

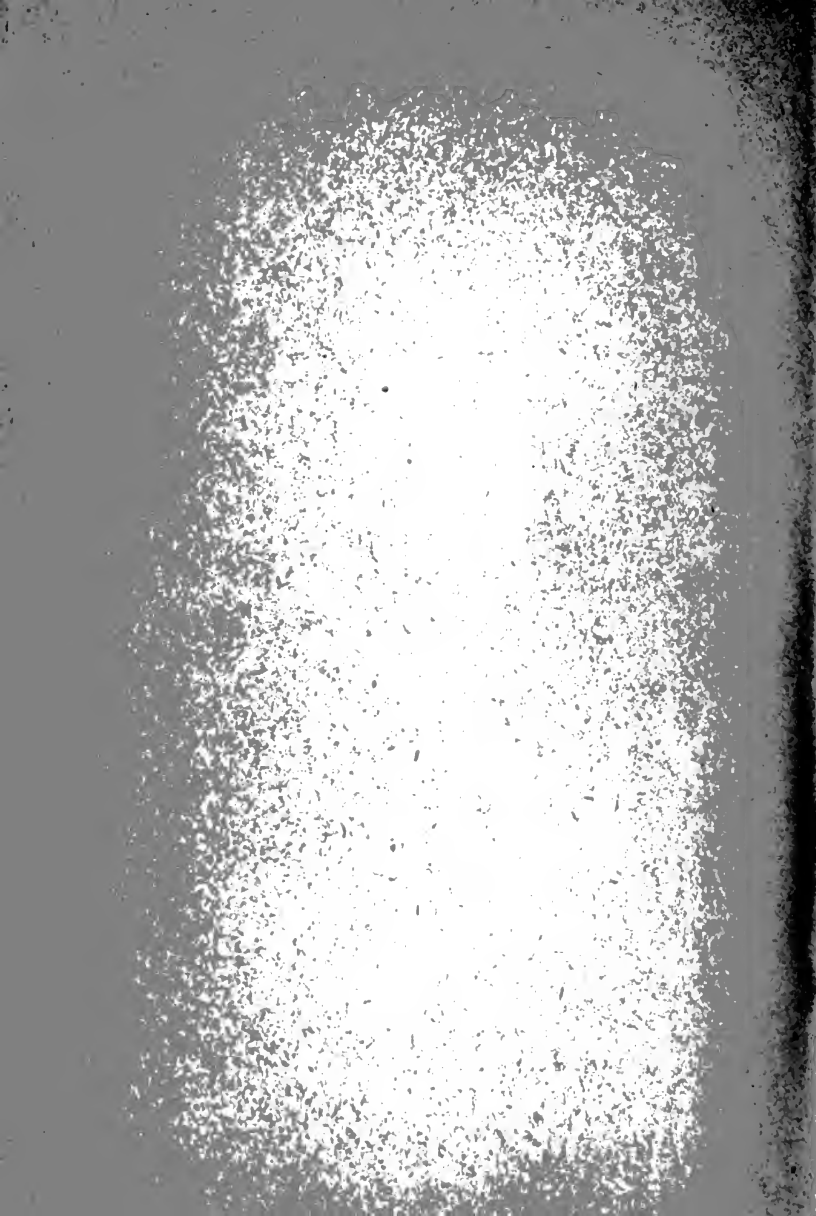




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The Faiths of the world







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St Giles' Lectures—Second Series

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THE FAITHS OF THE WORLD.





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# FAITHS OF THE WORLD

A CONCISE HISTORY

OF

THE GREAT RELIGIOUS SYSTEMS

OF THE WORLD



WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS  
EDINBURGH AND LONDON  
MDCCLXXXII





PREFATORY NOTE.

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THE Lectures contained in this volume were delivered in St Giles' Cathedral, Edinburgh, and in the Cathedral, Glasgow, on Sundays during the winter of 1881-82. They are studies in comparative theology, and are now published in the belief that many who heard them desire to possess them in a permanent form, and in the hope that, from the subject of which they treat, they may prove interesting to a wider circle than those who listened to them. Each lecturer is only responsible for the views expressed by himself.

ST GILES', EDINBURGH,  
*May 1882.*





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# ST GILES' LECTURES.

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*SECOND SERIES—THE FAITHS OF THE WORLD.*

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*LECTURE I.*

RELIGIONS OF INDIA:

VEDIC PERIOD—BRAHMANISM.

By the Very Rev. JOHN CAIRD, D.D., Principal of the University  
of Glasgow.

THE study of the pre-Christian religions possesses both a practical and a speculative interest for the Christian mind. As he who would teach a child must himself, in a sense, become a child—throw himself back into the childish attitude of mind, and adapt his instructions to its immature conceptions, and even to its vagaries and illusions; so there is a sense in which it may be said that he who seeks to convert a heathen must himself become a heathen—must, by a kind of intellectual self-abnegation, endeavour to throw himself into the point of view of the minds he

would elevate, and attain to some measure of sympathy with them. Catholic missionaries have, justly or unjustly, been sometimes accused of gaining a too easy victory for Christianity by assimilating its doctrines to heathen superstitions. But whilst that is only a nominal conversion which reclaims from heathenism to a Christianity which has itself become heathenish, it may yet be averred that a true conversion can be achieved only by a process of which this is the travesty—not, that is, by tampering with Christian truth, but by discerning and exhibiting its affinities to the unconscious longings and aspirations of the human spirit at all stages of its development.

But the study of the earlier and imperfect forms of faith has another than practical interest for the Christian mind. The maxim of Christian wisdom to which I have referred rests on the principle that there is an essential relation between Christianity and the pre-Christian religions. Even those who shrink from any such notion as that the religious history of the world is the expression of a natural process of development, are not thereby precluded from recognising in the earlier stages of that history a preparation and propædeutic for the more advanced. It is possible to hold that Christianity is no mere combined result of Jewish and heathen elements, and yet to discern in the characteristic ideas of the pre-Christian religions the germs at least of conceptions of God and of His relations to the world, which find at once their unity and their explanation in our Christian faith. What the great monotheistic and pantheistic faiths of the



ancient world were feeling after they failed to reach, for this, apart from other reasons, that their solution of the problem of religion was, in each case, a one-sided and fragmentary one,—that the element of truth which each contained was rendered false because held in isolation from that which is its necessary complement. On the one hand, in a religion which conceives of God simply as the creator and ruler of the world, absolutely exalted above it, unaffected by its limits, incapable of being implicated in its imperfections, the moral sublimity of the conception easily passes into a false elevation if it lacks, as the necessary complement of a power and will transcending the world, the idea of an infinite thought and love which reveals itself *in* it. On the other hand, a religion which sees God in all things—the reality beneath all appearances, the substance of all changeable forms, the all-pervading yet incomprehensible life in which all finite existences live and move and have their being,—such a religion, if its conception of the immanence of God in the world leaves no place for the equally essential idea of His transcendence over the world, speedily discloses its weakness in the obliteration of moral distinctions, and the swamping of finite individuality and freedom. In briefer terms, monotheistic religions are imperfect because they exclude the pantheistic element, pantheistic religions because they lack the monotheistic element. It lends a new force to our appreciation of the nature and spiritual value of the Christian faith if we can discern in it that which at once comprehends and transcends

these earlier religions, embracing what is true, and supplying the complement of what is imperfect, and the corrective of what is false, in both. Whilst, therefore, we may hold that Christianity is neither a reproduction nor a natural development of the imperfect notions of God in which the religious aspirations of the old world embodied themselves, it is possible at the same time to maintain that the study of the old religions sheds new light on the Christian religion, and gives to us a new and deeper sense of its spiritual significance and power.

The religions of which in this and the following lecture we are to treat, belong to one of the two kinds or groups of religions under which, as above indicated in a very rough and general classification, the religions of the pre-Christian world may be embraced. Brahmanism and Buddhism, in other words, are pantheistic religions. What that designation means we shall understand better by tracing the origin and historical development of these religions than by any formal or philosophical definition of the term.

I. A Christian apostle, addressing a heathen audience, tells them that God "hath made of one blood all nations of men, to dwell on the face of the earth ; . . . that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us : for in Him we live, and move, and have our being." If we ask what we mean by the word "religion," or why amongst the manifold elements of human experience, we characterise one

particular kind of experience as "religious," perhaps no better answer could be given than in these words of St Paul. Religion is that attitude of the human spirit, and its outward manifestations and expressions, in which, in all races and climes, we see it "feeling after God, if haply it may find Him." We are "the offspring of God." In the very essence of man's nature as a spiritual being there is that which renders it impossible for him to rest in the things that are seen and temporal, which forces him to rise above the world of finite and transitory experience, of ever-changing forms and appearances, and to seek after an infinite reality which underlies and transcends them. Within the rudest and most undeveloped nature made in the image of God, there is a latent capacity of transcending the finite, an inalienable affinity to what is universal and infinite; and it is this which constitutes the secret impulse to the search after God, and the key to the outward phenomena of the history of religion. It is not of course meant that in all religions men have been consciously seeking after that Being whom *we* call God, or that already from the beginning the human spirit was in possession of the idea of Him of whom it was in quest. There is a sense in which the ideal element which constitutes the impulse to many of our human activities is present in the mind of the agent from the very outset of his endeavours to apprehend it. All art is the endeavour to realise in material forms and colours an idea of beauty latent in the human spirit from the beginning. All science

may be viewed as, in one sense, only the gradual appropriation by the mind of its own latent wealth, the realisation of a belief in the systematic unity and continuity of nature, presupposed in, and constituting at once the impelling motive and the measure of each successive discovery; and all knowledge in general, even the most elementary, presumes in the knowing mind an idea of what is knowable, a standard or criterion of truth which is the measure of all particular opinions and acquirements, and which itself cannot be questioned without self-contradiction. In like manner the reason why we isolate certain facts of human history as belonging to that province which we designate "religion," is, that these facts are the witness to an essential relation of the human spirit to the infinite—the attempts, more or less imperfect, to give expression and realisation to that latent consciousness of an infinite Being and Life which is bound up with man's very nature as a rational and spiritual being.

Now, if we ask in what way this hidden element, this implicit consciousness of God, begins to manifest or realise itself—what, in other words, is the earliest form of religion, or of anything that truly deserves the name, in the history of the race—the answer, I think, is supplied to us by the early religions of India. I have said that these religions belong to the class which we designate pantheistic religions. But at first sight, the religion which is represented by the sacred hymns of the Veda seems to be simply a polytheistic nature-worship,—the worship, that is, of

a number of distinct divinities identified with different natural objects and appearances—such as the sun, the dawn, the daily and nightly firmament, the fertile earth, the winds and storms. The Rig-Veda, which embodies the early religious conceptions of the Indo-Aryan race, and which carries us back to a period of from 1000 to at least 1500 B.C., is a collection of hymns, invocations, prayers, songs of praise, addressed to various individual devas or divinities—Indra, Mitra, Varuna, Ushas, Agni, &c.—who seem at first sight to be personifications or deifications of the phenomena and forces of nature. It would seem, therefore, that in so far as this form of religion represents the dawn of man's religious life, the origin of religion is to be found, not in pantheism, but in a polytheistic nature-worship—the worship of many individual divinities representing, or implicated with, particular objects, powers, and processes of the material world.

But when we look a little more closely into the matter, I think we shall find reason to regard the polytheism of the Veda as only the superficial aspect or veil of another and different conception of God—a conception which gradually revealed its real significance as it dropped more and more the polytheistic form, and developed into the undisguised pantheism of Brahmanism and Buddhism. Those who have carefully studied the Vedic hymns, find in them many indications that the multiform character of the objects of worship is only apparent; that the various divinities are marked by no hard and fast line of distinction

from each other ; and that they are in reality only different names for one indivisible whole, of which the particular divinity invoked at any one time is regarded as the type or representative. In the minds of the writers of these hymns we can detect the latent recognition of a unity beneath all this multiplicity of the objects of adoration—an invisible reality which is neither the heavens nor the earth, nor the sunshine nor the storm, which cannot be fully represented by any one material object or aspect of nature, though each for the moment may serve as its passing symbol or exponent. What we have here is not, as in Greek and Roman mythology, a number of anthropomorphic personalities invested each with a life and character of his own, and having an individual existence and history as distinct from the rest as that of a human king or hero. On the contrary, in the Vedic divinities, not only is the personal, anthropomorphic element of the faintest, so that the personality ascribed to Dyaus, or Varuna, or Indra, or Agni, is scarcely more real than in the thinly veiled metaphors in which modern poetic language speaks of the smiling heavens, or the whispering breeze, or the sullen, moaning, restless sea ; but the language in which these various divinities are addressed shows that they flow into each other, and that they are only varied expressions, from different points of view, for the grander and wider presence of mighty nature—a presence which clothes itself in innumerable guises, but which, however varied, whether soft and gentle, or wild and wrathful, whether it de-

light or overawe or terrify, is still one and the same. Nay, we find, especially towards the close of the Vedic period, this instinctive sense of a unity that lies behind and comprehends all individual diversities, finding direct expression in various passages of the Veda. "There is but one," says one of the writers, "though the poets call him by many names." "They call him Indra, Nitra, Varuna, Agni; then he is the beautiful winged Garutmut. That which is, and is one—the wise name in diverse manners" (Rig-Veda, i. 164, quoted by Max Müller, Hibbert Lect., 311). Lastly, there is one divinity in the Vedic pantheon into which many of the other divinities which are invoked resolve themselves, as only different aspects of the same object of worship—the divinity which is identified with that part of nature from which, as comparative philology has shown, all Aryan languages derive their name for the supreme object of worship—the bright, all-embracing heavens.

And here let us pause for a moment to ask, What is the inward spiritual significance of this Vedic phase of Indian religion? What is the explanation of that attitude of the religious mind which we have just described? Perhaps we shall best understand it by reflecting that that which is probably the first thing to awaken in the human spirit the latent religious consciousness is the sense of the mutability, the evanescence, the unreality, which is the universal characteristic of earthly and finite things. It is only at a later stage of thought that we attempt to rise, after the manner of the modern natural-theology argu-

ment, from the existence of the world to the notion of a First Cause, or of an all-wise and powerful Creator. It is not what the world is, but what it is *not*, that first stimulates the mind to "feel after" a reality above and beyond it. "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof;" "the things that are seen are temporal;" "our life is but a vapour that appeareth for a little and then vanishes away"—such words as these express a feeling old as the history of man, which is called up by the fleeting, shifting character of the scene on which we look, the transiency of life, the inadequacy of its satisfactions, the insecurity of its possessions, the lack of any fixed stay, any enduring object on which our thoughts and desires can rest—the feeling, in briefer terms, which the unsubstantiality of the world and the things of the world awakens in the mind, and which irresistibly impels it to seek after some deeper and more enduring reality, some abiding rock on which, amidst the stream that bears all things away, we may plant our feet.

Now it is this sense of the vanity and unreality of the world and of all finite things, which constitutes the elementary form of religious feeling, and the root out of which a pantheistic conception of God gradually develops itself. Indeed it may be said to be in itself the implicit presence of such a conception. For the consciousness of the world's transitoriness and unreality is a negative that involves a positive. We could not be aware of that transitoriness and unreality save by a latent comparison with something



that is real and permanent. As the knowledge of error is possible only by reference to at least an implicit standard of truth, so the sense of the nothingness of the finite is due to an implicit consciousness of the Infinite that is rising within the spirit. It is already beginning to say to itself, There is a substance beneath these shadows, a something that is, and abides, underlying all these fleeting, phantasmal forms that only seem to be. But this essentially pantheistic attitude of mind does not at first formulate itself in a positive and fully developed religious belief such as that in which we shall presently find it embodied. The consciousness of weakness and evanescence, and the aspiration after some higher and abiding rest for the spirit, betrays itself at the outset in the ruder and more elementary form of a nature-worship such as that which we are now contemplating. The mind indicates that which it is groping after by the deification of whatever objects in the outward world can become to it the types of stability and power. It fastens instinctively on anything in its outward surroundings by which it can represent to itself that reality of which it is in quest. The sun that shines on in majestic strength and calmness far above the capricious, changeful phenomena of the lower world, undimmed and undecaying through the revolving years and ages; the silent stars, that pursue their mystic course, never hasting, never resting, shedding their pure light on the graves of a hundred generations; the solid and stable earth, the everlasting hills, the great rivers that flow on in

seemingly exhaustless continuity while one generation after another comes and goes ; above all, that in nature which has for the simple observer the aspect of at least a relative infinitude—that all-embracing heavens which, go where he may, is ever above and around him, expanding as he advances, impenetrable in its liquid depths, and, amidst the instability and evanescence of human life, retaining the aspect of ever-during permanence, and pouring down with no sign of impoverishment its wealth of bounty on the world ;—in the half-conscious deification of these forms and aspects of material nature the obscure and indeterminate longing expresses itself, for some infinite and enduring object of trust—

“Some Life continuous, Being unimpaired,  
That hath been, is, and where it was and is  
There shall endure, —existence unexposed  
To the blind walk of mortal accident ;  
From diminution safe and weakening age,  
While man grows old and dwindles and decays,  
And countless generations of mankind  
Depart, and leave no vestige where they trod.”

II. What has now been said as to the spiritual significance of the Vedic phase of Indian religion will become clearer to us when we pass on to contemplate its natural development in Brahmanism. The pantheistic element, which was only implicit in the period of the Vedic hymns, becomes explicit in the Upanishads, in the so-called Indian systems of philosophy, and in the great Indian epic poems. The Upanishads constitute the last portion of the

Veda, and consist of compositions in prose and verse (the more ancient of which reach back as far as the sixth century B.C.), which profess to unfold the mystical or secret doctrine of the Veda, and treat of such problems as the nature of God and of the human soul, the origin of the universe, and the connection of matter and spirit. In these treatises, however, we find, mixed up with and almost lost in a mass of mystical notions and absurd and puerile conceits, only the germs of those ideas which receive their fullest development in the philosophical systems. These last do not belong to that part of Sanskrit literature which is regarded as having the character of a divine revelation, though growing out of it and based upon it. They attempt to examine in a more systematic way the great metaphysical problems above named; and though the six philosophical schools differ in many important and even fundamental points from each other, not only are there many particular doctrines in which they coincide, but the religious and philosophical point of view from which they start, and which moulds and dominates their teaching, is common to them all. Let us endeavour to see what this fundamental point of view is, and to trace some of its results in the religious and ethical doctrines of Brahmanism.

We have seen that, on closer inspection, the religion of the Veda loses the aspect of a polytheistic nature-worship, that the individuality of the separate nature-divinities fades away, and that each becomes the symbol or representative of that invisible reality

after which the mind is groping, and which any one of these divinities may represent as well as another. But the same inward movement of the religious spirit which led it to break down the limits which isolated each of the particular divinities from the rest, and so virtually to make nature as a whole, the visible universe in its unbroken completeness, the symbol of the Divinity it sought—this same tendency impelled it by-and-by to a still further advance. The religious consciousness, dissatisfied with the effort to reach God by the mediation either of the grander objects of nature, or of nature in its totality, attempts to pass *beyond* nature, and to grasp in an immediate way the idea of an invisible essence or reality lying behind, and transcending all finite and sensible things. "I seem to myself," we can conceive the Hindu seeker after God to reflect, "to be dimly conscious of a reality which is neither the heavens nor the earth, nor anything which the whole complex of nature, the whole sensible world in its most overwhelming aspects of power and grandeur, can reveal to me. When the eye has wearied itself with seeing, and the ear with hearing, and the imagination with the effort to gather up into one all the scattered glories of the visible world, I feel, I know, that that after which I am seeking is something ineffably greater." It is this attitude of mind which is expressed by Brahmanic thought in such utterances as these: "Not by words can we attain unto it, not by the heart, not by the eye. He alone attains to it who exclaims, It is, it is. Thus may it be perceived

and apprehended in its essence." "A wise man must annihilate all objects of sense, and contemplate continually only the One Existence which is like space. Brahma is without dimensions, quality, character, or distinction."

The conception of God which is expressed in the words I have just quoted is that which dominates the whole course of Brahmanic thought, and out of which grew the institutions and customs, the moral ideas, and, in one sense, the whole social life, of the Hindus. There is indeed much in Brahmanism, as in other religions, which is not logically connected with its fundamental doctrine, and which must be ascribed to accident or external conditions; but neither the religion nor the ethics of Brahmanism can be intelligently studied without a distinct apprehension of that doctrine—that is, of the pantheistic idea of God, which from a very early period rooted itself deeply in Hindu thought. Before proceeding further, therefore, let us endeavour to understand what this idea of God is. Pantheism is one of those terms to which, though of familiar use, the vaguest and most contradictory meanings are attached. Perhaps, in the popular or semi-popular intelligence, what it generally stands for is the notion or doctrine which identifies the world with God. All things and beings, material and spiritual, organic and inorganic, rational and irrational—stones, rocks, streams, plants, animals, and man himself, with all his bodily and mental powers and capacities—"all thinking things, all objects of all thought"—are God; all of them, in

their immediate being, are parts of the divine nature. But this, so far from being the pantheism of the Indian religions, is a notion destitute of any historic foundation, and indeed of any rational meaning. No religion, no philosophy which the world has ever known, did or could entertain it. It is of the very essence of religion, even in its most elementary form, that it involves an elevation *above* the world, above the immediate objects of sense, to something higher. Even the stock or stone before which the most ignorant idolater bows is to him something more than a stock or stone. There would arise in his breast no feeling of fear, or awe, or absolute dependence, if he saw nothing more in it than the piece of matter he can touch and handle, if it did not awaken in him some confused conception, at least, of a something which the eye cannot see or the hand grasp—of an immaterial presence or power of which the material object is only the sign or exponent. Moreover, to make pantheism mean that the finite world is God, is, when we reflect on it, nothing less than a contradiction in terms. We may say that the finite *represents*, or is the sign or symbol of, the Infinite; but how can we say that the finite world *is*, or that finite things, as such, *are* the Infinite? When we examine into the real meaning of pantheism, as well as the historic significance of the word, we find that it is not only something different from, but the very opposite of, the deification of the finite world. It implies, not the divinity, but rather the nothingness, of the world of sense and sight. It has its genesis, as

we have seen, in the feeling of the fleeting unsubstantial character of the world and the things of the world, and in the demand which arises in the mind for a real and abiding object of trust. It is the attitude of a mind that has penetrated beneath the surface shows of things, detected the illusion of the senses, and to which the outward world has become as unreal as the stuff that dreams are made of, as the vapour that appeareth for a little and then vanisheth away. The formula which expresses it is not, "the world is divine," or, "all things are God;" but, "the world is nothing, and God is all in all"—or, as it is put in the comprehensive phrase in which the Indian philosophies sum up their doctrine of the universe, "*there is but One Being—no second.*"

Now, if we try to reduce to philosophic form this doctrine that God is the only being or reality in the universe, and that all else only seems to be and has no real existence, we shall perhaps find that it is simply the attempt which, at a certain stage of thought, the mind makes to give unity and coherence to its ideas by the aid of the logical notion or category of Substance. When we speak of the continuous existence of any individual object—a plant, an animal, a human being—which has many different aspects or qualities, or which is undergoing perpetual phenomenal changes, what is it that we think of as constituting its permanent reality? This flower or tree has a real existence, it is one individual thing, though the qualities of form, colour, fragrance, &c., by which I perceive it, are many and various. It was

the same plant yesterday as to-day, as it will be to-morrow and all its life long, though outwardly the matter that composes it, and the appearances it assumes, are never two days or hours precisely the same. When I say, *it* exists, *it* is one individual thing, *it* is the same plant which I saw a month ago, what is the "*it*" of which we speak? Not, certainly, what the senses perceive, for that is not one and the same, but many and various; not the outward material form, for that is perpetually changing, is not the same "*it*" for two days, hours—nay, for two successive moments of time. And the answer to which, at an early stage, thought, groping after the solution of the problem of the one in many, betakes itself, is that beneath and behind all the various and ever-changing qualities, forms, aspects of the plant, there is an unknown, invisible *substance*—a something which remains constant amidst all varieties, changes, vanishing appearances, and which entitles us to call the thing one and the same. Now this is precisely the conception in which Brahmanic thought seemed to itself to have found the key to the riddle of the universe. What our supposed observer does when he looks on the changeful appearances of the plant, and says, "Beneath all these there is an invisible substance that is ever one and the same," the Indian thinker did when, in the contemplation of the endlessly diversified, ever-shifting forms and aspects of the world to the eye of sense, he said, "These are but the surface appearances, the unsubstantial transitory accidents; beneath them all there is one, and only



one, reality—one Being that is and never changes—one permanent substance of all things,—and that is Brahma. I cannot tell *what* Brahma is ; I can only say *that* he is. He who would know Brahma must turn away from all that the senses perceive, and think only of an existence that is like pure, void space, without division or distinction, quality or dimension.” These ancient thinkers, indeed, did not formally reason after the manner of the modern metaphysician. They were at the stage when thought can only reason in metaphors, and even in their so-called philosophical systems their deepest reflections are embodied in sensuous figures and images. But when they represent the supreme God as declaring, “ I am the light in the sun and moon ; I am the brilliancy in flame, the radiance in all shining things, the light in all lights, the sound in air, the fragrance in earth, the eternal seed of all things that exist, the life in all ; I am the goodness of the good ; I am the beginning, middle, end, the eternal in time, the birth and death of all,”—when they represent the visible material world, and the life and actions of man, as the illusory phantoms and appearances which a conjuror or magician calls up and the gaping crowd mistake for realities, or as the personages, scenes, events of a troubled dream,—when they say that “ our life is as a drop that trembles on the lotus-leaf, fleeting and quickly gone,” and that such, so evanescent and unsubstantial, are the things that seem to us most real, “ the eight great mountains, the seven seas, the sun, the very gods who are said

to rule over them, thou too, and I, the whole universe which all-conquering time shall dispel ;"—in these and many other modes of expression, Indian thought is only ringing the changes on the one fundamental doctrine of its creed, that God is the substance of all things, the only Being who really is—and that the independent reality we ascribe to other beings is due only to illusion.

And now let us ask, What practical results follow from such a doctrine? what is the moral and religious life which it tends to produce, and which, in the historical development of Brahmanism, it actually did produce? At first sight the logical outcome of a pantheistic creed would seem to be purely negative. It appears naturally to lead to an ascetic morality, and a religion whose highest aim is union with Deity by abstraction from the world. The finite world being nothing but illusion and deception, the only way in which we can rise above the illusion, emancipate ourselves from the dominion of vanity and falsehood, is by withdrawal from the world and all finite objects and interests, by stifling all natural desires and affections; and, on the other hand, God being conceived of simply as abstract substance, the unknown reality behind the finite, beyond all we can see and think and name, union with Him is possible only in one way—by the cessation of all positive thought, even of all personal consciousness, and by identifying ourselves in a kind of ecstatic vacuity of mind, with that emptiness in which the divine fulness is supposed to dwell. And

this, as we shall see in the next lecture, was one direction in which the religious and moral life of India did actually develop itself. But there is another line which, especially in what may be called the popular exoteric religion and morality, it took, and which might seem to be altogether inconsistent with its pantheistic basis. At first view, it is difficult to see anything but contradiction between pantheism and polytheism, between the doctrine that God is the one only reality, and the monstrous mythology, the complicated system of polytheistic doctrines and observances, which in India grew up side by side with it. If the finite world be nothing but illusion and vanity, and God the Being who altogether transcends it, how shall we account for a religious system which consists of the arbitrary deification of all sorts of objects in the finite world—the heavenly orbs, the material elements, plants, animals, mountains, rivers, the Indus, the Ganges, the lotus-flower,—how shall we explain the unbridled licence of a sensuous idolatry, which, not content with actual existences, invents as objects of reverence a thousand monstrosities, incongruous combinations, offensive shapes and symbols? And again, if asceticism, a life of abstraction from the world and the gratifications of sense, be the logical result of a pantheistic creed, how could such a creed lead, as it actually did, to a social life in which the grossest sensual excesses are not only permitted, but perpetrated under the sanction of religion?

The answer is, that a pantheistic idea of God, if in

one point of view it is opposed to idolatry and immorality, in another point of view may be said logically to lead to them. The unity which pantheism ascribes to God is not a unity which is hostile to polytheism. A belief in the unity of God, as *we* understand that doctrine, is indeed incompatible with a belief in a multiplicity of gods. A man cannot be a worshipper of the one living and true God, and at the same time a worshipper of the gods many and lords many of paganism. But that is simply because in Christianity the unity of God is *not* a pantheistic unity. In pantheism, God, conceived of as the substance of the world, if He lies behind all finite beings and objects, stands at least in precisely the same relation to all. As the substance of a plant is as much in the unsightly root or the rugged stem as in the flower and fruit, so a Being who is thought of as the substance of all finite things, is equally related to all—to things mean as to things lofty, to gross matter as to intelligent thinking spirit, to the vilest and impurest as to the noblest and most exalted natures, and their functions and actions. But in Christianity it is different. It is true that, to Christian thought also, the world is full of Deity. Christianity sees God in all things; and there is no object, however insignificant, no evanescent aspect of nature, no meanest weed or wayside flower, no passing wind or falling shower, which is not the revelation of a divine presence and instinct with a divine significance. Nay, to Christianity we owe that deeper insight which can discern a soul of goodness even in

things evil, a divine purpose and plan beneath the discord of human passions and the strife and sin of the world. But the Christian deification of the world is not a deification of it, so to speak, in the rough—an apotheosis of all things and beings alike and without distinction. The God it sees in all things is a God of thought, of wisdom, order, goodness—a God who is Spirit or Mind; and therefore it can see Him in all things without seeing Him in all things alike. It can see more of God, a richer revelation of the infinite mind, in organisation and life than in brute matter, in human thought and affection than in animal instinct and appetite, in a spirit surrendered to exalted and unselfish ends than in one that is the slave of its own impulses and passions. And if, even in what we call evil, in pain, and sorrow, and sin, there is a sense in which God's presence is revealed, it is not in these things as seen only in their outward, isolated aspect, but contemplated from a universal point of view, as the discords that contribute to, but vanish away in, the eternal harmony.

On the other hand, a religion which regards God as the unknown incomprehensible substance of the finite can take no account of distinctions *in* the finite. If to it, in one point of view, the objects of the finite world are nothing, in another they are all alike consecrated by the presence of God. And whilst the philosopher or Brahmanic sage might attempt, by a process of abstraction, by the silencing or abnegation of all definite thought and feeling, to grasp that indeterminate essence behind the world which he takes

for God, the popular mind, which can never reach or rest in abstractions, would, by an irresistible necessity, take the other direction, and instead of deifying nothing, would deify everything indiscriminately. It would fasten, in other words, on that side of its religious belief according to which no one thing or being is nearer to God, no one more remote from Him, than another. He is the Being or Substance who manifests Himself alike in the mean and the great, the vile, obscene, and deformed, and the noble and beautiful and pure. Reptiles, beasts of prey, even the lowest forms of organic life, can be made objects of religious reverence as much as the human form divine; nay, there would be a kind of paradoxical logic, a legitimate capriciousness, in the preference of things monstrous and vile as the symbols of Deity: for the very arbitrariness of the selection would prove that it was not the particular qualities of the things themselves, but the one universal essence common to them all, which was the real object of worship—the light that shone through all, unaffected by the meanness, uncontaminated by the foulness, of the medium that conveyed it. It is this view of the subject that accounts for that indiscriminate consecration of the finite world in the immediate multiplicity of its existences and forms of being, which is the characteristic of the popular Hindu mythology.

And it is this view which accounts also for its defective morality. The hidden logic of pantheism leads not merely to an *ascetic* morality, but also,

and by an equally natural sequence, to a *fatalistic* morality—a morality which tolerates or sanctions the vices that spring from the natural desires. For moral distinctions disappear in a religion which conceives of God as no nearer to the pure heart than to that which is the haunt of selfish and sensual lusts. The lowest appetites and the loftiest moral aspirations, the grossest impurities and the most heroic virtues, are alike consecrated by the presence of God. Nay, there is a sense in which the baser side of man's nature receives here a readier consecration than the higher. For while all true morality implies a struggle with nature, an ideal aim which forbids acquiescence in that which by nature we are, it is of the very essence of a Pantheistic religion to discountenance any such struggle, and to foster a fatalistic contentment with things as they are. In a religion which finds God in all things—in which whatever is, simply because it is, is right—all natural passions, simply as natural, carry with them their own sanction. In yielding to nature we are yielding to God. Immersion in the natural is absorption in the Divine.

And it is on the same principle, finally, that we account for the immoral character and results of that which forms so important an element of Indian social life—the system of Caste. For that system is simply the fixation and hardening of social inequalities and arbitrary distinctions by a fatalistic religion. Such a religion tends to confer the sacredness of divine right on the accomplished fact, however unjust and inhuman.

When it began to dominate the popular mind in India, it found society divided by certain class distinctions, the origin of which it is not difficult to trace. The Aryan conquerors were divided by difference of blood and by the pride of race—the contempt of the superior breed for one inferior in physical and intellectual endowments—from the conquered aborigines. The former, again, were divided among themselves by various class distinctions, such as those which in modern society spring up between the aristocratic, the middle, and the lower ranks, or between the professional and the trading or working classes. Thus the warrior or fighting class was distinguished as the more noble from the agricultural and industrial class, whilst both alike were divided by a wider gulf from those who belonged to the inferior or conquered race. Finally, amongst a people such as the Hindus, of a devout and credulous temperament, it was natural that the priesthood should form themselves into a separate sacred order, with special privileges and prerogatives, and by playing on their superstitious fears and hopes, should secure for themselves an acknowledged supremacy over all the other classes. Now, on a society so constituted it is easy to see how a pantheistic creed would operate. A religion which finds God in all things and beings alike, might at first sight be expected to be an equalising religion; its tendency would seem to be to break down artificial barriers, and to soften class divisions and antipathies. But on the other hand, seeing that, in such a religion, that which is, by the very fact that it is, is divine, it



has a tendency to consecrate existing facts, to harden accidental differences and inequalities into permanent and inviolable divisions, and to extend over the whole organisation of society the iron yoke of caste. In Brahmanism the latter proved the far more potent tendency; and as it is one, the pernicious influence of which on the moral and social life of India is to be discerned in its whole subsequent history, I shall devote the remainder of this lecture to a brief examination of the institution of Caste, and of the injurious influences with which it was fraught. <sup>△</sup>

In the organisation of society, distinctions of classes and individuals are as inevitable and as necessary to its welfare as is the differentiation of members and functions in the physical organisation. Socialistic theorists, starting from the notion of abstract equity, have often advocated an impossible equality of civil conditions and occupations. But every attempt to realise such theories fights against nature. The essential distinctions of individual talents, tastes, tendencies, attainments, never fail to assert themselves; and though arbitrary force or mistaken enthusiasm may for the moment suppress them, it can only be at the expense of social progress, and with the ultimate result of the fresh outbreak of those inherent diversities which all spiritual life involves.

But if nature is at war with stereotyped sameness, it is equally at war with stereotyped distinctions; and any attempt to maintain such distinctions must prove not less fatal to the true welfare and progress of society. Now the Indian system of caste is simply a

vast and prolonged attempt to substitute artificial for natural distinctions, to create and perpetuate hard and fast lines of separation between the various orders of society, and the occupations, privileges, dignities, pertaining to them. It caught society at the point where, as above said, historical causes had led to certain social divisions of rank and occupation, and it petrified these divisions for all coming time. Thenceforth the place and vocation of each individual, the position above which he could not rise, below which he could not fall, were determined by birth. The son of the Brahman was born to all the honour and sacredness of the Brahmanical caste, and that sacredness became indelible; the vocations of war and government, and again of agriculture and industry, were in like manner irrevocably determined by the accident of birth; and finally, he whose hereditary position was that of the servile class, was bound to it for life by a destiny which quelled aspiration and made social ambition impossible.

Now, if we look for a moment to the results, social, moral, religious, with which such a system is fraught, it will be obvious that, had it not appealed to a principle deep rooted in the spirit and genius of the people—to an authority sufficient to quell the sense of the intolerable evils inseparable from it—no human ingenuity could have originated, or force of custom prolonged, its existence. The social objections to such an institution as caste scarcely need formal statement. The welfare of society depends in a great measure on the free action of that natural selection

by which the place and work of its individual members are determined. Whatever influence we allow for hereditary and transmitted tendencies, wrong is done both to society and to the individual when room is not left for the free play and development of natural capacity and genius, and when men are not allowed to find their level according to their powers and attainments and the use they make of them. But here we have an organisation which is altogether defiant of natural distinctions, and in which all manifestations of special ability and tendency are checked and suppressed from the beginning. The healthy stimulus which arises from the possibility of rising and falling is withdrawn, and an artificial protection against failure or disgrace is interposed. The evil influence of the system is perhaps more observable in the case of the Brahmanical than of any of the other classes. The position and privileges of the Brahman class are rigidly determined, and indeed constitute, as has been said, the hinge on which the whole system turns. In the laws of Manu, perhaps the oldest of post-Vedic Sanskrit works, elaborate rules are laid down for the maintenance of their arbitrary superiority. By birth and origin the Brahman is invested with an almost divine dignity; he is lord of all the other classes, and separated from them by an insuperable barrier. To him exclusively belongs the right to read, repeat, and expound the sacred books, and to perform sacrificial and other rites; and any interference with his sacred vocation is prohibited under the severest penalties. But from the very

nature of the thing, a conventionally sacred class, a priestly order determined by artificial and not by natural selection, is a self-contradictory notion, and every attempt to create it must prove a failure. Descent or arbitrary consecration can no more assure us of a man being a true priest than of his being a poet or artist, a philosopher or a mathematician. The call of a man to be a poet or philosopher is that the light of genius or the power of insight and originitive thought dwells within his soul, and it is obviously impossible to limit this vocation to any hereditary line or by any arbitrary designation. And in like manner, the call or commission to speak or act in God's name is simply that the light of divine wisdom illumines his mind, and that love to God and man glows within his heart. To substitute for this inward and spiritual vocation that which comes by the accident of birth or by external designation, is to rob the world of its true priests, and to transfer to official and spurious sanctity the reverence and submission due to wisdom and goodness.

But it is with the moral and spiritual results of the system of caste that we are here specially concerned ; and in this point of view the unwholesome influence of such a system may be traced in various directions. For one thing, caste and ceremonialism are closely connected. A sanctity based on the accident of birth is not only unspiritual in itself, but it naturally tends to the substitution of a ceremonial for a spiritual worship. Where the agency by which spiritual effects are supposed to be produced is arbitrarily determined,

there is no reason why the means employed by that agency should not be arbitrary too ; and in the case of a religious caste who cannot appeal to any spiritual pre-eminence as the ground of their authority, there is the strongest temptation to prop up that authority by sacerdotal and other devices. Suppose it were the prevalent belief that bodily diseases could be cured, not by men endowed with superior medical knowledge and skill, but by a hereditary race or order of doctors ; inasmuch as there is here no rational connection between the endowments of the agents and the cures ascribed to them, so neither need there be any rational connection between these cures and the remedies employed to effect them. Charms, spells, incantations, would, in the supposed case, be as likely means for the restoration of diseased organisms as the most careful scientific treatment ; and there would be every temptation on the part of the pretended order or succession of doctors to make this magic apparatus as imposing and elaborate as possible. In like manner a priestly caste, whose authority depends, not on superior wisdom and piety, but on hereditary or other purely arbitrary ground, almost inevitably has recourse to a religion of outward rites and observances. The arbitrary commission of the agents leads to an equally arbitrary character in the means employed by them. As their elevation to the privileged order, and the respect and reverence they demand from the community, have no relation to any special enlightenment or saintliness of character, it is neither necessary nor possible that their influence

over others should be the natural influence of spiritual insight and persuasive power over the minds and hearts they instruct and inspire. Destitute of such salutary means of influence, they inevitably have recourse to the illegitimate and unwholesome influence of magical observances, imposing sensuous rites, and the ascription of mysterious virtues to arbitrary signs and ceremonies. Thus in India, as elsewhere, we find an elaborate and debasing ceremonialism taking the place of a spiritual religion, and the whole relation of man to God degenerating among the mass of the people into superstition and unreality. The rise of the Brahmanical authority coincides with the development of a complicated system of ceremonial rites. The simple ritual of the Vedic period—its natural child-like devotion, its prayers and hymns, its offerings of food and libations of water, and of the juice of the Soma-plant—was gradually overlaid by an elaborate sacrificial worship conducted by the Brahmans according to minute arbitrary rules. “The number of sacrificers and sacrifices of all kinds,” we are told, gradually increased in India “in the post-Vedic period; and the greater the number of the sacrifices, and the more elaborate the ritual, the greater became the need for a complete organisation of priests.”—(Monier Williams’s ‘Hinduism,’ p. 41.)

But the most baneful result of such an institution as that of caste is, that it turns religion, which is the deepest and most comprehensive principle of union between man and man, into a principle of division and discordancy. If the divisions and inequalities

which it stereotyped had pertained merely to the outward life, the cruelties and wrongs to which it gave rise would at least have admitted of one all-important mitigation. The inflated pride of the Brahman, the helplessness of the pariah, the fatalistic indifference of all classes alike, would have been modified by the fact that there was a limit beyond which social inequalities could never penetrate. States of society there have been, such as medieval feudalism, as has been remarked, so far analogous to caste, that in them the social position and calling of individuals were practically determined by birth, and escape from a lowly or degrading occupation or station in life was almost impossible. But in these cases religion has formed the supreme corrective of social inequalities. In the instance just specified, there was, indeed, an order or caste of ecclesiastics separated from the laity, but the separation was not absolute. Even as respects outward rank and dignity, religion constituted a principle of equalisation, inasmuch as admission to holy orders was possible to all, and the highest dignities of the spiritual order were attainable by the son of the peasant alike with the son of the peer. But the power of religion to modify outward inequalities goes far deeper than this. The idea of the moral dignity of man—the idea that to each human being, as possessor of a spiritual nature, there belongs an inviolable freedom with which no other may tamper, that each has a spiritual life to live, involving rights and duties with which no earthly power can interfere,—this idea, which has received in Christianity its high-

est expression, is obviously one which opposes an insuperable obstacle to the ingression of class distinctions and inequalities into the sphere of religion. It becomes in the minds that are penetrated by it a principle which preserves self-respect under the most degrading outward conditions, and arrests the tendency to fatalistic apathy under the most cruel social injustice and wrong. Moreover, by making union with God, and participation in a divine nature, possible to all, Christianity raises the meanest human being to an elevation which dwarfs all earthly greatness, stamps insignificance on all finite distinctions, and opens up to us a destiny in the contemplation of which the dignities and degradations of time alike disappear. Finally, in Christianity religion becomes the solvent of class distinctions by its doctrine of the organic unity of the Church or household of faith. The ideal which it sets before us is that of a common or corporate life in which individual or class exclusiveness vanishes—a community in which the loftiest cannot say to the lowliest, I have no need of thee—from which pride and envy, scorn and hatred, all forms of human selfishness, are eliminated, and wherein the life and happiness of the whole becomes dearer to each individual than his own. To crown all, Christianity finds the highest finite manifestation of God in the person of one who was neither sacred nor great by birth or caste, who linked infinite greatness to the lowest earthly humiliation,—the Son of God and the carpenter's son, the incarnation of Deity and the



companion of the pariah and the outcast, the friend of publicans and sinners.

But, as we have seen, Brahmanism, by its institution of caste, is a religious system in all respects the opposite of this. In it arbitrary distinctions enter into the inmost sphere of the religious life, and, instead of being modified or annulled by religion, constitute its very essence. Instead of breaking down artificial barriers, waging war with false separations, softening divisions and undermining class hatreds and antipathies, religion becomes itself the very consecration of them. The Brahman is by birth nearer to God than other men, standing in a special relation to Him which is independent of character and moral worth, and to which no other mortal can aspire. No others can be his brethren. There are those among them whose very touch is contamination. To associate with them, eat with them, help them in danger, visit them in sickness, come even into accidental contact with them, is to him a pollution to be atoned for by the severest penalties. Nay, there are those whom it is no sin but a duty to treat with contempt and inhumanity, who are doomed by birth to a lot of infamy and isolation from their fellow-men, and worse than all, on whom religion inflicts a wrong more cruel than slavery by making them slaves who regard their fate as no wrong. Instead of teaching them to look on their dark and hopeless lot as a thing for which they can seek higher consolation, an injustice

against which it is right to struggle, religion only gathers over it a more terrible darkness by making that lot itself an unchangeable ordinance of God.

In these and other ways, we can perceive how the system of caste involves the worst of all wrongs to humanity—that of hallowing evil by the authority and sanction of religion. We cannot wonder, therefore, to find a reaction gradually arising in the consciousness of the people against a religion which so outraged the deepest instincts of man's spiritual nature. How that reaction found expression under the guidance of a great religious reformer, what were the particular form it took and the results to which it led, it will be our endeavour in the next lecture to show.

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# ST GILES' LECTURES.

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*SECOND SERIES—THE FAITHS OF THE WORLD.*

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*LECTURE II.*

RELIGIONS OF INDIA:

BUDDHISM.

By the Very Rev. JOHN CAIRD, D.D., Principal of the University  
of Glasgow.

**B**UDDHISM is, in one point of view, a reaction against Brahmanism ; but in another and deeper point of view, it is a new step in that progressive movement of religious thought which we have endeavoured to trace in the religions of India. In the former aspect, it is simply the recoil of the aggrieved moral instincts from the immoral and anti-social results of the earlier religion, and a protest against its idolatrous rites and observances. Neither in its religious nor in its moral teaching was Brahmanism true to its fundamental principle. Pantheism, as

we have seen, may, viewed from opposite sides, be regarded either as a religion in which everything vanishes in God, or as a religion in which everything is consecrated by the presence of God. But though both forms of religion start from a common pantheistic origin, only one of them may be said to be strictly and logically true to it. Brahmanism may be described as the false or illegitimate consecration of the finite; Buddhism as the recall of the religious consciousness to that elevation above the finite from which, in its indiscriminate deification of material and sensuous things, the former religion had fallen away. When you have begun by saying that the world and the things of the world are unreal and illusory, and that, in the whole compass of being, God is the only reality, you cannot legitimately return to rehabilitate that world which you have already denied and renounced. So far from pantheism lending its sanction to the deification of human and animal forms, or of every material object on which the superstitious imagination may fasten, its teaching would seem to be, that only by abstraction from the finite, by the mental annulling of the forms and phenomena of a world which is nothing but illusion, can we get near to God. So far, again, from finding in pantheism the basis of a morality which consecrates existing facts, and practically asserts that whatever is, is right—it would be nearer the truth to say that its ethical result is, logically, that whatever is, is wrong; and that only by emancipating ourselves from the thralldom of custom, by the obliteration of illusory

social distinctions and inequalities, can we rise into union with the Divine. It would seem, therefore, from this point of view, that Buddhism must be regarded as a reaction against Brahmanism,—a return to a religion of abstraction and a morality of renunciation which are the legitimate outcome of a pantheistic conception of God.

Yet though, no doubt, there is some truth in this view of the matter, Buddhism cannot be regarded simply as the return of Brahmanism to its fundamental principles. Like other religious reforms, it is at once a return and an advance. It reproduces in their simplicity and purity the ideas of the past, but it reproduces them with the deeper meaning which history and experience have infused into them. It reasserts the negative element involved in pantheism, and, as we shall see, exaggerates it till not only every finite and anthropomorphic ingredient, but every vestige of positive thought, vanishes from the idea of God, and we seem to be left in the absolute negation of atheism. But when we have examined the history and results of this singular religious revolution, we shall perhaps be able to discern in it something more than negation; we shall find that the emptiness to which it seems to lead is one in which a richer fulness begins to dwell, and that, at once in what it denies and in what it asserts, it constitutes a necessary step in that process of development which is to be traced in the religious history of the world.

At first sight no event in the religious history of mankind seems more unaccountable than the rapid,

widely extended, and enduring success of the religion which owes its origin to Buddha. Promulgated at first by a solitary teacher in a country in which Brahmanism had for more than a thousand years dominated the thoughts and lives of men, it succeeded in a short time in overthrowing the ancient faith and in transforming the social life of India ; and in less than two hundred years from the death of its founder, Buddhism became recognised as what, in modern phraseology, would be called the State religion. But more than that—inspired by a proselytising enthusiasm unparalleled in any other heathen religion, its missionaries went forth spreading its doctrines far beyond the country of its birth, amongst Asiatic races both savage and civilised. It penetrated, in the south, to Ceylon, which became, and has continued to our own day, the stronghold of Buddhism ; in the north and east, to Kashmir, to the Himalayan countries, to Tibet, to the Chinese empire (where, early in the Christian era, it could claim an equal place with the religions of Confucius and Lao-tse as one of the three State religions); and finally, to the shores of the Japanese islands. In India, indeed, though for many centuries it constituted the prevailing religion, Buddhism gave way at length to a revived and modified Brahmanism ; but its successes in other lands more than compensated for its extrusion from its original home. Its conquests have been greater, more extended, and more lasting than those of any other religion, Christianity not excepted ; and even now, wellnigh twenty-four centuries from the

birth of its founder, Buddhism is, nominally at least, the religion of five hundred millions of the human race. It is thus a religion which not only carries us back through the ages to a period earlier than the origin of almost all other existing faiths, but which is still strong with the vitality of youth, and constitutes at this very moment the sole source of spiritual faith and hope to a population larger than the whole population of Europe, and more than half that of Asia.

Yet if we inquire into the nature of the religion which has achieved a success so marvellous, the answer seems to be, that it is a religion destitute of every idea that has lent, or that can be conceived to lend, to any system of belief, its power over the human spirit. It is a religion which seems to deny the very being of God, and which refuses to man the hope of immortality. It teaches, as one of its cardinal doctrines, that existence is wretchedness, and the love of it a feeling to be suppressed and exterminated—that the highest happiness attainable on earth is in the extinction of all natural desires and affections, and the only heaven beyond it utter and final annihilation. Than such a creed as this, none could well be conceived more cheerless and unattractive, more destitute of either real or spurious conditions of success. Pessimism may sometimes have an attraction for executive minds, or, when presented in a philosophic form, may, like any other thesis on which speculative genius wastes its subtilty, achieve, as recent experience proves, a temporary popularity. But the limited success of the modern philosophy of despair affords

obviously no parallel to the wide and enduring prevalence of Buddhism. The success of false religions, again, has sometimes been traced to the adaptation of their doctrines to the passions and prejudices of men—to the proffer of worldly triumph and glory, or the promises of future bliss, which they presented to their votaries. But to no such appeal to human selfishness can the prevalence of Buddhism be ascribed. Instead of adapting itself to the spirit of the age and the prejudices of society, it seemed purposely contrived to revolt the class antipathies and jealousies which had rooted themselves for ages in the Hindu mind, and to arouse the hostility at once of the civil and ecclesiastical powers whose authority it assailed, and of the people to whom that authority had become nothing less than sacred. Instead of pandering to the selfish instincts by the proffer of a cheap relief from the stings of conscience, of temporal advantages, or of a futurity of sensuous bliss, it demanded, as the condition of salvation, the renunciation of the only pleasures which most men care for; and as the reward of austere self-mortification, it held forth the prospect,—to the majority, of a long series of future penitential existences in human and other forms—to the few, of immediate entrance on that Nirvana which is the Buddhist climax of blessedness, and which means the complete and final extinction of conscious being.

To what, then, in the absence of the ordinary causes of success, are we to ascribe the rapid and permanent triumphs of Buddhism? What was there in a religion



which appealed neither to what is lofty nor to what is base, neither to the deeper spiritual instincts nor to the lower selfish impulses of the human heart, that could secure for it a success which not even the most notable religions that have tried either way—which neither Christianity nor Mohammedanism—have attained?

I shall endeavour to answer this question by submitting to you a sketch of the leading doctrines of Buddhism in their relation to the development of religious thought. It is impossible, however, to understand the origin and the characteristic ideas of Buddhism without some reference to the life and character of its founder. Nor can it be doubted that amongst the causes to which, at any rate, its early successes were due, not the least was the singular personality and career of Buddha. As to these, our means of information are, it must be acknowledged, by no means either abundant or very authentic. The canonical Buddhist works from which our knowledge is derived belong to a period at least 200 years after the events to which they relate; and though those of the northern Buddhists contain an elaborate biography of Buddha under the title 'Lalita Vistara,' yet in this work so large an element of the marvellous and legendary has been interwoven with the story, that it is difficult to disentangle from it what may have been the original element of fact. It would be a waste of time, especially within the limited compass of a single lecture, to repeat the narrative which passes with various modern writers for the life of Buddha; but

some of its leading incidents are corroborated by the somewhat earlier books of the southern Buddhists, and in its general tenor it represents an ideal too exalted to have been the mere invention of the age and country from which it sprang. It is at any rate an ideal which profoundly impressed itself on the Indian mind in a very early age, and which has exerted a deep and lasting influence on the religious history of mankind.

I. Omitting details, then, which are probably the mere embellishments of popular tradition, the outline of the story is somewhat as follows. In the course of the sixth century B.C., Gautama (who afterwards came to be known by the designation "Buddha," the Enlightened), the son of a rajah or chief of the Sakyas, an Aryan tribe of central India, abandoned in early life his position and prospects as heir to his father's throne, and passed the rest of his life as a wandering religious mendicant. Various incidents, related with dramatic detail, are said to have led to this act of renunciation. But if we reflect on the influence which the conditions of the time—an age of gross and degrading superstition, and of intense social corruption—would exert on a mind of great intellectual originality, and of deep moral and religious susceptibilities, the step is one not difficult to account for. Buddha's seems to have been one of those natures, reflective, introvertive, restless, for which the problems of the spiritual life have an importance transcending all outward interests, and which are impelled to seek the solution of these problems

by an imperious inward necessity. In whatever form the object of spiritual inquiry presents itself—whether as the search for truth, or for the meaning and end of human life, or for the explanation of its moral contradictions and anomalies, or for salvation from sin and sorrow and death—for such natures there is no rest till the inward perplexity and anxiety are removed. Passive acceptance of circumstances is for them impossible; and if the outward conditions of life seem to conflict with the profounder needs of the spirit, we can understand how such minds, jealous of their influence, in some access of spiritual anxiety and impatience, may at one stroke shake off the bondage of outward position, and set themselves free for what they deem the great task of life—the work of spiritual thought and inquiry.

The subsequent career of Buddha is in keeping with the view I have now suggested. It is the history of a soul in search of spiritual rest, of the various experiments by which he vainly sought to find it, of the success which at last crowned his efforts, and finally, of his life-long endeavour to communicate to others the blessing he seemed to himself to have attained. Of his abortive endeavours, two are specially recorded—the search after spiritual satisfaction, first, by philosophic thought, and secondly, by ascetic austerities. He had recourse, in the first place, to some of the most famous Brahmanical teachers of the time, enrolling himself amongst their disciples, and listening patiently to their expositions of the great questions of ontology and ethics. But though in the doctrines

he subsequently taught we find traces of this sort of culture, and of his familiarity with the ideas of the so-called schools of Hindu philosophy, his studies, we are told, failed to bring him the mental peace he sought. His was not a nature which could find rest in speculative investigations or subtle dialectics. The relation of such inquiries to the exigencies of human life is too indirect to give them a permanent hold on a mind the practical side of which was so strongly developed. His moral and religious sympathies were too intense, his interest in humanity and its struggles and sorrows was too keen, to admit of his resting content with any satisfaction which abstract thought can bring. His next attempt to find what philosophy had failed to bestow was by a discipline of bodily austerities. He retired, says the story, along with five faithful friends, to a wild and solitary spot in "the jungles of Uruvela," and there gave himself up to fasting and other bodily mortifications of the most rigid kind. This discipline the youthful ascetic continued with unflagging courage for a period of six years. But perhaps it is one among the many proofs of that strength and balance of character which, through the dim light of tradition, we can discern in this great religious reformer, that the mystic visions and hysteric ecstasies which ascetics have often mistaken for supernatural revelations, found no access to his mind, and that at last he became convinced that in seeking spiritual peace by any outward regimen he was a second time on the wrong track. Giving up, then, his vigils and penances, and forsaken by his compan-

ions, to whose superficial natures this change seemed a grievous relapse, he betook himself thenceforth, it is said, simply to meditation and prayer. Translated into modern language, the attitude of his mind at this point may be said to be that of one who has renounced the idea of salvation by works, by meritorious self-denials and outward observances. Was there, then, no other pathway to peace? The answer came when he least looked for it. Wandering, says the story, from place to place, and ministered to by some humble women who had been touched by his piety and gentleness—still waiting, longing, aspiring after the secret of spiritual rest—at length, after a more than usually protracted period of meditation, while resting under a tree at a place which pious reverence named afterwards “*Bodhimanda*,” the seat of intelligence, a new light seemed to break upon his mind, his doubts and difficulties vanished, and the secret at once of his own spiritual freedom and of the world’s regeneration was within his grasp. This is the great moment when, according to the belief of his disciples, he became entitled to the designation by which, for thousands of years, he has been known—that of “*Buddha*,” the Enlightened, the possessor of spiritual intelligence.

What the new doctrine was, we shall see more fully in the sequel. If we said that this wondrous revelation, this idea so precious as to seem cheaply purchased by all the sacrifices and sorrows of past years, was no more than this—salvation, not by outward penances and sacrifices, but by inward renunciation

and self-devotion,—the great discovery would sound to modern ears but a trite and commonplace ethical maxim. It is, however, in all lines of investigation, a false complacency which, in the pride of modern enlightenment, looks down on the discoveries of the past, and measures the value of advances in knowledge, not by the imperfect light which preceded them, and the struggles it cost to gain them, but by the wider knowledge which in our day is the possession of all. But even if Buddha's discovery meant no more than this, that salvation, happiness, blessedness—the good, call it what you will, which is the end or goal of human life—consists, not in outward condition, but in inward character, and is to be sought, not in a future heaven which is the arbitrary reward of piety, but, here or hereafter, in superiority to all selfish desires and passions, in the inward heaven of the spiritual mind,—even, I say, if this were all he taught, it is a doctrine not so universally accepted and acted on in our own day, two thousand years after the Indian teacher first proclaimed it, that we can afford to contemn it as trite or commonplace.

From this time forward, the life of Buddha is that of the preacher or prophet of the new doctrine. Filled with a boundless compassion for the ignorance and wretchedness of his fellow-men, and believing himself to be possessed of the only truth which could save them, he went forth with enthusiastic zeal on his mission of love. He proclaimed his doctrine first in Varanaci, the modern Benares, then in other cities and villages in the valley of

the Ganges. Gradually the fame of the new teacher and his doctrine began to spread far and wide. His zeal, his rigid self-renunciation, combined with serene gentleness and benignity, his wisdom and eloquence, and even, it is said, his personal dignity and beauty, gave strange force to the stern doctrines he taught, and won men's hearts wherever he went. Crowds flocked to his teaching, and thousands of all ranks enrolled themselves among his adherents. The schools of the Brahmans began to be deserted; some of the most notable Brahmanical teachers became themselves his converts. The terrible bondage of caste became incapable of resisting the power of the newly awakened spirit of human brotherhood, and a moral reformation of the most undoubted character witnessed to the salutary influence of his teaching. In the fulness of his fame and influence he revisited, twelve years after he had left it in loneliness and uncertainty, his father's court; and soon, it is recorded, his father, his wife, his son, his foster-mother, and other members of his family, were numbered among his disciples. It is impossible, however, to pronounce what credit is due to this and to many other incidents with which tradition has filled up the outline of the latter part of his career. He is said to have lived to the great age of fourscore years, and to have found for many years an asylum in the dominions of a rajah or prince who had become one of his earliest converts. The ruins of a spacious building, erected for him by the piety of this prince, were pointed out to a Chinese pilgrim

in the seventh century of our era; and the tradition still ran that here were delivered many of those discourses which are preserved as the words of their master in the sacred books of the Buddhists.

However difficult it may be to separate the historic from the legendary and fictitious element in the story of Buddha's life, if the foregoing narrative can be regarded as even an approximately accurate representation of the facts, something at least of the wonderful success of Buddhism must be ascribed to the personal character of its founder. It brings before us the picture of a very rare and lofty nature. We seem to see in him a mind not only deeply reflective, but of great practical sagacity and insight, capable of profound and comprehensive views of life, able to discern the hidden causes of the evils under which society laboured, and to devise and apply the proper remedies. The impression, moreover, left on the mind by his whole career, is that of a man who combined with intellectual originality other and not less essential elements of greatness—such as magnanimity and moral elevation of nature, superiority to vulgar passions, an absorption of mind with larger objects, such as rendered him absolutely insensible to personal ambition; also, self-reliance and strength of will—the confidence that comes from consciousness of power and resource—the quiet, patient, unflinching resolution which wavers not from its purpose in the face of dangers and difficulties that baffle or wear out men of meaner mould. Along with these, we must ascribe to him other qualities not



always or often combined with them, such as sweetness, gentleness, quickness and width of sympathy. On the whole, whilst there is in the system of doctrine ascribed to him much which, to the modern mind, seems erroneous and repulsive, I do not think we shall err in conceiving of the character of Buddha as embracing that rare combination of qualities which lends to certain exceptive personalities a strange power over all who come within the range of their influence, calls forth the love and devotion of human hearts, welds together under a common impulse the diversified activities of multitudes, and constitutes its possessors the chosen leaders of mankind.

II. Amongst what may be called the secondary causes of the success of Buddhism, an important place is undoubtedly due to the morality which was not only embodied in the life of Buddha, but constituted a great part, if not the main substance, of his teaching. The tendency of the pre-existing religious system had been to dissociate morality from religion by transforming the latter either into a thing of speculation and school-learning, or into a thing of outward ceremonial. For the few who were capable of philosophic culture, spiritual perfection was identified with a kind of esoteric wisdom, attainable only by meditation and mental abstraction. For the great mass of the people, the moral and religious instincts were misdirected into the channel of an elaborate ceremonial—of prayers, penances, purifications, minute authoritative precepts and prohibitions appli-

cable to almost every relation and action of daily life. Now it is the singular merit of Buddhism, whatever view we take of the ultimate end to which it pointed as constituting the salvation of man, that the way by which it taught men to reach that end was simply that of inward purification and moral goodness. Outside of Christianity, no religion which the world has ever seen has so sharply accentuated morality and duty as entering into the very essence of religion, or as inseparably connected with it. If it made knowledge a condition of salvation, it was not a knowledge of theological dogmas or esoteric mysteries, possible only to acute or speculative minds, but a knowledge of which morality is the indispensable presupposition, and which is to be attained by clearing the soul from the darkening influence of impulse and passion. "The highest insight," is the declaration ascribed to Buddha, "is not that which can be measured by an intellectual standard; but it is of little use only to know that: what is of supreme importance is a change of the heart and spirit." If, again, the founder of Buddhism did not provoke the hostility of the priests or offend the prejudices of the multitude by declaring open war against the whole ceremonial system of Brahmanism, we find him constantly endeavouring to infuse into it a rational and moral meaning. "Anger," he says, "drunkenness, deception, envy—these constitute uncleanness; not the eating of flesh." "Neither abstinence, nor going naked, nor shaving the head, nor a rough garment; neither offerings to priests, nor sacrifices to the gods,

. . . will cleanse a man not free from delusions,"—*i.e.*, from the deluding influence of sensual pleasure, spiritual ignorance, and the selfish lust of life. In short, the large and important place which practical morality occupies in the Buddhist system, and the fact that, so far, it rests its claim, not on arbitrary dogmas and sacerdotal observances, but on an appeal to the conscience and the spiritual nature of man, constitutes one great secret of its strength.

