supposed to be angry because they have been neglected, and the sorcerer exhorts the people to greater fervour.

There is a worship of the shades analogous to that which Christianity gives to the relics of the

¹ There exist, however, more ancient shades whose identification has grown very vague, and consists in a name which is often archaic and altered. This is not frequent, but it gave rise to the supposition that the name was that of a genius or demigod. But the almost invariably *local* character of such personages, as well as the reconstruction of their names, justifies us in ranking them among the shades.

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Saints. The body is dissolved in the grave, but the clan keeps in a red-painted box of bark the skulls of its illustrious dead, and sometimes a few bones, hairs, nails, etc., along with them. This box, which only the initiated may see and touch, which is called *Bieri* by the Pahuans of Gabon and *Bouiti* by the Loangos, is the centre of attraction for the spirits of the dead. A place of honour is given to these strange reliquaries in all great ceremonies, such as sacrifices, libations, feasts of coming of age, councils of war, secret deliberations and public rejoicings. In mid-Africa the relics have even a hut for themselves, of the same style as the other huts but on a small scale. A small figure of carved wood, with fragments of looking-glass for eyes, is placed on guard before these little homes of the spirits, with an arm aloft and holding a javelin.

The spirits of the dead may show themselves sensible to such attentions, but they do not always stop there. A multitude of cases of possession are attributed to them; they enter the body of a man, a woman, a child, sometimes that of an animal or those of an entire herd. So says the sorcerer, at any rate, but oftener still it is the sorcerer himself who is supposed to be possessed and dwelt in by one or several spirits. He is, besides, in no way anxious to be rid of them, for it is from them he derives his gifts of second sight and prophecy, and his other superiorities.

We must not form our ideas of African belief in ghosts from European ghost stories, disturbing as some of them may be. In Europe, ordinarily, people do not seem very sure of them, or very uneasy about them. But in the primitive village, the anger of the shades, knowingly exploited, often brings on

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grave evils, sometimes with the cost of lives. The shades inspire mad terror, and lead people at times to make the heaviest sacrifices. Following a supposed injunction of the ghosts, whole villages have been known to abandon their sites, buildings, banana groves, plantations, and fly a day or two's journey away.

And yet the soul of the negro has grown familiar with these strange visitors. Among the Pahuans, for instance, an idea of vanity and nothingness attaches to everything concerning the *Be-Koun* or disembodied souls. Everything in nature wearing a *counterfeit* character is dedicated to them. There is a reed resembling the sugar-cane, but without its edible quality; that is the sugar-cane of the Be-Koun. Similarly, there is the banana of the Be-Koun, the spice of the Be-Koun, the potato of the Be-Koun, etc. In spite of their power, the poor blind spirits are supposed to be taken in by the imitation. And their worshippers cheat them as they please in the libations of sparkling palm wine, restricting their share to a few insignificant drops. Rarely are they offered a choice morsel of meat or other nourishment. You find on the graves of the dead a collection of odds and ends, cups, pots, basins, calabashes, household utensils; not one of them is intact. The spot is the refugium of everything that is cracked, leaky, or valueless. The natives give an explanation. "If the thing had any value," they say, "it would be stolen. And then the spirits of the dead are cleverer than us; they can drink out of a leaking cup without losing any of the water."²

² It may be that there is a symbolism here whose meaning is lost by the present generation, a *broken* cup in keeping with a *broken* life.

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Such easy-goingness and limitation of respect bear witness to a fairly weak faith. Perhaps; yet we Westerns should be on our guard against excessive logic. The negro can be both familiar and very much afraid, can sin by forgetfulness and yet keep an extraordinary conviction. Even when he is modernized and has put on our ways or at any rate our clothes, even when he has taken our certificates and degrees, even when he is a loudly professed free-thinker, he still retains some of the atavistic dread of the wandering shades, and never likes to go out alone when night has fallen.

CHAPTER VI

THE AFRICAN PRIMITIVE AND HIS SOUL

JUST as the negroes know of God and name Him, they also know that they have a soul and none of them doubts it. But they give it more than one name, for not only does the name vary with the dialect, but it changes also according to the faculty of the soul which has fixed the attention of different peoples.

Many of the Bantu languages have kept for the soul the root *ima*, *ema*, *em*, *im*, which means, according to Father Charles Sacleux, C.S.Sp., *to keep standing*, or in a figurative sense, *to be alive*. We need not wonder at meeting again this root, which has already served for the name of God and for that of the shades, any more than we do when we hear the word *spirit* used in our own language to denote our own soul or an angel or a demon, or to express the nature of God. The difference is even better indicated in the Bantu languages, which have special prefixes to mark the different meanings, and above all to keep God apart from all the rest. The Bantus distinguish less obviously the concept of the soul from that of the shades, because in their eyes the latter state is only a prolongation of the former. The context, however, lets us know which is meant; the way of speaking of a dead

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person differs everywhere from the way of speaking of a living one. The root *im*, *ima*¹ has come to mean *heart* in more than half of these tongues, but with a very wide extension of the scope of the word limited by us Europeans to denote the affections. One day a native of the Cameroons, in charge of a team which he had let get out of hand, explained to us that his mules were *evil-hearted*.

Another root *oya*, of onomatopœic form, meaning *to breathe*, is the basis of words for the soul in several African languages. Imagination has in this case dwelt rather on the breath of life. The words derived from this root vary in meaning from air and wind to breath, life, soul.²

The Pahuan language has for the soul a word meaning *shadow* in general, and not merely the human shade. The word is *Nsissim*, and is obviously reduplicated. But if it now means shadow, its origin seems to be the root *ima* already mentioned. The road of analogy has not been from shadow to soul, but from soul to shadow, and is due to a common quality of eluding the grasp. In the same tribe, the word for heart is *Nlem*, a word which, though differing in

¹ Examples of the root *im* or *em* :

Mtima (Nyangweh)=heart, soul.

Modimo (Duala)=soul, spirit, shades.

Mrima (Makua)=soul, spirit, shades.

Orema (Pongueh)=heart.

Nlem (Pahuan)=heart.

² Examples of words from the root *oya* :

Muoya (Zambesian Tonga)=air, wind.

Omwenyo (Nyanekha of Huilla plateau)=soul, spirit.

Moyo (Taïta of Zanzibar)=life, soul.

Omwoyo (Ganda of Uganda)=heart, life.

Omuinyo (Herero of South Africa)=life, soul.

Inina? (Pongueh of Gabon)=soul, spirit.

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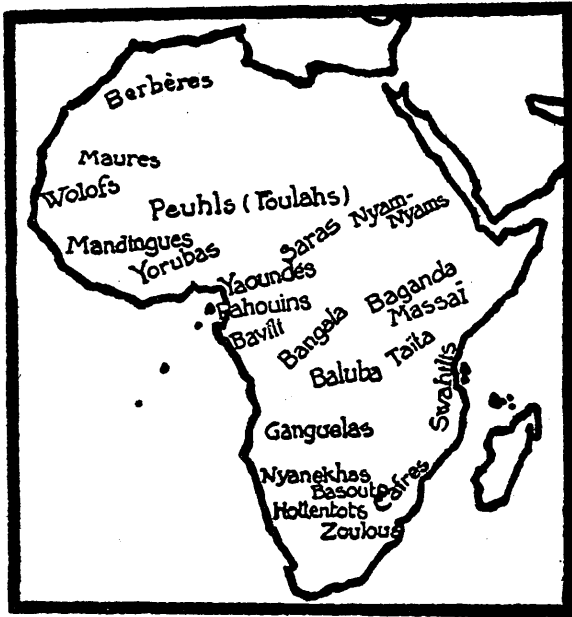
form and meaning from *Nsissim*, has the same etymology.

This difference between heart and mind, the former being kept for the seat of desire and the latter for the instrument of knowledge, exists in several tribes, even outside the Bantu area. The Vanyanekha of the Huilla plateau in Angola, have the word *omwenyo* for the mind, and *omutima* for the heart. But the Effiks, a people of the Niger and therefore not Bantu, have also the two words *okpom*, mind, and *esit*, heart, and the two are not interchangeable in conversation.

We give here some usages of words noted directly from speech among the Pahuans of Gabon. Among the signs of death they put the absence of the mind. They say: *A se fe ye nsissim*. He is no longer with his mind, or with his soul. To the question: What gives the eye the power of seeing, the ear that of hearing?—they reply: *Nsissim*. That is to say, the mind. *Nsissim* is also given as the explanation of the acts of the memory.³ But if we inquire the motives which urged somebody to commit a strange or violent action, and if they wish to reply that "such was his idea," *nsissim* will no longer be adduced. They will say: *Nlem wia a mbe nale*. His heart was so.

But we must not exaggerate and seek to put system where these people have none. *Nlem* and *nsissim* of the Pahuans, *okpom* and *esit* of the Effik tribe, *omwenyo* and *omutima* of the Nyanekhas, and all the words which in a great number of regions mark an obscure difference between the heart and the mind, are fundamentally only aspects

³ To remember, in Pahuan, is *Simiza*, whose root is clearly the same as that of *Nsissim*.



THE PRINCIPAL AFRICAN RACES

It is difficult to determine, among these races, which are of major and of minor importance. We indicate here those that receive most mention in this book.

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and glimpses of what the negroes consider to be the one soul which animates the body. Do we not do likewise ourselves, when we speak at one time of intelligence, at another of reason, again of memory, feeling, will, conscience, while all the time we are firmly persuaded of the unity of our soul, and know that all these aspects of it are bound together by a common substratum? Following Monseigneur Le Roy (*The Religion of the Primitives*, p. 141), we shall quote the conscientious R. E. Dennett, who wrote concerning the Ba-Vili of Loango: "There can be no great hope of giving a precise idea of the distinction which the natives make between the living shade, the breath and the intelligence on the one hand, and on the other, the mind, the conscience and the vital principle."

Yet some have been led to think that the negroes violate the belief in the unity of the soul when they say, in explanation of the unconsciousness produced in them by sleep, that their soul is then absent. Not only is it absent, but it uses the time of absence to commit a number of misdemeanours. Thus during the night certain souls become incarnate in panthers, hyenas, caymans and other noxious animals, in blood-sucking vampires, in serpents, or even in swarms of bees or nests of wasps. And all for the purpose of harming their enemies. Of course the sorcerers more than anyone else enjoy the privilege of letting their soul wander in this way, and profiting by invisibility to find out a lot of hidden things. This belief is plainly connected with the group of facts known by the name of *nagualism*, which is a totemism no longer tribal but individual, wherein a man, preferably a sorcerer, has the privilege of utilizing at

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will the body of an animal which is his associate and protector.⁴

What are we to think of a soul that thus quits and re-enters its body at will? Undoubtedly the poor negro, when interrogated by an inquirer on this point, will not be able to give a clear answer. He may be expected not to unravel the tangle without a violation of logic. He will say perhaps that his soul is not absolutely a unit, and that what momentarily escapes is only a part of it. Or he will hold that he possesses two or three souls, or as many as are required to get out of the difficulty. He will, in short, hazard a reply like a man who does not know. No wonder; how many villagers in Europe could give no better explanation! But unfortunately, instead of noting this pardonable ignorance as what it is, some have preferred to make a document of it, and raise it to the dignity of a theory like one of our own.

They liken it particularly to an Egyptian theory. The Egyptians were a people with a passion for ideographic painting, which indeed they executed with genius, and of which they made a great art all their own. Their funeral paintings, inscriptions and writings have procured acceptance for the theory of what is known as the *double*, and have given precise annotations of this being that are lacking everywhere else. They called by the name of *Ka* (or double) a kind of soul or vital principle distinct from the body but bound up with its

⁴ The wounds inflicted on this animal are found next day on the body of its human associate. When the animal is killed the man dies. Strangely enough, fairly marked traces of *nagualism* persist in Europe, even in France, in affairs of sorcery.

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existence, prolonging it, projecting it in a certain sense, either in spatial extent or in duration. They endowed this *Ka* with a life parallel to that of the man to whom it happened to be related. Its function became especially important after death, for the *Ka* had a power of survival which was not that of the soul properly so called, but which lasted as long as the corpse retained its external human form. To this double then, with its mysterious after life, was due the extreme care with which the Egyptians preserved their dead, or at any rate their illustrious ones. It was not of course the only kind of survival which was the object of Egyptian invocation. This *animula*, as the Latins would have called it, was oftenest represented by a bird or winged insect, but in other cases it was a dark shadow or a brilliant spectre. And apart from the excellence of embalming, the mummy was given a kind of insurance against decomposition by the presence of statuettes which reproduced the semblance of the deceased, and could serve at need as receptacles for the double during its periods of return and stay in the tomb.

What are we to consider as the motive of these precautions, if not an exasperated desire of survival at any cost? We may then question whether we are here confronted with philosophic documents, or with emblems of immortality expressed in very concrete shapes, in conformity with the rigid genius of Mithraism. In an almost similar order of ideas, what commentaries might we not excogitate on the haloes with which our Saints are adorned in order to give an idea of their celestial radiation? What might we not say, following a certain train of reasoning, on the wings we give our Angels?

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Since we know so little about the Egyptian double, it seems very imprudent and premature to attribute to the negroes of the interior of Africa such a specious belief, and to write, as though it were an acquired certainty, that they distinguish in man a body, a soul, and a double.

It remains to ask from what source the negroes took this idea which they all individually have about their souls. And yet we must mournfully confess that if the Egyptians, in spite of their monuments and papyri, have not transmitted us all their thought, it is almost impossible to know with any certainty how the consciousness of a spiritual soul arose among the negroes. The only thing which may perhaps give us any hint is the quite intuitive manner in which the Primitive takes cognizance of what he observes in himself. The supposition of the existence of a soul, as an explanation of phenomena in which the life of the body is suspended or cut off, is a product of reasoning of a discursive order for which these children of the forest have very little aptitude.

The interior life, with its recollections of the past, its immediate perceptions, its various emotions, its constant habit of overflowing the limits of expression, its subtleties which can do without words, its evanescent dreams that locate themselves willy-nilly beyond the range of the senses, its obvious and continual contrast with animal stupidity, is amply sufficient to enable a man to discover what is called a soul, both within and without his body. It is a case for reversing the famous Cartesian formula for the use of our Primitives. I am, therefore I think.

CHAPTER VII

THE MORAL LAW

WE frequently hear, from persons who have never seen savages, the objection: "Do you think those poor folk have really an idea of good and evil?" Some address us from a still higher pedestal. They quote philosophers who make fun out of the contradictions noted between the morals of different peoples. And the good old tag serves as conclusion: what is wrong at this side of the Pyrenees is right at the other.

It would not be difficult to supply the distinctions between fact and law, to mark precisely the variable conditions of human acts in both, and so establish rigorously the moral standard. But it is perhaps more instructive to consider the spontaneous reactions of Primitives when they are the victims of some wrong or another. When the negro has been robbed, what excellent lessons he will give us on respect for another's property! How justly he will speak of respect for truth if he has been the dupe of a man who has deceived him! How eloquently he will discourse in favour of conjugal fidelity if his wife happens to have gone off with another! And apart from those extreme cases, a negro whose children have been lacking in respect for himself will reason in a very sound manner on

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the duties of children to their parents. Indeed, in order to reason well about morals, there can be no better preliminary than a wrong received, and it is doubtless because of that that the justice of primitive peoples inclines so much towards the simple, brutal, convincing form of the *lex talionis*.

