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CATWG THE WISE

ALSO CALLED ST. CATWG

St. Catwg was born probably about the end of the fifth century, A.D., and the account of his life as recorded in the Cotton MS. in the British Museum (MS. Cotton. Vesp. A. XIV) is largely legendary in character. This life of Catwg (there spelt Cadoc) was printed, both in the original Latin and in an English translation, in *The Lives of the Cambro-British Saints*, which was published by the Welsh MSS. Society in 1853.

There are considerable differences in the accounts of the life of Catwg, as will be seen by comparing the following notes, which are largely derived from the Cotton MS., with the details given in the foreword to his writings collected in the *Myvyrian Archaiology*, that preface the writings themselves.

It is related that the Lord Gwynlliw greatly desired to wed Gwladys the daughter of Brychan, but her father refused his consent. Many messengers did the Lord Gwynlliw send to the father of the fair lady, but the answer to each of them was the same. Then the Lord Gwynlliw gathered together three hundred men and carried her off by force in order that he might marry her, and thus it was that she became the mother of Catwg.

Immediately prior to Catwg's birth, "four lamps were seen shining every night with great brightness at the four corners of the house where she remained until she brought forth her first-born son."

On the night of Catwg's birth, certain of his father's men, plundering in the district, carried off the cow of the Irish anchorite and teacher Meuthi.

That same night an angel appeared to Meuthi in a dream and directed him to go to the house of the Lord Gwynlliw where he

would find his cow, and furthermore, instructed him to baptize the new-born child, "in the laver of salvation."

The Lord Gwynlliw was also visited by an angelic messenger who told him that the holy man would come to him in the morning, that he was to receive him with great humility and respect, as was befitting to one so wise and holy, and entreat him to baptize his new-born son. The angel also instructed the Lord Gwynlliw that when the child had attained the age of seven years he was to send him to Meuthi to be educated. All this transpired as had been foretold.

Although baptized by the name of Cathmail, he was subsequently always called Catwg, sometimes given as Cadoc or Cadog, and in Latin, as Cadocus. There is no explanation of this curious fact in any of the records of his life.

"When the term of seven years was past, and all the allurements of the world being despised, the boy Catwg, with the consent of his parents, of his own accord, placed himself under the mastership of his baptizer Meuthi to be instructed in sacred literature and the liberal arts. And he willingly taking him, agreeably to the command of the angel, diligently instructed him in grammatical learning and other arts for twelve years at his college."

For that period of time, therefore, Catwg applied himself with fervour to the assimilation of the wise instructions of his teacher, always behaving with that humility which characterizes the true devotee.

It chanced one day at the end of the twelve years that the fire upon the hearth became extinguished, and Meuthi asked Catwg to procure live coals for re-lighting it from one of the servants, but his request was refused unless he would carry the live coals in his cloak. Desirous of obeying the behest of his master, and with perfect trust in the Lord, he transported the live coals thus, and the garment was not even singed.

When Meuthi beheld this miracle he said to Catwg: "My dear disciple, chosen servant of God, it is not lawful for me to teach thee any longer." At this Catwg was deeply grieved, fearing he had offended his master, but he was informed that he was now himself qualified to go forth and teach, under divine and angelic guidance.

He therefore reluctantly departed from his venerable teacher,

and wandered through the land until he came to a marshy valley in the domain of his uncle Poul of Penrynchen, who endeavoured to persuade him to return to a princely mode of life, and offered him lands and dignity. Catwg, however, would accept only this marshy valley named Llanccarfau. He was soon joined by a number of fellow students who, fired by his example, also renounced the life of the world for the life of the spirit.

Catwg was told in a dream that on the following morning he was to choose the site of his monastery, that he would come upon "a remarkable bristly white old boar," and that upon this spot he was to lay the foundation of his church; the boar when disturbed would move away, and upon the place where he paused and turned back, a dormitory was to be erected, and where he made a second pause, a refectory. He was also told that at the same time and place that he discovered the boar, a great white swan would be disturbed from her nest, and fly away.

All this transpired as had been foretold in the dream. "Then the blessed man marked, by the fixing of three twigs, the three stations of the boar; and he built at the first station a remarkable monastery of wooden materials, at the second a dormitory and at the third a refectory." The two latter were on that higher ground subsequently designated Llanfeithin.

When the monastery had been built many flocked to Catwg that they might benefit by his wisdom, for his fame as a teacher and holy man had become widely spread.

After Llanccarfau had been thoroughly established Catwg made a visit to Ireland, from which he returned with many new followers.

Shortly after this he went to Llanspyddid to study Latin after the Roman method with the celebrated rhetorician Bachan. While there a famine raged in the land, yet by another miracle, he and those with him were provided with food in plenty; for, as they sat at their devotions, a mouse came and deposited a grain of corn before him. This was repeated seven times. Catwg then caught the mouse and tied a long thread to one of its feet, so that it might be followed, which being done, he was led to a hole in a great mound, which being opened up by digging, disclosed a vast store-house of grain in a subterranean chamber; but who built that store-house, or how the grain came there, no one knew.

Having completed his studies with Bachan, Catwg returned to his beloved Llancarfan, only to find his principal monastery in ruins. He immediately, however, set to work to rebuild it, and before long, by the aid of still further miracles, it was restored to its former state.

It is further recorded that Catwg made visits not only to Scotland, but to France, to Rome and to Jerusalem; wherever he went miraculous events occurred, and in many places he founded churches and built abbeys. After each journey, however, he returned to his own monastery at Llancarfan, with which his name is most closely associated.

It was at Llancarfan that the great Bards Taliesin and Aneurin both studied with him,* the former for nine years and a day.

