

FRIEDRICH MAX MÜLLER

THE SILESIAN
HORSEHERD - QUESTIONS
OF THE HOUR

Friedrich Max Müller
The Silesian Horseherd.
Questions of the Hour

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F. Max Müller

The Silesian Horseherd

– Questions of the Hour

Preface

The story of this volume is soon told. In July, 1895, Professor Max Müller contributed to the *Deutsche Rundschau* an essay on the lost treatise against Christianity by the philosopher Celsus, known to us through the reply of Origen of Alexandria. This essay, entitled “The ‘True History’¹ of Celsus,” contained an exposition of the doctrine of the Logos and its place in Christian teaching, with reference also to its applications in our modern thought. Among the comments upon it which in due time found their way to Oxford, was a vigorous, if familiar, letter (dated February, 1896) from a German emigrant to the United States, residing in Pennsylvania, who signed himself by the unusual name of the *Pferdebürla*, or “Horseherd.”² His criticisms served as a fair sample of others; and his letter was published

¹ The Greek term “logos” was rendered *Geschichte* in the German title.

² The word *Pferdebürla* is apparently a Silesian equivalent for *Pferdebursche*, and is represented in this volume by the term “horseherd,” after the analogy of cowherd, swineherd, or shepherd. The termination *bürla* is probably a local corruption of the diminutive *bürschel* or *bürschlein*.

with a reply from Professor Max Müller in the *Rundschau* of November, 1896. More letters poured in upon the unwearied scholar who had thus set aside precious time out of his last years to answer his unknown correspondent. One of these, from "Ignotus Agnosticus," supplied a text for further comment, and the whole grew into a little popular *apologia*, which was published at Berlin in 1899, and entitled *Das Pferdebürla*, or "Questions of the Day answered by Friedrich Max Müller."

The veteran teacher thus enforced once more his ideas of the relation of language and thought, in which he had long since recognised the clue to man's knowledge of the relation of his spirit to God. This inner union he found realised in Christ, according to the testimony of the Fourth Gospel;³ and the lucid treatment of this great conception, freed from the technicalities of theology, will possibly prove to some readers the most helpful portion of this book. Ranging over many topics, once the themes of vehement controversy, the discussion has often an intimate, familiar, personal air. The disputants on opposite sides had drawn nearer; they could better understand each other's points of view.⁴ These pages, therefore, reveal the inmost beliefs of one who had devoted more than fifty years to the study of the history of religious thought on the widest scale, and had himself passed

³ "What difference does it make," he would ask, "whether it was written by the son of Zebedee, or some other John, if only it reveals to us the Son of God?" (letter from the Vicar of St. Giles's, Oxford, *Life and Letters*, II, Chap. xxxvi.).

⁴ See the letters between Max Müller and Dr. G. J. Romanes, *Life and Letters*, II, Chap. xxxi.

through severe struggles and deep griefs with unshaken calm. No reader of Max Müller's writings, or of the *Life and Letters*, can fail to recognise in these trusts the secret unity of all his labours. The record of human experience contained in the great sacred literatures of the world, and verified afresh in manifold forms from age to age, provided a basis for faith which no philosophy or science could disturb.

This is the key to the reasonings and appeals of this little book. It was translated as a labour of love by Mr. Fechter, Mayor of North Yakima, in the United States. The translation has been revised on this side of the Atlantic, and is now offered to the public in the belief that this final testimony of a "voice that is still" to the reality of "things unseen" will be welcome to many inquiring and perhaps troubled minds.

J. ESTLIN CARPENTER.

Oxford, April 2, 1903.

Chapter I.

The True History Of Celsus

The following essays, which were intended primarily for the Horseherd, but which were published in the *Deutsche Rundschau*, demand a short explanatory introduction. This, I believe, can best be given by me, by means of a reprint of another essay which appeared in the same periodical, and was the direct cause for the letter, which the writer, under the name of "Horseherd," addressed to me. I receive many such anonymous communications, but regret that it is only rarely possible for me to answer them or to give them attention, much as I should like to do so. In this particular case, the somewhat abrupt, but pure, human tone of the letter appealed to me more than usual, and at my leisure I attempted an answer. My article, which called forth the letter of the Horseherd, was entitled "The 'True History' of Celsus,"⁵ in the July number of the *Deutsche Rundschau*, 1895, and, with a few corrections, is as follows:—

In an article which appeared in the March number of the *Deutsche Rundschau*, 1895, entitled "The Parliament of Religions in Chicago," I expressed my surprise that this event which I had characterised as in my opinion the most important of the year 1893, had been so little known and discussed in

⁵ *Ueber die Wahre Geschichte des Celsus.*

Germany—so little, that the editors of the *Wiener Fremdenblatt* thought it needful to explain the nature of the Chicago Congress. Likewise, when in answer to the question as to what I should consider the most desirable discovery of the coming year in my department, I answered the discovery of the *Sermo Verus* of Celsus; this, too, appeared to be a work so little known, that the editors considered it necessary to add that Celsus was a renowned philosopher of the second century, who first subjected the ever spreading system of Christianity to a thorough criticism in a work entitled *Sermo Verus*. The wish, yes, even the hope, that this lost book, of which we gain a fair idea from the reply of Origen, should again make its appearance, was prompted by the recent discoveries of ancient Greek papyrus manuscripts in Egypt. Where so many unexpected discoveries have been made, we may hope for yet more. For who would have believed that ancient Greek texts would be found in a mummy-case, the Greek papyrus leaves being carelessly rolled together to serve as cushions for the head and limbs of a skeleton? It was plain that these papyrus leaves had been sold as waste paper, and that they were probably obtained from the houses of Greek officials and military officers, who had established themselves in Egypt during the Macedonian occupation, and whose furniture and belongings had been publicly sold and scattered on occasion of their rapid withdrawal. There were found not only fragments of classical texts, as of Homer, Plato, and the previously unknown treatise on “The Government of the Athenians,” not, perhaps, composed,

but utilised, by Aristotle, but also many fragments of Christian literature, which made it probable that the libraries of Christian families also had been thrown on the market, and that papyrus leaves, when they appeared useless for any other purpose, were used as waste paper, or as a kind of papier-maché.

But why should the “True History” of Celsus, the λόγος ἀληθής, or *Sermo Verus*, excite our curiosity? The reason is quite plain. We know practically nothing of the history of the teaching of Christ in the first, second, and even third centuries, except what has been transmitted to us by Christian writers. It is an old rule, however, that it is well to learn from the enemy also, —“Fas est et ab hoste doceri.” Celsus was a resolute foe of the new Christian teaching, and we should, at all events, learn from his treatise how the Christian religion appeared in the eyes of a cultivated man of the second century, who, it seems, concurred in many important points with the philosophical conception cherished in the Christian church, or at least was familiar with it, namely, the Logos idea; but who could not comprehend how men, who had once understood and assimilated a view of the world founded on the Logos, could combine with it the belief in Christ as the incarnate Logos. To Celsus the Christian religion is something objective; in all other works of the first three centuries it is, and remains, almost entirely subjective.

This could hardly be otherwise, for a religion in its first inception scarcely exists for the outer world. What at that time were Jerusalem and Palestine in the eyes of the so-called world?

