

A COMPANION TO  
MR. WELLS'S  
*OUTLINE OF HISTORY*



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TO  
MY BROTHER-IN-LAW  
JOHN HOGAN  
OF  
NAPA, CALIFORNIA



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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

**M**Y object in these pages is to follow Mr. Wells's *Outline of History*; to point out the principal old-fashioned popular errors, which its author has repeated, and to state the opposing truths with their supporting evidence and reasoning.

If it be asked why I should devote such labour to such a book, I answer that, though ephemeral, the work has had a wide circulation, and is therefore of some momentary effect worth checking, while it is also representative of its type: a sort of newspaper literature commanding wide circulation which repeats as facts for general acceptance theories once respectable and now exploded. To check erroneous statement is always worth while.

At the outset of my task it behoves me to set forth the great talents with which Mr. Wells has been endowed by Almighty God, and especially the talents suitable to the writer of a general history. For, indeed, he seemed from his earlier works admirably fitted for writing a general outline of history, and would, by the consent of all, have been thought apt for the task—had he not undertaken it.

First, he writes very clearly; he practises an excellent economy in the use of words. This, for popular exposition, is essential; and he never fails in it. He never lapses into verbosity. He is direct, simple, clear.

Next, he possesses a sense of time. Now in history nothing

is more valuable. Within his lights, within the measure of his limited instruction, he does see *time* in the right scale ; and that is so rare a sense in any historian that one cannot welcome it too warmly.

Next, we should remark that Mr. Wells has (as his works of fiction amply show) a strong power of making the image he has framed in his own mind arise in the mind of his reader. This is, indeed, his chief talent.

It is a talent extremely rare : the very essential of good imaginative writing, but of particular importance in historical writing. For History, as the great Michelet finely put it, should be a resurrection of the flesh. Were I engaged upon a critique of Mr. Wells's more permanent literary claims I would dilate on this : for such a gift is of quite exceptional power in him. None of our contemporaries possesses it in anything like the same degree. But I am not concerned here with his style, and must reluctantly leave it.

Next, it is worth noting that Mr. Wells is remarkably accurate in his use of reference books and proof-readers. The dates are always right, and the names and all the mechanical details of the book are similarly exact. I have a particular right to praise such a quality because in my own case (as in the case of the great Michelet, whom I have just quoted) I despair of accuracy. My own writings on History are full of misprints : " right " for " left " in descriptions of battles, " north " for " south," " east " for " west," transposed letters and the rest of it. Mr. Wells's writing is peculiar for its freedom from such irritating verbal blemishes.

But much more important than these advantages which he possesses for a writing of an Outline of History is his sincerity. He feels the importance of History to mankind, and especially, I think, to that part of mankind which he knows best—the mankind of the English Home Counties and London Suburbs. He feels instinctively that he and his must now obtain a general view. It is due to Mr. Wells to say that hardly anyone else in that very restricted society feels this as strongly as he does. Our newspapers, our politicians, and even our financiers, cosmopolitan though they are, do not feel the

need of trying to understand the past of Europe and of the world. They are still soaked in what is left of the old self-sufficiency. But Mr. Wells has woken up, and it is to his credit.

I put his sincerity thus last in this category of his advantages for writing History, because it is the chief. He is conspicuously and naively sincere. This good quality is manifest in every line of the work as it first appeared. It is equally apparent in the first part of the new revised edition. He does really believe from the bottom of his heart all that he read in the textbooks of his youth. He does really and from the bottom of his heart believe that the little world he knows is the whole world; and that his doctrines of goodwill, vague thinking, loose loving, and the rest—all soaked in the local atmosphere of his life—may be the salvation of mankind. It is not vanity or pride (though, of course, it is ignorance); it is a perfectly honest conviction. He cannot imagine how things could possibly be otherwise.

He is indeed bewildered and exasperated at the power of Something which he vaguely feels to be present, though he has no sufficient knowledge of it: something different from and at issue with the only world he knows. This "Something" of which he is uncomfortably aware is the Catholic Church. He hopes vaguely that the Church may be dying; he suspects it is not—the doubt worries him. It moves him to hatred, which hatred keeps him ignorant on the main matter of European civilisation; but that hatred is sincere. This sincerity of his, even where it is misguided and untaught, is respectable. He does sincerely desire to do good to his fellow-men within the narrow circle of his experience and understanding.

If the reader will add up all these advantages for the writing of History, he will find them amount, I think, to a very notable sum.

There are few men who could have produced a general history better than Mr. Wells—had he not suffered from certain graver disadvantages to which I shall presently allude. To be sincere is essential. To have the motive of History is

both singular and decisive. To have clarity, economy and a sense of time is rare and of high value. To be accurate in detail of dates, etc., is a most excellent minor virtue in any historian.

Mr. Wells has called me an inveterate antagonist of his. He is wrong. From the first moment that the *Time Machine* appeared, so many years ago, I have consistently praised his talents in private conversation and in public writing, and I shall praise them still.

Before I leave this point of his advantages in the writing of *History*, let me deal very briefly with certain false accusations that have been made against him.

The first and, I think, the stupidest, is that of brevity. I have heard people say, "Here is a man pretending to write a history of the world in a few months and in a few pages," and they have laughed at him on that ground. The accusation is unintelligent. You can give the outline of the history of anything in a sentence, or a paragraph, or a pamphlet, or a book, or an encyclopædia. If Napier, the great historian of the Peninsular War—perhaps the greatest English writer of *History*—had been asked to state in one sentence the outline of that struggle, he might have replied, "The Spanish national feeling enraged with French usurpation was supported by a small English regular army possessed of the command of the sea. These two forces combined achieved, after Napoleon's disaster in Russia, the driving out of the French from the Peninsula." If he had been given a page in which to write the thing he could have added phrases upon the talent of Wellington as a defensive General, the misconception of the French upon the Spanish national feeling, the skill with which the lines of Torres Vedras were drawn, etc. Had he been given fifty pages, he could have added more details still—and so on, up to a shelf full of books. But the outline from such a pen would have been good *History* had it covered ten lines or ten thousand. It is thoughtless to say that a man has no right to give an *outline* of any movement, however great, in any space, however small. The *Catechism* puts the whole vast business of man through time and eternity

into one short phrase, "That we were made to know, love, and serve God, and to be happy with Him for ever." You could add to that all the rest of true philosophy in as much detail as you like, and still expand ; but the original brief outline of less than a score of words remains true. Mr. Wells has a perfect right to produce an outline of general History in one volume, or half a volume, or a page, and, so far as the *manner* of it goes, he has done it excellently : the drawing is firm, the intention honest ; it is the shape of the Outline that is wrong.

Again, he is wrongly accused of superficiality. That is an accusation made by people who see—what, indeed, is obvious—that the book has no lasting value, and that therefore they can call it hard names with impunity, secure against the judgment of posterity. The book is ephemeral, certainly ; but no honest critic can call it superficial. Mr. Wells's book is not superficial at all. On the contrary, it goes to the roots of things, and considers what is really important to mankind. One may indeed call the writer superficial in so far as he knows nothing of beauty or tradition—that is due to his unavoidable limitations ; but superficial his effort is not. It is as searching in the matter of cause and effect as its writer can make it. That is not saying very much, for its writer has never had the opportunity for digging deep into cause and effect ; but the book does not suffer from that prime mark of superficiality—*indifference*. Mr. Wells means to say all that is in him, and if there is not very much in him, that is not his fault.

He has a neutral quality, neither an advantage nor a disadvantage in the writing of History ; or, perhaps, rather an advantage than a disadvantage, and that is, an intense nationalism. An English scientist is supreme. An English book changes the world. An English mode of thought is self-evidently the best. The Catholic Church itself is hateful mainly because it is foreign. Such nationalism is often the unconscious accompaniment of limitation, but, upon the whole, it serves the historical sense. After all, any worker must be himself. He cannot create unless there is a flame

within him. Such flames arise from intense conviction, and the historian steeped in his own country does better, in my judgment, despite his inevitable prejudices, than one who pretends attachment to nothing : for attachment to nothing is sterility. The three great historians whom good judges most admire were all intense lovers of their country—an Athenian, a Frenchman and a Scotsman.

Now for the disadvantages.

The first and most glaring of these is Provincialism.

But here I must warn my readers that they will not discover in this criticism any of those personal descriptions or offensive allusions to private life by which our vulgarians aim at extending their large circulations. I am concerned only with this one book of Mr. Wells's, and with History and Religion in it ; not with domestic details in the Author's life or the caricatures of them. The mental formation and social motive of an author must indeed be alluded to in any judgment of his work, as must his defects of instruction or judgment. The rest is irrelevant. I have even, in revising the text, cut out anything which might be *mistaken* for a personal allusion, and leave it, I believe, confined wholly to the criticism of historical statement, method and motive.

I have said, then, that with so many qualifications for writing a popular general History, Mr. Wells suffers from defects which ruin it ; and the first of these is that his book is Provincial.

The word " Provincial " is a hard one ; but it exactly applies to Mr. Wells's History ; therefore it must be used.

I find it the more difficult to use this necessary and precise word here because I know Mr. Wells, from an acquaintance of many years, to be abnormally sensitive to any printed judgment of his work.

Such extreme sensitiveness is not rare in men of vivid imagination, especially if they cultivate its literary expression. But in this case it is quite exceptionally developed ; and I naturally hesitate to offend it.

Greatly as I admire Mr. Wells's scientific romances, and

have always admired them, I am compelled to use exact terms in this criticism. I cannot do otherwise, because the truth of History is a sacred thing—the most sacred next to the truths of Religion. If History is falsely written, the reader not warned of it obtains a distorted view of human action and comes to misunderstand all the most essential things of life, including Religion itself; and Mr. Wells's History is obviously and fatally distorted through Provincialism.

Provincialism does not mean a limitation of experience to some one small department of life—we are all of us subjected to such limitations, and any man's petty personal experience is always infinitely small compared with the total possible field of knowledge. Nor does Provincialism mean seeing things through the medium of one's own habitat and character, both necessarily limited. All men must see, and can only see, through some such limited medium.

No, Provincialism means thinking that one "knows all about it"; Provincialism means a satisfied ignorance: a simple faith in the non-existence of what one has not experienced. Provincialism involves a contempt for anything foreign and, what is worse, an actual denial of things which the provincial person has not been made familiar with.

It is Provincialism in a yokel when he laughs at you for not knowing the way to his local railway station. It is not Provincialism to say, "I don't know about this. It is new to me. I must examine it before I accept it." But it is Provincialism to say, as the Frenchman in the story said of Joan of Arc, "It can't be true. If it were I should have heard of it."

It is not Provincialism to say, "I far prefer the atmosphere and institutions of my own country to those of any other." But it is Provincialism to think that the Cathedral of Seville must necessarily be inferior to the Crystal Palace because it was built by Dagoes, and that anyone who thinks otherwise is either a humbug or a fool.

It would not have been provincial in Mr. Wells to have written "the character of Napoleon repels me; give me

rather the honest Englishman of my acquaintance than this hard and profound Southerner"; but it is dreadfully provincial to belittle Napoleon's immense capacities.

It would not be Provincialism in me, who do not know German, to say that Heine in translation had not moved me, and that when the German of Heine was read aloud to me it seemed to me harsh compared with the exquisite music of Keats; but it would be gross Provincialism in me were I to lay it down, ignorant as I am of German, that Heine was no poet, that his reputation was exaggerated, and that, say, Schiller was his superior in the management of the German tongue; yet that is how Mr. Wells treats Napoleon. He knows nothing at all of Military History, and yet he presumes to criticise the talent of Napoleon.

Now this vice of Provincialism runs right through Mr. Wells's *Outline of History* from beginning to end.

The moment he is on a thing that is not of his own religion and social experience he rejects it or blunders on it. I shall have many occasions for pointing this out in my criticism of the book, but I may mention here, by way of example, one out of these many, to which I shall return. This is Mr. Wells's hopelessly provincial attitude towards the fragmentary record of the Gospels. He can only think of the events recorded as though they were taking place in the time and place he himself has known—they took place, as a fact, in the first century and in the Roman Empire. He imagines them taking place in a world where the supernatural elements of the story could only have been introduced gradually and after the death of the founder; whereas, in point of fact, the atmosphere of that time was in every class of society especially apt to the reception of the supernatural. There was scepticism among them—but the scepticism of society in the first century was not like our scepticism and—quite apart from the question of whether such a state of mind were wise or unwise—the men of the first century accepted the Thaumaturge and expected the marvellous in connection with religion.

The next disadvantage which I find in Mr. Wells for the writing of an outline of History is one which he has developē



somewhat late in his life, which is more and more warping his writing as a whole, and which is quite fatal to any attempt at History. This is his entertaining unreasoning reactions which one may now without exaggeration term rabid.

These reactions have a common root. They are all provoked by anything *traditional*. It is *Tradition*, its usage and Nobility, which irks our author. Lineage offends him, and whatever is venerable and great.

He suffers these reactions against the Gentry—especially the Gentry of his own country—against soldiers, great military characters in history, against certain contemporaries of his, but, most of all, against the Catholic Church. To be thus provoked to action by others—not to direct one's pen of one's own initiative, but to have it jerked into action by the strength of another—is weakening to all authors, but it is death to the historian. For History, of all forms of writing, most demands a general and balanced action of the mind, free from all control save that of a calm, inward judgment.

Here I would have my reader note the exact words I use : for I use them with discretion and after having fully weighed them. I do not mean that the dislike of a particular type—such as that of the English gentleman—or of certain individuals, or of a powerful institution, such as is the Catholic Church—necessarily makes a man a bad historian. Every vivid writer must have affections and distastes, and History that is not vivid is not worth writing. But when the distaste becomes *unreasoning* through violence, when it has that quality which we call “rabid”—a quality of impulse and unrestraint, a quality which makes men yell or pile on superlatives or descend to mere insult—then you have a quality useful perhaps in pamphleteering, but fatal to the reputation of an historian.

I do not mean that this quality is to be deplored in all writing or speaking : far from it. It is of great value in rhetoric ; it will often move men in the direction desired ; it is often justly applied to something evil against which an honest indignation is felt. What I do say is that in History it is out of place in proportion to its being unreasoning :

and unreason is the very essence of these instinctive reactions. Cobbett's *History of the Reformation*, for instance, is a first-rate piece of literary work, but bad history, because in his hatred of the Reformation he loses his sense of proportion and the faculty for weighing evidence.

To judge by his books, Mr. Wells came up against the English ideal of a Gentleman early in life. He probably from the first thought the worship of that ideal harmful. Very many will here agree with him. But later on he became obsessed by the thing. He came to hate everything connected with what used to be called in England "the governing class." He grew to hate Latin and Greek because these are, or were, the basis of a gentleman's schooling; soldiering, because it was by tradition a gentleman's profession—he hates it all, even down to the spurs worn by officers.

But Mr. Wells's violent and blind reaction against the Catholic Church is a much more important matter. Here he is quarrelling with the very matter of History; for the foundation and career of the Catholic Church is the chief event in the history of mankind.

To judge (again) by his books, Mr. Wells seems to have come up against the Catholic Church late in life—he does not yet really know what it is. But here, again, he found a power opposed to many ideas which he cherished, and (more exasperating) to many things which he sympathized with and practised. Perhaps he felt that in a world turned Catholic a man like himself would have difficulty in carrying on, and therefore came to hate the idea of a world turned Catholic as a fish would hate the idea of a world without water. But this mere impulse—this mere instinctive kick, lacking sufficient knowledge and lacking reasoning power—this mere attack without any sufficient ammunition of instruction—this mere impatience—makes it impossible for the man who suffers thus to write History as it should be written.

For instance, his hatred of the Church makes him wish to believe that its influence is dying. Instead of looking around him, and seeing that Catholic influence over the

more intelligent of modern men is markedly increasing, he shuts his eyes and screams his passionate refusal to accept so plain, if unpalatable, a fact. It has recently led him to write that the offer of larger income would make Catholic priests pour out of the Church *en masse* : a judgment clearly ridiculous.

Again, in dealing with the Galileo case, he will have it that the advance of physical science broke down the Catholic scheme. The motive of such a statement is clearly to suggest that the Faith is incompatible with real knowledge and that all extension of ascertained truth tends to destroy the Christian Religion.

But that is not rational history ; it lacks even elementary instruction ; a schoolboy ought to know better than to write thus. The historical process whereby so much of Europe was lost to European religion was not *first* an advance of physical science, *then* a loosening of the Catholic authority, and, *lastly*, a wide denial of that authority and the establishment of various heresies. The historical process was just the other way—*first* came the violent explosion of spiritual revolt and anarchy which nearly wrecked our civilization altogether ; *then*, later, a large but not complete recovery ; then, *last*, and principally in societies which had retained or recovered the Catholic culture, a new and remarkable advance in physical science.

It is not historically possible that astronomical discovery in the seventeenth century, the telescope, and the great new development of mathematics, could lead to the denial of Catholic doctrine in the sixteenth. Not only is it impossible in History ; it could not possibly be true in psychology. No one with an elementary knowledge of Catholic spirit and doctrine could conceive that doctrine and spirit to be affected by any discovery in the plane of physical science. You might as well say that a man's judgment on his duties to his country would be affected by a new ordnance survey, or his admiration of Bach by the discovery of zinc photography for printing music.

With all this I will deal later in more detail when I come to

those parts of Mr. Wells's work which specially show his general animus against the Faith. Meanwhile, let me conclude with another disadvantage which I find in him for the task he has undertaken. It is the inability he has shown for consulting the right people.

It is a laudable thing in any popular novelist who has acquired a large public and can attract its attention to set out with the sincere intention of instructing his fellow-beings, even in a department wherein he has had hitherto no practice.

Thus some such popular novelist might say to himself : " I think people ought to know more about the laws of health. I will therefore use my wide circulation and my large audience for the purpose of spreading knowledge upon hygiene." There is nothing blameworthy in this, nor need the effort be insufficient. The popular novelist, being hitherto ignorant of modern medicine, would have to go for instruction to men who were already experienced in the matter : he would have to read certain textbooks ; he would have to " get up the subject," and might, if he selected his tutors and guides with a good *flair* for the right sources, produce a really useful elementary treatise upon a matter of which he had, till lately, known nothing. His name being well known to the multitude, his little effort would probably have a wide sale, and that wide sale would do nothing but good. But it is essential that he should make himself acquainted with the difference between what was certain and what was hypothetical ; with the most recent debates upon disputed points ; with at least the main arguments on either side, etc., and it would further be essential that he should hear the latest results of research. For though a theory is not better than another merely for being later than that other, yet as there are new *facts* continually being discovered, and new arguments concluded, their bearing upon theory must be appreciated.

Now, Mr. Wells has been very remiss indeed in this duty of consulting the right authorities, before sitting down to write even so elementary a history as this " Outline " of his. He had, at the outset, not more faculty for writing an elementary history than any other best-seller might have for writing a

book on elementary mathematics ; indeed, a good deal less, for our schools give a certain amount of elementary training in mathematics, but as yet no training to speak of in history. But it was manifestly apparent from the first issue of his book that Mr. Wells was rarely given the latest historical theories, let alone the latest historical discoveries.

What is more extraordinary in a man so interested in such things, he does not know the modern trend of controversy in Pre-history and Anthropology. He remains away back in what I may call "the early Golden-Bough-Period"—that of Grant Allen's *Evolution of the Idea of God* in Pre-history. From internal evidence it would seem, as I shall point out in the text, that his studies in these matters stopped short—or at any rate crystallized—in 1893, the date of Ball's book on Croll's Theory of Glaciation and of the Weissmann articles in the *Contemporary Review*.

And I am appalled to discover that he knows nothing of all the modern work against Darwinism, in which system—that is, in Darwinian Natural Selection—he retains the simple faith of the day—over thirty-five years ago—when he was "doing" elementary science in a class.

It is the same with the recorded history of Europe. His informers referred him to no books wherein he might learn what force that Catholic Church was which made Europe. He did not compare—perhaps he never heard of—the various sources ascribed to our main political institutions, and the increasing evidence for their Latin origin.

Now these disadvantages taken together have ruined the book, and, as a preliminary summary of its character, I can say to my readers :

"Mr. Wells's sketch of History is not insincere in spirit ; it is simply out of drawing from lack of common instruction. He has not kept abreast of the modern scientific and historical work. He has not followed the general thought of Europe and America in matters of physical science. While, in history proper, he was never taught to appreciate the part played by Latin and Greek culture, and never even introduced to the history of the early Church.

“And this is the more remarkable as he assures us that he has a wide knowledge of modern languages, in which he reads French like English, and can handle German, Spanish, Italian, and even Portuguese.

“With all this Mr. Wells suffers from the very grievous fault of being ignorant that he is ignorant. He has the strange cocksureness of the man who only knows the old conventional textbook of his schooldays and mistakes it for universal knowledge.”

So much for the general consideration of the author, and of what he has attempted, and failed to do. I next turn to the particular consideration of points in his writing which will illustrate the truth of the contentions I have advanced in this Introduction.

## CHAPTER II

### MR. WELLS AND THE CREATION OF THE WORLD

MR. WELLS sets out to recite not only History properly so-called, the known and conscious records of the human race, but also Pre-history, i.e. our knowledge, little as it is, of life on this earth prior to the advent of man or his predecessors, and of man himself prior to any surviving record.

In the department of Pre-history the first task which meets the writer is that of telling the order in which, according to the geological record, the rocks composing the earth's surface were presumably laid down, and the order in which the vestiges of life appear in these rocks.

This task Mr. Wells has successfully performed. Anyone can put down the main known facts in their order, for it is a mere matter of reference to encyclopædias ; but Mr. Wells has done so with concision, lucidity and accuracy : qualities which are apparent here as throughout the work. He is even careful to modify phrases which might be too absolute. For instance, he tells us that astronomers "give us reason to believe the slowing down of the rotation of the earth," instead of saying, as many another would, "have proved. . . ." He also acts with sense in giving very wide limits to the guess-work of modern physicists upon the scale of time by which we should judge the geological process, though he does not warn his readers, as he should do, that it is only guess-work, and that the deductions upon which it depends are taken from first principles, of which many are incapable of verification and others mere hypotheses.

It is, perhaps, asking too much of our author to adopt a

strictly scientific attitude: that is, to distinguish between hypothesis and proved fact. And this is particularly true of a study so full of hypothesis as geology. Men pretend to vastly more knowledge than they have in that branch of knowledge—as, for instance, on the rate of stratification. A man cannot but be influenced by his own time, and Mr. Wells is influenced by the unscientific loose thinking and insufficiently supported affirmations of his generation and place.

The chief mark of our time is a decline in the logical faculty, and with that decline goes an increasing inability to distinguish between what is proved, what is probable and what is possible only. It is in fields (such as Pre-history) where very little indeed is known, and where there is immeasurable room for making things up out of one's head, that the distinction between fact and fancy is most easily lost. Only a minority in Europe have appreciated as yet how small a proportion of what passes for ascertained fact upon the remote past is really known, and how vast a proportion is based upon mere analogy or such quite unproved assumptions. Among our older men dogmatic affirmation of much that is already disproved, and much that is increasingly doubtful, continues. Such a profound remark as Ferrero's "The men of the nineteenth century thought they knew everything, we know that they knew nothing," would shock them to hear.

Allowing, then, for that natural tendency towards repeating in age what one was dogmatically taught in youth, Mr. Wells's précis of the geological process is quite exceptionally good.

He also states clearly our present ignorance upon the origin of life; our failure, so far, to find a link between organic and inorganic; and even our inability to affirm—what is presumable upon analogy and was taken for granted in antiquity and during the Middle Ages—that living proceeds from dead matter.

All this done, however, Mr. Wells tackles the fundamental question of Creation—and here, at once, the fundamental



weakness of the book appears : at its very outset on page 11.

The author becomes deeply concerned with a discussion peculiar to his own local society, and of a sort so childish that a thinking man has difficulty in taking it seriously : the discussion between the old-fashioned Protestant who thinks of creation as a sort of conjuring trick and the new-fashioned one who cannot believe in creation at all because he has discovered (rather late in the day) that things grow.

The old-fashioned Bible Christian thought that the Hen appeared mature in a twinkling, out of air, like the mango tree of the Indian jugglers. His newly enlightened son has discovered that it comes from an egg. Mr. Wells, upon this page 11, appears in the rôle of the newly enlightened, and is most earnest to convince his erring and belated fellows that life can have come into existence as a "natural" process : an idea which he conceives as repugnant to "religious" minds. It is astonishing that either of these two back-waters of culture should survive : the back-water of the Bible Christian enlightened by elementary "science," which gets rid of a Creator, and the back-water of the not yet enlightened Bible Christian, who can't think of creation except as the sudden appearance of familiar objects out of surrounding space. We may wonder with amusement what Mr. Wells would make of such a Catholic sentence as "God made this oak." I suppose he would think it a confusion of acorns with God. He should read St. Thomas.

However, though the philosophy is pitiable, the précis of familiar facts in this summary of observed origins is very well done, and all these statements, though they are no more than what you may find in any popular textbook, are put much better than in most.

So much for Mr. Wells's brief summary of the geological evidence as given in all our encyclopædias and books of reference. It is most readable, and accurately presents the ascending complexity of vegetable and animal life in the past.

But the man writing upon this process has another and far

harder task to perform than the mere cataloguing of facts set down in textbooks. There comes a moment when he must try to solve a certain problem : when he must *think*. He must face a question which is as old as human enquiry, and which searches the very depths of his own nature and of the world around him. It is this :—

“ Under the action of what Force did this difference between various kinds of living things come to be ? Under what Cause did the organism differentiate and meet its environment, and develop into its myriad forms each fulfilling a function ? What *mind* was at work, if any ; and if no *mind*, then what ? ”

*That* question is the one capital enigma, the pre-eminent riddle of life set to the enquiry of man. For centuries upon centuries he has examined it and has found no reply, save in mystery.

A lifetime ago a group of men, intolerant of fundamental philosophical enquiry and intolerant of mystery, thought they had found the answer in a very simple and wholly mechanical method which explained Evolution in a new way. They called this method “ Natural Selection,” and thereby—as they hoped—all necessity for design in the universe could be eliminated.

What that theory of Natural Selection was, I describe in a moment. It must suffice here to say that it made Evolution subject to blind chance—and that to-day it is quite dead.

It is characteristic of Mr. Wells's work that now, in 1926, he still gives in all simplicity that exploded answer, which was so fashionable in the nineties. Mr. Bernard Shaw said the other day, with native charity, that no one under seventy still believed in Natural Selection. Page 16 of this new Part I of Mr. Wells's book shows that Mr. Shaw estimated too highly the intelligence and culture of his contemporaries.

To trot out Natural Selection at this time of day as the chief agent in Evolution is almost like trotting out the old dead theory of immutable and simple elements in a popular chemistry. That is what was taught as chemistry when Mr.

Wells was young, and Natural Selection was what was taught as the cause of differentiation between living beings when Mr. Wells was young. The one error is to-day nearly as obsolete as the other. There is still continuing the remains of an obstinate defence, urged by the strongest of human motives, religion: for there are still those who agree with Weissmann that Natural Selection must be maintained at all costs, and with no matter what fantastic affirmations, because "It is the only alternative to Design" in the Universe—that is, to God.

But there can be no doubt which way the battle has turned.

When Driesch said, twenty long years ago, "Darwinism is dead," he was hardly premature.

To quote him now is to repeat a commonplace.

Let me not be misunderstood. I should not criticize Mr. Wells for ignorance if he had written thus: "Many explanations have been given of how Evolution has worked. The Ancients ascribed it to some inherent power in living things which they called 'entelechy,' i.e. the power to realize an end. The eighteenth century, led by Lamarck, tended at its close as did the earlier nineteenth to something similar, but emphasized the will and effort of the organism. In the mid-nineteenth century there was proposed by Darwin and Wallace a new mechanical explanation which got rid of design and of 'an end' to which organisms worked. Its authors called it 'Natural Selection.' For a short time it was so completely the fashion that it seemed impregnable. But Criticism soon began, and grew menacing by the end of the century. With the opening of the twentieth this Criticism had grown greater by far in volume and force, especially in America and on the Continent. To-day it seems overwhelming. None the less, I hold to those who with many modifications still maintain the old theory."

But Mr. Wells did not write thus, with an appreciation of the position as it stands to-day. He set down Natural Selection in all its crudity as an admitted final truth, a piece

of unquestioned modern science, and left his unfortunate readers under that impression.

To do that is morally inexcusable save on the plea of ignorance of all that vast bulk of criticism with which the average educated man is generally acquainted—at least as to its main results. And if he plead such ignorance as his excuse, then he admits himself quite unfitted to put forward even the simplest outline of Evolution to-day.

The point is one of first-class importance, for it illustrates at once the fixity and the weakness of that anti-Catholic—and irrational—spirit which will support any thesis however blown upon, so it be still of some service against the Christian Faith.

Let me give as briefly as possible the story of this old-fashioned theory of Natural Selection—which seemed so convenient for getting rid of God—and of its breakdown. I will first note the motives under which it arose during the mid-nineteenth century; next describe the theory itself; after that, give the arguments by which it was more and more shown to be untenable. Those arguments have long been familiar to all educated Europe.

Organic Genetic Evolution, i.e. the theory that one kind of living being arises from another kind, is as old as human observation and human thought. Common experience suggests it to everyone, because we know of no way in which living beings can appear upon earth save as the product of other living beings.

When, therefore, men first took notice of, say, donkeys and horses, or tigers and cats, they naturally said to themselves, "These things look as though they had a common ancestor." The next step is to suppose that there would be a common ancestor to more widely different types. It is even admissible, though not probable, that all life on this earth sprang from one very simple origin. Our old Pagan forefathers—those of them who were civilized—discussed all this centuries ago, and the Fathers of the Christian Church spoke in the same terms.

Though criticism, and instruction in physical science as well, declined in the Dark Ages, and though popular imagination had then, as ever, a simple imagery, the idea was not so much contradicted or denied as neglected.

In the Middle Ages it reappears, very vaguely, under the conception of Mediate Creation. God is the Creator of every living thing. Yet every living thing has a parent or parents. That is an example of Mediate Creation; and it at once suggests the idea that groups as well as individuals might originate in the same way. Indeed, St. Thomas, the great teacher of the Middle Ages, by concluding exceptionally that the creation of Man was *not* mediate, but direct, implies the possibility or probability of Mediate Creation for organisms other than Man.

With the growth of Modern Science in the eighteenth century full discussion of the Idea was revived, and from a hundred and fifty years ago Evolution was discussed throughout educated Europe. During the nineteenth century a great mass of evidence was accumulated in its favour, and to-day it is almost (but not quite) universally held by specialists who have authority to speak upon such matters.

It is true that the process Organic Evolution may have taken becomes more and more doubtful as modern research and debate advance.

Have the various species of Plants and Animals branched out from one original living cell or from many? It is uncertain.

Have the new origins of life appeared in succession and separately at long intervals of time? It is possible or probable.

Is transformism, that is, the change of one fully-developed mature and complex type into another, true? For instance, could a Reptile have changed into a Bird? Half a lifetime ago nearly everybody answered "Yes." To-day—especially since the great work of Vialleton—more and more people are answering "No."

These and any number of other doubts and criticisms—and some disproofs—have arisen in our time, though

Evolution in the widest sense of the word—that is, the doctrine that living things are genetically connected, is still the main doctrine taught and held in Biology.

But Evolution in general is not the point. It involves no fundamental issue. It clashes with no theology or philosophy, unless we dignify by those terms an attachment to pictures of ready-made beasts in the family Bible. It is when men come to discuss *how* the difference between the varying types arose that we enter at once upon a quarrel between opposing philosophies, Christian and anti-Christian. No Catholic, nor indeed any man possessed of a philosophy, would trouble himself much over the confirmation or disproof of Evolution. Evolution simply means continuous growth; a tree growing from a seedling is an example of evolution; growth is the universal phenomenon apparent in ourselves and all organic life around us, and to discover it generalized is no shock, but rather an extension of the obvious.

But when we come to ask *how* and *why* the vast variety of living things past and present grew and differentiated as they did: *whether a Spirit is at work or no: whether the process be intended or motiveless—then* the essential quarrel is engaged between those for whom the Universe is blind and those who see it to be the work of God.

That quarrel, which had long been acute in the general field of philosophy, became acute in the particular field of Biology in the late middle of the nineteenth century—over sixty years ago.

Darwin and Wallace and their school belonged to a generation—lived in a place and a time—to which the mysterious action of Will upon the Universe—and, indeed, any mystery—was incomprehensible. Mystery in any form the typical nineteenth-century “Liberal”—as he was called abroad—rejected; and it has been well said that his very politics were founded on the idea that even human life was not mysterious.

We must remember that they had but just escaped—most of their fellow-citizens were still plunged in—the base Puritan

superstitions of the seventeenth century. The *Vision*, the *Shrine*, the *Miracle*, the *Supernatural in Sacred Place and Thing*, they had become too dull to grasp. It was inevitable that such particular rejections of mystery should lead at last to the more general rejection of Divine Action. At the same time they were in reaction against the old Puritan Bibliolatry, which, in their ignorance of Catholic truth, they thought of as "orthodoxy."

It occurred to them, after doing a great deal of work upon the evidence for transformism—that is, for the change of one living type into another—that the (to them) impossible idea of Design could be eliminated; and it was under the more or less conscious action of a prejudice against Design that they propounded this theory of Natural Selection.

The process of their prejudice against Design moved as follows:—

"We must never have recourse to Mind in order to explain the Universe; that would be 'unscientific'; for to be 'scientific' is to allow for nothing but material causes. Therefore the appearance of separate kinds of living beings must come from blind chance, or at least *mechanically*. At all costs we must get rid of the idea of Design; of a desired End conceived and maintained in a Creative Will. Here is a theory which will make the whole process entirely mechanical and dead." Incidentally, it made it possible to get rid of the necessity for a Creator. It was upon that aspect and use of the theory that the enemies of religion immediately seized, and it is precisely because it is supposed to get rid of God the Creator (and Judge) that some defence for Natural Selection is still being kept up, especially (in part from Patriotism) among Darwin's fellow-citizens, but also abroad.

Darwin thought (and so did Wallace, who was a man of exactly the same type, belonging to the same generation and surroundings) that since the mysterious action of Will in the Universe was out of tune with his own mood, the evident order and purpose of organic life must be explained in another way, by the action of dead, unintelligent forces.

Whether God could create, did He choose, by the action of blind chance, trained theologians may decide. But it is obvious that if a system of blind chance were demonstrably true, those great modern intellects who say in their hearts "There is No God" have a powerful weapon, in the Theory of Natural Selection. They seized that weapon with gusto; and they are still desperately clinging to the handle though the business part of the instrument has long been battered shapeless by their conquering opponents.

Here I must pause to make an important point. I have said that the motives which made the first theorizers incline to an atheist solution were not consciously atheist. Indeed, it was characteristic of their generation that they could not define their own first principles. Further, they lived at a time when Christian principles were still powerful around them in the Protestant middle classes of England, and probably they honestly desired to combine incompatibles.

I want to make this point quite clear, because it is one upon which there has been a great deal of misunderstanding.

Neither Darwin nor Wallace, nor a host of other lesser known people who were all theorizing in much the same way a lifetime ago, were philosophic atheists after the type of the great Lucretius.\* They were not of that calibre. None of them could think out a consistent philosophical theory, true or false. Most of them would have told you, in a muddle-headed sort of way, that they reverently believed in a Creator, while actively preaching the crudely mechanical and accidental processes which alone they could grasp.

But though these men characteristically confused themselves about what they did and did not ultimately believe (or rather feel) in religion—i.e. what their ultimate philosophy really was—any modern reader, especially any reader with the clear intelligence of the Catholic, can see what was running through their emotional brains. The idea of Design

\* It is more accurate to say of Lucretius that he did not deny the Gods: only their action on our affairs. But the great Epicurean philosophy of Antiquity was essentially Atheist, though in a form far nobler than the vulgar "No Goddism" of yesterday.



was intolerable to them. It was inextricably connected in their minds with what *they* thought the word "Creation" meant. They had been taught in their childhood that "Creation" meant millions and millions of quite separate, mature, complicated things appearing suddenly, unconnected one with the other: magic full-grown oak trees without acorns to grow from.

To get rid of this folly they took refuge in another, and produced that theory of "Natural Selection" which seemed to them to account for the different types of living beings without having to admit a conscious and permanent Divine Intention. It seemed to them to solve, in a simple fashion any child could understand, the awful and ancient riddle which has perplexed Europe for certainly three thousand years, and perhaps much more. To the question, "How did differentiation among living organisms come to be?" they thought they had got the answer on what was virtually an atheist basis—a getting rid of intelligence from the Universe. They would not admit a Divine Plan of the oak tree and an inherent power, tending towards that end, implanted in the acorn. They called a profound view of this sort "mysticism," using that word as a term of abuse—and using it, of course, in a totally wrong meaning. No, they would get their oak and elm out of some general parent tree without an Idea being at work, without Fiat, without an underlying Spirit.

So they propounded the theory of Natural Selection.

The theory of Natural Selection is this:

No living thing can possibly be *exactly* like its parent: for every organism is individual. The difference may be very slight, but it is always present.

Now, it is also obviously true, from experience, that the conditions under which organic beings live—what is called their environment, i.e. their surroundings—change unceasingly. That again is necessarily true if the material Universe be, as it is, under the condition of Motion. These surroundings are perpetually changing slightly; sometimes they change

suddenly and catastrophically, as, for instance, when there is a flood.

Now, some particular change—as, for instance, the climate getting gradually colder or wetter or dryer—will suit some particular small variation apparent in a certain proportion of any given set of organic beings. For instance, out of a million sheep-like animals, ten thousand must in different degrees have very slightly woollier coats than the common run, and, if the climate is slowly getting colder, this minority of woollier sheep are better suited to the change.

All organisms die ; but those better-suited to a particular surrounding condition have a greater chance of survival than those less suited. (This dreadfully self-evident truth was solemnly set down in an academic formula : it was called “Survival of the Fittest,” or, more clumsily, “Survival of the Fitter ” !) Bit by bit, therefore, through the mechanical process of the slightly less fit specimens dying off more rapidly and leaving presumably less progeny, while a small number of slightly more fit lived longer and presumably left more progeny inheriting their advantages, the type of animal could be, and was, by the blind action of matter and with no necessity for its own or any other will, and with no design in the process at all, adapted to the changing condition. Since conditions are always changing, organic types (i.e. living things, vegetable and animal) were perpetually conforming to their environment by this process of “Survival of the Fittest,” wherein a *mechanical* process *inevitably* and *blindly* picked out—*selected*—(whence the term “Natural Selection ”) those who were to survive and form a new type. In this fashion all organic things came to be what they are at any particular moment *and also to change perpetually into new things.*

This doctrine of Natural Selection was thus made to explain the diversity and the unity of the living world.

Let us see how some simple organism, living on the tidal belt of the sea-shore (between high and low water-mark), and able both to exist in the air and under water will, according

to the doctrine of Natural Selection, differentiate out and produce a land animal. Out of a million of these organisms there are, perhaps, ten thousand in which you can discover some slight superiority, present in varying degrees among them, for standing a long dry spell. There are another ten thousand who show in varying degrees some tiny, almost imperceptible, superiority of standing a long spell without air under water. Raising of the land or the set of winds gives a season of abnormally low high tides. The animals just on the upper edge of the tidal belt die out for lack of their regular tidal supply of water, except some few who can, having the slight differential advantage apparent among them, stand the strain of living so long in the air. The progeny of these, again, will tend to survive according to the degree in which they can stand the lack of water about them. The less fit for air-life are gradually sifted out by this natural process; the more fit for air-life survive.

There is the theory of "Natural Selection" in its broadest outline. It was excellently adapted to the generation for which it was produced. It looked as simple as the old theory of Free Trade did in economics, or the old theory of Universal Suffrage in politics, or any other of the old crude mechanical conceptions born of the denial of mystery. It accounted for everything straightforwardly and at a blow. If you used its loose phraseology repeatedly, without ever gripping the full implication of the terms, without the capacity for holding a theory down hard and examining it closely, it seemed perfectly sufficient—and the old riddle was solved.

"Natural Selection," "the Survival of the Fittest," the very gradual and quite blind, purposeless, undesigned forcing of the living organism into correspondence with its material environment, the formation of the living thing by the pressure of the non-living—of death—was sufficiently proved. All the old ideas of Design, the looking for mysterious forces at work in the world, and for a Mind behind it all in order to explain the suitability of each organ to its function, could be scrapped. There was no creative God required. Those who wanted to

be rid of Him could (and did) say that men had only imagined such a Being from an ignorant projection of themselves on to the Universe. It was not life that transformed itself to meet and master matter, but (as Delage admirably put it in his refutation of Darwinism) matter which, through death, ordered life.

Such was the theory of Natural Selection.

Now, as we are about to examine why this theory of Natural Selection is untenable, and to discover why it burst after so very short a fashionable run, we must, by way of preliminary, clearly understand its implications. We must understand—what its original promoters did not—the things which, whether you know it or not, you are accepting when you accept Natural Selection. After that we can understand the arguments which have destroyed it.

Put as I have just put it, and as it used to be put in all the old-fashioned textbooks of Mr. Wells's youth, it sounds not only simple, but convincing. It is when one looks into what it implies that the old Darwinian theory of Natural Selection gets shaky.

#### THE IMPLICATIONS OF NATURAL SELECTION

(1) In the first place, note that, according to this theory, *there can be no stable type ; there can be no fixity of species*. All is in flux. Environment is never exactly the same, even for two days at a time, let alone for two successive thousand years. Very long slow changes in climate, or any other factor of environment, would necessarily involve long, unceasing, slight transformation, never halting. The theory *necessarily* demands a living world in a state of slow but *incessant* transformation, with no fixed mature results at the end of development.

It is only by the loosest sort of thinking, and by substituting imagination for close reasoning, that the ideas of Natural Selection and permanent stable types can be reconciled.

Thus some have said that the Seal was "sifted out" by Natural Selection, got more and more suited to its habitat

by "survival of the fittest," until it had no further need for adaptation : it was at last perfectly adapted to the purposes of its life.

Well, one of the most pressing needs of the seal under the conditions of its life is to scramble on to the icefloes in order to escape from its most deadly enemy. It does so most clumsily and ineffectually by the help of its flappers. For countless generations Natural Selection has had time to work if it were capable of bettering that state of affairs by producing flappers more serviceable. It has not done so. Why? Not because the seal is "in equilibrium," but because, however it may have evolved, it is now a fixed type : mature : it is what is and can now no longer change its fundamental structure.