It would unduly protract this lecture to illustrate at any length what has now been said, by citations from the ethical part of the Buddhist sacred writings. In one of Buddha's discourses, he is said to have summed up his whole system in the following comprehensive formula: "To cease from all sin, to get virtue, to cleanse one's own heart—this is the doctrine of Buddha." Besides the severer rules laid down for those who entered on the technically religious life—that is, the life of the orders of religious mendicants—there is in the sacred books a systematic digest of duties, negative and positive, which Buddha is said to have inculcated on the laity. Amongst the former are included the five cardinal prohibitions—of murder, of theft, of unchastity, of lying, of drunkenness. The positive virtues are summed up in "love of being"—*i.e.*, benevolence to all living beings—a precept extending not only to all human beings, including the lowest castes and the vilest outcasts, but also to the lower animals. From the "Dhamma-pada," or Scripture verses, a collection common to both schools of Buddhists, the following extracts have

been given by a recent writer (Rhys Davids's 'Buddhism,' p. 128 ff.): "Never in this world does hatred cease by hatred—hatred ceases by love; this is always its nature." "One may conquer a thousand men in battle, but he who conquers himself is the greatest victor." "As the rain breaks in on an ill-thatched hut, so passion breaks in on the untrained mind." "Let no man think lightly of sin, saying in his heart, It cannot overtake me." "As long as sin bears no fruit, the fool thinks it honey; but when the sin ripens, then indeed he goes down in sorrow." "Let us live happily, not hating those who hate us." "Let a man overcome anger by kindness, evil by good, . . . the stingy by a gift, the liar by truth." "Let a man speak the truth; let him not yield to anger; let him give when asked, even from the little he has. By these three things he will enter the presence of the gods." "Not by birth, but by his actions alone, does one become low caste or a Brahman."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The following translation of a poem, embodying moral precepts ascribed to Buddha, is quoted by the above-named writer under the title "Buddhist Beatitudes:"—

A deva speaks—

"Many angels and men  
Have held various things blessings,  
When they were yearning for happiness.  
Do thou declare to us the chief good."

Buddha answers—

"Not to serve the foolish,  
But to serve the wise;  
To honour those worthy of honour;  
This is the greatest blessing.  
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There is not a little in some of these sentences to remind us, in their spirit, and even in their form, of the lessons of a greater teacher. Yet, much as has

Much insight and education,  
Self-control and pleasant speech,  
And whatever word is well-spoken :  
This is the greatest blessing.

To support father and mother,  
To cherish wife and child,  
To follow a peaceful calling :  
This is the greatest blessing.

To bestow alms and live righteously,  
To give help to kindred,  
Deeds which cannot be blamed :  
This is the greatest blessing.

To abhor and cease from sin,  
Abstinence from strong drink,  
Not to be weary in well-doing :  
This is the greatest blessing.

Reverence and lowliness,  
Contentment and gratitude,  
The hearing of the Law at due seasons :  
This is the greatest blessing.

To be long-suffering and meek,  
To associate with the tranquil,  
Religious talk at due seasons :  
This is the greatest blessing.

.....  
Beneath the stroke of life's changes  
The mind that shaketh not,  
Without grief or passion, and secure :  
This is the greatest blessing.

On every side are invincible  
They who do acts like these,  
On every side they walk in safety,  
And this is the greatest blessing."

been made of the apparent coincidences between the Buddhist and the Christian morality, it will appear, I think, on closer examination, that the similarity is in some respects only a superficial one. The main defect of the former—arising, as we shall see, out of the fundamental principle of Buddhism—is, that it is a morality of negation or renunciation. It lays almost exclusive emphasis on the passive virtues of submission, resignation, indifference to the allurements of sense and passion, deadness to the world and the things of the world; and if it seems to find any place for active benevolence and kindred virtues, it does so only in name, or by a kind of noble inconsistency. Its precept of universal love is only to the ear identical with the virtue of Christian charity. The latter is essentially based on the idea of the value and dignity of man's spiritual nature as made in the Divine image and capable of an infinite destiny; but the universal love of the Buddhist has in it no ✓ element of respect for man as man, and can rise no higher than compassion towards a being whose very existence is vanity and illusion, and whose highest destiny is to pass away into nothingness. With all its imperfections, however, there can be no question that the comparatively pure and elevated morality which Buddha taught and exemplified is one of the causes to which we must ascribe the marvellous success he achieved in his own day, and the deep hold which his system has taken of the religious consciousness of the East through succeeding ages.

III. Yet moral teaching could never of itself have sufficed to create a religious revolution. A practical morality that is not based on universal principles—in other words, that has not its source in religious ideas—cannot take any deep or permanent hold of the spirit of man. Moreover, so far as we can learn, Buddha's was one of those deeply reflective natures in which the speculative instinct, the tendency to examine into the ultimate principles of things, is never wanting; and this tendency could not fail to be stimulated and developed by his long training in the schools of the Brahmans. We might naturally expect, therefore, to find in Buddhism something more and deeper than a system of practical ethics. And this is actually the case. Of the three "Pitaka" which constitute the canonical books of the Buddhists, and which, 170 years after the death of Buddha, are said to have received the sanction of his disciples as embodying the teaching of their master, one is devoted to the statement of doctrines and the exposition of metaphysical principles. Yet, when we proceed to examine into their contents, the difficulty with which we started recurs. For the strange fact meets us, that we have here what purports to be a system of religious doctrines in which the very idea of God is left out; and though we find in it the doctrine of a future state of retribution, it is only under the fantastic form of the transmigration of the soul after death into the bodies of men and of the lower animals, and even into plants and inorganic

substances. Though, again, there is in this singular creed a doctrine of final blessedness—or, in modern language, of “the salvation of the soul”—yet that in which this blessedness consists is what is termed “Nirvana,” which, according to the generally accepted interpretation, means simply annihilation,—absolute and final extinction of conscious being. How, it may well be asked, could the personal influence of any individuality however noble, or the practical power of any system of morality however pure and exalted, lend currency to a system of doctrines apparently so incredible and revolting? How was it possible for a religion that seems to be the negation of the very essence of religion—a religion without God, without immortality, without heaven—to gain a single sane convert, not to say to become the religion of more than one-third of the whole human race?

In order to answer this question, it will be necessary to examine a little more closely into the nature of the Buddhist doctrines, and the reasonings on which they were based. As, however, within our limits, a detailed examination of them is impossible, I shall, in what remains of this lecture, confine my remarks to an explanation and criticism of that doctrine of Nirvana which may be said to constitute the key-stone of the whole system. The word Nirvana is that which Buddha employs to denote the consummation of his own spiritual struggles and aspirations, and the blessedness in which he invited



all men to share. It was in his eyes the highest reward of goodness—the state into which only those who, it might be after ages of penitential discipline, were purified from all taint of evil, could be permitted to enter. What then, precisely, in the view of Buddha, did Nirvana mean?

Now on this point there has been great discussion and division, turning mainly on the question whether Nirvana is an absolutely negative idea, or admits of any positive element such as in other religions enters into the conception of a future state; whether, in other words, it means simply annihilation, or only an escape from pain and sorrow—the cessation of existence, or merely the cessation of the evils of existence, and the transition into a state of perpetual rest and blessedness. In deciding between these two interpretations of the word, etymology does not help us: for, according to different authorities, it may be translated either “blowing out,” the act of extinguishing a light; or “without blowing,” a state of calm which no breath of wind disturbs. Understood in the former sense, it would mean the complete extinction of being; in the latter, the passing away of the spirit into a region where the perturbations of life can follow it no more. By some Sanskrit scholars it is maintained that “two opposite sets of expressions in the Buddhist texts, with reference to Nirvana, represent two phases of the doctrine—the one ancient, the other modern. The original doctrine taught by Buddha is that of the entrance of the soul into rest,

while the dogma of annihilation is a perversion introduced by metaphysicians in later times." This theory has been shown by a recent investigator, Mr Childers, author of a dictionary of Pali, the sacred language of the Cinghalese Buddhists, to be untenable; and he himself propounds the theory that "the word Nirvana is used to designate two different things—the state of blissful sanctification called *Arhatship*, and also the annihilation of existence in which it ends." "Arhatship," he maintains, "cannot be the ultimate goal of the Buddhist, for Arhats die like other men. But Nirvana, whatever it is, is an eternal state in which Arhatship necessarily terminates; and, therefore, expressions properly applicable to the former, might, in a secondary sense, be used of the latter." These various theories as to the meaning of Nirvana are not, it seems to me, incapable of reconciliation. The word may be employed to denote either the ultimate end to which the Buddhist aspires, or the means by which it is to be attained. In the second sense, it is unquestionably frequently applied in the Buddhist scriptures to the completion of that process of renunciation by which the aspirant after perfection seeks to kill out the love of life, and all those desires and impulses which make men cling to life. In this sense it is a state or attitude of the human spirit attainable during the present life. The Buddhist conceives it possible, by self-discipline, to extinguish in his breast not only all selfish desires and passions, but the very consciousness of self in

which they centre. The four "Sublime Verities," as they are called, which are represented as constituting the sum and substance of Buddha's teaching, are these: (1.) Existence is only pain or sorrow; (2.) The cause of pain or sorrow is desire; (3.) In Nirvana all pain and sorrow cease; (4.) The way to attain Nirvana is by what is called the "noble path," which means virtuous self-discipline, ending in ecstatic oblivion of self-consciousness. When this last point is reached, everything that constitutes our separate individuality—feeling, thought, the very consciousness of personal existence—is annihilated; the oil that fed the lamp of life is drained off, and the flame goes out of itself. It is true that the man who has reached this blank mental nothingness still exists, but all that is left of his personality is the mere bodily form. When death has dissolved that, there is nothing left to constitute the basis of a new existence of trouble and sorrow, nothing to light up the lamp of life anew; and Nirvana, already virtually attained, reaches its actual consummation in death.

But whilst, in this point of view, it is possible to regard Nirvana as a state of perfection attainable in the present life, if we consider what it is in which that perfection consists, and the way in which it is supposed to be attained, I think we cannot hesitate to pronounce that this heaven of the Buddhist contains in it, at least explicitly, no positive element such as we express by the words "moral and spiritual perfection," but is neither

more nor less than absolute annihilation. This conclusion will, I think, be made still more obvious, if, without dwelling on particular passages in the Buddhist canon in which Nirvana is referred to, we trace briefly the process of deduction which led Buddha to regard it as the *summum bonum*, the goal, of all human aspiration and effort. His train of reasoning, if so we can term it, is in substance this: There is no possibility of escape from the vanity and wretchedness that embitter human existence but by escape from existence itself. If we examine into man's nature closely, we shall be forced to conclude that vanity and misery are not accidents of his being, but enter into the very constitution and essence of it, and therefore, that we can only cease to be wretched by ceasing to be. Take any of the elements of man's nature, and you will find it to be so. Our senses subject us all through life to the most miserable delusions. They fool us into belief in a world which has no reality. The things that please the eye and gratify the senses, are not as we seem to see them. The world is only a world of appearances that exist for the moment in us, and not in things that have any permanent reality without us. In regarding them as real existences, we are only the fools of our own fancy. Our desires and affections, again, subject us to a still more deplorable deception. They are not only directed to objects that have no real but only a phantasmal existence, but they perpetually cheat us with promises that are never fulfilled. The

joys of sense soon sate us. The palled appetite turns with disgust from the object that proffered it only delight, and sensuous pleasure long pursued dries up the very capacity of enjoyment, and leaves in the soul a weariness and vacuity more intolerable than the sharpest positive pain. The raptures of love, the joy of gratified ambition, the pleasures of gain, honour, worldly distinction and success, never are what in anticipation we fondly imagined them to be. A thousand drawbacks mar the sense of enjoyment; sickness and the fear of death poison it; possession soon deprives it of its zest. It is just the man who has tasted most deeply of life's joys, whose experience of life and its pleasures has been the widest, who will be the readiest to acknowledge what a mockery it all is. It is true that he who does so discern the unsatisfactoriness of life's pleasures is not necessarily delivered from their fascination. Moralising to-day on their hollowness, to-morrow he may be lured anew by the bait he despised. But this very fact only deepens the painful sense of unreality and deception. That we have seen through it, that we know it, and yet that open-eyed we let ourselves be deceived by it—this only adds to disappointment the shame of conscious weakness, the humiliation and remorse of self-detected folly. Nor is there anything inconsistent with this conviction of the vanity and misery of human life in the fact that the man who has thus learned to despise life should still dread to quit it—that there should be an instinctive clinging

to life even in the heart that has ceased to hope for anything from it. But this, again, only serves to deepen the conviction of the ineradicable falsehood and deceptiveness of human existence, and to add to the conception of it a new touch of ridicule and absurdity.

It is something like this which seems to have been the train of thought which led the deeply meditative spirit of Buddha to that conclusion which the word Nirvana expresses. Human life is only vanity, delusion, wretchedness. What is the remedy for all its ills, what the only salvation from a misery so inextricably intertwined with our whole conscious experience? Is it to be found in death? Does Buddha think of the grave as the place where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest, or anticipate the tone of modern sentimentalism which thinks of "our little life as rounded with a sleep," of death as the dreamless slumber in which "after life's fitful fever we sleep well"? The answer is—No, death is not Buddha's cure for life's ills: for the source of these he perceived to be an inward and spiritual one—in the mind, and not in man's outward condition and circumstances; and death, though it may change the latter, leaves the former, the true root of evil, unextirpated. Though not in the Christian form of the doctrine, Buddha, as we have seen, taught a kind of future retribution. To the soul which reaches the close of life unemancipated from its desires and passions, death is only the transition into

a new earthly existence, at once retributive and probationary; and that again, when it has run its course, if the cause at once of existence and its sorrows be yet uneradicated, is succeeded by another, and so on interminably. If, then, not even in death can we find it, is there no other way of escape, no other refuge from evil? Yes, Buddha answers, there is one and only one haven of rest from the storms of life, one way of salvation from all its ills. The disease is spiritual, and so, too, must be the cure. It is not life, but the desires that make us cling to life, in which the secret of our wretchedness lies. If these remain, no conceivable change of circumstances will avail us. Kill desire, extinguish feeling, quell every throb of emotion and passion within the breast, cease to care or wish for happiness, let not one pulsation of selfish feeling remain to ruffle the moveless calm of the spirit, and then Nirvana will be yours. Even here on earth you will be numbered among the enlightened and the free. The shadows which men mistake for realities will no longer befool you. The degrading bonds that enslave them will bind you no more. All that constituted the fatal gift of individual existence will have vanished away. And death, when it comes, instead of being only the entrance on a new cycle of sorrows, will be but the final rush of darkness on a spirit that has for ever ceased to be.

Such, then, is the strange doctrine which forms the fundamental principle of the Buddhist faith. Yet, state it as you will, have we here any solution of the

problem of the wide and lasting success of Buddhism? Can we conceive any human being attracted to a religion which preaches annihilation as the supreme good, the highest blessedness in store for humanity? Exceptive cases there may be, in which minds unhinged by misfortune or distracted by remorse have found it possible to prefer death to life, non-existence to an existence which has become one prolonged agony. "Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery," are the plaintive words of one from whose life all joy had vanished,—“wherefore is light given to him that is in misery, and life unto the bitter in soul; which long for death, but it cometh not; and dig for it more than for hid treasures; which rejoice exceedingly, and are glad, when they can find the grave?” And the same sentiment is expressed in the well-known words of a modern writer—

“Count o'er the joys thine hours have seen,  
Count o'er thy days from anguish free;  
And know, whatever thou hast been,  
'Tis something better—not to be.”

The analogy, however, which these cases present to the Buddhist longing for Nirvana, is a very imperfect one. That in a few rare and exceptive cases remorse, satiety, intolerable pain or shame, and the like motives, should overcome the love of life, helps but little to explain how millions of human beings should be attracted to a creed which makes annihilation the supreme good of man. Moreover, does there not seem to be a strange inconsistency between



this doctrine and the moral teaching and unwearied personal philanthropy of its author? Why try, by softening its hardships, to make life less intolerable or more sweet to those whose highest virtue is to cease to care for it? Or again, why be anxious for the moral culture of a nature not merely destined to speedy extinction, but whose highest hope and aspiration is to be extinguished? Why be at pains in adorning, purifying, and ennobling that which at the end of the process, and as the result of it, is to cease to exist?

The explanation of these difficulties is to be found, I think, in this—that here, as elsewhere, the real attraction of a doctrine or system of doctrines is in something deeper than its form, and that men believing ostensibly in Nirvana, really believed in the deeper truth which unconsciously they discerned beneath it. The long struggle of thought with the mystery of the world and human life, which we have traced in the Indian religions, seems to have issued only in the discovery that God is a negation, and blank annihilation the final destiny of man. But when we examine the genesis of the doctrine, we are led to the conclusion that the Nirvana of Buddhism is, at least implicitly, something more than the mere negation it seems to be, and that what gave it its real power was the positive element it virtually contained. The worship of a negation, it may be conceded, is an impossibility, and an atheistic religion a contradiction in terms. But Buddhism, though apparently, is not really, an

atheistic system. It starts from the basis common, as we have seen, to all pantheistic religions—that of the unreality, the evanescence, the unsubstantiality of the world and all finite things—and it presses this notion to a point of exaggeration at which it seems to pass into a deification of nothingness—an attitude of mind which it seems impossible to distinguish from absolute atheism. It sweeps away even that *caput mortuum* of a deity, the abstract substance in union with which Brahmanism found its heaven, and its only heaven is identification with the blank negation which is all the deity that is left to it. But those who thus identify Buddhism with atheism overlook two all-important considerations: first, that the negation of Buddhism could not exist without a virtual affirmation; and secondly, that all religion, and the Christian religion most of all, contains a negative element—or that negation is a necessary step in the process by which the human spirit rises into communion with God. As to the former of these points, it needs little reflection to see that that very recognition of the nothingness of the world and of all finite objects of desire, which in Buddhism reaches its climax, is a virtual appeal to a positive standard of reality by which we measure the world and pronounce this verdict upon it. He who avers that we are such stuff as dreams are made of, could not be conscious of that fact save by his knowledge of a real existence that is outside of the shadowy world of dreams; and even the slumberer who only dreams that he dreams,

is not far from waking. Absolutely unconscious ignorance and error—the ignorance and error of a mind that is content with its aberrations and illusions because it does not know them to be such—imply no conception of anything better; but to perceive my thoughts to be vagaries, my notions and reasonings futilities—this implies that I have virtually got beyond them, that I have in my mind a criterion by which I appraise and detect them; and I am at least half-way to a truth which I can already unconsciously employ as a criterion of error. In like manner, a religion whose cardinal doctrine is the negation of the finite, bears unconscious evidence to the fact that it has already transcended the finite. Before the mind that has become profoundly convinced that the things that are seen are temporal, there at least floats some vision of the things unseen and eternal; and if the vision be as yet shadowy and uncertain, that it can be even unconsciously apprehended as an ideal is the silent prophecy of a future when it shall be grasped as a reality. Have we not here, therefore, a principle which enables us to discern in Buddhism something more than the impossible worship of a blank negation? In the fact that its negation was one which felt and knew itself *to be* a negation, in those strange dogmas which make its teaching seem but one long scornful wail over the vanity and misery of the world and human life, may we not read the longing for, and latent belief in, a higher truth, in the light of which it saw and rose above the negation?

Was it not the eternal and divine, though it could only as yet be defined as the negative or contradiction of the transient and human, which gave their religion its secret hold over men's hearts? Whilst they seemed to themselves only to seek after escape from a world that was unreal and a life that was nothing but vanity, what they really though unconsciously sought after was participation in that infinite life which is and abideth for ever.

Moreover, as I have said, though religion cannot be a merely negative thing, all religious thought and feeling contain in them a negative element. It is not the language of paradox which the Christian believer employs when he speaks of "dying in order to live;" of "losing his life in order to find it;" of "bearing about in the body the death of Christ, that the life also of Christ may be manifest in us;" of "becoming dead to the world, that we may live unto God." That self-surrender to God in which the essence of religion lies, involves, as a necessary element of it, the abnegation of self, the renunciation of any life that belongs to me merely as this particular individuality—of any life apart from God. (As it is the primary condition of the intellectual life that the thinker effaces himself, gives up all merely individual opinions, prejudices, preconceptions—all ideas that pertain to him merely as this particular self—and lets his mind become the pure medium of the universal life of truth and reason,—so it is the essential characteristic of the spiritual life that the individual lives no longer to him-

self. / The initial act by which he enters on that life implies the renouncing of every wish and desire, every movement of inclination and will, that belong to his own private, exclusive self, or that point merely to his own interests and pleasures ; and its whole subsequent course may be described as the more and more complete extinction of the narrow, isolated life that centres in self, the nearer and nearer approach to that state in which every movement of our mind and every pulsation of our spiritual being shall be in absolute harmony with the infinite mind and will, and apart from the life of God we shall have no life we can call our own.

The error, therefore, of Buddhism is, not that in it religion contained a negative element, but that it stopped short there. In the Christian conception of self-renunciation, to live no longer to ourselves is, at the same time, to enter into an infinite life that is dearer to us than our own ; it is a death to self which rises to live again in the universal life of love to God and charity to all mankind. Yet even in that strange, morbid suppression of all human desire and passion, that impossible extinction of every natural impulse, which Buddhism inculcated, we may discern the unconscious groping of the spirit of man after something higher. To be in love with annihilation, to kindle human hearts by the fascination of nothingness, is indeed an impossible aim. And if we are confronted by the moral paradox of a religion of negation which drew to itself the faith and devotion of countless

multitudes, we may be sure that the attraction was not in the negation it seemed to preach, but in the positive truth in which that negation finds its complement and its explanation. Its last word was of the triumph of death over all human hope and love; but there was here at least some dim anticipation of another and yet unspoken word which it was given only to a far-off age to hear—"When this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory."

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# ST GILES' LECTURES.

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*SECOND SERIES—THE FAITHS OF THE WORLD.*

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*LECTURE III.*

RELIGION OF CHINA:

CONFUCIANISM.

By the Rev. GEORGE MATHESON, D.D., Minister of the  
Parish of Innellan.

THE subject which has been allotted to us in this course of lectures is that phase of Chinese worship which constitutes the state religion, in the special form which it assumed five centuries before the Christian era. It is well that our field has been thus narrowed, for the subject of Chinese worship is in itself a vast one, and its attractiveness to the speculative mind is by no means proportionate to its vastness. As we pass from the lofty aspirations of the Brahmin, and from the mystic earnestness of the Buddhist, into the religious atmosphere of China, we

feel instinctively that we are descending from the mountain into the plain. We are made aware that the bounds of our horizon are being curtailed, that we are exchanging the table-land for the valley, and that the era of poetry is giving place to the age of prose. Indeed, paradoxical as it may seem, the most interesting feature of Chinese worship is to us its want of interest, for it is this fact which, above all others, opens up the problem to be solved. We want to know why it is that a creed so cold, so passionless, so dead, is at this hour the dominating influence over 400,000,000 souls. We want to know why it is that a faith which, in intellectual vigour, in pietistic fervour, in poetic beauty, sinks so immeasurably beneath the creed of the Brahmin and of the Buddhist, should yet have maintained its empire where the Brahmin and the Buddhist have been compelled to yield their ground. Above all, we want to know why it is that this prosaic belief, dignified with the name of a religion, has manifested in the history of China a persistency, a fixedness, a superiority to change or vicissitude, which is perhaps unparalleled in the religious life of man.

✓ For it must be remembered that, in approaching the religion of China, we are approaching the incarnation of the spirit of conservatism. The faiths of the East are stagnant in comparison with those of the West; but in comparison with the religion of China, the faiths of the East are progressive. Brahminism is the worship of a universe whose life, though repeating itself in circles, is yet within each circle in



a state of perpetual movement—creating, preserving, and destroying to create anew. Buddhism is the worship of death, and therefore the adoration of that which changes all human things. Parsism is the recognition of a world whose very essence is restless movement and struggle—a battle between light and darkness, in which the balance is ever wavering. Even Judaism, though pervaded by a strong conservative instinct, is seen ever pressing onward to a future goal. It places its Messianic glory, not in anything which it has won, but in the advent of some golden hour which is yet to be. But in China we are confronted by a spectacle in every respect the reverse of these. We see a religion whose root is in the past, and whose essence is the fact that it has resisted the influence of progress. (Nor is this an accident or a peculiarity of the Chinese mind ; its religious conception is but the shadow of its national life. It has worked out in history that image of changelessness which it has conceived in faith.) In every department of life it exhibits the appearance of petrification. In arts, in manners, in the physical features of its inhabitants, in mental and moral portraiture, in language, and in religion, China has been of all lands the most untouched by time. It has resisted alike the inroads of matter and of mind. Like other countries, it has been subjected to the incursions and the conquests of barbarians ; but in a manner unknown to other countries, it has assimilated its conquerors to its own civilisation. It has been subjected to spiritual invasions ; foreign religions, like

foreign tribes, have tried to settle on its soil. But here, too, the result has been the same; the old Confucian faith has not forbidden the advent of the new, but it has gradually succeeded in drawing it nearer to itself. The system of Lao-tse is the result of foreign influence, and the creed called Chinese Buddhism is the product of the Indian missionary. Yet the system of Lao-tse has lost its hold on the community, and the adherents of Chinese Buddhism are hardly distinguishable from the followers of Confucius. A civilisation which has thus been able not only to resist new temporal influences, but eventually to appropriate these influences to itself, most certainly presents a spectacle of conservatism which is unique in the history of the world.

Nor in estimating the force of this tendency should we overlook the vast antiquity of the Chinese empire. Without giving any credence to its own claims on this subject, there remains abundant evidence to show that the civilisation thus stereotyped has been stereotyped for ages. We regard the civilisations of Athens, of Sparta, and of Rome, as representing the culture of an ancient world; but compared to the culture of China, the institutions of Athens, of Sparta, and of Rome are but of yesterday. Before Alexander had set forth on his career of conquest—before Plato had conceived the idea of his divine republic—before Buddha had proclaimed the existence of his heavenly Nirvana—before the mythical Romulus had founded the walls of the future Western empire—before the kingdom of Solomon had partially realised

the temporal hopes of the Jewish nation,—there existed an empire corresponding in many respects to the medievalism of Christian Europe, and already possessed of institutions which could only have been the result of a long course of development. It had its books of cosmology, its books of history, its books of poetry, and its books of ritual. It had its astronomy and its music. It had its arts and amenities of social life, its feasts and its dancing. It had its commerce and its products of industry; its porcelain cups have been found in the tombs of Egypt. It had a fully developed and organised feudalism, containing the gradations corresponding to duke, marquis, earl, count, and baron. It had an emperor who at the same time was pope, and who officially could do no wrong—who was the focus of a universal power, and was therefore the symbol and representative of the life divine. Indeed it is not too much to say, that if a scholastic of the thirteenth Christian century could have fallen asleep, and been transported back over two thousand years, he would have been startled by the resemblance which the institutions of that early age would have presented to his own, and would probably have been forced to admit that in many important respects the pre-eminence of civilisation lay on the side of the old Chinese empire.

It may be said, What has all this to do with the subject? We answer, It is the subject itself. That which seems an irrelevant introduction is here no introduction at all. For it so happens that this Chinese empire, with its feudal ranks and its conser-

vative institutions, is itself the object of Chinese worship. The belief in millenarianism—that is to say, the expectation of a kingdom of heaven upon earth—has in all ages of the world found some place in the religious instinct. The vision of such a kingdom has never been wholly absent from the lives of men. It glittered before the eyes of the Parsee, it shone in the imagination of Plato, it dominated the mind of the Jew, it sustained the heart of the early Christian. China, too, had her kingdom of heaven on earth, but with a difference. To the Parsee, to the Platonist, to the Jew, and to the Christian, the heavenly kingdom was something still to come; to the Chinaman it was something which had already come. The Chinese empire reveals to him the spectacle of a completed millenarianism—of a kingdom which exists no longer in a vision of the future, but in the actual experience of the passing hour. He believes that the social system in which he lives and moves is pervaded by a mysterious divine life, which, after diffusing itself through the different ranks and gradations of the constitution, finds its consummation and its climax in the life and reign of the emperor.

We come now to the all-important question, How is this object of worship to be served? in other words, what is required of a man in order to constitute him a citizen of this kingdom of heaven on earth? The answer to this question is the rise of that great teacher who has bequeathed his name to the whole state religion of China. In the earlier part of the sixth century before the Christian era, Confucius

stood forth as the exponent of Chinese doctrine—stood forth especially as the exponent of the practical problem, “What must we do to be saved?” Mr Carlyle has remarked that “great men have short biographies,” and the adage in the case of Confucius is abundantly fulfilled. History has left us no distinct portraiture of the man: his life as we have it is but a collection of fragmentary incidents, unmarked by philosophical development, and unilluminated by historic interest. That he was born in the state of Lu, in the reign of the Chow dynasty; that at six years of age he played at ceremonies and sacrifices; that at fifteen his mind was set on learning; that at nineteen he was married; that at twenty-three he began to teach; that he was very much impressed by the death of his mother, and very much unimpressed by the death of his wife; that his life was spent in wandering from court to court in the hope of obtaining converts to his ideal plans of government, and that in these missions he was oftener unsuccessful than victorious,—this is about the sum and substance of what tradition has told us of the man whose influence has become identified with the religious life of the Chinese nation.

But the interest in Confucius consists to us in the fact that he offered to his age an exposition of the Chinese religion which has been accepted by future ages. He professed to answer the question by what means a man was qualified to become a citizen of that heavenly kingdom which had been established in the Chinese empire. When he came upon the

scene, he found his countrymen already engaged in endeavouring to solve that problem. He found them inquiring into the nature of that mysterious life which they believed to be diffused throughout the empire. Some held it to be the manifestation of a personal God,<sup>1</sup> some looked upon it as the emanation of an impersonal force of nature, and some saw in it a stream of beneficent life poured down by the immortal spirits of their ancestors. Accordingly, there was everywhere observed a form of religious worship. There were public sacrifices; there were private prayers addressed either to the Supreme Being or to the ancestral dead; there were rituals and rules for their performance. Confucius stood forth in the midst of this old world and cried, "I show you a more excellent way!" He did not, indeed, tell his countrymen that theirs was a bad way; he was far too wise and politic for that. He did not tell them that their worship of a supramundane God was a delusion, their belief in immortality a dream, and their observance of sacrifice a waste of time.<sup>2</sup> What he did say was this: "There are things above the power of human comprehension, beyond the grasp of human intelligence; follow those things which are within the reach of that intelligence. You cannot figure to yourself the nature of God, you cannot certainly know that there is any point of contact between His nature and yours; and in the absence of

<sup>1</sup> According to Dr Legge, the monotheistic belief preceded all the others.—*Religions of China*, p. 16.

<sup>2</sup> He made no innovation on the existing ritual.

such knowledge the efficacy of your prayers and of your sacrifices must ever be an open question. But there is a region lying at the door which he who will may enter, and which is itself the entrance into the heavenly kingdom—a region within the reach of the most humble intellectual powers, and capable of being trodden by the simplest minds. That region is the world of duty; this is the door by which a man must enter the kingdom of heaven. What you have called in the past the observance of religion, is in reality but an exercise of imagination: it may represent a truth, or it may not—we cannot tell. But morality, the doing of that which is right, the performance of the plain and practical duties of the day and hour,—this is a road which is open to every man, and which will lead every man that follows it to the highest goal.”

Such, in brief compass, was the creed of Confucius—the substitution of a morality for a theology.<sup>1</sup> It will be seen how near it approaches to the agnosticism and the positivism of the nineteenth century. It does not deny the facts of theology; it denies that they are susceptible either of affirmation or of negation. It regards them as beyond the reach of human experience, and therefore as no fit subject for the contemplation of man; and it proposes to put in their room those rules for the conduct of life which are the peculiar province of the moral sphere. What, then, was the nature of that morality which Confucius pro-

<sup>1</sup> We have here followed the common view in preference to that of Dr Legge.

claimed as the substitute for theology? As we examine his system, there is one thing which strikes us pre-eminently; it is essentially a morality for this world. It is built upon the notion that the existing framework of Chinese society is destined to be a permanent thing: if that framework were shattered, the morality would disappear. This moral code is really a system of political economy which regulates the mutual moral duties of employer and employed, and prescribes who are to reign and who are to serve. It is an instrument for regulating the governmental relations of society. These relations, according to Confucius, are four—ruler and servant, father and son, husband and wife, elder brother and younger. The ruler, the father, the husband, and the elder brother represent the class of the employers; the servant, the son, the wife, and the younger brother represent the order of the employed: the duty of the former is to reign, the office of the latter is to obey. Yet Confucius would demand from each something more than power on the one hand, and obedience on the other: he would ask from the former, benevolence; and from the latter, sincerity. He felt that in order to consecrate the right of sovereignty in the state, and of parental authority in the household, it was necessary that sovereigns and parents should themselves be good men. Authority, to be made permanent, must be sanctified by the virtue with which it was exercised; obedience, to be made noble, must be hallowed by the freedom with which it was accepted, and the loyalty of that devotion with which it was habitually maintained.



In addition, however, to these governmental relations of ruler, father, husband, and elder brother, there was recognised by Confucius another relation which was not governmental, but social—that of the friend. It is when it touches this sphere that the morality of Confucius seems for a moment to burst its national boundaries and transcend its natural limitations; the element of subordination appears to melt away, and the sage of China seems to catch a momentary glimpse of an eternal and absolute morality which is designed not simply for employer and employed, but for man in his intercourse with man. For it is when Confucius comes to deal with the relation between friend and friend that he strikes out that remarkable principle which our Gospels have made familiar to every Christian, and which has come down to us by the name of the golden rule, "Whatsoever ye would not that others should do unto you, do not ye unto them." That Confucius is the author of this precept is undisputed, and therefore it is indisputable that Christianity has incorporated an article of Chinese morality. It has appeared to some as if this were to the disparagement of Christianity—as if the originality of its Divine Founder were impaired by consenting to borrow a precept from a heathen source. But in what sense does Christianity set up the claim to moral originality? When we speak of the religion of Christ as having introduced into the world a purer life and a surer guide to conduct, what do we mean? Do we intend to suggest that Christianity has for the first time revealed to

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the world, the existence of a set of self-sacrificing precepts—that here for the first time man has learned that he ought to be meek, merciful, humble, forgiving, sorrowful for sin, peaceable, and pure in heart? The proof of such a statement would destroy Christianity itself, for an absolutely original code of precepts would be equivalent to a foreign language. The glory of Christian morality is that it is not original—that its words appeal to something which already exists within the human heart, and on that account have a meaning to the human ear: no new revelation can be made except through the medium of an old one. When we attribute originality to the ethics of the Gospel, we do so on the ground, not that it has given new precepts, but that it has given us a new impulse to obey the moral instincts of the soul. Christianity itself claims on the field of morals this originality and this alone—“A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another.” It claims to have set up in the world an ideal of moral beauty which is fitted so to captivate the eyes and the hearts of men as to make it no longer necessary to lay down moral rules for the conduct of life; love has taken the place of law, and that which in the old dispensation was at best but a golden rule, has become, through the power of love, a golden necessity.

Now the Chinaman has no moral ideal. His morality is not actuated by admiration for any human type of moral excellence. He has not even that ideal admiration of womanhood which tended so powerfully to inspire to a life of sacrifice the best

minds of medieval Europe. Accordingly, as he is unable to point to an ideal, the Chinaman is forced to legislate; he must teach morality by rule. It is quite possible that by rule he may teach a man to perform those very precepts which Christianity reaches by love. It is quite possible, for example, that one who has no music in his soul may perform a piece of music with the most rigid exactness; he has only to learn mechanically the order and the value of the different notes, stops, and intervals which, when completed, constitute the harmony. But if we could imagine a perfectly tuned ear—an ear susceptible of the most subtle musical influences—we should reach a conception precisely the opposite of this. Such an ear would not need to learn the notes at all: it could improvise them; could pour them forth spontaneously and extemporaneously; could conceive in a few moments that completed whole which the unmusical man has reached only after the labour of many days. Now this is precisely the position which Christianity claims in the moral world. It professes to teach morality, not by telling men to strike particular notes of duty, but by giving them an ear for moral harmony which will enable them to choose their own notes. It lays down no code of detailed precepts; it rather seeks to impregnate the mind of its disciples with one great principle of love, which, if fully and clearly apprehended, must embrace in itself all precepts. It abolishes the law of ordinances contained in commandments; but it only abolishes them as the one blaze of sunshine abolishes the many

lights of the solar planets—it takes up the separate rules into the one law of love.

It will be seen at once, that to such a view as this the moral system of Confucius presents the greatest of possible contrasts—a contrast which would remain equally great even though every precept of his morality had been identical with that of the Christian founder. For it is plain that even that golden rule, in which he seems most closely to touch Christianity, has with him a totally different significance, and for this reason, that it *is* a rule. It does not seem to us that in uttering this precept Confucius really rose above his usual governmental theory—really meant to suggest more than a law for the wellbeing of the state. The thought in his mind was probably this: If you do evil to others, you may be sure they will retaliate on yourself the same form of evil; for, revenge in kind of injury is an instinct of humanity. Such retaliations can end in nothing but political anarchy; avoid them for the sake of good government, and in order to avoid them, shun that which may cause them. If at any time you are tempted to inflict injury upon your neighbour, remember that he will retaliate with the like injury upon yourself. Respect the peace of society—respect the balance of power—respect that system of social equilibrium which has made the preservation of one man's interests depend on the preservation of the rights of another.

Reverting now to the general characteristic of Confucianism—its attempt to substitute a morality for a

theology—we have to ask the question proposed at the beginning of this lecture, What has been the cause of its success? We may first inquire negatively, What has not been the cause? For one thing, it is plain that the system of Confucius derived no aid from the sympathy of contemporaneous history. The spirit of China in the days of Confucius was not the spirit of the world in general. Side by side with him on the canvas of religious history there stand out two other prominent figures, both leaders of the thoughts of men: the one contemporaneous in time—the other nearly so; the one representing the dawning West—the other symbolising the fading East; the one Pythagoras—the other Buddha. Yet neither of these figures has any affinity with Confucius. Pythagoras has certain speculations which present analogies to the older books of China, but to the Chinese sage himself he presents a contrast. Pythagoras was a philosopher; Confucius was a moralist. Pythagoras was a mystic; Confucius was a realist. Pythagoras was an ascetic; Confucius was a man of the world. Pythagoras would have admitted women to the higher education; Confucius made no effort to lift woman from her Eastern abasement.

Between Confucius and Buddha the outward features of dissimilarity are less marked; there are external points in which they agree. Both were of high origin, yet both in their actual circumstances were poor. Both were born into the Eastern world at a time when the Eastern world was in process of decay. Both attempted the salvation of their age by

the promulgation of a code of morals; but here the similarity ended. Their ideas of human salvation were not only different, but opposite. Buddha held this earthly existence to be so bad, that the only happiness for man was the hope of death, and he therefore taught a morality that would prepare for death;<sup>1</sup> Confucius held the present world, as represented in the Chinese empire, to be the best possible world—the very kingdom of heaven—and therefore he taught a morality which might tend to strengthen and perpetuate the things that are seen and temporal. It will thus appear that Confucius was not indebted for his success to the spirit of contemporaneous history; his great religious contemporaries moved on different lines from him, and in the elaboration of his plan of divine government he had to work out the problem alone.

Nor yet can it be said that the mind of China was attracted to the moral system of Confucius by any marvellous power exerted by his own personality. Most religions have taken their rise in the breast of some individual man; very few religions have had an individual man for their object. Of these few Confucianism is not one. We have already seen that the life of the founder, in so far at least as it has come down to us, is dry and uninteresting; and we know, as a matter of fact, that within its own limits it was a failure. Confucius achieved little while he lived; his hand seemed to be against every man, and every man's hand against him. It was when he had passed

<sup>1</sup> It consisted in the crucifixion of individual or sensuous desires.

away, and when he lay at rest by the banks of the Soo river, that his countrymen began to awake to the perception that there was something in his teaching worth cultivating and worth perpetuating. Even then, however, it was the teaching, and not the teacher, that was their goal. Christianity is the worship of Christ, but Confucianism is not the worship of Confucius. The Chinese sage is revered on account of the message which he brought ; it was the message alone that gave value to the messenger. The personal greatness of the teacher cannot explain the reception of his teaching, for it is only by reason of his teaching that he is reckoned personally great.

If, then, neither the spirit of contemporaneous history nor the private character of Confucius himself can explain the wonderful success of his mission, there is only one remaining direction to which we can look for such an explanation ; it must lie in some truth of the doctrine. No form of faith could exist for half an hour except by reason of the truth which is in it ; much less, in the absence of such conditions, could it persist for upwards of two thousand years. The wide and long prevalence of the system of Confucius is alone a guarantee for the fact that to the world which it addressed it bore some healing balm. We have said that the system of Confucius was not in harmony with the spirit of contemporaneous history. We shall find, it seems to us, that the points in which it was a reaction were precisely the points in which it brought healing ; and in the discovery of these we shall put our hand upon the causes which

have made this prosaic creed so permanent and so powerful.

These points of reaction, we think, were two. Let us first consider the fact that when Confucius appeared in the Eastern world he addressed a world which had abandoned itself to speculative dreams. Not only the Brahmin, the Buddhist, and the Parsee, but even the Chinese mind itself had become immersed in speculation: men were forgetting the light of common day in the search for that transcendental light which never shone on sea or land. On such a world the message of Confucius fell like a thunderbolt, but it was a thunderbolt fraught with sanitary influences. To an age immersed in transcendentalism there was health in the message, "Do the will, and ye shall know of the doctrine." There was health in the recall to the practical duties of life of men who had forgotten that life had any duties or that practice had any sphere. With singular felicity is this illustrated by the answer which Confucius himself gave to those desirous to hear his testimony on the subject of immortality. When he was asked whether he thought there was any efficacy in the practice of offering up sacrifices to the spirits of the ancestral dead, his reply was to this effect, If you have not yet recognised your relationship to the souls of the living, how can you discover your relationship to the spirits of the departed? One almost seems to hear an anticipative echo of the Christian sentiment, "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how shall he love God whom he hath not



seen?" We cannot doubt that to men whose studies on the subject of immortality had been limited to speculations on the abstract nature of the soul, the words of Confucius must have come with a message of power. For is it not true that, whether he meant it or not, he really pointed out to his day and generation the only road for reaching a rational conviction of immortality? The mind which speculates on the character of its own essence will inevitably wander in the mazes of uncertainty, but in the world of moral action it will probably regain its trust. The best evidence for the soul's immortality is a perception of the soul's beauty, and the highest perception of the soul's beauty is that which arises from the experience of a noble life. The man who lives for his brother man, who recognises that he has a relationship to every soul whose duties he must fulfil, is finding himself in the very act of losing himself, and is reaching the evidence of his immortality through the very process of sacrificial death. That Confucius saw the full force of this principle we do not believe, but his teaching was on the lines of a morality which was bound to issue in its revelation. He pointed his countrymen to a moral instead of an intellectual pathway for reaching the knowledge of transcendental things. Viewed in this aspect he was to his own age very much what Mr Carlyle was to the generation which first beheld him; indeed we have always been impressed with a strong parallel between them. Both had a reverence for the manifestation of force or power. Both sought to recog-

nise that power in union with virtue and moral aspiration. Both proclaimed the highest province of man—nay, the only available province for man—to be the pursuit of that virtue and the exhibition of that moral aspiration. Both in some sense were impelled to utter their call to duty by the contrary spirit of the times in which they lived. Carlyle appeared in an age in which speculation had taken the place of practice—in which the search for the absolute and the transcendental had obscured the vision of life and its moral claims. Confucius appeared in an age when men were impressed with the nothingness of finite things, and were struggling to fix their gaze upon that which resembled nothing in the heavens or the earth, or the waters under the earth. Both, therefore, in some measure, derived their force from their reactionary character. Their call to duty was a fresh sound to a world that had been listening only to monotonous strains of speculation which had issued in no end. They reminded man that there was a side of his nature which he was neglecting, and precisely that side of his nature which was likely to lead him to the highest goal. (They told him that if ever he should attain to any sense of the infinite and absolute, it would not be through the limitations of the human intellect, but through the practice of that eternal and immutable morality which gives to the soul the highest image of its own eternity and its own immutability.)

{ "But there was a second point in which the system of Confucius was a reaction against the spirit of his

age, and in which, therefore, it brought health to his age. The world in which Confucius lived was not only a world of speculation; it was a scene of pessimism—that is to say, of despair. As a general rule, the men of his day believed that in the present system of things everything was as bad as it could be. The Brahmin looked upon life as an illusion; the Buddhist viewed it as a curse; the Parsee contemplated it as a bitter and painful struggle. If men cherished hopes of a hereafter, it was a hereafter from which were to be eliminated all those elements which constituted the here. The effect of such a creed was manifest: it could only result in the neglect of the present hour; it led to the same disregard of practice which we have seen produced by the tendency to speculation. If the present world and the institutions to which it had given birth were in their nature evil—if the system of earthly things was incapable of being remedied by time and culture—if the only hope for humanity was the prospect of entering at death into a different order of being, from which would be excluded every thought of time and every vestige of human culture,—the inference suggested to the mind was the hopelessness of all action. It became the paramount duty of man to insist on doing nothing. Everything done for this world was but a link in the propagation of evil; the true attitude of an earnest soul was to fold the hands in prayer and wait for death, the great emancipator, to dissolve the old fabric and reconstruct the new. )

Into this world of pessimism the creed of Con-

fucius fell with crushing power. It proclaimed a doctrine comparatively new to Eastern minds. It told them that the chief end of man was not merely, or even mainly, to prepare for a future world—that the immediate task allotted to him was the beautifying and the glorifying of the life which now is. It told them that the life which now is admits of being beautified and glorified—that the present system of things, so far from being radically bad, contains in its root the germs of all perfection and the sources of infinite development. And let it be remembered that, in proclaiming this doctrine, China has made a real contribution to the science of religious thought. It has often appeared as if she had no place in the science of religion ; her name is generally associated with the profession of atheism. That she has rarely raised her eyes to a God above the world—that she has seldom striven to contemplate the essential nature of the divine life—that she has studiously refrained from considering the possibility of any order of being beyond the range of human experience and human faculties,—all this is true. But we must not forget that there is an order *in* the world as well as beyond it, and that the tracing of this order is itself a mode of tracing the life of God. This was precisely the point which the religions of the East *did* forget. No man would apply to Brahminism the epithet atheistic ; we should more naturally attach to it the term, God-intoxicated. Yet it cannot be denied that, with all its richness of religious life, Brahminism is weak in the very point in which Confucianism is

strong. Brahminism sees an order in the nature of the divine life, but her eye is riveted on the divine life above the world: she has no real sympathy with its manifestations in time—for time, and space, and matter are to her but illusions of a dream. Buddhism sees a kingdom of rest; but it is a kingdom outside the world, and is only reached by destruction of the human powers in death. Parsism worships a kingdom of light, and therefore recognises in the divine life a source both of order and of joy; but even here the order and the joy are things above the world. The kingdom of light exists in the heavens; but it is not yet established on the earth, for its reign on earth is disputed by another empire—the kingdom of disorder and of darkness. Thus all along the line of Eastern faiths we are confronted by the tendency to look for divine harmony in things beyond the world, and to see the life of God in regions which transcend the seen and temporal. But China comes forward with a fresh and a reactionary contribution; it proclaims the thought that there is a moral order *in* the world. It declares that it is needless to look so far away for an exhibition of divine harmony—that this earth is itself a harmony. It tells the Indian that in all his search for divine order he has failed to seek it in the one spot where it must be found—the commonplace morality of daily life. It says that, by pursuing the plain and practical duties of the hour, man can actually make this world itself the kingdom of God—that the harmony of the universe is to be found, not in some transcendental, timeless sphere, but in the com-

pleted result of those seemingly trivial acts which make up the moral history of the individual human soul. In uttering that voice, China called men out of despair, and pointed them to action. It told them that there was hope in action ; that the world which they deemed an illusion was in truth a great reality, and that it was capable of being perfected by the efforts of that very finite life which had seemed to them the enemy of all perfection. Can it surprise us that in proclaiming this creed of hope for the present world, the doctrine of Confucius should have been acceptable to the world—should have been welcomed even by the faiths of pessimism? Men who take a gloomy view of life would at any time rather be found wrong than right in their calculations. Their wish invariably points in an opposite direction to their thought, and they are ready to accept any system that promises to reveal what they despairingly desire to see. Accordingly, the doctrine of Confucius has been powerful beyond its natural boundaries ; it has influenced not only China, but India. It has come into contact with Buddhism, and it has affected Buddhism with its own spirit—has induced it to exchange its timeless paradise of Nirvana for the hope of a material heaven, beautified with earthly forms and glorified with earthly prospects. The Buddhist on the soil of China is willing to see life perpetuated in eternity, because he has received from his contact with Confucianism the hope which has made life an object of desire.

We arrive, then, at this conclusion. The doctrine

of Confucius owes its success to the fact that it has made a real contribution to the science of natural religion. It gave to the faiths of the East an element which was distinctive and new. Each had been contributing its quota. The Brahmin recognised the presence of a divine life above the world. The Buddhist was impressed with the conviction of human nothingness and human impotence. The Parsee felt the power of the moral disorder in the soul, and emphasised that sense of sin which lies at the root of the highest religious feeling. But it was the province of China, without denying these aspects, to present a neglected side of the picture—a portrait-ure of man's potential greatness. It held up the vision of an infinite in the finite—the establishment of a kingdom of heaven on earth, the existence of a perfected society, the organisation of a divine order out of the elements of time. It pointed to the prospect of a paradise below—to the advent of a pure civil government—to the possibility of a reign whose law would be universal blessing; and in the suggestion of that hope it supplied the one feature which was lacking to give the religions of the East a power over the present life.

There is, however, one thought which must forcibly impress the modern mind looking back upon the creed of Confucius through the vista of two milleniums: it is the fact that the Chinese empire herself has not realised her own vision of optimism. That empire, which professed to be the very source of human development, has been left far behind by the

stream of human civilisation. Is there any hope that part of her vision may yet be realised—that she herself may become sharer in the culture of the West? Were we treating of any other religion, a question so secular would be irrelevant; but in this religion the secular *is* the sacred, and the question becomes pertinent. Mr Draper, in his 'Intellectual Development of Europe,' has given it a negative answer. He holds that the East has reached its period of old age, and is sinking into inevitable death. It seems to us, however, that in the case of the Chinese empire there are grounds at least for suspending such a judgment. That she has remained stagnant for centuries is true; but it is also true that the stagnancy has in large measure been the result of an external cause. For long centuries she shut her gates against the ingress of Western civilisation, lest the influx of modern views should corrupt her ancient institutions. The question is, Was her fear well founded? Had she opened her gates to the West, would she indeed have been influenced by the breath of the new atmosphere? Now that she is beginning to open them, is there a hope that she shall be influenced? We have seen that this nation, with all her conservatism, has been suprisingly assimilative. We have seen how, in ancient times, she appropriated to herself every foreign influence that touched her shores; and we can point in comparatively modern times to a manifestation of the same plastic power. In that great outburst of missionary zeal which in the Catholic Church followed the age of the Reformation, nowhere did



the Jesuits experience such success as in the Chinese empire. The reason of their success was the real or fancied parallel which that empire perceived between their teaching and the statements of her own sacred writings. The success indeed was short-lived, and the movement faded ; but it is not difficult to discover the cause of its failure. The Jesuits contented themselves with trying to reach a *theological* parallel ; in other words, they strove to establish a European contact with that which, on any view of the question, is the least distinctive feature of the Chinese religion. In the sacred books of China there are passages which favour monotheism ; there are passages which favour polytheism ; and there are passages which favour nature-worship : there, as everywhere else, individual men have speculated in different ways. But since the days of Confucius the speculative element has declined, and the Chinese mind has sought truth almost exclusively by the path of morals. If, then, modern Europe would influence this ancient empire, it must seek to do so through its own distinctive sphere—the sphere of morality. And unquestionably modern Europe has here a stronghold of which medieval Europe was oblivious. It may be questioned, notwithstanding Dr Legge's high authority,<sup>1</sup> whether there is any real parallel between the God of Chinese speculation and the God proclaimed in the Bible ; but it cannot be denied that there is a strong possibility of contact between the morality of Confucius and the morality of the Christian religion.

<sup>1</sup> Religions of China, pp. 144-148.

The relation of the Christian code to the Chinese morality is the relation of the picture to its frame. China has the frame of morals, but it has no picture to place within it ; it wants an ideal to give beauty to its own conception. Christianity can supply that ideal. It reveals the precepts of all virtue concentrated in a single life. It unveils the vision of a kingdom of heaven, having all the order and discipline contemplated by the Chinese Utopia ; but unlike that Utopia, capable of being realised not merely in the life of the collective race, but within the limits of each individual soul. In union with such a principle, the empire of China would assuredly revive. The units would emerge from the mass, and become the centres of new power. The sacrificial virtues of life would take the place of purely utilitarian motives. Woman would rise into her position of rightful dignity, and with her would arise the elements of a true social system, which would fill with the arts of peace the places now held by the forms of lethargy.

For it is worth while to ask, at this stage, What is the great practical difference between the kingdom of heaven in the system of China, and the kingdom of heaven in the system of Christianity ? Both are professed attempts to establish a divine kingdom in the world—to perfect the life and practice of a visible human society. China professes to have accomplished her aim ; Christianity only claims to be on the road to its accomplishment. Yet it is manifest, even to the most superficial observation, that the

religion which claims to have realised the least, has been incomparably the greater power. Leaving out of view all theological distinctions, and keeping our eye merely on the sober facts of history, no man can fail to perceive that the Christian kingdom has been strong in the very point where the Confucian kingdom has proved weak. That point is human individualism. The history of Christianity is essentially the history of great men—the revelation of powerful spiritual personalities, which by their own individual force have moulded the destinies of their respective ages. The history of China, on the other hand, is the life of a collective nation. Everything moves on a prodigious scale. We are confronted by vast periods of time ; we are met by the rise and fall of powerful and protracted dynasties ; but we miss the originative force of single individual lives. The man is absorbed in the state ; the separate personality is lost in the collective whole. One naturally asks, Why ? Is it that the system of Confucius has omitted to lay stress on the necessity for individual development ? On the contrary, the leading peculiarity of that system is its intense and absorbing effort to stimulate the individual man with a sense of his potential greatness. The precepts of Confucius, from beginning to end, are pervaded by this spirit. Take the few following as illustrations of the whole :—

“ What the superior man seeks is in himself ; what the small man seeks is in others.”

“ The superior man is dignified, but does not wrangle ; social, but not a partisan. He does not

promote a man simply because of his words, nor does he put good words aside because of the man."

"A poor man who does not flatter, and a rich man who is not proud, are passable characters ; but they are not equal to the poor who yet are cheerful, and the rich who love the rules of propriety."

"Extravagance leads to insubordination, and parsimony to meanness. It is better to be mean than insubordinate."

"A man can enlarge his principles ; principles do not enlarge the man."

"The cautious seldom err."<sup>1</sup>

Throughout these precepts there runs one thought—the paramount importance of self-contemplation. The problem pervading them is this, How shall the individual render himself superior to other individuals ? Each man's motive is himself ; his stimulus is the contemplation of himself. The goal which glitters before him is the prospect of his own superiority ; the vision which lures him on is the sight of his own shadow. He has mapped out for himself many precepts, whose observance must exalt a man ; but the motive underlying all is the hope of exaltation.

Now when we turn to Christianity we find that this principle of self-contemplation is conspicuous by its absence. We are confronted by a religion whose very starting-point and basis is the idea of self-forgetfulness, and which demands of its votaries before all things the voluntary surrender of their wills. As we look deeper, we are met by a paradox more start-

<sup>1</sup> Encyc. Britann., 9th ed., vol. vi. p. 264.

ling still. We see that just in proportion as the self-forgetfulness grows, the power of the individual increases; that just as a man loses the thought of himself does he become a centre of influence to other men. The history of the Christian life as it is exhibited in the world's annals is essentially the history of strength in weakness, of personal force evoked by forgetfulness of personality. The men who come to the front in these annals are precisely the men who have their own interest in the background. We see enthusiasts kindling their contemporaries into inspiration simply because they have lost the remembrance of themselves in devotion to the interest of others. We see martyrs becoming the seed of the Church by the very force of that love which has compelled them to be martyrs, finding their life by the act of losing it. We see a kingdom which, by the admission of all history, has dominated every empire of the civilised world and modified every department of its civilisation, but which has attained this eminence, not by the search for but by the sacrifice of empire—which has conquered by stooping, grown rich by impoverishment, and reached the summit of dominion by ministration to the wants of the humblest human soul. The least has become the greatest through its consciousness of being little; the servant has become the ruler through his enthusiasm for the life of service; the crown has been won by the struggle for the cross.

Here, then, we are brought to the very gates of the solution, and the problem of the two empires finds its explanation. The solution, indeed, is given by Chris-

tianity itself. Christianity has revealed to the world that the principle of all success is self-forgetfulness, and that the only road to individual greatness is the banishment of the individual from his own thoughts. It has taught mankind that to make self the aim of life is to prevent the development of self, to dwarf its stature and to thwart its joy ; and that if men would really attain to the full stature and joy of personal being, they must do so by looking out from themselves. In the light of that principle we begin to see why the religion of Confucius has fallen short of triumph. The Chinese kingdom of heaven has failed to win the suffrages of humanity because the members of that kingdom are individually weak ; and its members are individually weak just because they are individually self-conscious. The paradise of China is not of the earth, earthy, but it is assuredly of the East, Eastern ; it is based upon the pillars of power. Its morality is a means, not an end ; its honesty is a policy, not an impulse. Its goal is everywhere the physical, the establishment and perpetuation of place, rank, authority. The virtues required for such a goal are essentially the active and masculine—prudence, calculation, foresight, concentrated energy, keenness of judgment, power to balance consequences. There is little room for the sacrificial or feminine type—the mercy that is long-suffering, the charity that thinketh no evil, the love that endureth. The Chinaman's heart is not hardened but his intellectual standard is mistaken. He has mapped out for himself an Eastern estimate of greatness, and he has ordered his life to

suit that estimate. He has started from the principle of the survival of the strongest, and he has selected for his empire the qualities which he believes to be the strongest, but he has made a mistake in his selection. He has preferred the virtues of active enterprise to the virtues of passive endurance, and therefore he has driven out the feminine to make room for the masculine type. But in so doing he has rejected the most abiding of all forces, the most indomitable of all influences. He has left it to be taken up by a religion which, through its exercise, has become supreme, and which is raising through its power that heavenly kingdom which China failed to build: the rejected stone of China has become in Christianity the head of the corner. If China is ever to retrieve herself, it must be by going back to incorporate this neglected element. If she is ever to realise any part of her ancient dream, it must be in union with that sacrificial principle which Christianity has made her own; for any spiritual empire other foundation can no man lay. It is in this direction alone that China can be radically influenced by the culture of the West. No mere transplanting of institutions, no simple adoption of European customs, no bare transition from an old to a modern *régime* of education, can permanently effect the cure. It is a spirit that China wants, an enthusiasm of humanity which is born of the love of man. In Christianity alone has that spirit been realised, and in contact with Christianity alone can China hope to find it. If a kingdom should await her in the future, if her

vision of a crown should be fulfilled, it must be a kingdom which has been built on the service of humanity, and a crown which has been conquered through the power of sacrifice.

Here, however, we are warned by our limits that we must bring this subject to a close. In deference to these limits we have studied throughout to avoid all minutiae. We have passed by everything of the nature of detail. Our main endeavour has been to grasp and to exhibit the essence of the religion of Confucius. We have sought to put our hand upon those distinctive features which have constituted this religion a separate faith, and have left untouched those extraneous elements which it holds in common with other faiths. Perhaps at the close of this study the thought most powerfully borne in upon our minds will be an impression of the modern in the ancient. Perhaps nowhere has the Asiatic intellect presented so many points of contact to the European mind as in this most exclusive, most conservative, most prosaic of Eastern religions. Nowhere has the East caught so much of the spirit of Western sanguineness. Nowhere has Eastern religion come so near to the European standpoint of bringing secular institutions into harmony with religious convictions. Nowhere has the oriental spirit made an effort so thoroughly modern to embody the worship of the heart in the acts and duties of the common day. In a world which habitually and systematically divorced the human from the divine, in an age which regarded with despair all manifestations of the seen and



temporal, in a community which looked upon man's chief end as a life of asceticism and contemplation, the religion of the Chinese empire struck out a path of novelty which modern life has made a path of permanence. It pointed to the fact that there is a divine order in mean things, in little things, in prosaic things; that the drudgery of daily toil has something to do with the interests of universal government, and that in union with these interests the daily toil may hope for its reward. It has bequeathed to Europe the inheritance of a thought which alone would make Europe its perpetual debtor—the belief that religion has a share in the establishment of human civilisation, and that the goal of a perfect civilisation is the foundation of a kingdom of God. China, the most seemingly irreverent of all nations, has here joined hands with Judea, that nation which of all others has been most impressed with the personality of God. Approaching the subject from different angles, and looking at the problem with a contrary bias, they have arrived in one respect at the same goal. They have reached that thought to which the continent of Asia has been otherwise a stranger, that there is a sacred element underlying all secular phenomena, that the sphere of religion embraces the things which are present as well as the things which are to come, and that the recognised thrones and dominions of this world are as much the agencies of God as the unknown principalities and powers of the heavenly places. They have transmitted that thought to Christian Europe, and Chris-

tian Europe has intensified it by its Christianity. It has not nullified the labours of the Chinaman and of the Jew,—it has prosecuted these labours by a shorter and an easier method ; and if ever that time should come when it shall impart its new strength to their ancient fabric, it shall only put into their hands the talisman by which their national mission shall be crowned and perfected.

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# ST GILES' LECTURES.

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*SECOND SERIES—THE FAITHS OF THE WORLD.*

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## *LECTURE IV.*

### RELIGION OF PERSIA :

#### ZOROASTER AND THE ZEND AVESTA.

By the Rev. JOHN MILNE, M.A., Minister of Greenside Parish,  
Edinburgh.

THE ancient Persian religion, which I am to describe, is a natural growth from the primitive religion of our Aryan fathers, who dwelt in Iran, the region rudely bounded on the south by the Persian Gulf, on the west by the Tigris, on the east by the Indus, and which extended northwards as far as the Scythians allowed. They adored one supreme god ; him they saw visibly revealed in the sky, which, as the grandest known existence, they endowed with the highest known qualities—life and personality ; and to him they gave such names as Varana,

Ouranos, the enclosing one; or Dyaus, Deus, Zeus, the shining one. From Iran westwards streamed those peoples which, as Celts, Romans, Greeks, Teutons, Slavs, overspread Europe, carrying with them the primitive faith. Lastly, eastwards into India flowed the Hindus, who, in the Rig-Veda, have given us the correctest picture of that faith. The supreme was not the only god; closely allied to Varana, the Sky, was he whom the Hindus in India and the Persians remaining in Persia, or rather, let us call them by the wider and more correct name, the Iranians remaining in Iran, called Mithra, the Friend, the kindly light of heaven. Six others stood around the supreme, and under them all the powers of nature,—gods without number. But a settled society under centralised government could not leave the gods in nomadic disorder and independence. Among the Iranians the idea of heaven developed into monarchy: Varana became sole god with the name Ahura, Lord; the other gods lost independence, became the works of Ahura's hands and his instruments in producing his other works,—being named Amesha-Spentas, Bountiful Immortals.

But while gods became mere dependent arch-angels and angels, demons refused to own the lordship of Ahura; therefore we call the Persian religion Dualism. This view of the universe, as divided into two opposing camps, is inherited from the old Aryan mother religion, in which we find it as a crude, unclaimed, almost unconscious possession. Its origin is easily accounted for. Every-

where we see that action and reaction, doing and undoing, balance or oppose each other. Heaven is alternately in the power of day and night, of cloud and sunshine. On earth activities are found equally opposed: one plant is for food, another is poison; one beast is a possession, another is a natural enemy. Growth, life, and welfare are produced or prevented by the state of the sky, its light or darkness, its drought or moisture, its heat or cold. Day is for labour; night protects the thief, she quells us with sleep, and invites all ravenous beasts to creep forth; day returns and hunts them back to their dens. Nowhere do the variance and opposition which are everywhere visible show themselves more vividly than in the storm. The storm not only struck the Aryan's imagination by its grandeur, but it enlisted his self-interest by taking away and bringing back the light and the rain, two of the blessings he valued most highly. If the Aryan husbandman languished for rain, he said, speaking in poetry what he did not know how to express in the plain, straightforward prose of science, that the robber had carried off the cows: a god rushed to the rescue; the lightning was the flashing weapons; the thunder was the crash of battle or the shout of the champions; the rain following was the milk of the rescued herd. If he pined for bright, warm sunshine, the serpent Ahi had darkened it in his folds, or the ravisher had carried off the lovely woman; the deliverer was her lover or husband. The tale, with the addition of caves, forests, mountains, and of all images under

which fancy may hide clouds and lightning, is endlessly varied.

But the gods had other aids than the lightning. One is the Soma. The juice of this plant, being found able to raise the spirits and to give unusual powers, was by our simple Aryan fathers declared divine. The heavenly Soma was what Greeks called Ambrosia, and gave immortality to gods and men. Stimulated by the earthly Soma offered to them in sacrifice, the gods overcame their foes. Helpful to them was also every word of worship coming from the mouths of the faithful. The gods were irresistible when to the Soma was added the holy hymn.

