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Comparative Theology

Radical, Biblical, Apostolic, Christianity



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Comparative Theology

Chapter One—The Brahmin

The original religion of the land of the seven rivers, which stretches from the Indus to the Hesidrus, came from Bactria (modern Bokhara). Among the mountaineer and nomadic tribes, which inhabited this ancient kingdom of Asia, there existed, long before their conquest by Cyrus, a system of religion which, with subsequent modifications, has been embraced by a larger number of mankind than any other. Its antiquity is so great, and facts respecting it so meager, that it cannot be fathomed with anything like precision. Its truths appear to have been handed down by oral tradition, to have been enthroned, to some extent, in the songs and hymns of the people, exemplified, doubtless, in the rustic and religious life of the people, and to have furnished more or less, of that material, which has entered into the religions of all the Aryan nations - the Hindoos, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Celts, Slaves, and Teutons.

The more recent investigations in the sciences of comparative religions and philology decide that the worship of this people was originally simple, though sacrificial; the religious type was a pure monotheism, resembling closely the worship of Israel in Palestine. Data of a character beyond question, show that the later and modified religion consisted in the worship of the divine in nature. The oldest divinity, Deva, the “all-embracing heavens,” corresponds precisely with *Canopus* of the Greeks.

The other gods were personified powers of nature. Agni, the god of fire, played a most important part. He was the mediator, the one who presented all prayers offered by mortals to Deva, and burned their sacrifices.

During these early stages of the Hindoo religion, which extended, according to Dr. Haug, from 2000 to 1200 B.C., there appear to have been no priestly orders. It was the

Hindoo patriarchal age in which the head of the family was Priest, or, without such a head, every man was his own Priest. To see God, and not mere man, the infinite, and not the finite, was the foundation of the old Hindoo effort and faith. Subsequently the nations of India adopted a more orderly and social constitution, abandoned their nomadic and warlike life, collected their ancient sacred writings, chiefly songs and hymns, into an authorized canon, and guarded them with jealousy almost equal to that of the Jewish Rabbins; they also instituted the priestly class, whose office was to represent the condition and wants of the people before the deity. The chief function of the Priesthood was prayer - *brahma*; hence *Brahmins*, i.e., praying.

After this date, the Hindoos possessed greater formal piety, but were more grossly immoral. The old Veda divinities were, in time, subordinated entirely to Brahma, and even the earlier phases of Indian theology resolved themselves into the doctrine of the abstract unity - a kind of impersonal *all*.

The modern Hindoo, in moments of religious excitement, declares that he believes in three hundred-and-thirty-million gods. Here, would seem to be the extreme of polytheism. Yet, to whatever natural object he looks, and to whatever form of intelligence he offers his devotions, he is, at every step, and in every effort seeking after the negative One - the eternal Check. The Brahmin, however, so far as he is not an ignorant and brutish idolater, asks different creatures and supplicates different objects with the sole purpose that they may inform him where he can find the Unseen; it is his way of erecting an altar to the Unknown God. His life, in fine, is a continued effort to approach, through some intervening something elevated into a god, to the presence of Brahm, who is the One Infinite Illumination, the Absolute and Self-Existent, the Mentor, and the All, who lies upon "eternity and the stars." It is, we think, usually conceded, at the present time, that not only was the original Bactrian, but the derived Vedic and the subsequent Brahmin idea, were also strictly monotheistic. "There can be no doubt," says Max Muller, "that the fundamental doctrine of the Vedas, is monotheism." Though all things may be involved in the Brahmin's general conception of deity, yet his monotheism clearly appears in the formation of his Creed - "Spirit alone is this All."

“To know that God is, and that all is God, this is the substance of the Vedas,” say the Vedas. “It is found, in the Vedas, that none but the Supreme Being is to be worshipped, nothing excepting Him should be adored by a wise man.” The Vedas often repeat the text, “There is in truth but One deity, the Supreme Spirit;” and often repeat the injunction, “Adore God alone, know God alone, give up all other discourse.” Its confession of faith, as far as it goes, could safely be incorporated into our own, “there is One living and True God, everlasting, without parts or passions; of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; the Maker and Preserver of all things. He is One and beyond description, whose glory is so great there can be no image of Him.” It would seem then, that the multitude of invented deities, in India, is only an effort at mediation, and a search after mediators.

The more definite steps in this religious development are confirmatory.

Brahm, the One Supreme, was thought, by Brahmins, to be too much like a “consuming fire,” too awful and too Holy to be approached by mortals directly; there was sought, in consequence, an intervening one. Indeed, they built no temples and offered no prayers directly to Brahm. In one of the early Vedas, Brahm is introduced as seeking an image of himself, and finding it in Brahma. The relations then become Brahm, the source of light, and Brahma, the light which flows from the source of light - the “Light of Light,” as with the Church Fathers; a “child springing from his father,” as among the ancient Greeks. And as the child, Zeus supplanted his father, in Grecian mythology, so Brahm, gave place to Brahma, who was either made identical with Brahm, or became, for a time, the sole object of Hindoo worship.

But, even this reflection of the Great and Ineffable through Brahma, was also at length, thought by the Hindoo to be too awful for most men to endure, though not for all; hence, the *caste* of India.

This resulted in a divine *call*. It was extended, at first, to some favored few: those, who were thus called, were made Priests of Brahma, who thenceforth found his one

adequate image in man - the Priest. Hindoo image worship is only another form of manifestation and mediation. "We do not believe these statues to be Brahma, or Brahm," said a Brahmin to M. Barnier, "but only their images and representatives, and we only give them honor on account of the beings they represent."

The Hindoo mythology contains two other characters which are of interest to us - Crishna Govinda, "the beautiful hero," who is the messenger of peace, and who, under human form, never ceases to be a "God-Being," - and Vishnu, who likewise combines two characters, "mortal and immortal," "being and *non-being*," "motion and rest." This Vishnu descended to the earth for the purpose of redeeming man. He is now the preserving power. He is the harbinger. He is a God, assuming human flesh, through an incarnation. He is to come again and judge the earth. As might be expected, Vishnu worship came, in time, to take the place of the original Brahma worship. Thus, the work of supplanting goes on. Brahma supplants Brahm, Vishnu Brahma, and the different incarnations of Vishnu supplant one another in the continued search after One who can satisfy.

The Hindoo also discovered symbols of terror in the world, groanings in nature, fire, earthquakes, and deaths. He reasoned that they must have a cause, but the cause could not be in Brahma or Vishnu; therefore Siva, the Destroyer, was introduced into their Creed.

Again, restoration and resurrection are in the world; life springs from death, and pure atmospheres have their birth in tempests. "All the rivers run into the sea, yet, the sea is not full; unto the place whence the rivers come, thither they return again." "every thunder-storm, each tornado, is a cry for quiescence." From strife comes symmetry. All these phenomena necessitate, and in the Hindoo Creed originate, the God, Rajah.

From this point, there is but a step to the principle of sacrifice. Brahminism was, from the outset, a blood-sacrificial religion. The Vedic hymns and prayers, as far as brought to our notice by the translators, appear, for the most part, to have been composed for sacrificial occasions. Very likely the Hills of Bactria, not long after the deluge, were

smoking with the choicest lambs and kine of the flock; and so, the custom was handed on; a custom heroic and religious.

This idea of sacrifice lies, as a matter of fact, at the foundation of individual life, in India. We read in the sacred books that “he who lives in the fire of the sacrifice is the great mediator between God and man.” The individual must be completely lost in the divine essence, and become *identical* with it. The Hindoo Institutes point out two paths leading to the state of perfection - religious sacrifice and religious contemplation. Brahma sacrificed himself by descending to the earth. The Sanscrit word for “sacrifice” means “union with God.” Brahma also sacrificed his own son, or emanation, for human good. Indeed, this refined pantheism of India pushed the idea of sacrifice, involving, at once, the highest and lowest orders, to its utmost verge. It produced, both the haughtiest individual asceticism and the conviction of Absolute Being, to which, all individual existence, in theory, and, if need be, in fact, must be sacrificed. To enforce this idea, there are occasions when their temples are made to run with blood, their enclosed grounds are clotted with blood, their garments bespotted with blood, and the whole air filled with blood.

It may be safely said, that the entire philosophy underlying the development of Brahminism, its Spirit of caste, and its different divine manifestations, is an elaborate, scholarly, and preserving effort to explain the various phenomena of nature, and is also a restless search after a living and incarnate intelligence to communicate *with* man, and to disclose to him, the otherwise, unknowable. Its success has been truly grand.

There is no mistaking the underlying principles upon which it rests, and which easily account for its success. We do not say that it borrowed from Egypt or Palestine; but it borrowed from - humanity, perhaps.