It is true that Darwin and others talk vaguely of the process "reaching equilibrium," but that, according to his own theory, is a contradiction in terms. Under Natural Selection there can be none such.

Darwin, Wallace, and the rest did not think clearly enough to see that this was so, but so it is. If a hare runs fast because it has developed its speed through an immense series of faster and faster hares who "survived" because their speed made them "fitter" to escape enemies, then the process demands that the speed shall continually increase. Your hare of 1925 that can cover the measured mile in three and a half must develop into your hare of A.D. 20,000 who can cover it in three : for there is no doubt whatsoever that an increase of speed has survival value. And he must be developing all the time. There is no escape from that conclusion, if the theory of Natural Selection held water : which it doesn't.

That is the first necessary result of Natural Selection. If the theory of Natural Selection is true there are not now, and cannot have been in the past, *fixed types* recognizable by marked and permanent characters.

(2) Next, observe that the theory of Natural Selection also demands a *regular* progression, and a *very slow one*. It involves, for instance, the development of a land animal

out of a water animal by an immense accumulation of exceedingly slight differences in each generation, favourable to a water animal's longer and longer bouts of staying out of water. These exceedingly slight differences in each generation are presupposed to be only such as we always observe between parent and child. Darwinian Natural Selection as a prime cause can admit no rapid, startling changes.

For it presupposes a purely blind, unintentional, "sieve-like" action, not merely as killing off the unfit—which is obvious—but as producing gradually increasing fitness, with no inherent power in the organism for adaptation. According to Darwinian Natural Selection, what works the change is a vast number of successive tiny differences such as always appear between parent and progeny.

To turn out, for instance, the white bear of the Arctic from the general undifferentiated type of subfusc beardom you must have hardly perceptible steps beginning with the slightly lighter hue of a few bears, and proceeding gradually for æons and æons until only the pure white survived (though however one could get at *pure* white by such a process it would have puzzled them to say !).

Natural Selection, then, imperatively demands for each species a slow ascension, a regular, inclined plane, produced over a prodigious space of time, in which the animal is getting whiter and whiter, or fleeter and fleeter, or what not, by infinitesimal degrees.

The theory of Natural Selection necessitates the presence, in all fossils, and even during any considerable historical period, of increasing progressive slight differences in type.

It is no good saying that Natural Selection might apply to new highly suitable variations coming at exactly the right moment to benefit the animal. Such variations indicate Design of some sort and Will. If the climate gets colder and very woolly types of an animal immediately begin to appear, that is not Natural Selection ; that is a startling but obvious adaptation, due to some other cause, of organism to environ-

ment. It is the very negation of a blind, causeless, undefined, unwilling process which the theory of Natural Selection was intended to bolster up.

(3) Again, Natural Selection implies advance by the killing off of the organism not possessed of a specific advantage. How is it then that organisms not possessed of the advantage survive—as they certainly do—side by side with the advantaged and in the same environment? The Elephant's trunk grew longer because the short-trunkites were killed off. What of the Tapir?

(4) Again, Natural Selection cannot allow itself to be ousted by any rival aid to development.

This is a very important point. The whole point of Natural Selection as the explanation of the difference between living beings is that it is mechanical. The moment you have to prop it up by saying "Animals with similar variations will tend to mate one with the other," or "Striking change in environment will tend to produce corresponding variations," you are abandoning Natural Selection, and covering up your retreat with mere verbiage. Why "tend"?

The theory of Natural Selection is a jealous god and it will admit no rival, nor even any support. You must make it your mainstay or give it up: for the whole point of it is that it permits you, if you will, to eliminate Will and Mind from the Universe. The moment you have to prop it up with some theory involving Will and Mind the essence of it disappears. Therefore does Weissmann, the most famous of its later defenders, ascribe to it "All-might" (to make a barbaric translation of his term) and desperately adds that we "must" accept Natural Selection because the only alternative is design—that is God; the Inadmissible: the Dogmatically Denied.

Suppose a man to say, "No one threw that stone: it hit my window by the force of gravity." Another then points out that a stone, merely falling, would have gone past the window, and that the stone, from the course it took, striking the window, must have been thrown by someone to take

the glass at the angle it did. To this the man replies : " Well, yes, perhaps ; but gravity influenced its course." Clearly he has abandoned his case. He was arguing that the stone merely fell : that no Will or Design caused it to take the path it did. When he admits a thrower of the stone and merely brings in gravity as affecting the course of the stone he abandons his position altogether.

That is exactly parallel to the old-fashioned advocate of Natural Selection who reluctantly admits, on modern evidence—and mainly through the work of De Vries—great and rapid changes adapting animals to a new environment, but adds, " Anyhow, those that *don't* change will be killed off." Of course they will ! But that isn't the point. The point is that the killing off of the unfit is proved *not* to be the *agent* of change. The climate gets colder. Much thicker fleeces begin to appear. Such animals as don't show the new thick fleeces begin to die out. Obviously !—But that doesn't explain why the thicker fleeces began to appear. If you admit Mutation (the name for rapid change) or Saltatory Evolution (Evolution by jumps) poor old Natural Selection goes by the board.

In the same way Natural Selection does not mean that, upon a change of environment, things unsuitable to the new condition tend to disappear. Of course they do.

If there is a flood, fishes survive, cattle are drowned. The fishes are fitter to survive the flood than the cattle. And if the flood lasted long enough, there would at the end of it be plenty of fish and no cattle. But to talk of that as " Natural Selection " is to use the same word in two different senses.

The theory of Natural Selection as the *agent* of Evolution does not mean that floods drown cattle and don't drown fish. We all know that. The theory means that successive floods turn cattle into fish—and that is a very different proposition !

The theory of Natural Selection does not mean that things die out when they cannot live ; if it only meant that it would not be worth stating. It means that the chance of survival, through exceedingly small and inevitable slight differences



between parent and offspring, is the great cause producing the marvels in adaption and beauty and special action in a million forms which make up the life of this world. Its chief use has been to back up the denial of God, and now it has broken down the opponents of Design in the Universe must seek for a new reply.

They are still seeking it.

(5) Next note that the theory of Natural Selection implies a *continual accumulation of fresh advantages*; although for this there is no sort of necessity and, on a theory of blind chance, no possibility of such a thing. It is a mere gratuitous assumption with no reason behind it and all actual experiment against it. This is the point which Morgan (Professor of Experimental Zoology at Columbia University) so powerfully emphasizes in his critique of the Theory of Evolution which came out just after the war.

To apply the theory to that simple case of the animal on the tidal beach. Those with minute advantages over the average in the way of standing slightly longer immersion have survival value over those who are only on or below the average. But why—by the mere blind selection of death—should the advantage *accumulate* from generation to generation? Why should *new* advantageous exceptions, each better than the last, appear in unbroken succession generation after generation?

(6) Lastly, there is the exceedingly important, the essential, point that, according to the theory of Natural Selection, *each slight successive change in the whole series must give its possessor a survival-value*. Not only must a fully formed flapper be an advantage (to a whale) over a leg, by the time it has become aquatic, but a half-formed flapper must be an advantage to the whale while it still uses the land. Clearly it was nothing of the kind. If transformism be true (which is not certain) then Design explains the leg into a flapper in spite of the intermediate disadvantages. If there is Design behind the transformation, if there is special protection for the heavily handicapped intermediate form, one can understand

the possibility of it. Under Natural Selection it is impossible.

So much for the Implications of the Theory. I hope I have put them as clearly as may be, and accurately ; not a very hard task, for it was an extremely crude and simple theory during its short life, and could be grasped (and refuted) by anyone.

Let me summarize these Implications.

(1) First, *Change must be continual and types must be always in a state of flux.* Stability of Type and Natural Selection form a contradiction in terms. You can have one or the other—but you cannot have both.

(2) Second, *Natural Selection inevitably implies that, on searching the records of Evolution, we shall find only gradual change,* proceeding continually, so that the ascending organisms follow, as it were, regular inclined planes showing no steps. The whole of Evolution should, under Natural Selection, prove to be of this kind. Thus you would have, say, tigers as they are now, gradually developing out of some tiger-like ancestor in the past by a regular and uninterrupted process, never achieving a fixed type but perpetually changing as time went on ; and that perpetual change would be still going on to-day. The world about us would not show (as it does) a vast number of strongly separate types but a confused jumble of forms all melting one into the other.

(3) Third, Natural Selection presupposes Evolution through the killing off of individuals lacking certain advantages : *how then do other types continue still to be with us in spite of lacking these advantages ?*

(4) Fourth, *Natural Selection must stand or fall of itself.* If you try to prop it up with Will or Design, inherent in the organism, or acting in any other fashion, you destroy its whole thesis. If you say, for instance, “ the country becoming drier, animals which *adapted themselves* to the new conditions survived, and those that could not adapt themselves died out,” that is no example of Natural Selection *as an agent of Evolution.* For when you say “ *Animals which adapted themselves*

to the new conditions," you are presupposing some inherent power in the animal to adapt itself: you are presupposing a form of Will and Design, and thereby denying the purely mechanical action, the unintelligent "sieve" of Natural Selection as an agent.

(5) Fifth, *Natural Selection presupposes, quite gratuitously, that new survival values will be perpetually and progressively appearing.* That sheep woollier than the average of a flock have survival value as the winters get colder is obvious: too obvious to need stating. But why should not the next generation, under mere chance, produce a number of new still woollier variations, and the one after that yet another even woollier set; and so on indefinitely?

(6) Sixth, *Natural Selection presupposes that in every stage of the slow process of development by infinitesimal differences, each successive difference is more advantageous than the last and has a special survival value.*

A bird with fully formed wings has a survival value through being able to fly away from land enemies. But if it evolved from a reptile by Natural Selection, then each stage between the useful Reptilian fore-leg and the useful wing must have had a special advantage over the stage immediately preceding it. There must have been an advantage in the fore-leg getting stumpy, then in its getting stumpier, then its getting so stumpy that the beast couldn't use it at all. And this must be true of every change in all the millions of tiny evolutionary changes proceeding through æons of time. All the way along, from the first signs of something which *later on* will be an advantage to the mature type, through myriads of generations, from the first origins when the organ was as yet rudimentary to the last when it was perfected, every step must have had a survival value over the last. And this must apply not only to broad cases, such as the reptile's fore-leg turning into the bird's wing, but to every one of innumerable organs and to every part of each organ. Otherwise the theory breaks down.

The implications then of Natural Selection as the blind

agent of development, "give one furiously to think." Merely stated roughly as I have done here, they shake the ordinary man's confidence in it. But when we come to ordered proofs against it, we shall find those proofs conclusive.

To these I now turn.

#### THE ARGUMENTS AGAINST NATURAL SELECTION

When one has to examine any proposition and see whether it be true or no, two radically distinct forms of reasoning present themselves to the mind.

(A) You may find the thing asserted to be in itself impossible, granted certain self-evident principles of thought. For instance, a man who died on the 16th of the month cannot have died of poison taken on the 20th of the month. Or again, the sum of certain payments cannot be less than some one of those payments. This method is called the *a priori* method.

(B) The other approach made by reason to see whether a theory is true or false is the experimental one, that of positive evidence. You test, by the positive evidence at your disposal, whether the thing affirmed has really taken place or not. Sometimes the first of these methods is conclusive, in which case one has no reason to go any further. Sometimes, and more usually, the second is conclusive, and there is no opportunity or occasion to apply the first. For instance, if we are told that John Jones forged the will of a man who was born after John Jones's death we know *a priori* that the story is nonsense. But if John Jones is said to have forged the will of a man who died while John Jones was still alive, then we must go into the evidence of handwriting and all the rest of it.

The reason that people rightly and necessarily supplement *a priori* reason in practical affairs by the experimental method is that *a priori* conclusions depend for their value on the rigid certitude of their premises. E.g. a man who died on the 16th cannot have died of poison bought on the 20th. But are we sure that the 16th is really the date of his death? To test that we require actual evidence.

One can conclude absolutely against a false theory by either of these two methods of reasoning. But when they concur, when you find the theory to be false both *a priori* and from the available evidence as well, then certitude could not be more certain : the combination of both methods of proof is overwhelming.

Now we shall see that this is exactly what happens in the case of this false theory of Evolution called Natural Selection. There are four crushing *a priori* arguments disposing of it, and, after that, there is overwhelming positive evidence against it, of which the main divisions are three in number.

The four conclusive *a priori* arguments are these :—

(1) Variations in nearly every case must continue to accumulate. Variations more and more advantageous must appear successively, Generation after Generation. This is not logically essential in every conceivable case, e.g. parti-coloured animals could grow whiter against snow. But in the vast majority of cases such accumulation is essential : e.g. to produce a taller type or to produce horns or to lengthen a tail.

Now the chances of such a regular series appearing by accident even in one case, let alone in millions, clearly approximate to zero.

(2) The advantageous differences making for survival are not of one kind in any particular case, but of an indefinitely large number (e.g. climate getting colder needs not only warmer coat, but power to digest new food, protective colouring so as not to show dark against snow, etc. An indefinitely large number of qualities). Now the chance of *all* being combined (and co-ordinated) in a single individual, *without design, accidentally*—let alone of their thus appearing in many individuals *accidentally and without design*—approximates to zero. On the same line of reasoning the chances of co-ordination between all the vastly numerous parts of one complex creature by accident approximate to zero.

(3) The chances of *each* very slight change being an

advantageous one over the last in a series indefinitely prolonged of myriads or millions approximate to zero.

(4) Where more than one specially favoured progenitor is necessary to the production of an organism (e.g. among mammals, two, a male and female : with many plants three, a male and female and an insect go-between) the chance combination of such favoured progenitors *accidentally and without design* diminishes with each generation in geometrical ratio and rapidly approximates to zero.

The decisive character of these *a priori* arithmetical arguments will appear later.

Now for the arguments from evidence.

The arguments from evidence against Natural Selection come under three main heads :—

(1) Within humanly recorded historical experience no trace of such permanent progressive action is observable. There is no doubt of individual differences ; there is also plenty of proof of slight changes swinging round the normal. There is manifest to every one differentiation of type : Negroes and Mongols among men for instance. But the main types are fixed. Negro and Mongol are both men. Man and other mature types are, within historical record, fixed. They are not on their way to becoming something else.

It is true that humanly recorded historical experience covers but a very brief fraction of the total time allowed for even the shortest estimates of the past of this world. None the less, it is sufficient to prove that types once achieved are permanent. Call it five thousand years (perhaps man-made prehistoric pictures may extend that limit), even that short period is enough to prove the existence of stable types. For if during five million years some animal form existing at the moment has been forever slowly changing by a process such that its present apparent fixity is an illusion, and is still proceeding to further slow changes indefinitely, then five thousand years ought to show a perceptible fraction of the movement ; only a thousandth of it, no doubt, but one in a thousand is measurable : tiny, but measurable. Yet no

fundamental change, still less any progressive change, is apparent. During all the *historical* epoch fixity of type is invariable.

(2) The geological record, so far from showing types perpetually in a state of flux, presents us with Fixed Types and Nothing but Fixed Types. A Fixed Type does not mean a Type which had no other Type for its ancestors ; nor one which never passed through immature stages before reaching maturity. Nor does it mean a type without collaterals. It means a type which, when mature, is repeated indefinitely.

(3) The geological record does not as a fact show gradually progressive change by imperceptible degrees like an inclined plane, but on the contrary, a series of leaps, like a number of steps.

There, in brief summary, is a table of the main arguments which have undermined the old theory of Natural Selection.

I will now take them one by one :

(1) *The first a priori argument against Natural Selection*, that it presupposes quite arbitrarily that variations will accumulate, I have already dealt with.

(2) *The second a priori argument against Natural Selection :*

*Natural Selection involves accidental survival-value not in one single feature but in many complex co-ordinated features all simultaneous and yet accidental. This without Design is mathematically impossible.*

Natural Selection is usually spoken of by those who still put it forward for popular consumption in terms of *one* advantageous difference : for instance, slightly greater speed, slightly better protective colouring, etc. This escape from the difficulty is duly repeated here by Mr. Wells. He gives us, as an example of the way in which Natural Selection would work, the climate becoming more snowy and, of a number of whity-brown animals, the whiter tending to survive in each generation, and the quality of whiteness tending, therefore, to increase. No better instance could be found of the way in which this book merely follows (and repeats) the mistakes of a generation ago. For that instance

of the whity-brown animal is the regular old tag which always cropped up whenever this theory of Natural Selection was advanced.

It should surely have been evident, even to the originators of the idea (as it is now at last evident to everybody worth counting), that what you need in order to adapt (*a*) an animal to new circumstances, (*b*) any developing function of a particular species, (*c*) the development of many co-ordinated functions within one organism, is not one simple advantage, but *an indefinitely large number of advantages, all of which have to be co-ordinated if survival-value is to be obtained.*

When the climate gets colder, there will probably be more snow. But this is not the only thing that will happen. There will also be a change in the methods of progression over the surface of the earth. Paws advantageous for speed when there was no frost or snow may be disadvantageous when there is. There will also be a change in the things present for an animal to eat ; many of the grasses and fruits present in the warmer time will presumably disappear and others better suited to the new, cold climate will increase. Again, a change of this kind does not take place in isolated fashion ; it will be accompanied perhaps by longer nights in winter ; probably by more cloudy skies, and by sudden floods in spring, and so on. Change of environment will nearly always mean not one, but a very great number of concomitant changes.

Change, then, in environment is always complex. But the organism which has to meet it is also complex, only because it *is* an organism. Every living organism is highly complex. It is its very complexity, that is, the vast number of its parts and the mysterious co-ordination between them, which makes it a living organism, and distinguishes it from dead matter. Even the simplest organic cell is chemically of a highly complex nature, and its principle of continuity is so different from a simple mechanical process that no one has ever been able to lay down a formula for it. In plain words, the very nature of a living organism escapes us on account of its complexity.



Here, then, you have a complex organism, consisting of an indefinitely large number of parts, all of which must be co-ordinated to the changed environment; and you have also an environment which, when it changes, changes not in one, but in a very large number of respects.

Now observe the inevitable, mathematical necessity of this relation. The environment changes not in one respect, or fifty, or a hundred, or a thousand, but in as many as you like to catalogue. The living animal consists not in one function, or a hundred, or a thousand, but in as many more as you care to examine. To every change of climate, or what not, there are an indefinitely large number of consequences. The organism has to be adapted to meet *all* the changes. But that living thing also must, in order to have a special survival-value, discover, somehow, a corresponding change in all its own innumerable functions. When such and such a proportion of the organisms show *one* particular slight advantage for meeting *one* aspect of the change, such an advantage helps this favoured proportion, *in that point only*, to survive. But, in order to have special survival-value, the organism must also show advantages in every other respect. The chance of *all* these advantages coinciding in any one organism and *accidentally* corresponding to the very numerous changes in environment, is mathematically indistinguishable from zero. The animals with whiter coats than the average are not (if the matter be left to chance) the same as those with paws slightly better suited for snow than the average; nor are either of these the same as those with slight survival advantage over the average in digesting changed food—and so on with any number of conditions. Left to chance the combination could not arise. Yet it does arise.

It is equally true that the adaptations of function to function within each organism are vast in number and could never have arisen from blind accident.

This is the unanswerable point brought out half a lifetime ago and increasingly emphasized ever since.

Wolff put it admirably in his attack on Darwinism as early

as 1898 : "One might possibly imagine the adaptation between one muscle cell and one nerve-end, through Selection among innumerable chance-made variations, but that such shall take place in a 1,000 cases in one organism is inconceivable." And another great biologist has well said : "What is the survival value of horns without the structure to support them and muscles to use them" ? Strange that Mr. Wells should never have heard of all this !

Animals *are* adapted, we know. They *do* co-ordinate an indefinitely large number of internal conditions to meet a whole complicated bundle of external conditions. They also have a myriad adaptations within themselves necessary to their existence as organisms quite apart from external change. But this could not possibly happen from blind chance. The mathematical chances are millions and millions to one against the possibility of such a thing. Grant Design moulding all nature—that is, God—and this process is explicable. Grant even an inherent power possessed by the living thing to attempt its own adaptation, and the process is explicable. Leave it to the mechanical explanation of Natural Selection, and it is impossible.

(3) *The third a priori proof against Natural Selection :*

*Natural Selection presupposes that each new infinitesimal stage in development out of millions in each type, is, by blind chance, an advantage over the last. This is mathematically impossible.*

This third *a priori* proof that Natural Selection is a false theory lies in the simple consideration that it demands *each stage* in millions of stages in millions of types to show a survival-value. The chances against this being possible are many, many more millions than the number of stages multiplied by the number of types. The chance of a penny coming down heads a hundred times in succession is vastly less than one in a hundred ; and when it comes to myriads of times, the chance is approximately zero. The chance of a hundred pennies chucked by a hundred men in unison doing this is far less. In other words, it can't happen by chance.

Let me return to the case of the bird. A bird has wings

with which it can escape its enemies. If it began as a reptile without wings—when, presumably, it had armour or some other aid to survival—what of the interval? Natural Selection sets out to explain *how* the evolutionary process changes a reptile's leg into a bird's wing. It does so by making the leg less and less of a leg for countless ages.

By the very nature of the theory *each stage* in all these millions is an advantage over the last towards survival! The thing has only to be stated for its absurdity to appear. Compare the "get away" chances of a lizard at one end of the process or a sparrow at the other with some poor beast that had to try and skurry off on half-wings! or to fly with half-legs! The change took place?—No doubt. Some of our greatest Biologists say it didn't and couldn't. Most say it did. The hypothesis has much in its favour. But the change could not possibly have taken place by successive advantages any more than the turning of an egg into a full-grown hen takes place by successive survivals, or of a chrysalis into a moth.

Postulate a Design, say "Here was something in the making," and the process is explicable, especially if fairly rapid so as to bridge over the dangerously weak stages of imperfection. Postulate Natural Selection, and it is manifestly impossible. Now Natural Selection wants that to happen not only with every kind of bird, but with every kind of living creature.

(4) *The fourth a priori argument against Natural Selection :*

When two or more progenital agents are required, *Natural Selection, acting by blind chance alone, loses effect in geometrical proportion with each generation.*

This argument is rather more difficult to follow than the first two, but it is worth understanding, because it is particularly strong, and because it was among the first rude blows against the Darwinian theory. Nägeli brought it out with crushing force as long ago as 1884—it is a commonplace with everyone—except Mr. Wells, who imagines (a great compliment!) that I made it up.

Where two or more progenitors are necessary, rare accidental advantages rapidly disappear in a few generations *if the process be left to chance*, as Natural Selection demands.

Suppose two progenitors required—as is the case with all animals—there are, of course, many cases in which the total number of factors necessary for the production of progeny is more than two and the argument far stronger, e.g., the pollen of one flower, the pistil of another flower, and the insect which acts as go-between. Take any proportion you like of slightly favoured specimens. Suppose out of a hundred individual males ten show in varying degrees the slight differentiation which gives them a survival-value under changing conditions of environment. It will not be anything like ten out of a hundred, and we have already seen that a *single* advantage is useless. But we can afford to give this nonsense every advantage in argument, so we will consider only *one* clear advantage and allow one-tenth of the males to have it. Now, suppose a similar number of females showing in varying degrees this slight valuable differentiation. *Upon the mechanical theory of Natural Selection*, the chances in favour of progeny inheriting that differentiation in the next generation are not one-tenth, but only one-tenth of one-tenth, i.e. one-hundredth. The chances of favoured progeny in the third generation are not one-hundredth, but one in ten thousand. In the fourth, the chances are already only one in a hundred million—which we may call zero.

The reason is clear. Here are a hundred male land-birds compelled by change of environment to take to the water. Ten of them show an infinitesimal rudimentary webbing between the toes of their feet, and that is a first infinitesimal advantage in swimming. Ten hens are of the same kind. *Left to mere chance* there is no reason why a season's mating should allocate the web-footed male to the web-footed female. Each one of the ten males has nine chances to one of pairing with a non-advantaged mate, and only one chance of mating with a hen similar to himself and possessing, as he does, this infinitesimal advantageous differentiation. On the average you would have only one couple in each hundred handing on

in full even that first tiny advantage to their progeny with a corresponding tiny survival-value. In the case of eighteen others it would be halved, and in the case of a hundred and eighty-one, it would be absent. It is so with each generation. Each little infinitesimal advantage can only be *fully* handed on to a fraction which is the square of the last, and in even *diminished* form to a fraction smaller in proportion to the flock in the third generation than in the second. Long before you got anything like an even rudimentary webbed foot the tiny advantage would have been absorbed. The advantage, left to chance, sinks into the common stock.

There is no getting away from this conclusion by saying, "Oh! we're not talking of individuals, we're talking of great masses." The masses are made up of individuals, and the mathematical argument is exactly the same whether you are dealing with a hundred or ten million.

These four *a priori* arguments against the theory of Natural Selection as the agent of differentiation in species are as conclusive as arithmetic can make them, and there is really *no need for any others*—though many others have been urged e.g. the mathematical chances against one special advantageous variation appearing by pure accident at exactly the time it was needed.

But, as I have said, apart from these *a priori* and sufficient arguments, there are conclusive arguments drawn from actual evidence, and all this evidence is in favour of this *Fixed Type*. A fixed type would be an impossibility under Natural Selection: it goes with a Creator and with Design; and certainly it is true of the real world.

Natural Selection, if it had been the agent of Evolution, would have prevented the formation of fixed types.

In the old materialist days when Natural Selection was triumphing, its supporters used to say, as we have seen, that it acted "until equilibrium was reached by the organism conforming to its environment." That was typical of their hiding the weakness of their case under vague phrases which, closely analysed, proved self-contradictory.

*If Natural Selection be the Agent of Evolution stability can never be reached.* There is always some slight proportion of beings rather more suited to survive than the mass of its fellows, and that fact should cause a perpetual change rendering stability impossible.

A water-mammal has not "reached stability" when it can stay under water ten minutes, or an hour, or two hours. According to Natural Selection, it ought to progress unceasingly to longer and longer capacities of submersion. A swallow has not "reached stability" by Natural Selection when it flies sixty miles an hour; it ought to fly faster and faster with the process of time. It may well have reached stability in the sense that it is suited to its lot and makes no further effort. It may well have reached stability in the sense that its end has been achieved, its design completed. But if it got its fast flight only because a slightly faster minority of swallows always outlive and outbreed their slower rivals, by an assumed perpetual accumulation of little additions of speed, why should the process stop at the bird's present capacity? Of course the series is a diminishing one. Each increment of speed is at a higher cost than the last. But no fast-flying bird has nearly reached a theoretical limit of speed—nor shows any tendency to reach it. Granted Design then an End,—a Fixed Type—a Normal to which individuals are planned and to which freak types tend to return—is explicable. Those who cannot bear the idea of Design, that is of a Creator implanting inherent powers, must try to invent some new theory which will allow of Fixed Types without Design. But if Fixed Types exist they cannot be due to Natural Selection, for Natural Selection and Fixed Types are contradictory terms.

If Natural Selection be true, then what we call a pig is but a fleeting vision; all the past he has been becoming a pig, and all the future he will spend evolving out of pigdom, and pig is but a moment's phase in the eternal flux, while, all around us should be quarter-pigs, half-pigs, near-pigs, all-but-pigs, slightly super-pigs, just beginning—and so on. But there aren't. There are just pigs. In other words, the

evidence is all in favour of Fixed Types and all against a ceaseless process of change.

(1) We have the evidence of our senses that we are surrounded by Fixed Types, and are Fixed Types ourselves. We have all about us species, including man, which remain distinct species during all our experience and as far back as historical record can carry us.

(2) If that were not sufficient we have Fixed Types, and nothing but Fixed Types, in thousands and thousands (and continuing for what seem to be immense stretches of time) in the geological record.

(3) That same geological record shows us, not a gradual turning of one type into another, not a gradual ascent like an inclined plane—which Natural Selection would demand—but a series of steps with *sharp* divisions between.

These three arguments from experience are conclusive.

1. *The First Argument from Evidence against Natural Selection : The Fixed Type is apparent in all recorded human experience.*

This is the argument based on human experience during the period of humanly recorded History, of which argument not nearly enough has been made.

For certainly 5,000 years of this record types are fixed. That is not to say that maturity is not reached by growth, nor is it to say that a type cannot disappear. But it is an affirmation that the conceptions of ceaseless flux, of the absence of form, of no maturity in characteristics and nature, are baseless. As, indeed, the mere evidence of our senses and of common sense acting on that evidence, must convince anyone who prefers reality to print. Tell the plain man that there is no such thing as a fox or a salmon or a human being, and he will laugh in your face. And he will be quite right.

We are told that the 5,000 years or so of recorded History (if we count prehistoric relics the period is probably longer) are so brief that they are a mere flash, and that we cannot observe in that tiny section of an immensely long period the slight process of change over which Natural Selection has been at work. We are under the illusion that types are fixed because

the few thousand years over which we can compare them are as nothing compared with the whole period of development. Types only *seem* fixed to us in the same way as a revolving wheel *seems* at rest when discovered by a flash of lightning : the period of vision is too brief for the motion to be appreciated.

But people who talk like that have not made the very simple calculation of dividing the total period of a particular development by the few thousand years over which our direct experience stretches.

Take, for instance, the theory of Natural Selection as applied to ourselves. We know that over all these 5,000 years the human body has not progressively changed. There have been various sorts of men, of course, and variations also round the normal. But the norm is set. Now even those who have indulged in the wildest guesswork to allow for development do not give true man more than 50,000 years.\* Now, one-tenth is a very sufficient fraction by which to measure any movement. If so highly differentiated and co-ordinated an organism as man has been subject to unceasing slow transformation during 50,000 years, and will go on changing slowly through the next 50,000 then certainly in one-tenth of that period some considerable change should be marked. None is so marked. Man, throughout those 5,000 years at least, is a certainly Fixed Type, as his own records and portraiture show.

## 2. *The Second Argument from Evidence :*

*Geological record is entirely in favour of Fixed Types.*

The geological record also shows us nothing but Fixed Types. Each *may* have come by a transition more or less rapid out of some other—but at any rate fixed they are, and the longer the time demanded by the modern geologist for his periods, the longer the Fixed Type can be proved to exist. Some few survive to-day from the very early days of life on this earth. It was hoped, when the theory of Natural

\* Not to burden the text, I give in this footnote a few of the main guesses. Sollas 15,000 from the beginning of the Magdalenian. Waldmeyer 15,000 to 20,000 for true man. Boulay 10,000. Mainage (a very high authority) 15,000 from the Chellean. Holst, less than 7,000.



Selection was first broached, that evidence would appear for continuous change. None has so appeared. On the contrary the more fossil evidence we acquire the more definitely does it appear that the Fixed Type is the normal—indeed the only—recorded thing. Of connected transitional changes (perhaps because they were too rapid to affect the fragmentary records of the rocks) *none* has been discovered. There are plenty of intermediary forms: there is not one connected series of changing forms passing one into the other.

All this evidence is no argument against transition. But it is damning evidence against the (a) very slow, (b) infinitesimally graduated, (c) continuous and unceasing transition or flux which Darwinian Natural Selection demands.

### 3. *The Third Argument from Evidence:*

*The geological record shows not a gradual unceasing development such as Natural Selection demands, but sharp steps.*

If Darwinian Natural Selection were the means by which simple ascended to complex forms, this ascent would necessarily have been a regular, very slow and uninterrupted process, continually at work.

The lines of ascent would have appeared in the geological record as so many inclined planes. They appear, in point of fact, as so many steps—each composed of very, very long flats separated, each from the one below, by a clean gap or break.

This character in the geological record does not get weaker as we come to know more and more of that record. On the contrary, it becomes increasingly emphasized.

There is evidence suggesting development of one type from another, but no evidence at all for the extremely gradual and continuous change of one type into another. On the contrary, each step noted in the process is a Fixed Type. What proportion the (presumably) rapid periods of transition and change may have borne to the immensely long periods of stable type, we cannot tell; but we do know that stable type is the rule, and that the process of change from one type into

another must, compared with the long periods of fixity, have been the brief exception.

Yet, in the face of evidence so considerable and so widely known, the talk of Natural Selection still survives in these popular manuals. As Dwight (Professor of Anatomy at Harvard) very well put it fifteen years ago: "Just at the time when the uneducated are prating about the triumph of Darwinism it is fast losing caste among the men of Science."

But if it be asked why so patently false a theory was so tenaciously defended for some years by serious authorities—is still defended by a diminishing few—the answer is that the defenders of Natural Selection were so preoccupied with a totally different discussion (to wit, the defence of Evolution in general) that they confounded the two.

In England and North America, more than anywhere else, there were many people a lifetime ago who, from some inherited superstition, did not want to admit the idea of growth, though growth was going on all about them. They did not want to admit that two kinds of tree might have come from an original common type of tree; still less that one kind of animal could come from another apparently different; although they had before their eyes the oak tree coming out of an acorn, and the frog out of a tadpole. They seemed to be unaware of the age-long controversy upon the matter; they had never heard, apparently, of the modern founders of the evolutionary hypothesis, especially Lamarck and Buffon: the former of whom had a much more rational theory than Darwin's, and put it forward before Darwin was born. Still less had they heard of the theory of Evolution among the Ancients and the Fathers of the Church.

Therefore, when patient observers of the middle of the nineteenth century (of whom the best known was Darwin) accumulated a great quantity of evidence in favour of Evolution, quite a number of their contemporaries tried to stand out against that evidence. It became, in England, a sort of national debate. The defenders of the ancient theory of Evolution, finding themselves caught in a religious quarrel—

of a most irrational type, it is true—were at the same time carrying on a conflict, quite novel and wholly their own, in favour of blind, mechanical, Natural Selection as the *agent* of Evolution. Their special contribution, their only original idea, the only thing that properly can be called “Darwinism,” was Natural Selection—“the explanation of descent” (as Kohlbrugge, I read, has put it) “in terms of Materialism.” But in order to defend their new instrument of Natural Selection, they also had to support the old, old idea of Evolution. They confused the two together. Many still confuse them.

To this day, in discussing the matter with a woolly headed man, or with one who has not followed the matter closely, you will find him advancing these strong arguments, which certainly support Evolution, as though they also supported Natural Selection—with which last such arguments have nothing whatever to do. You will find people saying (for instance) that the exploded theory of Natural Selection must be true, because living organisms (including the human body) appear to show vestiges of ancient functions now atrophied. Such vestiges are properly advanced in defence of the general Evolutionary theory; they have no bearing whatever upon the essential point of *Agency*; and that alone is of real theological and therefore of fundamental interest.

For this great debate has one supreme query underlying it, which is this: whether we may see in the Universe a Creator and His Ends, or a blind Nothingness.

Natural Selection has been the theory used to do without God: the theory which crudely attempted to put the organic in terms of the mechanical and chance in the place of Design. It was a bubble which burst when it was touched by the finger of Reality.

I think I have said enough to show how strong are the considerations against Natural Selection, and why it is being more and more abandoned among Biologists as the Agent of Evolution.

But I am not writing this book as a treatise on such things.

I am writing a criticism of Mr. Wells. And I would ask my reader in conclusion whether it is not remarkable to find Mr. Wells quietly taking Natural Selection for granted as the Agent of Evolution? Taking it for granted in 1926 as though we were still stuck fast at—say—1893?

Is it not remarkable to find a popular novelist swallowed whole when he propounds in Natural Selection a theory which has been riddled for a generation? Is it not strange that he should take no account of such men as (to quote at random) Bateson, Eimer, Morgan, Delage, Le Dantec, Driesch, Dennert, Dwight, Nägeli, Sachs, Korchinsky, Wolff, Carazzi, Vialleton, Diamare, and a hundred others?

I pretend to no sort of special knowledge in these affairs.

I have no more than that general liberal education which Mr. Wells so greatly despises. Yet I have at least heard of these men and of their work, and I know, roughly, where discussion now stands.

For Mr. Wells it stands as it did over thirty years ago, with no knowledge of the revolution in thought in between!

I say that in a man professing to teach popular science, this degree of ignorance is quite inexcusable.\*

\* Not to crowd these pages too much, I have relegated to a short appendix at the end of this volume authorities and criticisms which the reader may consult for examples of insufficient reading on the part of our Author.

## CHAPTER III

### MR. WELLS AND THE FALL OF MAN

AS we approach the problem of Man it behoves us, before dealing with Mr. Wells's views on that animal, to examine a little further his competence as a teacher of science to the multitude.

I have pointed out that where Mr. Wells has to deal with ascertained facts he is not only an accurate but an excellent précis writer, and that his summary of such facts as are contained in our older books of reference is clear, vivid, and in good proportion.

But the judgment of evidence is very badly done, the reasoning weak and yielding to imagination; while the theories supported and the positive errors repeated are most of them years and years behind the times.

I will give examples.

In the course of his account of Evolution Mr. Wells repeats (on page 37) with complete confidence, as though it were scientific fact, the old and now worthless theory called "Recapitulation." It was a theory invented by Haeckel (about 1870) purporting to be based on the work done by Von Baer more than 40 years earlier—though, as a fact, Haeckel characteristically suppressed one of Baer's four points.

The Theory of Recapitulation was as follows:—The embryo—in particular of man—bears witness to transformism by showing as it develops one phase after another of its ancestral past: as the current phrase went when Mr. Wells and I were young, it "climbs up its family tree." It was imagined that the embryo represents as it grows the various stages, from the original aquatic life onwards to general tetrapodal forms, then to more immediate ancestors from which the present

form of the animal came. Vialleton of Montpellier, probably the greatest contemporary authority in Europe on Embryology, has disproved the theory and left it wrecked. He has knocked the last nail into the coffin of that facile and superficial shortcut (and blind alley). Here again I must make myself quite clear, for Mr. Wells's tendency to confusion of mind (a defect attaching, perhaps, to his deservedly famous gift of imagination) may easily make him accuse me of opinions I do not hold.

I do not make this allusion to the great work of Vialleton (which I have had by me since it came out and which I study with increasing admiration) as a criticism of Evolution in general. Who could? I allude to it because Mr. Wells's ignorance of its existence is inexcusable in a man proposing to deal with such subjects even in the most summary and popular fashion. That Mr. Wells does, as a fact, know nothing of Vialleton's mass of instance and argument, and its modern effect, is clear from a protest he issued against me just before the publication of this book. He there said that perhaps some French student had believed the embryo to repeat its ancestry "conscientiously," and that Vialleton "may have thought it well to discuss this idea in one of his books!"

I might as well write that Darwin "may have thought it well" to discuss (and attempt to destroy) Design. Why, the whole of this work is one long and victorious attack upon the idea which Mr. Wells took for granted! It is not a casual refutation of some nonsense about the embryo exactly reproducing every minute stage of its ancestral past; it is a fundamental, detailed, complete refutation of the idea which Mr. Wells repeats.

Out of any number of citations which might be taken from Vialleton's hundreds of pages I then gave, and here give again, one: and it is sufficient. "Ontogenesis" (that is the development of the Embryo) "always begins with a general form and *not*" (my italics) "with a form recalling another simpler form passed through in an earlier phase of development."

So much for that. It is but one out of many examples of our Author's being behind the times. Here is another

In describing the glacial epochs, he trots out with the most naïf confidence (on pp. 20-22) the hopelessly dead astronomical theory which did duty in the textbooks of his youth and mine—for I also have believed these things. Relying on a popular volume which at the time had great effect, he puts down the main cause of glaciation to the combination of varying eccentricity in the earth's orbit with varying inclination of the axis, of which he gives a large diagram. Under the effect of the two movements (which Leverrier calculated more than a lifetime ago) the Northern and Southern Hemispheres would alternately suffer from cold and enjoy greater warmth. When the Northern Hemisphere was getting colder and colder, the Southern would be getting warmer and warmer, and vice versa.

This was called "Croll's astronomical theory of glaciation," and was made popular by a book of Sir Robert Ball's in 1893.

[1893, as I have said, seems, from internal evidence, to be about the date when Mr. Wells's stock of information crystallized.]

Now Croll's astronomical theory broke down quite early under criticism. It was dead before the end of the nineteenth century. The eleventh edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* is not exactly recent. Its well-worn covers testify to its age in all our libraries, and I see that a thirteenth edition is due. But even the eleventh edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* could have informed Mr. Wells that Croll's theory had broken down. Would he like something quite recent? Professor Coleman—Emeritus Professor of Geology at Toronto—has just issued a study of glacial periods, and I find on page 274 the curt sentence, "Croll's theory at present receives little attention." And why? Because fact, that dreadful enemy to theorizing, has killed it. If it were true, glaciation would have been alternate in north and south. As a fact, it has been proved simultaneous—the South American clay deposits alone show that.

This is not to say that astronomical factors have played no part in glaciation. That they did not do so would be incredible. But it is to say that Mr. Wells still takes for granted in this year of grace 1926, and states as facts, theories which the average educated man knows to have been exploded as long ago as the nineties of the last century.

Mr. Wells suffers, in this connection, from another fault besides that of stating the old and exploded theories of his youth as facts. He also affirms as fact what is doubtful. Thus he builds a whole series of assertions (p. 154) on the—at first sight—apparently obvious, but, in fact, much disputed idea that as the ice receded the sea-level rose. It is clear that the melting of great quantities of ice would, other things being equal, raise the sea-level. It is also presumable, on the isostatic theory, that the earth rose when and where relieved of ice pressure (the raised beaches seem proof of this). That—other things being equal—would mean a *lowering* of sea-level when the ice melted (thus the highest-known raised beach of glacial times in America indicates a *fall* of the sea-level, since the ice melted, by nearly 700 feet). Which of the two factors predominated? Only observations of such phenomena as raised beaches, fossils, submerged forests, etc., can decide, and the matter is still debated. Boule in 1906 affirmed a high sea under glacial conditions. The periods of high glaciation were, according to him, the periods of high sea-level, and the interglacial epochs the periods of low sea-level. Wright (in 1914) inclines to the opposite. The Scandinavian observers noted in one locality a rise of sea-level at the first receding of the ice, then a lowering of it. The latest opinion is mainly in favour of a rise in sea-level since the last Ice-age. Coleman, the last authority, tentatively suggests a rise.

But to affirm a rise as proved is bad science. In these and many other points Mr. Wells is evidently a man confusing theory with fact.

However, the few things really known by him about Pre-history are very well put. The narrative is straightforward and a fair summary. It is also to Mr. Wells's credit that,



unlike his fellow disseminators of popular "science," he frequently uses in this section, as elsewhere, those qualifying words which distinguish fact from probabilities or doubtful possibilities. He has "may," "probably," and "it would seem," where many another of his sort would have written "did," "was," "certainly." But what might here have been of excellent effect in ridding uninstructed people of their dogmatism is more than neutralized by too much positiveness in diagrams and riotous make-believe in pictures.