A province yielding little profit, and often in rebellion. The Jews and their religion had certainly attracted the attention of Rome and Athens by their peculiarities; but the Jewish sects interested the classical world much less than the sects of the Platonic and Stoic schools. Christians were regarded as Jews, just as, not many years ago, Jains were treated by us as Buddhists, Sikhs as Brahmans, and Buddhists, Jains, Sikhs, and Brahmans were promiscuously placed in one pile as Indian idolaters. How should the differences which distinguished the Christian from the Jew, and the Jewish Christian from the heathen Christian, have been understood at that time in Rome? To us, naturally, the step which Paul and his associates took appears an enormous one—one of world-wide import; but of what interest could these things be outside of Palestine? That the Jews who looked upon themselves as a peculiar people, who would admit no strangers, and tolerate no marriages between Jew and Gentile, who, in spite of all their disappointments and defeats, energetically clung to their faith in a deliverer, in an earthly Messiah, and in the coming glory of their nation; that they should suddenly declare clean what they had always considered unclean; that they should transform their national spirit into a universal sympathy; yes, that they should recognise their Messiah in a crucified malefactor, indicate a complete revolution in their history; but the race itself was and continued to be, in the eyes of the world, if not beneath notice, at least an object of contempt. It should not, therefore, surprise us that no classical writer has given us a really historical account

of the Christian religion, or has even with one word referred to the wonderful events which, had they actually taken place as described in the Gospels, would have stirred the uttermost corners of the earth. Celsus is the only writer of the second century who, being neither Christian nor Jew, was not only acquainted with representatives of Christianity and Judaism, but had also, it would seem, carefully read portions of the Old and New Testaments. He even boasts of having a better knowledge of these religions than many of their adherents (II, 12). That such a man considered this new Christian sect of sufficient importance to subject it to a searching investigation, is proof of his deep insight, and at the same time of the increasing power of Christianity as a religion independent of Judaism. Who this Celsus really was, it is not easy to discover. Even his adversary, Origen, seems to know but little of him; at any rate he tells us nothing of him,—indeed, we are even still in doubt about his date. It has been thought that he is the Celsus to whom Lucian (120-200 A.D.) dedicated his work on the false Alexander. This is possible; but Celsus is a very common name, and Origen speaks of two men of this name who were both Epicureans and are supposed to have lived in the times of Nero (54-68 A.D.) and Hadrian (118-138 A.D.). It has been argued that the latter could not have been the author of the *Sermo Verus*, because it apparently mentions the sect of the Marcellians, and this was not founded till the year 155 under Bishop Anicetus. But Origen's remark, that Celsus may have outlived the reign of Hadrian,

has been overlooked. At any rate Origen speaks of the *Sermo Verus* as a work long known, and as he did not die until the year 253 A.D., in his time the work of Celsus would have been recognised as of considerable age, even if written after the year 155. Much learning has been expended on the identification of Celsus, which seems to me to have been wasted. It is remarkable that Origen made no effort to become personally acquainted with his adversary. He leaves the question open whether he is the same Celsus who composed two other books against the Christians (*Contra Celsum*, IV, 36). At the end of his book he speaks of him as if he had been a contemporary, and asserts that a second book by him against the Christians, which has either not yet been completed or has not yet reached him, shall be as completely refuted as the *Sermo Verus*. Such language is only used of a contemporary. Could it be proved that Celsus was a friend of Lucian, then we should know that in the judgment of the latter he was a noble, truth-loving, and cultivated man. It was not Origen's interest to emphasise these aspects of his opponent's character; but it must be said to his credit, that though he was much incensed at some of the charges of Celsus, he never attacked his personal character. Perhaps it was not fair in Origen to accuse Celsus of being ashamed of his Epicureanism, and of concealing his own philosophical and atheistic convictions, in order to obtain an easier hearing among Jews and Christians.⁶ This does not appear quite fair, for it was a very pardonable device for Celsus

⁶ *Contra Celsum*, I, 8.

first to attack a part of Christian teaching under the mask of a Jew, who represents his faith as the older and more respectable, and seeks to convince the Christians that they would have done better had they remained true to the religion of their fathers. On the contrary, as Celsus, whatever he may have been except a Jew, could not with a good conscience have undertaken an actual defence of Judaism, it was quite natural that he should choose a Jew as an advocate of the Jewish religion, and put into his mouth, like a second Philo, ideas which at all events sound more Platonic than Epicurean. Origen was entirely justified in showing that in this process Celsus frequently forgot his part; and this he did with much skill.

But whatever Celsus may have been,—an Epicurean, or, as has occasionally been maintained, a Neo-platonist,—he was at all events no mean adversary and certainly not unworthy of Origen's steel. If not, why should Origen have felt the need of such an earnest refutation? He says, certainly, that he did it only at the request of his old friend and protector, Ambrosius. But that is what many writers under similar circumstances have said and still say. We have, at all events, lost much through the loss (or destruction?) of all manuscripts of Celsus. Not only was he acquainted with the principal philosophical schools of antiquity, he appears also to have studied zealously the religions of the ancient world as they were known at that time to the learned, especially in Alexandria, of which we have but scant knowledge. Origen expressly states (I, 14) that Celsus described

the various peoples who possessed religious and philosophical systems, because he supposed that all these views bore a certain relationship to one another. Without a doubt much has been here lost to us, not only for the history of Greek philosophy, but also for the history of Oriental religions and philosophies, whose representatives at that time sojourned in Alexandria, yet as to whose personal influence we are almost entirely in the dark. Celsus is presumed to have written of the doctrines of the Egyptians, the Assyrians, the Jews, Persians, Odrysians, Samothracians, Eleusinians, even of the Samaneans, *i.e.* the Buddhists (I, 24), and to have represented these as better accredited than those of the Jews. We see anew what treasures were stored up in Alexandria, and we feel all the more deeply their irrevocable loss. The desire and the hope of recovering the work of Celsus were therefore quite natural for any who wished to penetrate more deeply into the spiritual atmosphere of the second and third centuries, and especially for such as strove to understand clearly how men of this age, versed in philosophy, such as Clement and Origen himself, could confess Christianity, or become converted to it, or could defend it against other philosophers without in the least becoming untrue to their philosophical convictions. That the lower classes among Jews and Greeks followed the new teaching, is much more intelligible, even without wishing to lay too much stress on the evidential value of the miracles at that time. The great majority were accustomed to miracles; what was almost entirely

lacking was practical religion. The Greek thinkers had created systems of philosophy and morals, but the traditional worship had degenerated into a mere spectacle. Even among the Jews the old religion had become a rigid temple ritual, which offered but little comfort and hope to the weak heart of man. In the eyes of the majority of the philosophers of the age every religion was only pernicious superstition, good enough for the masses, but scarcely worth consideration by the cultured. That Celsus made the Christian religion the object of serious treatment and refutation, not only implies a subtle and unprejudiced view of his age, but shows us at the same time how the Christianity of that period, entirely independent of the Jewish religion, had gained in significance, and had even in the eyes of a heathen philosopher begun to be esteemed as something important, as something dangerous, as something that had to be combated with philosophical weapons.

Christianity is especially indebted for its rapid spread to its practical side, to the energy of its love, which was bestowed on all who were weary and heavy laden. Christ and the apostles had understood how to gather around them the poor, the sinners, the most despised members of human society. They were offered forgiveness of their sins, love, and sympathy, if they merely promised to amend and sin no more. Among these earliest followers of Christ there was scarcely a change of religion in our sense of the word. Christianity was at first much more a new life than a new religion. The first disciples were and remained

Jews in the eyes of the world, and that they came from the most despised classes even Origen does not dispute. Celsus had reproached the Christians because the apostles, around whose heads even in his time a halo had begun to shine, had been men of bad character, criminals, fishermen, and tax-gatherers. Origen admits that Matthew was a tax-gatherer, James and John fishermen, probably Peter and Andrew as well; but declares that it was not known how the other apostles gained a livelihood. Even that they had been malefactors and criminals, Origen does not absolutely deny. He refers to the letter of Barnabas, in which it is stated “that Jesus chose men as his apostles who were guilty of sin more than all other evil doers.”⁷ He relies upon the words of Peter, when he says, “Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.”⁸

Paul, in like manner, says in his epistle to Timothy,⁹ “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.”

But it is just in this that Origen recognises the divine power of the personality and the teaching of Christ, that by means of it men who had been deeply sunken in sins could be raised to a new life; and he declares it to be unjust that those who repented of their early sins, and had entered into a pure life, well pleasing to God, should be reproached with their previous sinfulness. In

⁷ *Contra Celsum*, I, 63.

⁸ Luke v. 8.

