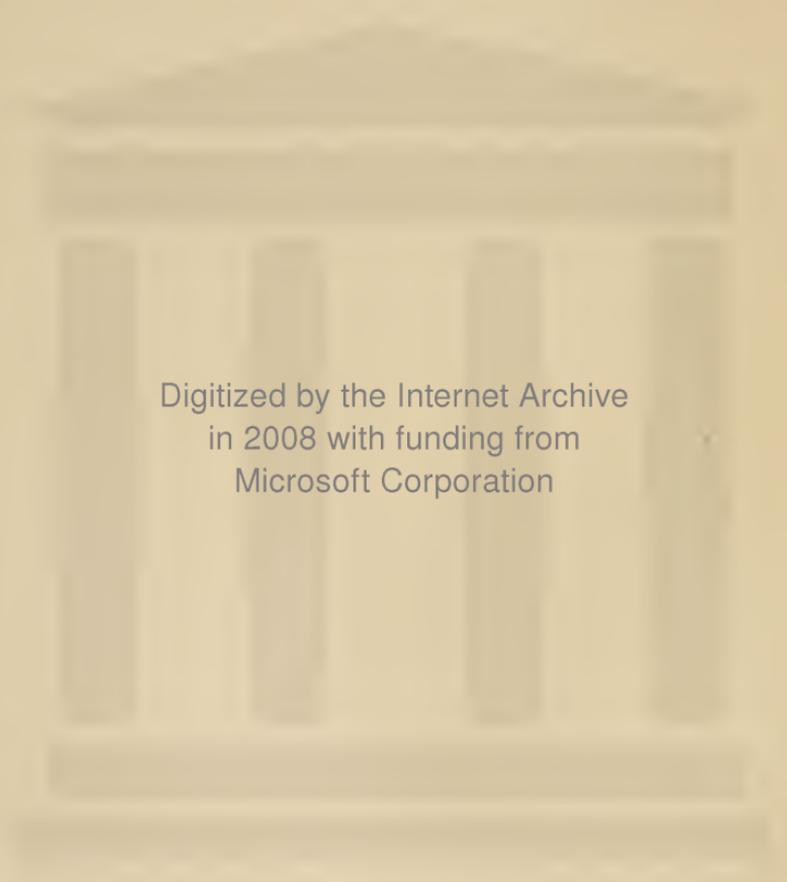


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CREEDS OF THE DAY.

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CREEDS OF THE DAY;

OR,

COLLATED OPINIONS OF REPUTABLE THINKERS.

BY

HENRY COKE.

IN THREE SERIES OF LETTERS.

VOL. I.

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LONDON:
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1883

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THESE LETTERS

ARE

• **Dedicated**

TO

CHARLES GEORGE BARRINGTON.

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ERRATA.

VOL. I.

Page 146, line 8, <i>for</i>	“Konyunjik,”	<i>read</i>	“Kouyunjik.”
“ 151, ” 20, ”	“Kalish,”	“	“Kālishch.”
“ 208, ” 20, ”	“Tyler,”	“	“Tylor.”
“ 210, ” 22, ”	“Plurial,”	“	“Pluvial.”
“ 214, ” 26, ”	“Davis,”	“	“Davids.”
“ 286, ” 1, ”	“skull,”	“	“jaw.”

VOL. II.

Page 247, line 7, *for* “Mansell,” *read* “Mansel.”

First Series.

THE OLD TESTAMENT.

“ You who have escaped from these religions into the high-and-dry light of the intellect may deride them ; but in so doing, you deride accidents of form merely, and fail to touch the immovable basis of true religious sentiment in the nature of man. To yield this sentiment reasonable satisfaction is the problem of problems at the present hour.”

JOHN TYNDALL, LL.D. : *Belfast Address*, 1874.

CREEDS OF THE DAY.

LETTER I.

Is there any God? or, what evidence have we of His existence?

The views of our ablest thinkers—recent and present—give us, at all events, the conclusions of the age we live in. I purpose therefore to set before you the theological outcome of Biblical literature, of modern science, and of current philosophy.

The matter will be treated of under two heads:—I. Revelation; II. Rational Theology. Rational Theology will be subdivided into Natural Theology or the Argument from Design; and Metaphysical Theology or the Theory of Being. These divisions will be dealt with respectively in the 1st, 2d, and 3d series of these letters.

Revelation, in the sense here employed, means miraculous communication from God to man. The subject of the communication must itself be a mystery—something, that is, which could not be discovered by human intelligence in the ordinary course of nature. Has God ever revealed Himself to man in this way? or, what is there to show that He has done so?

By far the largest number of human beings would at once refer you to their Sacred Books. But there are many

Sacred Books. In Europe and America the Bible is believed by most people to be the only true account of divine revelation; yet all the believers in the Bible throughout the world, including the Jews, are less numerous than the Buddhists alone. They scarcely exceed the Mahommedans and Brahmanists taken together; and are little more than 30 per cent. of our entire race. Is the Buddhist, or the Mahommedan, or the Brahmanist, less certain than we, respecting our Bible, that all sacred books are false except his own? If so, mere strength of conviction, being shared by all, fails to guarantee the truth for any; and since adverse doctrines are mutually destructive, one at most can be true. Which this may be, can only be decided by impartially comparing one with another. In the last resort, judgment concerning probabilities must always depend on what is *known*. This is a fundamental canon of criticism. In the task before us it must not for a moment be laid aside.

Many estimable persons shrink from the analysis of their religious belief. The fatuous credulity of some is not shaken by the obvious fact that, difference of religion is primarily a geographical distinction. Some regard it as profane, others as dangerous, to tamper with a subject beyond the scope of their intelligence. And, in these days, it must sorely try the consciences of many, not thus restrained, to settle how much of their own doubts they shall impart to others; and especially to what extent they shall deprive their children of beliefs which afford such substantial support to morality, and such unspeakable consolation to grief.

To say that truth ought always to be spoken at whatever cost, is a specious maxim which covers a double fallacy. First it has to assume infallibility of judgment; next, *if* truth, this may be neither beneficial nor intelligible to those who receive it. Here, then, we discover a principle to guide us. All theological inquiry necessarily

ends in speculation. One man may believe implicitly in his sacred books. Another may reject all such belief as superstition. The belief or disbelief can never, in this world, pass into knowledge. Let no man therefore give out for truth more than he can prove. Let him not pass off for knowledge what cannot be more than conjecture. This is the first rule.

With regard to babes and sucklings, of whatever age, when bliss and ignorance go hand in hand, let them be. Nevertheless, he who has honestly earned his opinions (provided always he observe the former rule), need not hesitate to preach them. The plainer he speaks the better; there are plenty who wish to learn. If he be wrong, he will the sooner be corrected.

The influence of steadfast inquiry upon one's own mind—the love of accuracy which it promotes, is as constant on the one hand, as are the hurtful consequences of an indolent security on the other. The force of this unpalatable fact is unfortunately not fully recognised until mental discipline has become a habit.

If any one were to offer us, as a bargain, a handsome crystal which he declared would, like the fabled gem, give out light in the midst of darkness, our first thought would be: is it a genuine diamond? This we should not be able to decide without some acquaintance with precious stones. But as a first step in the inquiry, we should be sure to ask how the bearer got it, or what was its history.

Such is our position with regard to the Bible. Its divine authority, its miraculous revelations, its intrinsic merits, demand the consideration of so many collateral matters that it is convenient to set these aside while we inquire what is known of the Book itself.

We speak of the sacred volume as of one book; yet we all know that it is a collection of many books. Inquiry therefore as to the authenticity of the whole, demands

investigation of the separate parts; one or more of which might be spurious, while the rest were genuine. It is far beyond my reach to attempt criticism of this kind. Little short of a lifetime devoted to Biblical research, with all its linguistic and ethnological entailments, qualifies any one to give an opinion of his own upon the exegesis, the authorship, or the history of a single book—or single sentence, I might almost say—in either the Old Testament or the New. A glance at the labours of Ewald alone (to say nothing of scholars like Paulus, Eichhorn, Strauss, Bauer, Gesenius, de Wette, Renan, Davidson, Westcott, and battalions of others) is enough to appal the most resolute student; and more than enough to stagger the easy confidence of the most faithful, or the contemptuous indifference of the unbeliever. It will be my endeavour to select such passages here and there as illustrate the verdicts of competent authorities. I shall state, however, without reserve, the inferences which seem to me legitimate.

We will, if you please, make our start from the English version of the Old Testament. In 1530, Tyndale was the first to translate the Pentateuch from the Hebrew text. Five years later the entire Bible was printed and published by Coverdale. Soon after, a new edition was brought out at Geneva by some English exiles. Cranmer's, or the Bishops' Bible, which was partly Tyndale's and partly Coverdale's, followed; and these two remained in use until the reign of James I.

James, disliking certain renderings in the Geneva Bible (especially that of the divine approval of the Hebrew midwives who disobeyed Pharaoh's orders to destroy the male children—disobedience which he condemned as "seditious and traitorous conceits"), ordered a new translation. This was undertaken by forty-seven scholars; who completed and published, in 1611, the version now used by the Church of England. "If you ask what they had before

them, truly it was the Hebrew text of the Old Testament, the Greek of the New," &c. ¹

What are we to understand by the Hebrew text, What was the original which these men translated? Let us trace the line of descent from this point, for it is here that our interest begins.

You are probably aware that the Roman Catholic Bible contains many books which the Greek Church rejected in the fourth century; and which the Protestant Church now excludes as apocryphal. In not very old editions of English Bibles these books are inserted between the two Testaments. The fact indicates that the different Churches disagree as to the genuineness of writings which at one time or other were esteemed as sacred. Upon what principles, then, was authenticity decided? Are the Greek and English Churches rejecting at the present hour divinely inspired works which the Latin Church preserves? or, how do the books retained escape the doubt attached to those eliminated? As regards the Church of Rome this matter was finally settled by Clement VIII. at the end of the sixteenth century. Fifty years before his time the Council of Trent had declared Jerome's version to be the standard and only authoritative one; which indeed it had been with the Western Churches for nearly a thousand years. During that long period it had become so corrupted by emendations that, Clement suppressed the edition revised under his immediate predecessor; and tried to produce one more in accordance with the translation of Jerome, most of which, however, had long been lost. Clement's edition, published in 1598, became, and remains to this day, the Vulgate of the Latin Church. Notwithstanding the professed deference to the authority of St. Jerome, the existing Vulgate contains all the apocryphal writings which Jerome himself excluded from the canon. Luther translated the apocryphal books with the rest of the Bible,

¹ Translators' Preface.

but he and the Protestants refused to accept the decrees of Rome as to their canonicity, and appealed to the decision of Jerome in justification of their own choice.

This takes us back to the end of the fourth century of our era. Jerome's translation was from the Hebrew into Latin; but before his time (probably more than two hundred years before it) Latin versions of the Bible already abounded. Why then did Jerome undertake a new one? For the same reason which influenced the Council of Trent and Clement VIII., viz., the corrupt state of the current editions. St. Augustine speaks of an indefinite number of Latin versions; and copies were extensively multiplied not only for Europeans, but for the Latin-speaking Christians of Carthage. The Pope Damasus, struck with the numerous and gross discrepancies between these versions and the Septuagint, of which, be it observed, they were but translations, urged Jerome to revise the best of them—known as the *Itala*, and recognised as the *Vulgata* of that period.

What means were at hand for the accomplishment of such a task? Was there any authentic collection of autograph manuscripts; or any undoubted copies even of the original writings? There was neither one nor the other. Jerome had to avail himself, in the first instance, of the four great Greek translations already made. These were the Septuagint or Alexandrine, and three others, by Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion. But if they were all translated from the Hebrew, why could not Jerome go to the same fountain-head? The translators of our English version tell us they made use of the Hebrew text, and Jerome tells us the same. Again, we have to ask, what was the Hebrew text? The only Hebrew text then extant was that which the Jews of his time accepted as canonical. The only Hebrew text known to our translators was that which they obtained from the Rabbins of their day. To the Synagogue then, and not to the Christian

Churches, we must look for the history of the Sacred Writings.

I have said there were not even copies of the original scriptures in Jerome's time; and that the highest authority of the Western Churches was the Septuagint. It should be mentioned that the Christians of Palestine had a Syriac version called the *Pechito*. This, however, although taken direct from the Hebrew, was not of earlier date than the second century of our era. The Septuagint was four, if not five hundred years older. It was the version of the Old Testament with which St. Paul was most familiar. It was the only one intelligible to the mass of the Hellenistic or Greek-speaking Jews of Jerusalem. It was recognised by all Rabbinical authorities until at least the end of the first century; and it is to this day venerated by the Greek Church as a work of divine inspiration. The Septuagint, therefore, must be regarded as the safest guide to the state of the Hebrew text when that was first rendered into Greek. Some elementary notice of it will lead us onward in the historical criticism which it is our object here to pursue.

After Alexander the Great had founded Alexandria, he transported thither a vast number of the inhabitants of Jerusalem and of Samaria. About twenty to thirty years later Ptolemy I., who had been one of his generals, and was then king of Egypt, captured Jerusalem, and forced 100,000 Jews to return with him to Alexandria. This took place in the year 301 B.C. In the course of a century the captives, largely augmented by Jewish immigrants, had peopled a great part of Ethiopia, Lybia, and the African shores of the Mediterranean; and for the main part had adopted the language of their conquerors. At the time of Christ, so completely had they forgotten their own speech, that even such a scholar as Philo was unacquainted with Hebrew, and seems to have had no knowledge of any tongue save the Greek. It was pre-

sumably to this circumstance that we owe a Greek translation of the Bible.

There are many different accounts both as to the date and origin of the Septuagint. According to the best accredited, Ptolemy Philadelphus (284-247 B.C.) ordered a transcript of the Pentateuch for the great Alexandrian library then being formed. This is the account given by Philo and by Josephus; who also betray a strong desire to prove its sacred origin. The Talmud and Justin Martyr, impelled by a similar motive, relate that seventy-two interpreters were shut up in separate cells, where each one completed his own version; and when all had done, the seventy-two translations corresponded even to the minutest detail. Whatever the origin, the date may be assigned to the middle of the third century B.C.

The Alexandrine Jews were ignorant of Hebrew. Only to the doctors of the Synagogue was that language known, and to them was it known only as a dead language. Consider well this important truth. Not to the Egyptian Jews and Hellenists merely, but to the Jews of Syria, to the still more numerous Jews of Babylon, indeed to the entire race, Hebrew was a dead language; and had been so, virtually, ever since the Babylonian captivity; or we may certainly say for nearly 400 years B.C. From the epoch marked by the return of the Jews under Zerubabel, their language gradually became Aramaic. This was allied to Hebrew as Latin is allied to French. Both were of Semitic origin. The dialect of Babylonia and Mesopotamia was called Eastern Aramaic or *Chaldee*; that of Syria, Western Aramaic or *Syriac*. This latter was the language of Christ, and of the whole of Palestine in His time. Nehemiah, describing the condition of the Jews as he found it "in the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes" (433 B.C.), says, "Their children spake half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews' language, but according to the language of each

people" (Neh. xiii. 24). Although this proves that Hebrew was then but partially obsolete, the enormous influx of Babylonian Jews who knew nothing but Aramaic soon established the latter, to the final extinction of their former tongue. Hebrew was exclusively employed in the Synagogue. It was used in Jewish worship just as Latin is used in the Church of Rome; and probably most of the official readers and expounders of the Scriptures knew about as much of "the sacred language" as the majority of the Catholic priests know of Latin. The congregations were as ignorant of the sense in one case, as they now are in the other.

The ordinary difficulty of accurately translating a dead language was but an insignificant fraction of the prodigious labour encountered by the Greek translators. Those who learnt Hebrew, learnt it solely by oral teaching. If they wanted to know the meaning of a word there was no dictionary to refer to; its meaning depended on its sound, and its correct sound depended on tradition. The formidable inconvenience of this may be understood when it is stated that the words were continuous—without breaks; and that no vowels, points, or accents were ever used at all, until after the completion of the Talmud (600 A.D.)¹ It is needless to say that the same combination of consonants would serve for various sounds; and that this consequently led to much diversity of Rabbinical interpretation. The Greek translators had often to guess at the sense of a passage they could not understand. That they were sometimes unable even to guess, is evident from the fact that they occasionally inserted the Hebrew word as it stood in the original before them.

What was that original? We may safely reply that, as a recognised collection of authentic writings, it had no existence. In the first place, it is impossible to tell when

¹ According to the famous Jewish scholar Levita, Luzatto fixes the date of the vowels at the beginning of the sixth century.

the Jewish canon was closed. The earliest catalogue extant of the sacred books is that of Josephus, in the middle of the first century. We know, to be sure, what books were translated, but we also know that many of these are now considered apocryphal, both by the Jews and by ourselves. In the second place, although the Christian Churches treat the Bible as a whole—all parts of which are equally ordained to reveal the purposes of God, the Jews, at the close of the canon, divided their twenty-four books into three parts; each part being of inferior sanctity to the one before it. The *Torâh*, *i.e.*, the Law, or the Pentateuch, is pre-eminently sacred. It is the direct and immediate dictation of God. The *Nebhîm* or Prophets, stand next as indirectly inspired. And the *Ketubîm* or Holy Writings, which include the Psalms, Proverbs, Job, &c., are held to be of attenuated inspiration, and hence of inferior sanctity.

The Rationalist might be tempted to regard these descending grades as indicative of the common relation between reverence and antiquity. The inference, however, would be invalidated by the authorship assigned by Hebrew tradition to the Psalms. Some of these are ascribed to Moses, Abraham, Melchisedec, and even to Adam. With respect to the last named, Rabbi Wogue shrewdly remarks, "Albeit that Adam (if he spoke Hebrew) may have uttered a portion of Ps. cxxxix., the last six verses at least ought to be denied him; and even in the first part it seems sufficiently strange that the first man could have spoken of his mother."¹

Still, for the Jew, every syllable, every letter of the *Torâh* emanates direct from God; and every line of it was penned by the hand of Moses. The devoted reader of the Bible would scarcely hold himself pledged to believe that Moses wrote the account, in the last chapter

¹ *Histoire de la Bible et de L'Exegese Billique*, &c., par L. Wogue, Grand Rabbin, &c.

of Deuteronomy, of his own death and burial. But to the devout Jew no such laxity is permissible. Upon this point the Talmud is definitive. "Even he who should say, All the Law comes from God save such a verse—falls under the sentence, 'he that despiseth the word of the Lord and hath broken His commandment, that soul shall be utterly cut off; his iniquity shall be upon him'" (Num. xv. 31). Rabbi Simeon consequently meets the above objection—that Moses must either have lied or else have written after his death—by the rejoinder that: Moses wrote at the dictation of God; and the responsibility of recording the death as a past event was assumed by the Deity.

This unbounded veneration was never extended to other portions of the Old Testament, even after the canon was closed. From the first commencement of its formation under Ezra and Nehemiah, the Law alone was regularly read in the places of worship. The Prophets were occasionally, but not systematically, recited; and the Hagiographa, or Holy Writings rarely, if at all, until later times. From this it would follow that the less esteemed books were less familiarly known, tradition would be more frequently at fault, and diversity would grow with every increase to the number of hand-made copies. This too would explain the frequent divergence between the Samaritan Bible and the Septuagint. It would also lead to the conclusion, amply attested by Rabbinical literature, that at the time of the Greek translation there were many texts and many books of disputed sanctity.

The incomparable superiority ascribed to the Law above all other Scriptures had, moreover, an effect upon these which is of the greatest importance for us; so far, at least, as we are concerned with conformity between originals and transcripts. The preservation of authenticity was entirely in the hands of the scribes. When Ezra returned to Judea in 478 B.C., his object was to restore the law of Moses; which seems somewhat unaccountably

to have fallen, during the sixty or seventy years that had elapsed after the destruction of Jerusalem, into almost utter neglect. His effort was to compile and collate such of the old manuscripts as had escaped destruction. What remnant of these there may have been, we have no means of judging. But considering the desuetude or ignorance of the Law, so clearly set before us by Ezra and Nehemiah; considering how Jerusalem was treated by Nebuchadnezzar; how he razed the walls of the town, and destroyed the Temple and every public building by fire; how under such circumstances it is as much as men can do to save their lives,—the natural inference would be that the perishable and cumbersome skins on which the holy works were inscribed, and which, if originals, were kept in the Temple, must nearly all have been annihilated. Such indeed was evidently the opinion of those Jews who affirmed that, by the aid of miraculous assistance, Ezra reproduced the whole of the Sacred Writings from memory.

Be that as it may, it is certain that Ezra, and the scribes who followed up Ezra's work, until the time of Alexander, *i.e.*, for nearly 150 years, were sedulously engaged in establishing the supremacy of the Law; and of interpreting and editing the rest of the Scriptures under a deep sense of their subordinate value. To the Christian, who looks upon the prophetic writings and the Psalms as the surest confirmation of his creed, this view is completely subversive of his own. Yet it cannot be denied that the Old Testament, as transmitted to us, is the Old Testament as the scribes compiled, revised, and we might almost say of parts, composed it. Assuredly no one questions the survival of some of the ancient writings. But it is hard to conceive now, the imperfect, confused, and dislocated condition in which the scribes found, and had to deal with, them. For all but trained experts the task would have been a hopeless one. The ancient language, as we have seen, had died out. More than this, the character in

which it was written was no longer in use. The old manuscripts were in the Phœnician character; for, the primitive form of Hebrew was "the language of Canaan" mentioned by Isaiah. At what exact period the Assyrian or Chaldean letter was substituted in its place is a disputed point. The Talmud informs us it was introduced by Ezra. "But," says Professor W. Robertson Smith, "we know that this is a mistake, for the Samaritans, who did not possess the Pentateuch until fifty years after Ezra, received it in the old Phœnician letter, which they retain in a corrupted form down to the present day."¹ In any case the change was not likely to assist the copyists. The continuous form of the ancient writing,—the absence of any break between either sentences or words, is affirmed by some and questioned by others. But the division into verses was an innovation, while that of chapters was not the work of the Jews at all; but was used for the first time in the thirteenth century. As to authorship, almost every book was without a name. The Pentateuch, it is true, was written on separate skins. No such distinction was conferred upon other books. It is therefore not to be wondered at that in the historical writings, indeed in the Pentateuch too, statements frequently occur under the name of the same writer, which directly contradict one another. Granting the most religious desire, on the part of the copyist, faithfully to reproduce a text thus obscured, how liable he must have been to err. If we picture to ourselves a musician whose proficiency was limited to flute-playing; and suppose such an one to set himself to reproduce a perfect transcript of the entire works of Beethoven from the crabbed autographic score, what havoc might we not expect him to make with the harmony! Moreover, we have it upon Rabbinical authority, that the

¹ *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church.* Those who are interested in this subject will do well to read these instructive lectures. Professor Smith is in the front rank of "learned and believing criticism."

scribes purposely departed from the text wherever they held that to be incongruous or unseemly. Thus in Genesis xviii. 22, where we read, "The Lord still stood before Abraham," they ventured to write, "Abraham still stood before the Lord." Nor in other respects was their editorial method based upon judicious principles. "If," says Rabbi Wogue, "one must yield to Talmudic testimonies (Jerus. *Ta'ânîth*, iv. 2; tr. *Sôpherim*, vi. 4), this work of restoration may not always have been conformable to the rules of a sound criticism. 'Amongst many diverse readings for the same word,' say they, 'the one was adopted which occurred in the majority of exemplars;' whence it follows that regard was had to quantity, not to quality." As increase in quantity must necessarily have been detrimental to quality, considerable progress must have been made in the direction of error.

The most ancient Hebrew manuscript of the Old Testament extant is that of Odessa. This was once believed to date from the sixth century. Modern authorities now assign it to the ninth. It is admitted that for long before either period there had been complete uniformity in the Jewish Bible. If we are to assume that the Hebrew canon was closed at the time of the Septuagint, uniformity must be supposed to have existed ever since: for accuracy of reproduction, after the closing of the canon, became one of the most sacred of religious duties. "All the evidence of variations and quotations later than the first Christian century points to the received text as already existing practically as we have it, but we cannot follow its history beyond that time. On the contrary, there is abundant evidence that in earlier ages Hebrew MSS. differed as much as, or more than, MSS. of the New Testament."¹ The standard copy, therefore, whatever that may have been, is the Hebrew Bible "as we have it." Here at last we approach the answer we are in search of.

¹ *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church.*

The final reply may be given in the words of Professor Smith—

“If the scribes were not the men to make a critical text, it is plain that they were also not in a position to choose, upon scientific principles, the very best extant MS.; but it is very probable that they selected an old and well-written copy, possibly one of those MSS. which were preserved in the court of the Temple. Between this copy and the original autographs of the Sacred Writers there must have been many a link. It may have been an old manuscript, but it was not an exorbitantly old one. Of that there are two proofs. In the first place, it was certainly written with the ‘Square’ or ‘Chaldean’ letters used in our modern Hebrew Bibles; but these letters are of Aramaic origin, and in old times the Hebrews used the quite different character called Phœnician. . . . It is very doubtful whether there were any MSS. written in the Aramaic character before the third century B.C., and that, therefore, would be the earliest date to which we can refer the archetype of our present Hebrew copies.”¹

¹ *Ubi supra.*

LETTER II.

WE have seen that, in the eyes of the Jews, the Pentateuch is the most sacred of the Scriptures. In so far as this comparison derogates from the inspiration of the remainder of the Bible, such an estimate cannot be endorsed by the Christian. Nevertheless, for the main question of Revelation, as containing the history of Creation and of God's original covenant with man—as containing, in fact, the history of God Himself from His primary relation with this world—the books of Moses are entitled to the superior importance assigned to them by the Jews.

No attempt will be made here to enter into details of textual criticism, or into the nice points of Hebrew scholarship, upon which modern authorities have framed their conclusions. I shall simply allude to the broad results placed by common consent beyond the range of controversy. In tracing the old Hebrew text back to the time of Ezra (478 B.C.), it was made evident that, even supposing authentic manuscripts of the Mosaic books to have survived both the capture of the Ark by the Philistines and the destruction of the Temple by Nebuchadnezzar, the obstacles in the way of faithful reproduction were almost insuperable. It was also noted as somewhat singular that in so short a space as half a century, or little more, the Torâh, which was the tangible bond that united the Israelites to Jehovah, should have fallen into such utter disuse and oblivion. We shall now see there is ample proof to satisfy a dispassionate mind that the Pentateuch, as known to us, was not extant before the Exile, or till the time of Ezra: and

that the difficulties which then had to be overcome were, in some measure, labours of authorship as well as those of recension.

In the eighteenth year of the King Josiah (623 B.C.), while the Temple was undergoing repair, "Hilkiah the high priest said unto Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the Law in the house of the Lord" (2 Kings xxii. 8). What was this book thus suddenly brought to light? Was it the book of Exodus, or of Leviticus, or Deuteronomy, or was it the whole Pentateuch? That it was a discovery of the utmost moment, and that it created profound astonishment, is apparent from its effect upon Josiah. "It came to pass when the king had heard the words of the book of the Law, that he rent his clothes." A very superficial acquaintance with Bible history from the time of Joshua to the finding of the *Torâh* (a period covering over 800 years) is enough to convince one that the Law, as reproduced by Ezra—the Law as we have it—was as unknown to the divinely appointed Israelite leaders who immediately followed the Mosaic era, as it was to Samuel, David, Solomon, Isaiah, Amos, Micah, Hosea, or indeed as it was to Josiah himself. Let us contrast the present *Torâh* with the religious life of Israel for the thousand years between its institution under Ezra and the death of Joshua.

In Nehemiah xiii. the Law is spoken of as "the book of Moses," and from the reference to the Levitical code, here and elsewhere, we perceive that the religious system now enforced, included, not only that portion of the Law which is contained in Exodus and is repeated in Deuteronomy, but also that which relates to the priesthood. The newly discovered book therefore was the equivalent of our Pentateuch. Now, the one impression which forces itself upon us in the perusal of the non-historical books of the Pentateuch is that, the religion of the people of Israel was from beginning to end an intensely complicated Ritualism,

based upon the ancient principle of sacrificial worship. So elaborate is the ceremonial Law that the Deity is rendered inaccessible save through the priestly order. There is one tabernacle, one ark, one altar, one sanctuary; and one family is dedicated to the holy offices. "I will sanctify the tabernacle of the congregation and the altar: I will sanctify also both Aaron and his sons, to minister to me in the priests' office" (Exod. xxix. 44). Not the Levites even, who have charge of the tabernacle, are suffered to approach the altar: "They shall not come nigh to the vessels of the sanctuary and the altar, that neither they, nor ye also, die" (Num. xviii. 3). Then, the whole of Exod. xxix. prescribes the ceremonies of the burnt-offerings of rams and bullocks. In Num. vi. Jehovah gives minute instructions for the sacrifice of "he lambs" and "ewe lambs." In the next chapter eighty-nine verses are occupied with Jehovah's directions to Moses about sin-offerings and peace-offerings. Leviticus repeats the same lesson, and explains the virtue of sacrifice in the interdict against the eating of blood: "For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it unto you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul" (Lev. xvii. 11).

Turn from this severely defined ceremonial Law to the actual history of the popular religion for the 800 years preceding Hilkiah's discovery. From the time of Joshua to that of Samuel, some 300 years, the most zealous of its righteous leaders strove earnestly to rescue the nation from the abominations of idolatry. Yet not one of these godly men seems to have had an inkling of the Pentateuchal system. Jephthah makes a burnt-offering of his own daughter, in genuine heathen fashion; and this immediately after "the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah." By the advice of "the angel of the Lord," Manoah "took a kid with a meat-offering, and offered it upon a rock unto the Lord." Local sanctuaries, extem-

porary altars, the use of "high places" throughout the land, was the normal condition of things, not only condoned, but recognised as orthodox, and practised, by those who held immediate converse with Jehovah. Samuel offers a sucking lamb at Mizpeh, and orders Saul to "sacrifice sacrifices of peace-offerings" at Gilgal. Of the best of the kings the same story is repeated many times almost in the same words. Of Solomon it is written that he "loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of David his father," &c. "And the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there; for that was the great high place; a thousand burnt-offerings did Solomon offer upon that altar" (1 Kings iii. 4). "And Jehoshaphat did that which was right in the sight of the Lord all his days, wherein Jehoiada the priest instructed him. But the high places were not taken away: the people still sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places" (2 Kings xii. 2, 3). Of Azariah, who reigned two and fifty years in Jerusalem, it is written, "And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father Amaziah had done: save that the high places were not removed: the people sacrificed and burnt incense still in the high places" (chap. xv. 34). And so on, until the reign of Josiah, the popular religion is completely at variance with the Levitical system, and not a soul of them is conscious of transgression.

Considering the stress laid upon the sacrificial ritual, and the direct injunctions respecting it from Jehovah Himself, we read with astonishment of the seeming audacity with which Isaiah, Amos, Micah, and Jeremiah set it aside as ineffectual and even offensive to the Deity. "What are your many sacrifices to Me? saith Jehovah: I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats, &c. Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto Me, &c., &c.; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease

to do evil; learn to do well," &c. (Isa. i.) Jeremiah, writing in the same strain, goes so far as to make the Lord say: "For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt-offerings or sacrifices: but this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey My voice," &c. And Amos: "I hate, I despise your feast days, &c.; though ye offer Me burnt-offerings and your meat-offerings I will not accept them."

Was the book of the Law known to the pious men who thus addressed the people? One of two assumptions we are constrained to make. Either the prophets here quoted knew nothing of the complicated Ritualism of our existing Torâh; or they were "advanced" thinkers, who sought to rescue the nation from its withering superstitions, and train it to a nobler life of righteousness.

"The result of this survey is that, through the whole period, from the Judges to Ezekiel, the Law in its finished system and fundamental theories was never the rule of Israel's worship; and its observance was never the condition of the experience of Jehovah's grace. Although many individual points of ritual resembled the ordinances of the Law, the Levitical tradition as a whole, had as little force in the central sanctuary as with the mass of the people. The contrast between true and false worship is not the contrast between the Levitical and the popular systems. The freedom of sacrifice, which is the basis of the popular worship, is equally the basis of the faith of Samuel, David, and Elijah. . . . In truth, the people of Jehovah never lived under the Law, and the dispensation of Divine grace never followed its pattern till Israel had ceased to be a nation."¹ The only law known to the Judges, to the Kings, to the Prophets, was the traditional Torâh passed from generation to generation by word of

¹ *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church*, p. 266, 7. See Lectures IX. and X., where the argument here abridged is fully treated.

mouth. As a written book of revealed doctrine the existing Pentateuch was not in being. Up to the time of Ezekiel, all alike seem to have been as ignorant of the Levitical ordinances, as they were of the promise of a Messiah, or of its subsequent fulfilment; and it was probably the ritual of Ezekiel, combined with the consuetudinary law, which formed the groundwork of the new Torâh.

We are invited by the believing critic to view "the priestly and prophetic Torâh" as a development of the grand religious movement which Moses projected, and in part forestalled: and hence to accept it as in a sense Mosaic. In one sense I believe we may do so. But we must restrict this judgment to the simple point of Ritualism. The compilers of the Pentateuch had one distinct object before them in making a code of ceremonies the only passport to Divine favour. They desired to separate the Jewish people from all other peoples. Israelites were not to intermarry with foreigners; they were not to sacrifice at foreign altars; they were not to worship foreign gods. With the same purpose and by similar means, Moses cut off the Hebrews from the surrounding nations. In his time this was the first step towards the establishment of their autonomy. Their national life was at once aggressive and defensive. Isolation by "peculiarity" was the bond of union which consolidated their physical resources. Beyond this political aim, the spirit of the *later* law is straightly opposed to the scheme of Moses. Though not expressly hostile to the barbarous doctrine of atonement inherited from a remote and savage antiquity, still Moses struggled, exactly as the greater prophets did, to supplant idolatry by a purer system of Ethics. With the exception of the commandments respecting their tutelary God, "who brought them out of the land of Egypt," and of the injunction to keep the seventh day holy, all the commandments were directed to the observance of moral rules.

The Jewish conception of the Pentateuch cannot be ours. And in proportion as we gauge the sacred character of the Pentateuch by its Mosaic authenticity, to that extent must belief in its Divine origin be impaired. Further grounds for doubt and dispute as to authorship will now be summarily touched upon.

From the times of the Fathers down to those of the Reformation, and from these again to our own, the integrity and genuineness of the Pentateuch has been a prolific source of disagreement. Amongst modern critics, suspicion of plurality of authorship was confirmed by the closer attention which had been called to the different names given to God. Sometimes God is spoken of as Elohim, sometimes as Jehovah, or Yahveh. The first is a much more ancient and more comprehensive term. It is the plural form of Eloah, and was applied to the heathen deities of the Semitic race generally. Jehovah, on the contrary, was not in use till Israel became a nation. God said unto Moses, "I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob by the name of God Almighty; but by My name Jehovah was I not known to them" (Ex. vi. 3). The Hebrew term, here translated Almighty, is *El Shaddai*; which, though not synonymous with Elohim, has none of the exclusiveness of the new name.¹ Moses is now given to understand that the Deity henceforth constitutes Himself the tribal God of the Israelites; precisely as Chemosh was the god of Moab; and as surrounding gentes had their Ashtoreth, or their Molech, or other Baalim. Nor is it manifest that the theocratic government of the Hebrews which Moses here announces, and which is the dominant notion throughout the Old Testament, was in any way peculiar to them. The Elohim spoken of in the first verse of Genesis as the Creator of heaven and earth, is quite a different Being from the personal ally of the favoured descendants of Jacob. The

¹ For the meaning of *El Shaddai*, see *infra*, p. 163.

latter is in constant and intimate communication with His chosen people. For any others, He has no concern whatever.¹ He is minister both of the domestic and foreign policy of the Israelites. He sides with them in battle, if they please Him, without the slightest reference to the justice of their cause. He directs their maraudings, and rewards them with the spoil of the conquered. Above all things, He is jealous of defection; and vindictive and cruel in the punishment of it. He is full of crafty subterfuge: sometimes tempting and hardening, sometimes exasperating, sometimes putting lying spirits even into men's hearts, in order to ensnare them, or to compass some contemptible design. In nothing does He appear consistent, save in unaccountable caprice. This picture of the God of Israel, as drawn by the Jehovists, would probably not have differed much from that of any tribal God, had other Semitic traditions been preserved as faithfully as was the Hebrew.

The wide difference, however, between the Elohist and Jehovistic conceptions is not by any means the only ground for believing that, in the historical and traditionary parts of the Pentateuch, we have the work of at least two authors, if not two sets of authors: the Elohist having supplied the original matter in a fragmentary state; which matter was long afterwards compiled, revised, altered, and added to, by the Jehovists. It is incredible that any work by a single hand should be so wanting in symmetry, so incoherent and inconsistent, as the Pentateuch. Systems of legislation are indiscriminately mixed up with historical narrative. As regards the Law, we have distinct codes suited to a people in various stages of civilisation. As regards history, we have repetitions which in great part are contradictory. Furthermore, we are assured by Hebrew scholars of the highest competency, that the varieties

¹ "You only have I known of all the families of the earth, &c." (Amos iii. 2.)

of style are as marked as those of Chaucer and our own. The record of creation is twice given: each time the Creator being differently named;—as the complementary theory of authorship would lead us to expect. We have two accounts of the Deluge interwoven in consecutive chapters. It is impossible to reconcile, and equally hard to connect, the fragments of the two. The facts are given in the following order.

The seventh chapter of Genesis opens with Jehovah's instructions to Noah to prepare for the flood, which is to begin at the end of a week, and last forty days and forty nights. Of every clean beast, and of fowls he is to take "by sevens;" of the unclean "by two." Noah does as he is commanded. "And it came to pass after seven days that the waters of the flood were upon the earth." All this happens, as we are expressly told, when "Noah was six hundred years old."

At the eleventh verse begins another account, by repeating with greater accuracy the age of Noah. "In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened, and the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights." The selections by sevens is not mentioned. This time "two and two of all flesh" enter the ark with Noah. "And the waters prevailed upon the earth an hundred and fifty days."

In the next chapter the narrative goes on to say, "And the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat, and the waters decreased continually until the tenth month; in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, were the tops of the mountains seen. And it came to pass at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made; and he sent forth a raven, which went forth to and fro, until the waters were dried up from

off the earth. Also he sent forth a dove, &c. But the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot," &c. After "other seven days," the dove is again despatched, and returned with an olive leaf in her mouth. "And he stayed yet other seven days; and sent forth the dove which returned not again to him any more."

Compare these dates, and see how they tally as to the duration of the flood. The waters prevailed for 150 days, *i.e.*, from the seventeenth of the second month, to the seventeenth of the seventh month of Noah's six hundredth year. On the 150th day, or after forty days' rain and 110 days of submersion, the ark grounded on the top of Ararat. So far is clear. But what are we to make of the statement in the next verse, that the tops were not visible till the first of the tenth month, *i.e.* (counting always from the seventeenth of the second month), 226 days from the beginning of the flood, or forty days rain and 186 submersion? Again, the following verse still further complicates the puzzle. The raven and dove experiments are first made at the end of forty days. After seven days the dove comes back with an olive leaf; showing that the tops (if olives grew so high) were nearly bare.¹ After another seven days the land is sufficiently dry to provide the dove with food. This gives only fourteen days for submersion after the rain had ceased; and only 54, as against 150 in one account and 226 in another, for the total number.

One more puzzle yet remains. In immediate conjunction with the final departure of the dove, it is written, "And it came to pass in the six hundredth and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, the waters were dried up from off the earth; and Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and behold, the face of the ground was dry. And in the second month, on the seven and twentieth day of the month, was the earth

¹ Mount Ararat is 17,212 feet with perpetual snow. The olive above the sea-level; and is covered will not survive our English winters.

dried." Now, from the seventeenth of the second month of Noah's six hundredth year, to the first day of his six hundredth and first year, gives 317 days. But to this, according to the last verse of all, we must tack on another fifty-seven days, making a total of 374.

As the two names—Elohim and Jehovah—are made use of, one would think some of this confusion might reasonably be ascribed to a multiplicity of authors. Drs. Keil and Delitzsch are of a contrary opinion. They hold that the interchange of the names of Jehovah and Elohim actually proves identity of authorship. "That the variations in the names of God furnish no criterion by which to detect different documents is evident enough, from the fact that in chap. vii. 1, it is *Jehovah* who commands Noah to enter the ark, and in verse 4, Noah does as *Elohim* had commanded; whilst in verse 16, in two successive clauses Elohim alternates with Jehovah; the animals entering the ark at the command of Elohim, and Jehovah shutting Noah in." ¹ The argument is not a strong one.

A few instances of repetition and divergence deserve some passing notice. In Gen. xii. 13, Abram, fearing the Egyptians will kill him for the sake of his wife, said unto Sarai, "Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister, that it may be well with me, &c." In chap. xxvi. 7, the same story recurs of Isaac, who tells the men of Gerar that Rebekah is his sister; "lest, said he, the men of the place should kill me for Rebekah." In Exodus and in Numbers there are varied versions of the manna and the quails. Each of the same books gives its own version of the tapping of the rock. Each also recounts differently God's message to the elders. Of God's appearance to Moses on Mount Sinai, and of the presentation of the two tables of stone, there are three accounts: (Ex. xix., xx., xxiv.; Deut. v.) In Exod. xxiv. Moses is spoken of in the third person, "And the Lord said

¹ *Commentary on the Pentateuch*, Keil and Delitzsch, vol. i. p. 144.

unto Moses, Come up to Me into the mountain and be there; and I will give thee tables of stone and a law and commandments which I have written," &c. After Moses had been forty days and forty nights in the mount, instead of producing the ten commandments, he gives chapter upon chapter of levitical ordinances concerning the making of the ark, the curtains of the tabernacle, the hem of the priestly garments, the lamp oil, the pattern of the candlesticks, even to "the tongs thereof, and the snuff-dishes thereof," &c. &c., the whole being prefaced with, "The Lord spake unto Moses, saying." All this, however, up to chap. xxxi., looks like an interpolation, for in chap. xxxii., Moses is still on the mount, whence the Lord orders him to descend in consequence of the corrupt practices of the people during his absence. The wrath of God being kindled, He threatens to "consume" the Israelites, but Moses dissuades him, "and the Lord repented of the evil which He thought to do unto His people." It is now that Moses comes down with the tables. "And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables." Notwithstanding this, upon seeing "the calf and the dancing," Moses "cast the tables out of his hand and brake them beneath the mount." God then orders him (chap. xxxiv.) "to hew two tables of stone like unto the first." The result is a set of commandments quite distinct from our decalogue, as taken from Ex. xx. and Deut. v. For instance, the third commandment is, "The feast of unleavened bread shalt thou keep. Seven days shalt thou eat unleavened bread, &c. All that openeth the matrix is mine, and every firstling," &c. The fifth commandment—"Thou shalt observe the feast of weeks, &c., and the feast of the ingathering at the year's end." The sixth—"Thrice in the year shall all your men-children appear before the Lord God, the God of Israel." The seventh—"Thou shalt not offer the blood of My sacrifice with leaven," &c. The eighth—"Neither

shall the sacrifice of the feast of the passover be left unto the morning." The ninth—"The first of the first-fruits of thy land thou shalt bring unto the house of the Lord thy God." The tenth—"Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk."

In Deut. v. Moses speaks in the first person—"Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak," &c. He makes no reference to the Ritualism just cited from Exod. xxxiv., but gives at once (as he also does Ex. xx.) the ten commandments adopted, as such, by the Churches. The repetition of the whole story three times over by one writer is not easy to account for. The remarkable variations in Exod. xxxiv. can hardly fail to convince us of later amendments by a priestly hand.

The next point is the anachronisms. We are not called upon to strain our faith over the record of Moses' death. Even Dr. Delitzsch, who maintains there is not a word in the Pentateuch which may not have been indited by the pen of Moses, admits that the last few chapters of Deuteronomy are posthumous additions. In spite of this eminent scholar, whose learning justly deserves respect, there are many passages which, to the ignorant, are quite as impossible to think Mosaic. In Gen. xxxvi., *e.g.*, it is written, "And these are the kings that reigned in the land of Edom before there reigned any king over the children of Israel." Now, as no king reigned over Israel till Saul, about 1060 B.C., and as Moses died about 1480 B.C., the event is referred to between 400 and 500 years before it happened. In Exod. xvi. 35, "And the children of Israel did eat manna forty years, until they came to a land inhabited," &c. It was after forty years' wandering that they took Canaan. But this did not happen till about 1430 B.C., or long after the death of Moses. In Numb. xxxii., places are spoken of which did not exist in the time of Moses. Constant mention is made of Dan, which was only known as Laish till a much later date.

In Gen. xii. 8, there is an accurate description of Beth-el and Hai; Gen. xxxiii. 18, mention of Shalem, a city of Shechem; all of them in the land of Canaan, where Moses had never set foot. In Gen. xxxv. 20, it is related how Jacob set a pillar upon Rachel's grave; adding, "that is the pillar of Rachel's grave unto this day." No one would speak thus of a recent occurrence. Elsewhere the later distribution of the tribes is spoken of; minute details concerning the reign of Solomon, and many events and circumstances which happened during the monarchy are accurately known to the writer or writers of the Pentateuch.

Besides the objections of this kind, there is a class which may be termed arithmetical. These have been carefully examined by Bishop Colenso. A couple of instances will suffice to illustrate them. In 2 Chron. xxx. 16, xxxv. 11, we have an account of the killing for the Passover: "And the priests sprinkled the blood from their hands, and the Levites flayed them." Upon this, Bishop Colenso comments as follows: "Hence, when they kept the second passover under Sinai (Num. ix. 5), where we must suppose that 150,000 lambs were killed at one time 'between the two evenings' (Ex. xii. 6) for the two millions of people,—at which time, certainly, there were only *three* priests, Aaron, Eleazar, and Ithamar (Lev. viii. 2; Num. iii. 4); each priest must have had to sprinkle the blood of 50,000 lambs in about two hours, that is, at the rate of about *four hundred lambs every minute for two hours together.*" Again, Exod. i. 5, we are told that when Jacob went into Egypt with his eleven sons (Joseph was in Egypt already) and their families, "all the souls that came out of the loins of Jacob were seventy souls." The sojourn in Egypt is variously given at 145 and 430 years (Ex. xii. 40); and we are afterwards told that, the number of *fighting* men who left Egypt, exclusive of women and children, amounted to 600,000. The entire number therefore could not have been less than near about two millions.

The seventh verse states that "the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly and multiplied," &c. Bishop Patrick, availing himself of this statement, suggests that the Hebrew women might, "by the extraordinary blessing (!) of God, have brought forth six children at a time."

We are dealing here with the simple question of authorship. In Deut. xxxi. 9-24, it is distinctly stated that, "Moses wrote this law,"—the *Torâh*; "and delivered it unto the priests the sons of Levi," &c. What is the opinion of modern critics, of learned and believing critics—I will quote no others—upon this head? Speaking of the Pentateuch, Professor Robertson Smith says: "In its present form it was written after the time of Moses, nay, after that of Joshua. It is now no longer permissible to insist that the reference to the kingship of Israel over Edom, and similar things, are necessarily isolated phenomena. We cannot venture to assert that the composition of the Pentateuch out of older sources of various date took place before the time of the kings."¹ Dr. Davidson writes: "There is little external evidence for the Mosaic authorship, and what little there is, does not stand the test of criticism. . . . The objections derived from internal structure are conclusive against the Mosaic authorship. Various contradictions are irreconcilable. The traces of a later date are convincing."²

Ewald distributes the contents of the Pentateuch between four, if not five, authors. The oldest of the compositions he considers to be the "Book of the Covenant," and to this he allows no higher antiquity than the time of the Judges. "All discoverable traces show that though it cannot be earlier than the second half of the period of Judges, . . . it certainly cannot be later."³ Next in age comes the "Book of Origins," which he assigns to the beginning

¹ *Ubi supra.*

² *Introduction to the Old Testament.*

³ *History of Israel*, sect. II. C.

of Solomon's reign. The author is "one who had felt the influence of David's kingly spirit, and who was himself an actor in the best part of the most hopeful age of Israelite dominion." The third narrator belongs, he thinks, to the tenth or ninth century B.C., *i.e.*, to the time of Elijah and Joel. The fourth gives "nothing but old matter newly worked up after the literary fashion demanded by the best prophecy and religion then in vogue." The fifth gives generally "word for word older books, or slightly modifies the accounts of others." He is a collector and a worker-up. Ewald adds that at the time of the fifth writer "the literature of the primitive history had long swelled out to an extraordinary bulk." Many more authorities might be adduced to the same effect; but we must now inquire what *internal* evidence of revelation is to be found in the sacred Scriptures.

LETTER III.

REVELATION necessarily implies miraculous intervention ; and as there is no *à priori* argument against an Author of nature, it is not admissible to deny revelation on the ground that the laws of nature are immutable. The credibility of miracles rests entirely on the balance of evidence. But there is a fitness in things : and most of us are disposed (however inconsistently) to make this fitness the standard of credibility. The miracle must bear a suitable relation to the occasion of it. A sense of this undoubtedly influences our judgment in respect of miracles belonging to religions not our own. Thus, for example, when we are told in the account of the Flood by the Persian Magi, that all the waters issued from the oven of an old woman, we naturally feel that the incongruity in some measure increases the difficulty of belief. But if we exercise criticism in this spirit, it would seem that not a few of the Hebrew miracles, which we have made essential to our religion, might, from a foreign point of view, be subject, for the same reason, to the same judgment. There may be some appropriateness in the dispersion of mankind consequent on the building of Babel ; though it is strange that people, however primitive, should ever have thought to reach heaven by means of a tower ; and certainly the progress of civilisation must have been greatly arrested by punishing men, who before spoke a universal language, with the “confusion of tongues.” The divinely-wrought plagues of Egypt are mostly exaggerations of its natural plagues. But the budding of Aaron’s rod savours strongly of the “plant

trick" of Oriental conjurers at the present day ; while the conversion of a rod into a serpent was performed as successfully by the sorcerers of Pharaoh as it was by the inspired Moses. The waters of Jordan and of the Red Sea are made to stand up in walls, for an adequate purpose, it is true ; but we are assured, upon authority quite as reliable, that the Pamphylian Sea behaved in precisely a similar manner to admit the passage of Alexander the Great. The miracle of Jonas in the whale's belly is hardly justified by the importance of the event : besides, Eastern mythology furnishes us with an exact parallel, if not with the original of the story. And the derangement of the entire universe by the arrest of the sun's, or rather of the earth's, progress, must be deemed an extravagant mode of gratifying even Hebrew revenge. These and a crowd of similar marvels may be passed over as either above or beneath criticism :—the subject of miracles will be attended to later on. But when we speak of internal evidence we allude to the moral teaching of the Old Testament, and to the character or nature of the Being from whom the revelation is alleged to come. We shall see that the instances of intervention are stamped throughout with a rankly human character, and with features so odious that no plea of symbolism, no allowance for antiquity of style, no outcry of sacrilege, can save them from emphatic condemnation.

If language of this kind should provoke you to cast aside these letters, I ask you to reflect calmly, if you can, upon the passages now laid before you. With what feelings are we to contemplate the conduct of Jacob who cheats his blind and aged father with the lie, "I am Esau, thy first-born," and who swindles his famished brother out of a birthright and blessing,—which means "the fatness of the earth and plenty of corn and wine?" It matters little what we think of the patriarch and father of his people ; but these things gravely affect our conception of

a God who chooses such an one for his special favourite. Another patriarch is upheld as an everlasting model of righteous faith, because in a moment of fanaticism he is ready to sacrifice his child to the demon of his superstition. Would a heaven full of voices justify any of *us* in so treating our children? Would any amount of miracle authorise the smallest amount of crime? Clearly a miracle in itself can prove nothing but supernatural power. Is not the Bible full of the devil's miracles? St. Paul says, "Though *an angel from heaven* preach any other gospel, &c., let him be accursed" (Gal. i. 8). Also Christ himself, "For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders," &c. And who does not know that, in the days of Abraham, the pagan rite of human sacrifice was as common as it is in Dahomey or in Central Africa to this hour?

In Numbers xiv. it is related how the children of Israel, frightened (naturally enough) when told that the land of Canaan was "a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof," and was full of giants, in whose sight they were "as grasshoppers," wished themselves back in Egypt; and how, for so wishing, Jehovah determines to smite them with a pestilence; but being cajoled by an appeal to his vanity—Moses tells him what the nations will say of him—changes his mind; yet after all declares, "Your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms until your carcasses be wasted in the wilderness."

In Judges iv., Jehovah punishes the children of Israel by selling them into the hand of Jabin, king of Canaan; the captain of whose host was Sisera. Some twenty years after this selling, the Jewish God (as is his wont) changes his mind, and discomfits Sisera and all his hosts, so that "there was not a man left." Howbeit Sisera escapes to the tent of Heber, a friend of Jabin, where Jael—Heber's wife—treacherously allures him to rest in the sacred

security of hospitality. She gives him milk; she covers him with a mantle; and as soon as he sleeps, murders him by smiting a nail into his temples. And the moral, as sung by Deborah the prophetess, is—"Blessed above all women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be; blessed shall she be above women in the tent."

I suppose every child brought up in awe of the Bible conceives a pious hatred for the Philistines, the Moabites, the Edomites, and all the other foes of the people of Israel. Thus the seeds of intolerance, of bigotry, and of sectarian animosity, are thickly sown, and take deep root in the credulous hearts of children, when they learn how their Heavenly Father can hate capriciously, and show vengeance upon the enemies of his chosen people. Yet what was the real truth concerning these nations? Until the invasion by the Hebrews, Canaan was their home, as much as Mexico and Peru were the homes of the primitive races before the Spanish Conquest of America. The Hebrews invaded Canaan just as the Syrians and Assyrians afterwards invaded Israel; just as the Scythians and Chaldees in turn invaded the countries of both. The Hebrews were usurpers and marauders: and unless patriotism be a crime, and plundering be a virtue, then is it the Philistinès, not the Jews, who deserve our admiration. But look at the part which the God of the Old Testament is made to assume towards the unfortunate Canaanites. In Exodus xvii. 14, Jehovah bids Moses write a memorial for Joshua, to the effect that he "will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven;" the crime of the Amalekites being that of fighting for their country (1 Sam. xv. 3). In obedience to the Lord of Hosts, Samuel commands Saul to "smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all they have, and spare them not, but slay both man and woman, *infant and suckling*, ox and sheep, camel and ass." No mercy even to the dumb animals! But Saul does spare Agag the

king of the Amalekites; and for this he is to lose his kingdom. Samuel hews Agag in pieces with his own hand.

Turn to that wonderful chapter, Numbers xxxi., where the awful tale is told of the spoiling of the Midianites. Jehovah Himself bids Moses "avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites." And "as the Lord commanded Moses, they slew five kings of Midian, and took all the women of Midian captives and their little ones, &c.; and they burnt all the cities wherein they dwelt, and all their goodly castles with fire." But when Moses found that some of the women had been spared, he was wroth; and ordered every married woman and "every male among the little ones" to be massacred. But the virgins he ordered them to "keep alive for yourselves." Can mothers realise this wholesale murder of babes, and not pause before they instil such lessons as these into the hearts of their own little ones? Are we striving to put down Jaggernaut amongst our people in India, and shall we teach our children to worship a Molech at home?

The hostility of the Philistines and the Edomites, which ended in the dispersion of Judea, was unquestionably due to the unjust aggressions of David. And the conquest of Samaria by the Syrian kings and all the sorrows it afterwards entailed upon the Jews, were probably due to the same cause. Some of the surrounding nations, whom we are taught to hate, were evidently disposed to be kind and generous to the Jews. The king of Moab, when appealed to, at once gave a friendly welcome to David; and sheltered his father and mother against Saul. But see the way in which David requites this act of kindness (2 Sam. viii.); without any apparent reason, "he smote Moab," &c., and "with two lines measured he to put to death, and with one full line to keep alive." That is, he barbarously massacred two out of three of them. No wonder their neighbours, the Ammonites, were suspicious of King

David's friendly overtures. Yet what was the penalty they had to pay for insulting the messengers of this man after God's own heart? Joab is sent to lay waste the country of Ammon; and David takes the king's crown and sets it on his own head. (1 Chron. xx. 3.) "And he brought out the people that were in it, and *cut them with saws, and with harrows of iron, and with axes.* Even so dealt David with all the cities of the children of Ammon." Even so!

So too Joab deals with Edom until he has cut off every male. Is it edifying, think you, to have one's sympathies thus perverted;—to be brought up to believe that God is always on the side of cruelty and injustice?

Again, David, this greatest and best of the Hebrew monarchs, is seized with brute-passion for his friend's wife: and how does he behave? He employs Joab—worthy instrument for such purpose—to get the husband put out of the way: and having committed murder, David commits adultery.