You may go the round of all tribes and races, and you will not find a population that is *non-moral*. Everywhere the difference between good and evil, between the permitted and the forbidden, is notorious. Allow as much as you please in your investigation for divergence, the series of things good and evil will be almost everywhere the same. You will discover ultimately that the world is less far than you thought from our ancient Decalogue, that humanity as a whole everywhere condemns robbery, violence, injustice, lying, impiety, and even lust.

But are these condemnations merely conventions between men, arrangements made to ensure the peace of villages, towns, or whole societies? There is a school of thought which teaches this doctrine, a school which makes no secret of its determination to separate human morals from any religious basis. We might object that it is precisely the nature of conventions between men to be transient and to have an excessively precarious existence. Manners, fashions, philosophies, tastes, do nothing but change. How does it happen, then, that men of all times and countries agree on a certain number of points? Is it not curious that we find everywhere qualified as bad certain acts towards which each of us feels urged by the weakness of his nature? Is it not also singular that the man, who yields momentarily to an evil inclination, upholds

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nevertheless the principle, and blames, at least in others, in a general fashion, the fault of which he has been guilty? If in morals men only followed respectable conventions, would there be among them, even among the least educated, such unanimity and depth of conviction?

Conviction with a religious basis, whether conscious or not, is alone capable of explaining this universal phenomenon. "Religious men," says Father Lagrange, O.P., in his *Study of Semitic Religions*, "have always believed that the Deity exercises a certain control over their lives, and expects of them certain acts. Hence every religion implies a requirement and a moral one. Those who deny that religion makes moral demands mean doubtless that the morality in question is not ours, but that matters little for our present purpose. Religion supposes in man a double belief, a belief in the existence of higher powers on which he is dependent, and also in the possibility of entering into relations with those powers."

The least we may say about this attempted divorce of morality from religion is that it goes against an alliance which is so old and so universally agreed on that many, even in the camp opposed to Christianity, call it instinctive and spontaneous. Certainly the alliance of morality and religion among the Primitives has this character of spontaneity. But having no writing or monuments, they have not drawn up their moral code any more than they have established the *Credo* of their faith. The rules have crystallized in custom, and as we might expect, have been altered more or less through the changes which superstitions or magical practices make in custom.

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THE NATURAL LAW

When we analyse the traces of the natural law in the primitive soul, we see that everything, even the condemnation of adultery, is derived from an idea of justice, and further that this justice derives from God, as current proverbs show. "The Vanyanekha of the Huilla plateau," says Father Felix Villain, who spent twenty-four years together among this people of the south of Portuguese Angola, and noted extensively and studied deeply their ethnology, "have a morality based on the innate sentiment of justice and on the distinction they spontaneously make between good and evil. They have the idea that good actions will be rewarded in another life, and evil actions punished. They have also the idea of responsibility and a word for the conscience. They have penalties and purifications to blot out what they call sins and faults. They readily appeal to the justice of God, saying: You have done me wrong, it will be requited you on God's day; or again: When a poor wretch is killed, it is in Heaven's ears his cry resounds."

The following is a more concrete example of the ease with which the pagan negroes relate the value of their acts with the divine will. In 1895, the Pahuans of the village of Ivanga in Remboe (Gabon), all pagans, seized one of the Fathers of the station of Donghila, Father Bailly-Comte, on the occasion of a talk-meeting to which he had come as arbitrator. They held him for two days. Then, not being able to agree on what they should do with him, and hesitating to harm him, they released him. A punitive expedition followed, and they were treated

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pretty severely. Because of these events, those of the mission station were a long time without returning to the district, and the village of Ivanga seemed excluded from our zone of evangelization when I decided to visit it in 1902. I expected some hostility, or at least ill humour; but I experienced nothing of the sort. The village had been sorely tried by deaths, epidemics, and the scattering of its youth. There remained in it only a few old people; the huts were no longer being repaired, and were crumbling with age. The instigator of the original violence was still alive, but crippled in both legs, and dragging out a miserable existence. The chief, a man in the prime of life, sorrowful and overcast in countenance, said to me as he pointed out the desolation around: "You see, God has punished us because we foolishly laid hands on the man who made no war on us." In an evangelized neighbourhood, the man would have been given the title of missionary, and called "the white man of God." Not so here; the chief simply acknowledged that violence had been done to a man who had not deserved it.

Thus the negroes do not think we must wait till another life for the avenging action of God in the case of unjust deeds. And to this idea, doubtless, corresponds a simple gesture, known also to antiquity, by which, in certain African regions, a man who has been ill treated, and is powerless to avenge himself, protests the justice of his cause. He stoops and takes from the earth a handful of dust, which he throws towards the sky, crying to his adversary: "May God judge you!" That, in the secret thought of the negro, is the appeal which resounds in heaven.

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There is a feeling of expectation, which has not escaped the negro's mind, about everything that happens here. The natural law in his heart has a direct corollary in the sanctions he looks forward to in the other life. The rewards that follow good works have not perhaps excessively engaged his attention, but he holds that God will punish crimes, especially those of which he has been the victim. The Pahuans of Gabon, who have certainly no native ideas about the Paradise of the elect, have clear notions of a hell. The word *ototolane*, which stands for it, is a curious term, one outside the classifications and ordinary forms of their nouns, a borrowed word doubtless, but borrowed from another native language in the course of long migrations and carefully retained. The thing it stands for is a cold hell in which souls, like some of Dante's desolate creations, endure eternally the torment of being astray in the darkness.

POSITIVE LAWS

The natural law, which every man living in the world finds in his own heart, provides only the essentials of moral direction. The man who has only this light to guide him finds himself very soon confronted with alternatives that cause him to hesitate, and with details that make him ask himself whether the obligation presented to his mind or the claims of his liberty should get the upper hand. Then it is that human reason, working on the elementary background of the natural law, works out a more detailed scheme of positive moral laws. Remark that it is at this point that divergences and errors begin. There is general agreement, such as to allow

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us to believe in a providential design, with regard to the fundamental portions of the natural law. But as the signs of human conventions become more noticeable, the more do variations, errors, abuses and illogicalities appear. Yet this positive legislation is not altogether erroneous; it presents a mixed character. It frequently contains wise precepts in a defective form, and right thoughts perverted by strange unreason.

DUTIES TOWARDS GOD

The positive morality of the Primitives is very insufficient in the matter of duties towards God. It does not, like the agnostic who draws no conclusion, regard the existence of God as doubtful. Neither is He entirely the inaccessible or the absent One, since He is named, and His presence dominates the world. Custom demands that He be respected; and in primitive countries God never has ascribed to Him the unbecoming adventures of Jupiter or Saturn. He is not blasphemed, and when He is mentioned in stories or proverbs, it is always in a way redounding to His honour. We shall see later that His worship is not absolutely neglected. But all that is still far away from a duty of habitual prayer, from the act of love, from the striving after moral perfection, from a distant imitation of the Divine Ideal.

TABOOS AND PROHIBITIONS

There is, however, one thing binding man to God in all primitive countries, though we may question whether it forms part of morality or of worship.

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That thing is the constant distinction between the sacred and the profane, and the practice to which has been given, with a widened sense, the Oceanian name of *taboo*.

This universal practice, no matter how various its forms, always reminds us of the Book of Genesis and of the account of Eden, the dwelling-place of the first man. God gave to Adam the mastery over all things in the earthly Paradise, with one exception, a fruit, and a fruit having no special qualification save that of the divine restriction. Except for the fact that among the Primitives the restriction is man-made, the taboo is merely a repetition of the Biblical warning, a setting apart of something for God, the reservation of some one thing as sacred out of the vast multitude of profane things.

Thus entry is forbidden into certain places in which, to all appearances, no danger lurks. They are regarded as the residences of the spirits or shades, but not seldom you hear the negroes say that the man who violates the prohibition exposes himself to the anger of God. God and the spirits, for them, are on the same side.

There are prohibitions applying to all the members of a tribe or a village, and others to a social category, such as children, young people, pregnant women or women recently delivered, people in mourning, etc. There are, especially, personal prohibitions imposed on each man at the time of leaving the maternal hut to enter the society of the adults of the village. Even infanticide, for a long time widespread among certain tribes, and the murder of twins and of children born under an evil sign, are really based on a kind of taboo.

And since we have spoken of this deviation of the

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system, we may at once mention that it has given rise, in interested and unscrupulous hands, to a multitude of criminal abuses. We must not, however, judge the taboo by its deviations; we must rather consider its origin. This origin, we have seen, is *the assignment of a portion to God*, and likewise the sanction of the taboo, which is not of external obligation merely, can only be an authority superior to this world. It is quite inadequate to give, as a reason for taboos, the dread of injury and the fear of using without restraint all that Nature offers. The essence of the taboo is that it often proscribes things which are known to be without danger, good and even excellent, and not merely things harmful in themselves. "The animal," says Monseigneur Le Roy, "also ranges through Nature. Like primitive man he discerns, among the fruits of the earth, what is favourable to him or the reverse. But he has never respected taboos."

Primitive man has marked out for himself but few positive individual duties, apart from those he has found in the natural law. He is bent on material things, occupied with the cares of livelihood, completely taken up with his hunting or fishing gear, entangled in the labyrinth of talk-meetings, great and small, and hence has never been able to rise to a true civilization. Industry he may have, and the sense of hospitality, a curious artistic sense and certain spiritual gifts such as eloquence and music, but it is plain that his mind has not exercised itself enough. The Primitive has retained too much of the child's mentality. And the great freedom of the savage life is paid for by an insecurity greater still.

With regard to the duties towards his fellow-men

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which primitive man holds to be binding, we shall not be far from a true view of them if we subtract from our own morals the justice, charity, and indeed return to common sense, of which the Gospel has been the source. The comparison can be verified only on the spot, and not elsewhere.

Family duties begin with marriage, but marriage is one of the most unsatisfactorily treated points of native morality. It is based on purchase. The man marries not the woman whom he loves and deems fit to be his companion and the mother of his children, but the girl he has bought in exchange for goods, often before she is of marriageable age.¹ Among the Pahuans of Gabon or their neighbours the Shekianis, Galoas and Nkomis, it is not rare to see the union of a husband of fifty with a wife of eleven. She, of course, is not consulted, nor would her opinion have any weight if she were. Polygamy depends on purchasing power; the number of a man's wives is ordinarily an index both of his fortune and social rank. Side by side with marriage by purchase there are its variations, the wife given as pledge, the wife yielded back, the wife sold to another, the wife lent. The woman submits to the law of the stronger. Or else she brings about her abduction. This means war; in fact all wars between village and village start in the first instance with a talk-meeting about a woman.

We must not, of course, dramatize such incidents in our own fashion. We should like to feel nothing but pity for the native woman, but she has her faults, the faults of a brutal savage; she is a mischief-maker,

¹ Purchase is often anterior to marriageability, but in this case the young girl who is married is placed in the company of her husband's other wives till she is fit for marriage.

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and sometimes a lazy-bones. Anyway, how should we expect her to love and act through love?

With regard to love, let us digress for a moment. Does this feeling which we call *love*, which unites souls through exalting them, exist among the negroes of tropical Africa? It was difficult to decide before any educated person was bred in their environment. But now there are sons of the Primitives who have had a fairly complete course of studies, and can understand exactly what the Latin poets or the modern novelists mean. It has been possible to question and find out from them if the love-sentiment that was an enchantment for our poets had any place in native society. The result has been always negative. In those countries, love between man and woman has remained, even in the best marriages, at the stage of physiological union, brutal and bestial, accompanied by a friendship based on esteem and habituation.² Only the future will show whether love will arise there.

Still, we must not despise those humble, matter-of-fact, unidealistic households. We must even allow some credit to polygamy itself. Polygamous union, for all its defects, is none the less a sign of social law and organization. It is a deformation of the family, but not a negation of it, like free union in the fashion of the "dusky partners" of the colonial novel. There is in truth no union in these marriages of a season which the European and persons of his party contract with native women who lend themselves to affairs of the kind. Such marriages are among the most powerful factors in the death of races.

² Unless perhaps the feeling exists without having found its expression.

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Native morality defines for the child fairly clear duties towards his parents. The latter word has a wide extension, and denotes uncles and grand-uncles as well as fathers and grandfathers. Many duties, that originate in the relation of father and son, are paid to the elders of the village. The emancipation of the young is very tardy, and under cover of so-called filial piety quite a number of abuses have grown customary. In many parts the young folk are the only workers, and allow themselves to be exploited and trampled on by the coalition of the elders. These, in return for obligations on which they jealously insist, acknowledge on their own side only a minimum of duties towards the next generation. That is a fact, but it is also an abuse, and we may not describe it as a law of primitive society.

The same is to be said of the various forms of slavery. Slavery is as old as the world. A negro of Central Africa, seeing a band of prisoners working in one of our chief houses, would inevitably take them for slaves. For the first slave was a prisoner whose head his captors preferred not to strike off. It is needless to add that mankind later on vastly abused this so-called mercy, and were only too ready to take advantage of this convenient means of avoiding fatigue. Slavery did not even stop at forced labour, but went as far as the power of life and death. In the Congo and many neighbouring regions, massacres resulting from this power, and sometimes followed by cannibal feasts, have been adduced as an important cause of depopulation in the period between 1850 and 1890. But we must not be led astray, even by such excessive cases as those in which the death of a chief was the occasion of twelve or fifteen poor victims being buried alive.

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Such acts, in the minds of their perpetrators, were religious, traditional, and in a certain sense moral: The negro potentate responsible was not acting on *caprice*, but following *custom*. Grenfell has fully established this in his account of his own intervention, on the 7th of July, 1889, with the chief Mungulu of Bolobo. It was a question of preventing the sacrifice of two slaves destined to accompany to the other world the deceased chieftainess Mbonjeka. Grenfell and three other Baptist missionaries tried to prevent the butchery. Mungulu is shaken by their appeals, hesitates, returns to the talk-meeting, leaves it again. Grenfell writes:

“ Poor old man! Clearly, he is trembling. What can he do? Submit to a tradition which remains only as a form of words, but which represents a belief he drank in with his mother’s milk? Or yield to the adjurations of a foreigner and the threat of a higher but far-off justice? ”

Regretfully the order was executed. The two living beings were bundled into the enormous trench, and the body of the dead woman placed over them. Those in attendance then quickly filled up the horrible grave.

In a less tragic order of events, it may be said that a kind of *modus vivendi*, founded both on simplicity of manners and on mutual interest, has ultimately been established between masters and slaves. The slave is doubtless an inferior being and is made feel it, but he takes the designation of *child* in relation to the master. We may compare with this the Latin *puer*, which meant both *child*

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and *slave*. The master treats him as a child, that is to say, he is responsible for him, must maintain him, and not ill-treat him at will. Sometimes matters arrive at such a pass that you find slaves who do not by any means want their freedom, and masters very embarrassed through having to satisfy the demands of servile dependents who give them no rest.