⁹ 1 Tim. i. 15.

this respect he makes, indeed, no distinction between the apostles and such men as Phædon and Polemo, who were rescued from the mire of their sins through philosophy; and he recognises in the teaching of Christ a still greater force, because it had proved its saving and sanctifying power without any of the arts of learning and eloquence. What the apostles were, and what they became through the influence of the Gospel, Origen himself explains in the words of Paul, “For we also were aforetime foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, and hating one another.”¹⁰

He attributes it as an honour to the apostles that, even if their self-accusations were extravagant, they had so openly acknowledged their sins, in order to place the saving influence of the Gospel in a clearer light. But the fact itself, that the apostles had been sinful and despised men, Origen honestly admits. We also know with what true humanity Christ himself treated the adulteress: how he challenged the Pharisees, if they themselves were free from sin, to cast the first stone at her. And who does not admire the aged Pharisees who silently withdrew, one after the other, from the oldest to the youngest, without casting a stone? Have we many such Pharisees in our time? Jesus, however, dismissed the adulteress with the compassionate words, “Sin no more.” That such a course toward sin-laden mankind by one who knew no sin, made a deep impression on the masses, is perfectly intelligible. We see a remarkable parallel in the first appearance

¹⁰ Tit. iii. 3.

of Buddha and his disciples in India. He, too, was reproached for inviting sinners and outcasts to him, and extending to them sympathy and aid. He, too, was called a physician, a healer of the sick; and we know what countless numbers of ailing mankind found health through him. All this can be quite understood from a human standpoint. A religion is, in its nature, not a philosophy; and no one could find fault with Christianity if it had devoted itself only to the healing of all human infirmities, and had set aside all metaphysical questions. We know how Buddha also personally declined all philosophical discussion. When one of his disciples put questions to him about metaphysical problems, the solution of which went beyond the limits of human reason, he contended that he wished to be nothing more than a physician, to heal the infirmities of mankind. Accordingly, he says to Mâlunkyaputta: "What have I said to you before? Did I say, 'Come to me and be my disciple, that I may teach you whether the world is eternal or not; whether the world is finite or infinite; whether the life-principle is identical with the body or not, whether the perfect man lives after death or not?'"

Mâlunkyaputta answered, "Master, you did not say that."

Then Buddha continued, "Did you then say, 'I will be your disciple,' but first answer these questions?"

"No," said the disciple.

Thereupon Buddha said: "A man was once wounded by a poisoned arrow, and his friends called in an experienced physician. What if the wounded man had said, I shall not permit

my wound to be examined until I know who wounded me, whether he be a nobleman, a Brahman, a Vaisya, or a Sûdra; what his name is; to what family he belongs; if he be large or small, or of medium size, and how the weapon with which he wounded me looked. How would it fare with such a man? Would he not certainly succumb to his wound?"

The disciple then perceives that he came to Buddha as a sick man, desiring to be healed by him as a physician, not to be instructed about matters that lie far beyond the human horizon.

Buddha has often been censured because he claimed for his religion such an exclusively practical character, and instead of philosophy preached only morality. These censures began in early times; we find them in the famous dialogues between Nagasena and Milinda, the king Menander, about 100 B.C. And yet we know how, in spite of all warnings given by the founder of Buddhism, this religion was soon entirely overgrown with metaphysics; and how, finally, metaphysics as Abbidharma found an acknowledged place in the Sacred Canon of the Buddhists.

Christianity presents a parallel case. In the beginning it sought only to call sinners to repentance. The strong, as Jesus himself said, do not require a physician, but the sick. He therefore looked upon himself as a physician, just as Buddha had done in an earlier day. He declared that he was not come to destroy the law, but to fulfil it. The truth of his teaching should be known by its fruits, and there is scarcely a trace in the Gospels of philosophical discussions, or even of attacks on the schools of

Greek philosophy. But even here it was soon apparent that, for a practical reformation of conduct, a higher consecration is essential. It was admitted, as an Indian philosopher is reputed long since to have said to Socrates, that no one could understand the human element who had not first understood the divine. Men of Greek culture who felt themselves attracted by the moral principles of the little Christian congregations soon, however, wanted more. They had to defend the step which they had taken, and the Christianity which they wished to profess, or had professed, against their former friends and co-believers, and this soon produced the so-called apologies for Christianity, and expositions of the philosophical and theological views which constituted the foundation of the new teaching. A religion which was recruited only from poor sinners and tax-gatherers could scarcely have found entry into the higher circles of society, or maintained itself in lecture-rooms and palaces against the cultivated members of refined circles, if its defenders, like Buddha, had simply ignored all philosophical, especially all metaphysical, questions.

How came it, then, that cultured men in high stations, entirely independent, professed Christianity? How did they make their friends and former co-believers understand that such a step was *bona fide*? In answering this question, we get help from Celsus, as well as his opponent, Origen.

The bridge which led across from Greek philosophy to Christianity was the Logos. It is remarkable how much this

fundamental doctrine of Christianity fell, later on, into the background; how little it is understood, even by the educated of our own time, and how often, without giving it any consideration, they have cast it aside. In early Christian days this was probably a consequence of the practical and political development of the new religion. But the living nerve of the Christian religion, which was its closest bond to the highest spiritual acquisitions of the ancient Greek world, was thus severed. First, the Logos, the Word, the Son of God, was misunderstood, and mythology was employed to make the dogma, thus misconceived, intelligible. In modern times, through continued neglect of the Logos doctrine, the strongest support of Christianity has been cut from under its feet, and at the same time its historical justification, its living connection with Greek antiquity, has almost entirely passed out of view. In Germany it almost appears as though Goethe, by his *Faust*, is answerable for the widespread treatment of the Logos idea as something obscure, incomprehensible, mystical. Many, when reading the opening of the Fourth Gospel, "In the beginning was the Word," say to themselves, "No one understands that," and read on. He who does not earnestly and honestly make an effort to understand this beginning of the Gospel, shows that he is but little concerned with the innermost essence of Christianity, as clearly presented to us in the Fourth Gospel. He forgets that not only faith, but thought, pertains to a religion. It is no excuse to say, "Did not the learned Dr. Faust torment himself to discover what 'the word' here meant, and did

not find it out?" He says in Goethe:—

“’Tis writ: ‘In the beginning was the Word’!
I pause perplexed! Who now will help afford?
I cannot the mere Word so highly prize,
I must translate it otherwise.”

But this is just what he ought not do. It was not necessary to translate it at all; he only needed to accept the Logos as a technical expression of Greek philosophy. He would then have seen that it is impossible to prize the Word too highly, if we first learn what the Word meant in the idiom of contemporary philosophy. Not even to a Faust should Goethe have imputed such ignorance as when he continues to speculate without any historical knowledge:—

“If by the spirit guided as I read,
“In the beginning was the Sense,” Take heed.
The import of this primal sentence weigh,
Lest thy too hasty pen be led astray.
Is force creative then of sense the dower?
“In the beginning was the Power.”
Thus should it stand; yet, while the line I trace,
A something warns me once more to efface.
The spirit aids, from anxious scruples freed,
I write: ‘In the beginning was the Deed.’ ”¹¹

¹¹ Miss Swanwick's translation.

Had Goethe wished to scourge the unhistorical exegesis of modern theologians, he could not have done so better than by this attempt of an interpreter of the Bible, fancying himself illumined by the spirit, but utterly destitute of all knowledge of history. Knowledge of the history of the Greek philosophy of the first and second centuries after Christ is indispensable to the understanding of such a word as Logos—a word that grew up on Greek soil, and whose first roots reach far into the distant past of the Greek mind; and for that very reason not admitting of translation, either into Hebrew or into German. Like many other *termini technici*, it must be understood historically; just as logic, metaphysic, analytic, organon, etc., can only be apprehended and understood historically. Now it is, perhaps, not to be denied, that even now a majority of educated readers either perfunctorily repeat the first sentence of the Fourth Gospel, “In the beginning was the Word,” or believe that something lies buried therein that is beyond the depth of ordinary men. This, of course, is partially true, and it cannot be otherwise in religions which are intended not only for the young, but for the wise and learned, and which should be strong meat for adults, and not merely milk for babes. The fault lies chiefly in the translation, in that it should have been thought necessary to translate a word instead of permitting it to remain, what it was, a foreign word.

