BRINTON DANIEL GARRISON

THE MYTHS OF THE NEW WORLD

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Brinton D.

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Содержание

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The Myths of the New World / A Treatise on the Symbolism and Mythology of the Red Race of America

PREFACE

I have written this work more for the thoughtful general reader than the antiquary. It is a study of an obscure portion of the intellectual history of our species as exemplified in one of its varieties.

What are man's earliest ideas of a soul and a God, and of his own origin and destiny? Why do we find certain myths, such as of a creation, a flood, an after-world; certain symbols, as the bird, the serpent, the cross; certain numbers, as the three, the four, the seven—intimately associated with these ideas by every race? What are the laws of growth of natural religions? How do they acquire such an influence, and is this influence for good or evil? Such are some of the universally interesting questions which I attempt to solve by an analysis of the simple faiths of a savage race.

If in so doing I succeed in investing with a more general interest the fruitful theme of American ethnology, my objects will have been accomplished.

Philadelphia,
April, 1868.

CHAPTER I.
GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS ON THE RED RACE

Natural religions the unaided attempts of man to find out God, modified by peculiarities of race and nation.—The peculiarities of the red race: 1. Its languages unfriendly to abstract ideas. Native modes of writing by means of pictures, symbols, objects, and phonetic signs. These various methods compared in their influence on the intellectual faculties. 2. Its isolation, unique in the history of the world. 3. Beyond all others, a hunting race.—Principal linguistic subdivisions: 1. The Eskimos. 2. The Athapascas. 3. The Algonkins and Iroquois. 4. The Apalachian tribes. 5. The Dakotas. 6. The Aztecs. 7. The Mayas. 8. The Muyscas. 9. The Quichuas. 10. The Caribs and Tupis. 11. The Araucanians.—General course of migrations.—Age of man in America.—Unity of type in the red race.

WHEN Paul, at the request of the philosophers of Athens, explained to them his views on divine things, he asserted, among other startling novelties, that "God has made of one blood all nations of the earth, that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him and find him, though he is not far from every one of us."

Here was an orator advocating the unity of the human species, affirming that the chief end of man is to develop an innate idea of God, and that all religions, except the one he preached, were examples of more or less unsuccessful attempts to do so. No wonder the Athenians, who acknowledged no kinship to barbarians, who looked dubiously at the doctrine of innate ideas, and were divided in opinion as to whether their mythology was a shrewd device of legislators to keep the populace in subjection, a veiled natural philosophy, or the celestial reflex of their own history, mocked at such a babbler and went their ways. The generations of philosophers that followed them partook of their doubts and approved their opinions, quite down to our own times. But now, after weighing the question maturely, we are compelled to admit that the Apostle was not so wide of the mark after all—that, in fact, the latest and best authorities, with no bias in his favor, support his position and may almost be said to paraphrase his words. For according to a writer who ranks second to none in the science of ethnology, the severest and most recent investigations show that "not only do acknowledged facts permit the assumption of the unity of the human species, but this opinion is attended with fewer discrepancies, and has greater inner consistency than the opposite one of specific diversity."[1] And as to the religions of heathendom, the view of Saint Paul is but expressed with a more poetic turn by a distinguished living author when he calls them "not fables, but truths, though clothed in a garb woven by fancy, wherein the web is the notion of God, the ideal of reason in the soul of man, the thought of the Infinite."[2]

Inspiration and science unite therefore to bid us dismiss the effete prejudice that natural religions either arise as the ancient philosophies taught, or that they are, as the Dark Ages imagined, subtle nets of the devil spread to catch human souls. They are rather the unaided attempts of man to find out God; they are the efforts of the reason struggling to define the infinite; they are the expressions of that "yearning after the gods" which the earliest of poets discerned in the hearts of all men. Studied in this sense they are rich in teachings. Would we estimate the intellectual and æsthetic culture of a people, would we generalize the laws of progress, would we appreciate the sublimity of Christianity, and read the seals of its authenticity: the natural conceptions of divinity reveal them. No mythologies are so crude, therefore, none so barbarous, but deserve the attention of

[1] Waitz, *Anthropologie der Naturvoelker*, i. p. 256.

[2] Carriere, *Die Kunst im Zusammenhang der Culturentwickelung*, i. p. 66.

the philosophic mind, for they are never the empty fictions of an idle fancy, but rather the utterances, however inarticulate, of an immortal and ubiquitous intuition.

These considerations embolden me to approach with some confidence even the aboriginal religions of America, so often stigmatized as incoherent fetichisms, so barren, it has been said, in grand or beautiful creations. The task bristles with difficulties. Carelessness, prepossessions, and ignorance have disfigured them with false colors and foreign additions without number. The first maxim, therefore, must be to sift and scrutinize authorities, and to reject whatever betrays the plastic hand of the European. For the religions developed by the red race, not those mixed creeds learned from foreign invaders, are to be the subjects of our study. Then will remain the formidable undertaking of reducing the authentic materials thus obtained to system and order, and this not by any preconceived theory of what they ought to conform to, but learning from them the very laws of religious growth they illustrate. The historian traces the birth of arts, science, and government to man's dependence on nature and his fellows for the means of self-preservation. Not that man receives these endowments from without, but that the stern step-mother, Nature, forces him by threats and stripes to develop his own inherent faculties. So with religion: The idea of God does not, and cannot, proceed from the external world, but, nevertheless, it finds its *historical* origin also in the desperate struggle for life, in the satisfaction of the animal wants and passions, in those vulgar aims and motives which possessed the mind of the primitive man to the exclusion of everything else.

There is an ever present embarrassment in such inquiries. In dealing with these matters beyond the cognizance of the senses, the mind is forced to express its meaning in terms transferred from sensuous perceptions, or under symbols borrowed from the material world. These transfers must be understood, these symbols explained, before the real meaning of a myth can be reached. He who fails to guess the riddle of the sphynx, need not hope to gain admittance to the shrine. With delicate ear the faint whispers of thought must be apprehended which prompt the intellect when it names the immaterial from the material; when it chooses from the infinity of visible forms those meet to shadow forth Divinity.