For instance, on pages 35 and 36, regarding a table of Geological Epochs, he writes: "These divisions *probably* mark off too precisely," etc. But the accompanying diagram gives a time-table like Bradshaw, with exactly 50,000 years for the last glacial epoch, 550,000 for those intriguing anomalies the Javanese skull and thigh-bone, and 100,000 for the vastly debated Piltdown fragments.

He does not, by the way, remark that the original guess at the cranial capacity of the Piltdown man was too small, certainly by 30 per cent. and possibly by 50 per cent. He does not tell his readers the remarkably high angle of the forehead, nor the really disturbing fact that there appear to have been no strong orbital ridges. And why are his readers not given all this? Because—like so many facts in Pre-history—they interfere with the simple "progress" idea and would make the reader understand how very little we do know about early man and his ancestry, and what an intolerable amount of theory there is to a halfpennyworth of fact. For the Piltdown man, on all the orthodox hypotheses, has got to be enormously older than Neanderthal man—and yet has a much more modern brain-box.

Meanwhile, Mr. Wells's artist constructs out of these little pieces of bone a human being wholly imaginary in all its functions.

This person appears on page 43 in a detailed picture as "Eoanthropos." He is having a good time hunting and looking uncommonly like an acquaintance of my own; but he is entirely made up out of the artist's head. Again, we have the coloured picture of a dance of American Red Indians

round a fire solemnly presented as a "reconstruction of Palæolithic society."

I know very well the excuse that is offered for such things. The public for which such books are written can digest a definite time-table, and, better still, a picture, more easily than carefully thought out pros and cons; *something* must be put simply before their eyes, and one can't put doubt pictorially. Nevertheless, the effect produced and intended to be produced is utterly false and misleading. The Piltdown fragments would fit into a soup plate. No one knows and no one ever will know whether the ape-jaw belongs to the scraps of human, and rather high human skull; on the one hand you have the very high authority of Keith, on the other the main weight of continental opinion. No one can confidently tell the exact posture and shape the total skull may have had. Of the creature as a whole, apart from these insufficient fragments of skull and that almost impossible jaw, we know absolutely nothing. To conceal all this and to present a finished picture of him as a fully known being is like writing a full biography on the evidence of a torn quarter of visiting-card.

But though this lack of scientific habit in Mr. Wells is woeful enough and very misleading, a defect of infinitely greater importance is his incapacity for dealing with the fundamental questions of our nature and destiny which are alone of real moment.

He seems to be aware of some clash between the materialist assumptions of his narrow world and another much more majestic philosophy, much more comprehensive; but he does not know what that opposing philosophy is. It is evident throughout all his work that he has not even consulted an elementary treatise on Catholic philosophy. Sometimes he seems to think that Catholicism is a jumble of irrational tenets like those of the old Bible Christians, for whose descendants he is writing and whom alone he really understands. There are other times when he brings in the name of the Catholic Church in a fashion which betrays his hatred of it, but clearly in ignorance of what the doctrines and nature of the Catholic Church may be.

He is like a man who, hearing a piece of Mozart, complains angrily of the noise it makes, but has never heard of the theory and emotion of music.

He suffers, therefore, as do much the greater part of his readers, from two forms of ignorance, very fatal to a proper handling of our chief human problems.

First, he is ignorant of the fact that he and they are working not on common sense accepted by all men, but on a highly particular philosophical theory (called once the Epicurean, but to-day the Materialist, Theory) which may be accepted or denied, but which can no more be taken for granted as universally admitted than can the Catholic Faith itself. He thinks he is only dealing with ascertained fact, whereas he is really acting on a religion; and as that religion is false, it compels him to force facts to fit it. This is the very mark of the provincial mind. It mistakes its local superstition for the very nature of things. It is from this inability to define their own first principles, from this conception that they are dealing with ascertained physical truth alone, that people of this kind are at once debarred from understanding their superiors and from reasoning clearly upon their own postulates.

Secondly, he is ignorant of the Catholic philosophy which he instinctively opposes. He does not know what it is that he is combating, nor what a crushing advantage of scope and examination it has over the insufficient and parochial experience lying behind his own work. He approaches the Catholic Church as a man who has only done a little suburban gardening might approach a fifty-acre field—with a spade.

All this comes out most clearly at the very opening of his discussion of human origins on pages 37 and 38. He there exposes in one paragraph all that ignorance to which I allude. He says with rather ponderous sarcasm that the Catholic Church is no more committed to a denial of the now widely accepted view of man's origin "than it is to a doctrine of a flat earth, or of a stationary earth round which the sun revolves"; but adds that though the Church is apparently not committed to any particular view in such matters (he has grasped that much), yet "many believers dissent from the

scientific opinion *because they feel it is more seemly to suppose that man has fallen rather than risen* " (my italics).

In that one sentence on Original Sin you have the whole of the writer's ignorance upon the matter (and upon the very terms used in its discussion) exposed. It is as though some foreigner were to say of English constitutional practice : " The English legal system is not committed to the denial of historical evidence on the vices of James the First, but many individual lawyers believe that the King can do no wrong—because they think it more seemly."

Why did he not look up the point in any book of reference ? It is astonishing to me that, with his active mind and interest in his contemporaries, and his reliance upon books of reference, he has not done so.

The Catholic doctrine of Original Sin has nothing to do with the stages of man's material culture. The fact that man now in Europe uses iron in places where he once used stone for his implements, has no possible connection with the doctrine of Original Sin. The traces of beings not men but, as are apes, man-like, exceptionally discovered, and belonging presumably to a remote past, can no more affect the Catholic doctrine of Original Sin than Pasteur's discovery of fermentation being due to a micro-organism affects the truth that men can and do get drunk.

The Catholic doctrine of Original Sin is this. That man, our known human nature as true men, was created by God to be supernatural, that is, enjoying beatitude ; but fell, through the rebellion of his will, into a natural state. This, and this alone, says the Catholic Faith, explains man's dual destiny, his sense of exile, the lack of correspondence between his ideal and his practice. It is not " many individuals " in the Catholic Church who affirm this great and luminous doctrine because it is " more seemly." It is *all* Catholics who affirm it, and they do so because, whether pleasant or unpleasant, it is true.

We affirm the Fall : *First* on the authority of the Catholic Church itself, which we have discovered from experience to be the only teaching body whose voice and nature correspond

with reality ; answering justly the queries and fulfilling the needs and ends of man. *Secondly*, because this truth, like all other truths which we receive from that same Authority, we discover to be but one in a consistent scheme of many co-ordinated doctrines, which scheme alone explains the world, and is consonant with the nature of the individual and with the nature of society : with the nature of man himself as he discovers it to be when he examines the recesses of his own being and with the nature of man in corporate action. Nor has the firm hold which the high Catholic intelligence maintains upon this essential and reasonable dogma of the Fall any conceivable link with the denial or the acceptance of some piece of physical evidence. It does not depend upon the existence of the Garden of Eden somewhere between Mosul and Baghdad, nor upon the date 4004 B.C.

The truth is that Mr. Wells, in some confused way, regards the Catholic Church as a sect ; an extreme right wing of the various Protestant sects, with which he is fully acquainted, from which he himself derives, and whose ethics and general attitude towards life are part of his being. For he goes on to tell us "that no considerable Christian body *now* (my italics) insists upon the exact and literal acceptance of the Bible narrative." He does not know—so ignorant is he of history—that this attitude towards the Bible came very late—in the seventeenth century—and was during its brief career highly local. He does not know that the conception of the Old Testament as an exact text book of history and science, not a word of which must be taken as allegory or generalization, was mainly confined to England and her colonies. The Catholic Church never held it or could of its nature hold it.

I wonder what effect it would have upon him to read a few passages from, say, Origen, on the allegorical interpretation of Genesis, or from St. Augustine? He need not do more than that. He need not waste energy in a long examination of the Christian past. It would be quite enough for him to consult a couple of passages, or, indeed, for any competent

historian to inform him that the only body of people who ever dreamt of taking Genesis as a literal and sufficient guide to all the details of history and physical science were the members of a small and local Puritan sect (now rapidly disappearing) of which he is himself a product and which held this amazing view of the Jacobean translation of the Hebrew scripture into archaic English. These people loom so large in Mr. Wells's personal experience as to obscure all else ; but I can assure him that they count for next to nothing in the general culture of Europe.

So much for the first of Mr. Wells's ventures into Theology, where it regards the relation of God to man. He and his like often profess to regard such things as of no importance. They are the most important things in the world. Indeed, they are the only important things : and the proof of their importance is to be found in the fact that the materialists can never leave them alone.

The materialists are always loudly protesting that they "do not meddle with Theology," that they "have nothing to do with Theology." They deal with nothing else. Their whole object is Theological—though they do not know it. Mr. Wells himself protests that he is not concerned with Theology in his *Outline*. It is his one preoccupation—though he may not realize it. The only criticism that really moves him is theological criticism. The only opponent he seriously challenges is a theological opponent ; and the moment he attempts to *reason* upon his subject, Theology at once and inevitably appears.

I have neither the space nor the inclination to deal with minor blemishes in this part of the work.

I do not even insist on Mr. Wells's failure to perceive (though he honestly quotes the facts) the implications of those perpetually recurring anomalies in our few shreds of evidence—e.g. more human teeth with less human craniums and vice versa. For though he misses the lesson of these unceasing breakdowns of each new "scientific" dogma upon the origin of man's body (which lesson is, that Hypothesis should never be taught as Science), he shirks none of the things he knows,

and, when he is abreast of modern knowledge, he states it clearly and well. For instance, he is acquainted with the exploding of the last dogma but two (still popular with most of his readers, I fear), the arboreal ancestry of Man. He knows it has broken down, and he admits it quite freely. Such a confession is greatly to his credit.

It is ascertained fact that many human and some very few doubtfully human remains of various types have been found under conditions which suggest high antiquity. It is ascertained fact that presumably older fragments are those of animals resembling men, in some cases, perhaps, even more closely than any known monkey of to-day—though the resemblance of monkeys to men has been a commonplace throughout History. Nor is it any surprise to learn, as we recently have done (though Mr. Wells makes no allusion to them), that in sundry other tests less striking (the make-up of blood, for instance) the animals most like us in structure and gesture have common qualities with us. It is only what was to have been expected.

But none of these things—though of curious interest—is on the same plane as the theological discussions upon which Mr. Wells embarks and makes shipwreck. That is why I have concentrated here upon the nature and doctrine of the Fall.

If you go wrong on that, your whole philosophy of politics and of individual human life will be wrong in its practical applications, and you prepare the ruin, certainly of society and perhaps of your own soul.

## CHAPTER IV

### MR. WELLS AND GOD

“**U**TRUM Deus Sit.” “Whether God be.” That is the title of the second question in the Summa of St. Thomas (2nd article); and it is, out of all comparison, the most important question which man can put to his own mind.

There is another question on that same overwhelming subject, put centuries ago in the tersest form: “*Is Religion from God or from Man*”?

Upon the right answer to these questions the whole meaning of the Universe and of our own lives depends. If we get it wrong, all is wrong, down to the least details. All is warped, diseased, increasingly unsatisfactory, and running down to some chaos. All is sick and ultimately doomed; not in our speculation, but in our action and being. If we get it right all falls into order, down to the smallest actions of daily life. The picture falls into perspective. We are one with reality; we are sane men; and we may, if we choose, go forward towards our end—which is an eternal happiness.

If God be and is our Creator, performs in us His works and makes of Himself our end, then the great structure of doctrine reposes upon a firm foundation. For there could not but be between That which made all things and ourselves the link of the intelligent creature with his Maker. There could not but be some intuition and some communion. Reason being present in man, there could not but be a process of striving for the fullness of being. Correspondingly, it becomes rational that the Creator should reveal Himself. It becomes rational, though awfully mysterious, that the Fatherhood should accept redemption. The Incarnation falls into



place ; and from thence onwards everything—to the last bead of the Rosary.

But if all this be an illusion, if (to summarize St. Thomas again, in his famous Two Objections to the Being of God), “ Nature be sufficient to herself ” (“ *Ea quæ sunt naturalia reducuntur in principium quod est natura* ”), then everything of the Creed fails, and so do all mortals. Whence we come and whither we go, and how we so proceed, are left at large and appear indifferent. Each man will adopt some petty object of his own for living, or deny that living has any object at all. Men will despair and satisfy the moment only. Lacking God, Unity and consecutive effort are dissolved.

“ *Utrum Deus Sit.* ” “ Whether God Be. ”

“ *Is Religion from God or from Man* ”?

Now these questions Mr. Wells’s *Outline of History* proposes to answer simply enough. To the first, “ No ”: God is Not. He is a figment of man’s imagination. To the second, “ From man ”: Man invented the idea of God : it is a phantasm of his brain.

I owe to a man for whose talents I have so great an admiration (though none for his culture or instruction) to say here, that I am not judging Mr. Wells’s private opinion upon the existence or non-existence of God. Indeed, that is not very important. Further, he is so impressionable, so carried away by his emotions, and so unaccustomed to close, consecutive thinking, that his decisions vary, as it would seem, with the last thing he happens to have read. In such-and-such a book he invented a new kind of Trinity. In another place he protests against what he elegantly calls the “ stuffed Nicæan God. ” In another he protests against the idea of God’s omnipotence. In general, he is in a state of flux, very characteristic of his time. He has thought nothing out.

But in this book (and it is with this book alone that I am concerned here) he quite definitely answers the essential question in that way which I have described. Religion is of man. God is a figment of our human imagining. He sets down again for us in 1926, at too great length (pp. 68 to 73),

the old vacuous guesswork of the seventies and eighties on how man came to imagine God, first as a projection of a man they knew, then by extension into a greater and greater being. With characteristic confusion of mind, he calls this process (p. 72) "Discovering God." But that's exactly what it isn't. It's *inventing* God—and one can't have it both ways. I know Mr. Wells honestly wants to have a sort of God, and, being a typical Modernist, he insists on combining what his emotions crave with what his creed denies. To say that primitive man "discovers God" when, as a fact, he is making Him up out of his head, is a contradiction in terms. There are not two truths, an historic and a moral. There is only one truth.

Of two processes, one must have been the actual process at work in man's mind from the moment when a true man existed and could think at all. Either he first felt instinctively that there was an external power upon which he was dependent, and later, perhaps, corrupted that instinct by identifying such power with lesser things; or he had no such intuition, but from having at first, though intelligent and a true man, no idea whatever of the spiritual life and of such an invisible external power, he came later to *imagine* it, to suffer the *illusion* of a god, by an erroneous taking of confused mental habits within for reality without.

No one can say the two processes could mingle or exist side by side. You do not mix a northward direction with a southward one. There is contradiction. Either the process was in one direction or the reverse. If the historical order was in the direction, "First a recognition of God . . . then the corruption of that idea by visible association . . . then idolatry, perversion, and all the rest of it" (as the very slight evidences and analogies suggest, and as common sense suggests also), that is one thing. If it was "A confused memory of being bullied by the Old Man of the Tribe—then perversions such as human sacrifice—idolatries—later vague imagining of some overshadowing spirit," that is the opposite. To postulate the *first* process is to say, in terms of Theology, that man had an original apprehension of God,

and later often overlaid it with false worship :—even to the degree of losing the original idea. To postulate the *second* is to lay down the definite affirmation that God is but a fiction, man-made : and therefore has no being : is *not*. And it is the second which Mr. Wells repeats once more in this book, from the popular materialist works of our boyhood.

Those who are of Mr. Wells's generation, the men who date their birth from the sixties and seventies of the last century, will remember the many efforts then made to get rid of God.

What efforts were made to get rid of Him as Creator I have described in my examination of the birth and death of that crude error known in its time as "Natural Selection." There was a moment when those who were attacking the idea of creation tried to turn this error from a mere fashion into a dogma. Created beings had no End for which they were designed. This grossly mechanical system, Natural Selection thus invented, has failed. They must seek for another.

But meanwhile they went to the heart of the matter—or at least the bolder of them did—and proposed to show not only that Creation and Design were illusions of the human spirit, but that the idea of God Himself was such an illusion. They made many efforts ; they started a dozen major theories, and scores of minor ones, to account for that illusion. Mr. Wells in this book characteristically follows one of the crudest—Grant Allen's. But while all of them, old or new, differ, they differ most amicably as fellow-opponents of true religion ; for men do not mind how much their theories disagree so long as they all have for their root-motive a common antagonism to the Faith and right living.

Note that these people were not out to observe historical record or to ascertain prehistoric fact upon the actions and the thought of man. That would have been true science ; and true science was not in their line. They were out to bolster up a theory. Facts must be twisted to meet theory, or, even more often, invented to support theory. A disciplined subjection to ascertained truth was abhorrent to them.

Since all can see that God—and God Creative—explains

the Universe, some odd system must be constructed to get rid of that simplest and most obvious explanation. Since man in his most primitive condition apparently takes God for granted, and only in later perversions distorts his vision of that primordial truth, some brief must be got together to argue an exactly contrary process.

We have had the suggestion that man first thought of spirits because in his dreams he saw dead friends again; then came to imagine a universal governing spirit. We have had the suggestion that early man's vivid imagination, comparable to that of a child, saw personality in every natural object that moved and apparently acted with intention—wind, trees, clouds, rivers—put gods into these, and so, very late, came to unite them in one Universal God. We have had a totally different suggestion that man, perceiving the action of the sun upon the earth, both beneficent and maleficent, got his illusion of God from that. This piece of foolery ran riot in my youth, and was made to explain not only the idea of God, but even great poems, until the very heroes of Homer and Patriarchs of the Bible became "Sun-myths"—as the silly jargon went.

How it all dates, to be sure! As I read Mr. Wells on the Evolution of the idea of God, I recall those successive cataracts of nonsense in this country alone: Grant Allen's, Max Müller's, and the rest of them. I am back in my youth. I am back in the days of the Bustle and the Bang, of Knowles's old *Nineteenth Century*, of *Sweetness and Light*, and many another faded picture and phrase that turn me cold with the mere memory of them, and yet give me a sort of homely feeling. I smell the gas of the old gas-burners, and I hear the wheels of the hansom cab along the London streets, and the clatter of horse hoofs in Pall Mall.

Mr. Wells brings out one only of these venerable contraptions. He goes in for "The Old Man Theory." It dates from about forty years ago. Here—as in the case of "Natural Selection," or of the Croll theory of glaciation—he reposes upon his early manhood; he is not even immediately pre-war, as he was in the case of Eoanthropos. He is as modern

as the days before the *Daily Mail*. How it dates ! How it dates !

But, like Cyrano, we elder men must be just as we approach the tomb, and I must do Mr. Wells the justice to admit that the "Old Man." theory is something a good number of his contemporaries still swear by. He is not so high and dry here as he is in the more antiquated passages of the book.

The "Old Man" theory is, briefly, this :

When man was not yet fully man, but still of a bestial type, the brutes went about in little groups, consisting of a father, several mothers, and a lot of young. The father was a vile bullying beast, and the subordinate members of the little group lived in terror of him. As the younger males grew up he got jealous of them and chased them out. What with one thing and another his horrid cruelty, his vicious temper, his jealousy—the dread of him filled the mind of all his wretched dependants. The mothers would tell their children hair-raising stories about him. He became an obsession. When this "Old Man" grew to be a little over forty, and lost some of his original vigour, he was knocked on the head by a younger male, or if that did not happen to him, something else got rid of him. He went off to die, or another rather younger "Old Man" supplanted him. But his legend was firmly fixed, and *that's* where we got the idea of God.

Personally, I think it a more unpleasant suggestion by far than the still older ineptitudes of men making God up out of Dreams, or the Sun, or even than that ubiquitous modern mania of Sex and the rest of it. In my judgment, the "Old Man" rubbish is an awful example of what happened to the nineteenth-century child who suffered a Calvinistic upbringing. There must, I fear, have been many "Old Men" at the head of suburban households forty to fifty years ago to give rise to this disgusting vision.

But what I would like to point out is not so much the offensiveness of the picture (and of the minds that entertain it) as its gratuitous inanity.

It is one thing to confuse hypothesis with fact—and bad enough, God knows—but it is a still more degraded thing

for the human intelligence to descend to mere unsupported affirmation.

Let us get this point quite clear—for it applies to the whole of Mr. Wells's work. Not only is hypothesis stated as fact, but things are stated as fact which aren't even hypothesis—which have *no* evidence at all in their favour.

If I see a man throw away an old pair of boots by the roadside, I can register the fact that he threw them away. That is science; that is ascertained fact. If I see an old pair of boots by the roadside I can, if I like, attempt to account for their presence by an hypothesis, that is, by a suggestion which (if I am a reasonable man who can distinguish knowledge from guessing) I do not *affirm*, but only put forward as a possible explanation. I say, "These boots *may have been* thrown away by the man who stole a new pair of boots from my neighbour Brown."

But what should we say of a man who, although no old boots had been found, made up a circumstantial story of the thief, saying, "This is where he threw away his old boots. His name was Archie Williams, he had red hair, he was a teetotaller, a widower, and had been in gaol for assaulting the police"?

Now this exactly corresponds to the process by which the Victorian Materialist group got its idea of God deriving from the "Old Man."

He is not even an hypothetical "Old Man," for he corresponds to no known human habit. All vertebrates have fathers, and all fathers grow old. Some sorts are polygamous, others pair in couples. But of a vertebrate ancestral to man, polygamous, and possessing these habits of bullying his "group" of terrorized wives and young, there is no trace. There is not a shred of evidence on bone or flint or prehistoric painting or tradition. The whole thing was spun entirely out of the Victorian writer's head. It gave him pleasure in this, as in other points, to think himself much nicer than his ancestors, because that flattered his pride. He liked to suppose the idea of God a figment of man's brain, because that left him free from moral responsibility; but of *evidence*

there is not a fragment. This fairy (or ogre) tale corresponds to nothing in the human spirit; it has no relation to the reverence, the exaltation, the affection which we instinctively feel for that by which we come to be: not only for God, but for our parents and our country. It is not the way in which our minds work from childhood to maturity—at least it is not the way in which the minds of normal children work. I cannot answer for the working of the mind in children brought up in strange heresies.

I say of positive evidence there is nothing whatsoever. The whole thing is as much like sober history as “Jack and the Beanstalk.” It is invented from beginning to end.

Mr. Wells is less to blame for this absurdity than if he had made it up himself out of his own head, and I hasten to spare him such ridicule. He did no more than copy it out of other people's old books. But he cannot be spared the ridicule of having copied it. He had far better for his reputation have left it alone. It looks silly enough to-day, and in a few years' time it will look far sillier.

But the reader here may say, “It is true that those whom our Author copies had no evidence for the theory that primitive man suffered from base illusions, out of which grew up the illusion of a general God. But neither have we any evidence to show that early man had intuitions of the One God.”

But is that so? Have we, indeed, no evidence leading towards, probably, a true answer?

. . . . .

Now, in the nature of things, evidence of such a sort must be vague in quality and very insufficient in amount. But it is converging evidence, and it is striking.

In the first place, we also are men. We can examine our own minds and find how they work upon the matter. The old-fashioned doctrinaires, the “Natural Selection” men, who are now rapidly becoming museum specimens, may tell us that such an examination is no guide because man is

always changing ; so what we feel to-day is no guide to what our remote forefathers felt. But they have been proved wrong. *Man is a fixed type*. We have just as much right to infer Early Man from ourselves as we have to infer the reindeer he hunted from the reindeer of to-day.

It is the neglect of this elementary truth that *Man is a fixed type* which renders ridiculous all the monstrous recent mythology on man. And, indeed, why is it that they only apply this mythology to man? They infer the habits and reactions of all other existing animals in the remote past from their present habits and reactions. Why is man alone treated as an unique anomaly, perpetually changing not his implements but the very nature of his mind, and changing vastly in a few centuries, while his fellow creatures stand unchanged for countless generations? Because their theories have for object a denial of man's Divine connection, and these theories break down unless facts are twisted to fit them.

Whether Man became a fixed type by this or by that process may be debated, but that when he had once appeared as true Man he remained a fixed type is certain.

Now when we consult our own Man-mind upon this problem of God and ask ourselves (as we are perfectly capable of doing), "How should I have felt about it had I not the traditions and teaching which I have had?" the answer is not far to seek. We should wonder at the unity and diversity of life of the world around us. We should suppose an origin for such things. Probably we should think of it vaguely, but undoubtedly we should think of it personally. We should conceive governance and a Being behind it all.

Here is another line of approach.

Nothing is more common in anti-Christian argument than the appeal to contemporary savages as examples of what Early Man was like. It is true that this cardinal doctrine, the close similarity of the modern savage with primitive man, having been turned against them, the materialists have recently been warning us against too close a parallel, and have begun repeating something we Christians talked of long ago (it ought to be obvious enough) that the savage has been at



it just as long as we have, and that often he may have degraded rather than have risen. But they can't have it both ways. They can't use the savage to make out the origins of Man as abominable as possible, and then, when the savage gives evidence on our side, say that they won't accept it.

Now the evidence from the savage in this respect is very remarkable. Not only is its general trend clear, but the more it is examined the stronger it becomes.

It is twofold. First, the very simple (and therefore, presumably, the very primitive) peoples are precisely those which have as a rule (not always) the primary conception of a Universal God. That is true of the Pigmies, it is true of certain striking cases in Australasia ; it seems less certain of the Esquimaux.

Secondly, when you get successive layers of culture, *it is precisely the later layers in which this idea fades away, and local immediate gods begin to obscure it.* The whole process has every appearance of being that of an original concept of a Universal God, later modified by particular tangible relations with immediate things, or, in plain words, Idolatry.

You get all the successive stages : The Supreme God still believed in, but regarded as indifferent ; the Supreme God half-forgotten ; the Supreme God wholly forgotten. They are like geological strata.

As an example of the way in which closer examination confirms this succession, I may take the case of the Andaman islanders and those who have observed them.

It was at first generally admitted, on the witness of an original observer, that these primitives held the idea of one Universal God. Then came a later observer who made his enquiries and decided that they had no such idea at all. Then came the careful scientific critic of this later observer (Andrew Lang) and showed, to the delight of all those who enjoy the comic, that the *first* witness spoke the language and lived intimately with the natives for years, while the *second* was a passing traveller who could not speak a word of it.

To all this add a third form of evidence. Primitive man, unless he was quite unlike contemporary savages, and unless

his thought did not follow the ordinary rules of thinking, could not possibly turn a local God or deified chieftain or what not into the Universal God. That is a wholly gratuitous assumption born of modern academic speculation. In the actual practice of the mind the two things are quite apart.

When a statement is continually repeated and is also simple, it easily comes to be an accepted commonplace. We ought always to test such ambient ideas by close inspection, and this one of many gods coalescing with one God won't hold water. Our minds do not generalize local attachments: they concentrate them.

They may extend the field of operation of such attachments, as when the patriotism of the city is extended to a nation or empire. But they remain fiercely exclusive. There is no "patriotism of the Universe."

Local gods are essentially competitive, active in a defined sphere. They are, by definition, many. Their very nature is to conflict one with another. There is no mental process whereby they can coalesce into a totally different kind of being. Far from it. They should, in the nature of things, and they do in actual historical example, degrade yet further, until they fall of their own insufficiency; but they don't turn into the one Universal God. There is no case of it in all History.

One body of Men—the ancient Jews—did indeed say that their God was the only true God and the Universal God. But they were unique in this, *and* they didn't begin by imagining many Gods. The whole point of their peculiarity was their affirmation of unity. That was what separated them from all other religions around them. The worshippers of local gods mocked this Jewish Jehovah (as on the Moabite Stone), but they never called *their* gods universal.

More than that we cannot say, and we do not know. The beginnings of the race are hidden from us, so far as scientific examination is concerned, save for certain analogies. There is no record of a contemporary sort, there is no direct archæological evidence. But such analogy as there is, and such examination of mental processes as is possible, leave the old

anti-Christian theories—sun-myth and sexual and animistic and somniac—wrecked ; and none more derelict than the unpleasant “ Old Man.”

. . . . .

So much for that one, and much the most important, point.

If anyone would support the contention that man had not in him the idea of God, nor came to fulfil it, but acquired it as an illusion from circumstance, he must make up some better theory than this. It is even stupider than those still older exploded attempts which Mr. Wells has wisely left alone. After all, there is such a thing as the sun, and there are such things as dreams : and children, and all people with vivid imaginations, and in a healthy spiritual state, feel separate spiritual forces behind the world which well might be erroneously deified. But the “ Old Man ” is fictitious altogether. He is as unreal as Santa Claus ; but we lose him with less regret.

## CHAPTER V

### WHENCE CAME RELIGION TO MAN ?

WHAT has Mr. Wells to say on the origin of religion in matters less than, but connected with, the Idea of God ; for instance, Sacrifice, Worship, the Future Life ? I leave Priesthood to a later discussion, in the place where Mr. Wells himself deals with it.

I take for my text a sentence drawn from his own work, page 67 :

*“ Fetichism is only incorrect science based on guesswork or false analogy.”*

That sentence is an accurate and exhaustive summary of what Mr. Wells has to tell us on the origin of religion. It is exactly that. It is “ incorrect science based on guesswork or false analogy.”

I have said that the origin of all the errors which he copies from his predecessors of half a lifetime ago is the neglect of the obvious fact that *Man is a fixed type*. It is the point I so emphasized in my last chapter, because it is capital to the whole discussion.

If you pretend, or try to believe, that Man alone, out of all creation, is not a definable being, but in a ceaseless process of rapid change, then, of course, you can invent at will any mythology to account for anything you prefer to hope happened to him in the past. You can imagine any monstrous lack of human faculty in the past so as to make your facts fit in with your theory. But if you regard Man as Man, since the time when first True Man (Mr. Wells’s own term) appeared upon earth ; if you regard palæolithic man as Man, a known animal, just as you regard the palæolithic reindeer as

a reindeer : if you consider a known thing called " Man " and not a succession of imaginary beings made up as you go along, then you have three certain guides to go upon, to wit : (1) your own knowledge of your own self, (2) your knowledge of your fellow-beings, (3) the record of Man's actions and being since he has kept records.

Let us first see what are the accompaniments of religion in the human mind, and how they tend to work in the fallen nature of man.

What is the *known* way in which the human mind proceeds in its religious activities ?

Those activities are all connected together by being each of them dependent on the original Idea of God.

If God be, then these religious practices—sacrifices, sacraments, prayers, awe, the sanctity of special deeds, places, and things, restrictions, rituals *Fas et nefas*—are more or less consonant to that Supreme Reality. However perverted, each religious action will, *if there be indeed a Creator and Sustainer*, correspond to and resemble what might have been an *unperverted* action of the same kind ; and that *unperverted* religious action would be an action in exact tune with reality. The perverted Sacrament argues a true Sacrament ; the perverted Sacrifice a true form of Sacrifice, and in general the perverted Worship a true Worship.

If God be not, then Sacrifice, Sacrament, Prayer, Inhibition, Ritual, are even worse perversions than the original illusion of a God from which they all derive.

These main religious functions I have just put down by their popular names. Let me give them a more exact order. They are, first of all, Veneration ; next, the offerings of gratitude and propitiation, that is Sacrifice ; next, the Communion of the Human Spirit with God, that is Prayer ; next, a recognition of Being, spiritual and incorporeal, which involves the possibility of man's surviving death ; next, Ritual—the necessary human framework of any continuous human Veneration, Sacrifice, Prayer, or affirmation of Immortality.

The Veneration natural to That which made us and by which we are, That which overshadows all possible things (including ourselves), produces a multitude of results : love quite as much as fear or wonder ; a vast curiosity and search ; and, above all, the ineradicable desire to *worship*—that is, to put up monuments (within the limits of our powers) bearing testimony to our Veneration ; to perform acts consonant with that Veneration ; to ask for aid, to admit wrongdoing, to expect justice in social relations, to enforce it, and so forth.

That, I say, is the very first action of the human mind, as we know it, where the conception of the Divine comes into its action : *worship*.

There is no race of men whatsoever, even where it has lost the conception of the Universal God, or has let that conception become obscure and indifferent, which does not still preserve the derivatives from the original idea of God. Treat the simplest savage with gross injustice, and you will soon see what he has to say to you : it will be of exactly the same sort as what the most corrupt of Londoners or Parisians would have to say to you. Propose that there is no ultimate vengeance for injustice, and you will discover despair in those who admit such a doctrine. You will find those who deny God—and those who find the Universe unjust are deniers of God—to be in despair, and you will find this despair showing just as clearly in the most corrupt Parisian or Londoner as you would in the most candid savage. Yet with this difference, that the savage is much less likely to accept such a proposition than the worn-out dregs of a luxurious civilization are likely to accept it.

Now on this chapter of Veneration--which must of necessity come first in order, and which we know does in practice, to our own human minds, come first in order—Mr. Wells has nothing to say.

He, or rather those from whom he got his mythology, have plenty to say of a base fear at the origin of religion, but nothing of Veneration.

Men feel Veneration in varying degrees, just as they feel colour or music in varying degrees ; but it is not for those who feel it least to teach those who feel it normally and fully. It is not for the man almost colour-blind to instruct the average man on colour ; it is not for a man almost tone-deaf to instruct you and me on the insufficiency of music. Mr. Wells does not apparently feel Veneration—even for great things near at hand, let alone for his Maker—at all.

Next to Veneration as a religious function proceeding from the Idea of God comes Sacrifice. If you will look at your own mind and see how the idea of Sacrifice arises in it you will discover that there is in that suggestion essentially the motive of offering a gift ; *after* that (not before it) there may also be a motive of propitiation. There may also come a motive, perhaps, sooner or later, of direct ritual connection between cause and effect : the feeling that a Sacrifice made by you will have a spiritual result. At any rate, the main motive is certainly *offering*. It is so with Sacrifice made for the sake of human beings whom we love or venerate. Still more is it so with Sacrifice to and for the Supreme Power : “ I owe you all things : so take back this, yours though it is, in gratitude.”

Now, this is a noble and generous emotion ; why in Mr. Wells's account do we only hear of its perversions and especially of its beastliest perversions ? The very primitive races among us enjoy that very feeling of owing gratitude ; we enjoy it in the full light of revelation. Many men continue to sacrifice all day long. The better they are, the more they do it. It is an essential factor in religion, subsidiary to and derivative from the Idea of God.

Now let us proceed to the survival of man after death. It is not true that all primitive men everywhere have been (or are) equally conscious of survival after death and of the immortality of the human spirit. It is still less true to-day that all men in our refined and fatigued civilization are conscious of it. But it is true that some consciousness of it is almost universal in unspoilt men, and that, wherever it

exists, it is accompanied by certain natural and almost necessary acts. We find these acts, on examining our own emotions, to be often rather symbolic than positively religious ; but they are intricately bound up—whether symbolic (such as putting flowers on a grave or objects into it) or actively religious (such as prayers for and to the dead)—with the conception of survival.

If you find that a particular set of men bury their dead with care, deposit with them loved or valuable objects, or objects with which their lives were associated, or even sink to the superstition of sacrificing companions to accompany them into the other world, you may be certain that these people believed in the survival of man.

Here again I repeat that warning which I have brought in over and over again in these notes. We must distinguish between what is evidence for truth and what is evidence only of human mood. We Christians may argue from philosophy upon the survival of the soul, or we may argue from authority upon it ; and we shall triumph in that argument, for we have all the trumps in our hands. We may, and I hope, do, accept Immortality simply on faith, as a truth which the Church teaches ; and we affirm it equally strongly whether we *feel* it little or much ; for the Faith is the best ground for certitude. But we are not here concerned with either of these processes, Faith or mood. We are not here concerned with whether man be right or wrong in generally accepting survival after death ; we are concerned only with the value of Mr. Wells as a would-be historian when he tells us that man has not accepted the idea.

I am not examining whether primitive man was right or wrong in this or that religious practice, or even in his acceptance of God. I am asking, Did he, in point of fact, act as Mr. Wells says he acted? If a materialist seeks to upset my faith in the Catholic dogma of Immortality by philosophical argument, he may be formidable in his assault on that ground. But if he produces the *historical* argument, and says that my forefathers did not believe in their own survival, I must test



his statement. If he prove to be quite wrong in his affirmation, then he ceases to be a formidable opponent in that respect : as an *historian* he is, on that prime matter, worthless.

Let us see how our Author deals with very early palæolithic sepulture.

Here Mr. Wells depends for his views directly upon Morillet, one of the great founders of modern archæology. Morillet laid it down (in a book dating from 1883) that palæolithic man was without religion, and only came to religion by a gradual exercise of invention : by an increasing illusion. Morillet based that negation of his *on the supposed fact (accepted in 1883) that there were no palæolithic tombs*. Mr. Wells knows that since 1883 those tombs have been discovered, but he is too rootedly conservative to admit the effect of the evidence. He is still a devoted pupil of Morillet, forty-two years after his master—it is a terribly long time for a man to cling to the superstitions of his youth !

As palæolithic sepulture *has* been discovered since Morillet and objects buried with the dead—instead of modifying his old-fashioned error, Mr. Wells begins forcing new facts to fit exploded theory. He tells us (on p. 68) that men buried the dead with ornaments and little domestic sanctities of food and arms, not because men loved the dead, and could not be rid of the idea of their spirit carrying on, but because “ they doubted they were dead ” ! He makes it very clear what he means by this. He means that men doubted whether the actual physical body were dead or no ! He adds that this “ is just as reasonable to suppose ” as that men showed by such burial offerings an idea of Immortality !

Well, to such a knock-down sentence as that one can only have one answer : It is nonsense. It is not “ just as reasonable ” to suppose that a man didn't know a corrupting carcase to be dead. It is wildly *unreasonable* to suppose that man would carefully bury his fellow-man in a carefully made tomb, deposit with him objects that showed great toil in their making, and were, therefore, a sacrifice of value, and at the same time did not know that he was physically dead. That

such nonsense can be talked at all is the best proof that, rather than give up a false theory, men will do anything with facts. It is exactly of a piece with the Bible Christian naturalists and geologists of the mid-nineteenth century, who said that fossils were freakish tricks to try their faith in the literal interpretation of Genesis. It is False Faith afraid to reason.

It is the very mark of False Faith that it fights shy of reason. So did the Bible Christian of the Victorian Age, who would not face geological science. So does his immediate lineal descendant, Mr. Wells.

When a False Faith is challenged by awkward facts it suppresses, denies, or distorts them. The facts have got to fit the dogma.

Materialistic Faith is at this warping of scientific truth perpetually—and nowhere more than in Mr. Wells's book.

If I thought this straining, ignoring, and twisting of ascertained fact—that is, of true science—to be an insincere trick in Mr. Wells, I would call it that. But I do not think it is. I think it is the unconscious action of a man untrained to clear thinking.

Take, for example, his attitude towards the known facts with regard to the palæolithic man, so far as they regard the origin of religion in departments other than burial. Palæolithic man made the pictures everyone has heard of in the depths of the caves and elsewhere. Mr. Wells remarks on page 68 that “one sees no scope in such a life” (that of the palæolithic hunter) “for superstition or speculation.”

Why on earth not? Are superstition and speculation absent from wild hunters as we know them to-day? Would they be absent from us if we turned to wild hunting again? Why should they be?

The only answer is that common sense and plain fact must not be admitted, because they would interfere with a preconceived theory that religion was an illusion coming late in the human story. The palæolithic hunter must be free from the taint of religion. The religious illusion must come

far on in the development in order that it may be associated at its origin with ritual murder and known savage customs. Yet the same writer is perpetually telling us that religious ideas are of bestial origin and came from the brutal cruelty to females and young of an aged monkey-like fellow myriads of years before the palæolithic hunters existed.

There is here a complete lack of consecutive thought. Religion began long before men were men, says Mr. Wells ; yet there is no trace of it when men first *were* men ! And then again (in a separate and contradictory proposition) religion began, very late, with the neolithic culture.

But indeed in his necessity for forcing facts to fit theory he makes a hash of palæolithic man from beginning to end. We have seen in how extraordinary a fashion he stretches fact to fit theory in the matter of palæolithic burial. Let us see now how he stretches it to fit theory in the matter of palæolithic art.

Mr. Wells says, on page 53, of the men who made the cave drawings (palæolithic men), that they "drew with increasing skill as the centuries passed." He says that because he thinks they *ought* to have done so according to all the Darwinian dogma of slow, minute, mechanical evolution. The plain fact is that they did *not*. Their painting followed a cycle precisely like that which the painting of higher cultures has followed : it sprang suddenly, or very rapidly, into existence as a vivid intense realization of the thing drawn. It sank into mere convention and then disappeared.

The more I look into Mr. Wells's book, the more I find this characteristic straining of facts to meet a mythological doctrine and neglect of facts (or, to be more charitable, ignorance of facts) which might upset theory.

Thus, I find, on page 47, "with regard to the cave drawings there is scarcely anything we can suppose to be a religious or mystical symbol at all," and he argues throughout this page that the cave drawings had no religious signification.

There are only two possible explanations of so strange a

remark. One is that Mr. Wells knew the evidence and suppressed it. The other is the much more probable one, that his reading is too slight for him to be acquainted even with the main lines of the evidence.

We can prove that the latter, more charitable, explanation is the true one. That the cave drawings were religious in character everybody now knows—except, apparently, Mr. Wells—from two discovered characters. *First*, a large proportion of them are in the very depths and recesses of dark passages—sometimes deliberately obstructed—where they could have had no utilitarian or merely artistic object. But apart from this we have, *secondly*, the famous Phallic Dance, at Cogul, which is conclusively ritual, in garment and circle and all else.

I have a further right to conclude that Mr. Wells was simply ignorant of the evidence, and not merely shirking it, from his confused writing upon details not religious. Upon page 55 he writes, concerning the palæolithic men of the cave drawings, this sentence, “*It is doubtful if they knew of the bow.*”

When I first read that sentence, I was so staggered I could hardly believe that I had read it right.

I have already confessed to a native inaccuracy in detail. I often have to read a thing several times to be certain I have not missed anything. I often skip a modifying phrase or word. I went carefully over several pages to make certain that I had not overlooked any qualifying term. But no. There was the thing in black and white.

It was the more extraordinary because here before me, in Mr. Wells's own book, were reproductions of these cave paintings with the bow and arrow appearing all over them!

We have the clear statement that later palæolithic men—who knew not the bow nor domestic animals nor tillage—were succeeded by another culture which knew all these things, and that can only mean the neolithic culture. Yet, *after* saying this, Mr. Wells remembers, or is told, that, after all there were palæolithic men who used the bow and made

pictures of it. So he devotes a section to them, contradicting what he has just said. It is as though a man wishing to deny the Red Indians were to say, "They did not know the horse, but were succeeded by a new culture of white men who did." But having said that (and allowed his publisher to illustrate the remark with a picture of a Red Indian on horseback!) were to add a supplementary chapter saying, "By the way, before they disappeared they did get the horse."