This becomes still worse when, as for instance, in certain Oriental languages, the newly converted Christian has to read, “In the beginning was the Noun or the Verb.” The correct

translation would, of course, be, "In the beginning was the Logos." For Logos is not here the usual word Logos, but a *terminus technicus*, that can no more be translated out of the lexicon than one would think of etymologically translating Messiah or Christ as the "Anointed," or Angelos as "messenger" or "nuncio." If we read at the beginning of the Gospel, "In the beginning was the Logos," at least every one would know that he has to deal with a foreign, a Greek word, and that he must gain an understanding of it out of Greek philosophy, just as with such words as *atom*, *idea*, *cosmos*, etc. It is remarkable what human reason will consent to. Millions of Christians hear and read, "In the beginning was the Word," and either give it no thought, or imagine the most inconceivable things, and then read on, after they have simply thrown away the key to the Fourth Gospel. That thought and reflection also are a divine service is only too readily forgotten. Repeated reading and reflection are necessary to make the first verse of the Fourth Gospel accessible and intelligible in a general way; but one cannot be a true Christian without thinking and reflecting.

An explanation of Logos in Greek philosophy is much simpler than is commonly supposed. It is only needful not to forget that for the Greeks thought and word were inseparable, and that the same term, namely, Logos, expressed both, though they distinguished the inner from the outer Logos. It is one of the most remarkable aberrations of the human mind, to imagine that there could be a word without thought or a thought without

word. The two are inseparable: one cannot exist or be even conceived without the other. I believe that I have clearly shown in my *Science of Thought* that thought without word and word without thought are impossible and inconceivable, and why it is so. Here is the first key to a historical solution of the riddle at the beginning of the Fourth Gospel. We know that Greek philosophy after making every possible effort to explain the world mechanically, had already in the school of Anaxagoras reached the view that the hylozoic as well as the atomic theory leaves the human mind unsatisfied; and that it is necessary to posit as the origin of all things a thought or thinking mind that manifests itself in the universe. This was the *nous*, the mind, of Anaxagoras. He could just as well have called it *Logos*, for the word was in use even before the time of Anaxagoras, to express that reason, the recognition of whose all-pervading presence in the universe was the great step in advance made by the system of Anaxagoras. Even Heraclitus had divined the existence of reason in the universe, and had applied to it the name *Logos*. While the masses recognised in *Moirai* or *Heimarmenê* only destiny, or fate, Heraclitus declared, that the essence of this *Heimarmenê* is the *Logos*, the Reason that pervades the world. This is the oldest expression of Hegel's thought, "What is, is rational." We must not suppose, however, that Heraclitus considered this *Logos* as identical with his fire. He merely says that the fire is subordinate to the *Logos*, that it operates *κατὰ τὸν λόγον*, according to the *Logos*, or (as we should say) rationally.

Our knowledge of the entire system of Heraclitus is of course so fragmentary that we can only speak of this, as of many other points, with great caution. The same is true, although in a lesser degree, of the system of Anaxagoras. His *nous*, if we translate it by mind, is more comprehensive than *Logos*. We must not, however, suppose, that this *nous* bore a personal character, for Anaxagoras expressly states that it is a $\chi\rho\eta\mu\alpha$, a thing, even though he would have said that this *nous* regulated all things. Whether an impersonal mind is conceivable, was still at that time a remote problem. Even in Plato we cannot clearly determine whether he represented his *nous* as God in our sense, or as *Sophia*, wisdom, a word which with him often replaces *nous*. It is remarkable that in his genuine works Plato does not generally use the word *Logos*, and in Aristotle as well *nous* remains the first term, what we should call the divine mind, while *Logos* is the reason, the causal nexus, the οὐ ἔνεκα, therefore decidedly something impersonal, if not unsubjective.

Plato is the first who distinguishes between essence and being in the primeval cause, or, as we might say, between rest and activity. He speaks of an eternal plan of the world, a thought of the world, the world as a product of thought, inseparable from the creator, but still distinguishable from him. This is the Platonic world of "Ideas," which lies at the foundation of the world perceivable by the senses, the phenomenal world. What is more natural or more reasonable than this thought? If the world has an author, what can we imagine as reasonable men,

but that the thought, the plan of the world, belongs to the author, that it was thought, and thereby realised for the first time? Now this plan, this idea, was the inner *Logos*, and as every thought finds its immediate expression in a word, so did this one, which was then called the outer *Logos*. The outer was not possible without the inner, even as a word is impossible without mind and reason. But the inner *Logos* also first realises itself in the outer, just as the reasonable thought can only be made real in the word. This character of the *Logos* as thought and word, at once capable of distinction and yet undifferentiated and inseparable, is of the highest importance for Christian speculation; without an exact comprehension of it, we shall see that the relation of the Son to the Father as we find it explained by Clement and other fathers of the church, remains dark and misty. We have no concept without a word, and philology has shown us how every word, even the most concrete, is based on a concept. We cannot think of "tree" without the word or a hieroglyphic of some kind. We can even say that, as far as we are concerned, there is no tree, except in language, for in the nature of things there are only oaks or beeches, but not and never a tree. And what is true of tree is true of all words, or to speak with Plato, of all ideas, or to speak with the Stoics, of all *Logoi*. There are no doubt conjurers who pretend to be able to think without words, and even take no little pride in being able to perform this trick. They forget only too often that their inexpressible thoughts are nothing but obscure feelings, in fact, they do not even distinguish

between presentation and idea, and forget that when we speak of words, we do not understand by them mere mimicry of sound or interjections, but only and exclusively intelligible words, that is, such as are based on concepts and are derived from roots. The old Greek philosophers, probably favoured by their language, appear never to have forgotten the true relation between Logos and Logos, and their thought finally resulted in a view of the world founded upon it. Although it is now the custom to speak slightly of the later Platonists, we should always recognise that we owe to them the preservation of this, the most precious jewel out of the rich storehouse of Greek philosophy, that the world is the expression and realisation of divine thought, that it is the divine word expressed.

We cannot here enter into the various phases in which Plato and his followers presented these ideas. At times they are represented as independent of the Creator, as models, as golden statues, to which the creative mind looks up. Soon, however, they are conceived as thoughts of this mind, as something secondary, created, sometimes also as something independent, as much so as is the Son in relation to his Father. The whole Logos, with all ideas, became in this manner the first-born Son of the Creator, yet so that the Father could not be Father without the Son, or the Son without the Father, Son. All these distinctions, insignificant as they may appear from a purely philosophical point of view, demand attention because of the influence that they afterward exerted on Christian dogma, especially on that of the Trinity—

a dogma which, however specifically Christian it may appear to be, must still in all its essential features be traced back to Greek elements.

It is certainly remarkable that Jewish philosophy also developed on very similar lines, of course not with the purity and exactness of the Greek mind, but still with the same object in view,—to bring the reason and wisdom recognised in nature into renewed connexion with their supernatural Jehovah. Through the Proverbs of Solomon and similar works the Jews were well acquainted with Wisdom, who says of herself (viii. 22 ff.): “The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was.... Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth.... When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth.... Then I was by him, as a master workman: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him.” These and similar thoughts were familiar to Jewish thinkers (see Proverbs viii. and ix., Job xxviii. 12, Ecclesiasticus i. 4), and it was natural that, in coming in contact with Greek philosophy, especially in Alexandria, they should seek to recognise again this traditional conception of divine Wisdom in the Logos of Greek philosophers. We see this most clearly in Philo, a contemporary of Christ, of whom it is often difficult to say whether he reasons more as a Greek or as a Jew. While the Greeks had almost lost sight of the bridge between the world and God by abstraction, the Jews,

through mistaken reverence, had so far removed the Creator above his creation that on both sides the need of mediation or a mediator was deeply felt. The Jewish God was little better than the Epicurean. If the Epicureans taught that there probably is a God, but that the world is of no concern to Him, so among the Jews of the first century gnostic ideas prevailed, according to which not the highest but a subordinate God created and ruled the world. The task of creation seemed unworthy of the supreme God. Philo therefore seized the Stoic idea of the Logos or Logoi in order to bring his transcendental God again into relation with the visible world. The most important attributes and powers of God were hypostatised as beings who participated in the creation and government of the world. Philo's God first of all creates or possesses within himself a world that is conceived, an invisible world,¹² which is also called the world of ideas¹³ or the idea of ideas.¹⁴ These ideas are the types¹⁵ of all things, and the power by which God created them is often called *Sophia* or *Epistêmê*, wisdom or knowledge.¹⁶ This world of ideas in its entirety corresponds, as is readily seen, to the Greek Logos, the separate types to the Platonic ideas or the Stoic Logoi.