From this vague naturalistic dualism of the Aryans, progress was possible in two directions. The Aryan in India with pantheistic tolerance declared gods and demons, both sides of the conflict, to be merely different powers or manifestations of the great indifferent One. On the other hand, Iran took her demons quite seriously. Nor need it surprise ourselves,—among whom has prevailed, and is still common, the belief that animal death, which was a law of nature for untold ages before man was made, is a result of man's sin,—to find Iran ascribing death and other harm wrought by the powers of nature to the wickedness of the living beings, the *devas*, by whom those powers were wielded. Lest iniquity should be ascribed to Ahura Mazda (the omniscient lord), a line of demarcation was drawn between good gods and bad demons. And just as the gods were gradually subordinated under Ahura Mazda, their monarch and

maker, so for the demons a ruler and maker was found, Ahriman (wicked spirit) by name. For this result the civilised world has to thank or blame the ancient Persian religion. Let us say, then, that if Ahriman was born in Iranian times, he had been already conceived in the Indo-Iranian, while Persians and Indians were still one people.

In Iran and India, the names of gods and demons have shifted ground in a way which much history and nearly the whole biography of Zoroaster have been invented to explain. In the primitive Aryan religion, as we find in the Greek and Roman offshoots from it, no sharp distinction had been drawn between gods and demons. Hindus, when settled in India, and Iranians remaining in Iran, gave for a time the names Asura (lord), and Deva (shining one), indifferently to all the powers, the helpful and the hurtful; but when the moral sense discovered, or the fancy invented, a difference between good powers and evil, each name, formerly indifferent, had to take a side. In India, Asura (lord) cleaved to the evil, Deva to the good. In Iran, Deva adhered to the evil, while Ahura (lord) became the name of the one god. The different fortunes of the two names in India and Iran mark no conflict between the two religions; the variance was not in the creed, but in the dictionary.

At what dates Iranian dualism reached its successive degrees of elaboration until the wicked spirit, Ahriman by name, stood forth from the darkness, personal, clearly characterised, independent lord and

maker of a large part of the universe, it is now impossible to say. Mazdeism, so we call the Persian religion, from its supreme god, Ahura Mazda, was not the growth of a day, nor the work of one man. In Cyrus's day Mazdean doctrine was probably complete, but how long before we cannot tell. Nowhere in the Avesta, the Persian scriptures, is dualism more clearly expressed than in the Gathas, the very oldest part. Hear the most ancient Persian psalmist: "I proclaim the two original spirits of the world—the one bountiful, the other wicked; . . . two twins, each having his own qualities—the one good, the other bad, in thought, word, and action. . . . The wicked spirit's law is evil; Asha is the law of the bountiful spirit, whose garment is the solid stone of the sky. At the end the infernal world shall be the abode of the wicked. The good man who follows the Asha, he, O Ahura Mazda, shall be thy blessed companion!"

The Mazdean history of the world consists of Ahriman's invasion; the contest between him and Ahura Mazda (Ormuzd), in the midst of which Zoroaster the lawgiver is born; the expulsion of Ahriman, and the regeneration of all things. In sketching this history, we shall have to depict it in scenes which reproduce the alternating storm and calm. Ormuzd has to be painted in colours which betray the original god of the shining sky; this remains still the visible parable of his qualities. Ahriman is the storm-serpent Ahi with another name, and endued with immoral attributes; and he is not whatever Ahura Mazda is.



First, let us treat Ahriman's invasion.

Ahura Mazda knew, for he knows everything, that Ahriman existed, and that he would scheme malice until the end. Ahriman, ignorant and dwelling in darkness, rose from the abyss, discovered the eternal light, and prepared for violence. Then Ormuzd proposed to him peace, bidding him help the good creation, and offer praise that his creatures might be immortal and undecaying. Ahriman refused, misunderstanding the divine mercy to proceed from lack of power. "I will not join thee in doing good; I will seduce thy creatures to myself." Then Ormuzd proposed a conflict of 9000 years; Ahriman accepted. Thereafter Ormuzd created the six Amesha-Spentas, and first of these Vohu-mano, good thought. Something of the real history of these six is already known to us. Then Ormuzd made the sky, then the waters, then the earth, then plants, then animals, and finally man. That he created them out of nothing nowhere appears. Whence came matter? is a question neither put nor answered in the Avesta.

Now Ahriman, the symmetrical opposite of Ahura, began a creation exactly opposed to his. In the dark world he made six demons, opposites of the six Bountiful Immortals, first of them being Akem-mano, evil thought. At length he marched against Ormuzd and the light. He eyed Ahura Mazda, he, the serpent, with that glance which in heaven is lightning and on earth is called the evil eye. With his glance he produced 99,999 diseases; then, like a serpent, he darted down to earth, and covered

it with serpents, scorpions, and all kinds of vermin. He attacked the plants and withered them; the fire, and mingled it with smoke.

Here, as elsewhere, we find that in explaining the world the Iranian learned a parable from the storm. One of the storm contests which float vaguely in time and space, or are renewed again and again, is the theme of the picture; the scene is enlarged, the names are changed, the figures are multiplied, and the action is put at the beginning of the world. This time it is called the introduction of evil.

Ahriman attacked the stars; the planets joined him. In the older and simpler times all the heavenly bodies were Ahura's work; but symmetry assigned the fixed stars to Ahura, while the wandering, unsteady planets, those corsairs of the sky, took part with Ahriman. But when Ahura had cast his enemies down from heaven, he built a bulwark round the sky, and the Fravashis, lance in hand, and like hairs on the head, kept watch.

In the oldest Iranian times these Fravashis were departed spirits, ghosts, *manes*. In old Iranian time the spirits of the good went about for the last ten days of the year asking, "Who will sing to us, sacrifice to us, satisfy us with food and clothing?" and they were feasted in every house. When the rain rose from the bosom of the Vouru-kasha, the waters above the firmament, then each grateful Fravashi ran to carry a share to his village or his region, saying, "I will make my native land rejoice." This worship of ancestors was an article of

Aryan piety, as it is of Chinese, and it streamed down into the oldest Iranian and Indian times. Then, mortal man, taking part by prayer and sacrifice in the heavenly conflicts, differed from the gods merely by living on earth. Removed to heaven he was every way like the gods, and received worship from his posterity, for whom he with the gods had won, and still continued to win, the rain and the light, and, as the Vedas say, created the world. Forgotten as ancestors, the Fravashis were remembered as guardian angels. Every person had his Fravashi, his second self, the vehicle of all divine grace, unless by unpardonable sin he had driven him away. With the Fravashis of persons were joined the old Aryan smaller gods, who had erewhile animated nature's smaller works; therefore, in all parts of the universe these Fravashis lived, fighting against the evil powers, keeping the fire, the water, the trees, the ✓flocks, and maintaining the universe for Ahura Mazda.

One problem solved to the Iranian mind by Ahri-man's invasion was the existence of mountains and seas. The cloud-mountains, with which primitive poets had seen the storm-demon pile the horizon, and to which the robber had driven the cows, and in which the light had been hid, were translated in later prose into merely earthly mountains, the work of Ahriman. First of them, called Hara berezaiti, or Berez haraiti, the mountain-sea, or sea-mountain, which surrounds the whole world, was localised in the Alburz Mountains, near the south end of the Caspian Sea.

Defeated in his attempt on the sky, Ahriman assailed the water. Tistar, in the forms of a man, a horse, a bull, met him, and poured a fearful flood for thirty days and nights upon the earth, drowning Ahriman's creatures. Then the wind gathered the waters into the great sky-ocean Vouru-kasha. This Persian myth of the flood is merely the old story of the storm: it puts at the beginning of the world the ordinary strife of Tistar, the Dog-star or Rain-god, who fights and prevails against the parching demon.

Ahriman's invasion produced also disease and death. He attacked the sole created bull. At the moment of death the bull's soul cried to Ormuzd with a voice like that of ten thousand men: "While evil wastes the earth, and the plants have no water, where is the man whom thou wast to create to pronounce the helpful word?" Ormuzd showed him the Fravashi of Zoroaster, and the bull was satisfied. Out of his dead body rose grain and medicinal plants, from his blood the vine. His germ was carried up to the ox-horned moon, and there purified; out of it were made a bull and a cow, and then a male and a female of the other kinds of animals. Here the dualistic or storm picture of the universe haunting the Iranian fancy, and differently named as one or another problem preoccupied the gazer's interest, shows the whole creation groaning and travailing, waiting for the manifestation of the man of God.

The tale told of the bull is told of Gayomard, the first man. Gayomard was made by Ormuzd, who took sweat, whereof he formed a body as of a young

man fifteen years old. Gayomard saw the world black as night, and all nature in conflict. Ahriman assailed him with Az, root and essence of our old enemy Azi the serpent, and with the wicked Bushyasta. But Gayomard lived thirty years. His germ was purified in the sun, and forty years afterwards there grew from it out of the earth the first human couple, man and woman, in a rivas plant. The rain, which the Rig-Veda calls the sweat of the airy god, is the material of which Gayomard was made. His shining eyes, the darkness, the conflict attending his birth, need no explanation, nor his enduring for a time ere he yields to the light-destroying power, nor the fruitfulness of his death, so like that of the dying cloud-bull, nor the molten brass, common figure for lightning, made from his body. The second half of his name, Gayomaratan, identifies him with the Maruts, who in the Vedas ride on the storm and hurl the lightning, as they probably had done in Indo-Iranian times. But Ahriman's other agent against man, the wicked female Bushyasta, provokes farther remark.

The glorious creature, light or woman, was in the cloud-myths the prey of the spoiler or the reward of the hero. With woman there entered into the sky-myths opportunities of love and mischief—of all human passions. Woman was sometimes not sinned against but sinning, not unfortunate but faithless, not stolen but self-surrendered to the enemy. Often the Iranian Delilah, seduced by Ahriman's gifts, betrays her Samson, and sometimes in his sleep. Bushyasta is one of

the Pairikas, a brood of such female demons, who fly in the sea, Vouru-kasha, under heaven, and fend the wholesome waters from the earth. But while demoniac they retain the female charm, beauty, like that of the Greek Medusa, irresistible, fatal. Ancient Persian poets ascribe to the fair and false the face of a Peri, the heart of a Deva. The humane and manly spirit of the Iranians and of us Teutons has relented towards the Pairikas. The Persian poet Firdusi, and the Mohammedans of the tenth century, loved the good gentle Peris as Europe has learned to love them from Thomas Moore and Victor Hugo.

II. In the Mazdean history of the world, the conflict with Ahriman is the second stage; it reveals what we may call the Heroic Age, and extends to the present time.

Let us pursue the history of mankind whose first parents we left growing entwined together in a rivis plant. Here the symmetry of dualism fails, for Ahriman produces no counter-creation to man, the creature of Ahura. The human soul is rather the field where the rival powers meet in battle. Born of the same parents, one child is a servant of Mazda, another serves Ahriman. Man is free; evil grows in him from his own will. Of sin's entry into the soul we are told what follows. Ahura breathed souls already formed into the two bodies, and said to Mashya and Mashyoi, "Ye are the parents of the world; think good thoughts, speak good words, do good actions, and worship no demons." Their first

thought was love for each other. Their first word was, "Ahura Mazda made all good." Afterwards the demons corrupted their minds, and they said, "All these things are the evil spirit's work." Thus they became wicked, and therefore they are in hell. The demons gained such power over them that they quarrelled and fought, and the demons cried to them, "Worship the demons, that your malice may rest." Then Mashya milked a cow and poured the milk towards the north, where the demons dwell. When they were fifty years old a pair of children were born to them; afterwards seven pairs were born to them, and each pair became a married couple; from them arose the generations of the whole world. One notable difference between the Persian genesis and the Hebrew is, that there the woman is neither born man's inferior nor becomes his tempter.

Greatest of heroes was Zoroaster. If at the heart of that vast mass of mythical clothing called Zoroaster there was a real man too great for ordinary men to understand, and who taught the system as commentators think it ought to have been, its actual blemishes being chargeable on other persons, his human nature has been overlaid and hidden with divine attributes. The newest and oldest authorities place his birth at any time between the six-hundredth year before Christ and the five-thousandth year before the Trojan war. He was born, but his birth was miraculous; he fought life's battle with miraculous weapons; he had sons, each of whom was a prodigy, and one is not yet born; he

died as none but heavenly heroes die. The conflict of Zoroaster with evil differs from the conflicts we have already beheld, by being more spiritual; it is evidently a much more modern conception than the others. Ahriman is the sole enemy, not Azi the serpent. If the picture is constructed of the old imagery, the meaning was put into it after the idea of Ahriman had been fully matured. Zoroaster's birth is beset with conflict; for before he was born, the fiends, bellowing, threw themselves on his mother and tried to tear him from her. But they fell off like autumn leaves, and, alone of all mankind, Zoroaster was born laughing, with that inextinguishable laughter, I doubt not, which Homer heard among the Olympian gods; inextinguishable, not because, like the noisy laughter of fools, it never ceases, but because it is lightning. Not alone of all gods is he thus born; for the Maruts of the Vedas are born in the laughter of the lightning, laughing, like Shelley's cloud, as they pass in thunder. The ewes come from the mountain to suckle him till sunrise, as the cow suckles the Indian fire-god Agni. His eye is piercing. At his birth the waters and the plants rejoice. He is first of priests, first of warriors, first of husbandmen. A man of light or fire born of the cloud, in fact, differing from Gayomard in being priestly. Demons attack him again as soon as he is born; he goes against them swinging stones as large as a house, and quarried evidently where the Indian storm-gods find the stones they so often launch against the demons. "I will smite," he cries, "the



creation of the Deva till the fiend-smiter, the Saviour, arise from the region of the dawn." "Do not smite my creatures, renounce the good law of Mazda, and thou shalt gain dominion over the world for a thousand years." Then Zoroaster invoked all the powers of the holy world. He repeated the Ahuna-vairya: "The will of the lord is the law of holiness; the riches of Vohu-mano shall be given to him who works in this world for Mazda, and wields, according to the will of Ahura, the power he gave him to relieve the poor." Hearing this spell, now worn meaningless as a Romish paternoster by centuries of incessant and irrelevant use, the demons fled, casting the evil eye: "Let us gather at the head of Arezura," the mountain at hell's gate, "for the holy Zoroaster is just born, the counter-fiend."

Victorious for a while, Zoroaster, like all the heroes of light, must die. The Clementine Homilies in the third century ascribe his death to lightning hurled at him by the fiend. But if all heroes of light die—for darkness, storm, evil, return continually—they also revive; for good and evil, darkness and light, alternate in this world. A son or friend avenges the hero, or he awakes from sleep and avenges himself. Of this latter kind is Keresaspa, slayer of the dragon Srvara, on whose back Keresaspa happened one day to cook his victuals, till the supposed green knoll started up, overturned the kettle, and scattered the water. To this hero the fire, with the complaisance of Thor's hammer—which, in fact, is the same thing—the lightning, came and went as he

pleased, kindled immediately the wood under the kettle, and, when the cookery was finished, withdrew.

• Keresaspa is, after Zoroaster, the most valiant of men. Similar is his other victory in bringing down with his arrows, after seven days' shooting, and notwithstanding the devil's wind, the bird Kamak, who with his wings overshadowed all mortals, hid the sun and caught the rain on his back, whence along his tail it slipped useless into the barren sea. The demoness Bushyasta put Keresaspa to sleep; but asleep he lives guarded by 99,999 Fravashis. As medieval Germany looked for Barbarossa; as the ancient Britons looked for Arthur, resting in Avalon, to rise when his wound should be healed; as the Bretons looked for the awakening of Morvan, Lez Breiz, ancient Persia waited for the awaking of Keresaspa. We shall meet him again.

Of those who die and are avenged, it is needful to remember Yima, known in India as Yama, another first man and first of the dead, over whom the Indian Yama reigns as king. In Iran, bending to that law of symmetry which rules all parts of the Mazdean creed, he leaves the lawgiving to Zoroaster, and priority of manhood to Gayomard. Ceasing to be first of men, he has in Iran to abdicate the throne of the dead, and becomes the mere founder of the Iranian power. The Var or paradise into which he received men and women, and where they lived a blissful life after the world's destruction by a horrible winter, becomes, instead of the future heaven, a mere earthly one, similar in use to Noah's ark, and whose

use we shall presently see. After a glorious reign, he is overcome by Zohak, our old enemy Azi dahaka, the fiend-serpent. He is revenged by Feridun, who, in legend, finds an invaluable ally in a blacksmith Gao, at the sight of whose leather apron brandished on a lance, Iran leaps into revolt. Zohak is seized, and, forasmuch as evil cannot be abolished out of this world, he is not killed, but merely bound to the crater of Mount Demavend, where we shall find him hereafter.

Under the two rival spirits the Mazdean religion embattled all things. Each kind fought under its own *ratu* or chief. The vegetable kingdom had its *ratu* in the white, the heavenly *haoma*; man had his in Zoroaster. A *ratu* was found for clothes in the sacred girdle which every Mazdean wore, and which, except at night, he might not without sin and severe punishment put off. Tistar, the dog-star Sirius, in the battle against Ahriman is *ratu* of the starry host. Things on earth are arrayed under the command-in-chief of the six Amesha-Spentas: Khshathra Vairya, Divine Sovereignty, whose emblem was the lightning, poetically styled molten brass, is lord of metals; Asha Vahista, Best Order, whose instrument on earth is the flame of sacrifice, is lord of fire; Vohumano, Good Thought, becomes lord of animals; Armaiti, Piety or Prayer, wedding earth to heaven, is the genius of earth. To Haurvatāt, Health, and Ameretāt, whose name is almost English, Immortality, is given sovereignty over plants and waters. Not arbitrarily; for in the oldest Persian scriptures we find the old Aryan faith in the power of the waters

to destroy disease and death. "Come, O clouds; with your waters bring new cures. To him who brings sacrifices to you, O waters, daughters of Ahura, bring health and strength of body, and long, long life." The giver of immortality was the white *haoma* which grew in the sky sea, while round it grew the 10,000 plants made by Ahura for resisting pain and death. That fine plane-tree which Xerxes, on his way to invade Greece, found near Sardis, and adorned with a golden offering, was an instrument or symbol of Ameretāt; the pious king fitly intrusted it to the care of one of that band of 10,000 called the Immortals, whom we may name the Ameretāt legion. At this day, more than 1200 years after the establishment in Persia of Islam, a religion so hostile to the worship of any creature, many an "excellent tree" or thorn-bush on the bleak granite sides of the Alburz Mountains, or in the very paradise of Persia, is compared in poetry to a ragged beggar, so hung with shreds by visitors or wayfarers, who thus crave relief from disease, or follow blindly a custom older than history.

But among animals, some are good, or creatures of Ahura; others, called bad, are creatures of Ahriman. The test of an animal was supposed to be the good or ill it does to man, but was often merely its use in some primitive myth as a symbol or disguise for god or demon. Naturalists are not aware that serpents are killed by white falcons, wild boars, goats, gazelles, wild asses; but the great old serpent is killed in many a Persian and Indian storm-myth by gods, or

heroes disguised in such forms; such animals were therefore clean. The harmless frog is the victim of a religious myth; for in the waters of the Vouru-kasha grows the Homa tree of life, against which Ahriman created a frog who seeks to reach it through the water, while ten fishes swim round it guarding the approach. The ant and the tortoise are mercilessly treated for similarly lending their names to disguise the devil or his works. The dog's high rank among Ahura's creatures rests on his merits. Notwithstanding deep demerits, the hawk, whose fell swoop is the common and natural picture of the divine lightning, ranks on the same side. The peacock belonged in Persia, as in India, to the wrong side, having lent his Argus eyes for a bad use; but Ahriman assigned another reason—"If I do no good I will show that it is not because I cannot, but because I will not."

The practical immoral results of these arbitrary distinctions between clean and unclean animals were startling. To murder one of Mazda's creatures was sacrilege, because it was to kill deity itself; while to kill Ahriman's creatures was an atonement for sin, because it weakened the devil, or destroyed his allies. Manslaughter was punished with 90 stripes; but to give bad food to a shepherd's dog brought 200; killing a house dog, 700; killing a shepherd's dog, 800. The murderer of the hedgehog "with the spiny back," fighting against Ahriman's creatures "in the dark till dawn," an image of the victorious sun, deserved 1000 lashes in this life, and perdition in the next. The slayer of the beaver, the creature

who destroys the water-demons, must kill 10,000 land-frogs, 10,000 water-frogs, 10,000 ants, 10,000 snakes, 10,000 head of each of several kinds of vermin, and, besides several other heavy penalties, must equip a priest, a warrior, and a husbandman, and receive 10,000 stripes. The Mazdeans had been almost brought to the worship of dogs, hedgehogs, and beavers, by their scribes and Pharisees.

In the conflict with Ahriman, laws of purity were deemed necessary which must have made Mazdean life a burden. One had to keep not merely himself clean, but all Ahura's creation besides. Fire, earth, and water were holy. Take, as an illustration, the laws connected with death. Ahriman's creatures, whether beasts or men, ceased from troubling when dead, and therefore were then clean; Mazda's creatures immediately after death were seized and possessed by the *nasu* or corpse-fiend, so becoming unclean; and the higher the religious rank of the living creature the more powerful was the victorious *nasu*. From the corpse of a priest he defiled ten men close to it and to each other; from a warrior's corpse, nine men; from a husbandman's, eight; and from the corpse of a shepherd's dog, seven. When a believer died, a four-eyed dog, or one having a spot above each eye, was brought to look at the body that he might terrify and weaken the fiend; for do not our dogs see spirits, which to other eyes are invisible? The body was then removed from the house through a breach in the wall. He who singly carried a corpse was thought to have received into himself the entire

*nasu*, and thus to have become a *nasu* incarnate ; he was therefore beheaded, and his soul went to hell. Wherever the fiend had to be encountered, two persons were required—in funerals, religious ceremonies, or elsewhere. The bearers—at least two in number that the *nasu's* power might be divided—carried the body on a bier, protecting their hands with old clouts. He who covered the legs of a corpse with clothing received 600 lashes ; covering the whole dead body deserved 1000—so stern, sometimes, were the Mazdean laws of thrift. The bearers proceeded, but not in rain—for the water must not be defiled by touching a dead body—to some high summit, where the body was laid on a carpet which protected the holy earth, and tied down, lest animals should carry morsels to the earth, the water, or the trees. If the faithful were able, they had to erect a Dakhma—a building, open above, now called Tower of Silence—for the reception of corpses. The present custom leaves the naked body there, facing the sun, and exposed to the expectant birds of prey. The holy rain which washes the picked bones is carefully drained off. The bearers sat down three paces from the Dakhma, and washed their bodies with *gomez*. The way whereby the funeral had come was impassable for persons, or fire, or cattle, until the four-eyed dog had crossed it thrice ; thereafter a priest reopened the way, chanting the Ahuna-vairya and other fiend-smiting and most healing words. After a year the *nasu's* power ceased. He who desecrated fire by burning a body was put to death, and he also who buried a body in the earth.

Whatever was once part of a body and had become separated from it, was esteemed dead and unclean. Therefore to blow a fire with the breath, or to let a hair fall on the earth, was sinful. The parings of the nails had to be carefully buried in a hole ten fingers deep, the points being turned to the north against the *nasu's* breast; three furrows were drawn round the spot with a knife, and prayers were recited. Hair had to be buried at least ten fingers deep, twenty paces from fire, thirty paces from water, and three furrows had to be drawn round the spot to imprison the *nasu*. Sickness, being partial death, was treated like other uncleanness as possession by a demon; therefore the most effective medicine was thought to be spells and religious ritual, specially the *bareshtinum* of nine nights, which I will describe as a specimen of religious purifying among real believers in a devil.

At least thirty paces from water, trees, and all that is holy, three holes are dug, two fingers deep, in a row, from north to south, and a foot apart. Parallel to these, and a foot from them, are dug three other holes. Nine feet from the latter row are dug three more. The last three holes are filled with water, the six others are filled with *gomez*. Then with a metal knife, from north to south, three furrows, at the distance of nine feet, are drawn around the six holes, three around the three holes, and then six around the nine holes. Meanwhile prayers and religious formulas are repeated. Thus the *druj*, the unclean demon, is shut up within the furrows, and can



be driven step by step from the person of the unclean, who takes his stand at the first hole. The purifier stands outside the furrows, and with a metal spoon, fixed to a very long handle, takes *gomez* from the first hole and puts it three times on the unclean hands. Next it is applied to the front of the skull, then between the brows, then to the back of the head, then to the jaws. Thus downwards, from right to left, the *druj* is gradually driven,—from the right ear, then from the left; from the right shoulder, then from the left; from the right armpit, and the left; the chest, the back, the right breast, and the left; the right and left sides; the right hip, and the left; then from the right knee, and the left; from the right leg, and the left; the right ankle, and the left; the right instep, and the left; the right sole, and the left; then from the right toes, and finally from the left toes, whence he flies to the infernal North. The voice works with the hand, and is never unoccupied with fiend-smiting and most healing words. The unclean feet must not touch the earth, but rest on stones, or potsherds, or something hard. Now the four-eyed dog is brought before the man, to scare fiends from him by his look. Stepping to the second hole, the unclean submits to the rite a second time. After it is performed at each of the six holes, the unclean sits down between the six holes and the three, washes his body fifteen times with dust, and waits until every hair of his body is dry. Then at the first of the three holes he washes himself with water, at the second hole twice, and at the third hole three times. He must now perfume his body, put on

his clothes, and go home. There he sits till the end of three nights in the place of infirmity, a house provided in every neighbourhood for the unclean. Then he shall wash his clothes and his body, and remain till the end of other three nights. Again he must wash his clothes and his body. At the end of the ninth night he is clean, and may go near the fire, the water, the earth, the cow, the trees, the faithful man or woman. Thus used to be purified all who had been defiled by a corpse on which the glance of the four-eyed dog or the shadow of the devouring bird had not fallen. In later times the ceremony was undergone by devout persons once a-year; could not, indeed, be taken too often; specially was it incumbent on the young man and woman when at fifteen years the sacred girdle was girt on, and the youth was admitted as a member of the Mazdean community. The *baresnum* was the baptism for washing off the impurities cleaving to man from before his birth. The unlawful purifier was beheaded: if he confessed penitently, his soul was saved; if he did not, his soul remained in hell till the resurrection.

To such ritualism, grotesque and horrid, did ancient poetic symbolism, misunderstood, bring the Mazdeans. Proof for centuries against all allurements to idolatry, to representing the spiritual God by graven or molten images, they were seduced into breach of the commandment by a more plausible, and therefore more dangerous, form of the same temptation, and turned spiritual truth into visible ceremony. Ancient poets thirsting for the healthful, fruitful rain, knowing well

what they meant, had taught men to pray for the *waters of the cow* against the hurtful demons. Poetry, parable, became myth, and was literally believed; then the heavenly myth was literally embodied in most gross earthly ceremonies. This speaking by action was found useful, probably, even to many spiritually-minded persons, who found it more expressive and more impressive than any words; an aid to thought and to feeling. But the curse due to the materialising of what is spiritual came, as it has come in the Christian and in every other religion; for helpless literalism soon changed religion's visible part into little else than an attempt to purge the devil out of the universe with *gomcz*.

III. The conflict with Ahriman ends in his expulsion. Let us now see how Persian faith awaited the end of life and of the present dispensation.

While Celts, Greeks, Teutons, Slavs, Iranians, and Indians were still one Aryan people, they guessed at a future life. The scripture tells that on the third morning after death comes the fiend *Vezaresha* and carries off the wicked soul. At the head of the *Chinvat* bridge over hell into paradise all souls await judgment. The "Brig o' dread," known to the Yorkshire peasant, was known to his fathers in Aryan times; Mohammed's bridge, *El Sirat*, is in conception and execution entirely Persian. To the waiting soul comes a maid of divine beauty or fiendish ugliness; she is his own conscience; the dogs who guard the bridge are at her side. The wicked, unguarded by the dogs

from the howling pursuit, fall from the bridge into hell. But the lovely maid leads the righteous soul above the Hara-berezaiti; Vohu-mano rises from his golden seat at heaven's gate and welcomes him into the undecaying world.

Like the storm the reign of Ahriman began, and the idea of its end is a storm followed by a calm. The reign of Ahura is everlasting. Dualism is merely the philosophy of the present. The mighty dawn or morrow, as the Mazdeans called the latter glory, shall know no following night. A destruction and renewal of the world in the past or in the future was part of the primitive Aryan creed; but the Iranian development is notable as embracing not merely a regeneration of the world, but a personal resurrection. A winter shall destroy all that lives on earth; whereafter the men and women and animals shall come forth from Yima's paradise and replenish the earth. For no reason but that another old myth was waiting to be utilised, evil again usurps the power. The old serpent Azi is unchained from Mount Demavend. Ormuzd calls for Keresaspa; the hero awakes from his sleep and destroys the old enemy. A virgin bathing in the Kasava Lake conceives and brings forth Saoshyant, the Saviour, the yet unborn son of Zoroaster, and the resurrection begins. First rises Gayomard, then Mashya and Mashyoi; and in fifty-seven years, for so long the first pairs took to be born, all shall arise. All shall know each other. Then shall all be gathered together, and a wicked man shall become as notable as a white sheep among

black. The wicked shall upbraid their good friends, saying, "Why did you not make me know the good part which you yourself chose?" and if one has not done so, he shall sit in heaven ashamed. Then there is parting, and every one's tears run down to his legs; for parent, child, husband, wife, friend, brother, are torn asunder; the good weep for others, the wicked for themselves. A fiery star strikes the world, which trembles under its power as a lamb in the grasp of a wolf. Then the mountains are levelled; the elements melt; the molten brass finds its way to the abyss of hell; Ahriman perishes, all demons perish. Three days men are bathed in the molten brass, but for the good it is as warm milk. Then all come together again, son, brother, friend; all drink from Saoshyant's hand heavenly homa juice mingled with the milk of the heavenly cow, and he awards to everybody according to his greater or less desert.

Not the religion of Moses himself keeps this world more steadily in view than the Mazdean. Few books are less poetic, more prosaic, than the Avesta; few religions are less sentimental, more practical. The Mazdean's idea of the resurrection glorified man's body as his eternal companion; and his view of heaven, presenting a continuance of his present life, reflected honour on his earthly lot, and made it his first object to lead well the life he had.

Ere Buddhism spread into Iran, Mazdeism had no temples, though some enclosure there must have been wherein to maintain the everlasting Bahram fire. In

early morning the congregation would gather under open sky, round the altar or hearth on which a fire was burning. The priest sits facing the fire on his seat, raised on a stone platform, reached by three steps. To protect the fire from his breath, he and his assistants wear a veil reaching from below the eyes to the chin. Rising, he begins: "I invite to this offering, and I prepare it for Ahura Mazda" and the other chief heavenly beings, whom he names. Then from his assistants he receives the *baresma*, the holy bunch of pomegranate, or other thornless twigs, and sprinkles it with holy water. With this *baresma* in his hand he repeats the invocation. Now he receives food, flesh, milk, butter, homa twigs, homa juice, squeezed out a day or two before, homa water—that is, water poured upon chopped homa twigs—pomegranate to mix with the homa twigs, and well-smelling wood for the fire. Prayer, and the reading of a scripture lesson follow, and he announces to the heavenly powers that all is ready. All is now presented to these, and the whole congregation communicate in the sacrificial feast, which concludes with prayers for the sovereignty of Ahura Mazda. The homa offering begins. The priest chants the homa *yeshit*, and solemnly elevating the cup of homa juice presents it to the fire, drinks a few drops, and repeats the creed. Again he receives sacrificial materials like the previous, and with them mortars of stone or metal. Having invited the Fravashis to witness, he dedicates the materials to them, recites the Ahuna-vairya, and, while chanting Gathas and other scriptures, he pounds the homa, whose juice

he afterwards pours out. More praises follow, and prayers, specially for all in authority—for without prayer for the king no public worship is celebrated. So the solemnity concludes.

Let us observe the morality in which this religion issued. Closely connected with the principle that the elements fire, earth, and water are holy, is the sacred duty of agriculture. He who tills the ground is as good a servant of religion as he who presents a thousand holy offerings or ten thousand prayers. *Arare est orare.* “Who is the fourth that rejoices the earth with greatest joy? It is he who cultivates most corn, grass, and fruit. What is the stomach of the law? It is sowing corn again and again. When barley is sprouting, the *devas* start; when corn grows rank, the *devas* faint; when corn is ground, the *devas* groan; when wheat is brought forth, the *devas* die.”

What we can gather of ancient Mazdean morality proves it rather active than contemplative, such as became Persians, the most warlike of all the Iranian peoples. The struggle between good and evil raging through the whole visible universe, raged also in the spirit and life of man, and in this conflict man was free and active, not passive. Mazdeism quickens the personality, is a system of doing, not dreaming; dissipates the dream of annihilation or absorption, which has so seduced the oriental mind; protests against throwing one's self as a drop into the stream of tendency and ceasing there; gives life a meaning by presenting it as a combat, and the natural state of man as a state of war; and gives it an object by lead-

ing to victory, not over existence, but over evil. While the Hindu, taught by his pantheistic religion to stand in awe of all things, feeling the meanness of man in the creation, fixed in his niche by the barriers of caste, timid as a slave, becomes the prey of conquerors, the Persian, a soldier by the very principle of his religion, struggles and prevails against Tourania, Assyria, Egypt; worsted in his strife with Greece, he rallies; comes forth with distinguished honour from his contest with Rome; and is still a power in the world.

Notwithstanding some appearances, Mazdeism is not a cruel religion. The only savage statutes are those which decree vengeance on such as injure divine beings or enhance the power of demons; for both these and those had it in their power to plague entire populations. It considerably relieves our mind to know that lashes, the ordinary punishment for sin, were commutable into money. Fasting and self-torture were forbidden. Marriage was enjoined on all who could afford it. The widow's portion of an inheritance was assigned her before even the priest could be remunerated. Impure love was severely punished. Mazdean sacrifices were rarely bloody. One of the sins severely visited in the next life was to refuse one's cast-off clothing to the poor. The Ahuna-vairyā tells us that Mazda has established government, and committed to it his power for the protection of the poor.

But no Persian virtue is more praised by the ancients, perhaps none more astonished the cunning



Greeks, than Persian truthfulness, which wins at this day the high respect of Indians dealing with Parsees. The most shameful thing in Persian eyes was lying. Debt and other faults were specially detested for the lies required to conceal them. Children were taught truth-telling as they were taught science. Ahriman is the liar of liars. The religious law reckoned severely with the breaker of an engagement. Persians were very slow to take an oath; but the pledge of a Persian's hand was like the Olympian oath by the Styx.

The Mazdean priesthood was and still is hereditary. The sons of the priestly caste are not compelled, but no others are permitted, to be priests. Their official name was Athravan, Fireman. Naturally they never call themselves Magi in their own scriptures, for Magi was merely the name of the Median tribe to which the priesthood belonged. The age of Cyrus, so decisive in the history of religion and of the world, saw Mazdeism make a long step forward. Within one lifetime Cyrus conquered Media, till then head of all Iran; became lord of Iran, of Babylon, and of much besides; he introduced the Magi into Persia, he permitted the Jews to return from their Babylonish exile to their own land, and Buddha and Confucius were alive. The Medians were a more polished people than the Persians; and we may infer from Cyrus's policy that the Magi were more cultivated, more expert, than the Persian priests, and possessed a more precise ritual and a better liturgy than theirs. While

his son and successor, Cambyses, was absent on his Egyptian campaign, the Magus Gaumāta raised the standard of rebellion, pretending to be Cambyses' brother Smerdis, whom the king had secretly murdered before his departure. After Cambyses had ended his own life on hearing the news, Darius and his Persians quenched the rebellion, the more bloodily because the Magian blood was foreign. Thus Darius Hystaspis became king by the grace of Mazda. The Persian invasion of Greece by Xerxes, instead of making Mazda supreme over kindred Aryan nations in the West, corrupted his worship; for an image of Diana taken among the spoil became a model, and such images were reared in several chief cities. In the year 331 before Christ, the sun of ancient Persia set at Arbela, and for a time the sky of Mazdean spirituality was clouded by the grosser charms of Greek idolatry. After eighty years of Alexander and his successors, Askh unfurled the blacksmith's apron, and became the first of the Parthian kings, who governed Iran until, in the year 220 after Christ, the blacksmith's apron was once more thrown to the breeze, and led a third rebellion to victory. The Persian and Mazdean family of Sasan ascended the Persian throne in the person of Ardeshir or Artaxerxes, and, to cement the empire, the national religion was revived. Persia had never been better governed than it was by the Sasanians. The Magian observances, formerly confined in their entirety to the priesthood, now became law. But the literalism which put to death a prime minister for

burying a corpse, and which would not allow Jews to perform their religious ablutions because these desecrated the water, and which, for the same reason, deposed a king, who, in the simple faith that water was made for man and not man for water, had erected a bath, was too much for laity. Among men and women who, having their work to do, had no time to guard against dropping a hair upon the ground, and to hold funeral services over the parings of their nails, Mazdeism stood self-condemned when made compulsory. Mazdean ritual was fatal to Mazdean doctrine. Buddhism, and Christianity, and Manichean heresy, made alarming progress. In the year 642 the Mohammedans conquered the Persian empire, and Islam became the established religion. In a century its truth, its simplicity, and its likeness to the best features of Mazdeism, gained a large majority of the Persians. In our day a very ignorant few in Iran still burn the Bahram fire and offer the homa; but Bombay and Surat contain nearly all, about 100,000 in number. There they refuse to admit into the body any one not of pure Parsee blood. Leaving religious formality very much to the priests, they distinguish themselves by very good morality, believing that there is one God and no devil, but that out of the heart proceed evil thoughts. They are diligent in business and very successful therein: trying in the spirit of their prophet to make life happy for themselves and for their brethren, with one result that no Parsee is a beggar.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Although what I have described was the ordinary faith — the

The Parsee scripture is the Avesta. In the year 325 of our era, while the Roman Emperor Constantine the Great and the Christian bishops in council assembled at Nice were laying down the creed of Christendom, the Shah of Persia, Shahpur II., fixed by decree the authorised text of the Avesta or Law, which we now have, differing little, probably, so far as it goes, from the scriptures known to Darius. It is only a fragment, however, a small book, written not in ancient Persian, but apparently in a dialect of Media, the native land of the Magi. When it was discovered to the learned of Europe in the middle of last century, its uncommon stupidity led half of its critics to pronounce it a very recent forgery. Its oldest morsels are the most spiritual; the newer parts view religion through the eyes of priests, scribes, and Pharisees. No great ancient religion has left so poor a record.

effective religion of the Mazdeans—we cannot suppose that Mazdeans, more than Christians or the professors of any other religion, were entirely at one in their thoughts upon what eye hath not seen and ear hath not heard. We have knowledge from early times of some who shrank from leaving the universe at the mercy of two contending rivals, and who sought a higher unity. This they found in boundless Time. His visible embodiment was the sky, whose movements, superior to both Ormuzd and Ahriman, bring day and night, summer and winter, growth and decay, life and death, joy and sorrow. This regard to time or fate, a return to the now lifeless original Aryan Asura of the shining sky, became the orthodox creed of Iran two centuries before the Mohammedan conquest. Still it smuggles a disguised existence among Persian Moslems, who in thought and speech, in prose and verse, relieve their Islam, or quiet submission to the will of the living personal God, by cursing Time, that beldame decrepit with age but undying; and the sky, the vault, the revolving wheel, which, after flinging its creatures alive upon this world, crushes them to death.

Among Aryans the Parsees are what the Jews are among Shemites, exiles from their own land, yet clinging firmly to the faith of their fathers. Some, however, are trying to open their religion to all the life and breath and light which are stirring the world; to bring back religion to first principles, not insisting on explaining in hard and fast terms or doctrines the divine, which they recognise as infinite, nor upon embodying our aspirations—that is, our worship—in fixed material forms; but guiding man, merely as man, in his efforts after the ideal and perfect, and in his duty of living not for self, but for all.

It cannot have escaped you that in form, and also in spirit, Mazdeism is closely allied to the Jewish religion. For this agreement we were prepared by knowing that around the sources of the Euphrates, ere Abraham crossed the river and became a Hebrew, his kindred and the Aryans lived side by side. Many centuries afterwards, when, in altered circumstances, Jews in Babylon met Persians, and regarded them as their masters and best friends, this renewed contact made Judaism conscious of the outer world and conscious of herself: aware of what others had, and of what she herself possessed, but had not well used. Judaism was quickened and enriched. Not formerly devoted to the worship of one God,—sent, say the prophets, into banishment for worshipping many gods,—the Jews returning from Babylon acknowledged, like the Persians, only one. Loftier views of Jehovah's greatness brought more into play angels and archangels, His messengers — and guardian angels,

His continual instruments. The Talmud tells us that the names of the archangels came from Babylon, whence the names of some devils also have come. The Asmodeus who, in the book of Tobit, strangles Sara's seven husbands, is Ashma deva—that is, Ahri-man under one of his older names. The grotesque humiliation under which he has laboured ever since Le Sage wrote his famous romance, illustrates a tendency of these latter days. Purer views of God's righteousness separated farther, in the Jewish mind, between God and Satan, until this accusing angel came to wear the form and features of Ahriman. A coming Messiah, a personal resurrection, the restoration of all things, were henceforth popular articles in the Jewish creed.

Mohammed, whose very name for religion is a Persian word, El Dīn, underlies a heavy debt to Jew, Christian, and Parsee.

Mazdeism, small and perishing in body, is everywhere present in spirit. If at death she has little to bequeath, it is because she gave her wealth generously around her while she was alive.

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# ST GILES' LECTURES.

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*SECOND SERIES—THE FAITHS OF THE WORLD.*

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*LECTURE V.*

RELIGION OF ANCIENT EGYPT.

By the Rev. JAMES DODDS, D.D., Minister of the Parish of  
Corstorphine.

WITH the exception of Palestine there is no country in the world which men regard with so much interest as Egypt, and even Palestine, to be understood, must be studied in the light of Egyptian history. It would hardly be too much to say that there is not a branch of human knowledge which can be fully mastered by any one who does not first turn his looks towards the Nile. The cradle of all civilisations, the birthplace of all history, this singular country has exercised a marked and often dominant influence over the ages. Within its limited boundaries many of the arts originated and flour-

ished, and here, too, science and philosophy found a primeval home. As we gaze at the ponderous pyramids and temples its ancient inhabitants raised upon its soil, and marvel at the skill which contrived and the mechanical ingenuity which constructed them, we see memorials of a people who as far surpassed others in civilisation and discovery, as their buildings overshadowed, by their vastness, the greatest architectural achievements of men in other lands.

It is to the religion of the ancient inhabitants of this country that our attention is to-day directed. The subject is one of engrossing interest; and, thanks to the industry and research of many distinguished men who have made the study of Egyptian archæology the work of their lives, we have at hand an abundant and constantly increasing store of materials available for the investigation. Their discoveries bring vividly before us details of domestic, social, and religious life in Egypt at periods in the remote past, of which history in other countries has preserved no traces. Nations whose memorials go back to the highest antiquity have no chronologies that vie with the dates inscribed in the records of the Memphian kings. A statue of Crephren, an Egyptian king, that was exhibited a few years ago at an international exhibition in Paris, was hewn thirty-eight centuries before our era. At the time when first appear the fabulous heroes and earliest legislators of the ancient societies of the extreme East, Egypt already numbers several dynasties, her civilisation has endured for centuries, and her annals constitute authentic history.



The religion of ancient Egypt can be traced back, through various authentic sources, for more than three thousand years, the last centuries of which coincide with the first centuries of the Christian religion, before whose progress it gradually disappeared. Not that even these long cycles bring us face to face with the first beginnings of religious faith in Egypt; old as are the memorials in which its character and features are enshrined, these testify to us of a religion already established and developed. Religion in Egypt is older far than the monuments. Like some of those African rivers which baffle the efforts of travellers to discover their sources, Egyptian religion cannot be traced to its fountain-head. Far back as we can penetrate we find a full-flowing stream, destined indeed to receive many tributary waters as it passes on through the ages, but receiving them always as a river of magnitude and strength. The first contemporary records we possess of Egyptian history carry us back to the days of Senopheru, a monarch of the third dynasty, who carved his name and exploits, not only in his own land, but on the rocks and in the caverns of Sinai. He subjugated the Arabs of that peninsula, and worked its mines, not less than eleven hundred years before the birth of Abraham, two thousand two hundred years before the siege of Troy, and two thousand six hundred years before Rome was founded. In giving us the first morning greeting from this remote age, he indicates his religious faith; for prefixed to his title, there is a sign which denotes the

god, "the Sun Horus," who dispenses light and life, blessing and prosperity ; and among the hieroglyphics which he traced appears one consisting of four little vases joined so as to form a single vessel. These compound vases were used only for libations to the gods, and the contrivance for pouring out all the four simultaneously, was to secure that no deity should have precedence of, and thus excite the jealousy of, the others. One vessel was probably poured out in honour of the supreme god, and the other three for the triad of subordinate deities.

The sources of information regarding ancient Egypt are mainly monumental inscriptions and papyri, partly also the fragments of Manetho, and the accounts of Greeks who visited Egypt before the Christian era. To the narratives of Herodotus, Diodorus, and other Greeks who have written works that bear upon the history of the country, we are indebted for much important information ; but living, as they did, in periods remote from the ages of which they wrote, and dependent upon tradition for their statements, they give us facts imbedded in much that is legendary and fictitious, and their chronology is not reconcilable with contemporary inscriptions. Manetho had better opportunities than these Greek writers, and his fragments possess greater value. He was a priest, conversant with the literature of ancient Egypt, and had access to the monuments, which give the most accurate statements of events and dynasties. It is a misfortune that his work has perished, and that he is known to us only through quotations extant in

Josephus, and in the writings of certain Greek historians. No doubt his lists of gods and sovereigns, and his historical statements, have suffered through the ignorance or carelessness of transcribers, and some of them are inaccurate or misleading. But the monuments which enable us to correct certain portions of his narrative abundantly confirm many others. The most important source of our knowledge regarding the religion of Egypt is found in the old documents and inscriptions which exist in almost every place to which the sway of the people extended. From the remotest ages they employed hieroglyphic writing, and took pleasure in inscribing on stone, or on the more fragile papyrus, the names of gods and heroes, the exploits of warriors, the records of work done or undertaken, of natural phenomena, of daily life. Their scribes must have been among the busiest members of the nation; and the dry climate, and the veneration of the people for written records, kept what they wrote from perishing. The modern traveller in Egypt is brought face to face with monuments that seem as fresh and legible as when they were traced by hands that ceased from labour thousands of years ago. For ages these inscriptions baffled the research and ingenuity of scholars, for the characters in which they were engraven had lost their meaning to modern eyes; the key seemed irrecoverably gone. But thanks to the Rosetta stone, whose story records one of the most interesting and eventful incidents of recent times, that key has been recovered, and the old world inscriptions are no

longer veiled mysteries. We are not now dependent upon Greek travellers or Manetho's fragments for our knowledge of ancient Egypt, but can extend and correct their statements by our own investigations. Every day is adding to our stores of knowledge. The pyramids and papyri, the tombs and temples, are gradually supplying the materials for a full history of Egypt. Only a few months ago, and just before his lamented death, the Arabs working under Mariette Bey discovered the entrances to several pyramids at Boulak, the port of Cairo, and found rooms and passages within them covered over with hieroglyphic inscriptions cut in stone, preserving the names and titles of the kings by whom they were built, as well as numerous religious texts which are said to throw great light on the theological tenets of the early Egyptians. The inscriptions show clearly that five thousand years ago these pyramid-builders had no small measure of astronomical knowledge. A still more recent discovery near Thebes has brought to light the mummies of nearly thirty of the most illustrious of the Egyptian Pharaohs, and with them documents which, when they shall have been deciphered and interpreted, are expected to fill not a few historical gaps, and to supply interesting facts bearing on Bible times. The eras of the dynasties to which these kings belonged, comprehend the period in which the famous exodus of Israel from Egypt took place. The inscriptions, it is not unlikely, may refer to that event, and may even serve to identify the Pharaoh who so often hardened his heart against

Jehovah and Moses, as well as throw light on other Bible incidents. Indeed, leading Egyptologists have already substantial reasons for the belief that, in one of these mummies, they have the remains of the king that "knew not Joseph." The exodus of the Israelites is now generally held to have taken place in the nineteenth dynasty, and the third king of this dynasty—who caused his titles to be inscribed on the pillar known as Cleopatra's Needle, which now stands on the Thames Embankment,—Rameses II.,—is, on good grounds, believed to have been the oppressor of the Hebrews—the king for whom the children of Israel built "the treasure cities Pithom and Raamses." His mummy is among those recently discovered, and is now on the shelves of the museum at Boulak.

From whatever source we gather our information regarding ancient Egypt, there is perfect agreement as to the prominent place which religion occupied in the life and manners of the people. A distinguished French scholar scarcely exaggerates the truth when he affirms that everything in Egypt bears the imprint of religion. In the middle of the fifth century before our era, Herodotus visited Egypt, and that which impressed him most throughout his travels in the country was the intense devotion of the people. "The Egyptians," he says, "are religious to excess, far beyond any other race of men." So much did this fact impress him, that, besides repeated references to the subject elsewhere, he devotes no fewer than forty-one consecutive chapters of his second book to a description of the priests, the temples, and the religious

ceremonies of Egypt. He tells us, though modern investigations scarcely go to establish the statement, that the first Egyptian edifice of any pretension was a temple. In the early architecture, at least, of Egypt, the tomb rather than the temple held the foremost place; but the tomb, equally with the temple, was meant to express the religious ideas of the people. The ancient writers ascribe the building of temples to more than one of the early kings, and in later periods the temples vied with the tombs in their architectural magnitude and magnificence, that of Karnak being the work of at least seven distinct monarchs, whose reigns extend over five hundred years, each of them contributing the best art to its extension and adornment that his age could produce. In all the cities of Egypt, and wherever men were gathered, capacious edifices lifted up their heads and invited the people to worship. The services held within them in honour of the gods were no bald uninteresting formalities, but were maintained with all the aids that art could furnish to make them attractive and inviting to the multitude. The temple walls and chambers were adorned with the choicest specimens of the painter's and sculptor's skill. A numerous and honoured priesthood maintained a costly and perpetual ceremonial. Clothed in robes of the richest materials and rarest workmanship—robes of which the modern ecclesiastical vestments of the Greek and Roman churches are the imitation and the relics—the priests passed in procession through sunlit aisles or shady recesses; through avenues of sphinxes, or through crowds of worship-

pers; now chanting in full chorus the praises of the gods; now, in humility or adoration, bending before their altars and invoking their favour and protection. The great temple of each city was the centre of its life. Not for worship only, but for recreation and enjoyment its courts were frequented. There the eye was filled with beautiful forms, and the ear with harmonious sounds. As incense floated into the air, and music resounded through the corridors, and all that was bright and costly regaled the senses, a continual crowd of worshippers or spectators resorted to the attractive scene, so that the temple became, not only the centre of city life, but the bond of civic fellowship, and the pride and joy of the inhabitants. Cities vied with each other in furnishing a complete and costly ceremonial. Religion permeated the whole being of the people. The priests were the practical rulers of the nation, and the representatives of its intellectual activity. All inventions, arts, and sciences, bore a priestly character, as, for instance, the picture-writing of hieroglyphics, the sciences of medicine, mechanics, chemistry, and philosophy, as well as astrology, alchemy, and the art of soothsaying. Priests and warriors constituted an ecclesiastical and lay nobility, and possessed a monopoly of political power. The king was the nominal head of the State, saluted with the title of god, but even over him the priests exercised large influence. A college of priests constituted his Privy Council; the supreme court of justice was composed of the representatives of the three great divisions of the priesthood; his whole

life was regulated, down to its minutest detail, by sacerdotal precepts; his servants had to be the sons of priests, who exercised constant surveillance over him in the interests of their order. At the public sacrifices the priests made prayer for him, and, while enumerating his virtues, had opportunity for effective censure of what they disapproved. His character was in their hands, for they alone transmitted history. Only a few kings of more than ordinary courage ever dared to assert independence of their control. The majority bowed meekly to their dictation, and in return for their submission obtained, through the influence of the priesthood, their reward of praise, the admiration and esteem of their people, and posthumous glory. This influence, so dominant in the palace, extended through all ranks. The priest's hand was everywhere. Literature, art, science, had hardly any other home than the temple. No profession could be entered, no art or industry pursued, save through the patronage and permission of the priests. The regulations which they established governed the ploughman as he turned the furrow, the mechanic as he plied his tool, the soldier as he went forth to war. Loyalty to priestly precept was the path to prosperity; rebellion was the sure precursor of poverty and ruin. It follows, therefore, that Egyptian life and character can be understood only in proportion as the religion of the nation is comprehended.

▷ In the paintings and sculptures preserved in Egyptian temples and tombs we possess a source of information, in regard to the ceremonial religion of the



people, fuller and more detailed than in the case of any other nation of antiquity. But difficulties meet us when we seek to penetrate into the inner shrine of the beliefs which this splendid ritual expressed. Creeds and confessions are of comparatively recent date. The ministers of the ancient faiths did not cast into precise dogmatic moulds their theological tenets, but were satisfied to regulate, as custom or expediency dictated, the names by which the deities were to be invoked, the prayers to be addressed, and the sacrifices to be offered to them. Numerous as are the manuscripts that have come down to us, no writing has been discovered in which an Egyptian priest or theologian has set forth the religious system of his countrymen. Manetho was indeed a priest, but we know his theological writings only partially and at second hand. Herodotus has preserved information bearing on Egyptian ritual, and a few traditions gathered from the priests of the temples which he visited; but if he discovered more than he records regarding the articles of their belief, he has carefully suppressed his knowledge. Diodorus gives in his first book an account of the religion of the Egyptians, but his expositions are coloured by his desire to prove that the Greeks owed their religious faith to Egypt. His object was not so much to explain the theology of Egypt, as to discover such analogies between it and the mythology of Greece as would serve to strengthen his position. The later Platonists dealt with Egyptian theology after their own philosophy had largely borrowed from Egyptian or ori-

ental speculations. This scantiness of information furnished from sources contemporary with the times when it was a living system, has always rendered the study of the theology of Egypt difficult and complex. Notwithstanding the additional light that recent discoveries have cast upon the subject, there is still considerable discrepancy between the views of the most competent authorities. Still there are certain features which are very generally acknowledged to have characterised it. It is admitted by many authorities that, in common with most of the religions of antiquity, it had two phases or aspects; one of these being that which it presented to the priestly and philosophic mind—the other, that in which it was viewed by the great mass of the people. It may be taken for granted that the body of the Egyptian nation knew little regarding the origin or import of their own theology, and that the initiated classes did not care to enlighten them, satisfied when outward obedience to religious laws was rendered. The vast multitude of deities figured in the Pantheon, to which the crowd paid homage, did not necessarily imply that belief in their separate existence and divinity was entertained by the learned. Some eminent scholars maintain that the Egyptian religion, while to the many characterised by polytheism and gross observances, was to the few a system that combined belief in one self-existent God with a speculative philosophy that concerned itself with the nature of God and the destiny of man. The priests, according to this view, rose to the conception of one only God; immortal,

uncreated, invisible, and concealed from human scrutiny in the inaccessible depths of his being. They worshipped him as the creator of heaven and earth, who made all things, and without whom nothing has been made. It is contended that, on any other supposition than belief in the existence of this unseen and supreme being, it is not possible to explain many expressions in their religious books and hymns. "The first characteristic of the religion," says M. de Rougé, "is the unity of God, most energetically expressed." In proof of this statement he quotes such sentences as these: "God—one, sole, and only; no others with him." "He is the only being, living in truth." "Thou art one, and millions of beings proceed from thee." "He has made everything, and he alone has not been made." On a staircase of the British Museum may be seen a papyrus, which speaks of "The great God, Lord of heaven and of earth, who made all things which are;" and Renouf asks, "Where shall we find such a prayer in heathen Greek, or Roman times, as this: 'O my God and Lord, who hast made me and formed me, give me an eye to see and an ear to hear thy glories'?" "Hail to thee," says a tablet in the British Museum, "Lord of Hermopolis, self-existent, without birth, sole God, who regulatest the nether world, and givest laws to those who are in the Amenti, and to those who are in the service of Ra." In a papyrus at Turin, the following words are put into the mouth of "the Almighty God, the self-existent, who made heaven and earth, the waters, the breath of life, fire, the gods,

men, animals, cattle, reptiles, birds, fishes, kings." "I am the maker of heaven and of the earth. I raise its mountains, and the creatures which are upon it; I make the waters, and the Mehura comes into being. . . . I am the maker of heaven and of the mysteries of the twofold horizon. . . . When I open my eyes, there is light; when I close them, there is darkness. I make the hours, and the hours come into existence." Another text says, "I am yesterday, I am to-day, I am to-morrow." "O God, architect of the world, thou art without a father, begotten by thine own becoming; thou art without a mother, being born by repetition of thyself. . . . Thou sustainest the substances which thou hast made. It is by thine own strength that thou movest. . . . The roaring of thy voice is in the cloud, thy breath is in the mountain-tops. . . . Heaven and earth obey the commands which thou hast given: they travel by the road which thou hast laid down for them; they transgress not the path which thou hast prescribed to them, and which thou hast opened to them. . . . Thou retest, and it is night; when thine eyes shine forth we are illuminated. . . . O let us give glory to the God who hath raised up the sky, and who causeth his disc to float over the bosom of Nut; who hath made the gods, and men, and all their generations; who hath made all lands and countries, and the great sea, in the name of 'Let the earth be.'"

While these and similar expressions seem to point to the conclusion that it was the one God,

Creator of heaven and earth, whom the Egyptian authors of such hymns and invocations ignorantly worshipped, we are not warranted in affirming that even the greatest minds in ancient Egypt grasped the great doctrine of the unity of God. Side by side with these lofty conceptions we find, especially in later times, gross polytheistic beliefs abundantly prevailing. Different explanations have been given of the apparent inconsistency between the seemingly monotheistic beliefs of the learned, and the multitudinous existence of deities, whose worship they sanctioned and inculcated. The gods of the popular mythology were, it is said, regarded by the initiated as either personified attributes of the supreme deity, or parts of the nature which he had created, considered as informed and inspired by him. The deity had agents, who were his own attributes personified, and who became so many gods under different names and forms; inferior divinities, limited in their parts, although participating in all his characteristic properties. "Thus," says Jamblichus, "the Egyptian god, when considered as that secret force which brings all things to light, is called Ammon; when he is the intelligent spirit which comprises all intelligence, he is Emeth; when it is he who accomplishes everything with art and truth, he is called Phthah; and when he is the good and beneficent god, they name him Osiris." This view is adopted by Professor Rawlinson, who says,—“No educated Egyptian priest certainly, probably no educated layman, conceived of the popular gods as really separate or distinct beings.

All knew that there was but one God, and understood that when worship was offered to Khem, or Kneph, or Phthah, or Maut, or Thoth, or Ammon, the one God was worshipped under some one of his forms, or in some one of his aspects. Ra was not a sun-deity with a distinct and separate existence, but the supreme god acting in the sun, making his light to shine on the earth, warming and cheering and blessing it; and so Ra might be worshipped with all the highest titles of honour."

Another explanation is given of the multiplicity of deities worshipped by the Egyptians which makes the number of separate gods more apparent than real. The Pantheon was gradually formed by a combination of the deities worshipped at separate local centres. The natural configuration of Egypt tended to produce separation, and, as a matter of fact, the country was at various periods divided into several distinct kingdoms. Each of its forty-two nomes or provinces had its chief town and its local worship. These provinces were disturbed by local jealousies, disliked each other's worship, and hunted down and killed each other's sacred animals. The hostile feelings of rival districts sometimes broke into actual conflicts, and it required the whole armed power of the king to extinguish the torch of war kindled by domineering chiefs or ambitious priests. Sometimes even the dynasty was changed through the success of some rebellious provincial leader who passed through victory to the throne. When a strong central authority overawed the provinces, there was

apparent unity in the State, but only partial agreement in the worship. Hence at each provincial capital a god, bearing a distinctive name, was regarded as supreme. No doubt a certain unity of religious conception characterised the national worship everywhere, but it was unity in diversity rather than the definite recognition of one divinity. The chief districts, at least, had their separate, and to some extent conflicting, systems, while yet the ruling god of each province, although bearing a distinctive name and localised by his worshippers, was practically the same deity that was honoured as supreme at all the other centres. From a union of these deities, each supreme at his own centre of population, the Egyptian Pantheon grew. The gods are thus not so many or so diverse as at first sight they seem. In their visible symbols, and in their names, they differ widely; but as they are studied it is found that each occasionally assumes the attributes of the others, and that a permanent line of demarcation cannot be drawn around any. At length we observe a general worship of some few divinities, especially of Ra, and of Osiris, with his consort Isis. For a time after the centralisation of the national worship the people of each nome would still regard their own local god as supreme, and accord him highest honour in their adoration. Thus in one inscription we find the chief place assigned to one deity, and in others to a second or a third respectively. The inhabitant of the Thebais would attribute to his Ammon, the citizen of Memphis to his Phthah, the dweller at Sais

to his Neith, the supreme power and dominion. But as time went on, and the local worship merged in the central, Ra, as the sun-god, drew to himself the pre-eminence; and in the litany of Ra, which first appears in the tombs of the kings of the nineteenth dynasty, all other divinities vanish in the brightness of his supremacy. He is the king of the universe; the father of gods and men.

There does not seem, however, to be sufficient evidence for the view strongly held by many, that the various gods of Egypt were but symbols and personifications of the attributes of a supreme being, whom the priests, if not the people, regarded as the one living and true God. This is not the natural impression produced by a study of the monuments. Everywhere there are traces of innumerable deities whose existence seems inconsistent with the recognition of any one supreme creator and governor of the universe. It may be possible by classification to reduce the number of distinct divinities, but after the process of grouping and assimilating has been carried to the utmost limits, we still encounter a host of gods and goddesses who cannot be resolved into attributes or emanations of one, without violence to reason and sound criticism.

This difficulty is felt by those who affirm most strongly that the Egyptian priesthood held the doctrine of monotheism, and they meet it by admitting that it subsisted side by side with a polytheistic religion. Thus Mr Poole, while maintaining this view, does so with the explanation that the notions of



monotheism and polytheism are found constantly existing together in the same bodies. "Few beliefs," he says, "which are true to unity, but have admitted at times, and in individuals, ideas of plurality; scarcely any which are founded on the idea of the Many but have been perpetually enlightened by a glimpse of the One." Renouf writes: "The polytheistic and the so-called monotheistic doctrines constantly appear together in one context; not only in the sacred writings handed down by tradition, and subjected to interpolations and corruptions of every kind, but even more frequently in literary compositions of a private nature, where no one would dream of suspecting interpolation." "Throughout the whole range of Egyptian literature," he adds, "no facts appear to be more certainly proved than these: (1) that the doctrine of one god, and that of many gods, were taught by the same men; and (2) that no inconsistency between the two doctrines was thought of." The fact that a few in every religious system have risen above the polytheistic notions of the many, may be admitted without accepting the conclusion that the religions themselves contained a monotheistic element. We must judge the religion of Egypt, not by beliefs which are supposed to have had a place in the minds of the sacred and the learned few, but by the doctrines and precepts which its accredited expositors delivered, and the effects which these produced upon the multitudes who accepted and acted upon their instructions.

