

ALLEN UPWARD



**THE DIVINE
MYSTERY**

The Divine Mystery

A Reading Of The History Of Christianity Down To The Time Of Christ

Allen Upward

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Advertisement

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The Divine Mystery

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The present volume is the first of a series intended to elucidate the history and significance of the greatest revolution in history. The writer is proceeding with a study of Jesus the Nazarene, and the intricate problem of the growth and formation of the Christian creed and scriptures.

It was not my original purpose to do more than summarize and combine the labours of previous students, and hence this outline was written mainly from memory. In deference to the wishes of others, I have now provided it with a

modest furniture of references and citations for the guidance of readers unfamiliar with the subject (in doing which I have had the expert assistance of Mr. Dudley Wright); but I need not say that these notes give a very inadequate idea of the material actually drawn upon. It is as a work of interpretation, and not as a work of reference, that the volume has been planned, and the only scientific merit it can pretend to is that claimed by Bossuet for his Universal History, the merit of a general chart which shows the relations between different provinces. Current literature is seriously deficient in comprehensive surveys of the kind; and I may be allowed to pay a tribute in passing to Professor Myres' lucid sketch. The Dawn of History, which I could wish to be read by way of introduction to these pages.

So far as I am aware this is the first attempt at a complete outline of the Christian evolution in the light of modern knowledge, and perhaps the chapters dealing with the rise of monotheism may be found to bridge a real gap. No reader can feel so strongly as the writer how tentative and provisional every work of this kind must be for a long time to come; but if we were to wait for perfect certainty in the field of history, we should wait for ever.

A. U.

THE DIVINE MYSTERY.

What Magnets far away control our Motions here?
What mystic Messages vibrating from the Sky,
In what immortal Code that baffles mortal Ear,
As those bright Signs in Heaven bewilder mortal Eye?

What Lights are they of which we the poor Shadows seem;
The changing Phantasies of Whose eternal Dream?
Into what Meaning clear ascends our muffled Speech?
What Shuttles throw the Woof whose Warp is all we know?
What Actors on what Stage does this Rehearsal teach?
In what glad Blossoms there are these sad Buds to blow?
What Strain beyond the Stars completes our Minor here;
What Divine Mystery in what remoter Sphere?

Allen Upward.

THE ENCHANTED CITY

Once upon a time there stood in the middle of the lands an enchanted City, whose foundations were laid in blood. It was a holy city, inhabited by the subjects of a Wizard Emperor, reigning over a fairy country far away. All the firm land had once obeyed the Emperor, who had raised it from the deep by words of might. But there had been rebellion in Fairyland; and the traitors, driven out from their native seat, had come among men, and tempted them to join in war against the great White Throne. Wherefore sentence of death had been recorded against mankind by their Suzerain Lord; yet he so loved them that his royal Son had taken their guilt upon himself, and by his death on earth had earned their pardon. Thereafter he had risen from the grave, and had gone back to Fairyland, where is no death; bequeathing to men his Father's invitation to follow him some day to that bright abode. They who had heard the good news, and become reconciled with their Suzerain, were called the Saints; and their camp and dwelling-place was called the City of God.

The City of God was besieged by seen and unseen enemies, against whom it was aided by mysterious protectors. The citizens were put into bonds, they were scourged, wild beasts were let loose against them, they were banished or crucified. From these calamities they were delivered by magical arms: they drank poisons without hurt, handled vipers, passed through prison walls, crossed seas and deserts in a moment, healed diseases, and raised the dead to life. They were cheered by visions of triumph to come. The city of their oppressors, that great city which reigned over the kings of the earth, had been doomed to destruction by a mighty voice, saying: Fallen, fallen, is Babylon the Great. And a holy city, the new Jerusalem, had been seen descending out of heaven from God.

These mystical predictions were almost literally fulfilled. The Kingdom of God on earth had been likened to a seed sown in the ground, no bigger than a grain of mustard seed, which, when it grows up, is greater than any plant, and puts out great branches; so that the birds of the air can lodge in the shadow thereof. At the end of three hundred years this parable was found to be a prophecy. The mortal enemies of the Kingdom became its lieges. Strange peoples coming from lands outside the old sacred geography settled within the divine realm, and embraced its polity. The true citizens were lost in the throng of aliens, and the spiritual kingdom was transformed into a temporal one.

