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**When science entered the soul: German psychology and religion,
1890-1914**

Cornell, John Shanner, Ph.D.

Yale University, 1990

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**WHEN SCIENCE ENTERED THE SOUL:
GERMAN PSYCHOLOGY AND RELIGION, 1890-1914**

**A Dissertation
Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of
Yale University
in Candidacy for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

**by
John Shanner Cornell
December 1990**

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ABSTRACT

WHEN SCIENCE ENTERED THE SOUL: GERMAN PSYCHOLOGY AND RELIGION, 1890-1914

John Shanner Cornell
Yale University
1990

This dissertation examines the relationship between psychological and religious modes of thought in German-speaking lands in the decades around 1900. Using the methods of cultural history, it reconstructs the debate over whether psychology could be used to support or to attack religion. On the one hand, psychology was a new weapon in the nineteenth-century warfare between science and theology. It could diagnose, even ridicule, religious belief as an emotional phenomenon like any other. On the other hand, psychology offered a chance to put "spirit" back into materialist science. It accepted and confirmed the "facts" of religious experience.

Drawing upon a diverse literature associated with the German psychology of religion around the turn of the century, the dissertation explores a wide range of topics: spiritism and occultism as new versions of empirical science; sexual fantasies and fears associated with the use of hypnosis; the proliferation of psychobiographies of saints, of prophets, and of Jesus himself; Catholic confession and priestly celibacy as practices which damaged mental health and endangered public morals; the controversy over whether mental illness is a result of sickness or of sin; and finally, the attempts to combine psychiatry and pastoral care into new therapies of spiritual hygiene. Major figures appearing in the dissertation include Freud, Jung, Wilhelm Wundt, and the Swiss minister/analyst Oskar Pfister. Although collaboration between psychologists and religious figures did not last, the dissertation concludes that the dominant tone for the Germany psychology of religion between 1890 and 1914 was one of accommodation, not aggression.

Grossen Dank verdient die Natur, dass sie in die Existenz jedes lebenden Wesens auch soviel Heilungskraft gelegt hat, dass es sich, an einem oder dem anderen Ende zerrissen, selbst wieder zusammenflicken kann, und was sind die tausendfältigen Religionen anderes als tausendfältige Äusserungen dieser Heilungskraft! Mein Pflaster schlägt bei dir nicht an, deines nicht bei mir, in unseres Vaters Apotheke sind viele Rezepte.

—Goethe, quoted by Oskar Pfister, "Die psychohygienische Aufgabe des theologischen Seelsorgers"

for Priscilla

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I would like to thank those members of the Department of History at Yale who took an interest in my graduate program: Peter Gay, Donald Kagan, Frank Turner, and Henry Turner. My friend Dan Goldstein shared with me all the rigors of graduate school. William Sledge helped me work through the emotional issues which lay behind the academic ones.

To my advisor, Peter Gay, I am immensely grateful for intellectual guidance which has been at the same time keen and gentle. It is he who introduced me both to cultural history and to psychoanalysis. I would be hard put to say which has taught me, or which I have enjoyed, more. And finally to my wife, Priscilla Hollingsworth, to whom this work is dedicated, my thanks are boundless.

PREFACE

The issues which I wish to address first took shape while I was reading the published correspondence between Oskar Pfister and Sigmund Freud. As a young Protestant minister in Zurich at the turn of the century, Pfister often felt that he was unequal to the demanding task of *Seelsorge*--pastoral care or the "cure of souls." Members of his congregation would turn to him with their spiritual yearnings and sexual desires, their anxieties and sense of guilt. Pfister would listen to their stories; he would give them advice; but he was not really sure how to help them. Studying theology, he realized, had not prepared him to be a psychotherapist. As a *Seelsorger*, he found himself to be an analyst by default--but a woefully untrained one. What he needed was a psychological framework for interpreting his parishioners' experiences and ministering to their needs. Only with the help of psychiatry, Pfister decided, could he truly care for souls.¹

It was at this point early in his career that Pfister discovered Freud. For years he had been learning all he could about psychology from his Swiss colleagues. He was disappointed to discover, however, that their theories could not account for the complex behavior which he observed every day in his own church. It was the symptoms of his parishioners--like those of Freud's patients--which drove Pfister forward. Pfister first heard of Freud from the Zurich psychiatrist

¹Oskar Pfister, "Autobiographie," in *Die Pädagogik der Gegenwart in Selbstdarstellungen* (Leipzig: Felix Meiner, 1927), vol. 2, pp. 167-168.

turned out, she had been writing to herself.² In Jung's comments about the Freudian notion of repressed sexuality, Pfister immediately recognized what he had been looking for: a psychology of the unconscious in which the erotic life played a central role. Pfister decided to contact Freud directly. In January, 1909, he sent him an article he had just published on adolescent suicide, initiating a lively correspondence which would last until Freud's death thirty years later.³

Freud was intrigued. The idea of a religious-oriented analysis, or what Pfister in later years called "psychoanalytic *Seelsorge*" had simply never occurred to him. "I am quite struck," he wrote in his first letter of substance to Pfister in February, 1909, "that I myself have not given thought to the extraordinary assistance which *Seelsorge* can provide the psychoanalytic method. That is probably because the whole way of thinking is foreign to me as a wicked heretic."⁴ Freud envied Pfister his relatively "normal" analysands, whose capacity for sublimation was largely still intact. He also saw the advantages Pfister had in working on behalf of socially sanctioned, Christian values. Half jokingly, he congratulated the Swiss minister on obtaining the ideal conditions for therapeutic success.⁵

Encouraged by this response, Pfister proceeded to adopt psychoanalysis with all the force of a conversion. He used it in his church

²Ibid., p. 169.

³*Sigmund Freud, Oskar Pfister: Briefe 1909-1939*, ed. Ernst L. Freud and Heinrich Meng (Frankfurt: S. Fischer Verlag, 1963), p. 11. In English, see *Psychoanalysis and Faith. The Letters of Sigmund Freud and Oskar Pfister*, trans. Eric Mosbacher (London: Hogarth, 1963). Pfister's essay "Wahnvorstellung und Schülerselbstmord," *Schweizer Blätter für Schulgesundheitspflege* (1909) was reprinted in *Zum Kampf um die Psychoanalyse* (Leipzig: Internationaler psychoanalytischer Verlag, 1920).

⁴Freud/Pfister, *Briefe*, p. 13.

⁵Ibid., p. 11

as a method for counseling his parishioners, especially those who were caught in the spiritual and sexual maelstrom of adolescence. Pfister took pride in becoming one of the first lay analysts and among the few within the ranks of the clergy. He soon began to submit articles for publication in psychoanalytic journals, whether his own case histories or those of religious figures from the past. Throughout his career, Pfister was an outspoken and prolific advocate of the psychoanalytic movement. And he was immensely grateful to Freud for giving him what he had been looking for from the very beginning. "Psychoanalysis restored my esteem for psychology," Pfister later recalled, "after I had begun to have my doubts."⁶

For his part, Freud valued Pfister as one of his staunchest defenders. He was the only Zurich analyst to remain loyal during the split with Jung. The situation was not without its dangers. Beginning in 1910, Freud chided Pfister repeatedly for his reluctance to publish material which might affront the religious and moral sensibilities of his audience. Such scruples, Freud warned, were nothing less than Jungian deviations masking as prudishness and respectability.⁷ In the event, Pfister resigned from the Zurich Psychoanalytic Society in 1914. Five years later, he helped to found the rival Swiss Psychoanalytic Society.⁸ Finally in 1922, Pfister published *Love in Children and its Aberrations*, in which he unequivocally aligned himself with Freud's theories of infantile sexuality. Freud pronounced his satisfaction. It was an emotional as well as an intellectual turning point in Pfister's life. He wrote to Freud at the time that psychoanalysis "brought a sunrise without comparison in my life, and I cannot thank you enough for

⁶Pfister, "Autobiographie," p. 170.

⁷See for example Freud/Pfister, *Briefe*, pp. 36, 52, 65, 83-84.

⁸Pfister, "Autobiographie," p. 173.

everything which you have given me through your research and your personal kind-heartedness."⁹ It is difficult here to distinguish Pfister's enthusiasm for psychoanalysis from his gratitude to Freud. For the rest of his career, Pfister would maintain an unabashed transference on the master.

Their friendship was one of genuine warmth. Pfister traveled to Vienna to meet Freud shortly after their correspondence began in the spring of 1909. He became from that time on an especially welcome guest of Freud and his family. Anna Freud recalled that Pfister cut an unusual figure among her father's acquaintances. With his clerical dress and demeanor he seemed almost a "vision from a foreign world."

In him there was nothing of the impassioned, impatient attitude about science which caused the other pioneers of psychoanalysis to view the time spent at the family table as an unwelcome interruption of their theoretical and clinical discussions. On the contrary, his human warmth and enthusiasm, his readiness to take part in a lively fashion even in the little, everyday events, excited the children of the household and made him at all times a much-desired guest, and in his own way a uniquely human figure.¹⁰

Freud, too, conceded that Pfister was a breath of fresh air. Although he sensed that Pfister suffered beneath the surface, Freud openly admired his energy, optimism, and irrepressible bonhomie. "What a good, kind-hearted man is this Pfister," Freud exclaimed to himself in a letter to Pfister, "to whom every injustice is foreign, and with whom you cannot compare yourself."¹¹ Pfister's spiritual vocation did not keep Freud from

⁹Freud/Pfister, *Briefe*, p. 93. Pfister, *Die Liebe des Kindes und ihre Fehlentwicklung* (Bern: E. Bircher, 1922).

¹⁰Ibid., p. 10. See also Freud's jocular account of one of Pfister's visits in his letter of 16 August 1909, p. 25.

¹¹Ibid., p. 80.

valuing his qualities as a friend and colleague. When Freud would begin a letter to Pfister "dear man of God," there was more affection than irony.¹²

There was irony nonetheless--a result of the fact that in matters of religion there was an unbridgeable gulf between Pfister and Freud. This was not for want of trying on Pfister's part. He made every effort to translate psychoanalysis--and Freud along with it--into Christian, even Protestant terms. "The Reformation," he wrote his new mentor, "is at its basis nothing other than an analysis of Catholic sexual repression...."¹³ He also described *Seelsorge* as the natural therapeutic corollary to psychoanalysis. Patients could resolve the transference, Pfister hinted, by shifting their trust and affection from the analyst onto god.¹⁴ Pfister even tried to give Freud the credit for this spiritual discovery, calling the self-styled heretic a "sexual Protestant."¹⁵

Freud never relaxed his atheistic vigilance. It puzzled him that Pfister could mix science and religion so freely. He looked upon Pfister as a "remarkable man... a true servant of God, whose philosophy and existence seemed to me improbable."¹⁶ When the Zurich pastor persisted in combining psychoanalysis and *Seelsorge*, Freud was baffled. How could a secular psychology and a religious *Weltanschauung* coexist? At first Freud articulated the differences between himself and Pfister in terms of wry amusement. When Franz Deuticke agreed in 1910 to publish Pfister's study of the pietist Ludwig von Zinzendorff as "something from a completely

¹²Ibid., p. 26.

¹³Ibid., p. 14. See Chapter Four below, "Nature's Revenge."

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 12-13. See Chapter Six below, "Using the Transference."

¹⁵Ibid., p. 15.

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 20-21.

different circle," Freud could not resist adding mischievously to Pfister, "did he mean the author or the subject?"¹⁷

In the long run, however, the matter was of utmost seriousness. Freud, after all, viewed religion as a flight from reality, an elaborate form of wishful thinking. He told Pfister this over and over again, most notably in *The Future of an Illusion*, his major discourse on religion published in 1927. Here Freud indicated that there could be no compromise between a religious and a scientific point of view. Science might be a rough and narrow road, Freud observed, but it was the only one which could lead anywhere:

The riddles of the universe reveal themselves only slowly to our investigation; there are many questions to which science today can give no answer. But scientific work is the only road which can lead us to a knowledge of reality outside ourselves. It is once again merely an illusion to expect anything from intuition and introspection; they can give us nothing but particulars about our own mental life, which are hard to interpret, never any information about the questions which religious doctrine finds it so easy to answer. It would be insolent to let one's own arbitrary will step into the breach and according to one's personal estimate, declare this or that part of the religious system to be less or more acceptable. Such questions are too momentous for that; they might be called too sacred.¹⁸

Pfister responded to the challenge the following year with "The Illusion of a Future." The very timing and title of this essay suggests the degree of his reliance upon Freud, from whom he always took his cue. At the same time, there is a certain aggressiveness about Pfister's attempts to appropriate psychoanalysis--and Freud--for his own cause. It must have been exasperating for Freud to find himself characterized as an exemplar

¹⁷Ibid., p. 40.

¹⁸Freud, *The Future of an Illusion* (1927), *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (hereafter, SE), trans. under general editorship of James Strachey, vol. 21, pp. 31-32.

of "true Christianity." "Whoever fights for the truth so mightily as you, and struggles so heroically for the redemption of love," wrote Pfister, addressing Freud directly, "is... according to Protestant standards, a true servant of God."¹⁹ Freud would hear nothing of it. As far as he was concerned, analysis called for the recognition and renunciation of religious illusions. Pfister, however, failed to see any contradiction. And on this point, the ever loyal and admiring student of Freud's never gave in.

I began my research by asking many of the same questions that Freud did about Pfister. How could he manage to be a minister and a psychoanalyst at the same time? How could he reconcile the competing claims of a relentlessly secular psychology (as Freud conceived it) and transcendent faith (in Freud's terms, another illusion)? In short, what made such a combination of religion and psychology possible in the first decade of the twentieth century? Pfister presented a problem which Freud never solved--and one which I set out to understand.

As I began to read material from the decades around 1900 in which "religion" and "psychology" were juxtaposed, I was surprised to discover that Pfister was not alone. There were many contemporaries who experimented with various combinations of the two, entirely heedless of the inconsistencies which seemed so clear to Freud. In fact, the more I read, the more Freud seemed to be in the minority. There certainly were those, like Freud, who viewed psychology as the culmination of the longstanding warfare between science and religion. Analysis--or any of the myriad

¹⁹Pfister, "Die Illusion einer Zukunft," *Psychoanalyse und Weltanschauung* (Leipzig: Internationaler psychoanalytischer Verlag, 1928), p. 98.

forms of modern psychiatry--would drive superstition from its last stronghold, the mind. Employed in this manner, psychology could easily be used as a weapon to wound religious sensibilities. It offered an alternative to religion as a description of what goes on inside the mind. Whether by direct assault or by indirect siege, then, psychology threatened a religious world view.

But for most of Freud's contemporaries, the relationship between psychology and religion was far more congenial. They welcomed the various versions of modern psychology as a reversal of nineteenth-century materialist science. Psychology was a science of the soul--indeed, science *with* a soul. In sharp contrast to the physical and evolutionary sciences of the latter half of the nineteenth century, psychology seemed to confirm religious belief rather than to call it into question. Religion and psychology shared, after all, much of the same ground. Both attempted to account for the innermost human qualities--everything from temptation, sin, and the sense of guilt, to free will, pride, and consciousness itself. Both appealed to the invisible workings of the mind--a fact which left much room for speculation, confusion, and hybrid compromises. The new psychology of religion which emerged in Germany at the turn of the century took religious experience as its empirical starting point. Belief, it presumed, was not an illusion but an irreducible--and eminently desirable--fact of psychological life. What is more, faith could be seen as an important contribution to a stable, healthy emotional life, a natural defense against neurosis and the hustle and bustle of modern life. It made perfect sense, in short, for people like Pfister to combine psychiatry and religion. Faith--not the combatting of it--was good mental hygiene.

My task thus became to explain this generous mixture of psychology and religion in German-speaking lands in the decades around 1900. To do so, I needed to go further than Freud's puzzlement about Pfister. What does a mixture such as Pfister's tell us about late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century thought and experience? What was at stake--in both intellectual and emotional terms--in these new accommodations between psychology and religion? How did the sorting-out process take place? For those who addressed these issues at the time, the boundaries between the two were far more porous than Freud had ever imagined. The new science of psychology was often put to spiritual use in the most creative, remarkable, and revealing ways.

In order to explore these issues, I have made use of contemporary writing of a diverse array: publications in the fields of religious psychology, debates by psychiatric reformers on the role of pastors and priests in insane asylums, Catholic handbooks and anti-clerical tracts, popular literature on hypnotism and the occult, novels and plays. In short, I have drawn freely from any material in which psychology and religion could be found together in liberal measure. I hope thereby to give some idea of the full range of this open-ended discourse (there is no tidy body of material to examine) and to suggest some of the underlying (often unintentional, unconscious) issues at work.

Three caveats. I have not written a systematic intellectual history of German *Religionspsychologie*. The broad outlines of this story do emerge as part of my account. But I have not made any attempt to trace the specific lines of intellectual influence and institutional development. The points of contact between psychology and religion are simply too many and too dispersed throughout German culture. I have sought, instead, to

concentrate on those aspects of the public discussion about psychology and religion--and its attendant anxieties--which seemed to me most illustrative and suggestive.

Second, I have concentrated on the period between 1890 and 1914. It was during these years that the psychology of religion emerged as a distinct field of study and the implications of modern psychology began to be addressed by a wider public. I often reach well back into the nineteenth century for antecedents to this discussion of the relationship between psychology and religion. And occasionally I cite sources after the First World War, especially for figures like Jung and Pfister who were influenced by turn-of-the-century religious psychology early in their careers. But most of my material is drawn from the Wilhelmine era, when Protestantism, progress, and the new psychology all seemed comfortably aligned.

Finally, I have confined my account for purely practical reasons to the German cultural orbit--Austria, Switzerland, and Germany itself. The sorting-out process between science and religion played a conspicuous role elsewhere in Europe and America in the decades around 1900. In fact, much of the impetus for religious psychology came from across the Atlantic and (to a lesser extent) from across the Channel. The psychology of religion was a decidedly international affair at the turn of the century. Europeans and Americans read each other's works and seemed to be grappling with many of the same basic issues. The discussion in each case did take a distinct national or a distinct cultural cast. But I have not drawn particular attention to what is uniquely or peculiarly German.

I have divided the text into three parts--"Wishful Thinking," "Aggression," and "Accommodation"--each named for one of the major

qualities I wish to associate with the emergence of religious psychology around the turn of the century. Part One seeks to identify some of the motives and desires behind the pursuit of various "psychologies," more and less legitimate. I begin in the Introduction ("The Warfare between Science and Religion") by setting the psychology of religion in the larger context of the nineteenth-century debates over natural science and theology. Psychology in many ways reversed the longstanding hostility between the two, opening up the possibility of a reconciliation.

Chapters One and Two explore the dense, pseudo-scientific atmosphere of spiritism and occultism in which much of the German discussion about psychology and religion took place. Chapter One ("Seeing is Believing: The Empiricism of the Occult") traces the attempt to construct an alternative version of empirical science, one in which a psychology of unseen spirits claimed to be more objective and more impartial than its "respectable" academic counterparts. Chapter Two ("Dirty Science: Hypnosis, Healing, and Taking Control") analyzes the unconscious imagery--much of it sexual--in the literature of hypnosis and the occult. The uncertain status of "spirit" in these psychologies left a lot of room for fantasies, fears, and what Freud referred to as "the omnipotence of the thought."

Part Two turns to the aggressive, anti-clerical qualities of religious psychology. Chapter Three ("Mysticism and Madness: The Diagnosis of Religion") describes the way in which psychologists tried to equate religious fanaticism both past and present with mental illness. Chapter Four ("Nature's Revenge: Catholicism and Sex") takes a closer look at the Protestant complexion of this new field of psychopathology. In particular, it examines the sexual diagnosis of Catholic institutions such as confession

and priestly celibacy. As with occult psychology, one can detect strong undercurrents of sexual speculation and animosity in the psychological discussion of religious experience.

Part Three complicates and balances this picture of religious psychology by portraying attempts to merge psychiatry and *Seelsorge*. Chapter Five ("Sickness or Sin? Medical *versus* Moral Psychiatry") shows the success of psychiatric reformers in transforming the older view of insanity as a product of sin into the modern view of mental *illness*. At the same time, these reformers actually took control of insane asylums across Germany from their clerical counterparts. Chapter Six ("Spiritual Hygiene: Combinations of Psychiatry and *Seelsorge*") suggests that, despite this success, the desire to combine spiritual and medical approaches to mental illness remained strong well into the twentieth century. The therapies of Oskar Pfister and C. G. Jung both should be viewed in this context. The psychology of religion, I conclude ("The Future of an Illusion"), was at least as interested in accommodation as in aggression. Above all, this study is not so much about new *certainties* brought about by the emergence of modern psychology and its application to religion, as it is about the conceptual *uneasiness* which it generated. As Freud himself discovered in the case of the minister-analyst Oskar Pfister, sorting out the relationship between psychology and religion was no easy task.

PART ONE:

WISHFUL THINKING

INTRODUCTION

The Warfare between Science and Religion

Let empiricism once become associated with religion as hitherto, through some strange misunderstanding, it has become associated with irreligion, and I believe that a new era of religion as well as of philosophy will be ready to begin.

William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*

In the spring of 1907, while Oskar Pfister was still casting about for a psychotherapy which he could use in his church, the first number of a new journal appeared, the *Zeitschrift für Religionspsychologie*. Bearing the subtitle "Issues at the Border of Theology and Medicine," the *Journal for Religious Psychology* was a collaborative effort between doctors and clergy, between men of science and men of god. Its two editors represented the two sides of the enterprise. Johannes Bresler served as chief physician for the hospital in a small town near Halle, where the *Journal* was published; and Gustav Vorbrodt was a Protestant minister in Silesia. Those who contributed to the *Journal*, doctors and clergyman throughout German-speaking Europe, were embarking on a remarkable enterprise. They hoped to combine religion and psychology into a new field of study that was at the same time moral and scientific. As the editors put it in their opening statement for the *Journal*, psychology should be able both to make use of the techniques of natural science and to respect the integrity of the religious experience. The psychology of religion was just the kind of science that people were looking for:

There can be no doubt that our era surges mightily towards religion. Millions of souls are weary of doctrinaire ideas.... Speculation and dogma are not always able to amply feed the springs of true piety.... Religious

history or cognition theory, however much they deserve recognition... do not offer satisfaction in the long run. Religion lies in the depths of the soul. Only a psychology of religion can provide the scientific means to help our era, our people, and our qualms of conscience.¹

Bresler and Vorbrodt thus began the *Journal* with the recognition of religion as a fact of life, as a valuable and deep-seated part of individual experience ("Religion lies in the depths of the soul."). They made clear that the purpose of religious psychology was not to challenge religion, but to advance it. This new field, they announced, had a three-fold program. First, it would examine the religious life of individuals and of groups in all its variety and detail. Second, it would pay particular attention to "the anomalies of religious life," that is, to its more unusual or pathological forms. And finally, it would promote "a healthy cultivation of religion" or what the editors called a "'Psychagogik' of practical theology."² It was the task of religious psychology to promote both psychological empiricism *and* religious belief. The scientific study of religious experience, the editors claimed, should not interfere at all with the religious life itself. As Bresler aptly put it in his article for the opening number, science should be able to study the digestive system without ruining anyone's appetite.³

The *Journal* none the less began with some pretty strong stuff. The lead article, "Obsessive Actions and Religious Practices," was by Freud himself--his first foray into the psychology of religion. In it he traced a connection between the neurotic ceremonials of individuals and the religious rituals of social groups. Freud argued that both individual and

¹Johannes Bresler and Gustav Vorbrodt, "Zur Einführung," *Zeitschrift für Religionspsychologie* (hereafter, *Z. Religionspsych.*) 1 (1907), p. 1.

²*Ibid.*, pp. 1-4.

³Bresler, "Religiöses Schuldgefühl," *Z. Religionspsych.* 1 (1907), p. 35.

collective behaviors were attempts to ward off repressed impulses and to gratify an unconscious sense of guilt. The only difference between a personal neurosis and a public ritual lay in its private or its shared character. The underlying conception of religion was hardly a sympathetic or flattering one. "In view of these similarities and analogies," Freud concluded, "one might venture to regard obsessional neurosis as a pathological counterpart of the formation of a religion, and to describe that neurosis as an individual religiosity and religion as a universal obsessional neurosis."⁴ Freud wanted to put religious experience into totally secular psychological terms. This could hardly be reassuring to those who hoped that the new psychology would "provide the scientific means to help our era, our people, and our qualms of conscience."

Such were the wide-open possibilities in the early days of religious psychology that an article by Vorbrodts titled "Biblical Religious Psychology" immediately followed Freud's. A more incongruous juxtaposition could hardly be imagined. Vorbrodts advocated using the Bible as a sort of psychological handbook. It possessed "hidden sources" of psychological insight and an "inexhaustible fund of spiritual energy."⁵ It provided all the case histories which a religious psychology should ever need. Moreover, Vorbrodts argued, the Bible could only make sense to those who believed it, who accepted its testimony from the outset: "If one asks without a living experience of God if He exists, one can never find Him--like the mole who philosophizes in the dark.... We can only give an account of what we

⁴Freud, "Zwangshandlungen und Religionsübung," *Z. Religionspsych.* 1 (1907); "Obsessive Actions and Religious Practices," SE 9, pp. 126-127.

⁵Vorbrodts, "Biblische Religionspsychologie," *Z. Religionspsych.* 1 (1907), pp. 12-13.

experience...."⁶ The psychology of religion, Vorbrodt reasoned, must itself possess a religious character. Otherwise it could not make sense of its own phenomena. Vorbrodt wanted psychology to recognize its limits in the face of faith. "The fundamental error of our miseducated times," he concluded triumphantly, "is that we want to know more than what is empirical."⁷ Taking issue with Freud's linking of religion and neurosis, Vorbrodt thus equated "religious" with "empirical." Only if a scientist *accepted* religious experience could he begin to analyze it. Only the Bible was necessary, Vorbrodt argued, to develop a new, religious psychology. The mole needed to see the light in order to explain it.

The initial differences suggested by Vorbrodt and Freud were never resolved in the history of the *Journal*. Each contributor had a different idea of just how much religion and how much psychology the new field should include--not to mention the different *kinds* of psychology which could be employed. During most of the *Journal's* seven years from 1907 to 1913, the medical/scientific contributors and the clerical theological ones made a serious, sustained effort to find some common ground. Try as they might, however, they never really managed to see eye to eye. In the beginning, they put up with the differences and contradictions, hoping for an eventual meeting of the minds. But when that meeting never came, the theologians gradually took over and the scientists gave up. Starting in 1910, submissions from the doctors began to fall off; those from the ministers continued to increase. By the spring of 1913, the imbalance had become so great that the editors declared that the *Journal* could no longer continue along its original lines. There could no longer be any pretense at

⁶Ibid., p. 125.

⁷Ibid., p. 125.

collaboration.⁸ First by sheer weight of numbers and then by editorial fiat, the theologians took control. The "healthy cultivation of religion" prevailed in the end over a more rigorous, scientific psychology. During its publication from 1907-1913 (the high point of German religious psychology as a whole), the *Journal* failed to accomplish what it had set out to do, namely, to produce a new generation of "minister-doctors"--*Theo-Mediziner*--who would give equal consideration to both body and soul.⁹ From that time on, the different professions and interest groups involved in the collaboration went their own way.

It would be a mistake, however, to dwell only on the *Journal's* ultimate failure. It was, after all, a remarkable undertaking. Its contributors aimed at nothing less than a psychology which could observe and analyse religious experience without desanctifying it. The material which they published represent a fascinating attempt to synthesize belief and knowledge, religious experience and psychological insight. The attempt itself is as telling as its failure.

The *Journal* stands at the center of a much wider public discussion of the relationship between psychology and religion in the decades around the turn of the century. The issue was this: what happens when science enters the mind, the privileged domain of religious experience? Would it drive belief out--as science had been hounding religion throughout the nineteenth century? Or would it become a new kind of science, a *spiritual* science, whose subject, after all, was the human spirit? These were the unspoken questions which lay behind attempts like the short-lived *Journal* to establish a religious psychology.

⁸See for example *Z. Religionspsych.* 7 (1913).

⁹Bresler and Vorbrod, "Zur Einführung," *Z. Religionspsych.* 1 (1907), p. 3.

The sections which follow try to put these attempts in their larger intellectual context. When it emerged towards the end of the nineteenth century, psychology showed itself to be a new kind of natural science. Unlike other fields which reflected the prevailing assumptions of materialism and positivism, psychology did not necessarily declare itself opposed to the notion of "spirit." This made possible a temporary truce in the longstanding "warfare" between religion and natural science. This experiment in accommodation--inspired first by William James and other American psychologists of religion just after the turn of the century--did not last much more than a dozen years. And it was marred by a good deal of confessional wrangling. Protestants, in particular, made extensive use of psychology in their quarrels with "backward" Catholicism. But the importance of religious psychology lay in its reversal of the logic which, throughout the course of the nineteenth century, had driven science and religion ever farther apart.

Babylon and the Bible

On January 13, 1902, the prominent philologist Friedrich Delitzsch delivered a lecture to the German Orient Society---with Kaiser Wilhelm II in attendance--on the subject of recent excavations in the Middle East near the site of Old Testament Babylon. Just a quarter-century before, the banker-turned-archeologist Heinrich Schliemann had thrilled all Europe with his discovery of ancient Troy. By rescuing the Homeric heroes from the realm of myth and restoring them to that of historical fact, Schliemann

started an excavation fever. Classical Greece was taken out of poetic timelessness and put back into history.

The same archeological urge soon came over those who wished to establish the reality of the biblical past. Here the emotional stakes were understandably higher. Nothing less than the historical accuracy of the Bible was at stake. In his report to the Orient Society in 1902, Delitzsch was relaying the results of a recent German expedition to the site of ancient Babylon. Using the Bible as a virtual excavation guide, the team had brought to light numerous artifacts which dated from Old Testament times. It was widely anticipated that the discoveries at Babylon would confirm the veracity of divine revelation. In the case of Babylon, Delitzsch's audience expected to hear, archeology could work *for* rather than *against* traditional belief. History, that is, could come to the aid of a flagging faith.

Delitzsch soon disabused his audience. His report from the Persian trenches turned out to be a most unwelcome one. The religious beliefs and practices of the Jews, Delitzsch claimed, were neither unique nor original. Instead, they were all borrowed from the Babylonians, who had a much more extensive and sophisticated civilization than previously recognized. Substantial portions of Old Testament faith, including the Creation story, the Great Flood, the Ten Commandments, the Sabbath, even monotheism itself, Delitzsch argued, did not originate with God's chosen people. They were used goods by the time the Israelites got hold of them. No matter what the Bible said, Delitzsch declared, Babylon was there first. The Old Testament, in short, was the record of a second-hand religion.¹⁰

¹⁰Delitzsch, *Babel und Bibel* (1902), 3 ed. (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1905), p. 29.

Delitzsch felt the need to reassure his audience that he was no anti-religious fanatic. The discoveries at Babylon, he maintained, could have a wholesome effect upon the Christian faith, purging it of historical inaccuracies and purifying it of all extraneous elements. By digging beneath the encrusted layers of prejudice and unfounded tradition, archeology could help to find the solid, spiritual core of Christianity. It was part of a scholarly "cleansing process" by which true faith would become more inward, more spiritual, more truthful than ever before.¹¹

Repeated a month later at the imperial palace, Delitzsch's address on "Babel und Bibel" immediately provoked a storm of controversy. By using modern methods of archeological research to challenge the historical testimony of the Old Testament, Delitzsch had called into question--whether he wished to or not--the divine origin of the biblical text. His arguments were certainly not above reproach. Scholars in the field accused him of playing fast and loose with evidence. Others complained that he he was performing to an audience of untrained, unscholarly dilettantes.¹² As one wit put it, if Delitzsch had found copper wire in the rubble, he would have claimed that the Babylonians had invented the telegraph. If copper were *not* found, however, Delitzsch would take this as sure proof that the Babylonians had already invented the wireless!¹³

Most people, including the emperor, were not amused. Wilhelm II, not wanting his attendance at the lecture to be mistaken for approval,

¹¹Ibid., p. 44.

¹²e.g. Franz Kaulen, "Babel und Bibel," *Literarischer Handweiser zunächst für alle Katholiken deutscher Zunge* 40 (1902), p. 458. For a sample of the responses to Delitzsch and a bibliography to the debate, see the English version, *Babel and Bible*, trans. Thomas J. McCormack (Chicago: Open Court Press, 1906), pp. 117-119.

¹³H. Burger, "Referat," *Zeitschrift für Religionspsych.* 5 (1912), p. 241.

hastened to distance himself from Delitzsch's position. In an open letter to Admiral Hollmann, president of the German Orient Society, he complained that Delitzsch had outstripped his evidence and entered the realm of metaphysical speculation.¹⁴ It was Wilhelm II's opinion--altogether typical for the time--that scientific inquiry and religious beliefs should be kept entirely separate. "We carry on excavations and publish the results in behalf of science and history, but not to confirm or attack religious hypotheses."¹⁵ True faith, the emperor insisted, could not be shaken by archeological earthquakes. "Religion has never been the result of science, but the pouring out of the heart and being of man from intercourse with God."¹⁶ It was precisely this attitude--that belief was a natural and ineradicable part of emotional life--that made religious archeology a questionable business, but religious *psychology* a legitimate one.

There was really nothing new about the Babel-Bibel controversy of 1902-1903. In fact, it came at the end of a long tradition of historical criticism which could not accept the origins of scripture as wholly divine. Spinoza, the Deists, and Enlightenment *philosophes* had delighted in pointing out the contradictions and absurdities of biblical accounts. It seemed implausible to ascribe miracles to a God who created the laws of an orderly nature. The Higher Criticism of the nineteenth century reconstructed the piecemeal and multi-layered composition of the Bible. Its discoveries made any naive reading of the Bible untenable to educated readers. Some began to see religion as a reflection of humanity rather than of God. "[R]eligion," wrote Ludwig Feuerbach in *The Essence of*

¹⁴Quoted in Seligman Meyer, *Contra Delitzsch! Die Babel-Hypothesen Widerlegt* (Frankfurt: n.p., 1903), pp. 52-54.

¹⁵Delitzsch, *Babel und Bibel*, p. 121.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 124.

Christianity in 1841, "is man's earliest and also indirect form of self knowledge."¹⁷ Others, like the controversial theologian David Friedrich Strauss, despaired of finding any firm historical basis for the gospel accounts. "We are no longer Christians," he concluded in 1872, because the rituals and myths of early Christianity no longer hold any meaning for modern society.¹⁸ Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the comparative study of world religions, pioneered by Frierich Max Müller, further demystified the mystical. *Religionswissenschaft* was fast becoming a science like any other, subject to the same standards of evidence and argumentation. In this respect there was nothing new about Delitzsch's theories about Old Testament Babylon. All they did was to put more than a century of historical criticism right at the foot of the imperial throne.

As it turned out, the Babel-Bibel controversy was virtually the last of its kind. Typical of the nineteenth century warfare between science and religion, it pitted empirical evidence against divine revelation. An observer could choose one or the other, not both. Either the text of the Bible was dictated by God , or it was a human document subject to historical, philological, and archeological examination. In short, Delitzsch's talk *seemed* to offer a choice between the revealed God of the Bible, or the Babylonian God revealed by the archeologists.

But actually Delitzsch proposed a different choice: between a religion which depended upon material confirmation, and one whose spiritual qualities lay entirely outside the boundaries of historical research. Delitzsch did not want to prove that the Old Testament record was wrong.

¹⁷Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity* (1854), trans. George Eliot, repr. ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1957), p. 13.

¹⁸David Friedrich Strauss, *Der alte und der neue Glaube* (Leipzig: C. Hirzel, 1872), p. 90.

He wanted to show that its mistakes did not matter. This was his "purified" Christianity, a Christianity of the spirit--not so far, after all, from the emperor's heartfelt "intercourse with God." By the turn of the century, "modern" theology had largely accepted this division of labor between history and metaphysics. From now on, *Religionswissenschaft* in all its various forms would investigate the social and historical aspects of world religions. Theology would deal with the spiritual and transcendent.

The difficulty with such neo-Kantian solutions, of course, was where to draw the line. Not surprisingly, it could result in some tricky feats of apology. In a series of lectures delivered at the University of Berlin in 1899-1900, the prominent Protestant theologian Adolf von Harnack conceded that beliefs and rituals were conditioned by their social and historical context. It was this insight which had propelled the comparative study of religions into academic respectability. But Harnack was unwilling to let Christianity become just one among many world faiths. He insisted upon its privileged place as *the* religious truth. Historical explanation, Harnack maintained, could only go so far--at some point revelation, divine, absolute, and incontrovertible, must intervene. The gospel, he reasoned, might be a product of particular circumstances, but it must be true for all time.¹⁹ On this basis, Harnack roundly rejected proposals that Protestant theology be merged into general departments of comparative religion within German universities.²⁰ Harnack, like Delitzsch, thus managed to accept empiricism and revelation at the same time.

¹⁹Adolf von Harnack, *Das Wesen des Christentums* (1900), repr. ed. (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1985), pp. 16-17.

²⁰Adolf Harnack, *Die Aufgabe der theologischen Fakultäten und die allgemeine Religionsgeschichte* (Berlin: G. Schade, 1901), p. 16.

This retreat to transcendence--by Harnack, by Delitzsch, by their contemporaries, and by the Kaiser himself--is important because it suggests the slow, silent psychologizing of religion that had been occurring in the nineteenth century. In order to escape the aggressive pushing and pulling of modern scholarship--an uncomfortable situation indeed--they began to define religion in terms of inner spiritual experience. It was the *psychological* reality of religion, not its historical reality which mattered. Instead of risking disconfirmation at the hands of scholars who dug into texts or archeologists who dug in the ground, one could base religion on the fact of religious experience. This had the advantage of seeming, like archeology or philology, to be scientific and empirical. The psychology of religion would thus turn transcendent experience into a science. After all, the inner life of the individual believer offered ample confirmation of the truths of religion. There was no need to rely on external evidence for any more than mere historical details. In this respect, the debate over *Babel und Bibel* was over before it began. The warfare between science and religion was already shifting its ground from archeology to psychology, from uncovering religious history to uncovering religious experience. In short, the emphasis was moving from history to psychology. Here, to be sure, religion stood a better chance of holding its ground.

Protestantism and Progress

Historical criticism was not the only threat to traditional religion during the course of the nineteenth century. It was the discoveries in natural science which posed the main challenge. The debate over

evolution, in particular, sharpened the polemics between the proponents of progress, materialism, and science on the one hand, and those of tradition, idealism, and religion on the other. "I have dissected many corpses and have never found a soul," wrote Rudolf Virchow, the Berlin pathologist and co-founder of the German Progressive Party.²¹ It was with pronouncements such as these that the advocates of natural science continued the longstanding warfare between science and religion. Until the emergence of psychology towards the end of the nineteenth century, spirit seemed to be giving way to matter at every turn.

Much of the late nineteenth-century hostility between science and religion was nothing new. That God, too, must obey the laws of nature was a central tenet of the scientific revolution of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. That all phenomena could be reduced to fundamental principles of matter and energy--materialism, in short--was a principal theme of many Enlightenment *philosophes*, Denis Diderot and Baron d'Holbach among them. In its most radical form, natural science completely denied the existence of a separate spiritual realm, subject to separate spiritual laws. Nature--including human nature--was of a single piece. Despite the fact that empirical science was in the dark about a lot of things in practice, in principle it could eventually explain everything. There was no need to invent a god to account for what one did not know. Religion, then, according to the thoroughgoing positivist, was nothing more than an elaborate form of superstition. It took a temporary state of ignorance and turned it into a permanent metaphysics. The natural scientists of the

²¹Quoted in Wassily Kandinsky, *Über das Geistige in der Kunst* (1910), 10 ed. (Bern: Benteli, 1952), p. 37.

nineteenth century were confident that this ignorance would eventually be filled by positive knowledge.

As a result of dramatic progress in natural science in the nineteenth century, then, religion was on the defensive. The debate over evolution exacerbated this defensiveness--and confirmed the aggressive stance of the advocates of natural science. The latter were nothing if not confident. As Virchow proudly declared in his *Confession of Faith of a Modern Naturalist* published shortly after the formation of the German Empire in 1871, "The empire of facts has prevailed!"²²

Ludwig Büchner, author of the best-selling positivist manifesto *Force and Matter* (and first president of the German League of Freethinkers), led the ranks of the popularizers of Darwinism in Germany. Büchner did not shrink from drawing sweeping conclusions about religion from his observations as a scientist. "No one who recognizes formulas and articles of belief, whether philosophic or theological, can be a searcher after truth or a non-partisan judge over the opinions of others."²³ Blind faith, according to Büchner, was simply incompatible with positive knowledge. It came from a "vague fear of the unknown," a fear which natural science could dispel. In Büchner's view, religion was "nothing less... than a proof of ignorance and the lack of education."²⁴ Perhaps more than any other figure, Büchner posed the question of science and religion in an unrelenting either/or form. "[W]ith every forward step which science

²²Rudolf Virchow, *Glauben-Bekennntniss eines modernen Naturforschers* (n.p., 1873), p. 7.

²³Ludwig Büchner, *Der Mensch und seine Stellung in Natur und Gesellschaft* (Leipzig: Theodor Thomas, 1889), p. v.

²⁴Ibid., p. 260. See also *Gott und die Wissenschaft* (Leipzig: T. Thomas, 1897), p. 4.

takes, God or the appeal to supernatural causes takes a step backwards."²⁵ One had to make a choice.

As the nineteenth century progressed, the warfare between science and religion became a personal crisis of conscience for many people. It relentlessly set intellect against emotion, progress against tradition, empirical observation against blind faith. It is not surprising, given the terms of the debate, that science won many converts. There are numerous nineteenth-century biographies written in the form of a declaration of intellectual independence from the church. In a short autobiography entitled *From Belief to Knowledge*--an entirely typical nineteenth-century agenda--one German in the 1890's recalled that reading Strauss, Darwin, and Haeckel as a young man led him to reject religion in favor of science.²⁶ "Religion and Culture are two irreconcilable enemies," declared the writer Heinrich Hart in a biographical "Confession" for the *Freie Bühne* in 1891. "Now I rely on myself."²⁷ A little pride in one's new-found freedom of thought was not at all uncommon.

But most people managed to find some middle ground. Commenting on "The Atheism of the Modern Naturalist" in the *Journal for Religious Psychology*, Otto Meissner lamented that the rigorous pursuit of science

²⁵Büchner, *Über religiöse und wissenschaftliche Weltanschauung* (Leipzig: Theodor Thomas, 1887), p. 10. See also *Kraft und Stoff* (Frankfurt: Meidinger, 1855). For the spread of evolution in Germany, see Alfred Kelly, *The Descent of Darwin: The Popularization of Darwinism in Germany, 1860-1914* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina Press, 1981).

²⁶Kuno Freidank, *Vom Glauben zum Wissen: ein lehrreicher Entwicklungsgang getreu nach dem Leben geschildert* (Bamberg: Handelsdruckerei, 1896). For some revealing accounts of the Victorian crisis of faith, see Frank Turner, *Between Science and Religion: The Reaction to Scientific Naturalism in Late Victorian England* (New Haven: Yale, 1974).

²⁷Heinrich Hart, "Das Ende der Religion. Ein Bekenntnis," *Freie Bühne* 2 (1891), p. 8.

often seemed to result in the neglect or attrition of feeling. Meissner especially complained about the fact that scientists often experienced this turn from feeling--and from religion--not as a loss, but as an immense source of gratification and pride.²⁸ It was precisely this sort of dramatic choice between reason and faith which the *Journal of Religious Psychology* sought to overcome. The logic which pitted reason against faith, its contributors thought, needed to be reversed.

The prospects, at first, did not seem good. The either/or standoff between science and religion was reinforced by the *Kulturkampf* within Germany shortly after unification in 1871. The *Kulturkampf*--literally a "struggle of civilizations"--was not only a political campaign by Bismarck to isolate and punish Catholic opponents of empire, and to gain majorities for his government with the help of eager anti-Catholic liberals in the Reichstag. It was also a genuine attempt to put "progress" and national development above what was viewed as Catholic "backwardness" and special pleading. "All religions are by nature inimical to culture," wrote one scientist in the wake of the *Kulturkampf*, anticipating by more than a generation the language of Freud, "because they all subsist on illusions, and science is a sworn destroyer of illusions."²⁹ Religion, he observed with condescension (though he clearly had "backward" Catholicism in mind), belongs to "the childhood of the human race." Religious explanations were, so to speak, "fairy tales in the nursery of mankind."³⁰ The new science of

²⁸Otto Meissner, "Der Atheismus der modernen Naturforscher und seine psychologische Erklärung," *Z. Religionspsych.* 4 (1910), p. 305.

²⁹Emil Wahrendorp, *Katholizismus als Fortschrittsprinzip?*, 2nd ed. (Bamberg: Handel, 1897), p. 19.

³⁰*Ibid.*, p. 16. On both the political and ideological implications of the *Kulturkampf*, see David Blackbourn, *Populists and Patricians* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1987); Blackbourn, *Class, Religion and Local Politics in*

evolution--along with the new responsibilities of German nationhood--brought with it ever louder demands to grow up.

In the atmosphere created by unification and the *Kulturkampf*, the battle on behalf of modern science often took on a decidedly Protestant air. "In Catholicism," wrote Ernst Troeltsch, one of the most prominent--and most nationalistic--theologians around the turn of the century, "modernism is a side stream which springs up again and again and is always diverted. In Protestantism, it floods everything and pulls all religious thought, whether as friend or foe, into the torrent."³¹ Troeltsch was trying to account, as he saw it, for the greater receptivity of Protestants than Catholics to changes in modern life. Modernity introduced what Troeltsch called a new "mental complexity" into the world, a historicist temper "the disruptive and divisive effects of which are only too familiar to us today."³² Despite their disturbing implications for traditional religion, Troeltsch recognized in these advances "a liberation of the most tremendous forces and possibilities."³³ Catholics, on the other hand, were being held in superstitious abeyance by the clergy and the Pope. Like his colleague at Heidelberg Max Weber, Troeltsch identified a link between Protestantism and Progress. Unlike Weber, however, Troeltsch did not see the church withering away in an increasingly secular world. Instead, Protestant spirituality was not only in the past but also in the future of

Wilhelmine Germany (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), and Jonathan Sperber, *Popular Catholicism in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

³¹Ernst Troeltsch, "Protestantisches Christentum und Kirche in der Neuzeit," *Kultur der Gegenwart*, 2nd ed., 1 (1909), p. 623.

³²Ernst Troeltsch, *Protestantism and Progress: a historical study of the relation of Protestantism to the modern world*, trans. W. Montgomery (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1912), pp. 34, 21.

³³*Ibid.*, p. 21.

European culture: "There is no direct road leading from the civilization of the Protestant church," he wrote shortly after the turn of the century, "to a modern civilization independent of the Church."³⁴ In Troeltsch's vision, the warfare was not between science and religion at all. Protestantism, after all, was on science's side.

Ernst Haeckel, the most popular scientific writer and outspoken advocate of evolution in late nineteenth-century Germany, agreed. Haeckel's contribution to evolutionary theory was the neat formulation that ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny--i.e. that individual development resembles the ascent of the species in its succession of ever more complicated stages. Haeckel's theory satisfied not only the requirements of science, but also the urge to unify, the desire to bring everything under a single all-encompassing philosophy. Haeckel called this world-view "monism," a theory of a unified, harmonious Nature which was at least as spiritual as it was scientific.

At the center of Haeckel's monism was the notion that science could only gain credit at the direct expense of religion. The very identity of the nineteenth century, he wrote in *The Riddle of the Universe*, his best-known work which was first published in 1899, lay in the "sharpening of the opposition between science and Christianity." Haeckel viewed the eventual replacement of religious superstition by science as a "natural" and "necessary" development. "The untenability of all these mystical world-views," he declared, "has become apparent"--Christianity included.³⁵ Evolution had brought the warfare between science and religion to its

³⁴Ibid., p. 58.

³⁵Ernst Haeckel, *Die Welträtsel: Gemeinverständliche Studien über monistische Philosophie* (1899), repr. ed. (Stuttgart: Alfred Kroner, 1984), p. 393.

crisis, making clear "the unavoidable conflict between the received, dominant teachings of Christianity, and the clarifying, rational revelations of modern natural science."³⁶ As he proudly put it in his conclusion to *The Riddle of the Universe*, the best-selling piece of non-fiction in Germany up until the First World War, "the century of natural science has greatly diminished the number of seemingly insoluble mysteries of the universe."³⁷ If science could eventually solve all of nature's riddles, who needed religion any more?

But Haeckel, too, actually aimed most of his anti-clerical barbs not at religion in general but at the Catholic Church in particular. He dismissed the rituals of Catholicism as nothing more than superstitious anachronisms--"the adoration of old clothes and wax dolls."³⁸ He repeatedly drew upon examples from the Catholic past to illustrate the church's stubborn resistance to intellectual progress. Those periods in history which had been dominated by papal Catholicism deserved to be called the most mindless, barbaric, and dark. The success of Rome in gaining worldly power meant "the death of all free intellectual life, the retreat of all true science, the decay of all pure morality."³⁹ For Haeckel, it was the Reformation which finally cast some light upon this papal darkness. Luther may have been haunted by visions and preoccupied with theological absurdities, but according to Haeckel, at least he marked a return to the independent, inquisitive, scientific spirit. By creating modern science, it was the Reformation which paved the way for the nineteenth-

³⁶Ibid., p. 394.

³⁷Ibid., p. 465.

³⁸Häckel, *The Confession of Faith of a Man of Science* (1892), trans. J. Gilchrist (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1903), p. 81.

³⁹Häckel, *Die Welträtsel*, p. 399.

century confrontation between science and religion. For Haeckel as for Büchner and others, evolution was to be the decisive battleground. Haeckel was not surprised to see Catholicism digging itself in for the final siege. One expected popes to do battle against the modern world. But Haeckel expected something different from Protestants: he thought they would be able to transfer their allegiance from religion to science, from spirit to matter. Monism would be the logical conclusion of the spiritual revolution which the Reformation had begun.⁴⁰

The warfare between science and religion, then, was not such a clear-cut affair. The phrase itself is a compound of the titles of two prominent polemics on the subject, both by Americans--J.W. Draper's *History of the Conflict between Religion and Science*, and Andrew Dickson White's *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom*. Despite their aggressive titles, neither Draper nor White actually portrayed an uncompromising opposition between science and religion.⁴¹ Draper, for example, clearly targeted Roman Catholicism, not religion in general, as the problem. He portrayed the clerical hierarchy as an insidious attempt to constrain freedom of thought. Protestantism, by contrast, encouraged probing and independent observation--the key to modern advances. Between the two lay, as Draper put it, "a bitter, mortal animosity." The Reformation reintroduced the possibility that the basic "friendship" between science and religion--strained by misunderstandings--might soon be restored.⁴²

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 404-407.

⁴¹Peter Gay, *A Godless Jew: Freud, Atheism, and the Making of Psychoanalysis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), pp. 14-17.

⁴²J. W. Draper, *History of the Conflict between Religion and Science* (New York: Appleton, 1874), pp. 363-64.

White, too, suggested that modern science and theology were by no means incompatible. The discoveries of the nineteenth century might have called into question many traditional beliefs. But they were by no means incompatible with belief in God. Science, White argued, restored order to theological chaos, dealing with those questions of natural causation which never belonged to metaphysical speculation in the first place.⁴³ Science put religion--or at least Protestantism--on a firmer footing than ever before. For both Draper and White--as for many educated bourgeois of the nineteenth century--the warfare between science and religion was not absolute. Protestantism might well have a privileged role to play in reaching some sort of compromise. The easiest and most common solution to the warfare between science and religion--one which would play a conspicuous role in the psychology of religion--was to engage in confessional quarrels.

"Protestant" must be understood here in a broad sense. Many free thinkers were abandoning traditional churches and creeds for a religion of their own making. Their efforts should still be seen as part of Protestant culture, though not in any orthodox sense. This widespread cultural Protestantism--the belief in progress, a spirituality separated from things of this world, and, last but not least, a desire to recombine science and religion--was the basis on which the psychology of religion would be built.

In a work called *The Living Cosmos* published at the turn of the century, the writer, scientific popularizer, and one of the founders of the Berlin *Freie Volksbühne* Bruno Wille, constructed his own compromise between "mere science" on the one hand and spiritual idealism on the other. He advocated an inner "contemplative culture" which would smooth

⁴³Andrew D. White, *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom*, 2 vols. (New York: Appleton, 1896), vol. 2, p. 394.

the rough edges of modern life. Wille did not propose turning his back on the "real" world--the very world which it was the business of science to describe. But like many of his contemporaries, he felt a yearning for something which a strict materialism did not satisfy. At the basis of all religion, Wille wrote, is "the central, profound experience" which he characterized as an "idealism of the heart" which accompanied and completed both sense perception and rational comprehension.⁴⁴ Wille took this experience as his empirical starting point.

There is a distinctly Protestant quality to these efforts to construct a new, more personal, and more spiritualized religion around the turn of the century--a religion which could not be threatened by discoveries like evolution or archeology. As the 400th anniversary of Luther's Reformation approached, Arthur Drews proposed that it was time to bring Protestantism to its logical conclusion by dropping all doctrine and ritual which had been inherited from the past and replacing them by what he called "free religion" or a religion of pure spirit.⁴⁵ The idea behind the Reformation--the rejection of a material basis for worship--was a sound one, Drews thought. It simply had not been taken far enough. Drews advocated a spirituality which was entirely divorced from the specific tenets of a historical church. A religion of pure spirit would not have to depend upon the absolute accuracy of a human document like the Bible. Likewise, a religion of pure spirit would not have to defend itself against advances in

⁴⁴Bruno Wille, *Das Lebendige All: Idealistische auf naturwissenschaftliches Grundlage im Sinne Fechners* (Hamburg: L. Voss, 1905), pp. 7, 11.

⁴⁵Arthur Drews, *Freie Religion: Vorschläge zur Weiterführung des Reformation-Gedankens* (Jena: E. Diederichs, 1917), pp. 2-6.

science. The world of spirit and the world of matter, according to Drews, were two entirely different realms.

Other contemporaries succeeded in reconciling science and religion not by keeping them distinct and separate, but by mixing them together. Haeckel's monism, for example, belonged to a long tradition of German *Naturphilosophie* which tended to put spiritual causes side by side with physical ones. Theodore Fechner, for example, had devoted many of his seventy years as a biologist at the University of Leipzig to exploring the soul-life of plants.⁴⁶ The boundary lines between science and religion could become hopelessly obscured in an almost mystic pantheism. God, as Haeckel put it, was the sum of all natural forces.⁴⁷ Natural science in which "energy" took primacy over "matter"--and acquired a kind of mystic, spiritual quality in the process--was called vitalism. The theory of evolution in particular gave credence to the vitalist cause. After all, the ascent of nature--and particularly man--over time suggested a guiding power and a plan at work. According to the Kiel botanist Johannes Reinke shortly after the turn of the century, evolution proved that a purpose--and a divinity--lay behind all biological development.⁴⁸ Scientific admiration for the beauty, order, and complexity of nature easily spilled over into a kind of religious enthusiasm in which the scientist celebrated the foresight and ingenuity of God. Vitalism, like nineteenth-century *Naturphilosophie*, thus blurred the lines between science and religion. In a chapter of *The Riddle of the Universe* entitled "Our Monistic Religion," Haeckel equated the "energy" of

⁴⁶Walter Lowrie, ed., *Religion of a Scientist* (New York: Pantheon, 1946), p. 249.

⁴⁷Haeckel, *Confession of Faith*, p. 78.

⁴⁸Johannes Reinke, *Naturwissenschaft und Religion* (Freiburg: Herder, 1907), pp. 12-14.

the universe with "spirit."⁴⁹ Haeckel put the human soul--in itself no more than "the sum of those physiological functions whose elementary organs are constituted by the microscopic ganglion cells of our brain"--on a vast natural continuum of "the world-soul."⁵⁰ The comparison between monism and religion could easily become more than just a metaphor.

Others were willing to go even further. Rudolf Steiner, the founder of German theosophy and anthroposophy, was a great admirer of monism. He lauded Haeckel's *Riddle of the Universe*, calling attention to its simplicity, elegance, and "moral power." Monism, Steiner declared, constituted "the first chapter of theosophy"--though *only* the first chapter, since it still rested on a materialist basis. For Steiner, the next step would be to extend science into the spiritual realm. This meant acknowledging that there are spiritual as well as physical organs of perception. It meant acknowledging, too, that there was a spiritual as well as a physical world to be perceived.⁵¹ Somewhere between monism and anthroposophy, Steiner transformed natural philosophy into a virtual religion. And in so doing, he was making use of the notion that spirituality was somehow scientific. *This* was the difference which psychology would make in transforming the nineteenth-century warfare between science and religion into a temporary truce.

Although contemporaries often formulated their experience in terms of a clear-cut opposition between science and religion, the choices they made between belief and unbelief, reason and faith, were in reality far more complicated and varied. The assumption that science, progress, and

⁴⁹Haeckel, *Die Welträtsel*, chapter 18.

⁵⁰Haeckel, *Confession*, pp. 16, 40, 51-58.

⁵¹Rudolf Steiner, *Three Essays on Haeckel and Karma* (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1914), pp. 169, 192-193, 200-201.

modernity must eventually drive out religion and create a secular society is itself a precipitate of nineteenth-century discourse. The "Great Substitution" of science for religion--logical, even inevitable given the terms of the debate--simply never took place.⁵² More often than not, European and Americans in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries managed to accommodate, however awkwardly, the competing claims of reason and faith. Historians and social scientists have increasingly drawn attention to the *ambiguity* of secularization during this period, to its more puzzling and contradictory manifestations.⁵³ Most important, they have tried to set it in its social and cultural context.⁵⁴ In the "warfare between science and religion" it was possible to stake out any number of intermediate positions.⁵⁵ The introduction of psychology by the end of the nineteenth century made those positions more numerous, attractive, and--on the face of it--more tenable.

The Will to Believe

"We all have some ear for this monistic music," conceded William James in his Lowell Lectures of 1906.⁵⁶ But he himself preferred a more

⁵²See Franklin Baumer, *Religion and the Rise of Scepticism* (New York: Harcourt and Brace, 1960).

⁵³See the *Festschrift* dedicated to Franklin Baumer: W. Warren Wagar, ed., *The Secular Mind: Transformations of Faith in Modern Europe* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1982). The term "ambiguity" appears in the foreword by Jaroslav Pelikan. See also James R. Moore, *Post-Darwinian Controversies* (New York: Cambridge, 1979).

⁵⁴The seminal book in this rethinking of secularization is Owen Chadwick, *The Secularization of the European Mind in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1975).

⁵⁵This is emphasized by Peter Gay in *A Godless Jew*.

⁵⁶William James, *Pragmatism* (1906), repr. ed. (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1978), p. 76.

"tough-minded" pluralism to the seductive, "tender-minded simplicity of a monism."⁵⁷ James was more interested in the *varieties* than in the unity of religious experience. When he published his book by that name, based on the Gifford lectures of 1901-1902, he founded the psychology of religion.