To describe or even to enumerate the Egyptian

deities would occupy more time than is at our disposal. The statement of Herodotus that the Egyptians had a threefold division of their gods into eight, twelve, and an indefinite number, though corroborated by Manetho, and accepted by Bunsen, who believed he had succeeded in restoring the old classification, has not been supported by recent investigations. The relative importance of the deities varied from time to time, as dynasties changed or cities identified with their worship rose or fell in influence or importance. The artificial arrangement was doubtless an invention of the priests at a time when the Egyptians were united into one kingdom. It is not now accepted, because it has been found that the eight principal deities of one part of the country were not those who received highest honours elsewhere. At Memphis, at Thebes, at Heliopolis, and at other religious centres, very different divinities received the chief worship, and even if the first class could be identified, the difficulty would remain, for the other groups present the same obstacles to identification. But while such general classification of the deities cannot be maintained, there is a peculiarity in their distribution throughout the country which is very remarkable. In almost every town three deities constituted a trinity which received the chief worship of the inhabitants. Sometimes, though only in rare cases, a fourth was added, but always one greatly inferior to the three. The triad consisted generally of a principal god, a female deity his consort, and their offspring—almost invariably a male. Thus at Thebes

the triad consisted of Ammon, Nut, and Chonsu; at Abydos, of Osiris, Isis, and Horus; at Heliopolis, of Ra, Nebkept, and Horus. Bunsen, Renouf, and others contend that there is nothing in the monuments to show that three was a sacred or a specially significant number. While accepting the wider national division of the gods into orders, Bunsen objects to the word triad, and thinks the grouping into threes unimportant. But it is certainly singular that these groups occur so regularly in the local centres; that the funeral triad, composed of Osiris, Isis, and Nephthys, is found in all the tombs throughout the country; and that many other triads variously combined continually occur. Sometimes, as a compliment to a reigning sovereign, a triad was composed, consisting of two deities and the king,—as at Thebes, where Rameses III. is placed between Osiris and Phthah — or at Aboukeshayd, where Rameses the Great is set between Ra and Atmu.

The worship rendered to the gods was public or private, the public being that which was offered in the temples, while the private was associated with the tombs. The temples, however, were not places of worship in our sense of the expression. To perform the temple service was the special function of the priesthood, who carried on in small inner chambers, to which only a chosen few were admitted, the mysteries of their office, reserving for the multitudes who resorted to the outer courts, those gorgeous ceremonies and processions which at once evoked enthusiasm and gratified the prevalent love of

spectacular display. The temples that remain were, without exception, royal offerings to the divinity of the locality; and while the image of the god and those of the deities associated with him were brought out in solemn processions, in which the whole population took their places, none but the initiated were admitted within the sacred inner precincts. Such processions were a conspicuous part of the Egyptian ritual. Sometimes the sacred animals were led by their respective attendants, and received adoration from the people as they passed through the streets. Sometimes the images of the gods were set upright on platforms, and were borne by a number of priests upon their shoulders, while other priests, marshalled according to their ranks and orders, went before or followed the figures of the deities, their conspicuous head-dresses and magnificent robes, official staves and fluttering banners, adding to the grandeur of the display, as their full-voiced choirs chanted the praises of the gods. Sometimes the images were placed in boats—bearing at prow and stern richly carved symbols of the deities—which, set on low sledges, were drawn along the streets, or carried on men's shoulders, or were launched upon the Nile, and impelled by priestly rowers on its sacred waters. Sometimes, as the monuments show, the king, his counsellors, ministers, and nobles, helped to swell the procession, which for the time interrupted all business and suspended all labour. Festivals, commemorating the loss and recovery of Osiris, drew great crowds to celebrate them. On these occasions a cow, emblematic of

Isis, was draped in black and led about for four successive days ; while in memory of the disappearance of Osiris and his sister's search for him, the company of men and women beat their breasts ; and in memory of his recovery the same crowds went to the sea-shore, the priests carrying a sacred ark in which they placed an image of Osiris, formed of earth and water, and as they did so the shout was raised, " Osiris is found ! Osiris is found ! " when the plaintive cries gave place to joyous congratulations and festivity. The Egyptians were the first to institute a sacred calendar, in which every day—almost every hour—had its special religious ceremony. The priests constantly ministered in the temples, and received and offered the victims or oblations brought by the people. The sacrifices with which in Egypt, as elsewhere, the favour of the deities was invoked, consisted of animals and vegetables, presented to the gods with libations of wine and the burning of incense. Whenever a victim was offered, a prayer was repeated on its head, " that if any calamity were about to befall either the sacrificers or the land of Egypt, it might be averted on this head." The head on which impending evil was imprecated, after being cut off from the body, was not eaten by the Egyptians, but was either sold to foreigners or cast into the Nile. Thus sacrifice was offered continually, and the voice of prayer, however imperfect or misdirected, was never silent.

The worship of the tombs was as widely prevalent as that of the temples. The tomb occupied a large

place in the thoughts and labour of the people. Accepting the doctrines of the soul's immortality and of man's moral responsibility, they believed, as the Book of the Dead clearly shows, that life in the future state was determined by men's actions in this world. The soul's trials did not end at death, and therefore it was necessary to care for and follow with rites and prayers those whose earthly life was over. From the king to the peasant, every man spent a portion of his means in making ready his sepulchre. The famous pyramids of Gizeh, which raise their giant forms like crystallised mountains from the mother soil of rock, while around them stretches the desert's boundless sea of yellow sand, are but tombs, though for ages they have been the admiration and wonder of the world as unparalleled works of power. The Egyptian set to the construction of his sepulchre as soon as he came into possession of his estate. "The Egyptians," we are told by Diodorus, "call their houses hostelrys, on account of the short time during which they inhabit them; but the tombs they call eternal dwelling-places." This last statement is borne out by numerous inscriptions. Words signifying "eternal dwelling-place" occur in the earliest inscriptions descriptive of the tomb. The departed are spoken of as "the living,"—as enjoying "everlasting life." The places of burial, which might be prepared by the owner himself, or purchased, ready made, from the priests, consisted of upper and lower chambers, and were often cut out of the solid rock. The Egyptians had a strong belief that life in the other world was somehow or

other closely connected with the condition of the body after death. Hence they embalmed the bodies of the dead, so as to preserve them from decay; and by placing them in rock-hewn chambers, and setting over them immense masses of stone, sought to secure them against assault. The leading idea in connection with the tombs was durability; and in the formularies of prayer, Ra or Osiris was invoked "to preserve the body, lasting for thousands of years, and never corrupting." The god Anubis was the presiding genius of the mummified body, and in the inscriptions he addresses the dead—"I come, I bring thee thy members." The possession of a body into which the soul, when it pleased, might pass, appears to have been one of the greatest benefits that pertained to those who were approved in the judgment. An inscription says: "Thy head belongs to thee, thou livest by it; thine eye is thine, thou seest by it; thine ears belong to thee, thou hearest through them; thy nose is thine, thou breathest through it." The view they entertained of the soul was, that it did not consist of pure spirit, but was a corporeal substance of finer texture than the body, which, in the life beyond, passes through many migrations till, purified, it soars upward to the full contemplation of the divine sunlight. Numberless transformations of the soul are delineated on the tombs. The happiness of the eternal life they connected not with quiet contemplations or with indulgence and ease, such as the Greeks associated with the islands of the blessed. The occupations of this life are continued in the other,—men

plough, and sow, and reap, and thresh in the celestial as in the earthly habitations. The Book of the Dead says, "He is in the midst of these things as he was on earth." In accordance with this future, the walls of the tomb chapel, or chapels—for sometimes there were two or more—were inscribed or painted with scenes illustrating home-life: agricultural work, hunting, fishing, stock-taking; artificers of all kinds are seen plying their crafts; and representations of such employments as had occupied the owner of the tomb during his earthly history are very numerous. On the mummy-cases were painted the weapons and the articles of dress which the deceased had worn in life. Small chests were placed in the chambers for storing the images of the gods or the ancestors of the dead; chairs and tables, vases, fans, insignia of office, were set beside the mummy, that the dead man might be surrounded by the objects that had been familiar to him during life. Something approaching to worship was paid by the living to the dead. From time to time the relatives and friends of the deceased met within the sepulchral chamber to sacrifice to their ancestors, and perform various acts of homage in their honour. The mummy-cases were then reverently carried from the recesses which they usually occupied, set upright near an altar, and adorned with wreaths of flowers. On the altar, offerings of fruits, vegetables, cakes, wines, sometimes joints of meat, fowls, vases of oil, and costly delicacies, were laid; while prayers were addressed to or for the dead, and libations of oil and wine were poured



over the cases in which the bodies lay. The friends prostrated themselves before the altar, or, tearing their hair and showing other signs of sorrow, embraced the mummies.

Such scenes are often depicted on the monuments, and the inscriptions show very prominently the close connection which was supposed to exist between the souls and the bodies of the dead. These set forth a belief that the bond which links the dead to their bodies is indissoluble. They show, that in the highest conceptions the people formed of the soul's felicity, it was not regarded as emancipated from thralldom to the body. They declare, indeed, that to see Ra in his splendour; to be admitted into his boat, and to share the society and friendship of the gods who steer it through the firmament,—is the lot of the justified. But this participation in the glory of the sun-god alternates with visits to the tomb. Sometimes the soul sojourns in the mummy and the mural chamber; sometimes with Amenti in the starry heavens. The peculiarity of the Egyptian religion is the distinctness with which it taught in its earliest records the great doctrine of immortality, perhaps even of resurrection; not, indeed, in its Christian fulness, but far more clearly than any other ancient system. It associated with this doctrine that of personal responsibility, and affirmed that in the future life man must undergo a searching ordeal of judgment. It was the belief of every member of the nation that immediately after death he must descend into the lower world, "the region of life," "the hidden country," where Osiris

exercised sovereignty and pronounced irreversible judgment. In the "Hall of Truth," or "Justice"—the same Egyptian word embraces both conceptions—this ruler of the nether world held his court of assize, assisted by three other gods: Anubis, his son, "the director of the weight," who produced a pair of scales, placing in one a figure of Truth, and in the other a heart-shaped vase containing the good deeds of the deceased; Horus, who regulated the index of the balance; and Thoth, who stood by with a tablet in his hand to write down the result. Osiris had forty-two assessors—accidentally or by design corresponding in number with the nomes of Egypt—before whom the deceased was called to justify himself, and make clear that he had not committed any of the forty-two principal sins. The tombs contain many scenes which illustrate this ordeal of judgment. Near the ruined city of Ibream is one which brings the trial vividly before the spectator, in colours as bright as when first set forth by the artist three thousand years ago. "Anubis sits beneath a great balance: in one of the scales is an effigy of the goddess of justice, wearing her ostrich-feather; in the other scale is the heart of the deceased. On the right stands Thoth, with tablet in hand, the roll of the great book, ready to inscribe the name of the deceased as among the justified or the condemned. On the left stands Set, the incarnation of evil, in the form of a hideous beast, looking up wistfully at the beam, and hoping that the soul of the departed may be found wanting on being weighed,

and may become his prey.”<sup>1</sup> In the ritual of the dead, prayer is addressed to Thoth, imploring him to do justice to the dead, to suffer truth to come to the body, and keep falsehood at a distance from it. Osiris pronounces sentence in strict accordance with the verdict of the scales. If a man’s good deeds outweighed the scale in which the figure of Justice or Truth was set, his soul passed into the bark of the sun, and he was borne by good spirits to Ashlu, the pools of peace, and the dwelling-place of Osiris. But if, on the other hand, the soul was found unworthy to enter the abodes of the blessed, it was sentenced by Osiris to a round of transmigrations, more or less repulsive and prolonged, according to the measure of its shortcomings, in the bodies of unclean animals. For a period of three thousand years these penal transmigrations and sufferings were to be endured; and then once more the soul entered, according to some, its old, or, according to others, a new human body, and began another term of opportunity and probation. In connection with this ordeal of judgment, we find no trace of any appeal for mercy on the part of those who are subjected to it; and there is also to be noted the utter absence of any acknowledgment of guilt. In the later stages of the Egyptian religion, the verdict of Amenti was anticipated by a judgment pronounced upon the dead by the priests. When the body arrived at the shore of the lake over which it was to be borne for inter-

<sup>1</sup> Villiers Stuart: ‘Nile Gleanings,’ p. 193.

ment, intimation was made that any one whom the deceased was thought to have injured, or who was acquainted with crimes of which he had been guilty, would have an opportunity of establishing the charges before forty-two judges convened for the purpose. If in the opinion of the judges the accusations were substantiated, interment was refused; the body had to be carried back by the friends, and the mummy was kept within the house until satisfaction or atonement had been made to the injured. But if the accusers failed to establish their charges, or if no one appeared to complain, the signs of mourning were laid aside, the good qualities of the dead man were rehearsed, prayers were offered by his relatives and friends for his happiness in the future state, and his body was borne across the lake to the place of sepulture. Traces of this ancient custom are found in Egypt to this day. Before a body is carried to the tomb, those assembled to render this last office are formally asked to pronounce judgment on the dead man's character.

From the defence made by the dead in the presence of Osiris as they rehearsed their good deeds, we gather interesting information as to the code of morality recognised by the ancient Egyptians. This is of a remarkable character, bearing a very striking resemblance to the requirements of the Mosaic law, and even to the higher precepts of the Christian religion. There is, indeed, abundant evidence in the tombs and temples that the knowledge and the life of the people were not always in harmony; but it is start-

ling to discover how closely the written ethics of ancient Egypt correspond to our highest notions of morality. "None of the Christian virtues," says M. Chabas, "is forgotten in the Egyptian code: piety, charity, gentleness, self-command in word and action, chastity, the protection of the weak, benevolence towards the humble, deference to superiors, respect for property in its minutest details, . . . all is expressed there, and in extremely good language." The following are specimens of the manner in which the dead justify themselves before Osiris: "Not a little child did I injure. Not a widow did I oppress. Not a herdsman did I ill-treat. There was no beggar in my days. No one starved in my time. And when the years of famine came, I ploughed all the lands of the province, feeding its inhabitants and providing their food. There was no starving person in it, and I made the widow to be as though she possessed a husband." Another claims to have been "the protector of the humble, the palm of abundance to the destitute, food to the hungry and the poor." Another says: "I have taken pleasure in speaking the truth. Though great, I have acted as if I had been a little one." Another: "I was bread to the hungry, water to the thirsty, clothes to the naked, a refuge to him that was in want; that which I did to him the great God hath done to me."

The same moral code which is recognised in the tomb-inscriptions is found pervading the different writings that have come down to us. The "wisdom of the Egyptians" was summarised in various com-

pende of proverbial philosophy. One of these—written centuries before the time of Moses—is termed by M. Chabas “the most ancient book of the world.” In common with other papyri of a similar character, it inculcates the study of wisdom, the duty of honouring parents and superiors, of respecting property, of being charitable, peaceable, contented, humble, chaste, sober, truthful, and just. It shows, on the other hand, that disobedience, strife, arrogance and pride, slothfulness, intemperance, impurity, and other vices, are wicked and foolish. Unhappily, this theoretic morality was combined with great imperfection and laxity of life. Both men and women were immodest and licentious in their behaviour. They were vindictive, treacherous, and avaricious, servile towards superiors, and cruel in their treatment of dependants. While the future life was the foundation upon which all moral and religious duties were avowedly based, its influence was counteracted by the prevalent belief in the power of magical rites and formal routine-worship to secure all that could be obtained by adherence to the laws of morality. The priests claimed, and were supposed by the people to possess, the power of propitiating the gods and averting the pains of Amenti; so that superstition neutralised the effect which the doctrine, rightly apprehended, might have produced.

In the strict sense of the term, caste did not exist in Egypt. As in every nation possessing claims to civilisation, classes were formed on the basis of property or occupation. The fact that a son

succeeds his father in a profession or business, naturally leads to heredity and exclusiveness, and there seems to have been much of this in Egyptian society; but no class had its limits so distinctly defined that others could not pass into it. The belief prevalent in India that the classification of society is ordained by the gods, and so protected by their sanction that violation of this institution is not only a political crime but an act of heresy, was never held. The rise of Joseph from a prison to be the king's chief minister and the son-in-law of the priest of Heliopolis, is not without many parallels in Egyptian history. On the monuments are found not a few records of men who rose from indigence to nobility and high offices at court, which close with the statement, "His ancestors were unknown people." Education was open to all ranks. In the schools the poor man's son sat on the same bench as the heir of the wealthy; and there the master sought to fire the lagging scholar's ambition by telling him of the rich rewards which awaited all who gained a name for erudition. No barrier of birth or poverty could successfully oppose a man's progress to distinction and wealth if he proved himself an eminent student of science or philosophy.

A remarkable feature of Egyptian social life was the honourable position accorded to woman. This was higher than in Palestine or in any heathen nation. She was regarded as man's friend and companion, and had equal rights of property with him. The tombs represent husband and wife seated on the same chair, or mingling on equal terms in the same

society. Women sat upon the Egyptian throne. They officiated in the temples, and offered sacrifices to the gods. Nowhere except in Christian lands has woman ever possessed so much freedom or exercised so strong an influence in domestic and national life as in ancient Egypt.

I have not touched upon the place which animal-worship held in the national religion, because the subject is so large that a satisfactory treatment of it would require more time than is available. The statement that every animal in Egypt was held sacred and worshipped by the people, is perhaps exaggerated; but the veneration with which most living creatures were regarded, gave point to the taunt that on the banks of the Nile it was easier to find a god than a man. This singular idolatry which set cats and crocodiles and jackals in the innermost shrines of magnificent temples; which raised bulls and apes above the kings, and gave them homes that rivalled palaces in costliness and splendour; which furnished retinues of priests and slaves to watch and wait upon the movements of an ibis or the contortions of a serpent; which filled the land with tombs whose occupants are the mummies, not of men, but of beasts,—has caused much speculation, in ancient and modern times, as to its origin and meaning. Philo regarded the animals as symbols through which the gods were worshipped. Some maintained that the priests invested useful animals with a sacred character, in order to secure their continuance and increase. Others held that a crafty king introduced the worship of animals



with the view of promoting discord in the nomes, and so the more easily governing his people. In modern times the pantheistic character of the Egyptian religion has been thought by many a sufficient explanation of the worship. Regarding all nature as divine, men easily attribute to living creatures qualities and powers of supernatural magnitude. Others, on plausible grounds, having in view the Negritian connections of the Egyptian race, believe that the beasts which, under the influences of a more advanced religion, received homage as incarnations of a higher being, were originally worshipped as fetiches, and that fetichism, too, originated the fantastic custom which struck the early Christian apologists, of placing in the innermost sanctuary of a temple some hideous dead or living animal,—“a beast rolling on a purple couch.” In the time of Moses this animal-worship was universally prevalent, and the plagues which he was commissioned to bring to bear upon the obdurate king who oppressed his countrymen, were meant to discredit the gods of Egypt, and emphatically condemn the idolatry which deified four-footed beasts and creeping things.

But with all its defects and idolatries, the religion of Egypt gave forth more scintillations of what we have been taught by revelation to regard as truth than any other of the ancient faiths. Its teachings as to the formation of man; its affirmations concerning death and judgment; its anticipation of what Christianity has made clear regarding the unity of man's complex nature and the sanctity of his body;

its glimmering light thrown on immortality and resurrection,—raise it above other ancient historic religions, and go far to warrant a belief that it originated in a primeval revelation. There is much in the legend of the death and resurrection of Osiris which seems a faint foreshadowing of truth taught by Him who is the Life and the Light of men—much that hints at the possibility that it was based on some old prophecy which the Egyptians brought with them from the common cradle of the human race. Nowhere could the great Jewish lawgiver have found so suitable an education for his hard task as at the Court of Pharaoh; and if before he entered upon his work he was withdrawn from the idolatries and superstitions of Egypt, that in the solitudes of Horeb he might receive his commission from the one living God, that retirement was but the complement of preparation which had made him “learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and mighty in word and deed.” The best features of the Egyptian faith reappear in the Books of Moses. There are golden grains of divine truth to be gathered still from the mummies and monuments of Egypt. The more we study this ancient faith, the more clearly we come to see that God never left Himself without a witness to man; and that, in some measure at least, the religion of the Egyptians, like the law given by Moses, was a shadow of things to come.



# ST GILES' LECTURES.

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*SECOND SERIES—THE FAITHS OF THE WORLD.*

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*LECTURE VI.*

RELIGION OF ANCIENT GREECE.

By the Rev. WILLIAM MILLIGAN, D.D., Professor of Biblical Criticism  
in the University of Aberdeen.

FROM the religions of the East, at one time so dark and oppressive, at another so mystical and vague, I have to invite you to enter with me to-day upon another and a totally different scene. From boundless plains and huge mountain-masses, in the presence of which the spirit of man is overwhelmed; from faiths and civilisations, the beginnings of which are lost in impenetrable obscurity; from immobility so long continued and so crushing that the mind sinks in the contemplation of it,—we have to turn to a country in many respects similar to our own, and to a people of a life, an energy, and

a movement which have enabled them to exercise an almost unparalleled influence upon the highest races of mankind. We have to pass from darkness into light. Instead of mental stagnation, we come in contact with freedom, inquiry, science, philosophy, and progress. Across the long lapse of ages, we clasp a people by the hand whose literature and art have supplied the finest models for the historians, poets, and artists of all succeeding times; whose political spirit has in no small degree nourished our own imperishable love of liberty; and whose philosophic thought has even penetrated Christianity itself, and helped to mould it into the forms that have secured its victories. We are in many respects strangers to the nations of the East: with the Greeks we feel that we are one.

It is impossible to think of Greece without a wonder and admiration which are only the more deepened the more we endeavour to trace in every direction the obligations under which we lie to it. The land was small, only covering—apart from its colonies—an area equal to one-third of that of England and Wales. Its population was insignificant in point of numbers, the free citizens of its several states not amounting to the population of Scotland at the present day; while Athens, the centre of its most powerful and lasting influence, possessed, with the exception of its slaves, not more than 21,000 citizens above the age of twenty. What a land and what a city to have effected what they did! The part played by Greece in the history of the world justifies the

enthusiasm always felt for what she was in ancient times; and not less the eager hopes of her friends now, that she may yet again prove herself worthy of her past. For the sake of Greece, the religion of Greece cannot fail to interest us.

But there is another important ground upon which the religion of Greece has a peculiar claim on our regard. History repeats itself; and it is not without reason that many dread a revival of paganism in our midst—not indeed in the details of its religious faith, but in its conception of the tone, the rule, and the aim of life. Should such a revival take place, it will be in the form of Greek rather than of Eastern or of Roman paganism. The paganism of Greece is by far the mightiest of the three. Eastern ideas of life have grown up in a soil so different from that of the West, that they can never take root beyond the great continent to which they naturally belong. From Rome's fundamental idea of universal conquest we are becoming every day further removed. The dominion of Rome over the spirit, too, is not for a moment to be compared with that of Greece. The Romans themselves, in the height of their power, when Greece lay prostrate at their feet, confessed that the conquered had given laws to the conquerors; and although it may be true that we have received many valuable elements of our civilisation through Rome, they have for the most part really come to us from Greece. In the most refined and spiritual elements which classical antiquity has transmitted to modern times, we are the heirs of Greek, not Roman,

thought. The literature, the art, the rhetoric, the philosophy, the politics which we cultivate, are Greek, not Roman, in their origin; and if any paganism is ever to regain a footing in the midst of us, it will be that of Greece.

Not only, therefore, for the sake of Greece, but for our own sake, we have the deepest interest in considering what the Greek religion was, and what the substitute for Christianity to which many in our day would, more or less consciously, lead us.

It is of little practical importance to inquire into the extent to which Greek religion was influenced at its start by the religions of other lands, especially of Egypt and the East. That it was thus influenced we know. The Greeks gained their knowledge of letters from the Phœnicians; and there is ample evidence to confirm the supposition, that they must have derived from that remarkable people other things besides an acquaintance with the alphabet and the power of writing. The names of their divinities, such as that of Zeus, are sufficient to show their dependence upon ideas embodied in the Rig-Véda; while Herodotus, even though he may at times have listened too credulously to the priests of Egypt, who impressed him with such awe in that land of ancient wonders, has probably some foundation for his statement that Egypt had communicated many parts of its mythology to his native country. Few things, in fact, are more certain than that the religious development of Greece was all along powerfully affected by its contact with the East, and that

to this contact it owed the power of that creative impulse by which it was so eminently marked. Had Greece not lain upon the very boundary-line which separates the Eastern from the Western hemisphere; had it not sent its colonies to the East, itself receiving immigrants in return; had it not, in short, enjoyed opportunities in a greater than common degree, of being introduced to those new thoughts and ideas which stirred so powerfully the quick and sensitive nature of its people,—Hellenic religion might have been as stagnant as that of Rome. The greatest modern historian of the Latin people has given it as his opinion that no nation upon earth was great enough, by its own efforts, to create the marvel of Hellenic culture. Only where the ideas of Aramaic religion have sunk into an Indo-Germanic soil has history produced such brilliant results.<sup>1</sup> Yet, be this as it may, it is not less certain that, by the richness of their imagination and the plastic power of their genius, the Greeks so transformed every foreign element of religion which they received as to make it their own independent possession. It is not necessary, therefore, to think of these other religions now. For the same reason, it is equally unnecessary to go back to the old Pelasgic faith, although it is certain that much of it was adopted by the Greeks when they came to occupy the countries in which it prevailed. Enough for us that, in the midst of the circumstances by which they were surrounded, and under native impulses, the Greeks unfolded their own

<sup>1</sup> Mommsen's 'Rome,' translated by Dickson, i. 186.

religious views. We need not ask how much of these was originally due to Phœnicia, or Egypt, or the East, or the primitive inhabitants of the Hellenic soil.

✓ Greece, then, developed her own religion; and if we transport ourselves as far as possible into the earliest period of her history, we shall find the kernel of that development in the relation in which the Greek stood to nature. This was in many respects different from what it was elsewhere, especially in those parts of the world that have been spoken of in the previous lectures of this course. There we see the mind overwhelmed by the tremendous forces that are at work around it, unable to unfold itself in their presence, and bowed, as if by irresistible necessity, into abject submission to their yoke. In Greece nature presents herself to man upon a scale smaller, more diversified, and infinitely more attractive. There are hills and valleys, woods and grottos, streams and fountains of waters. The sea with its joyous waves runs up into innumerable creeks and bays; while it washes, as it flows on, the shores of islands of every variety of size and form. Clouds come and go in the sky. The sun is felt in his brightness rather than his scorching power; the grass is enamelled with flowers, and the song of birds fills the air. Here, accordingly, we see man able, for a time at least, to preserve his own individuality, to unfold his own nature, to find in the phenomena amid which he moves a response to the stirrings of his own heart, and even to behold in them a portion of the spirit by which he himself is animated. In the older myth-



ologies of the East nature had mastered man. In Greece man had a new beginning granted to him; the mastery of nature was broken, and he was free. Not indeed that he was as yet superior to nature, or that he could realise the mighty difference between himself and her. The time was not come for the great victory bestowed only in Him who says to His people, "All things are yours." But man was to some extent equal to nature. He moved amidst the objects that she presented to him, like a child or a young animal to which everything with which it comes in contact is as full of life as itself. He listened to, and endeavoured to interpret, her meaning, as he would have listened to, or interpreted, a companion at play. He saw her act, he heard her speak, in every one of her departments. There was a rippling sound in the stream: it did not proceed from drops of water only; it came from a living spirit in the stream, fair and sweet, singing with the waters as they tripped along. There was a rustling or a hollow sound in the wood: it was not simply produced by the movement of leaves or of branches; it came from living spirits inhabiting the wood, who the one moment played in the breeze, the next moment sighed as the breeze freshened, or groaned as it deepened, into a gale. A rainbow glistened in the sky: it was not there by chance or inexorable law; it was

"A midway station given  
For happy spirits to alight  
Betwixt the earth and heaven."

Nay, it was itself the bearer of a message from a bright region where there was no more storm. The sea lapped the shore, and the little wavelets chased each other in the gay sunshine: it was because they had life in them that they thus leaped and played. And so with everything else that the Greek beheld. His peculiar gift was to translate the natural into the spiritual. Richly endowed as he was with fancy and imagination, and responsive to every impression made upon the senses, he could not rest in the cold realities of things as they appear to the scientific eye. He penetrated to something which he believed to be beneath them, and he imagined that they lived as he lived himself. Nor in all this was there any fear of nature. The Greek was not oppressed by the life which filled the land and the sea, the hills, the groves, and the fountains. He moved freely and joyously in the midst of it. Little of his worship sprang from dread of the more terrible forces, the thought of which is suggested by the whirlwind, the earthquake, the interminable wilderness, or the mountain that has never been scaled by human foot. The thought of these things may occasionally have awed or terrified him, but they were too rare or too remote to exercise an abiding influence upon the temper of his soul. He communed with nature as one who was at ease, and who heard her multitudinous voices with pleasure rather than alarm. But then these voices were multitudinous. They were all separate and distinct. Nature did not speak to him as a whole. He had no idea that she had been

fashioned by one great Being whose perfections all her parts expressed, and of whose garments they were the skirt. Christianity alone has reached this perception of what nature is, and Christian poets alone have sent us to her that we may be healed, when we are incapable of listening to still higher voices:—

“With other ministrations thou, O Nature,  
Healest thy wandering and distempered child.  
Thou pourest on him thy soft influences,  
Thy sunny hues, fair forms, and breathing sweets,  
Thy melodies of woods, and winds, and waters;  
Till he relent, and can no more endure  
To be a jarring and a dissonant thing  
Amid this general dance and minstrelsy;  
But, bursting into tears, wins back his way,  
His angry spirit healed and harmonised,  
By the benignant touch of love and beauty.”

But this was not the spirit of the Greek. To him every part of nature, even every distinct aspect of the same part, had a spirit peculiarly its own. That spirit might be merry or sad, but it was limited by the limitations of the object with which he was dealing at the time. It was no manifestation which led upward to the thought of an illimitable and eternal Being, in whom the most various phenomena find their unity.

Thus it was that, listening to a multitude of voices around him, the Greek immediately personified them. Yet there was no deliberate reflection in the process. We err if we imagine that, in the earlier stages of the Hellenic faith, the records of these personal deities

were allegories designed to give poetic expression to views which were entertained of the agencies and powers of nature. Such an interpretation was indeed afterwards resorted to by the Greeks themselves, in order to explain away the senseless follies and the disgraceful acts with which the legends of the gods abounded. But in the first instance, explanations of this kind are useless. Nor, on the other hand, can it be pleaded that these legends were the creations of the poets, such as Homer and Hesiod, who thus gave a mythology to Greece at a time when it had none. We shall immediately see how important a part these poets did play in the development of Greek religion ; but they did not create it. The structure of their poems, as well as the influence that they exercised, shows that the writers were not so much the makers as the reflectors of the popular theology, and that they embodied sentiments already existing in the minds of those for whom they sang. Nothing can be simpler, more natural, or more objective than the whole Homeric Epos. The poet is himself almost as much a child as those for whom he writes. He sings out of the depths of genuine unquestioning belief, undisturbed by the contradictions, unmoved by the absurdities, unappalled by the monstrosities of the faith which his song expresses. The whole Hellenic Pantheon, in short, had its root in the simple personification of Nature which marked the earliest period of Hellenic history ; and, at a stage of human progress when the mind can hardly conceive

of abstract essences, such personification was, in the absence of higher teaching, altogether unavoidable.

Yet it is remarkable to observe how far this personification was carried. I may allude to it for a moment—taking in, at the same time, the later developments of the personifying process; for the richness of the result helps to show that it could have sprung from nothing but the boundless stores of the popular imagination. Not only, then, was the spirit which was supposed to reside in every natural object personified, but new matter for personification was supplied by every aspect which the object assumed. Look, *e.g.*, at the sea. When thought of in the combination of all its qualities, and as ruling all the living creatures that inhabited its boundless wastes, Poseidon was its king. When beheld as the actual mother of everything that swam in it, it was personified in Amphitrite. When it issued, as it was supposed to do, like a river from its fountain-head, Thetis represented it; when it flowed softly, Nereus; and when it was roused into fury, Phorcys. Leucothœ was its presiding divinity when it slept peacefully under the moonlight, and Ægeon when it swept along with the irresistible volume of its waters. Every aspect of its countenance that never rested, every change of its heaving frame that was never still, every phase of its relation to man whether as his friend or foe, was separately marked, and every one was personified. The same thing might be illustrated by the case of the sun, who appeared as a different divinity

in each part of the daily task performed by him, or in each of his attitudes towards man.

Even at this point, however, the Greek did not rest. He had personified the spirit which breathed in each object of the nature that surrounded him. He next humanised it. The step to this was neither less easy nor less natural than those by which it had been immediately preceded. There must be something akin to our own nature in the nature of those with whom we are to hold constant and familiar intercourse ; and it was in the thought of such intercourse, and with no feeling of overwhelming dread, that the wanderer by the shores or in the groves of Greece had listened to the voices which told him that all nature was alive. Besides this, the Greek had an inborn sense at once of the greatness and the beauty of man. During the earlier stages of his history he had been nursed amidst the active politics of the little State to which he belonged, and which maintained a proud independence of every other. At a later stage, when the different States of the same Hellenic blood felt the necessity of union, he cultivated the feeling of a common brotherhood at the Olympic or the Isthmian games, which were the very apotheosis of muscular strength and physical energy. A happy climate and a fruitful soil had developed into its most perfect form the frame which is often relaxed beneath the heat of a Southern, or cramped by the cold of a Northern, clime. The noblest productions, too, of the merely human intellect, had appeared in Greece ; and it would be absurd to sup-

pose that those whose poetry and art have delighted all other ages of the world, should themselves have failed to perceive their sublimity and their gracefulness. Man, in short, considered simply as a being of this world, was to the Greek the expression of all that was best and brightest in his thoughts. What could he do but humanise his gods? This, accordingly, was what he did.

Nor is it to be imagined that in this process it was the coarser and more vicious aspects of humanity that were first transferred to them. The conception of Zeus, in his greatness, his solemn dignity, his interest in the affairs of man, and his concern for the right government of the world, would alone condemn such a view. All that lower side of the inhabitants of Olympus in which we recognise the foulness and the shame of the Greek religion, belongs to later stages of its history. It was, indeed, the necessary development of its principles, but it did not come first. If the Greek made his gods like ordinary mortals, he tried, at the same time, to make them stronger, wiser, and more beautiful. No doubt, even from the very earliest age, the gods of Greece were marked by many sins, by deceit and violence, by falsehood and lust. But we must remember that the sense of sin was as yet very imperfectly developed in the Greek mind, and there is a deep truth in the apostle's words, that "where there is no law, neither is there transgression." We must not suppose, therefore, that the toleration of certain sins is always and necessarily inconsistent with much that is otherwise lovable or

praiseworthy in character. The gods of Greece, even in the earliest stage of Greek history, fell far below the standard of natural as well as Christian truth. But the people were not then so deeply sunk by this as they were in later times, or as we should be.

Down to the point now reached by us, the religion of Greece already contained within it all the principles of its future development, although it had not had the opportunity of fully displaying its weakness and unsuitableness to the wants of man. Looked at in this stage of its history, it may seem a religion to be spoken of in less severe terms than we generally employ. There was about it a lightness and a sunniness of spirit, as well as a freedom from harsh and gloomy thoughts, that are pleasing to the mind. It connected men with a world higher than the present. It introduced them to communion with beings who, though cast in human mould, and animated by most of the ordinary feelings of humanity, enlarged the range of their vision, and taught them that there was a spiritual and invisible, as well as a material and visible, region of existence. But in all this there was hardly anything that can be called thought, hardly even the consciousness of a distinction between man and nature. It was as a child that the early Greek cherished his religious convictions and performed his religious rites. He was simply one part of a great whole. Each separate object of nature had a voice for him. Fancy and imagination were his only interpreters of the phenomena of the external world. He felt that he himself lived ; and he



saw everywhere the expression of a life similar to his own, as free, as active, as personal, and as human.

Such was the religion of Greece at a time anterior to the historic period, when all the various Hellenic races had been unconsciously contributing to it; when it had been assimilating elements of Assyrian, Phœnician, Egyptian, and Phrygian faith; and when it may be said to have been in a fluid state.

A great change took place in the ninth and eighth centuries before the Christian era, under the influence of the poets, more especially under that of Homer and Hesiod. These two poets, indeed, did not so much create as reflect the religious consciousness of Greece; but, in reflecting it, they gave it such a cohesion and fixity that, from their time onward until it was swept away by the advancing power of Christianity, it remained essentially unchanged. To Homer in particular, and to his immortal poems the 'Iliad' and the 'Odyssey,' this result is to be ascribed. By the marvellous power of these productions Homer became, so far as religion was concerned, the prophet of the whole Hellenic race, wherever it had found a settlement. His poems were the source of universal delight and admiration. They were read in private. They were recited in public assemblies by minstrels who devoted themselves to the task, just as at the present day the 'Arabian Nights' are read to eager listeners in Alexandria and Cairo. They were taught to the young as religious catechisms are taught in our families and schools. They were in the mouth of every Greek during the whole period of Hellenic

history. The consequence was, that the Homeric poems fixed the religion of Greece for 1200 or 1400 years. That religion saw all the changes going on around it which took place in one of the most eventful periods of the history of man—a period including the dawning of the Christian age; but it was itself changed in no essential respect. It had laid such hold of the mind of Greece, that the later developments of Greek thought and speculation never took religion along with them. They rather, at last, ended in so completely separating it from all progress that it could not be saved.

We must, then, look at the change which was brought about under the influence of the great poets whom I have named. I cannot enter into details as to the individual gods and goddesses of the time now before us; and I must content myself with marking the main characteristic of the change, and its effect.

That characteristic consisted in this, that the whole system of divinities higher than man ceased to be the mere utterance, in personification and humanisation, of the impressions made upon the mind and heart by nature. There can be little doubt that it had originally been so. The very names of the more ancient and less popular gods, it has been observed, betray this; for, the more ancient they are, the more do they retain the names,—such as Ouranos, Demeter ( $\gamma\eta\ \mu\acute{\eta}\tau\eta\rho$ ), and Kronos,—of elemental things. But this did not continue. The old gods now became real individualities, acting an independent part in a

world of their own—not coming and going with the changing moods of the minds that had imagined them, but possessing an existence quite separate from that of man. Thus the history of Kronos passed from being the mere expression of an idea into a historical reality. Kronos signifies time. He is the son of Ouranos, or Heaven, because the motions of the heavenly bodies give us our idea of time. He is married to Rhea, a word which signifies a flowing, because time flows; and he devours his own children, because time destroys whatever it brings into existence. Now, so long as this was the unconscious expression of a fact in nature, it might do little harm: men might live in the thought of it as in a poetic vision. But gradually the idea of the nature-fact was lost. Kronos became a free individual personality, and the most corrupting influences could not fail to proceed from his story when it was regarded as that of a personal deity to be worshipped. So also with the legend of the desolate Demeter and her search for her daughter Proserpine, who had been carried off by Hades, and who, when found after a long absence in the lower regions of the earth, was permitted to revisit her mother only for a portion of the year, before she was compelled to return to her ravisher. The legend was one by which, in a primitive time, men expressed the effect of the revolution of the seasons, when the earth is at one moment desolate and bare, at another is covered with the green braird and flowers of spring. In the former case, Demeter, or the Earth, mourns; in the

latter, she covers herself with beauty, and makes the air resound with the transports of her joy. But again the nature-fact was gradually lost sight of, and the legend became one of the personal adventures of the gods. It is doubtful whether a similar explanation is not to be applied to those who are commonly regarded simply as deified heroes. The story of Hercules, *e.g.*, seems to have been originally a myth representing the difficulty of obtaining Olympus except through toil and self-sacrifice. But the moral significance of the story was lost, and it became that of an individual personality struggling through the twelve labours, the thought of which had been at first suggested by the twelve signs of the zodiac.

These instances are sufficient to show the manner in which what had been originally symbolical passed, in the hands of the poets, into fables, in which the symbolical meaning disappeared before a supposed reality. Nor is it necessary to inquire whether this result was aimed at by the poets, or whether it was their purpose to enclose, in forms familiar to the time, a body of secret and mystical instruction. Opinions are divided upon the point; but, whatever the conclusion come to, it does not affect the practical consequences with which we have to deal. These in either case were the same. The severe gravity and respect, if not even the reverence, of the older ideas vanished. (Behind the stories of the gods the mind no longer beheld natural phenomena by which it was interested or awed, but frivolous incidents in the life of real divinities fitted only to bring down the actors

in them to the level of a low humanity, or even to make them objects of contempt./

It was thus, however, that the whole Olympic system sprang into being: and what a system it was! It may have been full of inconsistencies and contradictions. In one part of Hellenic territory many of its details may have been different from what they were in another. It may have been modified in one place by special tradition, in another by foreign influences which were limited in their range, in a third by local predilection for some particular divinity. But in its great outlines it was everywhere the same. The divine world became the counterpart of the human. Olympus was a royal palace, and Zeus the king surrounded by his attendants, among whom were found all the rivalries, jealousies, and intrigues that mark the aspirants to the favour of an earthly monarch. No doubt the gods were stronger or more beautiful than the inhabitants of earth, a finer blood coursed in their veins, and they were nourished by more heavenly food: but they ate and drank and made merry like revellers of earth upon their mountain-top; and when they descended from it to the world below, they were often mistaken for mortal men. Besides this, they were greatly multiplied in number, so that the polytheism which followed the Homeric age became even more marked than before. There were deities of every city, and mountain, and grove, and river. There were deities who presided over every stage of human life from its beginning to its close; over every event, whether of

joy or sorrow, by which our mortal lot is checkered ; over every endowment of the mind and every affection of the heart. And this multiplication of deities went on until, in that city which was the capital of Greece, the centre of her civilisation and learning and art, it was said that it was easier to find a god than a man ; and an altar was even erected—that seen by St Paul when he visited the city—To the unknown God. In this deifying process, too, not only were the higher attributes of humanity transferred to the Greek Pantheon ; its meanest, most sordid, most debased, and most sensual characteristics were equally represented. To this period belongs the great immorality of the gods. They had been much purer at the first ; but as the morals of Greece became loosened, its looser morals were transferred to them, until they lived, and laughed, and quarrelled, and strove, and sinned in the Olympian commonwealth as if they had belonged to the *agora*, or to the purlieu of a Greek city. Yet all of them were presented as beings of that higher sphere in which man was to find the objects of his worship, and lessons for his conduct.

It may, indeed, be alleged, that through this whole motley assemblage of divinities there ran higher views, and that those who occupied the topmost places in the descending scale were conceived of by the poets in a lofty, often in a noble, vein. The character of Zeus, in particular, has been dwelt upon in this point of view ; and his image in marble, by the great sculptor Pheidias, has been appealed to as

a proof that a high tone of religious thought lay under the mass of idle and corrupting legends with which the Greek mythology was stored. It may be so. But whatever traces of monotheism men may suppose that they discover in incidental expressions of the Greek poets, there can be no doubt that polytheism in its most degrading forms was the religion of the people, and that down to the very close of their history it was never otherwise. Poetry and art may to some extent have refined the popular conception of the gods, but they left it unchanged in its essential features. (Philosophy, too, failed to impress upon it its own better thoughts.) It continued to be for centuries what it had become after the days of Homer and Hesiod; and only then, when its foundations had been completely undermined, did it collapse and perish.

It is impossible, however, to pause at the point that we have reached. This very collapse of the religion of ancient Greece has to be more fully accounted for; and several distinct considerations must be kept in view if we would understand either that religion in itself, or the lessons afforded to all other ages by its history. I remark, therefore—

I. That the Greek religion *had no proper idea of God*. Not only was the unity of the Divine Being wholly strange to the Greek mind, it was equally devoid of all worthy conceptions of the Divine attributes. Its gods were for the most part local and limited, bound to a particular district or city or

family. Even when the same name meets us, it would be a mistake to imagine that it always represents the same divinity. The Pallas who protected the Greeks during the Trojan war was not the same Pallas who watched over their enemies. The Artemis of Greece was an altogether different divinity from the Artemis of the Ephesians. There was one Athené at Athens, and another at Sparta. Even Zeus himself, whose name was more widely known and revered than that of any other god, varied in almost every city that paid him honour. There was no conception of a universal ruler, to whom the whole human family was a care. If the Greek passed from one city to another as a friend, he was introduced to new guardians of men whose concern did not extend beyond the narrow limits of the city's rule. If he appeared before it as a foe, he felt that there was no means of warfare so likely to be successful as to bribe by gifts, or to carry off by stealth, the deities of his enemies. But the human mind craves for unity. To reach a unity lying at the bottom of all existence was its problem for ages. To see how the unity perceived by it unfolds itself in all existence is its problem now. No religion which does not satisfy it in this respect can retain its power. In his conception of the attributes of God, the Greek was equally at fault. The mind which craves for unity craves not less for holiness in the object of its adoration. Sinful as man is, he can never be satisfied with the worship of the sinful. Sin is not his true nature, and he knows it. He knows that he is



false to himself when he pays it homage. The simple fact that he can conceive the good, tells him that he *may* reach it; the fact that it is the highest conception he can form, tells him that he *ought* to reach it. How could the religion of Greece survive when its gods were destitute of every moral excellence? when they were little more than deified men, with all the passions of men raging in their bosoms, and producing, in proportion to their superior strength, results more disastrous than are produced on earth by human sin? Let us speak as we will of the bright and sunny side of the Greek religion, it contained within it, even in this respect alone, the seeds of death.

II. The Greek religion *supplied no well-grounded hope of immortality*. From the earliest ages, indeed, it exhibited vague and uncertain traces of a belief that the existence of man did not terminate at death, but too vague and uncertain to exert any real influence upon human hopes or fears. For centuries after the heroic age, these traces become feebler rather than stronger, and nothing can be more dreary than the aspect of the future world set before us in the Homeric poems. Achilles even remarks on one occasion, in the well-known words, that it were better to serve a needy master upon earth than to be lord over all the dead; and such is the spirit of the poems as a whole. The future world was shadowy, indistinct, unsatisfactory, involved in many inconsistencies and contradictions. Nor even at its best had it any connection

with religion, or with the fate of man as man. Heroes might at times be exalted to the skies, but for the common herd there was absolutely no hope. They had to look upon this world as their all. Reward or punishment belonged to a present life alone. Even the rites of sepulture were observed, not so much for the satisfaction of the living as for the repose of souls which had gone to their final resting-place, and which, so long as they were unburied, had no home. The grave was their only home; and men were but as the leaves of the trees, green in spring, but soon scattered by the winds of autumn. Nor was it ever otherwise in Greece, taken as a whole. In the earlier epitaphs there may be occasional reference to a future life, but in the later such references disappear, or give way to the language of scepticism or scorn. To the outward eye the Greek world may often seem cheerful, but within it was "full of melancholy." In the midst of its revels it trembled at the thought of the doom that was awaiting it; despair was at its heart.

It may be alleged that the "Mysteries" supplied the want of which we have been speaking; and there is reason to believe that the Eleusinian, or more particularly the Orphic, mysteries did contain an expression, found nowhere else in Greece, of the hope of immortality. The initiated, while celebrating these rites, seem to have anticipated a happy life to come, and to have learned both to live and die more cheerfully than other men. But the very fact that they were mysteries, and that initiation into them was

limited to a few, is a sufficient proof that they exercised little influence on the popular religion. How could they do so when the man who revealed their secrets was punished with banishment or death?

Nor is there more foundation for the idea that philosophy gradually brought in a better state of things. Even allowing that it accomplished more for the revelation of immortality than it actually did, it was not religion, and it never aimed at taking the place of religion in the popular mind. Practically, the Greek religion did nothing to satisfy the longings of the soul after a better world than the present; and it could not but perish in a grave, the darkness of which it was unable to dispel.

III. The religion of Greece *was a mere consecration of nature, and of man viewed as a being of this world.* In this respect, indeed, it effected much that lends to it a grace and charm unequalled by any other heathen religion. The eye rests with pleasure on the Greek as he traces everywhere around him those well-ordered arrangements, his sense of which expressed itself so powerfully in the very term, *kosmos*, by which he named the world. Nor is it less pleasing to mark in him that estimate of the dignity of man, which, though confined to his own people and leading him to think of all others as "barbarians," stirred him up to the manly part he acted alike in the assembly of the *demos* and in foreign war. But in both cases he looked no further than to the present, the visible, and the sensible. He never rose to the

thought of a spirit in man, constituting the deepest element of man's nature, and longing to be set free from limitation, imperfection, and sin. Of sin indeed, in any proper acceptation of the word, he had no sense at all. Everything both in man and nature was divine; everything both within and without the heart was in itself good—it became bad only by excess. ✓ Hence, in humanising his divinities, he did not so much elevate the idea of humanity as debase the idea of divinity. The higher world was brought down to the level of the lower; and human nature being honoured on its earthward as well as on its heavenward side, he could hardly think that what did not dishonour the man dishonoured the god.

The effect which may be anticipated followed. If men are to take nature as the only guide of life; if they are to disown the fact, however mysterious, of sin; if all that is natural is lawful, provided only we keep within such bounds as experience suggests,—it is not difficult to foresee that the obligations of a high morality will soon be cast aside. Never had the thought of the natural dignity of man and of the sacredness of all human feelings a fairer opportunity ✓ of showing what they can do for humanity than they had in Greece. The result was disastrous, humiliating, and melancholy failure. A corruption was nourished in the Greek world which gradually sapped the foundations of its life.

• Nor was art able to correct the evil. There can be ✓ little doubt that the perfection of art in Greece is to be largely traced to those conceptions of the digni-

fied and beautiful in man with which the Greek mind was filled. But whether it be so or not, no one will deny that whatever art can do for the refinement and culture of a people, it did there. Probably every one of the 21,000 free inhabitants of Athens was himself, if not an actual artist, an intelligent admirer, a skilled critic, an enthusiastic devotee, of art. He did not stand before a painting or a statue, gazing at it with the empty stare of most visitors of a modern gallery. Art was his life, his discipline, his joy. I cannot help thinking that the words of the Acts of the Apostles, which tell us that "all the Athenians and the strangers sojourning there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing,"<sup>1</sup> have no reference to ordinary gossip, but to the last important event, the last debate, the last book, the last work of art. Men did not only applaud, they revered and worshipped, him who embodied in words, in colour, or in stone, those ideas of the perfectly beautiful in which they floated like birds in the sunlight. All that art can do—more perhaps than it will ever do elsewhere—it did in Greece.

But what did it do? Art is not religion; and an admiration of the beautiful is no security for the love of the pure, the virtuous, and the true. On the contrary, experience teaches that, although the beautiful in spirit always elevates, the merely beautiful in form may, and apart from the spirit does inevitably, tend to degrade and sensualise. Beautiful scenery has

<sup>1</sup> Acts xvii. 21.

never by itself refined those who dwell in the midst of it. Beautiful sights or sounds, when they appeal only to the eye or to the ear, are equally powerless; nay, they often only strengthen the sensuous tendencies of our nature. It may be difficult to say why it should be so, but so it is. Probably it is because the art which lives upon material or even intellectual beauty, does not and cannot include within it a full expression of the spiritual, the Divine, in man. Only a Divine power can adequately express the Divine; and in struggling to give artistic expression to divinity, art must to a certain extent lower it. What we need to elevate us must be able to appeal to our deepest or our highest nature. (It must therefore be something that cannot be comprehended either in space or time—that cannot be exhausted by the loftiest effort of the human imagination.) It must be something able to come out in ever new strength, in ever fresh forms, as the world goes on or we go on, so that it shall not be a mere well, but “a springing fountain of water, unto eternal life.” Thus we need more than art. We need the unlimited, the spiritual, the everlasting. In other words, it is only when, in addition to an art above the world, there is a mind above the world to interpret it, that art can educate us for that kingdom of God which is above the world. Even Christian art in its most spiritual forms will fail to do so, unless we are ourselves able to impart to it the power by which it may react on us. Thus, because in Greece there was no spiritual religion to elevate art, art limited religion and the spiritual along with

it ; and religion, which can live only in the spiritual, languished and expired.

IV. The religion of ancient Greece *made no proper provision for the problems of life and of the world.* Had human life been always a holiday—could men have continued to be always children, as they were in the earliest period of Greek history, with no dark problems to solve, and no trials to disturb their peace—all might have been well. But this could not be. Men could not long be children ; life could not long be a holiday. From the first, problems must have presented themselves which required solution ; there must have been difficulties, and trials, and sorrows to deepen thought, to make men pause, and to lead them to ask the meaning of those darker experiences by which they were constantly overtaken. If this must have been the case even in the heroic age, much more must it have been the case in the more trying times that followed. In point of fact we know that it was so. Five centuries before Christ there came the great convulsion of the Persian war, —a contest even greater in its results than that of the Maccabees in Judea, or of the Waldenses amidst the hills and valleys of Piedmont, or of the Covenanters in the glens and on the moors of Scotland. If the men who fought the battles and achieved the victories of that memorable time, the men who were fired by the recollections of Marathon and Salamis, had been children before, they could be no longer children. From that hour Greek feeling deepened,

Greek life became more real and earnest, and the short space of half a century witnessed an outburst of mental vigour in almost every department of human thought, which made that period not only the most blooming in Grecian history, but one without a parallel in the history of the world. How, then, did Greek religion stand the change? The only answer is, that it utterly and miserably failed. Its want of all traces of a true theology, its puerilities, its inability to throw light upon the problems of life, its mocking silence when questioned by the serious mind, not only showed its impotence, but created a gulf between it and the deepest thoughts of man which told that its day was passing. The drama arose,—that splendid drama which, in its three greatest representatives—Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides—taught lessons that, for expressive and tragic power, for penetration into the strange perplexities of human destiny, and for the intensity of its aim to “harmonise the sadness of the universe,” remains, and will probably always remain, an unequalled monument of human genius. We have not, however, to deal here with the drama in itself. The inquiry that concerns us is its relation to religion. Now we are not to imagine that the dramatists rejected the popular theology. They used the ancient legends of the gods, and they could not have accomplished their work if they had not. No doubt they modified them under the influence of a stronger ethical feeling than had pervaded the old epic, and Æschylus was even charged by Plato with impiety



for the extent to which he did so; yet in the main they preserved the existing mythology. No doubt also the dramatists, so far from being intentionally irreligious, were the reverse. They exhibited a stern morality, a noble pathos in contrasting the wretchedness of man upon the one hand with his dignity upon the other; and they traced the Nemesis of Providence in words that must have burned into the heart. But even with this religious spirit in Greek tragedy, that tragedy did not strengthen the foundations of the popular faith. It rather weakened them. It was a proclamation that religion, such as it then was, had not accomplished its mission—that it had not the sterner teaching needed amidst the perplexing scenes of life, and that another teaching was required. Apart, therefore, altogether from the fact that the drama treated the legends of the gods as a vehicle for its lessons rather than as actual facts, and that it thus tended to promote the sceptical spirit at last exhibited in Euripides, it was never in Greece the handmaid of the popular religion. It became rather a substitute for religion; and when those who had entered into its spirit turned from it to the popular mythology, they could not fail to look upon the latter as an empty trifling with great subjects.

Perhaps it may be said that all this was of no moment if the drama came to take the place of religion, or even proved itself better than religion. But it could do neither. It could not take the place of religion; for the Greek people felt, as men have everywhere felt, that they needed a religion standing in

its own strength, and independent of all else. They clung, therefore, to the religion handed down to them by their poets, and associated with the glories of their heroic age. Nor could the drama prove itself better than their religion, for it recognised that religion as its basis. It did not deal with human fate only, but with Divine providence. It connected itself closely with the beings of another world, and made no claim to be a philosophy of life drawn from earthly considerations alone, and designed to expel religious convictions altogether. Its real effect was, therefore, to lead to the breaking up of religion, and to hasten that educative process by which men were to be taught that they needed a higher revelation as to the being and the will of God.

V. The Greek religion *was unable to reconcile itself with the progress of philosophy.* We have seen that the drama, in turning to the serious problems of human life, became a powerful factor in breaking up the ancient religion of Greece. A similar effect was produced by the progress of thought upon those questions of our relations to God and to the world which have always occupied, and must always occupy, the first place in human speculation. Men cannot confine themselves to the things immediately around them. They cannot rest without at least endeavouring to pierce the veil which hangs between the visible and the invisible, between this world and a world lying beyond and above it. They instinctively feel that the position of Agnosticism is the refuge of

despair, and they cannot willingly abdicate the highest functions of their nature. It was so in Greece. As society advanced, it was inevitable that thought should be directed both to the deepest questions of the soul, and to the ability of the popular religion to accept the answers of reverent inquiry. But that religion had in it no element of growth. It had become fixed by poetry and art. Its priests and teachers had no share in the best culture of the day, no interest in the progress of investigation, no spirit of allegiance to that great principle of truth which, even under Christianity itself, is always in advance of the forms that express it and the applications that we make of it. They were mere representatives of the people; placed where they were by the popular vote; with no higher duty than to gratify the popular inclination, to defend the popular ritual, and to guard the popular inheritance.

In the midst of such a system of things thought began to stir. No inquiring mind could rest in the puerile, and not unfrequently revolting, legends of the gods. Doubt necessarily sprang up, to be immediately followed by disbelief. From the very first, accordingly, philosophy took up an attitude antagonistic to religion. It did so even when the philosopher simply pursued his own investigations without directly attacking the popular faith,—as when, *e.g.*, Thales of Miletum, the founder of the Ionic school, and the oldest speculator of whom we know anything, in the seventh and sixth centuries B.C., stripped the Homeric Oceanus of his personality, and repre-

sented water as simply the element out of which all things were produced ; or as when Heraclitus of Ephesus, at the close of the sixth century B.C., represented Zeus as the all-pervading reason of the world. But it was still more the case when, with the advance of knowledge, the deities of Greece became themselves the subject of philosophical analysis, and when the myths were criticised in the light of purer and more elevated ideas. Philosophy could then do nothing else but treat with scorn and indignation the mythology which it summoned to the bar of reason. Both Pythagoras and Heraclitus, it is said, declared that Homer ought to be publicly thrust from the assembly and scourged. Xenophanes of Colophon, born 522 B.C., condemned anthropomorphism and polytheism, and charged Homer and Hesiod with ascribing to the gods conduct by which men would be disgraced. Plato would have banished both these poets from his model State, because of the corrupting influence which they exercised upon the minds of the young. Even the honest inquiries of most of the philosophers themselves had no religious interest: their aims were purely scientific; and it was inevitable that, as science advanced, religion, which could find no room for it, should decline.

The whole tendency of Greek philosophy was thus to undermine the popular religion; and the breach between the two continually widened. The former might, indeed, at times encourage the latter; and it

2.  
Anaxagoras

was even a saying of Pythagoras that man was at his best when he visited the temples of the gods. But its speculative system was deeper and more powerful than its tokens of outward respect; and with its reverence for the gods, or even belief in their existence as they were delineated by poetry and art, was wholly incompatible. The people, on their part, met the attitude of philosophy with hatred and persecution. Anaxagoras and Diogenes had to flee for their lives. Protagoras was banished, and his books were burned. Prodicus was put to death. Aristotle had to become a fugitive from Athens, and the fate of Socrates remains an eternal stain upon the memory alike of the populace and of the judges of that city. Yet philosophy could not fail to make progress even at the expense of religion. When a religion cannot embrace scientific truth and ethical ideas in all their developments, its doom is certain. Progress in these departments cannot long be confined to a few. It must gradually penetrate the mass, and that, too, with a power as irresistible as is the light of the sun when he mounts up into the sky, or the breath of spring when it comes with the revolving year. The darkness of night, the snows of winter, must flee before them. Philosophy acted on Greek religion like the drama, and tended to destroy, not to save it.

It has been said by an eloquent writer of the day,<sup>1</sup> that what concerns us at the present time is to learn how to face the problems of the world with Greek serenity. If we have nothing more to face them with,

<sup>1</sup> Symonds, 'The Greek Poets,' 2d series, p. 381.

we shall sink before them as Greece did. The great question is, Where is that Divine life to be found which faces all problems without sinking? Is it to be found in nature or in Christ? Greece answers that question. She sought it and found it in nature; and she perished. The search for the Divine in nature alone led to self-abasement; and

“Self-abasement paved the way  
To villain bonds and despot sway.”

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# ST GILES' LECTURES.

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*SECOND SERIES—THE FAITHS OF THE WORLD.*

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*LECTURE VII.*

RELIGION OF ANCIENT ROME.

By the Rev. JAMES MACGREGOR, D.D., Senior Minister of  
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IN dealing with so very large a subject as the Religion of Ancient Rome, I shall probably best use the short space at my disposal if, with as little comment as possible, I endeavour to set before you what the Romans believed and how they worshipped.

It was the deliberate opinion of their own greatest intellects, that they were the most religious people of their time, and that of all the forces which contributed to their greatness, and which helped them to the mastery of the world, religion was the first. History so far confirms their verdict, and adds, that when they ceased to be religious they ceased to be great.

Twenty-six centuries ago the foundations of Rome were laid with religious ceremonies and by religious men. It is an evidence of the strength of the adoring principle in human nature, that to the influence which it still exerts as the headquarters of the most perfect of all religious organisations, it mainly owes its unrivalled position among the cities of the world. We never utter the word *religion*, which by common consent is universally employed as most accurately descriptive of the relations which bind man to God, without bearing unconscious evidence to the powerful influence which their religion exerted, not only on the ancient Romans, but on all after-times.

The Roman religion was to a great extent a product of native Italian growth, and was coloured by the modes of life and thought which prevailed among the people whose spiritual conceptions it expressed. From the beginning they seem to have been a staid, sober, practical people, not much given to speculation, or to minute inquiry into the nature of their gods, whom all through their history they approached in set forms of worship, and for practical and definite ends. They had little or no creative power. There is hardly a trace among them of that legendary lore in which the other great branches of the Aryan family were so rich: the Greeks, for instance, and our own Celtic and Saxon forefathers. It was a high compensation that their religion was more spiritual than that of the Greeks, whose love for form, and for embodying their conceptions in form, inevitably led them to humanise their deities, and to regard them



as merely colossal and not very exemplary men. The gods of the Romans seem all through to have floated in a finer ether, and to have breathed a purer air. Their relations to men were of a more spiritual kind. They seldom came to earth in person, or deigned to enter into personal converse with men. Their voice was heard in the winds and the waters, in the roll of the thunder, and in the roar of tempestuous nights. They spoke to man by signs and wonders; in the entrails of animals and in the flight of birds; in earthquake, lightning, and eclipse; in the mysterious moan of the windy forest; and in the hollow echo of the vaulted cave,—but rarely face to face as a man speaketh with his friend.

At the very foundation of their religion there lay two profound ideas rooted deep in every sound-hearted nature—that the spirit of man is in close and conscious relationship with the Spirit of God, and that underneath all phenomena there lies a supernatural element. The deeply reverent nature of the Roman, seeing God first in himself, came to see God in everything. The whole external universe was to him but the manifestation of the divine. While an immense Pantheon of Roman gods opens up to our view, the religion at the bottom was not improbably monotheistic. But as the thought of one all-governing mind, taking cognisance of every thought and action, was too fine and spiritual a conception for his orderly and practical nature, he who knew so well the value of organisation introduced that principle into the domain of the gods; and, instead of placing all

the vast and varied departments of nature and of human affairs under the superintendence of the One Supreme, he felt it more business-like to assign separate departments to separate attributes, or aspects of the Deity; and thus applied to heaven that principle of the division of labour which he found so useful and necessary on earth. He therefore arranged the domain of the spiritual and unseen as he arranged his domestic and State affairs, assigning the higher departments to the greater gods, and the less important to those of lower rank, until every portion of the vast realm of nature—sun and moon and stars, rivers and hills, trees and flowers, birds and beasts; every department of human labour—buying and selling, sowing and reaping; every stage of human life—birth, marriage, death,—each and all had their own presiding deities. In the same way, the varying conditions of the human body, and the different affections of the human mind—health and sickness, joy and sorrow, faith and love, hope and fear, virtue and vice—were elevated into so many distinct objects of worship. There was a god of thieves; there was a god of drains and of evil smells. When we read of deities who had one special function to perform, and who are never heard of in any other relation—such as the god Vaticanus, who impelled the child to its first cry, and the god Fabulinus, who taught it to lisp its first word—we can hardly doubt that these were regarded not as separate and distinct personalities, but simply as the various attitudes or relations which the Deity bears to the creatures he has made. We can quite

understand how, with such views, the Roman had no more difficulty in effecting changes in his Pantheon than in his home or State arrangements, displacing one god for another more in favour or in fashion at the time, or admitting new deities from other lands with the same ease with which he admitted their merchandise to his markets. While he certainly seems to have endowed each separate individual of his multitudinous deities with a sort of vague personality, it is in the highest degree probable that they were to him no more than attributes, or, at the highest, representatives or vicegerents of that one supreme and absolute Being who was to him the unknown and the unknowable One. There are many indications that such was the case. One is the common use of the word *numen*, to describe not so much any distinct or personal being as Divinity in the abstract. Another is the strange and significant formula with which, on great occasions, the officiating priest addressed the Deity: "Sive mas, sive femina, si deus, si dea: quisquis es; sive quo alio nomine fas est appellare." "Be thou god or goddess, man or woman: whoever thou art; or by whatever name it is right to call thee." At the foot of the Palatine there stands an altar of travertine, dedicated to the unknown God, on which this ancient inscription can still be read—"Sei deo sei deivæ sacrum."