In its earthly avatar the kingdom was called the Holy Roman Empire, and the new Jerusalem was called the New Rome. The old Rome, that Scarlet Woman, drunk with the blood of the saints, was stripped of her purple robe, and reeled from all her seven hills, a prey to Christian armies — Gothic or Greek, imperial or barbarian. The owl hooted in the palaces of persecuting Caesars. And for a thousand years, the time appointed by the prophecy, the saints

worshipped Jehovah in the holy city of Constantine; the psalms of Zion were chanted in the Christian temples; and the wondrous Book of Israel replaced the literature and science of a world destroyed.

The Catholic Millennium endured from the building of Constantinople to be the capital of Christendom, until its conquest by the True Believers of Islam, (a.d. 324-1453.)

During the first part of this period, while modern Europe was in the making. Christian Byzantium continued to be the chief focus of temporal and spiritual power; and the main channel into which all the intellectual currents set, and out of which they flowed again. It was the lighthouse of civilization shining over the barbarian flood. The tribes of the farthest frozen Baltic told of the great city, Micklegard, round the foot of whose glittering walls the sea of heathenism washed to and fro. Therein the trolls toiled at their smithy, forging logical fetters for the White race. During those five hundred years the bands of Catholic dogma were drawn more and more straightly round the spirit of man, and the European brain took that Byzantine stamp and pattern that it still retains. The Nicene Confession, and the canon of the sacred scriptures, as they emerged from the Byzantine forge, are still the rule of the common faith in continents whose existence that faith implicitly denies.

Throughout this Dark Age the minds of men seemed to be wrapped in a magical sleep from which they feared to be awakened. The least glimmer of science irritated them like a light flashed into the eyes of a sleeper. Belated denizens of the Byzantine dreamland yet linger among us, who believe the earth is flat, and map it as a disk, with the north pole in the centre and the antarctic regions forming the outer rim. They deem that every sea-captain who sails

south of the equator falsifies his log, and that the laws of perspective drawing are wrong. Contradiction rouses their anger; they deem it contradiction of God. Their temper was once the common temper of mankind. It was a temper inculcated as the first of duties, and literally seared into the human frame with red-hot irons.

Yet the very anxiety with which medieval society watched for, and repressed, every sign of mental awakening betrays the existence of an uneasy sense that its dream did not correspond with the reality. The note of apology runs through all Christian literature, and where there is controversy there cannot be complete assurance. The tremendous emphasis placed upon intellectual assent as the condition of salvation, and on dissent as the most heinous of all crimes, is significant of the same thing. The Jews were a perpetual thorn in the Christian consciousness; hostile witnesses whose testimony was necessary to one half of the creed, and contradictory of the other. In the highest flood of fanaticism aroused by the Crusades we are startled to hear the chief Order of Crusaders accused of the most fearful blasphemies. A Holy Roman Emperor, educated by a Pope, is charged by another Pope with having written a book concerning Moses, Jesus, and Mahomet, entitled *The Three Impostors*, The Knights Templars may not have been guilty of trampling on the Cross. Frederick II probably wrote no such book. But the accusations are enough to show what thoughts worked under the surface of all that belligerent orthodoxy. We seem to see men half aware of their hallucination, and proportionately angry with those who do not share it.

The fall of the great citadel of Christendom evidently gave the signal for the fall of the enchanted City of which it had been the material embodiment. Within a hundred years Magellan had touched at the antipodes, and Copernicus

had loosed the earth from its foundations. The Renaissance was directly connected with the flight of a handful of Greek scholars, and the dispersal of a few of the manuscripts hoarded in the libraries of Constantinople. But this literary activity could not have made so much difference unless the hour had struck on that clock which measures out our planetary revolutions. The Reign of the Saints had reached its end. It was as if a spell had been dissolved. The miracles silently ceased. The thousand years' hibernation of knowledge was over, and the sleeper was beginning to awaken in a new world.

Since then the human spirit has travelled fast and far, while it still seems only in the beginning of its career. One by one the shriveled arts and sciences have put forth fresh leaves and burst into more vigorous life. The progress has not only been resumed at the point at which it was arrested. The new spirit is altogether mightier, more daring and more victorious than the old. We may liken this marvelous ordeal to that of the caterpillar, shrinking and stiffening in its narrow case as a preparation for another and more glorious avatar. Today the strait walls of the Byzantine chrysalis are cracking on all sides, and the butterfly of Science has begun to spread visible wings.