The Varieties of Religious Experience opened up new possibilities in the warfare between science and religion. No longer would every scientific advance mean a retreat by religion. No longer would the spiritual world give way to a physical one at every turn. Instead, James rejected what he called the "medical materialism" of nineteenth-century positivism. He insisted that religious belief was an irreducible fact of human experience. It needed to be explained, but not explained *away*. The psychology of religion, according to James, began by accepting--even admiring--the spiritual life. "Let empiricism once become associated with religion as hitherto, through some strange misunderstanding, it has become associated with irreligion, and I believe that a new era of religion as well as of philosophy will be ready to begin."⁵⁸ James had brought an end to what one American student called "the mad and disappointing rush" to reductionism. "Science should wittingly or unwittingly become Religion's greatest benefactor."⁵⁹ That was just what James had in mind.

The psychology of religion, at least in the beginning, was an American enterprise. In *The Varieties of Religious Experience* James announced that the new field must be empirical. That is, it cannot speculate about religion abstractly, but must observe religious behavior as it exists in real life. This emphasis upon empiricism, as we shall see, was to

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 12-13.

⁵⁸Quoted in Lowrie, ed., *Religion of a Scientist*, p. 314.

⁵⁹Josiah Morse, *Pathological Aspects of Religions* (Worcester: Clark University Press, 1906), p. 4.

become problematic. James himself took an interest in the more remarkable or peculiar manifestations of belief--mystic visions, rigorous asceticism, glossolalia, and the like. For all his own doubts, perhaps *because* of them, he was particularly drawn to those "'geniuses' in the religious line" whose inner struggles resulted in new and pioneering forms of belief.⁶⁰ From the very beginning the psychology of religion was thus preoccupied with psychic research and religious pathology. As a result of James' influence, the psychology of religion was initially drawn to the *stranger* varieties of religious experience.

Other Americans turned to more mundane aspects of "normal" religion. Edwin Starbuck, George Coe, and James Leuba all used questionnaires to survey a wide range of rituals and beliefs. Starbuck, for example, compiled accounts of conversion which suggested that adolescence was the crucial period for spiritual commitment.⁶¹ Another researcher examined the psychology of prayer, trying to record his subjects at their most intimate and most candid moments with God.⁶² At times, the statistics and inventories of these scientists could become delightfully absurd. Josiah Morse, for example, made a catalogue of all the different fears he encountered in his subjects--thunderstorms, reptiles, darkness, rats and mice, cyclones, drowning, and so on for a total of 5,037 fears.⁶³

It was assumed from the beginning by most researchers in the new field that to approach religion as an experience was, in effect, to promote it.

⁶⁰William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1901-1902), repr. ed. (New York: Viking Penguin, 1982), p. 6.

⁶¹Edwin Diller Starbuck, "A Study of Conversion," *American Journal of Psychology* 8 (1897), p. 268-308.

⁶²S. Walter Ranson, "Studies in the Psychology of Prayer," *American Journal of Religious Psychology and Education* 1 (1904), p. 132.

⁶³Morse, *Pathological Aspects of Religions*, p. 44.

G. Stanley Hall, the first president of newly established Clark University and one of James' professional rivals, was in full agreement that psychology should enhance religion. In his editorial introducing the first issue of the *American Journal of Religious Psychology and Education* in 1904, Hall gave its purpose as "rejustifying the ways of God to man."⁶⁴ Hall observed that work like Starbuck's "marks an extension of the domain of science within the field of man's higher nature," and "helps to close the chasm, which has long been so calamitous for youth, between science and religion."⁶⁵ This closing of the chasm was to be the central hallmark of the psychology of religion. As James himself put it, "Religion thus makes easy and felicitous what in any case is necessary."⁶⁶

Unlike the previous generation for whom evolution and positivism had posed a spiritual dilemma, these American researchers in the psychology of religion--and soon thereafter, their German counterparts--saw science and religion working hand in hand. Many of them still had their own evolutionary schemes. One contributor to Hall's journal saw a correspondence between the stages in an individual's life and different world religions: Islam belonged to childhood, Confucianism to boyhood, Christianity to adolescence, Buddhism to adulthood, and Vedanta to old age.⁶⁷ Josiah Morse put it more bluntly: "Arrested peoples have, naturally enough, arrested forms of religion."⁶⁸ To take a German example, Ludwig Büchner viewed the transition from animism to spiritism, and from

⁶⁴G. Stanley Hall, "Editorial," *American Journal of Religious Psychology and Education* 1 (1904), p. 4.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, p. 1.

⁶⁶James, *Varieties*, p. 51.

⁶⁷Jean du Buy, "Stages of Religious Development," *American Journal of Religious Psychology* 1 (1904), pp. 7-29.

⁶⁸Morse, *Pathological Aspects of Religion*, p. 66

polytheism to monism as a sign of spiritual progress.⁶⁹ But what is significant about these notions--arbitrary and patronizing as they were--is that they assume an evolution *towards* not away from spirituality. The psychology of religion set out to explore--and thereby affirm--that spiritual progress.

The German psychology of religion took its cue from the Americans. In 1907, the same year which saw the founding of the *German Journal*, the Heidelberg theologian Georg Wobbermin visited William James in Cambridge and published a translation of his *Varieties of Religious Experience*. In his introduction to the volume, Wobbermin described James' work as an important scientific milestone. But there was a danger, he warned, in emphasizing the unusual and eccentric forms of religious life. The empirical approach adopted by James, cautioned Wobbermin, could easily result in an unflattering picture of religion. Wobbermin therefore slightly altered the subtitle of James' work in order to signal his concern. He called it "Sources and Studies for a Psychology *and Pathology* of the Religious Life."⁷⁰

Wobbermin's theology--and his interest in religious psychology--rested on the slogan "Back to Schleiermacher and from Schleiermacher forward!"⁷¹ It was Friedrich Schleiermacher who at the close of the eighteenth century had challenged the "cultured despisers" of religion, the proponents of the Enlightenment, to abandon their hostility to Christian faith. Religion, he argued, was not primarily its institutions or its

⁶⁹Büchner, *Über religiöse und wissenschaftliche Weltanschauung* (Leipzig: Theodor Thomas, 1887), p. 9.

⁷⁰Georg Wobbermin, trans. *Materialen und Studien zu einer Psychologie und Pathologie des religiösen Lebens* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1914), p. xii.

⁷¹Wobbermin, "Religionspsychologie," *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* 4 (1930), p. 192.

doctrines--those favorite targets of anti-clerical glee. It was at heart an emotion, an immediate and indisputable sense of the divine. Upbraiding other educated Germans for giving precedence to thought over feeling, Schleiermacher paved the way for a psychology of religion: "Why do you not regard the religious life itself, and first those pious exaltations of the mind in which all other known activities are set aside or almost expelled, and the whole soul is dissolved in the immediacy of feeling of the Infinite and Eternal?"⁷²

Wobbermin and other advocates of religious psychology adopted the same attitude towards nineteenth-century positivism that Schleiermacher had taken towards the eighteenth-century *philosophes*. Empirical science, Wobbermain claimed, failed to recognize the true nature of religion, and to adjust its empiricism accordingly. Religion, Wobbermin argued along with Schleiermacher, did not exist in churches and creeds, but in hearts and minds--especially hearts. This sort of thinking made the combination of psychology and theology a natural one. "Piety," Schleiermacher wrote, "...is in itself neither knowledge or action, but a certainty of feeling or of immediate self-consciousness."⁷³ This is what Freud would later call the "oceanic feeling."

Wobbermin was not the first or the only one to recognize the psychological implications of Schleiermacher's theology. As early as the 1850's, the religious philosopher Hermann Lotze recognized that psychology was--or could be--different from the other natural sciences. Like many others in the second half of the nineteenth century, Lotze was

⁷²Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers* (1799), trans. John Oman (New York: Harper, 1958), pp. 15-16.

⁷³Quoted in Johannes Neumann, *Einführung in die Psychotherapie für Pfarrer* (Gütersloh: C. Bertelmann, 1930), p. 130.

suspicious of positivism and materialism. He wanted to give both the natural-scientific and the moral-religious points of view their due. Psychology stood half-way in between, since it was a science which dealt with non-material phenomena.⁷⁴ In lecture notes twenty years later published as *Outlines of the Philosophy of Religion*, Lotze agreed with Schleiermacher that religion was a consequence of human nature, that it reflected the importance of *internal* as well as external events.⁷⁵ One pastor from Hannover took this line of reasoning so far that in his Easter sermon of 1901, he preached that the resurrection of Christ takes place in the heart--but not in history.⁷⁶ He was promptly removed from his position. But the minister's service was a suggestive one: theology was turning itself into psychology--or at least waiting for psychology to come along. As one psychologist, Karl Römer, put it:

It may seem strange that we have had 1900 years of Christianity, thousands of years of religion, but only one generation of religious psychology; but a glance at the spiritual history of the Christian church shows that Christianity, especially Protestantism, has led close to the problems of present-day religious psychology.⁷⁷

Here again we see the close connection drawn between Protestantism and progress. Psychology was to the rest of science like Protestantism was to other religions--its spiritual culmination.

⁷⁴Hermann Lotze, *Medicinische Psychologie oder Physiologie der Seele*, (Leipzig: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1852), pp. 9-10.

⁷⁵Lotze, *Outlines of the Philosophy of Religion*, trans. George T. Ladd (Boston: Ginn and Co., 1886), pp. 4-5, 8.

⁷⁶Reported by Greg Glasenapp, "Die Bedeutung des Wunders in der Religion," *Z. Religionspsychologie* 5 (1911), p. 193.

⁷⁷Karl Römer, *Die Psychotherapie und die Entwicklung der Religionspsychologie* (n.p., 1930), p. 73.

The religious psychology which flourished in Germany after 1900 reflected Wobbermin's desire for a science which would bolster rather than assail religion. To be sure, there were those who used psychology as a weapon in the warfare between science and theology--a theme to which we will often return. One frequent contributor to the German *Journal for Religious Psychology*, for example, thought that belief could be reduced to its psychological causes like any other behavior. "Therefore piety and godlessness can be praised or blamed only under certain conditions."⁷⁸ Such statements aroused the anxiety of those who feared that psychology would put religion on a materialistic basis.⁷⁹ But for the most part, writers in the field of religious psychology accepted one of two propositions. They either espoused what one called "paratheism," a division of labor between science, which studied facts of the material world, and religion, which analyzed the spiritual one.⁸⁰ Or they saw in psychology a confirmation of existing religious truths. It was only a short step from Schleiermacher calling belief an immediate feeling of dependence upon God, to the early twentieth-century conviction that religion is a psychological fact.⁸¹ Friedrich Sperl, a pastor from Heilbronn, expressed this convergence succinctly: "What the Bible means by spirit and soul, and what our era has scientifically recognized as 'unconscious' and 'conscious' sound like the

⁷⁸P. Näcke, "Zur Psychologie der plötzlichen Bekehrungen," *Z. Religionspsych.* 1 (1908), pp. 241-242.

⁷⁹See for example A. Dorner, "Über die Begrenzung der psychologischen Methode der Religionsforschung," *Z. Religionspsych.* 1 (1908), pp. 186-187.

⁸⁰Otto Meissner, "Paratheismus und Aberglaube," *Z. Religionspsych.* 3 (1909/1910), p. 217.

⁸¹See for example M. Friedmann, "Über den Ursprung des religiösen Schuldgefühls, nebst Bemerkungen über die Grundlage der religiösen Ideen überhaupt," *Z. Religionspsych.* 3 (1909/1910), pp. 57, 61.

same thing. Yes and amen."⁸² Psychology, particularly a psychology of the unconscious, could easily be given a spiritual meaning.

More often than not, this spirituality was expressed in confessional terms. In 1910, the *Journal* added a psychologist, Otto Klemm, to its editorial staff in hopes of bolstering its flagging contributions from the scientific side. The *Journal* was now run by a triumvirate--Vorbrodtt from theology, Bresler from medicine, and Klemm from psychology. It is interesting that Klemm used the opportunity to reflect upon Catholicism as a drag upon science. Klemm drew attention to the differences between Protestantism, which looked to the future, and Catholicism, which looked to the past. The Catholic Church tolerated, indeed encouraged, all sorts of outmoded superstitions.⁸³ Karl Weidel, among the most outspoken of the Protestant "modernists", was explicit in his use of psychology as a confessional weapon. In an article of 1907, for example, he demonstrated how a recent papal bull was psychologically *wrong*.⁸⁴

Weidel was typical of those who wished the psychology of religion to accommodate both natural science and "transcendence." He rejected the positivist tradition of the nineteenth century in favor of a genuinely "spiritual" psychology, that is, one which viewed religious feelings as proof of a higher, non-mechanistic reality. He was especially careful to reassure those who were wary of the new psychology, who saw in it a threat to drive religion from its last stronghold in the mind. Weidel put limits upon the extent of scientific inquiry, reserving religion for the "super-empirical."

⁸²Friedrich Sperl, "Die biblische Anschauung von Geist und Seele und die moderne Erkenntnis des 'Unbewußten' und des 'Bewußtseins,'" *Z. Religionspsych.* 2 (1908), p. 165.

⁸³Otto Klemm, "Zur Einführung," *Z. Religionspsych.* 4 (1910), p. 7.

⁸⁴K. Weidel, "Zur Psychologie des Dogmas," *Z. Religionspsych.* 2 (1908), p. 3.

"Otherwise, what is all this striving good for, what can it mean?"⁸⁵ The convenient aspect of psychology was that it seemed to give scientific reasons for such a limit.

Friedrich Mörchen similarly helped set a tone for the *Journal* which would be congenial to scientists and Christians alike. He acknowledged that science in the past had been hostile to religion. But psychology was only an *emotional*, not a *real* threat to belief. Mörchen always took care to soothe his audience, to remind them that belief and knowledge are two different things. It is as if he were leading them by the hand, gently but firmly insisting that they must evacuate some ground to which the new science of psychology could rightly lay claim.⁸⁶ Mörchen represents the scientific impulse at its most indulgent and generous toward religion.

Even that was not enough, however, to allay uneasiness and discontent among those who feared that psychology--like every kind of science which preceded it--was an all-out assault upon religious faith. There were many who agreed with Wobbermin that religious psychology had become too empirical, too reductionistic, in short, too Americanized. In an appeal for new subscribers in 1910 to help the *Journal* overcome financial difficulties, one of the staunchest advocates of the psychology of religion from the religious/philosophical side, Georg Runze, reminded readers that the *Journal* reflected "the unconditional demand for respect, reverence, and appreciation for the living, human value of religion" As such, it stood in opposition to "every eclectic and indifferent empiricism"--

⁸⁵Weidel, "Das Transzendenzproblem in der Religion," *Z. Religionspsych.* 2 (1908), pp. 461-463.

⁸⁶Friedrich Mörchen, "Wirklichkeitssinn und Jenseitsglauben," *Z. Religionspsych.* 3 (1909/1910), pp. 140, 151, 283.

presumably that of Americans like James and Starbuck.⁸⁷ When it came to empiricism, it was apparently easy to have too much of a good thing.

Starting in 1910, discontent in the religious ranks of the *Journal* began to coalesce into an actual faction in the form of a special work-group composed of ministers and theologians led by Wilhelm Stählin. Stählin declared that the group's objectives were no different than those of religious psychology as a whole: "We want to collect, examine, classify, and study facts of mental life which in any way belong to the category of 'religion.'"⁸⁸ But Stählin nonetheless made it clear that he and his colleagues objected to the "vivisectionist" American approach which had become all too fashionable in German circles.⁸⁹ The scientific study of religion, he argued, could not progress under conditions that compromised religion.⁹⁰

Stählin and his supporters brought the fruitful collaboration which had marked the early years of the *Journal for Religious Psychology* to an end. By 1914, scientific contributors had abandoned the project, and the theologians were left to themselves. In that same year, Stählin founded the *Archiv für Religionspsychologie*, a journal devoted to the "protocol" method of research. This involved using the statements of believers as the data for religious psychology. The important thing, Stählin and others argued, was to take these statements on their own terms--not to analyze them as psychological symptoms, but to accept them as religious-psychological

⁸⁷Georg Runze, "Zur Jahreswende," *Z. Religionspsych.* 3 (1909/1910), p. 340.

⁸⁸Wilhelm Stählin, "Bericht über die Begründung einer religionspsychologischen Arbeitsgemeinschaft," *Z. Religionspsych.* 4 (1910), p. 220.

⁸⁹Stählin, "Religionspsychologische Arbeitsgemeinschaft," *Z. Religionspsych.* 5 (1912), pp. 400-401.

⁹⁰Stählin, "Experimentelle Untersuchungen über Sprachpsychologie," *Archiv für Religionspsychologie* 1 (1914), p. 118.

facts. The idea, as one of their leaders, Karl Girgensohn, put it, was to capture "concrete, rich, real, natural life."⁹¹ But the protocol method made it all too easy to ratify one's prejudices. The apologetic nature of religious psychology in the 1920's can be seen in Stählin's remark that "religion itself is life, and life makes no other demands than to be life and reality."⁹²

"Only a few steps separate science and life," wrote Werner Gruehn when he took over the *Archiv* in 1929 from Stählin.⁹³ This had been the motto of much German religious psychology from the beginning. But now it was completely divorced from its scientific component. Gruehn praised the maturation of German religious psychology, which, according to his reckoning, had first found expression in Stählin's *Archiv*, "the first high-quality organ of German religious psychology."⁹⁴ He damned by omission the efforts and accomplishments of the earlier *Journal*--an enterprise too fraught with dangerously anti-clerical science. As a mild reprimand, a number of medical publishers refused to provide Gruehn and the *Archiv* with review copies of their publications.

Pfister called the work of Girgensohn, Stählin, and others in the 1920's a waste of time, resulting only in banal truisms. Yet he himself shared the concern that religious psychology must find "method of observation and experimentation that is true to life."⁹⁵

"*Religionswissenschaft* " he wrote in 1927, "should never forget that it

⁹¹Karl Girgensohn, *Religionspsychologie, Religionswissenschaft und Theologie* (Leipzig: Deichert, 1923), p. 9.

⁹²K. Koffka and W. Stählin, "Zur Einführung," *Archiv für Religionspsychologie* 1 (1914), pp. 6-8.

⁹³Werner Gruehn, "Seelsorgerliche Analysen," *Archiv für Religionspsychologie* 4 (1929), p. 340.

⁹⁴Gruehn, "Zur Einführung," *Archiv* (1929), pp. 9, 17.

⁹⁵Pfister, "Die Religionspsychologie am Scheidewege," *Imago* 8 (1922), pp. 114, 148.

primarily concerns an experience."⁹⁶ That had been the message ever since William James. Wobbermin had brought this spirit to Germany with his back-to-Schleiermacher theology of the turn of the century. His concern that religious psychology might be *too* empirical in the end drove the new field out of science and back into the waiting arms of theology.⁹⁷ Though they had their disagreements, Wobbermin praised the experimental work in a "strict scientific-theoretical sense" of Stählin, Girgensohn, Gruehn, and others. But by this point, the experiment in collaboration was over.

In the nineteenth century, psychology emerged as a new science of the soul. To the positivist mind, the warfare between science and religion would end with a complete victory for a scientific psychology. The prominent mid-century natural scientist Carl Vogt had observed with satisfaction "that more and more the belief in a substantial, immortal soul has disappeared, and that the dissolution of psychology into natural science is the next advance of the future."⁹⁸ The Leipzig psychologist Wilhelm Wundt, for example, claimed that no mental process was unaccompanied by a physical one. Wundt more than anyone else established psychology in Germany as an academic, experimental endeavor. It was the task of psychology, Wundt insisted, to establish a "psychophysical parallelism" between the life of the mind and the life of the body.⁹⁹ The soul could not be kept out of the grasping reach of this new science of the mind.

⁹⁶Pfister, *Religionswissenschaft und Psychoanalyse* (Giessen: A. Töpelmann, 1927), p. 18.

⁹⁷Wobbermin, "Religionspsychologie," p. 1925.

⁹⁸Carl Vogt, *Köhlerglaube und Wissenschaft* (Giessen: J. Ricker, 1855), p. 7.

⁹⁹Wilhelm Wundt, *Vorlesungen über die Menschen- und Thierseele*, 2nd ed. (Hamburg: L. Voss, 1892), pp. 476-477.

Wundt saw no reason to speculate upon the existence of a soul apart from the mind. Thus in his efforts to turn psychology into a positive science, there was no room for metaphysical speculation. But for many Germans in the late nineteenth century, psychology offered just that opportunity. Was it indeed a positive science like any other? Did not the special nature of its subject, the human spirit, call for special forms of observation and special kinds of scientific conclusions? The initial argument was that science must stop at the boundary line of consciousness, that the human soul must remain a mystery, because, as Emil Du Bois-Reymond argued in his well-known "Ignoramus" address before a convention of German natural scientists and physicians in Leipzig in 1872, no one could ever know how matter became conscious of itself.¹⁰⁰ But this sort of thinking made it easy to characterize psychology as a completely different kind of science. Once science entered the soul, people argued, it must be willing to entertain hypotheses and explanations which would otherwise seem implausible and unscientific. In practice, this was often an appeal for psychology to keep the mystery in life. It also made it possible for psychology itself to become in some sense religious.

Such then was the source of many of the competing psychologies in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries which took the form of spiritualism, occultism, psychic research, and mind cures. From the very beginning it was difficult to distinguish a mystical psychology from a more modest psychology of mysticism. It was not always clear--it was certainly not always clear to William James--whether religion was the *subject* or the *substance* of psychological inquiry. Psychology easily

¹⁰⁰Emil Du Bois-Reymond, *Über die Grenzen des Naturerkennens* (Leipzig: Veit, 1872), p. 46.

appeared to many as a science not only of the soul, but also a science *with* a soul. The difficulty in distinguishing scientific psychology from rivals like occultism and psychic research would make a respectable psychology of religion a tricky business indeed.

CHAPTER ONE

Seeing is Believing: The Empiricism of the Occult

When a new natural force or natural phenomenon is to be investigated, the natural scientist makes use of the experiment. His task is not--as the layman often thinks--to set up the experiment to defy Nature, but quite the opposite, to figure out the conditions under which Nature lets the test succeed. Nature, not the scientist, sets the conditions.

Max Kemmerich, *Prophecies: Old Superstition or New Truth?*

The years in which psychology established itself as a new science--roughly, from the 1880's to the outbreak of the First World War--also saw a surge of interest in the occult. Albert Moll, a hypnotist and self-professed "physician of the soul," reported in 1908 that Berlin "with its 90,000 spiritists and over 300 mediums" had become "the capital of superstition" in Germany and around the world.¹ Some contemporaries ran into séances everywhere they turned: as a young biology student in Zurich in the 1890's, Fanny Moser attended her first séance at the home of a geology professor; later in Munich, she went to the home of the occultist Albert Schrenck-Notzing, who was conducting telepathy experiments with the anthroposophist Rudolf Steiner; still later she was able to watch a former patient of Freud's being hypnotized.² Others worried aloud about the dangers of this séance "epidemic."³ In any event, occultism was a major

¹ Albert Moll, "Einleitender Vortrag zu einer Umfrage über Okkultismus," *Z. Religionspsych.* 1 (1908), p. 354.

² Fanny Moser, *Der Okkultismus: Täuschungen und Tatsachen*, 2 vols. (Munich: E. Reinhardt, 1935), vol. 2, pp. 34-35.

³ Alfred Lehmann, *Aberglaube und Zauberei von den ältesten Zeiten an bis in die Gegenwart*, trans. from Danish (Stuttgart: F. Enke, 1908), "Vorrede des Verfassers."

and visible preoccupation--what Roy Pascal has recently called a "flood of superstition" which inundated Germany around the turn of the century.⁴

The simultaneous emergence of psychology and occultism was no accident. Occultism, in fact, *was* a kind of psychology. It relied upon a theory of the unconscious to explain the extraordinary capabilities of mediums. Setting itself in opposition to the materialism of the nineteenth century, occultism sought to establish itself as a science of the spirit. It even developed its own version of empiricism, one which insisted on the visible "facts" of the séance, and which allowed the medium to set the conditions for observation. Academic psychologists bitterly disputed the occultists' claim to scientific respectability. These critics developed their own methods for "catching" the unconscious of the medium at work. But they could not break the connection--however spurious--between occultism and psychology.

"I have fallen into the hands of the occultist."⁵ With these words, Thomas Mann began to describe a séance which he attended shortly after the First World War as a guest of the Munich physician, sexual pathologist, and specialist in nervous diseases Dr. Albert Freiherr von Schrenck-Notzing. For the past three decades, Schrenck-Notzing had avidly sponsored research into the occult. Some of the most famous mediums of Europe had performed in his home. The gatherings were fashionable and well-attended. What attracted Mann was that Schrenck-Notzing conducted the séances like an experiment. The entire séance was designed for

⁴ Roy Pascal, *From Naturalism to Expressionism. German Literature and Society, 1880-1918* (London: Weidenfeld, 1973), p. 174.

⁵ Thomas Mann, "An Experience in the Occult" (1923), in *Thomas Mann: Three Essays*, trans. H. T. Lowe Porter (London: Martin Secker, 1932), p. 220.

purposes of observing, controlling, and, if necessary, exposing the medium as a fraud. This was not mere spiritism, thought Mann, that sinkhole of gullibility and indulgence. This was science, the science of psychic phenomena, in short, occultism. At present, Schrenck-Notzing was investigating so-called "materializations." These were physical apparitions, usually resembling faces or hands, which, when no fraud could be detected, were presumably a product of the medium's spiritual energy. Was this science, or nonsense? Mann was determined to see for himself.

On his way to Schrenck-Notzing's house, Mann felt a certain "theoretical benevolence" towards the whole undertaking.⁶ Despite his skepticism, he found himself hoping that something strange and inexplicable *would* in fact happen. Part of him wanted to be dumbfounded; part of him wanted the medium to escape detection: "My sympathies were boundless, and I took pains to let our artist feel that I was no hostile onlooker, present with the sole idea of pouncing and unmasking with a bellow of triumph. I was a skeptic on the positive side, who would rejoice at his success."⁷ The urge to expose (to pounce and unmask, as Mann put it) is a prominent theme in occult literature--a theme to which we will return. But just as prominent was a willingness to go along, a desire to be carried away. At the very center of spiritism and its scientific counterpart, occultism, was a wish: a desire to see *something* happen, a desire to be deceived.

Mann was not disappointed. Schrenck-Notzing first subjected his medium, one Willy S., to a careful search. Mann himself examined Willy's

⁶Ibid., p. 227.

⁷Ibid., p. 320.

"irreproachable mouth cavity" to check for hidden objects. Willy then was sewn into a special gown with luminous ribbons and pins for keeping track of him in the dark.⁸ Those seated around the séance table kept Willy closely monitored. Mann himself was given "control" of the knee and wrist on one side. It was inconceivable, Mann concluded, that Willy could get away.

Despite all these elaborate precautions, Willy still put on quite a show. At his request, a concertina played in the background and the audience engaged in conversation. He twisted, turned, and moaned, convulsions which reminded Mann of parturition. Finally Willy gave birth. A white handkerchief on the floor rose repeatedly in the air. A bell on the table was grasped and rung vigorously as if by an invisible hand. Small phosphorescent hoops were tossed about the room. A typewriter on the floor tapped out an indecipherable message. And finally, a disembodied arm waved briefly from behind a curtain. This final apparition was the specialty of the house, the "materialization" or "ectoplasmic exteriorization" for which Schrenck-Notzing's gatherings were famous. Shortly thereafter, the exhausted Willy slumped in his chair, gasping out "Merry Christmas!" The séance was at an end.⁹

Mann was amazed. Although the atmosphere surrounding the séance reminded him of "the mawkish revival methods of the Salvation Army," and although he wanted to dismiss Willy's performance as "a distressingly complicated kind of humbug," Mann could not deny the evidence of his own senses.¹⁰ "Having seen what I saw," he declared, "I consider it my duty to bear witness that in the experiments during which I

⁸Ibid., p. 233.

⁹Ibid., pp. 245-253.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 239, 251.

was present, any mechanical deception or sleight-of-hand tricks were humanly impossible."¹¹

Schrenck-Notzing drew the conclusion that some nonhuman, or at least some invisible, agency was at work. Since the controls ruled out any mere mechanical cause, Schrenck-Notzing surmised that the apparitions must come from an as yet unidentified psychic or even spiritual source. Mann tried to put Schrenck-Notzing's murky hypothesis of materialization into cold, hard prose:

A fluid, in varying degrees of density, leaves the body of the medium as an amorphous, unorganized mass; takes form in various teleplastic organs, hands, feet, heads, and so on; and after a brief existence in this form, during which, however, it displays all the attributes of living substance, dissolves and is reabsorbed into the medial organism.¹²

The question is whether this is or is not a "scientific" explanation. Schrenck-Notzing and other occultists during the decades around 1900 certainly thought so. Academic psychologists, on the other hand, trying to distinguish their profession from the pseudo-psychologies of spiritism and occultism, were equally insistent that it was not. The debate itself, as we shall see, possessed a number of singular and revealing characteristics. In the event, Mann himself rejected occultism on moral grounds. But at least in his own experience--and this is the crucial point--he could not dismiss it as counter-empirical. He could not deny what he had seen with his own eyes. "Undignified by nature and trivial in their activity as they are, [these apparitions] are well calculated to be offensive to our proud aesthetic sense, but to deny their abnormal reality would be nothing less

¹¹Ibid., p. 255.

¹²Ibid., p. 258.

than unreasonable obstinacy."¹³ The occultists' claim to scientific respectability was based upon such emphatic eyewitness testimony. The séance, however "abnormal", was an empirical reality.

Deep Progress

"I saw these things," insisted Alexander Aksakov in *Animism and Spiritism*, his *magnum opus* published in Germany in 1894, about the same time Schrenck-Notzing began his occult research.¹⁴ Aksakov was referring to a series of well-publicized séances in Milan conducted by the internationally renowned medium Eusapia Paladino. Her performance could not be considered "conclusive", Aksakov wrote, since she only produced apparitions under certain very specific conditions. But Aksakov thought he could definitely rule out any physical explanation. In terms of natural science as we know it, Eusapia's powers could not be explained.

In the language of spiritism, "inexplicable" was perhaps the highest possible praise. It implied that some *other* agency was at work than those known to natural science. It was just this sort of reasoning--"spirit" as an explanation for otherwise unintelligible events--which brought spiritism to the threshold of psychology. As a frequent séance-impresario and the editor of *Psychical Studies* (a journal in German which reported on séances) Aksakov did much to popularize spiritism in Germany in the final years of the nineteenth century. Spiritists differed from occultists in their emphasis upon agencies from an otherworld. But they shared the occultists' distaste for purely physical explanations. The natural sciences,

¹³Ibid., p. 256.

¹⁴Alexander Aksakov, *Animismus und Spiritismus*, trans. from Russian by G. C. Wittig, 2nd ed. (Leipzig: O. Mutze, 1894), p. xix.

Aksakov thought, were mired in materialism. Spiritism, or "psychismus" as he called it, was a new science of the supernatural. The growth of spiritism over the past fifty years was one of which its advocates could be proud.¹⁵ Since its humble beginnings in the 1840's in upstate New York with the table-rapping of the Fox sisters, spiritism had advanced through a number of different phases. Knocking on tables had given way to speaking with the voice of the dead. This in turn yielded to automatic writing, then to telepathy. The latest form of mediumistic production around the turn of the century, materialization, was also the most conclusive and dramatic. Aksakov argued that the sequence denoted scientific progress. Both mediums and their audiences had become more knowledgeable and receptive. The spiritist lay-philosopher (and career military officer) Carl DuPrel was even more enthusiastic than Aksakov about the séances which he, too, had witnessed in Milan. "The spiritism of today," he wrote in 1892, "is already a sturdy youth in comparison to the child that it was when table-turning was in fashion. The phenomena have constantly improved, thanks in part to the opponents whose objections provided the impetus for ever new proofs."¹⁶

Both Aksakov and DuPrel had *seen* what Eusapia could do. They resented the fact that academic scientists ridiculed their efforts and cast doubt upon the authenticity of séance apparitions. These critics, they claimed, made the mistake of ignoring phenomena which they could not explain.¹⁷ Because of their small-minded, materialist prejudices, they dismissed the data which spiritists had observed with their own eyes.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. xvii.

¹⁶ Carl DuPrel, "Der Kampf um den Spiritismus in Mailand," *Psychische Studien* 19 (1892), p. 565.

¹⁷ Carl DuPrel, *Das Rätsel des Menschen* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1893), p. 4.

Observation, after all, was the basis of empirical science. "Precisely those whose obligation it is to investigate these phenomena," DuPrel concluded indignantly, "turn their backs on them."¹⁸

Aksakov liked to compare the falling of Newton's apple with the floating tables and flying objects of a séance. Both were enigmas; both defied the contemporary limit of natural laws; and both were undeniable facts. Science advanced from one stage to the next, Aksakov wrote, precisely because people like Newton--and now the spiritists--felt compelled to account for the facts of the world around them.¹⁹

Newton was also DuPrel's model of the true scientist who offered explanations for the seemingly inexplicable.

Newton, the discoverer of the law of gravity, admitted that he did not know what gravity is. For this reason it would be illogical to dismiss the phenomenon of weight-alteration just because it contradicts the mysterious power of gravity.... Gravity is not a completely definite, unchangeable quality. There is present in the human organism another power, which under certain conditions can make [gravity] stronger, but can also work against it, and can indeed be transferred to inorganic bodies.²⁰

DuPrel's reasoning, of course, was nothing less than a reversal of the Enlightenment program. By admitting the supernatural into science, DuPrel raised science to the level of miracles, rather than bringing miracles down to earth. He could claim to be the heir of Newton and at the same time dismiss the basic principles of causality and regularity at a single stroke. DuPrel argued that explanations based upon matter alone could only go so far. Without a concept of spirit, science would never be able

¹⁸ DuPrel, *Studien aus dem Gebiete der Geheimwissenschaften* (1890), 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Leipzig: M. Altmann, 1905), vol. 2, p. 133.

¹⁹ Aksakov, *Animismus und Spiritismus*, p. xx.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 10-11.

to make what he called "deep progress."²¹ He conceded that natural science boasted enormous achievements since Newton's time. It had extended its horizons to include more and more subjects. But this could not take the place of *vertical* discoveries in a world filled from top to bottom with mystery. "The history of the sciences," he wrote in his *Philosophy of Mysticism* in 1885, "is less an explanation of the riddle of the universe than it is a constantly growing consciousness of the riddle."²² In the perverse logic of the occult, science should make it possible to *increase* rather than to decrease the number of mysteries in the world. From DuPrel's point of view, the observation of nature should make more room--not less--for the action of invisible spirits. "The progress of the sciences," DuPrel concluded, "constantly widens the extent of what is considered possible."²³

The spiritists, then, could claim the high ground of empirical science. They tried to explain the observable facts of the séance which other scientists ignored. "I now believe," DuPrel wrote in his *Studies in the Field of the Secret Sciences*, "that natural science will find the explanation for mystical phenomena, but--take note--not the natural science of our day, but only a natural science enriched by the discovery of new powers in men and new connections between men and nature."²⁴ The addition of "spirit" turned natural into supernatural science.

DuPrel and other spiritists gave their new science a definite psychological cast. "The mystical faculties," he wrote, "are indeed part of the normal, unconscious capacity of man, but not of the normal condition

²¹ DuPrel, *Philosophy of Mysticism* (1885), trans. C. C. Massey (London: G. Redway, 1889), p. 12.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 14.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

²⁴ DuPrel, *Studien*, vol. 1, p. 19.

that is conscious to the senses."²⁵ A medium in a trance, DuPrel argued, might not be in a "normal" mental state. But the trance itself suggested the "really normal" nature of the human mind. Most people were unaware of these "really normal" powers because they were largely unconscious. As a spiritist, DuPrel was closer to a dynamic theory of the mind than many psychologists in the 1880's and 1890's.

DuPrel drew a religious--or at least a mystical--conclusion from psychological observations. He equated the unconscious with a transcendent presence built into the human mind. "If man is a dual being by virtue of a threshold of sensation," he wrote in 1885, referring to the recent research of the psychologist Wilhelm Wundt, "then mysticism is possible. And if the threshold of sensation is a mobile one, then mysticism is indeed necessary."²⁶ For DuPrel, a mystical world view was the natural corollary to a dynamic psychology. It was only a short step from the discovery of the unconscious to a full-fledged belief in unseen spirits.

Psychic Religion

Dr. Harter, a well-known Vienna physician, once wrote to Schrenck-Notzing about his conversion to occultism which came after a séance with a young Polish girl, Stanislava P.

"Now I may tell you that at the first sitting I laughed! I sat mostly at the back. But during the second sitting I was puzzled, and since that time the Saul has become a Paul. This second sitting... has had the result of totally reversing my former conception of life. All nature and all life for me

²⁵ DuPrel, *Philosophy of Mysticism*, p. 93

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

has assumed a new aspect.... In my occupation with this subject I found that which one loses in the exact sciences, namely, a belief in the soul."²⁷

"Conversion" is an appropriate word to describe Dr. Harter's experience, since occultism acquired for him the status of a religion. Carl DuPrel similarly described the way in which spiritism and occultism satisfied more than the mere desire for knowledge. It could be one's heart's desire as well.

The enthusiasm of [spiritism's] proponents can be explained by the fact that the world view of spiritism not only offers much to the mind, but also provides satisfaction for the heart like no other. The deepest drive in the breast of men is the will to live; spiritism takes this drive into consideration insofar as it makes immortality not just a matter of faith nor just a philosophical possibility, but proves it with empirical facts. The deepest pain in mortal life is the loss of loved ones. Spiritism, however, wants to prove that we can remain in contact with the dead, and that they can even be made to visibly appear.²⁸

This did not mean that occult beliefs were not subject to doubt. On the contrary, it was the nature of séance phenomena that they needed constant, repeated re-confirmation. No occult demonstration was ever decisive, no control ever complete enough. The evidence for occultism was *additive* in the sense that its proponents relied on the accumulation of instances rather than a single, irrefutable one. The sittings thus offered a kind of second-rate miracle, which needed to be repeated in order to maintain faith.

DuPrel saw the occult sciences as the basis for a religion of the future. Only they were in a position to restore the sense of transcendence which had been destroyed by modern materialism. Only they could return

²⁷Schrenck-Notzing, *Materialisationsphänomene: Ein Beitrag zur Erforschung der mediumistischen Teleplastie* (Munich: E. Reinhardt, 1914); *Phenomena of Materialisation*, trans. E. E. Fournier d'Albe (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1920), p. 256.

²⁸DuPrel, *Studien*, p. 129.

humankind to the mysticism of everyday life. DuPrel distanced himself from the religions of the past. Spiritism was a religion based on progress; it was the logical extension of the natural sciences beyond their materialistic premises.²⁹

Eduard Hartmann gave much the same diagnosis of a material-minded world--and made much the same prescription. "There has seldom been a more irreligious time than ours, and yet not often have religious questions been more deeply moving than right now."³⁰ Hartmann saw a natural line of development from Catholicism to Protestantism and finally to the religious individualism of a "pantheistic monism."³¹ A transcendental view of life was a result of "the progressive de-churching of the religious life," culminating in a completely generalized "religion of the spirit" rather than a specific confession.³²

Both Hartmann and DuPrel turned to psychology to justify this individualized religion of the spirit. DuPrel introduced what he called a "transcendental psychology," in which earthly and spiritual beings were only separated by thresholds of consciousness which, given the right circumstances, could be crossed.³³ Psychology made it possible, DuPrel wrote, to distinguish between the soul and the brain: the spiritual dimensions of one need not be limited by the physical dimensions of the other. Hartmann, on the other hand, called for the systematic development of religion based on human psychological capacities. Religion was a fact of

²⁹DuPrel, *Rätsel*, pp. 4-5, 11, 51.

³⁰Eduard Hartmann, *Die Selbstersetzung des Christenthums und die Religion der Zukunft* (Berlin: C. Duncker, 1874), p. 1.

³¹Ibid., pp. 121-122.

³²Hartmann, *Die Religion des Geistes* (Berlin: C. Duncker), p. 326.

³³DuPrel, *Rätsel*, p. 22.

human experience upon which psychology was based. Religion was a subjective truth *even if* its objective claims were called into question: "...for even if it were an illusion, religion would remain the most interesting and important area among all the productions of the human spirit, and would therefore remain the principal problem of psychology."³⁴ Psychology, then, could help spirituality gain a scientific stature. It made possible a new, more individual religion than ever before. One enthusiastic proponent of spiritism, who was especially proud of having reached his conclusions on his own, without swallowing many of the "meaningless stories" and "baroque conjectures" of his fellow spiritists,³⁵ put it this way:

The need [for spiritual satisfaction]... is universal and everlasting. Materialism on the one hand... and church-belief on the other... were not satisfying. They could only have a bleak weariness of life or a gullible hollowness of the spirit as a consequence. [Spiritism] offered something positive, which at the same time could be experienced, and established through personal investigation.³⁶

With its emphasis on the individual believer, occultism possesses a marked autodidactic quality. Each person had to discover for him- or herself the truth of its claims. The validity of occultism could only be measured on the basis of individual experience. Occultism relied on the testimony of witnesses who themselves *wished* to believe it to be true. Their appeal to empirical evidence, as we shall see, was in reality an appeal to their own experience. These self-taught believers easily mistook what is

³⁴Hartmann, *Religion des Geistes*, p. vi.

³⁵Immanuel Hermann Fichte, *Der neuere Spiritualismus, sein Werth und sein Täuschungen* (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1878), p.30.

³⁶Ibid., pp. 49-50.

inside for what is *outside* themselves. It is hard for the autodidact to be skeptical of his or her own conclusions.

Spiritism and occultism also encouraged an exaggerated sense of power and control over the outside world. The "omnipotence of thoughts" played a conspicuous role in occult phenomena. It is no accident that Fanny Moser referred to occultism as an "infantile dream of mankind."³⁷ "The idea of a connection between men and the spirit-world," wrote another critic, Alfred Lehman, "is in and of itself quite appealing if one ignores the baroque forms which it often takes in spiritistic apparitions."³⁸ All forms of religion and superstition, Lehmann argued, are based upon the initial helplessness of humanity in the face of nature. They are attempts to overcome physical powerlessness through the exertion of thought. Spiritism and occultism in this regard were a kind of magic, adept at finding hidden correspondences between one event and another. In the murky semi-darkness of the séance, Lehman wrote, "one overestimates the similarity that an unfamiliar object has with a familiar one."³⁹

Spiritism and occultism furthermore gave the illusion that a person can manipulate objects by contact with the spirits or by psychic energy. This sense of omnipotence is a characteristic feature of religious experience. Christian Science, for example, which appeared in Germany shortly after the turn of the century, had a high estimation of psychic power. *Gesundbeten* as it was called in Germany was an American import, but it met with great successes and threatened to become, as Albert

³⁷Moser, *Der Okkultismus*, p. 13.

³⁸Lehmann, *Aberglaube und Zauberei*, p. 306.

³⁹*Ibid.*, p. 333.

Moll predicted in 1902, "a new epidemic."⁴⁰ At the heart of Christian Science was a premise similar to that of occultism: the mind could exert a certain control over the physical world. Thoughts could cure through the natural and god-given power of natural suggestion. As Karl Beth, psychologist and critic of "Scientism", observed, this raised wishful thinking to the level of metaphysics.⁴¹ He agreed with Moll that all forms of faith healing were charlatanism and should be prosecuted in the courts.⁴² As with occultism, however, there was a certain element of psychological truth to the claims of Christian Science: there are indeed conditions which can be treated with psychotherapy rather than physical therapy. The problem was that both Christian Science and occultism drew spiritual conclusions from this psychological premise.

The loudest critics of DuPrel and the spiritists came, curiously enough, from their near-neighbors, the occultists. Occultists viewed spiritism as a threat to their own hard-won scientific respectability. There were, of course, differences between the two. Spiritists such as Aksakov and Duprel believed that a medium was an intermediary through whom one could contact the spirits of the dead. Schrenck-Notzing and the occultists, on the other hand, considered an otherworld to be only one possible hypothesis which science could not yet rule out. They tended to favor *psychical* explanation for séance-phenomena, i.e. one which posited some hidden power of the mind over matter. Occultists typically described

⁴⁰Moll, *Gesundbeten, Medizin und Okkultismus* (Berlin: H. Walther, 1902), p. 6.

⁴¹Karl Beth, *Gesunddenken und Gesundbeten, Eine Beurteilung des Scientismus* (Vienna: M. Perles, 1918), pp. 66-67.

⁴²*Ibid.*, p. 69

spiritism as "a pathological phenomenon." "Where lies the regularity of nature," wrote one, "if arbitrariness is accepted as a principle?"

Every spirit-hypothesis is for that very reason an unscientific one, because it forbids us from asking How? and precludes every further research concerning the way things work. Of what use to us any longer are all our natural laws, once we make just a finger's breadth of room for spirits, intelligent beings who do with us as they please, in our world?⁴³

In practice, however, spiritism and occultism were difficult to distinguish. The differences between them should not be exaggerated, especially in *emotional* terms. Both claimed to be respectable scientists observing empirical phenomena. Both were driven primarily by the wish to believe that "something" lay beyond the boundaries of the physical world known to natural science. And both appealed to psychology in order to account for it.

Occult psychologists liked to make analogies with the invisible forces of physics. The popular philosopher and psychologist Eduard Hartmann referred to the untapped resources of the mind as "nerve power." Hartmann was among the most outspoken critics of spiritism in Germany, which he dismissed as "the explanation of mediumistic phenomena through the operation of distant spirits."⁴⁴ Spiritism betrayed "an unbelievable absence of criticism and a superstitious gullibility" on the part of its devotees. This was especially true in America, Hartmann observed, the homeland of "humbug" and "swindle." Like most other occultists, Hartmann sought to distance himself from spiritism: "The

⁴³J. Leiser, *Herr Professor Wundt*, 2nd ed. (Leipzig: n.p., 1879), p. 73.

⁴⁴Eduard von Hartmann, *Der Spiritismus* (Leipzig: W. Friedrich, 1885), p. 1.

superstitious belief in spirits," he wrote, "is spreading like an epidemic, and opens up new ways for clever cheaters to exploit gullibility."⁴⁵

By distancing himself from the spiritists, Hartmann sought to draw closer to the more "respectable" physical sciences. Like static electricity and the attraction of magnets, psychic energy could concentrate itself outside the medium's body and have an effect on physical objects nearby. The somnambulant could produce a physical force out of psychical excitation.⁴⁶ Tibetan monks, for example, did not need the modern telegraph because they were capable of telepathic communication.⁴⁷ In order to observe similar psychic phenomena, Hartmann argued, one only needed to visit the nearest medium:

If the mediumistic nerve power can turn itself into apparitions of warmth and light on one hand, and has the characteristic of collecting itself on specific points to a tension point which leads to an explosive discharge on the other, then it can hardly be surprising when such discharges, like electric sparks, are capable of igniting inflammable materials....⁴⁸

Hartmann was not the only one to pursue the analogy with electricity. As early as the 1860's, the chemist and industrial entrepreneur Carl Reichenbach explained action at a distance in terms of "od", a current of psychic energy. "The movement of od, called a stream, goes primarily along the nerve cords and on or in them to the most external nerve structures. Finally it flows out into the air, [and] becomes perceptible...."⁴⁹ Another observer in 1879 attributed the extraordinary abilities of

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 1-2, 6.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 37.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 83.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 47.

⁴⁹ Carl Reichenbach, *Aphorismen über Sensitivität und Od* (Vienna: Braumüller, 1866), section xxv.

somnambulants to a similar current flowing along the nerves which could keep right on going past the fingertips to the objects and people beyond.⁵⁰ One critic of both spiritists and occultists was convinced that mind reading could be explained in electrical terms: thoughts simply leapt like a spark from one person to another.⁵¹ DuPrel explained the ability of Indian fakirs to survive being buried alive as "a natural phenomenon, somehow connected to electricity."⁵² By comparing the invisible, psychic powers of mediums with invisible currents of electricity--and later, radio waves--occultists sought to enhance their standing within the scientific community. A séance, they insisted, was like a lightbulb: both ran on unseen energy.

For all their protestations, however, spiritists and occultists had a lot in common. Above all, they shared a dogged empiricism. It was foolish, Hartmann thought, to deprecate mediums and séances just because they did not fit the academic model of experimental research. Such narrowmindedness had been typical of materialistic science for over a century. "The champions of the Enlightenment," he complained, "knew no better than to deny completely the facts on which these aberrations rested and to declare them bare-faced swindle and fraud."⁵³ Hartmann believed along with the spiritists that séance-phenomena raised serious scientific questions.

Like DuPrel and the spiritists, Hartmann turned to psychology for some answers. He attributed the special abilities of mediums to

⁵⁰ J. Leeser, *Herr Professor Wundt und der Spiritismus*, 2nd ed. (Leipzig, 1879), p. 43.

⁵¹ O. Simony, *Über spiritistische Manifestationen vom naturwissenschaftliche Standpunkt* (Vienna: A. Hartleben, 1884), p. 33.

⁵² DuPrel, *Studien*, pp. 2, 7, 34.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

somnambulism, a mental state between waking and sleeping in which the medium was extraordinarily sensitive and receptive. A somnambulant could accomplish amazing psychological feats, including the concentration of mental energy upon external objects and the transference of ideas from one person to another. Underneath the crusty shell of occultism was a kernel of scientific truth: that different mental states, not always accessible to one another, could result in seemingly inexplicable and uncanny phenomena.

Hartmann, Schrenck-Notzing, Aksakov, and DuPrell all insisted that they were scientists. In fact, they claimed to be *better* scientists than those in academe on the grounds that they were more empirical. Séance-phenomena, they argued, were stubborn and incontrovertible "facts" which did not fit existing scientific theories. "I saw it" was the basis for a simple, straightforward empiricism of the occult.

The séance, of course, was anything but simple and straightforward. Unlike a laboratory experiment, it depended upon the multiplication of variables to produce results. The darkened room, the lively, expectant audience, the prohibition against disturbing the medium in his or her trance--all contributed to the confusion surrounding séance apparitions. Occultism conducted its observations in an atmosphere that was far from rarified and thick with mystery.

Spiritists and occultists alike managed to make a virtue of necessity. Aksakov argued that a séance could not be treated like a laboratory experiment in which the variables could be altered, isolated, and tested at will. Instead, the *whole* situation was important for making contact with spirits. The medium must be allowed to determine the conditions of the occult "experiment." Any interference on the part of the observer might

prevent the phenomena from occurring. In that case, Aksakov pointed out, there would be nothing to observe. "A certain room must be left free for the presumed fluidic activity," he wrote, thereby justifying the use of an isolation booth which kept the medium out of the audience's view.⁵⁴ The scientist, in short, was supposed to assist the medium's efforts, not restrict them.

DuPrel was even more inventive. The spirits which appeared at a séance, he noted, could not act in an arbitrary and lawless fashion. Once they crossed the boundary line between the otherworld and this one, they were subject to physical constraints.⁵⁵ No longer could they behave like "pure" spirits: they now had to make do with the materials at hand. According to DuPrel, this went a long way towards explaining the peculiar, improvised, even contrived nature of mediumistic productions. Bell-ringing, typewriting, table-turning, and all the other bizarre and sometimes pitiful stunts of the séance repertoire could be explained by the spirits' discomfort in their physical guise. They were, so to speak, groping in the dark of the physical world. The undignified appearance of séance-phenomena could even be seen as a confirmation of their supernatural quality. Spirits would surely not *choose* to take such bizarre and demeaning forms if they could help it. Physical conditions even determined where séances could be most successful. Spiritism was so prevalent in America, DuPrel suggested, because the dryness of the air was easier for spirits to move about in--especially, he noted, in California.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Aksakov, "Bericht aus Mailand," p. 8.

⁵⁵ DuPrel, *Studien*, vol. 2, p. 112.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 120.

The true scientist, DuPrel concluded, would not scorn data from the occult just because they were inconsistent and unpredictable. One must take, after all, what nature chooses to give. Nature did not necessarily act in ways that suited the taste or convenience of the observer. It was up to the scientist, instead, to figure out under what conditions nature--or in this case, the supernatural--worked best. DuPrel's definition of empiricism thus included doing whatever it took to make a séance succeed.⁵⁷ This is what I would like to call a "sympathetic" or "indulgent" empiricism.

One of the most articulate proponents of this new empiricism was an obscure lay occultist J. Leeser. Leeser resented the fact that séances were scorned by most scientists at German universities. He argued, however, that the so-called experts were the *least* able to render a judgment on occult phenomena. Extensive training in the natural sciences actually prejudiced people against occultism. It made them blind to things which happened before their very eyes. The educated layman, by contrast, could recognize séances for what they were--manifestations of forces which physical science simply could not explain. Leeser thus constructed nothing less than a theory of scientific dilettantism. Naiveté and wishful thinking took precedence over knowledge:

The observation and particularly the correct evaluation of completely *new* facts is incomparably more difficult for a qualified specialist than for someone who possesses no masterly specialization in any field, who instead has a less fundamental knowledge of *many* different areas.⁵⁸

The occultist was the better scientist, Leeser insisted, precisely because he would not rule out anything in advance. He was not in principle

⁵⁷ Ibid., vol. 2, p. 135.

⁵⁸J. Leeser, *Herr Professor Wundt*, p. 4.

opposed to *any* phenomenon in nature--even if it was supernatural. This by no means contradicted the notion of the lawfulness and predictability of events, Leeser insisted. Occultists only sought to subordinate them to *higher* forms of lawfulness. "The number of possible natural powers is not limited for us."⁵⁹ In support of this principle, Leeser cited Fechner's dictum that a scientist should be as cautious about *not* believing as in believing what one has seen.⁶⁰ The occultists had the higher or "deeper" sense of what belonged to the empirical world.

Max Kemmerich defended indulgent empiricism in a similar fashion. In a book published in 1911 on modern-day prophets, Kemmerich originally set out to show that present-day mediums were all hoaxers. But he ended up being converted, as he himself put it, from Saul to Paul.⁶¹ In his research, Kemmerich was especially impressed by one Frau von Ferriem, who successfully predicted events around the world such as the release of Dreyfus in 1899, the harbor fire in New York in 1900, and the Martinique earthquake in 1902.⁶² Whenever a prediction had not come true, Kemmerich made reference to the natural ebb-and-flow of prophetic power. What needed to be explained was not the inspiration itself, but its temporary interruption. Both success and failure thus tended to confirm Kemmerich's hypothesis.⁶³ It was not the observer's job to discredit the medium, but rather to lend him or her every possible assistance: "Nature, not the scientist, sets the conditions."⁶⁴

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 18.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 1.

⁶¹Max Kemmerich, *Prophezeiungen: Alter Aberglaube oder neue Wahrheit?* (Munich: Albert Langer, 1911), p. v.

⁶²Ibid., pp. 325-341.

⁶³Ibid., p. 149.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 99. See the full quotation at the beginning of this chapter.

According to this new empiricism, the natural scientist became the ally of the medium. Kemmerich had learned from experience, for example, that he could not use bright lights to photograph a séance while it was in progress. Kemmerich used only red lights, which apparently did not scare the timid spirits away.

Schrenk-Notzing took this line of reasoning even further. In a series of sessions with "Eva C." over a four-year period, he investigated the source of the materializations which Thomas Mann later witnessed. Typically these took the form of pieces of paper, drawings, string, gauze, and other simple materials which mysteriously appeared during the course of a session and took on the shape of a hand, a head, or an entire figure. According to Schrenk-Notzing, the psychic energy of Eva C. temporarily coalesced into these visible, physical structures: spirit became matter.⁶⁵ Schrenk-Notzing was emphatic that the scientist must accommodate himself to the medium and the materializations, not the other way around.

*All conditions, controls, interferences, and experiments must, as far as possible, be arranged in such a way that the play of these forces and the mediumistic performances as such, are not hindered or interrupted in their development or mode of action.*⁶⁶

This sympathetic approach to the medium resulted in some remarkable rationalizations. Séances took place in darkness or semi-darkness not because it allowed the medium to practice deception with impunity, but because it was necessary for apparitions to occur. The occultist had to rely upon the medium to determine whether the setting was favorable or not. It was very important to keep both the medium and the

⁶⁵ Schrenck-Notzing, *Phenomena of Materialisation*, p. 1.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 24. Italics in the original.

audience in the proper frame of mind. "The [medium's] somewhat suspicious refusal of very rigid conditions of control," Schrenck-Notzing observed, "may be the result of a correct instinctive knowledge that they produce a psychic inhibition which places the whole result in jeopardy."⁶⁷ Skepticism, in short, was a self-confirming prophecy. The medium needed to be trusted in order to succeed.

This indulgent attitude could be quite ingenuous. When Schrenck-Notzing discovered pinholes in the cabinet curtains for Eva C., he argued that they were not counterconclusive. The pins, along with the paper images which they supported, might themselves have been materialized out of thin air. They were part of the apparition, proof, in fact, that the spiritual or psychic agency needed to make use of physical objects when entering the physical world.⁶⁸

Even in clear cases of fraud, Schrenck-Notzing added, it was usually the *audience*, not the medium, who was to blame. Mediums resorted to cheap tricks only because their observers expected them to. The trance state made them vulnerable to the unconscious suggestion on the part of the audience that the whole thing was a fraud. "Indeed, it almost seems as if the tendency towards deception and to the mechanical production of mediumistic occurrences is a frequent quality of mediumship, just as simulation appears as a symptom of hysteria...."⁶⁹ The scientist who is overly suspicious, it would seem, got just the kind of medium he deserved.

The hypnotist Albert Moll expressed similar sentiments in a lecture he delivered to the Psychological Society of Berlin in October, 1907. It took

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 26.

⁶⁸ Ibid., pp. 188-189.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 20.

only one doubter at a séance to make it difficult or even impossible for the medium to produce any apparitions.⁷⁰ DuPrel asserted that mediums responded sympathetically to the moods of their audience. Instances of deception, then, did not discredit the séance at all. It was proof of the medium's unusual power of suggestibility. As DuPrel put it: "There are not just two possibilities, conscious fraud or authenticity, but also the third possibility of unconscious fraud."⁷¹

Eduard Hartmann was the most vocal in his defense of the poor, beleaguered medium. Any attempt to "catch" or expose the medium could cause not only a temporary loss of a delicate, elusive, and temperamental psychic power, but also mental illness as well. Suspended between consciousness and unconsciousness in the somnambulistic state, the medium was in an extremely vulnerable position. Any disturbance, especially a sudden or hostile one, could cause serious damage.⁷² "Many mediums," he wrote, "end up with complete derangement of the body and spirit; they fall ill or become melancholic, and end in madness or suicide."⁷³ For that reason, the occultist should treat the medium more like a patient on the edge of sanity rather than the suspect in a crime. Once again the analogy between occultism and psychology looms large: like Freud with his patients, Hartmann counseled that occultists should *listen* to their mediums in order to gain insight into their symptoms. "When one deals with the literature of the spiritists, one has to adopt the attitude of a

70 Moll, "Einleitender Vortrag," pp. 356-358.

71 DuPrel, *Studien*, p. 262

72 Hartmann, *Der Spiritismus*, p. 6.

⁷³Ibid., p. 8.

specialist in mental disorders, who gets his patients to give him as exact a description of their delusions as possible."⁷⁴

The occultists thus raised their support for the medium to a principle of empiricism. Not only was it the case that they clung to a seemingly straightforward rule for scientific evidence--seeing is believing--but also they insisted that belief itself was a necessary condition for séance phenomena to occur at all. Turn-of-the-century occultism saw a remarkable convergence of empiricism and the will to believe, all under the auspices of a new psychology.