Look at his dealings with the children of Saul. (2 Sam. xxi.) There being a famine in the land, David inquires of the Lord. "And the Lord answered, It is for Saul and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites." So instigated by his terrible deity, David asks the Gibeonites what atonement they wish to exact in order that Jehovah may avert the famine. The Gibeonites reply: "Let seven men of his (Saul's) sons be delivered unto us; and we will hang them up unto the Lord in Gibeah." "And he delivered them into the hands of the Gibeonites." Now, although this act resulted from David's inquiries of Jehovah, although the line of David's conduct was clearly indicated by Jehovah, we find in 2 Kings xiv. 6: "But the children of the murderers he slew not; according to that which is written in the book of the law of Moses, wherein the Lord commanded, saying, The fathers shall not be put to death for the children; nor the children be

put to death for the fathers. But every man shall be put to death for his own sin." A commandment, by the way, which is distinctly contradicted in the Decalogue (Exod. xx. 5, xxxiv. 7; Deut. v. 9; and also Numbers xiv. 18). There are many other instances of these shockingly barbarous conceptions of the Supreme Being, which we are taught to adopt as the most sacred of all creeds. The story of Ahab and Micaiah is particularly offensive. (1 Kings xxii.) Ahab wanting to attack Ramoth-Gilead, consults the prophets, 400 in number. And they answer, "Go up, for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king." But Jehoshaphat, Ahab's commander-in-chief, has misgivings, and advises further consultations. So the prophet Micaiah is consulted; and he too at first repeats the language of the other prophets: but on being urged to speak the truth (which he has not done before), he confesses that Jehovah induced the prophets to lie, in order that Ahab might fall into a trap. Hear the words of the prophet: "And the Lord said, Who shall persuade Ahab that he may go up and fall at Ramoth Gilead? &c. And there came forth a spirit and stood before the Lord; and said, I will persuade him. And the Lord said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, Thou shalt persuade him and prevail also. Go forth and do so. Now, therefore, behold the Lord hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these the prophets. And the Lord hath spoken evil concerning thee."

In the same way, we are told repeatedly that Jehovah "hardened the heart" of Pharaoh for vainglory's sake, that "I might show them my signs before him." If that be a figure of speech, no such license can be claimed for the other.

No instances can be more strikingly gross than the miraculous punishments for sacrilege to the ark. (1 Sam. vi. 19.) Fifty thousand and three score and ten men of

Bethshemesh were smitten with death, "because they had looked into the ark of the Lord." It would seem impossible for the most credulous persons to believe such a story; since nothing short of a miracle could make 50,070 men persist in gratifying curiosity at the certain cost of life. The other case is that of Uzza (1 Chron. xiii.), driver of the cart in which the ark was placed: "And when they came unto the threshing-floor of Chidon, Uzza put forth his hand to hold the ark: for the oxen stumbled; and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzza; and he smote him because he put his hand to the ark: and there he died before God." To believe in such a tale would be the height of blasphemy: while it is transparent that the narrative merely embodies a superstitious veneration for all that pertains to the externals of religion;—a veneration which has prevailed in all ages, and which is so conspicuously illustrated in our own.

Some of these narratives are so grotesque, one might fancy that they were extracted for our amusement from a book of fairy tales. Such is the account of Elisha's going up to Beth-el (2 Kings ii. 23). "When there came forth little children out of the city, and mocked him and said unto him, Go up, thou bald head! Go up, thou bald head! and he turned back and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the Lord. And there came forth two she-bears out of the wood; and tare forty and two children of them." Conceive the Supreme Being miraculously destroying forty-two little ones for childish pranks like these. Besides such distortions of the divine character, many examples are set before us of Jewish intolerance and persecution, also supposed to be sanctified by approval of the Deity. Thus (2 Kings x.), Jehu, one of the most detestable of the Israelitish kings, treacherously massacres all the worshippers of Baal; "so that there was not a man left." "And the Lord said unto Jehu, Because thou hast done well in executing that which is right in mine eyes,

and have done unto the house of Ahab according to all that was in mine heart [Jehu had had Ahab's seventy sons put to death, besides 'all that remained of the house of Ahab in Jezreel, and all his great men and his priests, until he left him none remaining'], thy children of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel."

Josiah's persecution when he makes a clean sweep of the wizards and workers with familiar spirits, and when he pollutes the graves of the unfortunate Samaritans, and destroys all their houses, and "slew all the priests of the higher places that were upon the altars, and burned men's bones upon them," is especially praised. "Like unto him," we are told, "was there no king before him." And what can be more atrocious than Elijah's slaughter of the eight hundred and fifty priests at the brook of Kishon? Or what more repugnant to our notions of right and wrong, than the Hebrew laws respecting slaves and servants? What must the heathen think when our missionaries tell them how God ordained that, "if a man smite his servant or his maid with a rod, and he die under his hand, he shall be surely punished. Notwithstanding, if he continue a day or two, he shall not be punished, for he is his money" (Exod. xxi. 20, 21)? "I shall never forget," says Bishop Colenso, "the revulsion of feeling with which a very intelligent Christian native, with whose help I was translating these words into the Zulu tongue, first heard them as words said to be uttered by the same great and gracious Being whom I was teaching him to trust in and adore."

In short, the Old Testament is replete with horrors of this kind, perpetrated, often in the name, but more often by the direct instigation, of the Jewish Deity.

It would be the folly of narrow-mindedness to revile the Israelites for being Israelite. I am not pointing at the heathenism and barbarity of the ancient Hebrews as a special reproach to them. I have no thought of measur-

ing their mental condition by a nineteenth-century standard. It is *our* unfortunate veneration of their history and all its ugly consequences that, I am reprobating now. Here is the history of a semi-barbarous people, a history of unjust aggression, of superstition and idolatry, of immorality in its most repulsive forms, of bloodthirsty intolerance, persecution, and brutality, unsurpassed by the most hideous annals of the Inquisition; and we consecrate it. We are taught from infancy that the said history is the "Word of God." On our bended knees, as little children, we receive the awful instruction from those whom we reverence above all gods. We believe then with the perfect faith which accepts any teaching from the lips of love: and by and by, when simplicity and innocence are gone, the sacred lesson is dearer than life; and we are ready to tear one another's hearts out for the sake of a nursery tale.

Although we are applying the test of morality to the claims for Divine authorship—as a test of revelation, that is—we are not otherwise concerned here with the defence of the Bible as an aid to religious belief. There may be much in the Old Testament that is admirable for this purpose; but so there is in the sacred books of the Brahman and of the Buddhist. Nothing short of miraculous intervention can be admitted as the proof we are in search of. Our present inquiry has only to do with revelation in this restricted sense.

There are writers, justly deserving of the eminence their good work has earned for them, who strive to maintain the sacred character of the Bible on the score of its *righteous* teaching. Advocacy of this kind is not always free from ambiguity. It invites us to believe more than it has courage to express. Yet it escapes the sneer of scepticism by committing itself to really nothing. If, for the sake of my argument, I may refer to Mr. Matthew Arnold and Professor Max Müller as representative

pleaders of this class, I do so with great respect for the high aims which always animate these cultivated writers. It is incumbent on me, however, to show that the abhorrence I have intended to stir up in your mind, and the inference by implication which I would have you draw from it, are not to be warded off by the charge of a "hard and positive" spirit, or by the plea that some parts of the Bible announce the highest and noblest truths.

The purpose of Mr. Arnold's "Literature and Dogma," for instance, is to denounce such a spirit, and to warn us not to "kill our souls with literalism." His thesis may be summed up in a pair of sentences: "When we are asked what is the object of religion? let us reply, *Conduct*. And when we are asked further, what is conduct? let us answer, *Three-fourths of life*." And, "there is, then, a real power which makes for righteousness; and it is the greatest of realities for us." The last proposition is the very one for which we are seeking evidence. Mr. Arnold's earnest attempt to convince us that the Bible is a sure teacher of the first, bears excellent fruit after its kind. But he also, without hesitating, asserts as much for the other. Is he warranted in doing so?

It would be absurd to suggest that Mr. Arnold is wanting in straightforwardness. He is the most outspoken of men. He flatly enough declares "the popular theology which rests the Bible's authority on miracle" to be an obstacle to the receiving and the studying of the Scriptures. He believes the miracles related in the Gospels "to have been generated under the same kind of conditions as other miracles, and to follow the same laws."¹ He deprecates the usual antithesis between *natural* and *revealed*, "For that in us which is really natural is in truth *revealed*," a sentence which cuts away the preternatural standpoint at a blow; and which places his own finished poetry on a par, in this respect, with every inspired passage

¹ *Loc. cit.*, p. 140.

in the Bible. Nay, he goes so far as to say, "the assumption with which all the churches and sects set out, that there is a great Personal First Cause, the moral and intelligent Governor of the universe, and from Him the Bible derives its authority, can never be verified."¹ Nevertheless he affirms, "as long as the world lasts, all who want to make progress in righteousness will come to Israel for inspiration," &c. Why so? Because their morality is purer, their character sublimer than other people's? Not at all. It is "in spite of their shortcomings even in righteousness itself, and their insufficiency in everything." They are "petty" and "unamiable," yet they possess a most "extraordinary distinction," and the proof of this follows in the words of Balaam, "God has given commandment to bless, and He hath blessed, and we cannot reverse it! He hath not seen iniquity in Jacob, and He hath not seen perverseness in Israel; the eternal, his God, is with him."

Mr. Matthew Arnold has, I presume, no faintest belief in the words which introduce the passage he quotes: "And the Lord met Balaam, and put a word in his mouth, and said, Go again unto Balak and say thus." He warns us against taking such passages in a *literal* instead of in a *literary* sense. Still, the Spirit which informs this and all like sayings, the Spirit which throughout the Bible "*makes for righteousness*," is "*an enduring power, not ourselves*," and it testifies to its own existence by—well, by what? by making virtue its own reward, by making pleasure (the highest of course) the concomitant of goodness. This seems to be the outcome of Mr. Arnold's argument. The truth is, it is pure Utilitarianism in a Hebrew mask.

We have no experimental proof of a Personal First Cause. Miraculous revelation is as good for one religion as for another. But there is "*an enduring power, not ourselves, which makes for righteousness*." We have the

¹ Preface.

same evidence for this as we have that fire burns. Herein lies the revelation of the Bible; the Bible proclaims this greatest of truths for us as no other book proclaims it.

The Utilitarianism I leave to be discussed in its proper place. But why the Hebrew mask? It seems to cover (unintentionally perhaps) an insidious leaning to the kind of proof which is repudiated. This power is either a God or not a God. If in any sense, however vague, we are to say a God, then an assumption is made which can never be verified; and Mr. Arnold's suggestion verges upon the "rude and blind belief" which he criticises. If in no wise a God, then the Bible has but poorly helped us. Mr. Arnold relegates the doctrine of the Trinity to the bishops: he himself has succeeded in reducing the First Person of it to an impersonal abstraction. If, in turn, we reduce this "enduring power," once more, to the moral law or to the working of the social system, we have Mr. Arnold's doctrine in other terms; we have also the familiar doctrine of the Benthamites. But for this revelation we are certainly not indebted to the people of Israel. Mr. Arnold partly anticipates the objection when he says—"Why, however, if there *is* an enduring Power [the abstraction is here promoted to a capital letter], not ourselves, that makes for righteousness, should we study the *Bible* that we may learn to obey him? [the Power becomes personal]. Will not other teachers and books do as well?" And here again the answer is—"Why? why, because it is *revealed* in Israel and the Bible, and not by other teachers and books! that is, there is infinitely more of him there, he is plainer and easier to come at, and incomparably more impressive." This, I submit, is not borne out by a study of comparative theology. But if it were, the argument which goes on, "If you want to know plastic art, you go to the Greeks," &c., cannot be admitted as evidence of an intelligent Power, unless we first make the (forbidden) assumption that such a Power exists, or that the pre-

eminence of righteousness in Israel and plastic art amongst the Greeks are only to be accounted for supernaturally.

Professor Müller is more guarded, and less vehement, than Mr. Arnold. But he too seems to dally with revelation after a fashion not always quite in keeping with his own free-thinking. Nothing can be more catholic than the creed of Professor Müller. He takes his text from St. Peter: "That God is no respecter of persons, but that in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted with him:" and in the largest and kindest way imbues his discourses with this great principle. He almost goes the full length of the evolutionist when he admits, "that in one sense every religion was a true religion, being the only religion which was possible at the time, which was compatible with the language, the thoughts, and the sentiments of each generation, which was appropriate to the age of the world."¹ Still, here and there, it is implied that, evolution *proves* an Evolver; and that the Bible is evidence thereof. His protest against the literal reading of the Old Testament derives great strength from the science of language—of which he is so distinguished a master. He is able to show why certain passages are to be figuratively construed. "Ancient words and ancient thoughts, for both go together, have in the Old Testament not yet arrived at that stage of abstraction in which, for instance, active powers, whether natural or supernatural, can be represented in any but a personal and more or less human form. When we speak of a temptation from within or from without, it was more natural for the ancients to speak of a tempter, whether in a human or in an animal form," &c. "What we call divine guidance they speak of as a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way." Every student of ancient language, he tells us, sees at once that

¹ Introduction to the Science of Religion, p. 261.

the account of Eve's creation out of Adam's rib is but a metaphor. "Bone" was the figure for the innermost essence of a thing. If Adam had wished to say to Eve: "Thou art the same as I am," he would have said, "Thou art bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh." "Let such an expression be repeated for a few generations only, and a literal, that is to say, a material and deceptive interpretation would soon spring up, and people would at last bring themselves to believe that the first woman was formed from the bone of the first man," &c.¹ This is instructive, and reasonable enough; and we shall see in another letter what valuable use Professor Müller has made of the doctrine that, it is impossible to express abstract ideas except by metaphor, when he treats of comparative mythology and the religions of the ancient world.

For all that, I maintain the superhuman character of the Bible cannot be shored up with philological buttresses. I am ready to admit that, when we are told God appeared to So-and-so in a dream, this means that So-and-so dreamt it. But the sun either stood still or it did not. The walls of Jericho were felled with a shout, or they were not. And for all the crimes imputed to him, God is either responsible—as the Bible declares him to be; or the Bible is to be construed as we construe other "rude and blind" beliefs of human beings in their infancy.

¹ *Ubi supra*, p. 47.

LETTER IV.

THE evidence from the fulfilment of PROPHECY is held by many to be in itself conclusive. What is it really worth?

Prophecy is generally supposed to signify prediction. Yet prediction was by no means the exclusive, nor even the chief, characteristic of the prophet's calling. He was the inspired messenger of Jehovah it is true; but his function was to preach and exhort, and to interpret the Divine will, rather than to foretell the future. Nor is his office to be confused with that of the Levitical priest. Priesthood was an hereditary order; that of the prophet, never. The sacerdotal office was as ancient as the nation itself; while the prophet's vocation first became an acknowledged institution under Samuel. The duties of the priest were almost purely ceremonial, something like those of the subdeacons and acolytes in the Roman Church. The prophet was a moral and religious teacher; professing both to know and to expound the will of Jehovah. He was selected in his youth by presumed fitness; and was specially trained for the prophetic service. He needed something of the poet in his nature, and proficiency in instrumental music was one of his chief requirements. The training and habits of the prophet deserve particular attention. His mode of life was primitive in the extreme. His rude hut was framed of the boughs of trees. His meals were scanty and savourless, his dress coarse and of a fashion peculiar to his order. He lived apart by himself. And his inter-

course with the Divine Being was obtained after severe fasting, and by means of dreams, visions, and trances.

This mode of producing enthusiasm, fanaticism, and self-delusion, is infallible. In all times and places it has been practised with a like success. In his "Timæus," Plato thus alludes to the fact: "For the authors of our being . . . so ordered our inferior parts . . . and in the liver placed his oracle, which is sufficient proof that God has given the art of divination to the foolishness of man. For no man when in his senses attains prophetic truth and inspiration; but when he receives the inspired word, either his intelligence is enthralled by sleep, or he is demented by some distemper or possession." The North American Indian, the Malay, the Zulu, the Hindoo, and the African, all fast in order to produce a state of religious ecstasy. "Bread and meat," says Dr. Tylor, "would have robbed the ascetic of many an angel's visit; the opening of the refectory door must many a time have closed the gates of heaven to his gaze" (Primitive Culture, vol. ii. p. 415). Occasionally the morbid exaltation displayed itself in such exhibitions as that of Saul's stripping off his clothes to prophesy before Samuel; of Isaiah's walking naked and barefooted for three years; of David's dancing naked before the ark. So with the dervishes, dancing until giddiness and exhaustion are brought on is still a religious ceremony.

Although, as just stated, prediction was but an accidental rather than an essential attribute of the Hebrew prophet, he, like modern seers, was supposed to be gifted with clairvoyance. In 1 Sam. ix., when Saul's father lost his asses, Saul repairs to Samuel—the "seer" and "man of God"—and gives him the fourth part of a shekel. Whereupon Samuel tells Saul "all that is in his heart," and the asses are forthwith recovered. Some of the prophets indignantly repudiated this trade of professional divination; and even declared their contempt for the wisdom born of

phrensy. That the ecstatic condition was not always edifying may be gathered from the fact that Shemaiah the Nehelamite ordered "every man that is mad and maketh himself a prophet," to be put "in the stocks;"—a proceeding which so exasperated Jeremiah that, quoting Jehovah, as "thus said the Lord," he punishes Shemaiah and his seed with banishment.

In contemplating these features of the prophetic character we must not forget the intellectual condition of the people whom the prophets addressed. It was one of absolute ignorance, combined with its inseparable attendants—credulity and superstition. Under these circumstances the demand invariably creates the supply: a superstitious generation seeketh after a sign, and is only too willing to accept fanaticism for inspiration. In all ages mankind have been the dupes of priest-craft. But although the priest has interested motives in fostering credulity, it is man's innate tendency which first engenders the self-deception or the imposture of the professional spiritualist. Divination in some form or other has always had its votaries. From the mysteries of Urim and Thummim to the fortune-telling gipsy; from the horoscope of astrology to the dregs of the nurse's tea-cup; from the bellowings of the sacred Apis to the table-rappings of the "medium;"—the intense yearning after fore-knowledge has ever consulted its omens and its oracles. For ever the spirit of curiosity remains the same. The only change is in the means of gratifying it.

With respect to the predictions themselves, if any of them can be said to have been fulfilled (which in a literal sense is doubtful), those that relate to historical facts must be regarded as mere lucky guesses. They were made by sagacious men respecting events generally near at hand, and upon deliberate consideration of the causes then and there in active operation. They were dictated frequently by hopes which the energies of the whole nation most

concerned conspired to bring to pass; or, as in some of the prophecies of Jeremiah, by alarms which national despondency tended to verify.

That they were no more than fortunate conjectures is proved by the number of them which did not come true. Such, for instance, as the seventy years' exile foretold by Jeremiah, which cannot, by his own or by any other reckoning, be made to exceed sixty-three years, and if we date from the destruction of Jerusalem, only fifty-two. The prediction of Isaiah that Damascus should cease to be a city and become a ruinous heap has also had no verification. The prophecy of Ezekiel, chap. xxvi., that Tyre should be destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, is in chap. xxix. declared not to have been fulfilled. Unsuccessful guesses respecting Babylon were made by several of the prophets. Amongst others, Hananiah rashly foretold the downfall of Babylon "within two full years." Jeremiah, with evident jealousy of this encroachment on his prerogative, hears the inferior prophet at first with a bad grace, and after a while avenges himself by dooming his unfortunate rival to death. "So Hananiah the prophet died the same year in the seventh month." If the error were of so sinful a nature, how was it that Jeremiah himself, or Ezekiel, escaped a similar fate? For beside their other blunders, they both prophesied falsely concerning the conquest of Egypt by Babylon. As to the remarkable mention made by Isaiah respecting Cyrus and the destruction of Babylon, it is no longer disputed by Hebrew scholars that the latter part of the book from chap. xl. to lxvi. (which includes these references) is by a later writer—called the younger Isaiah, who shared in the captivity; and who wrote simply of what he had direct experience. The prediction by Daniel (chap. xi.) of the conquests of Alexander the Great is of a similar character to the foregoing; the evidence being tolerably conclusive that the book of Daniel was written in the time of Antiochus

Epiphanes (of whose tyranny he gives an historical account), and therefore nearly a hundred and fifty years after the time of Alexander.

The learned criticism of latter days, which has devoted so much patient study to the subject, has arrived at the same unsatisfactory conclusion concerning the Messianic prophecies. The general vagueness of the terms in which these are made, requires indeed but little ingenuity to find an appropriate application for them in support of almost any theory that may be desired. But the truth is, that without severely straining their meaning, it cannot be pretended that they have any reference whatever to the events they are supposed to foretell. Setting aside the special circumstances with which the idea gradually became invested, the one prominent and all-important feature is the expectation and promise of a Deliverer. Now, although the popular belief of the Jews distinctly pointed to the coming of this Messiah, the tradition had no definite place in their creed until conquest and persecution had overtaken them, and so rendered liberation from their oppressors a matter of solicitude. While they themselves were conquerors, and until the vain-glorious and ruinous reign of Solomon, with the misrule of which sensual voluptuary their greatest misfortunes may be said to have begun, their comparatively prosperous condition stood in no great need of amendment. Both in origin and development the Messianic tradition was purely secular;—save in so far as the belief in a Deliverer grew to be a part of their religion, and raised the idea of the Saviour from the conception of the human, to that of a divinely appointed, being.

As suffering pressed more and more heavily upon the Jewish people, we find the prophets, especially at the time of the Babylonish captivity, inspired with the enthusiastic and visionary hope which sanguinary and imaginative men not unfrequently extract from misfortune. We find

them nobly exhorting their fellow-sufferers to the worship of the one true God ; and stimulating their fortitude with predictions, not only of forthcoming deliverance, but of a universal theocracy combined with unbounded earthly dominion and glory. The belief that the advent of the promised Saviour was near at hand, was no less strong with the Jews in the days of Micah, than was the belief with the disciples of Jesus and also with Jesus himself that, they would live to see the coming of the kingdom of God.¹ But that the kingdom of the Messiah was a kingdom of this world, is not more evident from the writings of the Old Testament, than it is from the entire history in the New. "Christ crucified" was unto the Jews a stumbling-block. This was a corollary of their belief "that Christ abideth (*i.e.*, should live) for ever." In every sense, indeed, the earthly glory of their promised Deliverer was utterly incompatible with the humble pretensions of the carpenter's son ; and the assumption of the character of Jesus was so great an outrage to their preconceived notions, that death alone could expiate the offence.

It may be venturesome to offer an opinion on the disputed interpretations of the most important of the prophetic passages : nevertheless it may not be amiss to note here the meaning which is the most obvious, if the least acceptable. Let us take the great prophecy of Isaiah vii. 14. Suppose any one to read it who had never heard the name of Christ, and was prepared to accept only the plain sense conveyed by the words themselves, taken in context with the subject-matter of the discourse. It would seem, under such conditions, that one conclusion

¹ "We which are alive and remain," says St. Paul, "shall be caught up together with them in the air" (1 Thess. iv. 17). "The stars of heaven shall fall," are the words of Jesus ; "and then shall they see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. . . . Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done" (Mark xii. 25 ff.)

alone could be possible. For, what was this matter; what was it that led to these utterances of Isaiah?

The chapter in which the passage occurs gives us the situation with unusual clearness. It tells us how Judah was in a deplorable condition; how Rezin, king of Syria, in confederation with Pekah, king of Israel, had gone up to Jerusalem to war against it; how Rezin and Pekah had resolved to dethrone Ahaz, and set up a son of one Tabeal in his place. In this crisis Isaiah goes to Ahaz and encourages him with promises of divine aid. He tells Ahaz not to be faint-hearted, for Syria and Ephraim shall not set their strange king in the midst of Judah; and that within threescore and five years Ephraim shall cease to be a people. Ahaz is then directed to ask a "sign" of Jehovah as a pledge for the truth of Isaiah's words. When Ahaz hesitates, Isaiah tells him that Jehovah of himself shall give him a sign. "Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to choose the good. For before the child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings."

Here is the whole of this wonderful prophecy, which may be called one of the great corner-stones of dogmatic Christology. In the first place, what is meant by "a sign?" It is an outward and visible mark of an invisible something to be signified. How then could the birth of a child 740 years later be a sign to Ahaz in any sense whatsoever? Unless literally intended and literally accepted, it would have been nonsense. But who can doubt of its literal meaning when he reads the concluding verse, mentioning the two obnoxious kings, and thus proving at once the reference to present disasters? Beside the terrible anxiety of Ahaz, what trifling with his own anxiety for Judah, had Isaiah been alluding even to the birth of the traditional Deliverer, although that Deliverer was supposed to be at hand.

As the danger which threatened Judah on every side was imminent, so was the sign to be a present and visible sign. Like a wise oracle, Isaiah allows himself a certain Delphic margin. He does not commit himself to a day or a year, but promises that within the time required for a young woman, then in her maidenhood, to conceive and bear a child, and also for that child to come to years of discretion—which together might be a period within twenty years or so—Syria and Israel (both of them, it must be remembered, threatened at that very time by the Assyrians) would be completely overthrown.

It is not uncommon to meet with persons who regard the name of Immanuel as of special importance. It is believed that, the fact of the child being called "God with us," clearly indicates that the child intended could be no other than Christ. But in addition to the above considerations, how, it may be asked, if Christ were a Divine Being, could time and nurture be required to enable Him to know the difference between good and evil? If the child in question were indeed God, such knowledge would have been intuitive. In truth, the name was nothing more than a mere token to signify that Jehovah was on the side of Judah, and would protect it. Almost every Hebrew name commemorated some event or idea in a similar way.

In chap. ix. 6, we probably have a genuine reference to the ideal personage who was to sit upon the throne of David, and establish the Jewish kingdom for ever. Still the statement, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given," seems to refer to a past rather than a future event. The child "is to be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." The highest of these titles is a disputed reading. The term "everlasting" is a mere hyperbole for long life. None of these titles, however, are incompatible with ordinary modes of flattering princes. The obelisk of Usertesén, at

Heliopolis, is thus dedicated to the Pharaoh who erected it: "The Horus of the sun; life of all who are born; king of the upper and lower country; Kheperkara; lord of the two diadems; *life of all who are born*; son of the sun, Usertesén; beloved of the divinities of An; *living for ever; the good god*; Kheperkhara; he hath executed this work at the beginning of the 30 years' circle; *he, the gifted with life for evermore.*"¹ "To show how the divine and human nature of a king were thought to be distinct, he [the king] was often represented offering to himself, in the Egyptian sculpture, his human doing homage to his divine character."² The emperor of the Romans was their *divus* imperator. The Grand Lama of Thibet and the Emperor of China are addressed by the name of God. Even amongst Western nations the same forms of adulation are applied equally to kings and to the King of kings. The ruling monarch or chief was always looked upon as the Father of his people. Many barbarous nations to this day ascribe divine attributes to their chiefs. In the Polynesian islands the chiefs are held to be gods, and they alone are believed to be immortal.

Of course this was not the case with the Jews. But primitive beliefs account for traditional customs. Isaiah, moreover, as a prophet was also a bard; and the above passage, like many similar ones, may have been just such an adulatory ode as a laureate would have written on the birth of a royal prince, in whom the hopes of the nation centred. Indeed the prince might very possibly have been the son of Ahaz, the future King Hezekiah.

The eleventh chapter is unquestionably a foretelling of the Messiah. But in the eleventh verse the Deliverer's task is indicated by the promised recovery of the remnant of Jehovah's people, which shall be left from Assyria and from Egypt, &c. That is, by liberation from misfor-

¹ Erasmus Wilson, *The Egypt of the Past*.

² Rawlinson's *Herodotus*, ii. 292.

tunes either then pressing, or immediately threatening, the people of Judah. The remaining acts, here spoken of as the work of the coming Messiah, were all accomplished long before the time of Jesus; and the other allusions to the Messiah (chaps. xxviii. and xxxii.) bear the same construction.

Of the poetic incense with which regal personages are besmeared, we probably have another instance in the 110th Psalm, which is also cited as prophetic of Christ. "The Lord said unto my Lord [the King], Sit thou on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool," &c. This was doubtless addressed to the victorious David; just as Molière celebrated, in fulsome language, the victories of Louis XIV.; or Shakespeare, with still more extravagance, the virtues and conquests of his Maiden Queen.

The prophecy of the Messiah's advent in Zechariah ix. 9: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass," must be referred to the same perilous time as the first of Isaiah's prophecies. Who the author was, is extremely doubtful. Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, as he himself tells us, (chap. i.), wrote in the second year of Darius, or about 519 B.C.: but this ninth chapter is full of allusions to historical events of a much earlier period; and especially refers to Jehovah's defence of Ephraim, as the kingdom of Israel is called, and speaks of Ephraim as still in existence. Whereas, Samaria was captured by Shalmaneser, and Ephraim ceased to exist as a monarchy, in the year 721 B.C., or about 200 years before the time of Zechariah's writing. Future triumph—the predominant idea—and the dominion of the promised King (whose peaceful and judicial character are marked by his riding on an ass) is defined as extending from sea to sea—*i.e.*, from the Dead Sea to the Mediterranean; and from the river to the ends of the earth—*i.e.*,

from the brook of Egypt to the boundaries of the land of Canaan.

In Jeremiah xxii. the promise of a King of the house of David resembles the foregoing: Judah is to be saved, and Israel shall dwell in safety. The writer goes on to lament bitterly over the depravity throughout the land, and even amongst the prophets in Jerusalem. Micah announces a similar prediction (chap. v.): Bethlehem, the birthplace of their favourite king, is to be that also of the hereditary sovereign. His temporal charge is announced in the fifth verse. "And this *man* shall be the peace when the Assyrian shall come into our land; and when he shall tread in our palaces," &c. A contingency which was so imminent at the moment of the prophecy that it scarcely demanded inspiration to foresee it.

The 72d Psalm is also truly Messianic. But it need hardly be pointed out that it had no verification in the career of Jesus; although the language is such as to apply with very little distortion to the idea of Christ. It was not fulfilled that the king of Tarshish and of the isles should bring presents; nor that the kings of Sheba and Seba should offer gifts. But it may be thought true that, all kings shall fall down before him; that all nations shall serve him; that his name shall endure for ever; and that all nations shall call him blessed. After what has been said about courtly sycophancy, it is superfluous to add that this extravagant language might very well apply to the ideal Prince, whose exalted character and dominion could not be heightened by exaggeration.

The famous passage in Psalm xxii., "They pierced my hands and feet, &c., they cast lots upon my vesture," cannot be thought to have any fulfilment in Jesus. Mr. Matthew Arnold looks upon the alleged prophecy as "trifling," "a playing upon words which nowadays we should call childish." Certainly we must bear in mind

that the whole of this psalm is the outcry of a broken-hearted monarch. In depicting his lot at a moment of abject despair, David represents himself as overwhelmed by every possible ignominy. Language fails to express his misery: "My tongue cleaveth to my jaws; thou hast brought me into the dust of death; dogs have compassed me," and so on. The condemned criminal is not worse off than he. And he speaks of piercing hands and feet in allusion to the ordinary mode of capital punishment; the only possible outrage left wherewith to insult his fallen majesty.

Of all these prophecies none perhaps is so striking as that contained in Isaiah liii. Here the promised Saviour's character is completely changed—changed too into accordance with the historic portrait of Jesus; and harmonising with the most cherished conceptions of his mission. "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. He was despised, and we esteemed him not. He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities. With his stripes we are healed. Jehovah hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." The whole seems a perfect foreshadowing of the Christian scheme and its Founder.

With reference to this remarkable passage, Mr. Francis Newman observes, that in the forty-third and following chapters Israel is spoken of as "my servant whom I have chosen," and is represented sometimes, though not consistently, as possessing the Messianic characteristics. Mr. Newman says, "It is essential to understand the *same* 'elect servant' all along." But he adds that, in chap. xlix. this elect Israel is distinguished from Jacob and Israel at large. From this entanglement the most probable inference seems to be "that as our high-churchmen distinguish 'mother church' from the individuals who compose the church, so the 'Israel' of this prophecy is the idealising

of the Jewish Church; which I understand to be a current Jewish interpretation.”¹

There is another light in which this prophecy and others that bring the sufferings of the Messiah into prominence may be viewed. The nation was to pay a severe penalty for its transgressions; “therefore,” says Daniel (chap. ix.), “the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against him.” In Joel (chap. iii.) the misfortunes that are to precede their final deliverance are also foretold. Combined with this belief was the ground conception of atonement common to every people who possessed even the rudiments of a religion. The innocent who was thus to become the propitiatory sacrifice could not be other than “a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.”

It is foreign to my purpose to investigate either the intention or the accomplishment of the numerous prophecies which are supposed to relate to the coming of Christ. I have selected some of the most important as types of the whole. No one attempts to deny that the true Messianic predictions do foretell the appearance of an ideal hero; whose essential functions were to be legal and judicial. The spiritual element in his character, and also his sufferings, are relatively much less insisted upon than his temporal glory. True, he was to unite the entire Hebrew nation under one theocratic faith. But this part of his mission was fully as much political as religious: so a modern sovereign may be regarded as head of the national church as in Russia, or be styled Defender of the Faith as in England. He was to be the instrument in the hands of Jehovah to liberate his peculiar people from their burden of oppression. And according to the sanguineness of the prophet's temper, he was to restore the power of the entire nation with tenfold majesty; or

¹ *Phases of Faith*, chap. vii.

merely preserve the often mentioned "remnant" which appeared likely to be all that would survive it.

Many of the so-called prophecies could have no reference to the Saviour at all. Of such are the 110th Psalm above cited; and Psalm ii., "Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee." The latter evidently refers to David's son, Solomon. "Kiss the son lest he be angry," should, after the Septuagint, be rendered "seize upon instruction." The reference to the coming of Shiloh, Gen. xlix., which is always looked upon as one of the least ambiguous, is but one instance among many of a misreading consequent upon the obscurity of the original text.¹

Whatever interpretation we may put upon these celebrated passages, it is certain that without rejecting their most probable meaning, without perverting common judgment, and without wresting language from its ordinary sense to suit an extraordinary purpose, it is impossible to accept the sense taught by the Christian churches. It may be that the reference to secular and contemporary affairs is admitted: at the same time it may be held that this reference was but of minor importance; that the true bearing of the prophecies was typically signified; and that this was the foreordained occasion of divine revelation. Yet, if the primary meaning was intended by the prophet, if he was altogether unconscious of any latent significance in his utterances, what end can

¹ Whether the reader be acquainted or not with the Hebrew character, the subjoined commentary by a well-known authority will enable him to see how much depends upon the "points" before spoken of: and what simple beginnings may end in perverted doctrine. "The facts about Shiloh are these: the Samaritan שלה is the φ ἀπόκειται of Aquila and Symm., i.e., שלו a supposed contraction of לו אשר, which is of course an impossible etymology.

The Septuagint τὰ ἀποκείμενα αὐτῶν presupposes שילה for לוּ שִׁי, equally impossible. The ὁ ἀπεσταλμένος of the New Testament, "qui mittendus est" of the Vulgate, presupposes the reading שלח שילה from שִׁי. Lagarde conjectures that it = שִׁי אֵילָה. Others identify it with שלמה "Solomon." The verse may mean "until he come to Shiloh (שילה for שילה.) But the text is probably corrupt."

these prophecies be deemed to serve? We are told repeatedly in the New Testament, that such and such an event came to pass "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord." Mr. Matthew Arnold boldly avers, "It can hardly be gainsaid, that, to a delicate and penetrating criticism, it has long been manifest that the chief *literal* fulfilment by Christ of things said by the prophets was the fulfilment such as would naturally be given by one who nourished his spirit on the prophets, and on living and acting their words."¹ If the prediction bear the same sort of relation to its accomplishment as this bears to the prediction—should each, that is to say, depend on the support of the other, the method is curiously roundabout. That the prophecy was designed to strengthen miraculously the effect of its subsequent fulfilment, seems but an impertinent hypothesis, when the incomparably stronger measure of direct miracle was resorted to. The supplementary recourse to either support would appear to imply the inadequacy of both.

Nor is this all that can be urged against the proof from prophecy. We found the greatest of the prophets wrathfully inveighing against the belief in propitiatory sacrifice. According to them "a broken and contrite heart," a purer life, was the only acceptable offering to God. If they were inspired, what becomes of (the repudiated) sacrifice as a type of our redemption? Are we not forced to think that these prophets were men in advance of their age,—the natural products of progressing civilisation; and that they sought to replace savage life, with its savage rites, by exalting religious sentiment, and by raising the morality of the nation to a higher level? If this be the true view, sad indeed is the irony of Fate. For the noblest of the Hebrew race was put to death for daring to stamp out their soul-killing ritualism; while his disciples, imbued with ancient paganism, still clung to the efficacy of blood-

¹ *Literature and Dogma*, p. 114.

spilling: and for nineteen centuries Christians have treasured, as the most sacred of truths, a superstition to which the whole tenor of their Master's life gave the lie.

Of the remaining portions of the Old Testament the most valuable, as it seems to me, are some of the Psalms, for their great devotional beauty; and the book of Job, as a dramatic poem, expressive of the perpetual struggle of suffering humanity with the unfathomable mystery of existence. The Song of Solomon is probably what Bossuet thought it, an epithalamium on the occasion of the king's marriage with an Egyptian princess. Naturally the advocates of symbolism describe it as the love of the Church to Christ. "The description of the prince's daughter" is to be taken as an apostrophe to "the graces of the Church." Yet surely Hafiz, the "sugar lip," never wrote love-song if this be not one. Even were it what is claimed, we must still be inclined to think with Rabbi Wogue: "Be the intentions of the poet and the elevation of his religious conceptions ever so lofty, be the beauty of the sense hidden under the external form what it may, that form, with its temerity and its pitfalls, is always there. An allegory sustained from end to end, and which never reveals its intention or true application in any corner of the work, runs great risk of being misunderstood, at all events by common people, since its utility is effaced by its ineptitude, the end of edification is missed, and those even who revere the work as holy may misprise it as inopportune."¹ Indeed symbolism is always a two-edged instrument, apt enough to wound its user. What else happens to the rationalist who would persuade us that Christ only swooned upon the cross? So Origen tells us it could not be literally meant that Satan showed *all* the kingdoms of the earth to Jesus, because a bodily eye could not take them in. So, too, for propriety's sake, Justin Martyr transforms the Shunammite Abishag into heavenly wisdom; and Lot's

¹ *Histoire de la Bible.*

daughters into the Jewish and Gentile Churches. With a little ingenuity we may suit the meaning to our fancy. But the time for "trifling" is gone by : and were it not, what is the fairy tale without the fairy ?

Of the historic books, Kings, Nehemiah, and Ezra are the most trustworthy. The two books of Chronicles are valueless on account of their gross exaggerations, and manifest perversion of truth to suit the bigotry of the writer's spirit. They are constantly at variance with the books of Kings and of Samuel ; and while the failure or death of the wicked is always ascribed to miraculous punishment, whatever turns to their advantage is either misstated or suppressed.¹

The fantastic visions, dreams, and marvels of the book of Daniel speak for themselves. In no other writing in the Bible is there so lavish an expenditure of magical effect. But the authenticity of the book is disputed ; and some eminent commentators condemn it altogether as spurious.

¹ "As the result of our inquiry we find that for some very few notices, *e.g.*, I Chron. iv. 39-43, the writer probably had the support of older records, while for some of his lists of names he may have had written authorities before him, but these composed *after the captivity*. Very much of the contents of these books, however, is manifestly fictitious, the offspring of his own imagination. And in most of what remains, though he has copied almost

verbally the older histories, he has modified these continually to suit the purpose of his whole work—that purpose being mainly to represent the relations of the priests and Levites and the institutions of the second Temple, such as they were in his own time, as having existed from of old, even from David's time before the first Temple was built, if not indeed from the time of Aaron."
—*Bishop Colenso, Pent.*

LETTER V.

THE next point we have to consider is the MONOTHEISM of the Hebrews. Were they the first and sole worshippers of the one eternal God? And was this—the only true religion we will call it—revealed through Abraham; or (to begin with the first chapter of the Bible) was it revealed to Adam? This leads us to inquire whether man's original state was one of perfection; or whether we are not in some respects improvements upon the progenitors of our race?

Comparative mythology, universal history, and the theory of evolution, each have a weighty word to say upon these queries. Of the first two sciences, at any rate, none but the learned are competent to speak. Nevertheless, we may attempt to glean some generalities which will prove both intelligible and instructive. Evolution will have its full share of our space hereafter; but as it forms the basis of our present discussion, we must be mindful of certain facts brought to light by geology and archæology, which, no one worth attending to, now disputes.

It is established that, many thousands of years ago, men lived in caves and used flint implements; that at first these implements were so rude that, it needs now an expert to be sure about them; that in course of time they became neat and polished; that by degrees—probably after thousands of years, the flint gave place to bronze implements; that later on, bronze was superseded by iron; that men took to dwelling in tents, and finally built themselves houses.

If it be possible to doubt of primary barbarity in the

face of the evidence we possess, it is incontestable that progression, if not a law, is at all events a fact. Whatever may be thought of the dogma of the Fall, it can scarcely be questioned that, mankind have passed successively through the various stages of Hunting, Wandering, Fighting, Herding, Farming, and Trading. Nevertheless, many popular writers, amongst whom may here be named, De Maistre, Goguet, Whately, the Duke of Argyll, and the Archbishop of York, have contended for the orthodox belief in degeneration. Whately's point is that, instance is wanting of emergence from barbarity without "external help." We may answer—(1.) the alleged advancement is the result of ages, and is not within the scope of observation: (2.) archaeology supplies proof of progress, while it fails to yield any sign whatever of pre-existing culture. The absence of pottery (the most indestructible of relics) amongst pre-historic remains generally, and altogether in Australia, New Zealand, and the Polynesian Islands, is, so far as negative evidence goes, of the weightiest import.

The Duke of Argyll looks upon savages as "mere outcasts of the human race." He thinks it may be true "that most nations in the progress of the arts have passed through the stages of using stone for implements before they were acquainted with the use of metals." But he considers the Stone ages and Bronze ages to be fictions of the archæologist, for the actual existence of which "there is no proof whatever." We know that high civilisation in one part of the world, may coexist with the lowest degradation in another. Therefore, "it would be about as safe to argue from these implements as to the condition of man at that time in the country of his Primeval Home, as it would be in our own day, to argue from the habits of the Eskimos as to the state of civilisation in London or in Paris."¹ Again, the reply is: why should the oldest traces be always the most barbaric? And why should the barbaric alone be preserved? This reasoning

¹ *Primeval Man*, p. 129.

does not apply to material remains solely. We have historical evidence of survival and of progress, which far outbalances the evidence of degeneration. Every advanced race betrays in its language, in its superstitions, and in its religious rites, unmistakable symptoms of descent from barbaric ancestry. On the other hand, the lowest races retain no remnant of former superiority. Yet we are entitled to assume that the simplest and most useful arts would not be entirely lost. We should not expect to find, for instance, that when the fire-drill had once been invented, men would forget the use of the cord and come to twirl again with their hands, nor is it likely that they would forget the spindle and revert to the fingers for twisting thread. Yet besides these and many similar marks of ignorance, we find modern savages unacquainted with the bow; and even, islanders who never heard of a canoe.

The Duke of Argyll gives up the point of culture as implying knowledge of mechanical arts, nothing indeed being said in the Bible about the scientific attainments of Adam and Eve; what he stands out for is the moral and intellectual superiority of our first parents. To this Sir John Lubbock rejoins, "Adam is, on the contrary, represented to us in Genesis not only as naked, and subsequently clothed with leaves, but as unable to resist the most trivial temptation, and as entertaining very gross and anthropomorphic conceptions of the Deity. In fact, in all three characteristics—in his mode of life, in his moral condition, and in his intellectual conceptions—Adam was a typical savage."¹

De Goguet parries the difficulty by taking his departure from the Deluge instead of from Paradise. This accounts for the destruction of antediluvian culture with the wicked, but it has to assume that degradation proceeded from the divinely-favoured Noah. The truth is, no rational argument in support of the degeneration theory has ever yet been advanced: nor would defensive argu-

¹ *On the Origin of Civilisation*, p. 409.

ments now be put forth save in the cause of dogmatic theology. "The dogma of the condemnation of mankind through Adam, which is morally more revolting than any other, was also a necessary element of the Catholic philosophy, not only for the theological explanation it supplied of human suffering, but, more specially, because it afforded ground for the scheme of redemption, on the necessity of which the whole economy of the Catholic faith is based."¹

Setting aside the doctrine of the Fall as untenable, let us follow in imagination the advance of religious belief from what we may inductively argue to have been its commencement.

As Natural Religion is treated of in a separate series of letters, inquiry now into its origin and development may be somewhat premature. Yet the question of Hebrew monotheism cannot be discussed without reference to the ethnography of religion generally; and the fitness of the topic here will compensate the sacrifice of symmetry in another place. It may be said then, that in proportion as the historical evidence, afforded by archæology in favour of the progressive theory, is to be relied upon, savage life as we still find it, may also be relied upon as fairly indicating the condition of man in the earliest stage of which we have any trace of his existence. The state of savages of the lowest grade furnishes the present age with material of study, the immense value of which can only be estimated when we reflect how soon the opportunities for observation must pass away. The rapid growth of civilisation will ere long sweep all the primitive races from the face of the earth; and future generations will look to our ethnologists and to our travellers for knowledge which can never again be obtained by direct experience. Modern savage life is our safest clue to the beginning of all culture. In the matter of religion what lesson does it teach us?

Numbers of intelligent travellers and missionaries de-

¹ *Comte's Positive Philosophy, Martineau's transl.*, vol. ii. p. 276.

clare that some of the lowest races have no more religion than "the beasts that perish;" that the darkness of their minds is not "enlightened by even a ray of superstition."¹ Sir John Lubbock, both in his "Origin of Civilisation" and his "Pre-historic Times," quotes more than a score of "witnesses to the existence of tribes without religion." His own researches have led him to conclude that men start from *Atheism*, the meaning of which he limits in this case to "an absence of any definite ideas on the subject." Then follow *Fetichism*, *Nature worship*, or *Totemism*, and *Shamanism*, "in which the superior deities are far more powerful than man, and of a different nature;" then *idolatry* or *anthropomorphism*. "In the next stage, the Deity is regarded as the author, not merely a part, of nature. He becomes for the first time a really supernatural being;" and lastly we have religion associated with morality.

Much stress is laid on the fact that, many barbaric languages have no words for "God" and "soul." It is also cited as a proof of moral debasement that in the Algonquin tongues the verb to "love" is unknown, and that the Hos of Central India have no "endearing epithets." Now, no people can be without sexual love, and it is incredible that this should find no distinct vocal expression. Equally incredible is it that the simple affections, arising out of the gregarious instinct in all herding animals, should be totally absent in any race of the human species. It is but a truism to say, the more imperfect a language, the more likely would a stranger be to misapprehend it: and it is well known that savages often purposely, from pride or from superstition, take the greatest care to conceal their religious opinions from strangers. What with this concealment and ignorance of the language together, it has often happened that a missionary has been two or three years amongst a people before he discovered they had any religion at all. To a certain extent it is true that language is the measure of

¹ Sir Samuel Baker.

ideas. But the maxim—no word no idea—cannot be adopted without reserve. It could not be applied to a dog or to a tamed elephant: and there are plenty of deaf-mutes who must have thousands of ideas they cannot express. So, crowds of feelings and thoughts must be as familiar to savages as they are to us; although, in the case of the latter, poverty of language prevents these from assuming a “definite” shape.

Sir John Lubbock refuses to admit Fetichism as a form even of religious worship. “It is nothing more or less than witchcraft,” and inasmuch as the Fetich-maker believes he can control his Deity, Fetichism must be regarded as an anti-religion. “The negro of Guinea beats his Fetich if his wishes are not complied with, and hides him in his waist-cloth if about to do anything of which he is ashamed, so that the Fetich may not be able to see what is going on.”¹ The Chinaman likewise treats his idol as a Fetich. “How now, dog of a spirit!” he says; “we give you a lodging in a magnificent temple, we gild you handsomely, feed you well, and offer incense to you; yet after all this care, you are so ungrateful as to refuse us what we ask of you.” Hereupon they tie this image with cords, pluck him down, and drag him along the streets through all the mud and dunghills, to punish him for the expense of perfume which they have thrown away upon him.² Upon the authority of Captain Burton, we have it that the savage makes a distinction between a ghost and a spirit, *i.e.*, between “a present immaterial and a future.” And in further proof of the lowness of spiritual belief, Sir John Lubbock says: “Inanimate objects have spirits as well as men; hence, when the wives and slaves are sacrificed, the weapons also are broken in the grave, so that the spirits of the latter, as well as of the former, may accompany their master to the other world.”³

At most, then, the testimony amounts to this:—the

¹ *Origin, &c.*, p. 154.

² *Loc. cit.*, quoted from Astley's *Collection of Voyages*.

³ P. 397.

belief of the savage is a barbarous one; he has no conception of a Supreme Being. Belief in the other world is so common and so well marked, that nice distinctions in spiritual modes of existence affect rather the accident than the essence of the species. "Such narrow definition," says Dr. Tylor, "has the fault of identifying religion rather with particular developments than with the deeper motive which underlies them. It seems best to fall back at once on this essential source, and simply to claim as a minimum definition of religion the belief in spiritual beings."¹ Certainly if *Atheism* signifies no more than the absence of "definite" ideas about God, it cannot be denied that many races are utterly devoid of religion. But Sir John Lubbock himself freely allows that, "the question as to the general existence of religion among men is, indeed, to a great extent a matter of definition. If the mere sensation of fear, and the recognition that there are probably other beings more powerful than ourself, are sufficient alone to constitute a religion, then we must admit, I think, that religion is general to the human race." At any rate we must admit this to be the rudimentary stage of religious consciousness. The old theory of the Latin poet, *Primus in orbe deos fecit timor*, is not far from correct. It is not altogether true that fear first made gods. For, as Comte says, and as Hume had said before him, there is a primary tendency in man "to transfer the sense of his own nature in the radical explanation of all phenomena whatever." The joint action of these two principles would sufficiently explain that phase of intellectual evolution which may fairly be called the dawn of religious *feeling*. Thus limited, this view is also sanctioned by the high authority of Dr. Tylor. "So far as I can judge from the immense mass of accessible evidence," says he, "we have to admit that the belief in spiritual beings appears among all low races with whom we have attained to thorough intimate acquaintance," &c.

The one objection (and many people may deem it in-

¹ *Primitive Culture*, vol. i. p. 424.

superable) to so low an estimate of the origin of religious belief, is stated clearly by Sir John Lubbock—"If this definition be adopted we cannot longer regard religion as peculiar to man. We must admit that the feeling of a dog or a horse towards its master is of the same character, and the baying of a dog to the moon is as much an act of worship as some ceremonies which have been so described by travellers." This cannot be gainsaid. But who shall tell us in what depths of animal nature we are to seek the rootlets of religious consciousness; or at what point we are to break, with our artificial methods, the continuity of a seemingly perfect sequence?

If to the belief we are now discussing, the general name of Animism be assigned, it is not easy to determine to which element in its evolution we are to give precedence. Unquestionably one source of the belief in ghosts, phantoms, spirits, or souls, is dreaming. The sleeper has visions of places where his body is not. He is visited by people he has known, who are either absent or not alive. His immaterial being is active, while his body is apparently dead. And this resemblance between death and sleep leads naturally to similar conclusions concerning both. Further, the axiom: every change must have a cause, would necessarily be a product of his experience; and would, though of course unformulated, exercise its influence in his judgments upon all phenomena. Wind, rain, heat, cold, day, night, growth, decay, the running streams, the motion of the heavenly bodies, could only be accounted for by reference to life—*analogous*, if not similar, to his own. His impotency to control the forces, and their terrible ability to injure him, would inspire a sense of terror, which in turn would give birth to the two-fold notion of superiority and malignity. The early struggle for existence caused by increasing numbers, the convulsions of nature, and the vicissitudes of climate, all tending to produce disease and ultimately death, would inevitably result in a predominating belief in evil. Consistently with this view, we find the superstitions of the

savage, ever of the gloomiest and most terrible description. The dread of pending evil is eternally present to his mind; and he seeks to appease the unknown demons by hideous sacrifices and fiendish tortures. If cannibalism be coeval with the lowest form of religion, I do not hesitate to affirm that, to primitive man, cannibalism has been immeasurably the lesser curse of the two. It is a shock to one's belief in a benevolent Ruler of all things to reflect that, the progress of development has crept so sluggishly onward, that, for thousands of generations, religion has been an unmitigated affliction to a large portion of our race.

From this original phase of Pantheism,—this belief that all matter was alive, the transition to Polytheism was, as Comte remarks, the necessary consequence of widening generalisation. When broad resemblances came to be recognised, and phenomena were unconsciously classed according to their likeness, the fetich which resided in a single object only, was deposed by a being of a higher order, who animated the whole group. “Thus when the entire oaks of a forest in their likeness to one another, suggested certain general phenomena, the abstract being in whom so many fetiches coalesced was no fetich, but the god of the forest.” Still, the philosophy of the savage (if we may so speak of his crude interpretation of nature) would remain the same. Human action would still be his only type of change. And terms appropriate to his own acts would be applied to all the phenomena of inert matter. Amidst such conditions, mythology would make its start.

Here, however, we must turn from these prefatory remarks to the guidance of accepted leaders. Where knowledge is unattainable and reasoning rests mainly on conjecture, we must not look for unanimity. Concerning both the rise and flow of religious belief, there are many shades of opinion. It will be my business, as a *précis* writer, to select such passages from representative thinkers, as will, in the narrowest compass, put you in possession of their views.

LETTER VI.

PROFESSOR MAX MÜLLER and Mr. HERBERT SPENCER may be selected from amongst our ablest expositors of opposite sides of the question. Mr. Spencer's theory is in complete harmony with his system of synthetic philosophy ; and in so far, is consistent and easily understood. Professor Müller is not quite so perspicuous. This is partly due to the ordinary reader's ignorance of the philological sources from which Mr. Max Müller deduces his theory, and partly from a leaning to transcendentalism inherent to the Professor's mind. His first step in the scientific treatment of religion is to lay it down as a postulate that, man is essentially a religious being. "What makes man man, is that . . he alone yearns for something that neither sense nor reason can supply." "There was in the heart of man from the very first a feeling of incompleteness, of weakness, of dependence," &c.¹ These are the foundations of a religious instinct. The impulse to vent its overflow, under the stimulus of infinite surroundings, is as irresistible as the burst of leaf in spring, or the songs of the birds which herald it. "Before this vague yearning could assume any definite shape it wanted a name; it could not be fully grasped or clearly conceived except by naming it. But where to look for a name?" The relics of ancient mythologies, the myths of modern savages, and above all the débris of ancient language, show that, once upon a time, God and the sky were, in word and thought, as one. The sky was not the God of primitive man. But the identification of the idea of deity with sky was "a first attempt at defining the indefinite impression of deity by a

¹ *Introduction to the Science of Religion*, pp. 18, 270.

name that should approximately or metaphorically render at least one of its most prominent features.”¹

Let us tarry awhile to verify this pregnant statement. The most ancient and primitive religion whose sacred books are still in existence, is the religion of the Brahmans. The books are written in the old Sanskrit, and are called the Vedas.² Whether any fragment of our Bible can compare with them in antiquity is not known. But we do know that, whilst the oldest manuscript of the Hebrew Bible dates from the tenth century after Christ, every line of the Vedic scripture is, probably, as it was three thousand years ago; and certainly every word and every syllable was counted, and stood as it now stands, six hundred years before the Christian era. “The hymns of the Rig Veda,” says Professor Müller, “have revealed a state of religion anterior to the first beginnings of that mythology which in Homer and Hesiod stands before us as a mouldering ruin.”³

The allusion here to the Grecian mythology is not accidental. The Veda contains the creed of the old

¹ *Introduction to the Science of Religion*, p. 276.

² I refrain from confusing the reader with criticisms on the comparative age of the Veda and the Zend-avesta or sacred writings of the Parsees. “The Veda and the Zend-avesta,” says Roth of Tübingen, “are two rivers flowing from one fountain-head: the stream of the Veda is the fuller and purer, and has remained truer to its original character: that of the Zend-avesta has been in various ways polluted, has altered its course, and cannot with certainty be followed up to its source.” It has been convincingly shown by Professor Spiegel that Zend—the language of the Avesta—is distinctly Aryan, and it is enough for our purpose to understand that the Vedic books are the oldest writings of the Aryan races. In speaking of the Vedas as the religion of the Brahmans, it should be added that the

Sanskrit in which they were written is intelligible, even in India, to scholars only. And although every word of the Rig Veda is esteemed as divine revelation, the sacred books mainly in use amongst the Brahmans of the present day are the Puranas, the Tantras, and the laws of Manu, all of which are modern as compared with the Veda. It may here be conveniently observed that the Aryans were the supposed descendants of Japheth; the Semites or Shemites, including the Babylonians, Chaldeans, Assyrians, Syrians, Canaanites, Phenicians, Hebrews, and Arabs, the descendants of Shem; and the Turamians, including Samoyeds, Finns, Tungûses, Turks, Mongols, the speakers of the Tamilic dialects, the Thibetans, the Malays, and the Siamese, &c., the descendants of Ham.

³ *Semitic Monothcism*, Chips, i. 379.

