

DUALISM.

Dualism.

This generic word embraces all those systems of antiquity which strove to explain the contradictions manifest in the universe by tracing all things up to two irreconcilable principles. In respect to creation, it assigned to matter in some form an eternal independent existence, or, if not an existence independent, at least an existence as necessary to human thought as that of the Eternal Energy that moulds it. This is its differential element in relation to Pantheism. The one says that God IS in all things, or that all things are God; the other says that God MOVES in all things, either as their soul in their harmony or as their controller in their discords. Hence the distinction is a sound one that has termed Pantheism MONISM, and the system we now consider DUALISM. But we have many subdivisions of Dualism.

1. There is a sense in which the notion of a perpetual conflict pervaded all the religious ideas of antiquity. The sovereignty of one God not being firmly held, there was no settled theory either as to creation or as to the supremacy of one Being in the midst of its disharmonies. Even in the best philosophies the world was

In one
sense
Universal

the theatre of a mysterious struggle between light and darkness, good and evil, and the step was easy from this to a contest between powers above visible nature, and the evil that was manifest in nature itself. Running through all species of ancient Pantheism and Polytheism there is a stream of Dualism that cannot be hid. There is hardly a form of ancient mythology which did not, more or less distinctly, set over against each other two opposite forces, and distribute its higher powers accordingly ; though sometimes introducing a mysterious synthesis of the two by a profound instinct of the truth. We may go farther, and say that this idea unconsciously plays its part in almost every system of thought, Pantheistic or Polytheistic, in ancient and modern times.

**Persian
Dualism.**

2. The most remarkable expression of the principle, in itself the most elaborate and in its influences the most lasting, was that of Zoroaster, the reformer of Persian Dualism. Before his time Iranian religion was Polytheistic, with a tendency to divide all spiritual powers into two conflicting orders, good and evil ; his reform, about twelve hundred years B.C., aimed to bring back a more Monotheistic view, by making both Ormuzd and Ahriman spring from a higher existence, Zeruane Akerene, the infinite and timeless existence, and by teaching the future annihilation of evil. But, whatever the secret philosophy of this Persian religion might be, its open teaching and practical developments were Dualistic. How far its principles touched the question of the eternity of matter has been much questioned : probably that part of the system was derived rather from Buddhistic and Grecian speculation.

**Gnostic-
ism.**

3. Certainly the Dualism which we meet with in the Gnostic heresies of the early Christian ages was not more nearly related to Zoroastrianism than to the later speculations of Greek philosophy. From the former it derived the idea of an eternal opposition of light and darkness ; and of the Divine operation conceived as the emanation of rays or sons of existence decreasing in intensity until they reach the darkness of matter, where all evil is. From the latter it derived its philosophical idea of matter, as a certain indeterminate and undefinable principle, existent, and yet not existing, having in it the possibility of all things, not personal, without intelligence, and the material out of which

phenomena are woven. The creation in the Gnostic systems was not the work of the Eternal God. Nor was it eternal in any sense, save as spiritual existences for ever flow from the source of light. As matter it was already eternal, in the shape of the *κένωμα*, or empty void, outside of the *πλήρωμα*, constituting the perfect revelation of the God of true existence. The bridge between the Abyss or *βύθος* of substantial being and the material visible world was the fall of the last of the emanations into matter, and producing the Demiurgus (or Earth-former), or soul of the world. The infinite varieties of the Gnostic systems were efforts to account for the contact between the Eternal Spirit and matter, the seal of all darkness and source of all evil. The result was a Creator, who, first conceived of as unconsciously carrying out the Divine purposes, is at last made the diametrical opposite of God. The history of Gnosticism, in which the Dualist idea sought to Christianise itself, but in vain, which the Christian Church cast out, stage after stage, until its final overthrow as Manichæism, is worthy of profound study. But a few remarks in relation to our present subject are all that is necessary here.

(1.) The whole system was a vast and bewildering attempt to bridge over the impassable gulf between the Infinite and the finite. It was one contribution towards solving a problem that has taxed the human mind and baffled it from the beginning. Starting from a principle, the origin of which no man knows, that matter is inherently evil, the question was to account for its existence without disparaging the Supreme. It was assumed that the Eternal Being permitted an æon from Himself to transgress the *ὄρος*, or boundary of His own essence, and produce from matter, either by creating it, as some said, or quickening it as others, all creaturely existence. In human souls good and evil elements were mixed; and to undo the work of the Demiurge or creator of this confusion was the work of redemption. The task of the Christ, a new æon sent forth to assume the docetic semblance of matter, was to bring back the stray emanations that had become imprisoned in the world, to release man therefore from the body, his resurrection being "past already," and either to annihilate matter absolutely or to leave it to its empty chaos. The wildness of these systems was only equalled by their inconsistency. They

Its aim
to link
the In-
finite and
the Finite.

left the impassable *ōpos* where they found it. They sought to trace what, in modern times, would be called the law of continuity from the creation upwards to the Deity, or from the Creator downwards to the creation. And they thought they found it in the gradual attenuation of the light emanations until they passed over the boundary, and mixed with the darkness of matter beyond. But they were for ever vexed by two great anomalies. First, the Divine Pleroma was supposed to give out æons urged by love and desire which degraded the eternal essence down to the point of lusting after the material void. And, secondly, they either regarded that material void as eternally existing, or they supposed that the Supreme permitted the Demiurge to create it as the element of all future evil.

The
Christian
Scheme.

(2.) The sublime doctrine of the relation of the Eternal Son to the creature is the only secret of the continuity which is taught, the only bridge between the Creator and the creature. He is the Mediator—if such a use of the term may be allowed—between the Infinite and the finite, between God and the creature. With their eyes on the rising Gnosticism that was to disturb the Church St. Paul and St. John often use expressions which cannot be well understood but as laying down the truth concerning the Son, as the *Ἀρχηγὸς τῆς ζωῆς* and the *Ἀρχὴ τῆς κτίσεως*, which the dualistic heretics perverted. St John taught that *God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all*; but he also taught that Jesus was *the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world*, not, however, as an æon or emanation; for *in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*. Every word of this last sentence of St. Paul contradicts the Gnostic speculations as to the Demiurgus: the entire *πλήρωμα* of the Godhead, and not an emanation, dwelt in Him and did not descend upon Him bodily, and not in semblance. And He Who was the *Firstbegotten before every creature*, was such as the *Ἀρχή*, or Beginning, in Whom and through Whom creation began. *By Him were all things created*: as if in Him the Absolute God, or the Father, originated the creaturely existence, upholds it and administers it; by an incarnation before the Incarnation. We cannot conceive how the creaturely universe should have this specific relation to the Son, and how in Him the Infinite became finite, before God became flesh; but we must receive the mystery

Acts iii.

15.

1 John i.

5.

John i. 9.

Col. ii. 9.

Col. i.

15—20.

and adore it. Our Lord was the Firstborn of the new creation when He began its life in Himself; and He is the Firstbegotten, or the Beginning of the creation of God, which had its origin in Him.