Its deep reverence for the divine, for illustration, is fundamental. The profanity of other nations, sounds strangely enough, to the Hindoo ear. Of the many dialects of India, not one of them contains language, by which, the commandment, “Thou shalt not take the

Name of the Lord thy God in vain," can be broken. Nor is the Divine Call of India peculiar to that country; it pervades all history. The priesthood of every nation, an Abraham and John the Baptist wherever found, and Jesus of Nazareth, show the universal demand for one set apart and consecrated for the especial services of the Unseen.

The twice-born of the Brahmins is likewise essential, and is not in form unlike the second birth of the Christian faith. Again, the creating Brahma, who is inseparable from the Absolute Thought, and who corresponds with the Egyptian Intelligence, and the Wisdom of the Book of Proverbs, is the Brahmin's anticipation of the Word-Reason in the Gospel of John.

The doctrine of a Divine Incarnation associated with a sacrifice, which is felt by the Hindoo, to be the agency for alleviating and removing the evils of the world, is likewise prophetic of the apostle Paul's statement, that "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many;" and these different Creeds bear upon their clasped hands, a truth not arbitrarily assumed, but which is common to human nature. And any system of religion or philosophy which does not recognize, in one form or another, these root-principles, cannot touch human hearts, and must, sooner or later, perish from sheer lack of human support and human sympathy. Have not these subtle dreamers of India dreamed something besides dreams?

"The primal truth Glimmers through many a superstitious form That fills the soul, with unavailing truth."

Chapter Two—The Buddhist

BUDDHISM is one of the sublimest religious phenomena that has visited this world. It is not a primitive religion, but was originally a feature of Brahminism; it is safe to remark, that the primitive types of all known religions, have only been approximately ascertained. Buddha was early worshipped by the Brahmins, as one of the incarnations or manifestations of Vishnu. He was looked upon, however, as a propagator of heresies, and the originator of all forms of skepticism. This designation, Buddha, was very likely given to the reformer, Sakya-muni, at first, by way of reproach, who, by a most remarkable life, raised it above obloquy, making it as distinctive and honorable, as Brahm, or any other descriptive term could have been.

The modern phases of Buddhism originated in Northern India, from five-hundred to a thousand-years B.C., and were sincere and manly efforts to restore certain early types of Brahminism, and free the people from a galling yoke of hierarchy and dogma. It was a dissent of human nature and philanthropy against the obnoxious Hindoo system of religious caste.

A few leading steps in the controversy between Brahminism and Buddhism are the following: Brahm, of Brahminism, is a passive intelligence, with which it was contended, that the sacerdotal orders only, may through Brahma, ultimately become purely identical.

The corruptions of the priesthood, as with the Roman clergy before the Reformation, after a while, brought a stigma upon this dogma. The more intelligent, among the people, felt that they were as good, and if as good, then as worthy of divine honors, as their Priests. This led them to demand for a God, a being less abstract and more active; one who can enter into fellowship, not with one class, the Priests merely, but with all classes alike.

These bold Protestants of their time and country, like Luther and the Reformers of the

fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, called upon their countrymen, not to trust the sacerdotal classes, not to worship them, or Brahm through them, but to become their own Priests, and worship, “not on this mountain” or that, but everywhere and directly the Universal Intelligence. These reformatory movements led to controversy, and were doubtless, inaugurated under severe persecution. The bloody Spanish Inquisition may have been anticipated.

As has always been the case with similar reforms, it was a time, too, of religious break-up, attended with many and diverse “departures.” The infidel philosophies, of India, probably took their rise in this period. Humanitarian, rationalistic, naturalistic, and materialistic parties appeared, contesting the pre-eminence of their several claims to universal respect. India must have had its Hobbes, its Voltaire, and possibly, its Frederick the Great. It is with not a little interest, we find the modern “Development” theory, started at this time, or near it, in the formula, “The rising of the world is a natural cause.”

But, too many interests supported Brahminism to allow it to be overthrown by infidelities worse than itself, or supplanted by a revolution better than itself, but which was not without its grand defects. The seed of skepticism remained, however, producing more or less fruit ever after.

Buddhism soon yielded, and her noble sages became pilgrims, and fled to other countries. The leading Spirit in this reformatory movement was Siddharta, of the family of the Sakya. He has borne the names of Sakya-muni, Sramana, Gautama, and Buddha.

He told the people that purity, abstinence, patience, brotherly love, and repentance were better than sacrifice. He, like Jesus, became the poor man’s preacher and friend, employed the language of the common people, and chose his followers out of all classes, even from among the poorest women.

The subsequent success of Buddhism, is well nigh, incredible. It spread with amazing rapidity, and has held its ascendancy with unparalleled vigor. It is today, the faith of Tibet,

Siam, of the Burmese Empire, Cochin China, Japan, Ceylon, and is the popular, though not the state religion, of China. The later Yoga system of Brahmin asceticism was formed by the introduction of Buddhistic elements, and to Buddhism, is almost entirely indebted, for its success.

Buddhism, is therefore, in numbers, the most extensively prevailing religion that has ever existed in this world. It has not less than three-hundred million disciples. It holds under its sway, one-third of the globe, and perhaps, it might be worse held.

There are those who look upon this great religious movement as of no account. To say that it is not worthy of a moment's attention is easy enough, but argues a void in the speaker. Ideas which have exercised sway, over such multitudes must, from the nature of the case, have foundation in fact and truth. Upon their surface, there may be unseemly "parasite growths," but underneath, there are vitality and reality. Newman, is not far from correct in saying, that "the majority is always true-hearted." "What every man says must be true," contains truth. It is a late day for Christianity to fall into a jealous fit, for fear that she has something to lose from paying respect to the thoughts of so many men. There is truth in Buddhism, "an inward perennial truth," or there is truth nowhere. These fore-thoughts of Buddhists may be as good and the same as our after-thoughts. Sakya-muni peered, for a time, into the very heart and depths of divine things. His religious system is the "enormous shadow" of what he saw. His apprehensions may have anticipated and foreshadowed the similar apprehensions of all believers, in all ages. He looked and saw for others. "What he says, all men were not far from saying - were longing to say. The Thoughts of all start up, as from painful enchanted sleep, round his Thought, answering to it, Yes, even so! Joyfully to men as the dawning of day from night, is it not, indeed, the awakening for them from no being into being, from death into life?" from a night of nightmare into the tranquil smile of spring morning? The "perplexing jungle of Paganism," springs from a grand tap-root, nourished by the soul's life and thought. Its root is embedded in human nature; its leaves can but exhale, something of truth. All admit that Christianity is the highest form of religious truth and thought. Buddhism approaches and makes obeisance: why scoff at it? Christians can afford to be something near as

charitable as the Buddhist of Ceylon, who surprised a missionary by saying, "I respect Christianity, because I regard it as a help to Buddhism."

Recall some of its great lessons to the race. It taught, that not merely the Priest, but the vilest person of the vilest race, even if a woman, may become One with Buddha. The word *Buddha*, means pure intelligence - the Brahm of Hindooism. Buddha and Brahm are of cognate, if not of the same signification.

No thoughts known to the world could be, therefore, more inspiring to Brahmin or Buddhist, than identity with this divine intelligence of Brahm and Buddha. The cry, in fact, to all nations was, "Ho, every one that thirsteth," "without money," "without price," and "without Priest." thirsty humanity lifted its drooping eyes and exclaimed, "I would, and I will." Buddhism, also maintains, the highest administration for intelligence. The low estimate placed upon human life, by the Brahmin, the Buddhist could not brook.

Intelligence, wherever found, to him, is sacred. A drop of human blood must not be split. The laws of Gautama, rigidly forbid the killing of any animal, from the minutest insect even, up to man. Brutes are felt, by the Buddhist, to have intelligence. They even must not be offered in sacrifice. Their half-human faculties and affections are thought to be other forms of Buddha. Buddhism was, therefore, consistent and emphatic in saying to the world, "I will defend your life, for it is grand and sacred." "You need spill no more blood." "Hereafter crown your altars, instead with fruit and flowers." Affrighted humanity fleeing from the sacrificial knife, and crushed under the footfall of tyrants and Priests, heard the message, and said,, "I will - defend me."

Buddhism also advocated, not only the sacredness, but the infinite capacity, nay, the infinite actuality, of the human intellect. "The one infallible diagnostic of Buddhism, is a belief in the infinite capacity of the human intellect." Emerson, speaking of "the infinite enlargement of the heart, with a power of growth to a new infinite on every side," and of the soul of man as, "an immensity, not possessed, and that cannot be possessed," but reiterates sentiments, with which, Buddhism abounds.

