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CHAPTER I

THE MANICHAEAN LEGACY

The problem of Evil: the Judaeo-Christian and the dualist views. Manichaeism and neo-Manichaeism. Was Zoroastrianism a dualistic religion? Manichaeism in Syria, Armenia and Asia Minor before the seventh century. Sectarian movements in Asia Minor: Gnostics, Massalians, Encratites, Montanists, Novatians. Dualistic and Christian asceticism; Eustathius of Sebaste and the Desert Fathers. Influence of Manichaeism on Christian sects and its adaptation to Christianity.

Among the ever-recurring problems which have confronted human reason throughout the ages one of the most complex is that of the nature and origin of Evil. Whenever man seeks to support his religious faith by rational thinking, sooner or later he is inevitably led to the problem of reconciling the absolute qualities he attributes to God with the obviously limited and contingent character of the world he lives in. The importance and urgency of this problem is easily perceived by both speculative and non-speculative minds. The metaphysician and the theologian must explain the possibility of any relation between the Infinite and the finite, between the perfection of the Creator and the imperfection of the creature, between God and the world; and those men who, without being philosophers, believe that God is the source of all perfection and goodness and that He has created the world, cannot but recognize that in this world moral and physical evil—suffering, cruelty, decay, death—is abundantly present. How then can God, the Supreme Good, be the cause of Evil? Is it possible to escape the following seemingly logical conclusion: either God *is* the creator of Evil, in which case He is not the source of all perfection and hence not truly God; or else He is *not* the creator of Evil, and the origin of Evil must be sought outside God in some agent distinct from and opposed to Him? In the many solutions to the problem of Evil attempted by the human reason two main attitudes of mind, completely opposed to each other, are clearly distinguishable.

The first is based on the belief in a fundamental relation between God and the world created by Him; it was above all the faith of

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the Jewish people that the world, created by God, is good (Gen. i). The Book of Genesis describes the creation as an act of God's omnipotence, explains the appearance of Evil as a result of man's disobedience to the will of God, but gives no philosophical theory of the relation of the creature to the Creator. The direct contact between the Infinite and the finite, the Absolute and the contingent, has all the reality of a fact willed by God, but remains essentially a mystery, incomprehensible to the human reason. Judaism, throughout its history, always emphasized the profound nature of this relation between God and creation, recognized the work of Divine Providence in the world by stressing the positive importance of human history in preparing the Kingdom of God on earth and thus proclaimed the ultimate value and significance of this life. The Judaic view of life received a supreme confirmation and an all-embracing significance by the Incarnation of the Word, whereby God became flesh and entered human history. Christianity, by accepting and teaching the fundamental reality of God-man, recognized that the gulf between the Infinite and the finite had been finally bridged and that the created world into which the Creator Himself had entered was not only of positive value but even capable of sanctification. Henceforth to those who on account of the incommensurability of God and the material world denied the possibility of contact between them Christianity was able to reply that God created the world, became man and will raise up the flesh. Taking their stand on the mystery of the Incarnation, Christian theologians gradually built up a rational solution of the problem of Evil. Starting from the proposition that it is useless to seek for the origin of something without first defining its nature, they showed that the origin of Evil can be logically deduced from its nature. Everything that is, that has being, is good; and since everything that is derives its substance from God, it follows that Evil, as the opposite of Good, has neither substance nor being, nor positive reality (otherwise it would be good). Evil exists merely as a possibility of disorder: Evil is merely an accident of the substance, the *privation* of Good. Evil as the opposite of Good is not created by God, since nothing can generate its opposite; it is, strictly speaking, non-being. But Evil as the privation of Good, to exist at all, depends on the existence of substances in which this privation can become operative, substances which have being and

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hence are good. Thus, Evil exists in Good and depends for its existence on Good. Hence the cause of Evil is found to be in Good. This good is man's free will, which is a gift of God. Man's abuse of his free will, made possible by his finite condition, his state of inferiority as a creature in relation to his Creator, has resulted in his separation from God. This separation resulted in a state of privation, which has brought about disorder, suffering, corruption and the other manifestations of Evil.