Two lights will guide us on this venturesome path. Mindful of the watchword of inductive science, to proceed from the known to the unknown, the inquiry will be put whether the aboriginal languages of America employ the same tropes to express such ideas as deity, spirit, and soul, as our own and kindred tongues. If the answer prove affirmative, then not only have we gained a firm foothold whence to survey the whole edifice of their mythology; but from an unexpected quarter arises evidence of the unity of our species far weightier than any mere anatomy can furnish, evidence from the living soul, not from the dead body. True that the science of American linguistics is still in its infancy, and that a proper handling of the materials it even now offers involves a more critical acquaintance with its innumerable dialects than I possess; but though the gleaning be sparse, it is enough that I break the ground. Secondly, religious rites are living commentaries on religious beliefs. At first they are rude representations of the supposed doings of the gods. The Indian rain-maker mounts to the roof of his hut, and rattling vigorously a dry gourd containing pebbles, to represent the thunder, scatters water through a reed on the ground beneath, as he imagines up above in the clouds do the spirits of the storm. Every spring in ancient Delphi was repeated in scenic ceremony the combat of Apollo and the Dragon, the victory of the lord of bright summer over the demon of chilling winter. Thus do forms and ceremonies reveal the meaning of mythology, and the origin of its fables.

Let it not be objected that this proposed method of analysis assumes that religions begin and develop under the operation of inflexible laws. The soul is shackled by no fatalism. Formative influences there are, deep seated, far reaching, escaped by few, but like those which of yore astrologers imputed to the stars, they potently incline, they do not coerce. Language, pursuits, habits, geographical position, and those subtle mental traits which make up the characteristics of races and nations, all tend to deflect from a given standard the religious life of the individual and the mass. It is essential to give these due weight, and a necessary preface therefore to an analysis of the myths

of the red race is an enumeration of its peculiarities, and of its chief families as they were located when first known to the historian.

Of all such modifying circumstances none has greater importance than the means of expressing and transmitting intellectual action. The spoken and the written language of a nation reveal to us its prevailing, and to a certain degree its unavoidable mode of thought. Here the red race offers a striking phenomenon. There is no other trait that binds together its scattered clans, and brands them as members of one great family, so unmistakably as this of language. From the Frozen Ocean to the Land of Fire, without a single exception, the native dialects, though varying infinitely in words, are marked by a peculiarity in construction which is found nowhere else on the globe,[3] and which is so foreign to the genius of *our* tongue that it is no easy matter to explain it. It is called by philologists the *polysynthetic* construction. What it is will best appear by comparison. Every grammatical sentence conveys one leading idea with its modifications and relations. Now a Chinese would express these latter by unconnected syllables, the precise bearing of which could only be guessed by their position; a Greek or a German would use independent words, indicating their relations by terminations meaningless in themselves; an Englishman gains the same end chiefly by the use of particles and by position. Very different from all these is the spirit of a polysynthetic language. It seeks to unite in the most intimate manner all relations and modifications with the leading idea, to merge one in the other by altering the forms of the words themselves and welding them together, to express the whole in one word, and to banish any conception except as it arises in relation to others. Thus in many American tongues there is, in fact, no word for father, mother, brother, but only for my, your, his father, etc. This has advantages and defects. It offers marvellous facilities for defining the perceptions of the senses with the utmost accuracy, but regarding everything in the concrete, it is unfriendly to the nobler labors of the mind, to abstraction and generalization. In the numberless changes of these languages, their bewildering flexibility, their variable forms, and their rapid deterioration, they seem to betray a lack of individuality, and to resemble the vague and tumultuous history of the tribes who employ them. They exhibit an almost incredible laxity. It is nothing uncommon for the two sexes to use different names for the same object, and for nobles and vulgar, priests and people, the old and the young, nay, even the married and single, to observe what seem to the European ear quite different modes of expression. Families and whole villages suddenly drop words and manufacture others in their places out of mere caprice or superstition, and a few years' separation suffices to produce a marked dialectic difference. In their copious forms and facility of reproduction they remind one of those anomalous animals, in whom, when a limb is lopped, it rapidly grows again, or even if cut in pieces each part will enter on a separate life quite unconcerned about his fellows. But as the naturalist is far from regarding this superabundant vitality as a characteristic of a higher type, so the philologist justly assigns these tongues a low position in the linguistic scale. Fidelity to form, here as everywhere, is the test of excellence. At the outset, we divine there can be nothing very subtle in the mythologies of nations with such languages. Much there must be that will be obscure, much that is vague, an exhausting variety in repetition, and a strong tendency to lose the idea in the symbol.

What definiteness of outline might be preserved must depend on the care with which the old stories of the gods were passed from one person and one generation to another. The fundamental myths of a race have a surprising tenacity of life. How many centuries had elapsed between the period the Germanic hordes left their ancient homes in Central Asia, and when Tacitus listened to their wild songs on the banks of the Rhine? Yet we know that through those unnumbered ages of barbarism and aimless roving, these songs, "their only sort of history or annals," says the historian, had preserved

[3] It is said indeed that the Yebus, a people on the west coast of Africa, speak a polysynthetic language, and *per contra*, that the Otomis of Mexico have a monosyllabic one like the Chinese. Max Mueller goes further, and asserts that what is called the process of agglutination in the Turanian languages is the same as what has been named polysynthesis in America. This is not to be conceded. In the former the root is unchangeable, the formative elements follow it, and prefixes are not used; in the latter prefixes are common, and the formative elements are blended with the root, both undergoing changes of structure. Very important differences.

intact the story of Mannus, the Sanscrit Manu, and his three sons, and of the great god Tuisco, the Indian Dyu.[4] So much the more do all means invented by the red race to record and transmit thought merit our careful attention. Few and feeble they seem to us, mainly shifts to aid the memory. Of some such, perhaps, not a single tribe was destitute. The tattoo marks on the warrior's breast, his string of gristly scalps, the bear's claws around his neck, were not only trophies of his prowess, but records of his exploits, and to the contemplative mind contain the rudiments of the beneficent art of letters. Did he draw in rude outline on his skin tent figures of men transfixed with arrows as many as he had slain enemies, his education was rapidly advancing. He had mastered the elements of *picture writing*, beyond which hardly the wisest of his race progressed. Figures of the natural objects connected by symbols having fixed meanings make up the whole of this art. The relative frequency of the latter marks its advancement from a merely figurative to an ideographic notation. On what principle of mental association a given sign was adopted to express a certain idea, why, for instance, on the Chipeway scrolls a circle means *spirits*, and a horned snake *life*, it is often hard to guess. The difficulty grows when we find that to the initiated the same sign calls up quite different ideas, as the subject of the writer varies from war to love, or from the chase to religion. The connection is generally beyond the power of divination, and the key to ideographic writing once lost can never be recovered.