It also taught that the Pure Intelligence, the Illimitable One, may be embodied, in an infant. It affirmed that men are not brutes, but the True High Priests of the universe, nay, even gods. It anticipated in the same Spirit the claim of Empedocles, "I am God," indorsed by our New England philosopher. "The seer and the spectacle, the subject and object, are One." It anticipated the Spirit of Revelation, but with different import. "I have said, Ye are gods, and all of you are the children of the Most High." It told the mother that her child need not, and must not, be plunged into the Ganges, but be reared; for in the image of God had it been Created, and "of such is the Kingdom of Heaven." No wonder that these declarations were hailed, as messages from Heaven, and that whole tribes and whole nations exclaimed, "We too, are Buddhists." And who is not, in these respects, a Buddhist?

But again, to the Buddhist, belief in God, is the most constant and the most awful of all thoughts; and his relation to Him started strange and deep questions. Explanations were demanded; thence, other religious positions were taken. The Buddhist saw, for instance, that men are degraded; hence Buddha is represented as descending to earth, in order to raise men into a higher and purer life. The transcendental school holds, that this Buddha was not a real personage, but the imaginary or Spiritual character of a perfectly spotless being, God's representative, an example and a Saviour.

Though Buddhism started out as a protest against the idea of any kind of intervention or formal mediation between God and man, and likewise, against the idea of sacrifice as an element of reconciliation, still, through a philosophical necessity, both these ideas gradually fastened themselves upon the system, though not in old and repulsive forms, yet in essential forms. Buddhism, in these, as also in certain other matters, has, like Roman Catholicism, been, beyond question, a flexible religion, and upon this, in a measure, has depended its success.

Notice further developments: There is pure intelligence, and there is matter, said the Buddhist, but these positions inevitably lead to a third. There is a mediating influence or

personage who occupies the intervening territory, and this is Sanga. The Buddhist's idea of the God-man appears also, in those ancient idols which represent God's illimitable greatness in colossal human forms. The solemn idea of sacrifice, strange and contradictory, as it may seem, also found an important place in the Buddhist faith. It is really the essential foundation of its view of human and divine relations. The Buddhist's deity, not the Priest, is to destroy man and perfect him, and perfect by destroying, and make perfect by absorption. The sacrificial idea, is thus retained, but the prerogative of it is left, not with the *caste*, but with God. The Sankhya Cajhila state, that "sacrifice is the best of all *temporal* means of elevation; but to arrive at the possession of the prerogatives of the wise, *wisdom* itself must be sought." The lofty idea here embodied is, that "temporal means," like the Jewish economy, must give place to something higher; yet, these temporal means must not be discarded. The purer Buddhist souls seemed to half-apprehend, that wonderful economy which embraces all others, and which does not abolish the idea of sacrifice, but sees that Divine Reason has somehow been offered, "once for all," and that there is no longer needed, a sacrifice of blood for sin. Indeed, the more we examine the Christian side of Buddhism, the more it seems to be crowded with points of light; though its dark side leaves its followers in deepest ignorance and superstition. Notice additional aspects.

The Buddhist believes, for instance, that it is the privilege of divine men to contemplate divinity in its purity. It is likewise the teaching of Christianity that good men may know the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom He has sent.

This privilege, says the Buddhist, is obtained by sanctification. And thus, Jesus prays to the Father, to sanctify His disciples through divine truth.

Buddhism calls good men, Buddhas; Christianity calls them "sons of God." Buddhism affirms and reaffirms, that there must be some One person, and he a human person, in whom "perfect wisdom" resides. He may be a child in form, but he must be a God in power. All other persons utter only a part of the divine mind, this One is Himself Perfect; "Utterance." He is the Perfect Image. Thus, also Christianity points to One who is the

Word, and in Whom “dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.”

The Buddhist believes in the final loss of himself in some form of the Deity, perhaps the negative. The thought startles him, and almost induces non-belief. Nirvana, the absorbing One, is - Nothing. The Christian also holds to the well-nigh overwhelming thought of the union of Father, Son, and Spirit in One, which thought our Saviour extends, until it embraces all the pure in heart: “That they all may be One; as thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be One in us.”

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We need not carry our investigations further. We have seen enough to convince us, that in Buddhism, there may be a “half-play,” but also “real earnest” - rubbish, but gold.

Yes, it may be asked, but has not too much been shown? Why the need of special revelations, if these seekers have come so near God’s facts? If Buddhism has done so much, why may it not do all? If so, near the truth, why may it not be the truth?

Suppose, philosophically, there could be no reply; there are facts. One is, that there is no joy in Buddhism, nothing but profound sorrow. With other lights about it, there is also felt to be for it, no further progress. Beyond the Mongol nations, it can never step. The system has truth, but is not *the Truth*; paths it has, but is not *the Way*; light it gives, but not *the Light*; and never so sterile have been its fields, as they are today. “It is now Atheism, fast emerging into utter Idolatry.” With these thoughts in mind, we may admit all that the admirers of the system claim for it. Nay, we are desirous of allowing that these devout thinkers deciphered, in a rude style, their inmost thoughts, which are also in most truths. They saw, simply, what all true and earnest men must always see. “There is a Delphi and a Pythoness in every human breast,” though not all are willing or know how, to listen. Externals change and pass away, but underneath the crust, there are essentials, which remain forever. God loves truth wherever found, and will see to it that nothing harms it. No age in history has been a thoroughly dark age. God has always kept fires lighted upon some altars. “The whole Past, as I keep repeating,” says Carlyle, “is the possession of the Present: the Past had always something *true*, and is a precious

possession. In a different time, in a different place, it is always some other *side* of our common Human Nature, that has been developing itself. The actual True is the *sum* of all these; not any one of them, by itself, constitutes what of Human Nature, is hitherto, developed. Better to know them all, than misknow them.” “To which of these three Religions do you specially adhere?” inquires Meister of his Teacher. “To all the Three,” answers the other. “To all the Three; for they, by their union, first constitute the True Religion.”

Chapter Three

THE GREEK AND ROMAN

GRECIAN mythology presents a field so vast and attractive, of such lofty Spiritual development, and is so crowded with thoughts of the divine, that we hesitate before entering it, lest, while searching for the vital points demanded by our discussion, we be allured from the chief purpose, and linger here and there, until the ultimate design eludes us.

We shall not attempt, in this course, to follow the chronological order of development, because the chronological and logical orders, often seem at variance.

We also treat of the Grecian and Roman faiths, as though they were one. The earlier religion of the Sabines, who inhabited the hills of around Rome, is very little known. It may have had an Indian origin, and may have slightly modified the subsequent Roman faith. But, Greek culture, so affected the Roman, that it seems dependent upon it. The same is true of its later mythology; it does not present itself, as essentially independent.

The only marked distinction is, that the aesthetic and moral character of the Grecian people was deified, while the deification in case of the Romans, had relation to their practical and political character. There was, in consequence, but little piety in Rome; religion was utilitarian. It was different for a time, at least, in Greece.

But setting aside these comparisons, we seek leading ideas. It is well known to all, that first and last, the God-idea pervaded to the fullest extent, the ancient Grecian faith. Pantheism nowhere appears. Grecian theism was, in vogue, long before the time of Homer, who, though the first theologian of Greece, invented nothing; he gathered up the thoughts of ancients and of his contemporaries and set them to music; he was the Grecian Ezra.

Tyler, shows clearly in his chapter on, "The Homeric Doctrine of the Gods," that correct attributes were theoretically ascribed to them; but their conduct, as represented, presents thereto strange incongruities. The false ideas are the invention of men, the correct ones are the intuitive and almost unconscious testimony of the reason and conscience of man, to the truth of God.

Aeschylus, the later "theological poet" of Greece, represents the supreme deity as "the universal father," "the universal cause," the "all-seer," and "all-doer," and "all-wise," and "holy," and "merciful," the "most high and perfect one, blessed Zeus."

The current expressions, "God grant," "if God will," "God bless thee." "God will make amends," "God does good, men ill," betray most clearly, a popular belief in God's unity. Tertullian, Cyprian, and Arnobius employ, with great force, against the Pagans, an argument based upon this thought.

The relations of Zeus, to the Invisible and Unknown, have not yet been well drawn. This Zeus-deity merely stands at the head of Grecian civilization, art, and poetry. The representations that he is universal and eternal, must be received with qualification, for he was always represented as *specific*, as well as *generic*. He brings the world into light,

but his inviolable decrees *anticipated his own birth*, and he has father and mother; so that we may well ask, back of Zeus and back of Saturn, back of Coelus, or Uranus, and Terra, is - what?

Philosophy gives an indirect answer to the question. Pythagoras and Philolaus, tell us that "God" and "One" are the same. Zeno said, that no temples should be built to that deity, who is so far above all works of art and of artisans. Thales taught, that the formative principle of motion, somehow connected with water, is God. This reminds one of Mr. Carlyle's "Force," Darwin's "Development," and Huxley's "Protoplasm."