Towards the end of his life Catwg was said to have been transported from one place to another in a white cloud.

“The angel of the Lord appeared to the blessed Catwg, in a dream, on the eve of Palm Sunday, and said to him, ‘God has decreed that thou shalt now depart from the land of Britain.’ To which the blessed man answering said, ‘All things that shall be ordered me by the Lord, I will willingly perform, as far as I am able, but how I shall depart from hence, I do not at all know.’ To whom the angel answered, ‘To-morrow, after thou hast preached to thy people, a bright cloud shall cover thee, and thereon thou shalt be bodily carried to the city of Beneventum, and this will be a sign to thee; when thou wilt descend from the cloud, the abbot of that city will, in that same hour, be honourably buried in thy presence, and the monks will appoint thee abbot in his place.’”

Catwg then appointed his disciple Elli to rule over Llancarfan as his successor, and preached his last sermon to his people.

“While he yet spoke, lo, the brightness of God suddenly surrounded them, and all alike fell upon their faces to the ground, not being able to behold such a quantity of light. All having thus fallen, the blessed Catwg was taken off in a white cloud from their eyes, and disappeared; and immediately in the twinkling of an eye descended from the cloud in the city of Beneventum, and was seen amongst those persons who were burying the abbot; and wonderful to be said, he perfectly knew their language by the gift of the Holy Spirit and they his likewise.”

* See *Shrine of Wisdom*, No. 48, pp. 369-370.

“With common assent they willingly ordained him an abbot over them, and named him Sophias, for they saw that he was full of Divine wisdom.” Subsequently he became a Bishop.

It was the wish of Catwg that he should die a martyr’s death, and this was granted to him. He died at the age of 120 years, being slain by a Saxon spearman at the high altar of his church while administering the sacraments.

After his death many miracles were enacted at his tomb.

His date in the Welsh calendar of Saints is January 24th.

SUGGESTIVE INTERPRETATION

The accounts given of the life of St. Catwg, like those of the lives of many ancient saints, abound with references to miracles, and symbolical elements are also frequently used with a deep spiritual meaning underlying them.

The lights burning at the four corners of the house prior to his birth, might be taken to symbolize the manner in which Catwg was to illuminate the four quarters of the earth with his wisdom, for it was indeed to spread to the North, East, South and West.

His carrying the live coals in his cloak, marks the completion of his novitiate, and the dominance of the spiritual over the material.

The allegory of the boar has a mystical significance. The sixth of the Labours of Hercules is that of the Boar of Erymanthus,* and the attributes of conservation, continuity and preservation, characteristic of the fruits of this labour, have a fitting relation with the founding of a monastery. The boar which indicated to Catwg the site of the monastery may be regarded as signifying the stable Divine principle which guides those souls who enter upon the service of God and establishes them upon a firm foundation.

The three stations of the boar may be considered as representing three forms of man’s activities in connection with the religious life. Firstly the monastery: his devotional pursuits and the fervour of the spiritual life itself; secondly the dormitory: receptiveness, and the opening of the soul to illumination from above; thirdly the refectory: participation in spiritual as well as

* See *Shrine of Wisdom*, Vol. V, No. 20, p. 122.

material food, leading to mystical growth, suggested by the higher ground.

In Celtic mythology there are numerous references to boars, pigs, and swineherds, and many magical powers are attributed to them. Sometimes pigs and boars are represented as being indestructible, for when eaten they renewed themselves, whilst those who ate them were rendered free from disease, and were endowed with perpetual youth.

In the Black Book of Caermarthen there is a strange poem in which the Teacher addresses his disciple as a little pig: "Listen O little pig, thou happy little pig." And again at the beginning of each verse: "thou pig of peace," and "thou blessed pig."*

The swan, as in various myths, is closely associated with the sun and with illumination, and its whiteness can be regarded as symbolizing purity of intention.

The bringing of the seven grains by the mouse may signify the dispensation of Providential Grace to those who seek the Divine Mother in devotion. By this they are led at last to Her Celestial House of Plenty. It should be noted that the mouse brought the corn while Catwg and his followers were engaged in their devotions; while it was only when he actively sought to find the source from whence the corn had come that he was conducted to the store-house, which is symbolical of the store-house of Divine food upon the Mountain of the Gods.

The seven grains of corn also have a special significance, seven being always considered a sacred number. It is only after the seventh grain is deposited by the mouse in front of Catwg that he finds his way to the secret storehouse.

The incident of Catwg's transportation by means of the white cloud comes at the end of his long and holy life, when he can truly be considered as wise.

When the soul has attained union with the Divine, all spatial limitations are transcended, and so we may consider the white cloud as the power of pure reason and the Light of Truth, and conclude with a prayer that all men may be led to find that Truth, even as did Catwg the Wise, and that the world may thus be freed from all bondage.

* See Skene's *Four Ancient Books of Wales*, Vol. I, p. 482.

