

Introduction

MANKIND IS ENGAGED in the perpetual process of going mad — as the events of to-day sufficiently prove — but simultaneously mankind is persistently engaged in the complementary process of rescuing itself from going mad.

Now going mad is simply—or rather, not so simply — a process of disintegration of the personality; and the rescue consists in a reintegration. Blake is an excellent example of this, and that is why he is a man of to-day, typical of our world. The reintegration of Man is a wide process: Man has to achieve unity within himself, and also unity with the Universe:

They know not why they love nor wherefore they sicken and die.

Calling that holy love which is Envy, Revenge and Cruelty

Which separated the stars from the mountains, the mountains from man,

And left Man, a little grovelling Root outside of himself.

(Keynes, I Vol., 180.)

The two are connected: when man is at one with himself, he is at one with the world.

In the texts brought forward in this book, we discern clearly several trends in this effort:

First of all must be healed the cleavage among men between high and low. Thinking in our world is divided: we have a high educated class that cultivates science, and a low uneducated mass that cultivates primitive magic in all forms. Science stands at the door of knowledge, like those lawyers denounced by Christ, in Luke xi:

'You took away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves and them that were entering in you hindered.' Science — and official religion — giving no answer to questions, say: No, no, no! like the girl in the English song; but her no's never saved the young lady. The people want to enter. The sects pullulate and give their answers, where the officials will not. What is there in common in the background of the dissatisfied sects? Man realises that he is too much alone in the world. The gap

between him and the idea of God— the idea of the Whole — is too large for him to span as a man. Therefore he calls in spirits of many kinds, angels and fairies, to fill the heavens above him, which separate the stars from the mountains; And angels must have worlds to live in; but around him are the mountains, and a gap also separates the mountains from man: what is the connection between man and nature? the plants, the animals ? Hugo's wild attempt at a complete theory of reincarnation is an attempt to connect with stones, plants, and beasts; as Blake puts it:

Great things happen when men and mountains meet.

The queerest fragments of life are the insects — and connection with the insects will span all the gaps; and provide us with the queerest of mysteries and theories.

In Christ alone will man and insects meet, and men and mountains and stars.

But another division is most evident: across all beings runs the line of demarcation: Male and Female. A most popular line of feeling, which science, religion and psychology take amazingly little notice of. The suppression of the Female in official thinking is man's perennial evasion of a problem that the masses are well aware of. The idolisation of the Virgin Mary growing through the ages in spite of, not because of, official thinking is a proof: it is food for thought that the XIXth century should have seen Notre Dame de Lourdes and the XXth Sainte Therese de Lisieux. The cult is growing, not decreasing, as many would have it. But Blake knew of the Female.

Therefore we shall divide our span, from sects to insects, into four sections:

- I. Angels.
- II. Worlds for them to live in.
- III. Christ as the One.
- IV. Mary, the Mother of Christ, and of the World.

Thus will emerge a picture of reintegration, as seen in the depths of the masses to-day, among the dreamers, among the poets — and the poets have always known.

My wife and I (I feel the need of at least one fellow-witness), strolling in Hyde Park, came upon a huge canvas on which was written in large letters something like the following:

A Society for the Conversion of
Zoroastrians, Buddhists, Hindoos, Totemists, Christians, Catholics,
Mahomedans, Jews and other misbelievers.

A man in rags was talking with sublime omniscience. We listened with delight. Here was Blake come to Earth again, and we could feel Victor Hugo with us in the crowd listening to him. This book is, in part, a result of that meeting. Not far from the man in rags, my respected colleague, Professor Rogers, professor of Pastoral Theology at King's College, London, was, very successfully, addressing another crowd. Did he know that a true Professor of Popular Theology was talking on a parallel theme?

The people of Marble Arch were the jury. The verdict is still open; nevertheless, we listened to some purpose: here are most of the facts.

A Personal Note

I HAVE STUDIED for over 30 years (my book on *La Pensee de Milton* was published in 1920) the history of the ideas further investigated here. It has gradually been borne in upon me that the methods used in the history of ideas are extremely insufficient and that another method may well be useful, being complementary to the usual ways of research. The argument does not run: 'Milton expressed this idea, because he had received it from So-and-so, who had also expressed it at this date (before Milton), and we know that Milton had read So-and-so.' Ideas do not run from great man to great man, nor from small man to great man, nor, again, from great men to small men. Milton or Blake or Hugo have had practically no influence on subsequent thought. But the ideas which they expressed, to which they bore witness in their time, continue to evolve apart from them, in ways that might be strange to them. Ideas really evolve in the masses, in unknown people. Some great man at one point of the evolution of the ideas expresses and also distorts a part of what he has adopted, or as he sometimes thinks originated. Then, centuries later perhaps, another great man gives a new shape again to the descendants of those thoughts to which Milton or Blake gave a very partial expression: not to the ideas of Milton or of Blake, but to the descendants of those ideas among which Blake or Milton chose a few to express and distort.