Mr. Wells would not have written thus if he had not been driven by the necessity of denying facts which did not fit in with his theology.

What is the point of saying that the cave painters, who made their drawings so often under conditions obviously religious, and who painted an unmistakable religious ceremonial dance, had "as yet no religion"? What is the motive producing so absurd a saying as that later palæolithic men did not know the bow and arrow which they painted so clearly, and then, as an afterthought, bringing in palæolithic men who *did* know the bow and arrow? What is the driving force which makes a man write—in the teeth of the evidence—that this art arose very gradually from rude beginnings and progressed—instead of declining (as, in fact, it did)?

What is the point of saying that Neanderthal man may have spoken (*may* have spoken! A man who made instruments, lit fires and buried his dead!)? Or why add that he had "nothing we should call language"? (On which point neither Mr. Wells nor any other man has the least information and which on the face of it is wildly improbable.)

The answer is that you have to imagine facts without evidence, you have also to distort facts, you have also to suppress them if you are to present to your readers a childish simple scheme of regular and, above all, slow "progress."

You must make Early Man last as long as possible and be as base as possible. If the facts will not fit in with that very slow process of development, which was felt (stupidly enough!) to make a Creator less necessary, so much the worse for the

facts. Such very slow advance, unconscious, of imperceptible degrees—mechanical—such prolonged bestiality in true man, was dogma with all cultured people thirty or forty years ago. It is still dogma with Mr. Wells. Being dogma, and dogma divorced from reason, the facts must give way to it.

Or turn to the *origins of Sacrifice*. We come at the outset on the very true remark that the killing of a man is a very violent and striking act. But immediately after we find the quite false remark that such ritual murder would be “naturally” associated with any propitiatory offer. Mr. Wells at once proceeds to postulate this horrible perversion as a universal human action and a precursor of all religion. He has no basis for that at all. It is made up, not indeed by him, but by the older men whom he copies—the writers who were authorities half a lifetime ago, notably Frazer.

There is plenty of evidence to show that men have put their fellow-beings to death here and there, and have done so in *all* states of culture and for all manner of widely differing reasons—ritual, vindictive, military, magical, judicial. But there is not a scrap of evidence to show that such murder was original to religion, and most certainly it was not universal. The attempt to prove it universal has not only failed, but ought never to have been made : for it is nonsense.

Frazer, in *The Golden Bough*, gathered all the evidence he could—most of it negligible, some of it doubtful, a little of it firm and good—upon human sacrifice as connected with harvest. All he could show was that some few sets of men have here and there, in places unconnected and wide apart in time, killed men in a ritual fashion from a superstition that such ritual murder would procure them a good harvest. There is no sort of proof that it was a general human custom ; and what is worse, there is no distinction in Frazer between certain evidence, uncertain and worthless.

I should have thought that by this time educated opinion was alive to that criticism : it is many years since Andrew Lang died ; and Andrew Lang (in this country—it had little acceptance abroad) blew the theory sky-high—I mean

the theory that human sacrifice was an original universal accompaniment of the sowing or the harvest.

Human sacrifice being a violent because a horrible thing, has occasionally accompanied the desire for victory in war. It has accompanied mourning for the great. It has been the product of terror under defeat or pestilence. It has appeared in all sorts of forms, connected with pretty well any violent emotion of desire or dread. It has been particularly noticeable in very high civilizations ; Carthage had it at the very height of her luxury and greatness. Mexico had it—most highly developed just when Mexico was, apparently, at the highest point of her material civilization. Some savages have had it also. You get it in the Moabite Stone ; you get echoes of it in the Jewish folk-lore of the Old Testament. You get it in a totally different form among the Gauls, where it is commonly an act of vengeance on criminals and prisoners, and in no way an act of magic. You also get an abhorrence of it among societies which have not fallen to the degradation of practising it ; and these societies (by the way) usually prove the masters and the betters of those who practise it. But of human sacrifice as an original and universal habit, there is not a sign. To believe *that* you have to swallow whole the fourfold trick of Frazer's *Golden Bough*, which is :

(1) To gather all scraps of evidence indifferently, including a mass of vague hearsay and stuff at third hand, and vague analogies, and any custom, game, lark, or legend, however remote from killing, which can be guessed to be—or asserted to be—a memory of that perversion. (2) To leave out all counter evidence. (3) To put the thing cumulatively and (4) Then to present it as proved.

In such fashion any theory, however wild, could be demonstrated to satisfaction. Mr. Chesterton has wittily shown how it can be used to prove that History (what with Calvus, Socrates, Cæsar, tonsured Priests, and Calvin) is dominated by bald heads.

Such is Frazer's "proof" of universal original ritual human sacrifice.

Yet upon the assumption that this horror was universal and original, all Mr. Wells's argument in this department is based ; including what is not argument at all, but mere fiction, his elaborate and purely imaginary description of human sacrifice at Stonehenge.

Oh ! That Human Sacrifice at Stonehenge ! How well we know it ! In how many cheap magazines, in how many journalistic allusions ! With such a lineage it could hardly fail to turn up in such a best-seller as this *Outline of History*.

In point of fact we have no knowledge whatever of the use of Stonehenge or its purpose, and not a scintilla of evidence on its being used for human sacrifice. But the cinema public will have it so.

Historically the whole talk of human sacrifice as original to religion is quite worthless. There is no general evidence of the thing in the remains of prehistoric civilization ; no picture, no sculpture, no language test. We may safely prophesy that if this nameless perversion reappears among men—as it well may—it will reappear not in their simplest societies, but rather in their most refined.

The bulwark against all such things—and such murder is but one out of myriads of possible monstrosities—is that general tradition of our morals and culture which depends upon the Catholic Church. Men do not grow out of their evils : they return to them, lacking a Divine guide.

When, therefore, I lay down Mr. Wells's book (not without relief) and find my eyes following the phrase upon page 72, " it *must* be clear from what has gone before that primitive man could have had no idea of God or of religion," I leave that comic phrase " it must be clear " to the judgment of the reader.

There never was any writer *less* clear in his ideas than the author of this work when he deals with Early Man : and as to the few real facts and his conclusions from them, they dance such a saraband that you never know where you are, nor which is first or last, nor which is top and which is tail.



First religion arises in some beast living before man who gets a "complex" of terror from his horrible old father; then it is neolithic man who gets it—after an immense interval with no religion at all. On one page a thing is possible; two pages later probable; four pages on it is certain. A man having put forward a theory in 1893, it is still gospel in 1926, though exploded in 1895. A feathered chieftain waving bows and arrows at you is ignorant of the bow, and the poor devils of deer with arrows stuck into them everywhere are told that their hunters knew nothing of arrows.

It is on science of this kind, instruction of that calibre, and culture of such a tone, that we are asked to abandon the Faith, which made, and on whose retention depends, the civilization of our race.

## CHAPTER VI

### WE COME TO REAL HISTORY

**I** NOW leave Mr. Wells's *Outline of History* in so far as it deals with guesses, unproved statements, and ascertained facts on Man as he existed before any known written record.

I have devoted so large a proportion of my space to this earlier and vaguer part of the book because it is by far the most important. In it Mr. Wells, repeating the various materialist and other anti-Christian theories of his youth, has put before his readers an ethnography and a philosophy confused, indeed, but consistently opposed to the Catholic Faith. And it has been my business to distinguish what was demonstrably wrong in his statements, what exploded by recent scholarship and what solid and demonstrated; blaming his obvious unacquaintance with recent European thought, and his lack of mental grip, but praising his vividly picturesque style and his undoubted sincerity.

The opportunity for speculating at large and affirming without proof in this prehistoric region is unlimited. Therefore it is here that Mr. Wells's attack on the Catholic Faith is largely delivered; and since it is his antagonism to the Catholic Faith with which I am mainly concerned—for sympathy or antagonism with the Catholic Faith is the only thing of real importance in attempting to teach History—I have given to this section the considerable space my reader has traversed.

Mr. Wells closes his repetitions of the old and often discarded theories upon Man before human record with Chapter XII, the end of his second book, and page 88 of the volume.

Thence onwards he is to deal with History to which we have real witness, and it is noticeable that in the last pages of this first part, when he begins to deal with certain scientific fact, ascertained truth, and a certain amount of real knowledge, he becomes not only very much more reliable, but much more successful as a writer.

His remarkable talent for compressing the statements or actual discoveries of others into readable short form comes out brilliantly.

Thus even before he comes to the beginnings of human record, he has to deal with language, and he does so with a firmness of touch and an exactitude of form which everyone must admire, and no one more than I. The little passage only covers seven pages, but it is exceedingly well done.

There is a good reason for this. Mr. Wells is here dealing with a mass of well-known material. His talents for compression and exposition have full scope; his weakness as a reasoner is not tried.

Language is a positive thing. It is there, a real subject for analysis; you can study it. It is not moonshine like the "Old Man" who produced some very nasty God, nor like the palæolithic hunter who could not use bows and arrows, although he made pictures of himself using nothing else.

It is true that even in this most excellent little essay on the differences of language throughout the world, Mr. Wells cannot escape that futility which he shares with everyone of his type, the inability to distinguish hypothesis from fact, and the statement of a vague guess as a known truth. None the less, these seven pages, as a whole, are first-rate. Anyone who had not read about the differences between existing human languages, would, on merely skimming these seven pages, be permanently instructed by them, and soundly instructed. It can honestly be said that this bit of précis writing is a feat.

That weakness, however, to which I have alluded appears in a few sentences which I will quote before passing to the excellences of this passage.

Mr. Wells repeats, at the beginning of the affair (on p. 82), that the people who drew so well in the caves "probably" only made imitative sounds—that is manifest nonsense. People with excellent artistic powers, elaborate decoration, ritual, and so forth are not dumb, or half-dumb, animals. They are men. The only possible reason for dragging in the absurd statement that they "probably" could not use full speech is the mania for making man as base as possible for as long as possible, so as to feed the idea of Progress. He drags in several times the gratuitous and demonstrably false idea of very gradual development in this, as in other matters. He uses the phrases "*very slowly*" in his fourth paragraph, "*very slow process indeed*" in his fifth paragraph, and in general forces (without any evidence) the creation of language to conform to the old dogma of the nineteenth-century materialists that all development necessarily takes place by tiny stages spread over vast spaces of time. We now know that it does nothing of the sort in matters where we can follow it. We know that Evolution goes by jumps in things before our eyes—such as machinery—and we are more and more convinced by evidence that it has gone by jumps in the geological record. Therefore we may presume it did so in this affair of speech.

Mr. Wells is also to blame in saying that a number of tribes using one Aryan tongue "must" have wandered somewhere between Central Europe and Western Asia. That "must" is absurd and highly characteristic of pseudoscience. We do not know anything about the way in which the roots common to the group of languages in question spread, nor whence they spread. It is all mere statement in the void. In the same way he tells us that the Danube, "about eight thousand years ago or less," flowed into a sea which reached to Turkestan, and which may have sent out arms to the Arctic Ocean; and again "about eight thousand years ago" there were no straits between Asia and Europe where the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles now are. That phrase "about eight thousand years ago" is worthless.

He knows nothing about such a date, nor does anybody

else within enormously wide limits of time. These are only guesses based on slight and contradictory evidence.

Conversely, he does not allow for the rapidity with which languages sometimes change before becoming fixed for very long periods ; still less does he allow for the amazing differences which a comparatively short time will make in the development of the same word along different lines. No one without record to prove it could possibly think that the French word "guêpe" had any relation to the English word "wasp." That the English word "penny" was the great-grandson of "denarius," or that the German word "krieg" and the English word "war" were the same word come down through tortuous channels from an original Latin source, or that the English word "spade" was the same as the French word "épée," the noble word for a sword.

One could multiply instances indefinitely. Language sometimes changes with the greatest rapidity and takes on wholly new forms ; then remains fixed for very long periods. And this development of language, like the development of everything else, completely contradicts the mechanical idea of a slow, inevitable, mechanical, blind process—which idea governed the mid-nineteenth century.

But after allowing for these defects, it remains true that Mr. Wells's summary on language is, as I have said, exceedingly well done. It is a good instance of the way in which the Author's mind works best when it is dealing with concrete facts, and worst when it is in the region of hard, independent reasoning. Feed Mr. Wells's pen with facts and he presents them excellently. Ask him to think, and he either quotes at random (and often confusedly and contradictorily) what other people have deduced (usually wrongly) : or, now and then, very rarely, thinks for himself, and is then more confused and self-contradictory than ever.

We shall find, when we come to the later division of his work and deal with his summary of known and recorded History, that there is very much less to complain of than there is in his imaginary Pre-history ; though even in these later

sections the moment he touches the Catholic Church or the tradition of the European gentry with their foundations in the Roman Empire, he reacts against them with such violence that he loses his judgment altogether.

I desire here, at the end of the first division of my work, to summarize what I have had to say so far about the book, and it is only just that I should put down the bad side first and end with the best that can be said about it.

Mr. Wells's unfortunate disabilities for a task of this kind are primarily that he has not a sufficient acquaintance with the world, and that he has not supplemented this weakness—as it can in part be supplemented—by wide reading. He has not met many kinds of men nor compared many kinds of thought. He got coached, but he got coached too rapidly and too summarily. He knows little or nothing of the vast Catholic tradition and philosophy which inherits and explains not only Europe but the whole nature of Man. He seems to think that Catholic tradition and philosophy are a hole-and-corner affair, because, in the only society he has really known, Catholics form a very small and unfamiliar minority. He continually reaffirms what he happens to have read in the little popular textbooks of his youth up to about 1893-94. Over and over again one finds him saying things which passed for dogma in the popular science of thirty to forty years ago, and have since been quite done away with.

He has also clearly been very slack in overlooking the work. He has not sufficiently superintended the illustration of his book, nor prevented absurd contradictions between graphic teaching by picture and the statements of the text.

He falls into the common modern trick or error (I prefer to think it an error rather than a trick in this case, for he is a man, though limited, sincere) which I will baptize "the shoe-horn," and with which I became wonderfully well acquainted at Oxford. It consists in putting a thing as a possibility on one page, as a probability on a later page, and on a still later page as a certitude.

On page 48 he quotes a theory to which he "inclines," viz. that Neanderthal man and true man did not interbreed. On page 52 it is no longer an "inclination" but a certitude. He says "there is no trace of it." In exactly the same way on page 44 the Mediterranean area is, in the days of Early Man, "probably" a valley below sea-level. But on page 51 the submergence of the Mediterranean is taken for granted, till, on page 66, we get to the third stage in the "shoe-horn" process. It is by that page "practically certain" that at the end of the last Glacial Age, the Mediterranean, not yet flooded from the Atlantic, was but a couple of land-locked basins.

His thought is not connected. Thus he will say of the Tasmanians that they had no Neanderthaloid characters, and then remark that they represent a Neanderthaloid stage in the evolution of true man. He will tell us that one cannot go very much by the measurements of skulls because the shape of the skull sometimes changes rapidly. There he is quite right. But a few pages on he repeats all the modern fashionable nonsense about a Nordic race and a Mediterranean race and an Alpine race and the rest of it—which is based almost entirely on the idea that the skull formation is permanent. He traces religion to certain past terrors and offensive habits in a bestial type prior to Man, but won't allow it in palæolithic man long after; then he suddenly recurs to it in neolithic man far later still.

How familiar it all is !

Meanwhile, throughout the whole of the work there appears that wretched *a priori* bias which is the bane of all insufficient or false religions: the determination to squeeze facts to any shape, however unnatural, if only they may thus be forced to fit theories; the effect of a fixed mythology to which evidence must correspond, or be neglected, or so distorted as to become wholly unnatural, and under the influence of which the absence of evidence is supplied by sheer fiction. We have seen how this could lead so intelligent a man to affirm that men with capacity to fashion instruments, use fire and bury

their dead with ceremony and gift, could not speak a consecutive language. It also makes him say of men who hunted the reindeer in an Arctic climate and were remarkable artists, that "perhaps" they had no clothing. It leads him to postulate as necessary an exceedingly slow and unceasing process for all development—right against known evidence—and thus bring him to deny or neglect or forget plain record, such as armament, ornament, burial.

In other words, the disadvantages of Mr. Wells, in all the prehistoric part of his work, flow from exactly the same mental defects as warped his ancestors in religion. Just as his spiritual forbears, the Puritans (who lasted on to our own time), could not believe anything outside the family Bible, could only understand the literal interpretations of its English printed word, and were inhibited by their isolation from a wide philosophy; so, in their newer form, the Bible Christians and Puritans in revolt still demand the infallibility of a document (in Mr. Wells's case, the popular scientific textbooks of his youth), and reject without reasoning any facts which militate against an accepted theology which they have been taught in youth. Just as the old-fashioned Bible Christians, from whom he (and his audience) derive, could construct no general philosophy of the world, so he, or, rather, the people from whom he has learned these things, reject any general philosophy, and are not afraid of perpetual self-contradiction. Just as the religious enthusiasts of the sects from whom he (and his audience) derive replaced reason by violent emotion, so does he.

All that is bad enough, but one must end by summarizing his many and remarkable qualities for the task he attempted.

All his work so far (that is, down to the end of the Prehistory) shows to the full those qualities I praise in my first article. He is devoid of charlatantry. He always gives the name of the book he is quoting from. He is free from envy. He advertises the works from which he draws. The narrative is vivid, the power of presenting the writer's mental image



to the reader is quite exceptionally strong. Indeed, Mr. Wells is here unique in his generation. As this gift is one of the principal things to be admired in my own trade of writing, and one which I cannot pretend to have myself, I feel a special respect for it. Anyone reading a passage in this book has a mental image of the brightest kind called up before him. He can almost see and smell the apish "Old Man"—though he is as imaginary as the Giant Blunderbore. He can assist as an agonized witness at the barbarous slaughter at Stonehenge—which is as imaginary as the beheading of Puss in Boots.

Mr. Wells is also, as I have said, limpid, sincere, accepting all his simple, unco-ordinated beliefs with a candour which is morally admirable, though intellectually deplorable. Best of all, he can put into the briefest and clearest form the main statements upon which his story depends. And here I am so much his inferior that I would like to take this opportunity of saluting his superiority. I would give worlds myself to be able to put true things in History as tersely and as sharply as he puts unsubstantial things, and to be able to strike a true outline as firm and as strong as his fantastic one.

For, to repeat a metaphor already used, Mr. Wells's *Outline of History* may be compared to one of those vivid profile charcoal sketches which we had in the music-halls of his youth and mine: to a vivid charcoal sketch of Mr. Gladstone's profile, for instance—but presented to the audience as that of Queen Victoria. The drawing is rapid, firm, accurate, successful—but it is startlingly unlike the original.

It remains true that if the draughtsman had known reality well enough he would have done useful and permanent work in this field. He would have been a leader instead of a follower. As he has a wide public he would have given the average men of his own tongue a view of the past which would have rung true, and he would have been confirmed by every new fact as he accumulated experience. Unfortunately, he

was given by those on whom he relied a view of the past which is already badly out of date and necessarily doomed to be forgotten in a few years.

Seeing how remarkable his talents are, and how he might have used them, it is a very great pity indeed.

## CHAPTER VII

### MR. WELLS ON PRIESTHOOD

WHEN a man is talking of a social class whereof he knows nothing, you will notice that he does two things. First of all, he goes very much by the current statements about it which he has seen in print or on the stage : what he has met in the books and plays he happens to come across. Baronets are wicked, Dukes haughty, great Ladies disdainful and dazzlingly fair. Next, his imagination plays on that unknown world, creates out of the void, and then takes for granted a number of habits in it which are, as a fact, non-existent and wholly of his own imagining : as, for instance, Cabinet Ministers wielding awful power in whispered conclaves.

But when he comes to talking of his own world, of his own class, of the things he really knows, his manner changes altogether. He becomes, for one thing, much more interesting, and, for another, much more definite. In *that* region, one can judge his style and credentials by real standards.

Something like this change from romance and misjudgment to appreciation and reason takes place in Mr. Wells's book when he turns from what is called to-day "Pre-history" (of which we know hardly anything) to recorded History (of which we know a great deal, and which is in a totally different category).

This change takes place in Mr. Wells's *Outline of History* with the opening of Book III.

In the first two books, where he was dealing with the world before Man, and Man before History, he went by such text-books as he had come across (all of them anti-Catholic, few or none of them continental, and most of them old-fashioned

stuff thirty or forty years old, the theories of which are to-day, for the most part, exploded). He filled up the gaps with guesswork, rather confused, even contradictory, and often in direct conflict with the evidence—had he known or noticed what the evidence was. He romanced, and he romanced out of the map. The world he saw in his vivid imagination was an unreal world, much as the English aristocratic world of a popular novel is an unreal world comically unlike the thing itself.

But when it comes to real and tangible stuff, record and monument, and still better, record in writing—in other words, when it comes to real History—Mr. Wells's excellent qualities as a writer appear in a much better light and are put to a much better purpose. His narrative, which even in its misshapen prehistoric part was lucid, vivid and well-put, capable of holding the reader's attention, retains all these characters, and now becomes in great sections really informing without distortion. There is also a very successful packing of a great deal of information into a short space without redundancy of detail and without too much repetition. The order is well observed, and the survey is as wide as the Author intended it to be—that is, world-wide.

Unfortunately, in this second part of Mr. Wells's account, he cannot help suffering from the disabilities of the modern industrial town world, under which he naturally labours. He has never experienced the great part played by popular memory and impressions handed down from one generation to another, as the counterpart and corrector of documentary record. He is, therefore, too prone to treat what is handed down by masses of men living familiarly in neighbourhood (they still do so in our villages) as being, on its large lines and in its general sense, misleading; whereas it is, on its large lines and in its general sense, true. He has no appreciable knowledge of the Catholic Church, and, therefore, does not know how History falls into line under that philosophy which alone properly explains it. He also suffers, as we shall see, from that unfortunate tendency to violent personal hatred for the nobler things, especially for the great and united succession of civilization in Europe: Tradition.

But the merits, at first, outweigh the faults. Until he runs up against the beginnings of Rome—with all the irritation which the mere name of Rome provokes in him—he keeps his head and writes excellently. The thing is well balanced and of real value. The exceptions which must be made, even to the part before Greece and Rome, to this praise do not colour his story of early record as a whole. He gives a rather imaginary account of the beginnings of agriculture, but much of it is more probable than improbable; and he modifies it well enough by conditional adverbs proper to our necessarily speculative attitude towards these early and uncertain things.

Now and then, in a sentence or two, he is unwise enough to abandon this conditional attitude and bolts away again into fiction: for instance, he tells us that when man settled down to agriculture, the Red Sea was still connected with the Mediterranean (p. 91). We do not know that; it is mere guesswork, and ought not to be put up as historical fact. On the other hand, an immediately following remark, that “the Persian Gulf then extended much further northwards than it does now,” is real history; for there is sufficient proof of that.

Again (on p. 92), he puts down as historical fact the invariable conquest of settled populations by barbaric and nomadic populations outside. He treats it as a necessarily recurrent phenomenon and as the only process. Of course, we all know from History that in plain recorded fact the converse is just as common, and far more lasting in its effects. Subjugation of the barbarian by the civilized man is very much more the rule of recorded History than its opposite. And as for agricultural work being regarded as the lot of an inferior, that is a false generalization from our own suburban conditions. On the contrary, the tradition of the Mediterranean peoples, as of the Chinese, is just the other way. Agricultural work was the basis of their society and was clothed with moral dignity.

The account of early Mesopotamian civilization (including in that term the earliest culture before the junction of the

Euphrates and Tigris systems) is excellent, and the subsequent short section on the beginnings of Egypt is equally good—with a paragraph on the causes of the difference of record (on p. 98) between the Nile and the Euphrates Valleys particularly well put.

In order to keep the survey parallel and marching on one front, there follow a few lines on the early civilization of India and on the early history of China : in which, by the way Mr. Wells rightly rejects the somewhat shadowy hypothesis put forward of late years, which gives a Mesopotamian origin to the Chinese culture.

If only Mr. Wells had also rejected from these first stones of his building in real History such pure guesswork as the supposed "heliolithic" culture—an imaginary matrix for all future civilization—this early part might be called completely well done. It is a pity he yielded to that temptation, for it is one of the things that will "date" the book most seriously in a few years. Theories of this kind come and go, like the weather. The passage (pp. 107, 108) in which he quotes from another authority upon the development of the rowing ship in the Mediterranean is a good example of sane reasoning and informing conjecture. While the conclusion—a rapid review of the Cretan discoveries and of the Phœnician civilization—is on the same high level.

Unfortunately, the reader is, of course, left under the impression that civilization of any complexity came very late, a judgment which the author has to make in order to fit it in with his Messianic ideas—his ardent inherited faith in a Millennium for which we are only beginning to prepare.

In point of fact, we do not know how far back the origins of our complex civilization may stretch, and these very Cretan discoveries should give us pause before we make any confident statement upon the point.

It is not forty years ago that all popular history was roundly affirming the original semi-barbarism of the Greek world at a time long after the culture of the Labyrinthine Palace fell—if fall it did—or decayed. The really interesting thing about the whole affair is that we cannot find a transition from

barbaric to civilized conditions. We find civilization in all essentials fully present at the very origin of research. We have not yet, and probably we never shall, have final information upon the phase by which it passed from embryonic to mature. On the analogy of nearly all other development we may believe that change to have been a rapid leap. But where it took place or when, whether Egypt or Western Asia arose of themselves or whether there lay behind them some tradition of culture, far older, which they inherited, or which one of them inherited, and which later either by submergence or in any other way disappeared, we simply do not know.

The next section, Chapter XV, is, so far, the best of all. It deals with the development of the various forms of writing, and will be read with the greatest profit. It has all the qualities of Mr. Wells's close *précis* writing at its best. Nor should the Author be blamed for having left out the theory (Sergi's, if I remember right) that the alphabetic system had an origin of its own, connected neither with the Egyptian script nor with the Phœnician, but rather one from which the Phœnician itself derived. He has put the necessary facts simply and clearly and in the right order. He notes the reaction of writing on thought, and even (as in the case of China) upon social systems and method of government. And he has done well not to confuse so short a catalogue with too much consideration of learned theories.

But even this first-rate chapter is somewhat marred by a conclusion based upon the false hypothesis of a perpetual change in human nature. Writing is made to play a part far too great in the creation of something like a new man. That is not, historically, what happens to Man through any of his own inventions. Man's inventions do not change Man in essentials. Man remains Man throughout. And when Mr. Wells goes on to say that the very widespread use (and abuse) of printing to-day will create a further apocalyptic transformation of our poor minds, he is going right against the common experience of all cultivated men, and living in an unreal newspaper world of his own. The modern mind, in countries where this quite recent habit of promiscuous and

universal reading has arisen, has not improved ; it has visibly degenerated ; it thinks less clearly, it has a less intelligent grip than had the more sparing readers of the past.

You have only to contrast the peasant or fisherman to-day against the average newspaper-skimming townsman artisan, with an equal or higher material revenue, to appreciate this truth. In the popular appreciation of life and philosophy it is self-evident. The peasant is immeasurably superior. When, therefore, Mr. Wells concludes this admirable little section with the confident remark that "our world to-day is only in the beginning of knowledge," he must be told that all that is mere Messianic stuff, part of a false religion, and worthless. It is the mood in which the same false Puritan religion from which he comes produced the Seventh Monarchy men, Second Adventists, Jump to Glory Jane, and the rest of them : the facile and contemptible mood of "The Good Time Coming" as an imaginary escape from this *Lachrymarum Vallis* : the "Great Rosy Dawn."

The detail of what will happen to Man in the future we do not know. One thing we do know quite certainly : he will be Man in the future just as he has been Man in the past. The type will not change. He will yield to the same temptations, be strengthened by discipline and renunciation, weakened by indulgence and excessive opportunity—especially weakened by his own material creations when they are abused. And we further know, from all the records of our race, that a contempt for the past and a planting of standards in an imaginary future is the destruction of culture. Of all popular moods which a failing civilization can catch, it is the most fatal.

At the end of this section comes in again (with Chapter XVI) that note which is the principal motive for these comments. For it is with this Chapter XVI of his third book that we come again upon the Author's reaction against religion and particularly against the essential idea of a Priesthood. Mr. Wells's sixteenth chapter is entitled, "Gods and Stars, Priests and Kings."



He introduces it at the beginning of his account of recorded History, and it is the first example in this account of that personal and violent reaction of his against true religion which I am following throughout these articles.

His reaction is, of course, only part of the general spirit of our time outside the Catholic Church, and in his attitude towards all religion properly so-called—especially in his contempt and dislike of the high religious functions of ritual, hierarchy, sacrifice and the rest—Mr. Wells is but one individual in the millioned English-speaking Protestant public for whom he writes, and whose ideas he repeats to their satisfaction. But he feels this hatred with a particular animosity where other people nowadays feel it but vaguely : he is stirred by an antipathy to the Catholic Church which they also feel, but do not feel so pointedly or so continually. And he can express it in a very readable, popular fashion, which enables the average reader of his own sort to say “ This is what I have always thought, more or less, but more forcibly and better put than I could have put it.”

He here declares himself fully for the first time on the special point of *Priesthood*. What he thinks about it in general his readers had already heard on an earlier page, where he made an imaginary picture of its origin (p. 72 of the *Outline of History*). He there tells them that “ bold men, wise men, shrewd and cunning men, were arising ” (in neolithic times) “ to become magicians, priests and kings.”

There is, of course, no evidence at all as to how mankind first connected a Priesthood with the general idea of religion ; and this specific attachment of it to the neolithic period (itself a very vague term, for who can tell that men using polished stones were everywhere earlier than men using metals ?) is not History, but arbitrary assertion. However it is a guide to what Mr. Wells, and the myriads who have had the same education as he, in England and America, feel with regard to the institution of Priesthood. It was wholly man-made, seeing that religion itself is man-made ; and it proceeded from the same sort of very unpleasant origins as religion itself. Mr. Wells, on the same page, is careful to say that the

Priests were not to be thought of as cheats ; he wisely admits that they "usually believed in their own ceremonies," but the innuendo is that *any* "ceremony" performed by *any* Priest in *any* religion is bunkum.

Now *that*, of course, is a mere assumption the opposite to which may equally well be true : that *all* ceremonies of *all* Priests had something in them, and that, in a true religion, the ceremony would be efficacious and the Priestly office justified.

So much for his first attack on page 72 of his *Outline*.

On page 120, he goes in some detail into the matter ; and with a better basis for discussion, because he is talking of things historically certain, and not copying the story from nineteenth-century writers who made it up out of their own heads. There were full Priests in the old Pagan religions, or at any rate in the finest and most civilized of them ; and for that matter in nearly all of them there were Priests in some form or another. The theory Mr. Wells repeats with regard to the early recorded Priesthoods may, like so many of his repetitions, be called "The theory of the eighteen-eighties" : the theory current about a generation ago. It is the contention that the Priest came first when man was inferior and was at last ousted, as man advanced, by the King—the innuendo being that the power of the Priest essentially belongs to an earlier time, and therefore to a more degraded period in human History ; for to the man who believes in a childishly simple theory of "Progress" (as Mr. Wells believes in it, and as do the great majority of his readers), whatever is earlier must be worse than what comes later.

At this point I repeat what I have had to say so often in the course of these comments. It cannot be said too often in the ears of our opponents, because we know by experience that the modern half-educated mind, nourished on masses of print and without that capacity of clear thinking which our fathers had, feels a difficulty in grasping the distinction between two connected ideas. Once it hears the same word used in connection with two separate ideas it tends to confuse the two ideas together. So we Catholics who have the

privilege of inheriting the higher culture must always patiently explain our position to our opponents, lest we should merely antagonize them instead of teaching them. The following, then, is the point I wish to emphasize :

When we are presented with any *universal* statement which is (1) hypothetical (i.e. not a matter of ascertained fact) ; (2) of an exaggerated simplicity and therefore very easily swallowed ; (3) motivated consciously by a contempt for true religion, that is for the Catholic Faith, we Catholics do not deny the portion of ascertained fact contained in the universal statement. *What we deny is the universality of the statement.* When we, who can reason, are told that London and Carthage were great seaports, and that *therefore* all the capitals of high civilizations are great seaports, we do not deny the character of London and Carthage ; what we deny is that they are the models of all other capitals. What the trained and clear Catholic intelligence finds intellectually repugnant is a false simplicity imposed on highly complex organic phenomena, especially social phenomena. What we particularly complain of is the apparent inability of our opponents to recognize their own motives, and to see that they are putting things in a particular and artificial fashion in order to fit in with their theories instead of honestly inducing theory from fact.

Let me give an example drawn from a sphere where there is less violent emotion aroused, and which therefore can be calmly examined by anyone of our opponents. Supposing a man to maintain that the shorter races in the history of mankind had always conquered the taller races. He is putting forward a universal statement. He is putting forward, because it is universal and because it has so few terms, a statement absurdly simple. Finally, he is putting forward this absurdly simple universal statement with some motive. If we find that the man is himself a member of a short race, we at once divine what the motive is. It is the motive of satisfying self-esteem.

Now a statement like that put to the member of a race as short as you like, put to an intelligent dwarf, *ought* to rouse him to immediate contradiction : however flattering he might

find it. So it ought to rouse a man of average stature to even stronger contradiction, and still more, I suppose, a tall man. But it is contradicted, not because the contradictor favours tall men as against short men, but because the statement is in itself false and ridiculous. Sometimes short races have conquered tall ones, as the Romans the Germans, or the Normans the Saxons, or the Japanese the Koreans. Sometimes it has been notoriously the other way about.

The putting forward then, of a statement (1) as universal (when as a fact it is just the opposite) ; (2) as absurdly simple so that it can be easily swallowed (when as a fact the situation being human is exceedingly complex) ; (3) with a motive which is not acknowledged, is a thoroughly unscientific way of going to work ; yet that is what we Catholics are perpetually finding in the attacks made directly and indirectly against Catholic truths by popular writers on what these writers believe to be " Science " or " History."

So it is with Priesthood. You can cite cases of Priesthood revered in a very simple state of society and cases of a Priesthood dispossessed of power by an advancing lay organization. But so also can you find ample examples of the opposite : Priesthood powerful in a very high civilization and Priesthood overcoming lay power.

How a Priesthood arose we do not know : presumably after the same fashion as all other functions of religion. These functions being awful and sacred, there would, in the nature of things, be a special class of men attached to them. But, anyhow, the relations between the idea of a Priest and the idea of Civil Government are most emphatically *not* the relations between earlier and baser social functions on the one hand, and more developed and higher social functions on the other. You can cite cases where the power of a Priesthood (or, rather, of religion, for it is never the Priest who imposes his religion, but always the religion that needs the Priest) was mastered by the civil power ; but you can also cite cases where the exact opposite took place ; and you can cite intermediary cases innumerable.

Now, what Mr. Wells does in this sixteenth chapter of his

is to put forward *one* leading case—the Sumerian—in which (quite probably) an earlier Priestly power yielded to (though it was never downed by) what was in that one time and place a later kingly power. He first of all gives us (on p. 125) a purely imaginary account of Kings arising through the quarrels between Priests or during the inability of Priests to withstand foreign conquerors. He then proceeds, on the same page and the following, to present the Sumerian Kingship as becoming in time superior to the Sumerian Priesthood. The thing is, of course, neither recorded nor ascertained History, but it is a fair guess. It may very well be History ; and if it is so, then it is one particular example of the process going one way. But that is no sort of argument for the process never going the other way. When Mr. Wells comes to talking of the Egyptian development, he admits that the King was divine, and in that quality superior to and including both Priest and King. He again admits it in the case of China in another form. The Chinese civil ruler was also High Priest.

How, then, without any evidence to go on save *one* particular (and purely hypothetical) case, is this ridiculously simple theory made justifiable to the reader as a universal process ? How can Mr. Wells use it to prove that Priesthood goes with base undeveloped minds and yields to “ Progress ” ?

By the usual practice of allusion. In the case of the Sumerian King, the plain statement that the gods entrusted him with power is called by Mr. Wells his “ doing it with the utmost politeness to the gods ”—the innuendo being, of course, that the King’s power arose in spite of the Priesthood, that the King being later in development, and therefore more “ enlightened,” despised the gods, and that all he did was to compromise somewhat with old decaying superstitions in order to strengthen his hold on government. But we have no evidence of that ; it may be the right interpretation, or the exact opposite may be the right interpretation. The Sumerian King may have been sincerely devoted to the gods—as he says he was—and have risen through that devotion.

We are told (on p. 121), with regard to the early Priesthoods

that "it is clear" the Priesthood early developed political powers. But it is not clear at all. It is merely stated. True to the wearying puerility of his black and white "Progress" idea (Wednesday superior to Tuesday, Tuesday superior to Monday), Mr. Wells tells us that the temples began with an idol, "usually a somewhat monstrous half-animal form." Why "usually"? We know nothing about it at all. We know the half-animal legend in Babylonia, or, rather, the purely animal legend that a fish started culture. We know the animal and half-animal deities of the Egyptians. But no one can say that the Greek or Italian shrine began with a half-animal figure, or that there was anything "monstrous" about it. No one can say that the primitive worship to which the Bible bears witness was that of a monstrous or half-animal figure. The thing is only set down thus in order to confirm the statements already gratuitously made that religion, like all other human affairs, begins in something offensive.

It is the characteristic of these thin and erroneous theories, first, that they quote only what is in their own favour; secondly, that they bring in every possible indication, no matter how remote, which may be twisted into a support; and, thirdly, that those who promote them either (as is usually the case) are ignorant of, or (as is less common) refuse to mention, still more to study, any opposing evidence. They refuse to weigh the *full* record of the past or (what is equally available) to make a *full* examination of the present.

Take this case of the fading away of Priesthood and the mastering of it by a civil power as a necessary part of human "Progress." It is not what happened in our European community. It is not what happened in the history of our own race during the last twenty-five centuries, of which we know infinitely more than we do of the Euphrates or the Nile Valleys thousands of years ago.

What happened in the history of our own race is very well known: the religions of Pagan European antiquity had Priesthoods—all of them. Those Priesthoods were of very varying political power, and the variation in their

political power had nothing to do with the stage of culture. You do not find Priests more powerful in the lower stages of culture, less powerful in the higher stages of culture ; you certainly find them more powerful in Gaul, for instance, than you do in the more barbaric world beyond the Rhine. There is hardly a trace of any Priesthood among the lowest of all, the Scythians.

What Priesthood was in Etruria we do not know, but we do know that in the Roman religious origins which were probably Etruscan there is a curious rigidity and strength attaching to the hierarchic function, a union (again) between civil rule and Priestly action, and yet certainly not a government of Priests. We know how powerful was the horrible Priesthood of Carthage, but we know the government was civilian. There is every sort of type and degree in the power, the character, the rise and fall of Priesthood, and no indication whatsoever of a monotonous, regular elimination of the Priest by " Progress " such as Mr. Wells was taught in his youth.

When the great change comes over the recorded history of our race—the conversion of the Roman Empire to Catholicism—it is *not* the power of any Priesthood that weakens ; it is the hold of the local Pagan religion that weakens. The Pagan Priest is in no way conquered by the civil power. There is no trace of such a thing. On the contrary, it is the civil power which, as Paganism dies, works hard to keep the Pagan Priest going. Next arises the Catholic Church. It has a Priesthood, and a very strong organized Priesthood, from the earliest records of it that we possess.

In the later centuries you find, in the West, that Priesthood acting together under a personal Chief and at last dominating society in the main struggle between this head of the hierarchy and the nominal head of civil society. It is the head of the hierarchy (the Pope) who wins, and the head of the civil society (the Emperor) who loses—not the other way about.

With the destruction of religious unity and the introduction of widespread differences of belief into Western Europe

the civil power naturally preponderates. There came a maximum when the civil power might almost be said to have obliterated its rival during the nineteenth century. But it is pretty clear to people who know their Europe that something of a turn of the tide is already apparent.

What the future holds in the matter we cannot see ; but it is plain detailed History of the most glaring and obvious sort that during these *known* two thousand five hundred years, there has been *no regular process* one way or the other. There has been *no gradual fading away* of Priesthood in the growing light and its replacement by an anti-Priestly, "progressive" civil power. What has actually happened is what a sound intelligence, shy of too easy theories, would expect—a complicated, eddying, series of changes, swelling gradually up towards maxima of strength on the one side, and then to maxima of strength on the other.

It is here as everywhere. When Mr. Wells touches on the point of religion, even when he has recorded History to go upon, he at once begins to repeat the popular theories of the anti-Catholic world and to repeat them crudely and in a fashion convincing only to those who had already been told what he tells them. What is more interesting for the Catholic reader in this kind of thing is to remember out of what an atmosphere it arose. Put in a different dress, it is really nothing more than the old cry of "Priestcraft," which the more provincial sort of anti-Catholicism perpetually repeated though with failing accents during the middle third of the nineteenth century.

It is no safeguard against this for Mr. Wells to say—and he says it quite sincerely—that the Priests in some measure, some of them, believed what they taught. That is only part of the urbane tolerance which is used as a sort of oil to smooth the downward passage to destruction of such outworn things as the Faith. When they know our strength we shall have less of such courtesy.

Of two things, one : either Priesthood being a normal function of religion, like Veneration, Sacrifice, Sacrament, Shrines, Ritual, and the rest, will be found present in a true



religion and is no argument against the truth of that religion ; or, there being no true religion, Priesthood began as a man-made cheat, like all the other functions of religion—since (by this theory)—all religion and all its attendant functions are wholly illusion.

There cannot be in the nature of things any recorded evidence to decide between the two positions. Faith asserts that one religion is true, is of Divine origin, has authority to affirm the only things really worth man's knowing. From that position it is rational to expect as a rule in all religions, vague or precise, amiable or detestable, the concomitants of what will also be found in the one true religion. The Catholic is not disturbed, but confirmed by the discovery of parallels to his own practice in contemporary or past Paganism. On the other hand, Un-faith affirms that all these things are shams ; that Priesthood, along with the rest, is part of the sham and must be rejected.

But there is this great difference between the two positions, and it is one to be particularly noted in the great quarrel of the modern world.

The Catholic argues out his position, knows what his own first principles are, distinguishes between Faith and Science, does not pretend to prove that for which proof is not available, does not confound the possible with the probable, or the probable with the ascertained. Above all, he does not confound first principles which are beyond proof with things known by deduction or by observation.