The entire Logos, or the sum of Ideas, is called by Philo,

¹² κόσμος νοητός, ἄόρατος.

¹³ κόσμος ἰδεῶν.

¹⁴ ἰδέα τῶν ἰδεῶν.

¹⁵ παραδείγματα.

¹⁶ Philo, vol. I, p. 106.

entirely independent of Christianity, the true Son of God, while the realised world of Christian teaching passes as the second Son. If the first Logos is occasionally called the image or shadow of God, the world of sense is the image of the image, the shadow of the shadow. More logically expressed, God would be the *causa efficiens*, matter the *causa materialis*, the Logos the *causa instrumentalis*, while the goodness of God is sometimes added as the *causa finalis*. At the same time we also see here the difference between the working of the Jewish and Greek minds. In the Old Testament and in Philo, the Sophia or wisdom of God becomes a half mythological being, a goddess who is called the mother, and even the nurse,¹⁷ of all beings. She bore with much labour out of the seed of God,¹⁸ as Philo says, the only and beloved visible Son, that is to say, this Cosmos. This Cosmos is called by him the Son of God,¹⁹ the only begotten,²⁰ while the first Logos is the first-born,²¹ and as such often coincides with the Sophia and its activity.²² He is also called the elder son,²³ and as such is distinguished from a younger son,²⁴ from the

¹⁷ τιθήνη.

¹⁸ *De Ebriet.*, VIII, 1, 361 f.

¹⁹ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ.

²⁰ μονογενής.

²¹ πρωτόγονος.

²² σοφία = θεοῦ λόγος.

²³ πρεσβύτερος υἱός.

²⁴ νεώτερος υἱός τοῦ θεοῦ.

real, visible world. But this divine Sophia may not, according to Philo, any more than God Himself, come into direct contact with impure matter. According to him this contact occurs through the instrumentality of certain powers,²⁵ which in part correspond to the Greek Logoi, and which in his poetic language are also represented as angels.²⁶ Philo says in plain terms that the eternal Logoi, that is the Platonic ideas, are commonly called angels.

We see by this in how misty an atmosphere Philo lived and wrote, and we may be certain that he was not the only one who in this manner blended the Jewish religion with Greek philosophy. In the Samaritan theology also, in Onkelos and Jonathan, traces of the Logos idea are to be found.²⁷ If we now observe in the Fourth Gospel, somewhere in the first half of the second century, this same amalgamation of Christian doctrine with Platonic philosophy, only in a much clearer manner, we can scarcely doubt from what source the ideas of the Logos as the only begotten Son of God, and of the divine wisdom, originally flowed. Christian theologians are more inclined to find the first germs of these Christian dogmas in the Old Testament, and it is not to be denied that in the minds of the authors of some of the books of the Old Testament analogous ideas struggle for expression. But they are always tinged with mythology, and among the prophets and philosophers of the Old Testament there is absolutely no trace of

²⁵ δυνάμεις.

²⁶ M. M., *Theosophy and Psychological Religion*, p. 406.

²⁷ Lücke, *Commentary on the Gospel of John*.

a truly philosophical conception of the Logos, such as confronts us as a result of centuries of thought among the Platonists and Neo-Platonists, the Stoics and Neo-Stoics. We look in vain in Palestine for a word like Logos, for a conception of the Cosmos as the expression of a rationally thinking mind, especially for the Logoi as the species of the Logos, as the primeval thoughts and types of the universe. It is difficult to understand why theologians should have so strenuously endeavoured to seek the germs of the Logos doctrine among the Jews rather than the Greeks, as if it was of any moment on which soil the truth had grown, and as if for purely speculative truths, the Greek soil had not been ploughed far deeper and cultivated more thoroughly than the Jewish. That Philo found employment for Platonic ideas, and especially for the Stoic Logos, nay, even for the Logoi, in his own house, and that other philosophers went so far as to declare the fundamental truths of Greek philosophy to have been borrowed from the Old Testament, is well known; but modern researches have rendered such ideas impossible. The correspondences to the Greek Logos that are found in the Old Testament are of great interest, in so far as they make the later amalgamation of Semitic and Aryan ideas historically more intelligible, and also in so far as—like the correspondences to be found among the East Indians and even the red Indians²⁸—they confirm the truth or at least the innate human character of a Logos doctrine. But wherever we encounter the word Logos outside of Greece, it is, and remains,

²⁸ M. M., *Theosophy and Psychological Religion*, p. 383.

a foreign word, a Hellenic thought.

Jewish philosophers, while they adopted the word, only filled their old skins with new wine, with the natural consequence that the wine burst the old skins; but without spilling. For it was this which, in the hands of such men as the writer of the Fourth Gospel, as Hippolytus, Clement, Origen, and the best of the church fathers, gave them the strength and enthusiasm to triumph over the world, and especially over the strongholds of heathen religion, and even over Greek philosophy. Had the Fourth Evangelist wished to say that Christ was the divine Sophia or the Shekinah, or, as in Job, Wisdom as the fear of God, would he have said, "In the beginning was the Logos, and the Logos became flesh, and lived among us, and we saw his glory, a glory as of the only begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth?" Why not take the facts just as they are, and why wish to improve that which requires no human improvement? The Christian doctrine is and remains what it is; it rests on an indestructible arch, supported on one side by the Old Testament and on the other by Greek philosophy, each as indispensable as the other. We forget only too readily how much Christianity, in its victory over Greek philosophy, owes to this very philosophy. Christianity could no doubt have achieved the moral and social regeneration of the people without these weapons of the Greek mind; but a religion, especially in the age of the downfall of Greek and Roman philosophy, must have been armed for battle with the best, the most cultured, and the most learned classes of

society, and such a battle demanded a knowledge of the weapons which had been forged in the schools of Greek philosophy. We cannot therefore put too high a value on the Fourth Gospel for a knowledge of the intellectual movement of that day. It is true that a religion need not be a philosophy, but it must not owe philosophy any answer. Small as may be the emphasis that we now lay on the Logos doctrine, in that period it was the centre, the vital germ of the whole Christian teaching. If we read any of the writings of Athanasius, or of any of the older church fathers, we shall be surprised to see how all of them begin with the Word (Logos) as a fixed point of departure, and then proceed to prove that the Word is the Son of God, and finally that the Son of God is Jesus of Nazareth. Religious and philosophical are here closely related. If the Christian philosophers gain on the one hand the divinity of the Son of God, on the other hand they retain the rationality of the created universe. That "the ALL is Logos, is Word or Reason," was at that time as much the battle cry of the prevailing philosophy as the contrary has now become the battle cry of the Darwinians, who seek to explain species, kinds, *i.e.* the Logoi, the divine ideas, as the products not of the originating Mind, but of natural selection, of environment or circumstance, of the survival of the fittest. And what is the fittest, if not the rational, the Platonic "Good," that is, the Logos? Why, then, turn back to the stone age of human thinking, why again turn nature into wood, when for thousands of years Greek philosophers and Christian thinkers have recognised her

as something spiritual, as a world of eternal ideas? How would such men as Herder, Schelling, and Hegel have smiled at such a view of the world! Yes, Darwin himself would be ashamed of his followers, for he saw, though not always clearly, that everything in this sphere presupposes something beyond, and in the loftiest utterance of his book he demanded an origin, yes, an originator. In the writings of the philosophical church fathers we constantly hear more of the Logos which was in the beginning, and through which all things were made, than of God, who in the beginning created heaven and earth.