Let us leave aside man, great or small, and concentrate on the ideas. The great poets are the summits of Continents sunk beneath the sea and lost to us. We are in a position to-day to explore the Continent to which we belong now. It will sink in its turn. Nor do we know what parts of it will remain above water. But it is curious and useful to trace resemblances between the animals now living with us and those still to be found in fragments of ancient Continents like Australia. Ours have not derived from those, yet they are connected. Also many a lonely dreamer of to-day will here learn that he has more and higher fellows than he could hope for.

Since we cannot know exactly what Continent Milton belonged to, since on the Mortalists for instance and the sectaries of all sorts that pullulated round him we have very little information; since again of Blake's contemporaries, in so far as they agreed with him, we know so little, let

us investigate at least the state of those ideas to-day. Ideas are evolved in the dark regions of the human spirit, in the masses of mankind, and it is idle to think that they come always from our so-called great men. We shall of course be very far from Hugo, or Blake, or Milton while investigating beliefs of to-day, but we shall be no further from them than while investigating Edmund Spenser's ideas. And the results of our investigations will be much richer. Will it be said thus that an underground current — or sea — exists which gave those two springs in 1800 and 1850 say, and now comes again to light? That would be a mistake, the current or the sea is not underground at all; in fact my difficulty in studying XXth century ideas has not been that I obtained too little evidence, but, on the contrary, that there was too much evidence to be had, and that by far the greater part of it was of very dubious nature. Peguy has well pointed out that the Historians of recent times suffer from having too many documents and not from a scarcity of data : that is an infirmity of the Historian of distant times. By the generosity of Mr. Sidney Arnold, the Editor of the London Psychic Times, who has accumulated a very large body of evidence, I have been allowed to make use of contemporary material largely obtained through the research of Dr. M. Joycey Fisher, which allows us to see something of the present forms of the ideas studied in my previous books on Milton, Blake and Hugo. It will be understood that beyond this the names of the persons concerned cannot at present be given without serious inconvenience. Dr. Fisher, Mr. Arnold and myself bear witness to the absolute sincerity and genuineness of these statements. The texts that come from that source are printed in italics and headed XXth Century Texts.¹

¹ All of those texts date later than 1934, and most of them are statements made between 1940 and 1943.

The expert will no doubt recognise in these documents some of my stylistic peculiarities which, I am told, are not quite English. My old friend A. R. Orage used to say that English prose should be written with a French accent, so, what more can I do?

I must freely own that I took all this down myself and generally condensed it. Oral tradition, and as a rule abundant oral tradition, is in normal use in this region of culture, but I must insist that of any of the subject-matter I am conscientiously innocent. Let us say we are all sitting

on the circumference of time looking at the centre. We see what we see, but we also need to know and like to know what the keener sighted of our fellows sitting one or two or three hundred years to our right can see. To our left is the future towards which we can only cast a rapid glance now and then. But our fellows sitting on the left may like to know what we see. For only the whole of the circumference sees the whole of the centre. Yet, some say, and Milton was one and Blake was another, and Hugo was a third, that by looking at the centre we see something of the future as well as of the past; and indeed should the centre be a reflecting and many faceted crystal, as Malebranche rather suggested, it would be only natural that we should. Some reflections from the left as well as from the right of us would come to us where we are sitting. Perhaps also from above and from below.

An Historical Example: Christ in the Sun

THE MOST IMPORTANT of the doctrines hereafter brought out is the doctrine of the Central Sun, which is God, which is Christ, physically. It happens that in this case we can follow the filiation.

The *Mortalists* were a sect that flourished, in its way, during that fertile period of English popular thought 1640-1660: a period to which can be traced, and found in pamphlet form, all the ideas on which England has lived since. The *Mortalists* have left two pamphlets, in the second of which (1655) I hold that Milton had a hand.² A long passage (p. 33 to 36) in the first pamphlet, *Man's Mortalitie* (1663), explains that light is the first substance from which all things are made, and that the Sun is the chief repository of light.

² See on this *Milton, Man and Thinker* (Dent), p. 279.

'The Sun, the most excellent piece of the whole Creation, the Epitome of God's power, conveyor of life, growth, strength and being to every Creature — author generation is — to say God is not light, is to say he is not.'

The Mortalists are thus called because they believe that man dies wholly (to be resuscitated, it is true) since he has no soul. God is a physical substance, light; Christ, God's Agent in all, is light. Christ is situated in the Sun: when he went up to the Heavens, where could he go back to, physically? Only to the Sun, which is really his body, his being.