Paranoia mystica

It is not surprising that some doubting Thomases opposed this new, more indulgent empiricism. Academic scientists claimed that the "progress" of occult phenomena was nothing more than successive stages of fraud. In order to keep one step ahead of the vigilant few who wanted to expose their tricks, they devised new and ever more elaborate deceptions. As Alfred Lehmann, a prominent Danish critic of occultism, put it, "When the table is tired of turning over, then 'the knocking' begins, by which the spirits signal their presence."⁷⁵ It was easy to be cynical about the progressive stages of occultism in the late nineteenth century. Recoiling from what he called the "baroque," even "childish" atmosphere of the séance, Lehmann made fun of séance fashions, particularly the early practice of table-turning: "If Odysseus had adopted the modern procedure and put himself at a table with his friends he would hardly have

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 8.

⁷⁵Lehmann, *Aberglaube und Zauberei*, p. 252.

accomplished anything, because in the first place, Greek bronze tables were exceedingly heavy and unmoveable, and secondly, neither Odysseus nor his dead friends could read or write."⁷⁶ Lehmann's tone captures the tone of ridicule and scorn with which the "scientific" pretensions of the occultists were often received.

The strongest blasts came from the prominent Leipzig psychologist Wilhelm Wundt. Widely recognized as the founder of modern German experimental psychology, Wundt made no attempt to disguise his contempt for such mystical, pseudo-scientific dabbling. In a pamphlet entitled *Spiritism: A So-Called Scientific Question* published in 1879, Wundt demolished the occultists' claims to be members in good standing of the scientific community.

Earlier in 1879, the Berlin biologist Friedrich Zöllner had undertaken "experiments" with the famous American medium Henry Slade which he considered to be decisive confirmation of the spiritist hypothesis. Hermann Ulrici, a philosopher at the University of Halle who was present at these sessions, announced to his colleagues that as a result of Zöllner's discoveries, they must accept the "great probability" that disembodied spirits had been at work.⁷⁷ According to Ulrici, spiritism had finally earned the "dignity" of an empirical science.⁷⁸

Ulrici's comments provoked an angry response from Wundt. Whatever happened between Zöllner and Slade, Wundt wrote, had nothing to do with "real" science. The only thing that could be learned from such experiments was the full range of trickery and sleight-of-hand. According

⁷⁶Ibid., pp. 213, 305-306.

⁷⁷Hermann Ulrici, *Der sogenannte Spiritismus, eine wissenschaftliche Frage* (Halle: Pfeffer, 1879), p. 30.

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 2.

to Wundt, mediums like Slade led fools like Zöllner by the nose. It was the medium not the observer who was in control. How could a self-respecting scientist, Wundt asked, let himself be taken advantage of so shamelessly by his subject?⁷⁹ If the advocates of occultism really wanted to see something, they should turn on the lights.

For Wundt, spiritism threatened to reverse all the progress that modern science had made in the nineteenth century. Under the guise of empirical science, it actually tried to smuggle in superstition through the back door of a spurious psychology. Wundt first attempted to discredit the spiritists by accusing them of the very fault that they attributed to modern science, namely, materialism. According to Wundt, it was the spiritists who were the real materialists, because they depended on spirits taking the form of physical, visible apparitions. Spiritism was a typically primitive American plot, he wrote, to trivialize all aspects of life. "I see in spiritism a sign of the materialism and the cultural barbarity of our time."⁸⁰

Wundt's main line of attack was to challenge the integrity of spiritists at every point. If "I saw it" was a central part of their argument, then their personal assurances was an important link in the evidential chain. Occult data were based upon the assumption that the observer of a séance was reporting what he or she saw fully and accurately. Anyone who called into question the genuineness of a séance would also be casting doubt on the truthfulness of the medium, the observer, or both. The occultists were either liars or fools, Wundt concluded. They either falsified their observations to fit their beliefs, or they let themselves be taken in by

⁷⁹Wilhelm Wundt, *Der Spiritismus: Eine sogenannte wissenschaftliche Frage* (Leipzig: W. Engelmann, 1879), pp. 9-10.

⁸⁰Ibid., pp. 26, 30.

unscrupulous mediums. Wundt did not shrink from turning his scientific critique into a personal attack.⁸¹

The true scientist, he insisted, put his trust in the regularity of nature, not in the credibility of the observer. Occultism destroyed this trust by introducing the possibility of fraud. "The natural scientist approaches his observations with an unshakeable reliance on the authenticity of his objects."⁸² Wundt scoffed at the occultists' claim that there could be *different kinds of cause and effect in nature*, i.e. that there could be a supernatural. To open up the world to unseen spirits made any scientific explanation impossible. The occultists threatened to discredit the young psychological profession with their fast-and-loose empiricism. Wundt hinted at moral issues as well: "Fooling around with hypnosis for allegedly scientific reasons by dilettantes who are not medically trained... seems to me a great mischief which according to recognized policies of officials for health and morality should not be tolerated."⁸³ Hypnosis, suggestion, and the other trappings of the occult, Wundt concluded, belonged in the insane asylum, "not in the workroom of the psychologist."⁸⁴ The irony of his statement is that it was precisely in the asylum, listening to their "abnormal" patients, that Freud, Charcot, and other pioneers of dynamic psychology made their most important discoveries.

⁸¹The level of personal invective on this issue is remarkably similar today. "Some of us have blood that boils at the insufferable dogmatism of those who deny such areas of investigation their genuine integrity and their proper due. Others of us have blood that boils at the mere thought of the empty-headed gullibility of those impressed by such twaddle." Patrick Grim, *The Philosophy of Science and the Occult* (New York: SUNY, 1982), pp. 2-3.

⁸²Ibid., p. 8.

⁸³Ibid., p. 83.

⁸⁴Wundt, *Hypnotismus und Suggestion* (Leipzig: W. Engelmann, 1892), p. 8.

Wundt was not alone in his characterization of occultism as "a great mischief." The Danish psychologist Alfred Lehmann was disturbed by the contemporary fascination for mediums and séances. He was particularly troubled by the apparent difficulty in drawing the line between superstition and science, between mystical and scientific psychology. It was understandable, he wrote in his large compendium of superstition and magic in the 1890's, that simple, uneducated people took an interest in spiritism. It was a substitute for orthodox belief: "For the great mass of the people, [spiritism] itself is simply a religion like any other. One throws oneself in its arms in order to escape the dogma of the church...."⁸⁵ But scientists, Lehmann thought, should know better. The occultists put up with all the nonsense of a séance, Lehmann wrote, because deep down they wanted to hold on to a spiritual faith. "Whoever has the need to be an independent thinker, but cannot bring himself to tear himself away completely from all belief in authority, finds a powerful support in spiritism."⁸⁶ Occultism, in Lehmann's view, thus became a halfway house for those who wanted both science and religion, for those who wanted to be "scientific" but who easily wearied of scientific rigor. The results, Lehmann wrote disparagingly, made for abominable science: "The most remarkable thing shown by these spirit-photographers," he wrote of occultists like Schrenck-Notzing, "is perhaps the powerful drive... to be defrauded at any cost."⁸⁷ The entire atmosphere of the séance, he complained, was designed to distract, not to concentrate the attention of the observers. They thereby become the unwitting accomplices of the medium

⁸⁵Alfred Lehmann, *Aberglaube und Zauberei*, p. 243.

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 244.

⁸⁷Ibid., p. 277.

in the perpetration of fraud. Lehmann called this condition "Paranoia mystica", a kind of scientific gullibility which had been pushed to the point of self-delusion.⁸⁸ In describing his own experience in the occult, Thomas Mann recognized this willingness to be caught up, to be carried away by the bizarre theater of the séance. "I should like once more," he wrote, "to crane my neck, and with the nerves of my digestive apparatus all on edge with the fantasticality of it, once more, just once, to see the impossible come to pass."⁸⁹ Above all else, occultism in Germany in the decades around 1900 was a tribute to the seemingly inexhaustible will to believe.

⁸⁸Ibid., p. 339.

⁸⁹Mann, "An Experience in the Occult," p. 261.

CHAPTER TWO

Dirty Science:

Taking Control and Losing Control

[W]hen metaphysics becomes empirical; when it condescends, or begins to feel the obligation, or yields to the temptation, to track out the riddle of universe *experimentally*--and that is what it does in occultism, which is nothing but empirical, experimental metaphysics--then it must not count on keepings its hands clean or its bearing stately. The only dignity it has left is the irreducible remnant that must cleave to all honorable service in the cause of truth; and it must make up its mind that it will have to deal with a great deal of filth and foolishness.

Thomas Mann, "An Experience in the Occult"

In the decades around the turn of the century, German occultists based their claim to scientific respectability on the indulgent or sympathetic empiricism of the séance. They allowed their mediums an astonishing latitude in producing apparitions. Their critics were equally vehement that the séance was an unscrupulous venture from start to finish. They sought to discredit occultism by "catching" the medium during the course of his or her deception. They wanted to expose occultism as a scientific fraud with, as we shall see, dubious moral consequences. By the same token, occultists were equally inventive in their methods of supervising or "controlling" their mediums. They sought to demonstrate thereby the medium's honesty and their own scientific rigor. If cheating could be completely ruled out, then some *other* explanation of séance phenomena was called for.

The turn-of-the-century literature of occultism was thus pervaded with issues of detection and proof, vindication and foul play. Like a "whodunit", the plot usually revolved around who is getting away with something, and who is catching whom. This preoccupation with guilt and

innocence--especially, as we shall see, in its *sexual* dimension--can be attributed to the psychological nature of occultism. The emergence of psychology, particularly a psychology of the unconscious, stirred up issues of manipulation and self-control. Many of these anxieties worked themselves out--or at least found expression in--the literature of the occult. The following discussion of sexuality and occultism is only an apparent departure from the central subject of psychology and religion. It suggests the extent to which wishful thinking of the most intimate kind was part of a scientific as well as religious program. The pursuit of scientific respectability led the occultists down some pretty muddy paths.

Whodunit

Most of the critics' techniques for unmasking fraudulent mediums were mechanical in nature--turning on the lights, wrestling an apparition to the ground, bursting in on the medium's private cabinet. With such methods, they scored a number of dramatic successes--the embarrassment of Eusapia before the Society for Psychical Research in Cambridge in 1895, for example, being the most memorable. Lehmann called the exposure of Eusapia "a turning point in the history of spiritism." From that moment on, he wrote, "all physical stunts have lost their scientific interest, and spiritism ceased to exist as a scientific problem."¹

But they also had techniques of exposure which were *psychological* in nature. They did not seek to catch the medium red-handed, so to speak, but

¹Lehmann, *Aberglaube und Zauberei*, p. 457. See Ruth Brandon, *The Spiritualists: The Passion for the Occult in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (New York: Prometheus, 1984), p. 129, and Janet Oppenheim, *The Other World. Spiritualism and Psychical Research in England, 1850-1914* (New York: Cambridge, 1985), pp. 150-151.

to catch his or her unconscious at work. A psychology of the unconscious made it possible to account for mediums' remarkable mental powers without resorting to supernatural explanations. "Psychic research," as it was called, was particularly strong in Great Britain, where the Society for Psychical Research could boast having both William James and Freud as corresponding members. On the continent, its ablest practitioner was the Geneva psychologist Theodor Flournoy. Though psychic research, like spiritism, was hardly distinguishable from occultism at times, Flournoy did not share their wishful thinking and spiritual yearnings. Instead, he displayed a tenacious skepticism, a determination to track down the psychological sources of occult phenomena. He was impressed with the nonsense, empirical methods of American researchers in the new field of the psychology of religion. In his own major work, *From India to the Planet Mars*, published in 1900, Flournoy decoded the secret language of a woman who, in a trance state, was capable of speaking in the voice of several different personalities. The medium Helen Smith (whose real name was Catherine Müller) adopted the personas of Marie Antoinette, a Hindu, and a Martian. In his efforts to crack the code of Madame Smith's ecstatic utterances, Flournoy called upon the Swiss linguist Fernand Saussure. Saussure verified his suspicion that the voices were elaborate constructions based on words and language patterns which she had been exposed to early in life. The point of Flournoy's exercise in linguistic detection was to demonstrate that the languages of India and Mars did not come from *outside* the medium as some kind of spirit-revelation, but from *inside* her mind. They were "a personality quarreling with itself",

unconscious material which could be identified as unconscious fragments from Madame Smith's past.²

Oskar Pfister, a long-time correspondent of Flournoy's, adopted much the same approach. In an article entitled "Secret Writing, Secret Speech and unconscious Picture Puzzles," Pfister examined the nonsense-writing of otherwise healthy, normal people. He analyzed these baffling forms of secret speech--"Krypterga" he called them--as messages from the unconscious. Like dream images, Pfister suggested, they could be useful as a starting point for free association. They served to distract the patient from immediate worries and to lead quickly to the deeper, more tangled complex of problems.³

The association technique could also be used in a more aggressive fashion. By exposing the unconscious at work, the claim that some supernatural agency was present could be discredited. In his medical dissertation published in 1902 under the title "On the Psychology and Pathology of so-called Occult Phenomena," C. G. Jung analyzed a series of séances by his cousin Helene Preiswerk which he attended in 1899. Writing under the direction of Eugen Bleuler at the Burghölzli clinic in Zurich, Jung patterned his study directly on the work of Flournoy. He proposed, as he put it, to remove occultism from the realm of "scientific gossip" where it had long languished in "a remarkable dearth of scientific observation," and

²Theodor Flournoy, *From India to the Planet Mars* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1900), p. 118.

³Pfister, "Kryptolalie, Kryptographie und unbewusstes Vexierbild bei Normalen," *Jahrbuch für psychoanalytische und psychopathologische Forschungen* (1910), p. 155.

return it to the realm of scientific respectability.⁴ Though impressed by Preiswerk's productions at first, Jung was increasingly struck by the "frivolity and banality" of the entire proceedings, which eventually gave way to "the impression of willful deception."⁵

Like Flournoy, Jung attributed the medium's activities to the operation of the unconscious--whether deliberately manipulated for effect on the audience or not. Jung soon noticed that all of her trance-state personas reflected a sexual fantasy. In one she was seduced by Goethe, who gives her a son. In another, she appeared as Jung's mother. Jung quite rightly sensed that these images were linked to the budding sexual energy and confusion of his adolescent cousin.⁶

Jung took the further step of attributing all mystical delusions to similar unconscious factors. The séance indulged "the tendency to romantic ideas, to exalted religiosity and mysticism."⁷ "This pathological dreaming, with its auto-suggestive falsifications of memory sometimes amounting to actual delusions and hallucinations, is also found in the lives of many saints."⁸ In short, Jung began his career with an attack upon occultism--and by implication, upon other religious phenomena--as a mere symptom or distortion of psychological motives.

For a time, at least, Jung retained this skeptical attitude towards occultism. Like Freud, he saw religion as a challenge to a scientific psychology. As long as spiritual explanations were allowed, it would be

⁴C. G. Jung, "On the Psychology and Pathology of so-called Occult Phenomena" (1902), in *Psychology and the Occult*, trans. R. F. C. Hull, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), p. 19.

⁵Ibid., pp. 34, 46.

⁶Ibid., pp. 40-41.

⁷Ibid., p. 67.

⁸Ibid., p. 70.

impossible for psychology to make any headway. In this respect, spiritism tried to have it both ways: it wanted both invisible spirits and their visible effects. "The dual nature of spiritualism," he wrote in a 1905 essay "On Spiritualistic Phenomena"...

...gives it an advantage over other religious movements: not only does it believe in certain articles of faith that are not susceptible of proof, but it bases its belief on a body of allegedly scientific, physical phenomena which are supposed to be of such a nature that they cannot be explained except by the activity of spirits.⁹

Jung also sensed that spiritists were all too willing to let themselves be duped. "These people are lacking not only in criticism but in the most elementary knowledge of psychology. At bottom they do not want to be taught any better, but merely to go on believing--surely the naivest of presumptions in view of our human failings."¹⁰ As for the occultists, they too let the will to believe overcome their scientific scruples. "How does a thinking person, who has shown his sober-mindedness and gift for scientific observations to good advantage in other fields, come to assert that something inconceivable is a reality?"¹¹

Jung would later alter this skeptical position concerning the value of religious expression.¹² But for the moment, he was willing to use psychology in order to expose this "irritating nonsense." This aggressive use of psychology can be seen most clearly in another of Jung's early endeavors: the attempt to catch criminals by the technique of word association. Together with Bleuler at Burghölzli, Jung developed a theory

⁹Jung, "On Spiritualistic Phenomena" (1905), in *Psychology and the Occult*, p. 92.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 107.

¹¹Ibid., p. 100.

¹²See below, "The Healing Fiction."

of "complexes" which could be identified through a process of association. The more important or problematic the material, Jung theorized, the longer the response time in a word association test. When a man came to Jung wanting to know if he could determine whether his young ward was stealing from him or not--a suspicion he wanted to avoid taking to the police--Jung saw an opportunity to test his theory. With the help of his client, Jung developed a word association test which, if the young man were guilty, would statistically prove it in the response times. Jung did not hide his immense satisfaction when the thief was caught by the workings of his own unconscious:

The entire result of this examination seemed to me so convincing, that without further ado I declared to the subject that he had stolen. The young man, who up until then had made an embarrassed, smirking face, suddenly turned pale and asserted his innocence with great indignation. I then showed him a few points in the examination which seemed to me especially convincing. At that point, he suddenly broke out in tears and confessed.

The experiment was, therefore, a striking success.¹³

This incident afforded Jung a high degree of satisfaction. It was especially gratifying to solve a crime and prove his theory at the same time. With the use of psychology, Jung had managed to bring the testimony of the young man's unconscious against him. The criminal, in short, had betrayed himself.

Using psychology as a means of detection is a tricky business. On the one hand, it can be made to serve the cause of knowledge and to increase awareness and mastery of the self. On the other hand, it can put a person in an adversarial relationship with the products of his or her own

¹³Jung, *Die psychologische Diagnose des Tatbestandes* (Halle: C. Marhold, 1906), p. 29.

unconscious. The discovery and exploration of the unconscious in the decades around 1900 met with a great deal of hostility and wariness. Much of this resistance derived from the fear that the new psychology would entrap rather than liberate its subjects. Whether it was in the interest of scientific progress or not, Jung's use of psychology as a means of detection--and the pleasure which he took in it--only confirmed those fears.

Psychology could catch you when you were not looking, or more precisely, where you *could not* look: your own unconscious. The use of psychology as a means of entrapment was a temptation that could not always be avoided. As August Römer, a medical doctor and former director of Zwiefalten asylum put it, "...[w]hoever uses his psychiatric knowledge only in order to get someone else's number and to play, so to speak, the 'secret policeman' is missing the most important thing: the desire to help one's neighbor...."¹⁴

The discovery of the unconscious raised not only the fear of being caught, but also the fear of getting away undetected. A fascinating genre of occult literature took the form of a "perfect crime" made possible by hypnotic suggestion. If a hypnotist could get another person to commit a crime on his behalf and then erase all memory of it, then the real criminal, the hypnotist, would be completely safe. The hypnotic crime was the perfect "whodunit." Around the turn of the century, it became a major subject for popular literature as well as the basis for actual criminal trials. An unscrupulous person could use psychology--so the unspoken message went--to get away with murder.

¹⁴August Römer, *Psychiatrie und Seelsorge: Ein Wegweiser zur Erkennung und Beseitigung der Nervenschäden unserer Zeit* (Berlin: Reuther u. Reichard, 1899), p. 8.

In his capacity as a medical expert for the Munich courts, Schrenck-Notzing cited the case of a woman who in 1899 was convicted of attempted murder. She was later released when she convinced the appeals court that the "real" guilty party had been a clairvoyant card reader who had convinced her against her will to commit the crime. Schrenck-Notzing also reported the case of a rich woman who claimed to have been swindled by a hypnotist. He tricked her into marrying him, and then gained control of her entire estate. The court forced the hypnotist to return the money and property, but--Schrenck-Notzing pointed out the contradiction--did not convict him of rape.¹⁵ The hypnotic healer Albert Moll reported a similar incident to the Society of Prussian Medical Officers in the case of a man who donated all his money to a hypnotist. The donor charged that he had done so only as a result of post-hypnotic suggestion.¹⁶

Hypnotism could be used to catch a criminal as well as to commit a crime. A small notice in the *Journal for Psychotherapy and Medical Psychology* in 1909 drew attention to a case in Graz in which a village woman had been sentenced to three months in jail for accusing the parish council chairman of financial improprieties. When she appealed the sentence, the court overruled the conviction on the grounds that the woman had made her accusation at a séance. She could not be held responsible for words she spoke while in a trance. Her accusations, moreover, turned out to be true. The author of the notice concluded that local rumor, not clairvoyance, was the real source of the old woman's charges.¹⁷

¹⁵Schrenck-Notzing, *Kriminalpsychologische und Psychopathologische Studien* (Leipzig: J. A. Barth, 1902), p. 106.

¹⁶Albert Moll, *Hypnotism* (1889; London: Walter Scott, 1890), p. 337.

¹⁷"Verschiedenes," *Zeitschrift für Psychotherapie und medizinische Psychologie* (1909), vol. 1, p. 62.

People responded to such stories with enthusiasm. Schrenck-Notzing warned that sensational coverage of hypnotic crimes by the press could cause havoc in the courtroom. In a series of spectacular murders in 1896, for example, dozens of witnesses turned up claiming "psychic" knowledge of events they themselves had not witnessed. They had "seen" the crime in their minds--a form of testimony which Schrenck-Notzing and the courts dismissed, but which was the logical conclusion of spiritist reasoning.¹⁸ A joke which made the rounds in Munich at the time made fun of Schrenck-Notzing's preoccupation with the issue by mixing up his unusual name. "So then, Nenck-Schrotzing, no, Notz-Schrenking, ah hell, Schrotz-Nencking, Notz-Schrenking... ah, hypnotize me so I can get the name right."¹⁹

The real issue was one of control. A psychology of the unconscious, upon which occultism was based, called into question whether people really knew their own thoughts and controlled their own actions. It also raised the troubling possibility that another person, armed with psychology, could find out something about them before they themselves did. That person might even force them to do something against their will, as in the case of a "perfect" hypnotic crime.

The occultists dealt with the issue of control by being extra careful. Everything about a séance invited their critics' suspicion: the darkened room, the expectant audience, the specially constructed "cabinet" for the medium, and the dubious apparitions themselves. In order to counter the charges that they were committing some sort of crime against science,

¹⁸Schrenck-Notzing, *Studien*, p. 116.

¹⁹Eduard Otto Mönkemöller, *Geisteskrankheit und Geistesschwäche in Satire, Sprichwort und Humor* (Halle: C. Marhold, 1906), p. 198.

occultists developed elaborate methods of preventing sleight-of-hand. These included everything from holding the medium's wrists and knees to the most bizarre contraptions. Carl DuPrel once had a medium place his hands upon a board which in turn was resting on billiard balls: any attempt to move and they would go rolling off the table.²⁰ In the literature of occultism, the scientific "control" was never less inventive than the medium's "fraud."

Schrenck-Notzing subjected his mediums to thorough searches in order to prove that they literally had nothing up their sleeves. His procedure was quite typical. The medium's body and clothing would first be given a complete inspection. Then he or she would be bound or sewn into a specially designed suit. At a table séance, the hands and legs of the medium would be held by those sitting on either side--as Mann himself had done. The medium could also be placed in a cabinet, where, hidden from view by a curtain or screen, he or she could produce apparitions without interruption.

As critics became more and more insistent, the personal searches became more and more thorough. Schrenck-Notzing made it a regular practice to examine every orifice in order to make sure there were no hidden objects. In his popular study *Phenomena of Materialisation*, Schrenck-Notzing gave a detailed account of these precautions, which included vaginal as well as anal examinations.²¹ The dryness of his prose was intended to convince the reader of the sober, scientific nature of the whole proceeding. But the searches--and the materializations themselves--often became very wet indeed.

²⁰DuPrel, "Der Kampf um den Spiritismus," p. 552.

²¹Ibid., pp 82,84.

After a séance on December 29, 1910, Schrenck-Notzing recorded that the medium had been carefully searched both inside and out. He also speculated on possible forms of deception, only to dismiss them as far too difficult, given the stringency of the "control."

When the medium put on the knitted hose garment, before the sitting, Mme. Bisson, in my presence, introduced her finger into the medium's vagina. She was also explored by Professor B. and the author through the garment, but with negative result.

Assuming that a female medium wished to use the vagina as a hiding-place for closely rolled packets, e.g., chiffon gauze, she would have to attach some kind of cord or ribbon to the packet beforehand, in order to be able to withdraw it. This cord would be detected during the the exploration at the mouth of the vagina, and any finger introduced into the vagina would feel the foreign body. In the case of persons with a very wide vaginal entrance, it might be possible to withdraw the packet by means of the fingers, deeply inserted. But such a manipulation supposes that the genitals are not separated from the hand by any partition, even a knitted one, and that the person is in a standing or reclining position. She might have touched the external genitals through the garment, but could not have penetrated to any depth.

The hiding of objects in the anal aperture, and their withdrawal from it, is even less possible, on account of its closure by a firm ring of muscle, which hinders the introduction of a finger. Hidden packets can only be withdrawn by means of a cord of suitable strength, the external end of which would have been immediately discovered during the corporeal examination; but never with the sole help of the person's own finger.

The restoration of the material to its hiding-place would be even more difficult. It presupposes a careful folding-up and packing in the darkness of the cabinet. An introduction of the packet into the anal opening would be almost unthinkable without the use of vaseline. But all such manipulations are doubly difficult in the dark.

The bodily, and especially the gynecological, examination, the sewing-up of the tights to the dress, of the dress at the neck and wrists disposed of these objections, since the medium cannot touch her own skin except at the head. Besides, the manner of appearance and disappearance, and the automatism of the materials and forms produced, tell against the possibility of fraud. ²²

Schrenck-Notzing offers this remarkably graphic account as evidence of his scientific scruples. It left no doubt that the medium had

²²Ibid., p. 82.

brought nothing with her into the cabinet. Even her stomach could be checked by feeding a medium blueberry pie just before a séance: if she tried to hide materials by swallowing them and then vomiting them up in the secrecy of the cabinet, they would be stained with a telltale purple. The cabinet itself, of course, had also been subjected to an exhaustive search. There seemed to be no end to the imagination and inventiveness of the occultists in their search for complete and unimpeachable control.

Despite all these precautions and to the astonishment of her handlers, Eva C. still managed to produce materializations on this and other occasions. The suspicions of Schrenck-Notzing that the vagina could be used as a hiding place seem justified by the nature of the apparition. Schrenck-Notzing recorded these apparitions as they were reported to him by Eva C.'s companion in scientific--undoubtedly to the minds of many of his readers, salacious--detail. Alone with Eva C., Madame Bisson saw a form appear on the shoulder of the hypnotized medium. This form then detached itself, and took on the shape of a face. Then the apparition disappeared and Eva fainted. When she recovered consciousness, Madame Bisson reported, the materialization appeared again:

Suddenly Eva requested me to undo the seams [of her restrictive suit]. She removed the clothes and sat naked in front of me. Then followed a series of remarkable phenomena.

A large, flat, dark-grey patch appeared on her breast, white at the rims. It remained for some time, and then disappeared in the region of the navel. I clearly saw it being reabsorbed there.

The curtains were then kept closed for several seconds, without my releasing her hands. A round patch again appeared on her skin at the opening of the curtains. It had the same kind of shape as the first, but was larger. To this was joined, in the left ovarian region, a large, black, ball-shaped structure, white in the middle and dark grey at the rims. With the curtain open, I counted twenty-two seconds. Suddenly the material folded itself together at right angles to the axis of her body, and formed a broad

band extending from hip to hip under the navel. This apparition then folded up and disappeared in the vagina.

On my expressing a wish, the medium parted her thighs and I saw that the material assumed a curious shape, resembling an orchid, decreased slowly, and entered the vagina. During the whole process I held her hands. Eva then said, "Wait, we will try to facilitate the passage." She rose, mounted on the chair, and sat down on one of the arm-rests, her feet touching the seat. Before my eyes, and with the curtain open, a large spherical mass, about 8 inches in diameter, emerged from the vagina and quickly placed itself on her left thigh while she crossed her legs. I distinctly recognized in the mass a still unfinished face, whose eyes looked at me. As I bent forward in order to see better, this head-like structure rose before my eyes, and suddenly vanished into the dark of the cabinet away from the medium, disappearing from my view. Again the medium fainted.²³

The production of such phenomena was surely a painful experience.

On December 18, 1911, Madame Bisson reported a similar materialization by Eva C.

Ten minutes after she had lain down, the stertorous breathing began again, and she fell into catalepsy. Then phenomena appeared in the region of the vagina. A flat ribbon of material emerged from the genitals, remaining joined to them by a small junction. I touched it and pulled at it (which made Eva scream), and hoped to withdraw a small piece hanging loose. But, unfortunately, I did not succeed, as Eva resisted too much, and the whole product was reabsorbed into the vagina.²⁴

Schrenck-Notzing seems not to have noticed the suggestive, almost pornographic nature of his material. Nor did he suspect that others might read his book with more prurient interests. The materializations themselves could perhaps take on a sexual shape: what one observer thought was a foot, another declared to be a penis. In any event, Schrenck-Notzing omitted no detail in his attempt to convince his audience of the hard reality of materialization. He also invited the reader to share with him the moment of proof, when seeing--and touching--turned doubt into belief.

²³Ibid., p. 116.

²⁴Ibid., p. 137.

She then took both my hands and brought the first finger of my left hand towards the material lying in her lap. I was surprised when my finger touched a firm, hard, rounded object, with a rough surface. The sensation was like touching a rough bone. The object I touched appeared of a pink colour, and lay on the medium's left thigh.²⁵

Even more explicit than this is the series of photographs which accompany the text. These photographs typically show both the medium and a materialization. In some cases, the materialized form appears detached from the medium: gauzy shapes and paper-like faces which are not particularly convincing. But in others, the materialization appears against the background of the medium's naked body. One picture, for example, shows a net-like material draped over the breasts of Eva C. Schrenck-Notzing even included an enlarged detail of the nipples for closer inspection.²⁶ In such an instance, one has to wonder just what his audience wanted to see--the apparitions or the naked medium. Schrenck-Notzing's written description is no less striking. In the course of a sitting in September 1912, a moist brown substance appeared suspended in the air. Eva C.'s breast then became damp from drops of the mysterious liquid. She apparently wanted to prove to Schrenck-Notzing that the materialization was genuine:

Immediately after this, the medium put my hand into her mouth, so that I might examine it, but I could only feel the teeth and the tip of the tongue, and nothing else. The medium then expressed a wish to take off the tights, and did this against the advice of Mme. Bisson who, however, finally helped her to do so. The medium took my hand several times and guided it to her breast or her lap, so that I could make sure that the outside of the dress was moistened with liquid. Once she put my hand on her breast, and I suddenly noticed that a smooth, and quite soft piece of

²⁵Ibid., p. 83.

²⁶Ibid., pp. 216ff, figure 128.

material moved upwards under my hand, then returned and placed itself on the back of my hand, whence it finally disappeared upwards. At the level of her navel a piece of the same material, a few inches long, seemed to emerge from the dress, and then to withdraw itself. At the level of her breast some liquid matter, in the form of drops, emerged twice through the dress, and on one occasion spurted with considerable pressure into my hand.²⁷

No wonder Mann called occultism a dirty science.²⁸ He considered the apparitions he had seen at Schrenck-Notzing's, whether fraudulent or not, to be an affront to human dignity and reason. Mann called them "preposterous," "suspect," "lamentably trivial," and "a severe trial of our seriousness."²⁹ They might be unobjectionable on empirical grounds: he himself could not challenge them. But on moral grounds, they left much to be desired. "[I]s human dignity a criterion for truth?" he asked.³⁰ The answer for Mann was a definite yes. Despite his desire to see the performance repeated, Mann pledged never to return.

No, I will not go to Herr von Schrenck-Notzing's again. It leads to nothing, or at least to nothing good. I love that which I called the moral upper world, I love the human fable, and clear and humane thought. I abhor luxations of the brain, I abhor morasses of the spirit.³¹

There can be no doubt that turn-of-the-century occultism earned its reputation as a morally questionable endeavor. Attending a séance was like opening a door to the unknown: anything could happen. It is not surprising, then, that when something *did* happen, it often reflected deep-seated desires and and deep-seated fears which otherwise might go unexpressed. More often than not, these were sexual in nature.

²⁷Ibid., p. 202.

²⁸Mann, "An Experience in the Occult," pp. 222-223.

²⁹Ibid., p. 224.

³⁰Ibid., p. 221.

³¹Ibid., p. 260.

Hypnotic Seductions

There were those who shared Mann's distaste. Two French experts on black magic and "sexual occultism" admitted that exhibitions like those at Schrenck-Notzing's produced "a certain disquiet and nausea."

...[T]he impression received is quite similar to that a sensitive person would feel if he had breakfast in a dissecting room. The horrible odors of an abattoir combine with the pungent stench of an unclean pharmacœia and the smell of violated graces.³²

But the writers of this passage, Émile Laurent and Paul Nagour, displayed more fascination than disgust. Unlike Schrenck-Notzing, they counted on the dirty details of occultism to attract their readers. Their book, published in German in 1903 as *Occultism and Love*, was part of a series of privately issued, illustrated "classics" that were intended for circulation "only among members of the learned professions, mature scholars of the sexual sciences and other educated adults."³³ In their critique of occultism, they introduced the most lurid--and presumably alluring--vignettes, arousing both indignation and interest at the same time.

They cited, for example, the recent case of one "Castellan," a travelling beggar, twenty-five years old, and crippled in both legs. In his wanderings, he received the hospitality of a man who had a sixteen-year old daughter "with an unsullied reputation."³⁴ Castellan, secretly a master of the occult arts, decided to seduce the young woman, using his skill as a

³²Émile Laurent and Paul Nagour, *Magica Sexualis* (1902; New York: Falstaff Press, 1934), p. 12. The original French version was published in 1903 in German as *Okkultismus und Liebe* (Berlin: n.p., 1903).

³³Ibid., p. i.

³⁴Ibid., pp. 117ff.

hypnotist. Pretending to be mute, he conversed with Josephine by "magical" gestures. Before she knew it, she took on the "fixed and vacant stare" of a somnambulistic trance and was helplessly in his power. The rest of the story can easily be imagined, but it was part of the technique of Laurent and Nagour to stimulate the imagination by having the reader follow Castellan's every move.

Castellan picked her up, carried her to the bed, and there abused her sexually. Josephine understood what was being done to her, but an irresistible force prevented her from struggling or crying out. She was in the lucid state of lethargy.³⁵

The story ended on a reassuring note. After following Castellan about for some time, sleeping with him in haystacks and listlessly accepting his advances, Josephine finally managed to break out of her hypnotized captivity. Castellan was arrested and sentenced to twelve years of hard labor for his crimes. Laurent and Nagour then gave a summary of the courtroom revelations.

[The authorities] found out that he had previously been imprisoned for a similar crime. He would select subjects who were sympathetic to his hypnotic "passes" and then work his will on them. Twice he had had sexual intercourse with [his previous victim] when she was neither sleeping nor unconscious, but in a lethargic state; once when she was awake but had no consciousness of what was going on; and twice when she was completely unconscious.³⁶

On the surface, the story is intended to provoke outrage. But underneath the surface, it clearly attempts to arouse much more. Although there is an open expression of horror and indignation, readers are encouraged to indulge in the secret pleasure of imagining all those

³⁵Ibid., p. 119.

³⁶Ibid., pp. 120-121.

passive, unresisting women. The story sets a tone of both conscious reproof and unconscious fantasy of Castellan's magic power over women. The authors smuggle in the smut under the cover of moral protest.

Hypnotic attraction, they told their readers, could be exerted on wives as well as virgins. In a recent case, a woman with a husband and children killed herself in order to end an adulterous liaison. In her suicide note, she confessed to a long-standing infidelity, but declared herself powerless to escape:

It is four years now that I have been under the influence of Monsieur X, and have committed acts with him for which I had the greatest disgust. When he is away I am in full possession of my normal senses, but as soon as he approaches I feel my will weaken and must do whatever he says. I can no longer face my children. I am taking the only way out.³⁷

This is another story with mixed messages. On the one hand, the authors played on the fears of their (presumably male) readers: see how your wives can be spirited away by those who have special powers of attraction. On the other hand, they appealed to the desire for uncontested sexual conquest. When psychology was mixed with occultism, the most basic fantasies and fears of an audience could be exploited.

Another of those fantasies was that of public--not just private--seduction. The suggestibility of the opposite sex need not take place in secret. It could be practiced in the open air, with tent-revival oratory and multiple converts:

A passionate lover, named Henry Prince, infatuated his feminine contingent into believing that it was possible for him to devirginize a beautiful maiden, Miss Paterson, in a public assembly of his adherents in the "Sanctuary of Love" which he had founded. He indeed announced that

³⁷Ibid., p. 121.

he would in the power of God take a virgin to wife, not with fear and shame in a secret place, but publicly in the light of day and in the presence of both sexes. It was God's will for him to take her, and he would ask permission of no one, not even the chosen girl herself. Which one he would take, he said not. The virgins should thus hold themselves in readiness for his favors.³⁸

Alfred Lehmann told much the same story in his 1898 compendium, *Superstition and Magic*. Since the preacher/seducer would not declare in advance which member of the sect he would publicly have sex with, all the women were free to fantasize about the possibility. According to Lehmann, the suggestibility of crowds is not unlike hypnosis: both can result in actions which the actors would consciously condemn, but which they might unconsciously desire.³⁹

It is difficult in stories such as these to tell where disgust comes to an end and the fantasy begins. Each of these vignettes carry with it a dual quality: an express repudiation of the seduction or rape, and an implicit fascination. The authors declared Prince's ceremony to be "an outrageous spectacle." But they left plenty of room for their readers to fantasize about "public copulation." "We leave it to the imagination of the reader," they concluded, "to draw the inference of [Prince's] physical powers and ability to enamor the virgins into permitting such gross liberties with them."⁴⁰ This sounds more like an invitation than a warning. The authors *wanted* their readers to see it all in their minds.

The psychological component of occultism provoked fears--or fantasies--of sexual seduction. From its inception in the early nineteenth century, the practice of magnetism was invariably accompanied by charges

³⁸Ibid., pp. 121-122

³⁹Lehmann, *Aberglaube und Zauberei*, p. 469.

⁴⁰Laurent and Nagour, *Magica Sexualis*, p. 122.

of sexual abuse.⁴¹ As theories of hypnotism and subliminal states developed in the course of the century, speculation about their "moral" implications increased. Hypnosis, Wundt warned, is not only scientifically wrong; as "the reception hall for 'higher secrets'" it was also morally dangerous.⁴² Hypnotism showed the same "inclination to occultism" which threatened to degrade all respectable science.⁴³ Hypnotized subjects, Wundt sarcastically observed, belonged "not in the laboratory of the psychologist, but in the hospital ward."⁴⁴

Wundt also thought they belonged in jail. Wundt worried about the possibility that hypnotists might engage in all sorts of illicit behavior in the name of so-called hypnotic science. The hypnotist's mastery over the subject's will was a delicate situation. Wundt declined to make his fears more explicit, but he did make reference to sensational rumors:

In view of such reports, I cannot conceive how one can view hypnosis as a harmless procedure. It is absolutely clear that for persons under hypnosis the power of moral resistance is considerably weakened. With the greatest of ease, they can be convinced that they have experienced something, against which they would undoubtedly protest in an unclouded conscious state. And they can just as easily be made to do things--and to see them as justified or necessary--which under normal self-control would rouse their moral indignation to the utmost. Even if it were agreed that repeated hypnosis resulted in no physical harm, the moral damage to the hypnotized subject is striking.⁴⁵

As we have already seen with Laurent and Nagour, others did not scruple to voice their concern, which was usually sexual, in steamy detail. In his capacity as a medical expert in the Munich courts, Schrenck-

⁴¹For the case of "Wolfram" published in 1821, see Moll, *Hypnotism*, p. 335.

⁴²Wundt, *Hypnotismus und Suggestion*, p. 3.

⁴³Ibid., p. 23.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 8.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 82.

Notzing was in a position to know just what sort of crimes were involved. He took particular interest in the legal implications of a psychology of the unconscious. To what extent could legal action be taken against those who used their hypnotic power to gain a sexual advantage? What responsibility could be assigned to defendants who claimed to have committed crimes under hypnotic duress? Schrenck-Notzing chose to report in detail the case of Mainone in 1900.⁴⁶ Mainone was a young quack, a *Kurpfuscher*, who set up shop in Mühlheim on the Rhine after a one-week crash course in magnetic healing. One of his first patients was Maria R., a naïve young woman who wanted Mainone to improve her eyesight. The doctor, promising to help her in just a few painless sessions, proceeded to put Maria into a hypnotic trance. After having her take off all her clothes, he touched her back, breasts, and genitals--all under the pretext of a thorough medical examination. When Maria started from her trance with a cry of pain, Mainone announced that he had discovered a urinary infection. Another appointment, he told her, would have to be scheduled to clear it up.

At this second hypnotic session, Maria recalled that the doctor had put her on a sofa during the trance. She could remember hearing him exclaim that "[t]he bad water must come out!" and then feeling "a hard object" penetrating her. She awoke to find Mainone kissing her profusely while a strange liquid was running down her leg. She rushed out of his office and collapsed in the street. When she revived, Maria was too confused and ashamed to tell anyone what had happened. She even returned to Mainone for a third hypnotic treatment.

⁴⁶For the details which follow, see Schrenck-Notzing, *Kriminalpsychologische und Psychopathologische Studien*, pp. 155-166.

Maria's sister suspected foul play and called in a "real" doctor, who noticed Maria's torn hymen. Criminal proceedings against Mainone began. Accused of both assault and rape, Mainone denied ever having put his patient under hypnosis. He further claimed that it was Maria who had seduced him. The fact that she repeated her visits, he argued, denoted at very least her consent. The court refused to believe Mainone's version of the story and sentenced him to eighteen months in prison for sexual assault. It failed, however, to convict him on the more serious charge of raping someone in an unconscious state (§176).

Schrenck-Notzing made clear that the magnetist had undoubtedly used his position to take advantage of an unwilling patient. Conviction of assault, he thought, should have been followed by conviction of rape. Schrenck-Notzing reported a number of other instances in which a diminution of the will was exploited as a sexual opportunity. From his own practice he recalled a painter who hypnotized his model in order to seduce her.⁴⁷ He also reported a case in which his patient had hypnotized another man's wife, induced her to engage in manual sex, and gotten away with it for over three months. Hypnosis, it would seem, could make a man a cuckold without his wife's even knowing about it. Schrenck-Notzing suggested that unlike the case of Maria and Mainone, the woman in this instance was a willing partner in the affair. She had, as he put it, "a passionate nature and loved her seducer. He probably could have had her in a waking state."⁴⁸ The two adulterers, Schrenck-Notzing implied,

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 104. There are many nineteenth-century instances of artists seducing their models. The frequency of this scenario--both in reality and in imagination or fiction--suggests the degree of interest and anxiety attached to the male artist's "privileged" position to view women's bodies as part of his professional work.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 105.

employed hypnosis as a kind of subterfuge, a means of evading their own embarrassment and sense of guilt. In this case, hypnosis was a convenient excuse. By playing around with hypnosis, a person might be able to evade one's own conscience and sense of guilt. The psychological aspect of turn-of-the-century occultism permitted, whether in the imagination or in reality, a certain libertinism.

Even in Schrenck-Notzing's sobering reports from the Munich courtroom it is difficult to judge the wild accusations and counter-accusations produced by hypnosis. He told the story, for example, of a young woman who gave birth to an illegitimate child after repeatedly being seduced in a somnambulistic state. Years later, she revealed under hypnosis the details of this sordid affair to her husband. The husband then used this intimate knowledge of her past life as a kind of emotional blackmail, forcing her to obey him, or else he would divorce her.⁴⁹ Schrenck-Notzing also recorded a case of a doctor who, by his own testimony, exercised poor professional judgment by urinating in the presence of a hypnotized patient who he thought would take no notice. The thirteen-year-old girl told the court that the doctor had put his penis in her mouth and urinated there.⁵⁰ When dealing with thoughts, motives, and perceptions--the subject matter of any psychology, occult or otherwise--it was notoriously difficult to get the facts of the case.

What is most striking about these court cases is not just their legal implications--how much can a person be held accountable in a particular mental state--but the regularity of their themes and motifs: hypnotic seduction and the perfect crime. The most common scenario was one in

⁴⁹Schrenck-Notzing, *Kriminalpsychologische Studien*, p. 105.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 106-107.

which an altered mental state made it possible to take something without the consent or even the knowledge of the victim. Schrenck-Notzing admitted that the *claims* of hypnotic seduction--together with popular literature on the subject--outran its *actual* occurrence. The question of the reality of these seductions is fraught with controversial implications--as Freud's own revision of his infantile seduction theory has proved to be. The issues are not dissimilar. It is difficult, if not impossible, to determine in any given instance whether these events took place. But even when they do not, the fantasies and fears themselves become interesting and important facts. They suggest common anxieties and common desires which find their way to the surface as the result of occultism and dynamic psychology. The uncertainty of individual responsibility and control introduced by hypnosis was translated immediately and consistently into sexual terms. The literature of hypnotic seduction around 1900 suggests that the notion of an unconscious was a central and troubling one. And many of these troubling issues were worked out--more and less realistically, more and less tastefully--in the central arena for uncertainty: sex.

False Teeth and Thunderstorms

Two German novels from the late nineteenth century combine occultism and sex in liberal measure. They provide further evidence that the use of hypnosis was a troubling feature of occult psychology. Both novels depict scenes of "exposure" whose function is to lay bare the secret, malicious workings of hypnotism and the séance. In both cases, worries about occultism take the form of fears of sexual abuse. Taken together, the two novels confirm the impression that psychology--especially in its occult

manifestations--could be a discomfiting thing. It threatened the loss of control, a fear most effectively dramatized by scenes of hypnotic or psychic seduction.

The first novel is *The Midday Goddess*, the most successful novel of Wilhelm Bölsche, *Naturphilosoph, Freidenker*, editor of the *Neue Rundschau* in Berlin, and one of the most popular scientific writers of the Wilhelmine era. Bölsche was a passionate advocate of natural science, especially if it left room for human spiritual qualities. He rejected occultism, however, as a way for science to achieve this synthesis. First published in 1889, *The Midday Goddess* sought to expose spiritism as a fraud. The title refers to a beautiful young medium, Lilly, whose claim to fame is her unusual ability to hold séances in broad daylight rather than in the dark. Her patron is a gullible old count who is trying to stay in contact with his recently deceased wife. At the point at which the novel begins, Lilly has performed so well that a small community of devotees has gathered around her on the count's estate. She is their midday goddess.

They are soon joined by Wilhelm, a young man from Berlin who is both sensible and impressionable. Like Bölsche, Wilhelm is the uncertain child of a scientific age. On the one hand, he feels compelled to dismiss spiritism as a sham. He has seen the "pitifully wretched" productions of Berlin mediums--table-rapping, floating objects, voices from the dead, mysterious guitar chords, smoke-bomb finales.⁵¹ "Confound it," he cries, "the whole business would be completely ridiculous, except that respectable people go in for it."⁵² Perhaps, he tells himself, it is "a kind of exclusive

⁵¹Wilhelm Bölsche, *Die Mittagsgöttin* (1889), 4th ed., 2 vols. (Jena: Eugen Diederichs, 1910), vol. 1, pp. 3-4.

⁵²*Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 49.

sport practiced by people who find no other means of stimulation in the boredom of their carefree lives."⁵³ In any event, Wilhelm is skeptic enough at the beginning of the novel to take part in denouncing one local medium as a charlatan.

On the other hand, Wilhelm is not so sure that truth has been well served. Following a series of uncanny events and premonitions, he decides to study spiritism not in the skeptical environment of the university, but among the true believers on the count's country estate. All his friends and teachers smile at Wilhelm's credulity, but the count is quick to reassure him that "one can be a spiritist and a completely respectable fellow as well."⁵⁴

Wilhelm's initiation to spiritism quickly becomes a sexual one. He attends Lilly's séances and is struck by her physical as well as her psychical endowments. In his search for truth, he has fallen in love. One day Wilhelm is taken literally by sexual storm. Out for a stroll on the count's estate, he is overtaken by a sudden downpour with thunder and lightning. He decides that the safest thing to do is to peel off his clothes and dive into a nearby lake. Lilly just happens to be bathing there at the same time. In the middle of this awkward meeting, she prophesies that water will soon give way to fire. Sure enough, lightning strikes an old barn and it bursts into flames. Wilhelm is convinced that Lilly has the power of prophecy. But his conviction is twofold: spiritual and sensual. "I could have thrown myself at her knees and kissed her hands that she had finally freed me from my doubt."⁵⁵ He found what he was looking for.

⁵³Ibid., vol. 1, p. 41.

⁵⁴Ibid., vol. 1, p. 94.

⁵⁵Ibid., vol. 2, p. 61.

The search for truth soon becomes "an intoxication." Wilhelm and Lilly meet regularly on the far reaches of the estate for "wild orgies in the open air."⁵⁶ The only problem is that Lilly begins to lose her prophetic powers. The gratification of her sexual desires results in the diminution of her abilities as a medium. In order to disguise this new impotence, Lilly relies more and more upon fraud, the mechanical tricks of her trade. Eventually she is caught impersonating a ghost, and, in the ensuing chase and scuffle, she is killed by the count. The aftermath proves disconcerting for Wilhelm in two respects. First, it is proved that Lilly was a charlatan all along: she has had secret access to the count's papers and his wife's diaries in order to make her messages from the afterlife convincing. Second, an examination of the body reveals that for all her youthful allures, Lilly actually wears a set of false teeth. The midday goddess played false, the novel implies, from the very beginning. Wilhelm returns to Berlin a sadder but wiser man. Giving up the desire for complete sexual and scientific knowledge, he seeks forgiveness from his former fiancée. She may not see visions and make love with him in the woods, but she does have the good sense not to look beyond the natural world for human happiness.

Bölsche clearly exposes Lilly and other mediums in the novel as fakes. At the same time, however, he applauds Wilhelm's search for a deeper truth than the mechanical world of the positivists. Spiritism itself may not be the answer, Bölsche seems to be saying, but a science which takes the spiritual dimension of humankind into account still needs to be found. What is remarkable about *The Midday Goddess* is the way it explores the whole issue of occultism in sexual terms. Spiritism and

⁵⁶Ibid., vol. 2, pp. 244, 248.

sensuality come hand in hand for Wilhelm. First the initiation, then the betrayal--the whole issue of occultism is expressed in sexual terms. It is as if the possibility of Lilly's supernatural or (as Bölsche put it) subconscious powers could be most clearly worked out in that other troubling field of human activity, sexuality.

The second novel which links the issues of occultism and sexuality is *The Distant Cross* by Carl DuPrel. DuPrel, as we have already seen, was one of the leading advocates of spiritism in late nineteenth-century Germany. But DuPrel wanted to distinguish true spiritism from its false pretenders. And he did so in his novel by distinguishing the higher love of the spirit from the baser love of hypnotic seduction.

The Distant Cross appeared in 1890, one year after *The Midday Goddess*, openly billing itself as a "hypnotic-spiritistic novel." Like Bölsche's story, it takes place in an aristocratic setting, this time the castle of an Austrian count. Following the urgings of his open and generous nature, the young count falls in love with a shepherd's daughter, who lives on a mountainside near the castle. At their first meeting, a sudden thunderstorm forces them to take refuge in an empty hut, where they consummate their love. Because of the difference in their social standing, they cannot get married. But nine months later the shepherdess gives birth to a child. Then, as fate would have it, she falls to her death in an icy crevasse. No trace can be found of the count's illegitimate son "Moidele."

To console himself in his grief, the young count turns to the occult sciences. He travels as far as Egypt and India to learn the secrets of the magicians and the brahmin. When he returns, the count employs a medium to help him establish contact with a spirit calling itself "Eledoim"--the missing Moidele. DuPrel presents this activity as perfectly plausible,

and clearly praises the count for his spiritist bent. It is the very scientific devotion to his sadness, as DuPrel puts it, which makes the count a man.⁵⁷

Hypnotism, by contrast, receives DuPrel's full contempt. Twenty years after his mountainside affair, the aging count receives into his household a villainous doctor named Somirof. The invitation itself was the result of a hypnotic suggestion which Somirof had planted in the count's mind. Somirof plans to usurp the family fortune by marrying the count's innocent and beautiful niece--a marriage he hoped to arrange, once again, through hypnotic suggestion. Whereas spiritism appears in the novel as a plausible belief in telepathy and as a kind of modern, scientific religion, hypnotism offers an opportunity for seduction and ill-gotten gain.

Somirof is temporarily thwarted in his plans by the mother of the heiress/niece. He murders the old woman, and, with the help of hypnosis, almost gets away with it. First he induces an innocent man to confess to the crime. Then he plants false testimony in the mind of a key witness, no less than the local priest. Once again the young woman and the family fortune are within his grasp--the perfect crime!

At the last moment, Somirof's assistant who also resides at the castle discovers his true identity. He is actually Moidele, the long-lost son of the count who had "spoken" with his father as the spirit "Eledoim." The novel reaches a hopelessly happy conclusion: Somirof is exposed, the count is reunited with his son, and Moidele marries his beautiful cousin. DuPrel hints that this tidy ending is overseen by higher spirits who are watching over the affairs of mankind. The evil agency of hypnosis--a human, not a

⁵⁷DuPrel, *Das Kreuz am Ferner* (1890; Stuttgart/Berlin: Cotta, 1922), p. 222.

spiritual power--could not win in the end. As the count put it in his dying words to his son, "Everything seems reconcilable in light of immortality."⁵⁸

The importance of this third-rate novel is its use of sexuality to reinforce a spiritual message. The count, who represents "good" spirituality, falls in love with an innocent shepherdess. The scurrilous Somirof, who manipulates people through hypnosis, tries to seduce and murder his way to success. DuPrel's message is clear: not *all* forms of occultism can be trusted, though we should not dismiss the genuine ones. But even more interesting is the way he presents this message. His approval of "true" occultism comes in the form of "natural," spontaneous love. False occultism leads to such outrages as hypnotic seduction. Both in truth and in fiction, then, the issues of occult psychology got worked out in sexual terms.

Critics cited these connections between hypnotism and sexuality as evidence that occultism could not be accepted as a scientific approach to psychological phenomena. It was, in short, a dirty science. In a 1911 treatise entitled *Occultism and Sexuality*, Hans Freimark (a writer who combined his interest in psychology and history by alternating between historical novels with a psychological bent, and psychiatric case studies of historical figures) reported that the police had always kept a wary eye upon the activities of DuPrel's psychological society. They were especially on the look-out for any signs of sexual abuse or aberration among its members.⁵⁹ Freimark also charged one of the grandfathers of German occultism, Friedrich Zöllner, with sexual misconduct. In his "experiments" with the

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 533.

⁵⁹Hans Freimark, *Okkultismus und Sexualität* (n.p., 1911), p. 46. The subjects of Freimark's case studies and historical novels include Marie Antoinette, Catherine the Great, Robespierre, and Tolstoy.

American medium Henry Slade, Zöllner had reported feeling his penis being touched. Freimark criticized Zöllner for not putting an immediate end to the session. He should not have waited to see what would happen next.⁶⁰ All occultism (and for that matter, all religion), Freimark argued, was a result of sexual displacement. This discredited it as a real science. "The sexual drive and religious longing," Freimark wrote, "derive from a single source."⁶¹ This, of course, was a familiar and essential part of Freud's cultural critique.

The worries about hypnotic sexual abuse--whether fictional or real--seemed to confirm the opinion of those such as Freimark and Wundt who felt that occultism had no place in a scientific psychology. What these critics failed to recognize was that the "dirty" qualities of occultism were a common response to the troubling aspects of a new piece of knowledge, namely, the unconscious. Did this mean that people were not in control of themselves? Or that others could control them? Not surprisingly, these issues were played out most dramatically in sexual terms: could one person control another in matters of sex. Realities, fantasies, and fears about occultism tended to converge on this issue. These "dirty" preoccupations of occultism seemed to be a way in which people commonly dealt with a new--and unsettling--kind of science, a psychology of the unconscious.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 8.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 137.

PART TWO:

AGGRESSIONS

CHAPTER THREE

Mysticism and Madness: The Diagnosis of Religion

"There's another who's gone crazy from godliness. Religion, believe it or not, is the major cause of mental illness."

Julius Studer, "The Connections between
Religious Life and Mental Illnesses"

Julius Studer, a hospital chaplain in Zurich in the late 1880's, did not himself believe that religion made people crazy. But he was angered by the fact that psychiatrists, laymen, and even clergy made this connection in greater numbers and with greater frequency than ever before. He put the above words into his opponents' mouth in order to make fun of their position. He wanted to show how ridiculous it was to link religion and insanity. What, after all, did good Christian piety have to do with mental illness? For Studer, the question was strictly rhetorical.¹

The irony is that Studer's parody was fast becoming a majority, or at least popular, opinion. In the final decade of the nineteenth century, more and more people were willing to speculate openly about the relationship between religious devotion and emotional disturbance. The emergence of psychology gave the entire question a new sense of importance and urgency. Psychology, after all, made it possible to diagnose religion as a mental condition. By analyzing the lives of religious figures--the ecstatic, the troubled, or the frankly deviant among both the living and the dead--psychology gave substance to the notion that there was an inner link

¹Julius Studer, "Über die Beziehungen des religiösen Lebens zu den Geisteskrankheiten," *Protestantische Monatshefte* (1888), p. 881.

between mysticism and madness. No wonder Studer was worried: psychology had taken the offensive.

Part One explored some of the broad connections between psychology and religion, particularly the ways in which a science of the spirit could easily satisfy the will to believe. Theories of the unconscious made it possible to blur the boundary line between science and wishful thinking. Psychology could acquire, then, an occult, mystical cast.

The tendency of modern psychology to oppose religion was no less marked. In this regard, Studer's fears were justified. At the turn of the century in Germany and elsewhere, psychologists of religion attempted to reduce the transcendent claims of faith to some kind of aberration or sickness. They took the relentless attack of natural science upon religion across the threshold of the mind and into the very soul. This aggression is the theme of the following two chapters. Chapter Three explores the retrospective diagnosis of religious "genius," a diagnosis which extended even to Jesus himself. Chapter Four turns to the "sexual" diagnosis of Catholicism by a psychology that was largely Protestant. As we have seen in the case of occultism, controversy and uncertainty were more often than not worked out in aggressive sexual terms.