In the matter of duties towards the neighbour, the general rules of natural justice apply or do not apply (or apply but slightly) according as there is question of allies or strangers. Those in alliance are hospitable to each other, and give each other the assistance of force; they are, as the Pahuans say, *abum avori nte mbori*, "of the same womb and the same talk-meeting." But the stranger has always something of the enemy about him, and solidarity is usually considered to exist between all strangers. That was why many Europeans fell victims to assaults meant for other whites than themselves, especially in the days of exploration. Native rancour is not inclined to distinguish between members of a group.

The white man, besides, is a special kind of stranger. If he does not deserve the name of enemy, he has always the character of an undesirable, for he comes to change and upset everything, despite his protests to the contrary. Furthermore, he is not weak, he is educated and rich, lives spaciouly, can pay for services, has redoubtable allies and repeating guns. It is indeed comprehensible that in the presence of such a man the poor savage feels a menace like that felt by our frontier inhabitants in time of invasion. No wonder, then, if the negroes meet invading power with guile, if

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they make information uncertain, block the pathways, refuse to supply victuals or carry loads. They practise what Ernest Psichari used to call the defensive lie; let professional moralists consider the conditions and adjudge the responsibility.

Similarly for the question of cruelty. Primitive man has been described as a wilfully cruel being, with examples whose finding caused no difficulty. It is, for instance, an act of stupid barbarity to cut off the two hands of a young man who has stolen a few manioc (worth at most two or three francs); but let us not forget that in such a case public opinion also thinks the punishment excessive. Let us not forget that there were in our own country, in the Middle Ages, severe institutions repugnant to our modern sensitiveness. And the mark of ignorance, and not that of cruelty, should be applied to a great many deeds of the negro or of the Primitive. The chief of Alam, on the Rio Mouni, drove from his village one of his wives who was attacked by leprosy. The missionaries and the military post had to intervene before the old Pahuan would take her back. He explained to me the reason for his cruelty. "*Biang a se fe a dzal*," said he. Which means, there is no remedy in the village (for such an advanced stage of disease). The conclusion is that in such cases people must know how to die.

When a missionary finds a sick person abandoned, a wretch who is agonizing, all covered with flies, on the mould-heap of a banana plantation, or a young consumptive woman stretched beside a half-dug grave, the reason mostly is that the relatives of those sick people no longer knew what to do for them. Such abandonment is atrocious, but

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though it cannot be justified, it may be explained, and its cruelty is to a certain extent unconscious.

Let us finish by a statement which we have already outlined, and to which it is proper for us to return. It is extremely difficult to pronounce exactly on primitive morality, because, of necessity, it is not to be found in any formulated code or collection or table. We can come at it only by deduction, from sayings or proverbs, and from customs in regard to which we must learn how to distinguish between the primitive fact and later distortions of it. It would be a work exceeding the limits of a manual to give the results of such an investigation for every tribe, race and society outside the influence of the great civilizations of antiquity. We have had to sum up and popularize. But if our picture is not complete, we think at least that it is not an animal grimace it reveals on the negro's features. When we examine primitive morality, we feel, in spite of its omissions and errors, that we are in the presence of human beings endowed with conscience.

CHAPTER VIII

WORSHIP

As soon as man recognizes a Master, the signs of his respect at once appear, acts that signify dependence on the one side and sovereignty on the other. If such is the case between men, even though human power is so relative and transitory, how much more is it so when man looks towards God. All the actions that indicate his dependence on God, prayers, sacrifices, expiatory ceremonies, are included under the name of Worship. There is no religion without Worship.

But if it was difficult for us, when studying primitive morality, to make a continually clear distinction between primal obligations bound up with belief and indirect rules arising from social convention, it will not be less so to unravel in this new domain what is really religious worship and what must be regarded as a usurpation of it, due to magic and superstition. In primitive societies, religious considerations always carry the weight of authority, and hence superstition and magic have devoted themselves to a rough partition of all things bearing a sacred character. So that nowadays, in primitive religion, what is original and sacred is constantly met side by side with the adventitious operations of sorcery. Both are

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mingled closely together, and we may well imagine the negroes have not done anything either to mark the line of separation or to help in its discovery.

Another great source of confusion in this matter is the way in which primitive men, and their morals and religion, have been written and spoken about for a century back. Without going back on what we have said in our chapter, *A Study of the Sources*, about the value of the witnesses, we may say that one of the tendencies¹ of our writers and learned men is to represent the primitive as a man bordering on the animal state, as a brute, as an elementary being limited to the quest of his sustenance. In other words, they have made him conform to what has been imagined about Man of prehistoric times. His capacity, by a sort of *a priori* prudence, has been minimized. In the case of prehistoric man, no one can say if we are justified in regarding him as such an elementary being. And it is certainly wrong to regard the savage as such, the actual, real savage, who can be found in several of our colonies. The negroes have a great abundance of folklore, a vast series of legendary tales in which men are changed into beasts, become invisible, act like the magicians of the Arthurian cycle, like Merlin the enchanter, like the heroes of the old Celtic, German, Slavic or Scandinavian poems. They have a treasury of fables in which the cautious and crafty tortoise plays the

¹ One of the *tendencies*, for there are others, and even contradictory ones. For instance, after having long made fun of negro art, people have suddenly begun lauding it to the skies, and schools (?) take their inspiration from it. Simultaneously, the whole system of negro morals and customs has been deemed worthy of rehabilitation. Admiration has extended from their dances to their epic narratives, their wisdom and philosophy. These are excessive opinions.

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part of our Master Goupil, in which the lion is a sort of King Ubu, and the elephant a big stupid animal continually being duped, and any part of creation, besides, is *animated* at need. In these stories, not the animals alone talk, but also the forest, the river, the sun and moon, the trees and the grass, the stones and the mountains, not to mention the spirits, giants, and dwarfs.² It can easily be imagined that on such a plane we have constantly to do with a Nature whose forces are animated, but to draw an argument in favour of animism from these fables, the pastime of sitters by encampment fires, would be like forming an idea of our scientific opinions from data supplied by Æsop or La Fontaine. This error, both of information and interpretation, is very common, not only in all works at second-hand, but also in all investigations too quickly carried out. Thanks to such initial misunderstanding, people have been led to represent primitive worship as a thing which is only its wraith, and which has been successively given the names of Fetishism, Naturism, and Animism, to mention only the principal ones.

PRIESTLY FUNCTIONS

Before speaking of worship, it is perhaps necessary to say a few words about priesthood. For the majority of travellers, the priest of primitive worship is the individual of whom they have got a chance sight, decked out in a mask of light wood, a costume of hay and raffia tow, his head bristling with

² For example the dwarf *Kige-kigede* (Cut-Cut) of the Pahuan legends, a being without head, body, eyes, arms or legs, who, nevertheless, plays countless tricks on people better equipped.

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feathers and horns, threatening and gesticulating in the midst of a crowd capering in a savage dance. They call him the *fetish-man*, the head fetish-man. The sequel generally shows that they ascribe to this man the part we usually allot to the priest.

The excuse for this mistake is that the story which gives it credit makes for the most part no pretence of being scientific, and is derived only from external facts jotted down in a traveller's notebook. Only another comes along afterwards and gives this note a scientific status in a treatise. Unfortunately, in those exhibitions which strangers are allowed to see, there is often no question of an act of worship, and therefore none of a priesthood. Sometimes there is merely a dance in disguises which have no deep significance, just to amuse the children. The thing more readily occurs as a superstitious ceremony, or as a parade arranged by some secret society, but even then it does not constitute religious worship. Hence the individual who serves as *bearer* of the mask of another personality is no more a minister of worship than is the beadle in our churches.

There has been another confusion. *Fetish-man*, in accounts of travel in the days of exploration, had somewhat of the meaning of *hierophant*, the principal personage of a parade considered as a kind of worship. He was the priest, but further, he was the officiating priest. The designation of *sorcerer* adds a shade of meaning, but calls in its turn for a sub-distinction. There is a first category of sorcerers who are known as such, for example, the *nganga* or *munganga* of a number of Congo tribes, the *ngengang* of the Pahuan country, the *medicine-men* of the Niger and other parts under English influence. These are, if you like, the doctors of the country.

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They have a knowledge of diseases and some skill in diagnosis. They have also a knowledge of remedies, either classic or particular ones, and in the latter case the knowledge is a secret held by their families. They do not limit themselves to prescriptions; they are also apothecaries, and keep shops of *bilongo* (Fiote language) or *me-biang* (Pahuan).³ Above all they are diviners; just as a father or an uncle transmitted to them the secret art of healing, he also handed them on the inherited power of knowing the future or hidden things.

It may also be said, under condition of not taking classifications in an absolutely rigid sense, that these professionals sometimes specialize. One *nganga* is particularly renowned for his cures, another gets the reputation of being an infallible detective in judicial cases, another is summoned from a great distance when rain has to be produced. Specialization goes even further; once, in a case of snake-bite on the mission of the Apindjis, our intervention was put off, and we were told there was in the neighbouring village a man who possessed the "snake-remedy." It consisted in swallowing three palm-nuts while drinking a glass of cold water!

But howsoever it be regarding their science or their ignorance, their reputation or their inadequacy, all the individuals of whom we have spoken hold in the eyes of their compatriots a certain grade of honour. They are men possessing a particular science, who lend their services, in return for just payment, to those who seek them openly. They are then respectable citizens.

Such is not the case with the sorcerers of the

³ These words have the double meaning of *remedy* and *poison*.

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second category, who have a place all their own. They are people whom opinion regards as enemies of society, casters of lots, possessors of the evil eye, masters of the panther, the snake, the crocodile, animals into which they are credited with the power of changing themselves at will. All their science is used for evil-doing. Old missionaries, who know them well, have noted that they are nearly all misshapen creatures, one-eyed, crippled, stunted, leprous, etc., in a word, dregs and outcasts, often slaves. Even when they dwell in a village, there is something mysterious about their existence. They go about much and alone. They disappear for a time and then return. Sometimes, when irritated, they indulge in threats. Universal hatred surrounds them, but the fear they inspire, stronger than hatred, protects them. They are also defended by the fact that numerous clients have placed themselves in their power, for they are poisoning agents, and it is to them recourse is had when there is question of putting an enemy or a troublesome person out of the way. The case, unhappily, is neither chimerical nor rare. These individuals are *sorcerers* in the genuine etymological sense of the word, casters of lots.

For greater completeness, we should add that those categories are not water-tight. The man who has a knowledge of forest simples and natural remedies adds to his medical treatment passes, manœuvres, contortions, and other adornments, which he professes to be of supernatural origin. And if he ordinarily employs his art for healing, there are cases when some interest can urge him to supply the poison that kills without leaving any traces. There is much overlapping between these various trades; we have been able to indicate them.

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only by insisting on their differences and opposite characteristics.

In the lowest of these categories, that of the sorcerer who is a caster of lots, despised and dreaded, there cannot be any question of the exercise of priestly functions, and particularly none of a priesthood that has conserved a religious idea. These wretched men are the servants of superstition and magic.

But if we consider the other kind, to whom perhaps we should apply the name of prophet-healers, there is no reason why we should not recognize in them agents of a religious worship, for which, we should add, no private sanctity is required. In many cases we find this class of individuals entrusted with the maintenance of the *public* worship of the village or the tribe. The occasion is oftentimes that of the funeral of a chief or notable, or of some near relative of theirs. Or it may be a threat of war, epidemic, unforeseen calamity, public misfortune, grave accident, or any event that reminds people of the anger of the shades and the need for appeasing them. A ceremony is decided on, which varies in its programme according to tribe and country. To perform it, a man in some way specially marked out is required, for the chief, although fairly often a prophet and healer himself, is ruled out at least equally often by his station. The medicine-man is naturally fitted for a function of this kind, in which most of his own proceedings are the order of the day, such as sacrifices, interdictions, conjurations, exorcisms, imposition of special practices and penances and taboos, exhibition of fetishes that are ordinarily concealed. Often in these ceremonies, in which the anguish of a distracted population found

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shuddering expression, human victims have been sacrificed. It was for the medicine-man to indicate them; they would then be clubbed to death, or tied to stakes and ripped open and dismembered.⁴ The indication would be made by secret and often tacit agreement between chiefs, diviners and notables, and things were so arranged that the lot of victim fell only to an individual unable to resist. But this understanding was not communicated to the people, and hence the part of the officiating personage seemed to be that of arbiter. We may imagine what consecrated character and authority he obtained thereby.

Yet if public consideration has the power of consecrating such ministers, it must be admitted that the kind of worship they maintain seems of a mixed order. Not merely are the good, the indifferent and the bad mingled in it, but also the fundamental and the adventitious, primitive religious feeling and parasitic additions. Beyond these personages and forms we are bound to look for a worship older and purer, a priesthood of less chequered character. We shall thus arrive at a ministry for worship, in its earliest form, the nature of which our European languages reveal to us by virtue of etymology. *Priest*, from the Greek *presbyteros*, is the comparative of the word which means *old*. The priest is literally the man who is the elder, the patriarch of the family or tribe, the one who has the privilege

⁴ In many cases the prophet played also the part of executioner, or at least struck the first blow. There was for that purpose a knife of special form, peculiar and awkward, and thus unsuitable for any other use. Or a knife shaped like a vulture's beak, known to collectors as a throwing-knife, would be used. The victim was cut open by a point-thrust from the breast-bone to the nether abdomen.

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of age, of wider knowledge, of most indisputable respectability.

If we may see, as Monseigneur Le Roy does, in the Negrilloes of the Great African Forest one of the races most representative of the first ages of humanity, it is among them we shall find this least evolved form of the priesthood, that of the head of the family, with succession passing to the eldest of his sons. It is wonderful how perfect is the harmony of general etymology with the results of observation among this race of small men. Humanity had lost sight of them since Herodotus. The first missionaries found them once more, less than a century ago, conserving their character intact, throwing on many a question of ethnography such light as the furniture of houses in Pompeii threw on Roman antiquity. The dwarf races of Akoas and Wa-twa Ba-rimba have given us, wherever we have discovered them, an example of a relatively pure form of worship, more directly addressed to the Master of the Universe, and also a priesthood of the family order, possessed by the elder of the tribe. "These nomadic and hunting dwarfs," writes Grenfell, "lead a life like what must have been that of the earliest forms of human culture. They believe in a vague superhuman power which they locate in the sky, and which, in one of the Bantu dialects, they call Nzambi." The fewness of fetishes, statuettes and amulets, among these Pygmies of Central Africa, is a fact that has impressed the rare travellers who have visited their encampments.

Public worship, delegated as we have seen to the medicine-man, has not totally suppressed or abolished the ancient family worship among the

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Bantus as a whole. Before and after birth, the negro child is consecrated by a number of observances whose end is his protection through life. The father and mother have charge of this preservative liturgy. In some of the customs, meant for the preservation of the species, the individual life is regarded as cheap. The life of the child depends on a good number of influences which at the moment of its birth must combine to form a happy omen. Often twins are put to death, as well as children who are weakly, or who are born in time of mourning. The name to be given to a child is not usually decided by the caprice of father and mother. Family conventions impose a certain name; and not to act accordingly would expose the child or his family to a series of mishaps.