The number of such arbitrary characters in the Chipeway notation is said to be over two hundred, but if the distinction between a figure and a symbol were rigidly applied, it would be much reduced. This kind of writing, if it deserves the name, was common throughout the continent, and many specimens of it, scratched on the plane surfaces of stones, have been preserved to the present day. Such is the once celebrated inscription on Dighton Rock, Massachusetts, long supposed to be a record of the Northmen of Vinland; such those that mark the faces of the cliffs which overhang the waters of the Orinoco, and those that in Oregon, Peru, and La Plata have been the subject of much curious speculation. They are alike the mute and meaningless epitaphs of vanished generations.

I would it could be said that in favorable contrast to our ignorance of these inscriptions is our comprehension of the highly wrought pictography of the Aztecs. No nation ever reduced it more to a system. It was in constant use in the daily transactions of life. They manufactured for writing purposes a thick, coarse paper from the leaves of the agave plant by a process of maceration and pressure. An Aztec book closely resembles one of our quarto volumes. It is made of a single sheet, twelve to fifteen inches wide, and often sixty or seventy feet long, and is not rolled, but folded either in squares or zigzags in such a manner that on opening it there are two pages exposed to view. Thin wooden boards are fastened to each of the outer leaves, so that the whole presents as neat an appearance, remarks Peter Martyr, as if it had come from the shop of a skilful bookbinder. They also covered buildings, tapestries, and scrolls of parchment with these devices, and for trifling transactions were familiar with the use of *slates* of soft stone from which the figures could readily be erased with water.[5] What is still more astonishing, there is reason to believe, in some instances, their figures were not painted, but actually *printed* with movable blocks of wood on which the symbols were carved in relief, though this was probably confined to those intended for ornament only.

In these records we discern something higher than a mere symbolic notation. They contain the germ of a phonetic alphabet, and represent sounds of spoken language. The symbol is often not connected with the *idea* but with the *word*. The mode in which this is done corresponds precisely to that of the rebus. It is a simple method, readily suggesting itself. In the middle ages it was much in vogue in Europe for the same purpose for which it was chiefly employed in Mexico at the same time—the writing of proper names. For example, the English family Bolton was known in heraldry by a *tun* transfixed by a *bolt*. Precisely so the Mexican emperor Ixcoatl is mentioned in the Aztec manuscripts under the figure of a serpent *coatl*, pierced by obsidian knives *ixtli*, and Moquauhzoma by

[4] Grimm, *Geschichte der Deutschen Sprache*, p. 571.

[5] Peter Martyr, *De Insulis nuper Repertis*, p. 354: Colon. 1574.

a mouse-trap *montli*, an eagle *quauhtli*, a lancet *zo*, and a hand *maitl*. As a syllable could be expressed by any object whose name commenced with it, as few words can be given the form of a rebus without some change, as the figures sometimes represent their full phonetic value, sometimes only that of their initial sound, and as universally the attention of the artist was directed less to the sound than to the idea, the didactic painting of the Mexicans, whatever it might have been to them, is a sealed book to us, and must remain so in great part. Moreover, it is entirely undetermined whether it should be read from the first to the last page, or *vice versa*, whether from right to left or from left to right, from bottom to top or from top to bottom, around the edges of the page toward the centre, or each line in the opposite direction from the preceding one. There are good authorities for all these methods,[6] and they may all be correct, for there is no evidence that any fixed rule had been laid down in this respect.

Immense masses of such documents were stored in the imperial archives of ancient Mexico. Torquemada asserts that five cities alone yielded to the Spanish governor on one requisition no less than sixteen thousand volumes or scrolls! Every leaf was destroyed. Indeed, so thorough and wholesale was the destruction of these memorials now so precious in our eyes that hardly enough remain to whet the wits of antiquaries. In the libraries of Paris, Dresden, Pesth, and the Vatican are, however, a sufficient number to make us despair of deciphering them had we for comparison all which the Spaniards destroyed.

Beyond all others the Mayas, resident on the peninsula of Yucatan, would seem to have approached nearest a true phonetic system. They had a regular and well understood alphabet of twenty seven elementary sounds, the letters of which are totally different from those of any other nation, and evidently original with themselves. But besides these they used a large number of purely conventional symbols, and moreover were accustomed constantly to employ the ancient pictographic method in addition as a sort of commentary on the sound represented. What is more curious, if the obscure explanation of an ancient writer can be depended upon, they not only aimed to employ an alphabet after the manner of ours, but to express the sound absolutely like our phonographic signs do.[7] With the aid of this alphabet, which has fortunately been preserved, we are enabled to spell out a few words on the Yucatecan manuscripts and façades, but thus far with no positive results. The loss of the ancient pronunciation is especially in the way of such studies.

In South America, also, there is said to have been a nation who cultivated the art of picture writing, the Panos, on the river Ucayale. A missionary, Narcisso Gilbar by name, once penetrated, with great toil, to one of their villages. As he approached he beheld a venerable man seated under the shade of a palm tree, with a great book open before him from which he was reading to an attentive circle of auditors the wars and wanderings of their forefathers. With difficulty the priest got a sight of the precious volume, and found it covered with figures and signs in marvellous symmetry and order.[8] No wonder such a romantic scene left a deep impression on his memory.

The Peruvians adopted a totally different and unique system of records, that by means of the *quipu*. This was a base cord, the thickness of the finger, of any required length, to which were attached numerous small strings of different colors, lengths, and textures, variously knotted and twisted one with another. Each of these peculiarities represented a certain number, a quality, quantity, or other idea, but *what*, not the most fluent *quipu* reader could tell unless he was acquainted with the general topic treated of. Therefore, whenever news was sent in this manner a person accompanied the bearer to serve as verbal commentator, and to prevent confusion the *quipus* relating to the various departments of knowledge were placed in separate storehouses, one for war, another for taxes, a third for history, and so forth. On what principle or mnemotechnics the ideas were connected with the

[6] They may be found in Waitz, *Anthrop. der Naturvoelker*, iv. p. 173.