Genius and Pathology

Nowhere was the aggressive tendency of psychology clearer than in its diagnosis of religious "genius." From the very beginning, psychology took extraordinary interest in prominent personalities in religious history. No prophet, no apostle, no saint, not even Jesus himself was spared psychological scrutiny. Religion, after all, offered a rich set of behaviors for

psychological speculation--speaking in tongues, spectacular conversions, fits of possession, and self-flagellation. German psychologists and laymen offered numerous retrospective diagnoses of these dramatic symptoms, comprising a literature which reached its peak shortly after the turn of the twentieth century. Reverence beyond the grave was no bar. In fact, there were fewer risks in speculating about the mania of the dead. In many instances, indeed, it was difficult to distinguish psychological speculation from slander. In any event, the lively discussion of religious pathology in the decade before and after 1900 could not fail to offend religious sensibilities. Psychology threatened to discredit religion by diagnosing it as an illness.

In its preoccupation with religious "genius," religious psychology in America and elsewhere took its cue from the Harvard philosopher and psychologist William James. In *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, James ignored the "second-hand religious life" of "your ordinary religious believer." Instead he devoted all his attention to the hardy pioneers of new beliefs, the prophets in the wilderness, and the embattled, lonely innovators. It was the experience of these "'geniuses' in the religious line," James thought, which was the proper subject for a psychology of religion.²

James could not help noticing the frequent parallels between spiritual genius and mental pathology. It was difficult to tell the difference in those "for whom religion exists not as a dull habit, but as an acute fever." They easily crossed that subtle boundary line between radiant health and burning sickness.

²William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (1902; New York: Viking, 1982), p. 6.

[S]uch religious geniuses have often shown symptoms of nervous instability. Even more perhaps than other kinds of genius, religious leaders have been subject to abnormal psychical visitations. Invariably they have been creatures of exalted emotional sensibility. Often they have led a discordant inner life, and had melancholy during a part of their career. They have known no measure, been liable to obsessions and fixed ideas; and frequently they have fallen into trances, heard voices, seen visions, and presented all sorts of peculiarities which are ordinarily classed as pathological. Often, moreover, these pathological features in their career have helped to give them their religious authority and influence.³

James did not deny the symptoms of abnormality in the men and women he admired. In fact, these very symptoms helped explain their extraordinary success. A person possessed by an unshakeable conviction of a mission from God--however much it might resemble a delusion or an *idée fixe*--had the power to inspire others to believe. Such obsessive certitude and single-mindedness were contagious. A god who worked in strange ways, James thought, could certainly make use of strange people.

James never wavered in his respect for such gifted fanatics. The psychology of religion for him always remained a psychology of admiration. James valued in the experience of these spiritual "geniuses" the conviction and charisma which he himself could never muster. Furthermore, James never worried that a divine message could be tainted by the pathology of its prophet. The *source* of the inspiration did not diminish the *truth* of its transcendent claims. In *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, James repeatedly warned against a reductionist psychology. He rejected what he called the "medical materialism" of contemporary psychology--the attempt to discredit religion by tracing every spiritual state back to a physical condition.⁴ He ridiculed, for example, the way in which the newly converted Paul was reported to have suffered from "a discharging lesion of

³Ibid., pp. 6-7.

⁴Ibid., p. 13.

the occipital cortex," or the Quaker pacifist George Fox from "a disordered colon." As far as James was concerned, the diagnosis of Saint Teresa as a "hysteric," or Saint Francis of Assisi as a "hereditary degenerate" had nothing to do with the importance or validity of their spiritual message. The psycho-physical determinants of religious experience, he argued, played no role in determining its objective truth or ethical value. If they did, he retorted, "we should doubtless see 'the liver' determining the dicta of the sturdy atheist as decisively as it does those of the Methodist under conviction anxious about his soul."⁵ For James, psychology must be tempered by the will to believe. Psychology might explain, but could not explain *away* religious experience. Face to face with religious genius, James implied, psychology must both analyze and admire at the same time.⁶

For others around the turn of the century, the psychology of religion offered an opportunity to express not admiration but ridicule or contempt. The temptation was to use psychology to *expose* religious belief, to show that fanaticism was a kind of mental aberration. There was, of course, a wider turn-of-the-century interest in the connection between genius and pathology. The Italian psychologist Cesare Lombroso was a leader in establishing the psychopathology of "great men" as a respectable genre.⁷ Paul Julius Möbius similarly published a series of biographies around the

⁵Ibid., pp. 13-14.

⁶For a similar discussion of William James, see Peter Gay, *A Godless Jew*, pp. 21-30.

⁷See, for example, Cesare Lombroso, *Genii und Irrsinn* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1887); *Der Geniale Mensch* (Hamburg: Druckerei Aktien Gesellschaft, 1890); and *Hypnotische und spiritistische Forschungen* (Stuttgart: n.p., 1910). The fact that Lombroso took an interest in both psychopathology and occult phenomena suggests how close the two fields seemed at the time.

turn of the century on the pathological characteristics of Goethe, Schopenhauer, Rousseau, and Nietzsche.⁸ But in the area of religion, psychology could be wielded with particular fierceness to strip the saint of his robes and to lay bare his secret fantasies. The would-be psychologist could translate the ecstatic utterances of the prophet into humble and sometimes damning prose. He could turn a pious ceremonial into a neurotic symptom. For many practitioners of psychology at the turn of the century, it was only a short step from the varieties of religious experience to its abnormalities, from genius to pathology. As Ernst Kretschmer, a professor of neurology and psychiatry at the University of Marburg put it a generation after James, "The stamp of approval of religious genius, of 'saint', has been given not only to many personalities of the highest spiritual importance, but also to many people who today would no longer be the object of religious devotion, but rather of sensational news items and sometimes of a simple hospital report."⁹

In one of the opening numbers of the *Journal for Religious Psychology* in 1908, a Hildesheim psychiatrist, Eduard Otto Mönkemöller, offered a retrospective diagnosis of Anna Katharina Emmerich, the stigmatized "nun from Dülmen." Emmerich had become one of the most popular cult figures in nineteenth-century Germany when she had developed her unusual physical symptoms resembling stigmata. Why should such wounds, Mönkemöller asked, be taken as signs of special religious favor? Why should sickness, pain, and even repulsiveness lead to

⁸For example, see *Über das pathologische bei Goethe* (Leipzig: Barth, 1898), and *Über das pathologische bei Nietzsche* (Wiesbaden: J. F. Bergmann, 1902).

⁹Ernst Kretschmer, *Geniale Menschen*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Julius Springer, 1931), p. 41.

veneration?¹⁰ If doctors at the time had possessed the knowledge of psychosomatic symptoms that we do now, Mönkemöller declared, Emmerich's condition would have been correctly diagnosed as a psychological, not a spiritual one. The difference was important, Mönkemöller argued, because Emmerich was being considered for sainthood in the Catholic church. There was no reason to canonize her just for being sick. Modern psychology could keep the church from making the mistake of confusing symptoms with miracles. There was no need to grant mental illness the status of sainthood.¹¹

Pain was, of course, something that some people held in high regard. In a slim volume on the fourteenth-century golden age of German mysticism, a Leipzig pastor, Paul Mehlhorn, equated piety with suffering and asceticism. One could know the true believer by the intensity of the pain he endured--no matter whether it was inflicted by others or by himself. Mehlhorn especially admired the accomplishments of one Heinrich Seuse who, as he described in graphic detail, tattooed the letters IHS over his heart, wore a hairshirt studded with tiny nails under tight clothing day and night, tied his hands while sleeping so that insects could bite him freely, and carried a cross upon his back, occasionally pounding his fist onto its nails.¹² Mehlhorn, to be sure, was no psychologist. But turn-of-the-century religious psychology would take such stories of self-punishment and draw some very different conclusions about the spiritual life of the ascetic.

¹⁰Eduard Otto Mönkemöller, "Anna Katharina Emmerich, die stigmatisierte Nonne von Dülmen," *Z. Religionspsych.* 1 (1908), p. 318.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 256.

¹²Paul Mehlhorn, *Die Blütezeit der deutschen Mystik*, Religiöse Volksbücher, vol. 4, no. 6 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1901), pp. 41-43.

Psychologists did not only look to history for examples of religious pathology. Some found cases of it in the present. In 1905, a young Danish theology student named Emil Rasmussen published a series of biographical sketches which examined the pathological "prophetic type" of which Jesus was the prime example.¹³ Among his historical figures, Rasmussen could not resist including some contemporary portraits, like the recent Italian sensation Oreste de Amicis. Following the death of a beloved cousin, de Amicis had retired to a monastery cell. From there, he reported having long talks with the Madonna, who lived inside of him. As Rasmussen caustically observed, he even claimed that the excrement which accumulated in his cell smelled like roses when he had his visions.¹⁴

Other turn-of-the-century psychologists focused their attention on whole religious movements rather than individual case studies. The dominant tone of their diagnoses is one of suspicion and fear of "popular" religion. The activity of unorthodox, pentecostal sects was particularly disturbing to many of these Protestant writers. They saw in the periodic waves of revivalism in Europe and America an irrational "mass hysteria" which was out of control. A 1908 report in the *Journal of Religious Psychology* on a recent "psychic epidemic" in Hesse pointed to speaking in tongues, the relentless and insatiable demand for repentance, and allegedly miraculous cures as dangerous symptoms of mass suggestibility.¹⁵ One crippled woman, the writer noted, threw away her crutches at the urging of

¹³For the Jesus-biographies, see below "The Fool in Christ."

¹⁴Emil Rasmussen, *Jesus, eine vergleichende psychopathologische Studie* (Leipzig: J. Zeitler, 1905), pp. 105-106.

¹⁵Jansen, "Die psychische Epidemie in Hessen," *Z. Religionspsych.* 1 (1908), pp. 326-27.

the crowd. When she tried to walk, she fell and was badly hurt.¹⁶ The entire meeting had to be shut down, he continued, when the call for public confession reached the seventh commandment, the one concerning adultery. The subsequent testimonials evidently began to transgress the bounds of legal propriety.¹⁷ The meeting had been especially worrisome, suggested the reporter, because the most "suggestible" elements of the population--women and the poor--were on hand. The responsible, educated classes themselves set a poor example by their own interest in séances and the occult.¹⁸ It was up to the new psychology of religion, the writer urged, to provide a kind of sober, scientific prophylaxis against the unrestrained revivalism of the masses. Religious psychology offered an opportunity, borrowing the language of the Apostle Paul, for "a little leaven of natural science to leaven the whole loaf of mysticism."¹⁹

Along much the same lines, Eberhard Buchner, author of a very successful book on Berlin sects published in 1905, observed the elements of hysteria and suggestibility in these Protestant groups and concluded that "very many of our sects have a psychopathic basis."²⁰ Martin Schram, writing in the *Journal for Theology and the Church*, objected to demagoguery and exploitation of mass suggestibility from the pulpit: "The factors which explain the success of the revival preachers are mass suggestion, increasing the tension at any cost, straining after effect, and

¹⁶Ibid., p. 326.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 325.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 335-36.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 337.

²⁰Eberhard Buchner, "Ein typischer Fall von religiöser Besessenheit," *Z. Religionspsych.* 3 (1909-10), p. 311. See also his *Sekten und Sekterier in Berlin*, 3rd ed. (Berlin: H. Seeman, 1905).

the shocking of nerves."²¹ In a historical and psychological dissertation on the pentecostal movement, one Heidelberg student considered speaking in tongues to be an aspect of "lower" religions.²² Most contributors to the *Journal for Religious Psychology* would have agreed with Theodor Witty, a specialist in nervous disease from Trier, that messianic sects were unhealthy. For people's own good they should be carefully controlled.²³ With its diagnosis of crowd/women/lower-class suggestibility, psychology at the turn of the century became an attack upon the masses.

The use of psychology as a weapon against religion was not unqualified. There were those who shared James' belief that the psychology of religion should increase a person's admiration of religious genius. The Karlsruhe social-psychologist Willy Hellpach, an original and steady contributor to the *Journal for Religious Psychology*, made a clear distinction between mental illness and religious symptoms.²⁴ Piety, Hellpach argued, was not an illness in its own right. It only provided the material with which some other condition could construct symptoms. Mental illness thus took advantage of religion in order to express itself. Religion provided the stage on which mental illness could act itself out: "The hysteric," Hellpach wrote, "always makes a production, and where else does he have a better opportunity to do it than in temples and

²¹Martin Schram, "Die modern deutsche Erweckungspredigt," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 4 (1907), reviewed by Hubert Schnitzer-Stettin in *Z. Religionspsych.* (1908), p. 462.

²²Eddison Mosiman, *Das Zungenreden geschichtlich und psychologisch untersucht* (Heidelberg: Inaugural Dissertation, 1911), p. 63.

²³Theodor Witty, "Moderner Pseudomessianismus," *Z. Religionspsych.* 2 (1908), p. 411.

²⁴Willy Hellpach, "Zur 'Formenkunde' der Beziehungen zwischen Religiosität und Abnormität," *Z. Religionspsych.* 1 (1908), p. 102.

churches."²⁵ The theatrics of the insane, Hellpach wrote, should not be confused with normal, healthy piety.

Emphasizing the pathology of religious life encouraged slipshod scientific thinking. It was all too easy, Hellpach explained, to exploit the sensational aspects of the material. "People love to talk about sickness, and love to hear it talked about...."²⁶ Just because there were a few demented fanatics did not mean that religion itself was the source of the problem. Religion could not be blamed for these crazed excesses. The pearl is the production of an irritation, Hellpach reasoned. Is it thereby any less beautiful?²⁷

Hellpach resisted the tendency to diagnose individuals as suffering from a "religious" condition. In the case history of "Irma", Hellpach treated a Catholic girl whose obsessive adherence to certain rituals was cause for her family's concern. Hellpach diagnosed the condition merely as a thyroid problem. Irma's religious observance, he insisted, was no different from those considered "normal" for a "good" Catholic.²⁸ Religion in this case, Hellpach concluded, was *just* religion.

Some other contributors to the German *Journal* were equally insistent that religion supplied only the *material*, not the *cause* of mental illness. In an article entitled "The Psychology of Holiness," Friedrich Mörchen warned that "psychopathographies"--pathological biographies--were becoming all too popular. Psychology should try to analyze religious

²⁵Ibid., p. 104.

²⁶Hellpach, *Die geistige Epidemien* (Frankfurt: Rütten & Loening, 1907), p. 7.

²⁷Ibid., pp. 98-99.

²⁸Hellpach, "Religiöse Wahnbildung bei thyreogener Erregung," *Z. Religionspsych.* 1 (1908), pp. 360-382.

behavior, but it should not reduce religion to psychological, much less pathological, terms. Faith, Mörchen argued, is a normal, healthy psychological function in its own right. "The healthiest man will also possess the healthiest piety."²⁹ Like every other mental function, religious equilibrium could become unbalanced. But "these sickly phenomena of religious life are not essential characteristics thereof."³⁰ Only for people who were already sick could religion take on some of the properties of the sickness. "...[I]t is in the interest of both individual and social hygiene," Mörchen explained, "to protect individuals of unsound mind from an all too active display of their religious inclinations."³¹

Like Mörchen and other psychologists around the turn of the century, Julius Studer attributed a natural healing power to religion, at least when it was practiced in moderation. On the one hand, he admitted in a book published in 1888 on the relationship between faith and mental illness, the history of Christianity was full of "spiritual epidemics" and "religious delusion."³² As a mental and emotional faculty, religion could produce not only the noblest sentiments, but also the wildest and most degenerate dissipations. This was especially so, he thought, for women. One could not help being struck, Studer noted, that so many mental disturbances took the form of a perverted piety. Studer was critical of using psychology to attack religion. But at the same he was willing to use it to single out those "false" forms of religious observance which were conducive to mental illness. He included on his list of pathological symptoms the

²⁹Friedrich Mörchen, "Die Psychologie der Heiligkeit," *Z. Religionspsych.* 1 (1908), p. 436.

³⁰*Ibid.*, p. 435.

³¹*Ibid.*, p. 436.

³²Julius Studer, "Die Beziehungen," pp. 856-857.

belief in miracles, superstition, the belief in witches and devils, ecstasy, mysticism, and fanaticism of any kind.³³ It was more effective to treat such cases, Studer wrote, as medical rather than spiritual problems. He thus compared, without a trace of irony, the shock treatments of von Haller with the actions of Jesus, when he drove a host of devils out of a man and into a herd of pigs, who promptly hurled themselves off a cliff:

Does not a similar case reported to us by Albrecht von Haller belong to the same category? A mentally ill farmer from Bern was brought to the famous doctor and declared that he was possessed by the seven demons of Mary Magdalene, accompanied by all the symptoms of the deepest depression and the most sickly excitability.... Haller took in his hand an electrostatic device--at that time still relatively unfamiliar--and delivered to the patient seven hefty jolts one after the other, each stronger than before. And lo and behold, the possessed man was completely healed of his demonic melancholy.³⁴

On the other hand, this pathology did not affect *all* religious belief. "True religion cannot make a single person 'crazy'" Studer noted, "and a false one only indirectly."³⁵

...[I]n general, a truly religious disposition can bear the blows of fortune with greater calm and resignation than one which cares little or nothing for religious things. A purified, healthy, lively and active piety is less exposed to the dangers of mental illness than a soul which in its religious life and feeling exaggerates everything in a sickly and one-sided fashion.³⁶

The problem for Studer was where to draw the line between "normal" religion and mental illness. The question was not *whether* psychology

³³Ibid., pp. 883-884.

³⁴Ibid., p. 859.

³⁵Ibid., p. 882.

³⁶Ibid., p. 882.

should be used to diagnose religion, but *what kind of belief* was detrimental. Most psychologists of religion used the new science as a weapon, but each chose his own religious target.

Reporting on papers delivered at the 1909 International Congress for Psychology, Paul Louis Ladame admitted that religious fanaticism could mask a serious mental disturbance. He recalled, for example, a patient of his own who had taken the biblical directive about tearing your eyes out if they cause you to sin, quite literally. When Ladame tried to prevent the patient from mangling himself, the hospital clergyman accused him of contradicting a biblical directive.³⁷ This, Ladame thought, was taking piety too far. On the other hand, Ladame felt that the psychopathology of religion had also gone too far. He offered his audience a parody of Cuvier's famous challenge that he could reconstruct an entire prehistoric animal from one fossil bone. "Give us one symptom," Ladame quipped, "and we'll stamp the prophets, saints, and even Jesus himself according to our classification as mentally ill."³⁸ As we have seen, there was no shortage of those who subjected prophets and saints to psychiatric scrutiny. And there were those--as we shall see--who did not balk at putting Jesus to the test as well.

The Fool in Christ

No one was exempt from these critical diagnoses around the turn of the century. The transformation of Saul into Paul, for example, gave psychologists a field day. There were plenty of question marks surrounding his sudden, spectacular conversion from Christian-hater to an Apostle of

³⁷Paul Louis Ladame, *Religionspsychologische Fragen* (n.p., 1910), pp. 103-104.

³⁸*Ibid.*, p. 105.

in the early church. As early as the turn of the nineteenth century, a German theologian named Werner Ziegler suggested that Paul had been an epileptic.³⁹ The diagnosis was not always so exact. In 1870, for example, Ludwig Noack attributed Paul's conversion to an "exceptional irritability of the nerves and an excitable disposition."⁴⁰ But by the end of the century, some hint of mental aberration was entirely commonplace. The exceptional diagnosis had become the rule.

In the late 1870's, Max Krenkel made the epilepsy diagnosis a plausible and controversial one. Krenkel's starting point was a sensational lecture entitled "A Thorn in the Flesh"--a reference to the sharp physical pain which Paul reported during one of his visions.⁴¹ An independent lay scholar from Dresden, Krenkel pieced together all the references to Paul's health which are scattered throughout the New Testament: his eye troubles, his hallucinations, his unusual physical appearance, his bouts with some unnamed infirmity, and, of course, his dramatic seizures.⁴² Citing numerous ancient medical observers in his major publication on Paul in 1890, Krenkel concluded that the New Testament description of "possession" fitted all the symptoms for epilepsy.⁴³ Paul was not "possessed" by God; he was ill.

³⁹Werner Ziegler, *Theologische Abhandlungen*, 2 vols. (Göttingen: J. C. Dieterich, 1791-1804), vol. 2, p. 127. Cited in Adolph Seeligmüller, *War Paulus Epileptiker? Erwägungen eines Nervenarztes* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1910), p. 2.

⁴⁰Ludwig Noack, *Die Geschichte Jesu (1870-71)*, 2 ed., 4 vols. (Mannheim: J. Schneider, 1876), vol. 2, pp. 16-17.

⁴¹2 Cor. 12.7. For the importance of Krenkel in the debate over Paul, see Seeligmüller, *War Paulus Epileptiker?*, p. 3.

⁴²Max Krenkel, *Beiträge zur Aufhellung der Geschichte und der Briefe des Apostels* (1890), 2nd ed. (Braunschweig: C.A. Schwetschke, 1895), pp. 66, 103.

⁴³*Ibid.*, p. 63.

Krenkel did not mean any disrespect. Without a trace of irony, Krenkel reminded his readers that Paul was in good company--Napoleon, Peter the Great, George Fox, and even Pope Pius IX.⁴⁴ If anything, Paul's infirmity only *increased* Krenkel's admiration for the apostle's accomplishments. He had fulfilled his mission against all odds, *despite* an undiagnosed, untreated illness.⁴⁵ Krenkel's attitude in this regard was entirely typical of the emerging psychology of religion. On the one hand, it subjected the heroes of religion to aggressive, clinical scrutiny. But on the other hand, it tended to do so in the name of science *and* religion. Thus for Krenkel, Paul's sickness became the measure of his strength.⁴⁶

By the turn of the century, the epilepsy diagnosis was virtually taken for granted. William James was willing to admit that Paul was epileptic, though like Krenkel he vigorously denied that this had any effect on his religious authority and significance. For this reason, James was especially reluctant to describe Paul's experience on the road to Damascus as an epileptic seizure.⁴⁷ In a study of Paul's travels among the Greeks and Romans, one German theologian made reference to Paul's "condition."⁴⁸ In a survey of publications on the New Testament in 1908, another attributed the events on the road to Damascus to Paul's "sickly, nervous constitution."⁴⁹ For better or for worse, epilepsy offered a convincing psychological explanation for Paul's peculiar experience.

⁴⁴Krenkel, *Beiträge*, pp. 122-123.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 125.

⁴⁶Seeligmüller, *War Paulus Epileptiker?*, p. 20.

⁴⁷James, *Varieties*, p. 13.

⁴⁸Paul Wernle, *Paulus der Heidenmissionar* (1905), 2 ed. (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1909). Cited in Seeligmüller, *War Paulus Epileptiker?*, p. 33.

⁴⁹Adolf Hausrath, *Jesus and die neutestamentlichen Schriftsteller*, 2 vols. (Berlin: G. Grote, 1908), vol. 1, p. 274.

Oddly enough, it was often theologians who made the epilepsy diagnosis, and psychiatrists who opposed it. The first serious rebuttal to Krenkel's thesis came from a psychiatrist and professor of nervous diseases at the university of Halle, Adolph Seeligmüller. In a spirited denial of Krenkel's arguments, Seeligmüller contrasted Paul's symptoms with those of patients he had observed at Nietleben, an epileptic asylum near Halle. Seeligmüller insisted that Paul could not have accomplished what he did had he suffered from epilepsy. How could Paul have written the letter to the Romans eighteen years after Damascus without any signs of degeneration? How did the account of his conversion with the two sure signs of a major epileptic fit, muscle seizure and a loss of memory and consciousness? After examining a number of possibilities, Seeligmüller finally concluded that Paul suffered at most from eye migraines, or perhaps even a mild case of malaria.⁵⁰

A surgeon, Hermann Fischer, took exception to Seeligmüller's apologetic treatment of Paul, claiming that such a diagnosis could not convince a medical doctor. Fischer suggested that despite his odd physical appearance Paul had a sound constitution. His problem was a nervous one. He was mentally, not physically ill. Paul could not have suffered from "hemorrhoidal melancholy," Fischer reasoned, since he did not sit much. Nor was he especially prone to hypochondria. In the end, Fischer decided that Paul was epileptic--though he too did not accept Paul's conversion as an epileptic seizure.⁵¹

⁵⁰Seeligmüller, *War Paulus Epileptiker?*, pp. 31-35, 45, 77. For a critical discussion of Seeligmüller, see Hermann Fischer, "Die Krankheit des Apostels Paulus," *Biblische Zeit- und Streitfragen* 7 (1911), p. 125.

⁵¹Fischer, "Die Krankheit des Apostels Paulus," pp. 126-127, 139, 149-150.

In the same journal, *Biblische Zeit- und Streitfragen*, one Protestant theologian responded to Fischer's medical attack upon Paul. He objected to the recent tendency to view Paul's visions as the projection of an internal, aberrant experience onto the outside world.⁵² A Catholic priest turned the psychological argument on its head: Paul did not suffer from mental illness, he cured it. He was "the psychologist among the apostles."⁵³ This attempt to "save" Paul from the psychiatrists was typical of efforts to mollify the strained relationship between religion and psychology which such diagnoses implied.

Oskar Pfister's "Paul" went so far as to portray him as an example of a "positive" connection between religion and psychology. In an essay he wrote in 1913 shortly after completing his biography of Zinzendorf, Pfister described Paul as a male hysteric, whose zealous persecution of the Christians betrayed all the symptoms of an obsessive reaction-formation. Christianity appeared to him as the forbidden love, whose renunciation exacted a heavy toll, excessive hatred. Paul's conversion marked a return of the unconscious repressed. In Pfister's view, Paul overcame his obsessional neurosis with a successful sublimation, namely Christianity. Although traces of his original hysteria remained, argued Pfister, Paul managed to harness his powerful drives to a positive spiritual aim. Despite the shame of the original diagnosis, Paul's illness proved once again to be the measure of his ultimate success.⁵⁴

⁵²Johannes Martin Behm, "Die Bekehrung des Paulus," *Biblische Zeit- und Streitfragen* 9 (1914), p. 272.

⁵³Theodor Simon, *Die Psychologie des Apostels Paulus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1897), p. 2.

⁵⁴Oskar Pfister, "Die Entwicklung des Apostels Paulus: Eine religionsgeschichtliche und psychologische Skizze," *Imago* (1920), pp. 269, 288. Paul has recently been diagnosed by a Swiss Jungian pastor as having

Not even Jesus himself was exempted from the rush to make retrospective diagnoses of religious "genius." After 1900 in Germany, Jesus appeared in every conceivable psychological form: Jesus as hypnotic healer, Jesus as epileptic, Jesus as deluded paranoid, even Jesus as the first psychoanalyst. The historical record preserved few definite clues to his personality, but psychology made it possible to make some guesses. For a brief period in the first decade of the twentieth century, psychology seemed to bring to an end the search for the long-lost historical Jesus.

"Wild" psychology produced the most partisan portrayals of Jesus, and encouraged the most exaggerated identifications. "There is no historical undertaking more personal than to write a life of Jesus," observed Albert Schweitzer in his *Quest for the Historical Jesus*. Noting the frequency with which biographies of Jesus were inspired by anger rather than admiration, Schweitzer was of the opinion that "the most marvelous are written out of rancor."⁵⁵ Aggression could sometimes serve the interests of good research. But it could also lead to distortion and contempt. In the very fluid, inexact, and confessionally charged terms of religious

undergone the mid-life crisis of a typical pharisee engaged in "scapegoating"--*Sündenbockpsychologie*. Saul's conversion on the road to Damascus involved the transition from a dualistic to a unified psyche, i.e. the reclamation of his *anima*. Rolf Kaufmann, *Die Krise des Tüchtigen: Paulus und wir im Verständnis der Tiefenpsychologie* (Olten, Switz.: Walter, 1983), p. 7.

⁵⁵Albert Schweitzer, *Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung* (1906), 7th ed. (repr. ed., Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1984), p. 48. Despite his own Christian belief, Schweitzer acknowledged that in this instance, anger served the cause of enlightenment better than love: "They [the writers of "angry" Jesus-biographies] saw most clearly into history because they felt hatred. They have advanced research further than all of the others put together. Without the scandals which they caused, science would not be where it is today.... But the others, who wanted to resurrect Jesus out of love, have had difficulty with the truth." pp. 48-49.

psychology, Jesus took on whatever qualities the psycho-biographer wished to ascribe. More often than not, the psychological portrait was not a pretty one.

The flurry of sensational Jesus-diagnoses written in German reached a peak shortly after the turn of the century. Works like Oskar Holtzman's *Was Jesus an Ecstatic?* (1903), Georg Lomer's *Jesus Christ from the Point of View of the Psychiatrist* (1905), and Emil Rasmussen's *Jesus, a Comparative Psychopathological Study* (translated from the Danish in 1905) appeared in quick succession and caused quite a stir. Together they created the impression that Jesus was driven less by inspiration than by a dubious psychic quality or by some form of mental illness. Jesus was not only brought down to earth; he was put into the insane asylum.

These case studies proved to be the last stage in what Schweitzer had called "the quest for the historical Jesus." This quest had been, by and large, a nineteenth-century and pan-European affair. The most popular--and controversial--account of the historical Jesus was Ernest Renan's *Life of Jesus*, which in 1863 went through eight printings in its first three months. The whole point of Renan's narrative was to make Jesus seem a man, to put him in his social/historical context. Renan sought to fill in the spare Gospel accounts with sensual, novelistic detail. He invited the reader to join him as a visitor in the biblical landscape, to visualize the places where Jesus lived and preached: "We see the streets where he played as a child, in the stony paths or little crossways which separate the dwellings."⁵⁶ Making free use of his sources, Renan adopted a tone of

⁵⁶Ernest Renan, *Vie de Jésus* (1863), *The Life of Jesus* (New York: Modern Library, 1927), p. 83.

emotional immediacy. He avoided over-intellectualizing. Though Jesus lived nineteen hundred years ago, Renan seemed to say, one could almost reach out and touch him today. As one theologian grudgingly admitted, Renan's biography brought Jesus back to life: "...the Gospel once again becomes warm and colorful, the flowers of Galilee spring up under his feet, and the hearts of men open up to him."⁵⁷ As we shall see, it was only a short step from biographical intimacy in the late nineteenth century to a new kind of psychological intrusiveness early in the twentieth.

Renan's *Life of Jesus* was as anachronistic and improbable as it was detailed. His historical reconstruction never convinced the experts in the field. The demand for historical accuracy was partly a reaction to an earlier generation of German theologians who had dismissed Jesus as a historical figure entirely. In his controversial *Life of Jesus* of 1835, David Friedrich Strauss relentlessly rejected any "natural" explanation for the stories recorded in the gospels. He favored a "mythological" interpretation, in which Jesus appeared as a puzzling, insubstantial figure who only later was immortalized. The accounts of Jesus in the New Testament were not meant to hold up under scientific and historical scrutiny, Strauss argued. They appealed, rather, to the aesthetic sense, to the desire to believe, in short, to the need for a spiritual myth. Strauss doubted that the historical Jesus could ever be found. For him, the *idea* of Christ was far more important.⁵⁸

It was opposition to Strauss which set in motion the quest for the historical Jesus--a task which Schweitzer called the greatest

⁵⁷Johannes Naumann, "Die verschiedenen Auffassungen Jesu in der evangelischen Kirche," *Z. Religionspsych.* 3 (1909/10), p. 296.

⁵⁸David Friedrich Strauss, *Das Leben Jesu, kritisch bearbeitet*, 2 vols. (Tübingen: C. F. Osiander, 1835-36), vol. 2, p. 712.

accomplishment of German theology in the nineteenth century.⁵⁹ To what extent could the life of Jesus be pieced together from the surviving sources? Which witnesses could be depended on more than others? What were the specific social and historical circumstances in which Jesus lived? As scholars approached these questions, it became more and more clear how little was actually known about Jesus himself. The textual contradictions and slender supporting evidence all contributed to the psychological speculation which emerged around 1900. If philology and archeology could not discover any more about this elusive and enigmatic figure, then perhaps psychology could.

Important for the psychobiographies of Jesus were discoveries concerning the political and religious conditions of first-century Palestine. How much of a Jew was Jesus? What were the sectarian divisions which shaped and influenced him? More specifically, to what extent did his apocalyptic message and messianic claims differ from those of his contemporaries?⁶⁰ By 1900, these questions offered fertile ground for a sudden growth of psychiatric second-guessing. The portrayal of Jesus as a first-century visionary and fanatic paved the way for psychological diagnoses.

One more aspect of these biographies should be mentioned in advance. Some of them openly sought to discredit Jesus, replacing divine inspiration by clinical madness. But others portrayed Jesus as a kind of psychiatric wonder-worker. They sought to make sense of his exceptional, even erratic, qualities. Psychology could help fulfill the desire for a closer,

⁵⁹Schweitzer, *Leben-Jesu-Forschung*, p. 45. Schweitzer paid tribute to Strauss' accomplishment by dividing Jesus-scholarship into periods *before* and *after* Strauss.

⁶⁰The literature is discussed in Schweitzer, chapters 15-17.

more intimate view of Jesus--a demand which Renan had created, and which the quest for the historical Jesus had failed to satisfy. As one contributor to the *Journal for Religious Psychology* put it, Jesus had been taken away by the experts: "He is estranged from us. From the towns and villages of Germany he wanders back to Asia. That is not the Jesus our mothers told us about every Christmas in Germany."⁶¹ Psychology, perhaps, could give Jesus back.

"It is *a priori* unlikely," wrote one reviewer of Gerhart Hauptmann's "Jesus novel", *The Fool in Christ*, "that either the 'exact' natural sciences, which laboriously lay one stone on another, or history, which proceeds step by step in the labyrinth of historical documents, is likely to reach a full understanding of so unique a phenomenon as Jesus."⁶² Psychology could take the Jesus-problem of the nineteenth century and turn it on its head: the less one knew with any certainty about Christ, the more room there was for psychology to fill in the gaps. Psychology could say things about Jesus which were beyond the reach of historical criticism and which, at the same time, people wanted to hear.

The most satisfying was a flattering portrait of Jesus as the great healer. He was the original psychotherapist, whose methods only now were coming to light. Many of the sick people whom Jesus met were suffering from conditions which modern psychology identified as psychosomatic or mental illness. "Schizophrenia" or "epilepsy," for example, could be substituted for various instances of "possession"--as in the case of the two men beset by devils, whom Jesus drove into a herd of

⁶¹Naumann, "Auffassungen Jesu," p. 296.

⁶²Georg Lomer, *Das Christusbild in Gerhart Hauptmanns 'Emanuel Quint'* (Leipzig: J. A. Barth, 1911), p. 10.

swine. "Now in these demoniacs we recognize with perfect clearness the mentally unsound. We can even detect the individual forms of madness or of nervous derangement in the different stories: e.g. delirium... catalepsy... epilepsy."⁶³ Ignorant of modern psychology, the writers of the New Testament had used the language of demonic possession to denote mental illness. The symptoms they described could now be turned into a modern diagnosis: "We would like to have more exact case histories. But enough has been reported to make us certain that demonism in the time of Jesus was nothing other than the mental illness of our time."⁶⁴

Modern dynamic psychology also suggested the way in which Jesus performed his cures. The "miracles" reported in the new testament were actually forms of psychiatric treatment, effected variously through hypnosis, catharsis, or suggestion.⁶⁵ The remarkable trust which Jesus inspired in his "patients" enabled him to relieve them of their psychosomatic symptoms. "Transference" was actually the cause of his miraculous healing.⁶⁶ Whether aware of his methods or not, Jesus practiced a kind of instinctive psychotherapy. "His method of healing," Wilhelm Bousset, professor of theology at Göttingen, "may be called a

⁶³Wilhelm Bousset, "Jesus," *Religionsgeschichtliche Volksbücher für die deutsche christliche Gegenwart* (1904); *Jesus*, trans. Janet Penrose Trevelyan (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1906), p. 49.

⁶⁴Georg Hafner, *Die Dämonischen des Neuen Testaments* (Frankfurt: Karl Brechert, 1894), p. 9. Curiously enough, this insistence on the part of Hafner that the conditions reported in the New Testament were psychical rather than physical in nature put him somewhat at odds with the medical establishment, which took a more positivistic view of the matter.

⁶⁵e.g. Bousset, *Jesus*, p. 48.

⁶⁶Georges Berguer, *Quelques traits de la vie de Jésus au point de vue psychologique et psychanalytique* (1920); *Some Aspects of the Life of Jesus from the Psychological and Psycho-analytic Point of View*, trans. Eleanor Stimson Brooks and Van Wyck Brooks (London: Williams and Norgate, 1923), pp. 207-208. Bousset, *Jesus*, p. 50.

psychical one; he stirred the forces of the inner life so powerfully that they reacted upon the outward bodily life."⁶⁷ There was nothing, then, so miraculous about this: "his healing activity lies entirely within the bounds of what is psychologically conceivable...."⁶⁸ Relying on the discoveries of the French psychologists Charcot, Liébault, and Bernheim, Dr. Heinrich Stadelmann of Würzburg concluded that Jesus employed the time-honored technique of suggestion-therapy. If a patient believed in his or her doctor, a psychosomatic illness could be cured: "The sick person is already half well when he has a doctor at his side in whom he places all his hope, and whom he believes can make him healthy again."⁶⁹ Without knowing it, Jesus relied upon his powers of suggestion:

"Arise, your faith has made you well!" If you believe that I can heal you, then you will be healed. Everyone will look for help where he most hopes to find it. The trust which a patient brings to his doctor is based on this belief, on this hope. The patient is already half healed when he knows the doctor is on his side....⁷⁰

In his book *The Psychotherapist*, Stadelmann developed a "king-of-the-mountain" theory of the mind. The presence of any one powerful thought temporarily drove out all others. For a psychiatric cure to take place, the patient must let himself become completely preoccupied with a single idea. Using hypnotic techniques, Stadelmann claimed to heal, like Jesus, by suggestion. The belief in being cured, when isolated and magnified in hypnosis, could actually bring the cure about--a view not, after all, so very different from Christian Science. "The complete certainty that

⁶⁷Bousset, *Jesus*, p. 47.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 48.

⁶⁹Heinrich Stadelmann, quoted in Johannes Jaeger, *Ist Jesus Christus ein Suggestionstherapeut gewesen?* (Mergentheim: Ohlinger, 1918), p. 9.

⁷⁰Stadelmann, *Der Psychotherapeut* (Würzburg: O. Stahel, 1896), p. 20.

something can make me well is what makes me well. This belief however cannot falter."⁷¹ Stadelmann went on to list eighty-seven cases in which he had cured by hypnosis and suggestion everything from menstrual complaints (which Jesus, too, had dealt with) to rheumatism, asthma, and pleurisy. Like many other psychologists at the time, Stadelmann ascribed a healing power to the mere presence of religious convictions:

Belief constitutes a mental process in which the immediate consciousness, filled with a strong emotional conception, has little room for other conceptions of the same or a similar nature. Belief makes one happy; in its delusion, it can move mountains; for him who is imbued by belief in something there is no obstacle; the believing will can bring about anything humanly possible; there is no path too steep, no distance too far that belief cannot overcome it.⁷²

As Oskar Pfister put it: "Jesus also applied his *Seelsorge* to the sick, and practiced psychotherapy according to principles which indeed come very close to the modern treatment of neurotics."⁷³ For Pfister, as we shall see, the successful sublimation of the sexual drives was key: "Jesus cured the collective neurosis of his people according to good psychoanalytic principles; namely, by putting love, morally complete love at any rate, at the center of life."⁷⁴ One Swiss psychologist even went so far as to declare Jesus the first psychoanalyst. "Jesus did these things without the

⁷¹Ibid., p. 21.

⁷²Stadelmann, quoted in Jaeger, *Ist Jesus Christus ein Suggestionstherapeut gewesen?*, p. 9.

⁷³Oskar Pfister, "Die psychohygienische Aufgabe des theologischen Seelsorgers," in *Praxis der seelischen Hygiene*, ed. H. Meng (Basel: B. Schwabe, 1943), p. 113.

⁷⁴Pfister, *Die Illusion einer Zukunft*, p. 102.

experimental science of the modern psycho-analysts, but there is no need to suppose that he did them in any different fashion."⁷⁵

Whether such a designation was a tribute or not depended, of course, on one's point of view. As we have seen, hypnosis and suggestion were by no means entirely respectable occupations, keeping dubious company with spiritism and the occult. Turn-of-the-century psychology often appeared as an appeal to strange, unaccountable forces, mixed with a hint of decadent sensuality--as in Albert von Keller's painting of Jesus healing the daughter of Jairus. It was not always reassuring to think of Jesus as a hypnotist with naked women swooning at his feet.⁷⁶

One of the most outspoken advocates of a hypnotist-Jesus was Stadelmann's teacher, the Zurich geographer and ethnologist Otto Stoll. According to Stoll, Jesus employed the power of suggestion in order to gain both personal and popular support. "Christ," he declared, "was a wandering suggestion-therapist of the purest kind. He understood completely the art of producing the effects of suggestion in the individual and in the masses."⁷⁷ What made Stoll's depiction particularly irritating to some was its treatment of Christ alongside other hypnotists throughout world history. Moreover, it made Jesus a leader of the poor and dispossessed--those very people whose religious enthusiasm always

⁷⁵Berguer, *Life of Jesus*, p. 207. Pfister makes the same claim that Jesus was the first analyst, *Analytische Seelsorge*, p. 20. He extends the honor to all Christians--not just the priesthood but also the analyst-hood of all believers.

⁷⁶See Klaus-Peter Schuster, ed., "*München leuchtete*," *Karl Caspar und die Erneuerung christlicher Kunst in München um 1900* (Munich: Prestel, 1984), p. 165.

⁷⁷Otto Stoll, *Suggestion und Hypnosis in der Völkerpsychologie*, 2nd ed. (Leipzig: Veit & Co., 1904), p. 221.

threatened to get out of hand.⁷⁸ Stoll attributed Jesus' effectiveness to the "miracles" he performed for his "suggestible" audience:

The miracles of Christ have given particular difficulty to those who expound the sacred writings, because, whether they represent a supernatural standpoint or not, they have lacked up until now the key to their explanation, the scientific knowledge of the effects of suggestion. Today, however, no one who possesses this knowledge to a sufficient degree will hesitate to explain the miracles of Christ as such effects of suggestion.
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Thus, for example, Jesus could appear to raise from the dead merely by arousing someone from from a cataleptic condition. Cases of healing the crippled or the blind were similarly the removal of "functional, dynamic disturbances without organic changes."⁸⁰ Through verbal suggestion, the laying on of hands, and even placebos, Christ used the gullibility and desire to believe on the part of the masses to good medical effect. The woman who secretly touched his cloak effected her own cure by her unquestioning belief--which reminds us, Stoll added, "how powerfully the normal menstrual flow of woman can on occasion be influenced by suggestion."⁸¹ In several instances, including the officer's son in Capernaum, Jesus could even project his healing suggestion at a distance, through a kind of transference effect.⁸² Stoll portrays Jesus as a virtual turn-of-the-century medium.

Such performances were not limited to individual symptoms. Christ's greatest skill, so the argument went, was his ability to cause mass hallucinations. The Jewish people at the time--excitable, superstitious, and poorly educated according to Stoll--were especially susceptible to seemingly

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 221.

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 222.

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 223.

⁸¹Ibid., p. 225.

⁸²Ibid., p. 224.

magical sensory deceptions. The feeding of the four and five thousand was an illusion created by the appropriate "verbal and gesticular suggestions." The transfiguration was a similar feat. Jesus' first miracle, the changing of water to wine at the marriage feast in Cana reminded Stoll of the "sleights-of-hand which professional magnetists performed on hypnotized persons."⁸³ Stoll thus reversed the equation implicit in Christ's weary question: "Will none of you ever believe without seeing signs and portents?"⁸⁴ According to Stoll people saw Jesus do these things *because* they believed--a logic closely associated with the psychology of the occult. This, Stoll added, also explained why Jesus could not perform miracles in his home province: "His countrymen knew him and his lowly descent too well to be impressed by him as a prophet."⁸⁵ Familiarity bred contempt.

Stoll turned his psychological observations into a full-scale critique of popular religious movements. There was a dangerous psychological component to fanatic expressions of religious faith:

How dangerous the inherent suggestive power of "religion" can become in a psychic-hygienic connection can be seen most clearly in the fascinating power of attraction which those who stand or already have crossed the boundary of the psychical norm have exerted at all times upon the masses. Shamans, prophets, saints, visionaries of all kinds always form the center, from which the suggestive waves big and small in the religious area originate. Their effect has often been sufficient enough to unleash mass psychoses of an entirely pathological character, and to make people either temporarily or permanently mentally ill--including those who without this influence most probably would have remained their entire lives within the mental norm, however modest this may be.⁸⁶

⁸³Ibid., pp. 227-228.

⁸⁴John 4:48 (NEB).

⁸⁵Stoll, *Suggestion und Hypnosis*, p. 229.

⁸⁶Ibid.

Ascribing hypnotic techniques to Jesus understandably made many observers uncomfortable. Johannes Jaeger, professor of philosophy at Nürnberg, took exception to Stoll's natural explanation of the "miracles" performed by Jesus. How could Christ's "suggestive" words have an effect upon the deaf? How could he exert hypnotic powers at a distance, as in the case of Jairus' daughter? How could he accomplish with suggestion and hypnosis the immediate and lasting cures which practitioners today consider impossible? In terms of the contemporary scientific knowledge of hypnosis, Jaeger insisted, Jesus must have used something more.⁸⁷

Jaeger argued that most of Christ's miracles were performed on patients with physical, not psychical problems, and that the power he invoked was divine. The dust and the spittle which Jesus used was no mere placebo to win the sick person's confidence, but rather the physical medium of a spiritual agency. "[T]he outward procedures of the Lord Christ cannot be put on the same level with the 'dodges' and 'tricks' of modern suggestion-therapists. This mixture of street-dust and spit is once again to be thought of as the bearer of the divine power....⁸⁸

On the other hand, Jaeger enjoyed citing the testimony of psychologists and psychiatrists to substantiate his arguments--as if to demonstrate that he, too, was on the side of the latest scientific research. Modern medicine has shown, he wrote, that epilepsy was completely resistant to the efforts of hypnotic suggestion. Jaeger offered expert testimony by Binswanger, Charcot, and others to the effect that hypnotic treatment requires time and has limited effects.⁸⁹ "The most effective

⁸⁷Jaeger, *Ist Jesus Christus ein Suggestionstherapeut gewesen?*, pp. 43, 50.

⁸⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 37, 41-42.

⁸⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 47-48.

hypnosis is a kind of farce in comparison to the cures of sick people in the gospels, in the same way that the bearing of a modern hypnotist, compared to the eminence of the biblical account of Christ, leaves behind the impression of a caricature."⁹⁰ In particular, Jaeger cited the work of the Belgian Delboeuf on the effects of hypnosis upon eyesight. His conclusions, that any improvements come only over a long period of time with repeated application, was proof that Jesus, who healed in an instant, was no mere hypnotist.⁹¹ "Suggestion has no magical powers like the immediate effect of an 'open Sesame!'," Delboeuf had written. "And in hypnotism time is a factor like everywhere else, which cannot be circumvented."⁹² Jaeger concluded that "there is a world of difference between the therapeutic effectiveness... of Delboeuf and of Jesus Christ."⁹³

Most psychobiographies after the turn of the century emphasized not Jesus the healer, but Jesus in need of being healed. It was not his followers but Jesus himself who suffered from some mental affliction. This, of course, was a more aggressive use of psychological methods. It was only a short step from the genius of the miracle healer to the pathology of the self-proclaimed messiah. The mental stability of Jesus first became a big issue in France. According to Jules Soury, Jesus died in the early stages of paralytic decay--i.e. as a result of a "hereditary taint" of syphilis.⁹⁴ He suffered from an incurable cerebral disorder that prompted his "religious

⁹⁰Ibid., p. 52n.

⁹¹Ibid., pp. 53-73. J. Delboeuf with J.-P. Nuel and Dr. Leplat, *De l'étendue de l'action curative de l'hypnotisme appliqué aux altérations de l'organe visuel* (Paris: Germer-Baillière, 1890).

⁹²Delboeuf, quoted Jaeger, *Jesus Christus ein Suggestionstherapeut*, p. 57.

⁹³Ibid., p. 76.

⁹⁴Jules August Soury, *Morbid Psychology: Studies on Jesus and the Gospels* (London: Freethought, 1881), p. xii.

excitement." The resulting increase in his circulation, according to Soury, led to a "cerebral congestion" and finally to general, progressive paralysis of the brain.⁹⁵ If he had lived longer, he would have degenerated into complete insanity. In 1904, Wilhelm Bousset had no qualms about calling into question the sanity of Jesus: "Did he not live most of his life somewhere beyond clear, day-to-day consciousness?"⁹⁶ By the end of the decade, Charles Binet-Sanglé, a professor at the Paris institute of psychology, published an enormous four-volume series on the dementia of Jesus, emphasizing the hallucinatory quality of his messianic pretensions.⁹⁷

Speculations of this kind easily crossed the Rhine and spilled over into the popular sphere. The eccentric Wilhelmine satirist Oskar Panizza was quick to imitate the diagnoses of the psychologists. In a deft satire on both religious gullibility and academic fashion, Panizza declared Jesus to be autodidactic, paranoid, hallucinogenic, epileptic, homosexual, and fraudulent (like most other founders of great world religions, Panizza added). According to Panizza's impious account, the authorities hauled Jesus before the courts only because there were no insane asylums to put him in: "What could one do with him? There were no mental institutions.... There were even fewer psychiatrists. But there were district attorneys. There are always district attorneys. So someone invoked the blasphemy statutes."⁹⁸

⁹⁵Ibid., pp. vii-xi.

⁹⁶Bousset, "Jesus," p. 11. quoted in Werner, p. 27.

⁹⁷Charles Binet-Sanglé, *La folie de Jésus*, 4 vols. (Paris: A. Maloine, 1911-1915).

⁹⁸Oskar Panizza, "Christus in psycho-patologischer Beleuchtung," *Zürcher Diskussionen* 5 (1898), in *Die kriminelle Psychose, genannt Psychopatia criminalis* (Munich: Matthes & Seitz, 1978), p. 214.

Even "respectable" writers in Germany came close to a diagnosis of insanity. In a slim volume appearing in 1903, *Was Jesus an Ecstatic?*, the Giessen theologian Oskar Holtzmann rejected the popular conception of a calm, confident, peaceful Jesus--the popular Jesus inspired by Renan and pictured in contemporary paintings like those of J. M. H. Hofmann. Hanfstaengl's in Munich did a brisk business in the sale of modestly priced reproductions of this soft, sentimental Jesus.⁹⁹ Holtzmann characterized Jesus, by contrast, as a man driven by passion and inspiration, subject to wild swings between rapture and serenity. Jesus did not speak with the voice of quiet reflection. His message, rather, betrayed a constant struggle to master his own fanatic tendencies. For Holtzmann, Jesus' success lay precisely in his ability to harness his unusually powerful emotions, to tame a wild, even abnormal energy into a gentle gospel: "The temptation begins with ecstasy and ends with the written word."¹⁰⁰ Holtzmann declared Jesus to be an ecstatic only to underscore his marvelous self control. "Ecstasy" in these terms was still a far cry from mental derangement.¹⁰¹

It did not take long for that cry to be heard. Beginning in 1905, a spate of sensational diagnoses of Jesus appeared. "Instead of biographies, the 'pathographies' are on the agenda," remarked one worried observer.¹⁰² It became common, almost fashionable, to imply that Jesus was a candidate for the insane asylum. At the very least, wrote Julius Baumann,

⁹⁹For reproductions of Hofmann and others, see Peter-Klaus Schuster, ed., *"München leuchtet"*.

¹⁰⁰Oskar Holtzmann, *War Jesus Ekstatiker?* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1903), pp. 3-5, 135, 49.

¹⁰¹Schweitzer interprets "ecstatic" in Holtzmann's work to mean nothing more than "eschatological." *Die Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung*, p. 384n.

¹⁰²Kneib, p. 21.

a professor of philosophy at Göttingen, Jesus showed signs of "religious mania" or "an over-stimulation of the nerves."¹⁰³ In its swing from "genius" to "pathology," the psychological pendulum had finally caught Jesus in its path.

Writing under the pseudonym of Georg de Loosten, Georg Lomer, a staff physician at the Holstein provincial insane asylum, delivered his professional opinion of Jesus "from the standpoint of the psychiatrist." His diagnosis included so many possible maladies that one or more was bound to apply. Lomer first traced Jesus' mental instability to the questionable circumstances of his birth. Accepting the apocryphal story which assigned paternity to a Greek or Roman soldier, Lomer concluded that the bastard Jesus--"a half-breed saddled by heredity"--showed the psychological effects of racial impurity.¹⁰⁴ Lomer further pointed to scenes from Jesus' childhood--his disputation with the elders in the temple at the age of twelve, for example--as a sign of an abnormal, precocious intelligence and an exaggerated sense of self. Jesus repeatedly failed to show, moreover, any "normal" sense of family attachment and "natural" human feeling towards others. To make matters worse, his sexual urges appeared to atrophy in inverse proportion to his spiritual ambitions. For Lomer, all of these symptoms pointed to a diagnosis of paranoia. In this respect, Jesus' illness reflected the traits of the entire Jewish nation, a paranoid people with marked propensities towards uncontrolled fanaticism and a relentless sense of guilt. His teachings attempted to allay this constant fear of

¹⁰³Julius Baumann, *Die Gemütsart Jesu, nach jetziger wissenschaftlicher, insbesondere jetziger psychologischer Methode erkennbar gemacht* (Leipzig: Alfred Kroöner, 1908), p. 7.

¹⁰⁴Georg Lomer [de Loosten], *Jesus Christus vom Standpunkt des Psychiaters* (Bamberg: Handelsdruckerei, 1905), pp. 20-21, 90.

persecution, gradually acquiring all the qualities of a fixed delusional system. According to Lomer, Jesus was clinically paranoid. Lomer did not leave his audience to draw its own conclusions about the consequences of Christ's paranoia for all of Christianity: what started with a madman could come to no good. Lomer even sought to discredit Jesus for the same reason that others would later try to discredit Freud: it was mostly neurotic women, after all, who supported his cause.¹⁰⁵

William Hirsch, a New York doctor whose own reflections on psychiatry and religion were published in Germany before being printed in America, concurred with Lomer's diagnosis. Jesus offered "an absolutely typical example of a well-known mental illness," namely paranoia.¹⁰⁶ His delusions of grandeur, Hirsch explained, began like a Beethoven symphony with a delicate pianissimo, and gradually grew to an explosive, thunderous fortissimo.¹⁰⁷ The hallucinations started with the baptism by John, when Jesus "saw" and "heard" a divine dove. The hallucinations increased during the forty days of ascetic withdrawal in the desert. Jesus reported at length his long conversations with God and the devil--a sure sign of the rapid transition from a latent to an active phase of hallucinatory psychosis. For Hirsch, this was the decisive period in the development of Jesus' delusional symptoms. "The crazy notions which until that time had remained isolated and disconnected now came together to form a single manic structure."¹⁰⁸ The whole house came crashing down when Jesus' persecution complex made him seek martyrdom in Jerusalem--from the

¹⁰⁵Ibid., pp. 25, 32, 58-59, 74.

¹⁰⁶William Hirsch, *Religion und Civilisation vom Standpunkte des Psychiaters* (Munich: E. W. Bonsels, 1910), p. 99.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., 108.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., p. 102.

garden of Gethsemane and to the court of Pontius Pilate. The diagnosis of paranoia, reasoned Hirsch, at least absolved Jesus of any possible misrepresentation or dishonesty. Jesus really believed what he said to be true. From the point of view of the psychiatrist, whether Jesus spoke the truth or not became a moot point. He was neither a swindler nor the messiah, but the victim of his own paranoid delusions.¹⁰⁹ For this honest verdict, Hirsch concluded, we ought to thank modern psychiatric science.

All these saints and martyrs, declared a young Danish theological candidate in 1905, the banner year in Germany for Jesus-pathographies, "are not religious geniuses. Above all, they are sick."¹¹⁰ Throughout his career, Emil Rasmussen continued, Jesus was subject to unpredictable fits of epileptic anxiety or rage. This could be seen (Rasmussen here employed the categories of Charcot) in the *petit mal* at the garden of Gethsemane or in the *grand mal* when driving the money-changers out of the temple or when cursing the fruitless fig tree. Rasmussen also linked Jesus' hallucinations, such as standing on the mountain with Moses and Elijah or the dove descending on his head during baptism, to the "falling sickness."¹¹¹ The spiritual insight of other founders of the world's great religions, Rasmussen concluded, must be attributed to their mental aberration. Perverse sexuality, asceticism, hallucinations, delusions, paranoia, exaggerated self-regard, anxiety--all characterized the "type" of the epileptic prophet to which Jesus belonged. The best way to get a closer look at Jesus' problems would be to compare him with other sick geniuses from the past--Rasmussen offered Mohammed and Paul as two examples--

¹⁰⁹Ibid., pp. 89-91, 98.

¹¹⁰Emil Rasmussen, *Jesus, eine vergleichende psycho-pathologische Studie*, p. 55.

¹¹¹Ibid., pp. 138-142.

and to those who exhibited his symptoms today.¹¹² Unwilling to alienate his audience any more than necessary, Rasmussen did not wish to pronounce one way or the other on the question of Jesus as a religious genius--but of his sickness he could be sure.¹¹³

In his medical dissertation for the university of Strassburg, Albert Schweitzer rated the psychiatric value of Rasmussen's epilepsy diagnosis "exactly zero."¹¹⁴ The recent spate of psychopathographies generated in Schweitzer an "unpleasant feeling," which came from subjecting "a great personality to psychiatric examination."¹¹⁵ Other critics shared Schweitzer's distaste. One reviewer credited Rasmussen with sincerity and good intentions, but dismissed his work as one of the necessary wrong turns in the forward path of science. He turned the diagnosis back upon the author: the inner anxieties which Rasmussen found in Jesus should really be attributed to Rasmussen himself.¹¹⁶ Others were disappointed that Jesus had survived a rigorous cross-examination by biblical scholars in the nineteenth century only to end up with an insanity plea in the twentieth. As one reviewer put it, "Rasmussen dragged Jesus out of the ~~historical-critical court of law and into the psychiatric ward.~~"¹¹⁷ There, the verdict would be rendered by doctors and psychiatrists, not theologians:

¹¹²Rasmussen, *Ein Christus aus unseren Tagen* (Leipzig: Julius Zeitler, 1906), pp. 34-36.

¹¹³Rasmussen, *Jesus*, p. 160.

¹¹⁴Albert Schweitzer, *Die Psychiatrische Beurteilung Jesu* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1913); *The Psychiatric study of Jesus, exposition and criticism*, trans. Charles R. Joy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1948), p. 73.