THE WISDOM OF CATWG THE WISE, ABBOT OF LLANCARFAN, AP GWYNLLIW, AP GLYWIS, AP TEGID, AP CADELL DEYRNLLWG; WHO WAS KNOWN ALSO BY THE STYLE OF SAINT CATWG. TRANSLATED FROM THE WELSH IN THE ARCHAIOLOGY OF WALES. VOL. II

TO THE COURTEOUS CAMBRIAN READER

BELOVED CYMRO,

This book is the production of Catwg the Wise, who was also styled Saint Catwg. It has long continued in high estimation in our country, for the wisdom which it contains. You will find many wise sayings in it, which were greatly esteemed in former times by the bards and other ancient writers; whence the author acquired the honourable appellation of Catwg the Wise. We have the following account of him in the ancient books of pedigree: Saint Catwg, Abbot of Llancarfan, son of Gwynlliw, Lord of Gwynllwg, ap Glywis, ap Tegid, ap Cadell Deyrnllwg. Gwynllwg was one of the principalities of ancient Glamorgan, and extended from the Tav to the Usk. Catwg was the eldest son of Gwynlliw, but would not accept of the government, which was his inheritance, because he chose rather to devote himself to the pursuits of knowledge and religion. In those times great errors had crept into the religion of our island, from the misapprehensions of a countryman of our own, whose name, in the British tongue was Morganin, and in the Latin, Pelagius. This was the reason why some of the few who had not embraced his erroneous opinions invited Saint Garmon, a foreigner of great piety and learning, into this country, who immediately on his arrival, preached the Gospel to the inhabitants in its original purity, and established schools in divers places, that others also besides his own countrymen might be instructed in everything that was necessary to make them disciples of truth. The principal schools were those of Caerllion upon Usk, Llancarfan, and great Llanilltud. The name of the first master appointed by Saint Garmon, to preside over Llancarfan school was Dyfrig, in Latin Dubricius. It is said that

he resided at Carnlloyd to the day of his death; where there is a well still called Dyfrig's Well. Dyfrig was afterwards made Bishop of Llandaf by his patron, Saint Garmon; and Catwg, upon that event, was placed at the head of the monastery of Llancarfan. The name of the monastery at Llancarfan was Llanfeithin; which still continues to be the name of the place. Catwg is said to have died at Llancarfan, in the hundred and twentieth year of his age; where he had been always highly respected for his learning, wisdom, and piety. It was in his monastery that most of the learned men of the age received their education. Dyfrig, Bishop of Llandaf, had so high an opinion of Saint Catwg's judgment, that he took him for his companion to every place, and consulted him upon every occasion where advice was necessary. This was the reason why Dyfrig would never quit his residence at Carnlloyd. Catwg was one of the best poets of the age in which he lived; and so much celebrated for wisdom, that his proverbs, counsels, and wise sayings came at last to be fixed in the memories and upon the tongues of the whole country, far and near; insomuch that every discourse, and every saying or proverb in the British language, were at last ascribed to Saint Catwg, until his reputation swallowed up every other. For this reason, it must be very uncertain, at this distance of time, whether many of those things which are contained in this volume, under Catwg's name, be really his or not. Besides the contents of my own copy of Catwg, I have inserted in this book whatever I found dispersed here and there under his name, in other ancient manuscripts.

There are many particulars transmitted down to us by ancient authors, concerning Saint Catwg; such as, that King Arthur appointed him one of his twenty-four knights. He is mentioned thus: The three upright knights of Authur's court were his principal judges. The first, Saint Catwg, son of Gwynlliw the Warrior, Lord of Gwynllwg in Glamorgan. The second, Blas, Earl of Llychlyn. The third, Padrogl Baladyrddellt, Earl of Cornwall. And such was the humanity, wisdom and probity of these men, that they never did a single act that was unfeeling or unjust, but always exerted themselves to redress the grievance of every man that suffered any injustice or wrong; and to protect the fatherless and the widow, the weak, the helpless, and the stranger, against oppression and violence; Blas by the law of the land;

Padrogl by the law of arms; and Catwg by the law of religion and the church.

Catwg was one of Arthur's three principal counsellors.* He is mentioned thus: The three wise men who were Arthur's principal counsellors: The first Catwg, Abbot of Llancarfan, son of Gwynlliw the Warrior. The second, Arawn, son of Cynfarch. The third, Cynon, son of Cludno, of Eiddin. These men possessed such excellent natural talents, so much judgment and foresight, that every enterprise succeeded where their advice was accepted, and miscarried where it was rejected.

The following entry also is found in the same old manuscript: The three wise bards of Arthur's court: Saint Catwg, son of Gwynlliw the Warrior; Taliesin, the chief of the bards; and Llewarch Hen, son of Elidir Lydanwyn. These were men of such excellent principles that they never admitted any thing into their poems that was not dictated by wisdom and virtue.

Towards the latter end of Catwg's life, many of the religious wished to remove to the Isle of Bardsey, that they might avoid the troubles which afflicted our country at that time, from the treachery and encroachment of the Saxons. Upon this occasion they applied to Catwg for his advice, which he gave them in metre. It follows here, translated into prose:

When the holy convent of Breff had heard Dewi's excellent sermon, and were hastening to the Isle of Bardsey, by the command of the ancient prophets, that they might avoid future trouble and molestation; Cybi desired them to inform him how they could live in the sea, and what sustenance they expected to find amidst the waves?

Catwg told Dewi, as the prophet Eli would have done; God grant you His good counsel both upon sea and land! Endure every hardship you may meet with; indolence and timidity will never do you any good. Wisdom is better than vain imagination; and it is better to labour than to suffer want. Faith and prayer and fasting will carry you through all your difficulties. It is a thousand times easier for God to bestow blessings upon man, than for man to pray for them, if there be any truth in the words of Generi, who assures us that there never was a man yet born, but God

* Catwg is also mentioned in the triads as one of the "three knights that kept the Holy Grail," and in this capacity he is supposed to be the original of Sir Galahad.

supplied him with food. If you serve God, He will become better and better to you; but if you serve the devil, he will use you worse and worse, for your pains. Fear nothing that shall happen to you, any more than the blackbird in the bush; she has no garden nor gardener, yet none more merry than she. Let us all pray to the invisible God, the Lord of all lords, that He will, for the sake of Jesus and His five wounds, carry us through all difficulties, and be always a guide to us; and then we shall never fear.