It was prophetic of the social qualities and of the sober virtues which were to characterise the greatest people of the ancient world—of that reverence for the domestic relationship and for the purity of domestic

life on which, as its one solid basis, national greatness must ever rest—that the earliest, the most persistent and lasting of all the forms of their religion, was the worship of the spirits of their dead, and that the oldest of their deities, the mother-god of Rome, was the goddess of the hearth. What was it, and how did it arise? Of the earliest peopling of Italy we have no knowledge whatever. As far back as trustworthy information goes, we find the Italian branch of the great Aryan family already inhabiting the middle part of the beautiful peninsula, and isolated by sea and mountain from the rest of the world. Language would seem to indicate, that before the Græco-Italian stock broke off from the parent stem, they were so far acquainted with the cultivation of the soil, and had united the agricultural to the pastoral life. The movable tent of the wandering shepherd had already given place to the fixed hearth—the sacred shrine of the husbandman. If we could enter one of those ancient Roman dwellings we should see a rude central chamber called the *atrium*, which served as the family kitchen and dining-room. In this chamber was the *focus* or hearth, and by the hearth, or forming part of it, an altar, on which burned night and day the sacred fire. The last duty at night was to cover it up, the first duty in the morning to feed its holy flame. It was extinguished only once a-year, on the 1st of March, and immediately rekindled by rubbing pieces of dry wood together, or by concentrating the rays of the sun. That sacred fire, with the ideas which gathered round it, lay at the root of the political

institutions and the moral greatness and strength of Rome. If we look a little way beyond the house, but as near as sanitary considerations will permit, we see another noticeable object which may help us to understand what that fire signified. It is the family tomb, in which the members of the household were successively laid, and where at stated seasons the living gathered not only to honour, but to entertain and to feast, the dead. Among the primitive Romans, as through every branch of that great Aryan family from whom they and we have sprung, we find a firm and settled belief in an existence after death. The thought of extinction was with them not only an abhorrence, it was an impossibility. When they contemplated that last and greatest of all earthly mysteries, the awful and everlasting mystery of death, they had the same unconquerable difficulty which we have in believing that their beloved dead were dead for evermore. In their simple way they fancied that, along with the dead body, the living soul was laid in the grave, and that the abode of the one was the home of the other. Hence the dead were conceived to be in need of nourishment; a belief which prevails among the Red Indians of to-day, one of whose most sacred duties is to visit at least once a-year the burial-place of the dead, and place food and drink within their reach. In the depth of the severest winter an Indian will travel hundreds of miles to perform this office of filial piety. Hence also arose the need of the rites of sepulture, the neglect of which, as entailing eternal restlessness,

was the greatest calamity which the living could inflict upon the dead. From the conviction that the departed were living, it was a short and easy step for a primitive people to believe that they were in a sense divine; and thus, as the laws of Manou declare, the first gods whom the Aryans worshipped were the spirits of the dead, and their first altar and temple were the grave. The forefathers of the Greek and Roman people carried that faith with them in all their wanderings, till it took root in the beautiful lands where they permanently settled and lived on through all their social and political changes, till paganism was swept away. "Let the rights of the deities of the dead," said Cicero, "be considered sacred; let those who pass into the world of souls be considered as deified." It was these Manes, or spirits of the dead, who had been duly set free from bondage by religious ceremonies, and who, like the elves of our own land, hovered round the homes which they had once inhabited, whom the ancient Romans worshipped under the emblem of the sacred and ever-living fire. There was an important class of beings peculiar to their religion, the Lares and Penates, who were probably these Manes under a later name. They were the domestic deities, the tutelary guardians of private and domestic life. They expressed the inborn reverence of the Roman for the sanctities of marriage, of the nuptial bed, of the birth of children, and of all domestic relationships. Each household had its own Lares, each man his own guardian angel, who, as the *genius natalis*, was worshipped by him on his

natal day as the fruitful author of life and all its joys. Our English word "genial" has wandered only a little way from its original meaning of exuberant and generous fertility. So closely connected were these deities with the sacred fire, that in later times their names became interchangeable. It was essentially a domestic worship, at which no stranger was allowed to be present. As the gods of the household were its own departed members, they could be the gods of no other family. The house was the only temple, the hearth the only altar, the family the only worshippers, and, throughout the whole period of Roman history, in the highest sense of the term, the father the only priest. It was this ancient principle that the father was the priest of the family, with whose rights to prescribe and to practise the worship of the household no one could interfere, which inseparably associated in the later Roman mind the idea of the Cæsar as at once Pontifex Maximus and Imperator, the high priest and the father of the State. It was this same principle which lent such vast importance to the conversion of Constantine, and made it so powerful a factor in completing the victory of Christianity. Around that family altar the ancient Romans gathered for morning and evening worship: there incense and sacrifice were offered; there libations were made; there prayers were said before and after every meal, a part of which was duly burned as the allotted portion of the Deity. He and they, so to speak, took their meals together, and every repast became an act of worship. This simple faith seems thus to have

sanctified every stage of human existence, every act and event of domestic life. It consecrated the mystery of birth as introducing the little child into a living and everlasting connection with his father's gods. It made marriage the most solemn of all religious rites, by withdrawing the woman from the worship and protection of the gods of the family of her father, and placing her under the guardianship of the gods of the family of her husband. The oldest and the most solemn of the Roman marriage-rites was that known as the *confarreatio*. When the young bride, crowned and veiled, was led to the house of her husband, the marriage-rite was performed by the contracting parties, in the presence of witnesses, and before the father as priest, offering *far* or grain at the family hearth, and eating together a cake of flour. Not only did his people become her people, but his gods her gods, and his hearth henceforth her only shrine. It was this profoundly religious element, underlying the whole domestic system, which gave to marriage that sanctity which it preserved for ages among the Romans, and which formed one of the principal factors of their national strength. It made the conjugal tie the strongest, the holiest, and the most permanent of all earthly unions. It dignified the domestic virtues with the character and the name of piety. It made second marriages unpopular, adultery rare, divorce difficult, and polygamy impossible. It was a system, too, which bound by the closest tie the living and the dead, the human and the divine. Thus over all the relations of life—over birth and



death, over all the activities and sufferings which lay between, as well as all the hopes which lay beyond—there was thrown, from time immemorial, the mantle of religion, the sanctity of the presiding family gods.

Out of this strong, ancient, and far-spreading root of domestic piety, the powerful *physique* and the healthy mental and moral nature of the Roman grew: out of it his religious, civil, and political institutions took their rise, their shape and form. The family was the basis of the city, and the city the basis of the State, which, in its fundamental conception, was merely one large family or aggregation of families. It naturally followed that the State, too, should have its tutelary deities, its Lares *præstites*, and its Penates *publici*, its sacred hearth and fire, identified in the goddess Vesta or Ἑστία. No visitor to Rome will forget those three columns in the Forum, of Parian marble and of exquisite proportion, which are all that now remain of the temple of Castor and Pollux, who are supposed to have been the *Penates populi Romani*. Close by these columns is the spot which beheld the first beginnings of historic Rome. When dim tradition gives place to something like authentic history, when the Latin people of the Palatine and the Sabine people of the Quirinal, united into one, have formed the Roman State, we find standing there a circular temple or rotunda with its sacred grove climbing up the slopes of the Palatine. There too, and forming part of it, was the Regia, the dwelling, first of the king as the high priest, and afterwards of the sovereign Pontiff

and the Vestal virgins. It was the most sacred spot of the city, the common heart and hearth of Rome. There burned the sacred everlasting fire, the symbol of the life, the purity, and the strength of the nation, whose extinction, from whatever cause, was regarded as a great national calamity. To keep that pure flame burning night and day, and the shrine around it spotlessly clean; to offer the necessary sacrifices to the mother-god; to guard the sacred relics which were preserved within the temple, especially that most precious possession of the Roman people, the pledge of their permanent supremacy, the *fatale pignus imperii*, the Palladium of Troy,—there was established a peculiar priesthood, which, for purity, dignity, and sacredness, held the first place among the religious orders of Rome. It was that of the Vestal virgins, six in number, chosen by the sovereign Pontiff from maidens of the highest patrician rank between the ages of six and ten, perfectly sound in body and in mind, born of free parents who were then alive, whose dwelling was in Italy, and who had been married according to the most ancient rite of *confarreatio*. After taking the vow of chastity and consecration, they were solemnly conducted by the Pontiff to the temple. Their period of service was for not less than thirty years, ten of which were spent in learning the duties of their office, ten in performing them, and ten in teaching them to others. Clad in simple attire, with short-cut hair, scrupulously modest in their deportment and chaste in their life, they spent these thirty consecrated and laborious years within the

precincts of the temple. Though they were then free to return to the duties of civil life, and even to marry, such was the reverence of the people for their chastity, that such marriages were strongly condemned by public opinion, and were rarely contracted. So exalted, indeed, was the popular conception of their purity, that while they pitilessly punished the violation of the vow of chastity by scourging the man to death and burying the Vestal alive, as a compensation for this righteous severity they attached to the office the highest possible honour and distinction. The Vestals took a prominent part in all high religious festivals: magistrates of the highest rank made way for them on the street: if they chanced to pass a criminal on his way to execution, he was instantly released: in the public games they occupied the seat of honour next to the emperor: within the sacred precincts of their dwelling no foot could enter but that of the sovereign Pontiff. That Vestal worship of the sacred fire, the emblem and the guardian of the purity of the home and the piety of the nation—which had its origin, as we have seen, in the deification of the spirits of the dead—continued through a thousand years as the most distinctly national form of Roman worship, and was the last to yield to the triumphant progress of Christianity. Even then it was not destroyed, but only transformed, passing from the Lares and Penates of the pagan to the tutelary saints and guardian angels of the Christian Church.

Along with this primitive and specially character-

istic form of religion, which had its origin in the contemplation of the mystery of his own being, there was another common to the Roman and to the race from which he sprang, which had its origin in the contemplation of the mystery of the world in which he found himself. (From the thought of a spirit within himself, he early rose to the higher conception of a universal spirit in nature. / As that part of nature which ever has been and ever will be most impressive to the imagination of man for beauty, grandeur, and stability, is the great vault of heaven, the race-course of the clouds, the battle-ground of storm and thunder, the source of light and darkness, the home of the life-giving sunshine and rain, it came early to be regarded not merely as the abode of the great Spirit, but as the great Spirit himself, the celestial father, Divus or Diovis pater, Diespiter, Jupiter, the king of heaven. Although in course of time his functions, attributes, and names came, by a process of dissection, to be individualised and elevated into so many independent divinities, still all through, as *optimus maximus*, the highest and the best, he was to the Romans the one living and true God. ✓ While in point of fact there came to be a multitude of Jupiters, who, to all intents and purposes, were separate gods, he was in reality, as Augustine believed, simply the supreme being in his highest functions and attributes, the great author of light and life, the ruler of gods and men. Along with him were associated other divinities who were generally classified according to the departments of nature over which they ruled. They were known,

*e.g.*, as the *superi et inferi*; as the celestial, the terrestrial, and the infernal; as *certi, incerti, et selecti*, &c. Of these the principal were the twelve *Dii majorum gentium*, thus summed up by Ennius:—

Juno, Vesta, Minerva, Ceres, Diana, Venus, Mars,  
Mercurius, Jovis, Neptunus, Vulcanus, Apollo.

They also took the name of *Dii consentes*, as forming the supreme council of state for universe affairs. It will be seen that, as in all religions founded on naturalism, the principle of sex obtains, and that these highest gods are equally divided between male and female. If the all-embracing and kindly heavens were deified in Jupiter, their most splendid and beneficent occupant the sun, was deified in a god peculiar to Italy. This was the double-faced Janus (Dianus, the masculine of Jana = Diana or the moon goddess), looking eastward and westward, the opener and the closer of the day, the beginning and the end of all created things. He was worshipped every morning as Matutinus Pater, the father of the Dawn: the first or opening month of the year was sacred to him, and still bears his name. The gates of his temple, ever open during war as the refuge and sanctuary of the struggling people, were, when universal peace prevailed, shut to retain the blessing. There were no gods older or more essentially Italian than Janus and Vesta: as Vesta closed so Janus opened every catalogue and list of the gods. The one was usually invoked at the beginning and the other at the end of acts of worship and of sacrifice. As Jupiter was the king, so Juno or Jovino (the feminine of Jovis) was

the queen of heaven, the supreme being on the female side, the goddess of woman, her protector through every stage of life, and especially as *Pro-nuba*, the patroness of marriage, and the jealous guardian of its purity. The month of June, which bears her name, is still the favourite marrying month. In her great annual festival, the *Matronalia*, which took place on the 1st of March, the original Roman New-Year's Day, no woman of blemished character was allowed to take any part.

- ▷ Another purely Italian god of high antiquity, and ranking next in honour to great Jove himself, was Father Mars, Mavors, or Marspiter, the divine progenitor of the Roman people, and the personification of their warlike propensities. Originally the god of agriculture and the spring-time, with its new and exuberant life, he gave the name which it still retains to March, the first month of the ancient Roman year. War, which, next to agriculture, became their principal occupation, came early under his protection; and as *Gradivus*, whose step they heard before them in the battle-field, and whose shield and lance were preserved within the *Regia*, he led them on to a thousand victories. It was his name that was invoked before resolving on a campaign: it was to his shrine that the commander-in-chief repaired, and cried, "Mars, vigila!"—Mars, awake!—it was to him that sacrifices were offered and prayers were made, amid the dead and the dying, when the bloody field was won. If the *spolia opima* went to Jupiter, the spoils next in importance went to Mars.

Minerva, whose name is supposed to bear some relation to *mens* (mind), was a virgin goddess of Italian origin, the personification of intelligence, and, as such, the perpetual President of the Senate, the patroness of the useful and ornamental arts, and of science and scholarship in general. She must have been especially dear to schoolboys, as during her festival of five days in March all schools were closed, and books laid aside. Bearing a strong resemblance to the Παλλὰς Ἀθήνη of the Greeks, she gradually assumed her attributes and became confounded with that deity. Along with Juno she became the inseparable companion of Jupiter Optimus Maximus, in the great temple erected on the Capitol, B.C. 507. These three deities, the personification of power, wisdom, and purity, continued to be the great triad of the Capitol, the supreme guardians of the Roman State, until, in its pagan form, it ceased to be. Those now mentioned may be considered as the most prominent and most permanent occupants of the Roman Pantheon. Peculiar to the Romans, though corresponding somewhat to the Greek heroes, were a set of demigods known as *Semones* (semihomines, half men) and *Dii indigetes*, who were simply men indigenous to the soil, and who, as a mark of their eminent services, were raised to the rank of deities. Their notions of the under world were vague in the extreme. Its arrangements and government belonged to Orcus or Dispater: Nænia was the god of the death-wail: Viduus separated the body from the soul: Orcus gave the dying the fatal stroke, and

conducted the soul to the shades below. The rich mythology which Greece gathered around the dark realm was, until later times, quite unknown to Rome.

In its earlier and purer days its gods were comparatively few in number, and, with vague and ill-defined attributes, were little better than abstractions. But as time wore on, and national life expanded, and intercourse with other nations increased, this early simplicity died away. It was contact with Greece, with its sharper and more anthropomorphic conceptions, which exerted the most fatal influence on the original purity of Roman faith. The legends and fables of an ample mythology, the influences of a rich literature and drama, and of a profound philosophy, made silent but steady progress among a people who had no legends, nor literature, nor philosophy of their own. The attributes of the Greek gods were easily transferred to those of Rome, until their original character entirely disappeared. Although it was long before his worship took firm root, Apollo the healer and saviour became a thoroughly Roman deity. Venus and her voluptuousness; Diana in her triple personality as Luna in heaven, Diana on earth, and Proserpina or Hecate in hell; Ceres, the goddess of corn, who came from Sicily, and attained to very high importance; Dionysus and Persephone, under the names of Liber and Libera; Neptunus, the ruler of the sea,—all these were deities whose character and functions were transported from Greece, and engrafted upon original Latin stems. Towards the end of the



Republic, another and greater change for the worse came over the Roman religion. There is abundant evidence that the old faith had begun to lose its hold alike upon the higher intellects and upon the popular mind. Scepticism and indifference must have deeply permeated all classes of society, before the ancient gods could have been safely laughed at on the stage. But the surest index of decay was the introduction on a vast scale of the strange gods of the East. It could not be laid to the charge of the old gods that they had not done their duty by the State. For it was when the world was at its feet that the great republic fell, and fell because ancient patriotism had gone with ancient piety, burying in its ruins the last remains of both. In the weariness of spirit, in the sickness of heart begotten of that bloody time, men sought relief in a blank atheism on the one hand, and in a feverish quest of strange gods and strange rites on the other. Nor could it be said that there was not enough of gods already, for it was a common saying that there were more gods in Rome than men, and more idols than worshippers. Rooted in polytheism lies the tendency to an indefinite multiplication of deities. In man-made religions, fashion changes as it does in other things. During any great public calamity, such as pestilence or civil war, which their own gods seemed unable or unwilling to avert, it was natural that men should try the effect of an application to strange gods, who, in addition to having denied them fewer requests, had all the charm which attaches to the new and the strange. As early as 186 B.C., the foul abominations

in connection with Bacchanalianism had spread to such an extent, that more than 7000 persons, and among them ladies of the highest rank, were found to have taken part in them, the half of whom had to be put to death before the system was suppressed. But the evil grew apace. The people, tired of their own gods, transferred their affections to those of Egypt and of Asia. The Phrygian Cybele had been followed by the Egyptian Isis, whose mysterious rites seem to have had an irresistible charm; and later on by the dog-headed Anubis, and the great sun-god Serapis. Belus came from Babylon, and Mithras from Persia. The East poured in its mongrel deities in such hordes, that the poet represents Mercury as at his wits' end to know where to place them. As early as the reign of Augustus even Jehovah found a place in the Roman Pantheon, and Jewish rites were practised side by side with the abominations of obscene deities. The lifelong attempt of Augustus to restore the ancient faith to something like its pristine purity, arrested for a while the process of decay. But when the highest gods of the State came to be the departed spirits of monsters like Tiberius, Caligula, and Nero, it was evident that the end was not very far away.

From the faith let us pass to the worship and its ministers. To an extent almost incredible, and which was certainly not exceeded by any ancient people that we know of, with the exception of the Jews, worship entered into every act of a Roman's life—private, domestic, social, and public. In the case of

both peoples the sacred and the civil were inseparably combined: religion and politics went hand in hand: the Church and the State were one. To an extent which Judaism did not surpass, it was a worship of burdensome rites and ceremonies,—a worship of the letter, and not of the spirit. It was essentially a formal official act due at once to God and to the State, whose object was to secure some substantial public or private benefit, and whose virtue lay in its strict performance according to appointed rule, and not in any inward emotion or discipline or disposition of soul. What he believed and how he felt was with the Roman a matter of small concern compared with how he worshipped. It was the ceremony itself, and not the spirit which prompted it, which he conceived to have power with God. The thought of communion between the human spirit and the divine is a Christian conception, which probably never entered the Roman mind. In all acts of worship prayer held a prominent place; without it no religious observance whatever could be of any avail. Yet it seems rarely, if ever, to have taken the form of supplication for spiritual or moral blessing. That vast sphere of Christian petition was quite a blank. It was customary for the person engaged in prayer to cover his ears, and when offering sacrifice to cover his whole head with his robe, not so much to express reverence or to prevent distraction, as to insure that no word or sight of evil omen could possibly reach him. He expressed his *adoration*, as the word testifies, by raising his right hand to his mouth and kiss-

ing it.—(Job xxxi. 27.) After turning once completely round to the right, in imitation of the revolving world, he stood with his face to the east, raising his hands up if his prayer was to the gods above; if to the gods below, he knelt down and touched the earth with his hands. But the one essential thing in prayer was the correct repetition, in a clear and distinct voice, of the prescribed formula as it was preserved from ancient times in the books of ritual, known as the Index-books or Indigitamenta, in which were contained the lists of the gods, with their appropriate titles. Each god had his own mode of worship definitely fixed, and his own formula of prayer hallowed by the use of ages. The change of a single syllable, the omission or wrong pronunciation of a single word, was a dishonour to the deity, and rendered the service worse than worthless. This rigid adherence to ancient and traditional forms was characteristic of the orderly and law-abiding Romans, and was one of the many legacies which they left to their Christian successors: the value attached to frequent repetitions of the same prayer was another. So important was this accuracy in the use of words, that it was usual on solemn occasions for a functionary to stand by with an open book, and watch that no word was omitted or misplaced, in which case the service must be resumed from the beginning. An invocation to the gods generally, or taken in the lump, "*Deos confuse*," or "*generaliter invocare*," was the usual ending of prayer.

It was due more to religious purity than to want

of artistic power that in the earlier Roman worship God was adored under no outward form or semblance whatever ; and, instead of temples made with hands, in His own great natural shrines, amid the mysterious gloom of mighty forests, on the smoky mountain-tops, in the cave on the hillside where the full-bodied stream was born, or by the fountain in the hollow bubbling up among the flowers. Even as late as Numa the Roman disdained the use of any material structures or architectural display in the worship of God: with the open air for his canopy, and a rude turf bench for his altar, he offered his simple sacrifice. Though this simplicity soon passed away, and temples were reared and images employed, they came not from within but from without, as part of that Hellenic influence which began under the Tarquins, and of which Cicero spoke as pouring into Rome not in a tiny rivulet, but in a broad and overpowering stream.

Sacrifice, bloody and unbloody, formed an important element of worship. On all great public occasions, such as the taking of the census or the commencement of a campaign, and on important private occasions, such as marriage, it was of the former kind. The regulations for its due performance, whether as an act of thanksgiving or of propitiation and expiation, or as a mode of ascertaining the divine will, were so numerous and minute, that to acquire a knowledge of them formed no inconsiderable part of the education of a priest. Each god had his own animal as the *victima* or *hostia*, the

goddesses usually preferring females—those offered to the celestial gods being generally white, and sacrificed by day, while those offered to the infernal gods were very properly black, and were sacrificed by night. In selecting the proper animal, which must be free from spot or blemish, the points were as numerous and as carefully considered as in the selection of a bull for a Spanish bull-fight, or of the prize ox at a modern cattle-show. There were special breeds as famous for the Roman as for the Spanish purpose. One animal, as a rule, sufficed; but not infrequently the number far exceeded that—a common sacrifice, known by the comprehensive name of *suovetaurilia*, being a sow, a sheep, and a bull, which, before being slaughtered, were led three times round the persons or objects for which expiation was made. The persons sacrificing, along with the priest and his assistants, after bathing in running water, appeared, as a symbol of purity, in clean white garments before the altar, which always stood in the open air in front of the principal entrance to the temple, and so near that the image of the god whose nostrils were to be regaled by the smell was blackened by the smoke. The behaviour of the animal, as, gaily adorned with ribbons, it was led to or stood before the altar, where it was at once unbound, was eagerly watched, as affording good or evil omens. Flour mixed with salt, called *mola salsa*, was sprinkled over the altar, the knife, and the forehead of the victim, from which a bunch of hair was cut, and, along with wine and incense, cast into the

fire. After prayer by the person sacrificing, the animal, at a sign from the priest, was struck down by the *victimarius*, who then cut or pierced its throat upwards if to the gods above, and downwards if to the gods below. The blood having been sprinkled on the altar, the most momentous part of the proceedings began. This was the minute examination of the entrails by the Haruspex, of whom Cato remarked, probably with justice, that no two of them could look at each other without laughing. If the state of the entrails declared that the omens were favourable, and that the god was appeased, they were sprinkled with wine and incense, and burned upon the altar. If the result were unfavourable, the sacrifice must be renewed, until the god declared himself satisfied.

While Roman religion recognised no priestly caste as a mediator between God and man, and ordained that the father, the magistrate, or the general should offer the prayer and the sacrifice, it was manifestly necessary that for the due observance of so cumbersome a worship, and of so minute and intricate a ritual, there should be a specially educated order of men. In the ancient and admirable institutions ascribed to Numa, the Moses of Roman law and religion, we find various religious bodies or corporations holding a prominent place. Of these the earliest, the most eminent, and lasting—for it not only lingered on till the latest days of paganism, but, under certain modifications, it still survives as the most illustrious corporation on earth—was the Col-

lege of Pontiffs. As originally composed, it consisted of four persons, all of the patrician order, and members for life, with the right of electing to all vacancies. To these, in 300 B.C., four plebeians were added, the number being increased under Sylla, in B.C. 81, to fifteen, at or near which it continued till the end. Of this college the Pontifex Maximus, elected at first by and from among its members, and afterwards by the sovereign voice of the people, was the perpetual president, and as such invested with supreme power over the entire religion, worship, and priesthood of the State. The college had no relation whatever to any one deity or set of deities, or to any one religious rite. The marvellous power of the Romans in organisation can nowhere be better seen than in the appointment of this irresponsible, supreme, and central court, with absolute jurisdiction and control over the whole vast domain of the spiritual; "*rerum quæ ad sacra et religiones pertinent iudices et vindices.*" In all matters pertaining to the administration of religious rites, forms of worship, sacrifice, sacred days, and festivals, the admission of foreign gods with their cultus, the ceremonies at birth, marriage, and burial, the conduct of the priesthood, &c.,—their power was supreme, and their decision final. All official documents relating to religion were in their hands; and of all laws relating to it, whether written or unwritten, they were the guardians and interpreters, and had the sole power of legislation in all such matters. Clad in the *toga prætexta*, a purple-bordered robe, and wearing a conical woollen cap, they



were present at all great public ceremonies, and presided and read prayers at the opening of the *comitia* and other important civil assemblies. The Pontifex Maximus had his official residence in the Regia, as his successor lives in the Vatican. Like the high priest of the Jews, whom he resembled in so many respects, his person and office were surrounded with the utmost sanctity; and the reverence which the people showed for the emperors was due to the fact that they all, from Augustus to Theodosius, were sovereign Pontiffs.

We owe to the Romans not only the arrangements of the civil but the idea of the sacred year. Each season was ushered in and welcomed with its appropriate religious festival, the arrangements of which fell naturally into the hands of the Pontifical College, and, as a source at once of profit and of power, was jealously guarded by them from all external interference for a period of 400 years. Our Saxon forefathers gave us the names of four of the days of the week; the other three, with the names of all the months, came from the Romans. Every time we use the words September, &c., we have on our lips the evidence of that practical and prosaic nature which led them to call the months by numbers, not by names; and the still existing proof that there was a time when the year, which was originally lunar, and composed of menses, moons, or months, began not in January, but in March. When on that month the thin disc of the crescent moon first showed itself in a faint line to the watcher on the Capitol, as to the

Jewish priest on the hills of Palestine, a sacrifice was duly offered, and the people called to worship (*calata plebe*, whence *calends* and *calendar*), when they sang an ancient hymn, beginning "Jana novella," and public announcement was made of the number of days which intervened before the *nones*, when festivals were to be held; what days were *fasti* or lawful, and what *nefasti* or unlawful. As the lunar year does not correspond with the solar, it lay with them to determine what and how many should be the intercalary days required to bring the one into some correspondence with the other. The whole civil and religious arrangements of the year affecting public worship on the one hand, and business transactions on the other, were thus absolutely in their hands, and were annually recorded in an official register, called the *Calendar*, or the *Sacri Fasti*, in which, as in our modern almanac, which it closely resembled, important public events were noted down. In the course of time the calendar fell into such hopeless confusion—one year having actually extended to 445 days—that Julius Cæsar, as Pontifex Maximus, took the matter in hand, and put it very much on the scientific basis on which it now stands,—the eminent service which he thus rendered his country and the world receiving everlasting commemoration in the name of the month July. That the year did not begin, as it ought to have done, at the winter solstice, the happy turning-point from gathering gloom to gathering light, when the sun begins his march of blessing to the northern

nations, was due to the fact that the religious feelings of the people were stronger than the iron will of the dictator. As in B.C. 46 the new moon, which marked to them and to their fathers the beginning of their months and years, appeared at Rome eight days after the 24th of December—in the Julian reckoning the shortest day—it became the 1st of January of B.C. 45, and as it will always continue to be, New-Year's Day.

Next in importance to the Pontifex Maximus, and at one time even superior in rank, was the Rex sacrorum, an office held for life, and only by patricians, whose title, duties, and dignities came from the time when the king, as high priest of his people, performed with his own hand important religious functions. His wife, who had also important public duties, was called Regina. If we were to select the third highest personage in the hierarchy, we should have to pass from those whose duties were general, to those who were attached to special deities. The greatest of these was the priest of Jupiter, the Flamen Dialis, who, with those of Mars and Quirinus, constituted the order of the Flamines majores. He was a very stately and imposing personage, and so was his wife, the Flaminica, the priestess of Juno. The person and the office of both were specially sacred: they could not be divorced, nor could he marry a second time. If she died, he must resign. He could not mount a horse, nor touch a dead body, nor attend a funeral, nor wear a ring, nor take an oath even in the witness-box, nor sleep three nights running

out of his own bed. He was rewarded for all these restrictions by a seat in the senate, and the proud distinction which he shared with consuls, prætors, and ediles, of the curule chair.

As the College of Pontiffs, with the Flamens, were the executors, so the College of Augurs were the interpreters, of the divine will. This body, which grew in number as the city grew, from three at first to fifteen, ranked high in importance among the collegiate institutions of Rome. Dating back to the very earliest times of the city, it lived on till the reign of Theodosius, preserving through more than a thousand years the rude superstitions of a primitive people; and its influence lives still in many of the superstitious customs of Europe, and in the omens, portents, auspicious events, and inaugurations of our own English speech. The augurs or auspices (*avisper*, bird inspector) were trained diviners, whose duty it was to ascertain the will of God, and to foretell future events by the study of signs and omens. It was one of the very highest offices which a citizen could hold; and once an augur, always an augur,—even heinous crime entailing no deprivation. As the field of these operations was almost coextensive with nature, their science became a very complicated and confused one. Their special field of investigation, as their name implies, was the general behaviour, and particularly the cry and the flight of birds. No important event, such as the declaration of war—and no public ceremony, such as the consecration of a temple—could take place without them. Before entering

upon any important office, such as the priesthood or the magistracy, the auspices had to be consulted, and if favourable, the persons were said to be inaugurated—*inaugurari*. As the *comitia* could not be held without them, and might be dismissed at any moment by the simple declaration that the auspices were unfavourable, the augurs held in their hand a convenient and powerful weapon to strengthen the despotism of an oligarchy by dismissing an unruly or troublesome assembly, and preventing the passing of obnoxious laws. When, before a great national undertaking, on some night of perfect stillness, we see the stately augur, clad from head to feet in the flowing folds of the *toga prætexta*, long before the first flush of dawn breaks upon the hills, proceeding to the open summit of the Palatine or the Capitol, across which no faintest breath of wind is moving, and there, after having duly offered up sacrifice, and uttered in a clear and distinct voice the fixed formula of prayer, sitting down with his face to the east, and, with the conical cap of the Pontiffs on his head, slowly and solemnly waving the *lituus* or hooked staff like a crosier, which he holds in his right hand, and marking out certain lines or divisions in the heavens, with corresponding spaces on the earth, and then eagerly scanning earth and sky to note what bird or beast shall cross his line of vision, knowing that the passage of a hawk to the right or to the left or the croak of some unconscious crow will insure or defer the commencement of some great national enterprise;—when we see all this, we seem to be present at the

wild incantation of some fatuous Meg Merrilies, and not at the most solemn ceremonial of an ancient faith. That a strong-minded and practical people like the Romans should for many ages have found one of their very highest sources of information regarding the will of God in the conduct of chickens at feeding-time, is surely a sad comment on the spiritual helplessness of man.

To these two great colleges of the Pontiffs and Augurs there were added that of the *quindecimviri sacris faciundis*, who had charge of the books of the Cumæan Sibyl, and (B.C. 196) that of the Epulones, the attendants of the banquets of the gods. To these splendid feasts, after a formal invitation, a little image of the deity used to be carried reclining on a cushion or *lectus*, the ceremony thence taking the name of the *lectisternium*. There were others, such as the twelve Fratres Arvales, the arable brotherhood; the Luperci, or wolf-repellers; the Salii, or leapers; and the Fetiales, who had charge of the religious ceremonies connected with the declaration of war, and the conclusion of treaties of alliance or peace. All these corporations, originating at a very remote period, may be said to have lasted as long as paganism.

Such in brief outline was the religion of the ancient Romans. Even at its best, as we have seen it, the contrast between it and the divine religion which, after a fierce struggle lasting through more than two centuries, finally supplanted it, is as the contrast between night and day. The space at my disposal precludes me from dwelling on the lamentable decay of

faith and morals which marked the close of the Republic, and from even touching on the change which, under the emperors, came over religion in common with the State. That faith had all but died away from the minds of educated men in the age immediately preceding the birth of Christ, three notable witnesses may be summoned, and are sufficient to prove. In his great poem, 'De rerum natura,' Lucretius employed all the powers of his splendid intellect in the deliberate effort to rid the world of a religion which he regarded as a nightmare oppressing mankind, and taught in strains of lofty poetry that the gods take no concern whatever with human affairs, and that death — *mors immortalis* — puts an end alike to pleasure and to pain. At the age of forty-four (B.C. 51) he attested at once the sincerity of his convictions and the blankness of his creed by committing suicide. On a memorable occasion in the senate (B.C. 63), when the punishment of Catiline for conspiracy was under debate, Cæsar, sovereign Pontiff though he was, without awakening so much as a word of opposition, or a sentiment of surprise, openly based his argument on the conviction that death was annihilation; and it seems clear that Cato, who followed him, shared the same views. No man of the old world wrote so much or so well about religion as Cicero; and yet it is most difficult to know what he believed and what he did not believe. As a statesman and a member of the College of Augurs, he regarded religion as necessary to the welfare of the State, and bowed before the gods of his country; as a philosopher and a man of letters, their existence was

for him and his class an open question, which, "the longer he thought about it, appeared the more obscure." It is possible to gather from his voluminous writings the most contradictory views with regard to the two closely related doctrines of natural religion, the existence of God and a future state. What is certain is, that such belief as he had in the one or the other, was not conceived by him as having any practical relation to human conduct. His principles of morals were based on quite another ground. Future retribution he distinctly denied. No one ever gave higher expression to the aspirations of the human heart after immortality, or to the need of the knowledge of God: and yet in all his vast correspondence, so full and minute, we find no indication that in the many troubles of his own checkered life, at the death of his daughter Tullia, whose loss he acutely felt, or in the deluge of horrors which was sweeping over his country, he ever once had recourse to his religion as a strength for duty or a consolation in trial. He could calmly speak of death as the *malum sempiternum*, and say that if there was no good in it, there was at least no evil: and in view of his own end he sought for comfort in a stoical indifference, and not in a hope full of immortality. Of the other great writers of the time,—men like Virgil, Horace, Ovid,—the views could not be more accurately expressed than in the words which Francis Newman employs of himself: "Using my reason as well as I am able, I deliberately think that the continuance of the existence of noble souls, and



not least when cruelly marred, best harmonises with the divine perfections."

With crumbling temples and a dying faith morality also took its leave, and a horrible corruption fell upon society. It would be difficult to find a parallel in history to the whirl, the strife, the cruelty, the bloodshed, the misery, the delirium of licentiousness and debauchery, which preceded and accompanied the fall of the great Republic. Of the notable men of the time, "hardly one or two died on their beds . . . or fairly fighting in battle." Assassination and suicide were the recognised and applauded methods of dismissing from the world men who were a trouble to themselves or others. Cæsar and Cicero were murdered; Antony, Cato, Scipio, Brutus, and Cassius put an end to themselves. Marriage lost its ancient sanctity, and became an object of dislike and dread; and to such an extent did celibacy, with its attendant evils, prevail, that under Augustus there were more unmarried than married citizens of Rome. Divorce, which had been unknown for hundreds of years, became the fashion, and was resorted to even by men like Cato and Cicero, the two purest Romans of their time, both of whom twice divorced their wives for the most frivolous and selfish reasons. Unutterable crimes were shamelessly committed by the highest and the best. It was the surest sign of a decaying state that the corruption which had spread among men played still more fatal havoc among women, and that married ladies of the highest rank publicly announced themselves as

common prostitutes. Abortion and child-murder were common both to the upper and lower ranks; and to so alarming an extent did sterility prevail, that an able writer has assigned it as one of the principal causes of the ruin of Rome. It had come to this at last. All the civilising influences which can elevate humanity had for many generations been working at their highest pressure on this great and wonderful people—and this was the result. The hideous corruption of Roman society, on the day that Christ was born, is an everlasting lesson to mankind that the world cannot get on without a divine Revelation and a divine Redeemer.

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# ST GILES' LECTURES.

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*SECOND SERIES—THE FAITHS OF THE WORLD.*

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*LECTURE VIII.*

TEUTONIC AND SCANDINAVIAN RELIGION.

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TO us the religion we are now to consider has a special interest. It was the religion of our forefathers, and has, no doubt, to some extent influenced the character of their descendants. Not improbably on the very spot where this old church stands, Odin and Thor have been worshipped, for the early Christian missionaries were fond of building churches on the sites of pagan temples. Nor do we require to go to a very remote past to find the religion existing as the faith and cultus of the people. Christianity was some time in reaching Germany and Scandinavia, and when introduced, its progress was comparatively

slow. It came from a foreign country, and was "escorted by a foreign language." It was utterly opposed to the tastes, feelings, modes of thought, and worship of the inhabitants; subversive of many of their institutions and most cherished customs; denied any honour to their greatest achievements, and taught that the memories and traditions of which they were proudest, were only matters for regret and shame. So the new religion was unpopular, and the old long held its own against it. The first Teutonic people who embraced Christianity were the Goths, and their conversion dates only from the fourth century. Though introduced at an early period into Britain, the new faith did not gain a firm footing before the seventh century, when it was also accepted by the Franks. The Saxons were not brought within the pale of the Christian Church before the ninth century, the Danes before the tenth, the Norwegians and Icelanders before the eleventh. In Sweden idolatry was not completely eradicated till the middle of the twelfth century, whilst the Finns were pagans till the thirteenth, and the Lithuanians even up to the beginning of the fifteenth. Early Teutonic and Scandinavian religion, therefore, as a living power, though now happily a thing of the past, does not belong to such a remote antiquity as the religion of ancient Egypt, or even of ancient Greece and Rome, and possesses at least as deep an interest as any other part of European history.

That one religion was common to Scandinavia and Germany, and the other Teutonic countries, cannot,

I think, be doubted. The following grounds for the belief, given by Jacob Grimm, seem quite conclusive: "1. The undisputed and very close affinity of speech between the two races, and the identity of form in their oldest poetry. 2. The joint possession by all Teutonic tongues of many terms relating to religious worship. 3. The identity of mythic notions and nomenclature, which ever and anon breaks out. 4. The precisely similar way in which the religious mythus tacks itself on to the heroic legend. 5. The mingling of the mythic element with names of plants and constellations, and the undeniable admixture of the old religious doctrine with the systems of law." On these grounds I think we may regard the identity of the Teutonic and Scandinavian religions as established.

It would almost appear as if the earliest form of the religion had been monotheistic. From Tacitus we learn that "a Being, master of the universe, to whom all things were submissive and obedient, was the Supreme God of the Germans;" and from other sources we gather that, in all Teutonic tongues, this Being was called by the general name of *God*. The object of the most ancient Norse worship is described as the "author of everything that existeth, the eternal, the ancient, the living and awful Being, the searcher into concealed things, the Being that never changeth." He was believed to possess infinite power, boundless knowledge, and inflexible justice. He was not to be worshipped in temples reared by human hands, but in consecrated groves, and in the

solitudes of the forest. It was forbidden to represent him by any image. He was the great invisible Spirit who pervaded the universe, too awful even to be named, who was to be served with sacrifices and prayers, and who delighted in seeing men leading pure and brave lives. But monotheism could not long satisfy a rude and fierce people, many of them living in countries remarkable for wild grandeur of scenery, and subject to sudden and extreme climatic changes, involving great and striking elemental disturbances; most of them in a state of almost perpetual war. Nature by her changeful moods suggested the presence of more gods than one; their own experience, sometimes as victors, sometimes as vanquished, did the same. Rude minds never discover the unity of nature, and are quite unable to trace the endless variety of phenomena which meets them to the action of never-varying law. In the physical world they discover everywhere the presence of great unseen powers, causing themselves to be felt in many very startling and mysterious ways,—sometimes working for good, and making earth fair and fertile, and man happy; sometimes working for ill, and making earth bleak and barren, and man miserable; now smiling in the sunshine, then raging in the storm; at one time leading in the summer, at another letting loose the winter's frost and cold,—and these powers rude and simple men deify. This we find most forcibly exemplified in what became the Teutonic and Scandinavian religion.

And we are fortunate in possessing sufficient in-

formation concerning that religion, with its strange mythology, at once beautiful and grotesque, though it comes from a somewhat unlikely quarter. In Germany the early Christian missionaries exerted themselves to the utmost to obliterate every trace of the old paganism, and with a large measure of success. They razed the temples, cut down the consecrated groves and the sacred trees, broke every altar and image they could find, taught the people that their deities were not gods to be worshipped, but devils to be feared and abhorred, and in many other ways did their best to banish everything associated with the ancient cultus from the face of the country and the minds of the people. Germany, therefore, has comparatively little to say about its old paganism. It is from Iceland that our knowledge comes. In that curious island, with its "mud-volcanoes, and steam-clouded valleys, and lava-covered plains," its roaring geysers and sulphurous springs, peopled by brave and hardy Norwegian refugees, the story of northern mythology was written down. This story is contained in what are called the two Eddas, the elder and the younger: the former a collection of ancient poems, made some time during the eleventh century by an early Christian priest called Saemund; the latter a sort of prose commentary on the elder, with some fragments of mythic verse appended, written about a century after by one Snorri Sturleson, an Icelandic gentleman. The Eddas contain an account of the Norse cosmogony, the Odinic mythology, the lives and doings of gods, demi-gods, and heroes; of the mysterious

Ygdrasil or tree of existence ; of the twilight of the gods, the awful Ragnaröck, when Odin and most of the other deities perish in the great conflagration in which all things are consumed ; the happy regeneration, when new heavens and a new earth appear. The elder Edda opens with the Voluspa or Vala's prophecy—the very oldest specimen of the poetry of the North—and it contains some passages which remind us of some of the grandest passages in the Bible ; and others, which Professor Max Müller says, “are not unworthy of the hand of Æschylus, who loved, like the Scandinavian bards, to muse over the fallen fortunes of obsolete and overthrown divinities, and to set up a gloomy and inexorable destiny as the Lord both of gods and men.” In the song of Odin in the Edda, many noble principles are inculcated, such as courage, faith, truthfulness, temperance, independence, love of liberty,—principles out of which unquestionably the republic of Iceland was evolved, and which may have helped England to gain her Magna Charta, and in some measure inspired those brave struggles against heavy odds, which have made our own little country what it is. The younger Edda may be said to be a synopsis of the whole of northern mythology.

For the interpretation of this mythology different methods have been proposed. Some would have us believe that Odin and the other gods are only deified heroes. They profess even to give us Odin's history, telling us that he was an adventurer from a country situated between the Pontus Euxinus and the Caspian, the chief town of which was Asgard, who, when



servant with Mithridates, having been defeated by Pompey, fled to the forests of Scythia, where he collected a band of young desperadoes, and with them pushed north and west into Europe, subduing the different nations through whose territories he passed, and setting his sons over them as kings, till he reached Sweden, where he died, and afterwards received divine honours. This about B.C. 40. Others, moving along the same lines, inform us that the worship of Odin originated in the immigration of a sacerdotal caste; that the priest's agency was by the people themselves confounded with that of the god whose minister he was; that his undertakings and exertions for the civilisation of the people, the evidence of his superior penetration and higher knowledge, were, after his death, clad in a mythic garb; and that thereby, partly through learning and partly from events, a series of myths was framed, the elements of which would hardly admit of being separated from each other. Others again say (and this was the prevalent opinion during the Christian middle ages) that Odin and the other gods were magicians and wizards, who by their arts imposed upon the people, and, for the sake of their own worldly advantage, claimed the possession of divine power, and by mere priestly imposture, with the assistance of the devil, came to be worshipped. This method of interpretation—called the historical—is quite inadequate; for it can only be applied to the gods themselves, and does not in the least explain the other myths.

Passing over the ethical method, which represents

the gods as the personifications of man's virtues and vices, let us consider that method which represents the divinities as the personified powers and phenomena of nature, and which appears to me to furnish the only key to northern mythology. "All beings in the northern mythology," says Mone, "may be regarded as personified ideas; or, in other words, it contains philosophic views of nature and of life." What the Northman saw was a material world, in which a continual struggle seemed to be going on; what he felt, was a struggle something like it repeated in his own life. Around him good and evil powers appeared to be contending: he had to meet and battle with the forces of nature, with wild beasts, and human foes, in his daily efforts to obtain the bare means of support; he was conscious sometimes of a contest waged within himself between appetites of the body and principles which had their seat in his soul. The good powers he called gods, the evil giants. The world was born out of a conflict between these; its orderly arrangements were preserved, because the evil were held in check by the good; it will be destroyed when for a time the evil prevail. And to the Northman every cause in nature was a divinity. He heard some god in almost every sound, he saw one in almost every change. The thunder was the rattle of Thor's chariot, the lightning the flash of his hammer, swiftly hurled from his strong hand; the wind was Sleipner, the fleet steed of Odin; the dew, foam from the bit of the horse of night. When the hard winter-crust of earth began to thaw, it was Rind yielding to the rough

wooing of her persistent lover ; when in spring the early flowers bloomed, and the first braird was seen, it was Gerd cajoled by Skirnia to listen to the addresses of Frey. As the yearly wave of verdure washed up the hillside, and the herdsman drove his cattle from the lowland meadows to the green uplands, Sif was beside him with her yellow hair ; as the farmer looked at his fields covered with rich grain, he blessed the nuptials of Odin and Frigg. The fisherman, rowing his boat through the dancing waves, saw in each of them a daughter of Oeger ; listening on shore to the loud tumult of the angry sea, he heard the wrathful clamour of these fickle maidens. The huntsman was haunted by a divine presence in the silent deeps of the forest ; the child, as he looked upon the rainbow, was told by his mother that that was the trembling bridge by which the gods crossed from heaven to earth. When the long days of summer were over, and winter with its darkness and cold had come, the sad tale of the death of the bright and good Baldur was doubtless told at many a fireside, and many a tear shed over the unhappy fate of that best beloved of all the gods. The whole world was divine to the old Northman. Nature was to him, "what to the thinker and prophet it for ever is, preternatural." Nor, as the personification of the forces of nature, does this mythology stand alone. It has resemblances in those of India and Persia. They all belong to the same stock, and have the likeness belonging to a common origin. It is in their spirit that they chiefly differ. The Oriental is con-

templative, the Northern active. The dreamy gods of the East could not live in a Teutonic or Scandinavian climate, nor with the fierce restless men of the north. The northern deities must be always active, riding on the tempest, hurling themselves on icebergs and rocks, busy now with the ploughshare and then with the sword, delighting in the crash of battle, and gathering the fallen heroes into bright Valhalla, there to reward them for their courage with copious and never-failing goblets of mead, and the wild joys of an unending fight.

But let us now inquire somewhat more minutely into the details of this mythology. At the very outset we are met with the northern theogony and cosmogony. It is given in the younger Edda, and may thus be summarised. Before the world came into existence in its present form there was a great void called Ginnungagap, on the north side of which there was a cold and dark region called Niflheim, and on the south side a warm luminous region called Muspellheim. Between the two was a region of snow and ice, the moisture from which, meeting the heat of the southern region, fell in drops into the void ; and these formed a giant, called Ymir, out of whom sprang other three. The giant was nourished by a cow, called Audhumla, who licked with her tongue the great blocks of ice, which produced in three days the entire figure of a man, large, beautiful, and strong. He was called Buri, and had a son, Bör, who married Bestla, the daughter of giant Bölthorn, who bore to him three sons, Odin, Vili, Ve. These three

slew giant Ymir, who was of such a size that so much blood ran from him as to drown the whole race of frost-giants save one, who, with his wife, escaped in an ark. Out of Ymir's blood the three brothers made sea and water; out of his flesh, the earth; out of his hair, the trees; out of his bones, the hills; out of his teeth, jaws, and splinters of bones, rocks and cliffs; out of his eyebrows they made a wall round the earth, to keep out the giants. They made the vault of heaven of his skull, and scattered his brains about for air and clouds. "They then took the sparks that were cast out of Muspellheim and set them in heaven, to illumine heaven and earth. They also assigned places for the lightning and fiery meteors. Thus B6r's sons raised up the heavenly discs, and the sun shone on the cold stones, so that the earth was decked with green herbs. The sun from the south followed the moon, and cast her right arm round the heavenly horses' door (the East); but she knew not where her dwelling lay, the moon knew not his power, nor did the stars know where they had a station. Then the holy gods consulted together, and gave to every light its place, and a name to the new moon and to the waning moon, and gave names to the morning, and the mid-day, and the evening, that the children of men, sons of time, might reckon the years thereafter."

In this myth it will be at once perceived that there is no conception of a creation from nothing. The basis of all created things existed from all eternity. Niflheim, Muspellheim, cold and heat, were before gods and

men. Through the union of frost and fire, chaotic matter was produced, and represented under the form of giant Ymir—an utterly bad, useless, unmanageable being. The creative power operated on this unorganised mass, and matter grew, and icebergs and mountains were formed. Then came life, animal, vegetable, intellectual. This life developed through its own inherent energies. The higher acted on the lower, and the Æsir, the good gods, enemies of all monsters and wicked giants, were evolved. Odin, Vili, Ve,—spirit, will, holiness—that strange trinity, mentioned only this once in the mythology,—made an end of chaos, and tried to establish for ever universal beauty and order. But it was not to be. A giant family escaped in an ark, and fled to remote places beyond the sea. Wild and unorganised forces of nature were left, and with these gods and men must strive till the very end. A strange theory of evolution; but most creditable, I think, to the ingenuity of those rude men of the old heathen North.

With regard to the creation of man we have not very much information. All we know is, that three beneficent deities, having left the assembly of the gods in Asgard, and gone on an excursion to earth, when walking by the sea-shore found two trees, an ash and an elm, and out of these created the first human pair, and called the man Ask and the woman Embla. Odin gave them life and spirit; Hœnir, reason and the power of motion; Lodur, blood, hearing, vision, and a fair complexion. No theory is advanced to account for the first appearance of evil in

the world. It seems to have been taken for granted that it existed from the very beginning—was, in fact, an essential property of that chaotic matter out of which gods and men were evolved.

Outside the world was the great ash-tree Ygdrasil, whose branches spread over the heavens, whilst the roots went down to the region beneath the earth. It is supposed to be an emblem of the whole world, so far as it is under divine influence. The myth, which is said to be Indian and Lamaic, is not easy of interpretation, though Mr Carlyle finds in it a beautiful meaning. "It is the tree of existence. At the foot of it, in the death-kingdom, sit three Norns, Fates,—the Past, Present, Future,—watering its roots from the sacred well. Its boughs, with their buddings and disleafings,—events, things suffered, things done, catastrophes,—stretch through all lands and times. Is not every leaf of it a biography, every fibre there an act or word? Its boughs are histories of nations. The rustle of it is the noise of human existence, onwards from of old.

So much for the story of creation ; let us now turn to the consideration of the gods. There were twelve great Æsir, who lived in Asgard, the chief city of Asenheim, which contained many palaces of gold and precious stones for their accommodation. The central part of the city was called Gladsheim, and in it was Valhalla, the home of heroes. Odin's palace was called Valaskialf, and there was his throne. The goddesses dwelt in a hall called Vingolf, and had equal power with the gods. Besides the principal Æsir,

there were many minor deities, and the world was alive with elves and dwarfs.

The chief god among Teutonic and Scandinavian peoples was Odin, known by the Germans as Wodan or Wuotan, though a few rendered higher honours to Thor. Abundant proofs exist that he was worshipped by Norse, Saxons, Thuringians, Alamanns, Langobards, Franks, Goths, and others. In our own country, vestiges of Odinic worship still remain, in the names of places, of a day in the week (Wednesday), and in certain expressions, sometimes not in the least understood by those who use them. We are told that in Asgard the god had twelve names, and in the younger Edda forty-nine are given, with the reason that his name had to be translated into the various tongues of the nations by whom he was acknowledged, before he could be worshipped. Odin has been described by Grimm as "the all-pervading, creative, and formative power, who bestows shape and beauty on man and all things, from whom proceeds the gift of song, and the management of war and victory—on whom at the same time depends the fertility of the soil, and all higher gifts and blessings." To him man must look for the highest and best things, and in this respect he resembles the Mercury of the Greeks rather than Zeus. As father of the gods, he is called Allfather; and Valfather, because he takes as his sons the heroes who fall in battle. He is represented as a tall, one-eyed old man, with a long beard; a broad-brimmed hat, which is supposed to represent the ample vault of heaven; a striped cloak,



emblem of changes in the aspects of the sky ; a spear in his hand, to signify his conquering power. On his arm he wears a ring, from which every ninth night a ring as heavy itself is said to drop, and so is regarded as the symbol of fertility ; on his shoulders perch two ravens—Hugin (reflection) and Munin (memory)—which daily fly over the world. Two wolves crouch at his feet, to which he flings the meat placed on his table, for Odin never eats, but lives on wine. Like Zeus on Ida, he sits on a lofty throne, high in the heavens, from which he can survey the whole world, and even hear all that goes on among men. He is the all-powerful, all-pervading spirit of the universe, which produces life of every kind, and permeates and sustains all animate and inanimate things. He possesses in himself the attributes of all the other gods, who are mere emanations from him, or “renovations or rejuvenescences” of him. He is the “Creator of the world,” the “Father of time,” the “Lord of gods and men,” the “God of heaven,” the “King of the year,” the “God of war and Giver of victory.” The other deities are generated through his relations to external things. Out of earth proceeds his son Thor : the unsubdued giant powers ; rugged mountains, and regions of everlasting ice, produce to him Vidar, the imperishable : as King of the year, Baldur, the bright summer time, is his son ; and so are Höd, the dark winter, who slays Baldur, and Vali, the returning spring, who avenges his brother’s death : as God of war, he is father of Hermod, the messenger, and Tyr, the god of valour : as

the God of all intellectual life, of Bragi, the god of eloquence and poetry, and of Saga, a divine daughter, no unworthy sister for the Muses, daughters of Zeus. The Teutonic and Scandinavian conception of Odin was really a very lofty one. He was the supreme being in whom all power resided, who was the origin and spring of every good influence, material or spiritual, throughout the world. He pervaded the benign energies of nature, and inspired the highest thoughts of mind; he presided, in peace, over the affairs of nations and individuals, and controlled the tide of battle in times of war; he was the author of all knowledge, and the fountain of every virtue—the punisher of all sin, and the avenger of every wrong. Nor need it surprise us that by the old Northmen Odin should have been chiefly worshipped as the god of war. War was really the main business of their life, and the occupation held in most repute. Strength and courage were the qualities they admired the most; victory their highest glory and delight, a passage from the battle-field to Valhalla their last and dearest hope. So we need not wonder that they honoured Odin most as the god of war, who watched over the birth of the hero; superintended his growth and training in the use of arms; provided him with weapons; went with him to the battle; inspired him with valour; shielded him from danger; or if overtaken by death, bore him to those shining halls where only heroes dwell. But the god was also believed to have an interest in other things besides, and to favour men in other ways. In the elder Edda, men are advised to pray Odin—

Into our minds to enter.  
He gives and grants  
Gold to the deserving.  
He gave Hermod  
A helm and corselet,  
And from him Sigmund  
A sword received.

Victory to his sons he gives,  
But to some riches.  
Eloquence to the great,  
And to men wit.  
Fair wind he gives to traders,  
But visions to skalds.  
Valour he gives  
To many a warrior.

From a Teutonic and Scandinavian point of view, in Odin all things may be said "to have lived, and moved, and had their being," and from him came down everything that seemed a "good and perfect gift." It is said of him in the Edda: "He liveth and governeth during the ages; he directeth everything which is high and everything which is low, whatever is great and whatever is small; he hath made the heaven, the air, and man, who is to live for ever; and before the heaven and the earth existed, this god lived already with the giants."

It is impossible in a single lecture to recount the many myths setting forth the deeds and journeys of Odin; for, being the all-pervading principle, he was a great traveller. I shall only mention the one concerning the origin of his horse Sleipner, because it is illustrative of the correctness of the physical method of interpreting mythology. About the beginning of time there came a great builder from Jotunheim to Asgard, who offered to erect such a rampart round the home of the gods that no giant should ever be able to pass it, on condition that he should receive the beautiful Freyia, with the sun and moon. His offer was accepted, but he was bound to finish his

work in a single winter: should he fail, the bargain was to be void. The builder begged to be allowed to have the use of a horse of his called Svadilföri, and this request the gods granted at once. On the first day of winter he began his work, and progressed with most amazing rapidity, his horse dragging for him the enormous stones he needed during the night. The gods got greatly alarmed; for when they were just three days from summer, nothing remained to be finished but the gateway. Calling a hasty council, they discovered that Loki, the mischief-maker, was at the bottom of the bargain; so they ordered him, on pain of instant death, to find a way out of it. That same evening, when the builder went for stones, a mare suddenly appeared; and after her the horse, breaking the reins, ran, and was lost in a wood, though the builder chased him with all his might. Seeing that he was now unable to finish his work in the given time, he resumed his giant form, but only to have his skull smashed by Thor's hammer. "But," as the younger Edda quaintly puts it, "Loki had such a race with Svadilföri, that he some time after bore a foal. It was grey, and had eight feet, and this is the best horse among gods and men." This seems a very foolish, childish myth, but it has both meaning and beauty. The architect is winter; his horse is the intense cold; the rampart a wall of ice, which, if completed, would destroy all the life and fairness of nature. Heat and cold combined produce the wind, which soon melts the ice, and grows into a power strong enough and swift enough to be the steed of Odin, god of the year. The wind became Odin's

horse; and simple people in some places, long ago, would not weed their flax on Wednesdays lest Sleipner should trample it down; and when harvest was over, they used to leave some stalks of corn standing in the field for Sleipner, in case he might be hungry when passing that way. Christian farmers, of course, leave no stalks for Sleipner; but I am told that, in this country at least, even in good times, they spare but few for any benevolent agency.

The god next in importance to Odin amongst most Teutonic and Scandinavian people was Thor, known in certain parts of Teutondom as Donar and Thunar. He was the son of Odin by Jord, the uninhabited, uncultivated earth, and is therefore indicated by his birth as a great, burly, physical power. He is the god of thunder, and rules over clouds and rain. His home is in Thrudheim, the region of cloudy gloom, where stands his palace, Bilskirnir, a vast shining mansion, said to have had 540 floors, and from it he sends forth his lightnings. His chariot is drawn by two goats, whose hoofs and teeth flash fire—most fitting steeds for a car which has so often to rattle over the mountain-tops. He is girded with a wonderful belt, which doubles his strength. In his hand he carries the terrible hammer, Miölner, masterpiece of dwarfish skill, which he hurls against his foes, and which, after dealing the fatal blow, returns to him again. His deadly enemies are the Frost and Mountain giants, with whom he is continually at war. His name and his attributes have reference to the thunderstorm; and his two followers may be regarded as its attendants—

the rushing shower and the wind. He is represented as a young man with a red beard; and when it thundered, in some places people used to say, "Thor is blowing through his beard." He corresponds to Jupiter; for though the thundering god, he is also a fatherly and kind one.

The idea underlying the conception of Thor seems to be, mighty physical force exerted for the good of man and the world. It is embodied in the thunder-storm, because it, above all other natural phenomena, appears to proceed directly from God, and, as a rule, exerts a most benign influence on nature, clearing the air and bringing refreshing rain. The inhabitant of the north in olden times was painfully conscious of the presence of forces in the material world opposed to him. His agriculture, for instance, was very difficult to carry on. The soil was often hard, and thin, and inhospitable; much of it had to be reclaimed from forest or swamp before it would carry grain at all, or even produce wild grasses for the cattle; and it was only incessant culture that kept it from falling back into its primitive state. The seasons, too, were frequently unfavourable—cold springs, and wet summers, and late autumns, and winters so severe as almost to threaten the destruction of vegetable life. Then from time to time terrible hurricanes swept over him, and ruined his flax and corn; torrents swollen into rivers rushed down from the mountains and flooded his homesteads and fields. But the Northman had a firm belief that physical evil—the destroying powers in nature—would not be allowed to prevail so long as Odin and the other

gods reigned, but would be held in check by other and friendly powers, and these he centred in Thor. Thor's hammer broke the skull of a frost-giant, and freed earth from the bondage of winter; ground rocks and stones into powder, and turned them into fruitful earth. He drove past in his chariot and sent the pleasant showers which refreshed the parched field, and made the grass green far up the hillside.

But the pagan Northman felt that the greatest material powers which he knew, or of which he could conceive, were not supreme. There were things existing which they could scarcely affect, and in no appreciable measure change: there were laws of human life which they were powerless to resist; they were utterly unable to cope with spiritual agents; there were even subtle forces in nature, quite intangible, with which no known physical power could contend. The existence of this belief is very evident in one of the myths connected with Thor. An unbidden guest, he had, with three followers, entered the castle of a great king. There it was the custom for all visitors to exhibit some feats of strength or skill, and none were tolerated unless they did so. When asked what he and his companions could do, one of them said he thought he could distinguish himself by eating faster than most. A trough was at once filled with food, and he and a member of the royal household set to work; but when they met in the middle, it was found that, though Thor's friend had done well, and picked the meat clean from the bones, his rival had done better, for he had eaten up meat, and bones, and trough. That rival was Fire. Thialfi,

another of Thor's followers, confident in his speed, offered to run a race with any of the king's people, and one called Huge entered the lists with him. Twice they ran, and both times Thialfi was badly beaten; and no wonder, for he was contending with Thought. Thor himself then came forward, and knowing his capacity for mead, felt sure that no one there could match him in drinking. The royal cup-bearer brought him a horn, but, drink as he would, the liquor remained nearly up to the brim. He was trying to drain the Sea. On this the king playfully asked him to lift his grey cat. This Thor thought would be very easy; but, do his best, he could only bend its back, and move one of its feet from the floor. He had got hold of the Midgard serpent, that mysterious creature of evil, which had coiled itself round the world. Another trial of strength he adventured. He felt sure he could wrestle, and said so. A toothless old woman came forward, and with her Thor proceeded to grapple; but, in spite of all his efforts, he could not move her, and at last was brought down on his knees. He was wrestling with Old Age. Now I think this myth clearly shows that, in the view of the old Northman, there were certain agencies, material and spiritual, with which no conceivable embodiment of physical power was able to contend; certain things, too vast for it to control. Fire, the sea, the solid earth itself, Thor could not command; thought, feeling, even physical decay, were far mightier than he: only so far as the great mystery of evil affected material things, could it, in the smallest measure, be reached by him.



But, though not omnipotent, Thor was regarded as a very beneficent god. He did not remain much with the Æsir, being generally abroad on some expedition against the giants, Mountain or Frost—always ready to return to Asgard, however, when there was any fighting to be done. Sometimes he showed his power by raising turmoil among the elements; as when he dashed the foaming sea against the cliffs, breaking, as the myth has it, the drinking-cup of Hymir against the giant's forehead. But generally his agency was beneficent. He cleft the summit of the mountain, and sent the rain to wash down the earth from its sides, to form the soil of the valley—which was represented as his battle with giant Hrungner. He split the rocks, and laid open the seams of ore; and doing so, it was said, he paid a visit to the metal king Geirröd. In the goats which he and his companions devoured at night, only to find alive and fat in the morning, we have the symbol of the Northman's belief in the reproductiveness of nature, under the protection of Thor; and in the god's scorn of giant Thrym, impotently groaning in his desire for the goddess of fruitfulness, we have the expression of a settled belief, that, so long as the present system of things lasted, earth would never become a desert, nor seed-time and harvest fail. In his strife with the hostile power of nature, Thor was man's firm friend; and when, with the poor serfs, the god's best allies in the contest, the strife was over, he took them to himself. They could not "fare to Odin," but they fared to Thor. Grimm tells us that the newly converted Germans had, under the name of

Christ, the lord of thunder and the giver of rain in view, and confounded the sign of the cross with the sign of the hammer. It was not an unnatural mistake for the men who worshipped Thor to make.

