

**LIFE ETERNAL: PAST
- PRESENT - FUTURE**

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Life Eternal: Past - Present - Future by Barthelemy Prosper Enfantin & Fred Rothwell

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BARTHELEMY PROSPER ENFANTIN & FRED ROTHWELL

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LIFE ETERNAL
PAST—PRESENT—FUTURE



PÈRE ENFANTIN.

From Saint-Martin's *Soixante ans d'un peuple*, 1830.

LIFE ETERNAL

PAST—PRESENT—FUTURE

BY

BARTHÉLEMY PROSPER ENFANTIN

TRANSLATED BY

FRED ROTHWELL

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INTRODUCTION

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BARTHÉLEMY PROSPER ENFANTIN, one of the founders of Saint-Simonism, was born in Paris on the 8th of February 1796. When only a youth of eighteen, he formed one of the band of students who, in March 1814, attempted to drive back the armies of the Allies then besieging Paris. At the age of twenty-five, he joined the secret society of the Carbonari, and four years later became a friend of Olinde Rodrigues, the favourite disciple of Saint-Simon. Introduced to the master by Rodrigues, he ardently embraced his doctrines and schemes of political, social, and religious reform. Along with Rodrigues, he received the final instructions of Saint-Simon and the two were entrusted with the propagation and development of his system. They founded a journal: *Le Producteur*, whose motto was: "The Golden Age, hitherto regarded by blind tradition as being in the past, is really in the future."

Enfantin set forth not only his master's doctrines but also views of his own; this gave offence, and the following year the journal was discontinued. He had now become well known, and had influential friends in Blanqui, Bazard, Auguste Comte, Pierre Leroux, and other members of the Liberal party.

The revolution of July 1830 brought freedom to the social reformers, and a proclamation was issued demanding the common ownership of goods, the abolition of the right of inheritance, and the enfranchisement of women. Enfantin appealed to the people by systematic teaching; he also organised centres of action in the principal cities of France. Divergence of opinion, however, rapidly spread and finally led to serious dissension. Bazard devoted himself to political reform, Enfantin to social and moral improvements; Bazard was an organiser and a ruler, Enfantin a teacher and sympathetic consoler; the former attracted to himself feelings of reverence; the latter, feelings of love and affection.

Hopeless antagonism broke out between them in reference to Enfantin's proposal to supersede the formula of Saint-Simonism, which was, in substance, "the greatest good of the greatest number," by another worded: "to each man according to his capacity, to each capacity according to its works." The breach was widened by Enfantin's announcement of his theory of the relations between man and woman, which would have substituted for the "tyranny of marriage" a system of "free love." Bazard hereupon separated from his colleague, taking over with him those whose chief aim was politics and philosophy. Enfantin then became sole "father," new converts were found, and he announced that his followers in France amounted to the number of 40,000. He wore

on his breast a badge with the title of "*père*," was spoken of by his disciples as "the living law," declared himself to be the chosen of God, and sent out emissaries in quest of a woman destined to be the "female Messiah" and the mother of a new Saviour. He regarded himself as not only the bearer of a heavenly message but as actually the Word of God incarnate. He displayed both the strength and the weakness of an enthusiast; at one time speculating on the sex of God, at another teaching pure pantheism. His influence over the finest intellects of his age was wonderful; for he induced many to renounce family ties and live an ascetic life, to retire from society and engage in manual toil, to undergo the humiliation of public confessions and pay to himself the worship accorded to divinity. Meanwhile the new religion was spreading all over Europe, until in 1832 the halls of the new sect were closed by the Government. In August he was arrested, tried, found guilty, and sentenced to a year's imprisonment, with a small fine. This proved a deathblow to the society, and *Enfantin*, released after a few months, went with a few followers to Egypt, where he stayed two years and might have entered the service of the Viceroy had he been willing to profess himself a Mohammedan, as did some of his friends.

To the end *Père Enfantin* held fast to his ideal, but he abandoned his original project of giving it a local habitation and a name in this degenerate world.

His personal influence, as we have said, over those who associated with him was immense. "He was a man of noble presence, with finely formed and expressive features. He was gentle and insinuating in manner, and possessed a calm, graceful, and winning delivery" (*Gent. Mag.*, Jan. 1865). His evident sincerity and genuine enthusiasm were the means of obtaining for him his wonderful ascendancy over the minds of others.

Not a few of his disciples afterwards ranked amongst the most distinguished men in France, and from the school of which he was one of the founders proceeded the idea of constructing the Suez Canal, as finally carried out by de Lesseps. Infantin died suddenly in Paris on the first of September 1864.

This volume, now offered to English readers in its present abridged form, was published only three years before his death. It represents the fruit of his ripest thought on purely philosophical and moral, as apart from political, subjects.

F. R.