Aryan world. The Aryans (of whom you will hear more by and by) were the common stock from which, not Greeks only, but Armenians, Persians, Hindus, and all speakers of the Romanic, Celtic, Slavonic, and Germanic languages are derived. So that the Grecian mythology was also lineally descended from the Vedic. And, before we have done, we shall perhaps have reason to think that something of our own dogmas may be traced, as we can trace our language, to this same Indo-European source. Meanwhile we have to note how in Vedic times the name for God was also the name for sky.

The old Sanskrit word for God was *Deva*. This was derived from *Dyaus*, "sky," the root of which was *dyu*, "bright." A comprehensive term signifying "brightness" thus became the name for Deity. So too *Dyaus* was changed into the Greek *Zeus*, and into the Latin *Deus*; and alas! through the spite of the Zoroastrians, who turned the Aryan *deva* into evil spirits or *daeva*, the Aryan name for God has become our Devil. Professor Müller explains the first part of the process in this wise: The infinite, the all-encompassing, had got itself a name. But the name gradually ceased to be a metaphor, and was then further perverted by literal use. "The first step downwards would be to look upon the sky as the abode of that Being which was called by the same name; the next step would be to forget altogether what was behind the name, and to implore the sky, the visible canopy over our heads, to send rain, &c. Lastly, many things that were true of the visible sky would be told of its divine namesake, and legends would spring up, destroying every trace of the deity that once was hidden beneath that ambiguous name."¹ Professor Müller has enunciated his theory in so many ways that, I feel rather ashamed at my inability to make it, from all points, as clear to myself, and therefore to you, as I feel sure that it must be to its author. The truth is, I am not sufficiently satisfied with the premises

¹ *Science of Religion*, p. 273.

to be thoroughly persuaded as to the conclusion. If primitive man were equipped with an intuitive apprehension, however vague, of God, why should less primitive man "forget altogether?" It is a beautiful thought that

" Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting ;
 The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
 Hath had elsewhere its setting,
 And cometh from afar ;
 Not in entire forgetfulness,
 And not in utter nakedness,
 But trailing clouds of glory do we come
 From God, who is our home."

But unless we entirely subject our knowledge to our imagination, or cling blindly to the degeneration dogma, the above theory would seem to break down from inherent weakness. There is, however, so much palpable truth in what Professor Müller says, that we are bound to follow him with our best attention.

It is quite in keeping with the known laws of association and oblivion, and also with the use or abuse of language (presently to be illustrated), that the meaning of the word *Dyaus* should be perverted. The heavens, with their infinitude and their ever-changing aspects, would represent to untutored man all the mighty forces of productive and destructive nature. Light, warmth, rain, snow, wind, fire, &c., would be associated with different states of the firmament; and, as the magazine of these powers, the sky might metonymically stand for the change. The Aryan man, startled by the sound of thunder, might exclaim, *It thunders*. And the *It*, after the principle here laid down, would implicitly mean the sky. Professor Müller thinks that the idea of God would be understood. He adds, "It would be more in accordance with the feelings and thoughts of those who first used these so-called impersonal verbs to translate them by *He thunders*, *He rains*, *He snows*." And since the thunder is from the sky, and the sky was named *Dyaus* (the bright one), "*He thunders and Dyaus*

thunders became synonymous expressions, and by the mere habit of speech He became Dyaus and Dyaus became He. Henceforth Dyaus remained as an appellative of the unseen though ever-present Power which had revealed its existence to man from the beginning," &c.

Be the rationale what it may, all the world over, from Aryan times to our own, the Sky, the Heaven-God, and the Sun-God, have been the highest objects of man's worship. The Ζεὺς πατήρ of the Greek, and Jupiter or Jovis pater of the Roman, are the Dyaus pitar and divaspati or Heaven-father, of the Veda. The common expressions *sub divo*, "in the open air," and *sub Jove frigido*, "under the cold sky," show for how many ages the original identity was preserved: though assuredly no Roman used these phrases with an inkling of how he came by them. "In the religion of the North American Indians," writes Dr. Tylor, "the Heaven-God displays perfectly the gradual blending of the material sky itself with its personal deity."¹ "In South Africa, the Zulus speak of the Heaven as a person ascribing to it the power of exercising a will, &c. The rude Samoyed's mind scarcely, if at all, separates the visible person of Heaven from the divinity united with it under one name, Num. Among the more cultured Finns, the cosmic attributes of the Heaven-God, Ukko, the old one, display the same original nature; he is the ancient of Heaven, the father of Heaven," &c. In the Shoo-king, or sacred book of history, compiled by Confucius, it is written, "Heaven is supremely intelligent." "Tien, Heaven, is in personal shape the Shang-ti, or Upper Emperor, the Lord of the Universe." The following is quoted by the late Archdeacon Hardwick from the "Journal of the Asiatic Society" (1856), xvi.: "'Whom do you worship?' I asked [of a Chinaman]. 'I worship Heaven just as you foreigners do,' he replied. 'Who is the Heaven you worship?' 'Why, Shang-te, of course,' said he. 'Can you see Shang-te or not?' I inquired. 'Why,' replied

¹ *Primitive Culture*, vol. ii. p. 255, ff.

he, looking at me with surprise at my ignorance, and leading me to the door while he pointed up to the sky, 'there he is!' 'What!' said I, 'do you mean that *blue sky* up there?' 'Of course,' said he, 'that is Shang-te, the same as your Jesus!' I have never yet asked the above questions without receiving *precisely the same answers*; for all classes of Confucianists in China consider Shang-te to be the animated material heaven."¹ Archdeacon Hardwick, as "Christian Advocate" in the University of Cambridge, though always learned and candid withal, wrote, in a measure, *ex cathedrâ*. His testimony, however, is of so much value that, as I shall have to refer to the subjoined passage again, I give it in full. "I am led to the conclusion that in China, as elsewhere, had lingered from primeval ages the conception of one living, bounteous, and external Providence, whose earthly shadow was believed to sit exalted far above his fellows on the throne of the middle kingdom; but that ultimately this conception was broken and obscured until the unity of God no longer formed the basis of the Chinese creed. Philosophy then came forward as in other countries, and attempted to recover the idea of unity. 'Heaven' was made by the more thoughtful of philosophers a verbal representative of all the energies in nature," &c.

"Many things that were true of the visible sky would be told of its divine namesake, and legends would spring up," &c. This is the next point in Professor Müller's theory that demands our study. We are here introduced to the initiatory stages of mythology. How it was that legends and myths, now incomprehensible to us, did spring up, is a matter upon which experts disagree quite as heartily as they do upon the origin of universal heaven-worship, and of religion generally. Professor Max Müller's first proposition is that, in the mythopœic age, natural phenomena would necessarily be described as the actions of personal powers. Our ancestors, when

¹ *Christ and other Masters*, p. 298.

speaking of sunset, would inevitably say, "The sun dies," "The sun is killed by night." Where we speak of the sun following the dawn, the ancient poets could only speak and think of the sun loving and embracing the dawn. What is with us a sunset, was to them the sun growing old, decaying, or dying.¹ "From simple beginnings of this kind, the fuller myth would easily and surely grow. As what was true of the sky, would be told of its Divine namesake; so, what was true of changes of the sky, or changes in the heavenly bodies, would also be told of namesakes invented for these also. By this light, many myths, which would otherwise be nonsensical, show full of meaning. In the story of Hephæstos splitting open with his axe the head of Zeus, and Athene springing from it, full armed, we perceive behind this savage imagery, Zeus as the bright sky, his forehead as the east, Hephæstos as the young, not yet risen sun, and Athene as the dawn, the daughter of the sky, stepping forth from the fountain-head of light," &c.² The pursuit of Daphne by Apollo, and Daphne's metamorphosis into a laurel-tree at the moment the god is about to embrace her, yields to this method of interpretation. It is but the old metaphorical version of the fading of the dawn before the presence of the brilliant sun. Professor Müller quotes a poet of the Veda who says: "The Dawn comes near to him—she expires as soon as he begins to breathe—the mighty one irradiates the sky." He tells us that Daphne was the equivalent of Ahanâ, the Vedic name for dawn. The Greek corruption of the myth by the adjunct of the laurel-tree, is an instance of that homonymy or like-naming which plays so active a part in the formation of early myths. "The dawn was called δάφνη, the burning, so was the laurel, a wood that burns easily. Afterwards the two, as usual, were supposed to be one, or to have some connection with each other," &c. Professor Müller triumphantly exclaims, "This shows the value of

¹ *Chips*, ii. p. 66.

² *Science of Religion*, p. 65.

the Veda for the purpose of comparative mythology, a science which, without the Veda, would have remained mere guess-work, without fixed principles and without a safe basis." ¹ Indeed, this is the key-note of his system. It is his specialty to have shown how language has exercised a direct influence of its own upon what he holds to be "a primitive intuition of God." As to the agency of language—of which no man living is a better judge than himself—he goes so far as to say, "Mythology, in the highest sense, is the power exercised by language on thought in every possible sphere of mental activity," &c.²

From this condensed review of Mr. Max Müller's theory, we turn to the widely differing notions of Mr. Spencer. Here is a passage from his "Principles of Sociology," which may be taken as the text of his well-stored comment: "The first traceable conception of a supernatural being is the conception of a ghost."³ The soul of the fetich even, "in common with supernatural agents at large, is originally the double of a dead man." Where there is no belief in ghosts, there is no fetich-worship. Fetichism does not stand first in the order of superstitions, it is not primordial. Fetichism is "an extension of the ghost-theory."⁴

Let us then explore the ghost-theory; for it is pretty clear that what Professor Müller and his school take to be "a primitive intuition of God," Mr. Spencer takes to be a secondary conception of "a permanently existing ghost." First and last we have to do with the ghost. If the savage (as Mr. Spencer declares) has no dualistic propensities, where does his spiritualism come from? The answer, in the shape of a long list of everyday experiences, is satisfactory enough. Of these experiences, dreams are amongst the earliest and most assured. The events of a dream are always related by savages as actual

¹ *Chips*, ii. 96.

² *Science of Religion*, &c., p. 355.

³ Vol. i. p. 305.

⁴ *Principles of Sociology*, p. 343.

events, and are believed to be such. Swooning, apoplexy, &c., afford similar evidence of a double existence. To all appearance, the man who faints from the effects of a wound sustained in fight, is as the dead man beside him. The soul of the first returns after long or short periods of absence: why should the soul of the other not do the same? If reanimation follows comatose states, why should it not follow death? Insensibility is but an affair of time. All the modes of preserving the dead—drying, embalming, &c., no less than the custom of providing them with weapons, clothes, money, food, and so on,—evinced the belief in casual separations of body and soul, and in the possibility of their reunion, or of their ultimate independence. Shadows and reflections have their share in the work. “To the primitive mind making first steps in the interpretation of the surrounding world, here is revealed another class of facts confirming the notion that existences have their visible and their invisible states, and strengthening the implication of a duality in each existence.”¹ “The echo is regarded as the voice of some one who avoids being seen.”²

“*These multitudinous disembodied men are agents ever available as conceived antecedents of all surrounding actions which need explanation.*”³ Mr. Spencer will not allow that there is any primary tendency to animism. “What,” he asks, “could lead a savage to think of an inanimate object as having in it some existence besides that which his senses acquaint him with? . . . how can he imagine a second invisible entity as causing the actions of the visible entity?”⁴ “The antecedent is an accumulation of ghosts and derived spirits swarming everywhere.” “No other causes for such changes are known or can be

¹ *Ubi supra*, p. 133.

² In Tasmania the word for shadow and for spirit is one. The Algonquin Indians call a man's soul *otachuk*, “his shadow;” the Quiché uses the word *natub* in the same way; the Arawac has but a single word *ueja* for the

soul, shadow, and image; the Abipones call soul, shadows, image, and echo, by the one word *wakal*. See Tylor's *Primitive Culture*, vol. i. p. 430, ff.

³ *Sociology*, p. 237.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 345.

conceived; therefore these souls of the dead must be the causes." ¹

Now for the bearing of this ghost-theory upon the out-growth of religion: how does it affect the genesis of the myth? If all spirits, including the soul of the fetich, *e.g.*, the soul of a stone, of a log of wood, of a tree, of a plant, or of the idol—which is but a modelled fetich—were once human souls, then, the Heaven-God himself is nothing but a disembodied man; and nature-worship resolves itself into the worship of ancestors. "The heroic Indra who delights in praise . . . is but the ancestor considerably expanded; . . . if the human derivation of Indra needs further evidence we have it in the statement concerning an intoxicating beverage made from the sacred plant—'the Soma exhilarates not Indra unless it be poured out;' which is exactly the belief of an African respecting the libation of beer for an ancestral ghost." ² Mr. Spencer grants that language is a potent factor; he grants that, "the poorer a language the more metaphorical it is;" and "being first developed to express human affairs, it carries with it certain human implications when extended to the world around, &c." Nevertheless he objects to Professor Müller's application of the linguistic influence. The powers of nature are personalised, and then worshipped. But the explanation of the personalising process is that, certain celestial phenomena and certain human beings happened to be called by the same names.

Professor Müller believes that polytheism is in a great measure due to polyonymy: that the sun had scores of names, each designating some conspicuous attribute. "The sky might be called not only the brilliant, but the dark, the thundering, the covering, the rain-giving." "In ancient language every one of these words had necessarily a termination expressive of gender, and this naturally produced in the mind the corresponding idea of sex, so that these names received not only an individual but a

¹ *Sociology*, pp 236, 237.

² P. 315

sexual character.”¹ This is met in the first place by the objection that, terminations expressive of gender could only carry with them the idea of sex with peoples whose language was so constructed. For an adverse example, Mr. Spencer cites the ancient Peruvians, whose names for natural objects had no genders; notwithstanding which, the Peruvians personified all natural objects. The fact is, (thinks Mr. Spencer), sunshine and storm and the like were represented as persons because, sunshine and storm actually were persons who lived upon the earth under these names. Savages do not receive proper names or family names; but (and abundant instances are given to prove it) they are called after some event, some coincidence, some “juxtaposition.” If it thundered or hailed at the hour of a birth, the infant would be called Thunder or Hail. In short, if you want the explanation of Mythology you must look for it in ancestor-worship.

The prominent idea in Professor Müller’s mind is that, primevous man was, by the force of unbridled fancy heightened by ignorance and fear, and by the accident of his poor and metaphorical speech, a being of rude poetic feelings. As might be expected, the poetical element meets with little favour in the eyes of Mr. Spencer. “The intellectual mind,” says he, with just a flick of contempt, “has neither the emotional tendencies nor the intellectual tendencies which the mythologists assume.”² “Daily experiences prove that surrounding objects and powers, however great, excite no religious emotion in undeveloped minds if they are common and not supposed to be dangerous.” “The lowest types of men are devoid of wonder.” “In primitive man there does not exist that sentiment which nature-worship presupposes.” Primitive man is not a poet, he is not addicted to “imaginative fictions.” “Amongst *a posteriori* reasons for rejecting the mythological theory it is not true, as tacitly alleged, that the primitive man looks at the powers of nature with awe. It

¹ *Chips*, ii. p. 57.

² *Sociology*, appendix, vol. i.

is not true that he speculates about their causes. It is not true that he has a tendency to make fictions.”¹

So much for the salient principles of these two writers. Their strength and their weakness may be evoked by reference to the opinions of others who move between the two extremes.

Dr. Edward Tylor has devoted his attention to “Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art, and Custom.” These subjects have been for some years his particular study. His extensive knowledge, therefore, is of the greatest help to us, especially if we avail ourselves of his uncommon sagacity in the use of it.

In both the systems glanced at, there is now and then manifested a perceptible proneness to *à priori* reasoning. Before Mr. Max Müller, Bunsen had written, “All polytheism is based on monotheism.” After Bunsen, Mr. Müller has written, “No human mind could have conceived the idea of gods without having previously conceived the idea of a God.” Professor Müller trims his hypotheses to this belief as confidently as Mr. Spencer trims his to suit the doctrine of evolution. To a bystander, each consequently seems to heel to the side he favours. And one is not surprised to hear Mr. Spencer speaking contemptuously of “mythologists,” or Mr. Max Müller speaking inappreciatively of “Euhemerists.” Mr. Tylor, though a pronounced evolutionist, adopts a method which is strictly *à posteriori*. The astonishing mass of materials he sets before us, leaves a general impression behind that the subject, if not too intricate for analysis, is so many-sided as to render any definite theory incomplete. In dealing with mythology as the oldest form into which religious belief was crystallised, we meet with traces of historical and heroic myths, of nature-myths, and of theological myths, so contorted that, (to use a geological phrase), there is no constancy in either “strike” or “dip;” —or to take a better simile, so conglomerated that the

¹ *Ubi supra.*

fragments are as compactly set as in a lump of pudding-stone. Had I to select a single sentence from the "Primitive Culture" which might serve as a guide to its main argument concerning incipient religion, I should choose this: "Mythology rests on a basis of analogy." With the book before us, we can soon test the virtue of the proposition.

The influence of language has been duly weighed; the relation of spirit to soul or ghost has been duly weighed; (we shall note Mr. Tylor's opinion on both heads); and the net result is: "Deep as language lies in our mental life, the direct comparison of object with object, and action with action, lies yet deeper."¹ Whatever we may think of Mr. Spencer's opinion that, "there is no tendency gratuitously to ascribe duality of nature," or that it is not true that the savage speculates about causes, or has a tendency to make fictions,—it must be true that he observes or becomes aware of what he has the direct evidence of likeness for. If he dreams, if he sees another faint, if his shadow accompanies him, if he hears an echo, he has (as Mr. Spencer himself shows) immediate proof, or what is unavoidably taken for such, of a twofold existence. No innate tendency to arrive at this conclusion is called for. Nor need we dub the savage a philosopher, or talk of his speculating on natural causes, because, having always observed movement to be dependent on life in himself and in other animals, he argues that movement and life are inseparable concomitants. Whether he has or has not a tendency to make fictions, it is certain that he does make them. If "fictions" stand here for poetical fictions, or for myths, then I maintain it is a mere question of degree, not of kind. True, a poetic fiction or a myth must have some sort of artistic finish or completeness about it: it must make some pretence to a beginning, a middle, and an end. But myth in this stage is the developed fiction—the full-grown tree which was but as grain of mustard-seed. A dream or a phantasm is a fiction; and either might have

¹ *Researches, &c.*, i. p. 298.

been the stuff of which a myth was made. When primitive man saw the lightning dart from the cloud, and rive an oak to shreds, it was no act of poetic imagination on his part to ascribe the fact to a living power above him. As a human being (and we are not now talking of beings incapable of the simplest process of reasoning), he argued from analogy. He compared object with object, and action with action, and the result was an erroneous theory of causation, and a fiction doubtless not devoid of poetry.

Mr. Tylor repeatedly emphasises our right to assume close resemblance between the modern savage and early man. With endless detail he acquaints us with the myths still prevalent in all quarters of the world. In alluding to them, he says: "When in surveying the quaint fancies and wild legends of the lower tribes, we find the mythology of the world at once in its most distinct and most rudimentary form, we may here again claim the savage as a representative of the childhood of the human race."¹ "The various grades of existing civilisation preserve the landmarks of a long course of history, and there survive by millions savages and barbarians whose minds still produce, in rude archaic forms, man's early mythic representations of nature."² The worship of heaven, of the sun and moon, and powers of nature generally, have been alluded to. Everywhere we still meet with myth and legend; everywhere myth and legend are compounds of personified nature, metaphorical corruptions, exaggerated heroisms, perverted remnants of history, beast-fables, and allegory; the whole touched up by the hand of intrinsic art, and rounded by the wear of time. As for the worship of ancestors, Mr. Tylor fully supports Mr. Spencer regarding its universality. "Manes-worship," he writes, "is one of the great branches of the religion of mankind." A chapter is filled with instances of this custom amongst the inhabitants of both Americas, the Polynesians, the Malays, the natives of Madagascar, the Zulus, the Western

¹ Vol. i. p. 284.

² *Ibid.* p. 317.

Africans, the Veddas of Ceylon, the Japanese, Chinese, and generally throughout Asia. But we are not here at the root—the tap-root of religion. Anthropomorphic conception based on analogy—based on the direct comparison of action with action,—this, in the last analysis, is the simplest element of religious belief. “The general theory that such direct conceptions of nature as are so naïvely and even boldly uttered in the Veda, are among the primary sources of myth, is enforced by evidence gained elsewhere in the world.”¹

Language has undoubtedly played its part: “The teachings of a childlike primeval philosophy ascribing personal life to nature at large, and the early tyranny of speech over the human mind, have thus been the two great, perhaps greatest, agents in mythologic development.” “The distinction of grammatical gender is a process ultimately connected with the formation of myths.” Still, anthropomorphism comes first.

Although the discussion turns here mainly upon the order in time of the different stages of the mythopœic operation, the divergence between Mr. Spencer and Professor Müller is of vital consequence. I confess I can discover nothing in the formation of the religious myth which would surpass the capabilities of the untutored mind of the rudest barbarian;—nothing, therefore, to hinder my adherence, for the main, to the principles so famously defended by Mr. Spencer. Nevertheless, I take the liberty to think that, by his own showing, Mr. Spencer is not always self-consistent. More than once he tells us, in furtherance of his particular views that, “daily experiences prove that surrounding objects and powers, however great, excite no religious emotion in undeveloped minds,” that, “only when there is an unfamiliar appearance, or motion, or sound, or change in a thing, does there arise this idea of a possessing spirit.”² In the first place, these two sentences seem to cancel each other;

¹ *Ubi supra.*

² *Ibid.*, vol. i. p. 339.

they certainly would do so if we identified the "religious emotion" with the idea of a "possessing spirit;" and this we are entitled to do, seeing that the controverted point is the worship of nature. If then the idea of a possessing spirit does arise when there is an unfamiliar appearance, how can it be that, whatever the power manifested, no religious emotion is excited? Not to split dialectic hairs, I question the correctness of the statement that the savage is so unsusceptible of emotion. I know there are travellers who bear out Mr. Spencer's opinion; and I am especially mindful of Darwin's account of the Patagonians; nevertheless (and I speak from personal observation of savages in various parts of the world), I incline to think that, unless in overwhelming numbers, savages, from shyness or suspicion, or from whatever cause, simulate and dissimulate before strangers in such a way as entirely to mislead them. I do not believe the savage exists who is not terrified by a crash of thunder; certainly lower animals are so: and were I to observe indifference in a savage's manner under startling circumstances, I should at once assume that he was acting.

But the second part of the above statement concedes all we here contend for. No one alleges that the idea of a possessing spirit would arise under conditions other than those suggested. The mythologist holds, I suppose, that the firmament was personified because of the unfamiliar, *i.e.*, infrequent, appearances, motions, sounds, and changes, which it is wont to display. The heavens were neither personified nor worshipped because there were ghosts abroad; but simply because the heavens appeared to behave, in respect of change, as live animals themselves behave. It is impossible, however, for any one to state the case against Mr. Spencer more forcibly than he himself puts it. "I believe," says he, "M. Comte expressed the opinion that fetichistic conceptions are formed by the higher animals. Holding, as I have given reasons for doing, that fetichism is not original but derived, I cannot,

of course, coincide in this view. Nevertheless, I think the behaviour of intelligent animals elucidates the genesis of it." He then gives, by way of illustration, two instances of which he was a witness. In one, a dog, having hurt himself with the stick which he was playing with, ran away in fear: which showed that the dog regarded the stick as capable of again doing him injury. "Similarly in the mind of the primitive man, knowing scarcely more of natural causation than a dog, the anomalous behaviour of an object previously classed as inanimate suggests animation. The idea of voluntary action is made nascent; and then arises a tendency to regard the object with alarm, &c. The vague notion of animation thus aroused will obviously become a more definite notion, as fast as development of the ghost-theory furnishes a specific agency to which the anomalous behaviour can be ascribed." In other words, the movement of an inanimate object having *first* suggested animation—first, because the dog has no theory about ghosts—the ghost-theory then comes into play, converts the primordial fetichism into personification of nature; and by so doing, paves the way for ancestor-worship, or for polytheism, as the case may be.

Should the above rendering of Mr. Spencer's doctrine be still questionable, take his chapter on the origin of the distinction between the living and the not-living. If, he tells us, we would understand the nature of this distinction as conceived by primitive man, we must observe the development of it through lower forms of consciousness. With his usual felicity in choice of illustration, Mr. Spencer bids us mark the cirrhipeds on the sea-shore, and watch them draw to the doors of their cells when there is sudden obscuration by cloud. "Various inferior types, whose lives are carried on by reflex actions only, display no very marked advance on this mode of discriminating the living from the not-living as visually presented."¹ "Speaking generally, we may say that in

¹ Vol. i. p. 139.

such cases the motion which implies life is confounded with the motion which does not. The kind of mental act is like that occurring in ourselves when some large object suddenly passes close in front. . . . Here the primary suggestion with us, as with these lower creatures, is that motion implies life," &c. Is not this the pith and moment of the whole affair? *Motion implies life.* Here we get down to the uttermost depths of animism; and—shall we say the word?—the basis of religion is discovered in the reflex action of a mollusc.

LETTER VII.

It is a true saying of Mr. Tylor's, that "whatever bears on the origin of philosophic opinion, bears also on its validity." For all that, I would not have you fling these letters aside when you apply this aphorism to the conclusion just arrived at. We have many men's brains to ransack yet, and many creeds to collate. But we must steadfastly believe that, however startling or alarming a truth may be, it is at best but a partial truth. Our mental, like our ocular vision, commands a segment only of the circle; and even then, but the prison walls.

There is little else connected with the rise of mythology that needs detain us; for, what remains does but confirm, not shake, the drift of the foregoing arguments. I shall quote a few authors who have as good a claim to be heard as any, and then pass to the next stage of our inquiry. Creuzer, in his great work, "Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker," &c., says: "Language was also a prolific mother of gods and heroes. As it was extremely figurative and metaphorical, it must often, in passing from one people to another, and at wide intervals, have assumed a singularly foreign aspect; such and such expressions ceased to be understood, and myths were invented to make them intelligible." "Symbols and hieroglyphics must also have been affluent sources of myth. Thus the inventive genius of the Greeks readily found a meaning for the Egyptian vases surmounted with the human head, and having handles ornamented with serpents. They sought no mystic interpretation in the cultus of Isis, for which the vases were used, but simply

turned the sacred emblem into a Greek hero, tacked on a legend of the Trojan war, and then set to work to embroider an elaborate myth." After the same fashion the story of Cleopatra's suicide may not improbably be derived from a statue of this queen crowned with asps, the asp being a common emblem of royalty. Another parallel instance of the myth-making art is that given by Herodotus (Bk. I. chaps. i., ii.) of the story of Io. In the Greek myth, as we all know, the priestess Io, who is loved by Zeus, excites the jealousy of Hera. Zeus, to appease his spouse, changes Io into a white cow. Hera, not yet satisfied, sets the many-eyed Argos to watch her; whereupon Zeus sends the crafty Hermes to kill Argos. Hera retaliates by so tormenting Io with a gad-fly, that the latter wanders over the world for rest until she reaches the banks of the Nile; where, at the touch of Zeus, she regains her form and bears a son named Epaphos. The Persian version of the story as related by Herodotus is simply this: "The Phœnicians, who traded in the wares of Egypt and Assyria, happened to land at Argos. Here a number of women, and among them Io—the daughter of the king—came down to the beach. Suddenly the Phœnicians seized Io and set sail for Egypt."

Sir Henry Rawlinson traces the name of Io to a cuneiform inscription where mention is made of some Greek colonists under the name of the *Yaha* tribes. He further suggests that the name "may perhaps furnish an astronomical solution of the entire fable, &c., the Egyptian title of the moon being *Yah*, and the primitive Chaldæan title being represented by a cuneiform sign, which is phonetically *Ai*, as in modern Turkish." This last view was also entertained by Keightley,¹ who says, "The general opinion respecting Io seems to be that she is the moon, and Argos the starry heaven, which, as it were, keeps ceaseless watch over her; her wanderings are thought to denote the continual revolutions of this planet. In con-

¹ *Mythology of Ancient Greece, &c.*

firmation of this theory, we are assured that in the dialect of Argos *Io* signifies *moon*, and . . . that *Io* has the same signification in Coptic."

We could hardly have a more apposite illustration. Are we to adopt the Euhemeristic version of the Persians, or the mythologistic version of the orientalist? Unless the latter are at fault, we have here the sure marks of an original nature-myth, the "irrational element" in which is explained by the influence of language on thought. If so, it helps to bear out Mr. Max Müller's doctrine that, many of the legends of gods and heroes may be rendered intelligible if only we can discover the original meaning of their proper names.¹ This opinion coincides with that of Lassen, so learned in the ancient Indian languages. Having stated that *Deva* is derived from *div*, to shine; he adds, "We see here that with the Indo-Germanic race the notion of divine beings formed itself out of that of light."² The lighting, warning, and fructifying powers of the sun, the beaming of the distant stars, the lightning flashing through the storm—these, he believes, were the natural objects of man's worship, and the proof of it is to be found in what is left to us of early speech.

The passing allusion made by Keightley to the fetichistic origin of myth, leads us to infer that he did not regard it with favour. He points to the principle of analogy as lying at the base of nature-worship. Man himself was the type of animation. External nature was alive just as he was alive—*i.e.*, as his body was alive. His body lived and moved by virtue of his soul. So "when the sea rose in mountains and lashed the shore or tossed the bark, the commotion was referred to a god of the sea," &c. But presently Keightley adds: "When we shall in future speak of gods of the sea, the sun, the moon, we would not be understood to mean *personifications* of these objects. In truth, a personification of the sea or sun is not a very

¹ Cf. *Nineteenth Century*.

² *Indische Altertums Kunde*, Zweiter Band, p. 756.

intelligible expression. We mean by these gods deities presiding over and directing them, but totally distinct from them," &c. This at first sight seems to fit in with Mr. Spencer's theory, that the gods were ready-made, disembodied men. If we read on, we shall find this was not what Keightley meant. He carefully enumerates the various sources and occasions of the production of myths, dividing them under the two heads of *things* and *names*.¹ 1. A "peculiar fondness" "for symbol, myth, and allegory—*i.e.*, the 'tendency to make fictions.' 2. The pride of family and the flattery of poets, which would seek to cast lustre on the origin of some noble house by placing a deity at the head of its pedigree, or to veil the transgression of one of its daughters by feigning that a god had penetrated the recesses of her chamber, or met her in the wood or at the fountain. Legends of this kind are to be placed among the latest. Indeed, we very much doubt if this be a real original source of myths, and we place it here only because it has generally been so regarded." This directly probes the question of ancestor-worship as a source of myth, and rejects the epic element as an original factor. 3. "A great number of legends in all countries are indebted for their origin to the extreme desire which men have to assign a cause for the various phenomena of the natural world. The Scandinavian mythology is full of instances, and the subsequent pages will present them in abundance," &c. 4. "The desire to account for the phenomena of the moral world has also led to the invention of legends. Thus the laws of Menû explain the difference of castes in India by saying that the Brahmins, that is, the priests, were produced from the mouth of Brahmah; the warriors from his arms," &c. 5. "Casual resemblance of sound in words, and foreign, obsolete, or ambiguous terms, were another abundant source of legends. In Greek, *λάας* is a stone, and *λαὸς* a people; hence the legend of Deucalion and

¹ *Ubi supra*, p. 6.

Pyrrha restoring the human race by flinging stones behind them," &c. 6. "Metaphorical language understood literally may have given occasion to many legends," &c. The Hebrews termed one who is to die, a *son of death*. The Arabs call mist, *daughter of the sea*; springs, *daughters of the earth*. The Greeks called the showers, *children of the clouds*.

Grote, who devotes the greater part of a volume to legendary Greece, thus recapitulates his opinions:—"The myths were originally produced in an age which had no records, no philosophy, no criticism, no canon of belief, and scarcely any tincture either of astronomy or geography—but which, on the other hand, was full of religious faith, distinguished for quick and susceptible imagination, seeing personal agents where we look only for objects and connecting laws; an age, moreover, eager for new narrative, accepting with the unconscious impressibility of children (the question of truth or falsehood being never formally raised) all which ran in harmony with its pre-existing feelings, and penetrable by inspired prophets and poets in the same proportion that it was indifferent to positive evidence," &c.¹

Are Bunsen and the mythologists right; or are the evolutionists right? Was polytheism based on monotheism; or is the idea of one God the natural product of better brains and better knowledge? Up to this point evidence and argument have gone to show that religion has its origin in our common nature. By *à priori* reasoning we are led to assume that, a being endowed with our senses and our faculties would probably create a multiplicity of gods in his own image, after his own likeness. By direct observation we find that savages actually do so. We should further argue, even without proof, that increased knowledge would, in accordance with his mental furniture, guide man so to class phenomena as gradually to reduce the number of their kinds and causes, and finally

¹ *Hist. of Greece*, vol. i. p. 370.

to resolve the many into the one. This assumption, too, is verified by what we know of Greek philosophy; nor is it altogether unsupported by the Chinese, Egyptian, Vaidic, and other ancient forms of religion. "Thales, Pythagoras, and Xenophanes," says Grote, "were the first who attempted to disenthral the philosophic intellect from all-personifying religious faith, and to constitute a method of interpreting nature distinct from the spontaneous inspirations of untaught minds. It is in them that we first find the idea of Person tacitly set aside or limited, and an impersonal nature conceived as the object of study."¹ Besides these, there were Anaximenes, Diogenes of Apollonia, Anaximander, and other Ionic philosophers, who (about the same era, six or seven centuries B.C.) began to look upon the outer world in a new light. Each of them vaguely conceived the notion of a permanent beneath the transient, of one element or principle in which all others merged. Some of them believed this one to be a material element—*e.g.*, water or air; others a mathematical principle—as the number one. Some again tried to grasp the idea by aid of mere abstract terms, and made *existence* the soul, as it were, of all things—the eternal one of which the many was but the visible aspect. Xenophanes may perhaps have got something beyond this, for "the state of his mind is graphically painted in that one phrase of Aristotle's: 'Casting his eyes upwards at the immensity of heaven, he declared that the one is God.'"²

Of the still older philosophies and cosmogonies and religions, how does the case stand? Did Thales or Pythagoras invent their conceptions of the One? Did the henotheism of Xenophanes originate in Greece? Apparently not. Of Thales, Grote writes: "Extensive travels in Egypt and Asia are ascribed to him, and as a general fact these travels are doubtless true, since no other means of acquiring

¹ *Hist. of Greece*, part i. ch. xvi.

² Lewes's *Hist. of Philosophy*, vol. i. p. 44.

knowledge were then open." Of the Pythagorean doctrine Lewes says: "Every dogma in it has been traced to some prior philosophy. Not a vestige will remain to be called the property of the teacher himself, if we restore to the Jews, Indians, Chaldeans, Phœnicians, nay, even Thracians, those various portions which he is declared to have borrowed from them." To none of these nations, nor to the Chinese, are we to look for the scientific methods of observation which lead to the higher philosophic system of the Greeks. But even the ancient races here referred to as the probable teachers or forerunners of the Greek thinkers, had, as far back as any vestige of their language carries us, an established cultus or system of worship based upon a theory of the universe, which, to say the least of it, assigned the greatest share in creation to some one supreme being or power. Whether at its lowest or at its highest level—whether pantheism, henotheism, or monotheism, the conception of cosmological unity was the outcome of a distinctly intellectual movement; it was the result of an effort to satisfy an intellectual want. In short, it was a gradual growth from within; not an immediate communication from a supernatural power without.

In China there are two separate forms of religion besides Fo-ism or Chinese Buddhism. The oldest of all is probably that adopted and remodelled by Confucius. In the last letter, reference was made to the Shoo-King, in which the supreme intelligence of Heaven is spoken of. Hardwick elsewhere states that "allusion is made as many as eight-and-thirty times to some great Power or Being called *Shang-te*. The name itself imports 'August' or 'Sovereign Ruler.' As there depicted, he possesses a high measure of intelligence, and exercises some measure of moral government; he punishes the evil, he rewards the good." Citing various eminent modern authorities for the estimate, the same writer alludes to Tschu-hi as "the approved expositor" of Chinese metaphysics and theology. "According to the views propounded by him, and in part at least

transmitted from preceding ages, there is, underlying all phenomena however mixed and manifold they seem, a fundamental unity of which the common name is *Tao-keih*, the absolute, or literally the 'Great Extreme.' . . . From it alone, as from the fountain-head of being, issued everything that is. 'Creation' is the periodic flowing forth of it. . . . 'All things in the world,' says Choo-he, 'seem as to their primary tendencies to issue from the One,' &c.¹

Looking to the first great book of the Aryan nations, we learn, through Mr. Max Müller, that "the consciousness that all the deities are but different names of one and the same godhead, breaks forth indeed here and there in the Veda. . . . One poet, for instance, says (in the Rig-Veda), 'They call him Indra, Mitra, Varuna,*Agni; then he is in the beautiful-winged heavenly Garutmat: that which is one the wise call it in divers manners,' &c.² There are many verses in the Rig-Veda to the same effect. Take, for instance, "In the beginning there arose the Golden Child. . . . He established the earth and the sky. . . . Who is the God to whom we shall offer our sacrifice? He who through His power is the one king of the breathing and awakening world; He who governs all, man and beast, &c. May He not destroy us, He the creator of the earth; or He the righteous who created the heaven; He also created the bright and mighty waters," &c. The name the ancient Aryan gave to this mysterious power is Brâhman; "for brâhman meant originally force, will, wish, and the propulsive power of creation."

Colebrooke, speaking of the Veda, says, "The real doctrine of the Indian Scripture is the unity of the Deity, in whom the universe is comprehended; and the seeming polytheism which it exhibits offers the elements and the stars and the planets as gods. . . . But the worship of deified heroes is no part of the system; nor are the incarnations of deities suggested in any portion of the text which I have yet seen, though such are sometimes hinted

¹ *Ubi supra*, p. 300.

² *Lecture on the Vedas.*

at by commentators.”¹ Again in his *Essays* (vol. i. p. 25), “The deities invoked appear, on a cursory inspection of the Veda, to be as various as the authors of the prayers addressed to them; but, according to the most ancient annotations of the Indian Scripture, those numerous names of persons and things are all resolvable into different titles of three deities, and ultimately of one God.”

The Puranas are works of much later date than the Vedas, although the cosmogony and mythology are essentially the same in both. But to whatever age they may be assigned, they belong to an antiquity which was already vastly remote before the beginning of the Christian era. In the first book of the Vishnu Purânas, as translated from the original Sanskrit by Wilson, it is written: “Brahmâ, Vishnu, and Siva are the most powerful energies of God; next to these are the inferior deities,” &c. It must be understood, however, that God is here identified with nature. “All kinds of substance, with or without shape, here or elsewhere, are the body of Vishnu.”²

Of ancient religions no one more nearly concerns us than Zoroastrianism. In its present form it is the religion of the Parsees. But its interest to us lies in its originally pure monotheism, in its great antiquity, and in its relation to our Bible. I had better say at once, the whole subject is as yet obscured by impenetrable ignorance. When we are told that fifty years ago the sacred books of the Buddhists, Brahmans, and Zoroastrians were all but unknown, and that there was not a single scholar who could have translated a line of the Veda, a line of the Zend-Avesta, or a line of the Buddhist Tripitaka; when we further reflect that the cuneiform character and Achæmænian inscriptions have been rendered intelligible within our own recollection only, it will easily be understood what little progress can yet have been made, and how uncertain our footing still must be. We are, notwithstanding, in possession of some positive knowledge; and what we do

¹ *Asiatic Researches*, vol. viii. p. 473.

² Chap. xxvii.

know touches the old standpoints of theology to the quick.

It is not easy to winnow the grain from the husk of conjecture. The student is bewildered with masses of crude material, and with the diversity of opinion with which this is presented to him. All I shall attempt is to indicate a few of the best sources of enlightenment for those who are quite in the dark; and to save them time and trouble by extricating from the entanglement such facts and judgments as shall be least likely to mislead.

The points we have to think of are: 1. Who was Zoroaster; where did he come from; what was his date? 2. What did he teach? Before offering any surmises in reply, it will serve our purpose to glance at the origin of the Aryan people, with whom the whole of this subject is bound up.

If you turn to the map of Asia in any school atlas, and look at what is there marked Tartary, you will find the great river Amoo or Oxus taking its rise at the foot of the Hindu Kush mountains, which form the boundary between Caubul and Bokharia. A little farther to the north-east, you will see another river marked the Sihon; this is the Jaxartes of the ancients, which rises in the range separating Turkestan from Little Thibet, or the westernmost point of the Chinese Empire. The primitive land of the Aryans is said to lie somewhere between these two rivers. Owing, as it would seem, to great changes of climate brought about by physical convulsions (the grounds for the supposition are given below), the inhabitants of this "Land of Pleasantness," as the Iranians called it, migrated first (so it is supposed, though where nearly all is supposition we need not repeat the caution) towards Europe; which they entered, some possibly by passing north of the Caspian, others by way of the Hellespont. These were the progenitors of the Slavic, Celtic, and Germanic races: these, as their language proves beyond a doubt, were the ancestors alike of ancient Greeks and of modern Irishmen:

and through these, all Europeans, save the Laplanders, the Turks, and the Hungarians, are equally related to the Hindus. Long after the various migrations to the north-west, the original stem, or what remained of it, left their primeval home; and striking southwards, crossed the Himalaya and Afghan ranges, and took possession of the Punjâb. "At the first dawn of traditional history we see the Aryan tribes migrating across the snow of the Himalaya southward towards the 'Seven Rivers' [the Indus, the five rivers of the Punjâb, and the Sarasvati], and ever since, India has been called their home." "Before this time they had been living in more northern regions within the same precincts with the ancestors of the Greeks," &c.¹

The Medes and Persians of old were part of the Aryan stock. The name "Iran," by which Persians now call their country, is no other than the Vaidic Airyana, or home of the Aryans. The land of the Iranians, in one sense, formerly extended from the Indus to the Tigris, from the Oxus and Jaxartes to the Persian Gulf; but the true Iran—the old Airyana Vaêga—is limited by most modern writers either to the plateau of Pamir, which is in the neighbourhood of Samarcand, and formed part of the ancient Sogdiana; or to the region a little south-west of this, once called Bactria, which is held to be the same as the Balkh of the present time. Some authorities, and these amongst the highest, maintain that Airyana Vaêga was in Armenia, somewhere in the neighbourhood of Ararat. But to this we shall return presently.

It was incidentally remarked that the comparison of languages proved descent from a common stock. It is by such means alone that we are enabled to read with clearness a history that never was written. So far as it goes, the linguistic evidence is conclusive. When we find that "father" is *athair* in Irish, *fadar* in Gothic, *pater* in Latin, *πατήρ* in Greek, *patar* in Zend, and *pitar* in Sanskrit; and learn that, the Sanskrit root *Pa* means "to protect," the

¹ Bunsen's *Outlines of the Philosophy of History*, p. 129.

genetic relationship is too manifest for doubt. Also "among the Aryans, *mâtar* had the meaning of 'maker,' from *Ma*, 'to fashion.'" Thus our earliest prattlings discover the consanguinity never till now suspected. Other family titles tell the same tale. "'Brother' is *bhrater* in Sanskrit, *brâtar* in Zend, and so on till we come to *brathair* in Irish. Also we are taught the pretty meaning of our English 'daughter;' *duhitar* is the Sanskrit; and *duhitar*, as Professor Lassen was the first to show, is derived from *duh*, a root which in Sanskrit means 'to milk,' connected perhaps with the Latin *duco*, and also, maybe, with the French *traire*." "The name of milkmaid," says Professor Müller, "given to the daughter of the house, opens before our eyes a little idyll of the poetical and pastoral life of the early Aryans."

The southern and eastern migration of our Japhetic ancestors is fortunately not altogether untold. In the Vendidad—the religious code of the Parsees—we have a record of the exodus and wanderings of the last of the Aryans who left their northern home. According to Dr. Spiegel, the oldest part of the Zend-Avesta is the Yasna; the second the Vendidad. This work gives us the dispersion of the Aryans, their theology, and their philosophy, together with the most ancient traditions of the race. The Vendidad stands in the same relation to the descendants of Japhet, as the book of Genesis does to those of Shem and Ham. For historical purposes the first is fully as trustworthy and hence as valuable as the last. It introduces to us a monotheism which, at its fountain-head, was at least as pure as that of Abram and Melchizedek. What the relative antiquity of the two systems may be, we have but slender means of knowing. Of this you will better judge when we are farther advanced.

Allusion was made just now to changes of climate as probable causes of the great dispersion. In the first Fargard, or chapter, of the Vendidad, we are told that Angro Mainyus [Ahriman] converted the "Land of Bless-

ing" into a land where there are ten months of winter to two of summer. This is descriptive of the present climate of Thibet—the country in the immediate vicinity of that which the Aryans deserted. Each subsequent movement of the tribes is referred in the same way to the malignant actions of Angro Mainyus; and the suggestion does not seem extravagant that the angels with their flaming swords who, according to the Semitic traditions, drove their first parents from Paradise, were also physical convulsions, probably of a volcanic kind. But this by the way. The question before us is the one of antiquity. What do we know of Zoroaster? Was he a mythical or was he an historical personage? One writer tells us he was "a priest of the fire-worshippers, and found the doctrine of good and evil already in vogue." Another, that "he was a Chaldean who introduced his doctrines into Persia and Central Asia;" another, that "he was the Median conqueror of Babylon, who vanquished the realm and city of the Chaldees, and founded the second Babylonian dynasty;" another, that "he was identical with the patriarch Ham, the great progenitor of the Turanians;" another, that "he was identical with Abraham;" another, that he was contemporary with Abraham; another, that he was a Magian, and perhaps a Scyth; or even that Zoroaster was the mere eponym of a Scythic tribe.

His date is necessarily of like uncertainty. Some of the classic Greeks place him 5000 years before the Trojan war, *i.e.*, 6184 B.C. Bunsen says, "The date of Zoroaster as fixed by Aristotle cannot be so very irrational. He and Eudoxus, according to Pliny . . . place him 6000 years before the death of Plato," &c.¹ Dr. Haug writes, "Under no circumstances can we assign him a later date than B.C. 1000; and one may even find reasons for placing his era much earlier, and making him a contemporary of Moses."² Between these extremes there is ample room

¹ *Egypt*, &c., Book iv. part vi.

² *Essays on the Sacred Writings of the Parsis*, p. 299.

for speculation. Even if we allow to Zoroaster no earlier epoch than the latest admitted by Dr. Haug, this would not militate against the antiquity of the monotheism of the Zend-Avesta. We should still be at liberty to assume that Zoroaster found the doctrine, which he propagated, already in existence; and that he was but the mouth-piece of it, just as Moses was of similar doctrines amongst the Shemites. But it is hard to believe that Zarathustra Spitama (Zoroaster was the Greek corruption of his name) was a fictitious being. The stamp of some mighty genius is still legible upon the all-but-effaced traditions of a crumbled past. The oldest parts of the Avesta already apotheosise him. Even when the first of the sacred writings were composed, Spitama was adored as the prophet and associate of Ahuramazda, the Supreme God. And in further proof that he was no longer in existence, Dr. Spiegel notices that in the Yazna, he is named in the third person, as is Moses in the concluding chapters of the Pentateuch.

With reference to the question of antiquity, it is not very clear that the language of Zoroaster is of later date than the Sanskrit of the Veda. The Zend of the Yazna was already obsolescent at the time of the Behistun inscriptions; and we are assured that the language of the Avesta was certainly not that of Zarathustra.¹ Dr. Haug distinctly affirms that Zend is the "elder sister of Sanskrit," both being descended in common from some still older stem. "Zend," says Bunsen, "if compared with classical Sanskrit, exhibits, in many points of grammar, features of a more primitive character than Sanskrit."² Professor Müller thinks otherwise. In any case the student cannot escape the conviction of vast antiquity; and the following passage also expresses this view. "The tendency of modern criticism, with only few exceptions, is to carry back the age of Zoroaster into prehistoric times;

¹ Cf. *Chips*, vol. i. p. 88.

² *Outlines of the Philosophy of Universal History*, vol. i. p. 112.

or, representing him as the 'Vyasa' of the Perso-Aryans, to invest him with the dubious, half-impersonal character which attaches to his Hindu prototype the so-called author of the earliest Veda."¹

As to where he came from, we might argue, as Zend was the language in which Zoroastrianism was taught and preserved, that Zend was the language, if not the precise idiom of its founder: then, as Zend was the language of Bactria, that Bactria was the birthplace of Zoroaster. In the *Bundehesh*, one of the sacred books of the Parsees, we are explicitly told that Zarathustra propagated his religion in Airyana Vaêga. And while nothing whatever is said of his incoming, his departure from that land is recorded.²

This brings us back to the doubtful point above referred to. Where was Airyana Vaêga? In his "Eran, the Land between the Indus and the Tigris," &c., Dr. Spiegel notices that the traditional birthplace of Zoroaster was Arran. And he identifies this Arran, named in the Avesta, with the Chaldean Haran mentioned in Genesis xi. 28; assuming, as there is ample precedent for doing, that the name given to Abram's brother is the name of a place. "The departure spot of the Hebrew people, to which their own history points, is Haran, which land seems to be identical with Aran, *i.e.*, Airyana Vaêga." Here then, according to Dr. Spiegel, is the clue to the similarity between Genesis and the Avesta. "Whatever ideas," says Professor Müller in his review of the "Eran," "are shared in common by Genesis and the Avesta, must be referred to that very ancient period when personal intercourse was still possible between Abraham and Zoroaster, the prophets of the Jews and the Iranians." Professor Müller disputes the opinion. "This name [Arran] is given by mediæval Mohammedan writers to the plain washed by the Araxes, and was identified by

¹ Hardwick, *ubi supra*, p. 523.

² Cf. Spiegel, *Eranische Altertums Kunde*, Erster Band.

Anquatil Duperron with the name Airyana Vaêga, &c. The Parsis place this sacred country in the vicinity of Atropatene, and it is clearly meant as the northernmost country known to the author or authors of the Zend-Avesta. We think Dr. Spiegel is right in defending the geographical position assigned by tradition to Airyana Vaêga, against modern theories that would place it more eastward in the plain of Pamer; nor do we hesitate to admit that the name (Airyana Vaega, *i.e.*, the seed of the Aryan) might have been changed into Arran."¹ But while admitting that the birthplace of Zoroaster might be in Northern Media, to the west of the Caspian, instead of to the east, in Bactria, Professor Müller declines to identify the starting-point of the Hebrews with this Arran of the western provinces: and he entirely objects to the inferred intercourse between Abraham and Zoroaster; for, he argues, the MSS. of both religions are, comparatively speaking, so modern, that there is no saying which may or may not have borrowed from the other. This is true enough. Yet it hinders not that what is common to the two religions may have been due to intercourse somewhere.

M. Lenormant is very decidedly of opinion that the Airyana Vaêga of the Aryans is the Eden of the Hebrews; and that the Zendic Paradise was in the highlands of the Hindu Kush. The placing of Airyana Vaêga in Atropatene is, says he, "nothing but a transfer, of sufficiently modern times; it is a localisation of a sacred tradition which has nothing primitive in it; and only came into existence when the true site was forgotten which the authors of the *Zend-Avesta* had in view when they spoke of the cradle of the human race. The actual site of the Airyana Vaêga in the original and most ancient conception is to the east of the Caspian Sea and the lake of Aral."²

¹ *Chips*, i. p. 149.

² *Les Origines de l'Histoire*, Fr. Lenormant, tome deuxième, ire partie.

Whichever opinion we embrace, the very dispute points to an antiquity that, like all colossal forms, becomes more vast as we contemplate it. And considering that we have some data for estimating the epoch of the Hebrew origins, or at any rate the epoch of Abraham, no date that we can assign to this would prevent our placing Zoroastrianism at a far remoter period.

But while the question of relative antiquity remains in abeyance, that of Zoroaster's theology has ceased to be problematical. A single passage from a scholar like Dr. Haug, who has devoted a lifetime to the subject, must suffice to sum up what I could easily convince you is the unanimous verdict of the best informed. "The leading idea of his theology is *Monothcism, i.e.*, that there are not many gods, but only one; and the principle of his speculative philosophy was dualism, *i.e.*, the supposition of the primeval causes of the real world and of the intellectual," &c. "Spitama Zarathustra's conception of Ahuramazda as the Supreme Being is perfectly identical with the notion of Elohim (God) or Jehovah which we find in the books of the Old Testament."¹ Ahuramazda is called by him "the Creator of the earthly and spiritual life, the Lord of the whole universe, in whose hands are all the creatures." The common notion that he professed a theological dualism like that of the Christian is erroneous. As the prophet Amos says (chap. iii. 6), "Shall there be evil in a city and the Lord hath not done it?" as Isaiah says for Jehovah, "I make peace and create evil: I the Lord do all these things," so Zoroaster would have made his God speak. "A separate evil spirit," says Haug, "of equal power with Ahuramazda, and always opposed to him, is entirely foreign to Zarathustra's theology." It is a corrupt interpretation by later times to suppose that the two principles were two separate spiritual beings; they were both united in Ahuramazda. Even the dualism of modern

¹ *Essays on the Sacred Writings of the Parsis*, p. 300, ff.

Zoroastrianism is quite contrary to the monotheism of the founder.

Dr. Spiegel corroborates the statement of Dr. Haug: "As the Hebrew Jahveh, so is also Ahuramazda, the only God who creates; and all other beings, let them stand ever so high, are but his creatures. This view we find confronts us throughout the Avesta."¹ Amongst the many aspects common to both, which Dr. Spiegel assures us must be referred back to Iran, the similarity not only of conception but of name must be included.²

It would take more space than I can afford to epitomise the results of the researches which tend to make good these statements. There have been confused and erroneous notions respecting Zoroaster's dualism and his connection with fire-worship; but there is one point upon which all students are agreed, viz., that the teaching of Zoroaster was an emphatic protest against element and nature worship, and was an exhortation to abandon polytheism for the worship of one Supreme God. We may be unable to satisfy ourselves that Zoroastrianism is older than the monotheism of the Hebrews, but we are sure that it must be assigned to prehistoric times, and those who refuse to believe in its originality have therefore the impracticable task of proving that, its inspirations were not the natural outgrowths of individual genius working upon superior knowledge, but the results of contact with Semitic races who had previously gained possession of the divine truth.

¹ *Erânische Altertums Kunde.*

² "Dieser name Javeh wird, Exod. iii. 14, als der unveränderlich Seiende erklärt, und man hat schon lange darauf aufmerksam gemacht, dass das Wort Ahura ebenfals den Seiende bedeute, denn dasselbe kommt von ah, oder as, sein, her."
—*Eran. Alt.* 459.

LETTER VIII.

BEARING upon the same topic we have yet other evidence to consult. Universal history, comparative mythology, and especially ancient cosmogonies, must be regarded as the surest of our guides in the absence of testimony more direct. As the whole thesis here maintained is that, ethnic unity accounts for community of ideas, it may be said that we are wasting our pains, for the book of Genesis has already stated the fact. Is not all mankind descended from Adam? and are we not told, "the whole earth was of one language and of one speech?" True; nevertheless these researches and the biblical records help each other. The Bible is a gainer by whatever testifies to its correctness; and modern criticism has derived incalculable assistance from the Old Testament. But we have a special interest in the origins of other races besides the Semitic. By comparing the theologies of the principal stocks of mankind in various stages of their culture, we provide ourselves with a gauge whereby to test the traditions of the ancient Hebrews. These traditions and the rabbinical doctrines spun out of them are the warp and woof of the Christian faith. Our labour, therefore, would not be wasted if it merely helped to prove the statement about the unity of language. Still less will it be wasted if it induces us to believe that the earliest forms of religion were everywhere similar; and that, while in one direction we can trace these through nature-worship down to animism, we can, in the other, trace them through polytheism up to the conception of one God.

As for the fossil bones of history, we must not hope to reconstruct the once throbbing past with these. Nevertheless the prospects of discovery are very different to what they were a quarter of a century ago. The deciphering of the cuneiform inscriptions—which were formerly thought to be decorative patterns, or the borings of some extinct worm—has revealed treasures of far more value than the gold and jewels to which the strange characters were also once supposed to relate. Unfortunately against these acquisitions some losses have to be written off. The revelations first won by the remarkable sagacity and industry of Sir Henry Rawlinson, Mr. Pinches, and others, have had to suffer some slight modification at the hands of these scholars themselves; and where we deemed our path secure, we have come upon signs which compel us now and then to retrace our steps. Still, the cuneiform remains are the depositaries of the only information we are ever likely to obtain. They are records of an age in which the Turanians, the Hamites, the Semites, and the Aryans were mingled together. Media, Persia, Susiana, Babylonia, Chaldea, were the countries to which they belonged. In these countries, at the time many of the inscriptions were made, the Semites, the Indo-Europeans, and the Turanians were interspersed. The single circumstance that at Behistun, Persepolis, and other places of the Persian monarchy, monuments are inscribed in three languages, viz., Tâtar, Aryan, and Semitic, proves that these different races were then living in the closest intimacy.