In some tribes circumcision⁵ is performed at a very early stage, when the child is less than a year old. Elsewhere it takes place much later, towards the eighth or tenth year among the Pahuans, for example. It is not, as has often been stated, a universal custom. In the Congo basin there are whole tribes and even groups of tribes who do not practise it. Whether or no, the adolescence of the negro child, boy or girl, is not completed without an initiation whose ceremonial varies greatly from tribe to tribe. In only rare tribes is this initiation privately performed. Boys and girls nearly always

⁵ A colonial doctor gives as his opinion of circumcision that from the anatomic point of view it is by no means called for, that it is without notable influence as a sedative of passion, and insufficient as a measure of hygiene. There remains only the religious consideration, and many authors, among them Monseigneur Le Roy, see in it the release from a taboo; the uncircumcised man is regarded as unfit for marriage, and cannot find a wife.

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go through it in groups, separately, after being kept for a time far from the village, in the depths of the wood, under charge of old men or of matrons of canonical age and full experience.

The function of initiating his son is not reserved to the father. It has come to devolve on the medicine-man or public sorcerer, but it is a duty which the father must neither omit nor postpone. Even Christians have in many countries to submit to this custom with regard to their children. The missionaries content themselves with ridding the custom of its pagan or superstitious elements.

What is the aim of this initiation? As among the peoples of antiquity, it is social first of all, but fortified by the guarantee of religious forms and ceremonies destined to shed their influence on all that follows it. The society of men, and also that of women, has a reason of a social kind for not allowing children to mix with the life of adults. Aptitudes, tastes, knowledge, powers, are not the same in childhood as in maturity. For the child the society of adults is taboo. The solemnity given to the entry of youth into the category of adults serves to ensure the principle of the previous separation.

The adolescent principally receives from initiation fitness to seek a wife for himself, and by her to have children who will be regarded as legitimate. Afterwards, though only progressively, he obtains a voice in deliberations, the official recognition of his personality, a proportional extension of responsibility, and all the things ardently desired throughout the world by young people eager to leave their childhood behind.

A new name is often given at initiation to conse-

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crate the personality and rights of the individual. In certain tribes he receives ritual markings, a tattooing in commemoration of the event. And as it is an almost universal human law that an advantage must be paid for in some way, initiation is ordinarily the time when the young man has imposed on him what the Pahuans call *eki*,⁶ or personal taboos. These are not oppressive in kind, but must be rigorously observed. They remain on him for life, and are in their way characterized by an obvious sacrificial purpose.

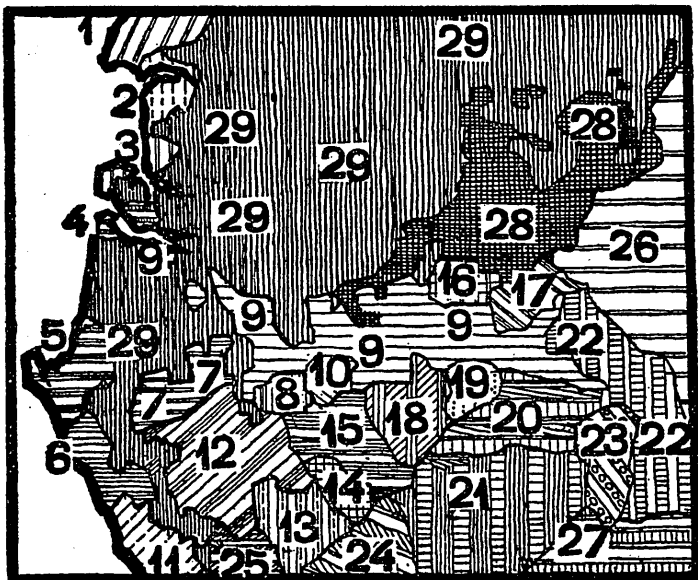
In East Africa the Chagas have, according to Father E. Meyer, C.S.Sp., "an entire treatise of history and civil law engraved in cabalistic characters in the wood of a staff about two metres long, and called *Kirengo*." This *Kirengo*, thus furnished with notches vertical and oblique, annular, zigzag and spindle-shaped, is a help to memory whose purpose is to fix traditions, and inculcate them on the young during their initiatory probation. Religious duties, social, commercial, conjugal, family relations, education, worship, jurisprudence, hygiene, all are resumed in the curious markings of this symbolic staff, which reminds us of the ancient Mesopotamian pillar stones or the runic or ogham inscriptions of Northern Europe. Among the thirty chapters of the *Kirengo*, there is even one on ornaments and another on dances. Apparently nothing has been forgotten, but the reading of this document is a

⁶ The following are some *eki* which the author discovered to have been imposed on a young Pahuan, initiated in the neighbourhood of the river Ndua, in Gabon, in 1903:

Not to eat the flesh of the soo antelope.

Not to continue his journey on the day he sees a tree fall.

Not to make a fire with the stakes of a ruined hut.



GABON AS AN EXAMPLE OF WHAT VARIATION, IN RACE AND LANGUAGE, IS SHOWN BY THE MAP OF EQUATORIAL AFRICA

Gabon on the above map is a colony equivalent to about twenty-five French departments. It contains the following populations:

1. *Kombehs* of the region of Bata and Benito.
2. *Bulus* or *Baseki*, also called *Shekianis*.
3. *Bengas*, around Cape Esterias and Monda.
4. *Ponguehs*, now only some hundreds, of very mixed breed, around Libreville.
5. *Orongus*, at Cape Lopez.
6. *Nkomis*, by the lagoon of Fernan-Vaz.
7. *Galoas*, in the valley of the lower Ogoway. Ponguehs, Orongus, Nkomis and Galoas have the same language, save for some dialectic differences.

8. *Ivilis*, at Samba Falls, river Ngounieh.
9. *Akelehs*, who inhabit a long strip south of the middle Ogoway, and formerly stretched to the Atlantic coast, along the Remboe and the Como.
10. *Iveas*, on the river Ngounieh beside the *Ivilis*, but speaking a different language.
11. *Kamas*, of Sette-Cama in Loango.
12. *Eshiras*, of the savannas between the Ogoway, the Ngounieh and the Fernan-Vaz.
13. *Apunus*, of the savannas on the left bank of the upper Ngounieh.
14. *Apindjis*, on the right bank of the upper Ngounieh. The race, like that of the *Ivilis* and *Iveas*, has greatly deteriorated.
15. *Ishogos* or *Mitsogos*, in the Ikoy basin.
16. *Okandehs*, on the middle Ogoway.
17. *Shakehs*, *ibid.*
18. *Asangos*, on the river Ofway.
19. *Pobehs*, a small tribe on the river Ofway.
20. *Owandjis* }
 21. *Ndjavis* } peoples of the upper Ogoway, with different
 22. *Adumas* } languages.
 23. *Mbetehs* }
24. *Bayakas*, on the upper Ngounieh, Loango.
25. *Ivaramas*, in Loango chiefly, related to the *Eshiras* (12).
26. *Bakotas*, in the valley of the *Ivindo*, on the left bank.
27. *Ongomos*, by the sources of the Ogoway.
28. *Pahuans* of the *Makina* or *Makeh* description, whose language is very corrupted and mixed with that of the *Akelehs*.
29. The great confederation of the *Pahuans*, which is slowly migrating coastwards and southwards. It is divided into clans numbering perhaps six hundred.

All these races are in slow but continual movement, and hence their territorial boundaries can be only approximately given.

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complicated business of which but few Chagas are capable.

This Kirengo of East Africa is doubtless an interesting object and a convincing document for the ethnologist. But it adds little to what we know otherwise through oral tradition, transmitted from father to son in all the tribes that make of the African Continent such an extraordinary geographical patchwork. We find everywhere the code of conservative and salutary principles, fixed in memory more profoundly than in the soft wood of sacred staffs; and nowhere do we find an independent morality apart from the Powers which the Primitive acknowledges to be above him, and which he adores without saying so.

The chief of the family, when his children are married, becomes a senior, an elder of the village, and devotes himself principally to arbitration in the talk-meetings. This occupation allows him to remain long seated, drinking calabashes of palm wine, smoking pipes, stirring the fire, chasing away flies. These talk-meetings are enervating affairs for the European, but the native, except in certain grave cases, loves to protract them. It would seem as if the solution to be found mattered less to him than the effects of real eloquence and the oratorical triumphs of which the talk-meetings supply the occasion. Furthermore, matters of religion are always cropping up in village jurisprudence. It deals constantly with questions of sacrilege and violation of supernatural laws. In cases of doubt, it uses the methods of trial by red-hot iron, boiling water, and especially by the poisonous decoction known throughout the Congo under the name of *nkasa*. It is the old way of the ordeal, the abdica-

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tion of human justice, which feels itself powerless and limited, and refers the matter, in imagination at any rate, to the judgment of God. Is this due to moral considerations? Or is it rather the worship of adoration indirectly addressed to a divine attribute? The procedure we are considering is a very ancient one; but it is impossible to regard it as devoid of meaning, and not to see in it an appeal to something higher than man.

PLACES OF WORSHIP

With regard to places of primitive worship, we may expect the greatest variety. Worship, in its exterior manifestations, is in keeping with the way of life of the tribe or village. It is of a very reduced kind among the forest tribes who live by hunting, fishing, and crops of grain and fruit. It is much more elaborate among the tribes who breed cattle.

The various observances of family worship are celebrated in the hut or its surroundings, particularly the banana plantation, which forms in Bantu Africa the garden side of the village as opposed to the courtyard side. Within these narrow bounds is sacrificed the chicken or the dog, or the kid whose warm blood is to restore a little life to the dying. The hut is, besides, fully furnished with amulets, to which different degrees of veneration are paid. And indeed degrees of piety differ too, for it often happens that these sacred objects are not withdrawn from huts that are allowed to become ruinous through age.

At other times worship is performed fairly far from the village, in an open space of the forest. Little huts of branches are built for the purpose.

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The congregation is a select one; there are no women or children, from which it may be presumed that the ceremony has a greater or less admixture of magic elements.

Upper Guinea and the Sudan have sacred groves. The forest in these countries is not as continuous as at the Equator. Small clumps of trees are assigned to the *jinés* (spirits), and are entered only to pay them worship.

On the Huilla plateau in Angola, the family hut has a hearth which is used for an altar, and is called *otyoto*. The dwelling of the principal chief has a sacred hearth which is held to be the central altar of the country. It is a specially venerated place of sacrifice, and has the name of Otyambola.

Africa has rudimentary temples in the little houses of the *mzimu*, or shades, to whom offerings are made. These small buildings begin to appear as we go inland from the Atlantic coast. They grow more numerous towards the east coast, and are most widespread in the parts of Uganda that have remained pagan.

Other small huts connected with the votive worship of the shades are built, not as the preceding ones in the neighbourhood of dwellings, but on the sites of disused or actual graveyards. These monuments are generally associated with particular shades. In certain tribes having the custom of burial under the ground of the hut, among the Ba-Vili and Bakunyi of Loango for example, mementoes of the deceased are kept in a structure which is both altar and museum. Such burial is for chiefs. The hut is no longer inhabited, but has a caretaker; women come there to lament, and propitiatory sacrifices are offered there.

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Among the Pahuans, the actual burying-place has little to denote it, but the ancestors' skulls are kept in almost all the men's huts.

Another style of shade-worship is fairly frequent, in which is used the sacred tree, preferably a branching euphorbia, or else the kind known as *euphorbia articulata*, at the foot of which offerings are heaped, remarkable always for their small value.⁷ There is also to be found, at the entrance of villages, a kind of high doorway from the middle of which is hung a large bundle of amulets, accompanied by a lance-head pointing downwards. The defensive symbolism is plain.

We may also note as accessory places of worship those numerous spots on pathway, edge of field and garden, river-bank and village wharf, where the traveller's attention is excited by a shell stuck on a stick, or a bundle of birds' feathers or a horn-bill's beak suspended from a bind-weed, or an ever-renewed strewing of fresh leaves or small pebbles. Whatever superstition or magic is mixed up with these signs, there is always in them an act of worship, an affirmation of another life, a turning towards a power above the earth.

THE WORSHIP OF GOD

A missionary of Gabon was in the forest with a company of men who were mostly pagan. They were felling timber for building, and cutting it up

⁷ Other trees are sacred for a motive which has nothing mortuary about it. When our missionaries in Donghila wished to cut down a group of silk-cotton trees which impeded the view down the river Como, the Akele chiefs of the old village made an energetic protest. These great trees had been planted over the spot where the umbilical cords of the ancestors were buried!

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on the spot. Rationing was effected by a succession of pirogues which went up and down a river near the encampment. One day, through the fault of the convoy, no food came, and the twenty men lived on the remnants of the previous day. At noon on the morrow, no food had come, and there was no means of obtaining any. The men felt the pangs of hunger. The missionary assured them that they would have food by evening. Evening came, but no pirogue, and they had to sleep with empty stomachs. Next day they spent the morning watching for the food-boat, straining their ears in the great forest silence for the sound of oars. Nothing had appeared by midday. Then the oldest wood-cutters, pagans who had been swearing all the time by Yasi and Bwiti, which are local fetishes, lifted their hands to the sky and raised together a cry of distress:

Anyambieh, eh, eh, eh! God, O God! wilt Thou let us die in this forest?

They were not reciting anything they had learnt; nor singing a figurative refrain. They were uttering the prayer which every man more or less consciously utters when he begins to fear for his life. They did not name any ordinary fetish, nor did they sign themselves as did their Christian comrades. They gave to God the name he has in their language:

Anyambieh, eh, eh, eh!

Such is the prayer of the Primitives. Ordinarily, they are never known to interrupt their talk-meetings, tasks, games or dances to fulfil like Christians or Moslems the duty of daily prayer. Among the Nyanekhas of Huilla there is even a proverb warning us not to bother God by indiscreet prayers: "Ask nothing of God, or He will give

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you something to break your teeth." Yet by a happy inconsequence these same Nyanekhas also possess a whole collection of prayers of archaic and traditional form, addressed to the Sovereign Master of the world. He is called in them *Tatakulu* (most ancient Father), and also *Tateh na Me* (our Father and Mother), the latter as though to double the motives for the confidence we ought to have in Him.

The following are some of these prayers, collected by Father Felix Villain, C.S.Sp.:

(For a sick person)

Ancient Father! Lord! Help us. Let this person be restored to health. Do not abandon us, Thou who art our Father and our Mother. When he shall have changed for the better, we will offer Thee what Thou dost require.

(Another, for a sick person)

Ancient Father, let him sleep well, without tossing. To-morrow at break of day let him say: I have slept well; and we shall say: It is God who has made him rise.

(To promise a sacrifice)

Ancient Father, may we live happy! Lord, visit us to pardon us. In Thee who art our Father and our Mother we have confidence. If Thou wilt grant us to live, we will offer Thee an ox (or whatever the sacrifice may be). May we live happy!

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(During sacrifice)

Ancient Father, turn away from us all evil. For Thee we are shedding blood. Thou hast put us in the world, do not scatter us, keep us together, Lord, do not leave us, turn away from us all evil. Thou, our Father and Mother, do not abandon us, may we remain prosperous and happy. Have pity, Ancient Father, O Father and Mother, forgive us.

(In time of thunder)

Ancient Father, what do we see to-day? The flashes of Thy thunder. What dost Thou show us thus?