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Now, I have only to leave it to the courteous reader to form his own judgment of some things, nay, of every thing contained in the following pages. It is the practice of the world to impute to the wise and to the unwise more than is due to them. It does not signify to thee, my beloved Cymro, from whose mouth what is here written has proceeded, nor does it signify to any one what they are or whence they came; it being of importance only that they are wise and true. Enough for thee that they are so; follow his good advice; consider his instructions; and retain his important truths in thy memory; and God bless them to thee, and to all my countrymen, and, indeed, to every man in the world! And if the lives and manners of men shall derive any benefit or improvement from them, be thankful to God for it. Revere the name which thou wilt find immediately prefixed to Catwg's works; the second token of thy respect to Catwg himself, though thou be not a worshipper of saints. And lastly, I hope, that the reader will not form an uncharitable opinion of me, though he should chance to meet with some things in this book, which he may not entirely approve of. I will pray that God will bless him also, in all things, and that most freely from my heart.

THOMAS AP IEFAN.

TRE BRYN,
January 1st, 1685.

The following selections from "The Wisdom of Catwg the Wise" were translated from *The Myvyrian Archaiology*. For other writings of Catwg see *Shrine of Wisdom*, Vol. IX, No. 36, p. 396; Vol. X, No. 37, p. 12, No. 38, p. 40, and No. 39, p. 68.

TRUISMS OF CATWG

4.

God will never be displeased at your asking for justice :
God is never poorer for always giving :

No one goes to Heaven on account of his pedigree or his valour :
Happiness is not the nearer for any man's gaiety :

The wise man will not turn from the right how great soever the
difficulty :

Heaven is never the more confined on account of the numbers
that go there :

He, that keeps not the little, will never arrive at much :
The sweet can not be obtained without knowledge of the bitter :
Health is only sweet in the presence of sickness :

It is not with the mild that you will find the most kindness :
It is not from the fluent tongue that the greatest wisdom proceeds :
It is not in mirth that the lightest heart will be found :
A kingdom will never be obtained by idle dreams :

It is not among the poorest that you will find the greatest want :

Excuses will not be easy on the Mount of Light,
When Conscience shall be displayed in all its nakedness,
In the presence of God the Ruler of the Supreme Hosts,
And Christ judging it in the light of Justice.

APHORISMS

33.

There cannot be a man where there is no instruction.
There can be no instruction where there are no manners.
There can be no manners where there is no elegance.
There can be no elegance where there is no liberality.
There can be no liberality where there is no love.
There can be no love where there is no peace.

There can be no peace where there is no piety.
There can be no piety where there is no justice.
There can be no justice without bearing with weakness.
There can be no bearing with weakness without humanity.
There can be no humanity but from the gift of God.
There can be nothing from the gift of God but for the sake of good.
There can come no good from God but consistently with supreme wisdom.
There is no supreme wisdom in man but to love and obey God in every thing.

THE ORIGIN OF WISDOM

60.

There is no wisdom but from genius :
There is no genius but from practice :
There is no practice but from urge :
There is no urge but from love :
There is no love but from choice :
There is no choice but from discretion :
There is no discretion but from consideration :
There is no consideration but from goodness :
There is no goodness but from God.
Therefore there is no wisdom but from God.

THE ORIGIN OF GENIUS (AWEN)

61.

There is no genius but from wisdom :
There is no wisdom but from use :
There is no use but from exertion :
There is no exertion but from discretion :
There is no discretion but from understanding :
There is no understanding but from thought :
There is no thought but from urge :
There is no urge but from affection :
There is no affection but from goodness :
There is no goodness but from God.
Therefore there is no genius but from God.

THE ORIGIN OF VIRTUE

63.

There is no virtue but from love :
There is no love but from affection :
There is no affection but from pleasure :
There is no pleasure but from sympathy :
There is no sympathy but from meetness :
There is no meetness but from understanding :
There is no understanding but from motive :
There is no motive but from service :
There is no service but from goodness :
There is no goodness but from God :
Therefore there is no virtue but from God.

THE "WITHOUTS" OF CATWG THE WISE

92.

Without feeling, without sense.
Without sense, without understanding.
Without understanding, without reflection.
Without reflection, without knowledge.
Without knowledge, without patience.
Without patience, without instruction.
Without instruction, without virtue.
Without virtue, without God.
Without God, without every thing.

CIRCLE OF EXERTION

93.

Poverty causes exertion ;
Exertion causes prosperity ;
Prosperity causes wealth ;
Wealth causes pride ;
Pride causes contention ;
Contention causes war ;
War causes poverty ;
Poverty causes peace ;
The peace of poverty causes exertion.
Exertion turns round the same circle as before.

METAPHYSICS

III.

In every person there is a soul :
 In every soul there is intelligence :
 In every intelligence there is thought :
 In every thought there is either good or evil :
 In every evil there is death :
 In every good there is life :
 In every life there is God.

THE BARDIC DISCOURSE OF CATWG

180.

Do good once, thou wilt do it the second time from shame, and the third time from good will, and the fourth time from love; and after there come love for it, thou wilt ever do it; for there can be no end to habitual love: there is nothing that will not perish excepting love.

Whoever acquires a good word once will wish to preserve and maintain it; if he gets it the second time, he will rejoice on account thereof; if he gets it the third time, he will love it; and from loving it, he will strengthen himself in whatever deserves it: and, strong from love, he is strong eternally.

Shouldst thou desire to divert a person from his fault, bestow on him a good word again and again; for a man will be better by being commended, he will become worse by being censured. He that loves what pleases him in one thing, will seek it in another; he that obtains what pleases him in any thing, whatever it be, will keep it as long as possible: for a man will seek what may please him; because life is nothing without pleasure; and to every one what pleases him is congenial.