Now here is a popular basis on which much of Milton's thought arose. But that popular movement still exists to-day.³ They have forgotten — if they ever knew — about Milton.

³ My friend Professor Malinowski, who in his way was a great man and a great wag, once said to my wife: 'People like me go to the Trobriand Islands in the Pacific, to study the beliefs of the savages — why, all they have to do is to go round London.' He used to live near Regent's Park. I live near Hyde Park, and there I met, after having listened to him carefully, a Mr. Medlicott, a herbalist, and invited him and his wife to tea. Tea is the mystic drink of the English. From his public oratory I had discovered that he was a Mortalist. He introduced me to

the Christadelphians. He had no idea that Milton held the same beliefs, and he was delighted to hear it.

The doctrines of the Mortalists are still being taught in the parks of London, Birmingham and other towns in Great Britain, and in the United States. The sect that preaches them has adopted the name of 'Christadelphians.' It was brought to England about 1850 by a Dr. Thomas, and its chief prophet is Robert Roberts, who published in Birmingham in 1884 a volume entitled *Christendom Astray*. There are roughly 10,000 Christadelphians: 2,000 to 3,000 in London, 4,000 or so in Birmingham, 2,000 or more in the United States and elsewhere. They are organised in *ecclesias*, each of which is administered by a secretary and within which equality reigns; each member can speak with authority. Dr. Thomas, who, like Fludd, was a doctor, came to England from a sect of American Baptists. Robert Roberts has written a *Life of Dr. Thomas* (Birmingham, 1873), but gives no indication of the origin of the ideas put forward by the founder of the modern English sect, whose reading or spiritual affinities are not discussed.

If we remember that the only meeting of Mortalists of which we can find historical traces⁴ was an Anabaptist meeting, the most reasonable hypothesis is that of the survival of Mortalist ideas within some Anabaptist community in the United States. A German scholar, E. Seipp,⁵ has discovered that Benjamin Franklin, during his youth, held ideas which seem to be identical with those that the Mortalists held. Further research will reveal the existence of links, as yet unknown, in the chain between Milton's day and ours. The Mortalists' ideas were very likely driven out of England under the Restoration, survived in the United States, and came back to England in the middle of the XIXth century.

⁴ In Thomas Edward's *Gangraena* (1646, p. 17).

⁵ B. Franklin's *Religion und Ethik*, Giessen, 1932.

Let us run rapidly through the main characteristics of the doctrine:

(1) *Opposition to the idea of the Trinity.*

The Christadelphians refused to admit the idea of the Trinity. I take the two following formulas from one of their pamphlets published in Bournemouth: "That God is not a Trinity of persons, but that there is one

God, and that He is a Unity in essence and person.' 'That Jesus Christ is not the second person of a trinity, but the Son of God, who has manifested God to the world.' 'That the Holy Spirit is not a person (far less the third person of a trinity) but is the power by which God works His will.'

(2) *Pantheism.*

An attitude very similar to that of Milton is maintained by the Christadelphians. One of their starting points is their criticism of the words *ex nihilo*:

Popular theology teaches that God made all things 'out of nothing.' This is evidently one of the many errors that have long passed current as truth. It has proved an unfortunate error; for it has brought physical science into needless collision with the Bible. Physical science has compelled men to accept it as an axiomatic truth that 'out of nothing, nothing can come.' The Bible teaches that all things have been made out of God, not out of nothing. It teaches . . . that God, as the antecedent, eternal power of the universe, has elaborated all things out of Himself. 'Spirit,' irradiating from Him, has, under the fiat of His will, been embodied in the vast material creation which we behold. . . All things are 'in God,' because embraced in that mighty effluence which, radiating from Himself, fills all space, and constitutes the basis of all existence. (*Christendom Astray*, p. 122.)

(3) *Light as a Divine Substance, and the Sun.*

Here we find again old arguments of the Mortalists on the question of the ascension of Jesus Christ. The 1643 pamphlet tells us that Jesus Christ went to sit in the sun after his resurrection. In the XIXth and XXth centuries, the Mortalists have acquired more precise information: astronomy has taught them that the sun itself moves and they have come to the conclusion that the sun is itself a satellite revolving with all the other stars around a centre which is so distant from us that it is invisible to us, but which is nevertheless the source of all the light and all the energy of the world, and which consequently is God himself. God is the physical centre of the Universe and Jesus Christ, when he went up to Heaven, went back to the physical centre.

Paul says in I Tim. vi, 16, '*God dwells in light which no man can approach unto.*' Here is a localisation of the person of the Creator. . . By

His Spirit in immensity-filling diffusion, He is everywhere present in the sense of holding and knowing, and being conscious of creation to its utmost bounds; but in His proper person, all-glorious, beyond human power to conceive, He dwells in Heaven.