(When lightning strikes a house without killing anyone)

Ancient Father, turn away from us all evil. There is none but Thee. To Thee we turn our eyes. He who holds on to a staff does not cast it from him, he who weeps in trouble does not leave his father and mother. Lord, we look towards Thee, our God!

The Wa-Pokomo, on the banks of the Tana in East Africa, have a prayer which names God, the Shades, and the Ancestors. Having given utterance to this triple invocation in the manner of our *Kyrie Eleison*, the prayer proceeds:

God, give us peace! Give us quiet, and let happiness come. Let him who is casting spells on our village meet his death, and him who casts an

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evil lot against us. Let him die, who says through jealousy that this village is rich, that its men are numerous.—

The prayer goes on to ask, as we do, for daily bread, but the dwellers on the banks of the Tana indicate to *Mungu* (God) three specifically named kinds of fish, esteemed the best.

The following is a prayer, noted as it was spoken, for a sick woman:

E-eh Mungu! O God, give her peace (health), to her, her village, her children, her husband. Let her rise and go to her work and do her cooking. Let happiness come from the other bank, let it return.—

Brevity of concept, absence of meditation, obedience to the necessity of the moment, such are the characteristics of the prayers of the pagan negroes. Sometimes we meet a different, more stereotyped form, like those which Dr. Krapf has found among the Wa-Nyika. But these are said, like those we have given, only on occasions. *Habitual* prayer to God or the spirits between God and us, shades or genii, is unknown in the primitive African world, but a prayer which is not habitual or even daily is still a prayer.

Even when this act of prayer is not an *organized* duty and is merely intermittent, it is not indifferent or of small importance. The Nyanekhas of the Angola plateau have for the act of prayer the strange word *okulikwambela*, which is the reflexive form of the verb, *to honour*. Hence *to pray* means the same thing as *to honour oneself*, or if you like, to receive an honour. The honour in this case is to be in relations with God and the spirits.

There is also a prescribed attitude for prayer,

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namely prostration or even genuflexion, anointing with oil or butter, and drawing a white chalk line from forehead to nose, with branches to both temples.⁸ Pregnant women or women recently delivered use coal instead of chalk, to give the line a gloomy colour. Mournfulness and self-abasement is thought to be agreeable to the spirits and to prevent them from harming the children. We may compare this state of mind with that underlying another custom, which has been also observed in Angola (in Lunda, Sambo and Bailundo). It consists in giving children, especially little girls, insulting names, such as Broken Pot, Sow, Dung, etc. The more the child is beloved by its mother, the more does the latter bestow unpleasant names on it. The object of this practice is to quiet the jealousy of the evil spirits.

SACRIFICE

Whatever be the place of prayer in primitive religion, we may agree with Salomon Reinach that its nature is too exclusively spiritual to have won easy acceptance in the minds of non-civilized peoples. But sacrifice, implying as it does the use of a concrete thing, "a substance which is surrendered or destroyed," and admitting, as it frequently does, a communion or tangible share in the benefits of the offering, is likely to be more obvious and universal. And in fact, sacrifice is one of the most universal acts of humanity.

⁸ Notes of Father Felix Villain on the Nyanekha people. See *Annales des PP. du St. Esprit* (1929).

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It always implies, more or less clearly, the following elements :

First, a gift or a surrender is made, either to the Deity or to an intermediary between Him and man.

Second, an admission is thus made of the sovereign dominion of the Deity or of the relative power of the intermediary.

Third, there is expressed and symbolized a hope of attaining communion or participation either with the Deity or with the power midway between Him and us.

The gift or the surrender are signified by the partial or entire destruction of the offering. To the latter case the name of holocaust is given. Since the Deity and the spirits are invisible, destruction is the only form which presents itself to man's mind in order to denote acceptance on high.

The communion, though always reckoned among the fruits and benefits of sacrifice, does not always consist in a participation in its material. Thus, human sacrifices have been cannibalistic in certain places, but in many others, the victim was not eaten, but only put to death, or buried alive, or drowned in a river.

The oldest historic forms of sacrifice were offerings of the fruits of the earth, vegetable products, cereals, berries, first things of the season, or of the milk of animals, butter, honey, etc. A more important sacrifice required the immolation of the animals and the offering of their blood. Next must have come the burning of the object offered, and the sending up to heaven of a smoke "of pleasing odour"; hence we find, in the sacrifices of antiquity, a burning of incense

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at the same time, in order that its perfume might correct the less surely agreeable smell of burning flesh and tallow.

The primitive peoples, and in particular the negroes of the Bantu region, have a modest form of sacrificial worship, contrasting strongly with that of mythological antiquity and with the present-day sumptuous religion of Brahmin India. The tendency of our time would seem to be rather to reproach them for it. But such has not always been the case. Several Fathers of the Christian Church, including St. John Chrysostom, and several learned Jewish Rabbis, including Maimonides, held that the bloody sacrifices of the Old Testament were only tolerated by Yahweh, and were merely a concession to the grossness of the Jews, who wanted forms of worship like those they saw in Chanaan. It is now admitted that the grossness of these forms of adoration is purely relative, and any such found among primitive peoples are regarded as an important indication on the spiritual side.

We give here a testimony of the first order in confirmation of the offering of sacrifice to God. It comes from Father Charles Sacleux, C.S.Sp., who was at the time a missionary in Zanzibar. We know what authority this learned man has won in the double field of linguistic experience and comparative ethnography. Here is his narrative:

“ When we were building the chapel of Manderu, in Zanzibar, I found one day under a shed in the fields the chief, Kingaru, watching his ripening maize. He asked me how the chapel was getting on. I had often explained its use, and invited our negro neighbours to come and receive instruction

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in it. I had perhaps laid excessive stress on their ignorance of the things of God; so now he said to me: 'We are not so ignorant as that. You whites do everything on a grand scale; you have spacious houses, each room of which has a different use; you also build immense temples, that can hold all the people together. We poor blacks do things in a small way, but we also have huts built for God. Come and I'll show you one.' And he led me to the entrance of the field, in front of a shelter consisting of a small straw roof resting on four stakes. He explained to me that it was there they offered to God the first-fruits of the harvest, adding that they were most careful about not tasting any portion of it till this offering had been made.'⁹

We shall now consider another piece of evidence, obtained at the other end of Africa, and regarding which we speak from personal experience. On the Donghila mission, beside the river Como in Gabon, we often received our food supplies from the hunters and fishers of the country, the Akelehs and Pahuans, who were all pagans at the time (1900-1901). They used to bring us gazelles, antelopes, monkeys, wild pigs, lamantins. The latter, as well as the gorillas and chimpanzees, were rather rare zoological specimens. But the directors of museums and the collectors with whom we were in relations had exigencies of their own; they wanted none but whole animals, perfect skeletons. God knows we often repeated that order to our hunters and suppliers. But it was never observed, and especially never in the case of the rarest specimen, the lamantin, that herbivorous fresh-water whale whose

⁹ *La Religion des Primitifs*, pp. 307-308.

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flesh softened for us the abstinence of Lent, and which is an object of superstitious concern throughout Nigerian and Bantu Africa. Every lamantin reached us mutilated. Our Akeleh fishermen, Baya and Magonda-kueh, had slashed the snouts, plucked out the whiskers, cut off the udders. We wanted to know why, and also what they had done with the severed parts. They would show us a square patch of skin, a hair of a whisker. The rest they had thrown in the river, immediately the animal was captured. "If we did not do that," they said, "God would not send any more lamantins our way."

At Loango, the buffalo hunters have a similar story. The animals they kill are never given up entire. Generally the snout is mutilated; the buffalo's scent is very sharp, and the nose is, spiritually speaking, the choicest morsel.

We may indeed, with our European notions, judge as rather unworthy of God such insignificant sacrifices, offered with so little ceremony. Unknown to ourselves, our verdict proceeds from a Christian mentality, from the mentality of people whose religion has been completely rewrought by theological study. The mental process in primitive countries is somewhat contrary to this. It is when addressed to God as the Sovereign Master that prayer takes the simplest form and sacrifice its most rudimentary aspect. There is an all-round gain in sincerity and naturalness. But as soon as there is question of the superhuman genii, favourable or avenging shades, complication at once sets in and produces veritable offices.

Anyway we find these slight sacrifices to God, whose form is almost spontaneous and free of

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ceremony, in many tribes and over an immense area of country. The form is generally that of the offering of first-fruits. The Massais offer a bunch of grass when they are looking for new pastures. A number of tribes of South-West Africa pour a libation of new beer. We have spoken of the first offerings of grain and meal in Nyassaland, when the family is beginning to reap the yearly harvest. The same happens among the Zulus in similar circumstances. We may remark that it is among the Pygmies that the offering to God has the highest simplicity and purity. Two kola nuts of the new year's growth are burnt on a fire, around which the little men sing and pray God to continue to watch over them.

But for the worship of the spirits, and especially of the shades, sacrifice takes on quite a different amplitude. Among the Nyanekhas, whose customs we give by preference because we know them to have been well and minutely studied, the sacrifice to the shades is not a simple offering of first-fruits, the consecration of a part of creation to its Creator, but the much more important immolation of an ox or a sheep.¹⁰

The ceremony of immolation varies but slightly. The hour is ordinarily in the morning. The animal is strangled, cut open and emptied in the kraal; only the prepared meat is brought to the altar. The stomach with its contents is placed on the stone *ehuno*. Portions of meat are cut from

¹⁰ The Nyanekhas have goats, but the goat is not a sacrificial animal. Its exclusion, according to Father Villain, is caused by its name *onkhombo*, which closely resembles another word *okukumba*, meaning disunion or dispersion. We may note here a superstitious element, a vain observance of relations of names, curiously mingled with the pure religious element.

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the limbs and the ribs, to be cooked during the ritual. The rest of the meat is kept in the kitchen. If the sacrifice is the fulfilment of a promise, all now, except outsiders, sign themselves with white liturgical powder. Then the vase *oholo* is brought, containing whey and some green leaves. The presiding personage sucks a little of this whey through a straw, and blows it out on the altar stone. The others in profound silence repeat this action, which is a kind of exorcism of the evil spirits. Then comes a libation of beer, some drops being first sprinkled on the ground. A little cooked meat is thrown towards the four points of the sky, then inside the kraal and beside its fence, and the spirits of those places are implored to harm nobody. Finally those present, including outsiders, join together in the consumption of the prepared meat, with calabashes of beer. The ceremony ends with songs and dances.

God the Creator, superhuman spirits, and shades can easily mingle together in the thought of those who offer sacrifice. Monseigneur Le Roy gives us the following direct testimony, from the time when he was a simple missionary in Zanzibar :

“ At Kilimanjaro I was witness of an interesting sacrifice. The natives of Marangu, being threatened with invasion by those of Kibosho, killed one evening a magnificent ram, and with various ceremonies, songs and prayers, they made four parts of the animal. One was for God, the tutelary spirits and the shades, and that was entirely burnt. A second part they ate. A third they left there for the beasts of the earth. The fourth was offered to the birds of the air. The object was to unite all living things

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with themselves in a general alliance, and to associate with themselves all the spirits and all the mysterious and protective forces of their country, to resist their enemies. And I confess that I found the idea very touching and elevated."

The communion of those present is a feature of most sacrifices. Men persuade themselves by this outward sign that they more certainly share in the merit of their religious act. Pretty generally, the men alone participate in this communion; or if there is one for women, it takes place a little later. Children are rarely admitted to it; sacrifice is a serious thing which must not be exposed to the light-heartedness of youth. In the sacrifice known in Kaffir countries under the name of *idini*, the communion of those present is subject to a small tax which they must pay the custodians of the kraal.

It cannot be denied that in these sacrificial communions some part is played by the gluttonous propensities of races who, apart from them, are poorly fed, and also that they are an occasion for abuses and extortions. The most sacred things cannot remain long in men's hands without being tainted by their passions and interests. But the jollification side of these love-feasts is very far from explaining by itself the frequent and self-imposed, and often ruinous sacrifices of the negroes.

It cannot be absolutely denied that there are here and there traces of totemism in the notion of sacrifice which we find among African Primitives. But totems are a very diverse set of objects and emblems, and it is strange that in the sacrifices to the shades and spirits we find only the products of the humble native farm, cattle, sheep, fowl, but never the crane,

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the rat, the turakoo, the hyrax, animals which are much rarer and more symbolic than the farm-yard ones. On this aspect of things, anyway, it is very difficult to explain sacrifice in a strictly totemistic way. And apart from that, it is not the explanation given by the negroes themselves, either in their stories or in what we may call the context formed by the daily spectacle of their lives.

We must surely take some account of the idea of purification so frequently associated with sacrifices. Washing the body, sprinkling with consecrated water or other liquid, have the double implication of cleansing the body and purifying the senses. Certain Pahuans of the north of Gabon, on the river Noya, have been observed, at the time of sacrifice before hunting, to swallow emetics and to provoke vomiting with their hands in their mouths, as an act of internal purification. In several tribes, when a sacrifice is afoot for the relief of a sick person, the patient sometimes has to make an actual confession of his sins. His malady has come by reason of them, just as we read in the Book of Job, and in order to be delivered he must declare them. This kind of confession takes place among the Kikuyus of East Africa, and is fairly private; their name for sin, especially external sin, is *sahu*. Among the Pahuans of the Como region, the custom has also been noted, but their confession has a more public character, and sometimes sins held to be very grave are revealed in it.

It has been said that the life of the negroes is a compound of childish light-heartedness and mad terrors, succeeding each other without preparatory transition, or even coming together in a juxtaposition the very idea of which is hardly conceivable by

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a European brain. To their light-heartedness we must ascribe the perfunctory nature of the offerings presented to the Supreme Being, whom Africa knows under a thousand names, while conceiving Him in a form unique and pure, as old as creation. By the terrors of the negroes we must explain those numerous, complex, costly, often cruel sacrifices, through which their dimly lit souls strive to be at peace with what lives and reigns beyond the world.

CHAPTER IX

FETISHISM, A DEBATABLE WORD

CERTAIN words have acquired, we hardly know how, a width of meaning so extraordinary as to make us wonder. The term *fetish* is an example. It is the opposite of scientific, and in its origin shows no pretentiousness at all. When the Portuguese seamen of the sixteenth century crossed the Equator and landed on the coast of Guinea, at Loango in Angola, they needed a word to denote the signs of what they believed to be the religion of the negroes. They chose the Portuguese word *feitição*, derived from the Latin *factitius*, which means *artificial, false*. We discern in the use of this word a reminiscence of the invectives of the Psalm *In exitu* against the images of the Gentiles.

Adopted by other European countries, the word became *fétiche* in French and *fetish* in English, and kept the same meaning. The name of fetish was given to everything seen hung about the necks of the pagan natives or from the joists of their roofs. It was applied especially to statuettes, masks, little sacks, and horns packed with unknown "medicines." Then the word gave rise to derivatives, fetish-man, fetishist, fetishism.

This line of descendants was given to the word much sooner than its precise meaning was deter-

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mined. And yet a distinction, nay several, should have been made. Were these things really religious objects? Had these "fetishes" the pretention of housing the presence or action of a spirit? Or were they, apart from the domain of religion and reverence, merely superstition and magic? Were they, sometimes at any rate, for the sole purpose of ornament? No one bothered his head about such questions. But when a single word was required to qualify in a lump the religions of negroes, Indians, Papuans, Maoris, Kanakas, everyone tranquilly wrote fetishism.