This is the most memorable chapter in the past history of the human race; and no wise man will read it as a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing. The Byzantine theology may slowly fade into mythology. The Catholic worship may linger as a pagan cult and pleasant ceremony for centuries to come. In the meanwhile we are called upon to interpret the historical revelation, as the latest chapter of that Divine Book of which we seem to be both writers and readers. If the Christian symbol be no longer true in the sense in which our benighted forefathers wrote and read it, yet it must be true as the result of some

cause; as the expression of some law, some power still working to mould our planetary fates.

Of old the assurance of everlasting life was imparted to men in Mysteries, wherein the things unseen were set forth in parable, or drama, under types and symbols. So the Christian Fathers interpreted the sacred history of Israel as a Divine Mystery, played out by the Creator upon the stage of the Holy Land, and intended to educate mankind for a fuller revelation yet to come.

To the thoughtful mind all history is sacred, and the whole world is a holy land in which man walks as in a garden planted by the hand of his Creator. Mystery encompasses his steps on every side; a divine voice breathes in the rustling of the trees at eventide and in the songs of birds at sunrise; he reads the nightly scripture of the stars, and his heart accompanies the solemn chorus of the sea. There is a universe within him as without; the network of his frame is a battleground wherein unseen and uncalculated forces meet and struggle for the mastery; his very thoughts are not his own, but the reincarnations of ancestral spirits, or else the angels of heavenly and hellish powers. So, moving from deep unto deep, he plays his part in some degree like a somnambulist, plays in a miracle play of which he feels himself to be the hero, yet cannot altogether seize the plot, nor tell what are the true surroundings of his little stage, nor guess what may await him when he shall pass behind the scenes.

Of this Divine Mystery the Christian gospel is a reflection in the heart and mind of man. It is an old, old story, retold from generation unto generation. Its words and signs are inherited from a primeval language, a true catholic speech, whose grammar is being recovered in our days from the tombs and dust of prehistoric peoples, from the daily life of

savage tribes, and from the tales that are still the bible of the peasant and the child. Its principles, the old church historian who drew up the Nicene Creed declares — " have not been recently invented, but were established, we may say, by the Deity in the natural dictates of pious men of old, from the very origin of our race." (Eusebius, H.E., I, 4.)

Looked at from the outside, the chemical process that precipitated the Byzantine faith appears as a great recrystallisation of universal fears and hopes, carried out in the crucible of a planetary heat wave, whose coming had been more or less distinctly felt beforehand by a series of true prophets from Zoroaster to John the Baptist.

With this clue we may hope to explore the deserted chambers of the soul wherein our forefathers inhabited, till what had been their city of refuge became their prison and their grave. Their ghostly footsteps yet haunt the broken pavement, the air is heavy with their sighs; their blood has left dark stains upon the walls. — Was not this the dungeon of the Holy Inquisition of God?

CHAPTER I - THE NATIVITY OF GENIUS

1. The Son of Thunder

I WAS sitting like Abraham in my tent door in the heat of the day, outside a Pagan city of Africa, when the lord of the thunder appeared before me, going on his way into the town to call down thunder from heaven upon it.

He had on his wizard's robe, hung round with magical shells that rattled as he moved; and there walked behind him a young man carrying a lute. I gave the magician a

piece of silver, and he danced before me the dance that draws down the thunder. After which he went his way into the town; and the people were gathered together in the courtyard of the king's house; and he danced before them all. Then it thundered for the first time for many days; and the king gave the thunder-maker a black goat —the immemorial reward of the performing god.

So begins the history of the Divine Man, and such is his rude nativity. The secret of genius is sensitiveness. The Genius of the Thunder who revealed himself to me could not call the thunder, but he could be called by it. He was more quick than other men to feel the changes of the atmosphere; perhaps he had rendered his nervous system more sensitive still by fasting or mental abstraction; and he had learned to read his own symptoms as we read a barometer. So, when he felt the storm gathering round his head, he put on his symbolical vestment, and marched forth to be its Word, the archetype of all Heroes in all Mysteries.

2. The Function of Genius

The form of energy called electricity is only the most coarse and obvious of the ethereal, and doubtless also sub-ethereal, influences forever at work weaving the woof of Life upon the warp of Matter. Yet it remained outside the realm of our science down to the other day. The lunar and the solar powers are only recognised by us in their plainest operations, as they govern the seasons and the tides. The study of man's dependence on the stars lies under the ban of the Materialist superstition. We still wonder why it is hot one day and cold the next; and our priests try to control the weather by their prayers. And yet if we should understand all these we should have only the bones and skin of the All-Thing in view, while the intricate nerves lay hidden from our dim microscopes. We should be as far as ever from the

knowledge of those invisible winds that blow upon us out of the ether, between the interstices of sense, and reveal themselves in moods that govern us against our reason and our will.