Besides this proof of contact, there is evidence (more important to our argument) of relationship reaching back into much older times. Speaking of the connection between the Hamites or Turanians of the valley of the Euphrates and the Hamites of Egypt, Sir H. Rawlinson says: "One of the most remarkable results arising from an analysis of the cuneiform alphabet is the evidence of an Aryan element in the vocabulary of the very earliest

period, thus showing either that in that remote age there must have been an Aryan race dwelling on the Euphrates among the Hamite tribes, or that (as I myself think more probable) the distinction between Aryan, Semitic, and Turanian tongues had not been developed when picture-writing was first used in Chaldæa, but that the words then in use passed indifferently at a subsequent period, and, under certain modifications, into the three great families among which the languages of the world were divided.”¹

Of the relationship that once existed between the Babylonians and the oldest of the Turanian stock, the Chinese, recent research has placed us beyond doubt. We were aware that Chinese traditions pointed to a western origin; and that at the earliest period to which these traditions refer, the nation was already far advanced in civilisation. Scholars of the present day affirm with confidence that the early home of the Chinese race was south of the Caspian sea; that the Chinese and Akkadian languages, as known to us through the cuneiform inscriptions, are akin; and that there are parallelisms between the Babylonian and Chinese astrotheology and also in their calendars so striking that they can only be explained by reference to a common source of civilisation. “The Akkadian syllabaries brought by George Smith and others from Babylonia furnish an identity of words and hieroglyphs which shows beyond reasonable doubt an unmistakable affinity between the written character of that region and of ancient China. . . . The cuneiform syllabaries have done more than furnish isolated instances of identity. A careful investigation into their contents, undertaken by M. Terrien, has been rewarded by the discovery of fragments identical with the Yih King in the Akkadian language.”² When inquiring into the origin of religions, and when taking into consideration what is similar be-

¹ *Herodotus*, Essay vi.

² *Quarterly Review*, July 1882.

tween them or what is common to all, such facts as these, if facts they be, must be carefully borne in mind. If we look to the religion of the Hebrews, whichever influence we take into account, whether it be early and long-continued intercourse with old-established races, or original affinity not yet obliterated at the time of Abram, either would inevitably determine the religious notions of the Abrahamites, whatever reform may have been introduced by the genius of their founder.

The centre of intercourse at the epoch of Hebrew beginnings was Babylonia. The first mention of the Hebrew patriarch is in connection with "Ur of the Chaldees." "Babel and Erech and Accad and Calneh, in the land of Shinar," are amongst the first places known to the Hebrew people. The land of Shinar was their first settled home: and the land of Shinar is Babylonia. Fortunately Babylonia and Chaldea happen to be the lands of the cuneiform inscriptions. Fortunately also we have (at second hand) some fragments of history compiled from the archives of Babylon by the Babylonian priest, Berosus, who lived about the beginning or middle of the third century before our era. The discoveries of MM. Lenormant and Jules Oppert and the late George Smith have cast some doubt upon the accuracy of Berosus. But within the limits of a few centuries harmony of dates does not affect the main question here at issue. Without any nicety of detail, we have sufficient ground for believing (1) that the Zoroastrian Aryans and the early Semites came together before or near the time of Abraham; (2) that there is actual proof both of intercourse and affinity between the early Semites and the Hamites or Turanians; (3) that ethnological development was accompanied by a corresponding development in religious conceptions.

To take the first two heads as they stand, let us suppose the original home of Zoroastrianism to have been in the vicinity of Atropatene or in the plains watered by the Araxes; which are generally held to be near the cradle of

the human race.¹ We should then have to accept simply the biblical traditions as to the universal mother-country; and to assume that, the geographical allusions in the Avesta refer to an era long subsequent to the first great dispersion of mankind—which indeed we have the highest authority for placing in Babel or Babylonia,—only so far need we venture, and community of ideas between Zoroastrians, Aryans, and Semites, is explained by a unity or at least a contiguity of races, which had not yet been disrupted. One objection to this hypothesis is that it might prove too much for our argument. The ideas, the community of which has to be accounted for, are probably of too high an order for so early an age as here referred to. It is certain that about the period assigned to Abraham the inhabitants of Ur were addicted to the adoration of the planets. Cuneiform-inscribed tablets have been discovered, which testify that the temple at Mugheir—the ancient Ur—was sacred to the moon-god Sin: and at Senkereh—the ancient Larsa—Jupiter and Venus (or Belus and Beltis) had their temples. From these remains, it is evident that this form of worship was supported by the kings of Akkad and Sumir; and had therefore been professed throughout Babylonia for many generations. Now though it may be feasible to assume that, religious notions were as advanced as this before either Aryans or Semites had a distinct existence as offshoots of a common stock, it would be an anachronism to suppose that the monotheism shared by Zoroaster and Abraham was owing to contact in pre-Semitic and pre-Aryan times. But if we limit our regress to the Vaidic possession of Bactria, and take Zoroastrianism to be of Vaidic descent, we may yet seek for contiguity during the period assigned by the best estimates to Abraham;—say about the end of the third or beginning

¹ If Airarat, as some say, be the old Armenian name for the plains of the Aryans, the above supposition derives some support from the fact. M. Lenormant, while admitting that the Elohist author of Genesis may have had the name Aryârathra in view, rejects the supposed identity of this with Ararat as nothing more than “a fortuitous assonance.”

of the second millenium B.C. If we are to side with M. Lenormant in supposing Airyana Vaêga to have been east of the Caspian, it still does not follow, because the Paradise of the Zend traditions may be the cradle of the human race, that the pre-Abrahamitic Semites never came under Zoroastrian influence, or indeed owed their monotheism to Aryans.

Upon this point, here is Bunsen's opinion: "The Semitic kingdoms, as we have seen, in the natural course of events came in contact with the Aryan in the year 1903 before Alexander, or the year 2234 B.C., in which Zoroaster, a Median king—that is to say, a ruler and a conqueror who professed the doctrine of Zoroaster—took Babylon and founded the second Babylonian dynasty."¹ And: "The king Zoroaster can only have received this title [Zoroaster] from being a follower, and professing the religion of the prophet," &c. The great Oriental scholar, Lassen, writes: "The mention of Zoroaster in this narrative [of Berosus] indicates that the Median conqueror of Babylon was a follower of Zoroaster's doctrine: for the *most ancient* Indian history this information signifies that the Zoroastrian faith had even so early as this spread to India."² Now, could it be made out that the date of Abraham was later than that of this Zoroastrian king, here would end the inquiry. This cannot be done. Most biblical writers place the death of Abraham at 1800 B.C., and his birth at 1975. Eusebius gives 1943 B.C. for the immigration to Canaan. These figures would place Abraham long after the Median conqueror. Some Jewish writers put the immigration back to 2212 (still later than the appearance of king Zoroaster). Bunsen, on the other hand, reckons the immigration at 2876 B.C., which completely upsets the theory of Zoroastrian influence from this quarter. But although Bunsen estimates the introduction of Zoroastrianism into Chaldea at 642

¹ *Egypt's Place in the World's History*, vol. iv. p. 403.

² *Indische Altertums Kunde*, Zweiter Buch, 752.

years *after* Abraham's departure from that country, he does not hesitate to put the date of Zoroaster, "the seer and lawgiver of Bactria," at from 3500 to 3000 B.C.; in fact, as already stated, he thinks a much earlier date than this quite possible. So that Abraham or the pre-Abrahamites may easily have been imbued with Zoroastrian doctrines before the Median conquest;—assuming these doctrines to have been afloat in the adjacent countries.¹

Another argument in favour of Zoroastrian influence, so far as chronology goes, might be drawn from the date of the arrow-head inscriptions. It is true that modern discoveries have discredited the figures of Berosus; nevertheless it is ascertained that the oldest cuneiform inscriptions belong to the time of the Babylonian kings, Lig-Bagas and his son Dungi. Assyrian scholars assign the date of these kings at 2700 B.C.: and not only tablets of this epoch, but Babylonian tablets, cylinders, and bricks, marked with cuneiform legends of a much later period, bear no trace whatever (as George Smith has shown) of Semitic names or of the Semitic language. This is mere negative evidence, I admit. Still, it is the opinion of many eminent scholars and ethnologists that, as a segregated ethnic group, speaking one language, and worshipping the same gods, the Hebrews had no being until the twentieth century B.C. "The development of Semitism," says Canon Rawlinson, "belongs to the early part of the twentieth century B.C., long subsequently to the time when Hamitic kingdoms were set up on the banks of the Nile and the Euphrates."² The same writer, speaking of "the gradual development of Semitism from the Hamitic type of speech," adds: "This change, which seems to have attained to a certain degree of completeness about the beginning of the twentieth century B.C., was accom-

¹ Since Bunsen's day, recent as that is, Assyriologists have gained much positive knowledge. Professor Sayce, amongst others, gives strong reasons for placing the Median conquest of Babylonia as far back as 2750 B.C.: and it is quite possible, as we shall presently see, that even this date may be within the mark.

² *Herodotus*, Essay xi.

panied or shortly followed by a series of migratory movements, which carried the newly formed linguistic type to the upper Tigris and middle Euphrates, to Syria, Palestine, Arabia, and the borders of Egypt. Asshur probably 'went forth' at this time out of Babylon into Assyria, while the Aramæans ascended the stream of the Euphrates; the Phœnicians (perhaps, however, hardly Semitised) passed from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean; Abraham and his followers proceeded from Ur by way of Harran to the south of Palestine, and the Joktanian Arabs overspread the great peninsula."

In support of our second proposition, relating to Turanian or Hamite connections, we have, first, the evidence furnished by the science of language; secondly, the historic records on the bricks, tablets, and monuments, &c.

Of all sources of knowledge concerning the human race in prehistoric ages, none is so trustworthy as language. If we were to find a flint hatchet embedded beneath a stratum of boulders of the glacial period, we might infer that man inhabited a certain district at an indefinitely remote period; we might further learn something of the climate and of his fellow-animals in the same region and at the same period; but thereabouts our acquaintance with his history would end. If, on the other hand, we discover that the names of the family ties are, with slight variation, the same amongst people so distinct as German and Hindoos, or as Celts and Greeks; if we ascertain that the name for a ship is, with slight variation, still the same in Latin, in Greek, in Anglo-Saxon, and in Sanskrit, two distinct and important truths are brought to light: first, that the family ties were observed, and secondly, that men used ships,—before these now distinct nations had ceased to speak one language, or had broken up their common home. Nor does our information end here. By comparing one language with another, we detect the secret of the formation of speech

itself. We discover different stages in the progress of language. We find there is an organic and root-language in which every syllable is a word, and every word a sentence. Then comes what is called the "agglutinative" stage, in which the radical forms are modified by additional syllables, which, however, do not alter the radical meaning. Lastly, there is the "inflexional" stage, in which different shades of sense are expressed by conjugations and declensions. The final form is represented by the Semite and the Aryan tongues; the agglutinative, by the Turanian and Allophylian;—the latter of which comprises the indigenous idioms of America, Australia, Polynesia, and most parts of Africa: Chinese alone remains as the last relic of primitive speech. All the dialects of the earth converge into this one monosyllabic tongue. "The real breaking up of the one language," says Bunsen, referring to Babel and the dispersion, "means nothing less than the individualisation of that one undivided mass of language and people represented by the Chinese."¹ This is the first great lesson taught by comparative philology: the critical study of languages proves the genetic relationship of races.

I have already spoken of the connection which at some time or other existed between the oldest of the Turanian stock and the Akkadian population of Babylon. Of the Turanian affinities of these people, with whom the Abrahamites were first associated, we shall still have to speak. At present let us attend to the clearly established relationship between the Hamite branch of the Turanians and Babylonians, and the Semites themselves.

First touching the name of Ham. We shall see how it applies to Egypt, and then note the affinity between Egypt and the Semites. In the Old Testament Egypt is alluded to as Mizraim, who was the son of Ham; just as Canaan, the name of Ham's youngest son, is given to

¹ *Egypt*, vol. iv. p. 416.

Palestine. Furthermore, the word Ham is the Coptic name of Egypt—Chem. “Chemi,” says Sir Gardner Wilkinson, “the black land, ‘the land of Ham,’ or of Khem (the Egyptian god Pan, or the generative principle of nature), is said by Plutarch to have been so called from the ‘blackness of the soil.’ Khem is singularly like the Greek *χαμαι*. Ham (Kham), the Hebrew name of the patriarch, signifies also ‘soot,’ and is like the Arabic *hem*, *hami*, ‘hot;’ and the Hebrew *hôm* (or *khôm*), signifying ‘brown’ or ‘black,’ as in Gen. xxx. 32, 40, is also ‘burnt up.’” M. Lenormant also bears testimony to the connection here indicated by the name. “The population of Egypt, as well as that of Phœnicia, belonged to the race of Cham, and came from Asia by way of the Syrian desert, to establish itself in the Valley of the Nile.”¹

“It is capable of actual proof,” says Bunsen, “that our present knowledge is sufficient, not to point out a few isolated resemblances, but that there is a pervading analogy between the Egyptian and Semitico-Aryan word stems and roots both in their points of identity and diversity.”² “Either all the axioms and results which have thus far been verified by philology are false, or the Egyptian language has an affinity with the Asiatic languages, and especially with the Semitic. . . . Kham himself came from the original country of the Semites, from Chaldæa, before the language had grown into historical Khamitism.” And, “The Egyptian language proves, both grammatically and lexicographically, the original identity of the Semitic and the Aryan.” Dr. Brugsch observes, “The primitive roots and the essential elements of the Egyptian grammar point to such an intimate connection with the Indo-Germanic and Semitic languages, that it is almost impossible to mistake the close relations which formerly prevailed between the Egyptians and the races called the Indo-Germanic and Semitic.” “Whatever relations of kindred

¹ *Les Premières Civilizations*, vol. i. p. 178.

² *Egypt*, vol. iv. p. 141.

may be found to exist in general between these great races of mankind, thus much may be regarded as certain, that the cradle of the Egyptian people must be sought in the interior of the Asiatic quarter of the globe." Lepsius, adds the same writer, "has proved, in the most convincing manner, this Asiatic home of the Egyptians in agreement with the Biblical accounts in the lists of nations."¹ Sir H. Rawlinson: "Without pretending to trace up these early Babylonians to their original ethnic source, there are reasons of some weight for supposing them to have passed from Ethiopia to the valley of the Euphrates shortly before the opening of the historic period:—(i.) The system of writing which they brought with them has the closest affinity with that of Egypt; in many cases there is an absolute identity between the two alphabets. . . . (iv.) All the traditions of Babylonia and Assyria point to a connection in very early times between Ethiopia, Southern Arabia, and the cities on the Lower Euphrates. . . . The building of Hur [Abraham's birthplace], again, is the earliest historical event of which the Babylonians seem to have any cognisance; but the inscriptions seem to refer to a tradition of the primeval leader, by whom the Cushites were first settled in the Euphrates, and one of the names of this leader is connected with Ethiopia in a way that can hardly be accidental."² "In regard to the language of the primitive Babylonians, although in its grammatical structure it resembles dialects of the Turanian family, the vocabulary is rather Cushite or Ethiopian, belonging, in fact, to that stock of tongues which in the sequel were everywhere more or less mixed up with the Semitic language," &c.

Upon high and independent authority, therefore, we have it that Hamites, Semites, and Aryans spoke dialects that were akin to one another; and that the three races hailed originally from Asia. Were I to hazard a scheme of movements that would tally with these statements, I should

¹ *History of Egypt under the Pharaohs.* By Brugsch Bey, vol. i.

² *Herodotus, Essay vi., notes.*

say the connection was broken, or rather interrupted, by Hamitic and Cushite migrations into Canaan and Egypt; that it was renewed in Babylonia after the return of Cushite tribes from Ethiopia; and again renewed in Canaan and on the banks of the Nile by the people of Abraham and of Israel.

Of the later intercourse between the Egyptians and the Hebrews we have the Mosaic account. Before their arrival in Canaan, the Shemites had no authentic history. They had dim reminiscences of ancient migrations and of eponym patriarchs and heroes. They had cherished the names of countries and peoples from which they had for ages been separated. But it is to the crumbling stones, the shattered tablets, and the cuneiform characters of Babylonia, that we must look for all we are ever likely to know of what the Hebrews themselves were profoundly ignorant. Fortunately these mines of information have yielded treasures that were never dreamt of; and yet we have barely done more than discover where the treasure lies. Further on you will find a short notice of these discoveries. For the moment we must follow the argument still in hand.

Ur of the Chaldees is the spot towards which our inquiries have a natural tendency to return. Ur stands on the threshold of Semitic history; and, as we have just been told, the Babylonians associated it with their oldest traditions. If we would know what were the immediate surroundings of Abraham and of his ancestors, with the view of testing the originality of the patriarch's religious opinions, we must know something about Ur, and something about the Chaldees or, as we ought perhaps to call them, the Akkadians. Well, we do know what their language was; and thus learn something of their descent. We know the names of many of their kings; and so know something of their history and something of their chronology. We are possessed of many of their oldest legends, and of the picture-writings and monuments which adorned their temples. From these we get glimpses of antecedents

which even to them were prehistoric ; and we learn with certitude what was their mythology and what their religion.

In spite of much actual knowledge, our ignorance leaves a wide field for guess-work ; and whenever we venture upon dates, or attempt to fix the chronological order of events, the results must be accepted with the utmost caution. To strike an average amongst many ingenious conjectures, and to take the epoch of the most ancient cuneiform remains as a point of time from which to explore both backwards and forwards, one may say that, at that period, the biblical "Land of Shinar" was occupied by the people of Sumir ; and that Ur or Hur was the capital of the Akkadian people, who were their kith and kin. The Akkadians, so far as we know, were nothing less than the inventors of the cuneiform system of writing. At all events, it is to the capitals of the Akkadian kingdom—Ur, Erech, Larsa, and Nipur—that the oldest cuneiform inscriptions, wherever found, refer. The Akkadians were members of the Turanian or Tâtar stock, and spoke a language allied to that of the modern Turks. Whether they were identical with the Chaldees we know not. The word "Chaldee" does not occur in the oldest inscriptions. Possibly the Chaldees may have been a Hamite or Cushite people whom the hardy Akkadian highlanders, on their descent from Armenia, dispossessed of the fat lands of Babylonia. We are told (Gen. x.) that Cush, who was the son of Ham, begat Nimrod. "And the beginning of his [Nimrod's] kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar." If Nimrod is the Izdubar to whom a mass of the oldest arrow-headed legends refer, and whose city was Erech, it seems highly probable that the Cushite descendants of Nimrod were the people whom the Akkadians first ousted ; and with whom they eventually amalgamated.

Where or at what stage of things the Zoroastrian Medes conquered the country, is more than I can tell. According to Berosus, the Median invasion of Babylon

took place in 2234 B.C. Then followed a dozen or so of kings, of a race unspecified; and next to these the Chaldean dynasty, dated 1975 B.C. Professor Sayce suggests that the siege of Erech recorded in the Izdubar Epic "was the work of those foreign invaders whom the Babylonian historian has termed Median."¹ Such an hypothesis scatters that historian's figures to the winds. For the siege of Erech had already passed into the mythical stage when the earliest tablets were inscribed. And these tablets cannot be much later than 3000 B.C. Sir H. Rawlinson offers the following scheme as "a plausible arrangement:" "About the year 2234 the Cushite inhabitants of Southern Babylonia . . . may be supposed to have first risen into importance. Delivered from the yoke of the Zoroastrian Medes, who were of a strictly Turanian, or at any rate, of a mixed Scytho-Aryan race, they raised a native dynasty to the throne, instituting an empire of which the capitals were at Mugheir, at Warka, at Senkereh, and at Niffer; and introducing the worship of the heavenly bodies, in contradistinction to the elemental worship of the Magian Medes."² This arrangement, however, is completely rescinded by a note a few pages further on. "The real difficulty then seems to be to decide at what period the Accad immigration in Babylonia took place; if it was in very remote antiquity—and the occurrence of the name of Accad in Genesis among the cities of Nimrod is strongly in favour of such a supposition—then these Scythic immigrants may very well be held to represent the Zoroastrian Medes of Berosus, who preceded the Chaldeans." This, again, has to face the difficulty of reconciling the two religions. We know that at Ur, the moon-god Sin, or Acu (whence indeed the name Accad), was worshipped. At Erech, Anu the Sky-God; at Nipur, Bel or lord of the lower world; at Eridu, Hea, lord of the deep, were respectively the chief deities. But these

¹ *The Chaldean Account of Genesis.* By George Smith and A. H. Sayce.

² *Herod.*, Essay vi.

were the very gods whom the Zoroastrians held in abomination. We are forced, therefore, to give up the problem as hopeless, and rest upon what we do know. This I admit does not at first sight appear very favourable to my main argument. One may naturally object that, if the people amongst whom Abraham was reared were Sabians, mere heathen worshippers of heavenly bodies, there is all the more reason to regard his monotheism as inspired, all the less ground to admit that he borrowed it from others. Yet we must not be misled by a comparison stated in such opposing terms. The monotheism of Abraham may still lose something of its supernatural perfection, while the polytheism of the Akkadians may turn out, like many other systems, to approximate in spirit the worship of a supreme God.

One of the Kouyunjik tablets which George Smith translated and which Dr. Oppert afterwards revised, is inscribed with a hymn to the Creator Hea. The Creator is addressed under a great variety of titles and characters. He is the God of Life, the God of the Illustrious Crown, the Heart-Knower, the God Sukhab. (4.) "His name accordingly is Nibiru the Possessor." "Lord of the World is his name, (even) Father Bel." (13.) "Hea also heard." (19.) "His fifty names they pronounced; they restored his precepts." (24.) "May (the Shepherd) obey Merodach, Bel among the gods," &c. "It is evident," says Professor Sayce, "that this hymn to the Creator emanated from what Sir H. Rawlinson has termed the monotheistic party among the ancient Babylonians, &c. The various deities of the popular faith are resolved into the one Supreme God, the Maker of the World and Man, who was worshipped at Babylon under the name of Bel, 'the Lord,' and Merodach, the sun-god; at Eridu under that of Hea; and at Nipur under the name of Anu. The gods of the multitude are said to be only the fifty names of the Creator. To him is ascribed the regulation of the stars, the naming of the angels, and the subjection of the subordinate demi-

gods, and the marginal notes expressly state that the several titles under which the Creator is addressed on the obverse of the tablets, all belong to one and the same deity."¹ The marginal notes not only remind readers that God has many names, but they collaterally prove the great antiquity of the Akkadian monotheism: "These explanatory glosses show that even in the Assyrian time the allusions in the original text were not all intelligible without the help of a commentary."²

As to the religion of the Hebrew patriarch, we may find an appropriate pendant to the above in the statement of a Jewish priest and scholar, written more than eighteen hundred years ago: "He was a person of great sagacity both for understanding all things and persuading his hearers, and not mistaken in his opinions; for which he began to have higher notions of virtue than others had, and determined to renew and change the opinions all men happened to have concerning God; for he was the first that ventured to publish this notion, that there was but one God, the Creator of the Universe; and that as to other gods, if they contributed anything to the happiness of men, that each of them afforded it only according to his appointment and not by his own power. This his opinion was derived from the irregular phenomena that were visible both at land and sea, as well as those that happened to the sun and moon and all the heavenly bodies, thus, "If," said he, "these bodies had power of their own, they would certainly take care of their own regular motions; but since they do not preserve such regularity, they make it plain that so far as they co-operate to our advantage, they do it not of their own ability, but as they are subservient to him that commands them, to whom alone we ought justly to offer our honour and thanksgiving. For which doctrines, when the Chaldeans and other people of Mesopotamia raised a tumult against him, he thought fit to leave the country; and at the command

¹ *Ubi supra*, p. 80.

² *Ibid.*

and by the assistance of God, he came and lived in the land of Canaan."¹

Barring the last sentence, there is nothing in this plain story to convey to one's mind aught save the often-repeated circumstances common to the lives of religious reformers. There is not a word here about the revelation of the great truth. Abraham "derived" his belief from a fallacious science. The apparent irregularity of natural phenomena was to him, as to unscientific minds it always has been, a proof of guiding intelligence. Of the inferior gods he speaks with caution. What share they may have in the affairs of the universe, it is not for him to say. It suffices to believe that amidst the multiplicity of inexplicable phenomena those which serve the ends of man are controlled by an Omnipotent Ruler. For all I can see to the contrary, this was not widely different from the belief of the man who composed the hymn to the Creator Hea. Nor have we any warrant to assume that Abraham was greatly in advance of the thinkers of his day. Long enough before his time, natural history, grammar, mathematics, and astronomy were cultivated by the Chaldees or Akkadians. And it would be rash to aver that amongst a people who had made such progress in civilisation there was no "monotheistic party," no individual thinker who had ever attained to the height of speculative or philosophic reasoning reached by Abraham. The Semites had settled amongst a people who, in respect of culture, were vastly their superiors; and although they eventually despoiled the Akkadians of their country, as they afterwards despoiled the primitive inhabitants of Assyria and the unfortunate Canaanites, they nevertheless appropriated the culture of the Chaldees; and with it, as we cannot doubt, the speculative opinions to which that culture would give rise.

¹ Whiston's *Josephus*.

LETTER IX.

COMPARATIVE mythology brings us to the final stage of our inquiry ; and as it is the most ancient of all systems of mythology, we will first turn to that of Egypt. Not that other systems were borrowed from the Egyptians ; not that Egypt lent its religion to the Hebrews, or to the Greeks, or to the Phœnicians, or to the Babylonians. In some measure, no doubt, this was so. But such evidence as we have touched upon, goes to show that all the great mythologies of the world owe their birth to Asia ; and that whatever is shared in common must be ascribed to primeval gentic integrity. Still, the religion of Egypt may be regarded as the mummy, as Bunsen calls it, of the original religion of Central Asia ; and this estimate of it, taken in combination with its immense antiquity and its many points of contact with our own and other religions, entitle Egypt to the leading place in our attention.

It is unnecessary to go into detail about Egyptian antiquity. But as the question of priority of beliefs nearly affects our argument, a few words on the subject will not be out of place. Egyptian chronology begins with the first Pharaoh—Mena or Menes. On the far side of this, history suddenly merges into the fabulous. Before the days of Menes, Egypt was ruled by gods and demigods. They came from a foreign country—a country which is constantly referred to as the “Land of the Gods,” or the “Holy Land.” Both Lepsius and Dr. Brugsch agree that this Holy Land is identical with Southern Arabia. After the gods, came Menes. He, at any rate, was a human

being, for he founded Memphis, and was killed by a hippopotamus. What was his date? What the condition of Egypt when Menes was its Pharaoh?

Most of our information upon the first of these queries is derived from Manetho, an Egyptian priest at the time of the first Ptolemy. The authority is not satisfactory, inasmuch as he is known to us through other writers only, such as Eusebius and Josephus. And the simple fact that he allows 24,900 years to the reign of the demigods may be thought a reason for suspecting his accuracy upon other matters. The date assigned by Manetho to Menes, 3887 B.C., is, however, not very wide of the mark at which modern research has placed it. Bunsen gives 3059 B.C., Lepsius 3892, Brugsch 4455, Lenormant and Mariette 5004. Nor must it be imagined, because the discrepancy is so great, that no reliance is to be placed in any estimate whatever. The difficulty arises from the allowance to be made for the length of the different dynasties. It is not doubted that so many kings or so many dynasties did rule. The question is, whether they should be calculated as synchronous or consecutive. When the twentieth dynasty is reached, Egyptologists agree in assigning it to the thirteenth century B.C. Taking the various estimates into consideration, it seems impossible to place Menes later than 3000 B.C. When we ask what was the civilisation of Egypt at that period, we may hesitate to admit that its extraordinary advancement points to a previous golden age that lasted as long as Manetho declares; yet there can be little doubt that many thousands of years were needed to produce the results actually reached before Menes came to the throne. A popular writer, in whom reliance may be placed, draws a picture of Memphis as Menes himself must have beheld it. A great temple dedicated to Ptah—"the Creator God, . . . a royal court, a princely college, a thoroughly organised army, a learned body of architects and men of science, a numerous complement of lawyers, doctors, and officials in every depart-

ment of administration, together with a wealthy yeomanry, and we have before us a marvellous picture of civilisation six thousand years ago, and the conviction is more and more forced upon our minds that such a state of civilisation must necessarily have required some thousands of years to accomplish.”¹

The greater pyramids (with the exception of the pyramid of Sakkarah, which is thought to be 1000 years older than those of Gizeh) were not built till 200 years after Menes. But 200 years wrought little change in the Egyptians. The scenes portrayed on their chamber walls, the hieroglyphs on the stones left in the quarries, show that the habits of the people were then what they are now, and that the art of writing was familiar to them. “The position too of each pyramid, corresponding as it does with the four cardinal points, and the evident object they had in view of ascertaining by the long line of one of its faces the return of a certain period of the year, prove the advancement made by the Egyptians in mathematical science, and all the evidences, being obtained from the oldest monuments that exist, introduce them to us as a people already possessing the same settled habits as in later times. . . . The blocks in the pyramids of Gizeh, many of which were brought from the cataracts of Syene, were put together with a precision unsurpassed by any masonry of ancient or modern times; and all these facts tend to the conclusion that the Egyptians had already made very great progress in the arts of civilisation before the age of Menes, and perhaps before they immigrated into the Valley of the Nile.”²

What lapse of ages we are to allow for the ripening of a civilisation which seems always to have been stagnant, is rather a matter for fancy than for reason. Bunsen, who had confidence in his own figures, says, “Egypt was an organised state 5863 years prior to Menes, during which

¹ *The Egypt of the Past*, Erasmus Wilson, F.R.S.
Sir Gardner Wilkinson, Notes, *Herodotus*, vol. ii.

period it possessed a language, and in part of it a written character." He is satisfied that "the first commencement of Egypt belongs to the antediluvian period." The principal ground for this assumption is that the Egyptians know nothing whatever of the Flood. "There are traditions about the Flood amongst those only who evidently, from their language, did not exist till after that event."¹ We are apt to think of the Deluge as following closely upon the creation of the world, the two events being recorded in the Bible within four or five chapters of each other. But Hebrew traditions, nay, the Hebrew people, are modern as compared with the hieroglyphs of Egypt. If we accept the rabbinical date of the Flood at 2288 B.C., this (according to the age fixed by Mariette and M. Lenormant for the twelfth dynasty) would be nearly 800 years later than the obelisk of Usertesén at Heliopolis, and only 600 years or so earlier than the obelisk on the Thames embankment; or taking the modest computation of 3000 B.C. for the Gizeh pyramids, this makes them 652 years older than the Deluge, according to the date of the latter as reckoned from our Bible. To be sure, 5000 B.C. would, I should say, be much nearer the time of the Noachian Flood. Even then, Egypt was probably very much what it was in the days of the Pharaohs.

The Egyptian religion, and the deeper meaning which its mysterious rites were meant to symbolise, is still, more or less, a sealed book to us. Outwardly some confusion arises from the excessive numbers of divinities that crowd its pantheon. Also, in Upper and Lower Egypt the gods are not precisely the same. The Memphian and Theban deities are not equivalent either in function or in dignity. Thus the "king of the gods" at Thebes was Amon-Ra. The name Amon stood for the Secret or the Invisible, Ra being the same as Re and Phrah (whence Pharaoh), who was a god of an inferior order. Ra was also the name of the inevitable Sun-God, and may therefore perhaps have

¹ *Egypt*, Book v.

stood for an attribute of the greater deity. At Memphis Pthah was "the Father of the gods." He was worshipped as the architect of the world; Patah signifying architect, former, constructor. In this character as creator of all material things, the Greeks identified him with their Hephaestus. On the walls of the temple of Denderah, Patah is described as "the chief of the society of the gods, who created all being. All things came into existence after he existed. He is the Lord of Truth and the King of the Gods." "On the walls of the temple of Isis, it is said of the same god, that it is 'he who created all being, who formed men and gods with his own hands.' He is God the Creator, who existed before the creation of the universe, his own exclusive work."¹

There were many orders of gods. The number usually given in the first rank is eight; twelve being allotted to the second. Below these there are several grades; and each town had its own divinity. Still, a supreme God, with all the attributes appropriate to such a Being, was worshipped throughout the land. And the multiplicity of names here again, may often point rather to the diverse aspects of a central conception, than to an endless variety of spiritual existences. Doubtless, to the upper ranks of the priesthood and to superior minds, this higher notion was by no means unfamiliar.² In the adoration of the sun-god Re or Ra, as the generative or vivifying power of nature, we appear to discover a remnant of the Sabianism or worship of heavenly bodies prevalent amongst the Akkadians and other nations of primitive Asia. The idea is strengthened by the representation of figures in the attitude of prayer conjoined with a star, and by the sun and moon over the head to denote the figure of a

¹ *History of Egypt under the Pharaohs.* Dr. Henry Brugsch Bey.

² "The Egyptians, as they advanced in religious speculation, adopted a pantheism, according to which (while the belief in one Supreme Being was taught to the

initiated) the attributes of the Deity were separated under various heads, as the 'Creator,' the divine wisdom, the generative and other principles." —Sir G. Wilkinson, *Notes, Herodotus*, Book ii.

god. If this surmise is correct, we have strong proof of the development of religious belief. For "when some 'stranger kings' from Asia reintroduced the worship of the real sun's disc, the innovation was odious to the Egyptians; and was expelled for ever with the usurpers who had forcibly established it in the country."

Among the many striking features of analogy which present themselves, the Egyptian fondness for the doctrine of a Trinity is not the least remarkable. It would be more accurate, perhaps, to speak of their triple alliance of gods as a triad composed of two principal deities from which a third proceeded. Memphis, for instance, had its great triad, of which Ptâh and Pasht were the two chiefs. At Thebes Amun and Maut were the pair from which sprang the third member, Khons. The "stranger kings" of the eighteenth dynasty had their triad of Atin-re, Moni, and Re. The great triad of the Cataracts, Ethiopia, and the oases, was composed of Noum or Nu, and Sâté, whence proceeded a third, Amonké. But, as before remarked, variety of name did not always imply diversity of object. Noun sometimes took the name of Amun, and was worshipped as the "Soul of the World." His emblem was the ram. "The very general introduction," says Wilkinson, "of the ram's head on the prow of the sacred boats or arks of other gods seems to point to the early and universal worship of this god, and to connect him, as his mysterious boat does, with the Spirit that moved on the waters."

By far the most interesting member of the Egyptian pantheon is Osiris. He is the one god whose functions and whose fate specially associate him with the human race. Both in the Babylonian and Phœnician systems, no less than in the Egyptian, the worship of Osiris, as moral Ruler and God of the Soul, is a predominant and fundamental doctrine. Osiris, in many respects, bears the closest analogy to the ideal Christian Avatar.¹ He is the

¹ Osiris also reminds us of the Hea, who was called "the Redeemer Babylonian Merodach, the son of of mankind," "the restorer of life,"

God-man, or incarnate presence of the Deity. "Osiris," says Bunsen, "seems to be the purely Egyptian form of an early Asiatic idea of the Deity sacrificing himself in creation and coming to life again in man. So Baal, so Adonis."¹ Himself the "good being," Osiris is murdered by Typhon, the representative of evil. His life is afterwards restored. He prevails over sin, and becomes the Final Judge of the Dead, dispensing judgment or reward exactly in accordance with the deserts of each. It may be observed in passing, that the doctrine of immortality is one of the most ancient of Egyptian creeds. On some of the oldest monuments of Egypt the winged soul is drawn taking its departure from the body. The Hebrews, on the contrary, knew nothing whatever of a resurrection: indeed they distinctly denied it until after the Babylonian captivity.²

To return to the Egyptian god, "The sufferings and death of Osiris were the great mysteries of the Egyptian religion, and some traces of it are perceptible among other people of antiquity. His being the divine goodness, and the abstract idea of 'good,' his manifestation upon earth (like an Indian god), his death, and resurrection, and his office as judge of the dead in a future state, look like the early revelation of a future manifestation of the deity converted into a mythological fable; and are not less remarkable than that notion of the Egyptians men-

and "the raiser of the dead." The Zoroastrian Sosiosh is another divine person possessed of similar attributes; though Sosiosh resembles more closely than either the conception of the Jewish Messiah. He is the restorer of life and the Judge of the world. He is also one of a divine Trinity, and was begotten of Zarathustra by a supernatural birth.

¹ *Egypt*, vol. iv. p. 332.

² "We might naturally expect that a principle so essential to religion would have been revealed in the clearest terms to the chosen people of Palestine, and that it

might safely have been entrusted to the hereditary priesthood of Aaron. It is incumbent on us to adore the mysterious dispensations of Providence, when we discover that the doctrine of the immortality of the soul is omitted in the law of Moses: it is darkly insinuated by the prophets; and during the long period which elapsed between the Egyptian and the Babylonian servitudes the hopes as well as fears of the Jews appear to have been confined within the narrow compass of the present life." — Gibbon, *Roman Empire*, chap. xv.

tioned by Plutarch (in Vit. Numæ), that a woman might conceive by the approach of some divine spirit.”¹ In the same reverent tone the learned writer here quoted elsewhere sums up his views as follows: “The two main principles on which the religion of Egypt was based appear to be the existence of an Omnipotent Being, whose various attributes being deified formed a series of divinities, each worshipped under its own peculiar form, and supposed to possess its peculiar office, and a deification of the sun and moon, from which it might appear that a sort of Sabæan worship had once formed part of the Egyptian creed.”² “The manifestation of the Deity, his coming upon earth for the benefit of mankind, his expected interposition, were ideas which even in the patriarchal times had always been entertained, having been revealed to man from the earliest periods, and handed down through successive ages even to the time when that event took place. We are, therefore, less surprised to find it introduced into the religion of the Egyptians, and forming one of the most important tenets of their belief. . . . The fact of this, and the doctrine of a Trinity being entertained by so many distant nations, naturally leads to the inference that they had a common origin; and most persons will admit that they appear to have been derived from immediate revelation or from the knowledge imparted to the early inhabitants of the world, rather than from accidental speculation in distant parts of the globe,—a remark which applies equally to the creation of man, the deluge, the ark or boat, and numerous mysterious doctrines common to different people.”³

Of the various myths and traditions in which some points of analogy may be discerned, there is no one so remarkable for universality as that of the DELUGE. In some form or other it is to be met with in both hemi-

¹ *Herodotus*, Book ii., Notes by Sir G. Wilkinson.

² *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians*, vol. ii. p. 499.

³ P. 494.

spheres; and, generally speaking, a certain degree of resemblance pervades every separate account. That this is so, is not disputed either by those who maintain or by those who deny the historical accuracy of the Bible narratives. The former class will be quite ready to accept the fact in evidence of a primeval unity. But the latter will still be able to argue that, the universality of the tradition does not necessarily prove the identity of its origin, or consequently verify the Biblical statement as to the extent of the flood itself. We are concerned to note that there may be truth on both sides. The palpable similarity between the Hebrew and the Babylonian traditions reveals a source of Jewish belief to which we may deductively ascribe doctrines of far more importance. On the other hand, this particular legend, when confronted with actual knowledge, becomes a prototype of mythological aberration.

No educated person now-a-days supposes that the Noachian deluge covered the entire surface of the globe. Many still believe that "all flesh died that moved upon the earth," and that "the earth" means the small portion of it then inhabited. I am afraid that even this amount of elasticity cannot be conceded to the text. In the first place, we must not forget what a very limited space "the world" was to primitive man. The notions of the ancient Greeks upon this subject provoke both surprise and amusement. When they first explored the southern coast of the Euxine, they believed that they had discovered the rising place of the sun. The boundaries known to them were the limits of terrestrial existence. The garden of the Hesperides, the Elysian plains, the floating island of Æolus, were situated beyond the seas and lands with which they had some acquaintance. So was it with the Persians. Sataspes, condemned by Xerxes to circumnavigate Africa, as a commutation of the sentence of death, returned to meet his doom in the less terrible form of the sword; declaring that he had sailed "until his vessel stuck fast and could move

no farther.”¹ Moreover, floods are among the commonest of natural catastrophes. In every period of man’s existence, and in all parts of the world, great inundations must have occurred which few would be so fortunate as to survive. In our own times, floods have frequently been known to submerge immense tracts of country. In India, in America, in Italy, and in Hungary, the enormous destruction of life and property caused by the overflowing of rivers is fresh in the youngest memory. Sir Charles Lyell has remarked that by the escape of Lake Superior through the subsidence of its barriers (which are only 600 feet high), “a region capable of supporting a population of many millions might be suddenly submerged.”² The flooding of the Mississippi in 1878 devastated a range of country extending nearly 400 miles in length, and in some places sixty miles in width. In days when the world was thinly populated, such an event would have swept away an entire tribe or a nation. The recent sinking of parts of Java would, in point of extent, have sufficed to destroy all the original inhabitants of the earth. And if we reflect that the strong feature of resemblance, in the different legends, is the escape of a single family (favoured of course by the Deity), there is no reason to doubt that the various traditions are founded on fact; although we decline to admit that the escape could have happened once only, or was then effected by miraculous intervention.

In the Chinese legend, Fuh-he his wife and six children—*seven* in all, survive the destruction of the world by water, and become the progenitors of the whole human race; though, according to Davis, some versions of the story limit the destruction to goods and lands. Six persons only were saved from the ancient Peruvian flood. This was in a country more subject, as we know, to physical convulsions than any in the world. Submergences of vast regions of South America have repeatedly taken place. In 1751, when the town of

¹ Grote’s *Greece*, vol. ii.

² *Prin. of Geology*, vol. ii.

Concepcion in Chili was destroyed by an earthquake, the sea rolled completely over it. On the same occasion a colony settled on the shores of Juan Fernandez, 365 miles distant, was almost entirely overwhelmed by the sea. The three great floods known to the Greeks, viz., Ogyges, Deucalion, and Samothrace, are distinctly three events. Aristotle relates that both of the former were caused by the overflowing of rivers, while that of Deucalion is limited to Thessaly.

Although we are bound to give due weight to these materials for a naturalistic interpretation, although we think they must be entirely applied in some cases and partially in all, there yet remain traditions of a deluge so nearly akin to that of the "sacred story" in minute, arbitrary, and essential details, that it is impossible to attribute the resemblance to accident. Wherever likeness of this kind exists, there is no alternative but to refer it to a common starting-point and to a particular event. In respect of the Grecian, Babylonian, Hindu, Hebrew, and perhaps Chinese legends, this, as we now know, is no longer impracticable; though if we apply the same principle to the Mexican version of the Deluge, all we can say is, the starting-point must have been remote indeed. Yet how can we otherwise treat it when we read as follows?—"The people of the Noacan preserved a tradition that Coxcox, whom they called Tezpi, embarked in a spacious *acalli* with his wife, his children, several animals, and grain. When the Great Spirit Tezcatlipoca ordered the waters to withdraw, Tezpi sent out from his bark a vulture, the *zopilote*, or *vultur aura*. This bird did not return on account of the carcasses with which the earth was strewed. Tezpi sent out other birds, one of which, the humming-bird, alone returned, holding in his beak a branch clad with leaves. Tezpi, seeing that fresh verdure covered the soil, quitted his bark near the mountain of Colhnacan."¹ The Deucalion version is also in some points very similar to the Noachian. Deucalion, warned

¹ Quoted by Hardwick from Humboldt's *Vue des Cordillères*, &c.

by Prometheus, builds himself an ark ; and with his wife Pyrrha floats on the sea of waters nine days and nights, and finally lands on Mount Parnassus. Plutarch adds, "The mythologists say that a pigeon let fly out of the ark was to Deucalion a sign of bad weather if it came in again, of good weather if it flew away." The world was re-peopled by Deucalion as by Noah.

The resemblance which the Hindu narrative bears to that in the book of Genesis, induced Burnouf to think that it must have been borrowed from the Semitic. But neither he nor Professor Müller ascribes the story in the Bhâgavata-Purana to Semitic origin. The legend goes that, Manu one day found a fish in the water wherewith he was about to wash his hands. The fish said to Manu, "Protect me, and I will be thy saviour." The fish was to be thrown into a pond. When it had outgrown the pond it was to be thrown into the sea. Manu complied with the instructions : and ere long the fish said to Manu, "In such a year will come the deluge. Build a ship, and when the deluge comes, embark on the vessel thou hast built, and I will preserve thee." . . . The deluge swept away all living creatures, Manu alone survived. His life was then devoted to prayer and fasting in order to obtain posterity. He made the Pâka sacrifice, he offered to the waters the clarified butter, cream, whey, and curdled milk. His offerings were continued, and at the end of the year he thereby fashioned for himself a wife ; she came dripping out of the butter, it trickled on her footsteps. Mitra and Varuna approached her and asked her, "Who art thou ?" and she answered, "The daughter of Manu." "Wilt thou be our daughter ?" "No," the answer was ; "my owner is the author of my being." Manu thus became the second parent of mankind.

In the translation of the Bhâgavata by Sir W. Jones, it is a pious king, Satyavrata, who obeys the orders of the Fish. The Fish, who is no other than the "Lord of the Universe," tells Satyavrata that in seven days the three

worlds will be destroyed by water; but that he, the Fish, will provide a vessel for the king's safety. The king is instructed to take all kinds of seeds and herbs, also seven saints, and pairs of all brute animals.¹ Whether these are separate fables, or, if so, which is the older, I am not able to say; but both Roth and Weber declare that there is mention of the Flood in the Veda itself.²

Far more perfect is the coincidence between the Babylonian account of the Flood (as taken from Berosus) and the Hebrew legend. Xisuthrus is the Babylonian Noah. Set (Khronos) appears to Xisuthrus in a dream, and warns him that, upon the 15th day of the month Dæsius, there will be a flood by which the human race will be destroyed. Xisuthrus is enjoined to build a vessel 3125 feet long by 1250 broad for himself, his children, and his nearest relatives. He is to take with him all the different animals, fowls, and four-footed beasts. Xisuthrus did everything as he was commanded. After the flood had been upon the earth, and was in time abated, Xisuthrus sent out birds from the vessel. These found neither food nor resting-place, and came back to the ship. A few days after, he sent out other birds, which returned this time with mud on their feet. A third time the birds were sent out, but they returned no more. Xisuthrus knew, therefore, that there was land again. So he took out some of the planks, and saw that the ship was stranded upon the side of a mountain. He immediately quitted the ship with his wife, his daughter, and the pilot. He then built an altar and offered a sacrifice upon it.³

Ewald having referred to the relation or rather identity of Japheth with Iapetos—one of the sons of Earth and Uranos, and father of Atlas, Promotheus, and Epimetheus

¹ *Asiatic Researches*, i. 230.

² "Dass sie [the flood] im Veda wirklich erwähnt werde ist jetzt näher bewiesen von R. Roth in der *Münchener G. A.* 1849, st. 26 f. und 1850, st. 72, und von Alb. Weber

in dem *Indischen Studien*, H. 2."—*Ewald*.

³ Cf. Bunsen's *Egypt*, vol. iv., and *The Chaldean Account of Genesis*, by G. Smith and A. H. Sayce.

—as showing the primeval connection between the Greek and Semitic people, speaks as follows of an ancient flood legend preserved by the old Armenian writers: “According to this legend, Xisuthrus (who corresponds to the Hebrew Noah) had three sons, Zervân, Titân, and Japetosthê; each of whom, in proportion to his share, ruled over all mankind. These three were also gods, as the last two were with the Greeks. Zervân, so well known in the Zoroastrian religion, was the equivalent of the Greek Kronos; and, since Titan was recognised as god of the Under-World, one might assign to him the rule of the South; while Japetosthê, as God of heaven, might be regarded as sovereign of the North. From this representation it is evident that Japeth in the Hebrew tradition has remained as lord of the North; but, by the same token, we must suppose that both Cham and Sem were once looked upon as gods. . . . In any case we are able to affirm that the combination of the three names, Sem, Cham, and Japeth is identical with that of Zervân, Titân, and Japetosthê, save in the greater antiquity of the Hebrew tradition.”¹ On what ground the “greater antiquity” is affirmed, Ewald does not vouchsafe to inform us. M. Lenormant, who has written at considerable length and with much learning upon the sons of Noah, declares that the name of Japeth is, on the contrary, of Aryan origin. “Nothing,” he says, “seems to me more natural than that tradition, having to give names to the three sons of Noah as chiefs of the three great races, should have borrowed them from the races themselves; and have accepted the chief whom, in its nearest and best known branches, each race presented as its eponym ancestor. In the same way the name of Ham admits of precisely similar conclusions to those we have been led to adopt with respect to Japeth.”²

The various accounts of the CREATION of the world afford many traces of original affinity. In the Institutes

¹ *Geschichte des Volkes Israel*, vol. i. p. 401.

² *Ubi supra*, p. 195.

of Menu, translated by the late Professor Horace Wilson, we find : (5.) "This existed only in darkness, imperceptible, undefinable, undiscoverable, undiscovered, as if it were wholly immersed in sleep."¹ (6.) "Then the self-existing power, himself undiscerned, but making the world discernible with five elements and other principles, appeared with undiminished glory dispelling the gloom." (8.) "He, having willed to produce various beings from his own divine substance, first with a thought created the waters, and placed in them a productive seed:" (10.) "The waters are called *nara*, because they were the production of NARA [or the Spirit of God]; and since they were his first *ayana* [place of motion], he thence is named NARA-YANA, [or moving on the waters]." (11.) "From THAT WHICH IS, the first cause, not the object of sense, existing (everywhere in substance), not existing (to our perception), without beginning or end, was produced the divine male, famed in all worlds under the appellation of Brahma." By some ontological juggle, the *seed*, mentioned in verse 8, became an egg; and from that egg the deity himself was born in the form of Brahma. We evidently meet here with a confused pantheistic notion: external substance, afterwards to become the Kosmos, is identified with a conscience power possessed of Volition. The egg (which plays its part in the Chinese and other cosmogonies) produces both creator and created: Brahma "caused the egg to divide itself." (13.) "And from its two divisions he framed the heaven above, and the earth beneath: in the midst the subtle ether, the light regions, and the permanent receptacle of waters." (21.) "He, too, first assigned to all creatures distinct names, distinct acts, and distinct occupations; as they had been revealed in the pre-existing Veda."

Dr. Spiegel observes in his chapters on "Genesis and the

¹ "The mind of the reader," says Wilson, "is left to supply the word which the sense of the context demands. This—everything: this —whole; this—universe; such is the manner in which the mind easily here suggests the requisite idea," &c.

Avesta," that the six periods occupied in the creation of the World are equal to the six days in Genesis. He also calls attention to the "borrowing" between the Iranians and the Semites, as shown by comparing the Avesta with the first eleven chapters of Genesis.¹ The similarity of the above description to the second verse of the first chapter of Genesis is certainly very close: "And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. (6.) And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters. (9.) And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear; and it was so." Most cosmogonies exhibit this sublime conception of a Beginning:—first, a material Chaos and Darkness; then a self-existing Power emanating from, and moving on, the face of the waters. Another example of it is in the Yajur Veda, which contains a verse thus translated by Colebrook: "Waters alone there were; this World originally was water. In it the lord of the creation moved, 'having become air.'"²

There are several Babylonian accounts of *Creation*. First, that by Berosus, of which there are reproductions by his ancient copyists. Then there are at least three cuneiform accounts. The latter are in every way the most interesting because of their antiquity. It is also gratifying to find that these modern discoveries corroborate the old story handed down by Berosus. As epitomised by Dr. Spiegel, the Berosus narrative runs as follows: In the most ancient times, when men lived like wild beasts, Oannes, who was half fish half man, came from the Erythrean Sea and revealed to mankind many useful arts. He also gave them a history of the past, and told them that: "In the beginning, all was darkness and water, where dwelt beasts of fearful shape; fishes and

¹ *Iranische Altertums-Kunde*, vol. i. p. 447.

² *Asiat. Res.*, viii. p. 452.

serpents with heads of other beasts, &c. But the God Bel cut the darkness in twain, and divided heaven from earth. Then the stars, sun, and moon were created; and all the monsters vanished because they could not endure the light. When Bel now saw the land was fit to bring forth, but still barren, he ordered the gods (Elohim and Baalim) to take earth and mix it with godly blood; and to form men and beasts therewith that could breathe and bear the light."

Other abridgments of the Berosus fable relate that, Bel formed heaven and earth by splitting in half a certain woman, whose name was Omoroka, the mother of Life, or, as the Chaldeans call her, Thallath, which is the Thallassa, or Sea of the Greeks. Belus, when he saw that all was ready (the expression corresponds to the Hebrew, "God saw that it was good"), commanded the gods to cut off his head, and to make men and other animals from the earth mixed with his blood. This same Belus created the stars also, the sun, the moon, and the seven planets. "Here too," says Spiegel, "are manifest, traces in which this myth accords with the Hebrew and Phœnician narratives. Here too we have a dark chaos divided into heaven and earth, and made habitable through light. Here too we find a sole Creator of the world, who not till later calls other gods to help. It is also noteworthy that, according to Babylonian opinion, man was formed from earth."¹

When speaking of the death of Osiris, allusion was made to Baal and Adonis as parallel instances among the Babylonians and the Phœnicians of the self-sacrifice of the Deity. "Out of love," says Bunsen, "God gave himself into being before all time, in order that all his creatures might rejoice in his glory. This is what the Babylonian prophet expressed in his history of creation, when he taught that the supreme God had cut off his own head that man might live upon the earth, born of the dust but begotten of God."² And elsewhere, "that creation, and

¹ *Ubi supra.*

² *Egypt*, vol. iv. p. 287.

especially the creation of man, is a self-offering of the Deity: the infinite and unlimited giving itself up out of love to the finite and the limited. Hence, if we put aside the veil of the genealogical view, and see nothing in the sonship but the separate momenta of the divine self-consciousness, we have the simplest expression of the idea, which, when differently applied, is represented as the sacrifice of the 'only son, or even as the slaying of the Father by the divine son.'"¹

¹ *Vide infra*, p. 157.

LETTER X.

(In Continuation.)

BEFORE we turn to the cuneiform accounts of Creation and the Deluge, it will be advisable to speak of the general claims of these records to antiquity, and hence to our special consideration. Nearly all the inscriptions to which I shall refer were excavated at Nineveh; and, for the most part, at Konyunjik, amid the ruined palaces of Sennacherib and Assur-bani-pal, or Sardanapalus. Sir A. Layard, assisted by the vice-consul, Mr. Rassam, had been the first to discover these buried palaces at Konyunjik. After Sir Henry Rawlinson had detected the likeness between the cuneiform legends and those of Genesis, the trustees of the British Museum sent out the late G. Smith, who had greatly distinguished himself by his skill in deciphering the inscriptions already brought home. Smith made several valuable additions to the previous discoveries. Amongst them, parts of tablets containing descriptions of the Deluge, of Creation, and of the Tower of Babel; all nearly resembling the account of these events in Genesis. The inscriptions are upon small tablets of baked clay, varying from an inch to a foot square. They were inscribed by order of the two kings above named, who took the greatest pains to collect the legends from Babylon. So highly were these records prized that, they were kept in the palaces; and, in one instance, under the charge of the king's own brother.

The date of Sennacherib is 704 B.C., that of his grandson Sardanapalus, 670 B.C. This, of course, does not give to these legends an antiquity to compare with that of Genesis;

and were they Assyrian compositions, we should at once say they were merely repeated from the Hebrew. But upon this head we have definite knowledge. "The Assyrians themselves state that the documents were copied from ancient Babylonian copies, and in some cases state that the old copies were partly illegible in their day."¹ Occasionally we meet with actual proof of the antiquity of a text. Mr. Sayce tells us of a certain Assyrian copy, the Babylonian original of which has been discovered, "about one thousand years older than the Assyrian one. Similarly a fragment of a Babylonian transcript of the Deluge tablet has recently been brought from Babylonia, and serves not only to fill up some of the breaks in our Assyrian copies, but also to verify the text of the latter."

The only legends we need examine are those which have their counterparts in our Bible. That of the Flood is inscribed on two of a series of twelve tablets devoted to what are called the Izdubar legends. Izdubar is believed to be the Nimrod of the Bible. He was a great warrior and a mighty hunter; Erech was his city, as it was also one of the cities of Nimrod. Whether Izdubar was a solar hero we need not pause to inquire. He certainly resembles Herakles—doubtless a mythical personification of the sun—in many respects. He slays a lion, a bull, and a tyrant who may stand for Geryon. He carries away gems that grew on trees, like the apples of the Hesperides; and he sickens of a deadly fever, which matches the end of Hercules. The legends relating to Izdubar are, I believe, the most ancient in our possession. They are Semitic translations from the Akkadian language; which language must have been extinct before the tablets were inscribed. It is, moreover, certain that all these legends had an oral existence long before they were committed to writing. The following extracts (the whole is too long to cite) are taken from the eleventh tablet, which is the most perfect of the series. Column I., verses 13, 14

¹ Prof. Sayce, *ubi supra*.