In complete contradiction to the Christian view of Evil, which follows from the belief in the Hypostatic Union and the consequent value attributed to this life and to the body, we find another conception, already existing in many respects before the rise of Christianity. This conception, positing a fundamental opposition between Good and Evil, denied that God, who is essentially good, can be the author or the cause of Evil. The origin of Evil must be sought outside God. The seat of Evil is the visible, material world where disorder and suffering are dominant. The origin of Evil lies in Matter itself, whose opaqueness and multiplicity are radically opposed to the spirituality and unity of God. This view, which attributes to Evil the same positive and ultimate quality as is possessed by Good, thus leads to an inevitable *dualism* between God and the opposite principle of Matter. It seems that this dualistic cosmology was accepted, implicitly or explicitly, by most of the Greek philosophers before Plato. Plato himself, by tracing the origin of Evil to Matter, regarded as independent of God and outside His causality, could not escape at least a strong measure of dualism. But it is above all in Gnosticism, which arose in Asia Minor in the first century of our era, that we find the first systematic attempt to solve the problem of Evil in a strictly dualistic sense.¹ Behind the numerous discrepancies in the teachings of the different Gnostic sects there lies the basic idea that Matter, which is essentially evil, cannot be the creation of God. The Gnostics explained the origin of Matter either by regarding it as eternally evil in itself or by positing an intermediary between God and Matter, the

¹ It has hitherto been customary among historians and theologians to trace systematic dualism back to the Zoroastrian tradition of Persia. But, as it will be shown below, Zoroastrian 'dualism' differs from the Gnostic variety in some important respects and even contains several features incompatible with true dualism.

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Demiurge, one of the emanations (aeons) of God, whose nature had been basically corrupted by a transgression which caused his expulsion from the divine pleroma; this Demiurge created the material world, which consequently shares in his essentially evil nature. Man himself, in Gnosticism and in every truly dualistic theory, mirrors this fundamental dualism: his soul is of divine origin, his body ineradicably evil. The ancient Greek myth of the soul, come down to earth from its heavenly abode and imprisoned in the darkness of a material body from which it is ever seeking to escape in order to return to its home, is present, at least implicitly, in every form of dualism. The body is 'the tomb of the soul', the instrument whereby the Demiurge seeks to imprison light in the darkness of Matter and to prevent the soul from ascending back to the heavenly spheres. Every truly dualistic conception must see the origin of all misfortune in life in this world: for the birth of a man is the imprisonment of a divine or angelic soul in an unredeemable body. The only final redemption is in death, the escape of the soul from its prison and the return of a particle of light to the One Uncreated Light. This redemption, this escape is not the repentance for the moral evil committed by man: man cannot be really responsible for the guilt of sin if Evil is not due to the abuse of his free will but is rooted in his material body and is thus the inevitable concomitant of life itself. But though he is not responsible for the existence of Evil and has thus ultimately no free will, man can and must collaborate in the work of God in striving by his knowledge and his actions to purify his soul from the contagion of its material envelope. Purification as understood and practised by the consistent dualist implies forbearance from all actions which further the soul's imprisonment in Matter (especially from marriage and the procreation of children, which strengthen the power of Matter in the world) and a rigid asceticism, based not on the desire to discipline the flesh but on a radical hatred of the body.

In the history of the Christian Church dualism plays a particularly important part. It was largely the necessity of refuting the doctrines of the dualists that led the Christian theologians to formulate in a comprehensive manner their own teaching on the problem of Evil. Moreover, dualism gave rise to a large number of sects which during the whole of Christian antiquity and until the

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very end of the Middle Ages were fierce and dangerous enemies of the Church, and against which both in eastern and western Europe the Church was compelled to wage an almost ceaseless war.

The most rigid and classical form of dualism in historical times is to be found in Manichaeism, invented in Babylonia in the middle of the third century A.D. by the Persian Mani. Mani's celebrated teachings spread, in the course of the thousand years after their first appearance, over large parts of Europe and Asia, extending from the Pacific to the Atlantic Oceans. Their main tenets, which were to exercise an astonishingly potent influence on human thought, may be briefly summarized as follows.¹