[7] The only authority is Diego de Landa, *Relacion de las Cosas de Yucatan*, ed. Brasseur, Paris, 1864, p. 318. The explanation is extremely obscure in the original. I have given it in the only sense in which the author's words seem to have any meaning.

[8] Humboldt, *Vues des Cordillères*, p. 72.

knots and colors we are totally in the dark; it has even been doubted whether they had any application beyond the art of numeration.[9] Each combination had, however, a fixed ideographic value in a certain branch of knowledge, and thus the *quipu* differed essentially from the Catholic rosary, the Jewish phylactery, or the knotted strings of the natives of North America and Siberia, to all of which it has at times been compared.

The *wampum* used by the tribes of the north Atlantic coast was, in many respects, analogous to the quipu. In early times it was composed chiefly of bits of wood of equal size, but different colors. These were hung on strings which were woven into belts and bands, the hues, shapes, sizes, and combinations of the strings hinting their general significance. Thus the lighter shades were invariable harbingers of peaceful or pleasant tidings, while the darker portended war and danger. The substitution of beads or shells in place of wood, and the custom of embroidering figures in the belts were, probably, introduced by European influence.

Besides these, various simpler mnemonic aids were employed, such as parcels of reeds of different lengths, notched sticks, knots in cords, strings of pebbles or fruit-stones, circular pieces of wood or slabs pierced with different figures which the English liken to "cony holes," and at a victory, a treaty, or the founding of a village, sometimes a pillar or heap of stones was erected equalling in number the persons present at the occasion, or the number of the fallen.

This exhausts the list. All other methods of writing, the hieroglyphs of the Micmacs of Acadia, the syllabic alphabet of the Cherokees, the pretended traces of Greek, Hebrew, and Celtiberic letters which have from time to time been brought to the notice of the public, have been without exception the products of foreign civilization or simply frauds. Not a single coin, inscription, or memorial of any kind whatever, has been found on the American continent showing the existence, either generally or locally, of any other means of writing than those specified.

Poor as these substitutes for a developed phonetic system seem to us, they were of great value to the uncultivated man. In his legends their introduction is usually ascribed to some heaven-sent benefactor, the antique characters were jealously adhered to, and the pictured scroll of bark, the quipu ball, the belt of wampum, were treasured with provident care, and their import minutely expounded to the most intelligent of the rising generation. In all communities beyond the stage of barbarism a class of persons was set apart for this duty and no other. Thus, for example, in ancient Peru, one college of priests styled *amauta*, learned, had exclusive charge over the quipus containing the mythological and historical traditions; a second, the *haravecs*, singers, devoted themselves to those referring to the national ballads and dramas; while a third occupied their time solely with those pertaining to civil affairs. Such custodians preserved and prepared the archives, learned by heart with their aid what their fathers knew, and in some countries, as, for instance, among the Panos mentioned above, and the Quiches of Guatemala,[10] repeated portions of them at times to the assembled populace. It has even been averred by one of their converted chiefs, long a missionary to his fellows, that the Chipeways of Lake Superior have a college composed of ten "of the wisest and most venerable of their nation," who have in charge the pictured records containing the ancient history of their tribe. These are kept in an underground chamber, and are disinterred every fifteen years by the assembled guardians, that they may be repaired, and their contents explained to new members of the society.[11]

In spite of these precautions, the end seems to have been very imperfectly attained. The most distinguished characters, the weightiest events in national history faded into oblivion after a few generations. The time and circumstances of the formation of the league of the Five Nations, the dispersion of the mound builders of the Ohio valley in the fifteenth century, the chronicles of Peru or Mexico beyond a century or two anterior to the conquest, are preserved in such a vague and

[9] Desjardins, *Le Pérou avant la Conquête Espagnole*, p. 122: Paris, 1858.

[10] An instance is given by Ximenes, *Origen de los Indios de Guatemala*, p. 186: Vienna, 1856.

[11] George Copway, *Traditional History of the Ojibway Nation*, p. 130: London, 1850.

contradictory manner that they have slight value as history. Their mythology fared somewhat better, for not only was it kept fresh in the memory by frequent repetition; but being itself founded in nature, it was constantly nourished by the truths which gave it birth. Nevertheless, we may profit by the warning to remember that their myths are myths only, and not the reflections of history or heroes.

Rising from these details to a general comparison of the symbolic and phonetic systems in their reactions on the mind, the most obvious are their contrasted effects on the faculty of memory. Letters represent elementary sounds, which are few in any language, while symbols stand for ideas, and they are numerically infinite. The transmission of knowledge by means of the latter is consequently attended with most disproportionate labor. It is almost as if we could quote nothing from an author unless we could recollect his exact words. We have a right to look for excellent memories where such a mode is in vogue, and in the present instance we are not disappointed. "These savages," exclaims La Hontan, "have the happiest memories in the world!" It was etiquette at their councils for each speaker to repeat verbatim all his predecessors had said, and the whites were often astonished and confused at the verbal fidelity with which the natives recalled the transactions of long past treaties. Their songs were inexhaustible. An instance is on record where an Indian sang two hundred on various subjects.[12] Such a fact reminds us of a beautiful expression of the elder Humboldt: "Man," he says, "regarded as an animal, belongs to one of the singing species; but his notes are always associated with ideas." The youth who were educated at the public schools of ancient Mexico—for that realm, so far from neglecting the cause of popular education, established houses for gratuitous instruction, and to a certain extent made the attendance upon them obligatory—learned by rote long orations, poems, and prayers with a facility astonishing to the conquerors, and surpassing anything they were accustomed to see in the universities of Old Spain. A phonetic system actually weakens the retentive powers of the mind by offering a more facile plan for preserving thought. "*Ce que je mets sur papier, je remets de ma mémoire*" is an expression of old Montaigne which he could never have used had he employed ideographic characters.

Memory, however, is of far less importance than a free activity of thought, untrammelled by forms or precedents, and ever alert to novel combinations of ideas. Give a race this and it will guide it to civilization as surely as the needle directs the ship to its haven. It is here that ideographic writing reveals its fatal inferiority. It is forever specifying, materializing, dealing in minutiæ. In the Egyptian symbolic alphabet there is a figure for a virgin, another for a married woman, for a widow without offspring, for a widow with one child, two children, and I know not in how many other circumstances, but for *woman* there is no sign. It must be so in the nature of things, for the symbol represents the object as it appears or is fancied to appear, and not as it is *thought*. Furthermore, the constant learning by heart infallibly leads to slavish repetition and mental servility.