“To make a deluge the great gods have brought their heart: even he, their father Anu, their king, the warrior Bel. 20, 21. Man of Surippak, son of Ubara-tutu, build a house, make a ship to preserve the sleep of plants (and) living beings. 38 to 43. Close the ship . . . at the season which I will make known to you, into it enter, and the door of the ship turn . . . Into the midst of thy grain, thy furniture, thy goods, thy wealth, thy woman-slaves, thy handmaids, the sons of the host, (the beasts) of the field, the wild animals of the field as many as I would protect.” Column II., 2 to 5. “On the fifth day . . . it rose. In its circuit fourteen in all (were) its girders; fourteen in all it contained . . . above it I placed its roof, it . . . I enclosed it. 10 to 12. Three *sari* of bitumen I poured over the outside; three *sari* of bitumen I poured over the inside. 34. He spake, saying: In the night I will cause it to rain from heaven heavily.” Then comes a description of what happened. 47 to 50. The spirits of earth carried destruction; in their terror they shake the earth; of Rimmon his flood reached to heaven. The darkened (earth to a waste) was turned.” Column III., verses 1 to 6. “The surface of the earth like . . . they covered, (it destroyed all) living beings from the face of the earth; the raging (deluge) over the people reached to heaven. Brother saw not his brother; men did not know one another. In heaven the gods feared the whirlwind and sought a refuge; they ascended to the heaven of Anu. 19 to 23. Six days and nights passed; the wind, the whirlwind, the storm overwhelmed. On the seventh day at its approach the rain was stayed; the raging whirlwind which had smitten like an earthquake was quieted. The sea began to dry, and the wind and deluge ended. 33, 34. The mountain of Nizir stopped the ship, and to pass over it it was not able. The first day, the second day, the mountain of Nizir stopped the ship. 38 to 46. I sent forth a dove, and it left. The dove went; it returned, and a resting-place it did not find, and it came back. I sent forth a swallow, and it left. The

swallow went; it returned, and a resting-place it did not find, and it came back. I sent forth a raven, and it left. The raven went forth, and the carrion on the water it saw, and it did eat; it swam, and turned away, it did not come back. I sent (the animals) forth to the four winds; I sacrificed a sacrifice; I built an altar on the peak of the mountain." It is impossible to doubt that this Chaldean story is the original of which we have the Hebrew copy in the Bible.

The CREATION tablets are unfortunately much injured; but they are not considered to be so ancient as the Izdubar series. They give descriptions of chaos and the generation of the gods, the gathering together of the waters, the creation of the heavenly bodies, and finally that of land animals. On a fragment of the first is written: "At that time above the heaven was unnamed; below the earth by name was unrecorded; the boundless deep also was their generator. The chaos of the sea was she who bore the whole of them. Their waters were collected together in one place," &c. "In the creation tablet," says Mr. Sayce, "the first existence is called Mummū Tiamatu, a name meaning the 'Chaos of the Deep.' . . . It is evident that, according to the notion of the Babylonians, the sea was the origin of all things, and this also agrees with the statement of Genesis i. 2, where the chaotic waters are called *tĕhôm*, 'the deep,' the same word as the Tiamat of the creative text," &c.¹

The fifth tablet gives the creation of the heavenly bodies, and is the equivalent of the fourth day of Genesis. "1. Anu made suitable mansions of the (seven) great gods. 2. The stars he placed in them, the *lumasi* he fixed. 4. For each of the twelve months three stars he fixed. 12. The moon-god he caused to beautify the thick night. 19. At that time the sun (will be) on the horizon of heaven at thy (rising). 22. (Then) will the darkness return; the sun will change."

¹ Page 60.

What remains of the seventh tablet is clear enough. "2. They (the gods) made suitable the strong monsters. 3. They caused to come living creatures. . . . 4. Cattle of the field, beasts of the field, and creeping things of the field."

The TOWER OF BABEL tablets are in an imperfect condition. Professor Sayce remarks: "It is evident from the wording of the fragment that it was preceded by at least one tablet, describing the sin of the people in building the tower." The seven verses here given are not to be mistaken. "8 to 14. (Small) and great he confounded (on) the mound. Their walls all the day he founded; for their destruction (punishment) in the night . . . he did not leave a remainder. In his anger also (his) secret counsel also he pours out; (to) confound (their) speeches he set his face. He gave the command, he made strange their counsel."

In all the great mythologies some notions of a PARADISE and a FALL are invariably introduced: closely or remotely connected with these, a tree of life and a serpent are frequently to be met with. As yet, no Chaldean legend of the Fall has been discovered; but it is evident the Akkadians were well acquainted with the entire fable. We have a perfect representation on a very ancient Babylonian cylinder of the figures of a man and a woman, between whom is a tree bearing fruit, while behind the woman is an erect serpent. An abundance of bas-reliefs and seals are also extant, whereon the tree is guarded on both sides by winged cherubim. Several hymns and legends refer to the same subject. One fragment of a hymn tells how, "In Eridu a dark pine grew; in an illustrious place it was planted." Its miraculous properties are spoken of; and, as in Genesis, the approach to it is guarded by the flaming sword,—here of Merodach. Allusion is made to a serpent, which embodies the evil principle, and is the same monster that Merodach fights on other occasions, as "the chaos of the deep," "the wicked serpent," and "the ser-

pent of night." Merodach is here the exact counterpart of Michael as described in Revelation.

The Egyptian emblem of sin was Aphophis or Apap, "the giant serpent," frequently represented with a human head. Occasionally the god Horus, as Re the sun, is drawn killing the serpent with his spear. In Hindu mythology the serpent or principle of evil is overcome sometimes by Pavati, sometimes by Krishna.

The Zoroastrian account of Eden, or Paradise, runs parallel with that of Genesis. The first parents of man lived in innocence and happiness until tempted by Ahriman in the form of a serpent. They ate the fruit he offered, and at once became as wicked as himself. It is argued that, as this account is taken from the Bundehesh, it is of too late a date for the Hebrews to have adopted it from the Medo-Persians. But if the story is as old as the Akkadian age (and we know it to be so), neither Zoroastrians nor Hebrews need have originated it. Certainly the belief in Paradise existed long before the days of the Semites. "The Paradise," says Kalish, "is no exclusive feature of the earliest history of the Hebrews; most of the ancient nations have similar narrations about a happy abode, which care does not approach, &c. The Greeks believed that at an immense distance beyond the pillars of Hercules, on the borders of the earth, were the Islands of the Blessed, the Elysium abounding in every charm of life, and the garden of the Hesperides with their golden apples guarded by an ever-watchful serpent (Ladôn). But still more analogous is the legend of the Hindus, that in the sacred mountain Meru, which is perpetually clothed in the golden rays of the sun, and whose lofty summit reaches into heaven, no sinful man can exist; that it is guarded by dreadful dragons; that it is adorned with many celestial plants and trees, and is watered by four rivers, which thence separate and flow to the four chief directions. Equally striking is the resemblance to the belief of the Persians, who suppose that a

region of bliss and delight, the town Eriene Vedsho, or *Heden*, more beautiful than the whole rest of the world, traversed by a mighty river, was the original abode of the first men before they were tempted by Ahriman in the shape of a serpent to partake of the wonderful fruit of the forbidden tree Hom. And the books of the Chinese describe a garden near the gate of heaven where a perpetual zephyr breathes; it is irrigated by abundant springs, the noblest of which is 'the fountain of life,' and abounds in delightful trees, one of which bears fruit which have the power of preserving life. . . . In the Chinese traditions four rivers flow from the mountain Kuen-lun to the four quarters of the world." ¹

In the Vishnu Purana the forbidden fruit are the apples of the Jambu tree. These apples are as big as elephants. They who drink of their juice "pass their days in content and health, being subject neither to perspirations, to foul odours, to decrepitude nor decay." ²

The introduction of evil into the world through woman's agency, as told in the Grecian myth, is familiar to every one; and the likeness between Eve and Pandora has often been celebrated in verse as well as prose. ³ Zeus, enraged with Prometheus, sends Pandora—the all-gifted—in charge of Hermes, to Epimetheus the foolish son of Japetos. Enraptured by her charms, Epimetheus, in spite of his brother Prometheus's warning, makes her his wife. In their house is a jar which the brothers had been forbidden to open. Hitherto the injunction had been observed. But Pandora, whose prevailing attribute was

¹ *Historical and Critical Commentary on the Old Testament.*

² See Colebrooke's translation, *Asiatic Researches*, vol. viii. p. 473.

³ "Espoused Eve . . .
More lovely than Pandora, whom the gods
Endowed with all their gifts, and oh! too like
In sad event, when to the unwise son
Of Japhet brought by Hermes, she ensnared
Mankind with her fair looks, to be avenged
Of him who had stole Jove's authentic fire."

—*Paradise Lost.*

curiosity, uncovered the jar, and its contents—every ill which could befall mankind—flew out. Terrified at the sight, she clapped on the lid in time to prevent the escape of Hope, which alone was left behind.

In his comments upon this myth M. Lenormant seems to think it natural that poetry should in all ages have signalled the baneful charms of woman.¹ Possibly the experiences of the stronger sex (whose faults are not of the alluring kind) may have led man to impute some share of his misfortunes to a being whose strength is in her weakness. But throughout these fables the uppermost thought is of lost virtue and lost happiness; of an age of innocence when man associated with the gods, and knew neither toil nor care. Such thoughts are the day-dreams of a half-forgotten childhood, when each sense tasted newly the intoxicating nectar of exuberant life. What else is the forbidden fruit or its rueful consequences than the indulgence of selfish passion, and the remorse that is of no avail? The contrast between life's opening and its close tells too truly the sad story of decadence. In the dire passage from one goal to the other, man in all ages has probably had more to bless than blame in the partner of his troubles.

The hatred and reverence so universally inspired by the serpent cannot here be discussed. In the creation myths, however, the fact that the serpent is so frequently identified with the "chaos of the deep" and the "serpent of night" indicates the radical conception. To the superstitious minds of children and of savages darkness is full of indescribable terror. And the dispelling of darkness by the sun is typified by Apollo and the Python, by Re and Aphophis, by Hercules, Krishna, Merodach, and other mythical personages.

The connection of the serpent with the Jewish Satan, partly belongs to the legend of the Fall and partly to the

¹ "L'influence fâcheuse qu'a exercée la civilisation sur le caractère faible, léger, volage, faux, ami de la parure et du luxe, du sexe féminin est devenu la source de tous nos malheurs."—*Les Origines*, &c.

passage already quoted from Revelation, both of which, as seen, have their parallels in Chaldean mythology. The Devil of the Christian epoch was an adaptation of the Zoroastrian Ahriman. The monotheism of Moses and of the greater prophets was averse from a spiritual dualism. But when the Jews brought back from their captivity the Zoroastrian doctrine of evil, they gradually developed the notion of a personal devil: the Founder of Christianity, accepting this belief as he probably found it, made it the corner-stone of his dogma of eternal punishment. At this epoch, however, the monodemonism of our days was not even in embryo. Devils swarmed innumerable. Every disease (as we shall have occasion to notice hereafter) was the work of demons. Deserts and solitary wildernesses were their places of resort. The horned devil, with hoofs and tail, is a creation of the Middle Ages: the explanation of it is to be found in the Biblical translation of the Hebrew *Seirim* into "devils." *Seirim* simply means "hairy ones;" and the he-goat being worshipped by the Egyptians, Moses was instructed by Jehovah to forbid the offering of sacrifices to these animals.

It is almost unnecessary to state that the "hell" of the Christian Church had no affinity with the Hades of the Greek, any more than it had with the Hebrew *Sheol* (translated *hell*) in the Old Testament. The latter primarily signified little else than the German Hölle, a cavern or hole, in which the corpse was deposited. The association with death naturally caused it to be spoken of with horror; and imagination readily converted the grave into a dark abyss situated beneath the earth. From this to a place of torment the passage was sure and easy. But even in the New Testament the old sense is sometimes retained. When St. Peter, speaking of the resurrection of Christ, says, "that his soul was not left in hell, neither did his flesh see corruption," the true meaning of hell is apparent from the context.

It is noteworthy that the conception of hell as "the

fire that never shall be quenched" and the "lake which burneth with fire and brimstone" is essentially the hell of a people subject to the discomforts of a hot climate. In the hell of the Brahmans and the Buddhists the wicked are tortured with boiling pitch and red-hot pincers, and are scorched with perpetual thirst. Movers informs us that the hot wind (Gluthwind) of the Syrian desert is the Arab's idea of hell. It is called the Fire of Death. This, adds the same learned writer, is the boar of Mars that slays Adonis. With the Scandinavians, and natives of frigid zones, on the contrary, the wicked are frozen for ever in ice. So the sun, whose worship as a beneficent god originated in the North, becomes in tropical Africa the demon who is both cursed and propitiated by sacrifice.

The absence of any definite belief in IMMORTALITY among the Hebrews has already been alluded to. If it be maintained that there are passages in the Old Testament which imply such belief, if it be further argued that the belief was divinely inspired, the answer is at hand (to say nothing of its prevalence among savages, which has already been dealt with), that both Egyptians and Zoroastrians entertained it in its fullest sense;—in the case of Egyptians, before the existence of even the mythological Semites. The preservation of the dead signified belief that, so long as the body was preserved from perishing the soul kept it company. The pyramids indeed are the lasting monuments of the early prevalence of this doctrine; their main object doubtless being to secure the immortality of the tyrants for whom they were constructed.

The *resurrection of the dead* is a genuine Zoroastrian creed. "The idea of a future life," says Dr. Haug, "and the immortality of the soul, is expressed very distinctly already in the Gâthas, and pervades the whole of the later Avesta literature. The belief in a life to come is one of the chief dogmas of the Zend-Avesta. . . . Closely connected with this idea is the belief in heaven and hell,

which Spitama Zarathustra himself clearly pronounced in the Gâthas.”¹ The following passage, translated by this eminent Zendic scholar from one of the collections of prayers in the Zend-Avesta, is of great interest:—“This splendour attaches itself to the hero of prophets and to his companions, in order to make life everlasting, &c., when the dead shall rise again, making life lasting by itself (without further support). All the world will remain for eternity in a state of righteousness; the Devil will disappear from all those places whence he used to attack the righteous man,” &c. Dr. Haug thinks these “coincidences” are accidental, *i.e.*, that “the doctrines seem to have sprung up independently. In the Zend-Avesta we meet with only two words which can be traced to the Semitic language, neither of them referring to religious subjects.”

Miscellaneous points of agreement and some final observations on the monotheism of the Hebrews will bring to an end this first division of our studies.

“Notwithstanding all the differences of the Phœnician mythus,” says Dr. Spiegel, “there is no denying that, in its fundamental aspects, it is one with the Hebrew.” Both Jacob and Esau serve to verify this statement. The name Israel is the equivalent of Yisrael, or the Struggler with God. “This,” says Bunsen, “can only be Hercules Palamedes, also worshipped by the Greeks, who once wrestled with Zeus on the sand, and had his hip sprained.” Elsewhere, “The Phœnician Hercules wrestled with Typhon (the sun at the meridian) in the sand, as Jacob-Israel did with Elohim in the dust (Gen. xxxii. 25). Hercules, like Jacob, was wounded in the encounter in the thigh, and, like the son of Isaac, received the name of Palaimon, the Wrestler.” “Esau,” says Movers, “is Usov, the rough-skinned or hairy one of the Phœnicians, also called by the Jews Zamael² (Samieli-poison). Sometimes the Pig, the

¹ *Essays on the Sacred Writings and Religion of the Parsis*, by Dr. Haug, p. 311. ² The Zamiel of the German legend of *Der Freischütz*.

Wild Pig, the old Serpent, and Satan. He is the same as the Egyptian Typhon."¹

Jacob and Esau struggled together in their mother's womb (Gen. xxv. 22). So also Proteus wrestled in his mother's womb with his brother Acrisius, the Phrygian Saturn.² If we note that Esau is the evil one in the Phœnician myth, it will be seen that the same idea recurs in the legends of Siva who kills Brahma, Typhon who kills his brother Osiris, and Cain his brother Abel.

To this same Usov or Esau and to Melékhet-Artemis the Phœnicians sacrificed human beings. "They might be ransomed by a doe, as Diana accepted that animal instead of Iphigenia." The sacrifice of first-born children was not a custom peculiar to the Phœnicians. It was equally practised by Syrians, Babylonians, Carthagenians, and Israelites. Thus both Manasseh and Ahaz, "who walked in the way of the kings of Israel," caused their children to pass through the fire. Jeremiah xix. 5 denounces the people of Judah because "they have built also the high places unto Baal;" and says that Tophet shall henceforth be called "The Valley of Slaughter." In Deuteronomy xii. 31 we read, "For even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their gods." And so late as the reign of Josiah, that king defiles Tophet, so "that no man might make his son or daughter to pass through the fire to Moloch." Hence, the intended sacrifice of Isaac and his ransom by a ram has its counterpart in that of Agamemnon's daughter, and in all respects illustrates the common practice of his time. It is not typical of the sacrifice of God's son, but merely instances a veritable custom, which infuses its character into the divine immolation. Precisely the same idea underlies the Phœnician myth of the sacrifice of Yadid or Yedud, the Beloved—the Only-Begotten—by his father the God El; who is the same as the Babylonian Bel and the Greek Kronos.

The last words remain to be spoken upon the Hebrew

¹ *Die Phönizier*. Cf. pp. 224, 397.

² *Ibid.*, 398.

monotheism. Was it so unique, so distinct from all other systems of belief, as to entitle it to the reverence which so many millions accord to it? Was it what so many millions still believe it to be—a revelation?

Distinguished theologians (some of our own day) lay stress on the intimate proximity of the Hebrew God to man. The monotheism of Abraham was not (so they assure us) a mere philosophic scheme, revealing a god of nature; it was the fruit of a supernatural revelation (let us not mince our words),—of the supernatural revelation of a paternal and personal Deity. Beginning with Abraham, a new association, as it were, was formed between God and man. The personal relation contended for cannot, I maintain, be regarded as an exclusively Hebrew idea. From Fetichism upwards, the belief in mutual influence between man and the spirit he fears or adores is the dominant notion of every creed. We talk of the “God of Abraham” as though he were the God of Christianity. The two are as wide asunder as is the age of Abraham from our own. Moses, Elijah, Jeremiah, were probably believers in no other gods than Jehovah; but the lives of these exceptional men were spent in the effort—the vain effort—to redeem the people of Israel from the foulest superstitions. What is more common in the Old Testament than the reference to “other gods” as recognised deities, co-existing with, and frequently worshipped in addition to, Jehovah? Jehovah is never more than the “God of gods.” “The Lord your God is the God of gods.” “Great is our God above all gods.” “Who is like unto Jehovah among the gods?” These, and a score of similar passages (not to speak of the ever-recurring idolatrous rites), prove that the religion of the people was not the religion of the few leading minds whom we, through Christianity, have been taught to follow, and whom we consequently regard as representatives of the Hebrew faith.

It is not, you may urge, the national belief that is here upon its trial. We are not called upon to revere the

abominations of a horde of semi-barbarians, or to think that the whole people whom the Lord had especially chosen were divinely informed by him. It is merely alleged that some dozen or two of the best were miraculously inspired; and that the first of these to whom God revealed the secret of his unity was Abraham. I reply: The theology of Abraham must be estimated by that of his contemporaries. Take any great reformer you please; it is demonstrable that his opinions, however much in advance of his age, are nevertheless determined by the stage of culture at which that age has arrived. So was it with Abraham. And it needs but superficial acquaintance with the commonplaces of biblical criticism, such as are here adduced, to enable any one to see how largely the religions of his neighbours entered into that of the Jewish patriarch.

The very names by which the God of the Old Testament is addressed show at once the foreign sources from whence his titles were derived, and (as it seems to me) the polytheistic character of the ancient Jewish religion. The first words of the first chapter of Genesis tell us that "*Elohim* created the heaven and the earth." In the sixth chapter of Exodus (ver. 3) it is written: "And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob as El Shaddai, but by my name Jehovah was I not known to them." These words are addressed to Moses. At Genesis xiv. 18: "And Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought forth bread and wine; and he was the priest of El Elyôn, possessor of heaven and earth." Abram accepts the blessing and gives Melchizedek "tithes of all" (ver. 22): "And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up mine hand unto Yahveh, the possessor of heaven and earth," &c. In this last verse the name Yahveh is translated "Lord;" but, generally speaking, where the "Lord" occurs in our translation, the Hebrew equivalent is Adoni. Here, then, are five distinct names under which the Hebrew God was worshipped. Let us consider the significance of each of these five in turn.

Elohim is the plural of El and of its synonym Eloah, so familiar to us as the Arabic Ilâh, or (with the article) Al-Ilâh, abbreviated to Allâh. El means the strong or the mighty. "Elohim," says Ewald, "was always used in the purest monotheistic sense, &c. We have, therefore, in the primeval use of the word Elohim a memorable testimony that even the patriarchs of the nation thought and spoke monotheistically." In another place he writes: "That Eloah, the name of God, is common to all Semitic nations, proves that the primitive people from which they all proceeded designated God by that term." With reference to the singular sense of the plural form, of course where Elohim is followed by the verb in the singular, the sense must be taken as singular. But although this is the most frequent mode of its use, it is not the invariable one. For instance, Exodus xviii. 11, Jethro, Moses's brother-in-law, says, "Now I know that Jehovah is greater than Elohim;" or, as it is translated, "than all gods." It is indisputable that Elohim was a collective term applied to the whole Pantheon, just as the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Phœnicians, and others, applied Baalim, the plural of Bel or Baal. That the singular number must logically precede the plural, is no argument for the priority of monotheism to polytheism. We might as well argue that the idea of a single star preceded that of many stars, or that the abstract singular, man, preceded the concrete plural, men. Besides, admitting that one name—Eloah—was common to all Semitic nations, the gods of the various tribes would then naturally be comprehended under the plural of this name. And though each would have its tutelary deity, it would regard as sacred the gods or Eloahs of the race collectively; and worship them as national Elohim.

Citing M. Renan, who agrees with Ewald as to the extreme antiquity of the name Eloah, "at a time when the Semitic speech had not branched off into national dialects," Mr. Max Müller observes: "When this name was first used in the plural, it could only have signified,

like every plural, many Eloahs, and such a plural could only have been formed after the various names of God had become the names of independent deities, *i.e.*, during a polytheistic stage.”¹ It should be added that this polytheistic stage most assuredly existed after, no less than before, “the branching off” took place. With the formation of dialects each division of the race would have devoted itself to the particular god or gods which the chiefs happened to prefer, or which the accidents of language may have led them unconsciously to adopt. This view is countenanced by Ewald, notwithstanding his comment on the singular sense of Elohim. “The arising of such a plural term for God makes it evident that, already in that ancient time when this word was coined, the idea of many gods was in vogue; and the notion of God seemed to the whole ancient world endlessly extensive and illimitably divisible. Easily then might Polytheism have found its surest support in this plural word.”² Further, “That God in pre-Mosaic times was conceived with this notion of indefinite extension and possible divisibility, is shown by the most ancient tradition itself; where the God of Abraham and the God of Nahor are invoked by oath as two distinct Gods, and the ‘God of both fathers’ is only set over this duality that the two may not separately avail, and thus stand in opposition to the Mosaic religion. It is discernible, on the clearest evidence, that a Hero-Pantheon was cultivated, at least in the popular belief, together with the Head-God and the House-God of the chief. This vague idea of one God could not completely prevent idol-worship. What fast hold this had, at least of the women and retainers of the house, is plain from the stubborn cleaving to the *Terafim* (Penates) many centuries after Moses, and in spite of the commands of the higher religion. Tradition even does not deny the idolatry of, at all events, Rachel and Laban. Hence there was still wanting

¹ *Semitic Monotheism.*

² *Geschichte des Volkes Israels*, i. 459.

to the one God the perfect definiteness and sharp delineation of the Mosaic deity.”¹

Eloah or El was worshipped by all the Semitic nations. In Babylonia he was known as Bel or Baal; Bab-El means the gate or temple of El. El was also a Phœnician deity. The Phœnician El corresponds to the Greek Kronos—the youngest of the Titans; and this Kronos or El had a son whose name was IADID or YEDUD. As before mentioned, El kills this only-begotten and beloved son with his own hand. YEDUD, says Bunsen, “is also the great God himself, the only-Begotten, the Monogenes,” &c. The allies of Kronos in his war against Uranos,—the other Titans, were called Elohim.

Eliûn, the Most High, is another Phœnician god. As the name Most High implies, Eliûn is evidently the same as Uranos. Moreover, Uranos was father of Kronos; and El, who is Kronos, is son of Eliûn. According to Movers, Eliûn was worshipped at Byblus (Gebal), in Phœnicia, as Adonai,—the Lord of the Old Testament, and the Adonis of the Greeks. The identity of Eliûn or El Elyôn (they are the same) with Adonis, is further established by the myth relating to both. Bunsen quotes Philo to the effect that, “‘Eliûn met with his death in a combat in the open field. He was deified, and the children offered to him libations and sacrifices.’ The combat in the open field is therefore unquestionably merely the contest with the boar of Mars; and indeed one whole class of manuscript reads, ‘in a contest with wild beasts.’”

The cognate relation of these gods is manifest once more in the Hebrew Yahveh or Jehovah. Movers asserts that IAVEH is the same as the Chaldæan god IAO, ruler of the seven heavens, and Demiurge. Bunsen also holds IAO to be an abbreviation of JAVEH. The name IAO or IAH was found by Sir H. Rawlinson in the cuneiform inscriptions. He was the Fire-God of the Chaldees, and probably the original of the Hebrew deity addressed as

¹ *Geschichte des Volkes Israels*, 461.

HALLELU-JAH. But the connection reappears in the fact that IAO is one with Adonis, and, like Adonis, was a Sun-God, or God of the Autumn Sun.¹

El Shaddai—the last on the list of names—is of somewhat doubtful origin. Perhaps “sufficient” or “potent” may be accepted as the oldest known sense of it. “It comes from a kindred root to that which has yielded the substantive *shed*, meaning *demon* in the language of the Talmud, and the plural *Shedim*, a name for false gods or idols in the Old Testament. The name occurs as *set* or *shed* in the hieroglyphic inscriptions. It is the name of a god introduced by the shepherds, and one of his surnames was Baal.”² Mr. Robertson Smith, commenting on the Hebrew pronunciation, observes: “We are thus entitled to regard the word as an intensive from שדה, Aram., שדא, *eschard*, Arab., *thada*, to pour forth, and the name which, from its form, is probably of Aramaic origin, will mean the God who gives rain.” With the Phœnicians, El Shaddai was the father of the Titans; hence one with Uranos and Eliûn.

From all this, two courses are open to us; either of which is equally adverse to a belief in the pure and inspired monotheism of the Israelites. We may take the line of calling every system of polytheism monotheism in disguise, or we must confess that the monotheism of the Israelites was polytheism in disguise. We find that El, Elohim, Yahveh, Eliûn, Kronos, Uranos, El Shaddai, Baal, Bel, &c., are, after all, one and the same, or else transmutable deities; nay, more than this, they are but other names for the God of the Israelites.

If the Ammonites called their God Molech or Milcom,

¹ “Das nun dieser IAO Adonis sei, unterliegt gar keinen Zweifel.” —*Movers, Die Phönizier*, vol. i. p. 542.

“Lenormant (*Lettres Assyriologiques*, vol. ii.), Tiele, Land, and others have sought to prove that Jehovah (IAHWE) is a name borrowed

from Semitic heathenism, while Brugsch and others will have it that the Mosaic conception of God is borrowed from the Egyptians.”—*Robertson Smith*.

² *Lectures on the Science of Religion*.

if Chemosh was the God of the Moabites, and Baal-Zebub the God of the Philistines, why were these nations less monotheistic than the Hebrews? Shall it be said that Molech was an evil God, that Baal-Zebub was the God of flies; that therefore we may not compare them with Yahveh? I answer, there is no conceivable atrocity which could be imputed to Molech that can surpass the evil imputed in the Old Testament to the God of Israel. If evil doing be but an accidental attribute of Jehovah, why may not the supremacy over flies be but one attribute amongst many of the Philistine deity? It is abundantly evident, from the Egyptian and Indian theologies, that the worship of a Creator is quite consistent with the deification of an endless variety of his attributes.

Clearly, Abraham did not hesitate to accept, as his own, the God of the Priest-king of Canaan. If then we are to regard the faith of Abraham as divine, we must allow that he found this faith already established in Canaan on his arrival there. Men like Melchizedek, and Abraham, and Zoroaster, may have considered the many gods of the people as so many names for one God: as Brahma was the generalised expression for Force, so El the Strong, and its plural Elohim comprehended all the powers of nature which were originally worshipped under separate titles. But supposing this was so, the most we could say is, that the belief was reached by a process of generalisation such as Comte suggests with regard to fetichism; such as in later times has taken the form of monodynamism.

As to the pure monetheism, we may conclude with the remark (and it applies to the whole discussion), that in every inquiry on this subject we ought to have some standard to guide us. Were the Christian to take his own religion for the purpose, he might not find it convenient, and it certainly would not be just, to condemn the faith of the Brahman, of the Zoroastrian, of the Egyptian, or of the heathen Semite. Could any one of

these have examined the Christian's belief by the dim light and in the hostile spirit with which the Christian criticises theirs, he would have been puzzled to reconcile the profession of monotheism with the belief of a Trinity of nominal equality, of a personal demon who (in the moral world at least) was plainly paramount, of a virgin mother of God more devoutly worshipped by many than God himself, of archangels, of angels without number, and of saints as holy and as numerous as the *dii inferiores* of any polytheistic system, or as the apotheosised ancestors of the wildest savage. Could the theologian of our own day have changed places with the theologian of Abraham's, the latter might, without presumption, have concluded that his own creed was the simpler and perhaps purer of the two.

My aim, in the last four letters, has been to indicate the vestiges preserved by language of original relationship between the primary stocks of mankind, and to mark how, with the linguistic affinities, mythological agreements also coexisted. From the resemblance of these mythologies and cosmogonies to the cosmogony and to other legends in the Bible, the inference is drawn that, the religion of the Hebrews possesses no exceptional features that entitle it to special claims upon our reverence. Critical investigation has brought the Semitic people completely within the legitimate scope of universal history. Henceforth, when this truth is recognised, the Jewish religion will take its place as a fractional phenomenon in the vast integral of civilisation. It grew out of preceding ages as surely and as gradually as any other phase of human belief; and if that which it possesses in common with other systems can no longer be traced to actual or probable contact, we must seek the explanation of similarity in the laws of our common nature.

THE NEW TESTAMENT.

LETTER XI.

THAT creed which I have maintained to be without attestation in the Old Testament is held to be miraculously established in the New.

If the personal existence of God and the immortality of the soul are not proved by the Gospels, then (as we have no other direct evidence to support these dogmas) they cease to rest upon any basis save conjecture.

It may be thought, and is thought by most people, that a Creator and Governor of the World is evinced by the Order of Nature. This opinion will be examined hereafter. For the present I have merely to remark that nature cannot be said to afford *direct* evidence of a God. The order which pervades the universe appears to indicate a guiding intelligence, and nature presents to us the similitude of design. Still, in reasoning from these appearances to a divine intelligence, our deductions are founded solely upon analogy. The inference is drawn from a balance of probabilities, and in these days men are as apt to find the weight in one scale, as they are to find it in the other.

For the immortality of the soul, the argument from analogy is not available. Here we depend entirely upon revelation; and the revelation of the New Testament depends, in turn, on the miracles, and especially on the Resurrection, of Christ.

The existence of God and the immortality of the soul, being of the highest conceivable importance, justify direct communication from God; and not being otherwise ascertainable, required it. Required it because human intelligence unaided is conversant with nature only; and some power or principle other than nature could alone impart knowledge of the supernatural. The only credentials of the supernatural, the only proof that what is taken for the supernatural is not some higher mode of the natural, with which we might become acquainted *in the ordinary course of things*, must consist in the subversion of the natural; and this it is which constitutes a *miracle*.

Upon this point it is essential to be very explicit at the outset, for theologians are not always clear as to what a miracle is, or how it should be defined. Since every step of modern science has tended to establish the uniformity and ubiquity of physical law, and has succeeded in bringing under this law phenomena which were once thought to be arbitrary, the ablest theologians have forsaken the old attitude of defence—such as that assumed by Paley—for a new one which seems to me to surrender all that is worth fighting for. Thus, Canon Row, one of the latest to speak, considers “that the whole exigencies of modern thought render such a change of front absolutely necessary.” He holds “that the moral evidences of Christianity ought to occupy the first place, and its miraculous attestation the second,” &c.¹ Such a thorough change of front as this is enough to ensure defeat. The superhuman nature of Christ, and the divine revelations which depend thereon, must stand or fall with the physical miracles. This opinion is fully endorsed by Canon Row himself when he speaks of the Resurrection as “the one great evidential miracle of Christianity, on the reality of which its truth rests. If they could prove that this was a fiction, they would force the entire Christian position.”² This also is the meaning of the Archbishop

¹ *Christian Evidences Viewed in Relation to Modern Thought.* ² P. 23.

of York, who declares: "It is plain that all historical Christianity contains the supernatural element; a Christianity without it would be, not a history, but a speculation," and "it is clear that the controversy about miracles is knit up with the controversy about Christ."¹ The physical miracle, therefore, is what theologians have to deal with. Such being the case, the exigencies of modern thought have put the defenders of miracles to considerable straits. With what success they come out of them now remains to be seen.

The most implacable opponent of miracles cannot pretend there is any *a priori* reason against the existence of a Being capable of performing them. The question is, whether we have any evidence of such a Being through miraculous manifestations of his power; or, in other words, what degree of credibility may be claimed for the evidence on this head contained in the New Testament.

The famous argument of Hume states the case in its aptest form. "That no testimony is sufficient to establish a miracle, unless the testimony be of such a kind that its falsehood would be more miraculous than the fact which it endeavours to establish." To deal here with general principles only, we may ask: Whether any testimony could be of the requisite kind? Whether the falseness of any testimony whatever could be so anomalous as a miracle? "It is experience only," says Hume, "which gives authority to human testimony, and it is the same experience which assures us of the laws of nature." But while experience proves the laws of nature to be constant (constant that is as a rule, for the believers in miracle deny the absolute constancy), experience also proves testimony to be exceedingly fallacious. So that, in believing miracles, one really chooses the least probable alternative.

Hume's proposition has been well elucidated by the

¹ *The Synoptic Gospels*, p. 117

late Samuel Bailey.¹ Bailey claims for himself the merit of calling attention to the fact that, we assume uniformity of causation in the *past*, with precisely the same degree of certainty as we count on it in the future. However arrived at, the belief is universal that, like causes not only do and will continue to produce like effects, but that they always have done so. The belief that a stone thrown upwards always had a tendency to return to the earth in times past, is as strong as the belief that the same would happen now. This assumption respecting physical events is equally potent respecting mental phenomena. In all our dealings with others we act upon this belief. We expect an act of kindness to give pleasure, or an insult to give offence, with the same confidence as we expect lead to sink in water or fire to burn: and we take it for granted that this always was so. Given similar conditions we assume similar results no less in moral and intellectual than in physical events.

Apply these considerations to our belief in testimony. The credibility of all testimony, whether oral or written, is invariably tried by rules which involve belief in the uniformity of causation. "It is allowed," says Bailey, "that the concurrence of a number of witnesses in the same assertion, their reputation for veracity, the fact of the testimony being against their own interest, the probability of detection in any false statement, are all circumstances enhancing the credibility of what they affirm." Why so? It is in virtue of our belief in the uniformity of causation. Or as Hume puts it: "It is experience which gives authority to human testimony." Where testimony conflicts, as it sometimes does, with the constancy of some assumed law of nature, we are reduced (if the case does not admit of an experimental test) to a balance of probabilities. We weigh the character of the witnesses, or the accuracy of the observations, against our knowledge of the order of phenomena which the alleged event is said to

¹ Vide *Essay on the Uniformity of Causation*.

contravene. If the occurrence testified to violate a complete induction—such as a law of nature whose constancy we have frequently experienced—no testimony, however well supported, would be strong enough to establish it as fact. Suppose, for instance, that a number of scientific men, men of known integrity, who had no interests to serve but those of truth and science, whose powers of observation were highly practised, whose professional reputations would be injured by error, and ruined by suspicion of dishonesty,—suppose a number of such men to declare that, on a certain occasion when they met together, by the simple word of command of one of the party, heat suddenly ceased to cause the expansion of mercury in the thermometer. However unimpeachable we may imagine the testimony to be in such a case, the statement would, by all but completely ignorant and uneducated persons, at once be discredited. Not the apparent fact, mind, that the mercury did not rise in the tube; but that this was brought about simply by a word of command. The claim of these witnesses to credence would rest solely upon our knowledge of their characters, backed by our experience of such men generally. We should believe them either because we had hitherto found them truthful; or, as a rule, had found men of their stamp worthy of belief. We trust, in short, to the uniformity of our experience, *i.e.*, to the uniformity of the law of causation. How then can we ever set aside this law, for the sake of testimony whose validity ever depends on the law?

There is no way to evade this objection to miracles save one: this is to maintain that a miracle is not a violation of the natural law. Modern theologians, almost to a man, embrace this doctrine. It is not, however, a new one. Brown, amongst others, sturdily defended the position in reply to Hume. Brown frankly admitted that, if Hume's definition of a miracle were correct, his argument would be unanswerable. For, says Brown, "however constant the connection of truth with testi-

mony, in the most favourable circumstances, may be, it cannot be more, though it may be less, constant than the connection of any other physical phenomena, which have been by supposition unvaried in their order of sequence till the very moment of that supposed violation of their order in which the miracle is said to consist." The connection between truth and testimony is less constant than the connection between death and decay for instance. Consequently it is more probable that the connection between truth and testimony should be broken, than that the connection between death and decay should be so; and hence that the dead should be brought to life again. "That a hundred, or a thousand, or a hundred thousand witnesses should in the same circumstances (*i.e.*, specially favourable to truth) concur in the same false account, would be a miracle indeed; but it would only be a miracle still." We may set one miracle against another—"the miracle of their falsehood against the physical miracle reported by them; but we cannot do better than this: we cannot render it less a violation of a law of nature, and less inconsistent therefore with the principle which both speculatively and practically has guided us in all views of the sequence of events."¹

Brown candidly confesses, no stand is to be made here; but he repudiates Hume's definition of a miracle. "The laws of nature," says he, "surely are not violated when a new antecedent is followed by a new consequent; they are violated only when the antecedent being exactly the same, a different consequent is the result," &c. "A miracle is not a violation of any law of nature. . . . It has nothing in it which is inconsistent with our belief in the most undeviating uniformity of nature; for it is not the sequence of a different event when the preceding circumstances have been the same; it is an effect that is new to our observation, because it is the result of new and peculiar circumstances." A miracle, he argues, is

¹ *Inquiry into the Relation of Cause and Effect.*

an extraordinary result of an extraordinary antecedent; so is any new and startling event in the course of nature. But we do not conclude a violation of the laws of nature because of our previous ignorance; neither should we do so in the case of a miracle. "It is the Divine will that, preceding it immediately, is the cause of the extraordinary effect which we call miraculous; and whatever may be the new consequent of the new antecedent, the course of nature is as little violated by it as it was violated by the electrician, who for the first time drew lightning from the clouds," &c. Again, "The Highest of all Powers of whose mighty agency the universe which sprung from it affords evidence so magnificent, has surely not ceased to be one of the Powers of nature. . . . He is the greatest of all the Powers of nature, but he is still one of the Powers of nature as much as any other Power."

This is precisely the dictum of our living apologists. Here we have the last word in defence of miracles. Archbishop Thomson writes, "We should need to know far more of the laws of nature before we attribute to them, as some people do, a rigid inflexibility, in which the idea of God is extinguished, and man becomes a machine." That is to say, we have no right to assume a miracle to be less natural (though more unusual) than any other event: God having the power to control all events.

Archbishop Trench more plainly affirms, "We should term the miracle, not an infraction of a law, but behold in it a lower law neutralised, and for a time put out of working by a higher. And of this abundant analogous examples are evermore going forward before our eyes."¹ As man, by means of the proper antidote, arrests the action of a deadly poison, why should not God, also by the control of physical means, arrest the decay of death itself?

The late Dean Mansel wrote: "A superhuman authority needs to be substantiated by superhuman evidence; and

¹ *On Miracles*, p. 15.

what is superhuman is miraculous." The Duke of Argyll, quoting this passage, adds: "It is important to observe that this definition does not involve the idea of a violation of the laws of nature. It does not involve the idea of the exercise of will apart from the use of means. It does not imply any exception to the law of causation." The Duke goes on to compare the operation of the divine will, as a cause, with the human will; and asks: "Is it difficult to believe that after the same manner also the divine will, of which ours is the image only, works and effects its purpose?"¹

The late Dr. Mozley argues that, although our belief in the order of nature has all the potency of a necessary belief, it is still a belief for which we can give no logical reason. Upon these negative grounds of our ignorance, he avers that "a miracle is not an anomaly or irregularity, but part of the system of the universe."²

Canon Row says: "The laws of nature are consequently no more violated by the performance of a miracle than they are by the activities of man." "We may take Peter's walking on the water as a crucial example. It has been affirmed that the force of gravitation must have been suspended in his favour. But the narrative affirms the contrary, for the sacred writer tells us that the moment Peter's faith failed him he began to sink, thus proving that the power of gravitation was not suspended for a moment. The only thing necessary was the presence of some force capable of neutralising its action on Peter's body, precisely in the same way as it is constantly neutralised by ourselves whenever we lift a weight from the ground."

All this, you see, is nothing but Brown's theory over again; only that Brown more baldly declares God to be "One of the Powers of nature." Still it comes to the same thing: the will of God takes the place of the

¹ *Reign of Law*, p. 21.

² *Bampton Lecture*, 1865.

physicial antecedent. However strange, the miracle is after all but a physical event introduced just as naturally—just as much in accordance with physical law as any event produced by the will of man. So explicit is Canon Row on this head that, he anticipates the difficulty of reconciling such a miracle as that of the loaves and fishes with this doctrine, by declaring that not even here need we affirm the exercise of creative power. “All the materials were at hand, either in the earth, the air, or the water. The ordinary action of God’s Providence makes bread and fish in one way; in a miracle he produces them in another.”¹

Nor is there anything to choose between this view and that of Bishop Butler. When Butler says, “that things lie beyond the natural reach of our faculties is no sort of presumption against the truth and reality of them,” he asserts what none will deny. When he pleads for the probability of miracles by comparing them to “the extraordinary phenomena of nature,” and adds, “then the comparison will be between the presumption against miracles, and the presumption against such uncommon appearances, suppose, as comets, and against there being any such powers in nature as magnetism and electricity,”² he and the Archbishop of York stand on the very same ground; which comes to this: Our knowledge of nature is too imperfect to settle the question. But if we cannot distinguish the natural from the supernatural, what can we learn from the manifestation of the latter?

Had Butler contended that every ultimate fact, which admits of no explanation in any possible state of our knowledge, is miraculous, his position would be unassailable. For, as no knowledge could ever be brought to prove, so none could ever be brought to disprove, the affirmation. In this shape the argument is tenable enough. Mr. Francis Newman, quoting Newton in support of it, says: “He [Newton] *justly* regarded the

¹ P. 70.

² *Analogy*, Part ii., chap. ii.

force of gravitation as a divine action ; certainly not as a material, but necessarily as a spiritual force," &c. "Divine agency, as in gravitation and other forces, which cannot belong to brute matter, is no hypothesis, but an undeniable present fact," &c.¹

Sir John Herschel held the same opinion. Speaking of terrestrial gravity, he says: "All bodies with which we are acquainted, when raised into the air and quietly abandoned, descend to the earth's surface in lines perpendicular to it, which it is but reasonable to regard as the direct or indirect result of a *consciousness* and a *will* existing *somewhere* though beyond our power to trace, which force we term gravity."²

This, however, is beside the purpose. I do not deny that gravity may be miraculous, in the sense that its exhibition as a force may ultimately depend upon a conscious will. But, if I am to regard *this* property of "all bodies" as miraculous, I must regard all properties of all bodies as miraculous. I am quite prepared to do so. But to accept every phenomenon as miraculous, or to reduce every miracle to "a part of the system of the universe," equally robs the miracle of that which alone would be adequate to prove a Creator of such a system. It is like cutting away the masts to save the ship; the ship is useless for its destined purpose until the masts are restored: the plight of the miracle is pretty much the same. This, which is the real difficulty, has been gallantly faced by Dr. M'Cosh. "The peculiarity of a miracle," says he, "is, that it has not a cause in the natural powers operating in the Cosmos. Though not falling in with the 'uniformity of nature'—which is by no means an ultimate principle, or a principle without exception (there is, *e.g.*, the creation of new species of plants and animals as revealed by geology), it is by no means inconsistent with what is truly the ultimate and intuitive principle, that 'every effect has a

¹ *Contemporary Review*. October 1878.

² *Outlines of Astronomy*. Ed. 1875, chap. viii.

cause;’ for it has an adequate cause in the power of God.”¹ He here *assumes* certain acts of creation to show that the uniformity of nature is not irrefragable;—a postulate which the defender of miracle is obliged to make. But in a later note he says: “It should be added that they [miracles] ought never to be represented (as they have been of late by some persons friendly to religion) as *natural*; for their peculiarity is, that they do not proceed from the scheme of physical powers operating in the cosmos, but from a *supernatural* cause known otherwise to exist.”²

These little words, “known otherwise to exist,” are the weightiest in the whole discussion. Whatever may be the strength of an argument in favour of miracles, one weakness is inherent to it, and fatal to it. Every plea for miracles starts with the foregone conclusion of a Power able and disposed to perform them. Miracles never can prove the existence of a supernatural Being, for the simple reason that, “unless a God is already recognised, the apparent miracle can always be accounted for on a more probable hypothesis than that of the interference of a Being of whose very existence it is supposed to be the sole evidence.”³

Whether the miracle be presented to us at first or at second hand, how are we to know that it is a miracle? (1.) The effect or event might (as Mill suggests) be the product of some natural agencies that we know nothing about. (2.) The event may be erroneously interpreted, either by illusion due to subjective conditions, or by delusion wrought with the contrivance of others. Touching the first difficulty, it would seem that we could never rely thoroughly upon our judgment until our knowledge of physical laws was exhaustive; which, assuming the infinity of the universe, it could never be. With regard to the second, so long as hallucination continues matter of daily experience, it is not impossible for any one to be the subject of it.

¹ *The Method of the Divine Government*, 8th edition, p. 114.

² Page 156.

³ John Mill, *Theism*, p. 232.

According to these views, there does not appear to be any test by which we could recognise a miracle even were we ourselves to witness one. How much more cogent are these reasons for discrediting the miracles on which the revelation of the New Testament depends. The same difficulties we should have to dispose of, affect those who are said to have seen the Christian miracles, in an immensely magnified degree. "It has now become necessary to show, not only that the reporters of miracles believed that they actually witnessed them, but also that it was impossible that, in accordance with the explanations which an eminent scientific authority [Dr. Carpenter, *Mental Physiology*] has given of some well-attested spiritualistic phenomena, the belief could have originated in mistaking subjective impressions for external realities."¹

Just think what the "reporters" of the New Testament miracles were. So far from being qualified judges, they were avowedly ignorant men, in an age which, considering its comparatively advanced civilisation, was one of exceptional credulity and superstition. In their eyes every phenomenon they could not otherwise explain was caused by the will of some being superior to nature. The consequence was, miracles were to them—what they still are to all people similarly situated—a part of the ordinary occurrences of life. Every illness, mental or bodily, was the work of evil spirits; and the chief remedy was in the hands of the magician who could exorcise these spirits. When the doctrine of a personal devil had taken root, the miracles performed by him were more numerous than those of divine agency. "As to miracles," says M. Renan, "they passed at that epoch for the indispensable mark of the divine, and for the sign of the prophetic, calling." "The founders of Christianity lived in a state of poetic ignorance at least as complete as that of Saint Claire and the *tres socii*. They found it quite simple that their master

¹ Canon Row, *ubi supra*, p. 35.

should have interviews with Moses and Elias, that he should command the elements, and heal the sick.”¹

In fact, the character of thaumaturgist was forced upon Jesus from the moment that he appeared as the Messiah. As the successor of Moses he was expected to work miracles. Hence was it that the Pharisees were always taunting him for a *sign* of his divinity (Matt. xii. 38; xvi. 1). Hence, after the expulsion of the money-changers from the Temple, the Jews ask him, “What sign showest thou unto us, seeing that thou dost these things?” (John ii. 18); and (John vi. 30) in the synagogue at Capernaum, the Jews again ask, “What sign showest thou then, that we may see and believe thee? What dost thou work? Our fathers did eat manna in the desert, as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat.” With these traditions before them, the Jews made fresh miracles the condition of their belief. “Jesus had to choose between two courses — either to renounce his mission or become a thaumaturgist.”² It is evident that Jesus himself had no relish for the part assigned him. On the occasion just referred to, he declares, the only bread he has to give is his own presence amongst them. Elsewhere he answers, “An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it but the sign of the prophet Jonas;”—this he is made to refer to the miracle of his resurrection. At Mark viii. 11, his grief is shown at the importunate demand for miracles. “He sighed deeply in his spirit, and said, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? Verily I say unto you, No sign shall be given unto this generation.” The reluctance, in fact, is everywhere apparent. Nevertheless, as M. Renan observes, “Jesus not only believed in miracles, but had not the least idea of a natural order regulated by laws.” If we are to put faith in Mark (xvi. 17, 18), Jesus himself expected his disciples to be gifted with miraculous powers,

¹ *Vie de Jesus*, p. 256.

² *Ibid.*

and to use them in his name. "And these signs shall follow them that believe; in my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover."

What reliance is to be placed on the evidence for any of the miracles ascribed to Jesus or to his disciples has next to be considered. It may, however, be added that "in the preaching and Epistles of the Apostles, a couple of general notices excepted (Acts ii. 22; x. 38, f.), the miracles of Jesus appear to be unknown, and everything is built on his resurrection," &c.¹

¹ Strauss's *Life of Jesus*, transl., i. 239.

LETTER XII.

IN reviewing the documentary evidence of miraculous revelation contained in the Synoptic Gospels, it is always understood that the gospels themselves are to be subjected to the same impartial scrutiny as any other ancient writings would have to undergo. They profess to be truthful narratives of accomplished facts. No one pretends that they were indited by other than human hands. And it is universally admitted that, not one of the three was composed until many years after the death of Christ. When were they written? By whom were they written? These are the two great questions upon which the value of their testimony entirely depends.

The early ecclesiastical writers whose orthodox opinions entitled them to rank as Fathers of the Church, in their efforts to propagate Christianity, based their instructions upon what was known to them of the life and teachings of its Founder. We should naturally suppose that the earliest of these patristic writers would have the best means of knowing what was the most authentic testimony; also that they would closely adhere to such traditions or to such records as were extant in their day, and which they had reason to look upon as genuine.

Unfortunately the earlier we go back the more fragmentary seem to have been the remains from which the fathers could have gleaned information: worse than this,—the more doubtful is the authenticity of the fragments. Every scrap has been jealously and critically analysed, and the literature on the subject is as interminable as it is wearisome.

A page or two of it will more than suffice for our present purposes.

“From the time of Irenæus the New Testament was composed essentially of the same books as we receive at present; and they were regarded with the same reverence as is now shown to them.”¹ Irenæus was bishop from 177 A.D. to 202 A.D., at which date he suffered martyrdom. It is to the writers before this time, therefore, that we must look for the knowledge we are in quest of. For Canon Westcott’s statement amounts to this: the Gospels, *as known to us*, were not canonised till the second half of the second century.

Taken according to their priority, these writers may be referred to in the following order:—Clement of Rome, first pope of that name, whose Epistle to the Corinthians may be assigned to the latter half of the first century of our era; Justin Martyr, born about the end of the first or beginning of the second century, martyred in the reign of Marcus Aurelius about the year 165 A.D.; Hegesippus, a Jew, born in Palestine about the commencement of the second century, and died at Rome about 180 A.D.; Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis in the first half of the second century, suffered martyrdom under Marcus Aurelius 163 A.D. Beyond these four, taken from a long list, it will not be worth our while to investigate.

The most celebrated of the other fathers, whose reputed writings are cited by disputants in support of their respective judgments, are Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch 70 A.D.; Barnabas, the associate of Paul; and Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, born at the end of the first century.

Respecting the “Epistle of Barnabas” and the “Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians,” so much doubt has been cast upon their authorship that they cannot lend much weight to the arguments on either side. As to the writings of Ignatius, here is the verdict of the author of “Super-

¹ *A General Survey of the History of the Canon of the New Testament.* By F. Westcott, D.D.

natural Religion :”—“ What, then, is the position of the so-called Ignatian Epistles? Towards the end of the second century Irenæus makes a very short quotation from a source unnamed, which Eusebius, in the fourth century, finds in an epistle attributed to Ignatius. Origen, in the third century, quotes a very few words, which he ascribes to Ignatius, although without definite reference to any particular epistle; and in the fourth century Eusebius mentions seven epistles ascribed to Ignatius. There is no other evidence.”¹

With reference to the first Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians (no other writing attributed to him can be accepted as genuine²), this is of very doubtful origin. Though formerly admitted to the canon, it has long since become apocryphal. At the beginning of the third century Irenæus and other fathers were ignorant of its date. Nor was the name of Clement mentioned in connection with the epistle till towards the end of the second century. Supposing this first epistle of Clement to be authentic, what evidence is to be gleaned from it as to the existence of our Gospels at the period of its production? Direct reference is made to Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians. This is the only instance in which any of the writings of the New Testament is spoken of by name. There are verbal coincidences with the Epistles both of Paul and of Peter; and there is a resemblance between certain passages in Clement and their parallels in Matthew and Luke—notably in the respective versions of the “Sermon on the Mount.” Still, the order in which the sayings are given is entirely different; and although the sense is generally the same, the language does not agree with that of our Gospels. This verbal difference, say the apologists, is just what might be looked for where the quotations were made from memory. On the other hand, the author of the

¹ Vol. i. p. 265.

² “The first Greek Epistle alone can be confidently pronounced as

genuine.”—Canon Westcott, *ubi supra*.

Epistle frequently designates his quotation as "the words of the Lord Jesus," emphasising his accuracy, as it were, to give greater force to his teaching. Again—and this is of more significance—this Epistle (like those of the other writers which we have to examine) contains many passages which have no parallel whatever in our Gospels, and which must consequently have been repeated from oral tradition, or else from some written sources now quite unknown to us. Either supposition tells with equal force against our Gospels. For had these been to Clement what they are to us, they could neither have been added to nor neglected; nor could any other source of information have had any weight comparable to theirs.

Justin Martyr is an authority demanding a more lengthened examination. He nowhere alludes to our Gospels or their authors by name; but he tells us that his source of information is certain writings, which he calls "Memoirs of the Apostles," and which contained "all things concerning Jesus Christ." These "memoirs," then, were in Justin's time the only written documents recognised as evangelical. "The written records," says Dr. Westcott in allusion to the memoirs, "were now regarded as the sufficient and complete source of knowledge with regard to the facts of the Gospel."¹ "The writings to which he [Justin] appealed were not only complete, but they were publicly attested." That is to say, they were read in the synagogue with the writings of the prophets. What were these memoirs? Were they our Gospels? It might almost be said that the genuineness of the latter hangs by the answer.

As in the Epistle of Clement, many of the quotations from the memoirs differ more in construction than in sense from the corresponding passages in our Gospels. But also, as in the case of Clement, there are numerous sayings and events in the history of Jesus that have no place at all in the Gospels. It has been urged by the defenders of

¹ Page 108.

the identity of the memoirs with the Gospels that, it is highly improbable that writings of such priceless value as Justin proves the memoirs to have been, could have disappeared without a trace, unnoticed even by any writer but him. The plea seems a strong one. But throughout this inquiry one momentous fact must be kept prominently before us. Luke opens his Gospel with the statement: "Many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are surely believed among us." This "surely believed among us" is an unequivocal announcement that not only were there many accounts in circulation in Luke's time, but that in respect of authenticity no preference was assignable. Besides this avowal of Luke's, we have ample testimony to the existence of numerous writings in circulation during the earliest ages of Christianity, of such authoritative character as to be read to the congregation on Sundays. Among them, for example, was the Epistle of Clement. The Gospel according to the Hebrews and that according to Peter are both quoted by Hegeppus, and by Justin Martyr. Nearly all the twelve apostles had Gospels ascribed to them; and there were many others of which something is known. Yet most of these have utterly disappeared, notwithstanding the reverence in which they undoubtedly were held. When, therefore, we are told by the highest authority in our Church, that Justin Martin's statement that the *Memoirs* were composed by Apostles and their followers "could not apply to any other set of books [than the Gospels] of which we have any account,"¹ we can scarcely think the opinion is borne out by the facts.

The discrepancies between Justin's quotations from the "memoirs" and our Gospels are so numerous that I must restrict my observations to the most notorious. Both Matthew and Luke, though irreconcilable in other respects, derive the Davidic descent of Jesus through

¹ Archbishop of York, *ubi supra*, 125.