From all eternity there exist two opposite and mutually independent principles, God and Matter, represented respectively on the physical plane by two 'natures', Light and Darkness. Our present world appeared as a result of an invasion of the realm of Light by Darkness, or Matter, and is a 'mixture' of both natures, an amalgam of divine particles of Light imprisoned in a material envelope. The future, or final, state of all things will come about as the result of the complete restoration of the original dualism by the absolute separation of both principles, which will render Darkness for ever incapable of further aggression. The present, in so far as it is a preparation for the future, consists in a gradual liberation of the particles of Light, consubstantial with God, which are the souls of men, from the prison of Matter, of the body. The separation of Light from Darkness is the work of God Himself, who desires that those elements which He lost when they became 'mixed' with Matter should return to their true abode, and is furthered by a series of 'evocations' (hypostatized divine attributes) which God sends into the world. One of these 'evocations', the Demiurge, created our visible world from materials belonging to the realm of Darkness: the purpose of this world is to be a prison for the powers of Darkness and a place of purification for the souls

¹ The best accounts of the Manichaean doctrines are to be found in the following works: P. Alfarcic, *L'Évolution intellectuelle de Saint Augustin* (Paris, 1918), pp. 95–213; H. H. Schaeder, 'Urform und Fortbildungen des manichäischen Systems', *Vorträge der Bibliothek Warburg* (1924–5), pp. 65–157; H. J. Polotsky, article 'Manichäismus' in Pauly-Wissowa, *Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft* (1935), Supplementband vi.

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of men, a kind of machine for the distillation of Light. In order to counteract this gradual liberation of the Light and to strengthen the fetters which bind the souls to Matter, the powers of Darkness created man who, by the duality of the sexes and his instinct of self-propagation inherited from the demons who generated him, is intended to perpetuate the imprisonment of the particles of Light in his own body. Man is thus in a microcosmic form the image of the macrocosmic 'mixture'. A further counter-measure on the part of God then became necessary: this is another 'evocation': Jesus, a Divine Being, descended from the realm of Light into the world and appeared on earth to bring the true teaching to man.¹ He gave to man the knowledge of his dual nature by showing him that his soul is one with the Divine Light which suffers in the whole world from its 'mixture' with Darkness and taught him the path of salvation; this path consists in carefully avoiding all those actions which harm the particles of Light contained in man and further the imprisonment of the soul in Matter. The method by which man must effect within himself the gradual separation of Light from Darkness, the breaking up of the 'mixture', forms the object of Manichaean ethics, based on a radical hatred of the unredeemable flesh and extreme asceticism.²

The history of Manichaeism, which until the latter part of the last century remained almost exclusively the domain of Church historians, has now become a subject which no scholar investigating conditions in the later Roman Empire and the Middle Ages can afford to neglect. The influence exerted by Manichaeism over the entire Mediterranean world and its repercussions on the religious, political and social life of medieval Europe are questions which—though still obscure in many respects—are increasingly

¹ The Manichaean conception of Jesus is typically docetic: if His role is to enable man to effect within himself the liberation of the particles of Light from the tyranny of the unredeemable flesh, He clearly cannot Himself have assumed a material body and been born of woman.

² The followers of Mani were divided into two main groups: the elect, or 'righteous', bound to a rigid observance of the ethical precepts of Manichaeism, and the catechumens, or 'hearers', who could make some concessions to the weakness of the flesh. To the elect, who alone were regarded as true Manichaeans, sexual intercourse, the eating of any animal food and the drinking of wine were strictly forbidden; the 'hearers' were allowed to marry, to eat meat and to drink wine.

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attracting the attention of historians. A particularly important aspect of Manichaeism is its direct connection with the problem of the Oriental influences exerted on medieval European civilization: Manichaeism was the last of these 'Oriental religions' which from the third century B.C. to the fifth century of our era penetrated into the Graeco-Roman world from the Near East—from Asia Minor, Egypt, Syria, Persia and Babylonia. Their common features were an alliance of faith and reason for the pursuit of ultimate knowledge, a strong syncretism ever ready to assimilate the most diverse religious and philosophical teachings and to adapt itself to the doctrines of other nations, and an earnest striving for moral purity by means of asceticism and mortification.¹

In the course of the present century two important discoveries of original Manichaean sources have resulted in a considerable development of Manichaean studies.² Between 1899 and 1907 excavations and searchings carried out in the oasis of Turfan, in Chinese Turkestan, by Russian, German, British, French and Japanese missions led to the discovery of a large number of manuscripts, identified as Manichaean.³ In 1930 a collection of Coptic papyrus codices was discovered in Egypt and identified as the remains of a Manichaean library, probably of the fifth century.⁴

¹ See F. Cumont, *Les religions orientales dans le paganisme romain* (4th ed.; Paris, 1929).