Apollonius taught, that no offering should be made to that God, who is called, the First. It was a dictum of Aristotle that "God, who is invisible to every mortal, is seen alone in His works." We perceive errors, undoubtedly, in these speculations, but they are errors that lie near or in the direction of truth. The *unit* of Pythagoras, the *infinite* of Anaximander, *water* of Thales, *air* of Anaximenes, the *symmetry* of Anaxagoras, the *good* of Euclid, the *one* and *all* of Plato, mean more than they express. "They stand for a great unutterable thought." They were stepping-stones in the majestic struggle of the human intellect towards the Invisible One, yet only stepping-stones. They were attempted solutions of the riddles and enigmas of divine manifestation, yet only attempts. We fail not to recognize, in these higher philosophical speculations of the daring minds of Greece, a vigorous but repeatedly baffled search, after God. And were this, as should be the case, the attitude of modern scientific speculation, it would no longer call forth, the antagonism of Christian faith.

But, these ideas of the philosophers, were too abstract, for the popular mind. We; therefore, discover a continual blending of the God-idea with the idea of a mediator. A tangible God was, from the nature of the case, resolutely demanded. Zeus answered this description, for a season, and in the meantime, that which is beyond Zeus was, by the people, forgotten. The masses, in their search, lost heart when they reached Zeus, and would go no farther. From terror, wonder, or perplexity of the vastness of the All Soul, even the search for it was abandoned. It was, at this point, that Grecian idolatry began;

and here, begins all idolatry. The moment, Zeus in Greece, and Jupiter in Rome, became the only generally recognized First and Father of all, that moment the earlier mythologies of Greece and Rome, except a few faint traces, were abandoned and lost; and lost, it will be observed, in consequence of an existing and absolute necessity of a mediator between the First God, whoever he is, and man. It is merely an unconscious repetition of what took place with both, Brahminism and Buddhism; nay, it is what occurs in every human soul, as well as in every religious system - an effort to clear away all rubbish, and find someone, or something, real and available, between God and man.

Socrates, Plato, Plutarch, as well as the masses of the people discovering no direct approach to God, were ever-looking for this *stand-between*. Hence, Porphyry and Phidias defended the popular image worship. Something for a mediator, there must be, they claimed; the what, was a matter of opinion. The popular Zeus-manifestation, could not long satisfy. He was too well known to the philosophers, and not well enough known to the masses. Socrates embodied a prevailing sentiment, when he said that the true religious philosophy for imperfect beings is "an infinite search after the divine." "What God is," he says, "I know not; what He is not, I know." He knew He was not Zeus.

"Believe in God and adore Him," said one of the Greek poets, "but investigate Him not; the inquiry is fruitless."

"O Jupiter!" said Euripides, "I know nothing of Thee but Thy Name."

How clearly these expressions embody Spencer's theory of the Unknowable. Forcibly do they confirm Hobbes's remark, "The Name of God is used, not to make us conceive Him, for He is inconceivable; but that we may honor Him." An echo, is all this, of the same sublime sentiment, which broke from the lips of Job - "Canst thou by searching find out God?"

In this confused condition of things, the leading minds of Greece vacillated between hope and despair; they went from the Peripatetics to the Stoics, and from the Stoics to

the Platonics; but, all seemed alike shrouded in confusion, contradiction, and doubt. Plato significantly defined man, as the “hunter after truth.”

Diogenes lighted his lantern and walked the streets of Athens, in daylight, to find a - man; a faultless man; an ideal man; a leader to higher attainments. This effort of the Greek philosopher, calls to mind the similar challenge of the Hebrew prophet, “Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any, that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it.”

The search, at times, seemed to end in despair. The elder Pliny was in so great darkness while attempting to understand the way in which the “immeasurable Creative Spirit” could be related to man, that he exclaimed, “What is God? If in truth, He be anything distinct from the world, it is beyond the compass of man’s understanding to know. It is a foolish delusion to imagine that the Infinite Spirit would concern Himself with the petty affairs of men. Man is full of desires. Man’s nature is a lie. The greatest good God has bestowed on man is the power of taking His own life.”

Philosophers were, at times, exasperated into avowing themselves atheists. Lucretius openly denied the existence of the gods, Euhemerus made sport of them, reduced them to a history of nature and to symbols of agriculture, and Plutarch, subtilized them. At other times, Nature was looked upon, as the tie between God and man. Plato, who was both, the most ultra of Spiritualists and the most ultra of materialists, found the chief divine manifestation in the outer universe. This was also a phase of ancient Persian worship.

There were two Gods in Plato’s scheme, the Seen and the Unseen; upon the principle of the *Ego* and the *Alter Ego*. The universe was simply a Created God, “the only begotten universe.” It was something “Whose body, Nature is, and God the soul.”

Even the world, to Plato’s mind, has a soul; therefore, it was, he thought, an animal. We can easily imagine him bowing to the stars, throbbing in the midnight heavens, and to the various forms of earthly beauty, as our New England philosopher gives his lusty

morning salute to the whispering pine or the incoming ocean. But, Plato fondly and easily stepped from this materialism into Spiritualistic idealism. Nature, he felt, as we may presently see, was not the only tie between God and man.

Back of all this materialism and these troops of gods, we find in others, as well as in Plato, occasional glimpses of a really lofty Spiritualism. Such, most likely, was the original basis of all Grecian mythology. Mercury, the messenger of God, Perseus, born of a virgin, Hercules, who burned himself to death, Orpheus, Musaeus, Melampus, and Pompilius Numa of Rome, enter into a material, better, perhaps, an objective superstructure, which has a profound and everlasting Spiritual basis. As soon as the material form, or the personification, was presented, it caught the popular eye, and held it; and this was the heathen's necessity, but also his mistake. Much advantage, had the Jew; it rested chiefly, in His Scripture and authority.

It was so much easier for the Greek to speak of Phoebus Apollo, Pallas Athene, Aphrodite, Ares, Hephaestus, Hestia, Hermes, Artemis, than of the abstract powers of nature, which they were made to represent; and so very much easier than to dwell upon the Universal Abstract which lies, and is felt to lie, back of all, that they often fell into unbelief and listlessness. In their doubt and skepticism they came to worship the creature more than the Creator. Indolence is usually the nurse, if not the mother, of skepticism.

But the strongest incentive to the search, in case of the Greek, as with other nations, was the felt necessity of a mediator, who is able to remove human guilt. If he could not do this, he was at once, dismissed. This matter of guilt always has been, and always will be, the fearfulest chasm between God and man. "No man is found," says Seneca, "who can acquit himself." "If you wish to be good," says Epictetus, "first believe that you are bad." "There is wanting," says Porphyry, "some universal method of delivering men's souls, which no sect of philosophy has ever yet found out."

These expressions are similar to Plato's earnest longing for emancipation and redemption; they are the anticipation of that wail, which broke from the soul of the great

apostle, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

As might be expected, both from the nature of the case and from universal experience, different forms of sacrifice, among the Greeks and Romans, were resorted to, for relief. The earlier sacrifices of the Greeks consisted of human victims. These, were subsequently abandoned, still, sacrifice, in some form, and with some kinds of victims, was practiced to the last, excepting where a religious polytheism had given place to a blank atheism. Excuses for sin, based upon the derelictions of the gods, who were often represented, as partakers in human crimes, afforded no permanent relief. The dissatisfaction and the restless search for something to relieve and restore, continued. We, thus arrive at the basis of Grecian and Roman, as of all other forms of polytheism; they spring from desires and efforts to find God, and a mediator between God and man; one who can unite God, and save from guilt. This is a tenant of universal and essential theology. The gods are multiplied among heathen nations, because they do not, in these respects, satisfy. Greek sculpture rose to perfection, but rose while feeling after, if happily, it could find and reproduce, a God Incarnate; no other thought could have kindled such enthusiasm.

Every new God is, in fact, the product of deep desires, and shows that the search had hitherto, been comparatively fruitless. The hand, in its reaching, had hit upon something, but not the thing. Plato represents Socrates, as advising men to investigate and learn from others respecting these great themes, and then risk themselves, as on a raft, until they can be carried more safely, or with less risk, on a surer conveyance, or some divine Logos.

A thousand years later, when Paul visited Athens, her inhabitants were still in search, and in public form, recognized the existence of the Unknown. These many gods of Greece and Rome, of Persia and Egypt, as also those of the Hindoo faith, are so many disappointments. They are meant for mediators, radiations of the supreme unity; but each has, after a while, received the slight and negative of the people in the suggestive cry, "We look for another!" Monotheism, as we have seen, has always been embosomed in

polytheism, notwithstanding its million gods; and pantheism always has been, as it is today, an effort of cultivated thought to mediate between the finite and infinite.

“When men are questioned concerning the nature of divinity,” says Maximus of Tyre, “their answers are all different; yet, notwithstanding all this prodigious variety of opinions, you will find one and the same feeling throughout the earth; viz., that there is but One God, the Father of All.” There is here recognized, a universal religious consciousness.