And in this lies the great interest of the lost treatise of Celsus. Had he been an Epicurean, as Origen supposed, he would have had no personal interest in the Logos. But this Logos had become at that time to such an extent the common property of Greek philosophy, that the Jew, under whose mask Celsus at the outset attacked the Christians, could quite naturally express his willingness to acknowledge the Logos as the Son of God. Origen, it is true, says that the Jew has here forgotten his part, for he had himself known many Jewish scholars, no one of whom would have acknowledged such an idea. This shows that Origen did not know the works of Philo, who would certainly have offered no objection to such a doctrine, for he himself calls the Logos the first-born Son (υἱὸς πρωτόγονος)²⁹ When therefore Celsus, the heathen philosopher, admits through the mouth of the Jew that the Logos is the Son of God, he is merely on his guard

²⁹ M. M., *Theosophy*, p. 404.

against the identification of any individual with the Son of God and indirectly with the Logos, that is to say, he does not wish to be a Christian. At all events we see how general was the view at that time, that the whole creation was the realisation of the Logos, nay, of the Son of God; that God uttered Himself, revealed Himself, in the world; that each natural species is a Word, a Thought of God, and that finally the idea of the entire world is born of God, and is thereby the Son of God.

This idea of a Son of God, although in its philosophical sense decidedly Greek, had, it is true, certain preparatory parallels among the Jews, on which Christian theologians have laid only too great stress. In the fifth book of Moses we read, "You are children of the Lord your God." In the book of Enoch, chap. cv., the Messiah is also called the Son of God, and when the tempter says to Christ, Matthew iv. 1, "If thou be the Son of God," it means the same as "If thou be the Messiah."

The question is: Is this Jewish conception of the Son of God as Messiah the Christian as well? Such it has been, at least in one book of the Christian church, in the Fourth Gospel, and it found its expression first in the representation that Joseph was descended from David; secondly, in the belief that Jesus had no earthly father. We see here at once the first clear contradiction between Christian philosophy and Christian mythology. If Joseph were not the father of Jesus, how could Joseph's descent from David prove the royal ancestry of Jesus? And how does it follow from his being the Son of God that he

had no earthly father? Although he was the Son of God, he was called the son of the carpenter, and his brothers and sisters were well known. The divine birth demands the human; without it, it is entirely unintelligible. We know from the recently discovered ancient Syrian translation of the Gospels that the two streams of thought—that Christ was the Son of God, and that at the same time he had an earthly father,—could flow side by side, quite undisturbed, without the one rendering the other turbid.

It was the misunderstanding of the spiritual birth of Christ from his divine Father, and even from his divine mother (the Ruach, feminine, the holy spirit), that appeared to make it necessary to deny him an earthly father, and to assert that even his human mother did not conceive and give birth to him in the ordinary way. In the earliest period of the Christian church this was otherwise. It was considered at that time that in Christ the divine sonship went hand in hand with the human, and further that the one without the other would lose its true meaning. In a Syrian palimpsest, which was recently discovered in the convent at Mount Sinai by Mrs. Smith Lewis, and which, being written in the fifth century, presupposes a still older Syrian translator, we now see an original Greek text, probably of the second century, in which the Davidic genealogy of Joseph (Matthew i. 16) is really the genealogy of Jesus, for it is there said, “Jacob begat Joseph; Joseph to whom the virgin Mary was espoused begat Jesus, who is called Christ.” In the twenty-first verse it reads also, “And she shall bear him a son,” and in the twenty-

fifth verse, “And took unto him his wife, and she bare him a son, and he called his name Jesus.” This purely human birth of Jesus does not in any manner disturb the belief in his true divine origin, as the Son of God, as the first-born, the image of God, whose name was called the Word of God, *i.e.* Logos. On the contrary, it removes all difficulties with which so many Christians have contended, openly or in silence, when they asked themselves how it is possible to conceive a human birth, a human mother, without a human father. Even a deification of the mother, or even of the grandmother, such as is proclaimed by the Roman church, does not help any honest soul out of this mire which has been made by well-meaning but ignorant theologians. The old Christian philosophers, the old church fathers, saints, and martyrs, alone give us light and leading. As long as we conceive the divine sonship of Christ from the Jewish or Greek mythological standpoint, the true divine nature of Christ remains a mere phrase. When, however, we call to our aid the most orthodox and enlightened men of the second century, we find that such men as Justin, Tatian, Theophilus, Athenagoras, Apollonius³⁰ and Clement, to say nothing of Origen, believed in Jesus as the only begotten son of God³¹ in the sense which these words had at that time for every one who spoke and thought in Greek. This Son is often represented as distinguishable from the Father, but not as separable. Of a Son of God in the Jewish

³⁰ See the *Deutsche Rundschau*, 1895, XXXIII, p. 47.

³¹ μονογενῆς υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ.

sense of the word, of a descendant of David, the evangelist would never have said that all things were made by him. That could be affirmed only of the true Son of God, of the Logos, as the thought of God, which is uttered in the visible world.

In what sense this Logos was recognised in Jesus, is certainly a difficult question, and here the work of Celsus would have been of great use to us, for he expressly states that he has no objection to the Logos idea; but how philosophers could accept an incarnation³² of this Logos in Jesus, was beyond his understanding. It must be borne in mind that matter and flesh were held by Celsus to be something so unclean, that according to him the Deity could only operate on matter by means of an endless number of intermediaries (a true *fætus æonum*). This obscurity in the conception of Jesus as Logos by the Christian church is the reason why Celsus does not regard Joseph as the natural father of Jesus, but Panthera. Origen, of course, denounces this very indignantly; and the legend is nothing more than one of the many calumnies, which are nearly always to be traced among the opponents of a new religion and its founders. For the true nature and the divine birth of Christ, as Origen himself seems to feel, such a story would naturally have no significance whatever. It remains true, however, that no writer of authority of the second and third centuries has clearly explained in what sense the Christian church conceived Jesus as the Logos.

Three conceptions are possible. The first appears to have been

³² Ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο.

that of the Fourth Gospel, that the Logos, in all its fulness, as the Son, who in the beginning was with God and was God, by whom all things were made, became flesh in Jesus, and that this Jesus gave to those who believed in him as Logos the power themselves to become sons of God, born like him not of blood nor of the will of flesh, but of God. This may also explain why the legendary details of the birth of Christ are never mentioned in the Fourth Gospel. But however clear the view of the evangelist is, it nevertheless remains obscure how he conceived the process of this incarnation of an eternal being, transcending time and space and comprehending the whole world, which lived among them, which, as is said in the Epistle of John, was from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we have beheld and our hands handled, the Word of life,³³ etc. If we think ourselves for a moment into this view, into the unity of the Divine that lives and moves in the Father, in the Logos, and in all souls that have recognised the Logos, we shall comprehend the meaning of the statement, that whoever believes in Jesus is born of God, that whoever has the Son, has the life. To have the truth, to have eternal life, to have the Son, to have the Father, all this then signifies one and the same thing for the evangelist, and for the greatest among the ante-Nicene fathers.

But second, the conception that the Logos was born in Jesus might simply signify the same as Philo means, when he speaks of the Logos in Abraham and in the prophets. This would be

³³ λόγος τῆς ζωῆς.

intelligible from Philo's point of view in relation to Abraham, but clearly does not go far enough to explain the deification of Christ as we find it in all the Evangelists.