Three centuries had to pass before the excessively simple word was subjected to distinctions. And the process is far from completion, for in the course of it the term itself has still to be employed in order to convey the meaning. An ethnologist has been bold enough to make the wicked play on words: Fetishism is a fetish word.

The term, fetishism, must then bear the heavy charge of not taking any account of the religion of the Primitives. And yet we have seen that they have one, that they believe in a God, in a soul, in good and evil, and that they possess a moral law and forms of worship. Doubtless that is so, but these poor folk are in a state of total ethnic disintegration, without central authority, or spiritual authority, or any organized control of their true religious tradition. Nothing for them holds the place of that *magisterium* which preserves the canon of our beliefs. In their hands, the treasure of primitive truths has flown away like water from a basket; the wonder is that some drops of it have remained.

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MAGIC

We can easily understand how a belief, a morality and a worship, thus poorly defended, were early in danger of being counterfeited and of losing some of their marks. When sacrifice was so undefined in meaning and aim, it was inevitable that bold and unscrupulous men should soon invest it with explanations of their own make. To win the obedience of the crowd, it was enough to speak in the name of religious morality, and what a temptation that must have been for some to insert in religious morality obligations coinciding with private interest and personal profit.

These are the reefs that lie in the track of all religions, and we can hardly suppose that the religion of the poor Primitives escaped them for long. A doctrine like Catholicism survives the centuries and remains identical with itself, thanks to the constant work of resistance to error. But such work was not, and hardly could be, performed by primitive religion. Belief was deviated, rites tampered with, practices abrogated, through an anti-religious tendency to which Andrew Lang has given the name of mythology. The word is not perhaps free from ambiguity, but the learned Scot explains it luminously and exactly:

“In the most ancient as well as in the newest conceptions of the Deity, it is possible to distinguish two principal elements which may be studied apart, the mythological and religious elements, co-existing among the most primitive as among the most civilized races.

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“The rational factor, or at least what seems such to us, appears in Religion; the unreasonable element predominates in Myth. In the hour of danger the Australian Bushman and the native of the Solomon Islands turn towards the gods, and both have in their hearts the idea of a father and friend. That is the religious element. But the same man, when seeking the reason of some natural phenomena, or giving free play to his imagination, will debase this father and spiritual friend to the level of the beasts, and make him the hero of comic or repulsive adventures. That is the mythical or irrational element. Religion, under its moral aspect, can always turn to belief in a power which is good and which works for the kingdom of justice. Mythology, on the contrary, even in Homer and the Rig-Veda, continually makes the gods return to their old immoral and absurd adventures.”

But at present we think of mythology chiefly as a domain of the past, a vast construction of fables without any connexion with what we seek in contemporary religions. Hence this term, which was not entirely wrong, has been replaced by that of magic, which is not entirely right, and which calls for clear explanation. Magic, the product of the secret doctrine of the magi or learned men of ancient Iran (?), has been defined as an enterprise tending to transfer to human hands the influences of the invisible world, by the use of secret practices with a carefully maintained religious appearance. It has been happily said that Magic is to Religion what false money is to true.¹

At all times a distinction has been made between

¹ *La Religion des Primitifs*, p. 331.

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white and black magic, or between natural magic and preternatural. White or natural magic is well known to us. For a long time the respectable science of chemistry passed for white magic. The tricks of our conjurers are in its category.

The performance of a "turn" of white magic requires in the first place knowledge more extensive than the ordinary, at least in certain directions; for instance, knowledge of natural laws that are unknown to the average public, or ordinarily forgotten by it. To this must be added boldness and cleverness. A certain staging of the event helps the operator—sometimes obscurity, sometimes the presence of an ally, sometimes preliminary side-play—to turn aside attention. All that, in negro countries, is strongly seconded by the complete lack of critical sense. The negro, open-minded enough to the practical, has need of long discipline in order to grow accustomed to reasoning. Further, he is easily duped by his animist tendency, which makes him ascribe a vital principle to inanimate objects. Two other important motive powers must be taken account of, the curiosity of a gaping crowd that is easily moved to admiration, and the cupidity of all those who smell direct or indirect profit in jugglery as in any other art.

The principal domain of white magic is the art of healing, the art which always finds a public ready to believe everything as it is ready to hope for everything, a public also which reacts in its turn on the healer, through the fact that it will consider him an incapable if he confesses ignorance and powerlessness, and also because it imposes on him, willy-nilly, its own hankering after the mysterious. The medicine-man must add to his medicines certain

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passes, grimaces, strange observances, prescriptions both extravagant and imperious. The more complicated they are, the more chance there will be, in case of failure, of blaming the patient for omitting or neglecting a portion of them.

A natural remedy acts by native power, as fire burns or oil softens. But white magic passes quickly from the natural field to the *analogical*. The panther is a strong and dangerous animal; hence a panther's claw will confer strength on whoever carries it about as an amulet. Sometimes a similarity of form or name is sufficient to make a substance take on a remedial quality of which no one would otherwise have dreamed. It may then be asked whether the medicine-man's stock-in-trade has more of medicine or of superstition. In most cases both are closely mingled, only while the superstitious element is practically extensible to infinity, the science of natural remedies soon reaches its limits. Pharmacy retires more and more into the background, while the commerce of amulets, talismans and charms almost automatically spreads.²

The medicine-man's clients are first interested in obtaining relief from their physical ills and bodily suffering. But soon they will ask the wise man to rid them of their other ills and to bring about the satisfaction of their desires. The hunter wants a charm to draw the animals and to direct his aim. The warrior pays dearly for another, in order not to

² Fetishistic deformation is not peculiar to the religion of primitive peoples. If monotheistic Islam had entered into the plan of this book, we should have had to speak of the traffic done almost everywhere by the marabouts in Koranistic amulets. And should we not also mention the European commerce of lucky articles, which form a special department of expensive jewellery.

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be killed or wounded in battle. The young woman gets a love-philtre in order to obtain a husband, and the young man does likewise in order to win the wife he wants. The old polygamous husband is a good client, for he constantly has reason to be uncertain about the fidelity of his wives. Those engaged in trade come to consult how to find lost articles, and to know whether enterprises are likely to be profitable. The village chief, engaged in endless and confused talk-meetings, seeks to know a little of the future in order to help his power of decision. Consultation is needed in public calamities, in epidemics, when a rain-swollen river threatens to make the fishing season fruitless, when persistent drought is withering the plantations, when the white man comes along whose projects fill the wretched savages with dismay, the white man who taxes the country, who has already established custom-houses and police, and now perhaps is running his roads or his railways through their territory. Consultation goes on incessantly, and we see that the medicine-man needs a famous imagination in order to be ready for everything, to vary his replies, to give them a look of likelihood, to leave in them a sufficient alloy of prudent equivocation.

All that is in the region of white magic, of what may be called charlatanism. Black magic goes further. Let us say at once that our distinction between natural and black magic is quite a speculative one, at least in so far as concerns the primitive world. They do not draw it; for them the limit between pure illusion and dealings with the spirits is automatically crossed.

It is the instinctive need of heightening the effect that has caused magic operations to invade the super-

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natural domain. The medicine-man, like a man addicted to stimulants, cannot stop; the dose goes on increasing. Being a mandatory of higher powers, occult and dreaded, he cannot resist the easy temptation of increasing his prestige. Public credulity, reacting on him, has made him drunk with his own renown. This action and reaction, indefinitely multiplied, has given rise to an industry both criminal and profitable. The whole savage world, and a considerable part of the Buddhist, Brahmin and Mohammedan populations, have been subjected to the yoke of the man who is visited by the spirits.

Let us define this black magic. It is the kind that frankly attributes its modes of operation and its efficacy to a commerce with powers beyond Nature, God alone excepted. It is therefore a commerce with demons³ and intermediary spirits, or with the souls of the dead. The latter are sometimes indicated by name. At other times, the shades act without manifesting their identity. As to God, there is never question of Him in magic. This is not surprising, for the presence of a Supreme God would reduce all things to order, and bring them under a discipline from which it is precisely the object of affairs of this kind to escape. We merely note, by the way, that this exclusion is an indirect acknowledgment of the Sovereign God.

We have already, when treating of worship, and particularly of priestly functions, established the necessary distinctions between the terms, fetish-man, healer, sorcerer, bewitcher. We have thus shown that there are in reality two kinds of sorcerers, those

³ God alone seems excluded from magic. In Christian countries superstition has dared to carry its usurpations even into the worship of the Angels and Saints, and to seek to use them for occult practices of divination.

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who hold the official employment and are both respected and feared, and those who are accused of practising it, casters of lots and spells, who are hated as such and sometimes cruelly put to death. Very often, indeed, we have the strange contradiction in negro village life, that the public sorcerer, the man in relation with the spirits, marks out for public vengeance the wizard supposed to be in competition with him.

The strength of the official, recognized sorcerer is that he does not stand alone. Magic has, probably throughout the world, but especially through the entire African continent, a constant ally, the secret society.

SECRET SOCIETIES

The secret society and the sorcerer are two different things, but they work in the same direction and lend each other fraternal support. Let us be allowed here to quote from former notes of our own:

“ There is, undoubtedly, a probability that the sorcerer belongs to the secret society. He is almost obliged to by his trade, and it easily comes about that he is among the leaders. He does not, however, dominate it like a master who is a summary in person of his school. For the secret society is an autonomous group, not large for the most part, but always a collectivity having grades of rank.

“ Like all freemasonries, the village secret society has a jargon of its own. This does not mean that it has created an entirely new language for its needs;

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that would be too difficult. It confines itself to giving a figurative sense to a certain number of words, and to using special turns of expression with a different meaning from what would ordinarily be assigned to them. It has also agreed signs, passwords or something not very obvious to take their place, a wink arranged on beforehand, for example. And just as in a number of his social customs, the negro puts into these things the spirit of childish complication, elaborated in idleness and comparable only to the arbitrary and fanciful nature of the innumerable rules of our European games. In everything and at all times the negro seems to be playing at some game.

“What is the game played in these little council meetings in retired places, in the mysterious shade of the great forest? Is it the debauch of carnal uncleanness which we can discern behind the secret forms of worship of ancient Egypt, or the rites of the good goddess of Eleusis? Such has not been established. Pagan morality allows so much open licentiousness that it is not likely that men, and particularly groups of men, should look for secrecy in order to practise new excesses. Polygamy is enough for their purpose; refinement of sexual pleasure ill consorts with the crude barbarism of fetishist minds. Those who suppose many indecencies to take place at these gatherings must not forget that the negroes make an open and shameless display of them in certain dances. It seems likely that if lust forms part of the agenda of the hidden meetings, it figures in them only as a side-show, has merely the character of a symbol whose meaning is more or less lost.

“But there exists in the primitive world, even

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more, perhaps, than among civilized people, a motive often as powerful as sensual desire, namely, the appetite for domination that takes hold of a seasoned man when his affairs have gone well and his youthful passions have reached their period of calm.⁴ To win a suitable or preponderant status in village affairs, to have a big part in profits, to provide against the decay and isolation of old age, to make sure of support, to remain a person of consideration, all these are strong incentives, and are fortified by traditions no longer reasoned about, which order a man to do as his fathers have done. You have there the reasons that lead a man in the strength of life to cut himself apart from common folk and to enter the little society of mutual help which he feels to be a storehouse of power.

“The patient investigations of colonists and missionaries have led to discern this purpose in the secret society, which we feel ever beside us in Africa. Such investigations have yielded more than the revelations of individuals, very rare in any case, who have turned from the heart of these mysteries to Christianity or civilization. Indeed, the sincerest of the negroes never becomes able to give an exact account either of what happens or of what is sought after, and there is a good reason for that. The baser end of self-interest has disappeared under the

⁴ It is noticeable in polygamous African countries that it is less an inclination for sensual indulgence than the desire of appearing rich that urges a man to have several wives. His ordinary conversation is seldom that of a libertine. But he shows remarkable ostentation, comparable to the joy of a great proprietor, in enumerating his wives, and ordinarily reckons the dead ones as well as those that still remain to him. A Pahuan, who has only three wives as far as the world can see, claims to have eight. When pressed to explain, he adds that five of them are dead, but he is none the less an *eight-wived man* and proud of it.

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covering of rites that have been piled on top of it, to the extent of making of it a simulacrum of religion. Secrecy is not the whole of this business. Something had to be added to it which should act powerfully on the mind of neophytes, and it was natural enough to borrow from religious ceremonies a staging capable of setting the true motive of the association in a coloured light. In some cases there is a special tattooing and the giving of a new name, to be used only during the intimacy of the gatherings. In others there is a preparatory fast and some slight mutilation. Nearly everywhere there is preliminary drunkenness caused by stimulating decoctions, the beating of the tom-tom, dancing, fantastic disguises, the presence of special fetishes and death's-heads shown as relics of ancestors; in short a whole system of decoration borrowed in its general style from ordinary pagan worship.

“ Besides having these vague religious appearances, the society sometimes gives it to be understood that it has the mission of ‘preserving the old customs.’ Preserving the old customs is the occupation of all the Senates throughout the world, and an employment much sought after. It makes a man arbiter in many disputes, including some in which he has a direct or circuitous interest. And thus the preservation of customs is in fact equivalent to the maintenance of a state of things in which the preservers are on top.

“ One of the commonest names to designate the secret society is that of Tiger-men, or more exactly, Panther-men, for the real striped tiger is unknown to the Bantus who people Africa between the Gulf of Guinea and the region of the great lakes. The term of Panther-man, found in nearly all the

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languages of this immense geographical area, is due to the fact that to the panther are imputed the sudden murders, with ensuing disappearance of the body, done by members of the brotherhood.

“When I came in 1906 to the mission of St. Martin of the Apindjis, one of the first visits I was brought on was to the ‘Tigers.’ Someone of the missionaries asked me had I seen their Tigers, and I expected to be shown some feline creatures in a cage. Instead of that I was conducted to the village of St. Elisabeth, near the station garden, and brought into the presence of four evil-looking individuals. They were the Tiger-men. Several years previously they had been taken in the act, in a horrible affair of cannibalism. Kwaki and Putu-Putu, the two instigators of the murder, had gone into ambush on the pathway through the brushwood, with the intention of killing the first who should pass. It happened to be a woman, who was going alone to her plantation. Putu-Putu, it is surmised, stole quietly behind her and felled her with a blow of a log. Then the two accomplices dragged the body some distance away, and hid it in a place of denser growth. But doubtless the operation left traces around the pathway, so that two other Apindjis who came that way followed the track of the trampled bushes through mere curiosity, and came on the guilty pair, whom they found cutting up the unhappy woman. Kwaki and Putu-Putu seized them and compelled them to help in their sinister task; by so doing, they thought to ensure their silence. But whether it was that they made too much noise, or that the successive passage of four individuals left too many marks, the carvers were surprised before they had finished

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by other natives, fellow-villagers and relations of the victim. The alarm was given and the malefactors secured. In this remote region there were at the time neither European administration nor justice, police nor military post, nothing but the Catholic mission which was being founded, and in which two Fathers happened to be working at the installation. The natives brought the criminals to them, but in what a state! They had been tied together with the chains of pirogues, and the crowd was belabouring them with sticks, thongs of twisted leather, iron bars, tools, in short, with everything that could wound or maim them. The boys, at moments of stoppage, would apply to them burning coals taken from the fire-places of the huts, and the women plastered them with filth.