A symbol when understood is independent of language, and is as universally current as an Arabic numeral. But this divorce of spoken and written language is of questionable advantage. It at once destroys all permanent improvement in a tongue through elegance of style, sonorous periods, or delicacy of expression, and the life of the language itself is weakened when its forms are left to fluctuate uncontrolled. Written poetry, grammar, rhetoric, all are impossible to the student who draws his knowledge from such a source.

Finally, it has been justly observed by the younger Humboldt that the painful fidelity to the antique figures transmitted from barbarous to polished generations is injurious to the æsthetic sense, and dulls the mind to the beautiful in art and nature.

The transmission of thought by figures and symbols would, on the whole, therefore, foster those narrow and material tendencies which the genius of polysynthetic languages would seem calculated to produce. Its one redeeming trait of strengthening the memory will serve to explain the strange

[12] Morse, *Report on the Indian Tribes*, App. p. 352.

tenacity with which certain myths have been preserved through widely dispersed families, as we shall hereafter see.

Besides this of language there are two traits in the history of the red man without parallel in that of any other variety of our species which has achieved any notable progress in civilization.

The one is his *isolation*. Cut off time out of mind from the rest of the world, he never underwent those crossings of blood and culture which so modified and on the whole promoted the growth of the old world nationalities. In his own way he worked out his own destiny, and what he won was his with a more than ordinary right of ownership. For all those old dreams of the advent of the Ten Lost Tribes, of Buddhist priests, of Welsh princes, or of Phenician merchants on American soil, and there exerting a permanent influence, have been consigned to the dustbin by every unbiased student, and when we see such men as Mr. Schoolcraft and the Abbé E. C. Brasseur essaying to resuscitate them, we regretfully look upon it in the light of a literary anachronism.

The second trait is the entire absence of the herdsman's life with its softening associations. Throughout the continent there is not a single authentic instance of a pastoral tribe, not one of an animal raised for its milk,[13] nor for the transportation of persons, and very few for their flesh. It was essentially a hunting race. The most civilized nations looked to the chase for their chief supply of meat, and the courts of Cuzco and Mexico enacted stringent game and forest laws, and at certain periods the whole population turned out for a general crusade against the denizens of the forest. In the most densely settled districts the conquerors found vast stretches of primitive woods.

If we consider the life of a hunter, pitting his skill and strength against the marvellous instincts and quick perceptions of the brute, training his senses to preternatural acuteness, but blunting his more tender feelings, his sole aim to shed blood and take life, dependent on luck for his food, exposed to deprivations, storms, and long wanderings, his chief diet flesh, we may more readily comprehend that conspicuous disregard of human suffering, those sanguinary rites, that vindictive spirit, that inappeasable restlessness, which we so often find in the chronicles of ancient America. The law with reason objects to accepting a butcher as a juror on a trial for life; here is a whole race of butchers.

The one mollifying element was agriculture. On the altar of Mixcoatl, god of hunting, the Aztec priest tore the heart from the human victim and smeared with the spouting blood the snake that coiled its lengths around the idol; flowers and fruits, yellow ears of maize and clusters of rich bananas decked the shrine of Centeotl, beneficent patroness of agriculture, and bloodless offerings alone were her appropriate dues. This shows how clear, even to the native mind, was the contrast between these two modes of subsistence. By substituting a sedentary for a wandering life, by supplying a fixed dependence for an uncertain contingency, and by admonishing man that in preservation, not in destruction, lies his most remunerative sphere of activity, we can hardly estimate too highly the wide distribution of the zea mays. This was their only cereal, and it was found in cultivation from the southern extremity of Chili to the fiftieth parallel of north latitude, beyond which limits the low temperature renders it an uncertain crop. In their legends it is represented as the gift of the Great Spirit (Chipeways), brought from the terrestrial Paradise by the sacred animals (Quiches), and symbolically the mother of the race (Nahuas), and the material from which was moulded the first of men (Quiches).

As the races, so the great families of man who speak dialects of the same tongue are, in a sense, individuals, bearing each its own physiognomy. When the whites first heard the uncouth gutturals of the Indians, they frequently proclaimed that hundreds of radically diverse languages, invented, it

[13] Gomara states that De Ayllon found tribes on the Atlantic shore not far from Cape Hatteras keeping flocks of deer (*ciervos*) and from their milk making cheese (*Hist. de las Indias*, cap. 43). I attach no importance to this statement, and only mention it to connect it with some other curious notices of the tribe now extinct who occupied that locality. Both De Ayllon and Lawson mention their very light complexions, and the latter saw many with blonde hair, blue eyes, and a fair skin; they cultivated when first visited the potato (or the groundnut), tobacco, and cotton (Humboldt); they reckoned time by disks of wood divided into sixty segments (Lederer); and just in this latitude the most careful determination fixes the mysterious White-man's-land, or Great Ireland of the Icelandic Sagas (see the *American Hist. Mag.*, ix. p. 364), where the Scandinavian sea rovers in the eleventh century found men of their own color, clothed in long woven garments, and not less civilized than themselves.

was piously suggested, by the Devil for the annoyance of missionaries, prevailed over the continent. Earnest students of such matters—Vater, Duponceau, Gallatin, and Buschmann—have, however, demonstrated that nine-tenths of the area of America, at its discovery, were occupied by tribes using dialects traceable to ten or a dozen primitive stems. The names of these, their geographical position in the sixteenth century, and, so far as it is safe to do so, their individual character, I shall briefly mention.

Fringing the shores of the Northern Ocean from Mount St. Elias on the west to the Gulf of St. Lawrence on the east, rarely seen a hundred miles from the coast, were the Eskimos.[14] They are the connecting link between the races of the Old and New Worlds, in physical appearance and mental traits more allied to the former, but in language betraying their near kinship to the latter. An amphibious race, born fishermen, in their buoyant skin kayaks they brave fearlessly the tempests, make long voyages, and merit the sobriquet bestowed upon them by Von Baer, "the Phenicians of the north." Contrary to what one might suppose, they are, amid their snows, a contented, light-hearted people, knowing no longing for a sunnier clime, given to song, music, and merry tales. They are cunning handicraftsmen to a degree, but withal wholly ingulfed in a sensuous existence. The desperate struggle for life engrosses them, and their mythology is barren.