There remains possible therefore only a third conception. Philo knows very well that God has an infinite number of powers or ideas, all of which might be called Logoi, and together constitute the Logos. If now, among these Logoi, that of humanity were conceived as highest, and Jesus were regarded as the incarnate Logos, as the expressed and perfectly realised idea of man, all would be intelligible. Jesus would then be the ideal man, the one among mortals who had fully realised the idea of man as it existed in God, who on the one side was the son of God, on the other side the son of man, the brother of all men, if they would only acknowledge Christ as the Son of God, and emulate His example. This would be a correct and to us a perfectly intelligible and acceptable conception. But many as are the difficulties which this would remove, the objection remains that we can produce no historical proof of such a conception of Jesus as Logos of humanity. We are too poor in historical monuments of the first three Christian centuries to be able to speak with assurance of the inner processes of thought of even the most prominent personalities of that time. In everything, even in relation to many of the leading questions of the Christian religion, we are obliged to rely on combination and construction. Not only in the Evangelists, but in many of the church fathers, feeling overcomes reason, and their expressions admit but too

often of the most varied interpretations, as the later history of the church has only too clearly proved. Nevertheless we must endeavour to enter not only into their emotions, but also into their thoughts, and not believe that they used words without thoughts. I do not say that this is impossible. Unthinkable as it is, that words arise and exist without ideas, yet we know only too well that words become mere words, that they grow pale and die, and that they may finally become *vox et præterea nihil*. It is, however, the duty of the historian and especially of the philologist to call back to life such words as have given up the ghost. May what I have here written about the meaning of the Logos fulfil this aim, and at the same time make it clear that my desire for the discovery of the original text of the *Sermo Verus* was not an idle one. I have since learned that the same wish was expressed at an earlier date by no less a person than Barthold Niebuhr.

Chapter II.

The Pferdebürle (Horseherd)

A contributor to a periodical, which, like the *Deutsche Rundschau*, has a world-wide circulation, receives many letters from every corner of the earth. Many of them are nothing more than the twitter of birds in the trees; he listens and goes his way. Others contain now and then something of use, for which he is thankful, usually of course in silence, for a day and night together contain only twenty-four hours, and but little time remains for correspondence. It is interesting to note how radically one is often misunderstood. While one person anonymously accuses the writer of free thinking and heresy, another, and he generally gives his name, complains of his orthodox narrow-mindedness, hypocrisy, and blindness, which for the most part are attributed to poor Oxford, which, in foreign countries at least, still has the reputation of high church orthodoxy.

Yet, in spite of all this, such letters are useful, for they give us a knowledge of the public which we desire to influence, but which for the most part goes its own way, as it may find most convenient. Often such opinions come to us from the highest circles, at times also from the lowest, and it is difficult to tell which of the two are the more instructive. The problems of humanity in all their simplicity are after all the same for us

all, only they are viewed from different standpoints, and are treated with scientific or practical design. Members of the same profession readily understand each other; they employ their own technical language; but the unprofessional person often goes straighter to the heart of a question, and refuses to be satisfied with authorities or traditional formulas. These gentlemen it is often difficult to silence. We can easily contend with combatants who wield their weapons according to the rules laid down by the schools; we know what to expect, and how to parry a quart or a tierce. But an opponent who strikes regardless of all rule is often hard to manage, and we get a scar where it is least expected or deserved. In this wise I was served by an unknown opponent, who wrote to me from a place in the neighbourhood of Pittsburgh, not far from Ohio. He had read in his country solitude my article on Celsus in the *Deutsche Rundschau*. I know nothing of him, except what he himself writes, but the man interested me. After all, he says in his rude way very much the same things as others veil in learned phrases, and his doubts and difficulties are manifestly products of his heart as well as of his brain. The problems of humanity have troubled him with genuine pain, and after honestly thinking them out as well as he knew how, his convictions stand firm as a rock, and all who disagree with him seem to him not only fools, but unfortunately hypocrites as well. It is the misfortune of these lonely thinkers that they cannot comprehend how any one can hold opinions differing from their own without being dishonest. They cannot doubt that

they have been honest toward themselves, and as a consequence they cannot conceive how others, who are of a different mind, can be equally honest, and have come by their convictions by a straightforward path. Often it has been very difficult for them to break with their old faith, cherished from childhood, and they can only look upon it as cowardice and weakness if others, as they think, have not made or wished to make this sacrifice. But we shall let the horseherd who emigrated to America speak for himself.

I here print his letter exactly as I received it, without any alterations.³⁴ To me it seems that the man speaks not only for himself, but for many who think as he does, but who have not the ability nor the opportunity to express themselves clearly. I resolved, accordingly, to reply to him, and once begun, my pen ran on, and my letter unexpectedly covered more ground than I had intended. Whether he received the letter or not, I do not know; at least it must have been delivered to his address, for it was not returned to me. As I have not, however, heard from him again since February, and as he speaks in his letter of chest catarrh, which he hopes will in no long time bring him to a joyful end, I must wait no longer for an answer, and publish the correspondence in the hope that there are other “Pferdebürle” in the world to whom it may be of value.

³⁴ The original was, however, in German.

* * * * *

Pittsburgh, Pa., U.S., February 26, 1896.

Dear Colleague Max Müller:

“Your article in the *Deutsche Rundschau* on Celsus pleased me very much. What does it matter that you do not know me? I love you, and that gives me a right to address you. Why those vain regrets over the loss of the original? I would not stretch out my little finger for that Celsus; gone is gone like the lost parts of the Annals of Tacitus. More than likely both of these losses are to be ascribed to Christian fanaticism. Tacitus hated the Jews and the Christian sect derived from them. But, father Max, have we not much greater modern Celsuses and Tacituses, for instance David Hume and Schopenhauer? One would think that after the writings of these heroes positive Christianity would be an impossibility, and yet the persistence of error is so great that it may take several centuries more before the end of the Christian era is reached. Has there ever been anything in the history of the world more humiliating to the human understanding than this false and lying tale of the Christian religion? And is there anything in face of our knowledge, and of the realm of nature and of man's position in it, so unbearable, yes so odious, as the inoculation of such error in the tender consciousness of our school children? I shudder when I think that in thousands of our churches and schools this systematic ruin of the greatest of all

gifts, the consciousness, the human brain, is daily, even hourly, going on. Max, can you, too, still cling to the God-fable? The English atmosphere may serve as an apology. I could not strike a dog, but I am filled with bloodthirstiness toward the Jewish idea of God, the soul-phantom, and the hallucination of immortality. —The facts are so simple and clear; we are the highest existing forms of being in the animal world of this planet, and share one and the same nature with them. After death we are just as entirely reduced to nothing as before our birth. Nature tells us so plainly that the eternal conditions before and after our birth are identical.

“You ask me what this juggling means;
Take this short answer for your pains;
A game of chance from the eternal sea
By the same sea again will swallowed be.

—*Omar Khayyam (Bodenstedt).*

“But there is nothing in this world so false as the statement that good can ever come out of lies. Nothing in the world is so wholesome as truth, and truth is under all circumstances lovable, beautiful, and holy. Let us kneel before the truth of nature; nature cannot go astray. The distinction between good and evil, the evil heritage of Judaism, must fall in the end. Max, on quiet fields, in a mountain village of Silesia, I turned somersaults with joy at the discovery that this distinction is false, and that good and evil are identical. Max, you will not be angry with me? I am no learned fellow. I never attended a high school, and now I

rejoice at it, for what a German calls education can only serve to miseducate after all. Modern life is, for every open-minded person, the real high school. Max, all German savants, or, if you please, the majority of them, still labour under the delusion that the mind is a 'prius.' By no means, Max! Mind is a development, an evolving phenomenon. One would suppose it impossible that a thinking man, who has ever observed a child, could be of any other opinion; why seek ghosts behind matter? Mind is a function of living organisms, which belongs also to a goose and a chicken. Then, Max, why not be content with the limits of our knowledge, conditioned by experience, and give up this infamous romancing and tyrannical lying? The only affection which after fifty years I still cherish in my bosom is the sweet, unquenchable longing for that truth which fate has denied us.