Joseph. Justin traces the genealogy exclusively through Mary. He also gives details of the birth of Jesus, which are not even hinted at in the Gospels. Describing the baptism, he says: "As Jesus went into the water, a fire also was kindled in the Jordan . . . and at the same time a voice came from heaven . . . 'Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten Thee.'" The account of the agony in the garden is peculiar to Justin. The account given by Justin of the institution of the Sacrament differs materially from the version of the same event in the three Synoptic Gospels. Finally, his narrative of the Crucifixion is unlike that in any of the canonical writings. He describes the mocking of Jesus on the Cross; and refers to words ironically spoken "which are also written in the memoirs of his Apostles." Here are leading events in the life of Jesus, one and all of which are inconsistent with the records of the Gospels. By what ingenious theory can such serious discrepancies be accounted for? Is it for a moment tenable that Justin would minutely relate the particulars of such memorable events as the Birth, the Baptism, the Agony, the Sacrament, and the Death, of Jesus, and in every instance depart from the received and genuine record of such facts, to give fabrications of his own in the place of it? Would he venture actually to substitute a quotation from the Psalms for the voice from heaven itself,—as he does on the occasion of the Baptism? Or, finally, will defective memory or carelessness account for such variation? When we call to mind the history of the Church and reflect what antagonistic doctrines and rancorous controversies have sprung from the interpretation of a single word, nay, from a syllable, we can no longer think it a small matter that the words and acts of the Founder of Christianity should be inaccurately related.

Stress is laid upon the similarity of Justin's version of the teachings of Jesus to the "Sermon on the Mount." But again, as with Clement, there is no similarity what-

ever in the order. To make the Gospels correspond with Justin, passages must be picked from this chapter and from that. Indeed, setting aside these considerations, no number of quotations from the "Sermon on the Mount" would establish the alleged identity; for from the very hour these remarkable sayings were uttered they became the common property of all, and would have been household words with the whole Christian community.

We should remember that Justin was propagating Christianity, and must have appealed to the highest authority known to him. Yet is it to these *memoirs* that he appeals, even for his account of the Crucifixion. So with regard to the Sacrament he professes to give the very words of Jesus; and expressly states that he is quoting from the "Memoirs" composed by the Apostles, "which are called Gospels." How in the face of all this non-conformity can it be maintained that these Gospels are ours? It was stated above that the Gospels as we have them were the same as Irenæus had them. What says Irenæus of the "memoirs?" Why, that they agreed with the Gospel received by the Gnostics. But the Gospel of the Gnostics was heretical in the eyes of Irenæus. How then can our Gospel and the "memoirs" be one? Now, if the "memoirs" be not our Gospels, it is conclusive, I think, that our Gospels were not known to Justin Martyr. Further, if these were not known to him, it was because they were not at that time in existence.

Our acquaintance with Hegesippus is principally through Eusebius, in whose ecclesiastical history is contained nearly all that remains of the great work of the former, called "Memorials of Ecclesiastical Affairs." Hegesippus was much respected by Eusebius for his character, his experience, and his orthodoxy. He travelled from Palestine to Rome, visiting many of the churches on his way, and thus obtained the materials for the early history of Christianity, which he afterwards compiled. So far as we are able to judge from the fragments (a collection of which have

been made), Hegesippus never refers to the books of the New Testament. Hence the name of this important witness does not figure conspicuously in the writings of apologists. Eusebins, however, states that he made use of tradition, and also of the "Gospel according to the Hebrews." The few remains of that Gospel still extant confirm this statement. Hegesippus gives an account of the martyrdom of James; this it is which affords the chief grounds for the supposition that he quoted our Gospel. But, besides some other variations, he puts into the mouth of James the words of Jesus on the Cross: "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." Had he been quoting from Luke, who alone gives this prayer, he could not have so differed from the Gospel narrative. The author of "Supernatural Religion" thus sums up his examination of Hegesippus: "Nothing is more certain than the fact that, in spite of the opportunity for collecting information afforded him by his travels through so many Christian communities, Hegesippus did not find any New Testament canon, or that such a rule of faith did not yet exist in A.D. 160-170."¹

Hitherto neither the writers we have glanced at, nor those set aside on account of their doubtful authenticity, are found once to allude to our Evangelists by name. When we come to Papias, for the first time two of them, Matthew and Mark, are spoken of as the authors of written histories of the life of Jesus. What is preserved of his commentaries—the title of which is "An Exposition of Oracles of the Lord"—is therefore exceptionally interesting and valuable, as the first direct indication of what may be called the literary nucleus of the New Testament. Papias tells us that he combines with his interpretations whatsoever in times past he "learned well from the elders, and remembered well." He carefully collected oral tradition from any one who came in his way, "who had been a follower of the elders." "For I did not think that I could

¹ Vol. i. p. 243.

get so much profit from books as from a living and abiding voice.”¹

What were the oracles, or *logia*, as he calls them, which Papias interpreted? The apologists answer: The original of the Greek Gospel, *i.e.*, our Gospel of Matthew. There are all sorts of difficulties in the way of this. True, Papias says, the *logia* were composed by Matthew. In the first place, *logia* means sayings or discourses, and it is objected that the systematic history of events, contained in our first Gospel, could hardly be spoken of as mere sayings. This point, however, may be waived. Dr. Davidson, in opposition to Schleiermacher, says: “When Papias tells us that Matthew wrote the *logia*, he means a work which contained the sayings and doings of Christ; and as the former predominated, the name took its origin from the principal part.” And, “The word *λόγια* designates a writing comprehending the acts and fate of Jesus; and the fathers of the Church were justified in understanding the testimony of Papias as relating to an entire Gospel.”² But the worst of it is, the original Gospel of Matthew was written in Hebrew, not in Greek. Irenæus says: “Matthew among the Hebrews did not publish a Gospel in writing in their own language.” Eusebius: “For Matthew having first preached to the Hebrews, when he was about to go to other people, delivered to them in their own language the Gospel according to him,” &c. The same author, quoting Origen, says: “The first was written by Matthew, once a publican, afterwards an apostle of Jesus Christ, who delivered it to the Jewish believers, composed in the Hebrew language.” Jerome and other Fathers allude to the same fact as though there were no two opinions about it. Jerome says: “Who afterwards translated it into Greek is uncertain.”³

At first sight one does not see why this should be so

¹ H. E., iii. 39.

² Strauss, *Life of Jesus*. Cf. also Ullman, Credner, Lücke, De Wette.

³ *De Viris Illustribus*.

serious a stumblingblock. Its obtrusiveness soon becomes apparent when we learn—and scholars are here quite agreed—that our Gospel is no translation from the Hebrew, but an original Greek composition.¹ Archbishop Thomson traces this statement concerning Matthew's authorship of a Hebrew Gospel to Papias, and with other orthodox writers impugns the character of Papias as an authority. Eusebius, in one passage, also speaks disparagingly of him; applies the epithet "fabulous" to some of his narrations; and talks of him as a man of "weak understanding." "This judgment," says Dr. Davidson, "rested on the fact that Papias understood certain parables of our Lord too literally, and entertained millenarian opinions to which the historian was strongly opposed."² Besides, Eusebius calls him "a man most eloquent in every respect, and skilled in Scripture." Irenæus also held him in high esteem as a man of learning, and intimate acquaintance with the Scriptures.

A further consideration is noticeable. Papias describing the Oracles says, "every one interpreted them as he was able." Being in Hebrew this was natural enough; but does it not clearly indicate that there must necessarily have been many interpretations? And what ground have we for pretending that our version was one of the many? It has just been observed that our Matthew is not a translation at all. Even if it were, this would not mend matters. It would equally remain that the genuine and original Gospel of Matthew is lost. It is highly probable the first Gospel was based upon the Gospel according to the Hebrews. This seems to have been Jerome's notion, as it was that of other of the early Fathers. There certainly may have been Greek versions of this;—the fact that every

¹ "Holtzman gives a long array of recent writers, who, differing much in their conclusions, are agreed that the Gospel, as it stands, cannot possibly be a translation from a Hebrew original."—*The Synoptic Gos-*

pels. p. 34. The Archbishop of York expresses his agreement with this opinion.

² *Introduction to the Study of the New Testament*, vol. i. p. 367.

one interpreted or translated as he was able would ensure it. But I cannot see what ground Bishop Lightfoot has for saying, this statement of Papias "implies the existence of a *recognised* translation when Papias wrote."¹ The only writings of Matthew that Papias does refer to are the *logia*, written in Hebrew. In any case this much is pretty certain; Matthew was not the author of our Gospel, even if he himself ever translated his Hebrew Gospel. And supposing for a moment that Papias knew of a "recognised" Greek translation, or of any Greek gospel whatsoever, have we not his own word for it, that in his estimation *no books* were worth the "living and abiding voice?"

The account Papias gives of Mark is, if possible, still less encouraging. The presbyter John said: "Mark being the interpreter of Peter, wrote exactly whatever he remembered; but he did not write in order the things which were spoken or done by Christ. For he was neither a hearer nor a follower of the Lord; but afterwards, as I said, followed Peter, who made his discourses suit what was required, without the view of giving a connected digest of the discourses of our Lord."²

Irenæus says: "Matthew wrote a Gospel while Peter and Paul were preaching at Rome and founding a church there. And after their decease, Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, delivered to us in writing the things that had been preached by Peter."

Clement states: "Peter having publicly preached the word at Rome, and having spoken the gospel by the spirit, many present exhorted Mark to write the things which had been spoken, since he had long accompanied Peter, and remembered what he had said; and that when he had composed the Gospel, he delivered it to them who had asked it of him. Which, when Peter knew, he neither forbade nor encouraged."³

¹ *Contemporary Review*, August 1875.

³ *H. E.* vi. 14. *Vide Davidson, ubi supra*, vol. i. p. 535.

² *Euseb. II. E.* iii. 39.

If our second Gospel were really taken down from the words of Peter, this might, in some measure, compensate for the misfortune that Mark himself "was neither a hearer nor a follower of the Lord." Even of this, however, we have but slender assurance. "The narratives (says Dr. Davidson) savour of a later time than Peter's, or Mark's his interpreter; for they have legendary and ideal elements of post-apostolic growth."¹ And "a careful examination of Papias's testimony shows that it does not relate to our present Gospel, nor bring Mark into connection with it as its author." Again, it is natural to suppose that a record of Peter's preachings would contain special mention of all the remarkable events in which Peter himself was a prominent personage. Strange to say, these are the very events which happen to be unnoticed in our version of Mark. The miraculous draught of fishes, the miracle of the tribute money, Peter's walking on the sea, and—most important of all—the words, "And I say unto thee that thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my Church," are all omitted by Mark. It is further to be observed, Mark's reminiscences of the preachings of Peter were no consecutive narrative of the life and sayings of Jesus: he did not record in order that which was said or done by Christ. Our Gospel of Mark, on the contrary, carefully observes the order of events. It is "an arranged work like Matthew's and Luke's."

"If our observations be correct," concludes Dr. Davidson, "the canonical Gospel could not have been the production which Mark wrote from reminiscences of Peter's oral teachings and narratives. The author is unknown. External evidence on the subject is unsatisfactory, and does not prove Mark's authorship of our Gospel, neither does it show that it is an echo, more or less complete, of the apostle Peter's teachings."²

The Gospel according to St. Luke may be summarily disposed of in a few words. The early writers never once

¹ *I.*, p. 537 f.

² *Ubi supra*, p. 254.

mention the name of its author. All we know of Luke is that he was a physician and the companion of Paul. He had never seen Jesus; and the whole of his information was obtained at second-hand. The date of his Gospel is unknown. He either made free use of Matthew, or else drew from the same sources as those used by the author of the first Gospel. With the exception of one doubtful resemblance in Clement's Epistle to the Corinthians, there is no reason to suppose that Clement knew of Luke's Gospel. Judging by the silence of Eusebius, Papias was not acquainted with it. "The Ignatian Epistles show no trace of acquaintance with our Gospel."¹ Under these circumstances, its testimony as regards miracles is of small value. We may therefore pass at once to the fourth Gospel.

The evidence we have to deal with here, is of a kind that appeals almost exclusively to the scholar. There is scarcely any matter of a historical nature upon which to found an argument either one way or the other. Still, such as it is, the evidence of the earliest writers must be the principal basis of our inquiry.

In his Epistle to the Corinthians, Clement makes no allusion to the Gospel of John. "This silence (says Canon Westcott) was not due to ignorance, and still less to any divergence from apostolic doctrine. He was acquainted with the writings of Paul and St. John, and he incorporates their thoughts and words into his Homily in a manner which shows that they had become his own." But as the Homilies are undoubtedly spurious, the silence of Clement in his Epistle may be taken as equivalent to his ignorance.

Justin Martyr is declared by some of the apologists to be a strong witness in favour of the fourth Gospel: although Canon Westcott thinks "his references to St. John are uncertain." Tischendorf points out that Justin designates Christ as the Word—a doctrine notably characteristic of

¹ Dr. Davidson.

the fourth Gospel. In the first place, the doctrine is much older than the Gospel of John; consequently Justin need not have quoted the latter. In the Book of Revelation, for example, Jesus is called the Word of God; and Justin was acquainted with the Book of Revelation; for he makes distinct mention of "John, one of the apostles of Christ," as its author. But the Book of Revelation was written in the year 68 A.D. or 69 A.D., and, as everybody agrees, the fourth Gospel was not written till long after that date.

In the second place, Justin's application of the doctrine of the Logos is quite distinct from that of the John of the fourth Gospel. Justin's doctrine is that, Christ was made flesh "through the power of the Word:" he also makes the Logos originate in time. There is, in short, a vagueness and confusion about Justin's conception, which Dr. Davidson ascribes to Philo, who, nearly a century before Justin, had been full of the subject. The author of the fourth Gospel, on the other hand, "teaches the co-existence of the Logos with the Father from the very beginning."¹

Passing over numerous resemblances, which on careful examination seem much more probably to be derived from apocryphal sources than from the Gospel of John, perhaps the closest parallel between this and Justin's writings is in the discourse of Jesus with Nicodemus. In John iii. 3 it is written, "Except a man be born from above he cannot see the kingdom of God." In his first Apology Justin has, "Unless ye be born again ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." The author of "Supernatural Religion," having commented on the difference in language in the original texts, insists strongly on the much more important difference of signification. The "born from above," upon which, as he points out, "the whole statement in the fourth Gospel turns," is ignored by Justin. With the former, the expression refers to a

¹ Cf. *Supernatural Religion*, vol. ii. p. 278, and Davidson's *Introduction*, vol. ii. p. 342.

spiritual birth—the birth “of the Spirit,” as distinguished from being “born of water;” while Justin speaks of regeneration by baptism; as is manifest from the context, where he dilates upon the “washing with water.” The variance, therefore, is so important both in language and meaning, that the presumption is strongly against Justin’s use of the Gospel of John, and as strongly in favour of his quoting from one of the many so-called heretical Gospels extant in his time.

Canon Westcott disputes this conclusion. He shows that the language of Justin coincides with a passage in the Clementine Homilies, which reads: “Thus swear our Prophet to us, saying, Verily I say unto you, except ye be born again (*ἀναγεννηθῆτε*) with living water into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.” He then makes the following comment: “The whole class of words relative to the new birth (*ἀναγεννᾶσθαι, ἀναγέννησις*) formed a part of the common technical language of Christians, and they occur repeatedly both in Justin and in the Clementines. The phrase in the Gospel (*γεννηθῆναι ἄνωθεν*), on the other hand, is not only peculiar, but ambiguous.”¹ This is as much as to say: If the phrases used in Justin and the Clementines were not synonymous with that of the Gospel, at any rate the signification of the Gospel passage may be taken to comprehend the others. Dr. Westcott quotes Ephraem Syrus as employing words “in a form which combines in equal proportions the peculiarities of St. John and Justin;” and adds, “If these parallels are not sufficient to show that the quotation of Justin is merely a reminiscence of St. John, at least they indicate that it was not derived from any apocryphal Gospel, but rather from some such tradition of our Lord’s words as has preserved peculiar types of our texts. Apocryphal Gospels were, in fact, only unauthorised collections of such traditionary materials; and it should

¹ *On the Canon*, p. 151, 4th ed.

be no matter of surprise if that which was recorded in them survived as a current story or saying." Certainly there would be no matter of surprise in finding that such a passage was contained in any number of "unauthorised collections." The question is, does the mention of it by Justin prove his acquaintance with our fourth Gospel? If the phrase to be "born again" was a part of the common technical language of Christians, the use of it is not worth much as a proof of the existence of any one particular work of that time. There is, in fact, nothing in Justin's writings to denote reference to the Gospel of John. On the contrary, there is a striking absence of some of the most remarkable occurrences narrated in the latter: it is sufficient to mention the omission of the raising of Lazarus,—the greatest and most important of all the miracles.

The apologists generally do not quote Hegesippus in evidence of the fourth Gospel. So far as is known of his remains, he never alludes to any of the canonical writings. "It is certain that had he mentioned our Gospels, and we may say particularly the fourth, the fact would have been recorded by Eusebius. This first historian of the Christian Church, whose *ὑπομνήματα* were composed during the time of the Roman Bishop Eleutherus (A.D. 177-193), presents the suggestive phenomenon of a Christian of learning and extensive observation, even at that late date, who had travelled throughout the Christian communities with a view to ascertaining the state of the Church, who made exclusive use of the Gospel according to the Hebrews, displayed no knowledge of our Gospels, and whose only canon was the Law, the Prophets, and the words of the Lord, which he derived from the Hebrew Gospel, and probably from oral tradition."¹

In the fourth edition of his work on the canon (both in the preface and at p. 229), Dr. Westcott strenuously repudiates this inference from the silence of Eusebius.

¹ *Supernatural Religion*, vol. ii. p. 320.

“Eusebius (he says) states distinctly that he proposes to record any use of *controverted* books—books in which opinion had been once divided—but he makes no such promise as to the use of the *acknowledged* books; as to these he proposes only to notice any details of special interest. It follows as a natural consequence that he has recorded every trace known to him of the use of the Gospel according to the Hebrews as a controverted book in the larger sense, while he does not, and could not according to his plan, record the simple quotation of the canonical Gospels as universally ‘acknowledged.’”¹ What Eusebius states is this: “In the course of my history I shall make it my object to indicate, together with the successions (of the bishops in the great sees), what ecclesiastical writers at the several times have made use of, what books from among the controverted, and *what they have said about the canonical and acknowledged writings,*” &c.² Whether therefore the strictures of Canon Westcott are justified, the words which I have italicised would render more than doubtful.

The same writer accounts for the silence of Hegesippus upon grounds which also seem more plausible than trustworthy. He quotes Eusebius to the effect that Hegesippus “wrote memoirs in five books of the unerring tradition of the apostolic message in a very simple style,” &c., “leaving in these a very full record of his own opinion.” Upon this Canon Westcott observes: “It appears, then, that his object was theological rather than historical.” If we turn to Eusebius, there is surely no warrant for such an affirmation. The first passage cited from the historian, after speaking of the style of Hegesippus, runs as follows: “And clearly shows the time in which he lived.” Certainly the opinions of Hegesippus himself would not do this. In book iv. chap. xxii., from which Canon Westcott concludes his quotation, there is an explicit statement from Eusebius as to the performance

¹ Preface, p. xxxiii.

² *Hist. Eccl.*, bk. iii. c. 3.

of Hegesippus. He tells how Hegesippus made observations on the Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians; how he related that the Church of Corinth "continued in the true faith until Primus was bishop there;" how certain Roman bishops succeeded one another; and how "in every succession and every city the doctrine prevails according to what is declared by the Law and the Prophets and the Lord." Eusebius goes on: "The same author also treats of the beginning of the heresies that rose about this time." Here follows a list of the heretical sects and "some account of their origin;" and then, "The same author also mentions in his *history* the ancient heresies rife among the Jews, as follows, &c. He also speaks of many other matters which we have, in fact, already quoted and introduced in their proper places. He also records certain things from the Gospel of the Hebrews, &c. Other matters he also mentions as taken from the *unwritten tradition* of the Jews, &c." From this account it is evident, no plea can be advanced on the score that his silence upon historical matters was in accordance with a plan which mainly involved the record of his own theological opinions. In truth, the whole goes far to support the comment in "Supernatural Religion," which Canon Westcott holds to be so unjustifiable.

The only one of the "assertions not justified in the least degree by the only evidence brought forward in support of them" may, I admit, be that "Hegesippus made *exclusive* use of the Gospels according to the Hebrews." There is certainly no evidence to prove this; yet as surely does he mention no other writing not heretical: moreover, in alluding to the prevailing, *i.e.*, the orthodox doctrine, he describes it as "according to what is declared by the Law, the Prophets, and the Lord." Even if the words of the Lord here spoken of be supposed to have been contained in the Synoptics, how could the fourth Gospel be unnoticed, being as it is dogmatically christological from beginning to end?

After what has been said of Papias, it would be superfluous to show that he nowhere makes reference to the fourth Gospel. Dr. Westcott says, "In addition to the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Mark, Papias appears to have been acquainted with the Gospel of St. John." The only evidence for this is the preface to a Latin MS. in the Vatican, in which occurs this statement: "The Gospel of St. John was published and given to the Churches by John whilst he was still in the flesh, as Papias, by name Hierapolis, an esteemed disciple of John, relates at the end of his fifth book." Tischendorf advances the same argument; but the author of "Supernatural Religion," in reply to the latter, entirely disposes of this testimony and shows it to be utterly worthless. Canon Westcott allows that "the text of the fragment is evidently corrupt; and it seems to have been made up of fragments imperfectly put together."

Having glanced at the evidence of the four most important witnesses, we may deal in like concise manner with a few others who are comparatively of minor consequence. If the remarks already made concerning Ignatius are correct, he cannot be relied upon as an important witness. Neither in the spurious nor in the genuine Epistles, however, is there any direct reference to the canonical Gospels. The apologists claim certain remote analogies between several of the Epistles, which bear the name of Ignatius, and our first Gospel; and Dr. Westcott speaks of "traces of the influence of John." But his uncertainty respecting the genuineness of this testimony renders it of little value, especially when we are told: "the so-called Ignatius is not an apostolic father, and the productions bearing his name were not prior to the middle of the second century."¹

The Epistles of Barnabas and of Polycarp have both been characterised as doubtful. It is asserted that "the authenticity of Polycarp's Epistle stands quite unshaken."²

¹ Davidson, *ubi supra*, vol. ii. p. 328. ² Westcott, *On the Canon*, note, p. 36.

On the other side, the reasons for doubting it are: Polycarp refers to the martyr-journey of Ignatius, which is held to be fabulous; he also refers to those of the Ignatian Epistles, which are allowed to be spurious. Still, the Epistle of Polycarp is mentioned by Irenæus, who had been his pupil; so that the question of authenticity may fairly be considered as debatable. Like the Ignatian Epistles, Polycarp's Epistle to the Philippians contains passages which have their parallels in the Gospel of Matthew; though in Polycarp the coincidence is much more perfect. The answer with which sceptical writers meet this fact is that, the Sermon on the Mount (which affords the similarity) must have been so well known by tradition that, the resemblance between our Gospels and any other early writing, when quoting the words of Jesus in this discourse, proves nothing more than that these words were the common property of all Christians. As to the supposed acquaintance with the fourth Gospel, it is Luthardt's notion that Polycarp's alleged acquaintance with the first Epistle of John involves acquaintance with the Gospel also. It necessitates, moreover, the gratuitous assumption that the Epistle and the Gospel were both written by the Apostle. At any rate, the letter to the Philippians contains no quotation from the Gospel. "Even if the alleged writer had known it, he could not have looked upon it as the composition of his teacher, John, because he defended by that very Apostle's example an opinion about the paschal meal which was directly opposed to the fourth Gospel."¹

Barnabas is not noticed by the leading orthodox critics in connection with the subject we are discussing.

The Clementine Homilies have already been spoken of as spurious. Their date is unknown, and their doctrine is so widely different from that of the Gospel of John, that although some parallel passages are cited in proof of the authenticity of the latter, we must not exceed our narrow

¹ *Introduct. to the New Testament*, vol. ii. p. 329; see also *Sup. Rel.*, ii. 270.

limits by an investigation which could hardly be profitable. The same plea compels us to leave unnoticed the Pastor of Hermas, Diognetus, Basilides, Marcion, and others. Nor is it of the least avail to inquire whether the fourth Gospel was known to writers so late as the end of the second century. The important conclusions to which we are brought by the evidence here referred to is that, nearly up to that time—up to the time of Irenæus—there is no reliable testimony to show that any Gospel was known to the Fathers as the work of the Apostle John, or that the fourth Gospel, whoever was its author, was in existence during the first century and a half after the Christian era.

Whatever weight can be attached to the fact that several of the patristic writers do make use of language which differs but little either in sense or form from corresponding passages in the canonical Gospels, the opposing fact cannot be overlooked that the numerous apocryphal works known to have existed, and the oral traditions which must necessarily have been in the mouths of almost every Christian, would fully account for these coincidences. Under such circumstances, absolute agreement of language, did it occur, would not authorise the conclusion that any particular one was the original of some other.

The utmost, therefore, that can be urged by the defenders of our Gospels is of a hypothetical and presumptive character; while the arguments of their opponents are backed by well-established truths. The testimony of Papias is as destructive as it is indisputable. Matthew wrote his Gospel in Hebrew; our version is in Greek, and is declared to be no translation. Neither Mark nor Luke ever heard or followed Jesus; and the evidence against the authenticity of the fourth Gospel is so crushing (I have not touched upon the incredible supposition that the “unlettered and ignorant” John should be the author of two works so incongruous as the crude and graceless Apocalypse and the elegant and classical fourth Gospel), that

to disregard it would seem to imply an inordinate affection for the doctrine of John, or perhaps for the integrity of the whole Bible.

If, then, the *prima facie* improbability is so great, and the historical testimony so little worthy of credit, what must be the inevitable inference as to the Christian miracles? ·

LETTER XIII.

THE next and last aspect of the New Testament that we have to contemplate is the relation it bears to the legendary and mythological phases of older religions. For this purpose we must turn back to our inquiries upon the nature and origin of the mythus. The following remarks, which do but reiterate our former conclusions, apply forcibly to the subject in hand. "The popular traditions, being orally transmitted, and not restricted by any document, were open to receive every new addition, and thus grew in the course of long centuries to the form in which we now find them. This is an important and luminous fact, which is very frequently overlooked in the explanation of mythi; for they are regarded as allegories invented by one person at a stroke, with the definite purpose of investing a thought in the form of a narration."¹

We have seen (and the most orthodox champions of the New Testament do not dispute the fact) that oral tradition preceded the written composition of the Gospels. It is so with every history that is not a diary, and must have been so with this. We know, moreover, that the Gospel histories (whatever may be their date) were composed, not on the spot where the recorded events took place, but at Alexandria, Antioch, Rome, and Ephesus. I have endeavoured to show that no one of our Gospels existed in its present form earlier than the middle of the second century. So far as our present argument is concerned, it might be granted that they were written long before this. How

¹ Otfried Müller, *Prolegomena to a Scientific Mythologie*, quoted by Strauss.

long shall we say? A living authority of the highest eminence in the Church, after commenting upon "the mysteries with which the growth of the Gospel is surrounded," remarks: "There will be no danger in accepting as the second factor in the calculation the growth of an oral tradition. The time of the formation of these materials would probably extend from the day of Pentecost to the year 63. During the next ten or twelve years the three Gospels before us were published."¹ This would be towards the close of the first century. Well, let any one reflect what oral tradition, rolling up "like a snowball" for half a century, would effect with any materials in any age. Let him then picture the age in which these particular materials were accumulated; also the temper of the accumulators, exalted by a religious enthusiasm quickened by intense desire to believe everything that kept it aflame.

There is no need to suppose that the reporters were consciously untruthful, or that, generally speaking, they intended to deceive. Many of them, no doubt, were aware that, with the multitude whom they sought to convert, a startling miracle would be more persuasive than a moral doctrine. Still, the preconceived requirements of the Messianic character would inevitably mould tradition into befitting shape; while the extraordinary personal influence which Jesus shed around him tended of itself to inspire his memory with awe.

The nature of the miracles performed by Jesus, no less than the miraculous events of his life, betray adherence to certain well-known patterns. In some cases an actual occurrence may have supplied the foundation. In others again—such as the transfiguration—the alliance of the Messiah with Moses and Elias was but the appropriate form of a recognised ideal.²

The miraculous birth of Christ is the first essential sign

¹ Archbishop Thomson, *The Synoptic Gospels*.

cedent is not wanting. Buddha also was transfigured on Mount Sumeru.

² Though in this case direct pre-

of his divine origin and mission. At once we are reminded that all the great founders of religions came into the world with the sacred stamp of a supernatural birth. Several of the Egyptian gods were born of virgin mothers: Herakles and Polydeukes were begotten by Zeus of women who also bore children to mortal fathers: Guatama Buddha or Sakya Muni, the solitary of the race of Sakya, as the last Buddha was properly named, was born from the side of a virgin.¹ "During the time that Buddha was in his mother's womb her body was transparent, so that she could see him plainly. He sat in a sort of framework or vehicle of immense splendour, which had been used by the gods to bring him down from heaven."² Laou-tzse, the great predecessor of Confucius, born 604 B.C., was miraculously brought forth. "His mother being in a solitary place, suddenly conceived by the simple presence of the vivifying power of heaven and earth, and bore him in her womb for four-and-twenty years."³ The Hindu Kapila, author of the Sankya philosophy, was an incarnation of the deity Vishnu. The Schaka of Thibet was born from the virgin Lhanoghinpral. The apotheosis of Plato, as son of Apollo, was a prevailing legend in Athens long after his death. Even St. Jerome avowed his belief that so divine an intellect as Plato's could only have been the fruit of immaculate conception. Millions to this day believe of Mahomet that "his birth . . . was accompanied by signs and portents announcing a child of wonder. His mother suffered none of the pangs of travail. At the moment of his coming into the world a celestial light illumined the surrounding country, and the new-born child raising his eyes to heaven exclaimed, 'God is great! There is no God but God, and I am his prophet.'"⁴

¹ Lassen, *Ind. Altertums Kunde*,
iii. 370.

³ Stanislas Julien, *Livre des Recompenses*.

² Lillie, *Buddha and Early Buddhism*, p. 72; see also Foucaux, *Thibetan History of Buddha*.

⁴ Washington Irving, *Life of Mahomet*.

The providential preservation of heroes and prophets in childhood is a stereotyped notion of an analogous character. The direct prototype of the supernatural rescue of the infant Jesus is the like occurrence to the prophet Moses; but everywhere a similar story is to be met with. Romulus, when exposed, is suckled by a wolf: Cyrus is nurtured by a bitch: Satavahna is saved by a lioness: German and Slavonic heroes are divinely protected in like fashion.

The Buddhist has his Queen of Heaven, who corresponds closely to the Virgin Mary. In China the goddess Kwan-Yin is the most popular of the deities. "Her 'nativity' and 'assumption' are both celebrated."¹ At Macao she is called *Santa Maria de China*. "The Jesuits in China were appalled at finding in the mythology of that country the counterpart of the 'Virgo Deipara.'"²

Christmas Day is the birthday of Buddha: the obvious meaning of this being that the winter solstice is the birthday of the Sun-god, and marks the dawn of life in the generative powers of nature.

The doctrine of the Logos was at least as ancient as Plato, and the Vaidic Vâch, the parent form of "voice," is the exact equivalent of the "Word." Justin Martyr, apologising for this superior antiquity of the idea, says: "If then we hold some opinions near of kin to the poets and philosophers in greatest repute amongst you, why are we unjustly hated? . . . By declaring the Logos the first-begotten of God, our Master, Jesus Christ, to be born of a virgin without any human mixture, and to be crucified and dead, and to have risen again and ascended into heaven, we say no more in this than what you say of those whom you style the sons of Jove."

The miracles themselves, as already observed, seem sometimes to be adapted to Old Testament conceptions; occasionally they read like mere repetitions of older fables; at other times, they are determined by local and

¹ *Nouveau Journal Asiatique*.

² *Barrow's Travels in China*.

contemporary influences. Of the second order the temptations of Zoroaster and of Buddha both afford striking instances. Buddha "fasts for forty-seven days and nights without taking an atom of food. And now the wicked one (Papiyân) comes to tempt. He is called Mâra in all the other versions. The name appears twice in the 'Lalita Vistara.' Two of the temptations are similar to those of Christ. Mâra offers him universal dominion. . . . The other temptation is addressed to his hunger."¹

The story of the woman at the well is a coincidence nearly as complete. Ananda, a future Buddha, meets a low-caste woman at a well, and asks her for water to drink. The woman, fearing to contaminate a holy Brâhmana, humbly refuses. "I ask not for caste, but for water," says Ananda. Buddha himself then converses with her on the subject of marriage.

Another parable tells of an ascetic who plucks out his eye because the young wife of a merchant extols his personal beauty. "It is impossible," says Mr. Max Müller, who quotes the fable, "to read such parables without being reminded of verses of the Bible, such as (Matt. v. 29), 'And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee.'"²

Speaking of the resemblances between Christianity and Buddhism, the Rev. J. Gilmour of the London Mission, Peking, says: "To enumerate them all would take up too much time and space. It will suffice to speak of a few. The Flood, the teaching of this narrative—the destruction of the wicked, and the escape of men and animals for the sake of one righteous man—agrees quite with Mongol doctrine. . . . The story of Elisha multiplying the widow's oil they say is exactly like their own legends. The parable of the prodigal . . . and of the Pharisee and publican they also welcome as orthodox.

¹ Lillie, *ubi supra*, citing Foucaux. See also Beal's *Romantic History of Buddha*, chaps. xxvii., xxviii.

² *Lectures on the Science of Religion*.

But what delights their hearts most of all is the picture of the good Samaritan, . . . because they recognise in the Samaritan the ideal of their own religion, &c." We learn from the same authority: "The Mongol believes that his future state depends on his actions in this life." "He has a firm belief in purgatory, in a hell of torment, and in a heaven of bliss." "He goes on long, difficult, painful, and expensive pilgrimages, because he is taught that this is meritorious. He makes costly offerings to temples and to the Lama class [the priests], because he believes this has its reward. He feeds the hungry, he clothes the naked, gives to the thirsty, and relieves the oppressed, because these things have their reward, and go into the scale that decides his fate. . . . Evil in all its forms he tries to avoid, because he believes that every sin will weigh against him, and drag him down in the scale of being." ¹

Some of the miracles, such as the exorcism of devils, are common to every age and every country. Demoniacal possession, or what Dr. Tyler calls the "animistic theory of disease," is as prevalent to this day as ever it was. For a single illustration, I may mention the extravagant Burmese custom of thrashing a suffering patient almost to death, under the belief that the demon only suffers from the blows.

Other miracles again mark the imputed sovereignty of Christ, in accordance with conceptions of the kingly office then as afterwards entertained. Of this kind are cures by the royal touch. Within our memory the name "king's evil" was still given to strumous diseases; and up to the time of Queen Anne, the sovereign touched patients afflicted with such complaints. In proof of the existence of this superstition at the commencement of the Christian era, the testimony of Tacitus supplies a remarkable though well-known instance. A blind man is brought to Vespasian, "*ut genas et oculorum orbes dignaretur respergere oris*

¹ *Among the Mongols.* Religious Tract Society.

excremento,"—"that he would deign to besprinkle the eyelids and orbs of the eyes with spittle." A paralytic is also brought up to be touched. "Immediately," says Tacitus, "the paralysed hand recovered its use, and light was restored to the blind man's eyes. They who were present testify to both circumstances, even now when nothing is to be got by lying."¹ These miracles were performed at Alexandria about 70 A.D. They were two only out of many; for during the few months of the emperor's stay there, "many miracles occurred, which showed the favour of Heaven and the special partiality of the gods towards Vespasian." Voltaire remarks: "Of all miraculous cures, the best attested, the most authentic, are those of this blind man, whose sight the Emperor Vespasian restored, and of this paralytic to whom he rendered the use of his limbs."

The earthquake and the darkness on the death of Jesus has its parallel in Virgil's description of the death of Cæsar, when he tells how the Alps trembled and the sun was eclipsed.² Alluding to the remarkable indifference of the most illustrious of the contemporary philosophers to such astounding appeals to their senses, and referring especially to the miraculous events at the crucifixion, Gibbon writes: "But the sages of Greece and Rome turned aside from the awful spectacle, and pursuing the ordinary occupations of life and study, appeared unconscious of any alterations in the moral or physical government of the world. Under the reign of Tiberius, the whole earth, or at least a celebrated province of the Roman empire, was involved in a preternatural darkness of three hours. Even this miraculous event, which ought to have excited the wonder, the curiosity, and the devotion of mankind, passed without notice in an age of science and history. It happened during the lifetime of Seneca and the elder Pliny, who must have experienced the immediate effects or received the earliest intelligence of the prodigy. Each of

¹ *Historiarum*, lib. iv. cap. 81.

² *Georgics*, i. 463.

these philosophers, in a laborious work, has recorded all the great phenomena of nature, earthquakes, meteors, comets, and eclipses, which his indefatigable curiosity could collect. Both the one and the other have omitted to mention the greatest phenomenon to which the mortal eye has been witness since the creation of the globe."¹

That men of science should pursue the ordinary occupations of life, in spite of such a miracle, is no more than our own observation would lead us to expect. That the early Christians should believe and record it with perfect faith, is as little to be wondered at, when we reflect that in the days of Irenæus, or until the end of the second century, they were accustomed to witness the resurrection of the dead as by no means an uncommon event.

To return to Buddhism, the many points of agreement between this religion and Christianity force us to conclude that either one or the other borrowed freely from its duplicate; the exact resemblance in ritualistic observances is alone sufficient to prove the fact. The missionary Huc was astonished to find, in the heart of Thibet, the very rites and usages he had been accustomed to in Rome. "The crozier, the mitre, the cope or *plurial*, which the grand Llamas wear on a journey, or when they perform some ceremony outside the temple, the service (office) with a double choir, psalmody, exorcisms, the censer swinging on five chains, and contrived to open or close at will; benediction by the Llamas, with the right hand extended over the heads of the faithful; the chaplet, sacerdotal celibacy, lenten retirements from the world, the worship of saints, fasts, processions, litanies, holy waters, —these are the points of contact between the Buddhists and ourselves." To this list Mr. Lillie adds "confession, torture, relic-worship, the use of flowers and lights and images before shrines and altars, the sign of the cross, the Trinity in unity, the worship of the Queen of Heaven, the use of religious books in a tongue unknown to the

¹ *Roman Empire*, chap. xv.

bulk of the worshippers, the aureole or nimbus, the crown of glory of saints and Buddhas, wings to angels, penance, flagellations, the flabellum or fan, popes, cardinals, bishops, abbots, presbyters, deacons, the various architectural details of the Christian temple," &c.¹ Where an opinion has to be formed upon relative antiquity, ritualism is sometimes found to have a significant bearing. Thus Mr. Lillie observes: "Some details, such as lights before altars, are sensible enough in the night-worship of Buddhism, but quite unmeaning in the day-worship of the Roman Catholics."

An impartial comparison between the moral doctrines of Christianity and those of the Brahmans and the Buddhists does not result very favourably to the first;—certainly not to such a degree as to entitle Christianity alone to the claims of a sacred or supernatural origin. Often the precepts of the latter seem (like its miracles) to be the echo of ancient wisdom; and although the utterance of such noble thoughts may, with the license of hyperbole, be called inspiration, fortunately good and great men have not been so rare as to make their presence even in this wicked world a miracle.

The purity of heart inculcated by Jesus is, as every one must feel, the only sure foundation of morality. But nearly 600 years before Jesus had warned us "that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart;" Laou-tzse had said: "To look upon a beautiful woman and form the desire to possess her in secret;—we become guilty from the moment we have formed this desire." Also, "good and evil actions are born in the heart of man."² Buddha taught men to "Obey the eternal law of the heavens. Who keeps this law lives happily in this world and the

¹ On the monachism of the Buddhists, see also *Language, Literature, and Religion of Nepal and Tibet*, by B. H. Hodgson.

² *Livres des Recompenses*, p. 323.

next.”¹ In the Sutrâs or discourses of Buddha, men are told: “By love alone can we conquer wrath. By good alone can we conquer evil. The whole world dreads violence. All men tremble in the presence of death. Do to others that which ye would have them do to you.² Kill not, cause no death.” In another place (the Khuddaka Patha) it is written: “Not the eating of flesh defiles a man, but evil thoughts, murders, thefts, lies, fraud, the study of worthless writings, adultery.” The ten commandments of Buddha are at least on a par with those of Moses. 1. Not to kill. 2. Not to steal. 3. Not to commit adultery. 4. Not to lie. 5. Not to get intoxicated. 6. To abstain from unseasonable meals. 7. To abstain from public spectacles. 8. To abstain from expensive dresses. 9. Not to have a large bed. 10. Not to receive silver or gold.”³ “That moral code,” says Professor Max Müller, “taken by itself, is one of the most perfect the world has ever known. . . . Besides the five great commandments not to kill, not to steal, not to commit adultery, not to lie, not to get drunk, every shade of vice, hypocrisy, anger, pride, suspicion, greediness, gossiping, cruelty to animals, is guarded against by special precepts. Among the virtues recommended, we find not only reverence of parents, care for children, submission to authority, gratitude, moderation in time of prosperity, submission in time of trial, equanimity at all times, but virtues unknown in any heathen system of morality, such as the duty of forgiving insults and not rewarding evil with evil.”⁴ “I do not hesitate to add,” says M. Barthélemy Saint-Hilaire, “that with the single

¹ “The most prominent doctrine in their religion is *the immortality of the soul*.”—*Rev. James Gilmour, Among the Mongols*.

² This cardinal precept was also the golden rule of the Chinese sage Kung-fu-Tsze or Confucius, who died 478 B.C. “Thus we read, Tsze-Kung said, ‘. . . What I do not wish men to do to me, I also wish not to do to men.’” . . . The Brah-

mans, too, had a distant perception of the same truth, which is expressed, for instance, in the Hitopadesa in the following words: “Good people show mercy unto all beings, considering how like they are to themselves.”—*Max Müller, Chips*, i. 313.¹

³ Burnouf, *Lotus de la' Bonne Loi*.

⁴ *Chips*, i. 222.

exception of Christ, there is not, among the founders of religion, one figure more pure or more touching than that of Buddha. His life is spotless. His constant heroism equals his conviction; and if the theory of his foreknowledge is false, the example of his life is irreproachable. He is the perfect model of all the virtues that he preaches; his renunciation of self, his charity, his immutable gentleness, never belie themselves for an instant. At twenty-nine years of age he abandons the court of the king, his father, to become a saint and a mendicant. He silently prepares his doctrine by six years of retreat and meditation. For more than half a century he propagates it by the sole power of speech and persuasion; and when he dies in the arms of his disciples, it is with the serenity of a sage who has practised goodness all his life, and who is assured of having found the truth."¹

The glad tidings which the prophet of Nazareth published to the world were the fundamental equality and fraternity of humankind. "We must needs die, and are as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again; neither doth God respect any person." So had it been spoken in the days of the prophet Samuel. In the language of Jesus, "Many that are first shall be last, and the last first," and "In my Father's house are many mansions." Before that Father, there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile or between slave and free. The Law and the Prophets are henceforth subordinate to the love of God and of one's Neighbour. Ritualism is only fit for the Pharisee. Right believing means nothing if it lead not to right-doing; and the two roots of right-doing are purity of heart and brotherly affection. This too was the teaching of heathen Buddha. His first aim was to destroy the afflictive distinction of caste: "My doctrine is like the sky. There is room for all without exception—men, women, boys, girls, poor and rich." "My law is a law of grace for all." The heartless ceremonials and the chill-

¹ *Le Boudha et sa Religion*, p. v.

ing philosophy of Brahmanism were pharisaical mockeries of the spiritual life; the highest principles of virtue were the only means for its attainment. It was the poor and the sinful who needed comfort and guidance; and as Jesus was reviled for his constant ministrations to these, so "Buddha was reproached for admitting amongst his disciples men cast out by all for their crimes and for their misery."¹

M. Barthélemy Saint-Hilaire, Mr. Max Müller, Csoma de Körös, and most writers on Buddhism, declare that this religion (whose votaries amount to something like 450,000,000, and are far more numerous than all the Christians in the world together) is without a God; and that Buddha himself was "certainly an atheist." Mr. Lillie, on the other hand, shows good reason for thinking otherwise, and declares: "A nine years' study of Buddhism" has convinced him that the agnostic (*i.e.*, the atheistic) school of Buddhism is the later development.

There is no doubt as to the worship of Adi-Buddha—the first of all the Buddhas, who "was before all, and is not created, but is the creator."² Adi-Buddha is distinctly adored as "without beginning;" as "the stainless, revealed in the form of flame or light when in the beginning all was void and the five elements were not;" as "the creator of the Buddhas, . . . the creator of the Prajna and of the world, himself unmade." Professor Beal, Mr. Rhys Davis, and others, will have it that Adi-Buddha is a modern addition. Mr. Lillie appeals to the rock and pillar edicts of Asoka (260–251 B.C.) Certainly, the ideas of God and also of a future life, as expressed upon these ancient monuments, would appear to refute the charge of atheism.

A good deal depends on the meaning originally attached by Sakya Muni himself to the term Nirvâna. Does it mean absorption into the divine source of spiritual being,

¹ *Introduction à l'Histoire du Bouddhisme Indien*, vol. i. p. 205, by E. Burnouf.

² B. H. Hodgson, *ubi supra*.

or does it mean annihilation? If the *summum bonum* of the Supreme Buddha himself is, like that of all conscious existence, cessation of being, then Nirvâna does not mean deliverance simply, it means nihilism; and belief in a God who ultimately achieves annihilation in his own person is almost tantamount to atheism. The soul-theory of the Buddhist, and of the Brahman too, is rooted in metempsychosis. The highest good for both is to escape, or rather to get to an end of, an interminable series of transmutations. For those who firmly believe that for thousands of years they will have to pass through stages of inferior life—that from being a tiger they may become a pig, and from a pig may pass into a scorpion or a spider—absorption into a higher state, even at the cost of self-consciousness, must seem a consummation devoutly to be wished. If THAT into which they are absorbed also tends to cessation, this in no wise diminishes the transcendent advantage of Nirvâna.

This, however, is not material to our inquiry. What we have to ask is: How much does Christianity owe to Buddhism? In framing a reply to the question, it is necessary to take into account the religious state of the populations among which the new creed was first disseminated. The comprehensive term Polytheism may here be indiscriminately applied. But throughout the West—certainly in Asia Minor, and as far as Egypt, the creeds of the pagan world were strongly impregnated with Orientalism.¹ Enthusiasts have striven to show that, the channels of communication between the Eastern and Western worlds had not been sufficiently open, before the Christian epoch, to warrant the charge of derivation from the former. Such an argument cannot for a moment be sustained. If

¹ "Orientalism had made considerable progress towards the West before the appearance of Christianity. While the popular Pharisaism of the Jews had embodied some of the moral practical tenets of Zoroas-

trianism, the doctrines of the remoter East had found a welcome reception with the Essene."—*Milman's History of Christianity*, book ii. chap. v.

we hesitate to accept the testimony of the rock edicts of Asoka, which record the conversion, by that king's missionaries, of Greece and Egypt, 250 B.C., the conquests of Alexander, which extended from the Sutlej to the Nile, must inevitably have brought to the city he founded a plentiful admixture of Oriental doctrines. Nor must it be forgotten that extreme flexibility of belief was an inherent feature of paganism. Unlike the nearly allied Christian brotherhoods, and religionists of modern nations, the heathens of the old world were always more anxious to detect resemblances than to quarrel over trivial distinctions. They were singularly ready to admit to their own pantheons every alien deity with whom accidental contact made them acquainted. This toleration, which proceeded from genuine superstition on the part of the masses, was fostered afterwards for political ends. When Christianity was introduced, nearly the whole civilised world was under the dominion of the Romans. And to quote the familiar words of Gibbon: "The various modes of worship which prevailed in the Roman world were all considered by the people as equally true, by the philosopher as equally false, and by the magistrate as equally useful. And thus toleration produced not only mutual indulgence, but even religious concord."¹

Of all places in the world, Alexandria was best adapted to the reception of the new creed. Greeks, Romans, Syrians, Egyptians, and Jews, formed its native population; while its advantageous locality made it the emporium alike for East and West. Here the religions of India, Persia, Egypt, and Greece found a common home; and out of the ashes of these pagan creeds, Christianity rose like a glowing phoenix. Here a small body of learned and pious men, chiefly Hebrews, devoted themselves to theological and metaphysical studies. About the middle of the second century before the Christian era, certain Alexandrian Jews were deeply absorbed in the mystic philosophy of Plato.

¹ Chap. ii.

The threefold conception of the First Cause, under which the Logos or "Divine Reason" is included, furnished the essential elements of the Christian Trinity, and of the manifestation of the Godhead in the promised Messiah. Embued with Zoroastrian dualism, and belief in the malignity of matter which characterised both Brahmanism and Buddhism, it was incumbent upon the principles of these Judæo-Platonists, no less than accordant to prophecy, that the Second Person of the Trinity—now identified with the Messiah—should be born into the world without taint; the more fastidious indeed ventured to think even the womb of a virgin a questionable situation for the God of the universe.

While the idea of an emanation of the Deity was thus rife among speculatists, the fraternities of the Essenians and the Therapeutæ were preaching and practising the doctrines and rites which for the most part were gradually embodied in an elaborate system by the majority who first constituted the orthodox church. These doctrines, and more especially the rites, were distinctly derived from the East. "The Therapeutic or contemplative monks of Egypt, described by Philo, whom Eusebius by an anachronism confounds with the early Christians, appear to have sprung from a union of the Alexandrian Judaism with the precepts and modes of life of the Buddhist devotees."¹ The vital tenet of these sects was the defiling contact of matter with spirit. Hence, as with the Buddhists, ecstatic contemplation of the Deity was (mainly with the Essenes and entirely with the Therapeuts) the first and last object of their lives. With the Gnostics the resemblance was, in this one respect, perhaps still closer. The Deity was contemplated and adored as the Unspeakable, the Nameless, the self-existing Pleroma or fulness of the Godhead. From this Pleroma, which comprehended the universe, all spiritual being emanated, and into it man was to be absorbed and mingle again into one indissoluble

¹ Mansel's *Gnostic Heresies*, p. 31.

unity. Redemption from the polluting influence of matter was the highest conceivable good.

The ceremonies of the law were entirely disregarded by the Essenes, nor did they even attend the great national festivals. Like the Buddhists, they abhorred the shedding of blood, and consequently abstained from and deprecated the use of sacrifice. But while they despised the outward ceremonies then prevalent, they inculcated with warmth the religion of the heart. The love of God and the love of man were the foundations of the Essenian faith. Seeking to withdraw entirely from the contamination of the world, they adopted the monasticism of the Buddhist ascetics in the fulness of its austerity. They were averse from marriage, and as a rule observed inviolable celibacy. The angelic and demoniac doctrines of the Zendavesta were prominent features of their belief; and it was a regular practice of the Essenes to cast out devils and heal the sick by the imposition of hands.

In Simon Magus, who is but slightly spoken of in the Acts (viii. 9), an example is presented of the spiritualist and mystic of the day. Simon, as it is there written, was one "to whom all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God." He professed to be an emanation of the Deity, and assumed the title of the "Word of God," "the Paraclete," and of "God" himself. It must not be supposed from the contemptuous mention of him in the Acts, as a rival miracle-worker, that Simon was a mere impostor or agent of the devil. "The avowed object of Simon," says Dean Milman, "was to destroy the authority of the evil spirits, and emancipate mankind from their control."¹ The petulance of Peter in abusively refusing Simon's offer to become a convert, seems scarcely justified by the answer of Simon, "Pray ye to the Lord for me," &c. The assumption of divine authority evidently provoked the jealousy of Peter. Yet Simon was not alone in his pre-

¹ *Hist. of Christianity*, Bk. ii. chap. v.

tensions ; Menander, also a Judæo-Platonist and mystic of the same school, invested himself with sacred attributes ; and doubtless many others did the same.

But of all men to whose agency we must look for the immediate antecedent of Christianity, John the Baptist, as the Gospels assure us, stands alone. It was John who in every sense prepared the way for Christ. It is probable, indeed, that John indirectly prompted Jesus himself, as he directly prompted the believing masses, with the insinuation of the divine character which Jesus ultimately accepted at the hands of his followers. And John the Baptist was an Essenian. In his dress, in his food, in his solitary habits, in his use of baptism, in his mysticism, he was an Essenian. Thus it was that Christianity was an outgrowth of Essenism. And allowance being made for the Pythagorean, Platonic, and Hebrew elements, the nearest of kin to Essenism was the religion of Buddha.

Such a conclusion may not accord with notions that have been long and fondly cherished ; but if we picture to ourselves the peculiar character of the religious ferment going on at that precise period—originating, as one may suppose, in the remarkable conflux of speculative opinion brought about by conditions such as Alexandria alone could have offered ;—if we consider how the presence of an extraordinary man like Jesus would be sure to operate in such a conjuncture, we may be inclined to regard the net result as the natural evolution of a great intellectual movement, to which the pressure of outward circumstances gradually gave a definite form.

It is no part of my office to dwell upon the character of Jesus, or upon the consequences to the world of the religion which has taken his name. I have simply had to examine the claims put forth in behalf of that religion to a superhuman or miraculous origin. In closing the inquiry, I may be permitted to observe that, until our mental vision has been trained to penetrate the glamour of divinity, we shall never discern the grandeur of the

man whose life has elevated, and whose death has given hope to so many generations. We cannot duly venerate, or sympathise with Jesus, until we recognise his defects as well as his greatness, and apprehend in both the stamp of his intense humanity.

Second Series.

RATIONAL THEOLOGY.

“ Nil ideo quoniam natumst in corpore ut uti
Possemus, sed quod natumst id procreat usum.”

—LUCRETIUS, lib. iv.

“ Organische Bildungsgesetze können nicht zweckmässig wirken, wenn nicht die Materie zu Anfang zweckmässig geschaffen wurde ; also sind sie mit der mechanischen Natursicht unverträglich.”—DU BOIS-REYMOND.

LETTER I.

INDEPENDENTLY of Revelation, there are, as Kant tells us, three, and only three, methods of proving the existence of God: the Ontological proof, the Physico-theological, and the Cosmological. The ontological proof rests on immediate intuition. The physico-theological is inferred from the order and unity as observed in the world. The cosmological depends upon a mental obligation to suppose a First or Efficient Cause "as a basis for the empirical regress." In the words of Kant, it assumes "that everything which is *contingent* has a cause, which, if itself contingent, must also have a cause. And so on, till the series of subordinate causes must end with an absolutely necessary cause, without which it would not be complete."¹ The term "contingent" here signifies the whole of the phenomenal universe, hence "cosmological." The "necessary" cause, as contradistinguished from the contingent, means God.

The first and third of these arguments are more especially concerned with speculative notions which transcend all possible experience. These two will be examined in the third series of letters devoted to metaphysical theology. The second, familiarly known as the Design Argument, forms the subject of the present series.

In the absence of authoritative teaching, either human or divine, the inference that the adaptation everywhere to be met with in Nature is the work of a supreme Artificer, has to most people all the potency of an intuitive perception. But although this conviction is the product of

¹ *Critique of Pure Reason*, Book ii., chap. iii.

direct experience, the argument is distinctly rational, and is therefore subject at any given time to the existing state of knowledge. Every educated person nowadays is aware that the old guise of the doctrine has latterly undergone a change, and that Evolution is supposed by many to supersede the necessity of an intelligent Creator. There is, as we shall have occasion to notice, very little that is absolutely new in the modern doctrine of Evolution. Three objections have, from the earliest days of philosophy, been opposed to Theism:—the Metaphysical, the Moral, and the Logical. The metaphysical affects the question of an *efficient* cause. The moral difficulty lies in the existence of *evil*. The logical objection arises from the imperfect nature of the inference as drawn from instances of doubtful analogy. This last is now held to be considerably strengthened by discoveries of modern science which go far to establish the general theory of Evolution. The theory itself, however, dates at least as far back as Demokritos. In the atomism of Demokritos we have the starting-point of Materialism. “*Out of nothing arises nothing; nothing that is can be destroyed. All change is only combination and separation of atoms.*”¹ The indestructibility of matter, and the persistence of force—the two cardinal doctrines of physics—are here as precisely formulated as they could be now.

To begin with the question of *analogy*: the common notion about the Design Argument, as entertained by the majority of those who accept it, amounts simply to this: the resemblance between natural arrangements and human contrivances is so close that it could only be due to the same cause, viz., intelligence.

In making this inference, an assumption is implied though not expressed. It is, that like effects are due to like causes; or that the course of nature is uniform. In every induction, in all our reasoning from the known to

¹ Lange, *History of Materialism*, vol. i.

the unknown, this is taken for granted. Now, if we throw the above inference into the form of a syllogism, which we can do by making this assumption the major premiss, it will stand thus :

Like effects are due to like causes ;
 Human contrivances and natural adaptations are alike ;
 Therefore both are due to like causes.

The reasoning here, as reasoning, is without fault. But though formally correct, is it so in matter ?