It is to this unexplored environment that we must needs refer so much of our experience as we cannot account for by causes that have come within our scanty field of observation. We are like barks with sails spread and rudder fixed to go in one direction, while a strong undercurrent sweeps them in another. The fool who pretends there is no Strength outside his reckoning is the same fool at heart who draws the chart of Heaven on the false projection of his own mind, and fills up the unexplored regions with mermaids and unicorns and flying men. Every positive system of philosophy, rationalist or religious, is an attempt to leave out the universe; like those chemists who believe they can compress the whole nourishment of beef in a tabloid, or manufacture bread from salts. Whereas the natural food derives its virtue from all the powers of air and light, and the very spikes that crown the growing barley are little mouths drinking in electricity to feed it.

For this invisible environment in which we live and move and have our being man has found no better name than Heaven. The Divine Man or, as he is better named, the Genius, is the spokesman and interpreter of Heaven. It is his function to reveal the ethereal influences as they are manifested within himself, in his emotions; like the photographic plate that by its own changes tells us the chemical constituents of the stars.

The relation of Genius to Humanity may be compared with that of man himself to the brute creation; and even the infirmities that veil the divinity of genius may remind us that the master of the elephant is concealed in the form of

a trembling pygmy. Thus man begins his own career as the animal of genius.

Now the superiority of man lies evidently in his greater faculty of growth. He is the topmost twig of the great Tree of Life, and the one still rising heavenward. The common mark of all the lower forms of life is fixity. Compared with man they seem like dried-up branches in which the sap has ceased to run. They are in equilibrium with their environment. Man may be defined scientifically as the changing animal, the one that is still growing; in a word, he is the Child of evolution.

Out of all living forms his is the one on which the hand of the Creator is still visibly at work. Man is the burning mountain in whose entrails the seed of fire yet glows, while all the peaks around are smitten into ice.

And of this uppermost branch the final shoot is Genius, the last delicate bud upon the Tree of Life. The historian of Christian folklore has been inspired beyond his own intention in naming his vast work the Golden Bough. The magical bough is Genius, for it is the medium of communication between God and Man. These golden spikes that crown the forehead of Humanity are like the slender wire that rises from a receiving station to catch the unseen message that comes across the sea from a strange continent. So does the prophet intercept the Good News of the Kingdom of Heaven.

In the old Folk pictures, copied and handed down from days when kings were worshipped, every king wears upon his head a circlet of golden spikes. That is the crown of genius, and it is the Crown of Thorns.

The divine right of Genius has been denied for the first time in these latter days by a school of criminologists whose words have been eagerly taken up by the great army of dunces. Insanity is infectious, and just as those who live too much with the insane suffer disturbance of their own mental balance, so it should seem that those who have given too much study to degenerate types learn to see nothing but degeneracy in every departure from the normal type. Had such minds been at work some hundred thousand years ago they would have esteemed the first man a degenerate monkey, and the first monkey a degenerate beaver. Had such eugenists presided over the creation life would never have been allowed to mount above the lizard. Nay, has not the conservative faith been defined once for all in the opinion that Life is a disease of Matter?

The disease of Genius is nothing but its greater power to feel. Its pains are growing pains. As the primeval form of life that crawls in blindness along the dark sea-floor has been named the Changeling (amoeba), so is Man the Changeling of the animals, and so is Genius the Changeling of Humanity. The old Folk scriptures have prophesied of him by that name as well, telling how the Changeling frets in his mortal environment, and pines for that happier region whence he came. And his rough foster-parents often use him ill; the Ugly Duckling is driven forth into the wild, and this disinherited Son of Man has not where to lay his head.

3. The Wizard

The Genius, or Divine Man, in his first avatar is the Wizard. He is the wizard of the foreworld — that divine, daemonic figure which throws its shadow across the mist of primitive imagination like the Spectre of the Brocken. The oldest

literature in the world, or at least that which has best preserved its antique form and spirit, is found in the Kalevala, the Bible of the Finns; and it is the epic of the Wizard. Genius has not yet specialized; the Wizard of the Kalevala is a Jack-of-all-trades, and we may discern in him the stem from which were to branch the poet and the chemist, the King and the God.