There was a time, not so long ago, when general intelligence was on a higher level ; it was a time in which our opponents met us as equals.

Nowadays they do not. We are compelled to meet them as inferiors. They put forward arguments in a circle ; they assume their own conclusions. They are not aware of their own first principles. They take it for granted that their own first principles are accepted by their opponents. They generalize from instances not only few, but often actually abnormal. They compel fact to meet theory instead of basing theory upon fact. Above all, have they that especial

mark of unintelligence, the hunger for over-simplicity, the determination to be quite sure of everything and to make everything fit in with a mechanical formula.

It has been well said by the greatest of modern Spanish artists that the chief need of the Catholic Church to-day is an opponent worthy of her stature. She has hardly found one in Mr. Wells.

## CHAPTER VIII

### BUDDHISM AS A STICK WITH WHICH TO BEAT THE CHRISTIAN

THE general survey of recorded antiquity continues to be very well set down in the *Outline of History* in every respect where the author is dealing with known facts.

Of all parts of the book this is perhaps the most successful : I mean the setting down of what we know of Man between the origins of record and the growth of the Roman Empire. But even in this well-written and straightforward section, Mr. Wells falls into that common fault of the modern book-led townsman : the acceptance of something he has seen in print against the evidence of his own senses.

This is particularly noticeable in his account of the Jewish people. Theories as to the early history of Jewish thought remain mere theories, and their statement as fact, though very common nowadays, is unhistorical ; as is, for that matter, the great bulk of what is called "the higher criticism." But the statement that the Jews are not a race but a religion, is a statement which flies in the face of ordinary experience. It is a statement constantly met with, for it has a very obvious motive on the part of the Jews, the motive of a people in peril who seek protection through concealment. But as History, i.e. statement of fact, it is nonsense. What proves it nonsense is the simple fact that when a Jew comes into the room, everybody knows that he is a Jew, and nobody either knows or cares what his religion may be. The Jews are not a religion ; they are a race and nation : and a race and nation very distinct indeed. Though it should be reprinted twenty thousand times in twenty thousand popular textbooks that they are not a race, no sensible man would be convinced ; for sensible

men prefer the evidence of their senses to the authority of print.

The account of early Greek civilization is also well done, with only a little admixture of modern myth, including, unfortunately, one very stupid statement quoted from Jung, to the effect that human thought before the Athenians was a mere jumble of emotions. Human thought at all times was human thought, and was always clear or muddled according to the intelligence of the individual at work.

If Mr. Wells had dealt with ancient Asia as he has dealt with ancient Greece, one would be able to say that, save for certain characteristic swallowing of guesswork without criticism, and for rather comic personal animosities (such as a passionate dislike of soldiers which makes him furious with Alexander the Great !), it is well enough ; and, in proportion, selection and accuracy, not merely well enough, but admirable.

Unfortunately, in the Asiatic section he inevitably comes across that kind of matter which always arouses in him an unbalanced anger : matter relating to the existence and quality of the Catholic Church. For in dealing with Asia he has to deal with Buddhism—and Buddhism has been used now for at least a hundred years as a stock example with which to attack the Faith. Not that the Europeans who profess such a strange and sudden affection for what is alien and inferior love Buddha, but that they hate Christ and His Church.

I say that a use of Buddhism as a stick with which to beat the Christian is a stock trick of the anti-Christian, and therefore it was bound to appear in Mr. Wells's *Outline* with all the other old properties of the trade. And appear it duly does.

The reason for this old trick is that Buddhism presents two features, both of which necessarily provoke the anti-Christian to a simulated friendship for it.

In the first place, Buddhism is philosophically the negation of the Catholic idea, for it makes Personality an illusion, denies God, and reconciles man to life through despair. The Church, on the other hand, affirms Personality not only in

ourselves but in God, Whom she proclaims and glorifies. She reconciles man to life not through despair but through hope.

Now Buddhism, justly repugnant to the high life and intelligence of the West, is none the less a powerful instance to bring up against us.

Affecting as it does something like one-third of the world, Buddhism can be set up as a rival to the Faith. It is not, like Mohammedanism, a heresy grafted upon the Catholic stock. It is a separate thing; and the hater of the Church cannot resist the temptation of saying, "Look! how much better than the Faith!"

In the second place, Buddhism has acquired a well-developed system of ritual and organized veneration, with all the natural accompaniments of that human function—vestments and ornament and light, communal worship, and all the details wherein the body may sacramentally act with the soul.

There again is an irresistible occasion for our anti-Christian: though, with characteristic muddle-headedness, he does not see that he is using it in contradiction to the first opportunity. Just as Buddhism is an obvious weapon to use against the Catholic Church on the lines, "Look what a much better thing the rival religion is!" So it can be used the other way about, "Look at this degraded religion, and see what a lot you have in common with it!"

The contradiction is resolved, of course, by the very simple dodge of saying that the good Buddhism which is so superior to the Faith of civilized men, the makers of Europe, is "the simple, pure, original Buddhism"—in plain English, the Protestant Buddhism—while the developed Buddhism is the naughty, "ritualist," Buddhism. And as the original Buddhism seems to have differed in doctrine and idea from the later Buddhism, the opportunity of saying "Modern Buddhism is a corruption of a simple original: therefore Catholicism is a similar corruption," seems too good to be missed.

Mr. Wells (as we shall see in a later article) shirks the

essential point, whether the Catholic Church *is as a fact* of different substance to-day from what it was at its origins. He prefers to put forward the false Buddhist parallel, and let it work in minds as ill-instructed as his own.

Thus we poor Christian remnants catch it both ways. "Buddhism is a degraded man-made thing, full of ceremonies and perverse human imaginings—look how like it is to the Catholic Church, and judge from that what a perverse, man-made thing is the Catholic Church also! At the same time, Buddhism is a supremely noble doctrine, especially in its denial of a personal God and of the immortality of the human soul. Judge from that how degraded you Catholics are with your absurd ideas of a personal God and of the immortality of the human soul"! The reader who turns to Mr. Wells's chapter, "The Rise and Spread of Buddhism," in Book IV (beginning with page 237), will appreciate what I mean.

Within a brief twenty-three pages, more than half of which, I think, are illustrations, he manages to put the whole anti-Catholic emotion (by innuendo) in the fullest fashion, and not only to do that, but to sacrifice common sense (as fanaticism must always sacrifice common sense) in the process.

On page 241 you get the note of the whole thing, "the teaching of History, as we are unfolding it in this book," says Mr. Wells, "is strictly in accordance with this teaching of Buddha": that is an example of what I mean. It is childish, not only as vanity in the Author, but as praise of a great, though perverted philosophy.

Mr. Wells's *Outline of History* is not a Buddhist *magnum opus*; it is an ephemeral popular book written by a simple Protestant Englishman who has lost what relics of doctrine he once possessed but still preserves a fine dislike of the Papacy. His attraction to Gautama Buddha as much resembles that of an Indian mystic as his style resembles the prose of Voltaire. When he tells us with approval that Buddhism regards the desire for Immortality as an evil and the loss of being (for impersonal being is not being at all) as a good, he tells us what is undoubtedly true: though in the

strong light of Western thought, obviously a muddlement—for there must be being, and conscious being, and discrete being, if there is to be the sense of joy or of good. But however much Mr. Wells pats Buddha on the back he will persuade no one that he is a Buddhist with a yearning desire to have done with notoriety and the flesh.

What of Mr. Wells's desire (which he earnestly presents to his readers) to be rid of Mr. Wells's own immortal soul?

It is pretty clear on page 242 what he feels in the matter of Immortality. He praises the Buddhist Atheism in this particular, because he dislikes "an endless continuation" of his "mean little individual life," which in his judgment is man's conception of Immortality, whether in the Egyptian whom he mentions by name, or in the Christian whom he really has in mind.

Now there is in this profession of dislike for the doctrine of Immortality, and ridicule of it, a positive element beyond the negative element of mere opposition to Catholicism and to the high tradition of Europe. The positive element is the very natural distaste for following on the dreary round of suburban life in London or New York; and in this our Author is to be applauded. But it is characteristic of him and of the time and audience in which and for which he writes, that he should have had any such appalling conception of the profound and majestic dogma of Immortality.

It exactly corresponds to what the same type of thought produces when it *demand*s Immortality instead of denying it. The present-day English Modernist, who writes a book saying that he has had communication with his son killed during the War, and that the son is drinking whiskies and sodas and smoking cigars in Purgatory or Paradise (whichever you like to call the fashionable idea of the next world), is in exactly the same mental state as Mr. Wells. Certainly, if the dogmas of Immortality (that very summit of the dignity of man and characteristic of all our race and its achievements) meant an endless succession of going up by train to the office and reading the *Daily Howl* on the way, we should be better without it. But it does not mean that, Mr. Wells; I assure you it does not.

There is far more glory about Immortality and far more elbow-room—and far more peril.

There, by the way, in this panegyric of Buddhism as a beautiful model (to the shame of the unmentioned Catholics) one little gem which I cannot pass over, though it has nothing to do with the subject. I mention it because it is so characteristic of the whole book. It is on page 243, and runs thus :

“ Modern science has made clear to us that there is no such exact recurrence as we are apt to suppose ; every day is by an infinitesimal quantity a little longer than the day before ; no generation repeats the previous generation precisely.”

If a man wanted to take a sample out of this book to show the futility of its Author as a thinker, I do not think he could get a better six lines. Only look at the mass of false statement and confusion of thinking packed into this little space !

First of all, there is the assertion that we—you and I—are apt to suppose exact recurrence in human affairs. When on earth was there any human being who imagined any such thing ?

Then we have the alarming folly that this imaginary idiocy is corrected by a God called “ Modern Science.” It would be corrected, if ever it arose in the mind of a lunatic, by simple daily experience ; it is so corrected, or rather prevented from ever arising, in the mind of every man or woman, learned or unlearned.

Then there is the statement that “ modern science teaches us that every day is slightly longer than the day before.” That again is characteristic. No “ modern science ” teaches us anything of the kind. On the contrary, the theory of tidal drag and of a gradual lengthening of the terrestrial day, for which there is a good deal to be said, has provokingly failed to furnish sufficient proof. It looks probable, on the face of it, and we have the moon as an example where apparently the thing has worked itself out. But when you come to the establishment of concrete definite proofs, that the day is longer by such and such a fraction than it was for the Alexandrian astronomers, you do not get it. You can find arguments for and against. Nothing is yet decided. One



new discovery might destroy the whole hypothesis—and hypothesis only it remains. It is the very opposite of science. It is probability, and an interesting hypothesis. Science it is not, and it will not be science until the day when conclusive proof is advanced.

Then there is the characteristic fact that Mr. Wells, who here affirms as scientific fact that interesting (but unimportant) statement of the possible lengthening of the terrestrial day, on an earlier page was more cautious.

Lastly, we have the monumental phrase : “ Modern science has made clear to us that no generation repeats the previous generation precisely.” You might just as well say that “ modern science ” has proved to us that the weather on Tuesday is never exactly the same as the weather on Monday.

This is a digression, but a digression worth making, for it is a most illuminating example of the sham culture I have to deal with.

But to return to the use of Buddhism as a stick to beat the Catholic Church with. After the glorification of the pure doctrine we get the “ awful example ” business of the ritual. First we are told (on page 244) that it was the fate of Gautama to have marvellous falsehoods told about him—as has been the fate of “ most religious founders ” since his days.

That word “ most ” means, of course, Jesus Christ. There have not been a crowd of religious founders since 500 B.C., and all this innuendo in the description of Buddhism is an innuendo delivered at the Faith.

On the same page, a little further on, there is the sneer, “ of course it was impossible to believe that Buddha was the son of a mortal father.” That is a sneer at the Incarnation, as is the sentence a few lines further on, “ a theology grew up about the Buddha. He was discovered to be a God.”

Then on the next page there is the familiar taunt against the titles of affection and veneration given to Our Lady. A certain Eastern goddess is Queen of the Sea, so Mr. Wells must put in quite gratuitously and out of place the words “ Stella Maris,” which some very learned man has told him means “ Star of the Sea.”

Then there is a completely misleading quotation from Huc. The misleading is no doubt unconscious, for I very much doubt whether Mr. Wells has ever read Huc ; he is probably depending upon what he may have heard vaguely on the matter in conversation. At any rate, the grossly misleading character of the passage must be pointed out.

He quotes Huc's interesting description of the similarities between Christian (or Catholic) and Buddhist liturgical details, and puts the whole thing in a completely false light by using the word "perplexing." He says, "We read in Huc's travels" how "*perplexing*" he found "all these things," the innuendo being that Catholics regard ritual as the soul of their religion and are disturbed in their Faith on finding foreign analogies to it.

No doubt Mr. Wells was told by those who coached him that the Abbé Huc was thrown into an agony of doubt by finding Buddhist ceremonies so like our own. But he would have done well to verify the point. It was foolish in him not to do so.

I know the passage well : there is not a word in it about Huc being perplexed. Why should he be ? There is not an indication in Huc's style or tone in the matter that he was perplexed. He noted with great interest the very exact correspondence between many details of ritual—down to such a tiny point as the chains and cover of the Thurible—and he gives a lucid, probable, learned and very rational account of when and how the later Buddhism may have copied such things (p. 112, Vol. II, of the third edition).

Mr. Wells ends this excursion against the Catholic Church (for that is what his new-found enthusiasm for Buddhism really means) by a passage on page 250 in the very best traditions of the "No Popery" lecturers of my youth. Buddhism caught "almost every disease of corrupt religions : idols, temples, altars, and censers." It is a funny list, with a horrible bathos on the word censers. Idols mean images ; altar means altar all right ; temples mean buildings put up with care and made as beautiful as possible—or at least what the putter-up thinks beautiful—in honour of the thing worshipped.

But censers are only things in which you burn incense ; and though they are an excellent adjunct to liturgy, they really have not the importance which Mr. Wells in common with most *Kensitites*, attaches to them. I assure him I could get on perfectly well without incense. On the other hand, I could not get on without an altar ; and a lack of images in a Christian church would seem to me very deplorable : a sort of empty, hungry, mean, absence of a very proper and natural religious function which, if there be a true religion, would certainly be found attached to that religion.

Then we have, just before the end of all the affair, the weary old business copied from Gibbon, and much older than Gibbon. "What would Christ and His apostles think of High Mass at St. Peter's" ? (By the way, Low Mass in Huddersfield is just as much to the purpose as High Mass in St. Peter's.) Only here it is not High Mass at St. Peter's shocking the Creator of the Catholic Church, but a Buddhist ceremony shocking poor Buddha.

But more important than his ignorance of Huc's testimony of other special points is his complete failure to set down the prime contrast between Catholicism and Buddhism : that the latter is founded on Despair. *That* is the whole point. It is *that* which makes between the living Church which Jesus Christ founded and the negative philosophy of Asia a difference of day and night. Mr. Wells does not omit this essential point from malice : he does it from ignorance. His whole account of essential Buddhism takes for granted that it is the religion he himself holds—a highly rarefied Protestantism.

But to fall into such an error as that is like taking vitriol for water.

## CHAPTER IX

### MR. WELLS AND THE INCARNATION

AS I approach what is much the most important section of Mr. Wells's book (for it deals with much the most important subject in all History—I mean the Incarnation, which he so cheerfully denies), I must, not without regret, be too brief upon preliminaries, lest I should take up the space necessary for the larger controversy later on.

Therefore, it is only in a very summary manner that I can deal with the writer's presentation of the rise of the Roman power and of the beginnings of the Empire ; that is, with the unity of the European world as it was prepared by Divine Providence for the advent of the Catholic Church : the noble antique soil in which was planted, as alone worthy of it, that institution whereby alone Man can be put in tune, or, even in temporal matters, a right civilization preserved.

As may be imagined, Mr. Wells on approaching the critical point in the drama of Human History, allows his anti-Christian enthusiasm more rein than he has given it hitherto, and the Roman Empire—because it was the foundation upon which our civilization was built through the action of our religion—moves him to an excited wrath in which he loses all historical sense, and curses at random.

It would be wearisome to repeat again the excellences which this department of the book also presents : its accuracy in date, its lucidity in expression : but a third excellence, which Mr. Wells usually has, proportion in statement—the essence of good précis writing, and therefore of good summarization in History—here fails him. The reason of this is that he takes up, of the few pages allotted to him, far too much space in violent abuse. I think I had

better give the reader a short list of these vituperations, in order to make him understand the state of mind in which our author approaches the majestic origins of Europe.

On page 259 he is reluctantly "forced" to repeat his grave criticism that the Græco-Roman civilization had no printing press. On page 260 he expresses his "astonishment" that they did not hand printed copies of the measures about to be discussed round their assemblies, especially the Roman Senate. In the same page he points out that the failure of popular government towards the end of the Republic was due to lack of Board Schools. A wholly disproportionate amount of the next few pages is devoted to diatribes against Cato the Elder. He begins as "a small but probably very disagreeable child of two." He is a hypocrite who "poses as a champion of religion and public morality"; he "carries on a lifelong war against everything that is young, gracious or pleasant"; and therefore he was, of course (after much more abuse of the same sort), "the type of man that rose to prominence in Rome" (p. 265).

Rome, successful in her gigantic battle for life against Carthage, was "a nation so cowardly that she had to destroy her enemy," and she is again "a cowardly victor" on page 268. (Mr. Wells understands so little of Paganism that he seems to think Carthage would have spared Rome.) She proceeds to "an ungracious expansion of power abroad," and the whole great age of our foundation is one (p. 269) of "general grim baseness." The Senate, on page 270, is "a Senatorial gang," in which Cato (who occupies an absurdly exaggerated place) especially shows "interest and natural malice." On page 271 you get "pitiless greed," and meanwhile, of course, "the military efficiency of the Romans had been steadily declining"—but, indeed, the singular incapacity not only of the Roman people, but of all soldiers, for war is one of Mr. Wells's standing grievances. The Senate, on the first failure against Carthage, passed "from a bullying mood to one of extreme panic." On page 273 we have a pleasant contrast between the horrid ignorance of the Roman citizens and the enlightenment of the modern British Trade Union

leaders, the latter of whom have done what no Romans ever thought of doing : to wit, started a Labour College. On page 273 Rome is "subcivilized." It is compared to "Neanderthal man" ; its religion "carries us far back beyond the days of decent gods to the age of Shamanism and magic" ; and there is a moving contrast between the antique leader searching the entrails of animal victims after a sacrifice for augury, and the more dignified gestures of a British Lord Chancellor.

On page 274 Rome is again "Neanderthal" ; and on page 275 there is yet another contrast between the gladiatorial shows and our own more humane sports—though there is no actual mention of either football or golf. It reminds one a little of the famous remark of the old lady who was seeing the death of Cleopatra on the stage, and said, "How different from the home life of our own good Queen Victoria" !

On page 277 the Roman senators and the great equestrians are "vulgar and greedy spirits." But do not imagine that the poorer Romans were any better ; they, in their turn, are "ignorant, unstable, and equally greedy" ; and, once again, on this same page, all these Romans are "Neanderthals." On page 278 he is able to answer the question which puzzled the Ancients in the latter days of the Roman Republic. Those mighty men asked themselves, even while they were founding a world state, in what they were to blame, confessed their errors, and sought remedy perpetually. But in *this* book "we" have the advantage over them. "We (that is, Mr. Wells) *who can look at the problem with a larger presentation* can see what had happened to Rome." On the same page there is a doubtful admission that Tiberius Gracchus may have been "more like an honest man" than the other cowards and mediocrities of the Roman State. But Gracchus, again, was defective compared with the modern authors of *Outlines of History* in that "he did not understand how much easier it is to shift population from the land into the towns than to return it." However, he stands excused ; for it seems that even to-day, in spite of progress, "few people" other than the Author "understand" this wearisome and age-long truism.

No wonder that, after all this, Mr. Wells is astonished at the voluntary association of external States with the Roman Empire which began before the end of the second century B.C.

Among their other defects, we are told, the Romans could not organize sea power. They foolishly marched their troops, not only because they were somehow unaccountably ignorant of railways (as was Alexandria, he bitterly complains, of typewriters) but because they had not the military sense to see how much easier it is to embark a large army in small sailing vessels at the mercy of the weather, and disembark them, than to march them round a not much greater distance by land.

On page 284 even the most superficial student of antiquity will be astonished to hear that it was the Roman unity which so weakened the Greek culture of the East as ultimately to subject it to barbarism under the Turks. He notes on the same page with horror that the Roman of the Republic had no maps of Germany, Russia, Africa, and Central Asia, and adds (of men like Cæsar) that "even if they had had maps they would not have had the intelligence to use them." Talking of Julius Cæsar, one might have thought that *his* really remarkable talents would emerge from Mr. Wells's eagle view of the human plain below. But no! That great head is first presented to us as "bald and middle-aged"—two qualities which, it seems, destroy capacity. His affair with Cleopatra marks "the elderly sensualist or sentimentalist" (Mr. Wells remarks with an ascetic sternness, remarkable and novel in such a novelist, that he was fifty-four at the time). As for great-mindedness, the unfortunate man was suffering from "a common man's megalomania" with "a record of scheming" which is "silly and shameful."

It will be seen from these few epithets, chosen at random from a bare twenty pages, what the effect upon Mr. Wells has been of his first acquaintance, late in life, with the Eternal City.

There is only one reasonable adjective for such an attitude. It is ridiculous. Lack of proportion and lack of dignity in

historical writing, when they are pushed to that extreme, are absurd.

There was about the Roman Empire all that we know most offends our author—majesty, greatness, a connection with our ancient tradition, and order. Roman letters suggest the education of the gentry, and anything connected with the gentry is, in itself, enough to rouse our author to boiling-point. The Roman story is the great story of soldiers—and with the Soldier goes the Priest, two characters abhorrent to him. But behind it all, without a doubt, the ultimate source of these ineptitudes is reaction against the Catholic Church, which not only the name, but the fact of Rome, suggests to the ill-guided and insufficient pen here at work.

The odd thing is that Mr. Wells does not hesitate to illustrate his account, and that his average reader (who, I fancy, looks more at illustrations than at the text) has, by even such a glimpse of nobility in architecture and statuary, the whole foolish railing discounted. Had Mr. Wells's publishers been able to include and present in popular illustration to their readers, not only building and bust and statue, but also that great volume of verse and prose which is the soul of Rome—but of which Mr. Wells would understand nothing, even if he had been compelled to study it for years—the effect would be greater still.

But, of course, the reader gets no hint of high verse or monumental prose, for our author has no idea of them. The reader of Mr. Wells's *Outline* is lucky to get one tiny hint of faces at least, and of buildings—of the latter very little—taken hastily from the most hackneyed photographs, but even these will be sufficient to destroy the folly of the text.

It is a singular phenomenon this : the itch to kick against that which made one : the instinct to destroy the house in which one lives : the craving towards impiety and unfilial negation. But we Catholics who live in the anti-Catholic culture are woefully familiar with it.

Mr. Wells himself is entirely the product of Rome ; not, perhaps, the ripest fruit on that great tree, but a fruit none the less. Out of the Roman Empire come all things that we



are—the sour and withered units of our Commonwealth, as well as the living parts ; the noblest and most traditional, as well as the basest, the most vulgar, and the most impatient of majesty. Yet a sort of necessity compels men of this sort to oppose that by which they had their being. You see it in their disgust with all that is oldest and best in their own narrow community, in their bewilderment at any European thing which happens to be outside their parochial experience, in their pitiful astonishment at learning that the material details of their own lives—tramways and “ last editions ” and electric light—were not to be found in the daily life of classical antiquity. They cannot understand that bad poetry set down on a typewriter may be of less value than good poetry written on papyrus : the distinction is incomprehensible to such minds. That the creation of a busy, contented, rich, united culture from the Grampians to the Euphrates was an achievement of lasting grandeur escapes them.

Well, we know that such minds exist and have always existed. We know that they are now being multiplied by the hundred thousand and the million under the conditions of our great towns and their press.

We also, we of the higher and older culture, we of the Faith, know that all of this can only end in ruin. But meanwhile let us vigorously stamp with our own mark the expressions of such vulgarity whenever they come before us, and label them for what they are ; which is rubbish : and degraded rubbish at that.

But all this raving against the Empire from which we descend, is but a preface. Its cause is the fact that the high Græco-Roman Culture was the prelude to, and the setting of, the *Incarnation*.

With this word we come to the supreme interest of mankind : the one essential question in human History which must always be answered by a “ Yes ” or “ No ” ; and according to that answer our whole view, not only of human society upon earth, but upon the very nature and destiny of Man, depends.

That question is, whether Jesus Christ, who was certainly

Man, was not also God : two Natures in one Person ? Those who answer "Yes, the Dual Nature was there present," believe in the Incarnation. Those who answer "No, Jesus Christ was only a man (or a Myth)" do not believe in the Incarnation.

Now the reader need hardly be told that Mr. Wells belongs to the later division. For him as for the great mass of his readers, and, indeed, the majority of English-speaking people to-day outside the Catholic Church, Jesus Christ was only Man.

Indeed, if Mr. Wells belonged to the other division, that is, if he believed in the Incarnation, his book would have had no great popular sale, however ephemeral.

If that were the main point against Mr. Wells's attitude towards the Incarnation, my article might stop here. Belief in the Incarnation is not a matter of historical proof, it is a matter of Faith. If a man doesn't believe it History will not make him do so. Historical truth, like all other truth, supports Faith ; but it does not cause Faith. When, therefore, we condemn a man's *history* in connection with a discussion upon the Faith, we must keep quite distinct our disagreement with his *doctrine* from our exposure of his ignorance or misjudgment of mundane *fact*.

What we are concerned with in this commentary is Mr. Wells's failure as an historian ; the insufficiency of his knowledge ; his weak judgment ; the confusion in his processes of thought : Not his lack of the divine gift of Faith, which is not here germane to our subject.

If a man comes to you with the remark that your father, long dead, once forged a cheque, you say to yourself, "I feel that man is wrong." But if he brings forward some testimony to that assertion, you listen to it. If you *then* find that he does not know what he is talking about, you are the more relieved in the matter of your father's memory. For instance : Suppose he said that your father forged the cheque in 1914 and that he remembers the date because it was in the same week as the battle of the Marne, while to your certain knowledge your father died in 1913, his history is at fault, and his contention worthless.

Now that is exactly the position in which the Catholic reader stands in regard to Mr. Wells's quite insufficient way of dealing with the question of the original doctrine of the Incarnation.

That question must be put quite clearly at the outset. We are not discussing the truth or falsehood of the Incarnation, that is, of Christ's Godhead. We are discussing the purely historical point, whether or no that doctrine is original to the Christian Church and its founder.

*Was the idea of the Incarnation, that is, of the Divinity of Our Lord, held by those who had seen and known Him ; did they claim to have received it from Himself ; did they record His own witness to it ? Or is the whole thing a later imposition ?*

That is the point ; and it is a point not of Faith but of History.

A writer is free to call the visions and voices of St. Joan illusions, and yet to remain a sound historian in the ordinary acceptance of that term ; but if he denies that St. Joan herself and her contemporaries believed she had had such experiences, then he is an absurd historian.

It is clear, on reading Mr. Wells's pages, that he has never come across the historical arguments for regarding belief in the Incarnation as contemporary with Our Lord and His companions. He does not know of their existence. He approaches the problem as though all the world would readily agree with his own cheerfully uninformed conclusions—because he has never heard of any other. He obviously thinks that those who accept as historical Christ's own gradual revelation of the doctrine, and its acceptance by certain contemporaries, are merely doing so to order. He thinks they have not read even as much (or as little) as he, and have only to be enlightened. He has no idea that a convincing body of evidence exists and has been marshalled by powerful and numerous pens.

Let me begin with the common view which Mr. Wells here repeats.

It is essentially the view of *Modernists* of a particular type, to wit, *Modernists* of the Protestant type, and of the Protestant

type which flourishes chiefly in the world to which Mr. Wells himself belongs. It is not of the German sort, still less of the French sort ; it is of the sort which you find in the more popular Sunday journals of the London Press. And here we must define what the Modernist is.

The Modernist is a man who, having lost his faith in whatever Catholic doctrine he or his may have held, is afraid of facing the consequences of that loss.

That is an exact definition. A man is not a Modernist who denies all Catholic doctrine *en bloc*, from the Omnipotence and Personality of God downwards, and accepts the consequences of such a denial.

A man is a Modernist when he no longer admits a Catholic doctrine with his intellect and will, but shirks the loss of its benefits.

The fear takes two forms. Sometimes (as with Loisy—a very great scholar—during his period of Modernism), it is the fear of corporate surroundings. A man has ceased to believe but he is afraid of following out the full consequences of his new intellectual attitude because he fears what people may say. More often the fear is an inward fear, very largely unconscious in its working and certainly unintelligent. It is the fear of losing a certain habit of mind to which the man who has lost belief is accustomed, which is only intellectually tenable so long as he believes, but which he blindly clings to when it is no longer intellectually tenable to him because the loss of the moral habit would be so painful.

In the Modernist of this type, trying desperately to combine incompatible things, you will find two marks invariably present. First, he is muddle-headed ; secondly, he does violence to sane judgment upon testimony.

That is exactly what you shall find in Mr. Wells's attitude towards the belief of Our Lord Himself in His Own Divinity and His followers' corresponding belief. Mr. Wells no longer believes in Our Lord's Divinity, *but he wants to go on feeling that He made all the difference.* In the attempt to straddle between the two his judgment goes all to pieces, and even his grossly

insufficient reading on the elementary evidence disturbs him. Thus Our Lord "is a great Teacher." He comes to "liberate the intense realization of the righteousness and unchallenged oneness of God and of man's obligation to God from its old Jewish narrowness" (pp. 321, 322). (The reader will remember, though Mr. Wells has forgotten it, that, a few pages back, God was appearing in the *Outline of History* as a human phantasy, and a nasty one : proceeding from the "Old Man." It is a fine example of inchoate thinking !) Our Lord is, in phrase after phrase, a subject for awestruck wonder and admiration. Yet He does not Himself quite know what He is about. Our Lord, according to Mr. Wells, does no more than talk very vaguely on general duties, and allude still more vaguely to some undefined, incomprehensible "kingdom." Our Lord has no intention of definite organized action upon Mankind ; indeed, He is clearly incapable of it. He never said anything about his divine commission, nor confirmed it with marvels, nor established rules of conduct, nor (of course) said a word about any Institution designed to perpetuate His memory, to enforce His teaching and continue His effect on earth. Those who heard Him and knew Him had no experience of His saying any such things ; wherefore Mr. Wells adopts the old tag of Our Lord being "the seed rather than the founder." And so on.

All that is essentially Modernist—and already belated. In a few years it will look grotesque.

The intelligent, straightforward and courageous thing to do if you are a clear-headed man and have ceased to believe, is to say that the whole Christian affair is an imposture and an irritating imposture at that. That is the German non-Christian attitude ; the German non-Christian boldly talks of "The Jesus Fairy Tale" and asks us to be well rid of it.

That is the French and Italian non-Christian attitude : a determination to have done with the tradition of Christian morals, and to root them out of the State.

That is the attitude of the old and robust English Atheism which was far more respectable intellectually and morally than the Modernist sentimentality of our day.

Granted the premises of men like our author, the Christian spirit proceeds from a fraud or an illusion and should be abandoned. It interferes with many of the pleasures of human life. It prevents an easy natural way of going on. It introduces authority in moral affairs (and that is always irksome). Unless you believe that you hear the voice of the Creator imposing such things, there is no sort of reason why you should accept them.

Since Mr. Wells will not give up the emotional side of his ancestral religion, though abandoning the intellectual side, he necessarily falls into bad history: the bad history of that sort which we have heard repeated so often that we almost take it for granted as a necessary part of the world around us, but which is just as bad history to-day as when it first startled the audiences of a hundred years ago.

The fundamental *historical* error in such contradictory talk is this: That the doctrine of the Incarnation was not held by those who heard Our Lord nor inculcated by Our Lord Himself. There is a mass of proof that it was.

There are the texts of the New Testament. There are the unbroken traditions. There is the fact that all the divisions, quarrels, and heresies of the very earliest years turned *not* on the denial of Godhead, but on the attempt to rationalize its presence one way or the other, either by saying that the Godhead was separate from, though in some way accompanying, the Man Jesus: or by saying that the Godhead only was present and the Humanity an illusion. There is the Johannine and Ignatian documentary evidence. There is the Pauline. And there is nothing on the other side.

It is no answer to say (wrongly) that the Johannine evidence *may* not be, or (rightly) that the Pauline *is* not that of an apostle who heard Our Lord. It is no answer to say that the first Christians were following a misguided enthusiast who suffered from illusions. (Mr. Wells is afraid to say that.) The point is that these first writers wrote for people who had met and known scores of witnesses, and that these evidently took the doctrine of Our Lord's Divine Origin for granted.

Before critical examination grew detailed men could say vaguely that the Gospels were of very late fabrication, and that there had been plenty of time between the Crucifixion and the first documents for legends to grow up and for living memory to die out. They cannot say that to-day.

They could, till recently, pretend that the Ebionites were not the heresy of one Ebion, but the original Christian Church. They cannot say that now. Historical Science is against them. They are free to say that the doctrine of Divine Origin was a folly and an illusion in its Propounder and His apostles. They cannot say it was not held by them. To say *that* is simply bad History. It is bad History also to admit the contemporary character of a document, such as a gospel, and then to discard at will and call an "interpolation" or "corruption" any part of such document which does not fit your theory.

In that connection (the arbitrary and contradictory rejection of all inconvenient evidence in documents the general authenticity of which is admitted) let me turn to another of Mr. Wells's unhistorical lapses: the strange idea that the assertion of Our Lord's Divinity did not much matter anyhow, and that the violent opposition aroused from the very origin by Our Lord Himself and by the Catholic Church which He founded, was due to His bidding men to love one another and recognize the Fatherhood of God: to the very vaguest and most general precepts out of all that vast and consistent body of morals and doctrine, most of it highly particular, for which the Faith stands.

Historically that assertion is ignorant, and, indeed, any man with a reasonable sense of values might see that it could not but be nonsense.

Why should anyone get very angry with a man for saying that people ought to love one another? Or for telling them to lead kindly lives? Or for telling them to acknowledge a righteous Creator? In point of fact, if we are to reject tradition and only trust the fragmentary records of the four Canonical Gospels (as Mr. Wells does in everything which is not ((a)) supernatural, or ((b)) favourable to Our Lady), we

know that Jesus Christ was put to death for *Blasphemy*. He was declared guilty of a specific crime meriting death, and that crime was refusing to deny that He was the Son of God : " We have a law," said the Jewish authorities who demanded His execution, " and by that law He must die."

We also know, according to the same record, that the Roman authorities were reluctant to allow Him to be put to death. They yielded to the intense demand of the Jewish authorities, which demand turned wholly upon what they regarded as His blasphemy in calling Himself Divine. But so strong is the power of imagination in your Modernist that he can get himself to prefer some visionary thing of which he has no record at all against the plain statement of a text, even when he himself accepts that text.

Again, the persecution to which the Catholic Church has been subject from its origins, has *not* been a persecution directed against such general doctrines as those of a beneficent Creator, of charity, etc. How could it be ? It has been a persecution directed against a definite, organized Religion, packed with mystery and affirmation, which Religion clashed and clashes with non-Catholic Religion and social ideas outside of itself.

No one persecuted the Jews for believing in one God and refusing to accept Pagan gods. But then, they did not say that their religion had universal authority : the Catholic Church and its Founder did say that of theirs—and do so still. It is simply silly to think that anyone would have persecuted anyone else for telling people to be gracious and to look to happiness from a good life : yet in order to fit facts in with his theory, the Modernist has to descend to that silliness.

The Catholic Church was persecuted because it proposed and practised a ritual, doctrinal, particular, mystery religion claiming universal and Divine authority, and therefore antagonistic to the official religion of the Empire ; and the heart of that mystery religion, the pivot on which it all turned, was, from the very beginning, a belief, right or wrong, in the Incarnation : that Christ was God. Ignorance of that



historical fact is, I say, a piece of first-class historical ignorance on Mr. Wells's part.

Next in importance, though still very important, is what I have already alluded to, his quite unhistorical way of looking at the Gospels. Here I must warn the reader that I take up an attitude which would have been that of a small minority fifty years ago (when the ideas Mr. Wells still retails were in their hey-day), and which is still that of a minority, but a rapidly growing minority to-day. I think the old-fashioned criticism of the Gospel text has failed. Anyhow Mr. Wells takes the Gospels—or what Modernists chose to retain of them—as contemporary records. In that he is right. He says that they have miraculous and incredible “additions,” and he only accepts the documents subject to his right to reject anything in them to which he is unaccustomed. I know that in this attitude he is only copying what he finds in a hundred textbooks of our time. But unhistorical such a method is and unhistorical it remains no matter how widely it is used.

Mr. Wells is careful to say, as all the swarm of his sort continually repeat, that he is treating the Gospels only as he would treat any other book. But the historian, when he comes across a book crammed with statements which he is certain are false, ceases to depend upon that book. You may indeed say that the man who wrote such and such a document credulously accepted a lot of nonsense, or got himself to believe what he was saying or was simply telling lies; but then, by every standard of historical criticism, documents packed full of falsehood are worthless.

You may say that the Gospels *may* have behind them some tiny, ultimate nucleus of fact, but that is all you can say: And you have no right whatever to single out what you choose to regard as true from what you choose to regard as false, simply upon the plea of probability. You can say, “In these stories there does appear a certain human figure: he may have existed: he probably did. But as he perpetually claims and exercises miraculous powers, and, as these are incredible, there is no certitude to be based on such

documents." But you have no sort of right to say, "He certainly said this. He certainly did not say that," on the strength of such documents. Least of all can you exclude matter which is in no way marvellous or unusual but simply out of gear with some imagined theory, e.g. the Petrine texts, the intensely vivid touches concerning Our Lady, Her rhapsody, Her Visitation, Her warning of tragedy (such things are said to mothers every day), Our Lord's recommendation of her to St. John from the Cross, etc. None of these things are miraculous : they are called "unauthentic" simply because they support Our Lady and St. Peter—whom the critics don't like. If the Gospels had not about them the 'traditional appeal to the heart and to the ancestral memories which the Modernist is too weak to strip off, our author would throw over the *whole* of them. If they came to him as documents from another tradition he would certainly do so. Belonging as they do to his past, he cannot bear to part with them altogether, and so picks out a few words to retain for his consolation.

Similarly, it is grossly unhistorical to imagine impossible motives at work in the composition of the Gospels. Suppose the Gospels to be contemporary, but the work either of people too daft to judge reality or of people who were telling lies. Then the historical way of attacking them is to say : "They are contemporary ; but they, being written under such and such a motive consonant to the time, tell such and such falsehoods, or are subject to such and such illusions for which the character of the time will account."

That is how critics with good historical knowledge, but of sceptical temper, deal with, say, the marvels in The Venerable Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, or in *The Life of St. Martin*. But if you do not know the motives consonant to the time, you will make a muddle of it—and Mr. Wells, not knowing the time, has made a muddle of it.

A very good example of his attempt at understanding something which he has insufficiently studied is his comment on the double lineage given for Our Lord through His Foster-Father, St. Joseph, and through His Blessed Mother, "both

leading to David." Mr. Wells remarks : " As if it were any honour to descend from such a man."

It is a remark which presupposes that a first-century Jew would present Our Lord's descent from David merely as a social distinction. What an extraordinarily ignorant idea ! Yet even Mr. Wells must have heard that the Jews expected their Messiah to be descended from David, and further, that lineage was counted among the Jews, not only through a natural father, but also through an adopted or legal father.

As another example (out of dozens) of the unhistorical character of the whole thing, you have those descriptions made up entirely out of his head, in which Mr. Wells excels as a writer of fiction, but which are hopeless in History. It is admirable to attach imagination to History for the purpose of giving life to known facts, but it is ridiculous to try to make History live by inventing facts. How, for instance, does Mr. Wells know that Our Lord was "lean," was "strenuous," or that He was unkempt ? Or that He was "very human"—I mean, with the modern connotation of weakness in those unfortunate words ?

I have said that the consequences of this attempt to "straddle" between belief and unbelief lead one into muddle-headedness, and we get muddle-headedness in these pages to the *n*th. Thus our author tells us that his concern is not with the "spiritual or theological significance of Jesus Christ"—whereupon he proceeds to spout theology page after page. He makes certain that the texts in which Our Lord admits Godhead are spurious ; that the cry on the Cross is proof of an only human nature in Christ ; that the supernatural is "incredible" ; that the Resurrection was a false story, which began to be whispered and then talked, and at last apparently foisted upon people. The whole thing is a theological tract from beginning to end.

It is the theology of the evangelistic Protestant turned Modernist. The old evangelical, Bible-Christian theology is as deeply impressed upon Mr. Wells's work as Catholic theology is impressed upon, say, the poetry of Claudel. It has all the consequences of that theology, especially in the

very unmistakable rhetoric. We have "The White Blaze of this Kingdom of His" and the inevitable Oleograph of "Three Crosses on the Red Evening Twilight." It is as though all of this had been written as part of a revivalist address ; but revivalist language in the mouth of a man who has ceased to believe is muddle-headedness gone mad.

## CHAPTER X

### THE ORIGINS OF THE CHURCH

WHEN we pass from the Life of Our Lord itself to the formation of the Church as He founded it and as it was and taught immediately after His Ascension, we find Mr. Wells (as we might expect) pursuing this same highly emotional, unintelligent, Modernist method, but with this difference ; that he is now free to attack everything at random. So long as Our Lord is still present in his pages, the *confused but powerful emotions he inherits from the older and more intelligent doctrinal Protestant world of his forebears* would not give him a free hand. He had to talk of Our Lord's "inimitable greatness," of the "giant measure of the Kingdom of God," and so on ; but when he has only to deal with the Apostles and their successors, he is under no such emotional obligation.

We may discover in his way of treating the early Church, its doctrines, and its organized form, two clear marks, both exactly consonant with that insufficiently cultured Modernist type of which he is the exponent.

*Firstly*, he is devoted to the old principle : "The Bible only." He does not understand the factor of tradition in History, and, as for documents, he writes as though the sub-apostolic writings did not exist, which, for him, they probably do not.

*Secondly*, he follows the fashion which became prominent in the Protestant world over fifty or sixty years ago, and is still powerful, of ascribing pretty well everything in Catholic doctrine to the unscrupulous invention of St. Paul. He repeats the German phrase that "Paul" found the Christian

community possessed only of a "way of living," and left it with "a belief": the doctrine of the Atonement, the Mass, the whole affair, must spring from the unbridled (and strangely unchallenged!) imagination of a man who never came across Our Lord during His ministry on earth, who knew intimately those who *had* been constantly with Our Lord during that ministry, who (according to this impossible theory) contradicted all *their* experience, and yet who appealed to that experience as the authority for everything he said.