We are perfectly justified in concluding what we know by observation to be true of certain things, is also true of all similar things, although they be not within the sphere of observation. This is the essential principle of legitimate induction. The question then which we have to answer is: Are human contrivances and natural adaptations similar? They do not belong to the same class of phenomena, but they do resemble each other in one point—in one single point, viz., in the subserviency of means to an end. If it could be proved that this point of resemblance cannot be due to any cause save intelligence, we should then have a complete induction. This cannot be proved. We have therefore at the utmost an argument from analogy only. I say *only*, for it is manifest that the impossibility of proving or testing the resemblance greatly impairs the strength of the inference. The most that can be urged in this case is, that the similarity between human contrivances and natural adjustments—in the fact of both conspiring to ends—renders it more probable that the natural should also resemble the human in being designed, than if the former bore no resemblance to anything connected with design.¹

Such inconclusiveness is inherent to all analogical reasoning. Besides this, it must be borne in mind that analogy itself may be weak or strong according as the points of agreement or the points of difference predo-

¹ Mill's *Logic*, vol. ii. ch. xx., and *Essay on Theism*.

minate. "Analogy," says Laplace, "is based on the probability that things which resemble one another have similar causes (*causes du même genre*) and produce similar effects."¹ In considering the vital question, whether natural and human adjustment are of doubtful analogy or not, we must ask ourselves: What is the probability that they are products of similar causes? Here at once we bring to light a flagrant weakness in the assumed analogy. We may compare two kinds of adjustments, but how can we compare these two kinds of causes? We are not permitted to assume the nature of that unknown cause which we are setting ourselves to prove. We are not supposed to know anything at all about it before the inference is made. We reason thus: As human contrivances are to human intelligence, so are natural adaptations to divine intelligence. But this begs the whole question. We may call the fourth term *x*, or use any other symbol which will stand for the unknown; but we must not forget that the fourth term is unknown. We must not forget that our argument is strictly *a posteriori*, and that "it is impossible for you to know anything of the cause but what you have antecedently, not inferred, but discovered to the full in the effect."² The probability, then, here spoken of must be determined by our estimate of other possible causes; and whatever strength there may be in these old-fashioned *prima facie* objections, it is immeasurably increased by the evolution theory; which, from the realistic point of view, has all the weight of a positive argument.

To appreciate the force of these stereotyped difficulties as put by Hume, and since by John Mill and countless others, let us turn to the position of Paley. "There cannot be design without a designer; contrivance without a contriver; order without choice; arrangement without anything capable of arranging; subserviency and relation to a purpose without that which could intend a purpose;

¹ *Essais Philosophique sur les Probabilités.*

² Hume, *Of a Providence and Future State.*

means suitable to an end and executing their office in accomplishing that end without the end having been contemplated or the means accommodated to it. Arrangement, disposition of parts, subserviency of means to an end, relation of instruments to a use, *imply the presence of intelligence and mind.*" He takes Voltaire's illustration of the watch; triumphantly proves that "its mechanism being observed," the inference follows "that the watch must have had a maker;" and then proceeds to show "that every indication of contrivance, every manifestation of design which existed in the watch exists in the works of nature."

It would be superfluous to dwell on the idle tautology of asserting that design proves a designer, &c. We might as well say, a son proves a father. But in other parts of the passage, Paley postulates *the fact* on which the whole design argument depends. If we again make use of technical forms, his proposition is that—

*All adaptation proves design ;
The works of Nature evince adaptation ;
Therefore the works of Nature prove design.*

Is it not transparent that the major premiss naïvely assumes that which Paley's well-selected instances are intended to establish ?

The illustration of the watch, which at first sight seems so forcible, serves to expose the radical fallacy of the teleological argument. If a rational being found a watch in a desert place, the effect upon his mind would entirely depend upon the state of his previous knowledge. If he were already familiar with the handiwork of civilised man, he would know the watch to be a contrivance for some purpose or other, and therefore made by a contriver; even though he had never seen a watch before. But he could only arrive at this conclusion from what he *already* knew of the cause of analogous objects. A savage who had no such knowledge could not, and (as travellers are well aware) does not, make this inference. If he heard it tick,

he would think the watch alive; if it stopped, he might think it dead or asleep; but if his own complicated frame leads him not to infer design (which it certainly does not), still less will the watch do so. With respect to the arrangements in the order of Nature, we are just as ignorant of their ultimate cause as the savage is of the cause of the watch. But we are more illogical, and even more anthropomorphical, than the savage, in ascribing these adjustments to a cause of which we know absolutely nothing.

Further examination will convince us that in place of the syllogism into which Paley's reasoning is cast we are compelled to substitute the following:—

Some kind of adaptation proves design;
 Some (other) kind is evinced in the order of Nature;
 Therefore in the order of Nature we have evidence of design.

Unfortunately this is not an argument at all. It is what logicians call a case of undistributed middle term, from which no conclusion whatever can be drawn. As Coleridge observed, "Neither the products nor the producents are *ejusdem generis*, consequently not subjects of analogy. . . . The proof proceeds on analogy questionable in both its factors."¹

To escape this difficulty, some thinkers, while admitting the objection to restricting the theological doctrine of final causes—the doctrine of designed ends—to perceptible adjustments, maintain that we have even stronger evidence of intelligence in "the vast scheme of universal order and harmony of design which pervades and connects the whole."² Discoverable adaptations are comparatively limited: sometimes the presumable final cause has aborted. Innumerable things exist "by which no visible end or purpose is answered." "For what *purpose* is life itself conferred, or to what *end* does the material universe

¹ *Aids to Reflection*.

² Powell's *Unity of Worlds*, Essay i. sec. v.

altogether exist?" Still, the writer I am citing holds that "order implies what by analogy we call *intelligence*; subserviency to an observed end implies *intelligence foreseeing*, which by analogy we call *design*."

A more recent author¹ takes the same line of argument. He tells us we must not limit our conception of final causes to the few particular ends which we are able to discern. Order and arrangement obtain, where no use or special purpose is discoverable. The true conception of final causes includes the principles of universal harmony, and dependent connection, no less than that of special adaptation. For if we regard all things whatever as "systematic unities, the parts of which are definitely related to one another and co-ordinated to a common issue," then, analytically considered, each part is adapted to its whole, and, synthetically considered, each whole is adapted to the kosmos. In this wider sense, adaptation is quite as conspicuous in the field of astronomy or of chemistry as in that of physiology.

Dr. Flint, moreover, escapes the questionable analogy in one of the terms of the equation by repudiating the equation itself. "When we infer from an examination of their construction that the eye and the ear have been designed by an intelligent being, we are no more dependent on our knowledge that a watch or a telescope has been designed by an intelligent being, than we are dependent on our knowledge of the eye and ear being the products of intelligence when we infer that the watch and the telescope are the products of intelligence. There is an inference in both cases, and an inference of precisely the same nature in both cases. It is as direct and independent when the transition is to God from his works as when to our fellow-men from their works. . . . We deny, then, that there is any truth in the statement that the design argument rests on the analogy between the works of nature and the products of art. It rests *directly* on the character

¹ Professor Flint, *Theism*.

of the works of nature as displaying order and adjustment." ¹

No opinion could more appositely show how, even practised reasoners are disabled for an impartial judgment on this subject by being imbued, as most of us are, from earliest infancy with belief in God as an axiom of faith. We first come to a consideration of the matter long after it has been to us an acknowledged truth, and after we have lost the power to accept as final the inaudible response obtainable from Nature. Our conclusion is foregone; the idea of God is already stamped on our minds; and we make not the inference, as Dr. Flint thinks, from his works to God, but from God to the works.

Dr. M'Cosh, a more cautious thinker, adopts Sir W. Hamilton's views. "It is never," says he, "to be forgotten, that, apart from a reflex contemplation of the human mind, it is impossible to rise to a conception of a living and intelligent God." ² The idea of God must first be "suggested" by consciousness and intelligence; and "it is by a spontaneous process that the mind is led to believe in the existence of God," &c. ³ Butler also prefaces his "Analogy" by telling us, he takes "for proved that there is an intelligent author of nature," &c. But if, like Dr. Flint, we base our reasoning solely upon experience, then we must boldly face Laplace's criterion of analogy—the question of *causes du même genre*. We must estimate all causes that could possibly account for order and adjustment; since, "for aught we can know *a priori*, matter may contain the source or spring of order originally within itself, as well as mind does; and there is no more difficulty in conceiving that the several elements from an internal and unknown cause may fall into the most exquisite arrangement, than to conceive that their ideas in the great, universal mind, from a like internal and unknown cause, fall into that arrangement." Why should mind

¹ *Ubi supra*, Lect. v.

² *The Method of the Divine Government*, p. 7.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 519.

alone account for the adaptation of means to an end? "Thought," replies Philo, "design, intelligence, such as we discover in men and other animals, is no more than one of the springs and principles of the universe, as well as heat or cold, attraction or repulsion, and a hundred others, which fall under daily observation. It is an active cause, by which some particular parts of Nature, we find, produce alterations on other parts. But can a conclusion, with any propriety, be transferred from parts to the whole? . . . Why select so minute, so weak, so bounded a principle as the reason and design of animals is found to be upon this planet? What peculiar privilege has this little agitation of the brain which we call *thought*, that we must thus make it the model of the universe?"¹

In another place, which shows how fully alive Hume was to the persistence of force, Philo asks: "Why may not motion have been propagated by impulse through all eternity, and the same stock, or nearly the same, be still upheld in the universe? *As much as is lost by composition of motion, as much is gained by its resolution.*" And in connection with this passage, Philo makes a remark which, but for the order of events, he might almost have borrowed from Mr. Spencer's "First Principles." "Wherever matter is so poised, arranged, and adjusted as to continue in perpetual motion, and yet preserve a constancy in the forms, its situation must of necessity have all the same appearance of art and contrivance which we observe at present. All the parts of each form must have a relation to each other and to the whole, and the whole itself must have a relation to the other parts of the universe, to the element in which the form subsists, to the materials with which it repairs its waste and decay, and to every other form which is hostile or friendly. A defect in any of these particulars destroys the form, and the matter of which it is composed is again set loose, and is thrown into irregular motions and fermentations, till it unites itself to

¹ Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, part ii.

some other regular form, . . . till finite though innumerable revolutions produce at last some forms whose parts and organs are so adjusted as to support the forms amidst a continued succession of matter. . . . The original force still remaining in activity gives a perpetual restlessness to matter. . . . Some new order or economy must be tried, and so on without intermission, till at last some order which can support and maintain itself is fallen upon."

Between this hypothesis and the first principles of evolution, as now taught, there is not much to choose. Given "chaos and disorder," given matter in a state of homogeneous diffusion, heterogeneity must follow; evolution is a self-evident consequence. All finite aggregates of matter, however great, must have "parts related to each other and to the whole." These different parts, inner and outer, &c., "stand differently related to surrounding agencies."¹ Hence the original force still remaining in activity, action and reaction being equal, "a perpetual restlessness" is set up. In the language of Mr. Spencer, "the condition of homogeneity is a condition of unstable equilibrium." Integration and differentiation must ensue. "Every motion being motion under resistance, is continually suffering deductions; and these increasing deductions finally result in the cessation of motion."² That is to say, all change tends to equilibrium. But before stable equilibrium is reached, "when the aggregate has a movement of its parts with respect to each other which encounters but little resistance, there is apt to be established an *equilibrium mobile*." Matter is so poised and adjusted as to preserve a constancy of form in spite of this internal moving equilibrium. And this more or less permanent form must, in virtue of the adjustment it has undergone, "have all the same appearance of art and contrivance which we observe at present."

"It is vain, therefore, to insist upon the uses of the

¹ H. Spencer, *First Principles*.

² *Ibid.*

parts in animals or vegetables, and their curious adjustment to each other. I would fain know how an animal could subsist unless its parts were so adjusted." ¹ A defect in any of the particular relations "destroys the form;" only where those relations are preserved is life possible.

So far is this doctrine from being new, it is essentially that of Empedokles. "What Darwin, relying upon a wide extent of positive knowledge, has achieved for our generation, Empedoklès offered to the thinkers of antiquity the simple and penetrating thought that adaptations preponderate in Nature just because it is their nature to perpetuate themselves, while what fails of adaptation has long since perished." ² Whatever difference there may be between the old and new, both assert "the purely mechanical attainment of adaptations through the *infinitely repeated play of production and annihilation*, in which finally that alone survives which bears the guarantee of persistence in its relatively fortuitous constitution." Epikuros, who did not believe with Demokritos in the animation of matter, ascribed the existence of the countless worlds, living beings and their souls, and the gods themselves, to the mere casual concourse of atoms. ³ Lucretius adopts with extravagant praise the system of Epikuros. He repudiates intelligence as the beginning of things. Atoms "are driven and tormented by blows during infinite time past; after trying motions of every kind, at length they fall into arrangements such as those out of which this our sum of things has been formed," &c. ⁴ The "Omnia mutantur, nihil interit," of Ovid is to the same effect.

"Ante mare et terras et quod tegit omnia cœlum,
Unus erat toto naturæ vultus in orbe,
Quem dixere chaos."

¹ Hume, *Dialogues*, &c.

² Lange, *History of Materialism*, vol. i.

³ "Quorum corpusculorum concursu fortuito et mundos innumerabiles, et animantia, et ipsas animas

fieri dicit, et Deos quos humana forma, non in aliquo mundo, sed extras mundos, constituit; et non vult omnino aliquid preter corpora, cogitare," &c.—*August.*, Epist. lvi.

⁴ Munro's translation.

Before "the waters under the heaven were gathered together unto one place," the universe was "without form and void."

"Rerumque novatrix
Ex aliis alias reparat natura figuras ;
Nec perit in tanto quicquam (mihi credite) mundo :
Se variat, faciemque novat."¹

The chaotic matter contained in itself the necessary elements of evolution.

From Gassendi to Moleschott, Materialism takes up the tale, and reiterates it with but slight amendment. Science gradually modifies the manner of enunciation, and ends by promoting to a theory what originally was a guess. The doctrine of final causes is more successfully dispensed with as its place is supplied by natural substitutes. There is nothing new in saying, "Eyes were not made for seeing, nor brains for thinking;" that we see because we have eyes and think because we have brains, was as patent 2000 years ago as it is now. Life, says the Materialist, is the product of its conditions; not the designed end or final cause of those conditions. If we find surprising fitness between organs and functions, all we can say is, the functions could not be but for the perfect interdependence and arrangement of the parts. As Hume puts it, "If it were not so, could the world subsist?"

Recent defenders of teleology, under the pressure of Natural Selection, have shown a tendency to abandon special adaptation for the wider field of universal order. Thus Baden Powell argues: "If a stone strike against an object, it may have been projected either by some mere mechanical power or by a voluntary agent; and if we saw only the resulting impact and not the origination of the motion, we should be unable to decide which was the

¹ "Nature so
With everlasting change of form to form
Repairs her restless bulk. In all the space
Of this huge world naught perishes; the shape
And aspect vary, but the thing remains."—*Metam.*, lib. xv.

cause. But if we saw a number of such projectiles striking the object and all hitting it upon a certain mark, we should immediately conclude that the projectiles were *aimed* at that mark, and therefore that the whole was the result of some moral volition. . . . Nor would it make any difference in our conclusion whether or not we could discover any particular end which might be answered in striking the object," &c.¹ General laws, fixed and constant system, these are proofs of a *moral cause*, and preclude the idea of blind unseeing fatality. In the same spirit writes Herschel: "When we see a great number of things precisely alike, we do not believe this similarity to have originated except from a common principle independent of them; and that we recognise this likeness chiefly by the identity of their deportment under similar circumstances, strengthens rather than weakens the conclusion. A line of spinning-jennies or a regiment of soldiers dressed exactly alike and going through precisely the same evolutions, gives no idea of independent existence, &c. If we mistake not, then the discoveries alluded to effectually destroy the idea of an *eternal self-existent matter*, by giving to each of its atoms the essential characters at once of a *manufactured article* and a *subordinate agent*." ²

The assumption, however, is still the same, viz., that mind, and mind only, can account for order and adjustment. In neither of the above passages is there any better reasoning than that already examined. The manifestation of a pervading principle does not of itself justify the inference to intelligence; nor do the effects here described destroy the probability of an "eternal self-existent matter." Even positive proof of design would not go this length. The evidence of purpose in the parts of a watch do not show that its contriver made also the brass and the steel, nor even that he conferred upon the steel the elasticity of which he avails himself. There is

¹ *Connection of Natural and Divine Truth.*

² *Natural Philosophy.*

not, indeed, the faintest evidence in the nature of the things themselves to support the conclusion arrived at. What evidence have we of mind in the thousand instances of order and symmetry known to every one? Drops of water hit the same spot on a stone, without design, till they bore a hole in it. Certain substances cooling under pressure assume geometrical figures as orderly and as regular as a regiment of soldiers, *e.g.*, basaltic columns. The illuminated point of a vibrating rod, fixed at one end, traces patterns resembling the work of rose-engine turning, *e.g.*, Wheatstone's *Kaleidophone*. The figures obtained in Chladni's experiment of exciting by means of a violin bow square plates slightly covered with sand, and occasionally damping the vibrations with finger and thumb, are still more complicated and symmetrically beautiful. If the retort be: These last are artificially produced, and therefore equivalent to designed results; I say it is easy to conceive their production by unconscious agents; at any rate, the symmetrical results are due to mechanical laws. If with Coleridge we ask, "Can material objects apply geometry and calculations to themselves?" "Are material particles the joint artists of their own combinations?" the answer must be: Under such and such circumstances they do behave in such and such a way. Beyond this we know nothing. Moreover, there is the old alternative of which the sceptical Philo reminds us: "Instead of admiring the order of natural beings, may it not happen that, could we penetrate into the intimate nature of bodies, we should clearly see why it was absolutely impossible they could ever admit of any other disposition?"

LETTER II.

OF all the difficulties which obstruct religious faith, in its popular form at least, the existence of EVIL is undoubtedly the most insurmountable. The Epicurean dilemma is, and remains, unanswerable. If we accept a CREATOR, we must impute to him limited power or indifference. There is no other course. If harmony and adjustment prove a designer, what does unfitness, and all the misery it entails, prove? Admit creation, and we shackle belief with the imperfection of the work. If there were but one *vibrio* in existence, that one would gnaw the vitals out of the design argument. Yet, does not *every* organism, like the dread parasite, prey upon or live at the expense of other life? Ingenious writers have cast up the sums of good and ill, and given to God the benefit of a doubtful residue. But all the subterfuges ever devised to palliate suffering are sophisms which insult our intelligence and mock our anguish. The whole crust of this planet is one vast graveyard of unthinkable misery. No hope of eternal heaven can blot it out; no realisation of eternal bliss can make past agony unsuffered. Yet the believer in an *omnipotent* Creator must also believe (let him deny it if he can) that God designed this suffering. To realise in thought what this creed implies, and then hold to it, would inevitably plunge a rational being into a hell of despair.

Fortunately, although "omnipotence" is the bane of belief, there is no pretext whatever for inserting it in our creed. If we look to Nature for any indications of the divine attributes, such evidence as we may be thought to

have is directly opposed to the notion of *infinite* power. This view of the subject is well set forth in Mill's "Essay on Theism." His chapter on "attributes" is especially noteworthy for the closeness of the reasoning, and contains some valuable ideas not to be found in the works of his great master; although this particular point was far too important to be overlooked by Hume. "Supposing," says Cleanthes, "the author of Nature to be *finitely* perfect—though far exceeding mankind—a satisfactory account may then be given of natural and moral evil, and every untoward phenomenon be explained and adjusted. A less evil may then be chosen in order to avoid a greater; inconveniences be submitted to in order to reach a desirable end; and, in a word, benevolence, regulated by wisdom and limited by necessity, may produce just such a world as the present." In his essay on the "Utility of Religion" Mill says: "One only form of belief in the supernatural—one only theory respecting the origin and government of the universe—stands wholly clear both of intellectual contradiction and of moral obliquity. It is that which, resigning irrevocably the idea of an omnipotent Creator, regards nature and life, not as the expression throughout of the moral character and purpose of the Deity, but as the product of a struggle between contriving goodness and an intractable material."

Why then is the adoption of this hypothesis the choice of an evil in any sense? It appears to me to be the choice of a great, though not unmitigated, good. It is on this supposition alone that the character of a moral governor of the world can in a measure be saved. Omnipotence covers all other attributes. If we suppose the Deity to be almighty, we must banish completely the idea of his wisdom; for since omnipotence can effect a given purpose by any means it pleases, there can be no wisdom in the selection of means: one is as good as another.¹ Perfect knowledge, again, is quite compatible with limited

¹ Mill's *Theism*.

power, but is destructive of absolute benevolence if coupled with omnipotence.

It is vain to struggle against these conclusions on the favourite score that the divine attributes are above our comprehension; for, those who resort to this plea must be reminded that they are the very persons who found the whole argument from design upon the assumed analogy between God and man. Considering the immense difficulties in which this article of our faith involves us, it is strange that we should cleave to it with such bigoted affection. Not only is it objectionable, it is irrational. Every indication of design in the world is so much evidence against the omnipotence of the designer; for what is meant by design, contrivance, the adaptation of means to an end, but the necessity for contrivance? The need of employing means is a consequence of the limitation of power.¹ Besides which, what can be more absurdly inconsistent than to admit of an antagonistic power like the Devil, and yet reject as blasphemy the notion of finite power in the Deity? As if the traditional faith in the Devil did not already clandestinely assert the limitation.

Mill echoes Hume, and goes so far as to say, "Grant that creative power was limited by conditions the nature and extent of which are wholly unknown to us, and the goodness and justice of the Creator may be all that the most pious believe," &c. I regret that I am unable to accept this view without reservation. If we reject omnipotence, this is the position we come to: Wherever evil results from mere imperfection, it would be irrational to ascribe that evil to the Deity; but wherever evil results from complicated mechanism, one of the manifest ends of which is pain, the supposition of finite power will not solve the problem. A homely instance may illustrate the case. Toothache, which arises from the imperfection of the teeth, may be due to the inherent properties of dentine. But the consummate apparatus for poisoning the serpent's fang and the sting of

¹ *Loc. cit.*

a venomous insect is too perfect to admit of the same interpretation.¹ Possibly death may be an evil which the Deity could not overcome or dispense with; and an envenomed wound may shorten the death-agony. Still, why was the sting not dipped in an anæsthetic? Why does the serpent not narcotise his victim? Even if, as Livingstone asserts, it is soothing to be shaken in a lion's jaws, the case is exceptional. We still must ask why bodily pain, why mental pain, why everywhere so much suffering? As Philo observes in connection with this subject, "If animals could be free from it an hour, they might enjoy a perpetual exemption from it; and it requires as particular a contrivance of their organs to produce that feeling as to endow them with sight, hearing, or any of the senses."

¹ "The action of the sting affords an example of the union of chymistry and mechanism, such as, if it be not a proof of contrivance, nothing is. First, as to the chymistry; how highly concentrated must be the *venom*, which in so small a quantity can produce such powerful effects! . . . With respect to the mechanism, the sting is not a simple, but a compound instrument. . . . All this machinery would have been useless

telum imbelles (!) if a supply of poison, intense in quality, . . . had not been furnished to it by the chemical elaboration which was carried on in the insect's body. And . . . the poison . . . could not have attained its effect or reached its enemy if . . . it had not found there a machinery fitted to conduct it, &c., viz., an awl to bore a hole, and a syringe to inject the fluid."—*Paley's Natural Theology*, chap. xix.

LETTER III.

WE may take leave of the old doubts, and address ourselves to the new. These may all be summed up under the one head—Darwinism. Under this aspect, Evolution has lately assumed cyclopean dimensions; first on account of the finishing-touch it has given to developmental cosmology; secondly, by its explanation of the Origin of Species,—which, when applied to man, has a closer and more impressive interest.

The theory of Evolution is so familiar to all educated persons, and the works of its chief interpreters in this country—Darwin, Mr. Spencer, and Professor Huxley—are so intimately, or rather so widely known, that it would be impertinent to dwell as long upon this portion of our subject as upon others which you are less likely to have studied. Nevertheless, to omit all mention of it in a work professing to give an account of the creeds of the day, would, in spite of its familiarity, be absurd.

In my capacity as middle-man, I shall merely attempt a brief compendium of the doctrine; and since it is impossible to estimate its philosophical and scientific merit without some acquaintance with the ultimate laws of Nature upon which it is founded, we may begin with a hasty glance at the “First Principles” of Mr. Spencer.

To the mind of Hume, these principles, as you have seen, were present in no very different form to that in which they are now set forth. As to Kant, there is hardly an important theory propounded by modern science with which he was not more or less conversant. This, however, in no wise detracts from the excellence of Mr.

Spencer's labours. In the application of the known laws of Nature to the system we are about to survey, Mr. Spencer is without a rival; and possibly on this account posterity may award him a representative place in the English philosophy of the present age.

Evolution is described by Mr. Spencer as "the transformation of the homogeneous into the heterogeneous." It also implies a change from the indefinite to the definite. "As well as an advance from simplicity to complexity, there is an advance from confusion to order, from undetermined arrangement to determined arrangement."¹

The three essential axioms of Evolution are the indestructibility of matter, the persistence of force, and the continuity of motion. As the proofs of the first two entail somewhat lengthy metaphysical considerations, they will be dealt with in the third Series of Letters. Of the continuity of motion, we are told that it "is not only inductively inferred, but that it is a necessity of thought, &c. To think of motion as either being created or annihilated—to think of nothing becoming something, or something becoming nothing—is to establish in consciousness a relation between two terms of which one is absent from consciousness, which is impossible."²

Given the factors of Evolution, under what conditions do they work, and what are their products? The first condition is mobility. "The constituents of an aggregate cannot be rearranged unless they are movable," &c. But the mobility must be within limits, for "no considerable degree of evolution is exhibited where there is either great mobility of the parts or great immobility of them."³ For example, "in liquids the cohesion of the units is so slight that there is no permanency in their relations of position to each other. Such rearrangement as any incident force generates is immediately destroyed again by the momentum of the constituents moved," &c. Freedom of individual action is essential to social development;

¹ *First Principles*, p. 176.

² Page 248.

³ Page 339.

but the freedom of savage tribes, where there is "extremely little cohesion among the units," is as unfavourable to social heterogeneity as the restraining power of "accumulated traditions, laws, and usages, and long-fixed class arrangements" common to societies of the Oriental type.

Evolution is compelled to surmise some point of departure. It starts from nebulous matter—matter in a homogeneous state; and "the condition of homogeneity is a condition of unstable equilibrium."¹ This is evident, for the following simple reason: "Each unit of a homogeneous whole must be differently affected from any of the rest by the aggregate action of the rest upon it. The resultant force exercised by the aggregate on each unit, being in no two cases alike in both amount and direction, cannot produce like effects on the units. And the various positions of the parts in relation to any incident force preventing them from receiving it in uniform amounts and directions, a further difference in the effects wrought on them is inevitably produced."²

Even supposing uniform force to act upon a uniform mass, we still get redistribution or change both in the mass and in the force. In the mass, "because the parts of the mass stand in different relations to the force." In the force, because "action and reaction, being equal and opposite, it follows that in differentiating the parts on which it falls in unlike ways, the incident force must itself be correspondingly differentiated."

A further consequence is, that the effects produced are continually being multiplied, so that "each stage of evolution must initiate a higher stage." Examples: "If the earth was formed by the concentration of diffused matter, it must at first have been incandescent, &c. The earth, falling in temperature, must contract, &c. As the cooling progresses and the envelope thickens, the ridges consequent on these contractions must become greater, rising

¹ Page 358.

² Page 356.

ultimately into hills and mountains, &c. As the earth's solid envelope thickened, the areas of elevation and depression became greater. In the place of islands more or less homogeneously scattered over an all-embracing sea, there must have gradually arisen heterogeneous arrangements of continents and ocean, such as we now know," &c.¹

"A like multiplication of effects must happen in the unfolding organism, &c. Doubtless, we are still in the dark respecting those mysterious properties which make the germ, when subject to fit influences, undergo the special changes beginning this series of transformation. All here contended for is, that, given a germ possessing these mysterious properties, the evolution of an organism from it depends, in part, on that multiplication of effects which we have seen to be a cause of evolution in general, &c." As instances of like germs evolving into unlike forms, according to circumstances, we have the larva of the working bee changed into that of the queen-bee by change of food at a certain period of its growth. "The ovum of the tape-worm getting into the intestines of one animal unfolds into the form of its parent; but if carried into other parts of the system, or into the intestine of some unlike animal, it becomes one of the sac-like creatures called by naturalists *Cysticerci*, or *Cœnuri*, or *Echinococi*, &c."

The changes on the earth's surface consequent on upheavals and subsidences would not only produce changes of climate and temperature, but would entail complete changes in the flora and fauna of the altered regions. Changes in physical conditions would modify or destroy plants. Changes in physical conditions and in food would produce change of habits, and hence modification in animals. Redistribution due to geographical changes would engender variations by crossing. "The sensible or insensible alterations thus produced in each species would

¹ Page 394 ff.

become organised; in all the races that survived there would be a more or less complete adaptation to the new conditions."¹ The inference is forced upon us that "*structural changes are the slowly accumulated results of functional changes.*"

But what is the meaning of all these rearrangements? In what direction do they tend? Evidently, towards more and more perfect harmony and concilience. "That continual division and subdivision of forces, which is instrumental in changing the uniform into the multiform and the multiform into the more multiform," must be perpetually dissipating force, "and that dissipation, continuing as long as there remains any force unbalanced by an opposing force, must end in rest."² Meanwhile we have states of transitional equilibration. "These moving equilibria have a certain self-conserving power, shown in the neutralisation of perturbations and the adjustment to new conditions."

All this, you will perceive, is nothing but Hume in modern costume. "The original force still remaining in activity gives a perpetual restlessness to matter, till at last some order which can support and maintain itself is fallen upon," and this has "all the appearance of art and contrivance which we observe at present." With these essential principles to build upon, we may select a few instances of the use Mr. Spencer makes of them in interpreting the facts of biology.

The first condition of evolution in general was said to be mobility; and in dealing with organic matter the first thing to be observed is "that organic bodies which exhibit the phenomena of evolution in so high a degree are mainly composed of ultimate units having extreme mobility."³ Of the four chief elements of organic substances, hydrogen, carbon, and nitrogen "have affinities which are narrow in their range and low in their intensity." They have but

¹ Page 402.

² Page 495.

³ *The Principles of Biology*, vol. i. p. 3.

slight tendency to combine with other elements. This chemical indifference, and the feeble bond of union possessed by their compounds, afford the primary conditions essential to redistribution.

Were the compounds which enter into living bodies possessed of excessive molecular mobility, no high degree of organisation could either be reached or sustained: but it so happens that "among those elements out of which living bodies are built there is an unusual tendency to unite in multiples, &c.,"¹ and the groups of products thus formed supply exactly what is wanted. "We have in these colloids, of which organisms are mainly composed, just the required compromise between fluidity and solidity."

Amongst the most familiar causes of redistribution and of vital changes, none is more direct than heat. "Heat, or a raised state of molecular vibration, enables incident forces more easily to produce changes of molecular arrangement in organic matter." Every one has noticed, the effect of the sun upon plants exposed to its rays; but the evaporation to which this effect is due, by emptying the sap vessels, is the necessary condition under which fresh material is imbibed and the growth and life of the plant is continued. The exhalations of vapour through the skin and lungs of terrestrial animals, also aided by heat, prepares the way in like manner for the circulation of fresh nutritive fluids.

Light is another active instrument in the process of development. As pointed out later on, the exhalation of oxygen and the absorption of carbon in plants is due to the influence of the solar rays. "And on certain eyeless creatures that are semi-transparent, the light, permeating their substance, works some effect evinced by movement."²

Chemical action is of chief importance in effecting changes in organic matter. In "nutrition and respiration we have the means by which the supply of materials for this active molecular rearrangement is maintained."

¹ Page 23.

² Page 28.

The one truth to be noted is that, organic matter is specially sensitive to the influences of surrounding forces; hence, specially possessed of that modifiability which is the first requisite of evolution.

Although we are here dealing with the data only of biology, we are now arrested by a point of the highest interest. We have spoken of forces acting on organic matter. It has again to be observed that the matter also reacts on the forces. Heat, light, electricity, and chemical affinity produce molecular excitement. But "this raised state of molecular vibration is itself a continuous consequence of the continuous molecular redistributions it facilitates." For instance, "the heat produced by oxidation . . . maintains the temperature at which the unoxidised portions can be readily oxidised." But besides these known modes of motion, there is "an unknown one . . . which cannot be assimilated with any otherwise recognised class; I allude to what is called nerve-force." Incident forces of every kind "produce in all creatures that have nervous systems certain nervous disturbances—disturbances which, as in ourselves, are either communicated to the chief nervous centre, *and there constitute consciousness*, or else result in merely physical processes that are set going elsewhere in the organism."¹ The proofs of this fact are matters of hourly observation. Nourishment increases the supply of nerve-force, while the excessive expenditure of this force involves excessive waste of tissue. From all sides we have evidence "that nerve-force is liberated by whatever disturbs the molecular equilibrium of nerve-substance."

The possibility of vital phenomena depends, however, not merely on molecular, but more especially on sensible motion. And this form of reaction is exhibited both by plants and animals. The sap circulates: pistils and stamens are spontaneously brought into contact: the zoospores of many algæ are actively locomotive: many

¹ Page 49.

small plants display a similar power, equal in fact to that of the simplest animals. The sensitive plant, the insect traps, and the fertilisation of orchids described by Darwin, are instances present to every one.

Thus it is that the changes produced by incident forces on the atoms of organic matter become in turn the antecedents of large amounts of new modes of force, which "may be manifested as heat, light, electricity, nerve-force, or mechanical motion, according as the conditions determine."

The evolution of nerve-force in conjunction with mechanical motion presents us with the characteristic phenomena of life. Also, as the radical tendency of evolution is ever towards equilibration, its highest form must evince this tendency in the highest degree. In accordance with this idea, we have life defined by Mr. Spencer as "the continuous adjustment of internal relations to external relations;" the most complete and perfect life being that which most completely fulfils this condition.

Whether, then, we contemplate the phenomena manifested by organic matter as a rearrangement of parts, or as new combinations of force, the interpretation of the process always at work is discoverable in the establishment of a balance between inner and outer changes; and "the final structural arrangements must be such as will meet all the forces acting on the aggregate by equivalent antagonistic forces." The question whether such structural arrangements are affected by acts of special creation, or whether they are explicable upon fundamental principles or laws of nature, such as we have been considering, can only be entertained when we are duly possessed of the arguments for and against transmutation. This brings us to the "Theory of Descent," which will be entered upon in the following letter.

LETTER IV.

THE doctrine of Evolution when applied to living beings affirms that, these are all descended from one or from a very few parent forms,¹ and that the origin of new forms is to be explained by reference to mechanical laws not necessarily directed by intelligence.

Strictly speaking, the doctrine involves belief in the evolution of life from inorganic materials by a similar natural process. But on this point there is difference of opinion. Darwin, for instance, holds that "the birth, both of the species and of the individual are equally parts of that grand sequence of events which our minds refuse to accept as the result of blind chance. The understanding revolts at such a conclusion," &c.² True, such a view might not be incompatible with the opinion that all the phenomena of Nature are to be interpreted naturally, that is to say, without reference, at any stage of their sequence, to miraculous interference. But elsewhere Darwin speaks more explicitly of life "with its several powers having been originally breathed by the Creator into a few forms or into one," &c.³ Heterogenesis, or spontaneous generation, therefore, is not an acknowledged canon of Darwinism. I propose, however, to return to the subject after a word or two on the history of the recent aspect of Evolution generally.

The tendency to classify is inherent to intelligent beings.

¹ "I believe that animals have descended from at most only four or five progenitors, and plants from an equal or lesser number."—Dar-

win, *Origin of Species* p. 518.

² *The Descent of Man*, vol. ii. p. 396.

³ *The Origin of Species*, p. 525.

It is, indeed, nothing more than a higher stage of that establishment of relations which, as we shall see by and by, is the primary condition of knowledge. Things must be mentally grouped as like and unlike before they can be recognised as even the same with themselves. The first attempts at classification of natural objects would necessarily be superficial: only the most conspicuous marks of difference would form the basis of disposal. Organised bodies would be readily divided into the seemingly distinct orders of vegetable and animal. Trees, shrubs, and herbs would constitute the first; beasts, birds, fishes, and creeping things the latter. By degrees, observation of external forms would lead to the study of internal structure and function. Comparative anatomy would become a science; and Physiology, which had hitherto served mainly for the treatment of diseases, would become essential to correct zoological arrangement.

Linnæus, the father of modern natural history, established his system chiefly upon artificial principles. Plants, for example, he divided primarily into flowering and non-flowering sorts; animals under the six classes—mammals, birds, amphibia, fishes, insects, and worms. His lines of demarcation are nearly always those of outward differences. This system was an immense improvement upon former plans; and his ingenious nomenclature, according to which the specific name of every plant and animal is added to its generic name, *e.g.*, *Felis domestica*, *Felis leo*, or *Pinus larix*, *Pinus picca*, and so on, is still retained as the simplest and most serviceable.

The first great stride beyond the method of the Swedish naturalist was made by Cuvier (born sixty-two years later, in 1769). Cuvier's arrangement was based upon internal organisation. And if we set aside Aristotle, and perhaps Xenophanes, he may not unfairly be called the founder of comparative anatomy. His four divisions of the animal kingdom were—1. Vertebrates, possessed of bony skeletons. 2. Articulates, with ventral nerve-chords and

dorsal hearts, *e.g.*, spiders, crustaceans, insects, earth-worms, leeches, &c. 3. Molluses. 4. Radiates, *e.g.*, sea-urchins, star-fish, &c.

We are here taught for the first time to look deeper than form for the sort of resemblance which constitutes the true alliance of kin. There is not much outward likeness between a man and a herring. But we shall see presently that the inward structure of both is evidence of a relationship which Cuvier neither discovered nor was willing to admit. Yet the footing upon which he placed comparative anatomy has furnished the theory of evolution with the most powerful instrument it possesses.

Almost equal in merit and importance to his reforms in the above respect, were the services Cuvier rendered to osteology, and hence to palæontology, by his scientific interpretation of fossil remains. By comparing these relics of ancient animals with their living analogues, he proved (again more than he designed to prove) that the past history of the world was to be read by the light of its present course. In spite of his belief in cataclysms, in spite of his averment that "the thread of induction was broken," in spite of his blindness to the lessons of his great contemporary, Lamarek, and of his distinguished antagonist, Geoffroy St. Hilaire,—the discoveries of Cuvier bore irrefutable testimony to the great canon of modern science, soon after to be demonstrated by Lyell, that, *all causes must be rejected which do not belong to the present order of nature.*

Notwithstanding the difference in their methods, there was one point of agreement between Linnæus and Cuvier. It is this point which separates them impassably from the Darwinians. With both, it was a maxim that species are immutable. In the words of Linnæus, "We number as many species as there were different forms created in the beginning." In truth, belief in the immutability of species commits its holder to supernatural creation. This was the case with these two great naturalists. In the face of Werner and of Hutton, and even of his own knowledge,

acquired by his valuable researches in the neighbourhood of Paris, Cuvier, fettered with his impracticable maxim, was compelled to hold that "the thread of induction was broken;" that Nature every now and again was guilty of the wildest freaks; that continents were suddenly submerged, and suddenly replaced by oceans; that whole races were suddenly swept away, and new forms suddenly and miraculously created to replace them.¹

In all discussions on development, you must bear in mind that the question at issue is, whether new species have been supernaturally created, or whether they are descended from ancient organisms *in the ordinary way of generation?* The immutability of species is the last shred of the tattered banner of the special-creationists. While they can make this hold out, their battle is not lost. For certain it is that, the old forms and the new are strangely different. There are no flying dragons nowadays, and there were no monkeys in the days of the Oolite or Lias. We know whither the dragons are gone—some of them to our museums; but where did the monkeys come from? If species are immutable, descent is out of the question; the original monkey must have been created.

In the first place, it is impossible to say what is "a species." No naturalist living or dead ever so defined a species as to make his definition at once perfectly inclusive and perfectly exclusive. The difference between *species* and *variety* is merely one of degree. In the latter the resemblance between the individuals of any group is somewhat closer than in the former. As Darwin says, "Few well-marked and well-known varieties can be named which have not been ranked as species by at least some competent judges." And elsewhere, "No clear distinction has been or can be drawn between species and well-

¹ Notwithstanding Cuvier's belief in repeated acts of direct creation, he says, when speaking of the horse, the ass, and the zebra, "Entre le

palæotherium et les espèces d'aujourd'hui l'on devrait découvrir quelques formes intermédiaires."

marked varieties."¹ The dictum of Linnæus, therefore, "Classis et ordo est sapientiæ, species natura opus," is precisely the reverse of the truth. Had he said species is factitious, he would have been more correct. It is an artificial distinction which preserves its utility by adapting itself to the versatility of Nature. Either this, or we must stretch and maim Nature to fit a term.

But the two new sciences, comparative anatomy and geology, were working hand in hand to bring to light one fact which, with every fresh discovery they made, grew more and more hostile to the dogma of invariability. Cuvier, Lamarck, St. Hilaire, and the geologists were all of one accord that the lower and the older the strata in which the fossil remains were found, the more unlike they were to living species; conversely, the higher and recenter the strata, the closer the resemblance to existing forms. Furthermore, the general truth was revealed that, organic life upon the earth had begun with simple, and advanced to complex structure, through stages of progression which geology was daily proving to be not violent but gradual. What was the inference from such discoveries? Clearly, the development of species by transmutation and descent. As yet, however, though distinctly apprehended by Lamarck and by Geoffroy St. Hilaire,² this was little more than a guess which forced itself upon a few leading minds of the age. The high authority of Cuvier obscured and obstructed for a time the judgment of the many.

Amongst the select few, and greatest of the great, was Goethe. Even one's concern in the absorbing question before us pales for a moment at the thought of Goethe. Deeply interesting is it to note that so early as 1790

¹ "The range of variation is so great among the Foraminifera as to include not merely those differential characters which have been usually accounted SPECIFIC, but also those upon which the greater part of GENERA of this group have been

founded, and even in some instances those of its ORDERS."—*Introduction to the Study of Foraminifera*, by Dr. Carpenter.

² "Les animaux perdus sont par voie non interrompu de generations et de modifications successives, les

he was working out the scheme of development in his "Metamorphosis of Plants." Part of the idea embodied in that work is elsewhere generalised in the following expression:—"Every living being is not a unity, but a plurality. Even when it appears as an individual, it is the reunion of beings living and existing in themselves, *identical in origin*, but which may appear identical or similar, different or dissimilar."¹ The force and meaning of this will be seen when we come to embryology. At the close of life, the battle over the mutability of species between the two illustrious Parisian naturalists was, in Goethe's eyes, of profounder consequence than the July revolution, news of which events reached him on the same day. His sympathies were entirely with Geoffroy St. Hilaire.² Indeed, his statement that type has no objective reality applies directly to species. And in his "Metamorphosis of Animals" (1819) he distinctly pointed to the conditions of existence as causes of transformations, first by determining the animal's way of life, then in turn by the life reacting on the structure. That the theory of descent was also in his mind, may be inferred from his "Introduction to Comparative Anatomy," (written in 1795), where he insists upon the necessity of starting the comparisons from the simplest organisms, and gradually ascending up to man.

Goethe's contemporary, and, in one of his discoveries, his rival, Oken, may here be mentioned. I can only afford space to allude to him as one of the first who proclaimed that, life was a product of a naturally formed chemical compound, to which he gave the name of *Urschleim*, or original slime, and which is nothing more or less than the protoplasm of our own day. "Every

ancêtres des animaux du monde actuel."—*Académie des Sciences*, cclxxxvii., p. 208.

¹ *Zur Morphologie* (written in 1795).

- "The best of it is that the syn-

thetic treatment of Nature introduced by Geoffroy in France can never more be set aside."—*Gespräche mit Goethe, &c.*, T. P. Eckermann, iii. p. 234.

organic thing," says he, "has arisen out of slime, and is nothing but slime in different forms. This primitive slime originated in the sea, from inorganic matter in the course of planetary evolution."¹

About the same time another German philosopher, Treviranus, strongly advocated the theory of evolution and the mechanical origin of life. "In every living being," he remarked, "there exists the capability of endless variety of form-assumption; each possesses the power to adapt its organisation to the changes of the outer world, and it is this power put into action by the change of the universe that has raised the simple zoophytes of the primitive world to continually higher stages of organisation, and has introduced a countless variety of species into animate nature."²

It is with surprise and admiration at his wonderful insight that we find Kant, in 1790, pointing to the theory of descent, based upon comparative anatomy, as the only legitimately scientific explanation of the agreement of animals in a certain common plan of structure. The following passage is in complete harmony with the evolutionary doctrines of the present day: "This analogy of forms (in so far as they seem to have been produced in accordance with a common prototype, notwithstanding their great variety) strengthens the supposition that they have an actual blood relationship, due to origination from a common parent; a supposition which is arrived at by observation of the gradual approximation of one class of animals to another, beginning with the one in which the principle of purposiveness seems to be most conspicuous, that is, man, and extending down to the polyps, and from these even down to mosses and lichens, and arriving finally at raw matter, the lowest stage of nature observable to us."

Not, however, till we come to Lamarck does the de-

¹ Huckel, *History of Creation*, translated by E. Ray Lancaster.

² *Ibid.*

velopment theory assume a methodical or systematic form. Though born in 1744, his memorable work, the "Philosophie Zoologique," was only published in 1809. Starting with spontaneous generation, he believed nature to be daily employed in creating the beginnings of life, according to the same physical law that pervades all her other works. The lowest plants and simplest animals equally sprung from these beginnings. Different surroundings produced different results. Use and disuse perpetually modify and permanently affect organisation. He supported his doctrine by an appeal to facts with which every one is conversant. He instanced the effect upon plants and animals of varied situation and climate, of culture and of domestication. And he called geology to witness that, time was an element in the calculation which might be drawn upon without stint.

There were, unfortunately, some slight defects in Lamarck's argument, which gave his opponents a temporary advantage. He ascribed development to the operation of two principles. One was inherent tendency to progressive advancement; the other was the force of external circumstances—"par l'influence des circonstances d'habitation, et par celles des habitudes contractées." Now, although the force of circumstances is a real factor of evolution, both these principles are open to objection, inasmuch as they fail to account for a great part of the facts. To one who invoked natural causes solely, reference to an intrinsic tendency was an infraction of his own rules. In the first place, his tendency is no better than his *sentiment interieur* or his *movements des fluides*, with which he indirectly sought to explain it. As to progress, it was easy to show that many of the lowest organisms had made no advance for countless ages; that there are cases in which the mature animal is less perfect than its larva; that instances of degradation are abundant, and (if the theory of descent be true) of reversion to ancestral types.

Setting aside the mystical explanation, which is itself

unintelligible, it is evident that no principle of direct adaptation alone can account for the change in forms, or (in the words of Mr. Spencer) for "all the modifications that serve to refit organisms to their environments." Taking, for example, defensive appliances: "Suppose a species of nettle bare of poison-hairs to be habitually eaten by some mammal intruding on its habitat, the agency of this mammal would have no direct tendency to develop poison-hairs in the plant, since the individuals devoured could not bequeath changes of structure, even were the actions of a kind to produce them; and hence the individuals that perpetuated themselves would be those on which the new incident force had not fallen."¹ Another apt illustration is the following: "How by any process of direct equilibration could it [an egg-shell] come to have the required thickness? or, indeed, how could it come to exist at all? Suppose this protective envelope to be too weak, so that some of the eggs a bird lays are broken or cracked. In the first place, the breakages or crackings are actions of a kind which cannot react on the maternal organism in such a way as to cause the secretion of thicker shells for the future; to suppose that they can is to suppose that the bird understands the cause of the evil, and that the secretion can be controlled by its will."²

Great, then, as were the services rendered by Lamarck, his system was not complete; some principle had yet to be discovered to supplement the process of direct adjustment. This discovery was made almost simultaneously and quite independently by Darwin and by Mr. Wallace. It is impossible to state the doctrine of natural selection more briefly or more clearly than in Darwin's own words: "As many more individuals of each species are born than can possibly survive, and as, consequently, there is a frequently recurring struggle for existence, it follows that any being, if it vary, however slightly, in any manner profitable to itself, under the complex and sometimes varying

¹ *Principles of Biology*, § 161.

² *Ibid.*, § 162.

conditions of life, will have a better chance of surviving, and thus be *naturally selected*. From the strong principle of inheritance, any selected variety will tend to propagate its new and modified form.”¹

In a letter to Professor Huckel in 1864, Darwin describes how the theory of selection was suggested to him by observations made during his voyage in the “Beagle” thirty years previously. He had been profoundly struck by the close affinity of species in neighbouring countries, and in islands and their nearest continents; also by the likeness of living Edentata and Rodentia to extinct species. This general resemblance indicated descent from a common parent. “But for some years,” he writes, “I could not conceive how each form became so excellently adapted to its habits of life. I then began systematically to study domestic productions, and after a time saw clearly that man’s selective power was the most important agent. I was prepared, from having studied the habits of animals, to appreciate the struggle for existence, and my work in geology gave me some idea of the lapse of past time. Therefore when I happened to read ‘Malthus on Population,’ the idea of natural selection flashed on me.”

In 1857, two years before the publication of the “Origin,” Darwin had written to the famous American botanist, Professor Asa Grey, giving an outline of his projected treatise on natural selection. In this letter also he referred to the tendency of human beings to increase in a much higher ratio than the means of subsistence, which Malthus had been the first to proclaim.² For over twenty years before publishing, Darwin devoted his wonderful powers of observation, and his no less remarkable energy and sagacity, to collecting proofs for the establishment of his theory.

Some years earlier, 1855, Mr. Wallace, then at Sara-

¹ *Origin of Species*, p. 4.

² Malthus appears to have taken the idea from Benjamin Franklin.

See *Observations Concerning the Increase of Mankind*, 1757.

wak, wrote an essay "On the Law which has Regulated the Introduction of New Species." His observations on geological and geographical distribution had led him, as they had led Darwin, to adopt the theory of descent. From the facts of affinity, geographical distribution, geological sequence, and the phenomena of rudimentary organs, he deduced the following law: "*Every species has come into existence coincident both in space and time with a pre-existing closely allied species.*" In 1858, Mr. Wallace wrote "On the Tendency of Varieties to Depart Indefinitely from the Original Type."¹ He here pointed to the struggle for existence and to the law of population. He illustrated this law by supposing a pair of birds to produce four young ones four times only in their lives. In fifteen years the numbers would amount to more than two thousand millions. "Whereas we have no reason to believe that the number of the birds of any country increases at all in fifteen or in one hundred and fifty years." He also distinctly enunciated the principle of natural selection. Speaking of the tendency of useful variations to preserve, and of their absence to diminish, the individuals of a species, he says, "If . . . any species should produce a variety having slightly increased powers of preserving existence, that variety must inevitably in time acquire a superiority in numbers." In the same essay, comparing his own theory with Lamarck's—that progressive changes in species have been produced by the attempts of animals to increase the development of their own organs, and thus modify their structure and habits—Mr. Wallace denies that the giraffe lengthened its neck by stretching it; but explains that "any varieties which occurred among its antitypes with a longer neck than usual *at once secured a fresh range of pasture, and on the first scarcity of food were thereby enabled to outlive them.*" Again, Mr. Wallace was the first to elaborate the marvellous principle of mimicry, the discovery of which is due to Mr. Bates.

¹ *Journal of the Proceedings of the Linnean Society.*

The great and well-deserved fame of Darwin has eclipsed the brilliancy of these services ; but although Darwin had been at work in the same field long before Mr. Wallace, and only delayed publication in order to perfect a system which Mr. Wallace had but outlined, it ought not to be forgotten that these two essays were printed, the first four years, and the latter one year, before the "Origin of Species."

There is still one illustrious name which will always deserve prominence in connection with the present subject. In his work on "Comparative Anatomy and Physiology of Vertebrates" Professor Owen writes: "Each successive parcel of geological truth has tended to dissipate the belief in the unusually sudden and violent nature of the changes recognisable in the earth's surface. In specially directing my attention to this moot-point, whilst engaged in investigations of fossil remains and in the reconstruction of the species to which they belonged, I was at length led to recognise one cause of extinction as being due to defeat in the contest which, as a living organised whole, the individual of each species had to maintain against the surrounding agencies which might militate against its existence. Mr. Darwin aims to apply it [this principle] not only to the extinction, but to the origin of species."¹

Professor Owen, without either admitting or adopting Darwin's application of this secondary law to the *origin* of species, is perfectly justified in affirming "that the 'admission' or 'adoption' was, in whatever degree it might relate to the Darwinian theory, an anticipation;" for whilst Darwin first promulgated his theory in 1857 (he did not publish it till 1859), Professor Owen, as early as February 1850,² had exemplified the principle of the preservation of the favoured race by noting the conditions under which the battle of life is fought. "If," said he, "a dry season be gradually prolonged, the large mammal will suffer from the drought sooner than the small one ; if such

¹ Vol. iii. p. 798.

² *Zoological Transactions*, vol. iv. p. 15.

alteration of climate affect the quantity of vegetable food, the bulky herbivore will first feel the effects of stinted nourishment; if new enemies are introduced, the large and conspicuous quadruped or bird will fall a prey, whilst the smaller species conceal themselves and escape. Smaller animals also are usually more prolific than large ones."¹

The strength of the argument for natural selection, great as its *prima facie* probability is at once seen to be, is enormously enhanced by the mass of facts which its champions have brought to bear upon it. There are difficulties, no doubt, which at present it has to overleap; but in the hands of its original propounders objections melt away, and not unfrequently come to further what they had once appeared to impede. The facts themselves, and indeed the treatment of the whole subject by Darwin and Mr. Wallace, are more fascinating than any work of fiction. Details are beyond the compass of my design, nor will you be offered dry abstractions in the place of them. I shall endeavour to set forth some of the strongest features of the theory, together with some of its weakest. Meanwhile it behoves us to refer to the beginnings of life, which Darwin does not deal with, and with which natural selection has, in the present state of our knowledge, but remote concern.

¹ *Comparative Anatomy, &c.*, p. 799.

LETTER V.

WHATEVER may be the ultimate issue in days to come of the *generatio equivoca* controversy, we have pretty strong grounds for the assumption that, upon this earth at least, life must have had a beginning some time or other. Without placing too much reliance upon the nebular hypothesis or upon the central fluidity of our planet—which cannot be called an established truth—earthquakes, thermal springs, geysers, volcanoes, and the certain though irregular increase of heat with depth, prove almost beyond a doubt that the surface of the earth is a very thin crust covering matter in a state of igneous fusion. Although geology is silent on the question of complete original fluidity, astronomy favours the speculation; while the theory of solidification by cooling, as applied to the earth's surface, has the full approval of science.

If, then, we may suppose that temperature continues to increase at the known rate of something like 1° Fahr. for every 65 to 70 feet, in two miles we should reach the level of our boiling springs; and at a depth of 34 miles should reach the melting-point of iron. Adopting then the cooling hypothesis in explanation of the crust, what is now the melting-point of iron might formerly have been 100 times hotter, and even the surface itself hot enough to convert metals into vapour. It is evident that, under anything approaching such conditions, life could not have existed. In the first place, the excessive molecular vibration would have rendered the necessary chemical combination impossible. Secondly, water, which enters so largely into the composition of all organisms, could not

have been formed until the temperature had fallen below that only two miles beneath our present surface. Whence then did life originate? Are we to look for its beginning in natural causes, or shall we resort to miracle?

In the latest of his published opinions, Professor Du Bois-Reymond counts the origin of life as one of the seven world-riddles, the ultimate solution of which he believes to be transcendental. "Transcendental," because although he maintains that we are logically bound to admit the mechanical origin of life (which, as Zöllner and Häckel declare, can only be denied by denying the universality of causation), nevertheless the question of life's beginning inevitably forces us back upon the prior questions of the beginning of motion and the existence of Matter and Force. "Once matter had begun to move, worlds might arise: under appropriate conditions, which we are as little able to imitate as those under which a mass of inorganic results occur, the peculiar state of dynamical equilibrium of matter, which we call life, may come into existence."¹ But we must first have matter in motion; and here we reach the limits of scientific inquiry, and are face to face with the transcendent.

The evolutionist must postulate something to evolve. The *pied-à-terre* of his theory is matter in a nebulous state, which has gradually condensed by gravitation. This nebular hypothesis, of which we shall have to speak hereafter, carries with it the supposition that condensation is the original cause of the earth's heat. If so, then of the sun's heat—of the heat, in short, of our entire system. But where were the germs of life during the "cosmological gas" period? Two conclusions are open to us: If life had no beginning in time—if there was always a life-supporting world somewhere in the universe, then the nebular hypothesis, as a cosmical theory, is false. If life had a beginning, then, inasmuch as life implies sensation and consciousness, its beginning is unintelligible: in other words, the

¹ *Die Sieben Welträthsel*, 1882.

laws of mechanics will not account for feeling, and the problem of life is transcendental. To this, however, we shall return. Meanwhile, we may notice the attempts that have been made to settle the question empirically. Can life be produced in the laboratory ?