Many reasons make it likely that it was in the part of a barometer that the wizard revealed himself first. His name, both in its older forms, witga and wicca, and in its newer one, has the same root as wisdom and vision; and the expression weather-wise suggests that the first prophet was a weather-prophet.

In man's continuing effort to reach harmony with his environment, whether by adjusting himself to it, or by mastering it and so adjusting it to himself; in man's search for the right Way of Life — to use less pretentious language — Genius has been his guide and leader. The faculty of weather-wisdom, as it showed itself first in the sympathetic storm excited in the nervous organization of the prophet by the storm without, was a genuine faculty; the wizard was, to anticipate the language of the Catholic Church, truly the incarnate Word of the Thunder-God. No sign could be more unmistakable, or more easily remarked, and none more directly useful to man in the hunting and fishing stage. It was the alphabet of revelation, brought down to the capacity of a child.

4. The Weather

The same simple phenomenon that revealed the Divine Man below revealed the God above. Man's dependence on the weather was a symbol, easily read by the savage, of the dependence of Earth on Heaven. Of all the natural changes

that influence and shape the life of man those of the weather are the most striking; and long ages had to pass before the rise of astronomy and agriculture taught man to look farther heavenward than to the clouds.

To this truth the history of language, of religion, and of astronomy bears ample testimony. Indeed, the lesson of astronomy has not yet been fully learnt. The French still use the same word *temps* for weather and for time. The seasons in India are even now named after the cold, the heat and the rains. The ancient year of the Yorubas contains only 224 days, the dry season being a blank in the almanac. " It was the first rumble of the thunder that recalled the fisherman and hunter to their huts (writes R. E. Dennett in his *Nigerian Studies*, p. 136), and caused them to commence to count the days." The English names of Spring and Fall survive from a later Vegetable Year, yet even they are older than astrology. According to the astronomer, Sir Norman Lockyer, Stonehenge was first oriented for a year whose quarter-days fell half-way between the solar solstices and equinoxes. That is the old Farmer's Year, which began with the sowing of the seed in spring, and whose quarter-days may be found in the calendar under the names of Shrovetide, Whitsuntide, Grotto Day and Guy Fawkes Day.

When looking for a folk-festival that should fall half-way between the summer solstice and the autumn equinox I turned to an almanac and found the entry Grotto Day against the seventh of August. Going through a suburban street towards the end of July I found boys already forming circles of shells and stones on the pavement. They told me that they knew nothing of the fixed date in the calendar and simply made a rough guess at the right season, as did their neolithic sires. So also, after surmising that James I. might have fixed the opening of Guy Fawkes' Parliament for

a popular feast-day, I learned that in the United States Thanksgiving Day is still a movable feast, the date of which is fixed every year by the government for some time in November. No anthropologist can doubt that Guy Fawkes' bonfire must be far older than Guy Fawkes. — " Grotto " is the Scandinavian gryfa, a mill.

Thus it would seem clear that celestial science began with the clouds, and not the stars. When the Men Above first took shape in the imagination of men below, they inhabited the clouds. The Rain-Cloud Indra is the foremost figure in the old Vedic pantheon of the Hindus. (Note: Indra is the national god of the Vedic Indians. As a name it dates from the Indo-Iranian period and is of uncertain meaning. The significance of his character is, however, sufficiently clear. He is primarily the thundergod, the conquest of the demons of drought or darkness and the consequent liberation of the waters or the winning of light forming his mythological essence. Secondly, Indra is the god of battle, who aids the victorious Aryan in the conquest of the aboriginal inhabitants of India. The thunderbolt (vagra) is the weapon exclusively appropriate to Indra. He is called " he who is attended by the Marut hosts." The Maruts are the clouds charged with rain and lightning.]

The Scandinavian Thor or Thunar is older than Odin, and his attributes clothe Zeus and Jove. (Note: Thor was one of the chief deities of Scandinavia. He is represented as a middle-aged man of enormous strength, quick in anger but benevolent towards mankind. He is second to Odin, who is represented as his father, but in Iceland he takes precedence of this god. But there is no doubt he was in Iceland worshipped more than any other god, and the same seems to have been the case in Norway. Even in the temple at Uppsala his figure is said to have occupied the chief place. There is evidence that a similar deity called Thunar

or Thonar was worshipped in England, but little information is to be obtained regarding him except that the Romans identified him with Jupiter. Outside the Teutonic area he had considerable affinities, not only with Jupiter or Zeus but still more with the Lithuanian and Slavonic gods, such as Perkun or Perkunas-Perun, the Thunder-god, who is also the Vedic Parganya, the rain-cloud-god or the thunder-cloud called Parganya in the Veda. Thor, like this word, means thunder.]