“A talk-meeting was held. Apparently these men deserved death, but the Fathers had no qualification to pronounce the sentence. To wash their hands of the affair would be the surest means of letting the butchery that was afoot take its course. After much talk it was decided to leave the four assassins under charge of the mission. There they subsequently built their huts and lived as outlaws, but were protected by the right of asylum implicitly recognized by the natives for our establishments.

“Apparently Kwaki and his accomplice were members of the brotherhood of Tiger-men *whose affair had not come off*. They were doubtless going through an initiatory probation. Such may be inferred from investigations made in the same region by a Government official devoted to ethnology. He has examined as far as possible several cases in which the disappearance of a man

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or a woman was attributed to the panther. To this official, Mr. H. C., is due the discovery of a system of organized assassination and cannibalism whose net-work runs through all the peoples between the Ngounieh and the Nyanga. Several guilty parties made confessions.

“ The secret society, according to their statements, exploits a belief in the survival of the spirits of the dead, who are supposed to come back to torment the living in the shape of noxious animals, generally panthers. Several of the negroes go further and state that it is a living man that transforms himself at will into a panther, more rarely into an alligator, or even into some animal entirely unknown but none the less terrible. It became an acknowledged fact that it was men who were playing the part of beasts of prey, without any preliminary transformation, carrying off at nightfall some solitary native of whom no trace was further found. Public opinion, cleverly played on by the unanimous affirmation of the conspirators, would then declare the misdeed to be the act, not of an actual panther, but of a wild beast animated by a human spirit and hence invulnerable.

“ Why all these murders? We may say at once that homicide is much more readily committed among savage peoples than in the civilized world. The jealousy of an elder or some secondary interest is always enough to cause the extinction of a life. But such assassinations are of particular use as a probation for candidates desirous of entering the brotherhood. The secrecy of the negro junta requires that the neophyte, before belonging to it, should be *utterly compromised* and made from the start unable to draw back. That is why the

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'fetish' of the Panther-men, in contrast with so many others that can be obtained for money, is given only for the price of blood. In the region of which we speak, it consisted of an earthenware pot which had served for human sacrifices and contained some remains of them, such as knuckle-bones and nails. And yet in order to see it, the death of a man, woman or grown-up child, preferably a relative, was necessary. We can easily imagine with what terror the mysterious society surrounds itself.

" Its internal code seems to be rather Draconian. Members must obey blindly, and the penalty is death for those who hesitate or let their tongues wag too freely. In return, considerable advantages are acquired by the initiated who give satisfaction. An enemy of theirs, or a mere troubler of their peace, will be marked out by the society as victims. It will work in their favour at a serious talk-meeting, and will always be able, with the aid of terror, to sway the balance of public opinion to their side. If there is an inheritance to be divided, they will get the lion's share. If the sorcerer has to draw lots for an expiatory victim in the event of some calamity, the lot will not fall on them. The mastery of the hour will be theirs.

" All this time, poor victims will continue to disappear at evening on the way to the well or the plantations. And the terrified negroes will remain in the belief that it is the Panther-man who has carried them off. According to the investigation from which our facts are drawn, covering a period of about ten years, a secret society called *Mangena*, composed of sixty members, had thus caused the death of nearly a hundred persons in a half-sub-

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division, containing approximately the population of a small French canton. The striking thing about this narration is that it was not the work of a scientist, despite its sincerity, but an official document, a judicial dossier.

“What this report has to say about the population of the extreme south of Gabon coincides with all that is told and observed throughout the African missions. The tranquil life of the villages has always and everywhere been menaced by freemasonries. They are in Mohammedanized Senegal,⁵ in Guinea, on the Niger, in the Cameroons, where several Tiger-men were shot in the early period of the French occupation, in the French Congo and throughout Belgium territory, in East Africa and as far as Madagascar. They have more than one characteristic of our own freemasonry, secrecy and a period of probation, religious rites utilized as scenic decoration, but above all, power and the desire of mastery as their motive and aim.”
(*Extract from the Annales des PP. du St. Esprit, May, 1928.*)

This long exposition enables us to see the strength which magical practices receive from their union with those secret societies that swarm in Africa side by side with the society open to all, and are

⁵In the south of Senegal, at Ziguinchor, a recent affair (1928) caused great excitement in Colonial circles. Several adults had disappeared, and there were rumours of acts of cannibalism. For a long time the matter was treated as a mere *negro story*. When the administration decided on an inquiry, it was horrified by what it discovered. In this apparently quiet country, half fetishist, half Moslem, nearly two hundred individuals had to be charged and imprisoned on conviction of cannibalism. And the authorities could not be certain that they had all the criminals in their hands.

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the *creators* of native opinion. An opinion thus formed cannot be resisted. When eight or ten notables, in collusion with the sorcerer, have said that some poor wretch has *eaten* the soul of a deceased person, the whole village is permeated by the belief. When the same influential minority has made a post-mortem of the corpse and found in it an *evus*, called in other places a *mulosi* or a *ndoki*, which is really only a lump of tissue cut at random from the entrails,⁶ when it affirms that this object is a living being, a fetish, and that its presence has been the cause of death, the whole population is ready to swear that it has seen the *evus* or the *ndoki*, and to slaughter at the meeting the individual indicated to it as the author of the witchcraft.

The negroes are at constant variance about their interests and about questions of women, but in regard to superstitions and magic, public opinion is of formidable unanimity. Children imbibe these beliefs with their mother's milk. Evening tales and camp stories complete their faith in the power of the great fetishes, and their terror of the secret society. The current of agreement is such that no one ventures any scepticism; there is no revolt of the sufferers. Everyone feels how vain and almost ridiculous would be the revolt of an isolated individual against the multitude.

The question may be asked whether there are convinced sorcerers, or whether supernatural facts have been observed in the course of these magical operations. Such has been stated, and even printed.

⁶ According to the analysis of an *evus* found among the Pahuans of North Gabon, and examined in 1908 at the Institut Pasteur in Paris.

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Europeans have given their word as guarantee of facts regarding bilocation, raising the dead, conversation in an unknown tongue that has not been learned, and phenomena of accelerated vegetable growth like those attributed to the fakirs of India.⁷

What are we to think of these marvels? We cannot deny to the Creator the right of interfering with His creation. But on the other hand, we must note the incongruity of making the Creator seem, in many cases that have been alleged, to obey the whim of a public entertainer. As to the facts themselves, we can only envy the luck of those who were, they say, once or several times witnesses of them. For such matters an exceedingly minute verbal inquiry is necessary, with abundance of details about time, place and circumstances. These things are generally lacking, and we must suspend judgment. It may not be out of place to adduce here the evidence of some missionaries with an undoubted reputation for science. One of them, Father Charles Sacleux, is a master of African ethnology, another, Father Dekindt, devoted his life to the special study of native sorcery in Angola, a third, Monseigneur Martrou, was taken by the Pahuans of Gabon for a reincarnation of one of their former chiefs, so complete was his knowledge of their customs. On this matter, all of them have come to the same conclusion. In

⁷ At Ndjoleh in Gabon, in 1906, a pine-apple tree is said to have grown up through a concrete floor and borne fruit, all in the space of two hours. A negro of Loango told the story to a missionary, several years after, and said he had been an eye-witness of the fact. He even added that he had eaten a portion of the pine-apple thus produced. Despite his assurances, the missionary who heard the tale refused absolutely to believe in it.

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no case have they come across the preternatural phenomenon, miraculous or diabolical. Manœuvres and stage tricks are their explanation for every case, the twofold game of credulity and the art of making use of it.

Cases of possession are spoken of. The native sorcerers often declare them to exist. Men, but more generally women, are shaken by extraordinary convulsions, roll on the ground, pronounce words which they seem to find elsewhere than in the ordinary repertory of their memory. It is then said the patient is possessed by a spirit. In East Africa, the spirit is the noxious *pepo*, that must be driven out by a long course of medicines and sacrifices that becomes ruinous in the end. Unfortunately, what the sorcerer or the patient or public opinion says is not worth the diagnosis of a qualified doctor in such a case. Native life is badly regulated, and dominated by continual terrors, hygiene is bad, and some of the medicines are extremely violent. Such things predispose for nervous crises, and hysteria is probably not rare. But this takes us outside the ground of ethnology.

One confession is rather frequently made to the missionaries, and lately more than hitherto. When a missionary becomes, as not rarely happens, confidential with some chief or sorcerer, the conversation sometimes turns on these stories of magic. The missionary has no scruple about emphasizing their improbability. The other lowers his voice and puts on a look of connivance. "You are right," he says, "but we have to keep up these things; otherwise our wives and children would no longer obey us."

No severity would be too great for proceedings

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of such a kind, and it is truly time for the civilized nations to interfere in them, for the benefit of the African Primitives whose territory they have divided among themselves. The depravity of such practices is evident. In many regions they have powerfully assisted other scourges, from sleeping sickness to alcoholism, in the work of depopulation. But the development of superstitions has particularly prevented any upward tendency in native society, for the results everywhere are suspicion, terror, delation and oppression. There you have the ultimate cause of all African barbarism.

And now that we have shown among the negroes both the traces of religion and the reign of magic, let us say an indulgent word for all the travellers, inquirers, writers, even novelists, who have taken one for the other. They were only birds of passage, they had troubles with disease and climate, difficulties about food supply and travel, they got contradictory information from corrupt and ignorant servants. What they saw around them was only a display of shams. Magic showed them its worship, rites, sacrifices, festivals, priesthood, holy places. In such conditions, how could they not be taken in! Behind the dances of Bwiti and Mboyo, Okukueh and Ngil, those fetishes of Gabon and the Congo, how could they suspect there were any reminiscences of right belief and traditions of healthy morality? These writers are excusable, and they have at any rate the merit of having made some investigations. For that reason we have less trouble in pointing out the error they commit when they write that the religion of the negroes has never inspired thoughts of justice and virtue. That is exact if we speak only of magic, which is the great

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school of egoism. But if the religious spark had had a chance of becoming a luminous torch, Africa would not have known its centuries of barbarism. From that barbarism the missions alone, by bringing it light, can gradually extricate it.

CHAPTER X

THEORIES AND SYSTEMS

WE have had to construct this study of religions in the summarized form of a work of popularization rather than as an extensive repertory of documents and sources. This plan gave us little chance of stopping on the way to discuss various systems that have been put forward as explanations of the "religious phenomenon." Yet we must not pass them over in silence, for these systems belong to the history of religions, and the impartial study of them may help to fill some gaps in our work.

We need hardly go back on the conceptions of the first travellers, seamen, and even missionaries. They had the too simple word *idolatry* to qualify the religion of the Primitives, and it remained current till about 1860-1870. It was an inheritance from the studies hitherto made on ancient mythologies. But these, in comparison with the religious thought of the Primitives, are in a highly evolved and even decadent stage. The images and statues of the gods were made by art as their accompaniment, but idolatrous adoration was ultimately given to the images themselves, and man gave his veneration to appearances. The name of idolatry does not fit the belief of the Primitives, and the distinction was one of the first that ought to have been made.

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Another term, *superstition*, was also used. That is not altogether right either, for all is not superstition among the savages. When the Pahuans call the Sovereign Being and unique Creator *Nzame*, there is surely nothing superstitious in that. The truth is that there is a parasitic element of superstition in all religions. It acts as a continual and spontaneous deformer of them. Some religions, such as Christianity, fight against it. Those that fail to do so die of it sooner or later.

We shall say nothing here of the term *fetishism*, which we have already subjected to distinctions, and which continues to have currency. Fetishism as a name for the totality of primitive religions is as unsuitable as would be, for example, the word *Kingdom* to denote the French Republic.

We have spoken at length of *magic*. It makes use of superstition, and is often confounded with it in popular speech. They differ, however. Superstition is compatible with a certain amount of good faith, and may be excused through mental error. But in magic, artifice plays a much larger part. Everything in magic need not, of course, be wrong in itself. It may preserve beliefs similar to those of religion, but it refuses to tend in its beliefs towards moral good. It seeks alliances with plainly perverse elements, such as trickery, lying, imposture and cold cruelty. And by reason of these alliances, it is always more or less mingled with esotericism and mystery. Several scientists, of whom the principal are J. G. Frazer and Van Gennep, are inclined to make magic the parent of religion. It is not perhaps unreasonable to suppose that magic, like ordinary superstition, attached itself and clung to religion from the start, but all the same the relation between

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magic and religion is one of opposition. It would be difficult for the unhealthy and evil element to give birth to the genuine and good one. We may be told that there might have been a reaction of good against the reign of evil. But we are not informed when or how or in consequence of what the reaction came about. Such a reaction would have been the work of a small number of righteous men in opposition to the noisy, impassioned crowd, long accustomed to rites accepted without discussion. Religion, however, is not the product of a small number, and the non-religious Primitives are isolated and insignificant in number.

The force of these considerations has prevailed. At present the distinction between religion and magic is commonly drawn, and in the sense of the mutual opposition we have noted. Hardly anyone now ventures to make magical fetishism the basis of religious evolution. But the discussion has moved to other ground, and a number of new theories have arisen to explain the religious phenomenon, which indeed cannot easily be buried in oblivion or treated with contempt. These theories are far from agreeing with one another. Each scientist, with his own investigations in mind, gives preference to his own system over the work of his neighbour. And yet all the theories might take as their motto the fallacious and sonorous lines of Statius, so often ascribed to Lucretius:

*Primus in orbe deos fecit timor, ardua cælo
Fulmina dum caderent . . .*

(Fear first invented gods on earth, when lightnings fell from the sky.) In other words, all these

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explanations start from the same point, the same philosophic system, Darwinian evolution. Man is an evolved animal, and has only the religion he has forged for himself; it is a system of illusions, and can be nothing else, "a long dream lived through, and enduring only by reason of priestcraft."

Religion is no longer supposed to have begun by magic, but by what has been called *Naturism*, or the worship of visible Nature. This worship is called *greater naturism* when the stars and celestial forces are the objects of it, and *lesser naturism* when it is offered to earthly phenomena, animals, plants, stones, etc. We easily admit that the first men wondered at these things and forces of Nature. But that is not the point of authors like the Belgian Goblet d'Alviella, the Dutch Tiele, the German Frobenius. Man did not merely wonder, he adored the objects of his surprise. "He made gods of those things," as the poet says. Frobenius says further that the thing must have taken place at a time when man "was not yet conscious of how he differed from the animal." And Pfeiderer insists that "man was not then aware of his superiority to the animals, nor of his personality, nor of his spiritual nature." Evidently we can always make hypotheses. But we ought also to be allowed not to accept them without some proofs. We go to make investigations among savages in order to get an idea of the earliest men. We grant that the idea may be an imperfect one, but it must be nearer to the truth than that furnished by an examination of ourselves. And in the presence of the savages we examine, it is observation and experiment alone that must speak, and not hypothetical constructions. We shall soon see the result of the experimental inquiry among the savages.