¹¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 28.

¹¹⁶Johannes Naumann, "Jesus Christus vom Standpunkte des Psychiaters," *Die christliche Welt* 12 (1906), pp. 266, 268.

¹¹⁷Friedrich Niebergall, review of Rasmussen, *Z. Religionspsych.* 1 (1908), p. 226.

The Jesus problem, which modern theology since Strauss and Renan has pursued with tireless effort through the critical examination of sources and now the psychological analysis of Jesus' inner life, has finally been solved: Jesus was mentally ill. The theologians have fulfilled their task and can pass the "Jesus file" on to their colleagues in the medical faculty. The details of the symptomatology and the final pronouncement of the diagnosis--whether it be hysteria or epilepsy or paranoia--can only be of interest to specialists.¹¹⁸

The most common defense against the new Jesus-genre was the charge of amateurism. "Now it gets ridiculous," exclaimed one theologian reviewing with shame the "unbelievable stupidities" of Rasmussen's book in the *Journal for Religious Psychology*.¹¹⁹ The absence of exact and reliable testimony made it possible for contemporaries to engage in dilettantish psychological speculation. Schweitzer accused the psychopathographers of an uncritical approach to the biblical sources, of a "layman's point of view" which could only result in embarrassing distortions.¹²⁰ One theologian suggested that every publication on the subject of "Christ and psychiatry" ought to be approved for its scientific merit: no more of these "witty literary essays" which relegated Jesus to the madhouse.¹²¹ These were complaints not against psychology as such, but against the way it had been practiced.

Others objected with the familiar argument that it is impossible to determine the mental state of people who are already dead.¹²² Heinrich

¹¹⁸Johannes Lepsius, *Das Reich Christi* (1906), p. 67, quoted in Georg Runze, "Der Kampf um den Christusglauben und die Psychologie," *Z. Religionspsych.* 3 (1909), p. 45.

¹¹⁹*Ibid.*, p. 225.

¹²⁰Schweitzer, *Leben-Jesu-Forschung*, pp. 381, 346. Schweitzer, *Psychiatrische Beurteilung Jesu*, pp. 33, 45-46.

¹²¹Friedrich Mörchen, "Zur psychiatrischen Betrachtung des überlieferten Christusbildes," *Monatsschrift für die kirchliche Praxis* (1906), p. 426.

¹²²*Ibid.*, p. 423. See also Hermann Werner, "Die psychische Gesundheit Jesu," *Biblische Zeit- und Streitfragen* 4 (1908), p. 4.

Schäfer, a former psychiatrist at the mental hospital Friedrichsberg in Hamburg, insisted that a diagnosis based on such scanty material from so long ago could scarcely be more tenuous and flimsy. He put Jesus beyond the reach of his own profession: "As the son of God of orthodox dogma, Jesus is *a priori* the object not of psychiatric interest but only of a pious world view."¹²³ Many religious observers agreed: better to keep Jesus out of the psychiatrists' hands entirely rather than to risk the wrong diagnosis.

The psychological *defense* of Jesus was pretty amateurish itself, consisting largely of denials and counter-assertions. More often than not, Jesus' would-be defenders managed unwittingly to confirm or at least to strengthen the pathographers' claims. Seeking to refute Rasmussen's contention that all prophets are insane, one reviewer offered the eighteenth-century pietist Count Ludwig von Zinzendorf as a counter-example.¹²⁴ This unusual visionary could hardly be considered a good character reference for Jesus.¹²⁵ Schäfer admitted that Jesus practiced a form of mass suggestion at the marriage of Cana and while feeding the five thousand, but denied that this gave any cause for psychiatric suspicion.¹²⁶ He wanted to have his loaves and fishes--and eat them too.

One doctor denied that Jesus could have been a doctor because there was no medical school in the vicinity of his childhood home: "If we absolutely wanted therefore to make a doctor out of him, the only remaining

¹²³ H. Schäfer, *Jesu in psychiatrischer Beleuchtung* (Berlin: n.p., 1910), pp. 10, 26, 21.

¹²⁴ Niebergall, p. 225.

¹²⁵ See below.

¹²⁶ See Schweitzer, *Leben-Jesu-Forschung*, pp. 379-380.

possibility would be as a medical improvisator, others would say, a quack."¹²⁷

Hermann Werner, a pastor in Andernach am Rhein and former *Irregeistliche*, offered one of the most awkward denials of all. Like Holtzmann, he conceded that Jesus was "abnormal," but only in the sense that he was not average.¹²⁸ His "special" abilities were a sign of divine favor, not of insanity. If anyone, it was John the Baptist --not Jesus at all-- who betrayed "a certain nervousness" in his eccentric clothes and habits.¹²⁹ By pushing the diagnosis off on others, Werner unwittingly granted that a diagnosis could be made for religious figures. Jesus, he continued, became a "moral eunuch" by choice, not because of some sick sexual disturbance.¹³⁰ His fear of persecution was no paranoid delusion--Jesus really *was* pursued by the courts, the crowds, the pharisees, even his own kinsfolk and disciples. The difference between a hallucination and a vision, Werner insisted, is that the latter *really* occurs. Delusions of grandeur did not make Jesus a madman since he was indeed grand: "A crown prince has the right to call the king his father and to refer to his eventual succession. But when a beggar believes himself to be a royal prince--that is madness."¹³¹ Jesus, it would seem, deserved *special* diagnosis and treatment. He was no mere fool.

"Even if" Jesus was mad, his would-be defenders argued, the gospel message would still hold true. It made no difference whether Jesus was ecstatic, paranoid, hysterical, epileptic, or otherwise deranged. What

¹²⁷R. Knur, quoted Jaeger, p. 17.

¹²⁸Hermann Werner, "Die psychische Gesundheit Jesu," p. 53.

¹²⁹Ibid., p. 35.

¹³⁰Ibid., p. 20.

¹³¹Ibid., p. 21.

mattered was the result. "What is great and profound in the ethical teachings of Jesus," conceded Albert Schweitzer in his medical dissertation reviewing the craze of Jesus-psychobiographies, "would retain its significance even if the conceptions in his world outlook and some of his actions had to be called more or less diseased."¹³² Apparently Jesus needed to be rescued from the psychiatrists--even if they were right.

Gerhart Hauptmann's 1910 novel *The Fool in Christ Emanuel Quint* suggests the extent to which these turn-of-the-century diagnoses of Jesus had permeated the public sphere. Set in the impoverished countryside of contemporary Silesia, the novel tells the story of a simple idiot, Emanuel, who unwittingly--or half-wittedly--becomes the center of a popular revival movement. First alone and then in the company of the pietistic "valley-brethren," Quint excites apocalyptic passions among the rural poor. Because his activities threaten to disrupt the social order, he increasingly attracts the attention of the provincial authorities. In a loose parallel with the brief career of Jesus (Hauptmann never *forces* the comparison), the novel follows Quint and his small band of devoted followers from the country to the big city, Breslau, where his fate will be decided. Quint seeks a martyrdom that will announce the coming of his kingdom. He confesses to a rape-murder he did not commit, hoping thereby to shoulder the sins of another. Failing to gain a conviction, he is finally reduced to a beggarly fool, wandering forlornly throughout Germany, calling himself Christ.

Like other works by Hauptmann, *Quint* is primarily concerned with "the social question" in imperial Germany. Hauptmann's critique is keen

¹³²Schweitzer, *The Psychiatric Study of Jesus*, p. 28. See also Runze, "Der Kampf um den Christusglauben," vol. 1, pp. 42-46.

and double-edged. On the one hand, he generates unmistakable sympathy for the plight of the Silesian poor. Religion emerges as a symptom of their impoverished condition, a substitute for their lack of worldly goods and security. They desperately *need* if they do not necessarily always *deserve* help. On the other hand, Hauptmann found religious fanaticism quite counterproductive and disturbing. Millenarian movements--like the recent resurgence of anabaptism--offered only an illusory alternative to a very disillusioning reality. He portrays the "valley brethren" of the novel as a menace, a band of misfits gripped by "a psychic fever, which constantly increases through infection."¹³³ It was they who turned Quint's individual condition--a harmless case of insanity--into a social contagion of religious orgies and paroxysms. Fanaticism had turned into a physical and mental epidemic.¹³⁴

For the purposes of this discussion, what is most remarkable about Hauptmann's novel is the way in which it combines "the social question" with the recent debate over the sanity of Jesus. Hauptmann claimed to have read "more or less everything" on the subject of the historical Jesus, and was thus well aware of *Quint's* topicality.¹³⁵ It is no accident that his modern-day Christ appears in the figure of a fool, a simpleton, one of God's special children. Hauptmann traces the development of *Quint's* condition from an occasional ecstatic state into a fixed delusional system. He even provides hints of a sexual aetiology for *Quint's* disturbance: his illegitimacy, the peculiar fascination he exerts upon women, his preference

¹³³Gerhart Hauptmann, *Der Narr in Christo Emmanuel Quint* (1910), in *Das erzählerische Werke* vol. 2 (Frankfurt: Ullstein, 1962), p. 204.

¹³⁴*Ibid.*, p. 253.

¹³⁵quoted in Karl S. Guthke, *Gerhart Hauptmann: Weltbild im Werk* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961), p. 113. See also the earlier *Jesus-Studien*, preparations for a drama which Hauptmann never drafted.

for bathing in the nude to the point of a cleanliness-fetish, and of course the spurious confession to rape. Throughout *Quint*, one finds the contemporary contemporary preoccupation with the psychiatric diagnosis of Jesus.

What is different is that *Quint* is not a novel of psychological exposure. The narrating Hauptmann manages to share Quint's ambivalence about his own messianic claims--an ambivalence expressed in the ambiguous title *Menschensohn*, "the son of man." At every point, Quint himself is uncertain of his own importance and destiny, Hauptmann portrays Quint as neither a charlatan nor a fraud. He even challenges the diagnosis of insanity. Quint may be a fool but much of what he says is all too true. Quint's message offers a trenchant critique of modern industrial society and its effect on the rural proletariat. Wise words from the mouths of children--and fools. Though Hauptmann constantly reminds the reader of Quint's mental state, he never loses his sympathy. Insanity, he implies, is a cheap diagnosis:

To declare all of these figures to be fools and to prove that they indeed are so, is by no means difficult from a certain superior point of view--no more difficult than to show that they are narrow-minded and lacking in education. But here is not to judge, but insofar as possible to understand and to forgive.¹³⁶

It was the ability to speculate but not to judge which distinguishes Hauptmann's *Quint* from the other psychological lives of Jesus after the turn of the century in Germany. In a psychiatric elaboration of the novel, Georg Lomer complained that Hauptmann had not stuck faithfully enough

¹³⁶Hauptmann, *Emanuel Quint*, p. 199.

to the clear symptoms of paranoia contained in the gospels.¹³⁷ What Lomer *really* missed in *Quint* was the unambiguous use of psychology as a weapon against religion. Though the temptation was great, not everyone wished to take the biblical hint of "fools in Christ" so literally.¹³⁸

¹³⁷Georg Lomer, *Das Christusbild* , p. 56.

¹³⁸1 Cor. 4:10 (NEB).

CHAPTER FOUR

Nature's Revenge: Protestant Psychology and Catholic Sex

Of all the possible diagnoses made by psychologists of religion, the most aggressive was a sexual one. Many German psychologists took particular satisfaction in tracing spiritual "genius" back to sexual origins. Certain fanatic practices and beliefs could be seen as derivatives of a misplaced eroticism: either a spiritually sanctioned libertinism on the one hand, or an extreme ascetic repression on the other. The result, whether overly indulgent or overly severe, was often diagnosed as an outright perversion. This diagnosis, of course, put divine inspiration on the same level as the sexual drive.

Freud himself set the tone for this debate over sexuality and religion with his 1907 essay "Obsessive Actions and Religious Practices." Appearing in the first issue of the German *Journal for Religious Psychology*, the article drew a connection between sexual repression and religious "ceremonies." Freud never feared being too bold in linking sexuality and religion. Throughout his career he never shied away from characterizing religion as a flight from reality, as a popular "illusion." He continued to speculate on the psychological meaning behind religious practices and beliefs, both in individual case histories like "Schreber," and in anthropological reconstructions like *Totem and Taboo*. In the case of Schreber, which he based on the published memoirs of a Leipzig judge who ended his days in an insane asylum, Freud offered a brilliant analysis of Schreber's strange personal theology. Schreber was convinced that he would become the "Redeemer", and in the process would be transformed

into a woman.¹ Freud attributed these magnificent absurdities to Schreber's advanced paranoia. They were an attempt to ward off illicit impulses, projections (among other things) of a repressed homosexuality. Freud clearly admired Schreber's valiant attempt to master his delusions by giving them a moral purpose and a theological meaning.² But the implication for religion in general was all too clear: Schreber's theology was the product of a mind out of touch with reality.

In *Totem and Taboo*, Freud extended the range of his observations to include *social* institutions and beliefs. He speculated on the totemic practices of prehistoric humanity, and how they might have developed in the earliest stages of civilization. The most basic taboos, Freud argued, were the result of ambivalence, the conflict between sexual desires and their renunciation in the interest of the tribal community.³ In a particularly celebrated passage, Freud noted a similarity between the tensions of the ancient tribe and the individual Oedipal complex. In both cases, the killing of the father by the son--or merely the desire to kill him--was accompanied by a sexual prohibition against his wife (or wives), i.e. the mother. "[The brothers] thus created out of their filial sense of guilt the two fundamental taboos of totemism, which for that very reason inevitably corresponded to the two repressed wishes of the Oedipus complex."⁴ Primitive religion thus took an anthropological cast for Freud: it was the product of social relations and their sexual meaning.

¹Freud, "Psycho-Analytic Notes on an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia (Dementia Paranoides)." SE 12, p. 18.

²Ibid., p. 71.

³Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, SE 13, pp. 35-36.

⁴Ibid., p. 143.

Oskar Pfister followed Freud's lead in the sexual diagnosis of religion. Pfister had ample opportunity in his Zurich ministry to observe sexual confusion and guilt in everyday life. Among his first psychoanalytic publications are the case histories of two adolescent brothers, Max and Arno, who were worried about masturbation and associated this guilt with their religious experience.⁵ Pfister interpreted the glossolalia of another young parishioner much as Freud would interpret a dream, using its images to prompt free association. The subsequent analysis of the material revealed that his speaking in tongues could be traced directly to the urge to masturbate and to its subsequent repression. "The impression of the mysterious--to which the story of the Pentecost and other biblical accounts give the form of inspiration by the Holy Spirit--is the result of the repression of the object of a wish."⁶ In perhaps his most compact and elegant analysis, Pfister tried to help a young man beset by a number of interrelated symptoms: suicidal urges, a psychosomatic crippling of the arm, and an extreme devotion to the Virgin Mary. Pfister saw the latter as the key to unlocking the memory of certain childhood experiences. The parishioner's Madonna-attachment proved to be a symbolic solution to a series of recent conflicts in his family: arguments with his father, failure in his professional ambitions, and last but not least, disappointment in love. He

⁵Oskar Pfister, "Ein Fall von psychoanalytischer Seelsorge," *Evangelische Freiheit* (1909), p. 10; "Analytische Untersuchung über die Psychologie des Hasses und der Versöhnung," *Jahrbuch für psychoanalytische und psychopathologische Forschungen* (1910), p. 134. For another example of one of Freud's followers pursuing this line of inquiry, see S. Ferenczi, "Zwangsneurose und Frömmigkeit," *Internationale Zeitschrift für ärztliche Psychoanalyse* (1914), p. 272.

⁶Pfister, "Die psychologische Enträtselung der religiösen Glossalalie und der automatischen Kryptographie," *Jahrbuch für psychoanalytische und psychopathologische Forschungen* 3 (1912), p. 441.

had become "stuck" on a piece of religious material as a neurotic solution to his adolescent troubles. In this case, Pfister concluded, pathology was at work, not true piety.⁷

One woman came to Pfister's attention who displayed a number of religious symptoms. Known in spiritistic circles as the "witch of the twentieth century," she could speak in tongues but could not say the name of Jesus. She also experienced convulsions and hallucinations. Pfister attributed these symptoms to the absence of sexual satisfaction, the result of years of marital neglect and, later, widowhood. Pfister generalized from her case to that of witches throughout history: "The witches' devil is the sexual devil."⁸

Pfister did not stop with the analysis of his own parishioners. He reached back into the history of religion for examples of libido run amok. William James to the contrary, Pfister set out to show that mystical "genius" was often a kind of sickness, the product of frustrated sexual drives. In the *Zentralblatt für Psychoanalyse* in 1911, Pfister published a short sketch of the fourteenth-century mystic Margaretha Ebner. Pfister described many of Ebner's pious words and actions as pathological symptoms. Betraying a combination of fascination and dismay, Pfister showed how the currents of mysticism and eroticism ran together in Ebner's life. He pointed to her chaste but erotically charged relationship with Heinrich von Nördlingen, who after receiving one of her nightgowns

⁷Pfister, "Zur Psychologie des hysterischen Madonnenkultus," *Z. Religionspsych.* 5 (1911), p. 270.

⁸Pfister, "Eine Hexe des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts," in *Religiosität und Hysterie* (Vienna: Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag, 1928), p. 105.

as a gift, agreed to wear it.⁹ In a section titled "Sickness and Piety," Pfister speculated that most of Ebner's sexual energy was directed not towards some earthly lover, but towards the idealized figure of Jesus. This repression resulted in the ecstatic visions in which she would cry out Jesus' name, claim to taste the sweetness of Jesus, embrace him, and drink the blood from his wounds. All of this represented for Pfister quite simply "sexual desire, soldered on to the image of a mystical union with the heavenly spouse."¹⁰ Ebner envisioned Jesus not only as her husband but also as her child. "One day she heard the voice of her Lord say to her, 'If you do not suckle me, I will withdraw from you when you love me most of all.' Obediently she laid a picture of Jesus as a child on her bare heart, at which she felt great desire."¹¹ Another of her symptoms was a spotting of blood, which Pfister understood to be a birth fantasy. In no way, Pfister concluded, could Ebner's piety be described as platonic and healthy:

All of this proves that religious eroticism simply allows the sensual desires to let off steam.... In the place of a transformation of the libido into ethically productive social and cultural activity, a mere "elevation" has occurred, for which the honorable name "sublimation" is far too good.¹²

Ebner's religion was the perverted result of a very powerful sexual drive and its subsequent repression.

Noteworthy with Margaretha, as well as with Zinzendorf and countless others who turn their blocked-up libido into religion without transforming it, is that the polymorphous sexual components break out into

⁹Pfister, "Hysterie und Mystik bei Margaretha Ebner," *Zentralblatt für Psychoanalyse* 1 (1911), p. 469.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 480.

¹¹Ibid., p. 474.

¹²Ibid., p. 483.

wild anarchy. Thus does Nature, when it is mistreated, know how to take its revenge.¹³

The most celebrated of Pfister's works in this vein was his analysis of the eighteenth-century Moravian pietist Ludwig von Zinzendorf. The case study (dedicated to Jung) first appeared in one of the early issues of the psychoanalytic journal *Imago*. Pfister traced the fanaticism of Zinzendorf, whom he referred to as his "analysand", to severe sexual repression: "Religious eroticism corresponded exactly to sexual repression, making up with quite naturalistic amusements for the renunciation of a life of love."¹⁴ Jesus became a substitute for the painful and missing things in Zinzendorf's life, a projection of his discontent and dissatisfaction. Young Zinzendorf had been subjected as a child to very strict discipline and restraint. He had received rough treatment at school. The sublimations of puberty had misfired. From early on he showed signs of homosexual and sado-masochistic inclinations. Jesus became a substitute, in Pfister's analysis, for all of Zinzendorf's unsatisfied wishes, a compensation for all his pain. With a kind of triumphant disgust, Pfister produced the evidence from Zinzendorf's own writings for such a damning diagnosis. Much like Ebner, Zinzendorf reported kissing and eating the body of Christ. He made "a religious orgy" out of the wounds and blood of Jesus, swimming and bathing in them.¹⁵ Pfister interpreted this sadistic "Theology of Blood" as an image first of heterosexual, then of homosexual activity:

¹³Ibid., p. 485.

¹⁴Pfister, *Die Frömmigkeit des Grafen Ludwig von Zinzendorfs: ein psychoanalytischer Beitrag zur Kenntnis der religiösen Sublimierungsprozesse und zur Erklärung des Pietismus* (Leipzig: Deuticke, 1910), p. 17.

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 51-54.

As distressing as it may seem to us readers, Zinzendorf portrayed with importunate eloquence the "holes in the side" [of Christ] as female genitals, and indeed, as the organ of birth on the one hand, and on the other as the place of the maximum satisfaction... of homosexuality driven into the religious sphere.¹⁶

Zinzendorf went on to list in detail all of the things one could do in these wound-genitalia of Jesus. One could "lie down inside, crawl inside, nestle into, whistle inside, burrow, play, lick, suck, bathe, move around like a little pigeon or a fish, be happy sit rest, sleep, bite into [them]...."¹⁷ "The corpse of Christ," Pfister observed, "was an ideal compensation for a body in heat."¹⁸

In this fashion, Pfister portrayed Zinzendorf not as a great Protestant mystic, but as a severely troubled character who had raised his fantasies and perversions into a sick kind of piety. This was not divine inspiration, but a very disturbed voice from Zinzendorf's unconscious. Pfister thus dismissed Zinzendorf's claim to a prominent place in modern religious history:

Proof has been given that the period of fanaticism from 1741 to 1749 brought nothing new.... It simply freed the sadistic, masochistic, and homosexual desires which had always been present in Zinzendorf from their repression, and let them become excessively active in the full light of day in the guise of piety.¹⁹

More than anyone else after the turn of the century, Pfister drew attention to the psychological connection between religion and sexuality. One of his students, Christian Schjelderup, similarly concluded that "the psychology of religion is only conceivable in connection with sexual

¹⁶Ibid., p. 58.

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 62-63.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 33.

¹⁹Ibid. p. 89.

psychology."²⁰ The remarkable thing about Pfister--in sharp contrast to Freud--is that he made this connection *for* and not *against* religion. That is, he used the sexual diagnosis to dismiss the spiritual importance people like Zinzendorf and Ebner. But he stoutly maintained, as we shall see, that a healthy religion could indeed exist.

The sexual diagnosis of religion at the turn of the century was not entirely new. In 1835, the psychologist J. B. Friedrich had noted that "it is altogether remarkable that a special connection exists between religious ecstasy and the sexual system. Religious insanity and fanaticism are especially linked to maladies of the genitals...."²¹ In the same year, an equally distinguished psychologist, Carl Ideler, observed that religious fanaticism could easily lead to degenerate behavior.²²

Others were not so restrained. There was an enormous popular and pseudo-academic literature in nineteenth-century Germany which dealt with the twin themes of religion and sexual decadence. The most notorious work of this genre was Otto von Corvin's *Pfaffenspiegel* which first appeared in 1845 and was reprinted with even greater success in the 1860's and during the *Kulturkampf*. Corvin's book was a mocking denunciation of Catholicism. It reads like one long historical scandal-sheet listing the sexual vices of clerical worthies throughout the ages. In a chapter titled "Sodom and Gomorrah," Corvin declared that for the Catholic priest, "the satisfaction of the sexual drive is a duty; in itself it is just as permissible

²⁰Kristian Schjelderup, *Die Askese, eine religionspsychologische Untersuchung* (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1928), p. 13.

²¹Quoted by Schjelderup, *Die Askese*, pp. 12-13.

²²Carl Ideler, *Grundriss der Seelenheilkunde* (Berlin: T. C. F. Enslin, 1835-38), p. 454.

and innocent as the satisfaction of thirst."²³ The institution of celibacy for priests, Corvin observed, resulted in hypocrisy and the most horrific sexual excesses. With anti-clerical smugness, Corvin relished tale after tale of wild eroticism, child-seduction, and even bestiality among Catholic priests.

This sort of sensationalism showed no signs of abating at the turn of the century. In a popular book entitled *Sexual Life in the German Past*, Max Bauer followed Corvin's lead. In a particularly appalling or salacious chapter (depending on one's point of view), Bauer portrayed the sexual license of the medieval cloister. Despite their vows of chastity--indeed *because* of it--monks and nuns were secretly desperate for sex. The solitude of the cloister provided the perfect opportunity for "the most excessive voluptuousness."²⁴ Nunneries became, in effect, aristocratic whorehouses. Bauer even quoted a jingle to the effect that abbesses were the most sexually active members of the convent ("Wer die meisten Kinder macht/ Wird als Abtissin geacht").²⁵ As if to punish himself for such frank thoughts, Bauer reminded his readers of the fruits of such sexual license. The recent draining of a lake on the grounds of one old convent revealed the skeletons of as many as six thousand children, the products of centuries of pious "chastity."²⁶

In his *Sexual Lives of the Saints* published in 1902, Ferdinand Steingiesser also gloated over the private peccadilloes of "holy" men and women. Like Bauer and Corvin, Steingiesser took particular interest in the

²³Otto von Corvin, *Pfaffenspiegel: Historische Denkmal des Fanatismus in der römisch-katholischen Kirche* (1869), repr. ed. (Flensburg: Carl Stephenson, 1979), p. 232.

²⁴Max Bauer, *Das Geschlechtsleben in der deutschen Vergangenheit* (Leipzig: H. Seemann Nachfolger, 1902), p. 75.

²⁵*Ibid.*, p. 79

²⁶*Ibid.*, p. 79.

sexual perversions of Catholic ascetics. With triumphant, anti-clerical glee, Steingiesser recounted medieval episodes in which French nuns began miaowing in unison, or German nuns began biting one another.²⁷ Steingiesser also reported a recent case in which an orphan girl in a convent had hallucinations of a naked Jesus, solicited her priest during confession, and masturbated up to twelve times daily.²⁸ The significant aspect of this and similar stories is not their accuracy (which, in any event, would be difficult to prove) but the *tone* in which they are told. Steingiesser seemed to relish the role of unmasking pious hypocrites. What better way than to expose their secret sexual lives.

The early twentieth-century French sexologists Laurent and Nagour also drew attention to the close resemblance between piety and erotic pleasure: "The enthralling feeling of rapture, the loss of sensation of personality, the thrill of delight and the recedence of the external world are undoubtedly very closely connected with the passionate glow of coition."²⁹ Laurent and Nagour offered their readers a number of instances in which sexual intimacy and saintly devotion went hand in hand. It is no accident that their subjects were almost exclusively women. "Maria Magdalena de Pazzi would often stand fixed in her worship until she felt the throes of sexual delight coming over her. When she finally reached the climax, she would sigh loudly in praise of the Lord, pick up her moistened habit and

²⁷Ferdinand Steingiesser, *Das Geschlechtsleben der Heiligen: Ein Beitrag zur Psychopathia sexualis der Asketen und Religiosen* (Berlin: H. Walther, 1902), p. 48.

²⁸Ibid., pp. 59-63.

²⁹Laurent and Nagour, *Magica Sexualis*, p. 226.

kneel in front of the altar."³⁰ Under the cover of a sexual critique of religion, Laurent and Nagour actually indulged in a great deal of fantasy:

Naturally the sexual excitation during ecstasy is best noted in the conduct of the saints, to whom that enraptured state was no particular novelty. Veronica Juliani... had herself given in marriage to the Holy Lamb, and even took a little lamb to bed with her and had it suck from her breasts. So great was the excitation aroused in her that the breasts of this virgin saint actually gave forth a few drops of milk!³¹

It is appropriate, then, that when it appeared in an English translation thirty years after its original publication in France and Germany and 1902, *Magica Sexualis* offered the warning --or perhaps an advertisement--on its title page that the book "is intended for circulation only among members of the learned professions, mature scholars of the sexual sciences and other educated adults." The sex lives of saints, especially when retold in such pornographic fashion, were for restricted audiences only.

In a more scholarly though equally irreverent vein Alphons Victor Müller came up with a particularly embarrassing piece of Catholic history shortly after the turn of the century. The reopening of part of the Lateran Church in Rome led to the discovery of an interesting reliquary, "the high-holy foreskin of Christ." In his detailed research into a medieval debate on the matter, Müller discovered that more than one church claimed to have one of these "adorable membranes."³² Which was the right one? Or had it managed miraculously to duplicate itself? Müller noted that the main

³⁰Ibid., p. 227.

³¹Ibid., p. 226.

³²Alphons Victor Müller, *Die hochheilige Vorhaut Christi im Kult und in der Theologie der Papstkirche* (Berlin: C. A. Schwetschke und Sohn, 1907), p. 55.

question concerning the prepuce in the fourteenth century was its status after resurrection. Would it have remained on earth along with other non-essential bodily productions such as spit, sweat, toenails, and excrement? If so, would Christ have gained a new foreskin in heaven, becoming whole once again? Or would it be resurrected with the rest of him, rejoining him in eternal glory? The theological issues seemed endless: did the transubstantiation of elements during the Eucharist include Christ's foreskin?³³ Even more troubling still, what was the reliquary's status as a holy object. Müller quoted with disgust an eighteenth-century text about a fourteenth-century Viennese "hysteric" named Agnes Blannbekin who had made an erotic cult of the foreskin:

Pitying and lamenting Christ, she began to wonder where the prepuce might be. And see there! Soon she felt a little piece of skin on her tongue, like the skin of an egg, full of immense sweetness, and she swallowed it. Hardly had she gulped it down, when she felt the little skin full of sweetness once again on her tongue, and she swallowed it once more. And this happened again probably a hundred times. And since she felt it so often, she was tempted to touch it with her finger. When she tried to do this, the skin went down her throat of its own accord. And it was revealed to her that the prepuce had been resurrected with the Lord on the day of Resurrection. So great was the sweetness when swallowing this little skin that she felt in all the muscles of her body a sweet transformation.³⁴

The resemblance of such stories to the turn-of-the-century literature of occult phenomena is striking. In both cases, issues of psychology, religion, and sexuality were thoroughly intertwined. What was new about sexual diagnosis of religion at the turn of the century was the addition of psychology. The existing genre of anti-clerical satire gained the respectability of a science. Psychology, after all, provided a theory or

³³Ibid., p. 47-56.

³⁴Ibid., p. 31.

repression which explained the sexual aberrations of monks and nuns. This nascent psychology can be discerned in comments by Ernst Haeckel about the Catholic clergy in his *Riddle of the Universe* of 1899:

The history of culture certainly teaches us that this ascetic Christian morality, which showed the greatest disdain for all of Nature, produces as a natural consequence its opposite. The cloister, the refuge of chastity and propriety, soon became the breeding grounds of the most wild orgies. The sexual intercourse of monks and nuns produced romantic relationships which the literature of the Renaissance very realistically depicted.³⁵

Such anti-clerical diatribes could now claim the status of a psychological observation. Pfister's argument was that sexual renunciation could lead to spiritual perversion. "As we so often observe among neurotics," he wrote in his study of Zinzendorf, "the ascetic violation of Nature took its revenge... in the considerable abridgement of moral substance and moral efficacy."³⁶ Ernst Kretschmer agreed. The key to Zinzendorf's theology was sexual renunciation, which resulted in that "oceanic feeling":

The sexual instinct stands once again as the most important object of many ascetic systems. It is a matter of the simple sublimation of the drive into a mystical experience. [This experience] easily and playfully translates erotic wishes and fantasies into something spiritual, and at its highest point, results in a direct transformation of erotic excitement into a glowingly ecstatic feeling of unity with God....³⁷

The Swiss psychologist August Forel recognized the sexual component of many religious practices. Some of the world's greatest religious figures were successful, he suggested, precisely because their

³⁵Haeckel, *Die Welträtsel*, p. 431.

³⁶Pfister, *Die Frömmigkeit des Grafen Ludwig von Zinzendorf*, p. 172.

³⁷Kretschmer, *Geniale Menschen*, p. 42.

message had erotic undertones. He criticized the fact that "man is so inclined to clothe his eroticism in religion, to attribute it to a divine source and to divine commands, and to declare it to be sacred."³⁸ The results could be disastrous: "The consequences of this ardent mingling of the sexual life with religious prescriptions is a mixture of the most ludicrous prudery with pent-up eroticism."³⁹ Forel cited a case in which nuns did not allow their schoolgirls to wash their genitals, or who covered the crucifix with a cloth to hide Christ's nakedness.⁴⁰ This complaint was a familiar one--it could have come straight out of Corvin's *Pfaffenspiegel*. But Forel's scandalized incredulousness now came with the *imprimatur* of modern psychology.

Hans Freimark argued along similar lines in the *Journal of Religious Psychology* that religion all too often was the product of repression. The denial of our natural instincts, wrote Freimark, drove eroticism into the religious sphere. This was especially characteristic of advanced, monotheistic religions like Christianity. Freimark ridiculed the ways in which sexual imagery made a mockery of the ascetic tradition, e.g. Mary as "a wet-nurse for all Christendom."⁴¹ Primitive religions were less perverted because they were less restrictive in their sexual taboos. Modern man, however, had too many scruples. If asked to choose between spirituality and sex, Freimark did not hesitate: "Is this supposedly 'higher' quality [in religion] actually something more valuable? Is the redemption which one experiences in religious ecstasy better than the

³⁸August Forel, *Die sexuelle Frage* (Munich: E. Reinhardt, 1905), p. 378.

³⁹Ibid., p. 374.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 373.

⁴¹Hans Freimark, "Das sexuelle Moment in der religiösen Ekstase," *Z. Religionspsych.* 2 (1908), p. 252.

gratification which follows sexual orgasm? The process is in both cases the same."⁴² Freimark thus drew the opposite conclusion from the strict disciplinarian Forel. In both cases, it is this frank, uncomplicated equation of religious and sexual experiences which distinguishes turn-of-the-century literature in the psychology of religion from anything that came before or after it.

In the *Journal of Religious Psychology* in the same year, 1908, Theodore Schroeder (an American) argued that the sexual urge was the starting point for all religions throughout history. Primitive religions, Schroeder claimed, practiced fertility rites which were scarcely disguised celebrations of coition. What made all religions essentially alike, Schroeder continued, were the instinctual drives which lay behind them. For that reason, religion would never wither away. "Once we have revealed the mystery of procreation, put aside the awe of ignorance, and no longer experience the ecstasy of love, only then will religion cease to exist."⁴³

A medical official from Hubertusburg disputed Schroeder's claim that primitive religion had its roots in fertility rites. But this did not mean he eschewed a sexual critique of religion. Phallic worship, he claimed, came at a *later* stage of religious development. Not all religions were equally responsible for harboring a sexual component. Catholicism, in particular, was what he had in mind:

⁴²Ibid., p. 257.

⁴³Theodore Schroeder, "Erotogenese der Religion," *Z. Religionspsych.* 2 (1908), p. 448.

In the matter of this special sexual coloring the Catholic Church is not without guilt. More and more it adopts the personal cult of Mary, sets up Jesus *ex officio* as the bridegroom of the soul, and insinuates also in its hymns and songs a direct sensual relationship.⁴⁴

The relationship between Catholicism and sexuality was a central turn-of-the-century theme. In a book titled *The Sexual Question and Christianity*, Julian Marcuse derided the close connection between asceticism and immorality. Marcuse, a Marxist writer, echoed the by now familiar psychological theme that sexual renunciation and self-castigation led to perversion. This was especially true for the Catholic Church, which practiced a "religious terrorism" over the emotional life.⁴⁵ This led all too often to those "sexual excesses which damage the nervous system."⁴⁶ Marcuse dragged out all the old stories of monks with concubines, convents as bordellos, and priests living with their mothers and sisters. He pointed to racy Catholic handbooks and pornographic paintings of religious themes as proof that asceticism led to sexual depravity.

Other Protestant observers agreed. In a series of essays published in 1907 on the relationship between religion and sexuality entitled *Eros and Christ*, Felix Maritus took exception to what he saw as the Catholic division between earthly love and heavenly faith. "God cannot have put so powerful a feeling in us only in order to practice the heroics of ripping it out."⁴⁷ Catholicism, Maritus told his readers, led to complete repression of the

⁴⁴P. Näcke, "Die angeblichen sexuellen Wurzeln der Religion," *Z. Religionspsych.* 2 (1908), p. 34.

⁴⁵Julian Marcuse, *Die sexuelle Frage und das Christentum* (Leipzig: W. Klinkhardt, 1908). p. 9.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 70.

⁴⁷Felix Maritus, *Eros und Christus: Gedanken über Bibel, Kirche, Religion und geschlechtliche Liebe* (Leipzig: Teutonia Verlag, 1907), p. 6.

sexual instinct. The Catholic Middle Ages had suffered, Maritus wrote, from the return of the repressed:

[Sexual love]... took its revenge through orgies, all the wilder because they were viewed as sinful and base from the standpoint of a morality claiming holiness. Not seldom were the representatives of holiness themselves corrupted.⁴⁸

Maritus placed the blame not so much on the bad example set by libidinous priests and nuns, but on the ill effects of a repressive morality on the population at large:

This official designation by the church of everything sexual as low and sinful has contributed perhaps far more to the degeneration of sexual relations--especially notorious in Catholic regions--as the bad example and the direct seduction by priests, as a result of forced sexlessness.⁴⁹

Protestantism, on the other hand, was more committed to taming the animal nature of sex, and in promoting a more sublimated, spiritualized version of love. It is no accident that Maritus considered the Song of Solomon to be the most "modern" and "pious" book of the Bible. It was almost Germanic, as he put it, in its combination of erotic and spiritual themes.⁵⁰

Maritus suggested his approval of a more sexualized Protestantism through his analysis of a contemporary painting by Max Klinger, *Christus in Olympus*. The painting depicts Cupid pulling off the robe of Psyche, leaving her naked and penitent before Christ. According to Maritus, the

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 32.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 34.

⁵⁰Ibid., pp. 14-18.

painting represents Christianity's (or at least Protestantism's) acceptance of sexuality.⁵¹

When used as a weapon, psychology was usually aimed at specific confessional targets. There were some who objected in principle to the aggressive stance of psychology towards religion. But most proponents of religious psychology did not mind a little aggression--so long as it was taken out on the right religious group. What was at stake was not so much the psychological validity or worth of religion as such, but the psychological value of one form of belief compared to another. In this respect, the psychology of religion did not clarify the nineteenth-century warfare between science and religion, but further complicated it.

Catholicism, in particular, bore the brunt of the attack. In terms of the *Kulturkampf* of the 1870's, it could be characterized as a backward religion, relying upon popular superstitions. After the turn of the century, Catholicism was diagnosed by Protestant proponents of psychology as a religion with a mass-hysterical basis. In his short history of the dogma of the immaculate conception for the *Journal of Religious Psychology*, Paul Perdrizet noted that "Catholicism in our time has unfortunately become a more inferior form of Christianity."⁵²

Lourdes and other popular cults were often cited as examples of this "backward" Catholicism. Perdrizet sought to demonstrate that young Bernadette's words--"I am the Immaculate Conception"--made no theological sense. This, however, did not hurt her popularity with the gullible Catholic masses.⁵³ Emile Zola characterized the Lourdes cult in

⁵¹Ibid., p. 3-5.

⁵²Paul Perdrizet, "Satan und Jungfrau: Zur Geschichte eines Dogmas," *Z. Religionspsych.* 4 (1910), p. 162.

⁵³Ibid., p. 168.

his novel by that name as "the big lie." A review in the *Journal* complained that Zola had not gone far enough in denouncing the "religious ecstasy, fanatic fury of belief, one-sided bigotry, hysteria, and the most diverse forms of mental illness" which Lourdes exhibited.⁵⁴ Around the turn of the century in Germany, Catholic-baiting was standard, acceptable psychological practice.

Oskar Pfister, as we have seen, drew a direct connection between Catholicism and sexual repression. In his view, Catholicism was a religion of repression, whereas Protestantism--at least in its true form--allowed both earthly and spiritual gratification. Pfister was willing to admit that the Protestant ethic of discipline, self-restraint, and self-denial could be pushed too far:

Exaggerated, harsh punishments, sparing signs of love, the proscription of harmless pleasures, the demand for absolute submission to the will of parents as the representatives of God, the breaking down of the child's own will, rigorous emphasis upon duty, the threat of horrendous torments in the life to come--all these belong to the means of this compulsive-neurotic pedagogy.⁵⁵

But such stringent moralizing, Pfister noted, was really an exception to the Protestant rule. Catholicism was the real culprit. "Everyone knows that Catholic *Seelsorge* with its coercion and its schematism is often brutal, and that its Protestant equivalent with its moralizing is seldom made use of."⁵⁶ In the case of Protestantism, Pfister asserted, this harshness was a mistake. But for Catholicism, it was a matter of principle. As Pfister put it

⁵⁴Eduard Mönkemöller, book review, *Z. Religionspsych.* 1 (1908), p. 182.

⁵⁵Pfister, "Der seelische Aufbau des klassischen Kapitalismus und des Geldgeistes," *Schriften zur Seelenkunde und Erziehungskunst* 7 (1923), p. 33.

⁵⁶Pfister, "Ein Fall von psychoanalytischer Seelsorge," *Evangelische Freiheit* (1909), p. 481.

in a letter to Freud, "The Reformation is in principle nothing other than an analysis of Catholic sexual repression...."⁵⁷ In sexual terms, according to Pfister, Protestantism was more progressive and more psychologically sound. When Christian von Ehrenfels, professor of philosophy at Prague and also a psychologist, called both Pfister and Freud "Sexual Protestants" in this progressive sense, Freud accepted with the term with amusement, and Pfister with no qualification at all.⁵⁸

The key for Pfister was that the Catholic Church denied the pleasures of the flesh, and imposed rigid constraints upon sexuality. It proscribed fish and meat on holidays and prohibited marriage for its clergy. Even *within* marriage, pleasure was denied. As one relatively moderate Catholic publicist put it, "in the ideal Christian life there is no sexual drive, only a drive for procreation."⁵⁹

There were plenty who rejected this new sexual diagnosis of religion. Erich Seeberg, a professor of church history at Königsberg, observed that there was only a "formal, aesthetic" connection between mysticism and eroticism. Their inner natures were entirely different. "The sexual experience does not exist prior to but alongside the mystical one. Since both come from the same mother, the desire of every divided creature for unity, they can overlap and merge into each other."⁶⁰ For Seeberg, this meant that religious inspiration could easily be mistaken for sexual rapture. Both were a form of copulation, a union with God or a

⁵⁷Freud/Pfister, *Briefe*, p. 14.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 15.

⁵⁹Ludwig Auer, *Die Einführung in ein richtiges Geschlechtsleben* (n.p., 1907), p. 5.

⁶⁰D. Erich Seeberg, *Zur Frage der Mystik* (Leipzig: A. Deichert, 1921), p. 46.

union of the flesh. But it would be wrong, Seeberg insisted, to equate the two.

Georg Runze, one of the editors of the *Journal of Religious Psychology* and a psychologist, sounded a similar note of caution: "When one enters the sacred area of piety with the eagerness of scientific research, one should remember the phrase, 'Take off your shoes, for you are standing on holy ground.'"⁶¹ Runze thought that religion had at least as much influence on sexuality as the other way around: "...the form of the erotic sphere of life [is] much more modified by religion, than that it [religion] is fundamentally determined by [eroticism]."⁶² Runze was convinced, in short, that morality and will power could manage the sexual drive.

A reviewer of Pfister's *Zinzendorf* gave alternative interpretation of his sexual theology. Zinzendorf's teaching merely displayed "a preference for sensual ideas and concepts in the portrayal of spiritual processes."⁶³ Zinzendorf used erotic language only in order to make God more immediate and more accessible by appealing to familiar feelings and sensations. "Metaphorical language" was a normal and innocent form of discourse, the reviewer argued.⁶⁴ The cult of Christ's wound and the preoccupation with Christ's circumcision and manhood were nothing more than an allegory, an intricate symbolism which was characteristic of any religious tradition. Pfister's *Zinzendorf*, in short, was a cheap shot.

⁶¹Georg Runze, "Religion und Geschlechtsliebe," *Z. Religionspsych.* 2 (1908), p. 294.

⁶²*Ibid.*, p. 299.

⁶³Gerhard Reichel, *Zinzendorfs Frömmigkeit im Lichte der Psychoanalyse* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1911), p. 125.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, p. 127.

Heinrich Lehmann of Jena protested "in the name of psychological science" against Zinzendorf as "a libelous pamphlet."⁶⁵ In a series of articles in the *Journal of Religious Psychology*, Lehmann complained that Pfister had broken the bond of confidentiality between analyst and analysand--even if in this case the patient was dead. It was precisely this sort of aggression, Lehmann charged, which gave psychology a bad name. "It is not noble," he wrote, quoting the words of an unnamed colleague, "to drag a person through the mud and the mire after two hundred years, and to deface an image [so that it] can only awaken loathing and disgust--especially when a member of his family is no longer there to defend him."⁶⁶ The sexual diagnosis of Zinzendorf and others, Lehmann concluded, brought psychology down to the level of mere scandal. As with occultism, the fear often associated with modern psychology was who could catch whom.

It is not difficult to understand why Catholics in particular were not very happy about the psychosexual critique of religion. They resented the psychobiographies which appeared after the turn of the century, such as Georg Hahn's diagnosis of Saint Theresa as a hysteric, and Georg Lomer's *Ignatius Loyola, From Sexual Libertine to Saint*.⁶⁷ Bruno Schön, a *Seelsorger* for almost twenty years at the Vienna Insane Asylum, decided

⁶⁵H. Lehmann, "Eine offene Antwort auf die offene Frage Dr. Pfisters, zugleich eine Ehrenrettung Zinzendorfs gegen Pfisters Entwertung der Frömmigkeit Zinzendorfs," *Z. Religionspsych.* 5 (1911), p. 61. For the other articles in the series, see "Zinzendorfs Frömmigkeit und ihre Bedeutung," *Z. Religionspsych.* 4 (1910), and "Das religionspsychologische Problem Zinzendorf," *Z. Religionspsych.* 4 (1910).

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, p. 61.

⁶⁷G. Hahn, *Die Probleme der Hysterie und die Offenbarungen der heiligen Theresa* (Leipzig: Julius Zeitler, 1906); and Georg Lomer, *Ignatius von Loyola, vom Erotiker zum Heiligen* (Leipzig: J. A. Barth, 1913).

to return the favor by putting out a Catholic biography on the first Protestant of them all, Martin Luther. Schön attributed Luther's peculiar acumen to a "psychical disturbance."⁶⁸ Young man Luther's excitable nerves soon led to more serious maladies such as hallucinations, delusions of grandeur, paranoia, and an uncontrollable sexual urge. Schön portrayed Luther as a sick, troubled genius in the religious line. Luther's confrontation with the devil was the projection of his mental disorder, a massive case of persecution mania. His absolute conviction and his determination to change the minds of others betray Luther as obsessive and insane. Schön demonstrated that two could play at this game of retrospective diagnosis. The psychopathology of religion easily turned into a kind of sexual slanging match between one confession and another.

For the most part, however, the psychology of religion in the decades around 1900 was a Protestant affair. Rather than being opposed to religion as such, it directed its barbs primarily against Catholic targets. Two of the most distinctive institutions of the Catholic Church, in particular, bore the brunt of the attack: priestly celibacy and auricular confession. The first, as we have seen, involved the unnatural denial of priests' sexuality and their subsequent flight into illness or perversion. The second, confession, offered the opportunity for secret, illicit sexual gratification. The confession booth, dark, enclosed, and private, invited speculation and suspicion. As with mediums in their cabinets, it was tempting to pull the curtain aside in order to expose a priest taking advantage of some poor penitent. This, at any rate was what Protestant psychologists feared--or fantasized about. How widespread such abuses actually were cannot be determined with any

⁶⁸Bruno Schön, *Dr. Martin Luther aus dem Standpunkt der Psychiatrie beurtheilt* (Vienna: C. Sartori, 1874), p. 3.

great accuracy from this sensationalized literature. What *can* be seen is the peculiar fascination exerted by Catholic confession upon outsiders. Something secret had to be something dirty. The critics of confession spoke in terms of censorious indignation. But their anger also contained an element of fantasy--as if anger were the penalty for peeking, the price to be paid for giving prohibited thoughts free reign. The turn-of-the-century psychology of Catholic confession can be read as fantasy turned into punishing rage.

The Statistics of Confession

Early in his career, Freud noted the resemblance between his new clinical therapy--the so-called "talking cure"--and Catholic confession. Together with Josef Breuer in 1895, Freud published *Studies on Hysteria*, a series of case studies which traced patients' hysterical symptoms back to earlier traumas. Breuer and Freud discovered that the symptoms themselves contained a hidden meaning, one that was connected with the original event. If a patient could be induced to discuss the symptoms in a way which led back to the initial trauma, he or she could be cured. Talking could be therapeutic. Breuer surmised that the need to talk was the psychological basis for confession:

We meet the same urge as one of the basic factors of a major historical institution--the Roman Catholic confessional. Telling things is a relief; it discharges tension even when the person to whom they are told is not a priest and even when no absolution follows. If the excitation is denied this outlet it is sometimes converted into a somatic phenomenon, just as is the excitation belonging to traumatic effects.⁶⁹

⁶⁹Breuer and Freud, *Studies on Hysteria*, SE 2, p. 211.

Freud's occasional remarks on the similarity between analysis and confession, however, were outweighed by skepticism. He increasingly saw the analogy between confessor and analyst as a superficial one. The confession of sins, after all, was not the same thing as free association. Nor was absolution quite the same as a cure. Freud addressed the issue later in his career in *The Question of Lay Analysis*. The key difference between the two institutions, he wrote, is that ministers and priests adopted a stern, moralistic approach to their *Seelsorge*. Analysis, on the other hand, depended on the suspension of all judgments in order to allow hidden material, however objectionable and embarrassing it might seem, to come to light. Both encouraged the patient/penitent to examine "bad" thoughts and deeds, but as Freud pointed out, in very different ways:

Confession no doubt plays a part in analysis--as an introduction to it, we might say. But it is very far from constituting the essence of analysis or from explaining its effects. In Confession the sinner tells what he knows; in analysis the neurotic has to tell more. Nor have we heard that Confession has ever developed enough power to get rid of actual pathological symptoms.⁷⁰

Furthermore, Freud observed, confession reinforced the relationship of authority between penitent and confessor. The term "father-confessor"--*Beichtvater*--expressed the situation exactly. Confession relied at every point upon the priest's authority over his parishioner: prompting him or her to speak, prescribing penance, and absolving guilt. In analysis, on the other hand, this authority, which is based upon the transference between doctor and patient, itself became the principal focus of the therapy. The patient needed to recognize and overcome the unrealistic component of his or her attachment to the analyst--a discovery which Freud himself learned

⁷⁰Freud, *The Question of Lay Analysis*, SE 20, p. 189.

only through painful experience.⁷¹ "Go and sin no more" was not an attitude which a therapist could adopt, however much the patient might want him to do so. For these reasons, Freud insisted that analysis was a therapeutic procedure *sui generis*. Catholic confession was at best only a distant analogy.

Others were more optimistic that the new techniques of psychoanalysis could be combined with traditional religious *Seelsorge*. Oskar Pfister, for example, believed that the transference could be put to good use: the analyst could help his patient to form a higher trust in God. C. G. Jung believed that auricular confession was a notable, positive aspect of Catholicism. He offered statistics to the effect that mental illness was less pronounced among the Catholic population, attributing the decrease in susceptibility in part to the emotional benefits of confession.⁷² Horst Fichtner, minister of the Dresden cathedral in the 1930's, thought that analysis was successful precisely because it relied upon the age-old principles of Catholic confession:

The abreaction, which was considered original and essential for the therapeutic effect of analysis, is also important [in confession.] Admittedly, it is by no means only a matter of release from pent-up emotions or of some mechanical discharge of mental tensions. The psychocatharsis as a secularized form of confession, rather, calls for mortification before a higher power, devotion to a superior guide--just like confession in the church.⁷³

Many worried about confession for the same reason that they worried about analysis. They were afraid that when people talked about intimate

⁷¹See his study, "Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria" (1905), SE 7.

⁷²On Jung and Pfister, see below "The Healing Fiction" and "Using the Transference."

⁷³Horst Fichtner, *Hauptfragen der praktischen Theologie* (Schwerin: Friedrich Bahn, 1939), p. 80.

matters, they might well indulge in them. The privacy of the confessional (or the consulting room) provided ample opportunity. The confidentiality of confession (or analysis) only fueled speculation. Ernst Kretschmer recognized that the possibility of seduction was built into the very dynamic between the "admonitory father-confessor and the submissive penitent."⁷⁴ Whether complete sexual frankness was a good idea was much debated--among both analysts and priests. It is no accident that Jung and Freud disagreed on this issue. And it is no accident that much of the literature on the Catholic confessional was intensely preoccupied with the sexual abuses which might (or might not) be going on there. In describing the temptations of the confessional in 1896, the American cultural historian Henry Charles Lea captured both the worry and the fascination. "It is easy to imagine," he wrote, "how great must be the strain on virtue when the priest, with all the passions of a man, has whispered in his ear from female lips the acknowledgment of lustful longings or of temptation unresisted."⁷⁵ Over the next decade, during the heyday of the psychology of religion, the German discussion of Catholic confession would turn precisely on this point.

In a book published in 1908 called *The Psychology of the Criminal*, Erich Wulffen, Director of Penal Institutes and Minister of Probation in Saxony, argued that confession in the Catholic Church increased the incidence of crime. Working from a table of German criminal statistics broken down by region and confession, Wulffen noted that Catholics were

⁷⁴Kretschmer, *Geniale Menschen*, p. 42.

⁷⁵Henry Charles Lea, *A History of Auricular Confession and Indulgences in the Latin Church*, 3 vols. (1896), repr. ed. (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), vol. 1, p. 380.

responsible for a greater proportion of certain types of crime than both Jews and Protestants. Wulffen attributed this discrepancy in part to the lower standard of living and higher alcohol consumption in southern, Catholic Germany than elsewhere in the Reich. But he also blamed the Catholic practice of confession and absolution. The forgiveness of sins, Wulffen implied, made it easier for the sinner to go out and sin once again:

Auricular confession is without a doubt something that increases criminality among the Catholic population which is on the average less well educated. Auricular confession may provide a humane reconciliation, and it may be politically expedient for the Catholic church. But by its exoneration of conscience and forgiveness of sin when there is outward remorse, it must give to those who have an unclear head and a passionate nature a stimulus to repeated perpetration of crime.⁷⁶

The sins that people worried about most often were not those which took place outside the confessional, but *inside* it. These worries were usually of a sexual nature. In an open letter to His Holiness the Pope in 1893, the longtime Jesuit bairer and Protestant patriot Robert Grassmann from Stettin denounced the sexual corruption of the Catholic church. He focused most of his attention on those moments when a priest and a woman were left alone for ostensibly spiritual reasons--the sick bed, the death bed, and, above all, auricular confession. Confession, according to Grassmann, offered the ideal opportunity for clerical seduction. It was a cunning, Jesuitical scheme by which priests could violate one's wives and daughters in complete secrecy and in complete safety.

Grassmann elaborated the nature of these seductions in paranoid detail. Every aspect of confession, he wrote, was calculated to break down a

⁷⁶Erich Wulffen, *Psychologie des Verbrechers* (Gross-Lichterfelde-Ost: P. Langenscheidt, 1908), p. 441.

woman's modesty and to lead her into temptation. The confessional itself was dark and private. The priest could go about his sordid business shielded by a curtain or a wooden partition. With the pretext of encouraging contrition, the priest sought to elicit intimate, sexual details from his trusting and submissive parishioner. He could question her about sins which she not only committed, but also which she *wanted* to commit. Grassmann characterized most Catholic confession manuals, which instructed priests to be especially vigilant about lapses concerning the Sixth Commandment, as pornographic.⁷⁷ The question-and-answer format made it possible for the priest to introduce the topic of sex without shame or fear. "The content of these question is so completely unchristian, so immoral and depraved, that any lay-person who put such question to a woman would be excluded from all society and severely punished."⁷⁸ The priest, Grassmann thought, had an unfair advantage. Whereas the rest of society built up barriers of decorum and circumspection, confession undermined them. It was designed to overcome every scruple of silence, prudence, and shame. By encouraging a woman to linger upon the details of her sexual thoughts, the lascivious priest could indulge his own secret passions. There was no doubt in Grassmann's mind that most priests let themselves be aroused. A trace of envy can be detected in Grassmann's anger:

Imagine that you were required as an unmarried man to carry on a dirty conversation with a pretty woman all alone.... Imagine that you were

⁷⁷Robert Grassmann, *Briefe an seine Heiligkeit den Papst...* (Stettin: Robert Grassmann, 1893) p. 87.

⁷⁸Grassmann, *Auszüge aus der... Moraltheologie des Heiligen Dr. Alphonsus Maria de Liguori...* (1894), rev. ed. (Stettin: Robert Grassmann, 1913), p. 16.

justified in letting the smallest detail be told to you by her. Would you not end up being greatly tempted? Especially when such temptations were repeated daily?

I believe that almost all of us would be done for. I at least doubt that I would be less done for than so many Catholic priests.⁷⁹

Armed with the knowledge of a woman's weaknesses and flaws, her inclinations and most secret wishes, the father-seducer was ready to make his assault. Since he already knew in advance who would succumb to his advances and just what sort of proposition he should make, the priest could not possibly fail. Confession gave him not only the physical, but also an emotional advantage in his lurid enticements. In the hands of the Jesuits, Grassmann wrote, confession had degenerated into "the art of seduction."⁸⁰ He described this art as a kind of ambush or a siege--in any event the fortress would eventually fall:

The confessor is instructed to take the first steps toward the woman with utmost caution. That way the penitent will not at first guess what he wants her to reveal to him, for then in most cases she would close the door against him. After the first steps forward, he would take a few steps backward, and lie in a kind of spiritual ambush in order to observe the effects of his first skirmishes. When there is any kind of chance for success, then the command "forward" will be given and a slightly more advanced position will be tested, or if possible, taken by storm. In this fashion, the whole area will gradually be so encircled and demolished that further resistance on the part of the stirred up soul will seem impossible. Then the last attack will be ordered, the decisive charge carried out; and if God does not accomplish a miracle to save the soul, the last walls will fall, the doors will be thrown open, and the father-confessor triumphantly celebrates his entrance into the place: heart, soul, conscience, and reason are vanquished.⁸¹

As part of his anti-clerical campaign, Grassmann played expertly upon the fears of his male readers. A husband could be sure that his wife

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 42.

⁸⁰Ibid., pp. 47f.

⁸¹Ibid., pp. 74-75.

would be asked to reveal all the details of their marital life to the priest. "No self-respecting husband who cares one whit about his household honor can allow another man to ask such obscene questions of a fundamentally lewd nature. If he does so, he gives himself up to general scorn."⁸² It was not only wives, but also daughters who were at risk. An innocent young woman might very well learn about sexual pleasures and sexual offenses from a priest long before she would have an inkling of them on her own. Furthermore, the husband and father could never be sure what took place in the confessional. A wife or a daughter who had sex with her confessor could be enjoined by the priest from revealing their secret. Thus priestly seduction--like a hypnotic one--was feared to be the perfect crime. In the event of a married woman becoming pregnant, paternity could always be attributed to the husband. Confession appeared to Grassmann like a giant conspiracy by priests to cuckold other men.