The Thunder God is missing from the pantheon of Egypt, where the clouds rarely gather, and the national life is regulated by the Nile. In Europe the Thunderer remained the Father of the Gods down to the Christian era. And the old religion survives in the oaths of the French and Germans. Bad language is heretical language, and he who swears by Donner or tonnerre is a dissenter from the Nicene Creed.

The first scene in the life of the Divine Man, therefore, shows him as a half-naked savage, cowering in his cave before the coming storm, and only half awake to the connection between the trouble inside his own head and the trouble outside in the sky. That trembling wretch is the first interpreter of Heaven, mediator and medium between man and his Creator. He is the father of all the human gods, of all the prophets and the priests, of the rude medicine man and of the College of Physicians, of the astrologer and the astronomer, of fetishism and philosophy; he is the teacher of the crafts and handicrafts, of art and science, of poetry and history, of the Law and of the Gospel. So Heaven calls him visibly, calls him even as Paul of Tarsus was called, calls him in pain and anguish to take up his great ministry to mankind, and calls him as its Son.

The price he pays for his prophetic gift is frailty. Rarely in the literature of the world does the Wizard figure as the warrior. He may split the rock and divide the sea and send plagues upon all the land of Egypt, but as soon as he meets the Bedawin in battle he has to call in Joshua. He is the hero in the tragic meaning of the word, that is to say the sufferer, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. The title that has been usurped by the strong acquired its glory from the neurotic weakling who bore it first.

From the beginning his mysterious endowment makes him more feared than loved. He benefits men, but he is not understood by them, nor does he altogether understand himself. The awe inspired by the thunder extends to its representative, the visible incarnation of its power. Who shall tell what are the limits of that power, or what other dangers lurk in that trembling frame? Saint, holy, accursed, consecrated — all these words once had the same meaning: the Wizard is tapu.

Note on Shrove-tide.

Professor Skeat derives the word Shrove from shrive, considering Shrove-tide as the season of confession and shrift; and, departing from his own principles of etymology, derives shrive itself from the Latin scribere, to write. But it is contrary to the first principles of anthropology to derive the name of a folk festival in so roundabout way from a foreign vocabulary, and we should rather suspect there has been a confusion of the Latin with an older Saxon word. Such a word appears in shire, formerly spelt schire, and in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, scir. The original meaning of this word is lost, the oldest that has been proposed for it being "business." Although Skeat is opposed on phonetic grounds to deriving scir from scar, the older form of share, there seems to be no objection to reversing the process,

and deriving scar from scir. In short it seems probable that as in the case of palm, the monks have effaced an ancient northern word under a Latin spelling, and that Shrove-tide was originally the season when the earth was ploughed, or shared. But there is much evidence for the former existence among the northern peoples of Europe, as elsewhere, of village communities, owning a tract of land in common, the arable portion of which was divided among the households by lot, every year before the ploughing began. The most important business of Shrove-tide, therefore, was the casting of lots, and this practice serves to identify the festival with the Jewish feast of Purim. While Hebrew scholars seem to be agreed that the word Purim has the meaning of "lots," they have not been able to explain why the feast should have been so called. But we are informed that, in the Babylonian, yuru means "dividing an inheritance by lot," and also, in Assyrian, "a term of office," so that the analogy with Shrovetide becomes very close indeed; and it is strengthened by the theory of scholars that Purim was a Persian, that is to say, an Aryan institution. The whole evidence points to the existence of a great spring festival, common to all the agricultural peoples of the northern continent, when the lands were divided for sowing, annual victims chosen for sacrifices, and annual officers chosen to conduct the business of the community.

CHAPTER II - THE WISE MEN

1. The Seer

In outlining the functions of the Wizard as Prophet, Sorcerer, Magician, Scientist and God, I do not mean to

suggest that these aspects of his character succeeded each other in the order in which I have considered them. All such distinctions are but meridional lines drawn across the map. The character of genius is complex, and neither the wizard nor his clients were quick to separate any one of his faculties from the rest.

It is a probable suggestion, and it is not put forward as anything more, that the prophetic faculty first attracted attention in connection with the weather. But once recognised, it was not long confined to a single field.