South of them, extending in a broad band across the continent from Hudson's Bay to the Pacific, and almost to the Great Lakes below, is the Athapascan stock. Its affiliated tribes rove far north to the mouth of the Mackenzie River, and wandering still more widely in an opposite direction along both declivities of the Rocky Mountains, people portions of the coast of Oregon south of the mouth of the Columbia, and spreading over the plains of New Mexico under the names of Apaches, Navajos, and Lipans, almost reach the tropics at the delta of the Rio Grande del Norte, and on the shores of the Gulf of California. No wonder they deserted their fatherland and forgot it altogether, for it is a very *terra damnata*, whose wretched inhabitants are cut off alike from the harvest of the sea and the harvest of the soil. The profitable culture of maize does not extend beyond the fiftieth parallel of latitude, and less than seven degrees farther north the mean annual temperature everywhere east of the mountains sinks below the freezing point.[15] Agriculture is impossible, and the only chance for life lies in the uncertain fortunes of the chase and the penurious gifts of an arctic flora. The denizens of these wilds are abject, slovenly, hopelessly savage, "at the bottom of the scale of humanity in North America," says Dr. Richardson, and their relatives who have wandered to the more genial climes of the south are as savage as they, as perversely hostile to a sedentary life, as gross and narrow in their moral notions. This wide-spread stock, scattered over forty-five degrees of latitude, covering thousands of square leagues, reaching from the Arctic Ocean to the confines of the empire of the Montezumas, presents in all its subdivisions the same mental physiognomy and linguistic peculiarities.[16]

Best known to us of all the Indians are the Algonkins and Iroquois, who, at the time of the discovery, were the sole possessors of the region now embraced by Canada and the eastern United States north of the thirty-fifth parallel. The latter, under the names of the Five Nations, Hurons, Tuscaroras, Susquehannocks, Nottoways and others, occupied much of the soil from the St. Lawrence and Lake Ontario to the Roanoke, and perhaps the Cherokees, whose homes were in the secluded vales of East Tennessee, were one of their early offshoots.[17] They were a race of warriors, courageous,

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[14] The name Eskimo is from the Algonkin word *Eskimantick*, eaters of raw flesh. There is reason to believe that at one time they possessed the Atlantic coast considerably to the south. The Northmen, in the year 1000, found the natives of Vinland, probably near Rhode Island, of the same race as they were familiar with in Labrador. They call them *Skralingar*, chips, and describe them as numerous and short of stature (Eric Rothens Saga, in Mueller, *Sagænbibliothek*, p. 214). It is curious that the traditions of the Tuscaroras, who placed their arrival on the Virginian coast about 1300, spoke of the race they found there as eaters of raw flesh and ignorant of maize (Lederer, *Account of North America*, in Harris, Voyages).

[15] Richardson, *Arctic Expedition*, p. 374.

[16] The late Professor W. W. Turner of Washington, and Professor Buschmann of Berlin, are the two scholars who have traced the boundaries of this widely dispersed family. The name is drawn from Lake Athapasca in British America.

[17] The Cherokee tongue has a limited number of words in common with the Iroquois, and its structural similarity is close. The name is of unknown origin. It should doubtless be spelled *Tsalakie*, a plural form, almost the same as that of the river Tellico, properly

cruel, unimaginative, but of rare political sagacity. They are more like ancient Romans than Indians, and are leading figures in the colonial wars.

The Algonkins surrounded them on every side, occupying the rest of the region mentioned and running westward to the base of the Rocky Mountains, where one of their famous bands, the Blackfeet, still hunts over the valley of the Saskatchewan. They were more genial than the Iroquois, of milder manners and more vivid fancy, and were regarded by these with a curious mixture of respect and contempt. Some writer has connected this difference with their preference for the open prairie country in contrast to the endless and sombre forests where were the homes of the Iroquois. Their history abounds in great men, whose ambitious plans were foiled by the levity of their allies and their want of persistence. They it was who under King Philip fought the Puritan fathers; who at the instigation of Pontiac doomed to death every white trespasser on their soil; who led by Tecumseh and Black Hawk gathered the clans of the forest and mountain for the last pitched battle of the races in the Mississippi valley. To them belonged the mild mannered Lenni Lenape, who little foreboded the hand of iron that grasped their own so softly under the elm tree of Shackamaxon, to them the restless Shawnee, the gypsy of the wilderness, the Chipeways of Lake Superior, and also to them the Indian girl Pocahontas, who in the legend averted from the head of the white man the blow which, rebounding, swept away her father and all his tribe.[18]

Between their southernmost outposts and the Gulf of Mexico were a number of clans, mostly speaking the Muscogee tongue, Creeks, Choctaws, Chikasaws, and others, in later times summed up as Apalachian Indians, but by early writers sometimes referred to as "The Empire of the Natchez." For tradition says that long ago this small tribe, whose home was in the Big Black country, was at the head of a loose confederation embracing most of the nations from the Atlantic coast quite into Texas; and adds that the expedition of De Soto severed its lax bonds and shook it irremediably into fragments. Whether this is worth our credence or not, the comparative civilization of the Natchez, and the analogy their language bears to that of the Mayas of Yucatan, the builders of those ruined cities which Stephens and Catherwood have made so familiar to the world, attach to them a peculiar interest.[19]

North of the Arkansas River on the right bank of the Mississippi, quite to its source, stretching over to Lake Michigan at Green Bay, and up the valley of the Missouri west to the mountains, resided the Dakotas, an erratic folk, averse to agriculture, but daring hunters and bold warriors, tall and strong of body.[20] Their religious notions have been carefully studied, and as they are remarkably primitive and transparent, they will often be referred to. The Sioux and the Winnebagoes are well-known branches of this family.