It is true that all forms of ancient polytheism have suffered terrible corruptions. There is truth in the statement, that development, in all cases, tends “to sacerdotalism, ritualism, polytheism, and idolatry.” It is not, therefore, surprising that the original conceptions, which the ancients attempted to embody, have been, in most instances, so strangely distorted as to escape recognition; still, the religious institutions which produced polytheism are, doubtless, of higher order, than those which leave to the world nothing save a cold, scientific and distant monotheism. Polytheism may have been the best expression of a new order of things that an unaided monotheism could devise. It is mediatorial throughout; nay, polytheism, rising from monotheism, may have been its prophetic announcement, that there cometh One, the latchets of whose shoes it could not unloose.

Before closing this course of Grecian and Roman mythology, we advance another step, and call attention to two quite distinctly marked developments of thought, which we take the liberty of denominating Grecian *Humanitarianism* and Grecian *Spiritualism*. It is interesting to notice in these and modern theories, how often and fully the moral and religious world repeats itself.

The thought, in either case, it will be noticed, points directly to a mediator, who, is somehow human and, somehow, divine. At times, so strong was the inclination in Greece and Rome, to convert ordinary men into mediators, that great care had to be exercised by the philosophers, lest unworthy and ungodly persons should be elected to the office by vote of a fickle populace. Plutarch throws out his challenge and warning thus: “If any

man, elated by arrogance, has claimed the attributes of a God, his career has ever been but short, and he has been ignominiously driven out, from the temple he desecrates.”

Pindar placed the greatest stress upon overcoming the tendency among men to “confound the merely human and divine.” To him, as to us, the line between the two is “unsurpassable.” Unintentionally, however, some of the leading philosophers had fostered these popular impulses.

Pythagoras, Plato, and Euripides, for instance, had repeatedly set forth, in various forms, the thought that “men are mortal gods, and gods are immortal men.”

The Greek, in common with the Oriental systems, though in different forms of development, held the opinion, that there is “an essential divinity in the eminently good man, and a possible association, or connection, of the Godhead with humanity.”

It was believed, by some philosophers, that all men have power over nature, and that this power results from some kind of connection with the divine. There are, doubtless, grains of truth in these representations. But when they were caught up by the common people, who could not well wield them, they were so sadly perverted, that it came to be, in men’s imaginings, no strange thing for the gods in human forms to walk the earth.

The usual effort on the part of the Greek, was to humanize deity; yet he sometimes yielded to the Spirit of Orientalism, and deified humanity. That was the popular Grecian Creed, which set forth, as fundamental, that the gods were nothing but children of women. Pythagoras was thought to have been a son of God. Aesculapius, is also, thus represented. At times Apollo displaced Zeus, and became the central figure in Grecian mythology. The Greeks and Romans were continually elevating the most ordinary men into intermediate or subordinate divinities, and, for the want of something better, their intense search centered itself, at times, in Hero-worship. In Rome, this idea was carried so far as, to well-nigh, shock us. Jupiter was practically dethroned, in order that man might be defied. As atheistically, France defied a prostitute, as Roman Catholics predicate divine attributes of the Pope, as the modern Mohammedan defies the Sultan,

and as modern humanitarians deify humanity, so Rome deified her Emperors, though changing daily. The bald-headed and squint-eyed Caligula, became a God.

In the startling language of Gibbon, the emperor of Rome, was at once, “a Priest, an Atheist, and a God.”

Such is humanitarianism, when carried to its logical extreme. Yet underneath, as with other forms of polytheism, there is something besides shadows. Here, are symbol and prophecy. But these extreme views were not received by all, or by most, of the best minds of Greece. And no wonder, for deified Nature, deified Heroes, and deified Emperors, never can satisfy the inquiries and wants of human souls. Souls are not content with toys, or make-believes, however gilded. Paganism answered no substantial purpose in these phases of it, and was never accepted by Socrates, Pythagoras, Plato, Anaxagoras, Pericles, or any of the thoughtful minds of antiquity, other than as an expedient. It was endured simply for the want of something better. There may have been some difficulty, in drawing the line between this, which we have termed, Grecian Humanitarianism and Grecian Spiritualism, but not so great, as at first, appears. There is an incompleteness in the system, but clear indications that these great minds were vigorously struggling towards the light in their search for the truth. Plato speaks of One, ideal or real, as we please to call Him, who embodies all that is true in modern civilization. Let us designate that conception as Spiritualism; better, theistic Spiritualism. Why stagger at terms? This Super-human One that great philosopher called, “Logos,” “Reason,” “Shadow of God,” “Ideal Man,” “Secondary God,” “Name of God,” “Looker on God,” “Divine Image,” “Eldest of Ideal Things,” “Undivided Association of the Supreme,” “God of God,” “Light of Light.”

How strikingly these terms recall the language of the apostle, “The effulgence of the Father’s glory, and the express image of his nature.” If one of these conceptions be Spiritualism, why not the other, though not equally clear? Both, Socrates and Plato looked for the divine manifestation in human form. They believed it possible for God to become man, and in such condition, visit the earth. These thoughts, to whatever source we trace them, made a deep impression upon the Grecian mind, and were subsequently reflected

from the Roman. Civero and Virgil employed very definite terms, respecting a coming supernatural Man, who would be able to satisfy the baffled intelligence of mankind.

Faith took shape in Seneca's mind thus: "No good man is Holy without God." "The wise or ideal man is the equal with God." How the thoughts of these men of Spiritual insight hovered about, though not fully comprehending the divine Logos! They were often in a kind of bewilderment - lost; but, in comparison with many others, how "delightfully lost!" The symbols and prophecies of the past, were with these men, at length, to be realized. But, pause - to find in the Pagan world, a higher and its highest type, we must go back.

Socrates anticipated Christian Spiritualism, if we mistake not, more perfectly than any other, outside the Jewish prophets, until Jesus came. We fix attention, for a moment, upon the last scenes of his noble life. He had taken, in his hand, the poison which he was condemned to drink, as a legal penalty for being true to truth, and then remarked, "It is certainly both, lawful and right, to pray to the gods that my departure thither may be happy; which therefore I pray, and so may it be." "And as he said this," says Plato, "he drank it off readily and calmly.....Having walked about, and saying that his limbs were growing heavy, he lay down upon his back, for the man so directed him. Afterwards Socrates touched himself and said, that when the poison reached his heart, he should then depart. Later, he uncovered himself, -- for he had been covered over, - and said, - and they were his last words, - "Crito, we owe a cock to Aesculapius; pay it, therefore, and do not neglect it." "It shall be done," said Crito; "but consider whether you have anything else to say." To this question, he gave no reply; but shortly after he gave a convulsive movement, and the man covered him, and his eyes were fixed; and Crito, perceiving it, closed his mouth and eyes. This, Echecrates, was the end of our friend, a man, as we may say, the best of all his time, that we have known, and, moreover, the most wise and just."

This, we hear it said, is the death of a Pagan. But is there here no faith, no Christian theism even? Who was this Aesculapius, to whom Socrates looked, in the last moments

of his life? An ordinary physician? No! Yet, a physician of whom it was reported that he could heal by the power of his word, or his touch, all manner of diseases that were brought to him. This Aesculapius was a god, the God of Restoration. He was the god, who once used the blood flowing from his veins, for the benefit of human beings. He was sometimes represented as the Light of the World; the One who gives repose; whose statue is the image and figure of Jove, slightly modified. He was represented, at other times, as seated upon a throne, holding in one hand a sceptre, in the other, the head of a *strangled serpent*. O, whence came these ideas? To this God-man, Physician, and Restorer, to this One who, more clearly than any other Grecian god, prefigures the Christian's Physician, Friend, and Saviour, Socrates, the great and grand prophet of Greece, looked, and feeling that this One, the most fully embodied, what the race needed, and what his own soul longed for, spoke his name, and died. In this act, there was no delirium, but an expression of the great beating and hunting heart of humanity. Here, was Christianity - beclouded. If a Christian be one who devotedly seeks God, through a mediator, then we know not, if a Christian lived on earth prior to Christ, why Socrates, was not a Christian.

“Sancte Socrates, ora pro nobis.” But, was Socrates faultless? Nay! Was Jacob?

Chapter Four--The Israelite and Ishmaelite

The Israelitish religion rests upon the same basis as Islamism. They both distinctly recognize subjection to an absolute will as the vital point in their faith.

Belief in monotheism and antagonism, to idolatry, constitute their natural strength. Whatever is original in the two systems belongs, however, to the Israelite. Its Jewish origin shows itself in all its better features. The name for its sacred writings, Koran, is borrowed for the Biblical term, *mikra*, reading. Scholten, though, as some think, in error respecting other statements, is quite right in saying that "what is true and good in Islamism, was borrowed from Israel and Christianity." "Islam," says Carlyle, "is definable, as a confused form of Christianity." It has been well termed, "a heresy of Christianity." "We think," says Deutsch, "that Islam is neither more nor less than Judaism, adapted to Arabia, plus the apostolate of Jesus and Mahomet."