² An impetus was given to Manichaean studies in the second half of the nineteenth century by the publication of two oriental sources containing valuable information on Manichaeism, the *Fihrist* of the Arab writer An-Nadim and extracts from the writings of the Syrian Theodore bar Khonai. This led to the works of G. Flügel, *Mani, seine Lehre und seine Schriften* (Leipzig, 1862), and F. Cumont, *La Cosmogonie manichéenne d'après Théodore bar Khôni* (Bruxelles, 1908; *Recherches sur le Manichéisme*, vol. 1).

³ See F. W. K. Müller, 'Handschriften-Reste in Estrangelo-Schrift aus Turfan, Chinesisch-Turkistan'. (I) *S.B. preuss. Akad. Wiss.* (1904), pp. 348–52; (II) *Abh. preuss. Akad. Wiss.* (1904); C. Salemann, 'Ein Bruchstück manichaeischen Schrifttums im asiatischen Museum', *Zapiski imperatorskoy akademii nauk* (ist.-fil. otd.) (1904), vol. VI; W. Radloff, *Chuastuanit, das Bussgebet der Manichäer* (St Petersburg, 1909); A. von Le Coq, 'A short account of the origin, journey and results of the first Royal Prussian expedition to Turfan in Chinese Turkestan', *J.R.A.S.* (1909), pp. 299–322; E. Chavannes and P. Pelliot, 'Un traité manichéen retrouvé en Chine, traduit et annoté', *J.A.* (1911), pp. 499–617; (1913), pp. 99–199, 261–394.

⁴ See C. Schmidt and H. J. Polotsky, 'Ein Mani-Fund in Ägypten. Originalschriften des Mani und seiner Schüler', *S.B. preuss. Akad. Wiss.* (1933), pp. 4–90.

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The investigation and publication of these documents, which contain much historical, doctrinal and liturgical material of the greatest value—including some works attributed to Mani himself—is still far from completed.¹ But there can be no doubt that the study of these newly discovered sources will shed much new light not only on the teachings of Mani—which have already been investigated in some detail—but also on the far less known question of the spread and development of the Manichaean sect in the territories of the Roman Empire.

Manichaean dualism penetrated into Europe in two waves, separated by an interval of some three centuries. The first wave, that of primitive Manichaeism, spread between the third and seventh centuries over the whole of the Mediterranean world, extending from Syria, Asia Minor, Judaea to Egypt, northern Africa, Spain, southern Gaul, Italy, and penetrated into the two centres of Roman Christian civilization, Rome and Byzantium.² The second wave was that of a revived and in many respects modified Manichaeism, sometimes known as ‘neo-Manichaeism’.³ It appeared in Europe with the dawn of the Middle Ages, and between the ninth and the fourteenth centuries swept over all southern and part of central Europe, from the Black Sea to the Atlantic and the Rhine. A comprehensive history of the neo-Manichaean movement as a whole has yet to be written, and before any such attempt can be made it will be necessary to study in greater detail than has yet been done its origin and development in each of the European countries where it found a home, particularly in Bulgaria, Serbia, Bosnia, northern Italy and southern France.

¹ The following documents have so far been published: *Manichäische Homilien* (*Manichäische Handschriften der Sammlung A. Chester Beatty*, Bd 1), herausgegeben von H. J. Polotsky (Stuttgart, 1934); *Manichäische Handschriften der Staatlichen Museen Berlin*, herausgegeben in Auftrage der pr. Akad. der Wissensch., unter Leitung von C. Schmidt, Bd 1, *Kephalaia* (Stuttgart, 1935–7); *A Manichaean Psalm-Book* (ed. by C. R. C. Allberry; Stuttgart, 1938).

² For this first spread of Manichaeism in the Near East, in Africa and Europe, see E. de Stoop, ‘Essai sur la diffusion du manichéisme dans l’Empire romain’, *Rec. Univ. Gand* (38^e fasc., 1909); Alfarcic, *Les Écritures manichéennes* (Paris, 1918), vol. 1, pp. 55–71.

³ The doctrinal and historical continuity between Manichaeism and ‘neo-Manichaeism’ has been denied by some scholars. An attempt is made in the following pages to prove this continuity and to justify the use of the term ‘neo-Manichaeism’ to describe this second wave of dualism.