We have seen that Dr. Richardson assigned to a portion of the Athapascas the lowest place among North American tribes, but there are some in New Mexico who might contest the sad distinction, the Root Diggers, Comanches and others, members of the Snake or Shoshonee family, scattered extensively northwest of Mexico. It has been said of a part of these that they are "nearer the

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Tsaliko (Ramsey, *Annals of Tennessee*, p. 87), on the banks of which their principal towns were situated. Adair's derivation from *cheera*, fire, is worthless, as no such word exists in their language.

[18] The term Algonkin may be a corruption of *agomeegwin*, people of the other shore. Algic, often used synonymously, is an adjective manufactured by Mr. Schoolcraft "from the words Alleghany and Atlantic" (Algic Researches, ii. p. 12). There is no occasion to accept it, as there is no objection to employing Algonkin both as substantive and adjective. Iroquois is a French compound of the native words *hiro*, I have said, and *kouè*, an interjection of assent or applause, terms constantly heard in their councils.

[19] Apalachian, which should be spelt with one p, is formed of two Creek words, *apala*, the great sea, the ocean, and the suffix *chi*, people, and means those dwelling by the ocean. That the Natchez were offshoots of the Mayas I was the first to surmise and to prove by a careful comparison of one hundred Natchez words with their equivalents in the Maya dialects. Of these, *five* have affinities more or less marked to words peculiar to the Huastecas of the river Panuco (a Maya colony), *thirteen* to words common to Huasteca and Maya, and *thirty-nine* to words of similar meaning in the latter language. This resemblance may be exemplified by the numerals, one, two, four, seven, eight, twenty. In Natchez they are *hu*, *ah*, *gan*, *uk-woh*, *upku-tepish*, *oka-poo*: in Maya, *hu*, *ca*, *can*, *uk*, *uapxæ*, *hunkal*. (See the Am. Hist. Mag., New Series, vol. i. p. 16, Jan. 1867.)

[20] Dakota, a native word, means friends or allies.

brutes than probably any other portion of the human race on the face of the globe."[21] Their habits in some respects are more brutish than those of any brute, for there is no limit to man's moral descent or ascent, and the observer might well be excused for doubting whether such a stock ever had a history in the past, or the possibility of one in the future. Yet these debased creatures speak a related dialect, and are beyond a doubt largely of the same blood as the famous Aztec race, who founded the empire of Anahuac, and raised architectural monuments rivalling the most famous structures of the ancient world. This great family, whose language has been traced from Nicaragua to Vancouver's Island, and whose bold intellects colored all the civilization of the northern continent, was composed in that division of it found in New Spain chiefly of two bands, the Toltecs, whose traditions point to the mountain ranges of Guatemala as their ancient seat, and the Nahuas, who claim to have come at a later period from the northwest coast, and together settled in and near the valley of Mexico.[22] Outlying colonies on the shore of Lake Nicaragua and in the mountains of Vera Paz rose to a civilization that rivalled that of the Montezumas, while others remained in utter barbarism in the far north.

The Aztecs not only conquered a Maya colony, and founded the empire of the Quiches in Central America, a complete body of whose mythology has been brought to light in late years, but seem to have made a marked imprint on the Mayas themselves. These possessed, as has already been said, the peninsula of Yucatan. There is some reason to suppose they came thither originally from the Greater Antilles, and none to doubt but that the Huastecas who lived on the river Panuco and the Natchez of Louisiana were offshoots from them. Their language is radically distinct from that of the Aztecs, but their calendar and a portion of their mythology are common property. They seem an ancient race of mild manners and considerable polish. No American nation offers a more promising field for study. Their stone temples still bear testimony to their uncommon skill in the arts. A trustworthy tradition dates the close of the golden age of Yucatan a century anterior to its discovery by Europeans. Previously it had been one kingdom, under one ruler, and prolonged peace had fostered the growth of the fine arts; but when their capital Mayapan fell, internal dissensions ruined most of their cities.

No connection whatever has been shown between the civilization of North and South America. In the latter continent it was confined to two totally foreign tribes, the Muyscas, whose empire, called that of the Zacs, was in the neighborhood of Bogota, and the Peruvians, who in their two related divisions of Quichuas and Aymaras extended their language and race along the highlands of the Cordilleras from the equator to the thirtieth degree of south latitude. Lake Titicaca seems to have been the cradle of their civilization, offering another example how inland seas and well-watered plains favor the change from a hunting to an agricultural life. These four nations, the Aztecs, the Mayas, the Muyscas and the Peruvians, developed spontaneously and independently under the laws of human progress what civilization was found among the red race. They owed nothing to Asiatic or European teachers. The Incas it was long supposed spoke a language of their own, and this has been thought

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[21] Rep. of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1854, p. 209.

[22] According to Professor Buschmann Aztec is probably from *iztac*, white, and Nahuatlacatl signifies those who speak the language *Nahuatl*, clear sounding, sonorous. The Abbé Brasseur (de Bourbourg), on the other hand, derives the latter from the Quiche *nawal*, intelligent, and adds the amazing information that this is identical with the English *know all*!! (*Hist. du Mexique*, etc., i. p. 102). For in his theory several languages of Central America are derived from the same old Indo-Germanic stock as the English, German, and cognate tongues. Toltec, from *Toltecatl*, means inhabitant of Tollan, which latter may be from *tolin*, rush, and signify the place of rushes. The signification *artificer*, often assigned to Toltecatl, is of later date, and was derived from the famed artistic skill of this early folk (Buschmann, *Aztek. Ortsnamen*, p. 682: Berlin, 1852). The Toltecs are usually spoken of as anterior to the Nahuas, but the Tlascaltecs and natives of Cholollan or Cholula were in fact Toltecs, unless we assign to this latter name a merely mythical signification. The early migrations of the two Aztec bands and their relationship, it may be said in passing, are as yet extremely obscure. The Shoshonees when first known dwelt as far north as the head waters of the Missouri, and in the country now occupied by the Black Feet. Their language, which includes that of the Comanche, Wihinasht, Utah, and kindred bands, was first shown to have many and marked affinities with that of the Aztecs by Professor Buschmann in his great work, *Ueber die Spuren der Aztekischen Sprache im nördlichen Mexico und höheren Amerikanischen Norden*, p. 648: Berlin, 1854.

evidence of foreign extraction; but Wilhelm von Humboldt has shown conclusively that it was but a dialect of the common tongue of their country.[23]