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Naturism, according to these authors, was the first religious stage of man. A higher one was then reached, that of *Animism*. These two systems are clearly not in opposition; the latter is an extension of the former. This extension is in conformity with evolutionary doctrine, but we see at once that between the two theories the primitive savage has made a remarkable jump. In the naturist stage he adored the thunder-god, the river-god, the leopard-god. In the animist, he puts in each of these objects a living spirit. There is no longer question of adoration in the sense of *divine* worship, but of timorous veneration of creatures who are not God but above man, genii or shades. The negro does not make the distinction precise, and it is difficult for us to do it for him.

Clearly much of this exposition must be accepted. There is no serious student of African matters who would throw a doubt on the animist tendency of all negroes. What the animist theory must be reproached with is the manner in which it is presented and the use that it is put to. For Tylor and Tiele, of whom we are thinking here, animism has a narrow and exclusive side that does not correspond to the spontaneous way of the negro. If the negro believes in spirits and sees them everywhere, he has also a name for God and a fairly good idea of what He is. Besides, the animism considered by our scientists is a rung in the ladder of evolution, always supposed as being ascended in the direction of more perfect concepts. Is that what has happened with human religions? Let us recall the break-up of Greek paganism, and the degradation of primitive Roman worship through the scandalous apotheoses of the third and fourth centuries, and through the

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confusion of Oriental theurgic rites. *Rising* evolution does not correspond to fact. The monotheistic notions of an average Pahuan or Negrillo apparently surpass what Seneca knew or Plato had a glimpse of. But that is not our fault.

We have spoken of *Totemism* only incidentally, merely to give a general idea of it. We must now return to it, for Totemism has become in its turn a system destined to explain the religious phenomenon in an evolutionary sense.

Totem is once more one of those words whose strangeness fixes the attention, and thereby often marks them out for a history. It is a possessive case borrowed from the language of the Chippewa Indians of North America. Normally it seems we ought to say *ote*, but *totem* has had the preference. The original meaning of the word seems to have been *family*, but rather in the sense of a group of families or clan, united by a kind of relationship to some animal, or more rarely, plant, to which a more or less definite kind of worship is paid.

The totem, with important variations, is known elsewhere than in North America. It has been discovered in Africa, in the Niger basin and in several parts of the Sudan, and also in the South among the outlying Bantus in the vicinity of the Hottentots and Bushmen. But in many parts no trace of it is found, and the name of totemism has been wrongly applied to certain taboos whose origin is completely different. There has been much confusion between totem-animals and the more or less invulnerable animals that figure in the stories of Panther-men or Alligator-men. But they are far removed from totemism.

In totemism, a clan is devoted to an animal which

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all the members regard as an ancestor. This ancestor is also the first parent of all the animals of its species. The *boar* totem, for instance, is the ancestor of all the men of the boar-clan, and also of all the *boars* of creation. The totemistic idea is therefore related to that of generation. The animal ancestor protects the clan which is devoted to it, and which is its own progeny. In return the members of the clan venerate their totem in a number of ways. A member of the boar-clan will die of hunger rather than eat the flesh of a wild pig, in which he discerns a relation of his own. In other cases the veneration takes a contrary direction; the totem-animal is sacrificed and a form of communion gone through by consuming its flesh and blood.

Authors who have worked out what they call the philosophy of totemism maintain that primitive men, gradually sublimating the totemistic idea, made of the animal ancestor first a reasonable animal capable of knowing and protecting human beings, and next, in the course of their evolution, a god in animal shape. Others, like Salomon Reinach, accept the equivalence of totem and taboo. The totem they hold to be a taboo affecting the relations of man with the animal and vegetable kingdoms, one of a set of "spiritual curbs by which mankind restrained its native brutality." Religion is nothing else than this utilitarian convention.

For others, such as Durkheim, the social side of the religious idea seems practically its unique explanation. Since man lives in society, they say, he has discovered "the stir and surge of emotion that takes place when crowds are gathered together, and gives him a glimpse of the world of sacred things." This world of sacred things means only

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the feeling of social strength. A concrete symbol is necessary for every lively sentiment, and the totem came into being. Further, primitive man is supposed to be dominated by the idea of the consubstantiality and interpenetration of all things. The idea of the soul gives rise to that of non-human spirits, and those lead on to the idea of a deity, at first totemistic and tribal. We feel the conclusion coming that "worship is eternal in virtue of its social element," and that there is no need, in order to explain it, to have recourse "either to a personified God or gods, or to the material efficaciousness of rites."

But we must make reserves about these conclusions, as well as about the items of the reasoning that precedes them. We must indeed be grateful to the inventors of these systems for having assembled a great amount of material. But it is a very diversified material, each portion of which depends on the value of the evidence of the informant, whether traveller, doctor or missionary, who supplied it. The area covered by totemism is supposed in it to be immense, and to include populations that have nothing in common, such as the prairie Indians, who are artistic and poetical and lovers of figurative language, and poor Australian tribes which are represented to us as altogether wretched. Can we be sure that there is a real and identical totemism among races so dissimilar?

We shall get nearer the truth by trying to put ourselves in the place of the native, especially if we have not long habituation to his manner of reasoning. Doubtless, as has been alleged, the idea of consubstantiality and interpenetration of things is familiar to him. But what is still more familiar to him is the animation of what he sees by a spirit or

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the soul of some ancestor. And a thing by no means familiar to him is long deductive reasoning, especially when it is evolutionist reasoning implying generations of reasoners. The Primitives have always preferred following a tradition to discussing or amending it. The same thing may have happened, though we do not affirm it as a certainty, regarding the animals chosen as totems in different places, as did in the case of the whirlpool, the rapid, the cavern, the rock. These abrupt or sombre or dangerous things draw the attention, and give rise to belief in the presence of spirits in them. May it not be that the swift or strong or cunning animal also was an object of such special attention that it was in the end supposed to have some connexion with a spirit or a shade? Of a shade in particular, since there are in Africa numbers of people who are supposed by their fellows to be in alliance with some animal to the extent of interchange of appearances, and who say and announce that they will be seen after death in the shape of their familiar animal. Is that not enough, with the help of a sorcerer, to create a set of relations between a group of families and soul-inhabited species of animals?

Perhaps we need not even go so far. When the chivalry of Europe went on a Crusade, it became necessary for the men-at-arms to wear marks which served for mutual recognition, and also as rallying signs. Each lord chose a sign for himself and his people. This was the blazon. One took pine cones, another roses, the King reserved for himself the *fleurs-de-lys*. On the escutcheons and banners were leopards, lions, eagles, swans, armed palfreys, unharnessed horses, boars, stags' heads, stars, suns, crescent moons. It was thence the science of

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heraldry arose. And this initial sign, the *badge* of the province or duchy or barony, became the source of inspiration for innumerable poems, allusions, artistic and literary *motifs*, as well as for countless emotions of souls. The French *fleurs-de-lys* alone have to their account a whole literary cycle. The people were not without interest in these emblems. Parishes mocked and insulted each other by names derived from the coats of arms of the local nobility. Some would call their neighbours the wolves, and the iris stems of the opposite party's blazon would be christened leeks. These charming details of history are worth recalling.

The Primitive does not read, but he can draw and even have a natural gift of style. And he is very strong on genealogy; there are Pahuans who can give you from memory ten or twelve direct ancestors. The Primitives are influenced by the clan spirit to an extreme. Even without going as far as the clan, it is rare for two boat-loads of rowers going in the same direction not to challenge each other, and the challenge may easily end in insults and blows. There, surely, you have all the elements that result in the adoption of an emblem, the mark of a group, chosen almost unconsciously and without any array of deductions. The fashion quickly spreads, and such emblems become the badges of rival tribes.

But does that explain everything, the belief in animal descent, the worship of the animal ancestor, the code of prescriptions for sparing, protecting, feeding it, or else bidding the clan to inoculate themselves with its blood? What of all these religious forms? But are they religious forms? Investigators have been forced to admit that

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throughout the world, side by side with *society for all*, there exists and has existed *the secret society*. It plays a part and exerts an influence of hitherto unsuspected magnitude, and when buttressed by credulity and magnitude, it has a power which practically knows no limits. Chiefs and sorcerers, the official maintainers of superstition, have used taboo, *eki* and interdict to mould the village mind as their interests require. And in like manner the secret brotherhoods, the only really deliberating and legislating bodies in primitive countries, may have early decided on laws of the totem, about which we can only make hypothetical conjectures.

Let us dwell on the likelier ones. The primitive clan was confronted with various problems. The first was that of remaining grouped, in spite of the necessity of providing the essentials of life. The totem helped the clan to remain grouped about a symbol.

But by remaining closely grouped the clan might weaken and have its blood corrupted through inbreeding. The totem then intervened as a prohibition against marrying a near relative, and constrained its members to seek partners outside the group. The clan of the boar would seek a wife among that of the drake, and the crane clan unite itself by marriage with the clan of the buffalo. The system had obvious advantages; even the Hindu castes, that led to other and greater abuses than totemism, had advantages which a close consideration would reveal.

The utility of the totem was thus discovered, and laws based on it were made. Solemnity was given them by religious forms, pacts rightly called magical, and fables that chimed with the animist tendency. All

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these proceedings are in keeping with the inclinations and ways of primitive men.

But merely to arrive at this set of laws and customs, it is plain that the first men must have had a religious conscience, morality and belief in spiritual beings.

It would be ascribing too much to the totem to make it the creator of so many things, and so many *spiritual* things. An American ethnologist, Brinton, has come to the opposite conclusion, and whether we like it or not, we must acknowledge the force of these reflexions of his:

“ This universal postulate of the psychic origin of all religious thought means the acceptance, or if you like, the supposition of the principle that a conscious will is the ultimate source of all power. It means the belief that behind the world of sense phenomena, distinct from it and giving it form, existence and activity, there is in last analysis an invisible and incommensurable power, the invisible and incommensurable power of a spirit, a conscious will, an intelligence in a certain sense analogous to our own, and further, and this is an essential point, the belief that man is in relations with this power.”

The Darwinian theory of evolution, in religious matters as in others, borrows on credit, with no guarantees save certain possibilities whose attractiveness it exaggerates. It set out to make of the first men beings whose grossness it laid on as thickly as it pleased, and generalized also to the operations of their minds. Undoubtedly, when you have seen the hovel of a Negrillo, the daily fare of an Apindji, the results of the Pahuan's æsthetic notions, you

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cannot but conclude that they are gross to an extent which, if the ladder of humanity has steps, puts them in the lower ones. And yet these poor savages have the consciousness of their personality, of their souls, of a supernatural world and a sovereign Creator. And they show that in a simple and spontaneous manner, without being forced or prompted, without feeling the least need for distinction or analysis, without even troubling to reason or knowing that they are reasoning. These notions never have the appearance of having been learned, or discovered by investigation. They always look like intuitions.

Animals have never shown the least sign of religiosity or beginning of worship, not even among the most evolved of them, those whose instinct seems miraculous,¹ or whose training has made them clever. We must then admit that, if there is evolution, it is an evolution with breaks of continuity and sudden leaps across chasms, which is very like an evolution that does not evolve, or reserves to itself the right of breaking its own laws when it thinks fit.

It is plainly very difficult to make use of evolution in order to explain the religious phenomenon by purely natural means. Even though we enlarge the part played by evolution, it remains only a method, while religion is a living force. How can that which is living arise from that which is anything you like but an organic and creative principle? The most extensive evolution can only explain a development. But a development cannot start from

¹ Indeed, the most extraordinary "miracles" of instinct are observed among the least evolved animals. There is much more ingeniousness among certain flies than among the feline animals or the larger monkeys.

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nothing. There must be at the root of it something of which itself is not the explanation. By such a road, not indeed the one the Primitives follow, we come to the intuition which they all possess, that there is law and order in the world which can be accounted for only by a sovereign Creator.

EPILOGUE

POINTING TOWARDS A PRIMITIVE REVELATION

WILL all these investigations into the thought of primitive peoples lead us by way of history to the reality of the Revelation which is the basis of Christian doctrine? Must they bear the reproach of futility unless they bring us back to Adam and Eve, the events of the earthly Paradise, the actual account of Genesis? Such is not their aim nor within their power. But the extremely miserable state of humanity prior to history has been used to scout the idea of a primitive Revelation of religious truth. Our investigations may help us in turn to demolish the objections made *a priori* by a certain kind of science against Catholic theology.

We cannot get an exact idea of the kind of life led by prehistoric men. We can only arrive at an approximation to it by considering the life led by Primitives like the Negrilloes of the present. It is certain that a race of men is not much above the level of what is called the Stone Age, when they live continually in the forest, have neither seed-sowing nor harvest, subsist on hunting, fishing and the fruit crop, dwell in a temporary hut offering the comfort of a beast's den. To many superficial minds such a state seems to border on animality. They cannot

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find any reminiscence of Revelation in such low-scale human beings.

Let us recapitulate for their benefit such reminiscences as we have come across. These poor creatures have an organized family life, and the home of one is not that of another. Their language has a name for God, and their thought conceives Him as Unique, Sovereign and Good. Their morals show that they possess the fundamental principles of morality. They have a sense of truth, justice, shame, reciprocity, kindness, good and evil. They have a name for the soul. They know it does not die with the body, that there is a beyond. They unite themselves with the Supreme Being by words of belief and prayer, and by fairly definite acts of homage and sacrifice. And most surprising of all perhaps, there is manifest and general agreement about these notions and acts from one end of the primitive world to the other. No effort has been made to reconcile divergences, there has been no work of systematizing, there is no trace of investigation.

Is all this assemblage of spiritual data nothing? Is it not wonderful to discover it among such poor creatures? How came they by it? Was it through reasoning? They reason very little, in our discursive and logical sense of reasoning. And reasoning in general results in diversity. How could it produce such unanimity in this single case of the fundamental principles of religion?

We are led back to the great questions, whence do man and beings and life arise. If we answer these questions like the Primitive, and admit that man came from God, we must also hold it to be reasonable that God, after creating man, should

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instruct him and charge him to transmit to his posterity the deposit of revealed truths. Is not this more fitting than ascribing life to the creative act of God, and then assuming God to be completely indifferent and man completely abandoned by Him. Such considerations make the hypothesis of a primitive Revelation exceedingly likely.

How was it made? St. Paul appears to have busied himself with the question. *Multifariam, multisque modis*, he writes in the Epistle to the Hebrews. God has spoken to men in *many ways*, for His ways of acting are no more circumscribed than is His power. The thought of a primitive Revelation gives us a kind of shock, because we cannot imagine the way it took place. But if earth and skies were to disappear suddenly from the field of our perceptions, the thought of Creation would equally shock our imaginative faculty. We should ask how did God create that of whose existence we are told with certainty, just as now we ask how He proceeded in order to reveal the truth to man. *Multifariam*. He has done it in many ways. Our study of the comparison of religions has shown us one of them with special insistence. It is a way that is not merely of former time but of all time, lasting from the beginning and excepting no man from its action. It is the pervasion of even the least awakened consciences, at intervals, by the breath of the Spirit of God, "the true Light that enlighteneth every man coming into the world."

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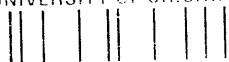
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