He that is called discreet will endeavour to be discreet; and if he endeavours, he will succeed; and by succeeding he will desire, and by desiring he will love; and by loving he will become fortified therein.

He that is judged discreet will endeavour to be discreet; from endeavouring comes fruition; from fruition hope; from hope a re-endeavouring; from a re-endeavouring comes knowledge; from knowledge general success: and there will be no want of power and success, where they are approached by hope, knowledge and exertion.

Wherever it may be desired to instil good, let the person be commended; commendation will rouse consideration; consideration will produce knowledge; knowledge will cause love; love will cause exertion; exertion will cause success; success will bring joy; joy will approach towards a re-possession; re-possession will recur to the paths of possession: and in the same sense as this is the old proverbial saying:

There can be no good without power:
 There can be no power without impulse:
 There can be no impulse but from love:
 There is no love without praise:
 There is no praise but from God.

Praise will accomplish three things; that is to say:

Make hope powerful;
 The reason inventive;
 And the labour easy.

From this let it be observed how a teacher should proceed towards his object, in the teaching and showing of goodly sciences, of all truth and excellence, and of every kind and appearance of goodness: that is, he ought:

1. To shew the kind and quality:
2. To commend goodness:
3. To excite love:
4. To fortify hope:
5. To make the advantage manifest:
6. To devise the means:
7. To enrich the understanding:
8. To support knowledge:
9. To demonstrate what is just and unjust:
10. To lead consideration:
11. To ease labour:
12. To strengthen truth:
13. To expose deceit:
14. To comprehend his sufficiency and means in all these things.
15. And that what he may impose on another be in every way agreeable.

THE WAY OF PURITY

The Blessed One reveals the Way of Purity under the heads of conduct, concentration, and wisdom. Thus does he indicate the three disciplines, a thrice noble religion, the advent of the threefold knowledge, the avoidance of the two extremes, and the adoption of the middle course of conduct, the means of escape from the lower and other states of existence, the threefold abandonment of the corruptions, the three corruptions, the three hostilities, the purification from the three corruptions, and the attainment of conversion and of the other degrees of sanctification.

And how?

By conduct is indicated the discipline in elevated conduct; by concentration the discipline in elevated thoughts; and by wisdom, the discipline in elevated wisdom.

By conduct, again, is indicated the nobleness of this religion in its beginning. The fact that conduct is the beginning of this religion appears from the passage, "What is the first of meritorious qualities? Purity of conduct." And again from that other, which begins by saying, "It is the non-performance of any wickedness." And it is noble because it entails no remorse or other like evils.

By concentration is indicated its nobleness in the middle. It is noble because it brings one into the possession of the sacred powers and other blessings.

By wisdom is indicated the nobleness of the end. The fact that wisdom is the end of this religion appears from the passage:

"To cleanse and purify the thoughts,
'Tis this the holy Buddhas teach,"

also from the fact that there is nothing higher than wisdom. It is noble because it brings about imperturbability whether in respect of things pleasant or unpleasant. As it is said:

"Even as the dense and solid rock
Cannot be stirred by wind or storm;
Even so the wise cannot be moved
By voice of blame or voice of praise."

From the *Visuddhi-Magga*

JAMES HARRIS

(1709-1780)

James Harris was born at Salisbury on July 20, 1709. At the age of sixteen he entered Wadham College, Oxford, and subsequently studied law at Lincoln's Inn. When he was twenty-four his father died, leaving him with independent means. He then gave up the study of the law and devoted himself to the classics.

"For fourteen years of his life he did little else than study Greek and Latin authors with great diligence, and his works show how deeply he was imbued with their spirit."

His work *Hermes* appeared in 1751. It is, as will be seen, a work on the universality of language, and the most important part of it, the first four chapters of the third book, will be here reprinted.

In 1761 Harris entered Parliament; in 1762 he became a Lord of the Admiralty and in 1763, Lord of the Treasury.

With all these public activities he still found time for his literary work, and in 1775 he published his *Philosophical Arrangements*, which is a commentary on Aristotle's *Categories*.

He was married and was the father of five children. His son James became the first Earl of Malmesbury, and in the preface to the collected edition of his father's works, he wrote: "The deep sense of moral and religious obligation which was habitual with him, and those benevolent feelings which were so great a happiness to his family and friends, had the same powerful influence over his public and his private life."

He was a contemporary of Thomas Taylor (1758-1835) though there is no record of their having met, yet this is of course possible, as Harris did not die until December 1780, at the age of seventy-one, when Thomas Taylor would have been a young man of twenty-two, who had just published his first book.

HERMES

OR A PHILOSOPHICAL INQUIRY CONCERNING
UNIVERSAL GRAMMAR

BY JAMES HARRIS

(BOOK III)

Chapter I.—Introduction—Division of the subject into its principal parts

Some things the mind performs through the body, as for example, the various works and energies of art. Others it performs without such medium; for example, when it thinks, and reasons and concludes. Now though the mind, in either case, may be called the principle or source, yet are these last more properly its own peculiar acts, as being immediately referable to its own innate powers, and thus is Mind ultimately the Cause of all; of every thing at least that is Fair and Good.

Among those acts of mind more immediately its own, that of mental separation may well be reckoned one. Corporeal separations, however accurate otherwise, are in one respect incomplete, as they may be repeated without end. The smallest limb, severed from the smallest animalcule (if we could suppose any instrument equal to such dissection) has still a triple extension of length, breadth, and thickness; has a figure, a colour, with perhaps many other qualities; and so will continue to have, though divided endlessly. But the mind surmounts all powers of concretion, and can place in the simplest manner every attribute by itself; convex without concave; colour without superficies; superficies without body; and body without its accidents; as distinctly each one, as though they had never been united.