Consider the ascension of our Lord, after his resurrection, and mark its tendency in this direction. Luke says (chap, xxiv, 5/1), 'He was parted from them and carried up into Heaven,' and Mark reiterates the statement: 'He was received up into Heaven, and sat on the right hand of God' (Mark xvi, 19). These statements can only be understood on the principle that the Deity has a personal manifested existence in 'The Heavens.' What part of the wide heavens this honoured spot may occupy, we cannot and need not know. Probably it is that great undiscovered astronomical centre to which allusion has already been made. . . .

. . . The power that draws the moon in circular journey round the earth, impels the earth around the sun, and drags even that stupendous and glorious body, with all its attendant planets, in a vast cycle, with the rest of starry creation, around *an UNKNOWN CENTRE*; that is, a centre distinctly indicated in the motion of the stellar universe, but whose locality cannot even approximately be determined on account of the vastness of the motion. . . The suggestion that this Unknown Centre is the source of all power is in significant harmony with what the Scriptures reveal concerning God. . . .

. . . Where is the Father? Does His name not imply that He is The Source? And, being the Source, is He not the Centre of creation? (*Christendom Astray*, pp. 117-122.) Thus light is the divine substance, as it is for Fludd and the Mortalists and Milton.

(4) *Materialism and Mortalism.*

Let us quote once more the Bournemouth pamphlet: 'That man has not an immortal soul, but is a mortal creature, in nature on a parallel with the beasts, and that at death he becomes entirely unconscious and goes to the grave.' The chief text is that of Ecclesiastes iii, 19, 20, which was the head text of the 1643 pamphlet: 'That which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath: so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast.' Basing themselves upon this, the Christadelphians deny the existence of the soul and interpret as Milton

and the Mortalists did all the texts of Scripture in which the words Souls and Spirit are mentioned.

(5) *The Resurrection.*

Robert Roberts devotes several lectures to the description of events which will occur when Christ comes back (chaps, ix to xvi of *Christendom Astray*). Christ will come and found upon earth a political and warlike kingdom, choosing his soldiers from among the elect then to be resurrected from the dead. The armies of Christ will conquer the whole world and will ensure a reign of justice upon earth. This earthly kingdom will last for a thousand years, as with Milton. At the end of that period, the kingdom will undergo a change which adapts it to the necessities of eternity (*Christendom Astray*, p. 3 14). Here again the similarity with Milton's ideas is striking. As far as I have been able to discover by conversations with the adepts of the sect, there can be no trace here of Miltonic influence. The Christadelphians with whom I talked were quite ignorant of the fact that Milton had held their ideas in the XVIIth century. They had thought that the beginning of their sect was Dr. Thomas and 1850, but they gladly received Milton as an adept and are now making use of him in their propaganda.

It may be said, therefore, that the Mortalist sect is well in existence and has only undergone a very slight adaptation to present-day circumstances, such as the change of the body of God from the sun to some central distant star. Some peculiarities of this faith make a certain appeal to a section of the lower-class audiences: in the park the crowd, generally made up of working-men and mostly unemployed, nearly always receives with marked favour the demonstration through the Bible of the non-existence of the soul. This sort of speculation constitutes a happy synthesis between the traditional belief in the Bible, which is a part of the very soul of the English people, and the brand of materialism that Socialists and Bolshevistic propaganda spread among the lower classes. Also, the idea of the foundation by Christ of an earthly kingdom that would cover the whole earth and bring about the final reign of justice is quite in harmony with the aspirations of the classes that think themselves down-trodden. The workers or workless listen therefore with a certain degree of sympathy to Christadelphian teaching and appear to consider that, in any case, these ideas are an improvement on the traditional notions of Christianity; but their sympathy is not yet strong enough to

bring them to join the sect and there seems no present chance of mass conversions to Mortalism. Yet it is interesting to note that the old association that existed in the XVIIth century between the Mortalists and the Levellers (the Bolsheviks of the time) has not quite disappeared. One of the truths of revolutionary mysticism is still alive. However, it seems to me that the Christadelphians to-day are not revolutionaries: they are rather to be compared to one of the many innumerable nonconformist sects which flourish mainly in the lower middle-classes and to which many business people belong. Indeed, I have been assured that important members of some very big business houses belong to the sect, and it is difficult to explain otherwise the origin of the money devoted to quite an active propaganda. The present-day existence of these ideas in an organised body of believers is one of the many examples of the astonishing power of conservation which is one of the characteristics of England and of the people everywhere.

Here also is an example of my contention that thought does not go from great man to great man, but flourishes on its own - and occasionally a great man establishes a connection with the people.