Neither in ancient nor in modern times has the seer, or optical sensitive, shown himself to understand the nature and limitations of his power. The faculties of second-sight, or vision of the future, and clear-sight, better known by its French name of clairvoyance, the vision of the present, have been confounded. It is only within recent years, and in the teeth of much prejudice on the part of the scientific as well as the religious vulgar, that the subject has been brought within the scope of serious investigation.

The general results of that investigation point to the conclusion that the seer is sensitive to a force called telepathy, which acts between brain and brain. The excitement in another mind, whether that of an individual or a group, sets up a sympathetic excitement in the seer's, so that his brain appears to reproduce, like a photographic plate, the thoughts, and even the unconscious impulses, latent in another. Thus the seer perceives as events in the future events which are already in existence as intentions or dispositions. When those intentions have not risen to the surface of the mind in which they lurk, or when the disposition is that of the collective mind of a group or public, the seer's prediction is in the strictest sense a revelation.

The London fortune-tellers whom I have tested have generally appeared to me to be reading my own thoughts, in so far as they have not been merely guessing. One predicted with surprising cleverness two enterprises which I had in view, but as I afterwards changed my mind and undertook neither, the "prophecy" was falsified accordingly. Another, whom I consulted after I had formed the design of going to Africa in a judicial capacity, foretold that I should go abroad, and travel about from a centre. This was a detail which had not been present to my own consciousness, and it was very closely satisfied by a tour which I made through my Nigerian province. But the seeress omitted to warn me that my Colonial career would be summarily closed by a nearly fatal illness, that being an event outside the scope of the telepathic force.

Most card-players have probably felt impulses to play some card that their partner was wishing for, a card that their judgment disapproved. Those who yield to such impulses win against their own judgment.

As an example of collective impression, I may mention that I myself have been able to foretell with substantial accuracy the result of every General Election in the United Kingdom for the last thirty years. In every case my opinion was not a judgment based on calculation, but a sympathetic response to the public sentiment.

We may regard it as established, therefore, that there is a genuine element in the prophetic faculty, although it is obscure and doubtful in its working; even if we exclude the possibility that coming events may cast their shadows before them in other, still more subtle ways, to which a neurotic organization is sensitive.

The link that connects this faculty with that of the mere weather-prophet is that both are found associated with something abnormal in the nervous system. This is the fact which stands out most clearly in the history of vision.

It goes without saying that, in most ages and countries the knowledge of the future has been eagerly sought, and the prophet has enjoyed consideration in consequence. The fear which the wizard inspires is thus tempered with gratitude for his public and private services.

From this it follows that the seer has always had a strong motive for cultivating his faculty. His search for the best means of doing so led him to the discovery that it was best exercised in a state of trance, or ecstasy, when his attention was released from the impressions of the waking sense; and hence we find him everywhere resorting to artificial devices for inducing that abnormal condition of the nerves which the thunder-storm produced naturally.

The word " inspiration " is generally referred to the belief that a spirit took possession of the seer, and spoke through his mouth. Older than that belief, perhaps, was the discovery that the natural vapours of a cave or medicinal spring had an intoxicating power, as in the famous case of the oracle at Delphi. The seer, in this case a woman, took her stand on a three-legged stool, or tripod, placed over a crack in the floor of a cave, and became literally inspired by the fumes that issued from the earth.

But the mere act of breathing can be so managed, in the belief of the Hindus, as to increase man's " spiritual " power, and the Yoga of Breathing is now receiving attention from the professors of physical culture in England.

The dance is another mode of intoxication, still practiced by the heathen wizard, all over the world, for its original purpose, while in the hands of the Muslim dervishes it is also given an astrological significance. Self-mutilation, like that of the priests of Baal, and sexual orgies like those of the Witches' Sabbath, and so many Pagan cults, may have come into existence in the same way, before ever they were developed as magical rites, or appropriated to the worship of the later gods. Fermented liquor is a more familiar means of intoxication, and its mysterious power made it sacred from its first discovery, as is proved by overwhelming evidence.