Posterity will smile at this way of getting out of an historical problem. But it is still so largely followed that Mr. Wells is in no way inferior to those whom he merely copies, so far as the general thesis is concerned. He is in very good company. Where he is inferior is in not appreciating, as the great scholars who are our opponents do, two points: *First*, that one must never in History state as definite fact, or present as a picture, something which one has made up out of one's head: *Second*, that the Catholic side has a body of historical evidence to present. He makes up pictures in support of his thesis as though he were writing fiction instead of History, and he leaves out, presumably because he has not heard of it, the counter-evidence with which he ought to deal.

For instance, he gives us this sentence: "We know very little of the ideas, or ceremonies or methods of the Christian communities in the first two centuries."

If he had said no more, that sentence could have stood; for "very little" is a vague phrase, and it is true that we have for the second century few documents compared, say, with the documents of the third century. We have far more documents than we have for the two centuries of English history between 400 and 600, but we have less connected ones than we have for the two centuries of English history between, say, 700 and 900.

On the other hand, "it is clear" (to use one of Mr. Wells's own favourite expressions) that he does not know what the "very little" is. He does not know the testimony of St. Ignatius, of Justin Martyr, of Papias, of Irenæus, of the Earlier

Apocryphal Gospels (especially the Proto-Evangelion), of the authentic Clementine, of the inscriptions, of the Didache, of the Hermas, and so on. If he did, he would know that the "very little" (and it *is* very little) is quite conclusive on such essentials as affirmation by the Church, in that very early time, of the Incarnation, the Virgin Birth, the Veneration of our Lady, and of the Saints who have passed; of Episcopacy, of a sacramental Priesthood, of the Presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist, of firm insistence upon orthodox unity and the excretion of heresy—and so forth.

It is "very little," but it witnesses to all the essentials. The evidence is not conclusive of the spiritual value, or the truth, of any of these things; but it is conclusive upon the fact that they were believed from the beginning.

St. Ignatius stood to the Apostles and to all those scores and hundreds of people who had seen Our Lord—and many of whom had talked with Him, in a highly civilized time, full of continual travel and criticism and sceptical enquiry—he stands, I say, to that generation *contemporary* with Jesus Christ as Mr. Wells himself stands to men like Huxley or Matthew Arnold. St. Ignatius was a lad in his teens when the younger witnesses, such as St. John, were not more than fifty or so. What he heard about Our Lord's teaching and foundation and commands, what he heard about those miracles which are so incredible to people fed upon the Daily Press, what he heard of the Resurrection, of the affirmation of the Incarnation, and the rest, is on a par with what Mr. Wells and I have heard of Darwin's publication of the *Origin of Species*, and of the effect it created.

Justin, Martyr, our next chief witness (giving the earliest surviving account of the Mass), stood to those contemporaries as a man just old enough to have fought in the Great War stands to those who had fought as subalterns in the Crimea or as a young American of to-day stands to Lincoln. St. Irenæus, with his explicit witness to St. John and to orthodoxy, stood to that generation of eye-witnesses much as a child born in the last year or two will stand to the mid-Victorians,

That is the kind of thing which the school Mr. Wells follows has got to get over. Such proximity may not be evidence as to the *truth* of what the contemporaries of Our Lord said they had heard from His own lips, but it is excellent evidence that they *heard* it. You may ridicule the story that Peary reached the North Pole, but if you deny that he said he did and that companions of his believed him it is yourself you are making ridiculous.

The great anti-Christian scholars of a past generation knew all that. Mr. Wells doesn't. He follows them simply, in the innocence of his heart, because he thinks it is all plain sailing with no snags. He knows no better. But the more a serious student appreciates the character of the Roman Empire in the first century, and the actual limits of time involved, the more certain he becomes that the main Christian dogmas, true or false, belong to the very origins. The idea of a *complete change in doctrine and method and tone within the known dates of the process* becomes impossible to him in proportion to his historical knowledge.

This argument applies, of course, with special strength to the tottering tale that St. Paul invented the Church.

If you accept even some main part of what are traditionally St. Paul's writings as authentic, you can discover him insisting to distant converts that he is adding nothing, that he has imagined nothing, that he is but conveying and spreading a doctrine which he has received.

Again—to develop a point I have but mentioned—if St. Paul was making up a fantastic new scheme of his own, why was there no resistance? Why is there no hint or tradition or echo of universal indignation against such monstrous innovations?

It is no good saying that the evidence for any such resistance has been destroyed. In the first place, it could not in the nature of things have wholly disappeared. There would have been a violent quarrel affecting the whole story of the early Church. And in the next place the most emphatic testimony is allowed to survive of a very grave difference of



opinion—to wit, whether the Church should include Gentiles or not, whether the converts should conform to Judaic ceremonial laws.

Mr. Wells suggests that the doctrine of the Atonement of a Victim offered to God was due to St. Paul's previous attachment to the mysteries of Mithras. He does not here actually descend to mere fiction, as he is too fond of doing (for instance, when he follows the high authority of Miss Marie Corelli upon the motives of Judas), but he does in that sentence on Mithras show that he is away back in the dear old Renan Period of his youth, and that he prefers an utterly unsupported guess to known fact.

The mysteries of Mithras do not turn on a human victim: contrariwise, the victim is a bull. The man gets much the best of it—with a knife.

The idea that Mithraism was ever a serious rival to the Catholic Church is an old-fashioned piece of guesswork, which every succeeding year of research has done more and more to discredit.

Mithraism was in no way universal. It was mainly a soldiers' superstition, its relics are not numerous as are those of the main popular deities.

There is not a shred of evidence, nor of anything that can be twisted into an implication of evidence, that St. Paul had ever heard of Mithras. To suggest that St. Paul got the dogma of the Atonement from the mysteries of Mithras is as though I were to suggest that Mr. Wells got his doctrine of Natural Selection from the Contrat Social; for (1) I have no proof that he has ever heard of the Contrat Social; he probably never has. And (2) the Contrat Social has nothing to do with Natural Selection.

As for the added remark that the idea of a human victim offered for the whole human race to God as a complete propitiation "haunted the black-white races" (which is Wellsian for the Italians and Greeks), that again is historically nonsense. We have individual sacrifice, of course, but no

universal one. The Mediterranean peoples other than the Semites were singularly free from such ideas. We seem to have some hint of them in the barbaric North, but very vague.

As to the pivot point of the Resurrection, Mr. Wells cannot, of course, lay the burden of that corruption upon the shoulders of St. Paul; and for this we should be grateful. But his handling of the subject is very poor. Here it is: "Then presently came a whisper among them and stories, rather discrepant stories, that the Body of Jesus was not in the tomb in which it had been placed, and that one, then another, had seen Him alive. Soon they were consoling themselves with the conviction that He had risen from the dead and shown Himself to many."

There is a very good example of the woolly way of writing which carries conviction to the man who is already convinced. Legends and falsehoods arise continually in History, but they do not arise like that. You may say of such a story that you disbelieve it: then it will have arisen by any one of the four known ways in which *false* stories of the marvellous do proceed. (1) Hearsay, with no witnesses available. (2) Conspiracy and falsehood. (3) The substitution (in a considerable lapse of time) of affirmation for what was originally metaphor, and definite statement for what was originally poetic expression. (4) Hallucination, individual or collective. But the idea that "stories getting about" transform themselves into a group of living and contemporary *sincere* witnesses is psychologically impossible.

And who were these witnesses?—according to the only accounts we have, they were Peter, the authority for Mark; John; later all the apostles. One can say the story is late, or madness, or a lie, and each hypothesis is arguable. But Mr. Wells's hypothesis that the witnesses did *not* witness a highly definite, most extraordinary event repeated over many days, and then were persuaded they *did* witness it, is not worth arguing; he only puts it in from a Modernist fear of shocking himself or his readers by ridiculing venerated names.

The best example we have of a false legend in our time is that of the Russians in England during the early part of the War. You can get myriads to say that they were heard of, but I (who received sheaves of letters written to me at the time by people who believed in the story) have never met a single individual who said he had *himself* seen them. Indeed, I have only heard of one such, and he turned out to be a practical joker.

Had Mr. Wells not been fettered by his Modernist necessity of treating the story of Our Lord with a veneration due only to His Divinity, he would boldly have said what the stronger and more intellectual sceptics have always said: that the story of the Resurrection is either contemporary falsehood or a piece of hallucination or a later legend; he would not have tried to rationalize it in this ludicrously insufficient fashion.

I have no space to make a full catalogue of Mr. Wells's lack of sufficient reading for his purpose. It needed no great amount. Even a few days among those Encyclopædias with which he is acquainted (and the articles in which are as anti-Catholic as he could wish) would have enlightened him. But he never spent those few days. He has copied the conclusions of the more commonly known anti-Christian writers of his youth as those conclusions have been presented in popular rationalist tracts, but he does not know how those scholars worked nor what has been said since their time.

He brings in the old tag from Gibbon of the contrast between Mass at St. Peter's and the state of mind of St. Peter himself. He brings in the fifth-century sneer against Our Lady, identifying her with Isis (and here there is clearly no knowledge of documents illustrating the veneration of our Lady as Mother of God and going back to at least the second century). He has the old error which, I suppose, one may still find surviving in certain remote conventicles—that sundry minor Catholic practices, such as the offering of candles, take the place with us of spiritual action. He even seems in one place to be under the extraordinary delusion—it may be

no more than confused writing—that we sprinkle ourselves not with holy water but with blood! (Where on earth did he get that?) He knows nothing of the way in which the early morning Sunday Mass at dawn followed naturally on the Jewish Sabbath, of which there is evidence as late as St. Ambrose; instead of appreciating that concrete piece of historical evidence he makes a vague guess at the “Sunday” of Mithras: for Mithras is his King Charles’s head.

He ends up by the wildly unhistorical statement that the idea of orthodox unity was imposed by Constantine in A.D. 325, imagining it to be unknown to the whole body of the first three centuries!

I marvel that those to whom he went for information did not warn him. There is—to quote from memory, at random, only the instances known to all men of average culture—St. John’s attitude towards Cerinthus (*c.* 70–90): The Clementine Epistle to the Corinthians (*c.* 90): The whole story of Marcion (*c.* 150–160): The Montanists a lifetime later: The tremendous *De Unitate* of St. Cyprian (A.D. 251).

The whole note of those three centuries *before* Constantine is a story of the expelling of heresy and the maintaining of unity. Yet Mr. Wells thinks Constantine invented such things! Moreover, he calls such unity “the stamping out of all *thought*” (my italics).

But I think the most revealing piece of ignorance is what he says about the Arian creed of the late federate troops of barbarian extraction.

He thinks they were Arian “because their simple minds found the Trinitarian position incomprehensible.” He thinks Arianism to have been a mere affirmation that Our Lord was only a man; and he has no knowledge of the plain, historical fact that most of the federate Roman troops, other than the Franks, got their complicated and highly metaphysical heresy from heretical missionaries at a moment when the official powers at Constantinople favoured heresy. He has no grasp of the peculiarly subtle—indeed, over-subtle—Arian position.

How surprised Mr. Wells would be if someone were to take him through the outline of that affair : " The Conditioned Procession of the Logos," " The All-Creative no part of the Ingenerate," etc. Talk of simplicity ! You might as well say that the London Sunday newspapers boomed the Einstein theory in its day because it was " so simple."

But what a revelation of this writer's ideas on the Faith in antiquity—and how typical of the second-hand, the popular, the half-educated attitude towards the ancient and enduring religion of Europe.

## CHAPTER XI

### ISLAM

THE end of the Fifth Book and the beginning of the Sixth Book of Mr. Wells's *Outline of History* deals with the early Persian religious movements after the Incarnation, with the History of China during the period corresponding to the early Dark Ages in Europe, and with the rise, first preaching and original conquests of Mohammedanism.

The whole of it is well done ; best of all the Chinese part but also very excellently the Mohammedan part. And here, as everywhere in the book, it is in the rapid presentation of a long period vividly to the reader's mind that this writer shows peculiar talent.

The reason that Mr. Wells is always at his best when he is dealing with China is that there is here no complication. He and his readers are on the same level. We none of us know anything about Chinese history, except a few experts, and what there is to know is apparently less detailed, or, at any rate (to our completely foreign minds), less manifold than what there is to know about our own old world between the Asian and African deserts and the Atlantic.

Moreover, the temper of China, with its absence of religious enthusiasm, is sympathetic to a mind which does not understand the qualities of that emotion, save in the comparatively narrow field of what may be called " Hot Gospel." Moreover, Mr. Wells's way of dealing with the story of China is moderate and unexcited, because he is here completely removed from that goad to which he reacts with such violence, the Catholic Church. With no Catholic Church to send the blood to his head, he can deal with matters as calmly as the proverbial " Mongolian Dynasties : so restful ; so impartial."

In the whole of these pages on China I can find but one "jerk" provoked by a sudden reminiscence of Christian doctrine (though, it is true, exactly the same phrase is repeated ten pages later rather irrelevantly) I allude to the term "Immaculate Conception." He is talking of the experience of a Chinese traveller in India during the seventh century, and in giving a list of "the preposterous rubbish" attached to the Buddhist negations and despairs (which, by the way, Mr. Wells never remarks to be negations or despairs), he includes (likening it to a "Christmas pantomime") the strange fairy-tales about what he calls "Immaculate conceptions" by monstrous animals.

Now, since I understand Mr. Wells does me the honour to read these careful comments and corrections of mine upon his momentarily popular work, I will put this in italics, so that he can have it before him in sharp form.

*The term "Immaculate Conception" does not mean Incarnation.*

Mr. Wells thinks it does. He thinks it means a miraculous birth without a human father, and, in particular, the miraculous birth of a divine being without a human father, of which central doctrine the instinct of mankind is full—wherefore, indeed, it does but seem the more absurd in Mr. Wells's eyes.

Mr. Wells may here plead that he sins in company; and he may also plead that, unlike the greater part of his errors, this error is not particularly old-fashioned. Ill-educated men of the English-speaking world constantly use the term "Immaculate Conception" under the impression that it means a miraculous *incarnation*. They do it almost as often as they talk of Socialism as meaning a wide distribution of property.

But it will be to Mr. Wells's advantage if, in future, he does not go wrong on this point. Insignificant as it may seem to him, it is a very characteristic test of general culture, and outside the world to which he belongs everybody laughs at this common blunder. Mr. Wells would be the first to ridicule a Continental journalist who should talk of "Sir Gladstone." But this blunder about the Immaculate Conception—a doctrine affecting the whole of Christian theology, and

a commonplace in the mouths of all instructed Europeans—is far less excusable. The term “Immaculate Conception” is a specific theological term, signifying the absence in a human soul from its first moment of original sin. It has nothing whatever to do with the idea that the origin of that human soul is supernatural, save in the sense in which the origin of all our souls is the effect of a supernatural creative act. Mr. Wells himself, for instance, believes (as do, I am sure, much the greater part of his readers) that he was immaculately conceived, and that the whole of the human race is so.

We Catholics, on the contrary, believe this is to be a peculiar state, attaching to the Mother of Jesus Christ and to no other human being.

Is that quite clear? I hope so; and I hope we shall not see this howler falling again from a pen so distinguished.

Mr. Wells is also unable, in this very clear, readable, and interesting summary of the early Chinese story, to avoid two passing references to his own exceedingly simple theology of “progress.” *One is that in which he makes certain that images of animals and men put into graves are but substitution for earlier living sacrifices; the other is that in which he refers to mankind as (in the matter of its conservatism) “still an animal.”* But, on the other hand, he modifies the general commonplace, mechanical, explanation that the lack of change in Chinese culture is due to the nature of its script. He modifies such a conclusion (which he repeats from an earlier page) by the word “plausible.” He says, “There is much that is plausible in this explanation,” and that is a perfectly reasonable way of putting it. So also, he keeps his nationalism within reasonable bounds when he calls the London Royal Society “the Mother Society of Modern Science.” Many foreigners would be angry at reading that phrase, and nearly all foreigners would smile at it; but there is something to be said for it, all the same.

Just before his account of the early Chinese, he has a fairly clear, though very brief, account of the origin of Manichæism, and clearly states the very great effect it had upon producing



Christian heresy : but he is, I think, a little out of it in confining that effect to a thousand years. It is most powerful to-day. The whole of what is called Puritanism is based upon it. It is probably inseparable from true religion, of which it seems to be a necessary parasite or poisonous by-product. He also here brings in his King Charles's head of Mithras, and makes the error of saying that the cult was "enormously popular" among the "common people." We have no proof of that at all. What we do find (as Mr. Wells also quite rightly notes) is what I have already pointed out, its presence in the Roman army ; but, as I have said in a previous chapter, the idea of Mithraism was never really widespread in the sense of affecting millions, let alone was it ever a serious rival to the Catholic Church. That was one of those exploded guesses of the nineteenth century, which still do duty in popular textbooks, but have lost all serious historical value.

We have in the next sentence, by the way, another of those little half-informed sneers at the Catholic Church which Mr. Wells seems to be quite unable to avoid, when he talks of Mithras "proceeding from the Deity" and gratuitously adds, to relieve his feelings, "in much the same way that the Third Person in the Christian Trinity proceeds from the First." (He prints God the Father, by the way, without capitals—to put Him in His place.)

Here, again, I can do Mr. Wells a good service, by giving him a little elementary instruction in the outworn creed of Augustine, Anselm and Mercier.

The dogma is not what Mr. Wells fancies it to be. He has read of the "Filioque" discussion, though perhaps he does not know that it was a pretext and not a cause ; he is acquainted with this word "Proceed" in connection with the Blessed Trinity, and therefore connects it with the Holy Ghost in procession from the Father alone, thinking this to be the original doctrine. As an historical fact the doctrine stood thus : that the Son is born of the Father, and the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son. Also it is a doctrine implied at the origin of our religion, and one which is

found in high antiquity long before the Greeks broke away from Unity. And though there was *late* argument against the double Procession, the complaint against the "Gilioque" was not only, nor perhaps chiefly, that it was innovation in doctrine as that it was an unwarranted Western addition to the Creed.

I know that all these names and terms sound very ridiculous to Mr. Wells, just as the etiquette of the gentry seemed ridiculous to Sancho Panza; but at any rate, an elementary historian ought to know the historical facts about a doctrine which fills all History, even if he thinks it absurd. A man may have no great respect for the Mormons; but if he is writing a popular history of Utah he must not mix up Brigham Young with Smith, or think that the Book of Mormon is only another name for the Bible.

If Mr. Wells deserves praise—and he certainly does—for his treatment of the Chinese passage, he also deserves it in a high degree for his treatment of the rise and effect of Mohammed.

He avoids the too obvious temptations of indiscriminate praise (to which he would naturally be led by the antagonism between Islam and Catholicism), and he gives a lucid, well-proportioned account of those famous ten years, their immediate preparation and their astonishing sequel.

He illustrates the vast sudden sweep of Islam in the best possible fashion by two accurate, plain and good sketch maps (on successive pages, 383 and 384), and, what is perhaps best of all, he fully appreciates and distinctly states the capital point that the success of Islam in the East was in the nature of a social revolution rather than of a conquest. There he is perfectly right, and the point is of great value to the proper appreciation of all our history.

Very few historians have—in the past—seized the fact that the appeal of Islam was to the slave and small-holder caught in the net of Roman Law and enfranchised by the new subversive movement.

Mr. Wells sees that clearly and it is a good example of historical judgment.

Moreover, in the whole of these thirteen pages he admits only two sneers at Catholic doctrine ; one in which he remarks that the plain man cannot make head or tail of it (on p. 379) ; the other a few lines further on, where he discovers a new and strange Catholic tenet to the effect that Priests and Kings have a place in heaven equal to the great saints, and superior to the common herd ! (What fun it would be to put Mr. Wells through an elementary examination on that philosophy which the whole of our civilization once held, and which the more intelligent of us still hold !)

He emphasized quite rightly and very strongly the strength of *simplicity* in the Arab enthusiasm, and the solvent effect of this upon the first societies which it approached.

But there is one bad unhistorical note running through the whole description which spoils it : he does not understand the greatness of his own people, of Europe : the European religion : the Græco-Roman culture, even in its material decline. He does understand that its complexity of social rank, of bureaucratic administration in the East, and of minute legal regulations everywhere (a complexity inseparable from the heights it had reached) subjected it to a heavy strain, and that the new enthusiasm out of the desert relaxed that strain ; but he does not appreciate that the relaxation was also a general breakdown. Nor does he appreciate the strength and majesty, the toughness and dignity, of this age-long structure of European civilization now faced with so sudden and overwhelming an attack of "levellers."

But there is a worse failure : he does not grasp the fact that Islam, being but a reaction against the highly developed Christian system of society, law, and religion, therefore proceeded from that system. Islam started more as a heresy than anything else, and was talked and felt about as a sort of heresy. It is a modern error, due to our long separation from it, which makes it look like a new religion. It is a pity Mr. Wells has got this fundamental point wrong ; but for that essential misunderstanding of the situation and for his inability to keep his text quite clean from insults against the Catholic Church—usually dragged in by the hair—these

pages might have had a permanent value and might have been reckoned among the best pieces of generalization of our time.

All the doctrines preached by Mohammed are discoverable in the great body of Catholic theology. Not one came from outside. The Fatherhood of God, the truth that God is Personal, that He is the Creator of all things ; that He is supremely good ; that the human soul is immortal ; that it may attain eternal beautitude or sink to eternal wretchedness ; that the souls of men are equal in the sight of God ; and that a man should regard all other men as his brethren : such a complete " corpus " of doctrine Mohammed did not find among the Jews (for they were exclusive—Immortality was not an original tenet with them let alone the dual fate of man) ; he did not find it taught in Buddhism, which despairs and knows nothing of God, let alone of the Immortal individual soul.

Mohammedanism drew of necessity from *our* culture. There was nothing else for it to draw from. The Græco-Roman world overshadowed all its origins. It is the failure to appreciate the magnitude of his own ancestry, which thus makes Mr. Wells misunderstand the nature of the first amazing growth of Islam. Or, rather, he understands one-half of that magnitude, its burdensome complexity ; but he does not understand the wealth of mind out of which alone such complexity could come. That is why he does not know that Islam submerged and degraded a higher thing. We have the ruins of column and capital to prove it ; but I do not think that Mr. Wells would understand, say, Timgad. We have the *Veni Creator Spiritus* and the *Vexilla Regis* and all that comes between them ; but I doubt whether Mr. Wells would understand what that great poetry is or the profound theology that nourished it. He exaggerated (though it is difficult to exaggerate) the material decline of the early Dark Ages. For instance, they kept up their roads. Islam could never make a road.

He does not know in how heroic a fashion our culture was kept alive until it should again easily dominate the world.

He has against his own civilization something of a twist, like that which makes occasional, cranky Englishmen anti-English. Nor does he grasp the central truth that the bad blows which came nearest to destroying us, were not those of the fifth and sixth centuries, but those of the ninth. He says, for instance that "Islam prevailed because it was the best social and political order the times could offer . . . the broadest, freshest, and cleanest political idea that had yet come into actual activity in the world." You might just as well say that of Bolshevism. For, though Islam was a much finer thing than Bolshevism, yet its appeal was of exactly the same simple, subversive sort. It did not flood the East, Africa, and Spain because it was "broad" or "fresh"—words of doubtful meaning. But when he adds, "It offered better terms than any other to the mass of mankind," he is right, especially as regards the first area of its expansion: Syria. It appealed there to the underworld of a very ancient and fatigued civilization, and met an army largely recruited from the Arabs themselves for its then decisive cavalry arm. These Arab troops of the Empire half-sympathized with the enemy before battle and readily joined them during and after it.

Nor must we forget that Islam failed to extirpate even in Syria the religion which it attacked, nor again that in those areas there had been years of desolation through war and violent religious quarrel with the central power. It was not till the tenth century that Islam became universal in Barbary. It swept Spain, because the ownership of land in Spain was in too few hands; but the mass of the people of Spain retained the Faith; and, but for their civilized traditions, their Mohammedan rulers of three hundred years could not have achieved what they did in building and tillage—for they certainly failed to do anything so great in North Africa after the Christian culture of Barbary had been killed.

The defeat of Islam in the heart of Gaul had nothing to do with the "vast line of communications from Arabia." Can Mr. Wells really think that the military base of the Arabs in Central Gaul was a base in Arabia?

No. The victory of Charles Martel which saved all Europe in the eighth century was a victory of European brain and muscle over Asiatic : not the last. It was the rally of our people ; and from that rally they pressed forward unceasingly, until at last they undid the greater part of the evil which had been done.

In his description of the Mohammedan world between the opening of the eighth century and the great Mongol invasions, Mr. Wells is at his best.

He has an exceedingly difficult task to perform, because the multiplicity and confusion of details, as well as the area to be covered are very great ; but he has managed to give the main features in good relief and without loss of proportion. I have already spoken of the few sentences here and there where his obsession against the Catholic Church betrays him into folly, sometimes puerile, sometimes mixed with startling ignorance, but the occasions for this sort of thing are rare, for he is dealing with a time and place in which the Christian religion was overwhelmed.

I expected, with some anxiety, the presence in this division of some one of those anti-Christian sneers (which he might have got from Gibbon or some other Voltairean authority) upon the Christians in Spain, but I am glad to say that he has omitted any such—for the very good reason that he does not here deal with Spain under the Moors.

He does justice, but not more than justice, to the beauty of detail in Arabic architectural work, and has properly noted in his authorities the literary beauty of which all those authorities assure us—though very few of us (and certainly neither Mr. Wells nor I)—can judge it for ourselves.

His great virtue of accuracy in detail also appears in his presentation of the Arabic contribution to mathematics. What he quotes tends slightly to exaggeration (for instance, the measurement of the angle of the ecliptic is not an Arabic discovery, but was open to anyone to make to within a fraction of a degree, at any time, for centuries, before Mohammed. It was as a fact made by the Greek civilization, centuries before).

He gives his right place to Averroës, though to say of this great mind that it "made a sharp distinction between Religious and Scientific truth and so prepared the way for the liberation of scientific research from theological dogmatism, both under Christianity and under Islam," is out of proportion. What Averroës did was to propound a beginning of something very like atheism or at the best pantheism. Nor was there any sort of proportion between the restraint upon physical dogmatism and vagary then exercised (and happily still exercised) by the supreme force of Catholic theology and the corresponding restraint created by the much too simple system of Islam.

Mr. Wells is further much to be congratulated upon his contrast between the universality of writing and reading in the world of Arabic culture at its height, and the lack of them in the contemporary world of Latin culture, which was, perhaps, the chief external difference between them. He is careful to note (in quoting another authority—and this is an example of his accuracy in detail) the presence of the so-called Arabic numerals in our civilization long before Islam arose. He very justly puts down the development of algebra to Islam, and adds, what is much less known, its possible or probable connection with India. He emphasizes with right judgment the historic function of Islam in creating a flux, as it were, between Asia and Europe and making a passage for ideas between the world east of the old Roman boundary and our world. But where he is most to be congratulated is in his emphasis upon the effect of the Mongol irruption upon Europe, and much more upon the Mohammedan world.

It is true that this feature in universal history has long been appreciated. It has been fully present in the minds of historians for more than a lifetime ; but an appreciation of it is not yet popularized, and Mr. Wells, writing for a popular audience, has underlined it much more than any other contemporary whom I can call to mind. It would perhaps have been better had he given the origins of the catastrophe (in so far as concerned Islam) with more emphasis. It is true that the horrible Mongolian disaster of the thirteenth

century was on another scale, and had ultimately far more effect ; but the Turkish beginnings are very important ; he gives a short paragraph to the Kahzars (pp. 411-12 )who determined the history of Russia—or at any rate *begin* the determination of it. He very rightly says that the second Turkish branch, the Seljuks, raiding the original Mohammedan Empire of the Near East, was more important. He gives this barely half a page, but he very properly emphasizes the supreme importance of their breaking through the mountain wall which had hitherto been the defence of our civilization upon the East from the Black Sea to the Levantine coast ; and the few lines in which he alludes to the battle of Manzikart and its effect, are striking and just.

I am not surprised at, but regret, the inevitable failure of the author to note here something which should give pause to every opponent of the Christian religion such as himself. He perceives (and very well describes) the breakdown of Islam as a culture after its early brilliancy. He notes that the second chapter in its power was only begun by that tide of abominable barbarism in the eleventh century—the Turkish hordes. He might have noted—it is certainly a thing which every judicial student of religion should note (unfortunately Mr. Wells cannot possibly be judicial when the Catholic Church is anywhere within ten miles)—that the Christian culture alone has not shown this recurrent “ fainting sickness.” Its material circumstance has risen and fallen slowly. It has had a rhythm, as every living organism must have ; but it has not had fatal fatigues. *Its resurrections have been from within.* Attacks from without have always strengthened it, whether it were attack upon the spiritual body—martyrdom and heresy—or attack upon the political body—Mohammedan and Pagan invasions. This Character in the Catholic culture is unique. The comparative history of religion will give you no parallel to this : and I say again that the impartial and really sceptical student of religion would note immediately in his studies this mark peculiar to the Catholic Church ; account for it as best he could by some natural explanation, but note it.



The long passages upon the Ottoman Turks upon the great thirteenth-century Mongol move, form the opening of Book VII. The description is full and good, and the accompanying sketch-maps illuminating. Mr. Wells is to be blamed in sparing those men the epithets which he is ready to fling at any Christian armies and particularly at those which impose orthodoxy upon the mortal enemies of our culture. But that is only to be expected ; and I think I have wearied the reader enough with emphasizing this unfortunate feature which deprives his work of solidity and permanence. Our armies never reached the barbaric depths of cruelty and mere destruction. They were creative.

The section on the travels of Marco Polo is first-rate. I find in it again, of course, the silly little sentences against Catholicism which he cannot avoid, the condemnation of the word "illiterate" coupled with the word "theologian" as applied to Charlemagne ; the contrasting of the Catholic Church with an imaginary "teaching of Jesus" (p. 443) ; an absurd suggestion that the Mongols would have become Catholics if it had not been for the Priest ; a sneer at the Catholic Church in the thirteenth century (of all centuries !) for its loss of the conquering fire of the early Christian Missions ; a complaint that the Papacy did not convert the Empire of Kubla-Khan—which he imagines to have been thirsting for conversion to Papistry, but only willing (apparently) to accept it in a Protestant form.

Apart from these inevitable breakdowns in judgment, such as fanaticism can never escape, the description of the period is, as I have said, good, and that of the travels of Marco Polo excellent. The succeeding pages which begin the story of the Ottoman Turks I must leave to a later chapter.

I lay down this, the best of the passages I have yet come across in the popular work, and I cannot resist an inclination to muse a little upon the conditions which make it a failure. I hope that I appreciate as much as anyone the great qualities possessed by Mr. Wells for making it a success. He need only, for instance, in this excellent summary of the Middle History of Islam, with its very just and powerful appreciation

of the effect upon universal history of the "Asiatic Tide," have written with detachment to have made it a perfect piece of work ; and had he carried a similar detachment with him throughout all his pages he might have done something enduring, or, if not that, at any rate something valuable for his own generation.

But his nervous reaction against the Catholic Church is too strong for him, and the result is that the colouring of the picture is all wrong. In proportion as a set of known facts are remote from our own civilization and do not touch upon the philosophy which made us all (including Mr. Wells), in that proportion his judgment is well balanced and his selection sound enough. That is why he is best when he talks of China or Islam, third rate when he talks of his own blood, the European, and quite below the average level of his popular contemporaries when he has to deal with the great debate as to whether religion be from God or from man, and as to whether the Catholic Church be what it claims to be or a maleficent illusion.

It is perfectly possible to write enduring and, in a fashion, valuable, historical stuff with as complete a conviction as Mr. Wells himself has that all religion is from mankind, and the Catholic Faith not only man-made, but ill-made.

What one cannot do is to write good History under the effect of mere irritation, and exasperated irritation at that. There is between such nervous weakness and a proper balance something comparable to the contrast between the advocacy of a good lawyer and the temper of a touchy witness. The lawyer, though pleading for a false cause, keeps himself, if he knows his trade, detached from the passions of that cause ; presents the arguments soberly though cumulatively, throwing stress upon what will achieve his result, but without betraying loss of control. And that is what the historian should do : he should so write that his reader says to himself, "I am reading what actually happened," and not so that the reader says to himself, "There he is off again at his *bête noire* !" !

Such criticism is parallel to what one has to say too often

with regard to military history. It is essential to good military history that its writer should be absorbed in the combinations of the affair, and see battle and campaign with apparent indifference to either combatant, or, at any rate, with a major interest only in war as war. While the bad military historian is he who, however great his interest in the main affair, cannot avoid a Jingo note—or an anti-Jingo, they are equally bad—in his writing. It is the difference between seeing human events from above as on a map—which should be the whole business of an outline of History—and seeing them slantways from the ground, and therefore out of proportion.

There, then, is Mr. Wells on one great chapter of History : Islam. He shows in it both his advantages and his defects. He is quick to grasp the real meaning of it as a social phenomenon ; he shows admirable skill in simple and lucid concentration upon main historical features. But he also betrays here his two main weaknesses. He can't keep off a petty and violent anti-Christian obsession which ruins his work and deprives it of any chance of permanence ; and he shows occasional examples of quite startling ignorance in matters which are common knowledge to his educated contemporaries.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE CHRISTIAN DARK AGES

MR. WELLS'S *Outline* continues in good proportion and lucid in his general description of what we call, in Christian history, "The Dark Ages": that is, the period between the first spread of the Mohammedan disaster (which he, of course, regards as a benefit because it destroyed or wounded the Catholic Church in the areas occupied by Mohammedans) and the German capture of the Papacy towards the year 1000.

The general tone is that of the ordinary textbooks written in the anti-Catholic vein; although there is a rather more violent irritation than usual against the Faith in Mr. Wells's general position and occasional references, it occupies little of this division. To the errors I will allude in a moment, but I must first point out the merits of this passage which brings us up to the eve of the Crusades and takes us from the end of Book V to the midst of Book VI.

Apart from his general lucid and vigorous presentation of a long period very difficult to summarize, there is an excellent metaphor upon page 396 comparing the fragmentary cohesion of society in the Dark Ages, and the gradual formation of feudalism in their most disturbed period, to the physical formation of crystals. The author is naturally a little confused about his general dates, because he has not had occasion to read History seriously. Thus he strangely considers the *Fourth* and *Fifth(!)* centuries to have been particularly chaotic in territorial arrangement, and immediately afterwards uses the term "Feudalism." That is, of course, a complete misunderstanding of comparative dates and a misapprehension of the length of the period and the great changes

which took place in such a length. In the *Fourth* century the Western world was entirely united and ordered from Rome, though there was the usual heavy local fighting and difficulty in guarding the frontiers from irruption. In the *Fifth* century there were armed bands raiding across the frontiers in not very large numbers, and accepted as soldiers of the Empire, one very bad Asiatic invasion *en masse*, which was beaten, and, at the end, the disassociation of the Western part of the Empire into separate vast regional governments under local generals.

*Feudalism* was an altogether later thing ; as much later as *we* are later than the Wars of the Roses. It was a thing which became established in the *Ninth* century, though you can already see it forming (unconsciously) in the *Eighth*. It was the break-up of society into a mass of local governments, very unsystematic and held together only by personal bond of overlord and vassal. To talk of it in connection with the *Fourth* and *Fifth* centuries is like talking of industrial capitalism in the same breath with the peasants' revolt of 1381.

Nevertheless, though the centuries are wildly wrong, the metaphor of crystals as applied to feudal groupment and regroupment is very good, and is an excellent example of Mr. Wells's powers of analogy and illustration.

I should not quarrel either in this commentary upon Mr. Wells's general acceptance of the old-fashioned History which is still conventional in most of our official teaching here in England, although it is already badly out of date. Were I writing a commentary upon the book treated seriously as an essay on European history, I should be more severe upon this simple acceptation of stuff on which most of our students are still fed, but which, in the light of modern scholarship, especially of French scholarship, has the effect of Crinolines and PEGTOP Trousers.

I am concerned here with the much more important business of Mr. Wells's anti-Catholic motive in writing, and though the false conventional history which we are still largely taught in England is ultimately anti-Catholic in motive, yet it is so largely accepted, and the connection between it and the ultimate religious motive behind it is so much disguised, that

it would hardly be fair to ridicule an old-fashioned statement save where it is so thoroughly and admittedly out of date that not even a best-seller ought to admit it into his popular writing.

For instance, one cannot be surprised to find this popular history, written in England and depending upon English encyclopædias, talking of an Anglo-Saxon conquest of this country at the beginning of the Dark Ages—nearly all educated Englishmen even now still speak in those terms, and have a vague idea at the back of their minds that a number of Germans, called Anglo-Saxons, came over the sea in boats, centuries ago, killed all the people who then lived in England, and started everything over again. And there is a great deal to be said (though I think it is wrong) for the conventional derivation of Viking from the word for “bay.”

I will even admit that writing of Charlemagne as speaking Frankish (that is, a sort of Flemish) as his habitual tongue is not a thing to carp at in a popular history, though it is almost certainly wrong. All the last generation believed that kind of thing, and it is still conventional teaching in England and Germany. Mr. Wells also has the imagination to see that Charlemagne must have known the Latin tongue as well, and admits that his talking literary Latin is “open to discussion.” A more detailed knowledge of the period makes it clear that a man in Charlemagne’s social position *must* have talked and thought in Latin, though it is true that a writer of the time talked of the old Frankish speech as being the “ancestral tongue” of that great man.

In the same way the description of the changes in the Papacy of the tenth century is the conventional description of from one hundred and fifty to fifty years ago—a virtuous German reform of wicked Italians—and it is natural that the modern scholarship which shows the real struggle to have been between an attempted renewal of Byzantine influence and the counter Western Imperial influence should never have been presented to our author.

All that, though out of date, may pass. But there are certain extreme statements in what I have called this “old-

fashioned conventional history" which really are too much out of date to go without notice.

For instance, Mr. Wells quotes, quite innocently, as though it were history, the ridiculous sentence from some other popular history or other, that "to practise medicine was forbidden by the Church, which expected cures to be effected by religious rites." He probably means that the strong general feeling of the day against *dissection* of the dead had clerical support. But to think that there were no doctors in the Dark Ages is really going a little too far in old-fashionedness: it is not even 1850. It is 1820.

In the same way the idea that Austrasia and Neustria were the German and French speaking halves of the Frankish dominion is really too antiquated. The people who believed that kind of thing and yet could claim to be scholars have been dead, even the longest-lived of them, many years since, and to use such language is rather like talking (as some people still do talk) of the United States as though they were a colony of Englishmen. The truth is, of course, that the two divisions were purely administrative, an eastern and a western; the area being too great for permanent single rule. They were obviously made without any consideration of language. Who cared about language in the seventh and early eighth centuries? They were designed to give fairly equal burdens and resources. The majority of people living in Austrasia had probably never heard German speech. The only thing in Austrasia that was German was the broad Eastern fringe, very ill-populated, with no cities that were not Roman, and with all the culture and the wealth—save Alsace and the Cologne-Aix, Rhine and lower Moselle region—romance in speech. After all, Rheims was in Austrasia, and perhaps its most important city.

In the same way, to talk of the "subject population" after the defeat of Syagrius by his fellow-general, Clovis, is beyond the limit of what is tolerable in the way of exploded mid-nineteenth century convention. Everybody knows, since Fustel, that there was no trace of a conquering and a subject race. The Gallo-Romans, the Flemish-speaking Franks in

the very beginning of the business, sundry German-speaking adventurers and nobles, chance soldiers from the extreme East, a great many from the South of Gaul, a mass of clerics, made up that society. It was never divided by race at all or by speech. That was the quite gratuitous assumption of people who thought noble Protestant Prussia to be the modern example of Franks, and decadent Catholic "Latins" to be the modern example of Gallo-Romans. It has no relation to reality. The social divisions of the sixth and seventh centuries were between free and unfree, between those belonging to the King's Curia and those governed by it, and (much the most prominent division of all) between Christian and non-Christian.

This impossible old idea about a German Austrasia has serious consequences in Mr. Well's History, for it makes him still talk of the two divisions as the origins of modern France and Germany; just as they used to talk in 1870! Nowadays that kind of thing won't do.

Nor is it tolerable to speak of Mercia as "holding out stoutly against the priests and for the ancient Faith and ways." We leave all that kind of thing to John Richard Green. The conversion of Mercia naturally came later than that of Kent and Northumbria because it lay further inland, but Penda of Mercia marched with the army of Christian Welsh Princes, and Sussex and the Isle of Wight were evangelized much later than Mercia.

To talk of Pepin of Heristal as "conquering Neustria" has been inadmissible for the better part of fifty years. And it is still wilder to speak of "but small racial or social difference" between the "Anglo-Saxon, Jute, or Dane."

The civilized Christian England of the Dark Ages was utterly different socially, and very different racially, from the Pagan, Saxon or Scandinavian; it felt so and it said so the whole time. The languages were similar, though the similarity can be exaggerated: the mind was different. As for the "Normans," if the word is used in the sense of the Northmen of the old pirate raids, then they were simply Scandinavians; but used as it is on page 400, after mention of



the Conquest, it is quite wrong. The Norman of the Conquest was a Frenchman, much like any other—short, stocky, round-headed, and with all the French violence, all the French vice of partizanship and fighting against one's neighbour, all the French instinct for simple mechanical order in building and measurement and legal system, and much of the French fun. Even the families of known Scandinavian origin were by that time French. William the Conqueror himself had but one-sixteenth of Scandinavian blood.

Still, these bad errors are after all no more than errors of the conventional old text-books, written in the days when all History had the Protestant air, and any man who has to fill up a popular history in a hurry from our encyclopædias will naturally be behind the times to that extent. What is less excusable is a series of chance sentences which show real ignorance of essentials on which not even the popular text-books would go wrong. For instance, the Comitatus of which Tacitus speaks as surrounding a German chieftan has nothing whatever to do with our words "Count" and "County." These come from the Roman official, the "Comes." Or, again, to talk of the Roman roads (p. 395) as being "destroyed" as early as the eighth century is to show that the writer knows nothing of the lines of marching or even the sites of battles. The Roman roads remain the great means of communication much later than that. Take a map of Roman roads in Western Europe, put pins in it for the sites of the great religious foundations, the new markets, and especially for the battles up to, say, 1200, and you will see what their meaning was.