The Israelitish faith was, doubtless, partly natural; and may it not also have been partly supernatural? partly inspired by nature; and may it not also have been, in part, and in a peculiar manner, God-inspired? The basis of it is not distinctively Hebrew, but is, beyond question, natural and common to all the other Semitic nations. Let not this admission disturb the Christian believer. For were God to form a supernatural religion, he would not reject existing materials, did they answer His purpose. He is an Economizer, and always practices rigidly upon the precept enjoined by His Son, "Gather up the fragments; let nothing be lost." Nothing slips undetected through His fingers. Truth is His wherever found, and He is not ashamed to use and own it.

Among all the Oriental nations, there was a religious Spirit that arose above the worship of nature. Bel among the Babylonians, Baal among the Ammonites and Moabites, Molech among the ancient Phoenicians and Carthaginians, Melkarth at Tyre and Carthage, and Jehovah, more properly Javah, of Israel, in each case, indicates a conception of the unity

of God, distinct from, apart from, and above nature. The religious sympathy between these nations was so strong, that the Israelites, notwithstanding the most resolute opposition of their prophets, constantly inclined to the worship of Baal and Molech.

The science of comparative philology, when applied to these Semitic religions, shows that they all had their “root originally in one and the same soil.”

The pure conceptions, which were reached in some individual instances, are seen in the old Canaanitish chieftains, Melchizedeck and Abimelech, who worshipped the same God as Abraham; indeed, long before the patriarch reached the Land of Promise, and while his father was engaged in idol-making, the beautiful hills of Palestine were adorned with altars and smoking with sacrifices to the same One Being, who is found in the original development of Brahminism.

Yet, no one can look upon the Israelitish religion, as a whole, not as frequently practiced by the people, but, as always, taught by the prophets, and recorded in the sacred books, without discovering, that apart from these natural or common elements, there is also a marked difference in subsequent developments between it and all other Semitic religious systems.

Such are the facts in the case. The only really difficult question is to account, upon naturalistic grounds, for this “disposition,” and this advanced step of the people of Israel. Did Abraham really receive a special call, and were the prophets under special instruction? If we can give an affirmative answer, our path is clear of difficulties, otherwise, it is well beset.

The Israelites, first and last, were not philosophers. No people were less prepared to make religious discoveries; none, by dint of will or intellect, were more illy prepared to reduce religious haze and nebula to order and system. They did not make their religion; it seems to have made them. With obstinate tendencies towards idolatry, they were kept, not to a cold and scientific, but to a lofty and inspiring theism.

Two centuries before Christ, there was written, in Alexandria, the Book of the Wisdom of Solomon. It is as philosophical, as anything in Jewish literature; still it is hardly a philosophy. The Spirit that pervades it, is metaphysical dualism. It holds, to what may be termed a personal God and a divine emanation. But its divine emanation is an idea, not a person. It is that which “fills all things, permeates the souls of the Holy, and is diffused like a luminous ether throughout the universe.”

Some of the sentiments of this book are pure, lofty, and dignified. It anticipated many truths subsequently enunciated in the Gospels. A “hope full of immortality” (Wisd. iii. 4); “the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God” (Wisd. iii. 1); “to know thee [O God] is perfect righteousness; yea, to know Thy power is the root of immortality” (Wisd. iii. 9), are beautiful and inspiring when viewed in the light of Christianity. The treatise, however, is indebted to Persian and Grecian thought, and especially to the utterances of Old Testament prophets, for its philosophy and for its sublime truth.

Of a later date, is Philo, the contemporary of Jesus. His is the only name in Jewish history that is worthy of the title, philosopher; and he is not original. He is Platonized through and through. His reasoning upon the nature of deity shows, that he stood comparatively independent of the prophetic schools, but not of the schools of philosophy. “When we attempt to investigate the essence of the Absolute Being,” he says, “we fall into an abyss of perplexity; and the only benefit derived from such researches is the conviction of their absurdity.” His God is not, therefore, the God of Abraham, but is an abstract being, who has no personality. Philo does not, however, stop in this state of despair; but, like a true Jew of the divine school, he says, “Unable to see God Himself, we may at least hope to see His image - the most Holy Logos, in whom, is comprehended the Most Perfect of sensible things -- the Universe.” But, here again, Philo’s Logos is never lifted from the region of abstractions. He, was perhaps, the Father of a modern notion that, “each man is the true Messiah and Saviour of himself.” We repeat, Philo, in laying any claims to philosophy, stands in the Jewish commonwealth, almost alone.

The prophets and Jewish teachers were not, by the slightest pretence on their part, philosophers, nor can we institute any such claim for them. They indulge in no speculations about God. He is represented as Creating and Ruling. He is the "I am," and the Jehovah, -- the coming One. He is such and such, and there the prophets stop. Of His generic nature and substance, they never speak. Whatever may have been the tendency of the common people towards idolatry, polytheism, images of God and image-worship, their sacred books and their inspired prophets countenance nothing of the kind, but severely condemn all such approaches. The Hebrew prophets attempted to explain God no more than a child attempts to explain his father. Yet, to this sublime doctrine of theism, the Hebrew nationality, under the personal influence of their prophets and the teachings of their sacred books, in the midst of polytheism and idolatry, has clung during a period dating two-thousand years before, and extending to two-thousand years since, their exile. Israel stands, in this respect, without a parallel.

From the God-idea of the Israelites, we turn, for a moment, to that of the Ishmaelite. The first historic notices of the ancient nomadic tribes of the Arabian peninsula, find them worshippers of the stars, the powers of nature, sacred stones, imaginary angels, and images. But there was, doubtless, among them, a prehistoric religious epoch. It discloses itself in the worship of Allahtaala, and points to a more distant monotheism. It can hardly be questioned, that the stars, the powers of nature, and the like, were merely looked upon, at first, as mediators between the Invisible and man. They were way marks in the journey to the Infinite. In their influence, they played the part of a talisman. But, thoughts of the Unknown One, at length, confused the minds of these early Arabs, and they paid their devotions and offered their sacrifices, not to the "All," but directly and exclusively, to invented, mediating, and deified things. From this state of idolatry, they were first, effectually aroused, by Mohammed. He was no ordinary man, but one of the greatest; he was religious, not ambitious. Those who knew him best named him, "Al Amin," the Faithful. His purpose was to revive the religion of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Like Zoroaster, Sakya-muni, and Martin Luther, Mohammed was a Protestant reformer. And like them, he, too, was no sham or false man. "A false man form a religion!" exclaims Carlyle. "Why, a false man cannot build a brick house."

He was born at Mecca (571), of a reputable family, belonging to the Koreish tribe. After his first public announcements, he suffered the various reverses of all reformers. He, at length, overcame the prejudices of his friends, organized troops, conquered Mecca (630), and made the Kaaba, the sanctuary of the new religion.

Islam (submission to God), is the word which embodies the doctrine of Mohammed, whence also, his followers take the name, Moslems. Nothing is truer or sublimer than this underlying principle of their faith.

“If this be *Islam*,” asks Goethe, “do we not all believe in Islam?” The first public act of the reformer, was to abolish idols and idol-worship. At the same time, he pointed the people to the one, Allah. His purpose was not merely, to destroy, but to build up. In these acts, he was no coward, but full of daring. “This wild man of the Desert, with his wild, sincere heart, earnest as death and life, with his great flashing natural eyesight, had seen into the kernel of the matter. Idolatry is nothing; these wooden idols of yours, ‘ye rub them with oil and wax, and the flies stick onto them;’ these are wood, I tell you! They can do nothing. ‘Allah Abkar, God is great.’”

But, Mohammed’s philosophy is not so good as his heart. His Allah is enthroned on high, and in the strictest isolation from the world. Thus, by separating God, as the abstract Supreme Being from the world, Mohammedanism, as Scholten states, leaves no place for the doctrine of God’s immanence. God’s Spirit no longer dwells in man. The divine revelations, remain purely mechanical, with no natural, or, in the true sense, supernatural point of connection in man. Hence, there can be no enduring prophetism, which is the fundamental principle of Judaism and Christianity. From this separation between God and man, the Mohammedan doctrine of pre-destination, in distinction from the Christian, is abstract and fatalistic. Man has no free activity in which God’s power and life are glorified, but is merely, a passive instrument of a higher power. To true moral independence, therefore, the Moslem does not attain. His religion, as a whole, is legal and external, therefore, cold, intolerant, and exclusive; “and when Islamism, led by

excited passion and a heated imagination, disregarded the sanctity of marriage, and held up, as a reward, before the faithful Moslem, a paradise characterized by sensual enjoyment, it missed, at once, the deep moral and Spiritual character of Christianity.”