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The present book is concerned with the beginnings of neo-Manichaeism in Europe, with its penetration into the Balkans from the Near East in the ninth and tenth centuries and its development in Bulgaria between the tenth and fourteenth centuries, where its doctrine formed the basis of Bogomilism. A study of the Bogomil sect in Bulgaria may thus establish the first important link in the thousand-year-long chain leading from Mani's teaching in Mesopotamia in the third century to the Albigensian crusade in southern France in the thirteenth century.

Historians of neo-Manichaeism have generally taken the historical connection of this movement with the original teaching of Mani for granted. Evidence which points fairly conclusively to this connection is adduced in the following pages. On the other hand, in trying to establish the distant origins of neo-Manichaeism, some of these historians have not unnaturally been led to investigate the source and nature of those earlier dualistic theories which were accepted in the third century by Mani as the basis of his teaching. This question must now be briefly examined.

Unfortunately, the problem of the origins of Manichaeism proper, which has given rise to the most varied and even contradictory hypotheses,¹ though considerably clarified during the past twenty-five years, can still be solved only in a general manner. It is fairly certain that the dualistic doctrines which directly influenced Manichaeism arose in the Near East or, more precisely, in the borderland between the two great civilizations of the late classical period, the Hellenistic and the Persian. This borderland, stretching roughly from Egypt to Armenia, was already before our era the land *par excellence* of religious syncretism, and it seems an almost impossible task to trace with any degree of certainty the relations between the numerous dualistic sects in the highly intricate maze of the heretical movements in the Near East during the first centuries after Christ. It is, however, possible to identify the main currents of dualism which influenced the development

¹ Outlines of the history of Manichaean scholarship are given by U. Fracassini, 'I nuovi studi sul manicheismo', *G. Soc. Asiat. Ital.* (n.s., 1925), vol. 1, pp. 106–21; H. S. Nyberg, 'Forschungen über den Manichäismus', *Z. Neutestamentliche Wiss... Kunde der älteren Kirche* (1935), vol. xxxiv, pp. 70–91; H. H. Schaeder, 'Der Manichäismus nach neuen Funden und Forschungen', *Morgenland. Darstellungen aus Geschichte und Kultur des Ostens* (1936), Heft xxviii, pp. 80–109.

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of Manichaeism and elements of which can be found in the later neo-Manichaean movement, and thereby to correct a number of errors and misconceptions regarding the origin of neo-Manichaean dualism which are still to be found in the works of some scholars.

According to the view prevalent among past historians and not infrequently upheld by present-day scholars, the origin of Manichaean dualism is to be sought in the ancient Zoroastrian tradition of Persia. The acceptance of this view has led many historians to regard neo-Manichaeism as a distant product of those doctrines which were taught in Iran at least six centuries before our era, and to which Manichaeism is supposed to have merely given a more definitely dualistic bent.

The close historical contact between Zoroastrianism and Manichaeism from the very time of appearance of the latter is undeniable. Mani himself was a Persian by birth, it was in Persia that he made his first public appearance as a religious teacher, gaining some success even in court circles, it was to Persia that after a long period of exile in central Asia he returned, to perish in A.D. 276 in the hands of the Zoroastrian priesthood.¹ Moreover, as it will be shown, there are some marked resemblances in doctrine between Zoroastrianism and Manichaeism. These factors, to which must be added the striking similarities revealed by the Turfan discoveries between the religious terminology of Zoroastrianism and that of Manichaeism in central Asia, have led many scholars to regard Manichaeism as an offshoot of the Iranian tradition, or at the most as a kind of reformation of Zoroastrianism in a more rigidly dualistic direction.

A detailed comparison of the Zoroastrian and Manichaean doctrines does not lie within the scope of this book. But evidence of a general character, based on the results of recent Iranian scholarship, may here be adduced to show that though several features of Zoroastrianism may appear to warrant the epithet 'dualistic' generally applied to this religion, Zoroastrian 'dualism' as a whole and in its basic philosophical and moral conclusions not only does not correspond to the general definition of dualism as given above, but is even opposed to it in more than one respect. If accepted, this view will lead to the conclusion that although a number of

¹ See A. V. W. Jackson, *Researches in Manichaeism* (New York, 1932), pp. 3-6; A. Christensen, *L'Iran sous les Sassanides* (Copenhagen, 1936), pp. 174-93.