In the same way, to talk of the Scandinavians "becoming bolder and ranging further at sea from the *Fifth* century" is absurd. We know nothing appreciable about them as pirates or long-voyage men until the end of the *Eighth*, and the very fact that we know nothing about them is proof that they did not early or regularly take these very long voyages.

The worst and most inexcusable direct error is again here in connection with the Filioque clause, on which, as we saw in my last chapter, Mr. Wells quite uncannily specializes in

mistakes. He seems to think that this clause was put into the Creed through a sort of personal private whim of Charlemagne in the Council of Aix, and he compares that decree to some vulgar fancy or other of the "late Emperor William writing operas or painting pictures." He knows that the Spaniards were the first to put it into the Creed, and he knows that the Pope delayed doing so; but he does not know apparently what the reason for the *Doctrine* was, nor does he appreciate that the vital point at issue was the question of unity. The Greek-speaking half of the Church had never worried very much about the Procession of the Holy Ghost. The fact that the Procession was defined in the Creed as coming from the Father had nothing to do with the idea of excluding the double Procession. The Procession from the Father was only specifically stated in the Creed as against certain heretics who had denied that the Holy Ghost proceeded from the Father; and the real point about the schism is this: the Universal Church of the early Councils accepted the Primacy of Rome: of that there is no more doubt than of the Battle of Waterloo. But the official and State-ridden Church of the East tended to protest more and more against that Primacy as it developed into the strong Papal idea of the later Dark Ages and Early Middle. That is really the whole affair; and the Filioque was but a pretext.

There appear, of course, those phrases deriving from Mr. Wells's own anti-Catholic theology, on which it would be tedious to linger after so many earlier examples. Thus the Nestorians—because they are anti-Catholic and far more heretical than the Byzantines—are called "more intelligent and active-minded than the Greeks," and, of course, "on a much higher level of general education than the Latin-speaking Christians of the West." Theology, when in a Catholic form, excites nothing but ridicule in minds of Mr. Wells's level of culture—but when it is Persian—and, best of all, Pagan Persian—it becomes "intense" and "subtle." The Blessed Trinity is something of which one "cannot make head nor tail," while an obscure Eastern Heresy is respectable.

But the worst mixture of ignorance and sneering at Divine things combined is on page 386. It is something which I hope it is not too disrespectful to call balderdash. Because certain Mohammedans seem to have wondered whether the Koran had been always in the mind of God (I suppose it was—as all things realized have been in the mind of God), Mr. Wells immediately makes up out of his head an imaginary Christian convert to Islam who is introducing to that world the Gospel of St. John ; he actually puts forward the phrase “The Word was God” as meaning that the Bible was God !

I confess I am bewildered. Mr. Wells cannot be ignorant of the term Logos—he cannot possibly be as ignorant as that. And yet here he is plainly thinking that Logos means Holy Writ. Ignorance is ignorance and muddle-headedness is muddle-headedness ; but when they mix and reach that degree criticism must be silent.

There runs through the whole of this division the nineteenth-century idea of “progress.” It is taken for granted, in all its crudity, all its tautology, all its unproved and untrue postulates, and all its flagrant contrast with reality—for of all forms of mystical enthusiasms that of “progress” is the stupidest.

Here is an example from page 385. “Politically, Islam was not an advance, but a retrogression from the traditional freedoms and customary laws of the desert.” Retrogression towards what—in the name of Heaven, common sense and the rudiments of education ? If I say a motor-bus is not an “advance” but a “retrogression” from the old horse bus, I must mean, I suppose that I like the old horse bus better than the motor-bus (which I do). Does Mr. Wells mean that the Arab of the desert, unorganized, and doing what he liked, is his ideal ? Then why does he give us his whole idea of progress as that people should get more and more together, and regard the stricter unity of mankind as a thing at once good and inevitable ? What does he mean ?

I doubt if he knows himself what he means. He had a vague feeling for the moment, as he wrote the sentence, that it would be jollier to be a free Pagan Arab playing about than

an Arab bound down by a religious system. Instead of saying that the change was a change towards the "less jolly," he calls it a "retrogression"—which simply means that he thinks the word "progress" means nothing more than "getting towards the kind of thing I like." In this, though he may not know it, he is perfectly right—that *is* about the only meaning of the word "progress" has in the mouths of its faithful flock. But then, to use Progress as a universal philosophy is essentially nonsense. For different people will always like different things. Until you have a rational and firm faith (or philosophy) as to what is best you have no way of distinguishing between going forwards and going backwards.

I will not disappoint the reader if I quote, as a savoury, the most extravagant example of "progress" in this division. It is on page 393, and runs thus: "Hitherto men of reason and knowledge have never had the assurance and courage of the religious fanatic. But there can be little doubt that they have accumulated settled convictions and gathered confidence during the last few centuries. They have slowly found a means to power through the development of popular education and popular literature, and to-day they are far more disposed to say things plainly and to claim a dominating voice in the organization of human affairs than they have ever been before in the world's history."

So now we know that the anti-Christian of the best seller, of the sexual novel, of the star article, and the cheap textbook, is about to take over the governance of mankind. God help us if he does! But he won't.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE MIDDLE AGES

ALL the end of the Sixth Book of Mr. Wells's History is taken up with his judgment on what must properly be called the Middle Ages in Europe—that is, the period which begins with the great awakening of the West in the eleventh century and ends with the strains and difficulties of the fifteenth, to conclude in the crash of the Reformation. It is the period midway between that great stage of Christendom called the Dark Ages which ends about the year 1000 and the split of Christendom which comes after 1500. It covers nearly twenty pages.

It would not be just to criticize the writer for this comparatively small allotment to what is, in the best judgment of cultivated European men, the greatest achievement of our race. Mr. Wells would answer that the Middle Ages were *not* the greatest period of our race, *nor* our race the chief portion of mankind. He had a right to his own theory of History: to treat the climax of united Christendom as but one episode (and not a superior episode) in the little we know of human effort and achievement. He is wrong, but he has a right to be wrong: unless, indeed, one affirms that no historian may adopt the anti-Catholic view. The scale, I say, is, in my judgment, warped. I think that an impartial observer (could such a one be conceived), looking at the world from far off, himself without religion, and judging things strictly by their temporal effect, would still say that it was in Europe men did the very most they ever could do, and that the time they did the most they ever could do was the 500 years between the year 1000 and the year 1500.

To ask Mr. Wells to see things in that completely detached fashion would be to ask too much ; for he does not seriously pretend to look at the story of mankind thus detachedly, but rather to interpret it in terms of Evangelical English Protestantism, gutted of such supernatural doctrine as it once possessed. I will therefore deal with this chief section of the human story as briefly as Mr. Wells himself deals with it, although it certainly deserves a much larger place. For, after all, Mr. Wells's whole quarrel is with the Catholic Church ; and this was the moment when the Catholic Church was producing its chief fruits after the long and desperate siege of the Dark Ages. I think, in decency to such an opponent, Mr. Wells ought to have made the section more important. But, on the other hand, I remember that the opponent is an opponent ; and if one regards the Catholic Church as the bane of mankind (which is Mr. Wells's hereditary attitude), one would naturally hesitate to emphasize the centuries of its most *united* active effect upon our blood.

Three things have impressed Mr. Wells mainly in what he has been told by his Oxford coaches on this tremendous episode in the human story.

*Firstly*, the spontaneity, energy, and united purpose of the Crusades.

*Secondly*, the apparent futility of the medieval Papacy in handling its fine opportunity for creating an international (and a merely human) state.

*Thirdly*, the decline and breakdown of Christendom, inevitably ending in the ship-wreck called the Reformation.

In the first of these points, he is right—though very restricted in vision. In the second, he is historically quite wrong : the Middle Ages were not a period in which a particular insufficient and later somewhat tyrannical institution called “The Papacy” was trying to achieve, or ought to have tried to achieve, a merely temporal unity, careless of Catholic doctrine. In the third, he is still more wrong historically. The Reformation was not an inevitable climax led up to by greater and greater weakness in Christendom and not to

be avoided. It might have been avoided ; and all that it did was very nearly undone again by the recovery of European sanity after the first delirium of a minority had passed. The destructive work of the Reformation would have been repaired altogether but for the shortsightedness (from a European point of view) of Richelieu in backing up the defeated Protestant Principalities of Germany against the Empire ; due to his considering nothing but the advantages of the French Royal house and forgetting Christendom.

Mr. Wells is genuinely impressed by the first Crusade. He uses in connection with it the novel German idiom "will to" crusade, and that is the highest compliment he can pay it. He is impressed by these great masses of men going eastward. He calls it a spectacle such as "had never before been seen in the whole history of the world." He does not, indeed, appreciate that the thing was a vast French movement (for he would not like any great movement to be French) ; he prefers to think of it as Norman, under the old Victorian superstition that the Normans, being vigorous, could not be really French at all. But he admires it, because it was popular, because it was spontaneous, and, above all, because it was big. He sees in just perspective the gradual "officializing" of the Crusades, and he appreciates the fact that the violent Moslem feeling of the later twelfth century was a reaction corresponding to the Christian enthusiasm of eighty years before. He puts the episode of Saladin well. But what I think he does not appreciate is the way in which medieval civilization continued to hold the crusading idea. He says in so many words that (by the third Crusade) the "magic and wonder had gone out of these movements" and that "the common people had found them out." He ought to have been told by those who coached him that, though changing conditions had made united popular support more and more difficult, yet, right on into the fifteenth century, the Holy Sepulchre was the ideal goal. Even in England (a country which had little to do with the Crusades), you have Henry IV dreaming of it all his life, and you have Henry V, 230 years after the time when Mr. Wells thinks

the ideal had been lost, complaining, as he died, that he had not retaken the holy places.

However, he does appreciate and feels the Crusades, especially the first one.

What he does not understand is the medieval Church, its necessary unity ; and that the Papacy was the condition and guardian of that unity. There he is altogether wrong. He is out of perspective, and misses the elements of the affair.

Here, again, I must make myself clear by yet another of what I fear my readers may call ceaseless repetitions of an obvious principle. Unfortunately it is not a principle obvious to Mr. Wells, or to the readers for whom he writes, and it must be repeated again and again, for it is almost certain to be misunderstood.

The principle is this. We are not primarily concerned in an historian with his philosophy but with his history. No doubt bad philosophy must always make bad history. And there is no true history, in the absolute sense of the word "true," which is written upon the basis of, or to prove, a false philosophy. But in ordinary language, when we say "bad history," we do not mean "bad philosophy"; we mean a statement of facts in false proportion : a bad outline. And it is most emphatically a bad outline which those who coached Mr. Wells have given him of the medieval historical period. He seems to think of it as something dominated by the old "Giant Pope" of his traditional Bunyan. He shows some admiration for the idea of the Papacy uniting Christendom because that subserves his Comtist ideal of humanity-worship. But what he doesn't understand at all is that the real point of issue was not the Papacy—which is the central organ of the universal Church—but the conception of the universal Church itself : and of a Church not only universal, but visible and corporate.

To read these pages one would think such an idea of visible, corporate unity had never existed—and yet it is the whole historical point and meaning of the Catholic Church : then, now and for ever. He seems to think that the Papacy was a



particular institution doing something on its own, artificial, like the League of Nations, and through defects in organization failing to pull it off. But the Papacy was nothing of the sort. It was original in the foundations of the Church. It remains dominant in the Church to-day. It is the exemplification of unity, and, to put it shortly, of the prime historical truth that the Catholic Church is not a theory, but a thing.

For instance, he gives at great length the quarrel between the Popes and Frederic the Second. He does not appreciate the elementary point, that if Frederic the Second had won the Church would have broken up. It was a life-and-death duel in which religion was at stake ; and though naturally a modern heir of Little Bethel sympathizes with Frederic merely because he finds Frederic in opposition to "Giant Pope," yet the historian should take a larger view. He may dislike our Christian civilization, and wish it were destroyed. He may rejoice to think how nearly the successes of Frederic came to destroying it ; he may praise Frederic for "irrigating us" with anti-Christian ideas—notably Moslem—and regret that our civilization won ; but to represent it as a mere struggle between two sovereigns, Pope and Emperor, is not history at all. It is like making the struggle between revolutionary France and aristocratic England a struggle between the tyrant George III against virtuous Republicans ; or the monster Robespierre against the Three Jolly Englishmen of the song.

All through this dealing with the Papacy in the Middle Ages, Mr. Wells continues to show that intense local Protestant feeling, in which he was trained, and misses the wide historical view altogether. He does not recover it by his phrases—which are numerous—upon the grandeur of an international ideal.

Popes have no international ideal, because the Catholic Church has no international ideal. There might be no such things as nations (any more than there were under the Roman Empire) ; perhaps in the near future there will

again be no such things as nations. But there would still be a Catholic Church, and there would still be a Papacy.

This provincial attitude towards the Papal position appears in all manners of phrases scattered up and down this part of Mr. Wells's work, as, for instance, that "men of faith and wisdom believe in growth and their fellow-men; but Priests, even such Priests as Gregory VII, believe in the false 'efficiency' of an imposed discipline." Here is a phrase which might have been written by a man in his sleep as to the first part, and which is composed of mere chapel doctrine as to the second—"believing in growth and one's fellow-men" means nothing; nothing whatsoever. It is gas. And, on the other hand, it is not a special sort of lurking animal called "Priests," who believe in the efficiency of an imposed discipline, it is everyone who ever organized Man for any end whatsoever; from coming down in time for breakfast to the salvation of the human race.

I wonder that a man of Mr. Wells's desire for intellectual distinction should lend himself to such things.

But the worst historical blunder in all this is the repetition, at this time of day, that the simple faith of the Dark Ages gradually broke down through the increasing knowledge and intellectual activity of the Middle Ages until at last it came to the complete disruption of the Reformation.

That sort of thing was already blown upon when Froude was writing a lifetime ago. To-day it lingers in a local tradition, but it has quite disappeared—and for ever—from intelligent discussion of that great religious catastrophe, from which we are at last, perhaps, slowly recovering.

We all know, of course, what really happened. A civilization bursting into increasing vigour, the rise of nations and of vernacular literatures, an expansion of knowledge, all these tended, as does all growth, to disrupt unity. Something much worse than any good force (and learning is good), the catastrophe of the Black Death, shook society, yet unity was preserved. Even the great schism of the fourteenth century was healed.

The shipwreck called "the Reformation" came, as all shipwrecks come, by blundering. So little was it inevitable, that once it had taken place the warning was immediately taken to heart. The Church recovered itself, only failed by an error of French policy to recover all Europe, is still (if Mr. Wells will look about him) remarkably alive, and is increasing its hold upon the intelligence of Europe.

Why, that is the very commonplace of our time! Yet, in these pages Mr. Wells talks as though he were the contemporary of those worthy gentlemen who cheered for the victory of Garibaldi in Exeter Hall and thought the Faith would die with Pio Nono.

Thus he discovers with joy in certain ecclesiastics of the Dark Ages "the spirit of Jesus still alive in them" (p. 422). He is persuaded that Salerno (i.e. Physical Science) "cast a baleful light upon Rome" (p. 425). He will have it that the Church "had become dogmatic," as though (Great Heavens!) it were not dogmatic in the Earliest Fathers. He will have it that "Jesus of Nazareth" and His preaching was "overlaid," and, worst of all, he's back at the old nonsense that "Priests"—that is the organization of the Church—think only about "their own power," and not about the Divine, unique thing which it is their business to preserve.

What on earth does Mr. Wells think that the average Catholic from the beginning (say, in the second century) to the present day has accepted in the matter of the Hierarchy? Does he think that this vast body called the Catholic Church (vast in time, as in space, as in numbers) is a pack of dupes, run by a few supernaturally cunning rogues? That he should think us wrong and mistaken, subject to illusion in our doctrines, is fair matter for discussion; but the idea of our being fascinated by insincere conjurers is asinine.

That word is violent. I will repeat it. For it is exact. It is asinine to judge of the Hierarchy (Innocent III, Gregory the Great, Anselm, Langton, Ximenes, Bossuet, Leo XIII—I pick at random) that it is a conspiracy of charlatans, and of the laity (St. Monica, St. Louis, Lamoricière, O'Connell,

Maritain, St. Francis, Pasteur) that they are gaping yokels who swallow any tale.

What is this, again (on p. 427), of Catholic "contempt for the intelligence and mental dignity of the common man"? If there is one conspicuous contrast between your elementary, half-educated, pseudo-scientific, "modern thought" and the Catholic Church, it is the contempt of the former for the common man, and the fact that the latter is based entirely upon the common man. The former—pseudo-science—is for ever trying to prevent the common man from getting a drink, marrying, having children, running his own house, living his own life, criticizing the mandarins of politics or of sham statistics; the latter—the Catholic Church—lives its whole life by consulting and realizing the common man. To attack the Catholic Church as being too subservient to the common man might be understandable; to attack it as contemptuous of the common man shows a complete ignorance of its character.

It is in the same spirit that we have (upon p. 429) the remark that the Catholic Church was, in the Middle Ages, "heading to its destruction." It is not destroyed. Really, I do assure you, Mr. Wells, the Catholic Church is not yet destroyed. Will you not believe me? Must I give you proof? It is arduous collecting proofs of the obvious.

It is in the same spirit that he says of Wycliffe that he was a much abler man than St. Dominic.

Now I am sure Mr. Wells has never read a word of either. If he will read anything proceeding from St. Dominic and anything proceeding from Wycliffe, and put them side by side, I shall be content. He might as well say that Proust was a greater writer than Molière.

It is in the same spirit that he tells us Wycliffe translated the Bible into English "in order that people should judge between the Church and himself," not knowing that a vernacular translation of the Bible existed in French, in German, in Bohemian, and even (probably, or certainly) in the newly-coalesced English tongue.

It is in the same spirit that he postulates "organized dogma" as in conflict with the "quickenning intelligence and courage of mankind." How can intelligence act upon any problem without resulting in organized dogma? How else did intelligence act on the problems of Astronomy? Is there no dogma to-day on the rotation of the earth? What on earth has "courage" to do with lack of dogma? Where is the courage in nourishing mere doubt in a woolly brain?

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE REFORMATION

AS we approach the break in Christian Unity, generally called the "Reformation," I look with interest at Mr. Wells's work to see whether his combined intelligence and instruction will stand the strain.

He writes, of course, as a local and intensely Protestant man who has lost the doctrine of his immediate ancestry, but preserved most of their catchwords and all their odd isolated philosophy. Nevertheless, his mind is alert, his intelligence, as always, conspicuously sincere, and his power of visualization quite exceptional.

Therefore, I hoped that he would, when he came to this critical test, rise superior in some degree to his limitations. But he has not done so. On the contrary, he has failed here more conspicuously than in any other department of his work with which I have hitherto had to deal. And the reason is this, that he is here right up against the Thing that distracts him : the Faith.

His other blunders are, as a rule, no more than his repetition of old errors which he did not happen to know had been exposed by modern scholarship, coupled with his sporadic outbreaks against the Church. But when he comes to approach the Reformation, we have something very different. We have an ignorance of (or aversion from) the fundamentals of the position, which ignorance (or aversion) is fatal to his History.

For to understand modern times (which have drawn all their trouble from the breakup of Christendom that followed, and all their energy from the renewal of discovery that preceded, the Reformation), one must understand what the

whole thing was about. A man who merely repeats the old Protestant formulæ is useless ; and that, unfortunately, is exactly what Mr. Wells does. He mis-appreciates the quality of the problem. He goes wrong here on the main outline more than he does in any other department of his work, and he goes wrong because he is in the "No Popery" tradition. To exemplify this I will quote.

In the first place he always speaks of the Catholic Church as something separate from Europe, something, as it were, imposed upon Europe like an alien conqueror ; a man who thinks in those terms of Europe before the Reformation manifestly ignores the nature of all our History. A man who thinks in those terms is like a foreigner talking of England as an aristocratic tyranny grinding down a mass of rebellious people. Many Frenchmen have talked of England in those terms, and have made themselves laughing-stocks by doing so. They have not understood the aristocratic state. So does a man who speaks of united Christendom as a thing to which the Catholic Church was an external, alien thing make a laughing-stock of himself. The Catholic Church was Europe and Europe was the Catholic Church. In so far as the break-up of Christendom succeeded, in that degree has Europe lost its unity and therefore its being. Nor shall we recover our being save by a reunion in religion.

Let us look at the phrases which betray this ignorance of the European past.

"Though it is certain that the Catholic Church opened up the modern educational state in Europe, it is equally certain that the Catholic Church never intended to do anything of the sort. It did not send us knowledge with its blessing, it let it loose inadvertently." "Us" ! "It" !—but "we" were "it."

Again :

"At first the current criticism upon the Church concerned only moral and material things." Criticism whence ? From those who were themselves of the Church !

Again :

"The Church was losing its hold upon the consciences of

Princes and rich and able people. It was also losing the faith and confidence of common people." But Princes and common people *were* the Church!

Again :

"The revolt of the Princes was essentially an irreligious revolt against the world rule of the Church." It was a scramble for loot of Church Goods undertaken by avaricious men within the Society of Catholic Europe—not by men from something outside.

I might quote many such sentences which we come across by the hundred in the sort of textbooks upon which Mr. Wells and the vast bulk of his readers have been brought up; they are all (to the historian) lamentable.

The Catholic civilization of Europe broke up from within, because the evil will of men was, at one moment, too strong for their conscience of good, and the opportunity for loot too strong for man's underlying knowledge that the Church was the salvation of mankind. To talk of criticism of the clerical organization and its abuses as an attack on "the Church" is unhistorical. It is thinking of the past in modern terms. To contrast Catholic Christendom with some ideal, impossible (and unpleasant) system, of vague, enthusiast religion, and to imagine the latter suppressed by the former is, historically, unreal. One might as well imagine English cricket rules persecuting an imaginary ideal cricket in which there were no rules. The Catholic Church, in any society which is Catholic, no more stands outside the community as an odd tyrant than the social habit of the Londoner stands outside the Londoner as a tyrant, or than the public school system stands as a tyrant outside the man trained under it. The whole thing is one.

That unity may suffer attack. It may break down. It may suffer the loss of certain portions while maintaining the rest intact. But to regard any vital principle (such as the Church) as something *outside* the body which it vivifies, is bad history. It is exactly the sort of bad history written by anyone who doesn't understand the personality, the identity, the spirit of his subject. Mr. Wells and his readers (and those



who wrote the textbooks on which he has been trained) are not themselves Catholics ; but cannot they exercise enough imagination to call up a world in which their ancestry and their blood were Catholic ? Apparently they cannot ; and in so far as they cannot, their history is worthless ; for they miss the main fact that Catholic Europe was still Catholic while the disruption was proceeding, and that the idea of the Church as an alien thing was only possible *after* the full effect of the break-up.

So much for the first piece of bad history—this obsession of the Catholic Church as an alien tyrant of Catholic men.

Now for a second more detailed point. Mr. Wells is obsessed, as the less intelligent part of Protestant society was obsessed a lifetime or more ago, with the extraordinary conception that the Catholic Church restricts the powers of reason and the action of the human mind.

A man who writes that of the Catholic Church is like a man who should say (and indeed there are nowadays some men who do say it) that a formula in mathematics restricts the freedom of the human mind.

Here you have a popular novelist dealing with what he himself has vaguely heard to be one of the great phenomena of History, and what every educated man knows to be the greatest phenomenon of all History, the Catholic Church ; and yet, in attacking it, he does not know what it was. A little while ago the greatest purely political phenomenon in the world—it is still, perhaps, the greatest—was the sudden expansion of the British Empire ; with its unique bond of a nominal crown, its vast territorial extent, its exceedingly rapid growth. What should we say of a foreigner who, writing of this phenomenon, should judge (because he hated it) that it was all due to tyranny ?

We should say of him exactly what I say of Mr. Wells. He does not know what he is talking about.

The Catholic Church propounds certain truths, and those who accept her authority accept those truths. They do not accept Her authority by discovering the truths and piecing them together. They do not accept Her authority like

your modern reader who accepts whatever he reads. They discover Her authority by Her character. Then, and only then, and as a consequence, not a cause, of such recognition, they accept Her teaching.

Those born into Her society inherit that knowledge of truth and have it taught them in childhood, as other truths are taught; but it remains knowledge of truth none the less; not meaningless suggestion. The Faith is not imbecile acceptance of something heard before the age of reason; on the contrary, it is the highest act of the intelligent will. Mr. Wells seems to be sincerely of the opinion that Lacordaire and Newman accepting the mystery of predestination and free will, did so through some base itch for obeying blindly. It is as though one in admiration of the Heavens and Earth were told he was but repeating an art critic's essay.

Here is Mr. Wells telling us with wearisome reiteration that at the end of the Middle Ages the common man began to "think for himself." The Church, he tells us (p. 464), had for its object the "subjugation of minds." Again, in the thirteenth century, "a new arbitrator, greater than Pope or monarchy, had come into the world." "Public opinion." (P. 465.) John Huss is a martyr "not for any specific doctrine, but for the free intelligence and free conscience of mankind."

And so on: all the tags of a long lifetime ago, as they ran current once in Exeter Hall.

It is a hopeless thing to argue with those who do not know the nature of their material. Perhaps I can best put it thus: Does Mr. Wells himself (as does certainly his great uneducated public) believe that the Catholic has not examined his own first principles? Is not interested in intellectual discussion? Does not perpetually criticize, weigh, and judge? Does he think that there are two kinds of men: (1) the Catholic—say Pascal—who is forbidden to think and can produce nothing intellectual; (2) those who, like Mr. Wells himself, have reached the summit of intellectual achievement through an exceptional intellectual freedom and power? I suppose he does. But the sight of such a man so complacent is a

dreadful eye-opener on universal free laical compulsory education in elementary schools.

Does he think that St. Thomas Aquinas shirked the use of the brain?

Does he think Suarez merely repetitive? Lanfranc a parrot? Augustine a repeater of set phrases? Does he think that they are still shirking intellectual problems at Louvain, in Paris, in Lyons, in Angers, in Maynooth to-day? Apparently he does.

I have done Mr. Wells the justice of saying here and elsewhere, that in the matter of detail, date and incidental points he is remarkably accurate. But here, in the matter of period before the Reformation, even his literal accuracy, his chief merit, breaks down. The reason is that here his passion runs away with him, and he will not be patient to discover even from common books of reference, what might clash with Protestant legend. For instance, having got into his head that chastity was in some way horrible to an imaginary thing called the Nordic race, he tells us of "the peculiar bias of the early Anglo-Saxons and North-men against the monks and nuns."

This is wild. Of what the pirates in the fifth century did against monasteries we know nothing, absolutely, and for this good reason: that monasteries had not yet been founded in Eastern Britain. We do know that the specially Teutonic belt—the North-Eastern coast—was devotedly and splendidly monastic beyond any other part of Anglo-Saxon England.

What the Scandinavian pirates did, we know too well. They attacked the monasteries because they were full of wealth, because they were comparatively defenceless, and because they were centres of civilization. But immediately after conversion they revere and endow the monastic institution even more than does the South. And if there is one thing more clear in history than another it is that the moment men accept our civilization they show a respect for its signal monastic institution.

It is incredible to me that a man professing to write even a cursory popular history such as this should not know that

the monastic institutions especially flourished in the ancestry of those to whom Mr. Wells applies the term Nordic (which simply means modern Protestant). It does not flourish among them *now*; but to imagine that the past was like the present is the very test of historical incompetence.

Or again, take what he says about Wycliffe and about Huss. These two worthies fill the greater part of a whole page (466), and they might be taken straight out of a Kensitite tract. He repeats the ineptitude that Wycliffe "translated the Bible into English in order to set up a counter authority to that of the Pope." He appealed to the Bible, of course, and he and his followers certainly translated the Bible (though their work has probably disappeared), but can he be so ignorant as to think that Vernacular Scriptures were unknown to the fourteenth century? I suppose he is thus ignorant. If that is so he ought not to attempt history at all.

Wycliffe wanted a Bible as a textbook out of which to cite particular quotations against developments later than the Canon. But he was not speaking to a society ignorant of the Canon. He wanted to make an idol of the existing Bible—but he did not fashion that idol. Probably he put in particular phrases and interpretations of his own, as all heresiarchs have; but what they were we shall never know, for they have disappeared.

And there is more. Mr. Wells imagines that Wycliffe started the heretical doubts on the Blessed Sacrament, making them the principal part of his teaching. What lamentable history! It is as though I were to say that Mr. Snowden started Socialism in Europe and made it the great message of his glorious career.

Wycliffe's main doctrine—the only thing that really counted in the mass of contradictory things which he put together—was a doctrine which he got from people of a century before, the doctrine that the right to holding property depends on our being in a State of Grace. What he thought about the Blessed Sacrament I defy Mr. Wells or anybody else to elucidate. He never touched upon the matter until quite late in his career, and it was more as a piece of intellectual

gymnastic than as anything else. But because, generations later, the main attack was upon the Blessed Sacrament, Mr. Wells imagines that Wycliffe was in the same case.

He shows the same fundamental ignorance about the Hussite movement. He thinks of it lovingly as Kentsite. The Hussite movement was a Slav anti-German movement, for which heresy was but the pretext. It was not a heresy which happened by some strange accident to be coincident with the Czech dislike of Germans. I even find here the hoary howler about the "safe conduct" of Huss. Huss never had a safe conduct guaranteeing him against trial and condemnation. I should have thought that by this time everyone knew that. Huss had a safe conduct to attend the Council, i.e. to pass through the territories leading to Constance; as a rebel he would naturally have been arrested or killed save for such safe conduct, but he was never given a guarantee against trial. He arrived for the purpose of trial.

But though I quote these startling examples of ignorance in detail, I think they are quite unimportant, compared with the inability of the writer, whether from lack of opportunity, or from anti-Catholic enthusiasm, to understand what he is dealing with.

The distinction between the good and the bad historian is the power—or lack of power—to survey things detachedly from above. A bad historian can only write in terms of his present experience; the good historian, or even the tolerable historian, writes from his fullness in the past.

Mr. Wells intended, quite honestly, to write history. He has failed, because, naturally opposed to the Catholic Church by training and social circumstances, he did not know the nature of what he was opposing.

So much for the Preliminaries: now for the Reformation itself. The Reformation is the most important incident in the history of our race since the Incarnation; and that for this reason: That Christendom disunited is wounded; that the unity of Christendom was broken by the Reformation after a different and more lasting fashion than in all the breaches which had hitherto occurred.

The separation of the East from the West was mainly a political separation and is mainly a political separation to-day. Such doctrinal differences as were pleaded, are an excuse, not a cause. The great heresies one after the other (of which the Arian was much the most important) did the harm they did and rocked the ship of Peter, but they never created what may be called a "separate realm" in Christendom; a whole with its own heretical traditions, its own roots in its own soil, and producing evil fruit.

Any one of them might have done so, and the Albigensian very nearly did so. Had not the Albigensian Crusade been tardily but successfully fought, and had not the Battle of Muret (which English boys are never allowed to hear about in their textbooks—it was as important as Marathon) saved European culture, the Albigensians would have swamped us all. At an enormous expense of energy and by a Providential good fortune that disaster was avoided.

But the general attack from many sides delivered in the sixteenth century was not repelled in time. There arose from it a division in Christendom, a wholly new culture, in which the ancient doctrines were but partially held, had but a partial effect upon social life and, by the very principle of the new departure, were destined slowly to be dissolved; so that to-day one may fairly say that nothing of doctrine remains for the mass of Protestant men and women save a certain respect for the personality of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity—regarded of course as only a man—some vague conception of a personal God, and some vague idea of a future life: but on condition that it shall minister to the individual's certitude that so fine a fellow as he is bound to be happy in the long run.

It may be objected that the great heresy of Islam (for, I repeat, it was a heresy, not a new religion; it drew all its life and all its true doctrines by selection from the Catholic Church) had an effect as permanent or more permanent, than the Reformation: effects often similar to Protestantism, as, in its contempt of Sacraments and of Priesthood, of symbol in imagery and of all the best part of the supernatural;

and its distaste for having to think hard and to appreciate Mystery.

But I distinguish between the two, and I call the Reformation the much greater event because it happened in what is at once the head and the heart of the world : Europe.

The Reformation broke up and degraded that culture of our race which has the leadership of mankind : Europe. Islam did not do that. It ruined whole provinces. It destroyed our complete hold upon the Mediterranean. It spread its blight over the edges of our civilization, Roman North Africa and the Greek East ; but it did not set up a parody of Christian tradition. There came a time when it desired to destroy Christendom as an external thing, whereas the heirs of the Reformation have always attempted and are still doubtfully attempting to destroy it *from within*.

It may well be that we have lived out the disease. It may well be that we are on the threshold of a time when we shall be immune to it, and when Catholic unity shall return. Certainly that is the only hope for our civilization. But on the other hand there is a possibility of yet greater peril, of a yet increased decline in our culture. In that case the high tradition of Europe will have to stand at siege again, as it did in the Dark Ages : restricted to some small body which shall still maintain the unbroken Catholic culture.

One of these two futures lies before us.

At any rate the huge upheaval of the sixteenth century, ending in the final breakdown of the seventeenth, is what I have called it : the chief event in human history since the Incarnation. It may be compared to some geological upheaval in which the whole countryside bursts up into flame, eruption, and chaos, but instead of settling down again into one landscape as it was before, breaks asunder, leaving an impassable gulf between two now wholly separate districts.

Now Mr. Wells does not appreciate what the Reformation was, because he does not appreciate what it destroyed.

Those little sneers at the united Catholic civilization, that perpetual Tin Chapel talk about the " Teaching of Jesus of Nazareth," that ceaseless use of the word " Christianity " in

the sense of whatever is common to the Protestant sects of his acquaintance—as though the test of Being were not Unity!—all this shows that he does not appreciate what he is dealing with. He never sees the Catholic Church as a unique Institution, and a unique historical phenomenon.

He is always putting it (as do the most of our textbooks) into sham categories confused in a sham similarity. The Catholic Church is to Mr. Wells (as to all his kind) one religion out of many religions. It talks (he thinks) of but one Incarnation out of many incarnations ; it has (he thinks) but one sacrificial system out of many sacrificial systems—and so on.

But the whole point of the Catholic Church is that, true or false, it stands quite apart from anything else in the history of our Race. It assumes as no other system ever did a universal Divine and absolute authority : and that authority not vague but detailed, specialized, insistent, manifold, covering all human life.

The Catholic Church says “ I am of God, none else is of God. God (made man for our sake) intended and created me. By His voice in me are you at unison with all God's works, and so with your own end and nature. I am ; and I bear witness for ever.”

The claim may be true or fantastic : but not to know what it is nor what a hold it had (and has) on men, nor how it made Europe, is the prime cause of Mr. Wells's inability to grasp the history of his own race.

The history of other races he can deal with better. All that he has to say on the Mogul Empire of India, for instance, is admirable, save, of course, when he tries to think ; as, for instance, when he pronounces that education is information upon “ realities”—without having, apparently, heard that, upon what philosophy you hold, depends what you call reality—and upon your scheme of values what is worth teaching.

He is excellent in his little sketch of the gypsies on page 457. He is picturesque on Tamerlane. But when he comes to the contact between Asia and Europe Giant Pope appears again. He thinks the conversion of Asia to have been a very simple



matter, merely missed because Giant Pope was trying to save that imperilled Europe of his instead of talking at large on "Jesus of Nazareth."

The second point in which Mr. Wells fails to understand his task is in his idea that the Reformation was an inevitable event. It is the curse of nearly all our modern popular writers (who are most of them inferior to, and outside the Catholic culture) that they read history in terms of that physical science which is the model for all their thought. They cannot understand the effect of Free Will: they cannot understand that spiritual good and evil come to men, not of fate, but from their own choice.

Europe was not shaking and breaking up before the Reformation. Europe was imperilled before the Reformation, as it had often been imperilled before, but it might easily have been saved. Only a very few political incidents turned the scale against the recovering of unity, and produced the trouble from which we are increasingly suffering to-day. Each of these events depended upon certain perverted human wills. The folly of looting the Church lands in England came from the immediate impulse of greed in a few, and *that* was what, sorely against their bewildered hearts, stole the Faith from the English. The principal incident in the tragedy, without a doubt, was (let me repeat) the policy of Richelieu, of which, so far as I can make out, Mr. Wells has not heard. Had Richelieu backed up the Empire, the whole of Europe would be Catholic to-day.

It is worth remarking that Mr. Wells on account of this defect in his historical vision (which is a defect of Provincialism) does not appreciate the fact that the Catholic Church still carries on.

I have already pointed that out to him. You can say that the unity of Christendom was wrecked, but you cannot say that Christendom was wrecked. The Divine Authority is not now universal over Europe, but it is universal over its own very wide, exalted, and increasingly active department of the European mind. We are still numerically the majority of Western Europe and, in intellectual weight, the centre of

gravity lies within our sphere. The intellectual centre of gravity of Europe to-day does not lie within the culture of Britain and North Germany aided by the moribund French anti-clericals and Scandinavia. It lies most certainly in those who have always accepted, or are now again beginning to reaccept the full doctrine which made the culture by which we live.

I have not the space to quote at length sentence after sentence in which the inability of the writer to deal with this prime matter appears. But take such a sentence as "Cease to be ruled by Dogmas and Authorities!" Mark the underlying conception that Authority merely means force and that Dogma is necessarily a falsehood; mark the characteristic inability to grasp what should be, to the thinking mind, an obvious truth: that all teaching is dogmatic, all acceptance of all truth necessarily under some authority, of reason, of judgment, of sense, or of accepted experience in others.

Perhaps Mr. Wells's most characteristic error on the Reformation (for it is a common one) is the conception that there was in the early sixteenth century (and earlier) a great popular movement—a sort of tide—against Catholic doctrine. There was nothing of the sort. I know this sthetic sounds too strong and exaggerated in the ears of many of my readers, because the myth of such a popular tide of protest against the Faith is taught on all sides.

But my statement is true. There was no popular uprising against the Faith. There was popular indignation against indifference and corruption in the administration of the Faith.

There was a small enthusiastic and sincere minority arising in the late Middle Ages against abuses. There was no general movement against doctrine. There was nothing remotely resembling a great popular feeling such as the great popular feeling against capitalism to-day. It is a myth. Here and there a few fanatics, here and there a few extravagances (all of them due to reaction against abuses in the use of Sacerdotal power) were apparent. Of widespread popular feeling against doctrine there was none. On the contrary

where doctrine was attacked at last by a few highbrows, the populace was its defender.

To men of Mr. Wells's intellectual furnishing it seems mere common sense that sooner or later people should wake up and say, "After all, can this doctrine of the Real Presence be true?" or, "After all, can this mystery of the Incarnation (or of the Trinity or what not) be anything but a fairy tale made up by men?" This was not the attitude of the mass of our fathers.

Scepticism upon the supernatural was current in the Catholic Culture from the beginning, and is current today. It was not peculiar to the sixteenth century—the Middle Ages were full of it. What was special to the late fifteenth century and early sixteenth century was what may properly be called a *political* reaction against the sterilization, the fossilization through the process of time, not only of the Ecclesiastical, but of the lay social machine.

Mr. Wells is perfectly right when he repeats the commonplace that the annoyance of the people with the Papacy was not that it governed religion, but that it did not govern religion enough: that it was not religious enough. But he is perfectly wrong—I mean historically wrong, writing bad history—when he prints (upon p. 497—writing of the end of the fifteenth century and beginning of the sixteenth century) that "only the Spaniards, fresh from a long and finally successful religious war against Islam, had any great enthusiasm left for the Church." He does not know the time.

The bulk of men all over Europe had any amount of enthusiasm for the Church, and any amount of vigour to react against those new pedantic subtleties which powerful men caught at as an excuse for plunder, but which the instinct of the masses taught them to be poisons, destroying the freedom and happiness of the common man.

Has Mr. Wells never heard of all the great, though unsuccessful, popular rebellions in England under the late Tudors, or of the much more violent and successful rebellions of the populace against the threat of Huguenot domination in France? He must know them, because they are in every cinema show.

But he certainly has no idea of what they were. These popular rebellions were furious protests under arms against the murder of that Catholic culture which was not only necessary to the scant happiness of the poor on this sad earth, but felt also by them to be Divine.

I find another piece of ignorance on page 502 : "Luther had taken," says Mr. Wells, "to reading the Bible."

Of course, the setting of the Bible up as an authority against tradition was a necessary part of the sectarian movement. Stated thus, you have an historical truth. But the idea that a cultivated man of the early sixteenth century did not know the Bible, or (for that matter) the idea that the rudest peasant of the sixteenth century did not know *what was in his Bible*, is as unhistorical as would be a Russian's idea that knowledge of racing in England to-day was confined to rich owners of horses.

Mr. Wells is perfectly right when he says that the Princes made a political reformation ; but he is perfectly wrong when he imagines a great popular repudiation of religion to have been going on at the same time.

There were mobs, as there always are in times of disturbance. But they came *after* political rebellion against the Church : not before it. They followed the rich. They did not urge the rich. There was popular rising against the pressure of the wealthy and the inequalities of life—as there always is when the organization of society is shaken. But there was no *popular* rising against *doctrine* ; only a few "intellectual" cliques. There was no protest of the "common man" of Europe against the only food whereby his soul may live. On the contrary, it was the Common Man who saved the Catholic Church in spite of the nobles and the princes and their dependent apostate priests, the Luthers and the Knoxes, and the rest—who would never have gone down to fame but for the use their atheist and glutton masters made of them.

I may put the whole attitude of our Author towards the Reformation in the simple but true phrase that he does not describe what took place ; he does no more than repeat the stories of his childhood.

To read him one would imagine that the Catholic Church broke up and disappeared, that it broke up and disappeared under a popular uprising, and that the popular uprising was due to the quarrel of plain sturdy fellows, like himself, with theological dogma. Indeed, he uses the word "theological" and the word "dogma" as though they connoted something irrational. What would Mr. Wells write down if you asked for a strict definition of the word "theological" and of the word "dogma"? He uses them as mere terms of abuse: yet they have a meaning for educated men.

What is at the back of his mind when he says that the Emperor, during the Reformation, "seems to have taken the religious theories as genuine theological differences"? What can he mean if he has any conception, however vague, of the meaning of the word "theological"?

If one set of leaders take up arms under the principle that individuals, and not a corporate authority, are the recipients of revelation, that is what educated men call a theological position. When the streets of Paris were placarded with posters saying, "Your Sacrament is but bread, and we will throw it to the dogs," that insult to devotion for the Real Presence (it was one of the many things which exasperated Paris into the St. Bartholomew) is said in educated language to have a theological connotation.