Thus it is that it penetrates into the recesses of all things, not only dividing them, as wholes, into their more conspicuous parts, but persisting, until it even separates those elementary principles, which, being blended together after a more mysterious manner, are united in the minutest part, as in the mightiest whole.

Now if Matter and Form are among these elements, and deserve perhaps to be esteemed as the principle among them, it may not be

foreign to the design of this treatise to seek whether these, or any things analogous to them, may be found in speech or language. This therefore we shall attempt after the following method.

Every thing in a manner, whether natural or artificial, is in its constitution compounded of something common, and something peculiar; of something common, and belonging to many other things; and of something peculiar, by which it is distinguished, and made to be its true and proper self.

Hence language, if compared according to this notion to the murmurs of a fountain, or the dashings of a cataract, has in common this, that like them, it is a sound. But then on the contrary it has in peculiar this, that whereas those sounds have no meaning or signification, to language a meaning or signification is essential. Again, language, if compared to the voice of irrational animals, has in common this, that like them, it has a meaning, but then it has this in peculiar to distinguish it from them, that whereas the meaning of those animal sounds is derived from nature, that of language is derived, not from nature, but from compact.*

From hence it becomes evident that language, taken in the most comprehensive view, implies certain sounds, having certain meanings; and that of these two principles, the sound is as the matter, common (like other matter) to many different things; the meaning as that peculiar and characteristic form, by which the nature or essence of language becomes complete.

Chapter II.—Upon the Matter, or common subject of Language

The Matter of language comes first to be considered, a subject which order will not suffer us to omit, but in which we shall endeavour to be as concise as we can. Now this Matter is sound, and sound is that sensation peculiar to the sense of hearing, when the air hath felt a percussion, adequate to producing such effect.

As the causes of this percussion are various, so from hence sound derives the variety of its species.

Farther, as all these causes are either animal or inanimate, so

* Aristotle in *De Interpretatione* writes:—I say, according to compact, because no name or noun is from nature, but when it is fabricated is a symbol, for illiterate sounds signify something, such as the sounds of beasts, of which there is no noun (Chapter II).

the two grand species of sound are likewise animal or inanimate.

There is no peculiar name for sound inanimate; nor even for that of animals, when made by the trampling of their feet, the fluttering of their wings, or any other cause, which is merely accidental, but that which they make by proper organs, in consequence of some sensation or inward impulse, such animal sound is called a voice.

As language therefore implies that sound called human voice; we may perceive that to know the nature and powers of the human voice, is in fact to know the Matter or common subject of language.

Now the voice of man, and it should seem of all other animals, is formed by certain organs between the mouth and the lungs, and which organs maintain the intercourse between these two. The lungs furnish the air, out of which the voice is formed; and the mouth, when the voice is formed, serves to publish it abroad.

Here then, by means of certain different organs, which do not change its primary qualities, but only superadd others, it receives the form or character of articulation. For articulation is nothing else than that form or character, acquired to simple voice, by means of the mouth and its several organs, the teeth, the tongue, the lips, etc. The voice is not by articulation made more grave or acute, more loud or soft (which are its primary qualities), but it acquires to these characters certain others additional, which are perfectly adapted to exist along with them.

The simplest of these new characters are those acquired through the mere openings of the mouth, as these openings differ in giving the voice a passage. It is the variety of the configurations of these openings only, which gives birth and origin to the several vowels; and hence it is they derive their name, by being thus eminently vocal, and easy to be sounded of themselves alone.

There are other articulate forms, which the mouth makes not by mere openings, but by different contacts of its different parts; such for instance, as by the junction of the two lips, of the tongue with the teeth, of the tongue with the palate, and the like.

Now as all these several contacts, unless some opening of the mouth either immediately precede, or immediately follow, would rather lead to silence, than to produce a voice; hence it is, that with some such opening, either previous or subsequent, they

are always connected. Hence also it is, that the articulations so produced are called consonants, because they sound not of themselves, and from their own powers, but at all times in company with some auxiliary vowel.

There are other subordinate distinctions of these primary articulations, which to enumerate would be foreign to the design of this treatise.

It is enough to observe that they are all denoted by the common name of element, in as much as every articulation of every other kind is from them derived, and into them resolved. Under their smallest combination they produce a syllable; syllables properly combined produce a word; words properly combined produce a sentence; and sentences properly combined produce an oration or discourse.

Thus it is that to principles apparently so trivial, as about twenty plain elementary sounds, we owe that variety of articulate voices, which have been sufficient to explain the sentiments of so innumerable a multitude, as all the present and past generations of men.

It appears from what has been said, that the Matter or common subject of language is that species of sounds called voices articulate.

What remains to be examined in the following chapter, is language under its characteristic and peculiar Form, that is to say, language considered, not as a sound, but as a meaning.

(To be continued)

SEED THOUGHT

There are three attributes which make up the essence of Divine Things and are constitutive of all the higher categories—Goodness, Wisdom, Beauty; and there are three auxiliary principles second in importance to these, but extending through all the Divine Orders—Faith, Truth, and Love. Faith gives all things a solid foundation in the Good. Truth reveals knowledge in all existence. Love leads all things to the Nature of the Beautiful.

Proclus.

EXTRACTS FROM THE VEDAS

THE GAYATRI, OR HOLIEST VERSE OF THE VEDAS

Let us adore the supremacy of that Divine Sun, the Godhead Who illuminates all, Who recreates all, from Whom all proceed, to Whom all must return, Whom we invoke to direct our understanding aright in our progress towards His Holy Seat.

.