The worship of the beneficent powers of nature so pervades Teutonic and Scandinavian religion, that it may almost be said to constitute that religion; and in proof of the statement, let me instance one or two more of the Odinic divinities. Frigg, one of Odin's wives, and the chief goddess, is the cultivated, grain-bearing earth. Her dwelling is Fensalir, moist loamy plains, where there is rich deep soil, with possibilities of luxuriant harvests; not the bare mountainsides, which can grow nothing but grass, and where Sif, Thor's daughter, reigns. Her attendants are Fulla, a maiden with yellow hair flowing over her shoulders, representing the golden fields of autumn; Hlin, the mild fostering warmth of long summer days and dewy nights; and Gna, with her swift courser, the breeze sent to bring good weather, or to bear the produce of the soil to every land. But as cultivation implies inhabitants, Frigg is also represented as administering oaths, registering lovers' vows, presiding over marriages, and knowing the fate of man. Remnants of the worship of this goddess long remained in parts of the north of England, where in autumn the peasants had a procession and a dance, in which the chief performers were called Woden and his wife Frigga.

Closely allied with Frigg is the god Frey,—known by the Germans as Fro, and, with his sister Freyia, resembling in many points the Nerthus mentioned by

Tacitus. The sphere of his worship was very wide. He was the chief god of the Swedes. His godhead, Grimm tells us, "seems to hold a middle place between the notion of the supreme lord and that of a being who brings about love and fruitfulness. He has Wuotan's creative faculty, but performs no deeds of war : horse and sword he gives away when consumed with longing for the fair Gerd." Rain and sunshine are his gifts ; and men also invoked him for a fertile soil and for peace. He represents the fructifying principle, which produces germination, and which was supposed to reside in the air. This is beautifully brought out in one of the Eddaic myths. Gerd, daughter of giant Gymir—a beautiful girl with bright shining arms—is loved by Frey, but does not return his love. Skirnir, Frey's messenger, is sent to Gymir's court to press his suit ; but in spite of promises and threats, the maiden will not yield, and is only brought to reason when threatened with the frost-giant, Hrimnir, as a husband. Gerd is the earth with the seed just sown in it ; Skirnir is the spring-wind that dries the sodden soil ; the marriage of Gerd and Frey is the germinating principle making itself felt in the sown corn, and forcing it to grow,—a principle which, if uncommunicated, would have left the sown field a barren waste. The god has two attendants, Beyggvir and his wife Beyla ; the one, in Professor Patersen's opinion, representing the refuse of the mill, chaff—the other, the manure which enriches the soil into which the seed is put. It was the custom on Yule-eve to sacrifice a boar to Frey,—the atonement-boar, as it was called. When the animal was led out, those present placed their

hands on it, and made a solemn vow. It was then killed, and cooked and eaten, and a horn drained to Niörd and Frey. Traces of this rite we find long after paganism was extinct. We are told that on good King Arthur's table there stood "a boar's head, garnished with bayes and rosemarye." It used to be the custom at Oxford, and perhaps still is, on Christmas-day, to carry round a boar's head, singing, "Caput apri defero, Reddens laudes Domino;" and at that season, to this day, in Sweden, cakes are baked in the shape of a boar.

It would have been very strange if the old Vikings had been without a god whose special province it was to rule the sea. Accordingly, we find two deities for the sailor—Æger and Niörd; the one presiding over the open ocean, the other reigning near the coast: the former, the fierce wind born of icebergs and snow; the latter, the mild sea-breeze. When, bent on war, the Norseman went on board his galley, and steered for other shores, he commended himself to the care of Æger, whose hall he thought he saw, blazing with burnished gold, fathoms beneath his keel, as he sailed across the phosphorescent sea; when, as a fisherman, he launched his boat into gulf or bay, or, as a trader, crept along the shore, always within sight of land, he sought the protection of Niörd. And if, through misadventure in peace or war, any of these bold searovers found a watery grave, their friends comforted themselves with the thought that they were safe and happy with the wife of Æger, the friend of all drowned sailors, the goddess Ran.

Every great and beneficent power in nature, as I

have said, was, to the pagan Teuton and Scandinavian, a god; and not only so, he filled earth and air with unseen but most active agents—with dwarfs, busy in the bowels of the mountains among metals and stones; with elves, watching and pervading the life of plants and trees, and beasts and men. War-maidens—the Valkyries—went with Odin to battle, and chose the combatants who were to fall, and waited on the slain heroes in bright Valhalla. Fulgiur and Hamingiur, a sort of guardian angels, accompanied every man from the cradle to the grave. The fate of all was in the hands of the Norns, who, spinning the threads of destiny, determined everything that should be. A French writer has well remarked, “Perhaps no religion ever attributed so much to the Divine Providence as that of the northern nations. This doctrine served them for a key, as commodious as it was universal, to unlock all the phenomena of nature without exception. The intelligence united to different bodies penetrated and moved them, and men needed not to look any further than to them to find the cause of everything they observed in them.” We are not, however, to suppose that the Norse conception of divinity was without its application to man’s intellectual and moral nature. The connection was most intimate: Odin was king of mind as well as of matter. The god Heimdall, whose symbol is the rainbow and who stood as the sentinel of heaven, also assured man that he was under the divine care. Thor was not only thunder: he was divine strength put forth in man’s behalf as well. The terrible Tyr—a northern war-god, fiercer even than Mars—who was

ever found on the battle-field, was also the embodiment of heroic self-sacrifice, undaunted courage, and glory. The bright Baldur was worshipped equally as divine goodness and piety, and the god of summer. Freyia was recognised as the goddess of love, as well as the giver of fruitfulness. (This twofold aspect of its gods runs through the whole of the religion.)

And though, on the whole, there is much brightness about that religion, it is not without its darker shades, deepening sometimes into gloomy grandeur or touching sadness, but never darkening into the blackness of despair. The Northman believed that the present system of things was transitory. He saw no chance of the powers which ruled the world being able to withstand the terrible forces opposed to them, when these were let loose in all their strength. The gods themselves had in them the germ of death. So the world and the gods must perish. But that was not the end of all things. Before the earth was created there were higher powers, and these would remain when it was destroyed; matter was indestructible; there was an everlasting summer-time in store for the world. This belief is shadowed in the myth of Baldur, one of the most beautiful of the Eddaic myths, and is clearly stated in the Eddaic description of Ragnaröck (the twilight of the gods) and the Regeneration. This myth I shall briefly sketch. Baldur, son of Odin, was the favourite of the gods. His mother, Frigg, having a great love for him, and being anxious to save him from all harm, exacted an oath from everything in the world she thought capa-

ble of hurting him not to do so. One little shrub that grew on the east of Valhal—the misletoe—she neglected to swear, which omission was discovered by Loki, the spirit of evil. Knowing the arrangement which had been made by Frigg, it was the custom of the gods to amuse themselves by throwing all sorts of things at Baldur, who, of course, was never hurt. One day Loki cut a branch of misletoe, and gave it to the blind god Hödur, telling him to throw it. He did so, and Baldur fell. There was great lamentation among the gods; and Hermod, as their messenger, was sent to Hel, the goddess of death, to plead with her to restore Baldur to them, which she promised to do, if every created thing would weep for him. The condition known, was at once complied with by all things living and dead, except by a giantess called Thok, supposed to have been Loki himself, who naturally had no wish to see Baldur restored. So Baldur had to remain with Hel; but his death was to be avenged by a brother Vali, soon to be born, and by whom Hödur was to be slain. Such in outline is the myth, which may be very simply explained. Baldur is the summer, or rather the sun, which makes the summer; Loki is fire, which does not need the sun; Hödur is darkness and winter, which seem to destroy the sun; by the return of spring his death seems to be avenged. The myth represents the death of the day at sunset, when the sky is red, as if stained with blood; and the departure of summer, when winter comes with its fogs, and clouds, and long dark nights. Gradually, however, the myth was lifted into the very centre of

the Odinic religion, and taken to signify the destruction and regeneration of the world.

The belief shadowed in this myth, is very boldly expressed in the weird picture of Ragnaröck, given us in the younger Edda. Some time during the history of the present system of things, the gods are represented as having succeeded in binding certain terrible hostile powers. Loki, emblem at once of material fire and of moral evil, had, like Prometheus, been chained to a rock, and tortured by a serpent dropping venom, placed over his head. The Fenrir-wolf, symbol of sheer destructiveness, and offspring of Loki, his last bad act the biting off of the brave Tyr's hand, had also been securely fastened up. The Midgard serpent, another of Loki's horrid brood, and type of the evil which surrounds the world, had been thrust out of Asgard, and cast into the sea, where it lay firmly coiled around the earth. These at Ragnaröck are let loose, and, aided by Surt from Muspel, make an end of the gods and the world. The Eddaic description of the final catastrophe is so very graphic that I give it in a condensed form. There will come a winter of bitterest cold and fiercest storm, with blinding snow, and no sun. Three such winters will follow without a summer, when there will be war and discord over the earth—brothers slaying brothers, and parents their children. Then will there be awful portents. The sun and moon shall disappear; the stars be hurled from the sky; the earth be so shaken that trees will be torn from their roots, and mountains totter to their fall. Then the Fenrir-wolf breaks loose; the sea rushes over the earth, and the



Midgard serpent gains the land; and the two advance, flashing fire and raining venom. Now the heavens are rent, and the bright sons of Muspel ride forth, at their head Surt, whose sword outshines the sun. These go, but wide apart, with Loki, now unbound, and his dreadful children, and all the Frost-giants, to Vigrid, the great battle-field of time. Meanwhile Heimdall winds his horn, and arouses the gods, who, with the heroes of Valhal, quickly arm and take the field, led by Odin, with his golden helmet, and shining byrnie, and much-dreaded spear. It is a terrible hour: the sacred ash quivers, and everything in heaven and earth quakes. Odin meets the wolf, and is crushed by his awful jaws. Thor encounters the serpent, which he slays, but only to fall dead himself, suffocated by the venom it vomits in its dying agony. Frey and Surt struggle; but Frey, having given away his sword, is overcome. The brave Tyr attacks the monster Garm; but it is the god's last battle. Loki and Heimdall fight, and both die. Vidar only is victorious, rushing on the wolf, and rending his jaws asunder, and avenging Odin. "Surt flings fire and flame over the world; smoke wreathes up around the all-nourishing tree; the high flames play against the heavens; and earth consumed, sinks down beneath the sea."

But after destruction comes regeneration. The pagan Northman looked for new heavens and a new earth. In the younger Edda it is said: "The earth rises again from the sea, and is green and fair. The fields unsown produce their harvests. Vidar and Vali live, dwelling on the plains of Ida, where As-

gard was before. Thither come also the sons of Thor; and they have Miölner. Then come Baldur and Hödur from Hel." The heads of a new human race appear, who feed on the morning dew. We have still here the worship of force. In the solemn and mysterious depths of the impenetrable forests, hidden away from the sunlight and the free sweep of the air, dwelt Vidar, the Silent. He represented the indestructibility of matter,—a quality wholly imperceptible, only believed to be. Vidar, therefore, appears again. Throughout all the years of the world's history a miracle had been wrought in nature every spring; for then a life-giving power passed through the earth, and revived dead things. That power was Vali, an imperishable force; and he, too, survives. When man was first formed, one of the creative trinity gave him reason and the sensitive faculty; and though Freyia, with all that is sensual, must perish, if man is to exist, these can never die: so Hoenir reappears. The Thunder-god is not needed in Paradise, but strength and courage must pervade all its inhabitants; so Thor's two sons are there. And as without light there could be no joy, we meet the bright and beautiful Baldur once more, bringing everywhere, and for ever, the bright summer-time, which had been looked for so long. Such was the Northman's view of the destruction and regeneration of all things,—one of the most important doctrines in his creed.

It is almost unnecessary to add that he believed in the immortality of the soul. That among northern nations was a deep-rooted belief; and they also

looked for a state of retribution beyond the grave. They regarded the future state as, to a large extent, a continuation of the present; and so the dead were supplied with some of their property, and coins were put under their tongues to defray the first expenses of their journey to the other world. It would almost seem, also, as if a belief in an intermediate state had been entertained. For the brave and virtuous there were two abodes, Valhalla and Gimli; and two for the vicious, Hel's home in Niflheim, and Naströnd—the former to be tenanted till Ragnaröck, the latter after that, for ever. Very few, save those who fell in battle, were received by Odin into Valhalla, which was a heaven such as only a warlike people could have conceived. It was a hall shining with pure gold; its ceiling was formed of spears, its roof of shields, its benches glittered with coats of mail. It was a great place, with 540 gates, through each of which 800 men could go abreast. There the Einheriar, the heroes slain in battle, dwelt,—arming themselves every day, and riding out into the spacious court to the fight, which they enjoyed with all its fierce delights, even to slaughter; and then returning unhurt, to drink mead with the gods, and be waited on by the Valkyries. Hel's dwelling is thus described: "Her palace was Anguish; her table Famine; her knife Starvation; her waiters Slowness and Delay; her door a Precipice; her bed Care; its curtains Splendid Misery." Of Gimli and Naströnd we know nothing save what the younger Edda tells us. "There are many good and many bad abodes. Best is it to be in Gimli, in

heaven. Plenty is there of good drink for those who deem this a joy in the hall called Brimer. There is also an excellent hall which stands on the Nida mountains. It is built of red gold, and is called Sindre. In this hall good and well-minded men shall dwell. Naströnd is a large and terrible hall, and its doors open to the north. It is built of serpents wattled together; and all the heads of the serpents turn into the hall, and vomit forth venom that flows in streams along the hall; and in these streams wade perjurers and murderers." The souls of bondsmen went to Thor; those of persons drowned at sea to Ran; those of pious women to Freyia.

That seems to have been the Teutonic and Scandinavian opinion in reference to a future state. It was the reflection of the people's minds—of their hopes and fears. Their heaven was the condition they most loved and prized, their hell the state they most hated and dreaded. Military glory being their highest happiness, they had Valhalla; perfidy, unchastity, cowardice being, as they thought, deserving of severest punishment, they had Hel and Naströnd. And poor and sensuous though the conception appears to us, it had a marvellous power over these simple pagans. It made them pious and virtuous; for blasphemy and baseness excluded even the slain hero from Valhalla, whilst conspicuous virtue could gain for man an entrance there, though death by arms had not released his soul. It inspired them with a courage which even yet wins the admiration of their descendants—nerved them to sweep the rough northern seas in their

little war-ships, to be valiant in battle, and to defy the most cruel deaths. An old Norse king, Ragnar Lodbrok, when about to die, shows us the power of this doctrine. He exhibited no fear, and uttered no complaint, but said: "We are cut to pieces with swords; but this fills me with joy, when I think of the feast that is preparing for me in Odin's palace. Quickly, quickly, seated in the splendid habitation of the gods, we shall drink beer out of curved horns. A brave man fears not to die. I shall utter no timorous words as I enter the hall of Odin." But amid all the pictured joys of Valhalla on which he feasted, I doubt not there came to the old Northman a dim suspicion that perhaps they might pall. Even the greatest warrior would at times be weary, and his life might be darkened by some great sorrow, which the hurry of battle and the clash of arms could not dispel, and he would long then for rest, and peace, and cloudless joy. So he thought of the bright Gimli, where the gracious Baldur reigned, and where there was neither Odin nor Tyr, and therefore neither strife nor tears.

I have thus endeavoured to present a brief outline of the Teutonic and Scandinavian religion—one of the great faiths of the world—to indicate what most of the inhabitants of Northern Europe, our own ancestors among them, believed in pagan times, in reference to God and His relations to man and the world, and what their hope was for a future state. That religion, with all its beautiful myths, has passed away, having in the Divine Providence served its end. Doubtless it was a power operating for good in its

time, and gave men what spiritual life they had, and made them the hardy, adventurous, brave men they were, and shed all the light they saw lying on the world beyond the grave. They were, in their own acceptation of the term, a religious people, and freely sacrificed their best and dearest in what they believed to be the way most acceptable to their gods: may we not hope that OUR God was pleased with the offerings of their gratitude, and listened to the cry of their penitence? To us Odin and Thor are mere names; to them they represented the governing and defending powers of the universe. They had no interpreters of the world and human life but their own experience and fancy; we have a sure key to both in God's Word.

“ Earth outgrows the mythic fancies  
 Sung beside her in her youth;  
 And those debonair romances  
 Sound but dull beside the truth.  
 Phoebus' chariot-course is run:  
 Look up, poets, to the sun!  
 Pan, Pan is dead.

Christ hath sent us down the angels,  
 And the whole earth and the skies  
 Are illumed by altar-candles  
 Lit for blessed mysteries;  
 And a Priest's hand through creation  
 Waveth calm and consecration:  
 And Pan is dead.”



# ST GILES' LECTURES.

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*SECOND SERIES—THE FAITHS OF THE WORLD.*

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## *LECTURE IX.*

### ANCIENT RELIGIONS OF CENTRAL AMERICA.

By the Rev. JOHN MARSHALL LANG, D.D., Minister of  
the Barony Parish, Glasgow.

THE pioneers of the famous "ocean chivalry" of Spain inflamed the curiosity and the cupidity of their countrymen by reports of fertile regions beyond the newly discovered Cuba. These reports were more than confirmed by the adventurous band headed in 1518 by Grijalva. Landing in Yucatan, they beheld houses with sloping roofs built of stone and lime. The fields were cultivated. The natives were carefully dressed. What most amazed them, and evoked such enthusiasm that on beholding them they named the shores New Spain, was the occurrence, at various places, of large stone crosses. They came

on fragments of masonry exhibiting the artist's skill ; nay, says an old chronicler, "a city was seen which for hugeness they called Cayrus, where were found turretted houses, stately temples, well-paved ways and roads, where markets and fairs for merchandize are held." But the monuments of extinct social life, in which the archæologists of recent times have found an exhaustless study, were unobserved. Buried in dense forests, the eye of the invader never reached them. Cortes, six years after the time of Grijalva's expedition, accomplished a dreadful march to Honduras. Along the line of march the people burned their villages and abandoned the country. For traces of human habitations he and his warriors intensely longed ; and yet, although passing within a short distance of the most famous of the ancient cities of America, no reference whatever is made to it. Palenque was even then, we may conclude, "a heap of mouldering ruins buried in a wilderness of vegetation."

Such mouldering ruins are found in spots far removed from the din and bustle of men, between the Isthmus of Darien and the northern limit of Anahuac. Undoubtedly the most remarkable are in the southern division of our territory—in Honduras, and Yucatan, and Chiapas.

Honduras has its Copan, the oldest of American cities, — uninhabited when Cortes and his soldiers marched through the land. Monuments extending for more than two miles indicate how large and magnificent the city once was. The part which



preserves most its integrity is that which has been named the Temple. In it altars and idols are of single blocks of stone, often elaborately carved, with tablets of hieroglyphics, and figures, and death-heads, and designs some of which, in the judgment of Stephens, are equal to the finest Egyptian sculpture. Besides these, there are still to be seen fragments of mounds on which, at a period indefinitely remote, imposing wooden temples had been reared. Yucatan has its Uxmal and its Chichen-Itza. The one, the capital of the old theocratic kingdom of the Totul-Xius in the ninth century. The explorer, attempting a description of its remains, observes,—“So vast a work rises up before me, that I am at a loss where to begin.” Notable are piles of gigantic buildings, pyramidal structures whose stones are each “part of an allegory or fable,” subterranean reservoirs, façades, corridors, terraces, walls covered with ornaments “strange and incomprehensible in design, sometimes grotesque, but often singularly simple, tasteful, and beautiful.” The other city, Chichen-Itza, is praised as “the gem for the riches of its sculptures ;” and one of its crumbling edifices is declared to be “the most strange and incomprehensible pile of architecture ever beheld—elaborate, elegant, stupendous.” Chiapas is famous for the Palenque already referred to,—if not the most ancient, at least the most extensive, of all the ruined places. Here, signs of an astonishing artistic genius, are the remains of pyramids whose summits were formerly crowned by palace and fane.

Here are tablets perfect in beauty, "surviving the wreck of elements, their figures and characters as distinct as when the people went to pay their adorations before them." Here—but the time fails to tell of the temples of the sun, and the moon, and the three tables, the bas-reliefs, the doorways, the chambers, the monuments of a city once teeming with life, but for long centuries silent and deserted.

These are the most outstanding of the witnesses of antiquity. The imagination is fascinated by the loneliness of their situation; the great idol-stones and sculptures standing erect on solitary plain or in the midst of dense and tangled jungle; and around and around, portions of stupendous masonry, their tracery and hieroglyphs telling the story of nations whose names cannot be recalled: the scenes of this vanished glory now shunned by the Indian; the bat, and the owl, and the monkey left sole tenants of places once brilliant with all that distinguishes power, and impressive with all that is gorgeous in the ritual of paganism.

The architecture of these partly buried cities contrasts most markedly with that of Mexico. They are unquestionably the more ancient, "to be measured, not by hundreds, but by thousands of years." The designs traced on the buildings are different from those in the north. The hieroglyphs, too, are different. The key to decipher them has been lost. But they speak of peoples milder in manner and gentler in spirit than those of Anahuac. There is an entire absence of the figures of warriors or the circumstances

of battle. And with this agrees the character of the remains. They exhibit no signs of fortifications. In the variety of sculpture, there is none which can distinctly be identified as a weapon of war. Idols are there, but they are neither so numerous nor are they so grim as in the country of the Aztecs. At Uxmal there are no idols. Where idols are found, altars, circular and square, stand before or near them, and stones which resemble the dread sacrificial stone. But the stones may belong to a time more recent than the most characteristic of the ruins. In these ruins we recognise the evidence of tribes which loved the arts, and possessed a considerable share of the refinements, of peaceful life. Their worship, on the whole, was not sanguinary. There was no god of war. There was no god of hell.

All this corresponds to the tradition that the nations in the Southern States belonged to the great family of Indians called the Maya, whose historical head is the half-mythical Votan,—probably the leader of some great migration, the founder of a priestly empire which, towards the beginning of the historic ages, spread far and wide. When it was broken up, we know not. Whither the Mayas dispersed, or what combinations the dispersion formed, we know not. But remnants of the empire settled, apparently, in Yucatan, carrying with them their worship and their arts. Probably in the course of time these remnants were mixed by other elements—the Toltecs from Mexico, and those Quiches, whencesoever they came, who found a home in Guatemala. And the

result of this occupation of the fertile Pacific plains was the civilisation of which no other records exist than those of stone and stucco—records, however, sufficient to prove that there were kingdoms, aristocracies, legislative councils, systems of numeration, calendars, phonetic writing, language not only oral but written. Slavery existed in milder forms than in other latitudes. The education of youth was attended to. The legal code was strict, yet not unjust. The priest is the great figure in the social life. The first Maya kings, it would seem, were the supreme pontiffs also. In later times the high priest of Yucatan had his papal city and his States of the Church. Rite and festival interpenetrated all family and personal ordering. There were feasts for fishers, hunters, apiarists; a strange compound, we can infer, of the beautiful and the grotesque, of thought essaying to rise towards the Everlasting, and superstition the most abject. Omens, dreams, witches, wizards, had their place. On the other hand, there are signs of a sweeter and loftier culture. One of the most curious of beliefs was that of a baptismal regeneration. The rite of ablution was held to be necessary. By this ablution it was supposed that a purer nature was received. None might marry who had not been baptised: an unbaptised person was held to be incapable of leading a good life. The banquet at baptism was called the Descent of God, and the baptised were spoken of as “born again.”

In Anahuac, we are introduced to histories, social conditions, worships, at many points contrasting with

the States nearer the Isthmus. All English readers are familiar with the conquest of Mexico, and with those aspects of civilisation which met the gaze of the conqueror. There is no chapter in historic annals more striking, it might be said more pathetic, than that which records the struggle closed by the downfall of Montezuma's dynasty. The empire which this dynasty headed was one of barbaric magnificence, but one also with compact institutions, with an elaborate political and religious organisation. It must be remembered that the Aztecs, in possession at the conquest, were only the third of the peoples which had won their right to the soil. It does not fall within the scope of my subject to trace the course—the coming and going—of the races which, previously to the Aztec, occupied the fertile valley of Mexico. Let it suffice to mention the Toltecs, that shadowy race whose domination extended from the sixth to the eleventh Christian century, and which then mysteriously disappeared—not, as we are at liberty to suppose, without influencing the religious life and the architectural genius of the race which followed. This race was the Chichimecs, along with the Acolhuans and their lake-engirt capital of Tezcuco. After a lapse of not two centuries, the Aztecs seized the supreme authority. Toltec, Chichimec, and Aztec, belong to the family of the Nahuatl—the division in which it has been found convenient to include all peoples not belonging to the Maya nations.

The Mexican cities tell no tale of the forgotten dead. There are no monuments in the modern cap-

ital. Temples, to be numbered by hundreds in the sixteenth century, and palaces, have disappeared. Old Mexico lies buried beneath the new. Only three relics have been unearthed—a sacrificial stone, a calendar-stone, and the idol of that goddess of death who conducts the warrior to the House of the Sun. Elsewhere fragments of masonry and pottery are visible. The ruins of the great pyramid of Xochicalco, covered with bas-reliefs and figures and idols, and of the celebrated city of Mitla, still exhibiting the remains of great priestly palaces, are the completest extant tokens of ancient Aztec, if not more ancient Toltec, genius. The vanquisher hid from the view of the vanquished the memorials of the past. His policy was to make a new Spain out of the old America.

Fortunately the chronicler of traditions and the decipherer of ancient tablets followed in the train of Hernando Cortes. We are provided with ample material for analysing the elements of the Aztec religion, and even, in some measure, of the older Nahua cults, which, as Prescott observes, were, in respect to the Aztec, “a generous graft on a vicious stock.”

Looking backward, then, from the latter part of the sixteenth century—the time when their records were disclosed to Spanish warriors and ecclesiastics—what were the faiths which served to the primitive races of Central America as “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen”? In dealing with this question, we are confronted by a

mythology altogether unique, so different from that embodied in the literature of other countries that there can be no doubt of its genuineness. We are confronted also by systems of worship remarkable for their elaboration, and the extent to which they covered the life of their devotees. It may be well, first, to regard the myths apart from the system. If, in our survey, we find that they abound in things puerile and whimsical, let us remember that the standpoint of primitive peoples was not ours; that "their thoughts were not only different from our thoughts, but different also from what we think their thoughts ought to have been."

Man's religious life is mainly concerned with a threefold problem—Being, Origin, and Destiny. The first finds its ultimate landing-place in the thought of God, of an unseen power encompassing the path. The second leads into the maze of speculation as to beginnings, genesis, evolution, the never-ending mystery, whence. The third would carry the gaze beyond the veil, would look through the great secret of the future to the everlasting. Let us regard the mythology which gathers around the second part of the problem: as to the first and third parts, it is less easy to detach the myth from the forms of ancient belief and worship.

To the untutored children of nature, very wonderful is the origin of race, of the heavens and the earth. The mind, for the most part, is incapable of investigation, incapable even of lengthened sequences and processes of thought. The most ready resource is

the idea of migration, of movement. We discern this idea in the traditions of nearly all the Pacific States. They have come over the sea; come from the far East: great oceans have been crossed; long journeyings have been performed. The Toltecs wandered—so their sages taught—for a thousand years. The Guatemalan Quiches asserted that they had come from a land where no graven image was worshipped, where they saluted only the rising sun. An exodus from some Asiatic centre may be the fact signified by these immigration legends. There are likenesses to the Genesis-narrative of the Bible which engage the attention. Accounts of a deluge have sometimes a colouring so Biblical, that the suspicion of ecclesiastical interpolation may be raised; as in the Mexican myth of the boat floating over the water-waste, with the old man Coxcox and his wife, who, when they find themselves, after the abatement of the water, resting on Colhuacan, send first a vulture, which never returns, and then the humming-bird, which does return bearing a green leaf. But almost all tribes preserved the story of a flood, and a great destruction and re-peopling of the earth. There were many legends, too, reminding us of the Scriptural Babel-tower, of huge pyramids which threatened to reach the clouds, until the gods hurled thunderbolts and fire on the builders. As in the Bible, the differences of dialects are accounted for by interpositions of Deity causing confusion of tongues. Thus, and otherwise, the mind stumbled for some explanation of phenomena—in simple piety connecting what



is seen with the guiding and overruling of powers unseen.

As to the genesis of man and the universe; the less cultured tribes claimed to be an ascent from birds, fishes, snakes. A royal dynasty boasted of having sprung from two tall trees—therein recalling Scandinavian legends. The old Californians asserted their development from the prairie wolf or coyote. Some Anahuac tribes believed in nine primitive forms, the tobacco-plant being one of the nine, from which men proceeded. (Probably in such accounts we trace the working of the thought that man is indeed the microcosm—that in him meet the essences of existence, animate and inanimate.) But, in the higher civilisations, we have other and worthier apprehensions. Often, in forms to our view grotesque, the feeling that there is a Divine element in humanity is foreshadowed. Such a foreshadowing was the Aztec myth of the flint-knife,—the flint-knife born of the goddess, which fell from heaven, and from which there sprang the sixteen hundred gods, who, from the bone received from the Lord of Hades—its fragments mixed with blood drawn from their own persons—made man. Such a foreshadowing, too, was the curious Thlinket tradition of the Great Spirit, whose earthly home was on Mount Shasta, and whose daughter, driven from it by the fierce wind to the abode of the great bears, was the mother of men. And perhaps the most beautiful and interesting of all such foreshadowings was that embodied in the Popol-Vuh, the Bible of

the Quiches. It is a strange combination of monotheism with polytheistic elements. It sets before us one Creator of whom are all things. But with him are associated subordinate deities, and their association constitutes the divine Pleroma. The Pleroma is called the Feathered Serpent. It says "Earth," and the earth is formed. And as, in the Book of Job, the sons of God shout for joy when the foundation of the earth is laid, so the Pleroma turns to the Creator and sings, "Blessed be thy coming, O Heart of Heaven." The Pleroma determines to make man. But the gods cannot create a being worthy of the love of the Supreme. They form a person of clay, but he has no intelligence. They form two persons of wood, but they have neither feeling nor intelligence. At length the Heart of Heaven interposes, and by the direct exercise of his wisdom and might, makes four perfect men—noble, "god-like erect," their eyes sweeping over immensity. He contracts their vision so that they may not see as the gods see. Other peoples are assumed as existent; but in these four the Divine humanity is realised. They sleep, and on awaking they find four women given them by the gods as their helpmates and the mothers of futurity. And all set forth in search of the sun, and it is a weary and cruel way which they must take. Not until long years have passed do they reach the mountain-slope whence the sun rises on their gladdened gaze. Now they live in peace. They worship the Unseen. They resolve on one thing—human sacrifice. When

the ages have passed, they die, calmly disappearing whilst they speak to their children, and leaving behind them a great bundle never unfolded, called "The Majesty Enveloped." I have called this legend beautiful. Can we fail to see in it the poetic vesture of some elements of experience and aspiration? Surely it interprets the conviction that in man there is something not of the earth, earthy. Is not the journey in quest of the sun the symbol of the craving for light? Is not the toilsomeness of the way the sign of the burden which weighs on the soul even in its fullest blessedness? And does not the bundle left behind, never to be opened, witness for the mystery, the solemn awful glory, which enwraps life and destiny—"a majesty enveloped"?

The Aztec cosmogony has been recognised by historians as interesting. It sets before us four great ages or cycles, each measuring thousands of years, each ended by the action of the elements. The first age—the sun of the waters—was ended by a tremendous flood, in which all, except one man and woman, perished. The second age—the sun of the earth—was closed with earthquakes. The third age—the sun of the air—was closed by tempests and hurricanes so disastrous that only few of mortals were left, and these few, losing their reason, became monkeys. The fourth age—that now passing—to which belongs the birth of the existing mankind,—the sun of fire,—is to be terminated by a universal conflagration. Who is the creator and controller of all these periods and spheres? Strange shapes, enigmatical birds,

dogs, coyotes, with which the genesis of the earth is associated, appear in ancient tablet and record. In one group of the Pacific tribes, there is a mysterious Presence called Yehl, transformed betimes into a crow, and betimes into a coyote, by whom the blessings of light, and fire, and water are secured to men. Truly there are lords many and gods many in the old-world tales which we regard; and odd the freaks and powers ascribed to them. But in these tales we can at least respect the efforts of poor floundering humanity to find some standing in the far past, some light for the thick darkness which encompassed. Day by day there was the marvel of the sun and light, night by night the marvel of the moon and stars; the silence of the wood, the reverberations of the sea, the song of the bird, the ripple of the stream, the lava poured forth from volcano, the rent which spoke of earthquake, the great facts of life and death, of pain and sorrow, the alternations of joy and grief;—these things were ever with him. What did they mean? Whence this boundlessness of being? Whence the mighty yet mean thing, Himself? So the heart asked in Yucatan and Mexico—so it has ever asked; and essaying to answer—at least feeling for an answer—sometimes it drew near to the Father and Lord of all.

▷ The systems of theology and worship to which the Central American myths adhere, constitute a field for research neither barren nor unfruitful.

Perhaps the rudest form of the idea of the Supernatural is that in which the unseen is merely dreaded

for the possibilities of power stored in it. There is no exercise of mind as to the divine. The moral sense is not sufficiently awakened to admit of the thought of retribution. All that is felt is a fear of some occult influence, some tormenting spirit. In this stage there is no religion; there is only the slavery of superstition. The dead haunt the mind; visions and dreams terrify; omens are regarded. The Shaman, or medicine-man, is a sorcerer. He seeks to cure disease by incantations; he keeps away the harmful spirit by song and gesture. The Hyperboreans, and some Californian tribes, were illustrations of this debasing "fear which hath torment."

The next stage is Fetichism. In it there is religion. The sense of something else than what is visible informs the consciousness. Every object is more than what it seems to be. The phenomena gazed on are so many gods; at least they have an individuality; they are invested with the attributes of personal being. This may seem strange to us; but to the savage, nature is a companion. He talks with it as with a person. It is but a step for him to regard its facts as persons, and transfer to them the worship of which he is capable. Such Fetichism prevailed amongst the wild nomadic Indians who hung on the outskirts of the Spanish army. It left its mark even on the more settled nations.

Beyond this is the worship, not of gods in things, but of the forces behind things—the great powers that are manifest in nature. Man observes that there

are potencies which it seems impossible to measure, and that he is beset behind and before by them. He becomes a worshipper of Force ; force in motion is really to him the deity. The sun and the moon and the stars seem the visibilities of the force-god. The air, the water, the fire—that is God. He lifts his hand, he bows his head ; he seeks to express his feeling by raising some stone and carving a figure on it. What was at first only the sign, becomes gradually confounded with the thing signified. The idol is the god.

But the powers are arbitrary. The sun scorches ; or, more terrible still, in the eclipse, he withdraws, and light seems about to be quenched. The fire burns the prairie ; its lightning flashes forth in awful majesty, with pealing thunders and deluging rain. The storm bursts and the sea rages. What can the poor son of man do but crouch before the awful gods of force ? Nay, he can perhaps propitiate them. There may be reasons for the anger, which he can remove or appease. He will give a present. He will offer that which most represents him ; he will offer the human life. Thus sacrifices are made ; and for sacrifices priesthoods must be founded ; and with sacrifices and priesthoods, houses of worship and altars ;—in a word, all that is involved in the organisation which Cortes contemplated with wonder.

To complete the picture of the American faiths ; the adoration of force includes the expressions of force, not only in the material universe, but also in man. The great man, the ruler, the chieftain, whose

proWess is the theme of song, whose influence is felt by all the tribes,—why should not he, too, have a place in the Pantheon? The concrete is always more attractive than the abstract: the man-god, associated with the force-god, gradually wins the heart—becomes the divinity with whom the communications of men are held, and is clothed with the attributes of the great forces. Thus, as we shall see, the hero, in the Aztec system, is transformed into the god of the air; in the Maya systems, Culculcan and Votan are worshipped as gods.

Considering the Nahua and Maya cults in the light of the positions now indicated, we obtain a clue through what seems otherwise a hopeless labyrinth. They are by no means the simple faiths which we are in the habit of associating with primitive races. The Maya, as representing older types, and as having never attained the solidarity of the Mexican myths, are the least complex and confused. In them we have many evidences of the force-worship alluded to. In the Popol-Vuh, the two most ancient gods are the Creator and Protector of the sun and moon; and beside them is the god, He who begets. The Quiche Trinity—Tohil, Avilix, and Gagavitz—denote thunder, lightning, and the thunderbolt: and the deity only next to them, Harakan, seems to have been identical with the rain or storm god of Mexico. The architectural remains at Copan leave no doubt as to the solar element in the religion of the peoples of Chiapas and Yucatan. The same element can be traced in the more elaborate Aztec theism.

It is difficult to analyse that theism—so vast, so numerous, is the hierarchy of heaven. The Hebrew prophet complained that, according to the number of Israel's cities, were its gods. But in Mexico, not each city only, but every street, home, family, had its tutelary deities. The grossest polytheism was rampant. The country was filled with idols, temples, priests: more truly than Athens of old, it was "wholly given to idolatry." Scarcely a day passed without its religious festival; the observances and rituals imposed were a burden heavier than could be borne. How can we gather up, how can we estimate, the significance of worship so widespread and complicated?

We can only trace some lines of thought. The Aztec cult, more narrowly regarded, is "a company of two armies." The signs of an older faith—milder, more a simple prostration before the great powers of the universe—may be traced along with, although they become more and more overlaid by, the fiercer conceptions of the more strictly Aztec faith. Teotl, the name for the supreme, invisible, absolute deity, belongs to the older cult; the sanguinary Huitzilo-pochtli, the god of war, is the Aztec supreme—the patron of the State, in honour of whom the chief sacrifices are offered. Quetzalcoatl, the god of the wind or the air—in spirit gentle, and averse to war, the god of merchandise—is the symbol of the older; the Tezcatlipoca, who persecutes him, belongs to the later—the Aztec. The older form embodies most the adoration of the divinities of



nature. Teotl is the conception, in the rough, as it were, of a Father of lights: and one of the touches which relieve the darker colours imposed by the Aztecs is the office assigned to the wife of the god of war—the conveyance of the departed warrior-spirit to the house of Teotl, the home of the sun. For this sun-worship, along with its symbol, the fire, is the basis of the most ancient conceptions of homage to the divine. It may be said that at the root of polytheism there is the idea of *the One*. That root-idea is exemplified in the highest strivings of the Aztec towards the Father of lights. The Franciscan monk, De Sagahun, by his industry and research, secured some interesting fragments shedding light on the purer type of Anahuac devotion. These fragments consist of prayers used at various times and for various purposes. Words cannot be more touching than those frequently to be found in them. The upward glances are most tender and spiritual; the adoration most profound; the petition most fervent. For example, one of the most striking parts of the religious discipline of Mexico is the prescribed confessional. The sinner confessed only once in his lifetime—only once could he obtain the pledge of remission. But in the pleading of the priest with “the Lord most compassionate,” there is a pathos which reminds us of the Penitential Psalms of Holy Scripture; and in the priest’s address to the penitent, although mixed with darker counsels, there are presented most searching exposures of the exceeding sinfulness of sin—a sinfulness from which there can be deliver-

ance only through the mercy of "God most clement," but from which there is deliverance when the soul is penitent and forsakes the evil of its way. "Of thine own will and volition"—thus the priest is described as saying—"thou hast defiled and stained thyself. But thou hast come to the fountain of mercy. Thou hast snatched thyself from Hades, and hast returned again to come to life in this world as one that comes from another. Now thou hast been born anew; thou hast begun to live anew, and our Lord God gives thee light and a new sun. See that thou live with much circumspection. Weep; be sad; walk humbly, with submission, with the head low and bowed down, praying to God. Look that pride find no place in thee, otherwise thou wilt displease our Lord, who sees the hearts and thoughts of all mortals."

The purest reflection of the more spiritual side of the Aztec faith is found in the character and career of the greatest of Aztec kings, Nezahualcoyotl of Tezcuco. His biography is almost a counterpart to that of David, king of Israel. As David was hunted by Saul, like a partridge on the mountains of Israel, so, when a youth, the Tezcucan prince was the victim of the jealousy of the occupant of the throne; and his adventures and escapes read like those recorded in the Book of Samuel. Like David, a man of war and prosperous in his campaigns, he raised his kingdom to the proudest of positions. Like David, his later life was overshadowed by one crime—the same, and involving the same treachery, as that of the royal Hebrew. Like David, he was "the sweet Psalmist"

of his people; his poems are elevated, pensive, and devout in tone. Like David, in oldest age, he bequeathed his crown to the only son of his favourite queen, and in presence of the assembled nobles, charged that son to seek after the one, the living and true God. This great monarch recoiled from idolatry and from sacrifices of blood. Once he was induced to lay the human victim on the altar which, for years, had not been reddened by gore. He protested that such an act would never be repeated. "He believed in one God only, the Creator of heaven and earth, by whom we have our being, who never revealed Himself to us in human form, or in any other; with whom the souls of the virtuous are to dwell after death, while the wicked will suffer pain unspeakable. He invoked the Most High, as "Him by whom we live, and who has all things in Himself."

But although, in its highest efforts, Aztec belief approached the region of spiritual religion, this was only through the special illumination of elect souls by the Spirit of truth. Good men are good in spite of bad creeds; for, in the beautiful phrase of the Popol-Vuh, their fellowship is with the Heart of Heaven. Even in such strivings as those referred to, there are many traces of the action of inferior modes of thought. The penitent, so touchingly exhorted to repent, is exhorted also to procure a slave and offer the slave to God. The wise and reverent monarch proclaims that the sun is his "father" and the earth his "mother." Aztec worship was the adoration of force. The highest niche

in its Pantheon was devoted to the god of war. In war the nation lived. Thus only could it provide itself with slaves for sacrifices. This force was infinitely distributed. Each aspect of it, each conception of it, had its personation in a god. There were chief deities; minor deities innumerable; gods of providence, rain, air, the maize, thunder,—in short, (every conceivable sign of force had its appropriate idol.) To these gods the temples were reared, and the prayers of the people offered; there were no temples, no prayers, no priests in honour of Teotl. And, summarising all this idol-worship, the old chronicler Acosta concludes: "The devil hath used the same manner to deceive the Indians as that wherewith he hath deceived the Greeks and Romans, and other gentiles, giving them to understand that these notable creatures, the sun, moon, stars, and elements, have power and authority to do good or harm to men."

The hideous feature of the Aztec religion was the human sacrifice, with, it must be said, the addition, occasionally, of cannibal practices. Such sacrifice was foreign to the old Maya cults. It was imported into them when the Mexican empire became supreme in the Southern States; but it never assumed the hideous prominence which it attained among the Aztecs. Hideous indeed! On huge stone altars the Aztec priests set the images of the gods of war and death. And before these altars stood the sacrificial stone, elevated three feet above the ground, and so constructed that, the body of the victim being in-

clined upwards, the heart might be the more easily extracted and offered to the idol. The festivals appointed at certain seasons were stained by the most revolting cruelties. There were banquet and riot, song and dance, whilst the slaves were borne in procession, and, one by one, were bound to the stone. Now and again even the obdurate feeling of the people was touched; sobs were heard, and tears were observed to fall, when, at the celebration in honour of the gods of rain and water, little children were carried on litters profusely decorated, to be offered on high mountains, or cast into boiling whirlpools. Perhaps the climax of rite both puerile and ghastly was reached at the feast of the elder brother of the god of war—the deity that persecuted the gentle Quetzalcoatl. A year before that feast, the noblest-looking of those who had been captured in war was selected as the representative of the god. He was instructed in every accomplishment of the aristocracy. He was indulged in the choicest dainties. He was surrounded by a royal retinue, and arrayed in regal garments. All—prince, noble, peasant—worshipped him, as, in stately equipage, he moved through the streets of the capital. Twenty days before the beginning of the festivities he was wedded to four of the fairest of women, and all kinds of entertainment and revelry were lavished on him. Thus until the fatal day. Then he was conducted, not to the great temple, but to one small and plain, about a mile from the city, and, guided up its steps, against each of which a flute was broken, to its summit, he was slain, and his head held up

by the priest to the sun. The chronicler avers that the tragedy was designed to be an acted sermon, whose moral was the unsatisfactoriness of "pomp and pride and circumstance," of mere luxury and worldly fulness.

An expensive sermon! "The heart was hardened, the manners were made ferocious, the feeble light of civilisation transmitted from a milder race was growing fainter and fainter as thousands on thousands of miserable victims were yearly fattened in its cages, sacrificed on its altars, dressed and served at its banquets. The whole land was converted into a vast human shambles. The empire of the Aztecs did not fall before its time."

In both the Nahua and the Maya religions we find gods, with whom a human history is connected, but who are the accepted symbols of nature-forces. Are these gods deified men,—heroes whom imagination has crowned with divine glory and honour? or are they nature-shapes humanised? "In savage peoples," it has been said, "the nature deity becomes gradually transformed into a national god, then into a national king, high priest, founder of religion, and at last ends in being considered a human being." Be this as it may, there is an explicitness, even in the confusions of the American traditions, which compels us to believe that, either at their base, or as matter which has been woven into them, there is a series of distinct historical facts. For example, the Nahua deity, Quetzalcoatl. As we have already seen, he was

worshipped as the god of the air. He was presented sometimes in the form of a bird, sometimes in the form of a flint, sometimes in the form of a snake. He was the Mexican Æsculapius as well, to whom, as the healing god, prayers were directed. His temple was round, with no corners. In the earlier period, no other sacrifice than the presentation of fruit and flowers was enjoined in his honour. The sanguinary character of Aztec worship, at a later time, left its impression on the festivals dedicated to him. But the human sacrifice never bulked so largely as in the celebrations sacred to the patron god of Mexico : by way of compensation, there were gashes made, and blood drawn from the bodies of the priests of his temples. Now the story as to the human career of Quetzalcoatl is this. He was the religious head and ruler of the Toltecs. His residences were their chief cities, Tulla and Cholula. In the latter city he lived for twenty years. His favourite retreat was the neighbourhood of a lofty volcano ; and from it, with sound so clear that it could be heard for three hundred miles, his laws were proclaimed. He taught the duties of religion ; but he taught also the arts of agriculture and mechanics. In appearance he was unlike the race to which he belonged. He was white in complexion, wore a long white beard, and dressed in a long white robe. His life was singularly chaste. He abhorred strife and denounced war. Outward thriving and prosperity followed the acceptance of his rule, until the god

Tezcatlipoca became jealous and persecuted him, now under one form and now under another. Then, taking four men with him, the gentle teacher left the region of the Toltecs. He travelled towards the east, and when he came to the sea he bade his companions farewell, promising that at some time unknown he would return; and instructing them to say to their countrymen that, by the way of the sea, white and bearded men likewise would come one day and deliver them from bondage. Surely this myth cannot throughout be a mere invention. Sir Arthur Helps reminds us that there are analogies to it in narratives of other teachers in various parts of the American continent. The Toltec priest has his Maya counterparts in Votan and Culcucan; and these, in their turn, give place to the figure of a Reformer, whom the Spaniards identified with the apostle Thomas, who came from the West, was wont to spend nights in prayer, and, himself austere, denounced the vanities of the world. In all such legends we may trace the recollection of some American Buddha, some good shepherd who practised and taught a life of self-renunciation and virtue, under whose guidance tribe or country flourished; so that, in the words of the tradition, "the very birds in the trees sang such songs as had never since been heard;" and whose fame, transmitted from generation to generation, received continual embellishments until the impression of the man was transferred to the conception of the nature-god.



Our sketch of the American religions would be incomplete without a brief exposition of their teaching as to the future of man. They cannot evade the question which has its seat in the instincts and cravings of our nature. Is this life, so brief at its longest, "in the presence of the Eternal but as a little smoke and fog," the be-all and end-all of humanity? Sad, often tinged with a feeling of despair, is the view of existence taken in the prayers and offices of the priesthood, referred to in a previous part of this lecture. The flickering of a hope beyond "the universal house of Hades" is dim; not so much, to quote a touching sentence of a prayer, "as a fire-fly gives out when going forth at night." Yet vague as the belief is, it is interesting to observe its alliances with other heathen modes of thought, and its occasional approximation to Christian doctrine. Occasional only, for the vision of the future was that of a life, not only of the earth of the present time, but even more earthy.

In the case of some tribes, indeed, it would seem that there was no vision at all. The Nirvana of Buddhism—a rest in the silence of not-being, a purification and perfection through the merging of the particular personality in the all of the universe—is a conception too speculative and refined for their rudely sensuous nature. The mind, as to all beyond the veil, was simply a blank: the sole witness for the feeling that there might be an unknown something being the appeal to the Shaman or sorcerer, and the

cry of fear. But this holds good of only the most barbarous and the least of the American families. There is a faith as to a world to come in the case of all whose civilisation had in some measure developed. Yet the stamp of materialism is on it. It has room for the Scandinavian Valhalla, with its gross and disgusting gluttony, for the happy hunting-ground of the Indian, as well as for conceptions which, in purity of thought, far transcend the Elysium of which Homer and Virgil sang.

One point is prominent: there is no clear perception of an indivisible and immortal soul. The soul is held to be distributed over the body—nay, each part of the body is sometimes conceived of as having a soul. Hence the assurance of a physical resurrection. "The bones were the seeds which, planted in the earth, or preserved in safe places, would, in time, put on once again a garb of flesh, and germinate into living human beings."

It is doubtful whether the idea of a future retribution was explicitly enforced in Quiché teaching. But it is so enforced in the majority of Nahua and Maya cults. In them we meet the old Latin and Greek poetry as to the river of death, and the shadowy ferryman, and the place of spirits. A river is described as flowing with swift, noiseless current. On its waters floats a stone canoe, and in this canoe the warrior-spirit is borne towards a blessed isle. While he is borne the actions of the past are examined: if the review establishes that the good has

preponderated over the evil, he is landed on the isle; if otherwise, the canoe is sunk, and the shade is left to see the isle, but never enjoy its bliss. In Anahuac, the thought of distinctions in the future state is outlined; and, having regard to the character of Aztec worship, outlined in forms singularly mild and graceful.

For the wicked there is the everlasting darkness; but there are no horrors of punishment, no physical tortures: there is only the absence of blessedness, the terrible isolation of a guilty and selfish soul. For the virtuous, three conditions of heavenly felicity are sketched. The highest is the portion of the brave warrior—in Mexican eyes the noblest type of manhood. As the ancient Egyptians believed that the good are absorbed into Osiris and float in the vessel of the sun, so the warrior, dying in battle, is conducted by the queen of the god of war into the great sun-house. Each morning, for a period, he marches before the sun; in the evening he rests in shady groves. After years have passed, his soul passes into the form of a bird of beautiful plumage, luxuriating in the bowers of paradise, "rejoicing with and praising the Lord, the sun; glad and eternally rich through him, sucking the sweetness of all flowers delectable and pleasant to the taste." The second condition of blessedness is that reserved for those who have died from disease or have been killed. Their city is Tlacolan—the source of the rivers and of all that nourishes the earth—where all is lovely

and all endures. There play, in never-ending youth, and never-clouded joy, the children who were offered in sacrifice to the gods, and who, once a-year, are permitted to revisit the earth. It is the scene of everlasting song and gladness. Finally, for the remainder of the virtuous, there is Mictlan, the shady place. It is doubtful whether, in the popular view, there are not ways of passage between this last and the second condition. But in Mictlan there are nine grades through which the spirit passes in its progress from a state of merely negative, towards that of positive happiness.

Thus the dead were regarded as, somewhere and somehow, living to God. The metempsychosis of the oriental is ever present to the imagination of the Indian tribes. In their thought the soul returns, after intervals longer or shorter, to live again an earthly existence: the higher in virtue or rank to inform the higher creatures, and the lower the lower. Through all vagaries, the feeling is evidenced, that those who pass out of sight are not lost; that the individual life is too sacred to be annihilated, to perish for ever. For the rest, when reading the pages in which historian and chronicler set before us what they have been able to discover of the dreams through which, in the remote past, "lame hands of faith" were stretched, it is as if the palpitating heart of humanity were beating against our own. There is the sensation of the cold shudder caused by the resignation of the pleasing, anxious being to dumb forget-

fulness. The great yawning chasm of which they conceived as separating the beyond from the present, the valley of gloom through which the spirit must pass, the long journey in darkness and pain which those who have died in peace must take: these things are the witness for the instinctive shrinking of the soul from death. It was customary to bury sword or implements with the departed: possibly as a tribute of affection, probably as a preparation for the future into which it was supposed he had passed. Anyhow, we can imagine the saddened countenance, the tear-stained cheeks, of those who performed the wonted rites. In our ears there seem to sound the cries of the slaves who were sacrificed that there might be service for the lordly Aztec in the blissful Tlacolan. Recognising the elements of the tragic and pathetic, we can follow, with a genuine emotion, the confusions through which, as the river forms for itself a way through beds of muddy sand, the hope of an immortal future found a channel and an utterance. And from such confusions we lift our eyes, praising and magnifying Him who has shown us the path of life, "in whose presence is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand are pleasures for evermore."

I have endeavoured, so far as this can be done in a single lecture, to indicate the salient features of the ancient mythologies and worships of Central America. It remains only that I refer, in conclu-

sion, to the influence which these faiths exercised, to their historical value, and to their religious significance.

Probably no beliefs ever more completely ruled the people who adhered to them. When Cortes told Montezuma that his idols were not gods, but evil things called idols, the Mexican monarch indignantly replied, "We hold them for very good gods, and it is our business to adore them and to sacrifice to them." Therein the king interpreted the feeling of his subjects. The adoration of the gods was their business. Unlike Egyptian temples, which were surrounded by high walls, their *teocallis* or god-houses were open to view. They were built on high places; and each day might be seen processions of priests ascending the spiral stairs, and the thin curling smoke of the hearts which were burned before the idols. It would be unjust to say that there was no relief to the gloom of bloody idolatries. There were light and cheerful ceremonials. Dance and song had their place. Children joined in beautiful acts of worship. Nor were the duties of benevolence omitted. The priest, whilst enjoining the penitent to procure a slave for sacrifice, further instructed him "to clothe the naked and feed the hungry, whatever privations it might cost, and remember that their flesh is like his own, and that they are men like him." The hospital for sickness and disease had its anticipation in Mexican cities; and the surplus of priestly revenues, beyond the provision for worship,

was by statute devoted to the support of the infirm and the poor. But, allowing for this play of human kindness, there can be no doubt that the effect of the national cults on morals and manners was hurtful in the extreme. It corrupted the sources of feeling. It cramped the energy on every side. It necessarily depressed the mind. An Aztec declared to a Spaniard that many were wearied by the hard things which were imposed on them, and longed to fly to some other creed. Religion was little else than a cruel and awful tyranny.

Systems which swayed for so long so many millions of the human family cannot be dismissed as of little account in the history of the world. They must have contributed, and that in no small measure, to the education of humanity. If we believe that a purpose runs through all the ages, we have the assurance that no moral discipline passes away until its share in the fulfilment of that purpose has been realised. When it perishes, it is taken up into something more lofty and enduring. And it is worthy of notice that, in connection with the religions under review, there are features of special interest to all who would investigate the conditions of religious and social development. For example, the Spanish conquerors of Mexico were confounded by the resemblances in some of the pagan rites and ordinances to the rites and sacraments of the Catholic Church. In these resemblances they saw imitations propagated by the wiles of the devil. How shall the sober-minded historian

account for them? Is it probable that, in some way not yet known, there was a connection between Christianity and the tribe or race which preceded the Aztecs in Anahuac? The mixture of at least two shades of thought,—the one softer and purer, and the other more fierce and corrupt,—in the heathenism of Central America, has previously been indicated. Was the one the faint reflection of a higher faith which had become mixed with grosser elements by the migration of some Aryans from the cradle-lands of monotheism? Or, shall we say that the explanation of the problem is to be found in mental and spiritual laws, with whose sphere of operation we are imperfectly acquainted? “The whole subject,” as it has justly been remarked, “well merits the largest and profoundest inquiry; and the laws of thought, which create and modify natural religion, might perhaps be more easily discovered from a consideration of all that was noticed in the discovery of the New World, than from any other body of evidence which exists on that subject, gathered from the religions of the rest of the world.”

To us who rejoice in the light of the glory of Christ, the study of modes of apprehension and forms of worship, albeit heathen, and now among the things that were, is neither profitless nor uninteresting. It sets before us the tokens of a fellowship of the Eternal with men, which transcends the limits of covenant and revelation, and to which the soul responds by



seeking if haply it may feel after Him, and find Him who is not far from every one of us. We have seen that, through all the darkness, notwithstanding even the horrid cruelties beneath which the Indians of Mexico and Honduras groaned, there were still the glimmerings of a spiritual truth and harmony, reminding all who have the ear to hear that—

“Where the spirit of man has gone  
A-groping after the Spirit divine,  
Somewhere or other it touches the Throne,  
And sees a light that is seen by none  
But who seek Him that is sitting thereon.”

And yet, how ample is the verification of the judgment on heathendom contained in Holy Scripture!—viz, that men who discover in things made the invisible things of the Maker, when unenlightened by revelation, become “vain in their reasonings, and their senseless heart is darkened.” Surely the tendency of natural religions to degenerate, their failure to interpret the needs of the soul, the baneful effects of the idolatry into which they change the glory of the incorruptible God, constitute a presumption, whose force it is scarcely possible to evade, in favour of an authoritative expression of the mind and will of God. Surely the study in which we have engaged sheds an increase of meaning on the words of St Paul as to the “riches of the grace which God has made to abound towards us in all wisdom and prudence.” And, recognising in the gospel of this grace the

fulfilment of the desire of all the nations, we can enter the more sympathetically into the apostle's feeling; we can the more vividly understand his ideal of the mission of Christianity; when referring to the altar with an inscription, "To the unknown God," he addressed the philosophers of Athens in the memorable sentence, "Whom ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you."

*The authorities quoted from, or specially referred to in the  
Lecture, are—*

- Bancroft : 'The Native Races of the Pacific Tribes.'  
 Charnay : 'Cités et Ruines Américaines.'  
 Cox : 'Mythology of Aryan Nations.'  
 Helps : 'History of the Spanish Conquest.'  
 Kingsborough (Lord) : 'Antiquities of Mexico.'  
 Müller : 'Chips from a German Workshop.'  
 Norman : 'Rambles in Yucatan.'  
 Prescott : 'History of the Conquest of Mexico.'  
 Sagahun : 'Historia General,' &c. (in Bancroft's and Lord  
 Kingsborough's 'Antiquities').  
 Stephens : 'Incidents of Travel in Central America.'  
 Tylor : 'Anahuac, or Mexico and the Mexicans.'
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# ST GILES' LECTURES.

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*SECOND SERIES—THE FAITHS OF THE WORLD.*

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*LECTURE X.*

JUDAISM.

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JUDAISM, as the religion of ancient Israel, and not in the more restricted and technical sense of the term, is the subject of lecture. It naturally falls under two periods: the Mosaic or creative period, and the prophetic or progressive; but a chronological division can only underly, without strictly regulating, the treatment in short compass of so large a subject.

I. The fundamental principle of the religion of Israel is its monotheism—a principle which distinguishes it by a practical line of demarcation from

the other religions of antiquity. Several of these may be reduced by speculative processes to a monotheistic basis. The Egyptian priest and Greek philosopher undoubtedly rose to the conception of a Supreme Deity, whom or whose attributes the many occupants of the Pantheon represented ; but the proof that the esoteric beliefs of the initiated, and the speculations of philosophers, were not religions, is the fact that the ancient religions decayed and died in the presence of science and philosophy. In the religion of Israel, on the other hand, the central fact, the living germ of faith and morals, was the realisation of the thought of one God,—in comparison with which, no single conception transmitted by the ancient world has fructified into such vast results.

Palestine and Greece have frequently been cited to prove that the small nations have in reality been the great. As for Israel, it was so small a people, and dwelt in a territory so meagre, as barely to possess the elements of a rich and varied culture out of which might happily be evolved a more exalted conception of Deity than among other peoples. Except that, on the north-western border, the Phœnicians, with their commerce, wealth, art, and letters, touched the slow-moving life of Israel, there was in the geographical situation an absence of those elements of advantage that stimulate a nation's thought and quicken the pulse of its religious progress.

The Semitic instinct has sometimes been credited with the peculiar function of germinating and elaborating the monotheistic idea. No doubt, even in

so high a matter, influences of race, climate, and historical experience must have their place. But here a unique racial instinct hardly comes within view. Semitic peoples, purer and as pure in blood, were idolaters. The old tradition was, that Israel's own ancestor, Terah, of the race of Heber and Arphaxad, was an idolater. The tribes themselves were not, all of them, of pure Semitic extraction. There were all along two centres of gravity in Israel—the southern and northern, in Judah and Ephraim-Manasseh respectively. Ephraim and Manasseh were sons of Joseph by an Egyptian mother, and were therefore partly of Hamitic blood,—a remark that may apply to several of the remaining tribes. It is certain that a mixed multitude accompanied the tribes from Egypt; that Judah strengthened itself by incorporating certain native septs; and that Israel, as a whole, gradually absorbed and did not extirpate the original inhabitants. Besides, like other notable conquerors, they adopted the civilisation of the vanquished races, and thus, in turn, became subject to Canaanite or Hamitic influence. It is very doubtful if Edom, Moab, and Ammon, Israel's neighbours and blood-relations, were a more mixed population; and yet they did not permanently resist the attractions of polytheism.

The fact that monotheism was coeval with the history of Israel, and that the history begins with the Exodus, has suggested Egypt as its source—the Egyptian education of Moses forming the intermediate link. But, in the present state of our information,

it is a large assumption that the religion of Egypt was monotheistic. Most Egyptologists argue, either that the popular gods were mere attributes of the Supreme One, or that they were independent divinities, whose existence was not inconsistent with the idea of a Supreme Unity. But the former supposition has the look of an after-thought, like similar philosophical explanations applied to the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. These philosophical reflections rarely form part of the original, living entity; they are of the nature of comments, and are later than the thing which they try to explain. The latter view may be accepted as historically true, but the admission which it makes is fatal to the claim to monotheism. The stage in religious perception at which the Sun-god, Amen-Ra, was believed to preside over the Egyptian Pantheon, corresponds to the stage at which Jupiter was believed to be the father of gods and men. In both cases the conception implied a partnership in divine power, or authority legitimately distributed among a supreme god and many lower gods. But belief simply in a supreme god is not monotheism, any more than belief in two supreme gods; least of all is it the monotheism of the jealous God of Israel. There is the further difficulty of understanding how an Egyptian deity was imposed on Israel. The gods of Egypt, deified sovereigns included, were the powers which had oppressed them, and not benign and friendly deities, one of whom might well be chosen as an omnipotent champion and adored. At the same time, Egyptian

influence may have favoured the preservation or the growth of monotheism, but for an opposite reason. Whatever the earlier form of Egyptian worship, and however simple the creed, these at the date of the Exodus were obtrusively polytheistic. While it may be replied with truth to those who trace the religion of Egypt to fetichism, that the monuments refute the theory, proving as they do that animal-worship is almost unknown to the earliest, and is well known in the latest inscriptions; yet, in the 19th dynasty, in which the Exodus is supposed to have taken place, animal-worship was fully developed. By that time every important town had at least its triad of divinities, and the sacred animals received all the outward marks of worship. If Moses aimed at imparting to Israel the philosophical abstraction merely into which Egyptian polytheism might be sublimed, antipathy to the actual religion of the oppressor might certainly have assisted him. The natural and intelligible law on which to explain the relations between Israel and Egypt in religion, is the law of repulsion and not of attraction,—of contrast rather than similarity.