Still, Mohammedanism, though a system of error, has done not a little, for the cause of truth. It has always held, to some tenets, which are common to both, Jewish and Christian believers. “It was wrong, and yet, not wholly wrong.” “Your salutation in Paradise,” it said, “shall be *Salem*” -- Peace. “Ye shall sit on seats facing one another. All grudges shall be taken away out of your hearts.” Such expressions would be, an adorning, to any religion. Prayer, hospitality, and benevolence, also occupy, a prominent place in the Islam faith. Belief in the future life, the Jewish-Parsee form of the resurrection, the final judgment, future rewards, and punishments are essential doctrines in the Mohammedan Creed. Belief in communications from the unseen Lord, to the pure and good, though contrary to the Spirit of their philosophy, is never called in question, by the followers of Mohammed. Indeed, they teach, that God, from the earliest times, revealed Himself to some privileged men, as to Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus; and of those, thus favored, Mohammed is regarded, as the greatest and last of the prophets. In him, the revelations of God are thought to find their culmination and their end.

The Mohammedan soldier exclaimed, “God is One, and man is His minister to do His will on earth. Mahomet is his prophet.” He needed no additional incentive. He swept onward in his startling conquests. Those “dusky millions, have felt daily, a power in this watchword. Nightly, the watchmen of Cairo, when they cry, ‘Who goes?’ with the response will hear, ‘Allah abkar, Islam.’”

But, with Mohammed and the visible government of the caliph, the divine manifestation ends. No new prophet can arise. God is to remain unobserving, distant, cold. The Mohammedan, will henceforth, worship his faithful mare and the desert. The new history with which Mohammed was to have the world begin, admits no additional step of religious progress. Their clarion shouts have already lost their startling effect upon the plains of Arabia. Here, in a system, that evokes no love, which impels submission, which is well

characterized by the epithet, "a pantheism of force," and the triumphs of the Crescent. No further or closer connection with the divine, no atonement, no universal kingdom, inspire the people. As early history of conquests, based upon an intense belief in God, and in a divinely-inspired man, so intense, clear, and simple, as to leave scarce any room for heresy or schism, and a future history of defeats, are what remain. It is a "fatal legacy." It now acts "as, a gradual decay in every nation over which it dominates." Here is witnessed, the fact that a pure theism, without the power or possibility of manifestation, cannot live on earth. Such negation shocks human nature beyond endurance, saps the foundations of belief, and opens the door to practical atheism.

Long since Mohammedanism had found its grave, but for the imaginary connection between God and the Sultan. In this earthly sovereignty remains, for a while, a central, natural, and religious power. As a shadow of that which resembles the truth, it affords a temporary support. When this falls or is questioned, Islamism is no more.

We now pass to the personal God, and Messiah-idea of the Jewish faith, which draw a broad line between Judaism and Islamism. The faith of the Israelite was made, first and last, to centre itself in a personal deity, who is ever present with His children, and who interests Himself in all the affairs of mortals. The early prophets, without, for an instant, losing sight of a pure theism, have, at the same time, clear visions of a King, who shall be the "manifestation of God," His Perfect Image, the Son of Man, the Son of God, not the human Sultan, but the Divine Deliverer. Isaiah has given the world a vision, which, for clearness and sublimity, upon grounds of the coldest criticism, finds no equal among mortals. Amid scenes of terrible conflicts and utter darkness, he saw in the distance, a Light. He saw the joy of the people, heard their shouts, and depicted their deliverance. He saw the armor of war, laid aside, the image of Peace, succeeding, the Light expanding, becoming more and more intense, and the darkness, on every hand, retiring. He gazed upon the wonderful scenes -- they were transformed, and there stood before Him, a little child, but one upon whose shoulders, the government of the world was placed. These prophetic visions produced impressions upon the Jewish heart, which for ages, were deeper than any other, and which have never been entirely obliterated.

It is a remarkable fact, that the Jews, though professedly strict monotheists, never attacked Christ or His disciples upon the ground of polytheism. They looked, in common, for a divine Messiah. "Make us gods, who shall go before us," the people demanded of Aaron. A deliverer, who should be a God, or a Son of God, was the strongest and deepest feeling in the heart of every Jewish patriot. The common people differed, it is true, in their opinions, as to the character of the Mediator. Some looked for a half-human and half-divine King. Others expected to see Him appear, in the form of a bloody conqueror. This was especially the case, after the Maccabean conquests. Nothing is more natural, perhaps, than for the nobility and courage of Judas Maccabeus, before whom, the vast armies of the Seleucidae disappeared, like morning mist, to furnish the Jew with an ideal Messiah. "This vision of the warrior archangel, was thenceforward, ever to float before their eyes." The masses were never quite able to understand how the empire of Messiah could be established by teaching, instead of fighting. Josephus thought he recognized the Divine One, in Vespasian.

But, there were others still, who looked for a Spiritual and Divine Reformer, a Saviour of the world. Such, when He appeared, were satisfied with Jesus of Nazareth.

These expectations, in various forms, were rife, not only among the School of the Prophets, but were talked of elsewhere. His name was heard more frequently than any other in the Schools of Hillel, Philo, and among the Essenes. The duty of every true Hebrew, was to consider it possible, for the Messiah to appear in Himself. These convictions, it may be noticed, were in part, the product of the prophetic writings, and in part, the prophecies of humanity. As in the case of the theism of Israel, so these Messianic longings and expectations had their natural and widespread basis, as well as their supernatural and special development. God fosters what is common to human nature, instead of inventing what is foreign to it. He is no more a friend to one part of His work, than He is to another. If nature, which is God's child, and which He loves, were strong enough, He would allow her to produce, without interference, the Supernatural. "Natural," were it possible, would take the place of "Supernatural," "Selection," and

“Development.” God is jealous, not of nature, though of man. Yet, as things are constituted, the supernatural is the natural, carried beyond natural possibility; but, there is no change of directions.

The root-faith, in the subject before us, is belief in a mediating and Divine Prince. This is the product of a common understanding among men. No religion can be a universal religion, that does not recognize it, and God would not “gather up the fragments,” did He not employ it, as a part foundation of His special providential and universal superstructure, whatever that may be.

The same statements, apply also, to the Israelitish idea of sacrificial atonement. There is a natural and universal basis, known and acted upon, long before special revelations in the Hebrew Scriptures, as well as a supernatural, ordained, and symbolic superstructure. Had he received no special directions, Abel would, nevertheless; have offered in sacrifice, “the firstlings of his flock.”

The Jews represent their God, as ordering sacrifices. Why object? May it not have been a divine recognition of a human necessity? The sacrifice of human beings, even, was not, among the people of Israel, altogether unknown. But, excepting in great emergencies, it had not the divine approval. Shall the Jewish faith, on account of its sacrifices, be condemned, as entirely of human invention?

Take away the principle of sacrifice, from any people, or any religion, leaving no substitute, there would of necessity, be a void so awful, that conscience must be violated or permitted to fill it. Human nature has remained too long essentially the same, in this respect, to be revolutionized, by merely, natural expedients.

But, leaving speculation, return to the simple fact of the Israelitish faith in the Messiah. The belief was wide-spread. In common, the Jew and Samaritan looked for one greater than their father, Abraham. At His advent, the Jew expected to see his nation suddenly “exalted to new bloom and luster.” When Pompey entered the Holy of Holies, he was surprised to find no image. He did not understand that this sacred apartment of the

Temple was in waiting for its True and Divine Lord and Master. With a half-glance, one cannot fail to discover, that the entire Jewish theocracy is made up from ideas of sacrifice, atonement, and a coming Messiah.

Scripture figures and types are, otherwise, meaningless. There is, upon any other supposition, no unity or force in Old Testament history, or prophecy. Introduce these elements, and there is one manifest object, from Adam to the origin of the Jewish commonwealth; from the prophets until “Behold the Lamb of God!” broke from the lips of John the Baptist. All incidental prophecies, histories, and biographies manifestly bear upon their surface, a Divine One. In Him, all sacrifices, rites, ceremonies, and types find their common centre and complete fulfilment. This explains those outbursts of feeling in the Jewish nation, which occasionally knew, no bounds. A wild “blaze of prophetic anticipation,” at times, swept over the people. It was the inspiring promise of His coming, which, in hours of adversity, brought every Jewish harp from the willows, and evoked their happiest songs of praise. The united anthems of the prophetic books, in force and beauty, will never be equaled. “I see Him, but not nigh. He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river, unto the ends of the earth. Break forth into singing, and cry aloud. The Lord of Hosts is Thy Name. The Lord of the whole earth, shall He be called. The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom, as the rose.”