It is enough to cite the Dionysian or Bacchic cults, the sacred haoma of the Zarathustrians, the story of Noah, the vine that adorned the Jewish temple, the miracle of Cana, and the part played by wine and vinous imagery in the Christian mysteries. Muhammad's prohibition of wine went naturally with his warfare with idolatry; and even the zeal of modern teetotalers has a strong vein of religious fanaticism. As Grant Allen has remarked, the use of the word spirits for strong liquors is in the same line of thought. The methods of the wizard have been imitated by the Buddhist monks, who stare into the bowl of a spoon, and by the Christian monks who gazed at their navels in the monasteries of Mount Athos. In each case the immediate object is the same, to escape from the dominion of the outward sense, in order to discern things visible to the inward sense. The monks of Mount Athos professed to see the light of Mount Tabor, that is to say, the illumination of Christ in his transfiguration. The Buddhists also declare themselves able to perceive a mystic light; while the adept goes farther and enjoys the sensation of quitting his earthly envelope and moving outside the bounds of time and space. The savage wizard claims precisely the same power. He believes himself, and is believed by others, to be able to

transport himself to a distance, and work evil to his foes, while his body lies in a swoon or trance.

Closely akin to the monkish practices is the device of crystal-gazing in use by the fortunetellers of medieval and modern Europe. Here the process is the same, though the immediate object is different, the aim of the fortune teller being, not spiritual ecstasy, but vision in the more primitive sense.

The last form of intoxication that need be referred to is that induced by the collective excitement of a crowd. Every orator is familiar with the stimulation afforded by an enthusiastic audience. Carried to a certain pitch this gives on one side the phenomena of revivalism, when neurotic individuals start up confessing their sins and declaring that they have "found the Saviour." On the other side the orator's excitement degenerates into the frenzy of the howling dervishes. George Sand discovered that in the nineteenth century howling was part of the ritual of the French workmen in their lodge meetings. In Welsh religious services it is still a common thing for the preacher to be carried away at a certain point in his discourse. His face becomes flushed, his manner changes, and his voice rises from the ordinary pitch into a strained, dithyrambic utterance known as the *hwyl*, and regarded as a sign of inspiration. It appears from the New Testament that in the early churches this "gift of tongues," at first valued as a miracle, soon had to be discarded as a nuisance. The prophet's outpourings degenerated into an unintelligible jargon, and the bishops were obliged to discountenance the practice.

" Unless in using the gift of tongues you utter intelligible words, how can what you say be understood? You will be speaking to the winds. . . .

At a meeting of the church I would rather speak five words with my mind, and so teach others, than ten thousand words when using the gift of tongues."

(i Corinthians xiv. 9 and 19.)

In spite of all the artificial means resorted to by the seer his inspiration remained a thing beyond his own control. There were times when he swooned in vain, as the priests of Baal gash themselves with their knives in the legend of Elijah. The true inspiration came not to the schools of the prophets but to the solitary herdsman of Tekoa.

"I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was an herdsman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit. And the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said unto me, — Go, prophesy unto my people Israel." (Amos vii. 14.)

This is the second act of the tragedy, when the prophet comes to his own, and his own receive him not. The schools of the prophets are leagued together against the true prophet. So the temple of dead genius becomes the citadel of the living dunce. The original thinker labours in obscurity and poverty; and the class who will trade on his work as soon as he is dead, are in a conspiracy to silence him while he is yet on earth. " You build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them."

2. The Witch

So far we have seen the wizard only in his passive capacity, his nervous system responding to the play of electric and telepathic energy. But as regards the latter he is also an agent, and it is in his active capacity that he has most strongly impressed the imagination of mankind. As the seer

he is dangerous merely as a live coal is dangerous if approached. As the witch he is formidable at a distance, and the harm which he does may be voluntary as well as involuntary.

It is not easy to draw a clear line between the ordinary influence exerted by a strong will over a weaker one, and that more subtle influence which it is sought to distinguish by the name of telepathy or witchery. The simplest and most familiar form of witchery is displayed in the English parlour game called "willing." One of the party goes outside the room, while those inside agree that he or she shall perform some trifling action, such as finding a pin, on re-entering. The subject is then led in by one of the "willers," and does what is required in obedience to the collective will of the others.

The genuine character of such performances, and of the telepathic energy itself, is still a matter of discussion, but the following experiments overcame the scepticism in which I was brought up. The subject of one, a kinswoman of mine, was taking the passive part in the game described above. As I suspected unconscious muscular action on the part of the person guiding her, I silently concentrated my own will in the effort to bring her towards myself, and make her touch a different article to what had been agreed on. She at once obeyed me. Afterwards I found that she responded readily to similar exertions of my will; however I abandoned the experiments as unwholesome.

On another occasion a professional mesmerist was giving a private demonstration to some Dublin journalists. Each of us was asked to tell the mesmerist beforehand what he wished the subject to do. She then entered the room, blindfolded, and he proceeded to direct her by passes, without speaking to or touching her. She succeeded in