Grassmann's fears exhibited a marked political component. "[B]y means of auricular confession," he wrote, "priests govern the world through women."⁸³ In addition to the political anti-Catholicism of the *Kulturkampf* and after, it was widely feared in Germany that suffrage for women would further solidify this secret power: women would be guided by their confessors. But in this respect, as in all others, Grassmann's worries outran reality, making the worries themselves the subject of our analysis.

Grassmann's anti-clerical tirades (printed at his own expense) landed him in the Stettin courts. There were additional lawsuits in Bavaria, and his books were confiscated in Catholic Austria. To support his claims, Grassmann published a translation of the eighteenth-century

⁸²Ibid., p. 33.

⁸³Ibid., p. 47.

Jesuit moral theologian Alfonso Maria de Liguori, whose works, Grassmann claimed, proved not he, but the Jesuit order was the real criminal.⁸⁴ Much like Otto von Corvin, Liguori offered sensational evidence for Grassmann's claims that the priesthood was rife with sexual indulgence and perversions. His translation of Liguori, Grassmann claimed, was "the first piece of writing... which called things by their names, especially all the dirt that had been heaped into Latin piles."⁸⁵ Returning to the messy metaphor, Grassmann announced that "He who wishes to dry out a swamp ought not to mind climbing down into the muck in order to open up the drains."⁸⁶ In the tradition of Corvin and others, Grassmann did not seem to mind doing the dirty work. In fact, he seemed to take delight in exposing the sexual mischief of Liguori and contemporary priests. The fact that an offending priest might not be caught was a source for Grassmann of both horror--and perhaps some pleasure.

Of course many priests *did* get caught. The number of priests in European jails in any given year around 1900 was in the hundreds--many of them for crimes against "moral decency."⁸⁷ In German lands, dozens of court cases each year saw priests accused and convicted of sexual misconduct--mostly for the abuse of boys and girls within their charge. The non-Catholic press, of course, enjoyed the sensation. Despite the number and seriousness of such cases, contemporaries disagreed over whether they

⁸⁴See, for example, Liguori's *The True Spouse of Christ; or the Nun Sanctified by the Virtues of her State* (New York: Benziger Bros., 1888).

⁸⁵Grassmann, *Auszüge*, p. 4.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁸⁷Otto Schwab reported 176 convictions in Italy alone for the years 1905 and 1906, two-thirds of them for "moral crimes." Schwab, *Das Elend des Priesterzölibats* (Leipzig: Braunschweig Verlag, 1910), p. 14.

could be used to attack the Catholic clergy in general. Were sexual offenders the exception or the rule among priests? Those who defended the priesthood could claim that charges of sexual abuse were exaggerated in order to discredit the Catholic Church. Critics, on the other hand, suggested that the number of court cases represented only a fraction of actual clerical abuses--the tip of the iceberg.

The reality, of course, would be impossible to determine. The sheer number of charges--and convictions--do suggest that sexual abuse was a significant problem. In any event, in addition to the actual *incidence* of priesthood seduction is the *perception* that it was prevalent. The way in which this highly charged issue was formulated and discussed was itself a part of contemporary life. Perhaps most remarkable about the turn-of-the-century debate over Catholicism in Germany was the prominence given to sexual scandal. Once again we find again that conflict in the public sphere was played out in sexual terms. We also find that charges of sexual misconduct exhibited a degree of voyeurism. The French sexologists Émile Laurent and Paul Nagour, for example, made no secret of what they saw: "In front of the statues of the saints, against which barren women were wont to rub their pudenda in order to ensure offspring, a low mass is being celebrated by a priest who specialized in seducing the pretty girls who came to him for confession."⁸⁸ Fantasy and indignation could in this fashion go hand in hand.

Many of the charges against the Catholic priesthood--and confession in particular--came from those who were priests themselves. Claiming to speak for thousands of German priests, Otto Schwab appealed to his

⁸⁸Laurent and Nagour, *Magica Sexualis*, p. 5.

superior, Bishop Keppler, for an end to the celibacy rule: "We want to be men, real, regular men the way God created them."⁸⁹ Schwab complained that celibacy put a tremendous strain upon himself and others. "Nature demands by force that we exercise the capacities created for us by God. Whoever denies it is himself an impotent spirit at best."⁹⁰ Pointing to the seemingly endless list of court cases implicating priests in various forms of sexual abuse, Schwab urged Keppler to relent. "We do not want to excuse the act, but we cannot agree that such people are 'criminals'."⁹¹ They were the victims, Schwab insisted, of the Catholic hierarchy.

The most difficult part about being celibate, Schwab intimated, was listening to confession. It was so easy to yield under those circumstances to sexual temptation. A young priest, shielded for so long in the seminary and inexperienced in the ways of the world, first learned from his parishioners what he was missing and what he had renounced. "He finds out about [life] in the confessional," declared Schwab. "There, women filled with shame kneel down only a hand's breadth from him and disclose to him their innermost secrets."⁹² Schwab's account seems to confirm all of Grassmann's fears--as well as the undercurrent of fantasy: "The work in the confessional itself offers an opportunity for sexual excitement, which many a man-about-town would envy the priest. The most off-color novel, the dirtiest books pale in comparison with the temptations which are offered here."⁹³ With the voice of experience, Schwab described how confession could corrupt a once virtuous, but now lonely priest. "Since all

⁸⁹Schwab, *Das Elend*, p. 21.

⁹⁰Ibid., p. 50.

⁹¹Ibid., p. 19.

⁹²Ibid., p. 24.

⁹³Ibid., p. 39.

the fine points of sexual activity are paraded before his eyes in the confessional, it can become for him a perfect school of lewdness."⁹⁴ Some female penitents deliberately tried to tempt their confessors, perhaps wanting to make their husbands jealous, or to reassure themselves--as discreetly as possible--of their powers of attraction.⁹⁵ In any event, Schwab concluded, the priest quickly learned some of his female parishioners were his for the taking: "He knows from the confessional how weak the women are, how only a touch is needed--and the world is his."⁹⁶

Schwab had few illusions about priests being able to resist such temptation. "Remain chaste, whoever can!" he exclaimed to Bishop Keppler.⁹⁷

The priest sits in the confession-booth... and must listen to all these sins in order to become conscious of the fact that he is a weak man. It would be more beneficial to the sanctity of the confessional, if such incidents were brought to an end. A married priest, we say, would have much less "interest" in such intimate matters. For that matter, many women would also no longer have a motive for such frequent "confession."⁹⁸

The most common solution to sexual frustration, Schwab reported, was for a priest to enter into a steady relationship with an unmarried woman, often his housekeeper--a common and accepted practice in many parts of Catholic Germany.⁹⁹ Schwab quoted with distaste a recent

⁹⁴Ibid., p. 33.

⁹⁵Schwab, *Die Sittliche Not in der katholischen Gesellschaft* (Munich: Krausgesellschaft, 1913), pp. 36-37, 42.

⁹⁶Schwab, *Das Elend*, p. 25.

⁹⁷Ibid., p. 33.

⁹⁸Ibid., p. 47.

⁹⁹Schwab, *Die Sittliche Not*, p. 28. On housekeepers as virtual clerical wives, see Oscar Maria Graf's novel of his childhood in Bavaria, *Das Leben meiner Mutter* (München: K. Desch, 1947).

announcement in the *Augsburger Postzeitung* by a priest on the look-out for "a young woman with an appetizing appearance" to serve as his housekeeper.¹⁰⁰ Another possibility would be for the priest to take advantage of his position occasionally to seduce a vulnerable woman--and then to make things right again by granting her absolution. It is not uncommon, Schwab noted, "that clergy first sin with women and then absolve them of sin in confession."¹⁰¹ Likewise, priests made use of a theological loophole to hide their sexual activity from their own superiors.¹⁰² If he did confess, a priest was not likely to run up against disapproval from the hierarchy--breaking one's vow of celibacy was smiled upon, so long as it was not done openly. Schwab portrayed the upper ranks of the clergy as a virtual racket for the mutual absolution of sexual excesses, even sexual crimes.¹⁰³

And crimes there were. Schwab was distressed by the fact that so many priests found other alternatives for their frustrations. These included masturbation, various forms of perversion, bestiality, and child abuse. Public opinion was not fooled by the appearance of chastity, and considered every priest either an "onanist" or "one who keeps concubines." A "respectable girl," Schwab noted, would not consent to work in the parish house alone.¹⁰⁴ Schwab thought that it was unfair to sentence a priest to two years in jail for brushing or fondling a fifteen-year-old's breasts through her clothing. "Is such a barbaric punishment, which destroys the

¹⁰⁰Ibid., p. 46.

¹⁰¹Schwab, *Das Elend*, p. 48.

¹⁰²Schwab, *Die Sittliche Not*, pp. 30-31, 45.

¹⁰³Ibid., p. 30.

¹⁰⁴Schwab, *Das Elend*, p. 42.

man, in proportion to the deed?"¹⁰⁵ For those priests who did manage to remain chaste, all their energy was used up in the constant struggle to resist the extraordinary temptations of the confessional. They had nothing left for their parishioners. That explains, Schwab concluded, why so many priests have gray hair.¹⁰⁶

To conclude his argument, Schwab presented Bishop Keppler with what he called the "statistics of the confessional."¹⁰⁷ The numbers offer a sobering version of Zeno's paradox. Half of all priests, Schwab estimated, "have sullied themselves with women." Half of those which remain, about one out of four, were "secret" masturbators. Another half, approximately 12% or 13%, were actively homosexual. Yet another half, about 6%, indulged in bestial and other perversions. This left only a small minority, about 6% Schwab suggested, who managed to keep their vows. Priesthood celibacy, he concluded, was a disaster. And above all, confession was to blame.

For his part, Keppler remained unmoved. He referred to Schwab and other Catholic modernists as "margarine-Catholics."¹⁰⁸ Keppler claimed that these dissenters were driven by personal sexual motives, not by a genuine commitment to the welfare of the church. He characterized them as a few isolated malcontents, whose sexual affairs discredited the vast majority of abstinent priests. For Keppler, those who proposed marriages

¹⁰⁵Ibid., p. 19.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., pp. 27, 34.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., p. 29

¹⁰⁸Otto Sickenberger, *Der Zölibatszwang und Bischof Keppler* (n.p., 1911), p. 10.

for priests were building a "bridge to Protestantism"--a severe Catholic censure indeed.¹⁰⁹

Schwab was not the only one to calculate the statistics of the confessional. Nor was such accounting limited to Germany and Germans. The Canadian temperance reformer and former Catholic priest, father Chiniquy--whose broadsides against the Catholic church were translated into German and met with widespread comment--reported much the same list of abuses. He was, if anything, more damning than Schwab. His star witness was "Mary," a young woman who had been corrupted by a priest's questioning, and had subsequently entered into sexual relationships with two priests in succession.¹¹⁰ The first of these priests later admitted during confession to Chiniquy that he had subjected over a thousand female confessants during his years as a priest to lascivious inquisition. Of these, he claimed to have actually "corrupted" ninety-five.¹¹¹ Only one in ten of the priests who came to him for confession, wrote Chiniquy, had not seduced one or more of their penitents.¹¹² One priest admitted having sex with as many as 1500 different women during his career. After leaving the priesthood, Chiniquy turned on the Catholic church with vengeance. In the publisher's frontispiece to his pamphlet, he listed Catholicism along with smallpox, yellow fever, typhus, tuberculosis and cancer as one of the great scourges of humanity--with the only difference being that Catholicism had not been recognized as malignant and combatted as such. Similarly, a renegade French priest, father Hyacinthe, reported that 99% of priests who

¹⁰⁹Ibid., p. iii.

¹¹⁰C. Chiniquy, *The Priest, The Woman, and the Confessional* (1880), repr. ed. (Toronto: The Gospel Witness, 1940), pp. 18-30.

¹¹¹Ibid., pp. 31-33.

¹¹²Ibid., p. 33.

came to him for confession had sinned with one or more of their parishioners, a few with as many as several hundred.¹¹³ Given these admissions--some of them, boasts--from clerical insiders, is it any surprise that those on the outside were worried?

The most vocal and detailed critics of the priesthood turned out to be a *former* cleric. Josef Leute, once a Bavarian priest, was not so lenient as Schwab with his erstwhile colleagues. Leute was so distressed by the demoralizing effects of celibacy that, unlike Schwab, he defected from the priesthood and chose to make his criticisms outside the Catholic church. As a result, his critique was more strident and sensational. The public liked hearing about the sexual excesses of the Catholic clergy--especially by one who knew firsthand all the secrets of the confessional.

Even as a priest, Leute had been something of a renegade. In 1899 he published an article--in German rather than in the usual Latin--on sexual perversions. Despite the "Catholic" standpoint of the article, Leute received a stern reprimand from his superiors. It was better, they told him to keep such matters out of the vernacular. The church collected and burned all unsold copies of the pamphlet, and Leute was required to kiss the bishop's feet as a sign of obedience.¹¹⁴

A few years later, Leute authored a very successful Catholic marriage-manual. Young couples were ready to take their sexual lives into their own hands, he wrote. They were "sick and tired of being told about these things in the confessional."¹¹⁵ Priests, Leute argued, tended to be

¹¹³Grassmann, *Auszüge*, pp. 3, 41.

¹¹⁴Josef Leute, *Mein Austritt aus der katholischen Kirche* (Nürnberg: K. Beisswanger, 1910). See also *Das Sexualproblem und die katholische Kirche* (Frankfurt: Neuer Frankfurter Verlag, 1908), pp. v-xv.

¹¹⁵Leute, *Mein Austritt*, p. 7.

more ignorant than their parishioners about important aspects of marital life. Leute recalled with chagrin the advice he had given as a priest on the "natural" means of preventing conception. The couple were to abstain from sex for fourteen days following the beginning of the wife's period until three or four days before the next one began.¹¹⁶ Leute was appalled at the consequences of this miscalculation: "The women who followed my instructions all became pregnant and came to confession again in order to berate me for my false, misleading advice."¹¹⁷ Leute concluded that confession was not the time or place for sex education. "When a Catholic woman feels the need to be educated about sexual things, she would be better off. . . consulting a doctor than talking about such things in the confessional. The confession should be employed for the forgiveness of sins, and not for teaching quackery."¹¹⁸

Leute put his hard-won knowledge to good use by designing his own guide to the details and difficulties of married life. His manual was part of a campaign to bring Catholicism more in line with modern life.¹¹⁹ The book initially received the approbation of the bishop of Augsburg. But when there were public objections to Leute's frank and explicit discussion of subjects which many felt should only be spoken of in hushed tones during confession, the bishop abandoned him. First he tried to pressure Leute into making changes in the book. Then he threatened to make public some of the details of Leute's sexual life. Leute refused to give in to this blackmail.

¹¹⁶Leute cites the most popular and up-to-date Catholic handbook of the late nineteenth century, Carl Capellmann, *Sterilität ohne Verletzung der Sittengesetze* (Aachen: R. Barth, 1884).

¹¹⁷Leute, *Das Sexualproblem*, p.103.

¹¹⁸Ibid., p. 137.

¹¹⁹Leute, "Das Zurückstehen der katholischen Literatur," *Theologisch-praktische Monatsschrift* (1899), pp. 45-49.

He admitted that he had engaged in "the well-known affairs characteristic for the clerical profession."¹²⁰ Disgusted by the whole business, he then quit the priesthood altogether. Leute put a picture of his wife and children at the very end of his bitter account of his resignation--mute but eloquent testimony, he thought, to the higher virtue of married life.

Thereafter Leute was a professional critic of the Catholic church. "My new life's vocation," he declared in 1910, "is deadly serious: to light up the dark chambers of the priesthood with the torch of enlightenment."¹²¹ In venting his frustration with the Catholic clergy, Leute spoke a language that many Germans after the turn of the century could understand, a language which combined traditional priest-baiting with a new psycho-sexual critique of Catholicism. Leute was not a psychologist, but he used the psychology of religion in a fashion bordering on invective. He raged against what he called "the sexual monopoly of the clergy." By restricting the discussion of sexual matters to the confessional, he charged, priests kept people from making their own sexual decisions, and gained for themselves an unfair sexual advantage.¹²²

Despite his critique of the Catholic Church, Leute was in some ways quite traditional. He considered, for example, that it was "repulsive" to show homosexuals any leniency in the courts.¹²³ He also betrayed a real lack of psychological sophistication in his insistence that *hearing* about sins necessarily made priests--and psychiatrists--more likely to commit them. It was better, Leute thought, for an adolescent to keep track of his

¹²⁰Leute, *Mein Austritt*, p. 7.

¹²¹Ibid., p. 13.

¹²²Leute, *Das Sexualproblem*, p. xiii.

¹²³Leute, "Moderne Moral," *Theologisch-praktische Monatschrift* (1899), pp. 720-733.

own lapses--masturbation--than to bring them up in confession. It was better for young women to keep their fantasies to themselves. Too much soul-searching, after all, could lead to trouble:

The secret conversation about such suggestive topics, especially with a younger minister, has something seductive about it. I have often gained the impression that the female confessants were less concerned about feeling remorse for their sins than about the pleasant task of putting their little sexual offenses into words. If she has no sins to confess, then she confesses "temptations." If she believes she has too little material to justify confession, then she asks questions if this or that thought is perhaps sinful. Finally, when all else fails, the sincere confessant who believes she has little to confess will "sneak in" earlier sins, that is, repeat her confession of them. Strangely enough it is always the sexual sins which are repeated, whether it is because they are considered especially serious, or whether they always offer material for a sexual discussion.¹²⁴

Leute's discussion of Catholic *Seelsorge* bore an interesting resemblance to a similar debate over analytic techniques. To what extent should the priest prompt his confessant, or the analyst his patient? To what extent should he rely upon material which the confessant has freely volunteered? As a result of his clinical experience, Freud himself came down firmly on the side of analytic restraint: a therapist should avoid intervening in the patient's analysis whenever possible. Leute concluded much the same for the priest, so that he could avoid corruption on the one hand, and temptation on the other:

The father confessor... should, whenever possible, refrain from questioning. He should rather be satisfied with what is voluntarily confessed, even at the risk that the confession is not complete. Only when he has a good reason to suspect that something important has been held back should he probe around--but in a cautious, circumspect fashion, in order to give no offense.¹²⁵

¹²⁴Leute, *Das Sexualproblem*, p. 137.

¹²⁵*Ibid.*, p. 136.

Leute was most appalled by the corruption and hypocrisy he saw within the Catholic clergy. He accused many priests of leading a double life, observing every propriety within their own parishes, but spending their holidays in Munich dressed as dandies in the red-light district. Among themselves, Leute charged, priests drank, swore, and even traded stories which they had heard in confession.¹²⁶ Such carousing posed no moral dilemma, he claimed, because each was able to absolve the other in a conspiracy of corruption. "Sheer hypocrisy! Sinful men, who forgive each others' sins. . . . Then they go to the pub for cards and beer."¹²⁷ They joked among themselves, Leute observed, about which made the better bedtime reading, Boccaccio or Chiniquy. Chiniquy won hands down.¹²⁸

Like other critics of Catholic "repression," Leute felt that the sexual restraint preached by the church had disastrous moral consequences. One of these consequences was excessive prudery. Some priests warned their parishioners, for example, against riding bicycles because of the unnatural excitations it caused. "The cleric," he wrote, "is especially suspicious that women climb onto the bicycle only in order to excite and satisfy sexual feelings through mounting and riding."¹²⁹ Indeed the Catholic hierarchy in Bavaria once prohibited priests from riding bicycles for that very reason. Leute also reported the story of a Munich school mistress who objected to the construction of a pissoir in the Ludwigstrasse on the grounds that it might encourage sexual thoughts in her young charges.¹³⁰ Such

¹²⁶Ibid., pp. 336-370.

¹²⁷Leute, *Mein Austritt*, p. 10

¹²⁸Leute, *Das Sexualproblem*, pp. 195-6.

¹²⁹Leute, *Mein Austritt*, pp. 6, 9. See also *Das Sexualproblem*, p. 215.

¹³⁰Leute, *Das Sexualproblem*, p. 238.

exaggerated prudery was a consequences of exaggerated prohibitions, and could not possibly be healthy.

Another consequence was sexual debauchery--whether in reality or in the imagination. With anti-clerical glee, Leute reported instances in which parishioners had passionately kissed the naked body of Christ when it was brought down on Good Friday, when they had masturbated during mass, experienced orgasm during prayer--*Ändachtsonanie*--or allowed sheep to lick their salted genitals.¹³¹ Whether the stories themselves are true or not, it is certainly true that Leute combined his censure with a most active and graphic imagination.

In any event for Leute, unnatural restraint--with its unnatural debauches--culminated in celibacy. Priests, he insisted, would argue over fine theological points when a communion wafer had accidentally dropped down the blouse of female communicant. They would mix their sperm with the communion host on the sly. Or they would celebrate a private mass on a prostitute's belly.¹³² As was often the case in such outbursts, anger was accompanied by a sensual imagery that cannot be mistaken or ignored. The sexual diagnosis of religion, however aggressive and anti-clerical, also contained an element of wishful thinking. Leute had no doubt that celibacy brought about the sexual corruption of the clergy. But even more revealing is the way he, Grassmann, Schwab, and others *talked* about it.

In a pamphlet produced by the Kraus-Society, a prominent association of Catholic modernists in the first decade of the twentieth century, Siegfried Hagen bemoaned the sexual burden placed on the Catholic clergy--a burden which seldom failed to take its toll. "Onanism is

¹³¹Ibid., pp. 51, 49, 43.

¹³²Ibid., pp. 195-196, 120-121.

the order of the day," declared Hagen. "It hardly counts as sin."¹³³ Hagen did not even shrink from citing incest--at least in thought if not in deed--as a possible consequence of celibacy: "The time could come, when the priest sees in his own sister more the woman than the sister."¹³⁴ This was, to say the least, an interesting way of putting it.

A Nervous Abstinence

In the years 1890-1914, psychologists also directed their psycho-sexual critique of Catholicism against the institution of priestly celibacy. The mortification of the flesh had traditionally been a central Christian virtue. It culminated in the monkish ideal of renouncing the world and abstaining from sex. The vow of chastity--at least in the eyes of Catholic critics--was often more honored in the breach than in the observance. As we have seen, the sexual activity of supposedly celibate priests and nuns had long been the preferred butt of anti-clerical ridicule, especially since the Enlightenment. As one late eighteenth-century German writer wryly noted, "Monks would be better served by a soft morality which could be observed, than by a strict one which would not be."¹³⁵

What was new starting in the 1890's was the addition of a medical and psychological component to this longstanding critique. Opponents of the Catholic Church--as well as Catholic reformers--continued to point out the glaring contradiction between the ideal of chastity and actual clerical practice. During this period, however, most of the attention shifted away

¹³³Siegfried Hagen, *Zwangszölibat oder Priesterehe* (Munich: Krausgesellschaft, 1910), p. 13.

¹³⁴*Ibid.*, p. 16.

¹³⁵Johann Georg von Zimmermann, *Über die Einsamkeit*, 4 vols. (Leipzig: Weidmanns Erben und Reich, 1785), vol. 4, p. 441.

from when celibacy fails, to what happens when it *succeeds*. What were the physical and--even more important--the emotional costs of sexual restraint? Was sexual abstinence natural? Was it healthy? The psychological debate over these questions began in the 1890's and lasted until the outbreak of the First World War. Although agreement had not been reached over the medical consequences of celibacy, the issue was not picked up again in such an urgent, concentrated fashion. The debate itself between 1890 and 1914 marked the end of the ascetic ideal. Henceforth, priestly celibacy--or any other religious practice--would have to be defensible on medical grounds, not just on spiritual ones.

It was commonplace around the turn of the century for Protestant writers--as well as Catholic modernists--to denounce the Church of Rome for its "unnatural" stand on priesthood celibacy. The hostile tone of these criticisms derived from the *Kulturkampf* of the 1870's, during which Catholicism had been derided as a backward religion of popular superstition (that is, opposed to modern science) and political reaction (opposed to national unification). The Protestant theologian Adolf Harnack observed in 1901 that Catholicism--in particular, a monastic order like the Jesuits--had progressively relegated its followers to "narrowness, empty barrenness, and servile dependence."¹³⁶ In Protestantism, on the other hand, sexual and political freedom went hand in hand. Had not Luther given up the monastic way of life? Did he not himself marry, and allow his clergy to do so as well?¹³⁷ Priestly celibacy--and the hierarchy it promoted--

¹³⁶Adolf Harnack, *Monasticism, its Ideals and History* (1882), trans. E. E. Kellett (New York: Putnam, 1901), p. 13.

¹³⁷*Ibid.*, p. 115.

was a fundamental way in which Catholicism appeared to Harnack and others in opposition to Protestantism and progress.

Another element of the Wilhelmine debate over priestly celibacy was the new emphasis upon national regeneration. According to the ethos of Social Darwinism, priests cut themselves off from the future by failing to have children. The very best in education and values was thereby lost to the nation. As one Catholic reformer noted sadly in 1905, priestly celibacy helped to give German Catholics their own confessional identity, "but at what a price!"¹³⁸ The writer proposed that the minimum ages for entering orders be set at fifty for men and forty for women, making celibacy a post-reproductive restraint. This would prevent, in the words of a colleague, the "permanent raid of the church upon the source of power of the people's intellect."¹³⁹

Social Darwinism helped focus attention on celibacy because it prevented reproduction of a "desirable" part of the population. But it was the introduction of psychology which really set the tone for the debate over celibacy between 1890 and 1914. By that time, physicians and psychiatrists had begun to speculate about the clinical consequences of abstinence. Their concern, of course, was linked to theories of repression, in which the frustration of sexual needs appeared as a source of neurosis. With its emphasis on the recognition of repressed desires and their gratification, modern psychology challenged the ascetic ideal.

Medical thinking in the past had tended to confirm the advice of the apostle Paul: "It is a good thing for a man to have nothing to do with

¹³⁸J. Müller, "Der Zölibat im Lichte der Biologie und Kulturgeschichte," *Politische-anthropologische Revue* 4 (1905-6), p. 156.

¹³⁹Ibid., pp. 159-161.

women; but because there is so much immorality, let each man have his own wife and each woman her own husband."¹⁴⁰ In the Christian tradition, sex and marriage were treated as concessions to human weakness. Abstinence was not just a virtue; it was also a sign of strength and good health. Up until the nineteenth century, it was commonly believed that the male body could benefit by reabsorbing sperm which had been secreted but unejaculated.¹⁴¹ Albrecht von Haller, an eighteenth-century physician, had observed the effects of abstinence on himself and reported, after a bout of headaches and high blood pressure, an increased sense of physical well being and emotional freshness.¹⁴² Celibacy was not only morally good, it was also good for you.

Dr. William A. Hammond, one of the most eminent and colorful American figures in nineteenth-century medical history, agreed with this older prescription--but for very different reasons. In a book titled *Self-Control in Curing Insanity* published in 1891, he recommended abstinence as a cure for various sexual and emotional inhibitions. By completely frustrating the natural sexual urge, Hammond reasoned, the tension and discomfort of the patient would increase to such a point that something would have to give way. The frustrated drive would overwhelm any inhibition in its path. Celibacy, like a good cold shower, could shock you to your senses.¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰1 Cor. 7:1-2.

¹⁴¹Victor G. Vecki refers to this as an "obsolete fable." *The Pathology and Treatment of Sexual Impotence* (1889), 2 ed. (Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders, 1899), p. 190.

¹⁴²See Krafft-Ebing, "Über Neurosen und Psychosen durch Abstinenz," *Jahrbücher für Psychiatrie* 8 (1889), p. 2.

¹⁴³Hammond, *Self-Control in Curing Insanity* (Boston: n.p., 1891), p. 18.

Most observers in the second half of the nineteenth century, however, began to call into question the notion that celibacy provided medical, as well as a spiritual, benefits. In a history of the Protestant controversy with Rome published in 1862, Karl August von Hase criticized priestly celibacy. In tried-and-true anti-clerical fashion, he questioned whether many priests actually lived up to their vows. And for those who did--were they not just pawns of the powers-that-be?

Far be it from me to maintain that a conscientious, or at any rate a timorous, diffident priest could not overcome this [sexual] temptation with an appeal for divine assistance. The question is if it ever was, or if it still is necessary for the church to demand this human sacrifice on the altar not of God but of the Hierarchy. ¹⁴⁴

In Hase's analysis one can detect the beginnings of a psychological critique, a rudimentary theory of repression. With his reference to "human sacrifice, Hase clearly did not believe that celibacy was a normal, natural state. If God-given instincts were not satisfied, then Nature would take its revenge: "The danger of abnormality and of crime," Hase observed "develops wherever Nature is blocked."¹⁴⁵ Especially with regard to "the most powerful natural drive," any attempt at complete abstinence could result in a damnable perversion or, at very least, a burning obsession: "Whoever would free himself completely from natural needs easily ends up being a slave to them in his thoughts."¹⁴⁶ Hase was convinced that the mental life of priests was not so pure: "Where then is the assurance that the Catholic priest has always just come from the altar or from the

¹⁴⁴Karl August von Hase, *Handbuch der protestantischen Polemik gegen die römisch-katholische Kirche* (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1862), p. 131.

¹⁴⁵Ibid., p. 130.

¹⁴⁶Ibid., p. 136.

confessional? And even if one can be certain of his path, who knows what thoughts and inclinations are fomenting in his mind."

It was only a short step from the notion of enslaved thoughts to a psychological theory of repression. Writing in the same year as Hase, a former English nun, Eliza Smith Richardson (whose works appeared in German translation), spoke of the "delusion" of the celibate life. Making a clear distinction between the "romance" and the "reality" of convents, she pointed to "the insane nun" as a typical result of sexual frustration. Richardson denounced the monastic ideal in "natural" terms. "That system is antagonistic to the laws of nature and the instincts of humanity; and, when [nuns] became its devotees, they entered upon a life-long warfare with these blessed laws and instincts."¹⁴⁷ Chastity, Richardson concluded, took its toll upon the mental and emotional constitution of normal, healthy human beings:

Would they wish to prepare inmates for a lunatic asylum, let them take as large a number as they can gather of certain fervid temperaments and impassioned natures, and place them for life within the walls of a convent: hereditary tendency or no hereditary tendency, the experiment would perchance be more successful than they dream."¹⁴⁸

Towards the end of the nineteenth century doctors and psychiatrists began to suggest just such a connection between abstinence and mental illness. Since so many neurotic and psychotic conditions seemed connected to sexual repression, the Catholic clergy seemed to provide a ready-made control group. The incidence of insanity or emotional distress among

¹⁴⁷Eliza Smith Richardson, *The Veil Lifted* (Boston: H. Hoyt, 1869), p. 151. A German edition appeared under the title *Der aufgehobene Schleier* that same year.

¹⁴⁸*Ibid.*, p. 156.

celibate priests and nuns could be compared with that of the population at large. Any differences would suggest whether celibacy was indeed healthful or not. The Catholic orders thus found themselves the subject of a giant experiment. They still had their defenders, even among the medical and psychiatric professions. But the ascetic life no longer could go unchallenged as a spiritual *and* a physical/psychological ideal. From now on, it would have to justify itself in medical terms.

The initial diagnosis was not at all unfavorable. In a seminal article published in 1889 on the relationship between sexual abstinence and neurosis, the Viennese psychologist Richard von Krafft-Ebing insisted that celibacy did not necessarily pose a problem for a person's health. The side effects depended upon an individual's constitution, and upon the particular conditions under which celibacy was observed. "For every normally constituted man," Krafft-Ebing argued, "abstinence... will cause no harm."¹⁴⁹ Since women possessed a weaker sexual drive than men, wrote Krafft-Ebing, they could practice celibacy with even less difficulty. The avoidance of sexual excitation, the energetic pursuit of a career, and the cultivation of spiritual ideals could more than compensate for the loss of sexual gratification. Given a healthy disposition and the right kind of environment, Krafft-Ebing concluded, sexual abstinence would have no adverse psychological consequences.

It is quite different, added Krafft-Ebing, when a person possessed a "neuropathological" constitution or an exceptionally strong sexual drive. "For such individuals, abstinence could lead to serious danger in the form

¹⁴⁹Krafft-Ebing, "Neurosen und Psychosen durch sexuelle Abstinenz," p. 2.

of nervous disease and insanity. It could be completely anti-hygienic."¹⁵⁰ Krafft-Ebing stopped short of attributing mental illness directly to not having sex: "I have never seen hysteria result from the non-satisfaction of the raw sensual, sexual drive."¹⁵¹ And he further objected to marriage as a cure-all for sexual complaints. But he did list sexual abstinence among the complicating factors--if not the causes--of mental disorders. Celibacy, in short, could make a bad situation worse.

Alfred Hegar, a professor of gynecology at Freiburg, was among the first to suggest that the number of monks and nuns in mental asylums would provide a valuable statistic for determining whether or not abstinence was harmful to one's mental or emotional life.¹⁵² In a book called *The Sexual Drive* published in 1894, Hegar drew attention to previous studies which suggested the relative rarity of mental illness among priests. At first, Hegar formulated the question only in terms of whether priests were actually celibate or not. In particular, he cited the recent work of a physician at the insane asylum in Deggendorf, Dr. Eduard Kundt. In an 1894 survey of more than a thousand cases of general paralysis of the insane (chronic syphilitic meningoencephalitis), Kundt found only seventeen of them to be Catholic priests.¹⁵³ Since this condition, whose symptoms include progressive dementia with personality deterioration (often accompanied by delusions of grandeur) was transmitted by sexual contact, Kundt interpreted the small number of afflicted clergy to mean that

¹⁵⁰Ibid., p. 3.

¹⁵¹Ibid., p. 6.

¹⁵²Alfred Hegar, *Der Geschlechtstrieb* (Stuttgart: F. Enke, 1894), p. 9.

¹⁵³Eduard Kundt, "Statistisch-kasuistische Mitteilung zur Kenntnis der progressiven Paralyse," *Allgemeine Zeitschrift für Psychiatrie* (1894), p. 261.

priests, for the most part, were keeping their vows. In the absence of any more detailed studies, Hegar was inclined to give celibacy the benefit of the doubt: it was probably perfectly sound from a psychiatric point of view.¹⁵⁴

Hegar's remarks sparked a flurry of interest in finding out just how many priests suffered from syphilitic paralysis. Reviewing more than two thousand paralytic patients who passed through his clinic, Krafft-Ebing reported that not one of them was a Catholic cleric.¹⁵⁵ Josef Hirschl, a specialist in syphilis at Krafft-Ebing's hospital in Vienna, confirmed these figures, listing only one priest among 200 paralytic patients for a period from 1894 to 1895.¹⁵⁶ French researches were especially keen on preserving the honor of the Catholic clergy: "Among the religious orders, general paralysis is completely unknown," wrote one French colleague. "It has never been observed."¹⁵⁷ In a 1913 article on nervous disorders, Alexander Pilcz contrasted the low percentage of paralytic priests (3.22%) among the total treated for mental illness with the same percentage from the population in general (20-30%). The "abnormal infrequency" of progressive paralysis among priests confirmed his favorable opinion of the overall health and morals of the clergy.¹⁵⁸ The fact that paralysis was unheard of among nuns was proof, he added, that they took their chastity seriously.

¹⁵⁴Hegar, *Der Geschlechtstrieb*, p. 13.

¹⁵⁵Pilcz, "Über Nerven- und Geisteskrankheiten bei katholischen Geistlichen und Nonnen," *Jahrbücher für Psychiatrie* 34 (1913), p. 367.

¹⁵⁶Josef Adolf Hirschl, "Die Aetiologie der progressiven Paralyse," *Jahrbücher für Psychiatrie* 14 (1896) 434-35. For similar results see Kundt, who reports no priests among 193 paralytic patients.

¹⁵⁷Caboureaux, *La paralysie générale chez les religieux* (Bordeaux: thèse, 1900), quoted in Kalman Pandey, "Die progressive Paralyse der katholischen Geistlichen" *Neurologischen Zentralblatt* (1908), p. 12. See also Bouchaud, "De la fréquence relative de la paralysie générale chez les laïques et chez les religieux," *Annales médico-psychologiques* (1891).

¹⁵⁸Pilcz, "Über Nerven- und Geisteskrankheiten bei katholischen Geistlichen und Nonnen," pp. 368, 370.

The chief physician of the mental asylum Lipómezo in Budapest, Dr. Kalman Pándy, disagreed with these findings. In a 1908 article on syphilitic paralysis among Catholic priests, Pándy asserted that earlier figures left many factors out of account. First, they ignored the fact that many priests entered private rather than public health care facilities. They did not show up, therefore, in general statistics. Second, since the symptoms of paralysis usually appeared after considerable delay, most of its victims were already being treated for *other* health conditions. This tended to further depress the figures. Finally, Pándy insisted, what was important was not the number of paralytic priests, but rather the differences in the aetiology of their illness. Whereas sexual contact could be determined to be the cause of the paralysis in only a few of the non-clerical cases, fully half of the clerical cases of paralysis indicated "sexual debauchery."¹⁵⁹ For Pándy the lesson was clear: not only was paralysis a disease no less common among Catholic clergy than anywhere else, it was more likely to result from an unclean life.¹⁶⁰

The main question for psychologists during this period, however, was not whether priests cheated on their vows, but what happened when they *kept* them. Was there a connection between celibacy and neurosis? In 1902, the Munich physician, psychiatrist, and occultist Schrenck-Notzing detailed ways in which abstinence could lead to impotent, perverse, and even pathological behavior. In one case, he examined a thirty-five year old man who had been unable to consummate his recent marriage. Detecting no signs of either homosexuality or masturbation in this otherwise robust character, Schrenck-Notzing attributed the man's plight to having been

¹⁵⁹Pándy, "Die progressive Paralyse der katholischen Geistlichen," p. 12.

¹⁶⁰Ibid., pp. 14-15.

sexually abstinent since youth. Prolonged celibacy, concluded Schrenck-Notzing, could result in lasting psychical impotence.¹⁶¹ In a related case, Schrenck-Notzing blamed the troubles of an unmarried, inactive middle-aged office clerk on sexual frustration. Having conquered the masturbatory tendencies of his youth, the patient had managed for years to combat his insistent sexual urges "with nicotine, alcohol, and religion." These palliatives, he complained, no longer sufficed. He was constantly interrupted during business hours by sudden, powerful sexual excitation. He complained of having untimely, embarrassing erections at his desk. Schrenck-Notzing suggested that it would be better for him to obtain a modicum of sexual gratification than to suffer the strain imposed by a strict bachelorhood.¹⁶²

Friedrich Siebert, a physician and friend of Schrenck-Notzing, termed celibacy a "sick idea," that had been introduced and promoted by Christianity.¹⁶³ Like Krafft-Ebing, Siebert was skeptical that abstinence from sex produced nervous side-effects upon those who were otherwise healthy (other than the usual dangers of masturbation and homosexuality). But he did object to the way in which religion, as he put it, "poisoned the purity of our sexual thoughts."¹⁶⁴ Why let a perfectly good organ of the body remain unused, he asked rhetorically. In his attack upon religious repressiveness, Siebert (who admitted being sexually aroused by the very thought of the united German nation) made no confessional distinctions:

¹⁶¹Albert Schrenck-Notzing, "Über sexuelle Abstinenz," *Kriminal-psychologische und psychopathologische Studien* (1902), pp. 174-78.

¹⁶²*Ibid.*, p. 177.

¹⁶³Friedrich Siebert, *Sexuelle Moral und sexuelle Hygiene* (Frankfurt: Alt, 1901), p. 53.

¹⁶⁴*Ibid.*, p. 32.

"A priest is a priest, whether he is Catholic, Protestant, or Jewish."¹⁶⁵ Others could be even more aggressive. Writing in 1908, Julian Marcuse characterized celibacy as a kind of "religious terrorism" over the psychological life of priests.¹⁶⁶

Perhaps the most measured and least vituperative turn-of-the-century diagnostician of celibacy was the distinguished psychiatrist Leopold Löwenfeld. In a series of publications from the late 1890's to the outbreak of the First World War--most notably his *Sexual Life and Nervous Complaints* which first appeared in 1899--Löwenfeld adopted a position similar to Freud's, namely, that sexuality is a powerful instinctual drive which demanded gratification. To thwart or even redirect this drive required a great deal of energy and ran the risk at least of "increased defilement" (masturbation) or of more serious emotional disturbances.¹⁶⁷ In his practice, Löwenfeld encountered priests who struggled with their vows and whose parish work suffered from the energies taken up--wasted, he would say--by the constant warding off of sexual temptation. Löwenfeld put the best possible interpretation on such cases. Priests became masturbators or seducers not because they were abnormal men, but because they were trying to attain an abnormal state, complete abstinence.

Löwenfeld expressed optimism that priests could accomplish this sublimation. After all, he reasoned, they enjoyed the advantages over the rest of the population which made celibacy possible to achieve. They began

¹⁶⁵Ibid., pp. 30, 42, 56.

¹⁶⁶Julian Marcuse, *Die sexuelle Frage und das Christentum*, p. 49.

¹⁶⁷Leopold Löwenfeld, *Sexualleben und Nervenleiden* (1899), 3rd ed. (Wiesbaden: J. F. Bergmann, 1903), pp. 35-36. See also *Über das eheliche Glück* (Wiesbaden: J. F. Bergmann, 1906), and *Über die sexuelle Konstitution und andere Sexualprobleme* (Wiesbaden: J. F. Bergmann, 1911).

practicing abstinence while they were still young seminarians, before puberty. They had limited contact with the outside world. They lived in a miniature society supportive of the celibate ideal. And they had the substitute satisfaction of their spiritual vocation. Löwenfeld did recommend marriage to at least one priest who could not handle the celibate state. But for most people, he claimed, the priesthood offered the best, not the worst possible test-case for the psychological consequences of celibacy. 168

Otto Schwab, the dissident priest, disagreed. "What do the *doctors* say to constant abstinence? They are agreed that it is possible to practice strict abstinence under the proper conditions."¹⁶⁹ But for Schwab, the priesthood was the *worst*, not the best possible environment for celibacy. Since the priest was exposed to so much temptation in the normal course of his duties, principally confession, there was little chance that he could forget about sex. Marriage, Schwab contended, was the only honorable solution for Catholic priests. "God allows every man, also the priest, to marry."¹⁷⁰ Marriage was infinitely preferable to the dangers which accompanied celibacy: seduction of parishioners, illicit affairs, masturbation or other perversions, or simple emotional exhaustion in the daily struggle to suppress one's sexual desires. It was the last of these--emotional exhaustion--which concerned many psychologists after 1900.

By the turn of the century, the medical profession had moved a long way from the ascetic ideal. Sex was sometimes even prescribed as a cure for various physical and nervous ailments. The emigré president of the

¹⁶⁸Ibid., pp. 34-35, 52.

¹⁶⁹Ibid., p. 38.

¹⁷⁰Ibid., pp. 46, 50.

San Francisco German Medical Society, Victor G. Vecki, was perhaps the most outspoken advocate of sexual therapy. Calling sexuality "the neglected stepchild of medical science" in 1910, he deplored the ignorance and prudishness which surrounded it.¹⁷¹ He especially ridiculed the notion that venereal disease was a vehicle of divine punishment. Vecki made the point, however, in a manner that was more liable to shock than to calm his patients. He told the story of an innocent young bride infected with syphilis by her husband on their wedding night. With a brutal relish (perhaps acquired during his stint with the Austrian military in Bosnia) Vecki lamented that "for years she will have to bare her buttocks to the surgeon's needle."¹⁷² For a public which was only learning how to talk about these subjects in an open, sensible fashion, such graphic imagery was hardly reassuring.

"[N]ature resents every infraction of her laws," Vecki elsewhere observed. "[N]ot excessive indulgence alone but also excessive *continence* can harm the body and the sexual power."¹⁷³ Vecki did not hesitate to prescribe sexual intercourse for his male patients with nervous complaints. Exercise, not rest, was the cure. "All bodily functions demand appropriate gymnastics, the sexual functions no less than any other."¹⁷⁴ When marriage seemed neither possible nor desirable, Vecki had no qualms about recommending prostitutes:

[M]any a convalescent patient will be compelled to have recourse to other connections than hymeneal in order to satisfy his sexual desire, if he

¹⁷¹Victor G. Vecki, *The Prevention of Sexual Diseases* (New York: The Critic & Guide, 1910), pp. 15, 47.

¹⁷²*Ibid.*, pp. 16-17, 19.

¹⁷³Vecki, *Sexual Impotence*, p. 188.

¹⁷⁴*Ibid.*, p. 188.

does not want to become impotent again or to be troubled again by morbid pollutions. He must satisfy this natural want regularly, and the act cannot be called immoral simply because it is accomplished out of wedlock."¹⁷⁵

In Vecki's opinion, true celibacy was exceedingly rare. First it led to masturbation and then to perversions which were even worse. A normal, healthy person would not submit to such an unnatural regimen. "A robust man with well-developed virility and powerful sexual instincts will never be in danger of making too sparing use of his procreative power," Vecki observed, "at least not voluntarily. Such is more likely to occur with people who are originally poorly provided with sexual strength and desires."¹⁷⁶ If a priest managed to remain celibate, Vecki concluded, he must be sexually inferior. Those who are chaste "are seldom endowed with marked virile power, and I believe that they are naturally possessed of a low degree of sexual power, because a duly gifted man neither will nor can be continent."¹⁷⁷

To insult the masculinity of a monk was an old anti-clerical ploy, now in a new medical form. The French physician François Lallemand, an expert on genital maladies during the first half of the nineteenth century, tried to turn the monastic ideal into a sign of weakness: "It is alway a bad sign for masculine potency when it is so easy to behave oneself for so long."¹⁷⁸ A German psychiatrist from the same era, Johannes Baptista Friedrich, pointed to the pronounced feminine traits of Christian mystics.¹⁷⁹ The psychologists of religion after 1900 picked up this familiar

¹⁷⁵Ibid., p. 272.

¹⁷⁶Ibid., p. 189.

¹⁷⁷Ibid., p. 190.

¹⁷⁸Quoted in Löwenfeld, *Sexualleben und Nervenleiden*, p. 34.

¹⁷⁹Johannes Baptista Friedrich, *Handbuch der allgemeinen Pathologie der psychischen Krankheiten* (Erlangen: Palm, 1839).

theme. In an article for the *Journal for Religious Psychology* in 1910, Hans Freimark claimed that the clergy of many different religions, both primitive and modern, tended to resemble women. Males designated for the priesthood did not possess a fully developed sexuality--a weakness which culminated in Catholic celibacy.¹⁸⁰ In turn-of-the-century psychological terms, abstinence was no longer a victory of spirit over the flesh; it was viewed as a sexual failure.

Christian doctors and moralists were quick to refute the suggestion that abstinence might not be good for one's health. Those who said so, they admonished, were encouraging loose morals and sensual decadence. They feared that modern medicine--particularly modern psychology--would legitimate sexual promiscuity. One Protestant admirer of Catholic institutions characterized modern medical sensualism as bondage to nature--*Natursklaverei*-- which could lead only to "weak indulgence and degeneracy."¹⁸¹ What was the world coming to if doctors and psychiatrists prescribed rather than prohibited sex?

Catholic writers, not surprisingly, offered the greatest resistance to a loosening of prohibitions. Despite calls that priests should be allowed to marry from Leute, Schwab, and other Catholic modernizers in the 1890's and the 1900's, celibacy as an official institution was never in any great danger. Dr. Carl Capellmann of Aachen, author of one of the most successful German Catholic health manuals of the late nineteenth century, not only preached the benefits of celibacy for priests: abstinence in

¹⁸⁰Hans Freimark, "Männerweiblichkeit und Priestertum," *Z. Religionspsych.* 4 (1910), pp. 36-38.

¹⁸¹F.W. Förster, *Sexualethik und Sexualpädagogik. Eine Auseinandersetzung mit den Modernen* (Kempton: J. Kösel, 1907), pp. 52, 20.

marriage was a good thing, too. For Capellmann, who ruled out the use of birth control devices and *coitus interruptus*, refraining from sex was the only acceptable means for preventing conception. Estimating that a woman's fertility is greatest immediately following menstruation--decreasing steadily thereafter--Capellmann recommended exactly the wrong rhythm. In a book on the subject, Capellmann offered a page-long list of maladies which would beset those who tried to cheat nature of its fruit by mechanical means.¹⁸²

For Seved Ribbing, a Catholic physician whose works were translated from Swedish and widely read in Germany in the 1890's, celibacy was still a moral, not a medical question. Ribbing refused to recognize conditions which were caused by abstinence--*Enthaltensstörungen*--as clinical ones. Citing the English works of William Acton, Lionel Beale, and others, Ribbing maintained that a person was more liable to be harmed by excessive or illicit sexual activity than by too little of it. The pleasure of sex, Ribbing declared, decreased with repetition. Like an addiction to drugs, it became ever less effective in inducing the desired state.¹⁸³ Ribbing recommended neither prostitutes nor "medical marriages" to those who suffer from the dangers and temptations of the single life. Self-control was the key to both happiness and health.¹⁸⁴

A professor of medicine in Berlin, Dr. Albert Eulenburg, similarly rejected the claim that celibacy could lead to neurosis. "I doubt that anyone

¹⁸²Carl Capellmann, *Facultative Sterilität*, pp. 10-12, 15.

¹⁸³Siebert's retort to this comparison: "Ribbing forgets that habituation to morphine is harmful, whereas I have never heard that said of coition." *Sexuelle Moral und sexuelle Hygiene*, p. 54.

¹⁸⁴Seved Ribbing, *Die sexuelle Hygiene und ihre ethischen Konsequenzen*, 2nd ed. trans from Swedish (Leipzig: Peter Hobbing, 1892), pp. 69-84 passim.

who otherwise leads a sensible life has become sick, especially of neurasthenia or sexual-neurasthenia, as a result of sexual abstinence alone."¹⁸⁵ In his opinion, it was irresponsible on the part of doctors to spread such unfounded rumors. They corresponded all too well with the increasingly popular notion that celibacy was unnatural and, therefore, unhealthy. A person who abstained from sex might have more erotic dreams than others, surmised Eulenburg, but this did not make him mentally ill.

There are plenty of individuals who are plagued neither by pollutions nor by "abstinence-sicknesses" despite their strictly celibate manner of life. They know how to protect themselves through hygienically regulated physical and spiritual behavior, and also to increase their resistance against sexual excitations.¹⁸⁶

There was nothing wrong, Eulenburg concluded, with a priest who fully mastered his sexual urges. A loss of sexual appetite--*Appetitlosigkeit*--was not nearly so bad as insatiable sexual hunger--*Heißhunger*.¹⁸⁷

In an article in 1913 for the *Vienna Clinical Weekly*, a health official from upper Franconia, Rudolf Hatschek, took offense at the implications of Freudian psychology for the Catholic church. If Freud was right that neurosis resulted from the unnatural deviation of sexual objects and aims, then one ought to expect certain groups of the population to be more susceptible to nervous conditions than others. Hatschek offered two counterexamples. First, Orthodox Polish Jews, who strictly prohibited contraception and encouraged early marriages (thereby circumventing the

¹⁸⁵Albert Eulenburg, *Sexuale Neuropathie; genitale Neurosen und Neuropsychosen der Männer und Frauen* (Leipzig: Vogel, 1895), p14.

¹⁸⁶Ibid., p. 15.

¹⁸⁷Ibid., pp. 95-96.

twin dangers of masturbation and celibacy) constituted the largest not the smallest proportional contingent of institutionalized psychoneurotics. For Hatschek, this meant that traditional Catholic morals were also psychologically functional. Second, Catholic priests and nuns, who should be particularly liable to neurotic complaints (if celibacy was harmful), were in fact *less* liable to turn up in mental wards.¹⁸⁸ Freudian theory foundered, Hatschek triumphantly declared, on the emotional health of the Catholic clergy.

Hatschek based his observations on the studies by Pilcz which showed that the Catholic orders suffered no more emotional complaints than other occupational groups. In a 1913 article on nervous disorders among the clergy, Pilcz vigorously disputed the charge that a celibate profession was necessarily a sick one. Drawing on more than three hundred case histories of priests and nuns from his private consulting practice, Pilcz concluded that they showed no particular disposition to neurosis or psychosis.¹⁸⁹ Pilcz took pains to note that the celibates' symptoms displayed no special religious or sexual coloring. Priests did not suffer from obsessive dirty thoughts, for example, during mass. Nuns did not exhibit any signs of frustration-hysteria. The fact the neither group seemed prone to neurasthenia, Pilcz concluded, suggested that masturbation among them was uncommon.¹⁹⁰ Contrary to the indictments handed down by Freudian analysis, abstinence affected neither the frequency nor the character of emotional disturbance.

¹⁸⁸Rudolf Hatschek, "Zur Praxis der Psychotherapie," *Wiener klinische Wochenschrift* 26 (1913), pp. 1015-1022.

¹⁸⁹Alexander Pilcz, "Über Nerven- und Geisteskrankheiten bei katholischen Geistlichen und Nonnen," pp. 368-69.

¹⁹⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 370-71.

Pilcz specifically attributed his patients' conditions to non-clerical factors. Many cases involved abuse of alcohol or tobacco--the problem therefore involved the rules on temperance, not chastity. Many problems stemmed from the period *before* entering orders. Others were constitutional or hereditary. The sexual complaints of novitiates, moreover, could not reflect on priesthood celibacy, since they had not yet taken their vows.¹⁹¹ In short, Pilcz rejected every possibility that celibacy could be the source of emotional difficulty: "I cannot think of a single case in my experience in which an individual who formerly was mentally sound developed a severe nervous condition only as a result of forced sexual abstinence."¹⁹²

In an energetic, counter-punching response, the psychoanalyst Eduard Hitschmann objected that Freud had been severely misunderstood. Masturbation did not *necessarily* result in neurasthenia, Hitschmann argued, only when it was *excessive*. Most of Pilcz's priests, he cynically observed, managed to lessen this danger by a judicious recourse to masturbation: "The clerical onanist (whom Pilcz is well acquainted with) makes yet another use of this practice: masturbation allows perverse inclinations to abreact; [if they were] satisfied in real life, they would bring complications."¹⁹³ Hitschmann wished that all the gratifications of priests were so self-contained. "Why do they not satisfy themselves through

¹⁹¹Ibid., pp. 372-73.

¹⁹²Ibid., p. 374.

¹⁹³E. Hitschmann, "Über Nerven- und Geisteskrankheiten bei katholischen Geistlichen und Nonnen," *Zentralblatt für Psychoanalyse und Psychotherapie* (1914), p. 270.

'harmless,' 'inconsequential' masturbation!?"¹⁹⁴ At least the courts, he sarcastically observed, would then be less crowded.

Hitschmann continued to hit back at the clerical profession. Actual psychoses appear relatively seldom among priests and nuns precisely because they constitute a self-selected group of impotent misfits. This was a familiar anti-clerical argument. "More often than not, one finds among those who chose the clerical profession sexual weaklings by nature, impotents, conscious or unconscious homosexuals, and above all those who were brought up from early on as ascetics."¹⁹⁵ The priesthood is filled with individuals who would be unable to handle the demands of the real world. Hence, the collective flight to a cloister spares them each an individual "flight into neurosis." "The cloister is a decision, a commitment. It kills doubts and rids life of its real sexual demands."¹⁹⁶ Hitschmann made no attempt to hide his contempt for religion's flight from reality and its strange sexual consequences: "how much of the sexual love of nuns gets sublimated as Christ-worship, and how many hot kisses fall on the pictures of Mary!"¹⁹⁷

Catholics like Hatschek, Pándy, and Pilcz were not alone in their rejection of the medical critique of abstinence. F. W. Förster, a Swiss Protestant, recommended a program of modern spiritual exercises specifically designed to bolster one's resistance to the temptations of the flesh. What the modern world needed, Förster argued, was not flabby self-indulgence, but a rigorous training of the will--*Willensgymnastik*--to master the sexual drive. When it comes to giving up physical pleasures,

¹⁹⁴Ibid., p. 270.

¹⁹⁵Ibid., P. 271.

¹⁹⁶Ibid., p. 271.

¹⁹⁷Ibid., p. 271.

Förster contended, "offense is the best defense"--in the form of fasting, prolonged silence, rising early, and so on.¹⁹⁸ If self-restraint were observed from childhood, the result would be a gentler, more self-controlled adult: "Every responsibility which religion imposes upon the erotic life has transformed itself into a new tenderness. Every renunciation which it demands of impetuous passion has become a new capacity for devoted love."¹⁹⁹ Förster opposed psychoanalysis for its supposed approval of promiscuity. He wanted to put sexuality back in the unconscious where it belonged, especially for women: "The goal of all our feminine education should be this spiritual form of virginity, in which the sexual world does not govern the inner life with its curiosity and demands, but rather... becomes deeply veiled and sinks back into the dark background of consciousness."²⁰⁰ What better testimony--from a hostile witness--to the connection between psychoanalysis and enlightenment.

By the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, advocates of priesthood celibacy were on the defensive. No longer did the debate revolve around abstinence as a positive virtue and a natural form of spiritual health. Instead, proponents of the institution felt compelled to demonstrate that at least it was *not* harmful. Whatever the validity of the asylum statistics, this was simply an argument that the defenders of traditional religious values could not win. The biggest reason is that celibacy was no longer being debated in purely moral or spiritual terms. What mattered more and more, to both critics and defenders of the priesthood alike, was whether celibacy could made sense in medical terms. Around 1900 in

¹⁹⁸Förster, *Sexualethik und Sexualpädagogik*, pp. 63-65.

¹⁹⁹Ibid., p. 29.

²⁰⁰Ibid., p. 28.

German-speaking lands, the debate over priesthood celibacy took on an entirely new complexion. Old animosities and old arguments gained a new impetus from the appeal to medicine and, in particular, to psychology. The ideal of abstinence could no longer be maintained by an appeal to divine authority or church tradition. Even its proponents made use of case studies and asylum statistics. The turn-of-the-century psychology of religion stripped the whole issue of its clerical garb and submitted celibacy to a thorough psychiatric examination. Whether it passed the test or not, sexual abstinence--along with confession, prophetic utterance, mystic "genius" and a host of other religious beliefs and practices--had become matters for psychological, not just spiritual, diagnosis.

PART THREE:

ACCOMMODATIONS

CHAPTER FIVE

Sickness or Sin? Medical *versus* Moral Psychiatry

The relationship between psychology and religion in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was an ambivalent one. On the one hand, psychology challenged religion in the one area where it still claimed authority, Schleiermacher's sense of the sublime, or what the French writer Romain Rolland referred to in a letter to Freud as the "oceanic feeling."¹ The diagnosis of religious genius at the turn of the century threatened to turn the immediacy and power of this feeling into a form of neurosis, insanity, or in its most aggressive form, sexual frustration. At very least, it tried to reduce what James had admiringly termed "the varieties of religious experience" to the level of any other emotional phenomenon. As a result of the new psychology, the emotional realm of religion--that oceanic feeling--was no longer a privileged experience, one which was exempt from scientific scrutiny.