Throughout all the rest of this Book VII and on into Book VIII the same false historical ideas run, and particularly the idea that the Catholic Church was, in the sixteenth century, destroyed.

It is not easy to state in clear terms what is going on in an unclear mind, though it is a most useful thing to attempt the criticism of such a mind; but I fancy if one could unravel the underlying idea of Mr. Wells's confused thought in this matter one would find something like this:

"The Catholic Church is dead. No one who counts nowadays accepts its authority. Those who pretend to do so are only playing a game. The old sincere attachment to it was based upon ignorance and the lack of newspapers, Board Schools, Typewriters, Railways, Broadcasting, and Best-

sellers. To-day you only have the old sincere Faith in a few very backward, uneducated peasant districts."

But is it not manifest that a man making such an enormous error upon the modern world must be incapable of giving an outline of the past?

That is what makes him misunderstand, for instance, the struggle in the Netherlands. He talks of the populace as bitterly Protestant and the nobles as only reluctantly following them. The truth is exactly the opposite. The majority, the large majority of the Low Country *populace* was strongly attached to the Faith and still is. It was the nobles here, as everywhere, and the great merchants of the towns who broke away—for loot.

That is what makes him wholly misunderstand the action of Alva. He had read nothing but the old diatribes of Motley. The marvel was not that Alva failed. The marvel was that he was able to keep his end up at all with such small forces, with all the wealthy against him, and with his supplies seized at the critical moment by Cecil.

That is what makes him misunderstand (to give a very small example) the nature of Charles V's great renunciation. Because that great Christian remained in his retirement attached to his old habits of food and drink, therefore he must be ridiculed.—Why? Because Mr. Wells has read nothing but Prescott, if that, and Prescott ridicules Charles.

After doing one of the finest and most significant things that ever a man did when he handed over power and betook himself to contemplation, the great Charles must be sneered at because he preserved his common (and excellent) habits of life instead of turning full monk.

But it is always so. The same men who ridicule the ascetic ideal demand it of those whom they confusedly imagine—because they are Catholic—to have devoted themselves to it. Charles V was no monk. He had not vowed himself to the renunciation of common life.

What he did do was to leave a fine example for ever to men, as did the Pagan Diocletian, of how little the value of power is in the general sight of Heaven. Power—too long

held—is evil or worthless at best to the soul. At the worst it is damnation. Charles V knew that. Mr. Wells does not.

It is so throughout all the description of the Reformation by Mr. Wells. The vast continuing quarrel of modern history is put forward as having ended all over the world, when it *seemed* to have ended in England. Mr. Wells is so ignorant of the modern world—outside his narrow reach—that he has no notion of these two powerful opponents, Faith and anti-Faith, facing one another as they do to-day throughout Europe. He thinks and writes of the Reformation as a mere breakdown in a thing once called the Catholic Church, a thing of the Middle Ages, now disappeared.

All attempt at outline disappears in his No-popery. The whole story falls into a mush, with long quotations on quite unimportant points, taken out of Protestant authorities, who wrote with a special propagandist motive in quite narrow fields such as the abuse of Spain or mere cracking up of the Dutch Commercial Oligarchy. There is not a word upon the tremendous business of the central arena upon which the whole undecided issue was fought: I mean the French field in which the Huguenots nearly changed all our civilization, then in turn were nearly destroyed by popular anger, but in which, at the end, the two parties were left undefeated, and facing each other as they still face each other to-day.

There is not a single quotation in Mr. Wells from any one of the Authorities writing under the Catholic Culture, not even from any one of the anti-Clericals among them. It is all Giant Pope.

To put it very plainly, Mr. Wells does not know what happened. He writes as one of his own type in a foreign country might write about the English industrial revolution, proclaiming that it destroyed English national feeling and tradition, and substituted democracy for aristocracy. He cannot see the gigantic religious cataclysm of Europe in its main lines: the first sweeping tide, then the ebb, then the crystallization of the offensive and defensive positions after one hundred years of armed struggle throughout the Continent.

I do not think the subject is too big for him. I think that

he has not taken upon it even enough trouble to grasp the main structure.

If he had written with great contempt, or, better still, with great anger, of the saving of the Catholic Church in spite of the storm, he would have been historical, though an opponent. Not understanding that it was saved, and that, having been saved, its fortunes of success or failure will make up the future story of our race, he must, in what is left of his history, blunder still worse than he has blundered before ; for he will have to account for modern Europe as though the Church were not there, and to do that is a little like trying to account for modern England as though the English climate were not there.

In this exposure of such nullity in the chief event in modern history I have had little time for the praise which is Mr. Wells's due in lesser matters touched upon during the period of the great change. I owe it by way of postscript.

Thus the summary of the literary and artistic Renaissance, though a little dull from cramming in much detail (a fault, as a rule, conspicuously absent from Mr. Wells's, who excels in economy of words) is accurate and sufficient. He appreciates, thoroughly the greatness of Magellan's heroic adventure. The pages upon Columbus (492 and 493) are good and sufficient.

There is only one foolish note in all this rapid sketch of *Springtime of the Arts*, and that is where Mr. Wells has the folly to say of Shakespeare that he was "happily" without the Classics. It is an idea which obsesses our author. Because gentlemen are trained in the Classics, therefore, he cannot believe that the Classics have any value.

But Mr. Wells, in spite of his violent antipathy to culture, is right by power of vivid imagination and original use of brain in many points where his fellow popular writers are wrong. For instance, he does not make out Francis Bacon to have invented a new philosophical method. He knows that printing was of gradual development (though he hardly understands what ill effect it had upon the mind as well as what good), he is original and interesting on the effect of



the coming of paper into general use—though naturally materialist in his exaggerated judgment of its effect.

I could quote a dozen little touches of the sort, in all of which he is to be congratulated. They do not make up for the lack of acquaintance with the main matter of his discourse, and that lack of acquaintance is not to be remedied by any amount of reading. It is not lack of scholarship ; it is lack of appreciation and judgment. He knows no more of the Catholic Church, which made Europe and still sustains Europe in its peril, than he does of the other things which infuriate him, such as the Gentleman.

I may sum up by saying that the whole of this attitude towards the Catholic Church, and even towards the religious sense as a whole, reminds me of an incident in my own life. A certain commercial traveller in the town of Lichfield confided to me his conviction that "*all this talk about wine is great rot. One wine is much the same as another ; and, anyhow, it's all sour, nasty stuff, as everybody would admit if people weren't afraid of their neighbours.*"

## CHAPTER XV

### THE FRUIT OF DISRUPTION

WITH the Reformation the chief motive of my examination disappears and the main matter of it. For I set out to examine whether Mr. Wells were competent as an historian to attack the Faith of Christian men, and the matter to my hand was his attitude towards the main doctrines of Faith and his acquaintance with the rise and character of the thing he hates so much.

The essential work is over when we come to the end of the great disruption which broke up the unity of our Civilization and has bred the increasing ills from which we suffer.

*I shall, therefore, do no more in this, the close of my book, than very briefly survey Mr. Wells's competence to deal with the modern world since, say, 1600 : testing that competence by one or two special points. I shall conclude with a Summary.*

Since the Reformation Western Europe has stood divided into a Catholic and a Protestant culture. This does not to-day mean a division into two groups of opposing religious profession. It means two whole social developments proceeding from original Religious differences. Your Atheist of the Protestant culture is a different man altogether from your Atheist of the Catholic culture.

Mr. Wells writes in the midst of the Protestant culture. He knows nothing of the Catholic. He understands the motives and general character of that Protestant part of our civilization to which he himself belongs. He understands it more or less when it is Prussian, better when it is English, and best of all when it is of the neighbourhood of London. When he

is dealing with such things he does his job reasonably well. With the other part of modern Europe and the Catholic part of all Europe he deals ill ; for it thinks and talks in what is to him spiritually a foreign and unknown language, and he even deals ill with that part of his own region—e.g. the new English Aristocratic State produced by the Reformation—which requires a feeling for tradition.

I select three points. First, an examination of what may be called the wind-up of the Reformation in England ; to wit, the destruction of the English Monarchy in the seventeenth century and its replacing by an oligarchy of the well-to-do ; for by the way in which a man treats that development, his general culture in the field of modern European history may very well be tested. Secondly, the corresponding Continental modern movement, ending with the French Revolution. Thirdly, what he has to say (and he says it *very badly*) about the effects upon the European mind, and particularly upon religion, of our physiological and biological discoveries, theories and blunders in the nineteenth century.

First, then, to the victory of the governing classes in England over the Crown, which was the final effect of the Reformation here.

Mr. Wells repeats upon the origins of Parliament what may be called the elementary-school-textbook legend. It is, of course, erroneous, and it is a type of those errors, which, though apparently unconnected with error in religion, are really dependent upon such error. For it proceeds from a lack of comprehension of that united Catholic Europe of the Middle Ages from which we all spring.

He tells us, to begin with, that monarchy in England was surrounded, after the breakdown of the Roman Empire, by Magnates who watched the common interests and modified the power of the monarch, but he adds that this was due to the presence of northern and Germanic blood. This is, of course, mere repetition of what is still written in a great many of our popular textbooks. It is, therefore, natural that Mr. Wells should repeat it. None the less it shows ignorance

of essentials. It contains, like so many popular myths, a truth and a falsehood combined.

Local governments, after the breakdown of central rule from Rome, were invariably a combination of the local general and a group of Magnates round him. That is true. But the second statement—that one of the two which is important—is quite false. So little had this grouping of Magnates round the king to do with Germanic blood, that you find it everywhere the same throughout Europe, and actually weaker in the Germanies than anywhere else.

Moreover, the group of Magnates is hardly apparent at the beginning of the business when many of the local Roman Generals, such as Theodoric, were of still unmixed Germanic blood. The Magnates only become strong much later in the centuries, and by that time the Germanic blood in the West had disappeared.

People of Northern Germanic blood have never shown any particular dislike to being governed absolutely by one man. Indeed they have been rather more docile under such a political condition than Southern people and Western people during and since the Dark Ages.

What made the gathering of Magnates round the Government a necessity during the Dark Ages was the return to primitive conditions, the comparative difficulty of communications, and the continual armament of a free society, which was perpetually in conflict either domestic or through resistance to the Mohammedans and the heathens. You do not find absolutely centralized monarchy anywhere in the Dark Ages. You find it no more in Ireland or in Brittany or Galicia than you find it in the Rhine Valley or in Scandinavia ; and the reason that you do not find it is that, under primitive conditions, such a thing cannot exist. Absolute monarchy, to be exercised over great numbers, needs high organization.

Mr. Wells is right in saying that the presence of Knights of the Shire gave the British Parliament a special character ;

but he is quite at sea as to why they gave it a special character. The special character of the English Third Estate did not lie in the calling up to the King's Council of men representing the smaller gentry. *That* happened all over France and Northern Spain, and it began abroad long before it began in England. The first parliaments of Europe were in the Pyrenees.

The special character of the English Commons House lay in the fact that the smaller gentry elsewhere sat in a house of their own, but here sat *with* the merchants of the towns ; and this made at last an organized unit wherein the combined wealth of the country could act against the King, who was the common guardian of all, rich and poor. In other words, the special constitution of the English Third Estate was one tending towards aristocracy.

But England would never have become an aristocracy—as at last it did—nor would popular monarchy ever have been defeated and replaced by rule of the gentry had it not been for one economic factor of overwhelming importance of which Mr. Wells appears not to grasp the effect, I mean the dissolution of the monasteries. He does not even mention this prodigious economic revolution as having any connection with Parliament ; yet it was the Dissolution which gave Parliament all its new power after the Reformation and enabled it to destroy the Crown.

The reason was this : the monastic land and a great deal of other Church endowment as well (the endowment of a great many schools and hospitals and confraternities of all kinds, and endowments for Masses, etc., and a great part of the Bishopric endowments) passed into the hands of the Squires and greater Burgesses—the gentry—and immensely increased their economic power, while the economic power of the English Crown was correspondingly depressed. That is the whole story.

The English Crown provided its own ruin by its ecclesiastical policy. It could no longer obtain the revenue necessary for running the country ; the Squires and the great merchants had become much richer than it. Only by

expedients could the King struggle on for a few years at a time by trying to put more land into the hands of the Government (resumption of the King's rights over the forests), by selling monopolies, by reviving quaint old forgotten taxes, and (in one case and for several years) by accepting support from a foreign Government. The victory of the gentry over the Crown (which Mr. Wells seems to regard as a popular victory !) was the consequence of an economic revolution which had preceded it, and that economic revolution in its turn was a consequence of the Reformation.

Mr. Wells, whose tendency being materialism is all for exaggerating of the economic factor in history, should have spotted this ; he has an acute and an original power of observation in such things. But he can well be excused through this fact that none of the ordinary official textbooks such as he would come across would put the truth before him.

In the same way he evidently does not know who and what Oliver Cromwell was. To give us an idea of the man, he quotes one sentence about his "country cut clothes," giving the impression (which is certainly Mr. Wells's own) that Cromwell was a bluff "man of the people." But the whole point of Cromwell was that he was a cadet of one of the very wealthiest of the new millionaire families. The "Cromwells" (an assumed name) had built up their enormous and ill-gotten fortune on the loot of religion. Cromwell's real name was Williams. The original Williams, his great-grandfather, was the favourite nephew of that Thomas Cromwell, the moneylender, who was the author of the policy of looting religion, and who heavily endowed that favourite nephew with monastic lands. No fewer than five great foundations—apart from lesser pickings—swelled the gigantic wealth of the family. It is symbolic and typical of the whole affair that Oliver Cromwell should come from those traditions of wealth acquired at the expense of the Catholic Church. It is true he was only the son of a cadet and therefore enjoyed but a small part of the family fortunes—a few thousand a year as we should say nowadays. But

he came out of the very heart of the new millionaires. When he is represented as some rough fellow sprung from the core of the populace it is history of the very worst sort ; not only badly wrong in fact, but in tendency and motive.

The same lack of general comprehension appears in Mr. Wells's quite honestly held idea of the Parliamentary army—particularly of the “new model.” He thinks of it as a sort of democratic force. It was, as a fact, a very highly paid professional body, especially its cavalry, which was its decisive arm. Of course, there were many people of no origin in it, and a few, not many, people of low birth even held commands in it as officers. But it had a very large proportion of the wealthy classes in such positions. Nor is it true to say that this highly paid cavalry, well disciplined though it was, and containing excellent personnel, “swept the cavaliers before them from Marston Moor to Naseby.” That is typical of the quite wrong old-fashioned textbook history from which such judgments are still drawn. Cavalry was the great strength of Charles ; and if there had only been cavalry on either side, Charles would have won. It was the cavaliers who generally swept the *mounted* part of the “new model” before them, and particularly at Naseby, but the counter-charge was fatal to the increasingly weak infantry of the King.

Naseby was won by Oliver Cromwell, leading his cavalry in person against shaken infantry. The Parliamentary horse was badly mauled by Rupert's horse on the left, but Cromwell on the right, checking the usual sweep of the counter-charge, gave up the following-up of the horse, wheeled to the left, and destroyed the badly trained, ill-disciplined and numerically weak Welsh footmen of the centre. The cavalry part of the few years' fighting, when against cavalry, was in Charles's favour, but Charles's infantry got weaker and weaker ; and the reason that Charles grew weaker and weaker in quality and numbers of infantry was lack of money. His cavalry was composed largely of noble-hearted and devoted volunteers, a good part of whom, popularly said to be half, were Catholic ; but his infantry he had to hire as best he could.

I only pick out these points (small in themselves) because they are typical. They show the way in which the old conventional school-boy history of a lifetime ago is the only one our author possesses ; and that explains also his quite erroneous view of what the Reformation was in England. He perpetuates what was once the official legend ; naturally, no doubt, for he has never heard the modern destructive criticism levelled against it.

We have exactly the same thing in what he says of James II, that he "set himself to force the country into a reunion with Rome." That, again, is the regular conventional stuff of his boyhood and mine, but it is utterly unhistorical. James II set himself the task of procuring toleration for that still very large proportion of the English people who were Catholic, and incidentally for other dissenting bodies as well. He insisted that the remaining minority of Catholics, who still heroically practised their Religion after a century and half of persecution unparalleled in any other country, should be allowed ordinary civic advantages. They were at least one-eighth of the population (and had the sympathy of at least another eighth, if not more), and James, himself a Catholic, proposed they should enjoy the benefits of the national universities, should be allowed to enter the public services, and should have as good chances as others in the legal profession. If freedom for Catholics was likely to result in a great many conversions, and thus largely to undo the work of the Reformation, the fault was not with the policy of toleration, but with the spiritual power of the Catholic Church. To say that James II was attempting to force upon his Protestant subjects an unnatural revolution in their religion, is about as historical as it would be to say that the modern French Government is attempting to force Communism upon France because it offers (unlike most other Governments) the fullest liberty to Communist printing and to the exposing of Communist ideas through the Press. Or it is like saying that the Canadian Government, because it tolerates the use of French and English indifferently, is trying to force French (or English) upon the whole community.



The whole policy of James was a policy of toleration and the whole of the opposition he had to meet was a fanatical (and interested) refusal of toleration.

Where Mr. Wells deals with the Continental movement, which has weakened or destroyed Monarchy and broken up the religious unity of various nations, we have again the same confused attitude which we find in his dealing with the English one, only it is rather more remarkable that he should be so wrong about the foreign business. For, after all, it is natural enough for a man attempting to write a broad outline of History to go wrong upon the modern English record, seeing that the modern English record was not only everywhere taught officially, conventionally and wrongly in Mr. Wells's boyhood, but is still in the main so taught. On English matters from the Reformation onward all our official History is propaganda: The Stuarts always wrong, Magna Charta a whig document, Cromwell a noble-hearted hero (and poor), etc., etc., etc. Only a good deal of original reading among modern writers and hard thinking of one's own as well, can set one right upon it. But the Continental record has been dealt with by the greatest scholars from all points of view and with the fullest freedom for two generations. There is no excuse for going wrong upon its main lines.

For instance, the tremendous struggle between the more civilized traditional part of Germany, led by the Emperor, and the less civilized northern part, led by the Protestant Princes, was decided adversely to the Catholic Church at the Peace of Westphalia. Mr. Wells prints a good little map of the results of that Peace. But what he certainly does not understand, and probably has never heard of is that those results were due to French policy. It was French deliberate support of the anti-Catholic side in the Empire towards the end of the struggle which prevented the evil of the Reformation in Germany from being undone, and which left the Catholic civilization and tradition of the German Empire in ruins.

He is also lacking in what should be part of the mental furniture of every educated man, and that is the history and quality of what is called religious toleration in the struggles of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Whether religious toleration be necessarily a good thing may be left to debate ; whether Mr. Wells regards it as a good thing no man can tell, because he is all for it where a Catholic culture is tolerating anti-Catholicism in its midst, and yet quite indifferent to an anti-Catholic culture oppressing Catholicism in its midst. That is a very frequent phenomenon in men who feel strongly and think weakly. I have heard men propounding with violence the duty of the State to forbid tobacco, wine, large families, free marriage of the poor, socialistic literature, Sunday trading, and Heaven knows how many other things—and everyone of them would have told you that he loved toleration !

Here we have Mr. Wells's pronouncement that the " more tolerating countries " became Protestant with happy little Catholic lumps inside them, while the " less tolerating countries—France, Italy and Spain," produced societies in which men are either definitely Catholic or Atheist, or, at any rate, strongly anti-Catholic.

A man who writes sentences of that sort about the processes which have produced modern Europe, singling out France, Spain and Italy(!) as specially intolerant, does not know what he is talking about. The Protestant countries persecuted religion with a ferocity unknown elsewhere. You find that persecution rampant in the exclusion of Catholicism in the early laws of the Protestant culture in North America as in England. The whole story of the Cecils is a story of drastic and murderous persecution, the determination of the new Reformation millionaires under Elizabeth and James I to stamp out the last vestiges, and the first beginnings, of Catholic truth. Persecution of the most extreme kind, relentless and overwhelming, is the one striking characteristic of later sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England. Does Mr. Wells imagine that he could find in any province under

the Princes of France, Italy or Spain the wholesale confiscation that went on in Ireland : a whole people dispossessed of their land in the effort to crush out the Church ? Did Louis XIII string up and disembowel Protestant pastors for no other crime than the reciting of their service ?

Again, Mr. Wells does not understand what it is that makes men in the Catholic culture either definitely Catholic or definitely and wholly sceptical. It is that men in the Catholic culture *think* ; they use the human reason. If they have the Faith they argue that a Divine authority will be infallible ; they therefore accept *all* its doctrine. If they have lost the Faith, if they think the Church to be of human institution, their reason bids them as a consequence combat an organization which makes such awful pretensions to authority without (as they believe) any right to it.

The reason, for instance, that you do not have mawkish *religious sentiment hanging about such minds as, in Catholic countries, have lost the Faith*, is that those minds are founded upon intelligence and despise muddle-headed emotionalism. They admit their loss of doctrine, and they are not afraid to face the consequence of whatever they conceive to be the truth.

But in nations not of Catholic culture it is the other way about. Men like Mr. Wells, who have ceased to believe that Our Blessed Lord was God, or even that He had Divine authority, cling desperately to the emotions which the old belief aroused—because they find those emotions pleasant. That is a piece of intellectual weakness for which corresponding men, atheists of the Catholic culture, very properly feel a hearty contempt.

When Mr. Wells goes on to the climax of the affair abroad, which is the French Revolution, his work becomes a mixture of good and bad. The *précis* side of it is good in so far as it proceeds from his own pen. It is, in my judgment, an error to print great wads of Carlyle, column after column. Mr. Wells's own less picturesque way of writing is much better suited for an outline—but that is a small point. The sequence of events and their proportion is well kept, and there is a very

good little sketch map of the Campaign of Valmy which shows that the author—or whoever it was that drew the map—has got a good clear comprehension of that rather complicated and very important episode.

But in his attempts to judge the characters of the Revolution he goes all wrong, because he is dealing with a whole side of Europe which is unfamiliar to him. For instance, he does not know what the trouble was with Marie Antoinette. It was not that she was grossly extravagant ; that is a mere legend. She was a lady ; and certainly Mr. Wells would not give one to understand that ; moreover, during all the later part of her life she had become a very sincerely religious woman, practising, frequenting the Sacraments. The tragedy of the queen lay in the intimate relations of her early married life. Now, everybody ought to know that who pretends to deal with the period at all. The details have been fully printed (by myself among others) and are available to popular writers.

In the same way he has got Robespierre all wrong. He has evidently read nothing modern on Robespierre, and he commits the old error of recording the last and worst of the Terror as being in particular Robespierre's work.

The point is of no very great importance, but it is worth quoting because it is very characteristic. Ask one of Mr. Wells's myriad-headed popular public, who Robespierre was, and they would answer a fanatical Republican who attempted to force his views upon France by guillotine, and was at last put down because people sickened of the increasing slaughter. Now when a popular author writes what his very large and uninstructed public already believe they know, he naturally goes down ; if he wrote historical truth instead, his work would be less pleasant to them and far less saleable. Yet, after all, truth is the test of good history ; not momentary selling value.

Now the truth about Robespierre is to-day fairly well known. Hamel's great monograph, though far too favourable to his subject, is crammed with document and reference.

It was not Robespierre, it was the Committee of Public Safety, and Carnot in particular, who created the Terror as an instrument of martial law. They created it in order to win the desperate battle in which they were engaged on every frontier and upon the sea, and the first sign of Robespierre's downfall was his desertion of the Committee of Public Safety. Carnot in particular saw that Robespierre was interfering with the Committee's rigour. The Committee had no idea that when they had got rid of Robespierre the false popular conception upon his character and position would release the very heavy strain which the Terror had created and make the continuation of it impossible : but though they did not see what was coming, it was *they* that deposed Robespierre, and they deposed him not because he represented the Terror, but, on the contrary, because he would have modified and restricted their power, of which the Terror was the instrument.

If Mr. Wells would be at the pains to read the actual indictments on which people were put to death in Paris, he would find that the great majority of them were humble people, and most of them, humble or prominent, were put to death for some form of weakening the military effort ; for sending money abroad, for attempting desertion to the enemy, or helping him, or uttering " defeatist " sentiments, and so on.

On Mr. Wells's very long and violent diatribe against Napoleon I shall not delay. It is merely silly. Mr. Wells seems to have a personal grudge against anyone in history who shows remarkable military talent, or, indeed, remarkable powers of any kind, and these in the case of Napoleon were combined with all the qualities which are to Mr. Wells like red rags to a bull. He was of the Catholic culture, he had an immense genius in nearly every department of human activity, he was a gentleman by birth, he was a soldier by profession. It is, therefore, natural that our author should be opposed to him strongly. But surely one can be strongly opposed to an historical character without making a fool of one's self ! I, for instance, am strongly opposed to Oliver

Cromwell's character : I have no indulgence for his particular kind of vices, cruelty and avarice and pride, while I have a natural indulgence for the sensual frailties to which Cromwell was not inclined. But what would any competent critic think of me as an historian if I denied Cromwell's energy, belittled his capacity as a cavalry leader, or doubted the reality of his fanatical religion ? If I made him out an insignificant fellow ?

## CHAPTER XVI

### SUMMARY

I PROPOSE at this conclusion of a long examination upon Mr. Wells's *Outline of History*, first to present a summary of the author's work as a typical popular teacher of our time in the English-speaking countries, and then to end on a much more important note ; the attitude of the popular mind in that same world with regard to the only questions which are of ultimate moment in human life : the decay of Christian religion in that world, and the pace at which Christian truth is being lost in it ; the religious revolution through which the English-speaking Protestant culture is passing, and the pace of that revolution.

The two subjects are closely connected, for it is clear that a man could not be a popular writer on these things unless he agreed more or less with his audience. Yet they are distinct ; because the Follower of the Herd, the popular expositor of which Mr. Wells is an example, is not quite the same thing as the average of the Herd. It is in tune with the average of the Herd ; but it presents a separate object of study from the Herd. You find in the Author the way in which reading and evidence react upon a certain kind of mind : you find in his innumerable readers what kind of faith or philosophy must be inhabiting them that they should devour wholesale the stuff thus delivered to them as food.

First, then, as to the Author. The most prominent point I discover in Mr. Wells as an historian is the acceptance of authority. It is a false authority, and it is an acceptance bearing everywhere that mark which is to the Catholic mind almost incomprehensible : blind acceptance of textbooks. He does not reason with himself, and say : " What

are my first principles? Why and how have I come to believe in them?" On the contrary, he takes them for granted, as though they were something so native to the human race that no class of reader could question them.

For instance, all through his work he takes it for granted that the supernatural does not exist; that the conception of it as real is an illusion—particularly in the case of miracles.

He holds then, unconsciously, a certain philosophy and certain first principles: to wit, what is called materialist *Monism*: that effect follows fatally from material cause. That, therefore, we are in the hands of fate and have no free will. That the words "right" and "wrong" in human decisions are meaningless.

Yet he has no idea of what his own first principles are; for he contradicts them at every turn. He is full of indignation—against the Catholic Church, for instance—and indignation involves an idea of right and wrong. He has a strong moral sense—as, for instance, of man's duty to his fellowmen. Again, his attitude towards the miraculous in the story of Our Lord, and particularly towards the Resurrection, is not only that of a man who disbelieves—which is natural enough—but that of a man who thinks that everybody else will disbelieve the moment the unusual character of such events is pointed out to them. Mr. Wells thinks that people who believe are simply people who have not yet had the advantage of being told that the things in which they believe are not obvious nor of daily occurrence. He starts from a first principle that only the obvious or the common can be true. Yet if he set down that first principle in black and white its absurdity would appear, even to him.

This inability to tell you what his first principles were or why he held them, this taking for granted as admitted what all the best minds of humanity have discovered to be worthy of profound questioning and anxious debate, I call blind faith—faith which accepts without question and without even the knowledge that question is possible. I have heard it discussed whether such faith even in *true* authority is an advantage or a disadvantage. You get it in little children, and in some



morally admirable but intellectually over-simple minds. But to have that faith in various *false* (and conflicting) authorities which have no common basis of intelligible theory is a very bad mark indeed against a man's intelligence.

The next major quality I discover in Mr. Wells's historical writing is one closely allied to the first. It is ignorance of the other side : not knowing what is to be said for the case which the author not so much rejects as remains unaware of.

For instance, Man imagines Gods ; therefore, it would seem, the Gods he worships are Illusions : therefore any God he worships, including the supreme God of Catholic theology, is a man-made illusion.

Well and good. That has been the attitude of a great many people, from the remotest antiquity. But people worth arguing with know that there is another, exactly contrary, attitude which may be stated thus : Men make up Gods precisely because they have an instinctive recognition of the existence of a God and of subordinate spirits : the process is one corresponding to reality, though led into errors of appreciation. Both positions may be argued, and have been argued, by the strongest of human intelligences. One man will say, like Diderot, that the whole affair is a mere projection of Man himself by his own imagination upon the void, and be confirmed in this view by every new discovery of men's gods in various eras and places. While another will say, like Newman, "On the contrary, if I find in all false religion something in common with true religion, it does not weaken my hold on true religion ; it confirms it."

Now we find Mr. Wells in strange ignorance of the fact that this opposite point of view exists.

Nor is this all. Over and over again he shows ignorance of general European movements, of the results of modern scholarship, of definite discoveries which have changed all our thought since he was young. Not only does he not know his Europe : he does not know his books.

A very striking example of this I have noted in the early part of this book. Mr. Wells thought, when I spoke of a widespread European (and American) criticism of Natural

Selection which is making that theory untenable, that I had imagined the whole thing ! He denied the existence of such authorities and challenged me, in a violent pamphlet, to quote names. He (and the reader) will find a few of the most prominent in an appendix to this book.

Next I notice a violent necessity in him for simplification. The general lines of History must indeed be simple ; an outline must never allow confusion through too much detail. But I do not mean that our author has a powerful grasp of general ideas ; I mean that he suffers from a weak simplification due to an inability to grasp the multitudinous complexity and the inhabiting mystery of things.

One example of this extreme simplification through weakness is the facile reference of everything social to race. Thus the "black-white" races of the Mediterranean have certain devotions, as, for instance, to Our Lady ; the superior "Nordic" stock has not. Then, what will you do with the fact that the one province in Europe where there was the most passionate devotion to Our Lady for century after century was Britain ? The desperate need for simplicity leads Mr. Wells to leave it out altogether.

I might multiply instances. They abound throughout the work.

Now, all these characters are allied to, or rather spring from, that quality which I noted in my author at the beginning of this long examination, and which I have called "Provincialism." It is an essential insufficiency for his task. He does not know his Europe ; he does not know the world. He writes in the few terms and with the few conceptions of a man going by the labels he finds in the newspapers and textbooks of his native place : certain printed generalizations which he read in his youth and never questioned. He is, therefore, when he talks of the great world of Man, out of touch with the stuff of his subject. It is this, no doubt, coupled with an excellent economy of words and lucidity of style, which has given him his wide public for his book ; it is also this which makes the book read second-rate to minds of a higher culture, or of a deeper

and more varied experience ; and it is this which confines its existence as a book to a very brief period of time.

We are reading in this *Outline of History* the work of a mind closely confined to a particular place and moment—the late Victorian London suburbs. Such a mind has an apparatus quite inferior to the task of historical writing.

And that is why I said in my first review of this book, what I here repeat : “ It will have a vast circulation, especially in the New World—and an early grave.”

I must end upon a much graver note. What are we to say of that world in which a book like this has a sale which, however ephemeral, is at any rate enormous ?

The question is one that my contemporaries do not seem to have put to themselves sufficiently. I mean, my Catholic contemporaries (for outside the Catholic Church very few people nowadays put any questions to themselves ultimately : they are content to drift and feel).

There has not, in my judgment, been nearly enough astonishment, alarm, or even aroused and curious interest in the vast social transformation of which we are the spectators.

Some of my contemporaries have criticized me with indignation when I have said that, outside the Catholic body, the last fragments of Catholic doctrine were rapidly dissolving before our eyes : yet surely the huge sales of such a book as this are proof enough that what I have said in this matter was true.

Within my own memory there remained of the Catholic scheme a most insufficient, but still solid, skeleton structure maintaining society in the English-speaking non-Catholic world. Within my own memory the Incarnation was commonly held by rich and poor in England and America, and very much of what the Incarnation implies was taken for granted in the structure of society. An attack upon that doctrine, stated in so many words, would have been violently offensive not forty years ago. As for a mere taking for granted that it was false, the books doing this were then thought eccentric. By a curious irony, the non-Catholic English-speaking world connected such blasphemy with the specifically

Catholic cultures which were (in those days) alluded to as "Continental."

Side by side with this fundamental doctrine of our Lord's Divinity, which certainly such a brief time ago was the commonplace of all our society, it possessed sundry other essential dogmas of Catholic truth—the Personality of God, His omnipotence, His creation of all things, the Immortality of the Human Soul, *and* the dual destiny of mankind: the conviction that man by his own free will might lose the grace of God, and that if he lost it his eternal existence would be marred and deprived of the end for which it was created. In plain English, men believed in Heaven and Hell: particularly wicked men—upon whom such ideas have the most salutary effect. The whole range of emotions which arise from such doctrines as surely, and are as inseparable from them, as a scent from a flower or the emotions of landscape from the living eye, permeated society.

Not only were these doctrines retained with all their effect, but the chief Catholic social disciplines still had value. Property was still held to be a right, not a mere arrangement or system. Its proper distribution was thought a good: its capture by a few, an evil: the Socialist attack on it as a principle, inhuman. The family was still the unit of the State. The control of the parent over the child was taken for granted and the action of the State, or of any other authority, was regarded as a delegation, and a perilous delegation at that. Marriage was normally regarded as indissoluble.

Behind all this remaining grasp of the last but most essential factors in the general scheme of Catholic society—all that by which men could still vaguely be called "Christians"—went the common-sense appreciation of the truth that Man was Man: that we could not deal with man by experiment as a changeable being, that he was not a mere phase in process of passing, but a fixed type with a known nature.

Man was—within my own memory—even to the highbrow non-Catholic world, what he still is (I am glad to say) to the populace—the most certain, the most fixed, known thing in

the world ; for Man knows himself as he knows no other thing. Hence was there a security in the sense and application of justice ; hence was there a powerful comprehension of the past. For it was rightly taken for granted that men had always acted upon much the same motives. Hence was there a hearty recognition of the human conscience (which every man discovers in himself), and a corresponding contempt for sentimental excuses of misconduct.

Not only was this true of the dogmas, the disciplines, and the social effect of such remains of the Catholic Church as survived in the non-Catholic English-speaking world about us ; but it was true of the intellectual heritage. Plain logic was accepted. The reason was given its due place. Men did not move by suggestion or by repetition ; they still examined ; and the presentation to that older generation (which I and all my contemporaries can remember) of statements unproved, the confusion of scientific hypothesis with scientific fact, were ridiculed. They were less and less ridiculed, it is true, as the nineteenth century drew to its close. Confusion of thought became more prevalent, and the swallowing whole of the last unproved and improbable affirmation in Biology, Pre-history, or Textual Criticism was already growing to be a habit. But the habit was not yet universal.

Now the lesson to be learnt from the immense sale of such a second-rate popular book as Mr. Wells's *Outline of History* is that the old doctrines, for the great mass of our modern English-speaking non-Catholic population have gone. Mr. Wells ridicules the Resurrection ; the Incarnation he could, of course, not grasp, but *also*—and here is the significant point—he does not think that others really entertain it. He does not admit any part of the Christian scheme. On the intellectual side he proposes as true things of which we know nothing ; and as obviously untrue things on which the best minds of Europe have long been assured.

Note you, in all this he is not an innovator. He challenges no one. He risks nothing. He follows the sheep. Mr. Wells makes no attempt to be a leader. He merely puts, in a nice, clear, simple fashion, that which the myriads to whom

he addresses himself already believe—that there is no Creator, no Saviour, no Resurrection, no Immortality, no Communion of Saints.

Is not this a portent? In my judgment it is. It is not true that the modern world as a whole has suffered such a revolution. The Catholic culture in the continent of Europe not only stands strong, but is rapidly increasing in strength. The two branches of reaction against it (the German Protestant reaction of which Prussian atheism was the climax, and the more respectable anti-clericalism of French and Italian tradition) are both manifestly weakening. The doctrines that would dissolve society have been exposed and are now counter-attacked with an increasing vigour. Europe—the Soul of the world—is hesitating whether it will not return to the Faith: without which it cannot live.

But is that so in the world to which we belong, or at least of which we Catholics are exceptional inhabitants? Is it true of that English-speaking culture which was founded upon the Bible and whose peculiar virtues and weaknesses, advantages and disadvantages (many of them alien to us Catholics, but all well comprehended by us), were the texture of life in England and Scotland, in the English Dominions, and in the United States?

I think not. Men hesitate to say it; they are afraid of facing the truth in the matter, but truth it is: the foundations have gone.

I do not mean that in their place other foundations may not be discovered. I do not predict chaos, though chaos is a very possible result of it all. What I do say is, that Christian morals and doctrine, and all that they meant, are, in our English-speaking world much more than in any other part of contemporary white civilization, in dissolution.

This is no place in which to discuss the remedies (if any practical remedies be available) or even the probable results of so vast a revolution; but it is the place in which to emphasize the truth that the revolution has taken place.

It is a revolution in doctrine, discipline, morals, and intellectual action, as complete as any that we can find

recorded in History since the conversion of the Roman Empire to the Catholic Church. It applies only to a section of the modern world, the section which I have mentioned : Britain, America and the Dominions ; but that is a very important section of the modern world, and (what is of chief interest to us) it is the section wherein we live, of which we are citizens, to which we owe allegiance, and with whose fate our own and that of our children is bound up.

I will add no more.





## APPENDIX

IT is cumbersome to load a book intended for general reading with quotations from Authorities and a mass of footnotes. Moreover, a reader of intelligence desires to hear the arguments rather than a mere list of expert names.

On this account, in the first draft of this book (which appeared in the form of a series of articles in the Press), while giving some of the main arguments against the old Darwinian theory of Natural Selection, I omitted particular names, and only alluded in general terms to that mass of modern criticism, increasing in volume, which has undermined it.

Mr. Wells was foolish enough to write a hurried pamphlet in which he made the strange affirmation that my arguments against Natural Selection were of my own invention and that I cited no modern critics of Darwinism because no such critics existed : the intellectual movement of which I spoke was a *figment of my brain*, and I could quote no authorities supporting it.

From this it was clear, though astonishing, that Mr. Wells had undertaken to write popular stuff about Evolution without so much as a casual acquaintance with the advance of biology in our generation.

I therefore append here the names of some few among the many authorities upon biological science who have exposed the error of Natural Selection.

It is a short list, drawn up at random, and in no particular order of date, and containing only some forty odd names such as a man of quite ordinary general education like myself with only a general interest in such matters can jot down from memory. It could, of course, be extended indefinitely

by anyone setting out to make a complete total of the first-class scholars who have left Darwinism the wreck it is to-day. I do not pretend, of course, to more than a very slight reading among any of these few. I give them only as sample names out of an increasing roll, professors in the great universities (Paris, Vienna, Leipzig, Harvard, Montpellier, Tübingen, Amsterdam, Columbia, Bologna, etc., etc.), a President of the British Association, men eminent in special research, and famous biologists who have determined the current of modern opinion in the course of my lifetime :—

CUÉNOT  
 DELAGE  
 ROSA (DANIELE)  
 KOLLIKER  
 DIAMIARE  
 CARAZZI (DAVID)  
 BATESON  
 CHAUFFARD  
 HENSLOW  
 HYATT  
 COPE  
 EIMER  
 PIEPERS  
 HARTMANN  
 DE VRIES  
 NÄGELI  
 PACKARD  
 JAECKEL  
 GOETTE  
 HABERLANDT  
 SACHS  
 KASSOVITZ  
 STROMER

DEPÉRET  
VOGT  
MORGAN  
DAVENPORT  
LE DANTEC  
FLEISCHMANN  
DRIESCH  
DENNERT  
DI BARNARDO  
WIGAND  
WOLFF  
SCHMARDA  
SERGI  
PFEFFER  
VIALLETON  
CONN  
OSBORN  
DACQUÉ

A few quotations may not come amiss :—

“ We [biologists in general] have come to the conviction that the principle of Natural Selection cannot have been the chief factor in determining species . . . ”

(PROFESSOR BATESON, President of British Association, 1914, speaking in Melbourne.)

“ Natural Selection never explains at all the specifications of the animal and vegetable forms that are actually found. . . . ”

“ For men of clear intellect Darwinism has long been dead. . . . ”

(DRIESCH.)

“ We have now the remarkable spectacle that just

when many scientific men are all agreed that there is *no part* [my italics] of the Darwinian system that is of any great influence, and that, as a whole, the theory is not only unproved, but impossible, the ignorant, half-educated masses have acquired the idea that it is to be accepted as a fundamental fact. . . .”

(DWIGHT, Professor of Anatomy at Harvard University.)

“Selection does *not* [my italics] bring about transgressive variation in a general population. . . .”

(PROFESSOR MORGAN, Professor of Experimental Zoology at University of Columbia, writing in 1919.)

“Animals and plants would have developed much as they did even had no struggle for existence taken place. . . .”

(NÄGELI.)

“Selection is in no way favourable to the origin of new forms.”

“The struggle for existence, and the selection that goes with it, restricts the appearance of new forms, and is in no way favourable to the production of these forms. It is an inimical factor in evolution.”

(KORCHINSKY.)

“On the question of knowing whether Natural Selection can engender new specific forms, it seems clear to-day that it cannot.”

(DELAGE.)

“One could possibly imagine a gradual development of the adaptation between one muscle-cell and one nerve-ending, through selection among an infinity of chance-made variations: but that such shall take place coincidentally in time and character in hundreds or thousands of cases in one organism is inconceivable.”

(WOLFF, *Beitrage zur Kritik der Darwinischen Lehre.*)

“The Darwinian theory, favourably received till of late, has lost ground more and more, and may now be said to have failed.”

(ROSA, Professor of University of Padua, *Lamarckismo*, etc. Bulletin of the Italian Entomological Society, 1910.)

“In conclusion, we may say that the Darwinian theory has completely failed.”

(CARAZZI, writing in 1919. See also his speech at Florence in November of the same year.)

“Never yet has it been possible to refer [to a common origin] methodically and without error any two types or even large groups.”

(DACQUÉ, *Paleontologie Systematik und Descendenzlehre*. Jena, 1911.)

“It is pretty clear that we must wholly abandon the Darwinian hypothesis.”

(CUÉNOT, *La Génèse des Espèces Animales*. 1921. Second edition.)

I think that is enough.



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