Of course you are aware that between organic and inorganic matter there is no radical difference. The same elements are common to both, their combination only being more complex in one case than in the other. The indefinite complexity of the organic compounds explains (from the chemical point of view) the corresponding complexity of organic phenomena. Well, say you, if chemistry recognises no essential difference between organic and inorganic, biology does : life is associated with one, and not with the other : here is something more than an artificial distinction. Precisely so. On this earth there is no life save in conjunction with organic compounds. We may *imagine* if we please that life is something distinct from the compounds, and added to the chemical elements after they have combined in a particular manner. All we *know* is, vital phenomena never appear until the combination is effected. Why certain elements combine in such a way, or why, when combined, life begins to be manifested, is more than any one can tell. From the green scum on a stagnant pool up to man, and through the whole scale of living things which divide them, one fundamental substance constitutes the living matter or germ of life in all. This substance is known by the vague name of Protoplasm, *i.e.*, original matrix. Life is said to be one of the properties evolved from it ; or, more correctly speaking, evolved with it.

Protoplasm is a semifluid gelatinous compound, consisting mainly of water, ammonia, and carbonic acid ; out of which ingredients it is procreated by plants, and so becomes the substance of the plant itself. When in turn the plant becomes the food of an animal, the protoplasm,

somewhat altered, becomes the substance of the animal. First and last, from the lowest vegetable to the highest animal, wherever there is life there must be protoplasm.

Should you wish to learn more about it, you may be told that protoplasm contains oxygen, hydrogen, nitrogen, and carbon combined in a very complicated manner: the meaning of which may be illustrated by a common substance like sugar, let us say. The chemical symbol for cane-sugar is $C_{12}H_{11}O_{11}$, which signifies that when 12 equivalents of carbon, 11 of hydrogen, and 11 of oxygen combine, the product is sugar. Added together, we have 34 simple atoms, which may be arranged in a thousand different ways. With every alteration in the position of any single one of these atoms, as Liebig tells us, "the compound atom ceases to be an atom of sugar, since the properties belonging to it change with every alteration in the arrangement of the constituent atoms." In protoplasm we have an additional element in nitrogen, not to mention a dash of sulphur and of phosphorus. When, therefore, one is informed that an atom of protoplasm contains at least 900 elementary atoms instead of 34, the complexity of combination, though not picturable, may be said to be faintly adumbrated to the mind. When one is further informed that nitrogen has a remarkable propensity to set a hair-trigger to every substance with which it combines; that the now famous dynamite owes its extreme instability or explosive tendency to the presence of nitrogen; that fish, meat, and especially eggs, speedily decompose on account of the nitrogen in the albumen, &c.—it becomes evident that the great unlikeness between the combined units in so highly compound an atom as one of protoplasm must, when subjected to disturbing forces, facilitate the differentiation essential to development, and ultimately promote the changes essential to high organisation. With these prefatory remarks we may attack the question of Spontaneous Generation.

1. Was life originally evolved from inorganic matter?

2. Is life now evolved from inorganic matter, or is it always propagated from living substances? With regard to the first query, we can but speculate. Still (setting apart metaphysical considerations for future discussion, and treating the subject entirely from the realistic point of view), when we reflect that the only physical difference between organic and inorganic compounds is one of higher or lower multiples in elements which are common to both; when we reflect how ambiguous are the lowest phenomena of life; when we reflect on the absolute dependence of its highest manifestations on physical conditions; lastly, when we think of our ignorance and proneness to be carried away by imagination; it is difficult to resist the conclusion that the apparent beginning of life is as natural as its apparent end.

Whether, as Oken, Lamarck, Lewis, Hackel, and many others thought and think, life is incessantly being generated by the formation of its appropriate matter, is beyond the reach of observation. Many conditions may possibly be requisite to its commencement which no longer exist upon our planet. Moreover, the supply of life, or at least the germs of life, are so astoundingly abundant, that there would not seem to be sufficient reason for further creation. Though, to be sure, this argument is not worth much, seeing that our notions of economy are no guide to nature.

There can be no *a priori* improbability in the way of artificial generation, supposing this to mean no more than the artificial combination of that which is *already* fitted for the purpose. Whether even this has ever been achieved is quite another affair. In ancient times belief in spontaneous generation seems to have been universal. Nor was this creed much disturbed till the end of the seventeenth century, when Redi, by means of some very simple experiments, convinced the scientific world that instead of putrefaction engendering life, it was life that engendered putrefaction; in other words, that the life within the putrefying substance comes from life without.

Redi's inferences were greatly strengthened by the eminent microscopists of the eighteenth century. By aid of their improved instruments they discovered that living organisms, though invisible to the naked eye, swarm on every side of us. According to Leuwenhoek, a single drop of stagnant water contains five hundred millions of living organisms. What is true of water in the ditch, is true of broth in the kitchen,—if this also be left for a few days exposed to the ordinary air. All vegetable and animal infusions are subject to a similar change. Where does the life come from? If from antecedent life, as Redi had declared, then it must either be from living germs already in the infusion, or else from such germs floating in the air.

The test, now so familiar to us, was applied by Needham. He boiled the infusions to destroy their living contents, and then sealed his flasks to prevent the entrance of life from without. The result was that, animalcules appeared in spite of the ordeal; and Needham declared for spontaneous generation. Towards the end of the last century Spallanzani, dissatisfied with Needham's experiments, renewed them with care, and with results exactly opposite to Needham's. The inference was that life must come of life, and that its germs were contained in the air. During the present century countless trials have supported this conclusion. When no air is admitted to the boiled infusions but such as has been calcined by passing through red-hot tubes or purified by sulphuric acid, no life appears. When the air is merely filtered by cotton-wool, no life appears. Even when the neck of the flask is bent downwards, so that the germs cannot fall upwards, no life appears. If, on the other hand, the air we breathe is admitted, as we breathe it, uncalcined and unfiltered, these same sterilised fluids in a few days become clouded with living beings.

Some twenty years ago, M. Pouchet revived the old dispute by announcing his success in artificial generation. This again brought great experimenters like Pasteur and

Tyndall into the field. The labours of these two finished experts were rewarded with success of another kind. They succeeded in destroying bacterial¹ life, and effectually excluded its existence from infusions most favourable to its development. But the advocates of spontaneous generation were not yet convinced. Dr. Bastian wrote and lectured energetically in its support. He did not doubt the fact that the air contains some germs of living organisms, and that the admission of these into suitable fluids would initiate fermentation or putrefaction. But his reply to Dr. Tyndall came to this: After boiling and sealing up the infusions, my flasks swarm with bacteria; and you admit that some of yours do the same. What justifies the assumption that these bacteria or their germs can only be accounted for by supposing them to have survived the boiling? What present warrant is there for supposing that a naked, or almost naked, speck of protoplasm can withstand four, six, or eight hours' boiling?² Dr. Bastian thinks there is none. Besides, he argues, admitting the possibility of imperfection in the experiments—admitting the possibility of contaminating air having reached the infusion, how does the germ-theorist know that that particular air contained living germs? How does he know that life in these instances was not initiated by “organic particles and fragments resulting from the breaking up of previous living matter of various kinds?” I don't believe bacteria have any germs at all. The assumption that they have is no better than a guess to suit a foregone conclusion. “In the present state of the evidence bearing upon the subject, I regard the hypothesis of spontaneous generation as the most logical and consistent interpretation of the facts which are at present known.”

¹ The name *bacteria* is given to the smallest known organisms on account of the staff-like form of many of them. They vary in size and shape, some of them being globular.

Some high authorities have pronounced them to be vegetables; but they cannot properly be classed either as plants or animals.

² *Nineteenth Century*, Feb. 1878.

1. What is the death-point of living matter, or what amount of boiling can it resist? 2. What does the air contain? These are the two minor issues upon which the main problem turns.

The death-point of living matter, unfortunately for Dr. Bastian's argument, is at present undetermined. Desiccation before entering the infusion, an oily surface, or other unknown causes, may prevent contact with the boiling fluid. A germ may "pass unwetted and unscathed" through sulphuric acid, and in like manner it may escape destruction by a heated liquid. But, according to Professor Tyndall, no infusion can withstand discontinuous heating. If the germs be killed *in the order of their resistance*, three minutes is "found sufficient to accomplish what three hundred minutes continuous boiling failed to accomplish." As to *naked* bacteria, Professor Tyndall ignores their existence. It is true that here and there an experimental flask does contain life; a hundred and thirty such were submitted to the Royal Society in January 1876. "In one flask, and in one only, a small mycelium was discovered."¹ "In this flask, and in it only, a small orifice was discovered through which the infusion could be projected, and by which the germinal matter of the air had had access to the flask." With respect to the existence of bacterial germs, the *Bacillus subtilis* of hay and the *Bacillus anthracis* of splenic fever are known to propagate themselves by spores "which may be rendered as plain to the eye of the microscopist as peas in a pod."

The only debatable ground left as a footing for the heterogenist seems to be on the needle's point of his organic débris. To this hypothesis there are two replies. If the débris is dead, is it more probable that it should engender life in the lifeless infusion, than that the denied living germs should do so? If the débris is not dead, there is no beginning of life.

Strictly speaking, spontaneous generation ought to have

¹ *Nineteenth Century*, March 1878.

nothing to do with organic matter, either dead or alive. The question is, whether a saline solution which will sustain bacterial life, or which enters into the composition of bacteria, will rearrange its atoms, or can by any means short of the introduction of living or once-living matter be made to rearrange them, so as to originate the protoplasm of bacterium. Albumen, fat, infusions of mutton, turnip, hay, &c., are either ready-made protoplasm, or else contain protoplasm. But can we put together life by putting together the chemical constituents of the matter of life? Until we can we are not its creators.

In his "Fragments of Science," Professor Tyndall writes: "Holding as I do the nebular hypothesis, I am logically bound to deduce the life of the world from forces inherent in the nebula. With this view . . . it seemed but fair to associate the reasons which cause me to conclude that every attempt made in our day to generate life independently of antecedent life has utterly broken down." If Professor Tyndall literally means *forces*, I see no logical objection why these forces should not be manipulated as we manipulate other natural forces. If he means that *life* was inherent in the nebula, it is not easy to understand what conception of it is compatible with conditions implied by the nebular hypothesis.

As to the theological consequences, the making of a bacterium is only more significant than the making of a diamond, in that a living organism is more interesting than a crystal. Under no conceivable circumstances can we ever know more than how to assemble the appropriate conditions—how to combine the *already* fitted materials, the congress of which is essential to life.

The true and vast importance of the subject lies in its relation to surgery and infectious diseases. The discoveries of Dr. Tyndall and of Dr. Budd as to the contents of the air, and the practical application of these discoveries by Mr. Lister, have enabled the surgeon to perform hundreds of operations which, before the antiseptic treatment, were

far oftener fatal than they are now successful. If also it be true that one-seventh of the human race die of tubercle, and tubercle is due to the presence of *bacilli* in the blood, the investigations of Dr. Koch of Berlin and of M. Pasteur have been productive of results the extraordinary value of which it is beyond our power yet to estimate.

LETTER VI.

WE must for the present content ourselves with taking life as ready-made. We can, however, begin where, to our very limited powers of penetration, *seems* to be its beginning—the undifferentiated structureless germ.

The most systematic account of germ-development yet offered is to be found in Professor Hackel's two famous books, the "History of Creation" and the "Evolution of Man." Since the publication of these, Mr. F. M. Balfour's great work on "Comparative Embryology," while adding enormously to the stock of facts, compels us to receive some of Professor Hackel's deductions with caution. Of course Professor Hackel's own observations are not to be contested; and for the superficial notice here required no better text-books are needed than his.

Professor Hackel's theory is that, all living things are derived from MONERA; and that monera themselves are constantly coming into being by a simple and natural process. "The entire body of one of these monera during life is nothing more than a shapeless, mobile, little lump of mucus or slime, consisting of an albuminous combination of carbon."¹ To the naked eye the moneron is about the size of a pin's head. It wriggles about in the liveliest manner, projecting and withdrawing little filaments like arms and legs from every side. It feeds upon atoms which accidentally become imbedded in its surface. The digestion of food-particles by absorption and simple diffusion through the mass, shows its structureless character.

¹ *History of Creation*, translated by Professor E. Ray Lankester.

Finally, it propagates itself by self-division as soon as it has outgrown its normal size.

This description of the moneron would almost serve for that of the *cell*. "Originally every organic cell is only a single globule of mucus, like a moneron, but differing from it in the fact that the homogeneous albuminous substance has separated itself into two different parts, a firmer albuminous body, the *cell-kernel* (nucleus), and an external softer albuminous body, the *cell-substance* or *body* (protoplasma)." The term "cell," therefore, does not always mean a little bladder filled with viscid fluid, as was formerly supposed to be the case; for while some cells have limiting membranes, others are without. Plant-cells are, for the main part, encased; but most of the animal-cells—those, for instance, in our own bodies, such as the colourless corpuscles in the blood—are naked specks of protoplasm with a nucleus.

Professor Hackel accounts for the formation of the kernel "by the condensation of the innermost central part of the albumen;" the naked cell puts on the cell-membrane, likewise, in a quite simple physical manner, "either as a chemical deposit or as a physical condensation in the uppermost stratum of the mass, or as a secretion."

Having got from the moneron to the cell, we must next speak of the "cell-theory." Goethe had stated that, "every living being is not a unity, but a plurality. Even when it appears as an individual, it is the reunion of beings living and existing in themselves," &c. About thirty years ago Schleiden and Schwann confirmed this statement, establishing the doctrine that the tissues of every plant and animal are built up of cells. The language of Goethe might now be used by Dr. Virchow or Claude Bernard; and in the words of Hackel, "Every organic cell is to a certain degree an independent organism, a so-called 'elementary organism,' or an 'individual of the first order.' Every higher organism is, in a measure, a society or a state

of such variously shaped elementary individuals, variously developed by division of labour."

The metazoon or many-celled organism is but a colony of protozoa or single-celled organisms. How protozoa become metazoa is not by any means so clear as Professor Hæckel seems to think. The first step must necessarily be one of reproduction. Amongst the protozoa there are three ways in which this is accomplished: (1) fission, (2) budding or gemmation, (3) spore formation. Fission takes place, as in the moneron, by self-division, "the nucleus when present becoming divided simultaneously with the cell-body." "The process of budding differs mainly from simple fission in the fact that the two organisms produced are dissimilar in size." Spore formation consists "in the breaking up of the organisms into a number . . . of portions, each of which eventually develops into an organism like the parent form."¹

The mere multiplication of the protozoa does not, however, explain the development of the metazoa. These "all originate from the coalescence of two cells, the ovum and spermatozoon. The coalesced product of these cells—the fertilised ovum—then undergoes a process known as the segmentation, in the course of which it becomes divided in typical cases into a number of uniform cells."² The process of reproduction here, then, is no longer asexual, but sexual; and we pass from ordinary unicellular forms to a special unicellular form—the egg. What is this egg? "Every ovum," says Mr. Balfour, "has the character of a simple cell. It is formed of a mass of naked protoplasm, containing in its interior a nucleus, within which there is a nucleolus." "Every primitive egg," says Hæckel, "being originally an entirely simple, somewhat round, moving, naked cell, possessing no membrane, and consisting only of the nucleus and protoplasm."³ In spite of the ova being "entirely simple," there appear

¹ Balfour.

² *Comparative Embryology*, vol. ii. p. 274.

³ *Evolution of Man*.

to be only certain cells "which have the capacity of becoming ova." These are called by Mr. Balfour "germinal cells." "The mode of conversion of the germinal cells into ova is somewhat diverse." With these modes we need not further trouble ourselves. But the embryologist does not tell us wherein lies their "capacity;" yet this is what we should much like to know.

The process of fertilisation is also suggestive of difficulties which are beyond the range of existing science. Professor Häckel's hypothesis is that "growth, which is the condition necessary to production, was attained by the union of two full-grown cells into a single cell, &c. At first the two united cells may have been entirely alike. Soon, however, by natural selection, a contrast must have arisen between them. For it must have been very advantageous to the newly created individual in the struggle for existence to have inherited various qualities from the two parent cells. The complete development of this progressive contrast between the two producing cells led to sexual differentiation. One cell became a female egg-cell, the other a male seed or sperm-cell."¹ The working of natural selection is less easily followed here than might be wished. The implied principle is that, the "contrast," in cells at first "entirely alike," was the consequence of unlike exposure to incident forces; and that the new resultant, produced by fusion, profited by the education, so to speak, which the original cells had received. This principle proving more successful than parthenogenesis—self-production—was seized upon by natural selection, and became a law of nature. The advantage to the "newly created individual" is intelligible enough; and natural selection would undoubtedly favour beings endowed with the capacities of two parents instead of one. But inasmuch as it is the offspring and not the maternal cells that are better provided for the struggle, one does not see how the original production can thus be accounted for. The

¹ *Evolution of Man*, vol. ii. p. 391.

question is rather one of primary variation ; which will be considered later on.

The difference between the germ and the sperm-cell, between the ovum and the spermatozoon, is enormous ; and the process of their union, though a conjugation, is at all events inexplicable upon mere mechanical principles. To take a typical case of fecundation—that of *Asterias glacialis*,—when the ovum has arrived at maturity, a number of small vesicles “aggregate themselves into a single clear nucleus, which gradually travels towards the centre of the egg, &c. If, at this time, the spermatozoa [which are infinitesimally small as compared with the egg] are allowed to come in contact with the egg, their heads (they are composed of a nucleus or head and a mobile protoplasmic flagellum or tail), their heads soon become enveloped in the investing mucilaginous coat. A prominence pointing towards the nearest spermatozoon now arises from the superficial layer of protoplasm of the egg, and grows till it comes in contact with the spermatozoon.”¹ The spermatozoon then worms its way through the porous membrane, leaving its tail behind it. “At the moment of contact between the spermatozoon and the egg, the outermost layer of the protoplasm of the latter raises itself as a distinct membrane, which separates from the egg and prevents the entrance of other spermatozoa.” The head having entered, forms a small pronucleus. “At whatever point of the egg the spermatozoon may have entered, it gradually travels towards the female pronucleus. The latter . . . remains motionless till the rays of the male pronucleus come in contact with it, after which its condition of repose is exchanged for one of activity, and it rapidly approaches the male pronucleus, . . . and eventually fuses with it.”

Immediately after the fusion, what is called the egg-cleavage or segmentation begins—first into two, then into four, eight, &c., successive parts. “At an earlier or later

¹ *Comparative Embryology*, vol. i. p. 65.

stage," says Huckel, "the entire mass of cleavage-cells divides into two essentially different groups, which range themselves in two separate cell-strata—the primary germ-layers."¹ These germ-layers, as we shall see, contain the future, ay, and the past history of the growing organism.

When the segmentation is completed, "these segments usually form a wall one row of cells thick round a central cavity, which is known as the segmentation cavity, or the cavity of Von Baer. Such a sphere is known as a blastosphere. . . . When the segmentation results in the formation of a blastosphere, one-half of the blastosphere may be pushed in towards the opposite half, and a GASTRULA be thus produced." This is called "invagination," from *vagina*, a sheath. Like the sheath formed by turning the finger of a glove into the hand of the glove, the cavity has two walls. These walls are the germinal layers out of which most of the animal organs are evolved. Of the two layers of which the gastrula is composed, "the inner one is known as the hypoblast, and the outer as the epiblast, while the pore leading into its cavity lined by the hypoblast is the blastopore." This blastopore when furnished with minute tentacles is really the animal's mouth.

Besides invagination, there is another way in which the cavity—for ever after to be the alimentary tract—is formed: this is delamination. When the segmentation ends in a solid mass like a mulberry called a morula, either the surface of the morula may become depressed, and the dent may become a groove, and the groove may deepen into a cavity, which finally becomes a sheath;² or else the solid mass of cells separate or delaminate straightway into two layers. Both methods occur, and both with numerous minor variations. Both, however, result in the differentiation of the epiblast and the hypoblast cells. In addition to these two layers there is a third or mid-layer—the mesoblast.

¹ *Evolution of Man*, vol. ii. p. 186.

² *Ibid.*, vol. i. p. 186.

“The organs which may be regarded as mainly derived from the epiblast are—(1.) the skin; (2.) the nervous system; (3.) the organs of special sense. Those from the mesoblast are—(1.) the general connective tissue and skeleton; (2.) the vascular system and body cavity; (3.) the muscular system; (4.) the urinogenital system. Those from the hypoblast are the alimentary tract and its derivatives, &c.”¹

For further details there is no room here. Taken forwards and backwards, inductively and deductively, the lesson to be learnt from embryology is twofold: “From the one-celled organisation of the human egg and of the eggs of other animals, the conclusion directly follows, according to this fundamental law of biogeny, that all animals, including man, descend originally from a one-celled organism.”² “Ontogenesis, or the development of the individual, is a short and quick repetition of phylogenesis, or the development of the tribe to which it belongs, determined by the laws of inheritance and adaptation.”

Three branches of science contribute direct evidence to establish this latter principle: embryology, comparative anatomy, and palæontology. From embryology we learn that, at the commencement of his existence, man, like every other animal, descends from a single cell. By repeated division this cell is multiplied. A mulberry-germ is formed by the massing of these cells. The gastrula or cup-germ is developed either by invagination or by delamination. The cells of the inner lining are differentiated from those of the outer walls; and from these walls are formed a primitive intestine and a skin which is the potential source of movement, sensation, consciousness, and will.

From comparative embryology and comparative anatomy combined we gather that man, in some stage of his foetal development, passes through phases which agree in all substantial with the organisation of some of the

¹ Balfour, *ubi supra*, vol. ii. p. 323.

² Hückel, *Evolution of Man*, vol. i. p. 140.

simplest of both invertebrate and vertebrate groups of animals. "Each organism reproduces the variations inherited from all its ancestors at successive stages in its individual ontogeny which correspond with those at which the variations appeared in its ancestors."¹ At one period of man's existence he possesses the "form-value" of the worm tribe, with a single intestinal tract having two orifices instead of the original blastopore. Later on, a spinal canal enclosed in a tube of skin is added; and man becomes a skull-less vertebrate like the lowest of this class,—the living amphioxus or lancelet. Presently he passes into the ichthyod stage. Two pairs of shapeless limbs appear, the homologues of dorsal and ventral fins. Gill-openings are completely formed, the first pair of gill-arches becoming afterwards upper and lower jaw. Seen in this particular stage, the human embryo, though well defined, is scarcely distinguishable from the embryo of such diverse animals as a bat, a tortoise, a chick, a dog, a sheep, &c.

Comparative anatomy, from beginning to end, is a continuous verification of the descent theory. It teaches that from fishes to amphibians, from amphibians to reptiles, from reptiles to birds, from birds to mammals, the passage is as gradual, even amongst living beings, in most classes, as is that from lemurs through the apes up to man.

Paleontology, instructed by comparative anatomy, presents us with such volumes of facts testifying to the mutability and blood-relationship of different species, that it is almost impossible to select any one handful of these facts which shall be more weighty than another. The embryos of existing species again and again are found to bear the closest resemblance to ancient and extinct forms of life, although this resemblance is quite obscured in the adult form. Wide as the diversity seems at first sight between the flora and fauna of the past and present,

¹ Balfour, *Introduction*.

the palæontologist is struck with the veritable smallness in the changes. Hooker declares that not a single new ordinal type of vegetable structure has yet been discovered in a fossil state. By one of the greatest of comparative anatomists we are told that "no fossil animal is so distinct from those now living as to require to be arranged in a separate class from those which contain existing forms."¹ It is calculated by M. Pictet that the lowest proportion of the genera of animals living during two consecutive formations was about one-third; the average number of genera common to almost any two successive geological eras being about 78 per cent.

As our knowledge is extended, as our collections are increased, so are proofs accumulated that the changes have, as a rule, been slow and gradual. Though a few distinct types occasionally appear unheralded by their congeners, and disappear without recognisable descendants, this is an exception to the law. In the case of some genera, palæontology has discovered intercallary forms which perfectly fill the gaps, and make the series of gradations as palpable as though we had witnessed the transformation. Between animals the most outwardly distinct, as, for instance, between reptiles and birds, transition forms, which the boldest imagination could hardly have pictured once, are now but a seven-days' wonder. In the archæopteryx at the British Museum a feathered bird is exhibited with perching feet, but with free finger-like claws on the fore-limb, similar to those of a reptile, and possessed of a reptile's tail fringed with feathers. Were its head not wanting, we should probably have a beak set with teeth; as indeed we have in those wonderful birds the hesperornis and ichthyornis, found in the chalk of Western America.

Just as birds existed with reptilian characteristics, reptiles existed with those of birds. In the group Ornithoscelida, the compsognathus and iguandon were

¹ Huxley, *Persistent Types*.

reptiles that walked on their hind-legs, with short flapper-like fore-limbs, and snout prolonged like a beak. It is even possible that the *compsognathus* may have been a feathered reptile. "On comparing the pelvis and hind-limb of the *ornithoscelidan* with that of the crocodile on the one side, and that of the bird on the other, it is obvious that it represents a middle term between the two."¹ Again, as an instance of atavism or reversion to ancestral types, Dr. Huxley observes, "The examination of the pelvis of a chick, however, shows that each half is made up of three distinct bones, which answer to those which remain distinct throughout life in the crocodile."

Between birds and mammals the passage is consummated by the living duck-bill and the echidna. Nor is the affinity of the *ornithorynchus* to birds confined to its bill. It is oviparous, *i.e.*, the fœtus derives its nourishment before birth entirely from the egg; although, as a sort of compromise between the lower and higher order of beings (to each of which it partly belongs), the egg is hatched within the body. Furthermore, while the breastbone of the duck-bill resembles the *furculum* or merry-thought of a bird, the shoulder-bones are analogous to those of a bird, and most significantly evince relationship to a reptile's.

Between ruminants and pigs there is no living link; but palæontology discovers the *anoplotherium*, and the want is at once supplied. In the *palæotherium* are united many peculiarities of such varied structures as those of the rhinoceros, the horse, and the tapir. But of all instances of verified gradation, that afforded by the horse tribe is the most complete and striking. Between our existing species and the *orhippus* of the Eocene period, four intermediate fossil species have been discovered; making six in all. The *orhippus* has four toes on the front limbs and three on the hind. Next we have an equine animal with three toes in front, and a large splint

¹ Huxley, *American Addresses*, p. 63.

representing the aborted fourth toe; then an animal with three toes and a very small splint; then three toes without the splint; then one toe and two splints or small digits like dew-claws, which did not reach the ground; and, lastly, our one-toed horse with its two minute splints, which themselves have nearly disappeared.

When, in addition to these facts, geology instructs us that, the order of time in which these six equine species inhabited the earth corresponds with the order of gradation—that the later the date, the closer the likeness to living kinds, how can we resist the inference to descent?

Again, the remarkable discoveries of M. Gaudry in the Pyrenees, the Himalaya, and Greece, have enabled him to draw up a set of genealogical tables showing at a glance how gradual the change has been between many genera and species, now living, and their predecessors of the Miocene and Pliocene periods. Taking the proboscideans alone, he has arranged in chronological order more than thirty distinct species between our elephants of India and Africa and the mastodons of the Miocene era. Several other tribes have been treated by this eminent naturalist in the same way. But if the theory of transmutation can thus be confirmed in a single instance, what argument, save an appeal to ignorance, can resist its adoption throughout?

Precisely the same inference is forced upon us from other sources. Look at the geographical distribution of plants and animals. Certain great divisions of the globe possess their own distinct families. In Australia there are kangaroos, wombats, opossums: in South America, sloths, armadillos, and lamas: in Europe and Asia, rhinoceroses, elephants, bears, and tigers. Now, the fossil remains from each of these divisions agree in type with the living kinds. The extinct mammals of Australia were marsupial; those of South America were Edentata; and so on. Are we to reject the obvious conclusion that the present tribes are lineally descended from the past,

or shall we call in a miracle? It is not as if the regions occupied by the distinct races were the only ones fitted for their habits; all the geographical features, including climate, are repeated in many parts of the world. But physical barriers, even mountain-ranges, deserts, and great rivers, seem everywhere sufficient to occasion the distinctness. "On both sides of the Straits of Malacca the Indian fauna exhibits abundance of species in common, wherever the depth does not exceed 100 fathoms; whereas if the soundings are deeper, even though the separate lands be in sight of each other, the birds and mammalia are quite distinct."¹

Notwithstanding this distinctness in secondary characters, the entire vegetable and animal kingdoms are respectively marked by a community of structure or "unity of plan." This great truth, combined with the existence in both kingdoms of rudimentary organs, can only be explained on the theory of descent with modification. There is no other meaning in the fact that the hand of a man, the foot of a mole, the leg of a horse, the paddle of a porpoise, and the wing of a bat are all constructed on the same pattern, *i.e.*, include similar bones in the same relative positions; or that the dragon-fly, the ladybird, the butterfly, and the flea each have primarily twenty segments; or that "under the down of the moth and the hard wing-cases of the beetle and the calcareous framework of the lobster we should discover the same number of divisions;" or that in the necks of all mammals we should find seven cervical vertebræ, whether the neck be long as in the giraffe, or rudimentary as in the whale.

Perhaps no circumstantial evidence is so strong as the presence of rudimentary organs. Take a few of the notorious instances. In some snakes there are rudiments of a pelvis and hind-limbs. In that extraordinary species of *manatus*, the cow-fish, we find the perfect but useless bones of fore-limbs. This animal is described by Mr. Wallace

¹ Wallace, *Physical Geography of the Malay Archipelago*.

as having "stiff bristles on the lips, and a few distinctly scattered hairs over the body. Behind the head are two powerful oval fins, and just beneath them are the breasts, from which, on pressure being applied, flows a stream of beautiful white milk; . . . the lungs about two feet long, &c., and can be blown out like a bladder; . . . no rudiments of posterior limbs; the fore-limbs, on the contrary, are very highly developed, the bones exactly corresponding to those of the human arm, having even the five fingers, with every joint distinct, yet enclosed in a stiff inflexible skin, where not a joint can have any motion."¹

The description of the cow-fish's lungs is notable, as confirming the theory that lungs are the transformed swim-bladders of fishes,—a theory illustrated by the respiratory organ of the mud-fishes, whose swim-bladders are furnished with air-inhaling vessels; and also by amphibia, in which the swim-bladder is first replaced by a transparent thin-walled sac.

In some insects the wings lie under wing-cases firmly soldered together. In plants the male flowers often have a rudiment of a pistil. The embryos of many ruminants have aborted teeth in the mid-bone of the upper jaw. Foetal whales have teeth, not whalebone. Animals which live entirely in the dark have eyes not made for seeing. In ourselves we have the rudiments of a nictitating membrane, so serviceable to other mammals which are handless, and to birds and reptiles for cleaning and lubricating the eye. We have in the os coccyx, from three to five vertebræ of an aborted tail; in the cœcum, a small quite useless appendage of the intestine, which corresponds to a large and useful organ in gramminivorous animals. We have abnormal muscles completely resembling muscles in the hands and arms of the higher apes. During the sixth month the human foetus is thickly covered with fine wool-like hair; round the mouth it is much thicker than on the head. "The whole surface, including even the

¹ *Travels on the Amazon and Rio Negro*, p. 186.

forehead and ears, is thus thickly clothed; but it is a significant fact that the palms of the hands and the soles of the feet are quite naked, like the inferior surfaces of all four extremities in most of the lower animals.”¹

Genetic relationship and transmutation brought about by disuse would satisfactorily account for this state of things. When we are told that the sham-winged beetles inhabit small and exposed islands, it is easy to understand how “natural selection would continue slowly to reduce the organ, until it was rendered harmless and rudimentary.”

ATAVISM, or reversion to ancestral types, is another remarkable principle which has to be taken into the account. This is, after all, but one form of the principle of inheritance which so often forces itself upon our notice. It is, therefore, not necessary to adduce instances to support the fact. Most of us have had some experience of the manner in which plants and animals, allowed to run wild, always tend to return to wild types: and every one has daily opportunities of observing family features, family dispositions, family diseases, &c. What, then, is the meaning of such cases as the following? Why do pigeons of the most distinct race, when crossed, beget young which so frequently resemble in some, if not in all respects, the colour and markings of the rock-pigeon? How is it that a barb crossed with a spot, a nun with a tumbler, &c., themselves not having a single blue feather, produce blue offspring with the black bars on the tail feathers so peculiarly characteristic of the rock-pigeon? If this means atavism, the tendency in fowls—of such pure breeds as the Game, Malay, Cochin, Dorking, and Bantam—to have black breasts, red backs, and frequently the identical plumage of the wild *Gallus bankiva*, indicates descent from the latter. The stripes on the shoulders and legs, so common in dun horses, mean descent from some remote parent like the quagga or zebra. The extraordinary growth of canine teeth occasionally found in man, as in

¹ Darwin, *The Descent of Man*, vol. i. p. 26.

the case of the Naulette skull and others, points to an ancestry which is happily very distant. The abnormal occurrence of a double uterus in woman, interpreted in the same way, means reversion to the marsupial type; for this cannot be explained as a case of arrested development, since "no such stage is passed through during the ordinary development of the embryo."¹

The method of CLASSIFICATION now universally adopted, whether by the opponents or advocates of evolution, is one and the same. What are the characters considered of most importance for the purpose? Not "those parts of the structure which determine the habits of life, and the general place of each being in the economy of nature." These are looked upon as merely "adaptive or analogical characters." They may be mainly due to external conditions or so-called accident, and the true affinity may be completely hidden beneath them. Nor is the physiological importance of an organ any measure of its classificatory value; for the groups of animals possessed, for example, of such important organs as those for propelling the blood or for aerating it, or those for propagating the race, are so numerous that these characters are of subordinate value for classification. "Therefore," says Darwin, "we choose those characters which, so far as we can judge, are the least likely to have been modified in relation to the conditions of life to which each species has been recently exposed. Rudimentary structures on this view are as good, or even sometimes better, than other parts of the organisation. We care not how trifling a character may be, &c.; if it prevail throughout many and different species, *especially those having very different habits of life*, it assumes high value."² And why? Not simply as a mark of resemblance, (we have far more obvious resemblances which we set aside), but as a mark of affinity—most important, because its presence cannot be accounted for on any hypothesis save that of its inheritance from a common

¹ *Descent of Man.*

² *Origin of Species.*

parent. "Community of descent is the hidden bond which naturalists have been unconsciously seeking;" for, the natural system of classification is founded on descent with modification.

The remarkable instances of MIMICRY which were first seized upon by Mr. Bates, and have been so extensively illustrated by Mr. Wallace, seem to receive a simple explanation in the "survival of the fittest." Indeed, Mr. Wallace's theorem, that "those races having colours best adapted to concealment from their enemies would invariably survive the longest," is too self-evident to be disputed. Hares, partridges, grouse, ptarmigan, &c., are all protected by the resemblance of their own colours to those of their habitats. The sole or flounder, lying at the bottom of the water, is identical in colour with the sand; while its under surface, as is that of all fish, is a bluish white, which serves admirably for protection against enemies when swimming beneath, and looking upwards toward the light. Mr. Bates and Mr. Wallace give scores of examples of imitation which serve the purpose of concealment. "The most wonderful and undoubted case of protective resemblance in a butterfly I have ever seen is that of the common Indian *Kallima inachis*, and its Malayan ally *Kallima paralekta*."¹ These insects are described as exactly resembling the dead or decaying leaves amongst which they settle. "We come now to a still more extraordinary part of the imitation, for we find representations of the leaves in every stage of decay, variously blotched and mildewed and pierced with holes, and in many cases irregularly covered with powdery black dots gathered into patches and spots, so closely resembling the various kinds of minute fungi that grow on dead leaves that it is impossible to avoid thinking, at first sight, that the butterflies themselves have been attacked by real fungi." The phylidium or "walking leaf" is another. The "walking-stick insect" is another. "Some of these are a foot long and as

¹ Wallace, *Natural Selection*, p. 59.

thick as one's finger, and their whole colouring, form, rugosity, and the arrangement of the head, legs, and antennæ are such as to render them absolutely identical in appearance with dead sticks."

Another class of imitations to which Mr. Bates gave the name of "mimicry," is the likeness assumed by innoxious insects to others which are unpalatable or hurtful to insectivorous animals. There are bee-like, wasp-like, ichneumon-like, insects which are nothing but harmless moths. Mr. Bates discovered a beetle so like a wasp in form and colour that even he was at first afraid to touch it. The same distinguished naturalist describes a large caterpillar to outward appearances like a snake. "The three segments behind the head were dilatable at the will of the insect, and had on each side a large black pupillated spot which resembled the eye of the reptile. Moreover, it resembled a poisonous viper, not a harmless species of snake, as was proved by the imitation of keeled scales on the crown, produced by the recumbent feet as the caterpillar threw itself backwards."¹

Mr. Wallace has cited a number of instances to show that the dull colours of female birds are for the purpose of concealment during incubation. His case is immensely strengthened by the exceptions to the rule. When the plumage of the female is bright, she has either a domed nest or else builds in hidden places. When the plumage of the male is less conspicuous than that of the female, the male hatches the eggs instead of the female.

Darwin is of opinion that adornment and beauty of colour in animals is due to sexual selection. This view is countenanced by the habit of display in the males, so notable in peacocks; also by the brighter plumage or increased beauty of the male during the breeding season; and further by the decided preference evinced sometimes by the females in mating. Probably both these agencies are instrumental in producing the one effect. For although

¹ *Ubi supra*, p. 99.

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the ends of concealment would be served by the dull plumage of the female, the greater safety of the male would not promote brilliant colouring.

With respect to the showiness of some caterpillars, butterflies, &c., it has been constantly observed that such insects are for some reason distasteful to other animals.

The brightness of flowers serves to attract the insects by whose instrumentality they are fecundated. "I have come to this conclusion," says Darwin, "from finding it an invariable rule, that when a flower is fertilised by the wind, it never has a gaily-coloured corolla."

We have now run through the stock arguments to be found in the best modern works on Evolution. It will be our task in the next few letters to consider some of the objections which the doctrines here set forth have given rise to.

LETTER VII.

THE mass and weight of evidence that may be advanced in favour of Evolution is so overwhelming that, for my part, I am unable to look upon the theory as any longer debatable. As regards *natural selection*, there are some impediments in its way,—at least to its entire acceptance, that demand attention; all the more because both adherents and opponents are apt to think, the doctrine has a special bearing upon the argument from design. The inquiry will best be pursued by meeting the objections in the following order:—(1) The absence of transitional form; (2) the limits of variability; (3) the time required; (4) the efficiency of natural selection.

It is admitted on all hands, even by the most irreconcilable of Darwin's adversaries, that his fairness in dealing with difficulties, nay, his care to seek them, commands respect for the founder of the theory, whatever may be thought of the perfervour of some of his disciples. It has often been said that, in order to fully estimate the weak points of natural selection, we must go to Darwin himself, who, surpassing all others in the knowledge of his subject, is likewise the most painstaking in exposing its defects. The sixth and seventh chapters of the last edition of the "Origin of Species" are devoted to objections which have occurred to its author, and also to such as, up to the present time, have been advanced by others. Amongst the foremost of these at home is Mr. Mivart, to whose strictures, in the "Genesis of Species," Darwin gives his special attention. Some of the arguments in Mr. Murphy's "Habit and Intelligence," and in Mr. Wallace's

“Natural Selection,” are also well worthy of consideration. But perhaps the ablest attack yet made within equal limits is Professor Tait’s skilful essay in the “North British Review” of March 1867. As this is not very accessible, I shall refer to it repeatedly.

It is a maxim with Darwin that “Natura non facit saltum.” “Natural selection,” he tells us, “acts only by taking advantage of slight successive variations. She can never take a great and sudden leap, but must advance by short and sure, though slow steps.”¹ “This canon, if we look to the present inhabitants alone of the world, is not strictly correct; but if we include all those of past times, whether known or unknown, it must on this theory be strictly true.”² In the closing chapter of the “Origin of Species” he again repeats the canon, under the conviction that “every fresh addition to our knowledge tends to confirm it.”³ We shall be reminded of these sentences by and by. At present they preface the remark that, “by this theory innumerable transitional forms must have existed; why do we not find them embedded in countless numbers in the crust of the earth?” This is the oldest and most obvious of the objections to natural selection. It does not touch the doctrine of evolution, for evolution does not pledge itself to minute and gradual changes; but with anti-Darwinians, it is an *ultima ratio*. “It is not possible,” says Mr. Mivart, “to deny the *a priori* probability of the preservation of at least a few *minutely transitional* forms in some instances, if *every* species without exception has arisen exclusively by such minute and gradual transitions.”⁴ Professor Tait asks how it is that, we find such vast numbers of perfectly similar specimens—so many fossils of one variety—and fail to meet with more varieties, which probably far exceeded the number of individuals that have existed of any one variety. “It is very strange that the specimens should be so exactly alike

¹ *Origin of Species*, p. 156.

² *Ibid.*, p. 166.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 414.

⁴ *The Genesis of Species*, p. 153.

as they are, if, in fact, they came and vanished by a gradual change."¹ Darwin himself declares that "the number of intermediate and transitional links between all living and extinct species must have been inconceivably great."²

In certain formations whole groups of species suddenly make their appearance. What is the answer to this? Mr. Mivart thinks it "absolutely incredible that birds, bats, and pterodactyles should have left the remains they have, and yet not a single relic be preserved in any one instance of any of these different forms of wing in their incipient and relatively imperfect functional condition." Bats have always "presented the exact type of existing forms." "The pterodactyles, again, though a numerous group, are all true and perfect pterodactyles."

The geographical distribution of animals strongly favours the Darwinian theory of descent. The resemblance between extinct and existing forms in different parts of the world is otherwise quite inexplicable. Yet Mr. Mivart produces a long list of genera, species of which are met with at most unaccountable distances apart. Families of fishes, for instance, are represented in the fresh waters of India, Java, Borneo, and Aleppo, and again on the West Coast of Africa. "The characinidæ (a family of the physostomous fishes) are found in Africa and South America," &c. "Pleurodont iguanian lizards abound in the South American region, but nowhere else, &c. Yet pleurodont lizards, strange to say, are found in Madagascar." Amongst the insectivorous beasts of Madagascar there is one member of the group, the solenodon, "which is also found in Cuba and Hayti." "The connection, however, between the West Indies and Madagascar must surely have been at a time when the great lemurine group was absent," &c.³ Darwin quotes Professor Dana to the effect that, "it is certainly a wonderful fact that New Zealand should have a closer resemblance in its crustacea

¹ *Genesis of Species*, p. 317.

² *Origin of Species*, p. 266.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

to Great Britain, its antipode, than to any other part of the world.”¹

The main reply to these and all similar objections is—the imperfection of the geological record. There is also something to be said about the supposed multitude of the individuals of intermediate forms. Let us hear Darwin on this head before I select a few passages which justify his reliance on the other and greater plea. His opinion is that, we have no right to expect to discover as many varieties as individuals of one variety, because the connecting links would never have constituted large masses. “If we take a varying species inhabiting a very large area, we shall have to adapt two varieties to two large areas, and a third variety to a narrow intermediate zone. The intermediate variety, consequently, will exist in lesser numbers from inhabiting a narrow and lesser area,” &c.² Darwin has found this to be practically the case; hence he concludes “that varieties linking two other varieties together generally have existed in lesser numbers than the forms which they connect,” &c. Another matter which objectors are apt to overlook is, “that the parent form of any two or more species would not be in all its characters directly intermediate between its modified offspring, any more than the rock-pigeon is directly intermediate in crop and tail between its descendants, the pouter and fantail pigeons.”³ If we want the intermediates between distinct groups of animals, we must seek them in the remote past; and the imperfection of the geological record forbids us to expect any such discovery.

It may here be noticed by the way that, uninformed critics point with sceptical scorn to the impassable gulf even between animals low down in the scale; as if the lowest of the vertebrates, or at all events the lancelet, ought, upon the Darwinian theory, to exhibit signs of relationship to the higher forms of molluscs, or to some of the articulated

¹ *Origin*, &c., p. 338.

² *Ibid.*, p. 136. All references are to the 6th edition, unless otherwise stated.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 408.

animals. But it is a mistake, we are told, to suppose that the soft-bodied sea-squirt is descended from any of the soft-bodied molluscs. The entire vertebrate tribe, to which the sea-squirt, and probably the lancelet, belong, has developed from the worm tribe.¹ Consequently, we vertebrates have nothing to do with insects, any further than through our common descent from the protozoa. "Unfortunately," says Professor Huckel, with unfeigned sorrow, "we lose by this relationship, which might otherwise connect us with termites, ants, bees, and other virtuous members of the articulate class."²

To turn now to the imperfection of the geological record. One is embarrassed with the wealth of instances. To begin with, the sweeping announcement may be made (no geologist disputes it), that, "every spot which is now dry land has been sea at some former period, and every part of the space now covered by the deepest ocean has been land."³ This is no guesswork, mind; we have positive proof as to the submersion. The Alps, the Andes, and the Himalaya, give up their marine shells at the respective heights of 8000, 14,000, and 16,000 feet. Even so late as the beginning of the Eocene period, the Alps rose in some places 10,000, and the Pyrenees 11,000 feet. Professor Ransay found near Snowdon, at 1400 feet above the sea, shells that prove the submersion of Wales so recently as the glacial epoch. But after this the bed of the glacial sea was again laid dry. Great Britain was united, as before, to the Continent; and then came the present state of things. The supposition regarding the bottom of the present ocean is based on the assumption that the proportion of land to water was always about the same. And if the average depth of the sea be roughly taken at 15,000 feet, and we admit that Chimborazo with its 21,000 and Everest with its 29,000 feet have been under water, it is easy to believe that the whole bed of the ocean may have been exposed.

¹ Huckel, *Evolution of Man*, vol. i. p. 251.

² *Ibid.*

³ Lyell, *Prin. of Geology*, vol. i. p. 260.

Whether modern geologists are right or wrong as to the gradual nature of these mighty changes, no one can doubt that the time they occupied must have been very great indeed. Who can say how great? There is nothing to show that the elevation of any of these mountain-ranges was continuous. There may have been enormous periods of rest, or there may have been (what we know to have been in the case of the British Isles) alternating periods of elevation and depression. And what says Darwin to this? Why, that just the very period during which most variation occurs is also that of which there is no record. Extinction will be more rife during subsidence; but preservation will not be effected while the land is rising. No new strata wherein fossils can be embedded are formed on dry land that remains unchanged. "Forests may be as dense and lofty as those of Brazil, and may swarm with quadrupeds, birds, and insects, yet at the end of thousands of years one layer of black mould, a few inches thick, may be the sole representative of those myriads of trees, leaves, flowers, and fruits, those innumerable bones and skeletons of birds, quadrupeds, and reptiles which tenanted the fertile region. Should this land be at length submerged, the waves of the sea may wash away in a few hours the scanty covering of mould, and it may merely impart a darker shade of colour to the next stratum of marl, sand, or other matter newly thrown down."¹ Yes, even where remains have been preserved in the order of their extinction, these, to be discovered, must be upheaved. But if this process be very gradual, they would be removed by denudation as soon as they came to light. The exposure of metamorphic schists and plutonic rocks on an enormous scale in some parts of the world—(Humboldt describes the granitic region of the Parime as at least nineteen times as large as Switzerland)—indicate such an amount of erosion that Darwin may well say: "It is probable

¹ Lyell's *Principles*, vol. i. p. 300.

whole formations have been completely denuded, with not a wreck left behind."

A chapter of instances might easily be added to the scraps here collected. Lyell gives many reasons, such as the perishable nature of organic remains (and we all know "your water is a sore decayer of your whoreson dead body"), why we may seek in vain for relics. Besides, geology is in swaddling-clothes. One need scarcely to have lived half a century to remember the dogmatic assertions of such men as Sedgwick, Murchison, and Agassiz, which recent lights have completely falsified. The discovery of monkeys in the Miocene stage was never dreamed of by Cuvier. Moreover, connecting links, as we have seen, are no longer altogether wanting. The affinity between birds and reptiles is established by the *compsognathus* and the *archæopteryx*; between reptiles and fishes by the *archægosaurus* of the coal measures; between the *orohippus* of the Eocene and the true horse by the nicest of gradations; between bears and wolves; between *hyænas* and civets; between giraffes and deer; and even between the pig and the camel.

With reference to those cases of geographical distribution which the theory of descent seems inadequate to account for, what, we must inquire, were the possible means of dispersion in bygone times? This inquiry should be prefaced by the remark that, Darwin and almost every one of his followers believe in what is called "specific centres," *i.e.*, "that each species has proceeded from a single birthplace." Only upon this hypothesis, they say, can we explain the fact that certain distinct families are confined to different quarters of the globe. They are bound therefore to explain these apparent anomalies without violating the principle of "centres of creation."

Darwin declines to avail himself exclusively of geographical oscillations. He does not believe that the continuity, within *recent* times, of existing continents and

islands can ever be demonstrated. Besides this means of dispersal, however, there were others which would equally serve the purpose. Some of the interchanges amongst flora and fauna of what are now warm and cold regions—such as reindeer in the south of France and the ichthyosaurus in the Arctic regions—are explained by extreme variations of climate hereafter to be considered. We know that vegetation similar to that of Northern Europe once extended to the Arctic regions, “and probably reached the pole.”¹ Alluding to the bones and teeth of the ancient elephants hidden amongst the gnarled roots of the “Cromer forest,” Dr. Huxley says, in his picturesque way, “Sea-beasts, such as the walrus, now restricted to the extreme north, paddled about where birds had twittered among the topmost twigs of the fir-trees.” Darwin mentions a crowd of instances which might be added to Mr. Mivart’s list, all to the effect that forms characteristic of one part of the world are met with in another. And, what climate itself fails to explain may often be ascribed to the direct instrumentality of ice. In Pleistocene times, during the glacial epoch, floating ice would have transported not only plants but animals to parts of the world widely divided by oceans; just as bears and Arctic foxes, and even shipwrecked crews, are now occasionally carried for hundreds of miles upon icebergs. It was not the northern hemisphere alone that was subjected to these severities. Forbes found marks of the ice action in the furrowed rocks of the Cordillera from lat. 13° to 30° south, at a height of about 12,000 feet. “Further south on both sides of the continent, from lat. 40° to the southernmost extremity, we have the clearest evidence of former glacial action in numerous immense boulders transported far from their present source.”²

Still it must be owned, Mr. Mivart’s *centetes* is an awkward interloper, to say nothing of his pleurodont lizard.

¹ Lyell’s *Principles*, &c., chap. xi.

² *Origin*, &c., p. 335.

There are many reasons why the presence of these animals in Madagascar is peculiarly inappropriate. It is a long voyage, even on an iceberg, from Madagascar to the West Indies or South America. Yet changes in the disposition of sea and land would not help us here. We know "that the sea, even in post-tertiary times, covered the space now occupied by the Sahara, so that Africa was for vast periods surrounded by water on every side but the north-east, where it was connected by an isthmus with Asia."¹ Clearly, the chances of a lizard from South America reaching Madagascar *via* this isthmus would be small. Then too, the Mozambique Channel, which separates Madagascar from the mainland, is 300 miles wide. Finally, owing to this circumstance, the indigenous fauna of Madagascar is so distinct as to form a zoological sub-province. There is one escape from the puzzle, so far as the small insectivorous quadruped goes, "it is supposed to have been taken in ships."² But this supposition will hardly avail for the pleurodont. Upon the whole, however, the Darwinians have, I think, the best of it. And we may pass to the next item in our catalogue.

The LIMITS-OF-VARIABILITY question is nothing but the old wrangle about the mutability of species, which, as before observed, lies at the root of the whole discussion. One test, always applied to this, was long thought to be decisive, viz., the sterility of hybrids. We can breed from varieties of the same species, but not from males and females of different species. At any rate, when distinct species do produce offspring, these hybrid offspring are (said to be) barren. Thus Nature, it is alleged, sets her limits to variation.

Now, sterility can no more be acquired by natural selection than barrenness can run in families. Darwin abandons the notion that it can be a byelaw of his theory. His answer virtually is: the allegation is not true, and if it were, it would not signify. "It cannot be maintained

¹ Lyell's *Principles*, &c., vol. ii. p. 346.

² *Ibid.*

that species, when intercrossed, are invariably sterile and varieties invariably fertile, or that sterility is a special endowment of creation."¹ Instead of its being a special endowment, it is but a physical accident. "It is an incidental result of differences in the reproductive system of the parent species."² Which differences, says the selectionist, are products of gradual change in the descendants of a species,—accumulated differences, *i.e.*, of varieties. It is absurd to argue that because the change finally reaches a point at which the varieties cease to interbreed, therefore these varieties which naturalists class as distinct species must be specially created.

Nearly all our experience in this matter is derived from domesticated or from captive animals. The test of domestication gives conflicting results; yet, in both ways I think, favourably to Darwinism. For example: wild animals in captivity do not cross, and often will not interbreed with their own species. In a state of nature, the struggle for existence would suffice to prevent amalgamation. Again, "the domesticated descendants of species, which in their natural state would have been in some degree sterile, when crossed become perfectly fertile together."³ And "with our domesticated animals the various races when crossed together are quite fertile; yet in many cases they are descended from two or more wild species."⁴

In the "Origin of Species" we are furnished with instances of plants whose fertility is much increased by the pollen of other species. M. Quatrefages is quoted as stating that the hybrids of certain moths continued to breed for eight generations. Professor Hæckel cites many cases of the fruitful hybrids of distinct species, "as, among several genera of butterflies . . . the family of carps, finches, poultry, dogs, cats, &c."⁵ The hare-rabbit, or

¹ *Origin, &c.*, p. 422.

² *Ibid.*, p. 235.

³ *Animals and Plants under Domestication*, vol. ii. p. 173.

⁴ *Origin, &c.*, p. 240.

⁵ *History of Creation*, vol. i. p. 147.

Lepus Darwinii, has been bred these thirty years for gastronomic purposes. In Chili the fruitful hybrids of sheep and goats are bred for industrial ends. In fine, the only conclusion one can fairly arrive at is that, fertility or infertility tells us nothing.

Stability of species is thought to be proved on the following grounds. When the Egyptian mummies were first sent to Paris, Cuvier was at once struck with the complete similarity between these perfectly preserved forms, 4000 years old, and their various representatives then living. In opposition to Lamarck's doctrine of evolution, he seized upon the fact to show that, if this were the rate at which transformations took place, the addition of countless ages would be but the addition of countless zeros. Had Cuvier known one-hundredth part of the facts now familiar to every palæontologist, or could he have known of those contained in Dr. Huxley's essay on "Persistent Types of Life," all of which seem to make for immutability, he might have felt as much contempt for the evolutionist of our day as the latter feels, and not infrequently expresses, for his opponent. If we look into the valuable essay last referred to, we shall learn that the four thousand years may certainly be squared, perhaps cubed, and not then shall certain forms be changed. We have it on Hooker's authority that the araucaria which adorns our pleasure-grounds was as it now is long before the long ages of the chalk; on Dr. Huxley's that the scorpion of the coal formations is "hardly distinguishable from such as now live;" that the crocodiles, which entered an appearance just after the coal, "are identical in the essential characters of their organisation" with their uncomely children of to-day. In the chalk "there is found a fish belonging to the highest and most differentiated groups of osseous fishes," &c. This is the beryx, "represented at the present day by very closely allied species which are living in the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans." There are sharks and rays of the primary

rocks (the lowest of the life-bearing series) which "differ no more from existing sharks than these do from one another."¹ The Ganoid group of fishes, also belonging to the Devonian period, "in many important respects," says Mr. Mivart, "more nearly resemble higher vertebrata than do the ordinary or osseous fishes." "The Peruvian lizards differ astonishingly little from the lizards which exist at the present day."²

These instances are certainly not on the side of mutability; and Dr. Huxley's own comments upon them are as little favourable to pure Darwinism. "Obviously if the earliest fossiliferous rocks now known are coeval with the commencement of life, and if their contents give us any just conception of the nature and the extent of the earliest fauna and flora, the insignificant amount of modification which can be demonstrated to have taken place in any one group of animals or plants is quite incompatible with the hypothesis that all living forms are the result of a necessary process of progressive development, entirely comprised within the time represented by the fossiliferous rocks."³ Yet, as the same writer tells us, "this hypothesis [evolution] postulates that the existence of every form must have been preceded by that of some form little different from it."

How are the facts to be reconciled with the hypothesis? Dr. Huxley is armed with a double-barrelled reply. First, the imperfection of the record. Second, we are not to expect change of form unless we have change of conditions. Unless something is gained by it, "there will be no progression, no change of structure through any imaginable series of ages," &c. But has not the change of conditions been enormous? Yet, in the cases above mentioned, and in thousands of others, the consequences have been nil. Cuvier pointed to the change of conditions which dogs and cats have gone through in the course of their long

¹ *Lay Sermons*, p. 218.

² *American Addresses*, p. 41.

³ *Lay Sermons*, p. 226.

companionship with man. These animals abound in every part of the world, and under every climate; but not a limb, not a tooth, has varied in any one essential. Speaking of the conditions of life as a cause of variation, Darwin writes: "We have also seen that the degree to which domesticated birds have varied does not stand in any close relation with the amount of change to which they have been subjected." We are in a position now to strengthen this reasoning immensely by our knowledge of the vast lapse of time and the prodigious physical changes which have passed since MAN himself inhabited the earth.

But as man's antiquity has special interests of its own, you will perhaps not object to dwell upon it rather longer than our main argument would otherwise justify.

END OF VOL. I.



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