There is, in point of fact, a remarkable series of antitheses between them. The point under consideration must itself be set down as one, for the rude but genuine monotheistic faith of the Israel of the Exodus is really not in the same category with the high-flown and shifty tributes paid to the Egyptian god of gods. Apart from this—one of the most characteristic of Egyptian doctrines was that of the

immortality of the soul. That was not a recondite speculation, but a popular belief. It must have been as familiar to Moses, and indeed to every Israelite, as to the Egyptians themselves; yet it finds but a faint echo in the religion of Israel, and none at all during the Mosaic period. The omission from the Mosaic records of the important doctrine of immortality, with its power of adjusting the mysterious inequalities and of righting the wrongs of this world by the rewards and punishments of another, has always excited surprise. It was used long after in the quarrel between Pharisee and Sadducee in support of an oral tradition supplementary to the written law. Moses, it was argued, could not have been wholly silent on so grave a doctrine, and must therefore have communicated it orally to the elders. The Sadducee replied, however, by appealing to the written testimony, and denied both immortality and the resurrection. On the ground of the same omission, Bishop Warburton founded, in last century, his elaborate argument for a "Divine Legation of Moses"—the omission being, in his view, so extraordinary as necessarily to infer design, a divine purpose and particular providence. It may be accounted for otherwise. The reason may have been, that a practical belief in immortality could not be developed by positive enactment, and that it could only be an energising factor in morals when the fruit of sustained and living fellowship with the Eternal. But the fact of the omission remains, and is in glaring contradiction to the obtrusiveness with which a be-



belief in immortality was present in the religion of Egypt. Nor is there anything to correspond to the judgment after death in Amenti, under the direction of Osiris. There is no metempsychosis or transmigration of souls from the body of one animal to another in expiation of crimes, although Josephus attributes to the Pharisees a somewhat similar belief that the souls of the just reanimated the bodies of men, not in punishment, but reward. That the Egyptians believed in a resurrection of the body is a fair inference from the pains taken to preserve it. But as the inference is disputed, all that can be said is that, while probably an Egyptian belief, it was unknown in Israel, and was probably developed by Egyptian intercourse in those later times when alliance with Egypt was cultivated. On the other hand, there is no provision in the Egyptian system, as in Israel, for eliciting a true and profound sense of sin,—a fact that points to a radical difference in their conception of the moral character of God, and of the entire relation between man and God as his Maker and Judge. To these antitheses—which might be multiplied, for the first four commandments of the decalogue plainly affirm each of them an Egyptian negation, or deny an Egyptian affirmative—additional significance is lent by the absolute identification of the Exodus with Jehovah's power and work. His is no neutral position towards Egypt or its gods. He has conquered them, and delivered His people from them. His name in Israel sounds defiance to Egypt, and has the ring of a battle-cry.

It may be doubted whether the task assigned to Moses was to instil a philosophical abstraction into the mind of Israel, as if Israel had had no tribal religion prior to the settlement in Goshen, or lost it during the period of subjugation. The tradition in Israel went back through a series of great personalities from Moses to Abraham, and, as preserved, is credible in itself, and consistent with whatever testimony is to be derived from other sources. It represents a tribal religion as in existence, but as being now reformed—a new and enlarged conception of God as being introduced, but as one which could be grafted on to the old without violence. El-Shaddai, El the Almighty, to signalise and commemorate the national birth, adapts His name in Israel to the great features of the event, and records it as Jehovah (Jahweh)—I am—He that is, or He that causes to be. The former title was indicative of power which might or might not imply a particular providence, whereas the latter revealed the eternal, ever-present, covenant-keeping God, brought within the range of all that concerned His people in person and estate. There is thus, on the face of the records, a distinct contribution by Moses to the monotheistic idea, but a suggestion of Kenite or Midian influence rather than Egyptian. Whatever link of connection there may be between the religions of Egypt and Israel, must be found in the personality of Moses himself. His traditional, Semitic faith and Egyptian education were a vantage-ground from which to contemplate law, religion, and legis-

lation in the Nile valley. The combination may well have been a providential training that qualified him to be prophet, legislator, and leader ; but there was, besides, an essential relation between the higher truth which he communicated, and the popular faith which he reformed. That he sought to impart an esoteric doctrine or a philosophical abstraction which had no prior, living root in Israel, is a pure assumption. No people has ever voluntarily placed itself under the protection of such a god, fought under the standards consecrated to his service, or made him the last refuge from despair in disaster and death.

By being thus referred to certain great personalities for the origin and growth of Judaism, we are brought nearer to a solution of the problem of its origin, but not enabled to solve it. The historical treatment rightly looks for and requires sequence in the character and inner life of a religion, and not only in its forms, achievements, or experience. But the demand for an exhibition of cause and effect, or historical continuity, may be pushed to an extreme and even an absurd length. The attempt exhaustively to resolve a great personality or life into its antecedents and circumstances, is not true to life or nature. Every life born into the world is, to some extent, a fresh starting-point for humanity. If it is the representative of the old, it is also something new. If only because the elements of life coexist in a new combination, the humblest of lives is more or less original. It is more apparent still that the demand cannot be satisfied in born leaders of men. Absolute intel-

lectual sequence from their progenitors or predecessors cannot be discovered in a Shakespeare or a Burns. The old was reproduced in them; they are seen to have been dependent on the past, to have been in some degree its products; but there is in each the new that never was till he himself appeared. No analysis can pulverise them into antecedent atoms. In their essential characteristics all men may be alike, yet each is partially a new creation. It has also to be kept in view that in these investigations there are limits that baffle all attempts to get beyond them. The finite may know but cannot comprehend the infinite. There is no history of God. We are entitled to infer that divine intelligence, or will, or purpose, is manifest in the history of religion, war, politics, just as we are entitled to make a similar inference from the course of nature. But the point at which the inference is made, at which the divine is supposed to be manifest, is also the point at which the revealing fact, combination, or result vanishes in the invisible and spiritual factor. The point of impact where divine power acts on the human consciousness is only partially within the sphere of investigation.

Still, the historical development can be traced, for the Mosaic period was the creative period as well for the religion as for the nationality of Israel. But our Christian conceptions of the nature and character of God must not be read into the records, as if the shepherds of Goshen and nomads of the desert, the warrior settlers of Canaan, thought the thoughts of

the Christian era. Moses and his contemporaries stood at the beginning of a history and revelation vaguely apprehended by their highest thought. The notion of an election of Israel for great world-purposes was no part of the beliefs which were then current. The idea of God corresponded to the actual condition and wants of the people, and was absolutely for this world and not for another. He who was believed to have broken their bonds was believed also to have further substantial rewards to bestow. The relation was thus one which the rudest settler could appreciate. Health, happiness, prosperity,—all the joy and light of life,—were Jehovah's rewards. Above all, He was their own, and they were His, a relation clearly indicated by many passages, the language of which, far from being metaphorical, breathes an intense realism and expresses the absolute conviction that a union, exclusive and indissoluble, existed between Jehovah and His people.

When the settlement in Canaan had been completed, there existed alongside of the national or prescribed religion an idolatrous cult affected by the great body of the people, as the complaints of the prophets and successive attempts at reformation prove. The ways of the old inhabitants of the land, a more polished people, naturally influenced their masters on settling down to citizenship and agricultural pursuits, while the plea for images was doubtless as plausible as in more recent times. The sun and star gods of the Canaanites, their Baalim or spiritual lords,—Baal, Astarte, Moloch, and others,—were adopted by Israel,

and had their shrines and symbols, while even Jehovah was represented by an image. The Book of Judges leads us to conclude that the actual religion of the period was a syncretism or union between Jehovah and Baal or Baalim, in which their attributes were either interchangeable or drawn into a strangely close alliance. During the monarchy, kings like Ahab in Israel, and Ahaz and Manasseh in Judah, were devoted Canaanites in religion; and up to the time of the captivity of Judah "the land was full of idols." The prevailing worship corresponded, and was unspiritual. The old sanctuaries, such as Bethel and Gilgal, marked by the sacred stone, *maççēba* (and perhaps by the sacred pole, *ashēra*, although this is doubtful), continued long after to localise the worship of Jehovah. They were sacred spots associated with traditional divine manifestations, and free to all. Yet they are not to be thought of as only securing greater freedom of access to Jehovah, but also as imperilling the simplicity and purity of His worship by localising it yet more, and identifying it with local superstition. At all these centres offerings and sacrifices were made, and the divine Will consulted—divination by teraphim and ephod existing alongside of the more legitimate method of decision by lot or Urim and Thummim. When afterwards they were abolished, there was both loss and gain in the concentration of worship at one national shrine—the loss of the old freer access, and the gain of an increase of dignity in the conception of worship itself, and of a certain security against individual caprice.

Yet this Baal-religion was at no time universal in practice, as even Elijah had imagined, or national in character. The higher thought of the religion instituted by Moses overshadowed and impregnated these lower, sensuous forms of religious life. Honestly embraced, although by simple and rugged natures, it was a religion that struck its roots down into every thought, action, and concern of life. As a national religion it was narrow and unspiritual; but because its roots were living roots, with a firm hold on the realities of life, all the possibilities of future development were secured. It was limited, but within its limits true. Preserved from degradation to the level of idolatry in Canaan, it retained its specific character and refused to become dualistic in Babylon, where it undoubtedly learnt much. Traces exist of a power or principle of evil in the earliest portions of the Bible; but it is only by reading into these sections comparatively modern ideas, that the devil of current popular belief is discoverable. The conception of the Serpent's part in the narrative of the Fall is unique in the Old Testament. Nothing leads up to it, nor is anything added in explanation that brings it fairly into the general system. It is too feeble an embodiment of evil to be Zoroastrian, and is probably a traditional belief brought from Shinar, where Japhet, Ham, and Shem commingled in the course of their migration westwards. It may thus be Accadian in origin (Gen. x. 10), and have a common source with the storm-serpent of the Iranians. We may refer to an equally primitive source the traces that are to

be found elsewhere of similar ideas (I Kings xxii. 21); whereas the Satan of the Book of Job, the Chronicler, Zechariah, and later Judaism, may be attributed to Zoroastrian influence. There is nothing, however, in the Old Testament that corresponds to Ahriman, serpent-devil, yet co-ordinate ruler of the universe with the omniscient and beneficent Ormuzd. There is nothing to suggest the lurid splendours of Milton's conception of him, whom

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“the Almighty Power  
Hurled headlong flaming from the ethereal sky,  
With hideous ruin and combustion, down  
To bottomless perdition, there to dwell  
In adamantine chains and penal fire  
Who durst defy the Omnipotent to arms.”

As a personification of injured pride, disdain, revenge, and all but omnipotence of intellect and will, Milton's Satan has the Persian Ahriman for his remote ancestor. Truer far to the Semitic original is the great Teuton's betrayer-tempter, Mephistopheles—bad at heart, through and through, without reverence for innocence, sympathy with goodness, or regard for truth. But even he is far more elaborately fiend-like and subtle than the mysterious emissary of the Old Testament Books, who executes his errands within the strict limits of divine permission. David's census, ascribed to Satan by the Chronicler, is directly attributed to God in 2d Samuel. It is he who sends a lying spirit into the prophets to lure Ahab to his doom, who gives Egypt to the Babylonian conquerors of Tyre for wages, and who snares the nations as a



fowler takes birds: his are the famine, the sword, and the pestilence. According to the Mosaic view, no rival shook Jehovah's throne "in dubious battle on the plains of heaven." Nature was not the field of conflict between powers of darkness and light, storm and calm. Nothing countenanced the distinction between a secular and spiritual world, or the belief that this world is not sacred. On the contrary, Jehovah was the energising force in all human affairs, and His festivals were seasons of mirth and high festivity. Not even Confucianism made this world more the expression of a divine order; and among no other people had love of home and country, of children, and the joys of life, a stronger hold, for the full sanction of Jehovah crowned and completed the bliss of living and doing, of loving and being loved.

Judaism did feel the influence of Persian dualism, and worked out from its own point of view and principles the thoughts assimilated in the contact. Yet, at the birth of Christ, it was, with many developments, not only strictly monotheistic in principle, but absolutely monotheistic as the actual religion of the people. There was then, as one of the early Fathers could record, "no maker of images among their citizens, nor sculptor in their state."

The connection between monotheism and morality is so apparent, that a monotheism based on a principle of evil is almost inconceivable. Pantheism, on the other hand, dissolves moral distinctions either by denying all morality, or affirming that everything is moral. Its underlying principle is the nothingness

of the phenomenal world, God being all in all. Hence the divine essence or all-inspiring and sustaining substance is drawn into a relation with nature so close, that all matter and thought, every impulse, action, object, is divine, and equally divine—or that each and all are nothing, on which latter alternative there is neither foul nor false. A polytheistic religion, again, might conceivably preserve moral distinctions, were its gods strictly subordinated to the One Supreme; but no polytheistic religion has had a stable existence in that form. The worship of divine attributes, or of material forces as self-existing gods, has invariably resulted in divided and partially independent authority, which can only mean many and independent centres of morality with conflicting moral principles. While one god is the guardian of virtue, another is the indulgent patron of vice, and every lust may have its sacred fane. Even Persian dualism, which ranged all its disciples on the side of Ormuzd and righteousness, held out the temptation to propitiate his malignant counterpart. Monotheism, which thinks of God as in the world, but above it and independent of it, alone promulgates a universal moral law, can alone pronounce the categorical imperative to which every conscience must concede the right of exacting obedience. It alone harmoniously unites in thought all the powers of nature, subjects them to universal law, one will or intelligence, and thus brings nature round to be on the side of righteousness and the just man. From the monotheistic point of view, the order of nature supports

morality and sustains the conscience in the exercise of its functions.

In the religion of Israel it is possible to witness in a concrete form the growth of the conception of a divine righteousness and holiness. He who brought Israel out of Egypt was their living lord, helper, guide, and judge, under all circumstances. If Moses was the visible leader and lawgiver, yet behind Moses in all that he did was Jehovah. Moses began by deciding all causes in person, but was persuaded to devolve on others, head-men of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens, all but the hard cases, which he reserved for himself. These last might be decided on his own knowledge, or referred to Jehovah directly for decision, probably by lot. Jehovah thus became identified with law and justice, not excepting consuetudinary law, which decided all minor cases, for it also was administered with his sanction—a thought which retained its vitality. Singly and collectively, these decisions were known as Torah, divine instruction or revelation; and when they afterwards issued in a code or written record, that also was Torah, the name by which ultimately the divine revelation as a whole was designated. Evidently two kinds of Torah grew up side by side; the decisions of the ordinary judges, which were supposed to be informed not only by tradition, but also by the precedents that issued from the supreme court of Moses or Jehovah—and these precedents themselves. There were thus two parallel courses of legislative development, a lower and a higher, of which the spirit of the lower was tradition

mainly, whereas the spirit of the higher was revelation,—a distinction represented afterwards in the main by the priests and the prophets. It was in favour of these decisions that they were not originally committed to writing,—that they were living utterances that carried Jehovah's sanction—not even a book standing between Him and the hearts and conduct of His people. Nor did the thought of law as an abstraction intervene. Among patriarchal communities law has ever been an actual consuetudinary force equivalent to a binding public opinion, or the decrees of individuals to whom the community defers. Thus Jehovah was ever kept before the thoughts of His people, while they in their turn were taught by all their more serious affairs to think of Him as the God of justice and truth, the fountain-head of righteousness, and guardian of morality. In this instance, also, it was not by imposing an abstraction, but by the slow growth of actual experience, that the idea of the righteousness of God was firmly rooted in the national life.

It resulted that there were in Israel the living presence and rule of Jehovah, without a formal theocracy. A formal organisation of the state as a theocracy was not contemplated, nor did the civil authority formally profess to be theocratic. The old patriarchal government continued. The chiefs of clans and heads of houses, individually and in council, exercised the old rights according to consuetudinary law. The natural positions of men as articulated into the tribe or sept by descent, possessions, personal prowess, or reputation for wisdom, supplied

the ordinary machinery of a civil government. One peril of tribal federations has always been the possibly loose cohesion of the tribes—a cohesion which, in Israel's case, the settlement in Canaan necessarily endangered. Here, however, their religion came in aid, by so interpenetrating the whole business of life as to be the main element of cohesion and bond of unity. Not by kinship, nor yet by consuetudinary law, were these old clans held together, but by religion. The basis of Israel's nationality, or rather the matrix where it came into being, was Israel's religion.

II. The importance of the fact now stated lay in this—that the nation itself became a factor in the development of religion during the prophetic or progressive period. In this development the prophet, and not the priest, had the chief share. The priest, as such, had no new message from God to man. He represented man rather before God. Correct ritual was therefore, to the priest, the great essential; whereas to the prophet, who bore as it were words of fire in his breast, external forms of any kind were comparatively valueless. The priest's calling tended to make him a mere mechanical performer of rites, and to rest his vocation itself on a merely legal and purely rationalistic view of righteousness and of man's relation to God. The priest of the heathen world could make atonement, and he who under his guidance approached the altar could fulfil all righteousness—for righteousness itself was thought of as a legal arrange-

ment. But it was not so with the priesthood and sacrificial system in Israel. They rested on the thought that the deliverance and national birth of Israel were an act of sovereign favour. Israel was debtor, to begin with, and in all things. Not because it had had anything to commend it, but absolutely for His own name's sake, as an act of independent grace, in furtherance of His own purpose, had Jehovah made Israel His own. Thus, the heathen priest simply represented the guilty fear and cry of nature. The Levite, on the other hand, represented in addition the consciousness of Jehovah's electing and forgiving love, and could thus pass on to his spiritual descendants the idea of self-sacrificing love even in God. There is thus a true connection between the sacrificial system of the Old Testament and the whole conception of atonement in the New. But the thought was apt to be forgotten by the priest, except as he was reminded by the prophet. The first idea to be connected with prophecy is, that the prophet is spokesman for another, and emphatically for God. In the highest sense of the term, the prophet was essentially different from the diviner, soothsayer, or seer; and different, also, from the professional prophet. Diviners had always abounded under various names, and are mentioned with respect along with warriors, judges, priests, and prophets—*i.e.*, professional prophets. These, like the members of other professions, readily mistook their principles, maxims, and routine methods, for a higher illumination. Yet it is a mistake to regard these pro-

fessional prophets as mere professors of a superstitious art. Together with the priests, they were rather the ordinary spiritual guides who went by tradition or the illumination of the past, which cannot fully meet the wants of an ever-changing present and future. They were the rank and file of the preachers, who nourished according to their lights the intellectual and moral life of the people. Their services, no doubt, were often worthless and mercenary; but they themselves occasionally stood in honourable relation to the prophets, emphatically so called. There was nothing in the fact that one belonged to the professional class that pre-eminently fitted or entitled him to receive a divine revelation, so as to mark him out as one of the higher order. At the same time, there was nothing in it to prevent him; and Habakkuk and Haggai appear to have been prophets by profession, while Ezekiel was a priest.

The idea of prophecy was thus necessarily somewhat shifting, if only for the reason that a prophet had to prove his claim to the higher gift—or rather, that the higher gift had to prove itself, for there were tests of prophecy. If of the nature of prediction, or involving prediction, fulfilment would verify it; if rather of the nature of moral and spiritual truth, its self-evidencing power would ultimately prevail. Of course the popular verdict was frequently at fault—electing to stand by the traditionalists rather than by those who really had a new truth or fresh information, wisdom, or counsel from Jehovah to give. It revered the old truth that had been proved or accepted, but regarded

with aversion the truth that was on its trial. Probably no fixed line was drawn in popular estimation between the various classes of prophets, seers, and soothsayers. As happened to Samuel, the functions of the seer and prophet were not strictly distinguished. But the prophet, properly so called, was more than his professional brother or than the seer. He was a seer, so to speak, with the power of seeing into the heart, into the secrets of life, and of divine Providence, as well as to some far-off point of time; for while the latter was not excluded, the former was essential. Jehovah's true prophets were they who were in His secret counsels, who were in sympathy with His thoughts and methods, whose whole inner life lay open to His spiritual influence, and whose consciousness was toward Him rather than toward the phenomenal world. His action and communication neither impaired nor destroyed their intelligence and personality.

The conception at the bottom of mantic or heathen prophetism was radically different. According to it, the prophet's personality was the central point of resistance to the afflatus of the gods. His personality had therefore to be destroyed or overborne in order to his being fully possessed. Hence fatuous persons, and others to whom nature had denied a true human consciousness and personality, were supposed to be peculiarly susceptible of the prophetic influence. From this general position there was a natural descent, till even divination by inspection of the entrails of sacrificial beasts or birds was logically



reached—the latest visceral pulsations presenting an opportunity where absolute passivity and supernatural action might most happily be combined. This view, although not at all the normal Old Testament conception of prophecy, has occasionally prevailed in the Christian Church. The early apologists illustrated the action of the Holy Spirit on the prophets by reference to such figures as the flute-player and his flute, or the plectrum and the lyre; but the view was an import from Alexandrian Hellenism. It has even been carried to excess since the Reformation, in the course of one of the most miserable and fruitless of controversies, the so-called Syncretistic, which originated in foolish attempts to draw all Churches closer together, and ended in an incredible increase of mutual animosity. But the mantic or ecstatic conception of prophecy has long ago been judged, condemned, and driven out as a Montanist heresy. The Old Testament does know something in rare cases of an ecstatic exaltation, but the difference between it and the mantic or heathen view was well expressed by Augustine: the latter was alienation from one's own mind; the former meant only that the mind was freed from the ordinary trammels of the senses.

Monotheism is as essential to the true conception of prophecy as it is to morals. An intelligent view of the course of nature and human affairs must assume that they are subject to law, and not simply to diverse and discordant or conflicting forces. History, to be intelligible, must be interpreted on harmonious principles, if not also on the assumption that its phenom-

ena are referable to a central intelligence. Nature may here be left out of view, for the scientific investigation of nature was unknown. Now, men accustomed to regard events as the manifestation of divine purpose were thereby prepared to be in sympathy with the purpose itself. They were trained to consider the tendencies of things in relation to an inner harmony and causation. Hence they sought to discover things, the issue of a campaign, or the fate of an empire, not by chance sights and sounds, flight of birds and the rest, but by weighing probabilities and estimating moral and physical causes—especially moral causes. They looked deeper for the secret of success or failure, and the reasons for national stability or decay. They sought to stand in Jehovah's secret counsel, to them the only centre from which contemporary events could be explained and life be made to disclose its full significance; the one point of view, also, from which there might be discernment of the future. Plainly it was a mental attitude, a habit of observation and reflection, favourable to the reception of revelation. In it the Supreme Intelligence could find the point of contact and a worthier vehicle of its communications, unless we suppose that the prophecies of an Isaiah might have been given to the world with an equal fitness of things by one of the Magi in the train of an Eastern satrap, or by one of the courtiers of Augustus. It was also a habit of mind which made it possible for a continuous line of prophets to build on the same foundations without destroying each other's work. This, moreover, was not the mental attitude of

solitary individuals, but that to which prophets in succession strove to bring the whole nation, with, it is true, only partial success. Still it was diffused throughout the nation, one here and another there catching the spirit of the prophet. Thus the groundwork of the prophetic institution lay partially in the national life itself, in its common memories, ideas of things, and hopes. But for the action and reaction of spiritual influences throughout the whole people, a succession of prophets is almost inconceivable. There would have been no provision by which men might be fitted to receive revelation, and to become prophets.

Hence prophecy was not cosmopolitan but national, or from the national point of view. Hence, also, the fortunes of the nation in turn reacted on prophecy. Jehovah's purpose in and with Israel came to be clearly reflected in Israel's actual experience. The religious consciousness of Israel added to its contents as that experience ripened. By means and occasion of a remarkable and instructive history, the conception of Jehovah's relation to Israel was itself modified; and doctrines hitherto obscurely apprehended were taken up into the national faith.

Unlike other nations that had their golden age in the past, Israel placed it significantly in the future. No doubt the period of unique prosperity and military prowess, which culminated in the reigns of David and Solomon, was afterwards looked back to with peculiar fondness. The monarchy had united the tribes under a firm administration, and had given strength to the little kingdom hemmed in by sea, mountain, and

desert. It had increased its wealth and territory, and given it a place among the nations from which it looked abroad—dreaming of conquests, and forming projects of the loftiest ambition. But if Israel looked back to this period as others might to a golden age, it was because it saw in it the type of a glorious era which was yet to come. That old time was a realisation of greatness which never after faded from memory, and the retrospect became in the depths of their misery the suggestion of a future. It is no doubt possible to trace the germ of the Messianic hope further back; but it is undeniable that it was developed, realised, and formulated in times subsequent to David's reign and under the pressure of their calamities. The reigns of Ahab and Manasseh were the miserable and appropriate preparation for exile and captivity; and these last brought Israel face to face with the problem identified with the nation itself—its purpose in the world. Had Jehovah brought it with a strong hand out of Egypt, and chosen it for Himself, and had He now abandoned it? That could not be, for He was the covenant-keeping God. Or could it be that He was not God of gods and Lord of lords? Either thought was impossible. Still, the conquering world-kings aiming at universal empire had come within cognisance. The pressure of Syria, Assyria, Egypt, and Chaldæa, had been felt. The larger knowledge of the world was full of doubt and forebodings of evil. Disunion and dispersion, captivity and exile, and at last a broken people living on sufferance, seemed all to indicate that

Israel had no mission and no divine protector. Yet through these human agencies the faith of Israel was driven into the true line of expectation. If Jehovah was God, there must be hope for His down-trodden people, and another Moses, or rather another David, must arise. A glorious age must still be in the future. The nature of Jehovah's covenant, the very fact that its sanctions were not spiritual but temporal, required this. The conclusion was an absolute necessity for faith: faith boldly drew it, and clung to it with invincible tenacity. The prophetic literature from Amos downwards, and even the late apocryphal, implicitly rests on this conclusion, or broadly enunciates it. Held though it was in a thoroughly material form, and looking for a great world-kingdom, it preserved faith in Israel till the expectation itself was transfigured in the life and by the power of Him who is the author and perfecter of the faith. During the captivity in Babylon, Judaism was taught additional lessons. It was compelled to worship without a temple and with maimed rites of sacrifice. It could lean no longer on the old organisations of the national life. It was driven inwardly on itself on what was spiritual and eternal. It came in contact with Zoroastrianism, from which it would not necessarily recoil at its first impact; and Zoroastrianism, with its sharp distinction between good and evil, carried inexorably through every sphere of thought and life to the extreme of Dualism, its firm faith in immortality, and its clear conception of a spiritual world far more richly dowered with life than this, and filled with the

activity of angelic hosts, had in this crisis wherewith to profit Judaism; and without consciously borrowing, Judaism assimilated what of truth was kindred to itself. To this period may be traced the place and importance ever after given to prayer, the belief in immortality and a spiritual world, angels and archangel, and perhaps, also, the resurrection. In this expansion of its thoughts, Judaism gave proof of its vitality and of its essential truth; acting as Christianity now acts when, informed of science or of its own history and experience, it modifies its views and works out its ethics in successive parliaments or ecclesiastical councils and assemblies.

Henceforth Israel's faith was occupied with thoughts of a future in this world for the nation, and of a life after death. The former, the natural or native and prophetic development of Israel's faith, and the latter, assimilated from foreign sources, coalesced in the national creed, and appear in the later Judaism with which the Gospels have made us familiar. The widening of the area of faith went hand in hand with the more firmly rooted expectation of secular empire.

But the same national discipline which drew Israel's faith into the line of a Messianic expectation did more; it prepared the way for a spiritual and universal religion. Severe and protracted, this discipline was in the face of covenant promise, and of the national faith itself. What was its cause? Why was the promise broken or delayed, and the hope of Israel deferred? For the pious Israelite who laid to heart the monitions of prophecy there was only one answer.

The cause was Israel's sin,—a doctrinal position or belief in which his monotheistic faith more readily acquiesced. Had he become a convert to Persian dualism, the national misfortunes might otherwise be explained as an episode in the everlasting conflict between good and evil. It was a belief that could not have been suggested and firmly fixed in the mind during the happier circumstances of the old and prosperous times, and it was excluded by the earlier belief that the covenant was with Israel as a whole. But now there was plainly a sinful Israel in Israel, or all Israel was sinful, and, for the time at least, rejected. This latter and more awful alternative the prophets declared to be true. The universal declension had incensed Jehovah's wrath. The intenser realisation thus obtained of Jehovah's character as Holy accentuated the necessity for personal holiness in His people. In reality no new condition was imported into the covenant relation, for Israel had all along been bound to keep Jehovah's statutes. Yet, at the same time, a new turn was given to the spirit of observance by this insistence by the prophets on personal holiness. Men believed, indeed, that they were fulfilling all the covenant conditions, and in one sense they actually were more religious than ever. The sacrificial ritual had become more elaborate; priestly dues were thereby increased; and yet, religious burdens heavier than ever were willingly borne. The prophets' complaint was, that the people were in this sense too religious, and that there was too much of a righteousness that had nothing in it. What was required was, according to the pro-

phets, that a man should do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with his God. Personal holiness, in the sense of a spiritual morality, and as opposed to a legal morality, was what was now taught by the prophets as the condition of Jehovah's favour,—a truth confirmed and illustrated, as they maintained, by Israel's actual experience.

The effect was to change the very basis of the covenant relation itself. It was now with faithful Israel, with the Israelite in heart, with a spiritual people and not a privileged race, that the promise held. The covenant relation was made to rest on an inward, subjective, and spiritual foundation. On that ground all Israel might be rejected; but to rise in thought to the possible rejection of Israel was to admit the thought of the possible reception of others, if only they might fulfil the spiritual condition. As soon as room was made for this thought, that it was no longer Israel after the flesh, but Israel after the spirit, that was intended, the basis was laid for a spiritual and universal religion, in which nationality should in itself confer no privilege, and Jehovah be the covenant-keeping God of a people drawn from any race, and nurtured in any clime. This actually is the thought that inspires and sheds its light over the entire prophecy of the later Isaiah. Even he still localises the presence and glory of the Lord in the temple, although His glory also fills the whole earth. Zion is still the centre from which the glory of the Lord shines forth, but the centre to which all nations look. And from time to time the thought



overflows its usual bounds ; the temple becomes the house of prayer for all people ; mercy and forgiving love are extended to all ; heaven only is Jehovah's throne ; the whole earth is His footstool ; and no house, however sacred or magnificent, is the place of His rest.

This conception of a spiritual religion can hardly be said to have risen higher, or to have remained at that high level. No thought more slowly penetrated the Jewish mind. The narrower views lived on, that the rest of mankind, with their philosophy, political science, and art, must by rite or obligation become Judaic ; that the one religious portal, through which all must pass to be saved, was Judaism. Provision had always been made for the reception of converts or proselytes, the "strangers" of the Pentateuch. The fame acquired by Israel during the earlier monarchy probably attracted many. After the captivity, men of many nations occasionally passed over to Judaism on account of its worship of one God, and its comparative purity of life. Even the legionaries of Rome, when stationed in Palestine, at times cast in their lot in religion with the Jews. Prior to that, the desire to make proselytes had been strengthened by the persecutions endured under Antiochus Epiphanes (B.C. 176-165), and the struggle for independence under the Maccabees, till the desire became fanatical. Frequently the worst motives so combined in these conversions, both on the side of convert and proselytiser, that the convert when secured became "twofold more the child of hell" than his

teachers. But under every form, proselytism assumed that Israel, as such, was still a privileged race, or, practically, that the salvation of God ran in the life-blood of one small heterogeneous people. It is well, however, to remember that a similar difficulty reappeared in Christianity, and still lingers there, if only in the difficulty experienced by many of believing that God's providence has extended to the origin and growth of the religions of all nations, and that they are not wholly of Satanic origin. It would appear that under the most favourable circumstances men slowly and reluctantly admit the thought that the one living and true God rules supreme in every department of nature and life. The whole field of nature has at last been won for that view; but a synthesis in which the divine purpose shall clearly emerge from the history of all religions seems to be, as yet, but timidly entertained. Judaism alone, of all the ancient religions, went at least so far as to lay the basis of a spiritual or universal religion.

A monotheistic religion is not necessarily perfect or complete. Monotheism is not everything in religion—for the reason that two parties, God and man, are concerned. True views are, therefore, also necessary of the nature of man, of the wants, and even of the rights, that attach to his humanity, if the grave perils of a one-sided, fanatical religion are to be escaped. Where the divine element in religion is the all-absorbing consideration, feelings divinely implanted, sacred and tender, may wither in the presence and light of the awful Majesty, exclusively

adored; and at His supposed behest all considerations may be swept aside, although founded on truth and justice. Nor is it open to question that Judaism was almost continuously marked by fanaticism and intolerance, and at times, in the persons of its highest representatives, by ferocious cruelty. Its hard, unbending, and exclusive spirit may, indeed, have been an absolute necessity of its existence and continuance. It may have been exclusive in order, at the proper time, to become comprehensive; but the fact itself cannot be denied. But for the impossibility, it would undoubtedly have propagated itself, like Mohammedanism, by the sword. John Hyrcanus, son and successor of Simon Maccabæus (B.C. 136-106), anticipated in this the Arabian prophet. It was, accordingly, weakest where Hellenism was strongest. The Hebrew prophets were the prophets of Jehovah, attempting to see, understand, and explain all things from the divine or universal centre—the centre of the supreme rule and purpose of Jehovah Himself. The Greek, on the other hand, sought to understand and harmonise everything from a particular centre—the point of view of his own manhood. His centre of thought and vision was humanity, his purest and loftiest religion was philosophy, and rightly and naturally he became the chief prophet of humanity. His mastery of form and sympathy with the beautiful, his love of liberty and passion for art, were simply the expression of the truer and fuller conceptions which he, in turn, had realised of the nature of man. With him man was everything, and had virtues

and rights over against the gods. Hellenic art and philosophy were and remain an unconscious plea for humanity in its own right. Hellenism also was one-sided ; yet because it had the insight to discern and the vigour to preserve a substantial and indispensable truth, it is justly acknowledged to be a more genial, and in many respects truer, exponent of humanity than Judaism. There have been notable occasions when the revival and diffusion of the thought and spirit of Hellenism alone gave voice and effect to the just claims of humanity against a one-sided theological development. Without the ideas and life that flow from it, Christianity could not have directed the spiritual conceptions of Judaism into the service of a universal religion. At the same time, it is none the less true that the theistic is the higher centre of thought, and therefore the one absolutely essential basis of a spiritual religion ; for any lower stand-point, humanity itself, is part of the system of things to be explained. If, again, there have been times that called for and justified the protest of Hellenism, history reveals occasions when the influence of the Judaism, and even of the Mohammedanism, that coexisted alongside of Christianity, restrained its progress towards idolatry, or the deification of humanity, and so checked its further degradation.

These, then, are some of the contents which it handed over to Christianity, and that still live in it : a monotheism in which the sole, supreme Ruler of the universe is holy and just, yet merciful and gracious,

the God of truth; prophecy, the spirit of which is still full of insight, because it draws its life from enduring principles, and helps all on whom it rests to discern the divine purpose amid the shifting scenes of life; an intricate symbolism of oblation and sacrifice, that illustrates the manifold relations in which men acknowledged that they stood towards God, dependent, grateful, joyously confident, conscience-stricken and deserving of death; and a literature which, if it were nothing more, contains the oldest religious traditions of mankind, but is, besides, poetry, history, and practical wisdom, that continuously reveal the divine purpose, and, with incomparable truthfulness, the desires of the soul in its sorrow and shame, its strong yearning for deliverance from the bonds of sin, and for the favour and fellowship of God. Taking note of these, of the positive and negative elements which it has contributed to religion, the thought arises, nay, is forcibly borne in on the mind, that in the work which it actually did it was itself caught up and held of God—that in the higher thoughts and purer aspirations in which it rises so far above its ordinary self, and above other peoples, it was inspired by the eternal wisdom and kept alive by the power of God. How its national life throughout its history was an educational factor for Israel itself; how in its unity of blood-relationship, positive institutions, and social life, it became the sole representative of distinct tendencies of thought, till, in itself an instrument infinitely com-

plex and delicate, it effected the most definite, substantial, and permanent results; how it became the prophet nation of antiquity and of the world,—can never fail to bespeak and awaken serious reflection. If it be true that nations have each of them its mission, and along with it its diversity of gifts; if nations, and not individuals only, are the forces that are moved against each other for the solution of the far-reaching, stern, and awful problems of life,—it is only a special application of that view to maintain, what the long course of its history corroborates, that under God Israel's mission was essentially the religious education of mankind, and that its main purpose in the world was the revelation of divine truth. No other nation has borne so sustained and trustworthy a testimony to the supernatural and spiritual.

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# ST GILES' LECTURES.

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*SECOND SERIES—THE FAITHS OF THE WORLD.*

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*LECTURE XI.*

MAHOMMEDANISM.

By the Rev. JAMES CAMERON LEES, D.D., Minister of St Giles' Cathedral, Edinburgh; and one of Her Majesty's Chaplains.

THERE are few who have passed from Christendom into a Mahommedan country for the first time who will readily forget the sensations they experienced. Whether they crossed the Straits of Gibraltar, or sailed through the Iron Gates of the Danube, or entered Egypt by the Port of Alexandria, it was their introduction into a new world, marked not only by the change in the natural scenery and the dress and manners of the inhabitants, but by the signs of an all-prevailing religion different from any form of faith that they have ever before known. Instead of the familiar steeple or tower, there rises the slender tapering minaret; the glittering crescent

flashes high in air in the place of the cross ; and the gaily painted mosque stands with its court and fountain, where the traveller has been accustomed to see the Christian church. Five times a-day he hears floating over the city the weird cry of the muezzin calling the inhabitants to their devotions. He sees men, in the midst of their occupations, prostrate themselves in prayer in obedience to the summons ; or, if he obtains admission to the mosque, he finds a worship unlike any he has ever seen. There is no priest, no altar, no sacrifice, picture, image, ritual ; and though there may be a thousand people before him, they are all buried in profound silence, all gazing in the same direction—all apparently absorbed in their devotions, to the exclusion of everything around them. This is entirely new to the Christian traveller, and it is long before the feeling of novelty wears away. Nor is it the novelty of the religion alone that awakens his interest. It has a great history, in which one episode after another rises before him : the great human deluge which submerged early Christendom ; the struggles of the crusaders for the Holy Sepulchre ; the gleam of intellectual progress that shone on Spain ; the glories of the Alhambra, and the schools of Cordova and Seville ; the expulsion of the Moors ; the salvation of European civilisation by Charles Martel on the plains of France, and by Sobieski beneath the walls of Vienna. Mahommedanism<sup>1</sup> has carved its

<sup>1</sup> I use in this lecture the popular name for this religion, though Islam is the more correct designation.



name deep on the history of the world; nor can we feel sure it has played its part. It is here with us still—a powerful faith, commanding the bigoted allegiance of 175,000,000 souls, 40,000,000 of whom are our own fellow-subjects,—presenting on its political side in Turkey, India, Africa, problems most difficult of solution; a religion adding to its adherents by an unceasing proselytism; a religion utterly unlike any other the world has seen—unlike Christianity, with which it has been in perpetual conflict—unlike Buddhism, for it owns a personal God—unlike Hinduism, for it denounces idolatry—unlike Judaism, for it acknowledges the Messiah. “There are two objects of curiosity,” said Dr Johnson—“the Christian world and the Mahommedan world; all the rest may be considered as barbarous.” In view of what we have learned regarding other religions, we may look upon that statement as too sweeping; but for thinking men, Mahommedanism, in its past history, its creed, its possible future, must ever be a subject of surpassing interest.

It is impossible to form any true conception of this religion without some study, however slight, of the life and character of its founder; for the whole system as it exists to-day is just as it left his hand, and bears upon every feature the impress of his powerful mind. Mahommed was born in the year 570, in the Arabian city of Mecca. He spent his youth as a shepherd near that city; in after life he was especially fond of referring to his early occupation. “Pick me,” he said to his followers on one occasion, “the blackest of

those berries, they are such as I used to gather when I fed the flocks at Mecca. Verily no prophet has been raised up who has not performed the work of a shepherd." When still a young man he entered the service of a wealthy widow called Hadigah, who was a merchant, and who employed him in the management of her caravans. He made on her behalf one special journey to Damascus, which was attended with such success that the widow, delighted with his business qualifications and his other attractions, became interested in him, and finally married him. He was a man of upright character, courteous in his demeanour, and so much esteemed for his honesty that he bore the name of El Amin, the Trusty. He was thoughtful, fond of solitary contemplation, of an extremely sensitive and nervous temperament, and had from his youth suffered from a disease which tradition calls epilepsy, but "the symptoms of which more closely resemble certain hysterical phenomena well known and diagnosed in the present time, and which are almost always accompanied with hallucinations, abnormal exercise of the mental functions, and not unfrequently with a certain amount of deception, both voluntary and otherwise."<sup>1</sup> While such was the peculiar nature of the man, it was one calculated to be deeply affected by his religious surroundings. These were of a very special character. The religion of the Arabs was idolatrous: originally Sabeen, or the worship of the heavenly bodies, it had degenerated into a gross

<sup>1</sup> Palmer, *The Qurân*, p. xx.

fetichism. In the temple of Mecca, which procured for that town the distinction of the Holy City, there was a collection of three hundred and sixty-five idols, the chief of them bearing the name of Allâh ta âlah—the God most High; and in the wall of the temple then, as now, was the celebrated black stone believed to be one of the stones of Paradise, said to have been originally white, but blackened by the kisses of its sinful worshippers. Of this temple, or Kaaba, as it was called, the grandfather and the uncle of Mahommed were successively the guardians. He was familiar with its ceremonies, and was brought into daily contact with its pagan rites. The surroundings of Mahommed were, however, by no means exclusively heathen. There were communities of Jews who had found their way into the country, seeking a refuge from Roman persecution; and there is reason to believe that Mahommed was familiar with their peculiar rites, and the strange traditions of their Talmud. Christians also were to be found largely interspersed among the Arab tribes. There were anchorites living in the wildest parts of the Arabian desert, in the clefts of Mount Serbal and Sinai; and there were Christian communities and monasteries planted here and there on the outskirts of Syria, with whom Mahommed came in contact in his wanderings as a trader. It was a debased and corrupt form of Christianity, full of extravagances, that they represented; but, such as it was, he was familiar with it. Indeed there were tribes of Arabs who nominally professed the Christian religion as their creed. The contact, or

perhaps rather the clashing together, of these various faiths, produced a spirit of inquiry. There were those at Mecca whom neither Paganism, Judaism, nor Christianity, taken alone, could satisfy, and who were anxiously searching for some kind of truth that might commend itself to them. These were called "Hanifs." Some of these searchers were led by their investigations to embrace Christianity; others seem to have taken their stand on what they deemed the faith of their father Abraham, the unity of God, and to have proclaimed it as the only worthy ground of belief; others found no answer at all to their quest. A story has been handed down, how four men of the tribe of the Koreish sat in secret conclave, and discussed the religious state of their people. "Our fellow-countrymen," they said, "are in a wrong path; they are far astray from the religion of Abraham. What is this pretended divinity to which they offer victims, and around which they make solemn processions?—a dumb and senseless block of stone, incapable of good and evil. It is all a mistake; seek we the truth, seek we the pure religion of our father Abraham. To find it let us quit our country if need be, and traverse foreign lands." Three of them in their travels became Christians; but the fourth, unable to find a religion to satisfy him, might be seen daily standing with his back to the Kaaba uttering plaintively the touching prayer: "Lord, if I knew in what way thou didst will to be adored and served, I would obey thy will; but I know it not." This story illustrates the sceptical and inquiring spirit of the time,

and the longing for light entertained by the more thoughtful. Among these Hanífs were some of Mahommed's near relations.

Such was the environment of this pensive, sensitive, nervously organised man. Such were the influences which were daily telling upon him. The result was the evolution of a new and powerful religion. When he was approaching his fortieth year his doubts pressed heavily upon him; and he was wont to retire for meditation to a cave in the neighbourhood of Mecca, spending there sometimes whole days and nights together, in fasting and watching. It is in a wild and rugged spot, about three miles from the city, in a situation lonely in the extreme. During one of his visits to this solitary place, an angel appeared to him and bade him read. Mahommed replied, in great terror, that he was no reader. The angel shook him violently three times, and again bade him read, when the angel repeated these words:—

“ Read ! in the Name of the Lord who did create ;  
Who did create man in congealed blood.  
Read ! for thy Lord is the most generous,  
Who has taught the use of the pen,—  
Has taught man what he did not know.”

The effect of this apparition upon Mahommed was overwhelming. He deemed himself possessed; he contemplated suicide; in his misery he felt life to be intolerable. After a time the angel appeared to him again, and subsequently revelations came rapidly—visions, some of them weird and terrible, presented themselves to his mind. Tradition says he roared

like a camel ; the sound as of bells wellnigh rent his heart in pieces ; on the coldest day the perspiration, like beads of silver, would roll down his face, and the glorious brightness of his countenance give place to a ghastly hue ; his face was covered with foam ; his eyes were closed. The result of these revelations was a conviction impressed upon him of the unity of God, and also that he was divinely commissioned to preach it to the world. It does not fall within the scope of this lecture to enter upon the questions that have been very earnestly debated as to the reality and character of these revelations—Whether Mahomed was an enthusiast, a fanatic, an impostor, a man specially inspired by the devil, or an epileptic subject to hysterical hallucinations. Our business is with the religion as we find it. There can, we think, be little doubt that the man himself was convinced of the reality of these visions and revelations : especially, in the early part of his career, his personal sincerity is apparent. The enthusiasm also that he kindled in others, and the way in which some of the noblest of his countrymen rallied round him, show him to have been no conscious impostor ; and if some of his later revelations seem to have come when they were wanted to vindicate his conduct, and to stamp very questionable actions with divine authority—such as his marriage with the divorced wife of his adopted son—we must remember the readiness with which men believe to be true what they wish should be true, and how he had been long accustomed to regard all his impulses as express commands from God.

His progress as a teacher was slow. He suffered persecution from the mass of his fellow-countrymen. His wife Hadîgah, his freedman Zâid, and a few others, accepted his testimony, but the rest of his people regarded his visions as vain tales. Five years passed, and he had made no more than forty or fifty converts. Some of these were compelled to seek safety in flight to Abyssinia. His own life was only safe through the protection of his powerful relatives, especially that of his uncle Abu Tâlib, the guardian of the Kaaba. "My nephew," said this aged man to him, "what is the new faith I see thee following?" "Oh, my uncle," replied he, "this is the religion of God and of His angels and of His prophets—the religion of Abraham. The Lord hath sent me an apostle unto His servants; and thou, my uncle, art most worthy of all I should address an invitation unto, and the most worthy to assist the prophet of the Lord." Abu Tâlib replied: "I am not able, my nephew, to separate from the religion and customs of my forefathers, but I swear that so long as I live, no one shall dare to trouble thee." Notwithstanding the intervention of his uncle in his behalf, he and his followers continued to suffer much from the hostility of the people, who were deeply attached to the national cult. Other troubles pressed heavily upon him. He lost his wife, Hadîgah, to whom he was deeply attached; and soon after his uncle, who had protected him so long, died. He was stoned by the inhabitants of a village which he had visited, and was left by the roadside wounded and almost dead. These

were heavy troubles, but with almost unfaltering steadfastness he held on his way, proclaiming the unity of God, and his own divine mission. Once he was tempted to enter on a compromise with idolatry, but his lapse was but momentary. "By Allah," said the determined man, "if they placed the sun on my right hand and the moon on my left to persuade me, yet, while God bids me, I shall not renounce my purpose." He was encouraged by a vision, in which he believed himself carried by Gabriel on a winged steed to Jerusalem, to meet all the prophets of God, who welcomed him, and afterwards to the presence of God Himself in the seventh heaven. His prospects were at the darkest, when aid came to him from an unexpected quarter. Two tribes who held the city of Medinah, and who regarded the Meccans with animosity, received his religion, and afforded a refuge to his disciples, and finally to himself. He stole away, at the risk of his life, from Mecca, and reached Medinah. On his journey he lay three days and three nights concealed in a cave from the pursuit of his enemies. His sole companion, Abu Bekr, looking upwards to a crevice through which streamed the morning light, and thinking of his enemies, whispered, "What if one of them were to look beneath him, he might see us under his very feet! "Think not thus," replied the prophet; "we are two, but God is in the midst a third." This flight of the prophet—or the Hegira, as it is called—took place in 622. It is well looked upon as the beginning of the Mahomedan era. It was certainly the crisis of the prophet's history: thenceforth his star was in the ascendant.



For the first six months of his residence in Medinah he was busied in organising his converts. He built a mosque for their worship, from the roof of which was proclaimed the call to prayer, that has never since ceased to be sounded. Here also he made a new and a great departure from his previous line of action. Hitherto his only weapon was persuasion—now it became force. The sword was henceforth to be the pioneer of the faith. “Fight against them until there be no opposition in favour of idolatry, and the religion be wholly God’s,” became a maxim, as it still is, with all true Moslems. If the prophet had a high ideal before, as there is reason to believe he had, he now fell sadly away from it. The peaceful preacher of righteousness spent the last ten years of his life in training an army of fanatical warriors. His character became brutalised, his life sensual. He appealed to divine sanction for his licentiousness. The early purity of his soul vanished. He changed into a man of cunning and of blood. But his outward success was great. With an army of ten thousand men he advanced against Mecca. The city was conquered, the Kaaba swept of its idols, and made the sacred place of the new religion. One by one the Arab tribes submitted to the conqueror, and paid him tribute. In 632 the prophet died, when about to measure his strength with the power of Rome, but the work he had inaugurated went on. The Arab tribes in myriads poured forth from their desert to the conquest of the world. Like a fire driven over a sun-scorched prairie, they swept on to victory. Within

little more than a century they had conquered an empire extending from India to the shores of the Atlantic, and the same call to prayer was heard from the temple area at Jerusalem, and the mosque of Cordova in Spain. Mahommedanism has found a home in lands far away from the Arab city where it took its rise, but it bears deeply impressed upon it, wherever it is found, traces of its early home. In the ritual of the Meccan pilgrimage, in the worshipper praying towards the Kaaba, in the old pagan feast of Ramazan, in the language of its sacred literature—the language of the Bedaween of the desert,—in the Talmudic legends, and the stories from the Christian Apocrypha, gathered together by the prophet and incorporated in his revelations,—we have reminiscences of the circumstances in which this religion was cradled, and the influences which presided at its birth.

Such is the genesis of this religion. We have now to consider its leading and fundamental principles as we find them to-day. I shall confine myself to those beliefs common to all Moslems, having no space to notice the various sects into which they are divided upon points of belief and practice, apart from their common doctrinal basis. The creed (Kálíma) of Mahommedanism is a short one. It is contained in the words which are familiar to every one who has been in the East—which have been the battle-cry of armies, and the simple assent to which secures admission into Paradise. “There is no deity but God, and Mahomed is the apostle of God.” The two propositions of the creed are co-ordinate, of equal authority, and

equally binding upon believers. They express both the power and the feebleness of the religion. The proclamation of the unity of God is where the power of Mahommedanism has lain from the very first. It came as a new revelation to Eastern idolaters of a very grovelling description—to Eastern Christians, who were little better than idolaters, who were given up to image-worship, and had lost all sense of the unity of God while they were disputing about it most loudly, and waging angry controversies regarding it—to Jews who had forgotten the simple creed of Abraham and the sublime revelation of Sinai, and were wholly taken up with vain and silly traditions. It told all these of the one behind the many. It swept away images, philosophical subtleties, theological speculations, like so many cobwebs. There is but one God, it said, and man must be resigned to His will, and if he refuses he must be compelled to be so. “The Jews,” cried the prophet, “say Ezra is the Son of God, and the Christians say Messiah is the Son of God.” They take their doctors and monks for lords. God fight them, how they lie! But they are bidden to worship but one God: there is no God but He.” It was this revelation of the one God which had power. “It seized on these Arab hearts like an inspiration; it roused them by its breath out of death to a vigorous national existence; it made Cosmos in their chaotic world; and wherever they bore it, it kindled a fierce enthusiasm. The Moslem rang it out like the blast of a war-trumpet, and everywhere it stirred, persuaded, quickened, and organised the peoples prepared

for its message. The way in which it was caught from lip to lip, and was repeated, re-echoed, age after age through the Moslem world, shows how deeply it has stirred the hearts and imagination of a vast section of the human race. It is the one master-key to the history of the Moslem conquest, and to the elevating, purifying, stimulating influence which, while the doctrine was young, Mahommedanism exerted on the nations which composed its empire, and through them, on the whole world.”<sup>1</sup> But while the proclamation of the unity of God has been its strength, the other branch of its fundamental creed—the divine commission of the prophet—has been the source of its weakness. It has made men receive as of divine origin what are seen to be only utter and transparent absurdities. It has put the stamp of finality on practices which, in the light of advancing civilisation, are felt to be detrimental to the highest interests of humanity; and it has raised barriers to progress in all spheres—political, social, intellectual, and moral—which cannot be allowed to stand.

The creed of this religion is terse and pointed, but its theological system is very extensive, complicated, and dogmatic. It comprises that divine revelation said to have been given first to Adam, then at successive periods to Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Christ, and in its last and perfect form to Mahommed. “We believe,” said he, “in God, and in what hath been sent down to Abraham, and Ishmael, and Isaac, and Jacob, and the tribes, and in what was given to

<sup>1</sup> British Quarterly Review, No. LXV.

Moses and Jesus, and the prophets of the Lord." Mahommedanism thus professes to be the final chapter in a long series of revelations. According to the orthodox Moslem theologians, there are four foundations upon which the faith rests—the Qurân, the Hadis, the Ijmâ, and Quias. The Qurân is the written word of God; the Hadis comprises the traditional sayings and acts of the prophet; the Ijmâ is what corresponds to the "consent of the fathers"—the concurrent opinion of the highest authorities upon points concerning which neither the Qurân nor the Hadis is explicit; Quias is the analogical reasoning of the learned with regard to the teaching of the Qurân, the Hadis, and the Ijmâ. These are the pillars of Moslem theology and law; but of the four, the Qurân is the chief. Its authority is absolute, not only in all matters of religion, but in the sphere of politics, ethics, and science; and from it alone we can form an idea of the genius of the system, the principles underlying its action, and its influence on faith and practice.

The Qurân is the inspired word of God sent down to the lowest heaven in a complete form, and then revealed in portions to the prophet by the angel Gabriel. It is a book apparently without order or arrangement, the different parts of which seem promiscuously thrown together. It is divided into chapters, which are called Suras—the word Sura meaning a row of bricks in a wall. Some of these Suras evidently belong to the early part of Mahommed's career—others bear the marks of later com-

position; and it has been found possible, by careful analysis, to reduce the heterogeneous mass to something like chronological order, and to point out the precise period in the prophet's history to which the different parts belong. The confused character of the materials is accounted for by the manner in which they were brought together. At the death of the prophet, scattered fragments of the revelation were in the possession of various of his followers; some in the hands of one of his widows; others remained only in the memory of believers. In one of the battles which took place soon after the death of Mahommed, some of the most famous reciters of the Suras were slain; and lest they should all die and the revelations be lost, Zâid, a native of Medinah, was employed to collect all of them that could be found. These he gathered from fragments written on palm-leaves, scraps of parchment, shoulder-blades of mutton, stones, and other materials, and "from the hearts of men." His finished work probably differed but little from the Qurân as we now possess it. So carefully has it been preserved and transmitted from generation to generation, that there is but the one version in use throughout the Mahommedan world, and different readings are unknown. "The Turanian and the Aryan, the Arab and the Negro, alike learn its sonorous sentences, day by day repeat its opening clauses, and pray in its words as their fathers prayed before them." It is held in the utmost reverence. It is regarded as the great miracle of the faith. Its style and composition are deemed unsurpassable — more

miraculous than raising the dead. It is never touched by the Moslem without ablution of the person. Sentences from it are the only ornaments which adorn the walls of his mosques; verses from it are inscribed upon his banners. It is his code of laws, his theology, his book of prayer. No matter what his race, he must learn in Arabic and repeat by rote portions of the Qurân in every act of worship. To the European reader who makes its acquaintance through the medium of a translation, it seems a chaotic production—a mass of childish stories—a farrago of disconnected rhapsodies—largely sprinkled with legends from the Talmud and the Christian apocryphal books, among which he recognises familiar Bible stories sadly mutilated and travestied. To the Oriental it represents the most perfect form of speech, and the loftiest poetic inspiration attained to by man. But even the European reader cannot fail to discern occasional passages worthy of admiration for the grandeur of their descriptions, and the sublime morality they inculcate. Very fine, for instance, is this description of true religion from the second Sura:—

“There is no piety in turning your faces towards the East or the West, but he is pious who believeth in God, and the last day, and the angels, and the Scriptures, and the Prophets; who for the love of God dispenseth his wealth to his kindred, and to the orphans, and the needy, and the wayfarer, and those who ask, and for ransoming; who observeth prayer and payeth the legal alms, and who is of those who are faithful to their engagements when they have

engaged in them, and patient under ills and hardships, and in time of trouble. These are just, and those who fear the Lord."

Even in an English translation, we can catch the poetic rhythm, and discern somewhat of the majesty of this vision of the Judgment-day taken from the Sura entitled "The Folding-Up:—"

"When the sun shall be folded up,  
 And when the stars shall fall,  
 And when the mountains shall be set in motion,  
 And when the she-camels with young shall be neglected,  
 And when the wild beasts shall be huddled together,  
 And when the seas shall boil,  
 And when souls shall be joined again to their bodies,  
 And when the female child that had been buried alive shall ask for  
     what cause she was put to death,  
 And when the leaves of the Book shall be unrolled,  
 And when the Heavens shall be stripped away like a skin,  
 And when Hell shall be made to blaze,  
 And when Paradise shall be brought near,  
 Every Soul shall know what it has done."

As another instance of the lofty poetic expression often taken by the Qurân, we may give the famous contrast between believers and unbelievers, from the "Chapter of Light." Arabic scholars tell us that in the original it is unsurpassed for the dignity and expressiveness of its language and the singular beauty of the images employed. "God is the light of the heavens and the earth: His light is as a niche in which is a lamp, and the lamp is in a glass; the glass is as though it were a glittering star; it is lit from a blessed tree, an olive neither of the east nor of the west, the oil of which would wellnigh give light



though no fire touched it—light upon light! God guides to His light whom He pleases, and God strikes out parables for men, and God doth all things know. . . .

“But those who misbelieve their works are like the mirage in a plain: the thirsty counts it water till when he comes to it he finds nothing; but he finds that God is with him, and He will pay him his account, for God is quick to take account.

“Or like darkness on a deep sea, there covers it a wave which is above a wave, above which is a cloud—darknesses one above the other. When one puts out his hand he can scarcely see it, for he to whom God has given no light, he has no light.”

These are some of the more beautiful passages in the *Qurân*. They are chosen from long chapters, the greater part of which seem often to us silly, and are frequently unintelligible from our not knowing precisely the incidents in the prophet's career which called them forth. Some of the Old Testament stories which are given in the *Qurân*, are frequently so strangely told as to seem ridiculous.

As might be expected, the leading article of faith, “The Unity of God,” is the prominent doctrinal feature of the *Qurân*. The short Sura called “Unity” is said to be equal to two-thirds of the book. The attributes of God are expressed in ninety-nine names which are deemed especially sacred, and are often repeated as an act of devotion. Every chapter of the *Qurân* opens with the formula, “In the name of the merciful and compassionate God.” The following

words describing His majesty are esteemed most precious by the devout believers; they frequently carry them about their persons, engraved on agate or other precious stones, and they are constantly seen inscribed on the walls of mosques. They form the passage in the second Sura called the "Verse of the Throne:"—

"God, there is no God but He, the living, the self-subsistent. Slumber takes Him not, nor sleep. His is what is in the heavens and what is in the earth. Who is it that intercedes with Him save by His permission? He knows what is before them and what behind them, and they comprehend not aught of His knowledge but of what He pleases. His throne extends over the heavens and the earth, and it tires Him not to guard them both, for He is high and grand."

Passages similar to this celebrated one abound in the Qurân, describing, if not in language equally grand, yet in terms striking and forcible, the majesty and greatness of the Most High God, "whom those who are in the heavens and the earth adore voluntarily or involuntarily, their shadows also mourn and eve—Allah! the Eternal, the Living One, who never dieth, the first and the last."

These expressions, it must be felt, resemble somewhat those of Scripture, but the view of God given in the Qurân is peculiarly its own. It is different from that of the Jews, which combined with the idea of will that of righteousness, and there is an aspect of the character of God not found in Mahommedan

theology, which is the glory and mainspring of Christianity. We may read the book carefully through, yet never come upon such passages as these, "The Lord is not willing that any should perish," or "who will have all men to be saved." The name "Father," which expresses so much to the Christian heart, has no place among the ninety-nine holy names of the Qurân. Nor have the ideas it suggests anything corresponding to them in Moslem theology. The God of the Arabian prophet is not a God of love who desires that His children should become one with Him, and should yield Him their affection. He is a God of will and power, withdrawn from the human world, the highest relation to whom attainable by men is expressed in the well-known name the religion bears: Islam—that is, resignation,—the state of unconditional passiveness. This conception of God, certainly bound to lead in practice to a fatalism paralysing the activities of life, has been well termed the "Pantheism of Force."<sup>1</sup> "God is one in the totality of omnipotent and omnipresent action which acknowledges no rule, standard, or limits, save one sole and absolute will. He Himself, sterile in His inaccessible height, neither loving nor enjoying aught save His own and self-measured decree, without son, companion, or councillor, is no less barren for Himself than for His creatures; and his own barrenness and lone egoism in Himself is the cause and rule of His indifferent and unregarding despotism around."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Palgrave's Arabia, vol. i. p. 369.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

“One God the Arabian prophet preached to man ;  
 One God the Crescent still  
 Adores through many a realm of mighty span,—  
 A God of power and will.

A God that, shrouded in His lonely light,  
 Rests utterly apart  
 From all the vast creations of His might,  
 From nature, man, and art.

A power that at His pleasure doth create,  
 To save or to destroy ;  
 And to eternal pain predestinate,  
 As to eternal joy.”

That is not the God of the Christian.

Grouped around this central conception of God, there are certain dogmas occupying a prominent position in the Qurân, and to which great importance is attached in Moslem theology. The angelology of the Qurân is very definite in character. It is a reflection of Persian ideas, largely coloured from Talmudic sources. Angels are beings of a pure and aerial nature, who neither eat nor drink, who minister at the throne of God, watch the conduct of men, and record their actions for judgment. Four angels are specially held in veneration : Gabriel, the Holy Spirit, God's special messenger ; Michael, the protector of the Jews ; Azrael, the angel of death ; and Israfeel, the angel of the resurrection, by whom the last trumpet shall be sounded. A race of beings called *ginn* or *genii* also exist. They were created from fire before Adam ; they are less pure than the angels, and they shall be judged like men. Iblis is the devil, cast out of Paradise, because he refused to do homage to

Adam. Munkar and Naku are two angels who visit every man in his grave, make him sit up, and examine him as to his belief. If he confess that there is but one God, and that Mahommed is his prophet, he is allowed to rest in peace ; otherwise he is struck with an iron hammer, so that he roars out, and all animals near his grave, except gins and men, hear him. The earth is then pressed down upon the corpse, and it is left to be torn by dragons and serpents till the day of resurrection.

The eschatology of the Qurân and of the faithful, like that of many other religions, is the projection into the future of what is deemed painful or pleasant in the present. Much has been said as to the sensual character of the Mahommedan Paradise, but the heaven of the Moslem is just such a place as an Arab of the desert would naturally desire—"shade, water, fruit, rest, companionship, and service ;" and hell is the opposite to all this. Heaven consists of eight divisions. The physical delights of which are particularly described : The garden of eternity, the abode of peace, the abode of rest, the garden of Eden, the garden of refuge, the garden of delight, the garden of the Most High, and the garden of Paradise. Hell is said to have seven divisions also : Gehenum, for Mahommedans — for all Moslems must pass through hell ; Laswa, a blazing fire for Christians ; Hutama, a blazing fire for Jews ; S'ahir, a flaming fire for Sabians ; Saqar, a scorching fire for Magians ; Gahim, a fierce fire for idolaters ; and Hawia, a bottomless pit for hypocrites. Here is an

extract from the Qurân, illustrative of its view of a future life: "Verily those who misbelieve in our signs we will broil with fire; whenever their skins are well done, then we will change them for other skins, that they may taste the torment. Verily God is glorious and wise. But those who believe and do aright, we will make them enter gardens beneath which rivers flow, and they shall dwell therein for aye and aye; for them therein are pure wives, and we will make them enter into a shady state."