What the sun and light are to this visible world, that are the Supreme Good and Truth to the intellectual and invisible universe; and, as our corporeal eyes have a distinct perception of objects illuminated by the sun, thus our souls acquire certain knowledge by meditating on the light of Truth which emanates from the Being of beings: that is the light by which alone our minds can be directed in the Path to Beatitude.

.

Without hands or feet He runs rapidly and grasps firmly; without eyes He sees, without ears He hears all; He knows whatever can be known, but there is none who knows Him: Him the wise call the Great, Supreme, Pervading Spirit.

.

Perfect truth; perfect happiness; without equal; Immortal; absolute Unity; Whom neither speech can describe, nor mind comprehend; all-pervading; all transcending; delighted with His own boundless intelligence; not limited by space, or time; without feet, moving swiftly; without hands grasping all worlds; without eyes, all-surveying; without ears, all-hearing; without any guide, understanding all; without cause, the first of all causes; all-ruling; all-powerful; The Creator, Preserver, Transformer of all things; such is the Great One: this the Vedas declare.

JEWELS FROM A DISCOURSE ON "THE LIGHT OF NATURE"

BY NATHANAEL CULVERWELL

The date of the birth of Nathanael Culverwell is not known. He entered Emmanuel College, Cambridge, as a pensioner in 1633, at about eighteen years of age. In 1636, he gained his degree of B.A., and in 1640 that of M.A. He was chosen a Fellow, and for some time before his death (which occurred not later than 1651) he was a regular preacher in the chapel of his college.

It is probable that Benjamin Whichcote* was his tutor, since he was a Fellow of Emmanuel when Culverwell entered it, and continued in that office until 1644. Certainly the young student must often have heard him preach, and the influence of the elder upon the younger man is clearly apparent in his writings. John Smith and Ralph Cudworth were also Culverwell's contemporaries at Emmanuel, and considering their kindred interests, they can hardly have failed to be friends.

His chief literary work, *The Light of Nature*, was first published in 1652, subsequent editions appearing in 1654, 1661, and 1669. It was again reprinted in 1857 by John Brown, D.D., of Edinburgh, and the chapter and page numbers here given are from this edition. Selections from this work also appeared in *The Cambridge Platonists*, by E. T. Campagnac, in 1901.

There are stamped and printed upon the being of man some clear and indelible principles, some first and alphabetical notions, by putting together of which it can spell out the law of nature. There are scattered in the soul of man some seeds of light, which fill it with a vigorous pregnancy, with a multiplying fruitfulness, so that it brings forth a numerous and sparkling posterity of secondary notions, which make for the crowning and encompassing of the soul with happiness. (Ch. VII, p. 81.)

The knowledge of God is an object fit to enamour all understanding; for the more any being is abstracted from materiality,

* See *Shrine of Wisdom*, Vol. VI, No. 24, p. 115.

the more it is refined from material conditions, the more graceful and welcome it is to the understanding.

The idea and likeness of all things is in the being of God. Thus God, looking upon His own omnipotency, knows all possibilities; viewing His own determinations, He sees all futurities; looking upon His own wisdom, He beholds all varieties, all degrees and differences of being, which yet put not least shadow of difference in Him; because the excellences of all beings are treasured up in Him only by way of transcendency, not by collection and perfection. (Ch. XI, p. 155.)

If men could but rightly interpret and comment upon Providence, what fresh discoveries, what bright displaying of Divine Reason would they continually meet withal! (Ch. XI, p. 161.)

The more men exercise reason, the more they resemble God Himself, Who has but few creatures that can represent Him in so bright an excellency as this—only angels and men; and therefore He expects it the more from them. And the more they exercise their own reason, the more they will admire and adore Him. For none can admire reason but they that use some reason themselves. (Ch. XI, p. 162.)

I shall need to say no more than this, that true religion never was, nor will be, nor need be, shy of sound reason, which is thus far “a directive light,” as that it is obliged by the will and command of God Himself, not to entertain any false religion, nor anything under the pretence of religion that is formally and irreconcilably against reason; reason being above human testimony and tradition, and being only subordinate to God Himself, and those revelations that come from God. Now it is express blasphemy to say that either God, or the Word of God, ever did, or ever will, oppose right reason. (Ch. XV, p. 218.)

Be open, therefore, ye everlasting doors; and stand wide open, ye intellectual gates, that the Spirit of grace and glory, with the goodly train of His revealed truths, may enter in! (Ch. XVI, p. 228.)

This Holy Spirit of God creates in the soul a grace answerable to these transcendent objects; you cannot but know the name of it—it is called Faith, “a supernatural form of faith,” which

facilitates the soul to assent to revealed truths; so as that, with a heavenly inclination, with a delightful propension, it moves to them as to a centre. (Ch. XVI, p. 228.)

Faith spies out the resurrection of the body, as reason the immortality of the soul. (Ch. XVI, p. 229.)

Only let thy faith triumph here, for it shall not triumph hereafter; let it shine in time, for it must vanish in eternity.

You see then that reason is no enemy to faith, for all that has been said of faith has been fetched out of reason. . . . Nature and grace may meet together, reason and faith have kissed each other. (Ch. XVI, p. 236.)

There can be no greater pleasure than of an understanding embracing a most clear truth, and of a will complying with its fairest good. . . . All pleasure consisting in that harmonious conformity and correspondency that a faculty hath with its object, it will necessarily flow from this, that the better and nobler any object, the purer and stronger any faculty is, the nearer and sweeter the union is between them—the choicer must be the pleasure that ariseth from thence. (Ch. XVII, p. 240.)

Mental and poetical delights, like the touches of the lute, make the sweetest and yet the stillest and softest music of all. (Ch. XVII, p. 247.)