"Max, you are by no means a free man, as I observe that the religious congress in Chicago impressed you very much.³⁵ I was present when the gayly dressed idolators from Cardinal Gibbons down to the stupid Shinto priest and the ill-favoured Baptist woman preacher sat together on the platform. It was very pretty and refreshing to look upon. They all talked nonsense and thought themselves very wise. There was but one exception which interested me: a yellow Buddhist monk inquired, what they thought of English missionaries, who in time of famine distributed bread to the poor, but only on one condition, that they

³⁵ *Deutsche Rundschau*, 1895, LXXXII, 409 ff., "The Parliament of Religions in Chicago," by F. Max Müller.

adopted the Christian superstition (indifferent whether honestly or not). The so-called 'Ethical Culture Societies' were not admitted by the committee to their congress of many religions. Max, it was pitiful to listen to the tittle-tattle that was read. None had learned beforehand what he wanted to say. *Dicere de scripto* is a shame for learned men. Only Cardinal Gibbons made a short, but colourless and dull extemporaneous address, which closed with the hypocrisy, what a great thing it is to keep oneself unspotted by this world. Accursed hypocrites, you yourselves are this world,—pitifully incarnate, it is true,—but you yourselves are this 'spotted world.' Why then still hold to the stupid distinction between good and evil, when we must admit that evil is essential to the very existence of things, and it would be impossible for the world to be, except as it is. We must be as we are, or we should not be at all. O beautiful longing for the primeval cause! Our ignorance is like evil, welcome. Let us, O Max, embrace the evil and ignorance, for if we were nothing but wretched cripples of virtue, and knew everything, we could not bear to live. As it is, we enjoy the spirited battle, and carry a sweet yearning in our breasts.

“Max, how are you personally? Have you a family? How is your health? How old are you? What relation do you bear to the learned set in England? Do you know the one German philosopher, with the courage of his convictions, Emil Dühring, in Berlin. I consider my knowledge of the writings of Dr. Dühring as the greatest gift of fate which has been vouchsafed

to me. The Jews and state professors hide his fame under a bushel. Oh! could not such independent men as you, honoured Max Müller, do something to bring this hero nearer to our young students? Dühring is the only writer of the present day who is to be enjoyed almost without drawback. What is to be said of our German set which is cowardly enough to repress so long the greatest mind which our century has produced? Were I in *your* position, how would I shout my 'Quos Ego' across to Germany! Please, my countryman, favour me with a few lines in answer to this effusion, in order that I may learn who and what you are. I am a Silesian horseherd (to be distinguished from the cowherds [*kühbürla's*], who till their field with pious moo-moos). Instead of attending a high school, I herded cows, ploughed, harvested, and helped to thrash in the winter. While herding I played the flute in the valleys of the Sudetic Mountains; and because the hands of the old village schoolmaster trembled very much, I begged of him to let me try to play the organ for him. 'Ah, you rascal, you can play better than I,' and he boxed my ears. Then my eldest brother took possession of the farm of seventy-five acres, gave us no compensation, and the rest of us lads had to pack off. We scraped together the passage money to America, and about thirty years ago I arrived here, where—I almost said God be praised—it has always gone pretty hard with me. Whether I fare well or ill is the same to me. I make no distinction, for in view of the rapid passing of life, it does not pay to give much thought to unnecessary distinctions. I never could

think of marrying, chiefly because the majority of the women in this country are shrews, cannot cook, and spend much too much money on the housekeeping. Besides, I have but a short time to live, for I possess a chest catarrh most loyally devoted to me, verging upon a perfect asthma, which I hope ere long will bring me to a joyful end. No doubt you will think what a disconsolate fellow this is who has written to me. O pshaw! I have always enjoyed the sunshine, and have sat alone hundreds of snug hours before my winter's companion, a small iron stove. During the last three nights I have repeatedly read through your article on Celsus, published in the *Deutsche Rundschau*, by a tallow-candle. In relation to your enthusiasm over the religious clap-trap in Chicago, I should like to observe that you would have been entirely in the right if you had represented the Exhibition as the greatest event of the past ten years. I came through Chicago in September, 1892, visited the prospective site of the Exposition, and found there a mere wilderness, scarcely a single building half finished, and it was a wonder of wonders what American enterprise and genius for organisation accomplished within the single intervening winter. One could scarcely recover from one's astonishment at what ten thousand labourers, urged on by the Yankee lash, could make ready in six months. 'There was money in the business,' and for money Jonathan works real miracles. Its like the world has never produced. The American is cut on a large pattern, and in spite of his political delusions I entertain the greatest hopes for the future of a country which is in such hands."

With many friendly greetings,

A Silesian Horseherd.

Emigrated to America.”

* * * * *

I answered my unknown friend and correspondent as follows:

* * * * *

“My Good Friend: You are an honest fellow, and I believe that I am one too, but our views are widely divergent. I am an old professor, am now seventy-two years old, or as has been often said to me, seventy-two years young. Like yourself I commenced life with nothing, and have laboured till I have become not rich, but independent. Here in wealthy England and in wealthy Oxford I am considered a poor man, but I am quite content, and call that riches. I have been married thirty-seven years, have one son, secretary to the Embassy at Constantinople, and a happily married daughter, with four grandchildren. Now you know all that you wished to know. Of my sorrow, the loss of two daughters, I must remain silent.

“All my life I have been engaged in investigating the past; I am a philologist and have therefore been also a student of history,

have especially studied the historical development of the various religions of mankind, and to this end have had to make a study of ancient languages, particularly Oriental languages. When one consecrates one's life to such a cause, one acquires an interest in and a love for the ancients, and a wish to know what has consoled them in this vale of grief. As you probably acquired a love for your colts, mares, and stallions, I acquired an interest in ancient and modern religions. And as you probably do not immediately kill or reject your horses because they possess a blemish, shy, kick, prance about, etc., so I do not immediately destroy all beliefs, and least of all my own mount, because they are not faultless, occasionally leave me in the lurch, behave foolishly, even dance on their hind legs with head in air; but I endeavour to understand them. When we understand even a little, we can forgive much. That many religions, including our own, contain errors and weak points, just as your horses do, I know perhaps even better than you. But have you ever asked yourself, what would have become of mankind without any religion, without the conviction that beyond our horizon, that is beyond our limit, there still must be something? You will answer, 'How do we know that?' Well, can there be any boundary without something beyond it? Is not that as true as any theorem in geometry? If it were not so, how could we explain the fact that mankind has never been without a belief in a world beyond, nor without religion, either in the lowest or in the highest levels.

“This horizon, this boundary, does not relate only to space,

as all will agree, even when carried beyond the Milky Way; it relates as well to time. You assert, 'The world is much older than we suppose;' you are right, but if it were a million years, still there must have been a time before it was even a day old. That also is indisputable. But when we reach the limit of our senses and our understanding, then the horse shies, then we imagine that nothing can go beyond our understanding. Now let us begin with our five senses. They seem to be our wings, but seen in the light they are our fetters, our prison walls. All our senses have their horizon and their limits; and the limits in the external world are our making. Our sight scarcely reaches a mile, then it ceases; we can observe the movement of the second hand, but that of the minute hand escapes us. Why? We might know that a cannon-ball passes through our field of vision, but we cannot locate it. Why not? Our sense of touch is also very weak and only extends over a very limited space. And as it is on the large scale, so is it with the small. We see the eye of a needle, but infusoria and bacteria, which we know to be there and which affect us so much, we cannot see. With telescopes and microscopes we can slightly extend the field of our perception, but the limitations and weakness of our sense-impressions remain none the less an undeniable fact. We live in a prison, in a cave as Plato said, and yet we accept our impressions as they are, and form out of them general notions and words, and with these words we erect this stately building, or this tower of Babel, which we then call human science.

“Yes, say certain philosophers, our senses may be finite and untrustworthy, but our understanding, and still further our reason, they are unlimited, and recognise nothing which is beyond them. Well, what does this most wise understanding do for us? Has not Hobbes long since taught us that it adds and subtracts, and *voilà tout*? It receives the impressions of the senses, combines them, feels them, comprehends and designates or names them after any characteristic, and when man has found words, then the adding and subtracting begin, but unfortunately also the jumbling and chattering, till we finally establish that philosophy and religion, which have aroused in so great degree your anger, and even your blood thirstiness. In spite of all it remains true that we can no more get beyond the horizon of our senses than we can jump out of our skins. You know that old saying of Locke's, although it is much older than Locke, that there is nothing in our intellect which was not first in our senses. And therefore, however much we may extend our knowledge by adding and subtracting, everywhere we feel in the end our horizon, our limitations, our ignorance, for with the limitations of our senses it cannot be otherwise. Invariably we receive the old answer, ‘You are like the mind which you conceive, not me.’

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