Between heaven and hell there is a partition-wall called El-Aarâf, on which are placed those who are not good enough for the one and too good for the other. "They will know the inhabitants of Paradise by their whiteness, and the people of hell by the blackness of their faces. They shall cry out to the fellows of Paradise, "Peace be upon you!" but they cannot enter it, though they so desire. But when their sight is turned towards the fellows of the fire, they say: "O our Lord, place us not with the unjust people." The day of resurrection and of judgment is preceded by special signs, twenty-five in number, some of them of a very singular character: The sun rising in the west; the appearance of a remarkable beast which shall rise out of the earth in the temple of Mecca; the coming of Jesus Christ, who shall descend upon one of the minarets of the mosque at Damascus; a mighty wind which shall sweep away the souls of all who have but a grain of faith in their hearts. When these and other signs minutely given shall have taken place, the day of judgment shall come, when all men

shall be judged by God in equity, from the book in which are written their good and evil actions. They "shall read it, and they shall not be wronged by a thread." Some shall enter into paradise; some shall go to hell. There is a bridge, *Sirat*, which all must pass over on the day of judgment. It is fixed in the midst of hell. It is sharper than the edge of a sword, and finer than a hair. In passing over it the feet of the infidel will slip, and he will fall into hell-fire, where his feet will be shod with shoes of fire, the fever of which will make his skull boil like a caldron, but the feet of the Moslem will be firm, and will carry him safely to paradise, where palaces of marble, full of delights, amid groves and gardens, await his coming.

The religious duties of the present life are equally clearly defined with the pleasures and pains of the life to come. The five pillars or foundations of practice are the saying of the creed, the five stated periods of prayer, the thirty days' fast of *Ramazan*, the legal alms, and the pilgrimage to *Mecca*. The *Qurân* attaches much importance to prayer, a fact which is somewhat anomalous in a system of religion so essentially fatalistic. "Glorify God," says the *Qurân*, "when the evening overtaketh you, and when you rise in the morning, and unto Him be praise in heaven and in earth, and at sunset, and when you rest at noon." Prayer is said to be "the pillar of religion," and the "key of paradise." Five times in the course of every day, in the morning before sunrise, directly after mid-day, immediately before sunset, after sunset, and at

nightfall, the criers from the minarets of the mosques proclaim in these words that the hour of prayer has arrived: "God is great! God is great! God is great! God is great! I bear witness that there is no god but God! I bear witness that there is no god but God! I bear witness that Mahommed is the apostle of God! I bear witness that Mahommed is the apostle of God! Come to prayers! Come to salvation! God is great! There is no other god but God!" and in the early morning the crier adds, "Prayers are better than sleep." All prayers must be preceded by ablution with water, and when that is not available, with sand, as travellers in the desert must often have observed. The form of prayer consists chiefly in the repetition of certain small Suras, the creed, the salutation of Mahommed and the angels, as given in the Qurân. It may be said anywhere, though services in a mosque are most meritorious. During the month of Ramazan, fasting is imperative. This month is chosen as sacred because during it the Qurân began to be revealed, and on a certain night in it, "the night of power," the Qurân came down in one volume to the lowest heaven. "The gates of heaven are then open, the gates of hell shut, and the devils are chained by the leg." Fasting is rigorously observed during this period, no one being allowed to eat, drink, or smoke from sunset to sunrise, though exceptions are made in favour of the sick and others similarly situated. The legal alms is the fourth of the five foundations of practice. "Prayer," say the theologians, "carries us half-way to God, fasting brings



us to the door of His palace, and alms procure an admission." A rate is regularly levied upon certain kinds of property belonging to believers, and its results dispensed in ways of charity and benevolence, and specially for the support of the poor. The fifth practical obligation is the pilgrimage to Mecca, a duty which is binding upon all believers, and the ritual and ceremonies of which, some of them of very extraordinary character,<sup>1</sup> are very minutely laid down. In 1880 93,250 pilgrims visited Mecca; and a graphic writer—Mr Blunt—who saw the mighty gathering at Jeddah, passing on to the holy city, has given us his impressions of its cosmopolite character. Every race and language were represented, and every sect: "Indians, Persians, Moors were there; Negroes from the Niger, Malays from Java, Tartars from the Khanates, Arabs from the French Sahara, from Oman and Zansibar, even; in Chinese dress, and undistinguishable from other natives of the Celestial Empire, Mussulmans from the interior of China," all pressing to the holy shrine, to say their prayers in the Kaaba, and to kiss the black stone, as the Arabs did probably for centuries before Mahommed was born.

There is yet another aspect of this faith which needs to be noticed, and without which any survey of its religious principles would be incomplete. It is not only a rule of faith and practice; it is also a code of law—a system not only of theology and ethics, but also of jurisprudence. With the Moslem, Church

<sup>1</sup> A full description of these will be found in that fascinating book of travel, Burton's *Pilgrimage to Mecca*, vol. iii. ch. 26.

and State are one. The clergy are the lawyers, the Khalif is both emperor and pope, and the chief ecclesiastical functionary of Constantinople is the chief legal officer. According to the Arab proverb, "Religion and country are twins." Many of the political institutions are simply the customs of the Arab tribes, which, being adopted by the prophet, have become the fixed law for all ages. Some of the peculiar features of Mahommedan jurisprudence are specially worthy of notice. There is no tolerance to be shown to unbelievers, and war against them is a sacred duty. "When ye encounter the unbelievers of the Qurân strike off their heads, until ye have made a great slaughter amongst them, and bind them in bonds." This is the written law; and though, from circumstances, it may be in abeyance, it is still binding on the faithful. It inspires a suppressed spirit of hatred which may, should a fitting opportunity at any time arise, take shape in outbursts of fanatical zeal and cruel slaughter. Slavery is a legalised institution. Mahommed did much to ameliorate the condition of the slave, giving directions that all slaves should be kindly treated: "And your slaves," he said, "see that ye feed them with such food as ye eat yourselves, and clothe them with the stuff ye wear; and if they commit a fault ye are not inclined to forgive, then sell them, for they are the servants of the Lord and are not to be tormented." These instructions of the prophet are in the direction of mercy, but slavery being tolerated by him, and mentioned in the Qurân, becomes for ever legalised; and so long as the religion survives,

this curse of humanity must survive also. Polygamy is also a fixed religious institution. It is allowed by the teaching of the Qurân and the example of the prophet, and can never be abolished. With all the evils connected with the practice, it is an ordinance for all time. It is under certain restrictions, but it cannot be abrogated. The position of woman in society is equally defined. She belongs to an inferior grade of beings, incapable of self-control,—the slave, not the companion, of man. The law of divorce is also very specific. By it woman is recognised as the property of her husband, having no rights of her own, and entirely at his caprice and will. These institutions are outstanding; but there are other features of the Moslem code which are also singular,—such as the law of evidence, the embargo on usury, the interdict on all games of chance, and the express laws against use of intoxicating liquors, though the latter have been so refined by Moslem lawyers that their force is almost lost. The legislative provisions of Mahommedanism are in a great measure unique, and they specially differ from those of Christendom in the foundation on which they rest: they form part of religion itself; they are of its essence, bound up with its very existence; and must be binding so long as it endures.

There are two points still remaining, on which a few words must be said,—the relation of this religion to Christianity, and to the progress and civilisation of the world. Mahommedanism has very direct relations with Christianity. Though it was more

indebted to Judaism, still, so much of Christian doctrine has been incorporated in its theological system, that it has been called a kind of Christianity;<sup>1</sup> and regarded by some writers, rather as a heresy than an anti-Christian creed. One of the ablest Christian missionaries among the Indian Moslems,<sup>2</sup> pleads earnestly that the elements of Christianity in their creed should be freely recognised and honoured by those labouring among them, and used "as a foundation whereon to base higher and more glorious truths." And a late Mahommedan writer<sup>3</sup> attempts to show that Christ Himself foretold the coming of His prophet, and his work upon earth. Jesus, according to the Qurân, was the "Word of God," the Messiah and the greatest of the prophets—though in no sense divine. "They misbelieve who say, 'Verily God is the Messiah the son of Mary.' Say who has any hold on God, if he wished to destroy the Messiah the son of Mary and His mother, and those who are on the earth altogether." The allusions to Christ in the Qurân are equally numerous and strange. Many of the incidents mentioned in connection with His life are from the Arabic "Gospel of the Infancy," and the account of Christ's supposed death is substantially that of the "Gospel of St Barnabas." Christ did not die at all, but another was crucified in His stead. Judas, according to this apocryphal Gospel, was transformed into the form of his Master, delivered to Pilate, and crucified. The second ad-

<sup>1</sup> 'Hero Worship'—T. Carlyle.      <sup>2</sup> Rev. T. P. Hughes, B.D.

<sup>3</sup> Syed Ahmed Khan Bahador.

vent of Christ is acknowledged in the Qurân as "a sign of the approach of the last hour." Christianity as it appeared to Mahommed was a form of tritheism, and as such he denounces it again and again in the Qurân. The doctrine of the Trinity, as he knew it, he held in the utmost abhorrence. "They misbelieve who say, 'Verily God is the third of this,' for there is no god but one; and if they do not desist from what they say, there shall touch those who misbelieve amongst them grievous woe." "The Messiah, Jesus the son of Mary, is but the apostle of God, and His word, which He cast into Mary and a spirit from Him; believe then in God and His apostles, and say not 'Three.' Have done! it were better for you. God is only one God." Such notices of Christianity as it presented itself to Mahommed are very frequent. Had he known the religion of Christ in a purer form, how different might have been the result! Apart also from these semi-Christian references, there is a certain similarity in the two faiths themselves. Each proclaims itself the only true and universal religion; each is in its nature aggressive, and maintains an active propaganda; and each coming to life in a small circle of believers in the East, has overspread a large portion of the globe. The contrast, however, between the two religions, is more marked than any similarity which may exist between them can ever be. Not only is their fundamental conception of God, as we have seen, different; but the religion of Christ "contains whole fields of morality, and whole realms of thought, which are all but outside the re-

ligion of Mahommed. It opens humility, purity of heart, forgiveness of injuries, sacrifice of self, to man's moral nature,—it gives scope for toleration, development, boundless progress to his mind,—its motive power is stronger, even as a friend is better than a king, and love higher than obedience. Its realised ideals in the various paths of human greatness have been more commanding, more many-sided, more holy.”<sup>1</sup> Above all, in the life of our Lord and of Mahommed the contrast is complete. The one lived a life of self-sacrifice, the other of self-gratification,—the one relied on the power of the sword, the other on the power of the truth and the attraction of a mighty love. As the thought of the spotless purity, the incomparable benignity, the royal beauty of Christ's character, rises to our mind, we bow insensibly before it, and from our heart involuntary comes the tribute, “Truly this was the Son of God;”—but no such tribute can ever come from us, as we think of the Arabian prophet and his life, great and commanding though in many respects they were. Between the two religions there is a deep fundamental difference, in whatever aspect we regard them; whether we look at their origin, their historical development, their position in the world at the present hour. Perhaps in this last particular the contrast is as marked as any. “The Bible,” as Dean Stanley has truly said, “demands for its full effect the institutions, the teaching, the art, the society, of Christendom.” Christianity is a living spiritual religion, adapting itself to all forms of

<sup>1</sup> ‘Mahommed and Mahommedans’—R. Bosworth Smith.

human life, and thought, and action. In Mahommedanism there is no regenerative power; it is "of the letter, which killeth,"—inelastic, sterile, barren. And the words of Lord Houghton contain a deep religious and philosophical truth, as well as a beautiful poetic sentiment:—

“Mahommed’s truth lay in a holy book,  
Christ’s in a sacred life.

So, while the world rolls on from change to change,  
And realms of thought expand,  
The letter stands without expanse or range,  
Stiff as a dead man’s hand.

While, as the life-blood fills the growing form,  
The spirit Christ has shed  
Flows through the ripening ages fresh and warm,  
More felt than heard or read.”

These lines, while they contrast strikingly the genius of the two religions, indicate also the relation of the faith we are considering to the progress of the world. To that progress it must prove an obstacle from its very character. It is "stiff as a dead man's hand." It has no power of adaptation, expansion, development. All its customs, even those which are felt to be detrimental to the highest interests of humanity, stand upon the same divine authority. The social habits are so intertwined with the religion, that to separate them must mean the destruction of both. No race swayed by Mahommedanism can ever advance, except by renouncing their religion. There can be no permanent *modus vivendi* between such a race and the progressive nations of the world. When one of the

Turkish Sultans issued a manifesto against European interference, in which he said that the "affairs of his empire are conducted upon the principles of sacred legislation, and all the regulations of which are strictly connected with the principles of religion," it was not merely the statement of a truth; it was with him and his subjects a sufficient reason for the affairs of his empire remaining for ever as they were. When, a few years ago, reforms were proposed which would put the Sultan in the position of a constitutional sovereign, they were at once vetoed by the council of the Ulamá, on the religious ground that religion does not authorise its Khalif, or visible head, to place beside him a power superior to his own. "The Khalif ought to reign alone and govern as master. The Vakils (ministers) should never possess any authority beyond that of representatives, always dependent and submissive. It would consequently be a transgression of the unalterable principles of the Sheri (the written code of jurisprudence from the Qurán), which should be the guide of *all* the actions of the Khalif, to transfer the supreme power of the Khalif to one Vakil." For similar reasons most of the reforms forced upon Turkey by the European Powers have failed to obtain religious sanction, and have been carried out, if at all, but feebly and ineffectively. Every traveller in Turkey or Syria must have noticed wherever there is a Christian community, however corrupted its form of Christianity may be, there are signs of prosperity and advancement, presenting a singular contrast to the death-like state of things which prevails in the im-



mediate neighbourhood. That must ever be where a religion like this exists, which regards innovation as a sin. Doubtless in its origin it was a reform upon the terribly degraded state in which it found the idolatrous Arab tribes; and when it comes still to savage races who are low down in the scale, it may be regarded, in the first instance, as an improvement on their condition, ameliorating as it does certain features of their social and religious life; but in ameliorating these evils it makes no provision for their ultimate abolition, it rather makes them binding for ever, and it effectually prevents the people who embrace it from rising any higher. If it bestows upon them, in the first instance, some slight benefit—and even this is questioned by those who ought to know best—it certainly is almost an insuperable barrier to their receiving a greater benefit in all time to come.

The future of this religion has been often forecast. There are those who entertain hopes of a reformation which will bring it into harmony with the thought and life of the present day, and of a successor of the famous four Imáms who followed Mahommed, who shall possess, like them, the *Saut el Hai*—a living voice of authority to make deductions from the Qurân, and so adapt the religion to the requirements of modern life.<sup>1</sup> I confess I can see no ground for their hopes: not only is it part of an orthodox belief that the four Imáms can have no successor, and that their written law is unchangeable, but the essential charac-

<sup>1</sup> See "The Future of Islam," by Wilfred S. Blunt, in the 'Fortnightly Review,' 1881.

ter of the religion itself is unprogressive ; there are in it no principles capable of development, no germs from which higher things can be evolved. "It is sterile like its God, lifeless like its first principle, in all that constitutes life." The golden age of this faith, if it ever had one, is in the past. With its centre at Mecca or Medinah, or some Asiatic or African city, it may still exert in the future a power over oriental nations, but its day in civilised Europe is fast drawing to a close—

“ The moon of Mahomet  
Arose, and it shall set,  
While blazoned as on heaven’s immortal noon  
The Cross leads generations on.”

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#### NOTE.

This lecture is based upon personal observation and recollections of Eastern travel. I desire to express my special indebtedness to the following works : ‘The Qurân,’ edited by E. H. Palmer ; two admirable articles in the ‘British Quarterly Review,’ Nos. 55 and 65 ; and in particular to ‘The Faith of Islam,’ by the Rev. E. Sell, and ‘Notes on Muhammadanism,’ by the Rev. T. P. Hughes. The two latter works—studies by men who have lived long in the East—are well worthy of perusal.

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# ST GILES' LECTURES.

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*SECOND SERIES—THE FAITHS OF THE WORLD.*

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## *LECTURE XII.*

### CHRISTIANITY IN RELATION TO OTHER RELIGIONS.

By the Rev. ROBERT FLINT, D.D., LL.D., Professor of Divinity in the  
University of Edinburgh.

**M**Y subject—Christianity in relation to other religions—is obviously far too extensive to be satisfactorily dealt with in a single lecture. I am entitled, however, to assume that my hearers do not need to be informed either what Christianity is, or what the chief other religions of the world are or have been. Your acquaintance with Christianity began from infancy, and has been constantly increasing. You know the facts on which it is founded,—the authoritative sources of information regarding it,—the general course of its eventful history,—the

general character of the doctrinal systems to which it has given rise,—the ordinary objections which have been urged against it,—the chief evidences appealed to on its behalf, &c. As to other religions, eleven of them, comprising the most remarkable and most developed faiths of the world, have been described to you, in careful and comprehensive sketches, and in a fair and thoughtful spirit, by the lecturers who have preceded me. I may therefore confine myself entirely to a consideration of the relationship between Christianity and other religions, on the assumption that the things related do not need to be expounded or explained. This is what I mean to do.

Christianity is the only religion from which, and in relation to which, all other religions may be viewed in an impartial and truthful manner. It alone raises us to a height from which all the religions of the earth may be seen as they really are. Towering above them all, it is easy to perceive from it how far they fall short of it in elevation, magnitude, and beauty, while yet from no other point can their actual grandeur be so clearly seen, their relations to one another so distinctly traced, and the significance of each of them as a revelation of God and of men so readily and fully understood. No other positive religion thus affords us a point of view from which all other religions may be surveyed, and from which their bad and their good features, their defects and their merits, are equally visible. The point of view of a rational theism—of what is called Natural Religion—is, doubt-

less, next to that of Christianity, the most advantageous position from which to judge of the various "Faiths of the World," but it is certainly far below it,—one from which a large portion of their contents must appear without meaning,—one from which the estimate formed of them can be neither so comprehensive nor so profound, neither so just nor so genial. Christianity alone occupies the lofty and central vantage-ground from which every phase and phenomenon of religion can be appreciated with all the exactness of human science and all the fulness of human sympathy. This is a remarkable fact; and as it takes us straight to the very heart of our subject, let us endeavour to apprehend the meaning of it.

Now it certainly means much more than merely that Christianity is the centre of religious history. It is true, indeed, that various religions, directly or indirectly, prepared the way for Christianity, and contributed more or less to its contents. It is true, also, that other religions have come into contact with it, and given place to it, at various stages of its course. But it is quite possible to represent the actual historical connection between Christianity and other religions as having been far closer than the facts warrant us to maintain. The religions of mankind are not to be conceived of as so many stages or phases of faith all leading up to Christianity and passing on to it the truths which had been successively but separately embodied in each. This view overlooks one of the most important distinctions between the Eastern and Western, the Asiatic and

the European worlds. It is only in the latter, and there largely because of the influence of Christianity itself, that a common life and a common development of culture through a series of stages,—that the rise and progress of a truly human history, comprehending many nations united in the bonds of spiritual brotherhood,—can be traced. The Eastern or Asiatic world, in which Christianity and so many other religions appeared, was essentially a complex or aggregate of coexistent peoples, with separate histories but no general history, each of these peoples being isolated or in little more than external contact with one another, each acting on principles or impulses peculiar to itself, and each proceeding on a different course from its neighbours. The creed of Confucius, so wonderfully correct as regards its moral precepts, was already old when taught by “the Master Kung” in the sixth century B.C., and it still rules the minds of about four hundred millions of human beings; but Christianity has certainly not borrowed from it a single thought or maxim. Brahmanism and Buddhism far surpass in profundity and wealth of spiritual and speculative thought all other heathen systems; but it is only in modern times that they have come into contact with Christianity, and only in quite recent times, and in connection with the pantheism and pessimism of Germany, that they can be held to have affected even in the slightest degree the estimates formed of Christianity by any European thinkers. Israel may have derived from Egypt some of her external rites and minor

laws; but it seems clear that she did not derive thence anything of importance in the faith which she transmitted to Christianity. To the ancient Persian religion, the Jewish religion was much more closely akin in spirit than to the Egyptian, and Judaism was manifestly quickened and strengthened by its contact with Mazdeism during the Babylonian captivity; and may even, perhaps, have been enriched with certain secondary beliefs, which afterwards received, in modified forms, divine sanction; it only assimilated, however, what was consistent with its own principles, and returned from exile essentially unaltered, although with a larger faith and fuller hope in the coming of that kingdom which the Christ was to establish.

Christianity, in fact, so far from being the result or synthesis of all previous religions, or of many previous religions, was in immediate and intimate historical connection with only two religious developments of thought—one Semitic and the other Aryan,—the Hebrew and the Hellenistic, the Jewish and the Grecian. Its primary and fundamental relationship was with the former. It assumed the religion of Israel as its basis. It professed to be the fulfilment of the law and the prophets, to have done away with whatever was imperfect in them, to have retained whatever they included of permanent value, and to be the full corn in the ear of every seed of truth sown, and of every blade of promise developed, in them. The more thoroughly we investigate this claim the more we shall become impressed with its

justice. There is not a prominent doctrine of the Bible of which such propositions as these may not be laid down,—namely, that it was evolved from simple facts or statements of a rudimentary or germinal kind ; that the course of its development was gradual, closely associated with the history of events, and through a succession of stages, in each of which the doctrine was extended and enriched ; that this course was throughout one of progress, constantly unfolding into greater clearness and comprehensiveness ; that the evolution was imperfect before the New Testament era ; and that the New Testament fulfilment actually gave to the doctrine developed the self-consistency of completeness, so that it thereafter only required to be apprehended and applied. These affirmations may almost be regarded as laws of the important science of Biblical theology, because they hold true of all Biblical doctrines. Judaism and Christianity are connected by all the truths of both, and by all the threads or strands of the history of these truths. Judaism brought nothing to maturity ; but the whole religion of Israel was a prophecy of Christianity. This can only be fully established and exhibited by the entire science of Biblical theology. But the most cursory survey of the authoritative records of the Jewish and Christian religions is sufficient to show us that the connection of Judaism and Christianity was very peculiar and very wonderful.

The latest portions of the Old Testament appeared generations before the birth of Christ,—its earliest portions belong to an unknown antiquity,—its inter-



vening portions were written at intervals, through many centuries, by a multitude of authors, of every condition in life from prince to peasant, in every form of composition, and on a vast variety of subjects; yet the collective result is a system of marvellous unity, self-consistency, and comprehensiveness. It is at the same time a system which is not self-centred and self-contained, but one of which all the parts contribute, each in its place, to raise, sustain, and guide faith in the coming of a mysterious and mighty Saviour,—a perfect prophet, perfect priest, and perfect king, such as Christ alone of all men can be supposed to have been. This broad general fact—this vast and strange correlation or correspondence—cannot be in the least affected by any questions of “the higher criticism” as to the authorship, time of origination, and mode of composition, of the various books of the Old Testament: by the questions, for example, which have been raised as to whether Moses wrote the Pentateuch; whether its first book has been made up of a number of older documents; whether its legislation consists of various deposits or strata; whether the book of Deuteronomy is the work of Jeremiah; whether there was an earlier and a later Isaiah; whether the book of Zechariah is the work of several writers; whether Daniel was composed by the prophet whose name it bears or by a later author. Answer all these questions in the way which the boldest and most rationalistic criticism of Germany or Holland ventures to suggest,—accept on every properly critical question the conclusions of

the most advanced critical schools,—and what will follow? Merely this, that those who do so will have, in various respects, to alter their views as to the manner and method in which the ideal of the Messiah's person, work, and kingdom was, point by point, line by line, evolved and elaborated. There will not, however, be a single Messianic word or sentence, not a single Messianic line or feature, the fewer in the Old Testament Scriptures. The whole religion of Israel will just as much as before be pervaded by a Messianic ideal; and that Messianic ideal, however differently it may be supposed to have been developed, will be absolutely the same as before,—an ideal which can only be pretended to have been realised in Christ, and which may reasonably be maintained to have been completely fulfilled, and far more than fulfilled, in Him.

Such is the connection between Judaism and Christianity. It is a relationship which is not only remarkable, but unique. Comparative theology cannot show a second instance of it in the religious history of humanity. Brahmanism was, indeed, a development of the Vedic religion; but no person has ever regarded it as a fulfilment of the Vedic religion. Buddhism was an offshoot of Brahmanism; but instead of being the completion of Brahmanism, it was an essentially antagonistic religion. The religion of Israel and the Christian religion are the only two faiths in the world which have been historically related as prophecy to fulfilment, hope to substance.

The wisdom of the classical world—a wisdom primarily and chiefly Greek, but considerably modified by the Roman mind, as well as by Eastern thought—must also be admitted to have had historically an influence on the rise of Christianity, although a feebler influence than that which it exerted for many subsequent generations on the development of Christian theology. The popular religions of Greece and Rome were too poor and fanciful, indeed, to contribute anything directly to the treasury of Christian truth; but, unlike some greater religions, such as Brahmanism and Buddhism, which overpowered and enslaved the soul, they allowed, and even signally favoured, a free, simple, and natural growth of the human mind. The consequence was the Greek and the Roman man,—the Greek an artist and philosopher, the Roman a conqueror and legislator,—but Greek and Roman alike fully conscious of superiority to the world, and in some large measure conscious of the divine in humanity. Hence the culture of the classical world was far superior to that of the oriental world, and a magnificent preparation for the Christian faith, and for the world which rests upon it. The Greco-Roman intellect achieved marvellous successes in every sphere of activity, and not least in the highest spheres of thought. The tragedians of Greece had presentiments of truth so divine, expressed so clearly a sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin and of the need of expiation, and breathed forth so pathetically the longing for reconciliation, that they have

not inaptly been called "the pagan prophets of Christianity." The Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle is not only a deeper and truer, but one might almost say a more Christian exposition of moral duties, than the generality of modern manuals of moral philosophy. When Plato taught that the Idea of the Good is the source of all existence and intelligence, and that the Absolute Good is God, he was not far from the thought of Christ, "None is good save one, that is God," nor from the thought of St John, "God is love;" and although "Platonic love" was but joy in beauty, order, excellence, still the inculcation even of that was a notable approximation to the doctrine, "Love is of God, and every one that dwelleth in love is born of God and knoweth God." The thinkers of Greece, in discovering and developing all the arguments which reason can yet urge for the existence of God, are entitled to the credit of having first explicitly proved rational the truths assumed in the Scriptures as the very foundations both of Judaism and of Christianity; and in labouring to show that the whole heavens and earth depend on the Eternal Reason, they reached conclusions as to the self-revelation of that reason, which the Jewish thinkers of Alexandria could easily combine with the intimations of the Old Testament as to the "Word of the Lord" and the "Wisdom of God," and which were fitted to lead up alike to what St Paul taught of Christ as "the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature, by whom all things were created, and by whom all things consist," and to

what St John taught of Him as "the Word made flesh, who tabernacled among men, so that they beheld in Him the glory as of the only begotten of the Father."

This Greco-Roman wisdom spread into Palestine and the adjacent countries,—spread far as Roman conquest extended and Greek speech penetrated,—so that the atmosphere of thought and feeling which Christ and the apostles breathed was much less purely Jewish, much less purely native, than that in which Moses, and the psalmists, and the prophets of ancient Israel lived. The spiritual change is reflected in the general difference of tone and character between the Old and the New Testament Scriptures. It is not, however, traceable in the form of definite thoughts, or sentiments, or expressions directly derived by the New Testament writers from classical authors. There was no borrowing of this kind. It was not thus that classical thought acted on Christianity in its conception. Christ and the apostles are certainly not to be regarded as the students or disciples of Greek philosophers. They were providentially so circumstanced that no one can reasonably suppose their teaching to have been based on Greek speculation, or reasonably deny that, while proceeding from a Jewish past, they displayed in setting forth a new religion the most marked originality. Greek wisdom influenced them only in the same general way in which German idealism or French positivism may affect the thoughts of an intelligent Scottish peasant, although he has never read a line, or even heard the names, of Hegel or Comte. But its influence is not

to be inferred to have been unreal or inconsiderable, because it was vague and general. It exerted an indubitable historical influence, however difficult it may be precisely to determine what its particular effects were. At the same time, most superficial and erroneous is the notion that Christianity was only a product or compound of Jewish and Grecian forces and elements. Christianity is the religion which has the deepest and broadest historical foundation, and yet it is also the most original of religions, for it is essentially the manifestation and work of the most original of personalities. Christianity centres in Christ, and Christ's character had no pattern in actual history either heathen or Jewish, nor His mission any parallel in its grandeur and comprehensiveness. It is vain to attempt to explain them from any resources or by any peculiarities of the age in which He appeared.

Let us now come back, however, to the point from which we started—namely, the fact that Christianity has relations to all religions, and often most intimate and special relations to religions with which it has had little or no historical connection. How happens it that the religions of India and of China, of the Teuton and Scandinavian of Northern Europe, and of the Toltec and Aztec of Central America, can just as well be judged of from a Christian stand-point and in relation to the Christian faith, as the religions of Greece and of Rome? It can only be because Christianity is in a higher and broader than merely historical manner the centre of the system of the world's reli-

gions. All judgments and comparisons of the kind referred to would otherwise be arbitrary and unjust. Christianity is, however, the ideal or spiritual centre of all religions in two ways, which only need to be indicated in order to explain why all religions look towards it, and can be most clearly seen and most fully comprehended in the light of it.

First, then, Christianity is the Absolute Religion, in the sense of the perfect realisation of the idea which underlies and gives significance to all religions. Religion is the communion between a worshipping subject and a worshipped object,—the communion of man with what he believes to be a god. It is a relationship which supposes both distinction and unity. Were there no distinction between the subject and the object, there could be no religion, whether the self-identical unity were named God or named man. Neither a relation of God to Himself nor of man to himself can be regarded as religion. On the other hand, were there only distinction between God and man, were they absolutely separate from and indifferent to each other, religion must be in this case also impossible. Religion supposes two factors, which are different yet related, so far distinct and so far akin, a Divine Being and a human being, the worshipper and the worshipped; and as a state of mind and life, it is the man's, the worshipper's, sense of relationship to, and dependence on, the Being whom he believes and feels himself bound to adore, to propitiate, and to serve. This is the generic notion of religion,—the idea of religion which applies to all

religions, however rude and degrading, or however spiritual and ennobling. It applies to all heathen religions, for they all, without exception, contain some sort of honest belief in a power or powers regarded with awe and reverence. It applies to natural religion, which is the communion of man with God so far as God is discovered by man through the natural exercise of his faculties and from natural objects and events. It applies to revealed religion, which is the communion of man with God, as made known to him, immediately or mediately, through special supernatural manifestation. The rank and worth of a religion depend on the measure in which it approximates to the complete realisation of this idea. Christianity alone completely realises it. It alone shows us the whole grandeur and wealth of the idea. But for it our consciousness and thoughts of religion must have necessarily been comparatively poor and meagre, one-sided and perverted. In and through it alone we see what religion really means; what, in order to answer fully to its own nature, it implies as to God and man, and the relationship between God and man. Because it thus alone presents religion to us at once as a reality and in its ideal perfection,—without error or one-sidedness, with pure and comprehensive truthfulness,—it is the absolute religion, the religion in the light of which and in relation to which all other religions must be viewed, if they are to be rightly and thoroughly understood.

Christianity, alone of religions, gives a clear, self-consistent, adequate view of God. It presents Him



as the one God, eternal, infinite, omnipotent, omniscient ; as perfect in wisdom, in righteousness, in holiness ; and yet as merciful, gracious, full of goodness and love ; a true Father in His feelings and actings towards men ; the God and Father of Jesus Christ, in whose character and sacrifice His moral glory has found the highest revelation of its purity and beauty, its attractiveness and tenderness. It, alone of religions, addresses itself to man as he really is, and in the whole extent of his being, overlooking no weakness, cloaking no sin, making no false concessions, yet denying no legitimate supports, and appealing in due order and degree to faith, reason, affection, and will. It, alone of religions, discloses and promises to man a complete communion with God. It shows the perfect union of the divine and human in the person and life of its founder. It offers, on the basis and surety of a divinely accomplished and divinely accepted atonement, full reconciliation with God to every one who will repent and turn from his sins. It demands that the whole soul and strength of man be devoted to God ; and to render possible compliance with the demand, it enriches him with such internal gifts as the abiding presence of Christ within and the regenerating and sanctifying operations of the Holy Spirit, and with such external aids as the Scriptures, the Church, and sacraments. Christian communion with God should be inclusive of the whole receptive life of man, filling him with the peace, and love, and joy of God ; yet equally inclusive of his whole active life, requiring conformity to every precept of the

divine will and the exercise of every energy in the advancement of the divine kingdom.

The idea of religion which Christianity thus completely realises is present in every religion, and the more any religion embodies and expresses it, the higher and the better is that religion. No religion, however, but the Christian, nearly approaches to the complete embodiment and expression of it. Most of them are sadly defective as regards every element of the idea. All of them, but the one strange exception, err grievously as to some constituent or aspect of it. Those of them which excel most in one respect often fail worst in others. Yet none of them are wholly false or "without some soul of goodness," and in so far as any religion is true and good, it is akin to the religion in which the fulness of truth and goodness implied in the idea of religion has been realised, the absolute religion, founded by Him who, in the spirit not of narrow exclusiveness but of broadest inclusiveness, claimed to be "the way, the truth, and the life."

A brief glance over the world of religions will illustrate what has been asserted. At the bottom of the religious scale a crowd of religions are to be observed, which have not been dealt with in this course of lectures, but which have had much attention drawn to them by the works of Lubbock, Spencer, Tylor, Waitz, and others. They are the religions of the type known as fetishistic or animistic. In these religions nothing is too mean to be worshipped, nothing more grotesque than the worship, and no end so capricious or selfish but that it may be sought to be

attained through worship. It is always easy to see how wretchedly the divine is conceived of in them; how little conscious of his own true wants and of the worth of human nature is the poor worshipper; and how dark and gross, how uncomfoting and unelevating, are his attempts to gain the aid or avert the anger of the agents on whom he feels himself dependent. It is often difficult to bring one's self to acknowledge that there is any religion at all in these so-called religions. Yet religion there is, and not unfrequently much religion, unless we have greatly erred as to the notion of religion. There is a sense of nature being pervaded and of life being influenced by mysterious powers; a conviction that in all things and events there is more than can be seen and touched; a practical faith in mind above and around man answering to the mind within him. Now, as he to whom "a primrose by the river's brim a yellow primrose is and nothing more" can have no poetry in his nature, so he who believes that in wood and stone there is nothing more than what his eyes perceive and his hands grasp, or nothing more even than all that the chemist and mineralogist or botanist can tell him about them, has little piety in his soul; and if, as Christianity teaches, "in God we live, and move, and have our being," and "by Christ all things consist," the animist possesses truth which such a man ignores, and stands, in consequence, in closer relationship than he to the Christian faith. The vague, feeble, wayward gropings of the fetishist after communion with divine powers are not to be denied to be religious,

nor denied to have affinity with what is deepest in religion. Many professed Christians, perhaps, if they had eyes to see and hearts to understand, might learn not a little from the fetishist. And certain it is that Christianity, although the highest of all religions, or rather just because the highest of all religions, can convince and convert the devotees of the very lowest religions, and thus speak peace and yield satisfaction even to the heart of the fetishist. As in art and literature the utmost perfection may be combined with the utmost simplicity, so is it in religion. The higher heathen religions, like the Egyptian religion, Brahmanism, and Buddhism, are essentially abstruse, and only capable of being intelligently apprehended by speculative intellects. But the absolute religion is so simple, clear, and plain, so adapted to the mind and heart of universal humanity, that the most degraded peoples can discern the force of its claims, and recognise in it the true response to what they were blindly feeling after in their fetishistic state.

Passing by, because of the limited time at our disposal, intermediate phases of polytheism, religions of a fully developed anthropomorphic type, like those of Greece, Rome, and Scandinavia, present themselves. In these religions the gods have become completely human forms—magnified men and women. Hence the communion of the worshipper with the worshipped is here, on the whole, cordial and familiar. It is a communion, however, which is weakened and divided because there are many competitors for homage; one in which reason has little share,

and which the growth of reason tends to destroy; one which largely rests also on the sense of sin being imperfectly developed, so that the growth of conscience is as fatal to it as the growth of thought; one which cannot satisfy the more spiritual affections of the soul, and is very far from including a true ideal or law for practical life. Religions of this kind can rule the mind only in its youthful immaturity. But through eliciting and stimulating the free and energetic exercise of men's faculties they may do more for the progress of humanity than religions of a far more profound and serious character. The culture of Greece is the best vindication of the scheme of providence which included the religion of Greece. Without the gods of Greece the works of Phidias and Apelles, of Æschylus and Sophocles, would either not have been, or been very inferior to what they were. The Roman gods helped mightily to make those Roman men who conquered the world, and who still "from their urns" so largely rule the world through Roman law. The followers of Thor and Odin were stern and ruthless, but they were also free, fearless, enterprising—fit instruments for the destruction of the Roman world when it deserved to fall, and strong materials with which to build up the edifice of another and weightier world. Christianity has made Christendom, but it has made it because it could, without inconsistency, appropriate, and utilise the culture of the Greek, the political intelligence of the Roman, the Saxon's love of liberty, the Norseman's enterprise and valour. It has de-

throned alike the gods of Olympus and of Valhalla, but it has rejected nothing of good which grew up under their sway. Every germ of truth in these ancient pagan faiths may find a place, and every energy which gave worth to the lives of ancient pagan men may find scope, within the sphere of Christian thought or work.

In the Mazdean or Zoroastrian religion we have the best example of a dualistic faith. It conceived of morality as essentially a struggle in favour of Ormuzd, and consequently in favour of light, purity, and truth; and against Ahriman, and consequently against darkness, impurity, and falsehood. It represented the struggle as hopeful, because not a struggle against existence itself but simply against evil existence, and because Ahriman and his hosts were doomed to defeat. It afforded scope for a vigorous and manly virtue, man being supposed to have been created by the good God, and to have been placed, endowed with complete personal freedom, in the midst of the moral antagonism of the world, in order to combat the evil god and all his works. Its good points were its recognition of the reverence due to the holy will of the good God, its belief in a kingdom of God, and its hope in the triumph of good over evil. And Christianity has all these merits. It erred chiefly in confounding moral and physical good, moral and physical evil, in unduly extending the boundaries of evil, and in exaggerating the power of the Evil One. And Christianity is free from all these faults. Zoroastrianism was, moreover, a meagre, rudimentary, unde-

veloped system; whereas in Christianity there is the fulness of truth and of grace.

The best example of a pantheistic religion is Brahmanism. It is as rich in thought as Zoroastrianism is poor. It has sprung from the most profound and earnest meditations on the nature of existence, on the absolute spirit, on the relation of the infinite and the finite, on reality and appearance, on life and death, on suffering and retribution. It has given rise to a vast and peculiar civilisation, to various systems of theology and philosophy, and to an abundant and remarkable literature. It is only of late that Christian scholars have applied themselves to a close study of its principles and doctrines. It may well be that they will find it to have much to teach them and more to suggest to them. It may well be that Hindu thoughts will yet modify considerably European views of religion, and even modify them for the better. But it is clear that however much truth there may be in Brahmanism, it is truth which must be consonant with the spirit of Christianity, and which that spirit can assimilate; whereas Brahmanism has so conspicuously failed to realise the idea of religion—or, in other words, to meet the requirements of a religion—that it is mere folly to think of it as a rival to Christianity. It conceives of God as so absolutely the One Being, that all finite objects, finite minds, and finite interests are deemed illusions, and that not even moral distinctions are supposed to exist in Him or before Him. It denies to Him the intelligence, the freedom, the holiness, the

love, which can only be found in a person ; indeed it denies to Him all definite attributes, and so leaves to be worshipped merely an empty abstraction, an infinite blank. It regards the worshipper's own consciousness of freedom and sense of responsibility as deceptive. It represents the loss of finite being, the absorption of the finite in the infinite, as the perfection and ultimate goal of communion with God. Such being the general idea of religion on which Brahmanism proceeds, it has necessarily fallen into the wildest speculative errors and led to the most deplorable practical consequences.

There are three religions to which it may suffice merely to refer, as showing that great success in certain respects does not preclude great failure in others. Buddhism, by its inculcation of charity, self-sacrifice, justice, purity, and all the passive and gentler virtues, and by the moral ideal which it presents as having been exemplified in the character and life of Buddha, far surpasses, on one most important side of the religious idea, all other heathen religions, and might be maintained to have left in that particular direction little or nothing in Christianity unanticipated. Yet it is Buddhism which represents God as a negation, all existence as irrational and vain, and the chief good as eternal nothingness. In a somewhat different manner, Confucianism, which reflects and impresses so truthfully the mind of China, was also strong on its practical side. This ancient, singular, isolated nation has from the earliest time shown a most remarkable genius for accurate moral discern-



ment. No nation in the world has displayed the same ability to perceive what was individually and socially, morally and politically, right. Its plain, precise, common-sense mind has shown itself to singular advantage in the ethical sphere. There is probably not a single moral precept in the Christian Scriptures which is not substantially also in the Chinese classics. There is certainly not an important principle in Bishop Butler's ethical teachings which had not been explicitly set forth by Mencius in the fourth century B.C. The Chinese thinker of that date had anticipated the entire moral theory of man's constitution expounded so long afterwards by the most famous of English moral philosophers. But while China has in Confucianism a correct and detailed moral code, she has nothing to supply her great want,—the want of a worthy view of God. On the spiritual side this religion is defective in the extreme. Its god is almost a void, without depth or content, without will or affection. And hence, notwithstanding its admirable common-sense and equally admirable moral sense, China remains almost dead and immobile, with its heart and hopes buried in the past, not only not progressing, but not even dreaming of progress; a vast monument of the insufficiency of earth without heaven, of moral precepts without spiritual faith, of man without God; an instructive and impressive warning to Europe as to what any gospel of positivism may be expected to do for her. As the Chinaman turns to the past, the ancient Egyptian turned with all his love and interest to the

future. The present life he comparatively little esteemed—not, indeed, that he regarded it, like the Hindu, as illusory and vain, but because he contrasted it with a higher, and better, and fuller life, only to be realised in the next world. The Egyptians had a strong and steady sense of a divine and righteous government of the world, and a wonderfully firm and operative conviction of a future life dependent in character on personal conduct in the present. To have expressed this sense, to have maintained this faith, was the glory of the old Egyptian religion. But what a dark and dishonouring blot on the system which had such a merit was its debasing animal-worship! And what injustice was done to all the truths it contained by that abstruse and excessive symbolism which makes it of all religions the most enigmatic and impenetrable!

It is unnecessary to compare Christianity with the only two religions which agree with it in being manifestly and consistently monotheistic, Judaism and Mahomedanism; for the former was essentially and in all respects imperfect in itself and a preparation for Christianity, while the latter must be pronounced to have, on the whole, alike as regards its views of God and of man, of worship and of conduct, very seriously degenerated or retrograded even from Judaism.

Enough has now been said, perhaps, to indicate what is meant when we maintain that Christianity is the Absolute Religion, or has alone completely and harmoniously realised the idea of religion, present,

indeed, in all other religions, yet always merely in some inadequate, undeveloped, deformed, or debased shape. All heathen religions contain some erroneous and evil principles among their essential tenets, and in so far as such is the case Christianity must be hostile to them. All heathen religions are defective and disproportionate, and therefore ought to give way before Christianity, which is complete and harmonious. All heathen religions comprise elements of truth, features of goodness, disclosures of God, means of spiritual life; and in so far they lead up to the absolute religion, the full orb'd faith, in which all rays of light are concentrated, and on which there is no darkness at all. Christianity as thus the absolute religion, is a religion *sui generis*, a religion most unlike all other religions, and at the same time related and akin to all other religions, the religion around which all other religions in their better aspects group themselves to do it homage, "saying with a great voice, like the angels round about the throne and the living creatures and the elders, Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain to receive the power, and riches, and wisdom, and might, and honour, and glory, and blessing."

Secondly, the peculiar position of Christianity among other religions arises from its being the only religion which rests on a complete revelation. This is implied in its being the absolute religion. Absolute religion cannot rest on a partial or fragmentary revelation. Wherever there is religion there is revela-

tion. Man does not know God by immediate vision, nor does God act on man by His absolute essence. God manifests Himself to the faculties of man through certain media. These constitute revelation, in that broad sense of the term in which it is the condition and correlative of religion. Thus understood, revelation is either general or special, for both general and special revelation come under the one idea of divine self-manifestation. Both imply that there is a God who makes known to His rational creatures His presence, character, and will. God Himself is the agent and object of both; He makes known what would otherwise be unknown, and what He makes known is Himself.

General revelation comprises all objects which present themselves to the eyes, ears, and other senses; all minds, and those faculties of volition, intelligence, moral discernment, and affection, which make them images of God and enable them to reflect the features of God wherever displayed; and all the events of history, which is the manifestation of God in time, as the material creation is His manifestation in space. This vast book of general revelation lies open within the reach and in the presence of men in all lands and ages. It is an inexhaustible treasury of truth, and individuals and generations may always find in it what is new. Great stores of spiritual truth have already been drawn from it. Probably it is the source whence all the truth in heathen religions has gradually been derived. Evidence is wanting that these religions have been enriched through special revelation,

although special spiritual influence may have opened the eyes of many wise and good men among the heathen to behold the wonders of God's law in creation and providence. The book, however, in which general revelation has been recorded, is a difficult book to decipher and interpret. Material objects, mental experiences, and historical events, have religious meanings, but not meanings which can be apprehended with much clearness or correctness by savage or barbarous men, by uneducated or unthoughtful men, or by any man whose heart is darkened and perverted by evil passions, and whose mind is not already largely possessed and enlightened by spiritual truth. The easiest volume of this book to read is that of physical nature; it is the volume from which the lower religions, the nature-worships, have been almost entirely drawn; and yet, although a volume undoubtedly full of wisdom and instruction, its characters are practically in an unknown tongue to the great majority of men. There may be "sermons in stones, and books in running streams," yet to all but one in a thousand a stone is just a stone, and no sermon,—a running stream simply a running stream, and no book.

" One impulse from a vernal wood  
    May teach us more of man,  
Of moral evil and of good,  
    Than all the sages can ;"

but only if we are ourselves sages,—otherwise it will probably teach us nothing.

It is not in the least wonderful that all the heathen

religions should have often not only failed to read, but grievously misread, the book of general revelation, or that not one of them should have found the key to its interpretation as a whole, or the right point of view from which to regard it. It is very wonderful that there should be a religion of which this cannot be said. And of Christianity it cannot be said.

As regards the physical world, obviously in even the highest forms of polytheism the divine is rather viewed as a revelation of nature than nature as a revelation of the divine. The gods have grown out of religious representations of the powers of nature, and are still considered as subordinate to and limited by nature. They are the revealers and not the revealed. The natural world is first; the divine world is second. Nor can nature be consistently and rightly accepted as a revelation of the divine by pantheistic faiths, for pantheism either identifies nature with the divine, or so confounds the natural and the divine that the divine is thought of as physical, and thereby degraded, or the world is absorbed or dissolved into the divine, and represented as an illusion. In all these cases nature is conceived of both as more and as less than a revelation, but not truly as a revelation. Christianity, however, takes its stand firmly and decidedly, as a fully developed monotheistic faith, which has appropriated the truth of Judaism, on the position that the universe is a creation of God's word, a manifestation of His mind, a disclosure of His eternal power and Godhead. It unreservedly accepts it as such, and thus makes nature's religious teaching also its

own, and puts itself into a right relation to all physical science.

Then, as to the mental and moral constitution of man. There is little recognition in the lower forms of religion of there being any divine revelation in this volume. In Brahmanism man began to seek for God in thought; Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Confucianism, discerned the divine chiefly in conscience, and hence have sometimes been classed as ethical religions; in Mahommedanism God was above all conceived of as absolute will, and in Judaism as a righteous will. Christianity fully recognises the whole revelation of God in man, and represents the completion of the revelation of God as made through a perfect man. The religion of Greece tended to form artists, and that of Scandinavia warriors; Brahmanism is the religion of priests, and Buddhism of ascetics; but Christianity aims at the production of men, true and complete men, sons of God perfect as their Father in heaven is perfect. It cannot aim at less, for, amidst all the sinfulness of men, it discerns also all the divine features and possibilities which are in him.

History is the volume of general revelation which the ethnic religions have most neglected. The two greatest of them—Brahmanism and Buddhism—do worse than ignore it; they take up a decidedly hostile attitude towards it, regarding salvation only as the escape of the individual from temporal limits and social ties. Mazdeism, in spite of its dualism, and its narrowness and meagreness of conception, was probably in this respect the least defective heathen faith. Judaism

had its general doctrine of providence and its distinctive Messianic hope. But Christianity came to proclaim and found "the kingdom of God," as the realisation of the purpose which had been running through the ages, as the fulfilment of the law and the prophets, and as destined to overspread and transform the whole earth. It came not merely to save men, but to regenerate and sanctify humanity. It identified the goal which it set before itself with the chief end of man and the final cause of history, viewing in the same light the fates of the mightiest nations and the events which befell the humblest individuals. It taught men to look in all past history for the evidences of God's sovereignty, wisdom, justice, and goodness, and to believe that from the time of Christ's incarnation, divine truth and grace would be traceable, working ever more mightily until all falsehood should be exposed, all evil expelled, the triumph of holiness and love complete, and the entire world laid as a trophy at the feet of Him who once wore a crown of thorns.

Christianity, let it be repeated, is the religion which alone has known to place itself in a perfectly right relationship to the whole general revelation of God. It does not keep aloof from it, and still less does it oppose it. It is willing to conform to it, and to be judged by it, so far as general revelation extends. It cordially accepts it in all its length and breadth, confident that physical discovery, mental science, and historical research can find only what will prove an addition to its own wealth.



While Christianity, however, accepts the general revelation of God, it does not confine itself to it ; on the contrary, it professes to be a special revelation, and consequently assumes the possibility, needfulness, and reality of special revelation. It is the task of the Christian apologist to exhibit fully what grounds there are for this assumption. Here it may be enough to say, first, that the fact that all the religions of heathendom have so seriously misunderstood general revelation, as they undoubtedly have done, of itself seems to show that a special revelation cannot reasonably be deemed unnecessary ; and, secondly, that if any one, with awakened conscience, duly considers man's condition as a sinner—observes how little nature has to tell as to the way in which God will deal with sinners—realises how impossible it is to love God with any real, earnest, steady love, so long as we are conscious of being in revolt against Him—and marks how signally, how terribly, the heathen religions have erred in regard to the nature and means of salvation,—he will probably be little disposed to dispute the necessity of a special revelation, and he will certainly be in the only proper frame of mind to judge of the evidence which can be adduced for the reality of such revelation.

Special revelation may appear in two forms. The lower form comes first. God may manifest Himself by particular interventions amidst fixed laws, by visions and voices, by the inspired utterances of law-givers, psalmists, and seers ; and the memory of His disclosures may be perpetuated in social ordinances,

religious rites, or literary compositions. A revelation of this kind through words and institutions was what the Jewish economy claimed to be. Christianity admitted its claim. It abolished, indeed, the law so far as it was external, temporary, and superficial, substituting for it one which is spiritual, eternal, and sufficient; but it transferred to itself all that was of permanent value in the Old Testament; educed out of its particular practices and statements the universal principles implied in them; provided in the work of Jesus Christ satisfaction for the religious wants expressed in its rites, symbols, and sacrifices; and shed a light over every page of the Hebrew Scriptures which should make them far more instructive and profitable to the Christian than they ever could be to the Jew. While the Gospel frees us from bondage to the letter of the older dispensation, it at the same time enables us to discover, with greatly increased clearness, the true significance of the revelation on which that dispensation rested.

What Christianity claims, however, as its own great distinction, is another and much higher form of special revelation. God's general revelation of Himself is by fixed laws of order which know no pity, which show no forgiveness, which are indifferent to the interests of individuals, which conceal the divine character in some respects while they reveal it in others. God's special revelation of Himself by intervening among these laws in miraculous acts and inspired words brings Him nearer to individual hearts, and yet it leaves Him far away; for after all but signs and

sounds have been given, not Himself; He is Himself still shrouded in darkness, still hidden where no man can approach Him. Can He come yet nearer man that man may draw closer to Him? Christianity answers, and its answer is Christ,—the person, the character, and the work of Christ. The highest form of special revelation—the revelation which rests on all other revelation, and in which all other revelation is completed—the revelation which is the consummation of the whole process of the divine self-manifestation, and which brings with it the realisation of all that religion implies,—is, according to Christianity, revelation through a human person possessed of all human graces and virtues, and exhibiting in human conditions, in human action, and in human suffering, the divine love and sympathy. The perfect union of the divine and human in Christ—the fulness of the Godhead disclosed in perfect manhood,—to the end that, through the putting away of sin and the work of the Holy Spirit, men may be not merely servants but sons of God, enjoying free and entire communion with Him, and living in a righteous and loving relationship to one another,—this Christianity puts forward as its central idea, and at the same time as historical fact. It is impossible even to imagine how in the domain of religion there can be anything higher or more perfect. It completes revelation. It founds the absolute religion. Henceforth there may still be unlimited spiritual progress, but it must be within the outlines of this revelation and on the basis of this religion.

Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid.

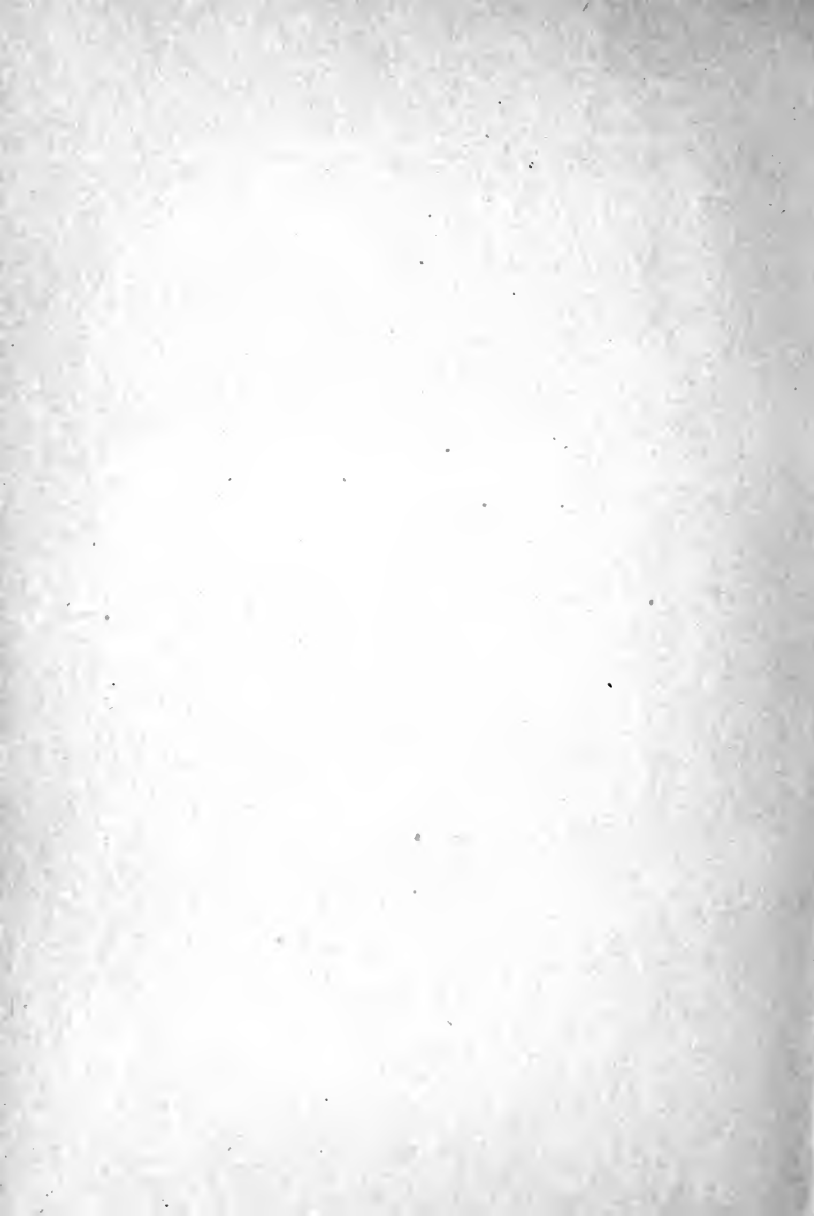
The claim which Christianity makes for Christ is one which no other religion makes for its founder. Confucius is represented merely as a sage, Zoroaster and Mahommed only as prophets. Buddha alone can be set over against Christ as one deemed by his followers both God and man. But what a contrast! Do not these two great solitary figures rise up before us, as if to show how vast is the distance between the wisdom of God and the wisdom of man? Christ—the God-man—God in infinite love and condescension taking upon Him human nature and becoming a human brother: Buddha—the man-God—with his vain and presumptuous boast of having raised himself to Godhead by his own power and knowledge. Christ revealing the Father: Buddha proclaiming that there is no Father, and that all existence is evil and vanity. Christ bringing life and immortality to light: Buddha setting forth only nothingness.

I must conclude, not at the close, but at the commencement of my subject. I have sought merely to introduce you into it; but I have sought to do so through what seems to me the main entrance, where a view is to be had of that general relationship between Christianity and other religions whence all their special relationships diverge. To follow up these latter—to attempt to explore the subject as a whole—is not work for a lecture, or for a series of lectures, but the appropriate task of a science, the great science of Comparative Theology. It is

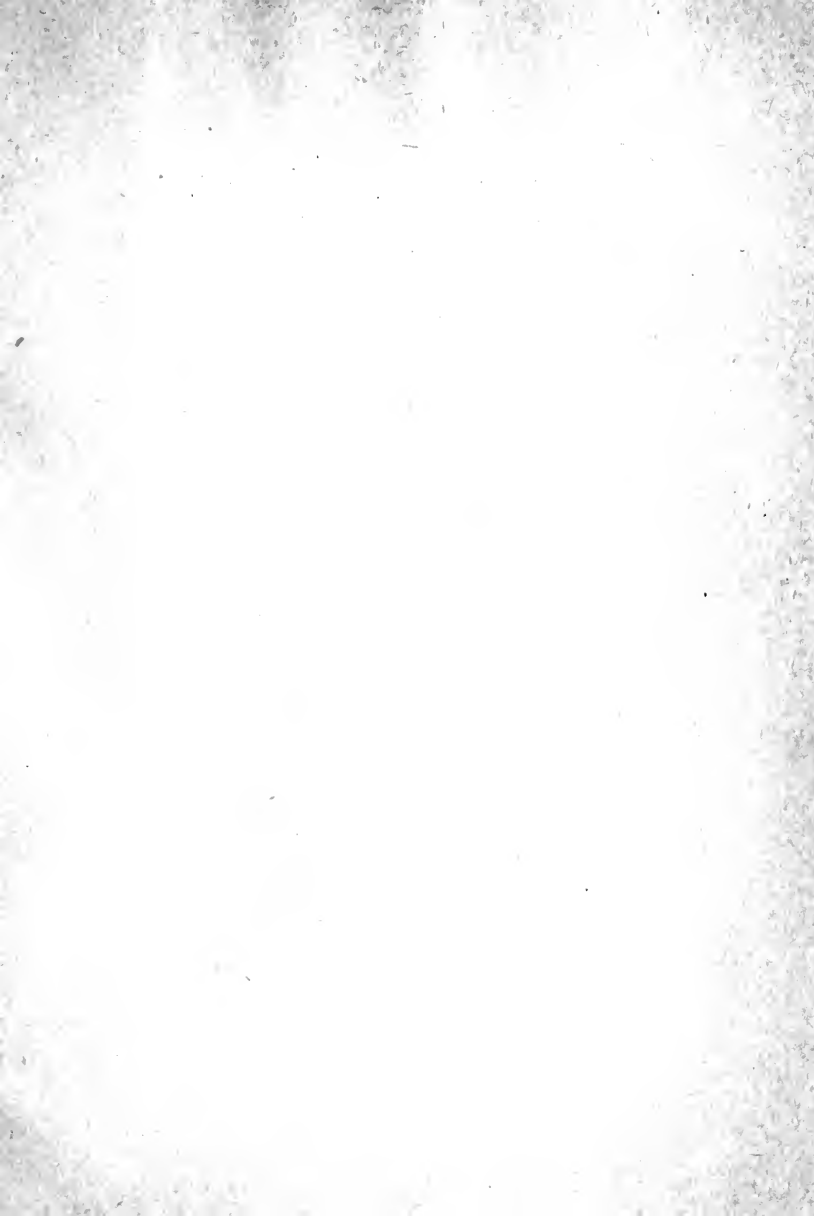
a science which is unfortunately cultivated by many who endeavour to make it yield anti-Christian and even atheistical inferences, but that is assuredly not due to the real character of the study itself, but simply to the mental perversity of these individuals. The study itself is a magnificent demonstration, not only that man was made for religion, but of what religion he was made for. The more accurately the nature of religion is determined, the more thoroughly its various forms are studied, and the more closely they are compared, the more conclusively will it appear that Christianity alone is the ideal of all religion, and alone satisfies the spiritual wants of humanity; that Christ is "the desire of all nations," and the appointed Saviour of the world, in whom all perplexities of the soul are reconciled, and in whom alone the restless hearts of men can find peace. If it be true, on the one hand, that the ethnic religions can only be understood when viewed in relation to Christianity, it is also true, on the other hand, that Christianity cannot be fully understood unless viewed in relation to these religions. We must know what questions the human soul has been putting to itself in various ages, lands, and circumstances, and what are the answers which it has been giving to them, before we can appreciate aright the comprehensiveness and aptness of the response contained in the Gospel. Not one of the features or doctrines of Christianity will fail to appear in a brighter light, and with a diviner beauty, after they have been compared and contrasted with the correlative features and doctrines of other religions.

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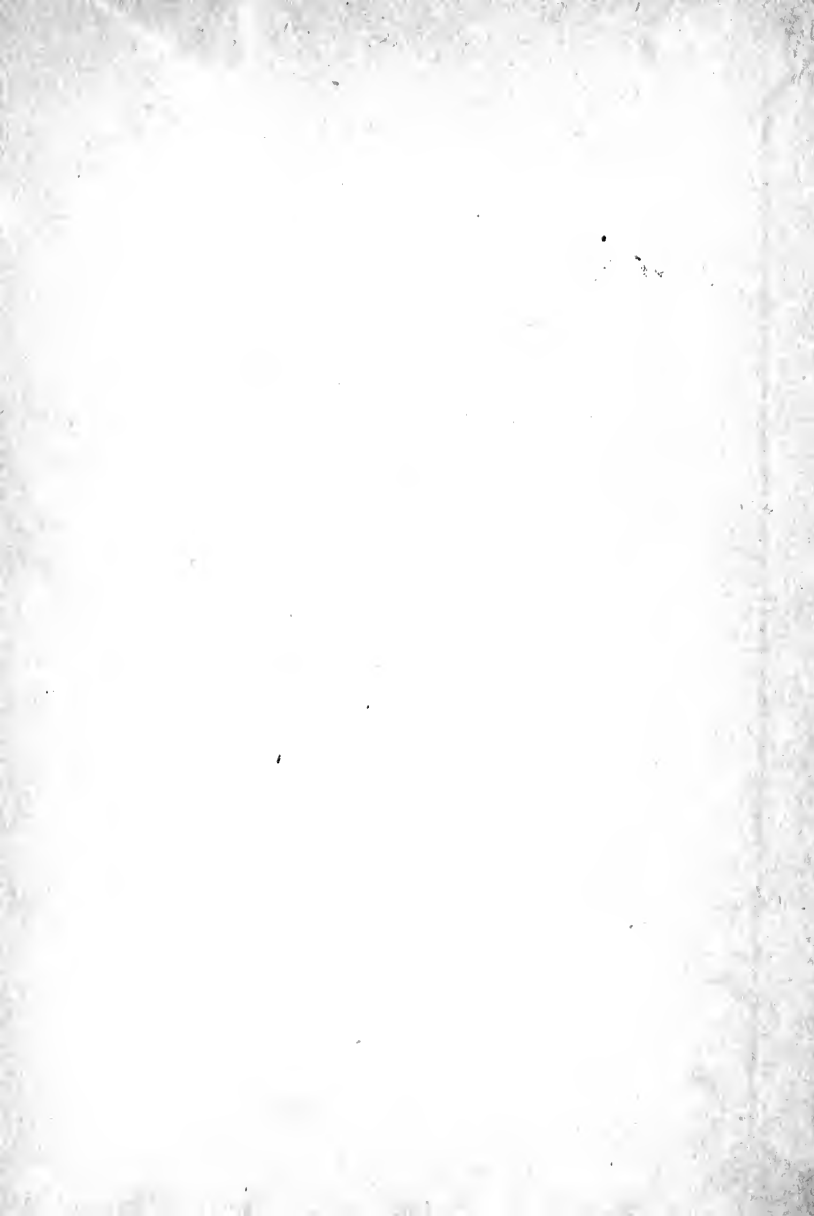




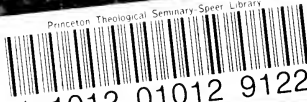








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