The glorious and ultimate end which must fill and satiate the being of man, is the beatifical vision of God Himself. (Ch. XVIII, p. 267.)

Every being does naturally long for its own perfection and, therefore, a rational nature must needs thus breathe and pant after God, and the nearer it comes to Him, the more intensely and vehemently it does desire Him. (Ch. XVIII, p. 268.)

Such things as last long are perfected slowly, and such is happiness. (Ch. XVIII, p. 274.)

God therefore creates and prepares *lumen gloriæ* for the soul; that is, such a supernatural disposition in an intellectual eye, by which it is clarified and fortified, and rightly prepared for beholding the Divine essence; which makes Dionysius very fitly describe happiness by this “The soul’s sunning of itself in the light of glory.” (Ch. XVIII, p. 274.)

Though an eye be enabled to behold the sun, yet this does not make it all one with the sun, but it keeps its own nature.

Nor is this vision a comprehensive vision, for a finite being will never be able fully to grasp an infinite essence. It is true, indeed, it sees the whole essence of God, not a piece of His Face only, for all essence is indivisible, especially that most simple and pure essence of God Himself; but God Himself sees it; hence degrees of happiness spring; for the "light of glory" being variously shed amongst blessed souls, the larger measure they have of that, the brighter sight have they of the Divine essence. Several men may look upon the same face, and yet some that have more sparkling eyes, or that stand nearer, may discern it better; if a multitude of spectators were enabled to behold the sun, yet some of them, that have a more strong and piercing eye, might see it more clearly than the rest. In this glass of the Divine essence, glorified souls see all things else that conduce to their happiness. As God by seeing Himself, the cause and fountain of beings sees also all effects that come streaming from Him; so these also, looking upon the sun, must needs see his beams—they see the sun, and see other things by the sun; they see there *omnium rerum genera et species*, they there behold *virtutes et ordinem universi* . . . all that a glorified understanding sees, is in one twinkling of its eye, for its sees all by one single "idea," by the Divine essence. It forgets its wrangling syllogisms, it leaves its tardy demonstrations when it once comes to an intuitive knowledge. *Non movetur de uno intelligibili in aliud, sed quiescit in actu unico*. The soul rests and fixes itself in one act of perpetual enjoyment, and by this participation of simultaneity it partakes of eternity, for that is *tota simul* . . . But it is enough for us that an entire soul, a whole rational being, is united to its dearest, fairest, and supreme object, in a way of pure intuitive speculation, in a way of sweetest love and fruition. Nor could nature of itself reach this, for an inferior nature cannot thus unite itself to a superior, but only by His indulgence raising it above itself.

This "candle of the Lord" (reason) may shine here below, it may and doth aspire, and long for happiness; but yet it will not come near it, till He that lighted it up be pleased to lift it up to Himself, and there transform it into a star, that may drink in everlasting light and influence from its original and fountain-light.

(Ch. XVIII, p. 277-8.)

SOME FRAGMENTS ON THE BEAUTY OF VIRTUE AND OTHER KINDRED SUBJECTS TAKEN FROM PLATO'S "REPUBLIC"

(THOMAS TAYLOR'S TRANSLATION)

Can there be, to anyone who has eyes to see, anything more beautiful than the sight of a man whose beauty of soul is combined with outward beauty of form, the latter corresponding and harmonizing with the former, because it partakes of the same impression?

For it does not appear to me that whatever body is found, doth by its own virtue, render the soul good; but contrariwise, that a good soul, by its virtue, renders the body as perfect as may be.

For indeed vice can never at all know both itself and virtue. But virtue, where the temper is instructed by time, shall attain both to the knowledge of itself and depravity. The virtuous man, then, and not the wicked, it appears to me, is the wise man.

Ought not then our children to receive directly from their infancy an education more agreeable to the laws of the constitution? Because, if their education be such as is contrary to law, and the children be of such a nature themselves, it is impossible that they should ever grow up to be worthy men, and observant of the laws. But when excellent amusements are appointed them from their infancy, and when, by means of music (that is any art presided over by the Muses) they embrace that amusement which is according to the law (contrariwise to those others), this music attends them in everything else, and grows with them, and raises up in the city whatever formerly was fallen down.

This of all things is most to be studied, in what manner every one of us, omitting other disciplines, shall become an inquirer and learner in this study, if, by any means, he be able to learn and find out who will make him expert and intelligent to discern a good life and a bad; and to choose everywhere, and at all times, the best of what is possible, considering all the things now mentioned, both compounded and separated from one another, what they are with respect to the virtue of life. And to understand what good or evil is created by beauty when mixed with poverty, or riches, and with this or the other habit of soul; and what is effected by noble and ignoble descent, by privacy and by public station, by strength and weakness, docility and indocility, and everything else of the kind which naturally pertains to the soul, and likewise of what is acquired, when blended one with another; so as to be able from all these things to compute, and, having an eye to the nature of the soul, to comprehend both the worse and the better life, pronouncing that to be the worse which shall lead the soul to become more unjust, and that to be the better life which shall lead it to become more just, and to dismiss every other consideration. For we have seen that in life and in death, this is the best choice.

For, mighty is the contest, and not such as it appears, to become a good or a bad man: so as not to be moved, either through honour, or riches, or any magistracy, or poetic imitation, ever to neglect justice, and the other virtues.

That the soul is something immortal, both our present reasoning, and others, too, oblige us to own: but in order to know what kind of being the soul is, in truth, one ought not to contemplate it as it is veiled both by its conjunction with the body, and by other evils, as we now behold it, but such as it is when it becomes pure. As such it must by reasoning be fully contemplated; and he who does this will find it far more beautiful, and will more plainly see through justice and injustice, and everything which we have now discussed.