On the other hand, many advocates of religious psychology proved to be remarkably adept at reconciling the new science and the old faith. Like James, they combined empirical science with a will to believe. Psychology possessed special qualities as a science of emotions, not of matter, which made this fusion (or in the case of the occultists, confusion) possible.

The same tug-of-war between aggression and accommodation could be seen on the clinical level as well. Throughout the course of the nineteenth century, psychiatric reformers sought to put doctors ahead of

¹Freud subsequently used the phrase as the starting point for the most systematic presentation of his views on culture and society. *Civilization and its Discontents*, SE 21, pp. 64-65.

clergy in the treatment of mental illness. These reforms--a resounding success by 1900--meant transforming the whole notion of psychiatry, switching from a "moral" to a "medical" view of mental illness. This chapter examines the struggle between doctors and clergy in German lands in the nineteenth century for control over mental health care, both in theory and in practice. Setting themselves squarely against the traditional "religious" conception of sickness as the result of sin, the reformers managed to prevail. Every gain by the new psychiatric profession, it would seem, was *Seelsorge's* loss.

The story then turns from conflict to compromise. Chapter Six examines the ways in which doctors and clergy alike sought to bridge the gap between psychiatry and *Seelsorge*. The two professions, many believed, did not need to compete against each other. They could benefit from each other's techniques. Ministers and priests needed to adopt a less admonitory, moralistic tone in administering *Seelsorge* to their parishioners. Psychiatrists, by the same token, had much to learn from the therapeutic tradition of pastoral care. They needed to understand and to support their patients' yearning for final answers, for higher values, and for God. The difference between mental and spiritual health was by no means clear to doctors and clergy early in the twentieth century. Often they remained interchangeable.

In short, turn-of-the-century psychiatry and *Seelsorge* combined forces. New forms of psychotherapy could be viewed as the culmination of pastoral counseling rather than its rejection. The hybrid strategies which appeared for "spiritual hygiene" or "psychiatric *Seelsorge*" suggest that psychiatry was at least as interested in *supporting* as in attacking religion. Despite the markedly anti-clerical nature of psychiatric reforms in the

nineteenth century, it is these attempts to find common ground which were the most characteristic and surprising feature of German religious psychology. Accommodation between psychiatrists and *Seelsorger* might be less sensational and therefore less conspicuous than aggression. But that did not mean it was any less typical.

"Men may say what they will, but apart from the total denial of God, there is no psychic disorder."² This observation by J. C. A. Heinroth, one of the giants of German psychiatry in the early nineteenth century, suggests the extent to which psychiatrists before the modern era put mental illness in moral terms. Heinroth espoused a version of "religious" or "moral" psychiatry which attributed mental illness, in effect, to sin. Sometimes there was a direct, physical connection between sinful behavior and mental impairment--alcoholism or the contraction of syphilitic paralysis, for example. Proponents of religious psychiatry, however, usually viewed the connection between sickness and sin as an indirect one. A person could suffer quite literally, according to Heinroth, from a guilty conscience. Insanity, he wrote, was "an effluence of personal guilt, " a natural consequence of evil thoughts or evil actions.³ The best medicine, Heinroth wrote, was a dose of clean living and pure faith. Christianity, as he put it, was "the principle of prophylaxis" against mental disorder.⁴ Religious

²Quoted in Emil Kraepelin, *One Hundred Years of Psychiatry* (1917), trans. Wade Baskin (New York: Citadel Press, 1962), p. 34.

³Ibid., p. 26. For Heinroth as a representative of a stern "religious" psychiatry, see E. Engelhorn, *Die Pflege der Irren sonst und jetzt*, Sammlung gemeinverständlicher Wissenschaftlicher Vorträge 1 (1885), p. 194.

⁴Johann Christian August Heinroth, *Lehrbuch der Störungen des Seelenlebens*, 2 vols. (Leipzig: C. H. F. Hartmann, 1818), vol. 2, p. 335.

belief was the natural way--God's way--of maintaining mental health. Unbelief was the best way to lose it.

Such views were perfectly common among German doctors and psychiatrists through the first decades of the nineteenth century. Karl Wilhelm Ideler, a younger contemporary of Heinroth, shared his conviction that mental illness resulted from sin. Insanity served as a natural check, Ideler believed, upon the moral failings of mankind. It was the task of the psychiatrist, he concluded, to make the patient aware of the error of his ways. A moral diagnosis implied a moral cure.⁵ The prominent Bonn psychiatrist, Christian Friedrich Nasse, pointed out that the clergy, not doctors, should handle most cases of insanity. They had far more experience, after all, in treating the moral aspects of mental illness.⁶

It was a *Vormärz* physician, Justinus Kerner, who declared young Friedericke Hauffe to be "the Seeress from Prevorst." Hauffe experienced periodic fits, bursts of prophetic inspiration, and even stigmata. If God, or at least some denizen of the crowded spirit world of the early nineteenth-century occult, was using her as an instrument, a mere doctor had no right to intervene. Kerner shared the contemporary assumption that most cases of insanity were beyond hope, while curable ones were a matter of spiritual possession. "It is reasonable to assume," he wrote, "that if a Messiah and worker of miracles or a real Magus entered one of our asylums, among a number of incurable lunatics he would discover some patients who are truly possessed and whom he could cure...."⁷ Kerner made it clear to his readers that his book *The Seeress of Prevorst* was not "a case history of an

⁵Karl Wilhelm Ideler, *Grundriß der Seelenheilkunde*, 2 vols. (Berlin: T. C. F. Ensin, 1835), vol. 1, p. 548.

⁶Kraepelin, *One Hundred Years of Psychiatry*, p. 26.

⁷Quoted in Kraepelin, *One Hundred Years of Psychiatry*, p. 53.

illness," but rather an account of "a disembodied life" which offered "many clues to an inner life of men and to the intervention of a spirit-world into ours."⁸

The very language of psychiatry encouraged such a spiritual approach. Early in the nineteenth century, German psychiatrists were reluctant to speak of the brain as an organ of the body. They preferred terms like *Geist*, which emphasizes the "higher", more abstract faculties of reason, intellect and understanding; and *Seele*, which, in addition to a range of meanings from "soul" to "spirit" (as in Holy Ghost or evil spirit), could denote emotional qualities of energy and character--one's "heart". It is no accident that Heinroth included in the title of his psychiatric textbook the phrase "disturbances of the soul."⁹ When a mental condition lay beyond the knowledge and experience of a *Seelsorger*, Heinrich wrote, it should be treated by a *Seelenarzt*--a physician of the spirit. The term *Seelsorger* was generally understood to mean a member of the clergy, though in Heinroth's day it could still be used to describe a psychiatrist as well. Members of the clergy, particularly the Jesuits, used the title *Seelenarzt*.¹⁰ In a similar attempt to acquire medical or scientific respectability, it was not uncommon for a minister or priest to refer to his work *geistliche Behandlung*--mental or spiritual therapy. In the era before psychiatric reform, it was difficult to distinguish doctors and clergy, psychiatry and *Seelsorge*, even by name.

Moral psychiatry, then, took its cue from religious instruction and reproof. There was something reassuring in this approach to mental

⁸Kerner, *Die Seherin von Prevorst*, p. 45.

⁹The English translation preserves the ambiguity of the title: *Textbook of Disturbances of Mental Life, or Disturbances of the Soul*, trans. J. Schmorak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1975).

¹⁰Grassmann, *Auszüge*, p. 25.

illness. It made it possible, after all, to isolate the source of otherwise mysterious emotional problems. Mental patients, so the reasoning went, brought their condition upon themselves. At a time when little was known about the actual causes and nature of insanity, blaming the victim could give a certain comfort and sense of mastery. What is more, if the patient was still accessible to reason and moral suasion, then ultimately the cure was also his or her responsibility--not the doctor's. According to the tradition of religious psychiatry, someone suffering from mental illness or emotional distress would need to identify the source of spiritual infection and reform his or her life accordingly. The psychiatrist was no more and no less than a *Seelsorger*, assisting the patient in the examination of conscience, the confession of sin, and subsequent penance.

It was only a small step from spiritual reproof to physical restraint. If a patient could not be cured, that did not mean that the psychiatrist had failed: the patient had. Persistence in the evil thoughts or behavior which drove a person to madness justified the use of force. Moral psychiatry made it difficult to draw the line between admonition on the one hand, and punishment on the other. Madness, in effect, was treated like a crime. As nineteenth-century reformers in the field of psychiatry never tired of pointing out, this led to the mistreatment and abuse of patients. Cold baths, strait-jackets, and manacles were the necessary consequence of a therapy which equated sickness with sin. Indeed, with the exception of the venerable *Juliusspital* in Würzburg, there were no asylums for the mentally ill separate from prisons in German lands until the nineteenth century. It made perfect sense to confine mental patients with criminals: both, after all, had done something wrong.

Abbeys into Asylums

During the course of the nineteenth century, medical reformers challenged moral psychiatry on every front. Objecting to the punitive treatment of insane patients, they campaigned for a more humane form of therapy. Operating on the conviction that hard science and a soft heart could go hand in hand, they pushed for greater emphasis on medical training and research. Not only did they dispute in theory the notion of religious psychiatry, but also they claimed actual administrative control of the institutions for mental health care. Combatting the connection between sickness and sin, doctors replaced clergy as heads of German insane asylums.

Their efforts peaked during the Wilhelmine era. From the 1880's onward, the question "sickness or sin?" became a rallying cry for both psychiatric reformers and their opponents. No single, decisive turning point in this public debate can be found. But sometime shortly after 1900, a significant, silent shift occurred. There remained pockets of resistance, but by 1914, the medical view of psychiatry had prevailed.

Given the nature of the religious tradition in psychiatry, it is not surprising that the nineteenth-century reformers waged their campaign in anti-clerical terms. "[A]s long as medicine remained completely in the hands of the priests," wrote Theodor Kirchhoff, director of the Schleswig provincial insane asylum after the turn of the century, "psychiatry also received its entire education from them. In this manner, it remained

closely aligned with the whole theory and practice of temple-medicine."¹¹ In his *History of Psychiatry* which first appeared in 1912, Kirchhoff noted angrily that the "moral" view of mental illness in the past had made it hard to tell the difference between therapy and punishment. "[T]he centuries-long connection between mental and penal institutions was not good for most patients. It contributed substantially to the fact that mental illness was viewed as a disgrace--*Schande*--rather than a misfortune--*Unglück*--and is still viewed so occasionally today."¹²

"Temple medicine" was Kirchhoff's polite name for what Josef Leute, that former cleric among the anti-clericals, did not scruple to call "medical quackery."¹³ Leute cited numerous instances in which *Seelsorge* approved by the church could hurt parishioners--granting permission, for example, for a sick person to fast during holidays, or for a woman not to consult a doctor at the birth of an illegitimate child. "We turn our backs in disgust," Leute declared, "from the brutality of such so-called morality."¹⁴ The turn-of-the-century accounts of German psychiatric reform were filled with anti-clerical jibes. In his *One Hundred Years of Psychiatry*, for example, Emil Kraepelin observed in 1917 that the old religious therapy consisted of little more than a sprinkling of holy water, a reproving sermon, or a sharp slap on the face.¹⁵

¹¹Theodor Kirchhoff, *Geschichte der Psychiatrie* (Leipzig: F. Deuticke, 1912), p. 7. See also Kirchhoff's tribute to the leading German reformers, *Deutsche Irrenärzte* (Berlin: J. Springer, 1921-24).

¹²Kirchhoff, *Geschichte der Psychiatrie*, p. 38.

¹³Leute, *Das Sexualproblem*, p. 62.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 65-66.

¹⁵Kraepelin, *One Hundred Years of Psychiatry*, pp. 54, 74. Kirchhoff, Kraepelin, and Heinrich and Hans Laehr (father and son) must be given pride of place as the chroniclers of nineteenth-century psychiatric reforms in Germany. See Heinrich Laehr, *Die Heil- und Pflegeanstalten für Psychisch-Kranke in Deutschland, der Schweiz und den benachbarten*

It was the use of force which provoked the most indignation. "[O]ur own work houses are full of epileptics," wrote Emil Rasmussen (one of the turn-of-the-century biographers of Jesus), "which alone would suffice to show how poorly things stand with modern criminal law. Prisons for the mentally ill! Just like in Morocco!"¹⁶ The sheer physical abuses of psychiatry in the past made Rasmussen and other reformers recoil in horror and disbelief. From his vantage point much later in the 1930's, René Fülöp-Miller looked back on the prison-like conditions of asylums in the nineteenth century and before: "Since the senseless, often raving behavior of the inmates was at that time mostly viewed not as sickness but as 'malice', the insane were subjected to the most cruel tortures and punishments."¹⁷

In 1885, the popular scientific writer E. Engelhorn took his readers on a tour through an imaginary asylum, one which incorporated all the advantages of modern psychiatry. Gone were the strait-jackets, beatings, and dousings with cold water, Engelhorn proudly observed. The patients were not subjected to physical restraint by the staff. The lone exception, a patient in a padded cell who needed to be force-fed, proved the rule: physical restraint was only used for the patient's own good. The other, less severely disturbed inmates were quietly engaged in work or some calm

deutschen Ländern (Berlin: Reimer, 1875); *Gedenktage der Psychiatrie aller Länder* (Berlin: Reimer, 1885); and Hans Laehr, *Die Anstalten für Geistesranke, Nervenranke, schwachsinnige, Epileptische, Trunksüchtige usw. in Deutschland, Österreich und der Schweiz*, 9th ed. completed and reedited by Georg Ilberg (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1937).

The reformers' belief in scientific and humanitarian progress is precisely what Michel Foucault seeks to debunk--unfairly, in my opinion--in *Madness and Civilization* (1967; New York: Random House, 1973).

¹⁶Rasmussen, *Jesus*, p. 63.

¹⁷René Fülöp-Miller, *Kulturgeschichte der Heilkunde* (Munich: F. Bruckmann, 1937), p. 313.

leisure activity. In the ideal sanatorium of 1885, there was plenty of therapeutic labor, and plenty of instructive recreation. For Engelhorn, the new asylums demonstrated what science and a humane approach to therapy could accomplish together.¹⁸

In order to effect their humane reforms, medical psychiatrists needed to gain control of insane asylums themselves. Up until the nineteenth century, doctors were subordinate to clergy in the administrative structure of asylums. Ministers and priest usually served as directors--a position which reflected the traditional priority of spiritual over medical values in psychiatry.¹⁹

All that was to change completely. In 1825, Maximilian Jacoby became the first physician to direct a German institution for mental health care, the Prussian state asylum at Siegburg. More medical appointments followed, and by mid-century clerical directorships were the exception rather than the rule. Many German asylums experimented with different combinations of *shared* authority. Stettin, for example, split the administrative responsibilities among a triumvirate of clerical, medical, and financial directors. And some small, private institutions sponsored by church charities like the Protestant Inner Mission retained at least nominal clerical control. But in most instances, doctors insisted upon and received the final authority to run their asylums as they saw fit.²⁰ In 1881,

¹⁸Engelhorn, *Die Pflege der Irren*, p. 195.

¹⁹Mönkemöller, "Psychiatrie und Seelsorge in der Frauenkorrektionsanstalt," *Z. Religionspsych.* 1 (1908), p. 148.

²⁰See the catalogue by Heinrich Laehr of German asylums, *Die Heil- und Pflegeanstalten für Psychisch-Kranke in Deutschland*. Matthias Sengelmann, a prominent Hamburg pastor and director of an asylum for mentally retarded children, noted in 1885 that 5 of 35 such asylums in German-speaking lands still had directors from the clergy. *Idiotophilus*:

Heinrich Laehr, the energetic chronicler of German psychiatric reform, insisted that in the asylum, doctors must run the show. "In the founding of insane asylums," he wrote, "the pioneering notion has finally taken hold, that the asylum constitutes its own state in miniature, with the doctor-specialist at its head."²¹

The replacement of moral by medical psychiatry could even be seen in architectural terms. In 1811, the provincial asylum at Marsberg purchased the buildings and grounds of an old Capuchin monastery. One year later, Württemberg established its prominent state asylum, Zwiefalten, in a former Benedictine cloister. In 1815, Eberbach, a small-town sanatorium a few miles up the Neckar River from Heidelberg, took over a former abbey. The list goes on and on throughout *Vormärz* and after: Hildesheim (1827), Andernach (1835), Pützchen (1866), Schüssenried (1875), Kosten (1893). All of them set up shop in former abbeys and cloisters. For Heinrich Laehr, the purchase of old monasteries and churches neatly symbolized the transition from the old treatment of mental illness to the new. Psychiatry was literally driving religion out of its quarters.²²

The new psychiatry also established itself professionally. University professorships in psychiatry were established in 1806 in Berlin, 1811 in

Systematisches Lehrbuch der Idioten-Heilpflege (1885), repr. ed., ed. Hans-Georg Schmidt (Hamburg: Friedrich Wittig, 1975), pp. 135-148.

²¹Laehr, "Der Geistliche in Irrenanstalten," *Allgemeine Zeitschrift für Psychiatrie* 37 (1881), pp. 234-235.

²²Heinrich Laehr, *Die Heil- und Pflgeanstalten für Psychisch-Kranke in Deutschland*. See also Friedrich Panse, *Das psychiatrische Krankenhauswesen* (Stuttgart: G. Thieme, 1964), p. 27. The first new construction of a German sanatorium came in 1820 in Schleswig, then Sachsenberg/Schwerin in 1830, Ilenau in 1842, and 1845 at Hornheim/Kiel. New building increased through the latter half of the nineteenth century, climaxing in the 1890's, and continuing steadily until the outbreak of World War I.

Leipzig, 1833 in Würzburg, 1849 in Erlangen, 1861 in Munich. New publications appeared, like the *Allgemeine Zeitschrift für Psychiatrie und psychisch-gerichtliche Medizin*. And professional organizations sprang up, like the German Association of *Irrenärzte* and the German Association of Psychiatry. By mid-century, the reformers began to make their presence felt in academic and professional circles.²³

What lay behind these changes was a completely different idea of what constituted mental illness. Starting in the second half of the nineteenth century, doctors and psychiatrists argued that insanity was a medical, not a moral, condition. The reformers found valuable allies among the clergy. In the early 1880's, the pastor and *Seelsorger* of the St. Johannis asylum for the insane in Copenhagen, for example, rejected the view that doctors must be jailors and that patients must be inmates. In a work titled *Our Mentally Ill*, N. C. Dalhoff suggested that insanity is a *mental* condition, not a spiritual one. He attributed nervous ailments to social and environmental pressures which affected everyone to a greater or lesser extent--hence "*our* mentally ill." By attributing insanity to "normal" causes, Dalhoff hoped to remove the stigma of psychiatric care. A mental breakdown could happen to anyone.²⁴

Julius Studer, a hospital pastor in Zurich in the 1880's, wholeheartedly supported psychiatric reform. Taking vigorous exception to the "religious" therapies of the past, Studer urged a more humane treatment of the mentally ill. In an article published by a prominent Protestant monthly in 1888, Studer captured the essence of the reform

²³Panse, *Das psychiatrische Krankenhauswesen*, pp. 106-112.

²⁴N. C. Dalhoff, *Unsere Gemüthskranken*, (Karlsruhe: H. Reuther, 1883) pp. 5-7, 12-13, 56, 125.

movement in a simple question and answer: "What is mental illness? An illness like any other. At the basis of insanity," Studer continued confidently, "there always and without exception lies a material ailment of the central nervous system, the brain, and the spinal cord."²⁵ Thus Pastor Studer gave his clear and unqualified approval of "materialist" (and mostly Protestant) science. He rejected outright the "cruel" system of "care" for the mentally ill which blamed their suffering on their own sin and shame. "It is an indictment against the church, that the much maligned so-called 'Materialism', supported by advances in the natural sciences, first pressed towards a truly Christian and humane treatment of the insane, that took away their chains and straitjackets, and that created for them a worthy existence."²⁶ Studer expressed his distaste for the "religious therapy" which combined forcible restraint and spiritual conversion. Emotional disturbances, he argued, called for no different treatment than any other medical condition. The conclusion for Studer was obvious: "An insane asylum is simply a hospital for the mentally ill." He even objected to the term lunatic asylum--*Irrenhaus*--because it put mental patients in a separate category by themselves. "As if a hospital for the insane was something completely different from a medical, surgical, or ophthalmological ward!"²⁷ Studer approved of the distinction which the psychiatric reformers made between criminality and illness. "A great deal of what we today label and punish as crime," he wrote, "will be seen [in the future] as organically determined and therefore pardonable. There are

²⁵Julius Studer, "Über die Beziehungen des religiösen Lebens zu den Geisteskrankheiten," *Protestantische Monatshefte* (1888), p. 855.

²⁶*Ibid.*, p. 909.

²⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 905-906.

many who sit in jails... who actually belong in insane asylums [because they are] not accountable for their actions."²⁸

One consequence of the reformers' efforts was an emphasis in the second half of the nineteenth century on the *physical* nature of mental illness. In order to distinguish them from the *Seelsorger* and the *Seelenärzte* of the past, many referred to themselves as *Nervenärzte*--specialists in nervous complaints. They also spoke more readily of the brain as an organ of the body. They tended to scoff at the idea of a disembodied spirit or soul. They tried to determine, instead, the physical causes for every mental event. The struggle against religious psychiatry thus created pressure for modern psychiatry to become an entirely *materialist* one.

This provoked a worried response from the religious community. A conference of German *Seelsorger* in 1888 objected to the reformers' attempt to turn psychiatry into a purely physical science. "An organic compulsion in ethical matters cannot be accepted and cannot be proved," they declared.²⁹ The new psychiatry, in critics' minds, was the epitome of soulless materialism.

Their complaint was not entirely without justification. The "physical" school of nineteenth-century psychiatry, of which Wilhelm Wundt became the central figure, adamantly refused to accept any *psychical* causes for mental phenomena. The reformers feared that this would be letting the old religious psychiatry return by the back door. But the consequence, as Emil Kraepelin, one of the most active reformers of the

²⁸Ibid., p. 880.

²⁹Quoted by August Römer, *Psychiatrie und Seelsorge: Ein Wegweiser zur Erkennung und Beseitigung der Nervenschäden unserer Zeit* (Berlin: Reuther u. Reichard, 1899), pp. 278-279.

late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, observed, was that it became difficult to establish a truly psychological psychology. The preoccupation with the somatic etiology of neuroses delayed the emergence of a dynamic psychology, in which *internal* events play a role along with *external* ones in the workings of the mind. It would be left to the next generation of psychiatrists to change this state of affairs, and to reintroduce a purely emotional causation for emotional events. Freud himself did not break away from the physical school until 1895. But in the meantime, much of the field abandoned by the reformers was left wide open for psychiatries of a less "scientific" kind.

The *Seelsorger* had been provoked by a resolution made earlier in 1888 by the Association of German *Irrenärzte*. At their annual meeting, they established the terms of the debate for the next twenty-five years. "The insane person," the Association resolved, "is a sick person who cannot be made accountable for his actions."³⁰ As a reviewer for the popular Protestant monthly *Die christliche Welt* put it, it was high time that people treated mental illness "not under the heading of the moral law, but under that of sickness."³¹

The most forceful articulations of this new medical view of mental illness paralleled the emergence of religious psychology in the first decade of the 1900's. "It would be completely false," declared Georg Ilberg in the fledgling *Journal for Religious Psychology* "to maintain that even the majority of mental illnesses are caused by culpable behavior, by sin."³² Ilberg, a physician, attacked moral psychiatry head-on under the familiar

³⁰Ibid., p. 278.

³¹Review article, "Die seelsorgerliche Behandlung der Geisteskranken," *Die christliche Welt* (1891), p. 515.

³²Georg Ilberg, "Krankheit oder Sünde," *Z. Religionspsych.* (1908), p. 143.

title, "Sickness or Sin?" It was both mistaken and cruel, Ilberg charged, to imply that those who became mentally ill must have done something to deserve it. He admitted that certain "bad" practices, like heavy drinking or promiscuity, increased one's chances of contracting certain diseases. But if anything, Ilberg argued, the causal connection between sickness and sin ran in the opposite direction taken by the religious-oriented psychiatry of the past. It was mental illness which often led people to engage in illicit or illegal behavior, not the other way around. In any event, every patient whether guilty or innocent had a right to medical care. Suffering should not be a moral issue, he concluded.³³

For Ilberg, the distinction between sickness and sin was not just a theoretical one. It had immediate practical consequences. He recommended, for example, a more liberal legal interpretation of §51 of the German penal code, the paragraph concerning mental incapacity and the insanity plea. For the sake of those suffering from mental illness, Ilberg argued, the law needed to be applied with greater consistency and force:

If the understanding, the mind, or the will of a person who breaks the ethical code is disturbed, then it is a matter of sickness not of sin. Not only the deed, but also the mental condition of the culprit must be taken into consideration. Responsibility only exists where there is complete mental stability at the time of the act.³⁴

In short, therapy should replace punishment as society's response to those who had lost the capacity to judge for themselves.³⁵

³³Ibid., pp. 140-141.

³⁴Ibid., p. 100.

³⁵Ibid., p. 100

Others agreed on the need for legal reforms. In 1913, another physician named Hans Lungwitz drew the connection between leniency in the courts and the medical view of mental illness:

Then along came psychiatry and taught us to recognize that in many cases where we thought we had a criminal before us we actually had a sick person who never belonged in prison, much less a penitentiary. [Psychiatry also taught us] that most crime and delinquency result from a psychopathic handicap and its various developmental forms. For that reason, one can no longer speak of a personal, expiable guilt on the part of such malefactors. The consequence of this realization, together with humanitarian principles, is that the penal institutions emptied in proportion as the mental institutions filled up.³⁶

Members of the clergy also came down on the side of sickness rather than sin. In 1906, a Protestant minister and professor of theology at Jena, Otto Baumgarten, ridiculed the notion that mental illness is a "punishment"--*Strafübel*--which the sinner brings down upon himself.³⁷ Similarly, in an article for the *Journal of Religious Psychology* in 1908, Arthur Muthmann, conceded that "[m]uch of what theology calls sin is really sickness..."³⁸ Muthmann, also a minister, considered it to be one of the major tasks of the new publication to spread the notion of medical psychiatry among the clergy. It was a naive *Seelsorge*, indeed, Muthman wrote, which could simply *tell* a person to get better. The whole point of modern psychiatry, Muthman argued, was that many of the patient's thoughts and behaviors were simply beyond his or her conscious control. A reproving or didactic therapy which aimed at the conscious, moral mind

³⁶Hans Lungwitz, introduction to *Beiträge zur forensischen Medizin* 17 [1915], p. 4.

³⁷Baumgarten, "Beiträge zu einer psychologischen Seelsorge," *Monatschrift für die kirchliche Praxis* 6 (1906), pp. 126-127.

³⁸Muthman, "Psychiatrisch-theologische Grenzfragen," *Z. Religionspsych.* 1 (1908), p. 135.

was bound to fail. What is more, it was liable to reinforce the patients' own unconscious recriminations. In Freudian terms, it tended to fortify the super-ego in its relentless criticism of the beleaguered ego. Traditional *Seelsorge*, Muthman concluded, actually made the patient worse. For this reason, it was a good idea to distinguish sickness clearly from sin. It was the job of psychiatrists, not *Seelsorger*, to go poking around in the unconscious.³⁹ "Now that we know that much of what the theologian calls 'sin' is sickness," Muthmann wrote, "this knowledge... challenges us to consider 'sin' and the 'realm of evil' as the objects of scientific research."⁴⁰ These words, written in 1908, would have been inconceivable only fifty years before. The burden of proof now lay with clergymen, not psychiatrists. As the psychiatrist Wilhelm Bergmann put it, "So long as it is not absolutely certain whether a sin has been committed or not, I would rather decide in favor of the patient. What painful injustice can one do to those who are sick! It is enough for me that an illness be confirmed in doubtful cases to determine that sin is not present."⁴¹

The Great Remedy

During these years in which medical psychiatry established itself as the norm, religious psychiatry proved to be surprisingly tenacious. In the

³⁹Laehr, pp. 74-75. Muthman was not entirely negative about the possibility of *Seelsorge* as a form of psychotherapy. He viewed religion as a pre-analytic form of abreaction. That is, the *Seelsorger* might engage an unconscious complex in such a way as to make his parishioner better. This success, however, was unintended, and could not be attributed to the spiritual content of *Seelsorge* at all.

⁴⁰Arthur Muthmann, "Psychiatrisch-theologische Grenzfragen, p. 135.

⁴¹Theodor Müncker, *Der psychische Zwang und seine Beziehungen zu Moral und Pastoral* (Düsseldorf: L. Schwann, 1922), p. 307.

1870's, for example, Pastor Friedrich von Bodelschwingh, director of an asylum for epileptics near Bielefeld, believed that it was more important to demonstrate the *saving* rather than *healing* power of God. Since Bethel was financed by the Inner Mission, the domestic Protestant charity, Bodelschwingh had the opportunity to put his beliefs into practice. Pastor Bodelschwingh wanted his patients to view their condition not only as an affliction, but also as a spiritual opportunity sent by God. In the words of his son and biographer, "he showed them their sickness not as their enemy, but as their benefactor, because in their sickness they recognized the real nature of their hearts which otherwise would have remained hidden."⁴² According to the elder Bodelschwingh, epilepsy or any other mental disorder was a symptom of human weakness and depravity. As his admiring son put it: "The sickness itself was the great remedy which God had prescribed for inner recovery."⁴³

After more than twenty years working with epileptics at Bethel, Pastor Bodelschwingh addressed the Association of *Irrenärzte* gathered in Frankfurt in 1893. This was the same body which five years previously had abandoned the notion of sin as the source of mental illness. In his remarks, Bodelschwingh made it clear that salvation must take priority over both physical and mental health. *Better to be sick and saved, he declared, than to remain healthy and yet live in ignorance of the Gospel.* As Bodelschwingh's son recalled:

Physical illness and physical health no longer could be distinguished; they had lost for him the great importance which they are usually assigned. Indeed he considered someone who was physically

⁴²Gustav Bodelschwingh, *Friedrich v. Bodelschwingh: Ein Lebensbild* (Bielefeld: Pfennigverein der Anstalt Bethel, 1922), pp. 178-179.

⁴³*Ibid.*, p. 215.

healthy as sick if his mind was set on the temporal things of this world. He considered [someone who was] physically sick as healthy the moment he gained access through belief to eternal hope. For that reason, he could praise with the most glowing conviction a poor imbecilic epileptic who hurried towards departure from this world with pious hope, compared with one who in full bodily strength stormed out of life without purpose and goal.⁴⁴

Medical psychiatry alone could do little in this struggle for true spiritual health. In fact, Bodelschwingh insisted, it was a distraction from the real task at hand. He clung to the religious psychiatry he had practiced at Bethel, which was now under attack.

In general it can be said that the less the doctor of the body uses his medical means upon mental disorders the better.... Medical science by itself lacks sufficient means not only to assess mental illnesses but also to cure them completely. It does not take into consideration sin and grace, prayer and belief, healing and salvation.⁴⁵

It is not surprising, then, that Pastor Bodelschwingh took charge of the medical staff at Bethel. "Our dear doctors do not have much to do," the son recalled his father saying. "The brothers and sisters take care of the main things."⁴⁶

Addressing the same audience in 1893, Georg Hafner, pastor in Eberfeld, echoed Bodelschwingh's sentiments. "Is it not... a greater blessing," he declared, for a patient "to learn to bear his illness than to be cured of it?"⁴⁷ These remarks are not as cruel as they sound when put into context. Hafner was referring in this instance to spirit possession and exorcism. He thought it was preferable for a patient to "bear an illness"

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 176.

⁴⁵Attributed to Bodelschwingh by Mönkemöller, "Psychiatrie und Seelsorge in der Frauen-Korrektionsanstalt," *Z. Religionspsych.* 1 (1908), p. 146.

⁴⁶Gustav Bodelschwingh, *Friedrich v. Bodelschwingh*, p. 214.

⁴⁷Georg Hafner, *Die Dämonischen des Neuen Testaments* (Frankfurt: Karl Brechert, 1894), pp. 32-33.

than to undergo such a questionable procedure which, in any event, was seldom employed or condoned by the Catholic Church. The alternative, however, usually was no cure at all. Hafner preached instead the virtues of long-suffering. Like many advocates of religious psychiatry, he did not really believe that insanity could be treated with any success. This was an illness which was in God's hands. For the patient to return to faith as a result of his or her condition was better than not to become sick at all.

At the forty-second convocation of the Inner Mission of the Kingdom of Saxony in 1908, *Seelsorger* and psychiatrists gathered in Dresden to discuss the issue of sickness and sin. A Protestant minister named Johannes Jaeger upheld the basic tenet of moral psychiatry, that sin is an important factor in causing mental illness. "Every defilement of spiritual purity," Jaeger wrote, "must necessarily reflect in a pathological fashion upon the bodily organism."⁴⁸ Much like the occultists, Jaeger took the materialist assumptions of nineteenth-century science and turned them on their head: every event in man's spiritual world, he contended, will have repercussions in his physical world. Mental illness is only the medical term, he concluded, for what religion has long called and will continue to call sin.

Jaeger was particularly worried about the ethical impact of modern psychiatry. He feared that the notion of mental *illness* rather than spiritual *punishment* introduced a disturbing relativism, one which threatened to obviate all moral judgments and values. Jaeger took alcoholism as a clear example of a moral state taking its mental toll: "when one goes so far as to declare that the consequences of drunkenness are merely a misfortune,

⁴⁸Jaeger, "Krankheit oder Sünde," *Z. Religionspsych.* 2 (1908), pp. 113-14, 117.

that is, actions for which one cannot determine personal accountability, then it is no longer clear where guilt can ever be found at all."⁴⁹ "Finding guilt" was, of course, a central component of moral psychiatry.

Jaeger's address to the Inner Mission was echoed five years later by an article in the *Journal of Religious Psychology* entitled "Pastoral Care for Paralytics." The author, Daniel Forck, insisted that there was a connection between sickness and sin--in this case, syphilitic paralysis. According to Forck, this disease offered "shocking proof of the destructive power of sin."⁵⁰ If patients avoided extra-marital sex, he reasoned, they would never have become sick in the first place, except in cases of inherited disease. At the same time, Forck tempered his indignation and urged the humane, sympathetic treatment of patients who became ill from their own misguided actions: "We should never forget that we are dealing with sick people." In the complex discussion of sickness and sin, it was possible to be part reformer and part traditionalist at the same time.

Some of the same ambivalence can be seen even in similar remarks by Georg Hafner to the Association of German *Irrenärzte* in 1893. On the one hand, he never doubted that "everything in the world which is called suffering would not be there if sin had not entered the world."⁵¹ On the other hand, however, he expressed "boundless sympathy" for victims of mental illness, and urged lenient treatment by the courts. "Human judgment as well as legal judgment must be withdrawn," he wrote. "The sick person ought not to be punished. The insane asylum must strive to get

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 122

⁵⁰Daniel Forck, "Die Seelsorge an den Paralytikern," *Z. Religionspsych.* 2 (1908), p. 416.

⁵¹Hafner, *Die Dämonischen*, p. 17.

rid of the last remnants which remind one of a prison."⁵² At least in this respect, Hafner managed to sound quite progressive.

This mixture of traditionalism and reform suggests that the old religious psychiatry would not die easily. During the Weimar era, a German physician Hans March called upon *Seelsorger* to abandon the moralistic style of pastoral counseling based upon seeking out and punishing sin--*Sünde suchen und Sünde strafen*.⁵³ Unless the *Seelsorger* adopted a more sympathetic approach, March warned, he could cause serious emotional damage, even with the best of intentions.⁵⁴ March at the same time persisted in characterizing cases of hereditary mental illness as "the finger of the father in heaven" pointing out the unhealthy crime.⁵⁵ Such statements make one wonder if the doctors, in winning the battle for control over the psychiatric profession, had lost at least part of the war over the difference between sickness and sin.

What made moral psychiatry so difficult to give up was the fear that people might take the axiom about knowing all and forgiving all much too literally. Publishing a book entitled *Psychiatry and Seelsorge* in 1899, August Römer, a physician in Stuttgart and one of the staunchest advocates of reform, was at the very center of the debate. "Psychiatric science," he wrote, "admittedly traces numerous imperfections, mistakes, and sins of men back to the influences of illness, thereby excusing them more or less."⁵⁶ It was just this sort of absolutism which Bodelschwingh,

⁵²Ibid., p. 28

⁵³Hans March, *Psychologische Seelsorge* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1930), p. 13.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 15.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 97.

⁵⁶August Römer, *Psychiatrie und Seelsorge*, p. 12.

Jaeger, Forck and others were determined to resist. By treating patients as mentally and not morally ill, the reformers seemed to be condoning and even encouraging illicit behavior. Calling the assumptions of religious psychiatry into question created a certain uneasiness, as if in substituting sickness for sin the doctor was letting the patient get away with something. Modern psychiatry, it was feared, would set the sinner scot-free.

In emotional, if not in scientific terms, moral psychiatry made a certain amount of sense. With its emphasis upon virtuous suffering rather than an actual cure, the older psychiatry seemed to keep control in the patient's hands. It also gave doctors and patients alike the satisfaction of knowing that *someone*--not some unknown agency--was to blame. It personified the source of the pain, offering the illusion of knowledge in the face of helplessness. Römer, a former director of Zwiefalten asylum, understood that "catching" someone was a strong, if misguided, motive behind moral psychiatry. "Whoever uses his psychiatric knowledge only in order to get someone else's number and to play, so to speak, the 'secret policeman' is missing the most important thing: the desire to help one's neighbor...."⁵⁷ One Weimar minister evidently preferred to play the secret policeman. "Is the psychopath not sinful?" he asked. "If everything is considered 'sick', then he passes through life without a stain. No, he is sinful."⁵⁸

By attacking the connection between sickness and sin, psychiatric reformers threatened to replace moral certainties with scientific question marks. Jaeger went to the heart of the matter with his concern about psychiatry removing all guilt. This was the most troubling aspect of

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 8.

⁵⁸P. Jacobi, "Was Sind Psychopathen," *Arzt und Seelsorger* 19 (1929), p. 43.

modern psychiatry for those who observed it during the last decades of the nineteenth century. Not only did the psychiatric profession fail to condemn sin, it actually seemed to encourage it. It was difficult for many people to distinguish the absence of blame from actively condoning a patient's behavior. The free play of thought in analysis was easily equated with moral decadence. Freud's frank discussion of sexuality would thus be mistaken as an approval of sexual license. By suspending judgment of the patient, modern psychiatry seemed to be introducing a moral laxity into the world. It threatened a loss rather than a gain of ethical mastery. The deep-seated distrust of modern psychology by clerics and laymen alike stems in part from this fear. It was difficult to accept the proposition in the late nineteenth century--as it still is difficult to accept it today--that psychotherapy should be based on a non-moral approach to a patient's mental productions.⁵⁹ In the closing words of his 1908 address to the Inner Mission, Pastor Jaeger expressed shock that a diagnosis of insanity might replace the confession of sin. "Then we would no longer need jails and penitentiaries," he exclaimed, "only nursing homes for fallen people."⁶⁰ For the reformers, of course, this was precisely the point.

Divisions of Labor

Despite these reservations about the moral consequences of modern psychiatry, the medical view of mental illness succeeded in replacing the religious one in the years around 1900. But this did not mean an end to the role of religion in mental health care--far from it. Beginning in the 1880's,

⁵⁹Georg Ilberg, "Krankheit oder Sünde," p. 141.

⁶⁰Jaeger, "Krankheit oder Sünde," p. 122.

psychiatrists, clergy, and members of the lay public developed strategies for preserving *Seelsorge* as a spiritual supplement to psychotherapy. For Catholics, this meant reemphasizing a strict division of labor between doctors and priests. For Protestants, it usually meant new combinations of psychiatry and *Seelsorge*. Asylum clergy and medical doctors, they thought, should work hand-in-hand.

"Patients ought not to believe that they have suddenly been transported to a heathen land," declared Wilhelm Griesinger, one of the leading proponents of psychiatric reform in the nineteenth century. "No sick person who feels a need and demand for it ought to miss having religious instruction."⁶¹ Along with all the other major figures of early German psychiatry--Heinrich, Jacobi, Nasse--Griesinger never doubted that a healthy spiritual life was an important part of the emotional and mental health of a patient. "The help of religion in the treatment of the mentally ill ought not to be underestimated," Griesinger observed. "But the use of this remedy," he hastened to add, "requires great caution."⁶² Griesinger took the presence of the *Seelsorger* in the asylum for granted. It was his wariness towards *Seelsorge*, a recognition of the need to place limits on clerical interaction with patients, which was new. As Christian Roller, director of the sanatorium at Illenau in the 1870's, put it: "The main thing is that the ministers do not treat the patients on their own, but that they do so hand-in-hand with the doctors."⁶³

⁶¹Quoted by Dalhoff, "Die Stellung des Geistlichen zu den Gemüthskranken," appendix to *Unsere Gemüthskranken*, p. 189.

⁶²Ibid., p. 193.

⁶³Ibid., p. 194.

Even the most anti-clerical among the reformers agreed that religion still had an important role to play. Theodor Kirchhoff, for example, saw no need to get rid of "temple medicine" entirely.

When we survey again the whole development of psychiatry, we recognize in its origins the close connection with religious motives, which for better or for worse influenced this development again and again. If it appears now that it is to the advantage of our new psychiatry to free itself from these influences, namely from those of [clerical] hierarchy, we should not go so far as to keep at a distance the blessing of religion from a science so closely bound with practical life.⁶⁴

Kirchhoff made it clear that a clergyman would have to accept the supervision of the medical staff. Only they could determine when, and what kind of pastoral care was appropriate. "We recognize with pleasure the value of practical *Seelsorge* among our patients in appropriate cases, for then it provides essential support for our medical treatment. In any event," Kirchhoff was quick to add, "the number of these cases is not so great, and only the doctor can decide if and when the task of the *Seelsorger* begins."⁶⁵ Not a single psychiatric reformer in Germany advocated the elimination of *Seelsorge* from the asylum. The discussion of this issue, beginning in the 1880's, involved *changes* in the relationship between religion and therapy, but not an *end* to it. The reformers made it clear that moral psychiatry must go, but that the asylum chaplain--the *Anstaltsgeistlicher*--was free to stay.

The new division of labor between psychiatry and *Seelsorge* was interpreted in a different fashion by German Protestants and Catholics. In the Catholic view, psychiatry simply extended the principles of modern

⁶⁴Kirchhoff, *Geschichte der Psychiatrie*, p. 47.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*

medicine from the body to the brain. This left the spiritual part of human nature, the soul, untouched. Progressive Catholic *Seelsorger* accepted psychiatry's claim that mental illness can have somatic causes. They further accepted the authority of the psychiatrist in treating neurological conditions. But the Catholic clergy reserved for themselves the exclusive right to deal with the *spiritual* condition of asylum patients. In principle, then, they tended to make an absolute distinction between psychiatry and *Seelsorge*. The doctor cared for the body--and with it, the nervous system--and the priest cared for the soul.

In practice, the situation was more complicated. Especially in rural areas where doctors were few and trained psychiatrists even fewer, priests were often the first to come into contact with mental illness. They were usually the first to make an initial diagnosis. Roller explained the typical pattern of referral. "The sick person expresses the desire to see the priest, the family fetches him, and he is the one who first recognizes, perhaps after repeated visits... that the case before him is not in his province."⁶⁶ Like it or not, the clergy was the first line of defense against mental illness.

It was essential, then, for priests to acquire at least a rudimentary knowledge of psychiatry. They needed to be able to spot the symptoms of mental illness, and to distinguish them from other forms of emotional distress. A priest should know how to recognize, for example, schizophrenia, or to tell the difference between a healthy conscience and an obsessive sense of guilt, between scruples and pathology. These were not distinctions which most *Seelsorger* in the nineteenth century, whether Catholic or Protestant, were prepared to make.

⁶⁶Quoted in Dalhoff, *Unsere Gemüthskranken*, pp. 202-203.

Priests had long relied upon special clerical handbooks to help them determine when a parishioner needed medical help. With the emergence of psychiatry in the nineteenth century, many of these handbooks added new chapters on mental disorders. Their content was simplistic and often quite wrong, but the central message was clear: when in doubt, the priest should have his parishioner consult a doctor. In cases of emotional disturbance, they suggested, the risk of making damaging mistakes was especially high.⁶⁷

This grudging acceptance of medical psychiatry did not diminish the priest's spiritual authority. Rather, it confirmed it. E. W. M. Olfers, for example, was a Catholic doctor who wrote a medical handbook in 1881. His *Pastoralmedizin* included chapters--by this time almost obligatory--on mental illness and psychotic behavior. Olfers's main concern was to help his readers tell the difference between mental conditions and spiritual ones. Hysterical convulsions, epilepsy and St. Vitus disease, for example, could easily be mistaken for demonic possession. It was important, Olfers emphasized, for the priest not to treat such cases on his own. If a parishioner showed signs of mental illness, the priest was out of his depth.⁶⁸

What is interesting about Olfers' handbook is the fact that he still accepts possession as a possible diagnosis, and exorcism by the priest as a possible cure. Jesus himself, after all, healed people by casting out devils. The New Testament was not just a series of quaint case histories of mental

⁶⁷For a catalogue of these handbooks, see Heinrich Adolf Köstlin, *Die Lehre von der Seelsorge* (Berlin: Reuther u. Reichard), p. 312.

⁶⁸E. W. M. Olfers, *Pastoralmedizin* (Freiburg: Herder, 1881), pp. 130-142. Olfers further warns that many symptoms of hysteria are self-induced. A hysterical woman will even put needles under her skin or in her genitals in order to create a convincing effect.

illness and psychosomatic cures. It would be "absurd," Olfers wrote, to read the Gospels as a kind of primitive medical account.⁶⁹ Olfers conceded that possession by demons was less common in the 1880's than in New Testament times. But in principle, it did still exist. It was up to the priest to know when his services and not those of a psychiatrist were called for. The best test for possession, suggested Olfers, was speaking in tongues. If a person used a language which he or she could not possibly have learned--keeping in mind the remarkable abilities of the "subconscious"--then this knowledge must have come from a supernatural source. A second criterion, Olfers continued, was prophetic power: could the patient make predictions about hidden or future things, predictions which not only came true, but which also could not possibly be explained in human terms? Finally, according to Olfers, mental illness develops gradually over time; divine inspiration or demonic possession comes in a blinding flash. One minute a person was normal; all of a sudden, he or she was possessed.⁷⁰ Without realizing it, Dr. Olfers had one foot firmly planted in the world of the occult.

Anselm Ricker, a professor of theology and rector at the University of Vienna, was the first to publish a handbook in German *solely* devoted to pastoral psychology. Appearing in 1888, the book was based upon lectures Ricker had delivered in the 1870's. Ricker advocated a method of *Seelsorge* which anticipated the later psychoanalytic procedure of free association. He encouraged priests to let their parishioners talk about indifferent, trivial matters. In so doing, he explained, they were bound to touch upon the most sensitive, important, guilt-ridden matters. The priest could tell when this

⁶⁹Ibid., pp. 128-129.

⁷⁰Ibid., pp. 142-143.

happened, Ricker advised, because they would become more engaged and lively.⁷¹

This insight stemmed in part from Ricker's rejection of a purely materialist psychology. Ricker accepted the basic premise of medical psychiatry, namely, that ailments with a physical cause were the province of the doctor. But like many Catholic thinkers, he insisted that many mental and emotional problems came from purely psychical sources. These, he claimed, were best treated by the *Seelsorger*, the doctor of the soul.⁷² By giving up some ground to medical psychiatry, Ricker hoped to reserve an even larger territory for the priest.

In theory, this division of labor opened up a realm of psychiatry which was closed to the so-called physical school. But in practice, it meant that Ricker approved of a clerical *Seelsorge* that was often little better than pseudo-pschiatric superstition. Ricker thought, for example, that insanity could be caused by parents who conceived children in the throes of *too much* physical pleasure.⁷³ In his medical handbook, Ricker recommended cold baths as a good way to reduce sexual agitation which, after all, could have such dangerous consequences for oneself and for one's children.⁷⁴ Like Olfers, Ricker also believed in demonic possession, though he too admitted that it was far less common than people thought and, in any event, was difficult to diagnose.⁷⁵

⁷¹Anselm Ricker, *Pastoral-Psychiatrie zum Gebrauche für Seelsorger* (1888), 3rd ed. (Vienna: Heinrich Kirsch, 1894), pp. 150-151.

⁷²*Ibid.*, pp. 18-20.

⁷³*Ibid.*, p. 41.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, p. 143.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 75-76.

The real problem with Ricker's handbook, however, was that he, like many theologians and clergy, tended to approach *Seelsorge* as a kind of voluntaristic will-cure. The first step was to identify a person's wrongdoing, and then to convince him or her not to repeat it. Ricker took his parishioners' sense of guilt seriously; it was a spiritual and psychological, not a physical event. But he drew the conclusion--a naive one, from a psychiatric point of view--that there must be some guilty thought or action causing it.⁷⁶ Ricker and other priests who hoped to reach some *modus vivendi* with modern psychiatry failed to notice that the sense of guilt could be separated from actual sin. As Freud would later show, the sense of guilt was so effective, so harsh, and so relentless precisely because it was inaccessible to the conscious, moral mind. It resisted any attempt at reality-testing, thus making will-power alone insufficient as a practical therapy.

Wilhelm Bergmann, owner and director of a cold-water spa in Cleve early in the twentieth century, offers another example of another Catholic pursuing a naive, voluntaristic psychology. Bergmann wanted to institute reforms in his sanatorium's treatment of the mentally ill. He recognized that some of his clients' behavior, though outwardly religious, was inwardly neurotic or obsessive. He had patients, for example, who could not rid themselves of sexual fantasies while they were in the confession booth, or who imagined swallowing parts of Christ's body (Bergmann declined to say which ones) during communion, or who felt compelled to interrupt mass on a regular basis by swearing aloud or dropping the host.⁷⁷

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 69.

⁷⁷Wilhelm Bergmann, *Die Seelenleiden der Nervösen* (Freiburg: Herder, 1920), pp. 182, 192-196.

Even priests, Bergmann asserted, were not immune to nervous tics--such as getting stuck on a particular word while saying mass, or wanting to say an entire service over again just to be on the safe side.⁷⁸ Bergmann interpreted these behaviors not as spiritual problems *per se*, but as symptoms of some kind of hidden stress or aberration. He also admitted that the appropriate therapy was not mere admonition and moralizing.⁷⁹ Sensing that these conditions were somehow connected with sexuality and repression, Bergmann instructed the *Seelsorger* at his Catholic *Kurort* not to come down so hard on the two commandments concerning adultery and coveting your neighbor's wife.⁸⁰ Bergmann could go along at least this far with the new psychiatric sensitivity.

But Bergmann's conversion to modern psychiatry was only skin deep. Whereas psychoanalytic techniques emphasized the importance of talking, Bergmann made it possible for his patients to talk less, not more about their symptoms. He criticized clerical obtrusiveness. But his response was to institute more perfunctory confessions at his sanatorium. The *Seelsorger*, in effect, was to offer absolution without hearing all the messy details. In comparison to the real progress of modern psychiatry in getting patients to voice their unconscious concerns, this was a retreat from his parishioners' neuroses. It was naive to think that *Seelsorge* could be replaced by a therapy of will--or a therapy of silence.

⁷⁸Ibid., pp. 200-201.

⁷⁹Ibid., pp. 205, 217.

⁸⁰Ibid., pp. 188, 191.

Christus consolator

Protestants tended to interpret the division of labor between psychiatry and *Seelsorge* in a significantly different manner. Where Catholics tried to maintain an absolute distinction between the two, thus making *Seelsorge* indispensable, Protestants tended to blur the lines between them. Ministers often viewed their relationship to psychiatrists as collaborators or partners in psychotherapy. They more actively adapted Protestant *Seelsorge* to the techniques of modern psychiatry. Protestant physicians, as well, tended to view their medical calling in spiritual terms. As a result, most combinations of psychiatry and *Seelsorge* after the turn of the century came out of a Protestant context.

Like their Catholic counterparts, Protestant ministers in the final decades of the nineteenth century accepted a new division of labor in the asylum, one which circumscribed and specialized their spiritual role. The clergyman in Engelhorn's ideal asylum in 1885 knew his place. It is significant that Engelhorn still took for granted the presence of an *Anstaltsgeistliche*. But this imaginary minister understood that he was there to support, not supplant, the efforts of the medical staff. Engelhorn's depiction suggests how the spiritual *tone* of the asylum had changed. The minister gave a daily sermon to the patients, but he avoided talking about fire and brimstone. Although he spoke with each patient on a regular, individual basis, the minister's *Seelsorge* was always guided by the advice of the physician. The most important thing about asylum *Seelsorge*, Engelhorn observed, was not to push religion too hard:

Where a real religious impulse is lacking, it is better to do too little than to cause damage by too great eagerness. In earlier centuries the clerical profession considered the mentally ill its own domain. We see now

it has received its appropriate place in the treatment of lunatics, insofar as it is in a position to support medicine most successfully.⁸¹

Just a few years later, pastor Studer cautioned other ministers that when it came to counseling the mentally ill, patience, calmness, and a kind of confessional modesty were in order. An asylum was not the place for preaching, shaming, and threatening with damnation. Previous generations of *Seelsorger*, Studer implied, had done a great disservice by confusing therapy with admonition. "The idea that through a course of religious instruction, improvement and conversion, insanity could be healed directly was a testimony to the complete ignorance of the nature and course of such illnesses."⁸² What the insane really need, Studer insisted, is a peaceful, supportive atmosphere. The strictures and reproaches of the old *Anstaltsgeistliche* must be replaced by a more reserved, relaxed demeanor. "Everything depends at first on not confronting the mania of the patient directly, not even going along with, but on acting as if it was not even there." Studer recognized that psychotherapy is not a matter of re-education or of breaking the will: "The mental disturbance does not, after all, consist of mistaken ideas, which can be set aside by rectification, or healed by lecturing against sin, by catechising and moralizing."⁸³ But in typical Protestant fashion, he did not find any contradiction between modern psychiatry and *Seelsorge* which was practiced in an unobtrusive fashion: "True Christianity and humane treatment," he concluded, "are not two opposing concepts, but complementary ones."⁸⁴

⁸¹Engelhorn, *Die Pflege der Irren*, p. 23.

⁸²Studer, "Über die Beziehungen des religiösen Lebens zu den Geisteskrankheiten," p. 907.

⁸³Ibid., p. 908

⁸⁴Ibid., p. 910.

In the 1890's, a number of Protestant doctors sought to establish the precise limits of pastoral care for the mentally ill. In an overview of Protestant *Seelsorge* published in 1895, a church musician, Heinrich Adolf Köstlin, discussed the role of asylum clergy under the headings "self-restriction" and "self-moderation."⁸⁵ The doctors did most of the actual medical therapy, Köstlin wrote. The *Seelsorger's* only concern was with the spiritual *effects* of mental illness. He must follow the doctors' orders for the number, length, and nature of his pastoral visits. "When the doctor, who is responsible for the care of the patient and is aware of his present condition, demands it," Köstlin advised, *Seelsorge* "will be restrained. It will never force itself upon the patient against the express wishes of the doctor...."⁸⁶ The "tactless remonstrations" and "quackery" of asylum clergy in the past, Köstlin observed, had caused far more harm than good.⁸⁷ Their model should be *Christus consolator*, not Christ the healer.⁸⁸

Comfort, not conversion or even therapy, was the role that medical psychiatry assigned to asylum chaplains. "The first task of the doctor," wrote the Stuttgart physician August Römer, "is to fully assess the influence of the body on the mental life. The *Seelsorger* by contrast only needs to care for the 'soul' of those placed in his care."⁸⁹ This did not mean that an *Anstaltsgeistliche* could dispense with psychiatric training. It was necessary for the *Seelsorger* not only to be able to recognize a serious condition when he saw one, but also to incorporate psychiatric techniques

⁸⁵Köstlin, *Die Lehre von der Seelsorge*, p. 314.

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 331.

⁸⁷Ibid., pp. 317, 385.

⁸⁸Ibid., pp. 333.

⁸⁹Römer, *Psychiatrie und Seelsorge*, p. 1. It is the word "only" which distinguished Römer from his Catholic colleagues at the same time.

⁸⁹Römer, *Psychiatrie und Seelsorge*, p. 1. It is the word "only" which distinguished Römer from his Catholic colleagues at the same time.

in his own work with patients. This is important, wrote one of Römer's reviewers in the popular Protestant magazine *Die christliche Welt*, "so that he can approach such people in the right fashion... so that he will not make unreasonable demands on them, so that he can support them in a way in which they have a right to be supported."⁹⁰ The cries of the psychiatric reformers were not falling on deaf ears.

In contrast to Catholic thinking on the subject, Römer also did not mean that *Anstaltsgeistliche* should hold themselves apart from the medical staff of the asylum. Römer wanted chaplains to be specially trained for ministering to the mentally ill. Moreover, he recommended that they should be briefed right along with the doctors upon the entry of each new patient, and should be permitted to take part in staff reviews of each case. Despite this integration of the chaplain into the staff of the insane asylum, Römer told his (presumably Protestant) readers in no uncertain terms that a physician, not a clergyman, must be at the helm.

It goes without saying that the supervision belongs to the doctor, and the *Seelsorger* must in a certain sense subordinate himself to the doctor. This subordination is all the more urgent and imperative since a misguided spiritual care can cause great harm to the patient.⁹¹

Otto Baumgarten, a Protestant theologian first at Jena and then at the nearby university of Tübingen, agreed with Römer's conclusions. In an 1891 article for the *Evangelisch-soziale Zeitfragen* called "The *Seelsorger* for our Day," Baumgarten had nothing to say about the psychiatric role of the pastorate. He spoke of the clergy solely in terms of its relation to social and

⁹⁰W. Herolds, review article, *Die Christliche Welt* 6 (1892), p. 515.

⁹¹August Römer, *Psychiatrie und Seelsorge*, p. 331.

political issues.⁹² But by 1906, as a result of all the attention religious psychology had received, Baumgarten's focus had shifted. He published an article on "psychological *Seelsorge*" in the *Monatsschrift für die kirchliche Praxis* which reflected the reformers' by now almost conventional wisdom for pastoral care. He recognized mental illness as a curable condition, one in which the roles of doctor and minister must be carefully defined. He urged the *Seelsorger* not to lecture patients so much, but rather to remain quiet, to listen, to let their presence and not their words become a source of comfort to the patient.⁹³ As he later put it in a volume entitled *Protestantische Seelsorge*, ministers should on no account treat patients as a captive audience--*gefunden Beute*. The *Seelsorger* should adopt, rather, a tone of humane sympathy, fitted to the character of the patient and the circumstances of each case. It was better, in any event, to say too little than too much. "Only after natural means have been exhausted..." wrote Baumgarten, "does the Christian perspective come to the fore."⁹⁴

The difficulty, of course, was knowing where to draw the line. In his 1906 article, Baumgarten summarized Römer's conclusions on the subject, and adopted them as his own:

1) Mental illness is a cerebral disorder. Its cure is a matter for the doctor, not the *Seelsorger*.