The concluding Books of the Old Testament, are less inspiring, but have an intensity of meaning, rarely met, with elsewhere. These “short, convulsive sobs of a dying dispensation contain, in their broken and pathetic eloquence, many gleams of glorious hopes and splendid predictions, like the beautiful visions that cheer the death-bed of the sad and weary.”

The Jews of today, need not detain us. Their history is a sad one. Two-thousand years ago, they said, “the Messiah was then coming.” They made extensive preparations to receive Him. Today, they say, He has not come. They have lost heart, and fall to worshipping Dollars. The essence of true worship with the Jew, is no longer, morality.

The deep feeling of dependence on God and the spontaneity of religious life, are, among this people, rarely met with. Faith in the Most High, who, enthroned in Heaven, “puts purity into the closet, and allows the most intimate communion with the true worshipper,” no longer characterizes this nation of hucksters. What next, they scarcely know. That He, *will come*, has been through history, a bond of union, but this today, yields to a bond of mutual and financial interest.

Alas, for the descendants of Abraham! Islam sees God, in the ruling Sultan, and worships a horse. Israel trembles upon the verge of atheism, and consecrates an altar, to Mammon

Chapter Five--The Aboriginal American

A review or comparison of religious thoughts would not answer its purpose did we leave from our account, as is often done, the original inhabitants of the American continent. Here, were peoples and nations, numbering in the aggregate, from ten to twenty-million souls, and speaking six-hundred different dialects. Here, was mankind presented under various phases, from brutal abasement up to, at least, a limited civilization. At the northern extremity of America, were the pygmy Esquimaux, a trifle above four-feet in height, and at the southern, the Patagonian giants of seven feet. Here, humanity has unquestionably existed, in such numbers, and of such character, as to demand attention, if we correctly settle what are some of the religious ideas, which are innate or common to the race.

The Indians, who occupied both sides of the Alleghany Mountains, upon the arrival of the English Colonists, possessed the same general characteristics. They loved their respective tribes, treated their wives cruelly, and their children with indifference. The grand element in the Indian character, is stoicism. The Indian is gloomy, stern, severe, and is a stranger to mirth and laughter. He desires, above all things, to be let and left alone. He has, however, deep religious convictions. His Supreme Being is the Great, sometimes called, the Good Spirit. There were tribes -- for instance, the Natchez, near the Mississippi -- who worshipped the sun, and erected temples, upon whose altars, as in the Jewish Temples, they kept a perpetual fire.

Others -- for illustration, the Araucanians of South America, who, in true courage, in manliness and energy of character, take precedence of all the original American nations, and who maintained their independence against the best troops and the best generals of Spain for two-hundred years, while they intensely believed in a Supreme Being, have neither temples, nor idols, nor religious rites. The Indians generally, if not universally, believed in a future state; their descriptions make it resemble, the heaven of Mohammed.

The good and brave, according to their belief, enter beautiful and eternal hunting-grounds; the wicked fall into the hands of a relentless master. Their religious thought and Spirit threw coloring over every object of nature. Theirs was a kind of theistic naturalism. The melodious names they gave to mountains, lakes, and rivers are suggestive. Their "Smile of the Great Spirit," "The First Good," and the "First Fair," enthrone truth, and hint to us, the past poetico-religious character, even of the unsettled and savage tribes of America. Of the settled and partially civilized nations, we call attention, especially to two.

The largest empire in the early history of America was the Peruvian. Her people were unwarlike, and devoted themselves to art and agriculture. The government was an absolute despotism, based upon a strict theocracy. This feature mitigated largely, the rigors of its constitutional despotism. The temporal sovereign of Peru was, like the Monarchs of Egypt and Japan, the Supreme Pontiff. He also assumed, like the Emperor of China and the Catholic Priest, the title "Father of the People." He was regarded, as the descendant and representative of the great deity, the Sun, who was supposed to inspire the Pontiff's Councils and speak through his orders and decrees. The race of the ruling Incas was held sacred, and their claim to celestial origin seems, by the people, to have been implicitly believed.

The founder of the line of the Incas is to the Peruvians what Buddha is to the Buddhists. Not far from eleven-hundred of our era, Manco Capac, with his wife, and Mama Ocello, his sister, appeared as strangers upon the banks of the Lake Titicaca. Doubtless by some fortune of the sea, they or their ancestors had drifted from the shores of China. They brought with them, the principles of a higher civilization and purer religion than those of the native Peruvians. They were taken to be "children of the sun;" were believed in; then worshipped.

How naturally and fondly humanity worships a deity in human form! The people of Lystra exclaimed, when they saw the deeds of Paul and Barnabas, "The gods are come

down to us in the likeness of men!" and prepared their garlands and oxen for sacrifice.

Manco Capac, like Sakya-muni, Zoroaster, and Odin, was a religious reformer. Like Quetzalcoatl of the Mexicans, the Bochica of the Muyscas in New Grenada, and the Camarara of the Brazilians, so Manco Capac was looked upon by the Peruvians, as God-sent. May he not have been? Whose are the world's reformers, her teachers, prophets, and workers of miracles? May not the same providence which sent Paul and Barnabas to Lystra, have also sent Capac and Ocello, to the shores of Peru? Who governs the affairs of this world, God, man, or chance?

The Peruvians, like the Chinese, worshipped the sun, the moon, the evening star, the Spirit of thunder, and the rainbow. To these deities they had temples erected in Cusco, as the Chinese have in Pekin. Their sacrifices consisted of those objects of their own industry which were most highly prized - fruit, grain, and animals.

The story of Manco Capac and Mama Ocello, and the beneficence of the ruling Incas, is to-day fresh in the memories of the Peruvians. The accounts have been handed down from, father to son, with fondest admiration. Abraham is no better remembered among the Jews.

Three centuries of humiliation and misfortune have not blasted their hopes. They will not rest, nor will the Indians of the territory of Quito throw off their mourning dress of black, until their Incas, this race of the sons of God, return for their relief and restoration. Suffering humanity, thou shouldst have a universal Restorer!

Next to the Peruvian, ranked the early Mexican empire. Probably not far from 500 of the Christian era, the Toltecks first occupied the Mexican tablelands.

The ancient towns and cities visited by Stevenson, which have been, for ages, partially covered by dense tropical growths of vegetation, and which point to an earlier civilization than that existing at the time of the Spanish conquests, were undoubtedly of Tolteck

construction. Five or six centuries later, the Toltecks were subdued by the Aztecs, or Mexicans Proper, who upon the ruins of this earlier and higher civilization, erected their own.

When Cortez made his conquest, the eighth of the Montezuman line of Monarchs ruled a territory of one-hundred-and-thirty-thousand square miles, containing two-million subjects. The government was under an arbitrary aristocracy of Priests and Nobles.

Their Temples of worship were upon the same architectural plan as that of Belus at Babylon. They had a complicated system of theology. It was unique, in many particulars, but in others, strongly resembled that of the Persian fire-worshippers, and in still other respects, it reminds one of the faith of the Hindoos of the Ganges. They recognized One Supreme God, the "omniscient" and Invisible." Yet, like all other nations, they sought relief in mediations and incarnations. Hailzilopotchli and Tezcatlipoca were the chief deities, to whom, sacrifices were offered. These are approachable, because they are gods, born of women.

But, the people were not satisfied, and, like the Egyptians and Buddhists, the Greeks and Romans, the Goths and Vandals, they invented other divinities, still more human. They desired a Being, who could walk in their midst, heal and comfort them, and in the hem of whose garment there should be virtue. Quetzalcoalt came, and answered the conditions, and inaugurated the Golden Age of Mexico. He was probably a deified person, like Zoroaster, Buddha, and Odin. He was, according to their accounts, subsequently expelled from the empire, by a Superior God. But the Aztecs, year after year, looked and longed for his return. At first, they mistook Cortez, for this returning deity. How much this had to do with their conquest, it is not easy to estimate. The Aztec religion appears to have been cruel and savage, beyond measure. Women and children, as well as men, were mercilessly sacrificed. The highest estimates of victims (human) throughout the empire reach fifty thousand annually. At the dedication of one of their great temples the procession of victims extended for the distance of two miles.

A certain ceremony in honor of Tezcatlipoca, who ranked next to the Supreme and Invisible One, is to us, painfully interesting and suggestive. This deity is represented, as a man, faultless in form and beauty, and endowed with perpetual youth.

A captive youth, remarkable for personal beauty, was selected to represent him, to whom divine honors were paid for a year. Then, amid imposing and solemn ceremonies, he was publicly executed - an atonement for the people.

The stories of these repeated tragedies are appalling. They show what fearful and bloody coverings are sometimes thrown over truths which are fundamental to the race. This young man, of faultless form, of perhaps thirty and three years, made the representation of deity, the God-man of the Empire, and led forth, as a sacrifice for the people, awakens in the heart of humanity, a thought which, when once awakened, never slumbers.