2) Offering the consolation of grace is not to be viewed as a means of curing the illness. It should be practiced during the illness as a duty in preserving the community of Christ.

⁹²Otto Baumgarten, "Der Seelsorger unsrer Tage," *Evangelisch-soziale Zeitfragen*, 1 (1891), pp. 9ff.

⁹³Otto Baumgarten, "Beiträge zu einer psychologischen Seelsorge," pp. 132-135.

⁹⁴Otto Baumgarten, *Protestantische Seelsorge* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1931), pp. 238-240.

3) The question of the origin and cause of mental illness... does not concern the practical *Seelsorger*, since his behavior must be fully independent of its solution.

4) In the case of deep religious shocks, abnormal depressions, sudden defects of will and trust, religious consolation cannot help, even if it is greatly desired. Only medical treatment can help. The greatest service of the *Seelsorger* is immediate referral to a doctor.

5) The religious forms of insanity, special symptoms of melancholic obsessions--sins against the Holy Ghost, belief that one is the Savior, and so on--should least of all be treated by *Seelsorge*....

6) The *Seelsorger* should not be high-handed with his influence. It is the doctor who determines the extent of *Seelsorger's* influence, since even the soul must submit to physical forces in its expression and receptivity.⁹⁵

Baumgarten's list is testimony to the new professional modesty which modern psychiatry imposed upon *Seelsorge*. It also testifies to the Protestant clergy's willingness to accept a substantial diminution of their traditional role. The role of *Seelsorge* in the asylum was increasingly viewed as an auxiliary one. Heinrich Laehr, for example, thought that the most important function which chaplains performed was daily individual contact with the patients. Since he was not the one giving orders and in charge of their cures, they could interact with him in a more open, personal fashion. In other words, the chaplain was valuable not because of his *Seelsorge*, but precisely because of his *non-spiritual*, humanizing effect.⁹⁶

Like Engelhorn, Studer, Römer, and the others, Laehr cautioned asylum clergy against too much *Seelsorge*. They were there to promote a peaceful, harmonious atmosphere in the asylum, not to get the patients stirred up by troubling them with spiritual questions. "[T]he *Anstaltsgeistliche* must be a person who furthers the calm and serenity of the institution. He should not pursue one-sided goals, and he should not

⁹⁵Baumgarten, "Beiträge zu einer psychologischen Seelsorger," pp. 134-135.

⁹⁶Heinrich Laehr, "Der Geistliche in Irrenanstalten," pp. 236-237.

force religious convictions or religious ideas [upon the patients] or change them."⁹⁷ Tact was important. Especially in the case of the mentally ill, obtrusiveness--*Aufdringlichkeit*--was to be avoided at all costs. According to Laehr, when it came to spiritual matters, the chaplain of a mental asylum should be seen and not heard.⁹⁸

Taken one step further, this reasoning could lead to a virtual withering away of the chaplain's role. Regular worship services for patients in a Protestant asylum were by 1900 virtually a thing of the past. By the end of the nineteenth century, the chapel building itself had given way to the multi-purpose common room, used for social gatherings of all kinds. Laehr envisioned that in the future, the *Anstaltsgeistliche* would run the educational programs and leisure activities of the sanatorium.⁹⁹

By the time Johannes Bresler wrote a guide to the administration of public insane asylums in 1910, the spiritual function of asylum clergy had become an afterthought. The book is filled with very practical advice on everything from how to design an institutional kitchen, to the chain of command from director down to janitor. But there was no separate section on the role of the chaplain. The *Seelsorger* is only mentioned in connection with those patients who are about to die--the hopeless cases.¹⁰⁰ Otherwise, the office appears only under the headings of "Entertainment" and

⁹⁷Ibid., p. 240.

⁹⁸Mönkemöller was especially worried about the effects of such obtrusiveness on patients who were women. Citing their tendency to hysteria, religious delusions, and a sexualized piety, he concluded that "the female sex is more susceptible to the influence of religion than the male." "Psychiatrie und Seelsorge in der Frauen-Korrektionsanstalt," pp. 156-158, 149.

⁹⁹Heinrich Laehr, "Der Geistliche in Irrenanstalten," pp. 237-238.

¹⁰⁰Johannes Bresler, *Ausgewählte Kapitel der Verwaltung öffentlicher Irrenanstalten* (Halle: Marhold, 1910), p. 15.

"Amusement."¹⁰¹ Bresler could write off the entire nineteenth-century debate over the relationship between psychiatry and *Seelsorge* with a laconic note and a brief question mark: "*Seelsorge*. Arrangement of services; are special *Anstaltsgeistlichen* needed?"¹⁰² By the time of the First World War, many had decided that if in-house *Seelsorger* were needed, it was as much for the diversion of the patients as for their spiritual well-being--much like Dr. Krokowski in Thomas Mann's *Magic Mountain*.

¹⁰¹Ibid., pp. 69f.

¹⁰²Ibid., p. 18.

CHAPTER SIX

Spiritual Hygiene: Combining Psychiatry and *Seelsorge*

The issue of sickness and sin within German asylums in the decades around 1900 was far more complicated than many reformers or their traditionalist opponents liked to think. It was not merely a battle of science against superstition. Nor was it a matter of replacing prisons with mental wards, promoting doctors rather than priests to run them, or putting restrictions on asylum chaplains. "Religious" and "scientific" opinions tended to mix much more freely after the turn of the century than much of the debate over modern psychiatry might suggest. For all their condemnation of materialist science, clergy recognized the need to adopt psychiatric methods in counseling their parishioners. And despite the reformers' campaign for more humane treatment of mental illness, they continued to prescribe "moral" therapies for their patients. Psychiatry and *Seelsorge*, as it turns out, were not so far apart after all.

Since its subject was the invisible twists and turns of human emotion, psychiatry was not a branch of medicine like any other. Even the *Nervenarzt* could not see a feeling or weigh belief in god. There were many doctors for whom it made perfect sense, when they entered the mind, to leave materialism at the door. Psychiatry was the one branch of medicine which still had a soul.

At the same time, there were members of the clergy, especially Protestant ones, who saw positive benefits in the new psychotherapies. Modern psychiatry did not just mean a division of labor within the asylum which relegated the clergy to a passive, auxiliary role. It meant that

Seelsorge had now become scientific. It seemed to confirm what religion had taught all along about the spiritual nature of man. When psychiatry entered the final domain of religion--the mind, the will, conscience, guilt, the emotions--all sorts of surprising turn-of-the-century hybrids of psychiatry and *Seelsorge* emerged.

In contrast to the preceding chapter on the *conflicts* between religious and modern psychiatry, this chapter will examine some of the *combinations* of the two. As various schemes for "spiritual hygiene" and "psychiatric *Seelsorge*" suggest, accommodation--not aggression--was the dominant theme after the turn of the century. Two of these compounds, in particular, deserve closer examination. The first, that of the Swiss psychiatrist Carl Gustav Jung, restored religious experience to a central place in the natural, healthy life of the mind. The second, that of the Zurich minister Oskar Pfister, put the discoveries and techniques of modern psychiatry at the disposal of an enhanced spirituality. From both sides, then, medical and pastoral, there were attempts to knit together psychiatry and *Seelsorge*. In the end, these attempts--like the *Journal for Religious Psychology* by 1914--came unraveled. But in the early years of this century, the woolly-minded optimism of Pfister, Jung, and others was more characteristic than the austere, unyielding skepticism of Freud. Religion, they thought, was no illusion; it was part of the psychiatry of the future.

"[T]he true religion and a pure way of life will reduce the danger of going mad, insofar as they ennoble the human spirit, fix it on higher things, and provide consolation during misfortune."¹ These words by the

¹Krafft-Ebing, *Lehrbuch der Psychiatrie* (1879-1880), quoted in Bresler, *Religionshygiene* (Halle: Marhold, 1907), p. 15.

Austrian psychiatrist Krafft-Ebing in his *Lehrbuch der Psychiatrie* echoed the sentiments of many psychiatrists and clergymen in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. "Christianity," the Protestant theologian Adolf Harnack similarly announced, "is medicinal religion."² For all the anti-clericalism which surrounded the emergence of modern psychiatry, most German psychiatrists continued to put a high value on the therapeutic benefits of religious belief. J. L. A. Koch, director of the large and prestigious Württemberg insane asylum Zwiefalten, attributed psychoprophylactic powers to spiritual faith. "I am convinced," he wrote in 1891, "that the one who is most resistant [to mental illness], is the one whose defense comes from a living, religious relationship to God."³

Formulations of this nature became much more common after the turn of the century. In 1907, the medical psychiatrist Johannes Bresler published a book to which he gave the suggestive title *Religious Hygiene*. In it, Bresler sought to reassure his audience that modern psychiatry was not trying to replace religion as a secular form of *Seelsorge*. Instead, he argued, it proved the age-old validity of pastoral counseling by demonstrating its efficacy in preserving mental health. Religion, Bresler suggested, is a natural defense-mechanism against the wear and tear of modern life. Many aspects of religion might not make much sense. Nor

²Harnack, "Medizinisches aus der ältesten Kirchengeschichte," *Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur* 8 (1892), p. 96.

³Julius Ludwig August Koch, *Die psychopathische Minderwertigkeiten* (Ravensburg: O. Maier, 1891), quoted in Bresler, *Religionshygiene*, p. 16. Koch recognized the physical etiology of many mental conditions and advised the modern *Seelsorger* accordingly: "Often in the case of a man descended from a healthy family and previously a sound Christian but now bothered by spiritual troubles, . . . it is often best to ask first after the state of his digestion." Quoted in Bresler, *Religionshygiene*, p. 17.

were they in good taste. But sometimes, Bresler observed, a good dose of faith was just what the doctor ordered. Religion, as he put it, was like a scab: it looked ugly, but it helped to heal the wound.⁴

These were by no means peculiarly German sentiments. In 1910, the medical superintendent of Bethlem Hospital in England put forward the power of prayer as a simple, sensible, universal mode of mental hygiene:

As an alienist, and as one whose whole life has been concerned with the sufferings of the human mind, the writer believes that of all the hygienic measures to counteract disturbed sleep, depression of spirits, and all the miserable sequelae of a distrait mind, he would undoubtedly give the first place to the simple *habit* of prayer.... Such a habit does more to clean the spirit and strengthen the soul to overcome mere incidental emotionalism than any other therapeutic agent known to him.⁵

Statements such as these should be clearly distinguished from reactionary attempts to return to the moral psychiatry of the past. With an undiminished ardor for both science and progress, they look *forward* to the scientific *Seelsorge* of the future. Religion, that is, has important lessons to learn from psychiatric reform.

The discussion of spiritual hygiene was partly obscured by confessional battles over *which* church promoted the greater spiritual health. Otto Baumgarten made his position clear by giving his work the title *Protestantische Seelsorge*. On the other hand, August Huber wrote in 1908, while he was a seminarian at Münster, that false religion--presumably Protestantism, not just atheism--could have deleterious effects on the mind. "Only religion--and we must quickly add, only the *right*

⁴Ibid., p. 45.

⁵Theodore B. Hyslop, "Faith and Mental Instability," in Geoffrey Rhodes, ed., *Medicine and the Church* (London: K. Paul, 1910), pp. 111-112.

religion--is in a position to harness and tame the passions of mankind...."⁶ Psychiatry seldom turned its weapons against religious *Seelsorge* as a whole: it usually chose more specific targets.

It was easy for psychiatric reformers to ridicule the notion that sickness was a punishment which the sinner brought upon himself. But it was far more difficult for them and for the public at large to relinquish the notion that suffering builds character. The moral approach to mental illness managed to survive not just in competition with modern psychiatry, but as *part* of it. Gustav Vorbrodt, a prominent figure in the new field of religious psychology, observed in 1908 that the sense of guilt cultivated by religion must be counted among man's "natural" psychological capacities.⁷ Nothing was more beneficial than a sturdy faith for keeping a sound mind. Similarly, the physician Albert Moll praised religion as an essential part of a cure, especially in those cases where, medically speaking, there could be little hope:

As one of the most effective psychotherapeutic agents, I must finally mention religion. I do not mean such religion that leads to superstitious practices, which may indeed be psychotherapeutically effective, but through neglect of the proper somatic therapy can cause damage. What I have in mind far more is that religion which helps the patient to bear the most difficult situations with composure as a result of his devotion. There will be many cases of incurable diseases, some stable, some progressive, in which the doctor is no longer in a position to heal the patient. In these cases, religious belief will be the patient's best medicine. When a sick person says to the doctor that God must love him very much to inflict so much pain on

⁶August Huber, *Die Hemnisse der Willensfreiheit* (Münster: Westfälische Vereinsdruckerei, 1908), p. 154.

⁷G. Vorbrodt, "Naturwissenschaft und Theologi in puncto: Schuld und Zwang" *Z. Religionspsych.* (1908) p. 76. See also *Psychologie des Glaubens* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1895), *Beiträge zur religiösen Psychologie* (Leipzig: A. Deichert, 1904), and *Zur theologischen Religionspsychologie* (Leipzig: A. Deichert, 1913).

him, then the doctor... must consider that he could never provide the patient with such comfort from some other source.⁸

In contrast to previous attempts to prevent psychiatric reforms, religion itself was increasingly praised after the turn of the century as a "psychotherapeutic agent." The "old school of Christian character-building," as Baumgarten called it, was given new life by the psychology of religion.⁹ The generation of German psychiatrists after the turn of the century was interested in the positive benefits of piety. They were eager to find a correlation between sanity and a sound spiritual life. Wilhelm Bergmann praised the therapeutic successes of the church, "the unsurpassed teacher of character, whose effects in the discipline of the will can only be characterized as exemplary."¹⁰ "True religion also leads to psychic health," Bergmann continued. "It elevates all the demands of hygiene to the demands of morality.... Hygiene and morality are only two different sides of the same eternal, divine law."¹¹

What is evident in the discussion of psychiatry and *Seelsorge* after 1900 is a new psychological sophistication. Arthur Muthmann, for example, characterized *Seelsorge* in the 1908 *Journal of Religious Psychology* as a therapy of abreaction. During the course of his conversation with a parishioner, a clergyman could hit upon a complex, bring it to consciousness, and thereby resolve it. This made pastoral counseling an effective, if unsystematic, therapy of the unconscious even before the discovery of psychoanalysis. In sensitive *Seelsorge*, he hastened

⁸Moll, *Der Hypnotismus*, quoted in Bresler, *Religionshygiene*, pp. 20-21.

⁹Baumgarten, *Protestantische Seelsorge*, pp. 234ff.

¹⁰Wilhelm Bergmann, *Selbstbefreiung aus nervösen Leiden* (Berlin: Herdersche Verlagshandlung, 1911), p. 230.

¹¹*Ibid.*, pp. 233-234.

to add, could also do great harm. The minister's admonitions could easily reinforce the parishioner's super-ego in its relentless attacks upon the ego. *Seelsorge* needed psychiatry in order to enhance its therapeutic effects and to avoid such unintended emotional damage.¹²

There was also the growing recognition that the influence must also work in the opposite direction, that is, from *Seelsorge* to psychiatry. This was especially true for writers later in the 1920's and 1930's, though often (as in the case of both Pfister and Jung) their basic ideas can be traced back to the pre-war period. Every psychiatrist, suggested the physician Hans March in 1930, must become in some sense a *Seelsorger*. No longer able to limit his practice to the physical welfare of the patient, he must expand his practice to include the patient's spiritual state as well. "The fact that the doctor must more and more become a *Seelsorger* is simply grounded in the science of medicine, enriched by the discoveries of depth-psychology and psychopathology."¹³ The doctor must gain new insights and new responsibilities. With the advent of modern psychiatry and its demonstration of the reality of the immaterial soul, the practice of medicine could no longer be purely medicinal. It must be fully spiritual as well.

Such a spiritual psychiatry, March admitted, did not need to be openly religious. The important thing was the nature of the relationship between doctor and patient. The frankly secular and anti-religious psychiatrist, March explained, would lose the confidence and trust of the patient. He would be unable to make use of the healing potential of their relationship, the combination of admiration and trust which constituted, in

¹²Arthur Muthmann, "Psychiatrische-theologische Grenzfragen," pp. 74-75.

¹³Hans March, *Psychologische Seelsorge*, p. 4.

Freudian terms, the (positive) transference. What made psychiatrists, like other doctors, so effective, March argued, is the fact that they appeared objective and at the same time supportive. March went further to suggest that an avowedly Christian doctor could be more "objective" than a spiritually indifferent or hostile one.¹⁴ The patient's faith, after all, was a reality which the doctor could not ignore. In a Christian land, March concluded, Christianity was the best protection against a mental breakdown.

Serious doctors are realizing more and more these days that true belief, one which plumbs the depths of one's personality, can be the most effective prophylaxis against mental illness. [It can be] therapy in the highest sense. As a result, in the interest of their patients they seek to establish greater contact than in previous decades with religious *Seelsorge*.¹⁵

Viewing religion as "the most effective prophylaxis against mental illness," in short, was an old moralistic prejudice with a new psychiatric twist. *Seelsorge* now had the blessing of modern science.

The Healing Fiction

One of those serious doctors after the turn of the century was the Swiss psychiatrist Carl Gustav Jung. Shortly after his break with Freud, Jung developed a new form of psychotherapy in which the spirituality of the patient played a central role. One of the main legacies of the turn-of-the-century psychology of religion was this merger--or at least the desire to merge--psychiatry and *Seelsorge*.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 4-6.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 16.

The mixture of of medical, pastoral, and occultist elements which have been the subject of previous chapters were all part of Jung's heritage. Born in 1875, Jung was the son of a Protestant village parson and sometime *Anstaltsgeistlicher* of the Friedmatt asylum in Basel. On his father's side, he was the grandson of a prominent physician. On his mother's side, he was descended from a visionary parish preacher, and a grandmother who reportedly possessed the ability of "second sight."¹⁶ It made perfect sense, then, for Jung to attend medical school, to specialize in psychiatry, and, finally, to make occult experiences his area of research. In his autobiography, Jung recalled the very moment at which he had decided upon psychiatry as a career. As a medical student at Basel in 1899, he had just finished reading Krafft-Ebing's textbook on psychiatry:

All of a sudden my heart began to pound. I had to stand up and take a deep breath. I felt the greatest excitement, for it had become clear to me in a lightning-flash of illumination that I could have no other goal than psychiatry. Here alone could both currents of my interest flow together, and with united force dig their own channel. Here was the empirical field, which I had sought everywhere and never found, common to both biological and to spiritual facts. Here finally was the place where the collision between Nature and Spirit actually occurred.¹⁷

Jung, like others, was struck by the fact that psychology was a science which did not necessarily deny the soul. The place to look for this "collision between Nature and Spirit," however, was not in the physical school of academic psychiatry. Jung got his start, instead, by following in the footsteps of the occultists. While at medical school, he plunged into the works of Kerner, Zöllner, Du Prel, members of the Society for Psychical

¹⁶Details from Jung's life have been taken from Gerhard Wehr, *Jung: A Biography*, trans. David M. Weeks (Boston: Shambhala, 1988).

¹⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 115-116.

Research, and others. Jung was fascinated by the unknown psychic or spiritual forces which they described. Here, he thought, was the real testing ground for a new psychiatry:

However strange and questionable they seemed to me, the observations of the spiritists were the first accounts I had seen of objective psychic phenomena.... I was puzzled, on the one hand, by the certainty with which they could claim that such things as ghosts and table-turning were impossible and therefore fraudulent, and on the other hand, by their resistance [to these things], which seemed to have an uneasy quality.... Why, after all, can there be no ghosts? How can we be sure that something is "impossible"? ...I found such possibilities extremely interesting and attractive to me. They added another dimension to my life. The world gained in depth and background.¹⁸

As we have seen, Jung's interest in the occult went further than dabbling. He completed his doctor's thesis, *On the Psychology and Pathology of So-Called Occult Phenomena*, after attending séances by his cousin Helene Preiswerk.¹⁹ What most intrigued Jung was her unconscious ability to take the most fragmentary, disparate material and to give it an order and a meaning. For Jung, as for others of his time, a dynamic theory of the mind made perfect sense after watching a medium perform. Jung not only "caught" his cousin's unconscious at work, he also used psychology to "catch" criminals in their response times to certain word associations. In 1906, Jung initiated contact with Freud by sending him a copy of his *Studies in Word Association*. The correspondence between the two men soon burgeoned, and remained voluminous until the break between them in 1912/1913.

From the very beginning, there was a difference in the two men's attitudes towards the unconscious, a difference which showed up especially

¹⁸Ibid., p. 99. Quoted in Wehr, *Jung*, p. 63.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 70-75.

on issues of occultism and religion. In a letter of November 2, 1907, Jung mentioned to Freud that he had been made an honorary fellow of the American Society for Psychical Research, asking for Freud's opinion of this kind of research. "...I have devoted myself a little more to apparitions recently," Jung wrote. "Your discoveries prove to be most brilliant here as well. What do you think about this field?"²⁰

Freud's response has not survived, but the issue came up again during a visit Jung paid to Freud in 1909. The two men began discussing whether occult phenomena were "real" or not. At that moment, as Jung recounts in his autobiography, something strange happened:

It was as if my diaphragm were made of iron and were becoming red-hot--a glowing vault. And at that moment there was such a loud crack from the bookcase, which stood right next to us, that we both started up in alarm. We feared the bookcase was going to topple over on us. I said to Freud: "That is an example of a so-called phenomenon of catalytic exteriorization."

"Come now," he exclaimed. "That is complete nonsense."

"No," I replied. "You are mistaken, Herr Professor. And to prove that I am right, I now predict that in a moment another loud crack will occur!"--And sure enough, no sooner had I said the words than the same sound came from the bookcase.

To this day I do not know what made me so sure of this. But I knew beyond all doubt that the cracking would come again. Freud only stared at me in a shocked manner. I have no idea what he thought, or what he saw! In any event, this event awakened his mistrust against me, and I had the feeling that I had hurt him somehow. I never again spoke with him about it.²¹

Freud himself could offer no other explanation than his own impressionableness. But once Jung, his designated successor in the psychoanalytic movement, had returned to Zurich, Freud wrote him

²⁰Freud/Jung, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Wm. McGuire and Wolfgang Sauerländer, abr. ed. (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1984), p. 45.

²¹Jung, *Erinnerungen, Träume, Gedanken*, pp. 159-160.

sternly that a scientist had no business indulging in other-worldly explanations. "I put on the horned-rim glasses of the father again and warn the dear son to keep a cool head." It is preferable, Freud insisted, "not to understand something than to sacrifice so much for the sake of understanding."²²

Jung had his own ideas about who was compromising intellectual integrity. He complained that Freud put everything that had to do with the soul--including all philosophy and religion--under the heading of superstition. In so doing, Jung claimed, Freud put his own authority beyond question. "Freud, who always emphasized his impiety," he wrote in his autobiography, "had laid down his own dogma. In place of the jealous God he had lost, he had shoved a different peremptory idea, namely that of sexuality."²³

Certainly the disagreement over the role of sexuality was the major reason for split between Jung and Freud. But the issue of religion also pointed to a source of fundamental disagreement between the two. What was at stake, after all, was nothing less than what counted as a psychological reality. For Freud, religion, myth, and superstition were all illusions which needed to be overcome or replaced by the firm guiding hand of reason and reality. For Jung, on the other hand, these "illusions" were basic constituents of the human psyche. In order to achieve psychic health, they needed to be recognized and given their place. Belief could never be replaced by "working through." The result of these assumptions was a very different kind of therapy. For Jung, religion was not part of the problem,

²²Freud/Jung, *Briefwechsel*, p. 105.

²³Jung, *Erinnerungen, Träume, Gedanken* (Freiburg: Walter, 1985), pp. 155-156.

but part of the cure. As he put it in lecture before the Society for Psychical Research in July, 1919, "Spiritualism as a collective phenomenon thus pursues the same goals as medical psychology, and in so doing produces... the same basic ideas and images--styling themselves 'teachings of the spirits'--which are characteristic of the nature of the collective unconscious."²⁴ The way was open to combining psychiatry and *Seelsorge*.

What made this possible is that Jung adopted an entirely different attitude than Freud towards the unconscious. Freud explored it warily, often disturbed by what he found. The unconscious made unrealistic, insatiable demands in its drives for satisfaction. It also rendered harsh judgments upon the self, judgments from which the hapless ego could be no appeal. In short, Freud recognized the unconscious as a very unwilling ally and a dangerous adversary in the search for happiness. If the twisted paths to sensual gratification could be straightened out; if the unfair, unrelenting criticism from the unconscious could be muted; if some of its brutal energy could be redirected into civility and love--then psychotherapy could hope for no more.

Jung, however, was much more sanguine in his approach. For him, the unconscious was a valuable part of the self which had been neglected, lost, or repressed. This hidden self needed to be regained in order for a person to achieve psychic wholeness. For Jung, the unconscious was a source of warnings to be heeded, wishes to be fulfilled, and values to be cherished. The unconscious did not need to be harnessed--Freud himself preferred the image of a horse and rider--but accepted and embraced. As a

²⁴Jung, "The Psychological Foundations of Belief in Spirits," *Psychology and Western Religion*, trans R. F. C. Hull (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 124.

result, Jungian therapy sought to discover and reaffirm the products of the unconscious.

This affirmation applied, above all, to religion. Religion, which for Jung encompassed the entire realm of symbol, myth, and unconscious meaning, satisfied the divided psyche's hunger for wholeness. According to Jung, religious belief served as a practical form of psychotherapy. It might not be true in an objective, transcendental sense, admitted Jung. But insofar as people had a psychological need to give their lives meaning, it was true in a psychological sense. This insistence upon religious experience as psychological "fact," of course, had been an important component of the psychology of religion from the very beginning. By contrast, Jung declared at a conference of Alsatian ministers in 1932, Freudian analysis "is psychology without a soul, appropriate only for those who believe they have no spiritual aspirations or needs.... [It is] too scientific and matter-of-fact. [It gives] too little scope to the fictive or the imaginative. In a word, it does not provide enough meaning. *Only the meaningful can liberate.*"²⁵ Like William James and others, Jung made the leap from religion as an *observable* part of human experience, to religion as an irreducible, natural, and therefore *good* part of human experience.

Jung rejected, of course, Freud's notion that religion was an illusion which could be given up in favor of a more realistic approach to one's self and the world. "Religion can only be replaced by religion," he wrote to Freud in a letter of February 1910. "Wise men are ethical only out of pride

²⁵Jung, "Über die Beziehung der Psychotherapie zur Seelsorge" (Zürich: Rascher, 1932), *Gesammelte Werke* 11, p. 358.

in their reason. Others have need of the true, eternal myth."²⁶ Jung felt that psychotherapy should meet this need. Jungian analysis, as a consequence, offered an unabashed fitting of solutions to problems: *because* a patient felt a sense of spiritual loss, then the therapeutic remedy *must* consist of a spiritual gain. Jung did not mind adopting the language of religion as an illusion as long as it was understood that illusions could be psychologically "true." "Meaning," he told the Alsatian clergy in an address titled "The Connection between Psychotherapy and *Seelsorge*...

...is something mental or spiritual. Call it a fiction if you like. Nevertheless this fiction enables us to influence the course of the disease far more effectively than we could with chemical preparations.... Fictions, illusions, opinions are perhaps the most intangible and unreal things we can think of; yet they are the most effective of all in the psychic and even the psychophysical realm.²⁷

This was, of course, a complete reversal of Freud's logic about dealing with the conflicting demands of reality and the unconscious. "Freud has unfortunately overlooked the fact that man has never yet been able single-handed to hold his own against the powers of darkness--that is, of the unconscious. Man has always stood in need of the spiritual help which his particular religion held out to him."²⁸ In Jung's view, it was the therapist's job to provide this spiritual help.

He is now confronted with the necessity of conveying to his patient the healing fiction, the meaning that quickens--for it is this that the sick person longs for, over and above everything that reason and science can give him.

²⁶Freud/Jung, *Briefwechsel*, p. 136.

²⁷Jung, "Psychotherapists or the Clergy" *Psychology and Western Religion*, p. 198.

²⁸*Ibid.*, p. 212.

He is looking for something that will take possession of him and give meaning and form to the confusion of his neurotic soul.²⁹

The problem was that the typical psychotherapist was ill-prepared to respond to this aspect of a patient's condition. The *Seelsorger*, on the other hand, had long been accustomed to treating the patient as a person in need of spiritual succor. Not only were ministers and priests in the front line in diagnosing mental illness, but also they *belonged* there. Many people, especially older ones, Jung concluded, would be better off turning to a pastor or priest for help than to an analyst.

Among all my patients in the second half of life--that is to say, over thirty-five--there has not been one whose problem in the last resort was not that of finding a religious outlook on life. It is safe to say that every one of them fell ill because he had lost what the living religions of every age have given to their followers, and none of them has been really healed who did not regain his religious outlook. This of course has nothing whatever to do with a particular creed or membership of a church.³⁰

Jung had never thought much of mere church-going, but he did make therapeutic distinctions among the different confessions. He particularly admired Catholicism for the way in which its sacraments and rituals seemed to offer protection against the stresses of modern life. Based on his own practice, Jung was convinced that Catholics were less susceptible to neurosis than Protestants or Jews. In a talk before the London Guild of Pastoral Psychology in the late 1930's, Jung speculated on the reasons for Catholicism's therapeutic powers. He attributed them, in part, to the reassuring qualities of the Mass, "a mystery that reaches down into the history of the human mind."³¹ Because the Mass is an expression

²⁹Ibid., p. 199.

³⁰Ibid., p. 202.

³¹Jung, "The Symbolic Life" (1939), p. 270.

of "a fundamental psychological condition," it reassures and relieves the communicant far more deeply than any rationally conceived therapy. "We are not far enough advanced psychologically to understand the truth, the extraordinary truth, of ritual and dogma. Therefore," Jung concluded, "such dogmas should never be submitted to any kind of criticism."³²

Another aspect of Catholicism which Jung particularly admired was auricular confession. The confessor, like the psychoanalyst, encouraged his parishioner to produce unconscious material which was likely to be of a disturbing, guilt-ridden nature. Unlike the analyst, however, the priest could offer the assurance of forgiveness. This gave him a distinct therapeutic advantage over the secular analyst or, for that matter, the Protestant *Seelsorger*. "In view of the means of grace at his disposal, the priest's intervention cannot be regarded as exceeding his competence, seeing that he is also empowered to quiet the storm which he has provoked."³³

[T]he Catholic Church has at her disposal ways and means which have served since olden times to gather the lower, instinctual forces of the psyche into symbols and in this way integrate them into the hierarchy of the spirit. The Protestant minister lacks these means, and consequently often stands perplexed before certain facts of human nature which no amount of admonition, or insight, or goodwill, or heroic self-castigation can subdue. In Protestantism good and evil are flatly and irreconcilably opposed to one another. There is no visible forgiveness; the human being is left alone with his sin. And God, as we know, only forgives the sins we have conquered ourselves.³⁴

Protestantism, Jung observed, does not have the symbolic capacity to deal with people's unconscious anxiety and guilt. Instead it must rely upon

³²Ibid., p. 271.

³³Jung, "Psychoanalysis and the Cure of Souls," *Psychology and Western Religion*, p. 219.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 221.

moral instruction and admonition--a form of *Seelsorge* which brings with it unhealthy repression:

For the Protestant minister the problem is not so simple. Apart from common prayer and Holy Communion, he has no ritual ceremonies at his disposal, no spiritual exercises, rosaries, pilgrimages, etc., with their expressive symbolism. He is therefore compelled to take his stand on moral ground, which puts the instinctual forces coming up from the unconscious in danger of a new repression. Any sacral action, in whatever form, works like a vessel for receiving the contents of the unconscious. Puritan simplification has deprived Protestantism of just this means of acting on the unconscious....³⁵

In his address on pastoral psychology to the London guild, Jung told a number of stories about patients whom he had rerouted--or tried to reroute--from analysis *back* to religion. In striking contrast to Freud's concern about religious illusions, Jung expressed unmistakable pride in returning strayed sheep to the religious fold.

So, you see, if I treat a real Christian, a real Catholic, I always keep him down to the dogma, and say, "You stick to it! And if you begin to criticize it in any way intellectually, then I am going to analyse you, and then you are in the frying-pan!" When a practicing Catholic comes to me, I say, "Did you confess this to your father-confessor?" Naturally he says, "No, he does not understand." What in hell, then," I say, "did you confess?" "Oh, lousy little things of no importance"--but the main sins he never talked of. As I said, I have had quite a number of these Catholics--six. I was quite proud to have so many, and I said to them, "Now, you see, what you tell me here, this is really serious. you go now to your father-confessor and you confess, whether he understands or does not understand. That is of no concern. It must be told before God, and if you don't do it, you are out of the Church, and then analysis begins, and then things will get hot, so you are much better off in the lap of the Church." So, you see, I brought these people back into the Church, with the result that the Pope himself gave me a private blessing for having taught certain important Catholics the right way of confessing.³⁶

³⁵Jung, "Psychoanalysis and the Cure of Souls," p. 219.

³⁶Jung, "The Symbolic Life," p. 271.

Jung displayed even greater smugness and insensitivity to one of his Jewish patients. She would be better off, he told her, to stick to the faith of her fathers. "Look here," he admonished,

...I'm going to tell you something, and you will probably think it is all foolishness, but you have been untrue to your God. Your [Hasidic] grandfather led the right life, but you are worse than a heretic; you have forsaken the mystery of your race. You belong to holy people, and what do you live? No wonder that you fear God, that you suffer from the fear of God."³⁷

Jung boasted that this troubled young woman was cured within the week.

There was nothing special about traditional or orthodox forms of belief, Jung argued. What mattered was the belief itself. If a person did belong to a particular confession sect, however, the psychotherapist should keep a low profile.

My attitude to these matters is that, as long as a patient is really a member of a church, he ought to be serious. He ought to be really and sincerely a member of that church, and he should not go to a doctor to get his conflicts settled when he believes that he should do it with God. For instance, when a member of the Oxford Group comes to me in order to get treatment, I say, "You are in the Oxford Group; so long as you are there, you settle your affair with the Oxford Group. I can't do it better than Jesus."³⁸

Jung was quite willing to take this line of reasoning to its logical--if somewhat fantastic--conclusion. "If a patient, for example, could say with conviction, 'I am the daughter of the Moon. Every night I must help the Moon, my Mother, over the horizon'--ah, that is something else! Then she lives, then her life makes sense, and makes sense in all continuity, and for

³⁷Ibid., p. 279.

³⁸Ibid., p. 272.

the whole of humanity."³⁹ The important thing for Jung was the fact that the patient believed, not whether the belief was realistic or not.

For those who found no spiritual satisfaction in religion, analysis was only a poor, second-best solution. Analysis, according to Jung, sought to accomplish by artificial, rational means what religion brought about through natural, unconscious, and symbolic ones. The modern doubter, in effect, must probe his or her unconscious in order to regain a sense of harmony and wholeness. This meant constructing a new, personal religion when the old ones would not do.

In this process, the psychotherapist was not entirely passive or helpless. In fact, according to Jung, the analyst could play a crucial role in assisting the patient in establishing this new spiritual equilibrium. The analyst, namely, could make use of the patient's trust and attachment--the transference--in order to become like a god. Through love for the analyst, thought Jung, a patient could come to a realization of his or her spiritual self. Jung made no apologies to the London Guild of Pastoral Psychology for making use of the transference in this fashion.

I remember a very simple case. There was a student of philosophy, a very intelligent woman. That was quite at the beginning of my career. I was a young doctor then, and I did not know anything beyond Freud. It was not a very important case of neurosis, and I was absolutely certain that it could be cured; but the case had not been cured.... She produced dreams in which I appeared as the father. That we dealt with. Then I appeared as the lover, and I appeared as the husband--that was all in the same vein. Then I began to change my size: I was much bigger than an ordinary human being; sometimes I had even divine attributes; I thought "Oh, well, that is the old saviour idea." And then I took on the most amazing forms. I appeared, for instance, the size of a god, standing in the fields and holding her in my arms as if she were a baby, and the wind was water, and in the same way I rocked her in my arms. And then, when I saw that picture, I thought, "Now I see what the unconscious really is after: the unconscious

³⁹Ibid., p. 275.

wants to make a god of me: that girl needs a god--at least, her unconscious needs a god. Her unconscious wants to find a god, and because it cannot find a god, it says 'Dr. Jung is a god.'" And so I said to her what I thought: "I surely am not a god, but your unconscious needs a god. That is a serious and a genuine need...." That changed the situation completely; it made all the difference in the world. I cured that case, because I fulfilled the need of the unconscious.⁴⁰

Jung, in short, was willing to make use of the transference which inevitably arises as part of the analytic relationship in order to help effect a spiritual cure. The doctor thereby became a *Seelsorger*. It was medical psychiatry, which had begun by declaring itself opposed to the tradition of moral psychiatry, which after the turn of the century had made this remarkable reversal of roles possible.

Using the Transference

Jung was not the only one to exploit the special relationship between analyst and analysand in order to combine religion and psychotherapy. The Zürich minister Oskar Pfister, an acquaintance of Jung and a great admirer of Freud, did so as well. Whereas Jung offers an example of someone trained in the medical profession who attempted to combine psychiatry and *Seelsorge*, Pfister made his attempt from the ministerial side. "The doctor has become a priest," he declared, quoting the words of the theologian Johannes Neumann. "Will not the pastor once again become a doctor."⁴¹ Pfister believed that Freud's ideas and techniques gave

⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 277-278.

⁴¹Pfister, "Die psychohygienische Aufgabe des theologischen Seelsorgers," in H. Meng, ed., *Praxis der seelischen Hygiene* (Basel: B. Schwabe, 1943), p. 114.

him all he needed to conduct pastoral care in modern, scientific terms-- "sacred medicine'," as he put it, "enriched by science."⁴²

Like Jung, Pfister possessed both a medical and a spiritual pedigree. Born in 1873, he was the son of a liberal pastor who, after one of his other children died of diphtheria, also studied medicine. Although Pfister's father was unable to complete his medical degree (he died when Oskar was only three years old), the son harbored the same ambition, as he put it, "to be a doctor of the body and of the soul at the same time."⁴³ For Pfister, this always meant that he would not accept theological ideals which contradicted empirical human realities. After completing his studies at the universities of Basel and Zurich, he turned down a university professorship in order to accept a call to the ministry, on the grounds that the "research" he conducted with his parishioners was more important to him than "lecturing" to students.⁴⁴

Pfister viewed his role as a pastor--he held his position at the Zürich Predigerkirche until his retirement in 1939--as something of a clinical one. He soon realized that he simply was not prepared to deal with the range and complexity of his parishioners' problems. This was particularly the case for his adolescent parishioners who described to him their ignorance, their anxiety, and above all their overwhelming sense of guilt. Traditional *Seelsorge* called for firm admonitions, especially for masturbation, but this did not always make sense to Pfister in emotional terms.

Psychology, at first, was not much help. There was little in academic psychology at the turn of the century--dominated as it was by the "physical"

⁴²Pfister, *Christianity and Fear* (1944), trans. W. H. Johnson (London: G. Allen and Unwin, 1948), p. 504.

⁴³Pfister, "Autobiographie," p. 163.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, p. 168.

school of experimental research--which could be of therapeutic use. Pfister thus began actively searching for a psychology which would help him explain the behaviors he encountered every day in his own church. His first published article in 1902 was a call for a new psychology, upon which a more appropriate, scientific *Seelsorge* could be based.

Pfister, as we have seen, found the answers he was looking for in psychoanalysis.⁴⁵ Freud's description of the unconscious, brimming with drives and reproaches, accorded fully with Pfister's own observations. Pfister was skeptical at first about the sexual etiology of the neuroses, but when push came to shove during the split with Jung, he dutifully lined up behind Freud. He remained one of Freud's staunchest and most vocal defenders for the rest of his life. The two also struck up a warm friendship, one which defied the spiritual gulf which lay between them.

Freud never quite understood how Pfister managed being a psychoanalyst and a *Seelsorger* at the same time. To Freud this seemed a contradiction in terms. Pfister, by the same token, never wavered in his conviction that psychoanalysis was part of God's work. Indeed, much of Pfister's extensive (if repetitive) *œuvre* is devoted to demonstrating "the moral superiority and religious value of that much maligned movement [psychoanalysis]."⁴⁶ The differences in outlook between the two men culminated in Freud's publication of *The Future of an Illusion* in 1927, followed shortly thereafter by Pfister's response, "The Illusion of a Future." The titles themselves suggest the extent to which Pfister took his cue from

⁴⁵See Preface above.

⁴⁶Pfister, *Psycho-Analysis in the Service of Education* (1917), trans. Charles Rockwell and F. Gschwind (London: H. Kimpton, 1929), p. x.

Freud. Always the enthusiastic admirer, Pfister made a place for himself in the psychoanalytic movement as the loyal opposition on behalf of religion.

What for Freud was an illusion, for Pfister was a form of sublimation: this was the heart of their disagreement. Pfister did not think that Freud took his own ideas far enough. Analysis, he wrote in an essay of 1917, should be a two-step process. The first--the analysis proper--consisted of "relief" or "redemption" from neurotic symptoms by bringing repressed material to light. Once conscious, it became subject to rational/moral decision-making on the part of the patient. For Pfister, this second step was a matter of values not reason, *Weltanschauung* not *Wissenschaft*.⁴⁷ It was important during the first stage to keep religious and ethical questions in the background, he wrote in an essay called "The psycho-hygienic task of theological *Seelsorge*." Otherwise, they might unwittingly aid the forces of repression.⁴⁸ But once the symptoms had been cleared away, the work of reconstruction could begin. For this healing task, thought Pfister, analysis alone was not enough. It needed to be supplemented by some system of sublimation, no matter which one. "Psychoanalysis can be adapted to any moral background," Pfister declared.⁴⁹ The problem was that analysis itself did not provide any positive goals once the essentially negative work of blazing a path to the unconscious was complete.

But religion did.⁵⁰ "If one wants to overcome an infirmity that is connected to pleasure," Pfister wrote, "then a superior, unobjectionable

⁴⁷Pfister, *Was bietet die Psychoanalyse dem Erzieher?* (Leipzig: Klinkhardt, 1917), p. 10.

⁴⁸Pfister, "Die psychohygienische Aufgabe," p. 130.

⁴⁹Pfister, *Psycho-Analysis in the Service of Education*, p. 143.

⁵⁰Pfister, *Was bietet die Psychoanalyse dem Erzieher?*, pp. 98-99.

value must take its place."⁵¹ It was just such higher, sublimated goals which religion supplied. By setting norms for life in society, religion showed people how to divert their instinctual energy into ethical channels. Pfister promoted what he called "moral health"⁵² or "an ethical therapy of the soul."⁵³ This involved a commitment to certain values or beliefs over and above the initial tasks of analysis. "A healthy religious conception of the world and conviction in God," wrote Pfister in 1910, "supports the efforts of the analyst in the most commendable fashion."⁵⁴

Pfister made it clear that "analytic *Seelsorge*," as he called it, was primarily a Protestant endeavor.⁵⁵ Unlike Jung, he was no admirer of Catholic ritual and confession. Pfister, as we have seen, viewed the Catholic Church as an institution of repression, using the means at its disposal to limit the full expression of our human--especially sexual--nature.⁵⁶ "Catholicism," he wrote in 1910, "... is a religion of maximal repression of the natural drives...."⁵⁷ Culminating in the Catholic ideal of priestly celibacy, such asceticism was bound to result in pathological symptoms. "The history of Catholic sainthood," he noted, "provides analytic pathography with endless material."⁵⁸

⁵¹Pfister, "Die psychohygienische Aufgabe," p. 137.

⁵²Pfister, *Psycho-Analysis in the Service of Education*, p. 144.

⁵³Pfister, "Analytische Untersuchung über die Psychologie des Hasses und der Versöhnung," *Jahrbuch für psychoanalytische und psychopathologische Forschungen* (1910), p. 178.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, p. 98.

⁵⁵Pfister, *Analytische Seelsorge. Einführung in die praktische Psychoanalyse für Pfarrer und Laien* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1927).

⁵⁶See chapters Three and Four above.

⁵⁷Pfister, "Die Psychoanalyse als wissenschaftliches Prinzip und seelsorgerliche Methode," *Evangelische Freiheit* (1910), p. 192.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, p. 195.

Pfister was not blind, of course, to similar excesses by Protestant ascetics. His study of the eighteenth-century Moravian Ludwig von Zinzendorf had exposed powerful undercurrents of sexual fantasy and perversion. Pfister never denied that Protestantism--indeed any religion--could be turned into pathological symptom. "As soon as Christians are beset by the formation of neuroses," he noted, "their Christianity itself easily becomes a neurotic formation and, as a defense against illness, elaborates and strengthens the neuroses further."⁵⁹ Not least because of its relentless attack upon pietism, *Zinzendorf* and related studies on religious pathology were Pfister's most original and memorable contributions to psychoanalytic literature. Freud, at least, certainly thought so.

But for Pfister, Zinzendorf was the exception to the Protestant rule. In contrast to Catholicism, which considered marriage a concession to human weakness, Protestantism allowed for "maximal sublimation" of the instinctual life, "with acceptance of the drives which serve it."⁶⁰ In practice, this meant both sexual gratification--within, of course, the boundaries of marriage--and a higher "ethical" love.⁶¹ "The more a person is animated by love of God, love of people, and love of self (in the manner of Jesus), the stronger is his mental-hygienic defense...."⁶² As therapies based upon sublimation of sexuality into love, Pfister concluded, psychoanalysis and Protestantism had a lot in common.

⁵⁹Pfister, "Die psychohygienische Aufgabe des theologischen Seelsorgers," pp. 122-123.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 196.

⁶¹Pfister, *Psycho-Analysis in the Service of Education*, p. 4.

⁶²Pfister, "Die psychohygienische Aufgabe des theologischen Seelsorgers," p. 123.

Pfister was also critical of the way in which the Catholic Church conducted confession. Unlike Jung, who viewed confession as an effective way for unconscious material to be brought to light, Pfister felt that in psychological terms, it was a clumsy, even harmful practice. The elusive, protean, and sometimes tempestuous unconscious was hardly accessible to the direct application of morality and will-power. The Catholic *Beichtvater*, wrote Pfister, was operating with a naive psychiatry indeed: like the surgeon who slices the surface [of the skin] but does not cut out the diseased tissue.⁶³

What is more, Pfister added, confession tended to reinforce the authority of the priest over his parishioner. Whereas Catholicism tried to induce conformity, Protestantism emphasized "the religious personality" of the individual believer.⁶⁴ Pfister thought he saw an analogy with psychoanalysis in the Protestant attempt to devise an appropriate *Seelsorge* for each different person: "The same preaching, the same amount of hygienic material which works well for one person, can repel and hurt another...."⁶⁵ The whole purpose of analytic *Seelsorge* was to let confession take the form not of predictable admonitions, but of free association. If a pastor simply encouraged his parishioner to talk in an undirected fashion, it was sure to lead to repressed material and the unconscious sense of guilt.⁶⁶ For Pfister, it was thus only a short step from the priesthood of all believers to the analysis of all believers.

⁶³Pfister, *Analytische Seelsorge*, pp. 120-121.

⁶⁴Pfister, "Die psychohygienische Aufgabe des theologischen Seelsorgers," p. 127.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 125.

⁶⁶Pfister, *Analytische Seelsorge*, p. 10.

"The entire Gospel is a powerful form of mental hygiene," Pfister wrote towards the end of his career, "... so profound that neurology and psychiatry have only begun to understand its prophylactic wisdom."⁶⁷ Unlike Freud, who believed that a realistic view of the world meant giving up religious illusions, Pfister saw no contradiction between psychoanalysis and faith. Analysis, in fact, paved the way for a spirituality which had been purged of all unsublimated eroticism. "I have not seen it happen a single time," declared Pfister, "that a healthy piety lost any of its inner intensity as a result of analysis."⁶⁸ Atheism, Pfister insisted *contra* Freud, was not the triumph of reason over illusion, but a "bankruptcy of thought" in the face of human complexity.⁶⁹ "We humans are not thinking machines," he wrote in 1917. "We are beings who live, feel, and want. We need virtues and values. We must have something that satisfies our soul and quickens our aspirations."⁷⁰ The belief in guardian angels, for example, struck Pfister as "psychologically a fine belief"--a statement which Jung would undoubtedly have approved.⁷¹

The key to understanding what Pfister called in his final book, *Christianity and Fear*, "the psychology and hygiene of religion" is the use he makes of the transference.⁷² For Pfister, there was no such thing as a "pure" analysis in which the issue of sublimation did not arise.⁷³ The only

⁶⁷Pfister, "Die psychohygienische Aufgabe des theologischen Seelsorgers," p. 116.

⁶⁸Pfister, *Was bietet die Psychoanalyse dem Erzieher?*, p. 99.

⁶⁹Pfister, *Die Illusion einer Zukunft*, p. 123.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, p. 125.

⁷¹Pfister, *Psycho-Analysis in the Service of Education*, p. 8.

⁷²The complete title reads *Christianity and Fear, a study in history and in the psychology and hygiene of religion*.

⁷³Pfister, "Die psychohygienische Aufgabe des theologischen Seelsorgers," p. 137.

question was *where* the values for making choices about one's newly conscious drives would come from. As Pfister put it, there was no reason why the plower and the sower--the analyst and the *Seelsorger*--could not be one and the same person.⁷⁴

In fact, Pfister argued, the special relationship between analyst and patient made analysis the perfect situation for reaching higher, more sublimated values. In the natural course of things, the patient/parishioner built up a certain amount of trust--even affection--for the analyst/*Seelsorger*. According to Freud, the transference itself became the central subject of the analysis. By "working through" his feelings about the analyst, a person could gain a new mastery over his irrational desires. For Pfister, on the other hand, these feelings could become the basis for the analysand's task of sublimation. "Behind the objectively unfounded personal connections, which come from the transference..., there must be some genuine connections, which are founded on the real qualities of the two individuals."⁷⁵ Pfister sought to exploit this attachment to give his parishioners a continuing source of personal support. "Do you see a difference between you and me," he once asked Freud, "that I do not entirely break off relations [with patients], but only purify the transference of everything inappropriate?"⁷⁶ The difference between "purify" and "work through" is the difference between Pfister and Freud.

Pfister went even further. He suggested that a *Seelsorger* could prevent a person from becoming "stuck" in the transference by holding out some other attachment instead, such as ethical values or religious belief.⁷⁷

⁷⁴Pfister, *Was bietet die Psychoanalyse dem Erzieher?*, p. 10.

⁷⁵Pfister, *Psycho-Analysis in the Service of Education*, p. 119.

⁷⁶Freud/Pfister *Briefe*, pp. 121-122.

⁷⁷Pfister, *Was bietet die Psychoanalyse dem Erzieher?*, p. 98.

In other words, the *Seelsorger* should try to turn the patient's trust in him into trust in God. The negative process of analysis would thus lead eventually to a positive act of faith. Where Freud left his patients to judge for themselves what was right and wrong, Pfister gave them a helping hand. At one point, Pfister identified even Jesus himself as a transference-phenomenon.⁷⁸

Pfister made use of the transference in order to turn analysis into *Seelsorge*. He did not shrink from loosely equating analysis, in this broader sense, with salvation.⁷⁹ This could result in--at least in Freud's terms--some remarkable ironies. "Confidence in God's help," Pfister once wrote, "consoles and fortifies the man who has to pass from the world of neurosis to that of sombre realities with their terrifying moral demands."⁸⁰ The fact that Pfister could count God among the realities and not the illusions was precisely what baffled Freud.

⁷⁸Pfister, *Psycho-Analysis in the Service of Education*, p. 134.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁸⁰*Ibid.*, p. 146.

CONCLUSION

The Future of an Illusion

The scientific spirit brings about a particular attitude towards worldly matters; before religious matters it pauses for a little, hesitates, and finally there too crosses the threshold. In this process there is no stopping; the greater the number of men to whom the treasures of knowledge become accessible, the more widespread is the falling-away from religious belief--at first only from its obsolete and objectionable trappings, but later from its fundamental postulates as well.

Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*

During the final decades of the nineteenth century in Europe and America, science entered the soul. Doctors and psychologists extended the principles of natural science to the workings of the human mind. The empirical methods which had been so successful in observing, describing, and mastering the outer, physical world, were now turned inward. This immediately raised fears that there was no place left for religion. In the long nineteenth-century "warfare between science and theology," spiritual explanations of Nature had repeatedly given ground to scientific ones. By turning the immortal soul into a physical brain, psychology was threatening to drive religion from its final sanctuary.

But psychology was not a science like any other. It dealt with the "higher" capacities of human experience: free will, emotion, rationality, and consciousness itself. These qualities were elusive, invisible, and difficult (perhaps impossible) to locate in solely physical terms. Unlike the sciences which preceded it, psychology resisted being reduced to materialistic premises. At the same time, then, that psychology revived old worries about secularization, it also raised hopes for a new, more positive relationship between science and religion. This contrasted sharply with

the debate over evolution, which (from a spiritual point of view) had such demeaning implications for the nature and descent of humankind. Protestant observers, in particular, welcomed psychology as a potential ally. They were likely to equate their own tradition with "progress" in the natural sciences--particularly as psychology moved towards abstract "spirit." Towards the end of the nineteenth century in German lands and elsewhere, psychology, the science of the soul, showed promise of becoming science *with* a soul.

Most of these attempts at accommodation fell outside the boundaries of academic psychology. Within academe hostility towards "supernatural" science continued unabated. Researchers like Virchow and Wundt often used psychology as a weapon to enforce a scientific worldview. More often than not, however, the target was not religion as such, but a particular confession--generally Catholicism. Only a few people actually linked psychology to a completely secular *Weltanschauung*. Freud, for one, believed that religion encouraged unrealistic (and therefore in the long run unhealthy) illusions which would have to give way to the more modest, sobering realization of things-as-they-are.

It is important to place the emergence of modern psychology into a cultural and intellectual context that is larger than the debate over secularization. In the decades around 1900, psychology intersected with religion in diverse and unexpected ways. Proponents of spiritism and occultism, for example, claimed to be psychologists in their own right. Because of their work with mediums and hypnosis, they were more willing to explore the possibilities of a dynamic psychology--that is, a psychology of the unconscious--than their more "respectable" academic counterparts. At the same time, however, both the spiritists and (to a lesser extent) the

occultists pursued a spiritual program. They *wanted* to prove that séance phenomena were inexplicable, and to show that they lay outside the recognized boundaries of natural science. Under these conditions, psychology could easily slide into mysticism--deliberately in the case of the spiritist DuPrel, unwittingly in the case of the occultist Schrenck-Notzing. In either case, it is difficult to tell in their indulgent versions of empirical science where wishful thinking stops and scientific knowledge begins.

Turn-of-the-century occultism also raised a number of troubling questions on the borderline between psychology and religion. What are the ethical consequences of a dynamic theory of the mind? If material can pass freely between conscious and unconscious states, then how can responsibility for a person's actions be assessed? When the hypnotist (or the analyst) brings repressed material to light, does this encourage immoral behavior? These issues found a prominent place in the turn-of-the-century German literature of the occult. Because psychology and occultism both seemed to be a matter of catching and being caught, this literature is filled with stories of detection and exposure, manipulation and deceit. Not surprisingly, these concerns about controlling others and loss of self-control found expression in the sexual sphere. The sexual fantasies and aggressions in turn-of-the-century occultism suggest just how discomfiting a dynamic psychology could be.

The preoccupation with sexual issues in occultist literature bears a striking resemblance to a similar genre in the psychology of religion itself between 1890 and 1914. The more aggressive proponents of religious psychology treated religion as a mental aberration. Religious fanaticism and "genius," they pointed out, was often the result of sexual repression. Their case studies of religious pathology both past and present reached a

high point in Germany around 1905. Here, too, the use of psychology as a weapon was usually limited to specific targets. Protestants, in particular, developed an extensive psychological critique of Catholicism. This included a detailed resumé of sexual excesses, presumably caused by the Catholic institutions of auricular confession and priestly celibacy. As in occultist literature, the different strands of fantasy and reproach are difficult to disentangle. Uncertain how to use the powerful new tool of psychology, many observers resorted to aggressive--and sometimes secretly pleasurable--descriptions of sexual misconduct. In any event, when practiced by ministers like Oskar Pfister and doctors like Johannes Bresler, the German psychology of religion tended to be more anti-clerical than it was ~~anti-religious~~.

German psychiatrists did wage an extended campaign during the course of the nineteenth century against the traditional notion that mental illness is a punishment for sin. By 1900, they had succeeded not only in replacing this "religious" view of psychiatry with a medical one, but also in taking actual administrative control of German institutions for mental health. Both in theory and in practice, then, clergy yielded to doctors in the insane asylum. In terms of the medical reforms achieved by 1900, religion's loss was psychiatry's gain.

But this did not mean that psychiatry and *Seelsorge* were completely at odds. In fact, the dominant strain in the German psychology of religion was the desire to combine the two. From its very beginning in the late 1890's, proponents of the new field urged the harmonious realignment of religious and scientific values. Theologians and physicians such as Georg Wobbermin and Willy Hellpach followed the lead of William James in seeking to find the common ground between psychology and religion. The

fact that many writers around the turn of the century attacked one confession or another complicates but does not contradict the thesis that psychology was a science which could be used to defend the "facts" of religious experience.

The principal vehicle of these attempts was the short-lived German *Journal for Religious Psychology*, which from 1907 to 1913 published articles by doctors and clergy alike. During these years, contributors to the *Journal* sought to draw the two professions closer together. Their efforts mark the high point of the psychology of religion in German-speaking lands. This period is also notable for attempts by Pfister, Jung, Otto Baumgarten and others to combine psychiatry and *Seelsorge*. It was their common belief--though taking various forms--that a sound religious faith, far from being an impediment, could actually contribute to mental health. "Religious hygiene" was the logical outcome of the German psychology of religion as it developed from 1890 to 1914. Accommodation, not aggression, was the key. These programs for combining psychiatry and *Seelsorge* continued to be influential during the 1920's and beyond.

By that time, however, the scientific collaboration between clergy and psychiatrists had collapsed. From the point of view of the doctors, the *Journal for Religious Psychology* had simply become too religious. In the years just prior to the First World War, they abandoned the experiment and the clergy took over. Interest in the psychology of religion gave no signs of flagging in the 1920's and 1930's. But it was no longer a mutual undertaking. At a meeting of the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft* of Doctors and Theologians in 1927, one of the *Journal's* successor groups which published a series entitled *Arzt und Seelsorger*, almost 70% of those attending came

from the clergy.¹ The physicians who were there were equally bent on a psychology which confirmed rather than challenged their religious experience. From the very beginning, then, the will to believe was an important part of the German psychology of religion. Now it had taken over. Freud may have been right about religion as an illusion, but he was definitely in the minority.

¹"Teilnehmerliste," *Arzt und Seelsorger* 14 (1928), pp. 110-111.

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abbreviations:

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Z. Religionspsych. = *Zeitschrift für Religionspsychologie*.

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