When Columbus first touched the island of Cuba, he was regaled with horrible stories of one-eyed monsters who dwelt on the other islands, but plundered indiscriminately on every hand. These turned out to be the notorious Caribs, whose other name, *Cannibals*, has descended as a common noun to our language, expressive of one of their inhuman practices. They had at that time seized many of the Antilles, and had gained a foothold on the coast of Honduras and Darien, but pointed for their home to the mainland of South America. This they possessed along the whole northern shore, inland at least as far as the south bank of the Amazon, and west nearly to the Cordilleras. It is still an open question whether the Tupis and Guaranis who inhabit the vast region between the Amazon and the Pampas of Buenos Ayres are affined to them. The traveller D'Orbigny zealously maintains the affirmative, and there is certainly some analogy of language, but withal an inexplicable contrast of character. The latter were, and are, in the main, a peaceable, inoffensive, apathetic set, dull and unambitious, while the Caribs won a terrible renown as bold warriors, daring navigators, skilful in handicrafts; and their poisoned arrows, cruel and disgusting habits, and enterprise, rendered them a terror and a by-word for generations.[24]

Our information of the natives of the Pampas, Patagonia, and the Land of Fire, is too vague to permit their positive identification with the Araucanians of Chili; but there is much to render the view plausible. Certain physical peculiarities, a common unconquerable love of freedom, and a delight in war, bring them together, and at the same time place them both in strong contrast to their northern neighbors.[25]

There are many tribes whose affinities remain to be decided, especially on the Pacific coast. The lack of inland water communication, the difficult nature of the soil, and perhaps the greater antiquity of the population there, seem to have isolated and split up beyond recognition the indigenous families on that shore of the continent; while the great river systems and broad plains of the Atlantic slope facilitated migration and intercommunication, and thus preserved national distinctions over thousands of square leagues.

These natural features of the continent, compared with the actual distribution of languages, offer our only guides in forming an opinion as to the migrations of these various families in ancient times. Their traditions, take even the most cultivated, are confused, contradictory, and in great part manifestly fabulous. To construct from them by means of daring combinations and forced interpretations a connected account of the race during the centuries preceding Columbus were with the aid of a vivid fancy an easy matter, but would be quite unworthy the name of history. The most that can be said with certainty is that the general course of migrations in both Americas was from the high latitudes toward the tropics, and from the great western chain of mountains toward the east. No reasonable doubt exists but that the Athapascas, Algonkins, Iroquois, Apalachians, and Aztecs all migrated from the north and west to the regions they occupied. In South America, curiously enough, the direction is reversed. If the Caribs belong to the Tupi-Guaranay stem, and if the Quichuas belong to the Aymaras, as there is strong likelihood,[26] then nine-tenths of the population of that vast continent

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[23] His opinion was founded on an analysis of fifteen words of the secret language of the Incas preserved in the Royal Commentaries of Garcilasso de la Vega. On examination, they all proved to be modified forms from the *lengua general* (Meyen, *Ueber die Ureinwohner von Peru*, p. 6). The Quichuas of Peru must not be confounded with the Quiches of Guatemala. Quiche is the name of a place, and means "many trees;" the derivation of Quichua is unknown. Muyscas means "men." This nation also called themselves Chibchas.

[24] The significance of Carib is probably warrior. It may be the same word as Guarani, which also has this meaning. Tupi or Tupa is the name given the thunder, and can only be understood mythically.

[25] The Araucanians probably obtained their name from two Quichua words, *ari auccan*, yes! they fight; an idiom very expressive of their warlike character. They had had long and terrible wars with the Incas before the arrival of Pizarro.

[26] Since writing the text I have received the admirable work of Dr. von Martius, *Beiträge zur Ethnographie und Sprachenkunde Amerika's zumal Brasilians*, Leipzig, 1867, in which I observe that that profound student considers that there is no doubt but that the Island Caribs, and the Galibis of the main land are descendants from the same stock as the Tupis and Guaranis.

wandered forth from the steppes and valleys at the head waters of the Rio de la Plata toward the Gulf of Mexico, where they came in collision with that other wave of migration surging down from high northern latitudes. For the banks of the river Paraguay and the steppes of the Bolivian Cordilleras are unquestionably the earliest traditional homes of both Tupis and Aymaras.

These movements took place not in large bodies under the stimulus of a settled purpose, but step by step, family by family, as the older hunting grounds became too thickly peopled. This fact hints unmistakably at the gray antiquity of the race. It were idle even to guess how great this must be, but it is possible to set limits to it in both directions. On the one hand, not a tittle of evidence is on record to carry the age of man in America beyond the present geological epoch. Dr. Lund examined in Brazil more than eight hundred caverns, out of which number only six contained human bones, and of these six only one had with the human bones those of animals now extinct. Even in that instance the original stratification had been disturbed, and probably the bones had been interred there.[27] This is strong negative evidence. So in every other example where an unbiased and competent geologist has made the examination, the alleged discoveries of human remains in the older strata have proved erroneous.

The cranial forms of the American aborigines have by some been supposed to present anomalies distinguishing their race from all others, and even its chief families from one another. This, too, falls to the ground before a rigid analysis. The last word of craniology, which at one time promised to revolutionize ethnology and even history, is that no one form of the skull is peculiar to the natives of the New World; that in the same linguistic family one glides into another by imperceptible degrees; and that there is as much diversity, and the same diversity among them in this respect as among the races of the Old Continent.[28] Peculiarities of structure, though they may pass as general truths, offer no firm foundation whereon to construct a scientific ethnology. Anatomy shows nothing unique in the Indian, nothing demanding for its development any special antiquity, still less an original diversity of type.

On the other hand, the remains of primeval art and the impress he made upon nature bespeak for man a residence in the New World coeval with the most distant events of history. By remains of art I do not so much refer to those desolate palaces which crumble forgotten in the gloom of tropical woods, nor even the enormous earthworks of the Mississippi valley covered with the mould of generations of forest trees, but rather to the humbler and less deceptive relics of his kitchens and his hunts. On the Atlantic coast one often sees the refuse of Indian villages, where generation after generation have passed their summers in fishing, and left the bones, shells, and charcoal as their only epitaph. How many such summers would it require for one or two hundred people to thus gradually accumulate a mound of offal eight or ten feet high and a hundred yards across, as is common enough? How many generations to heap up that at the mouth of the Altamaha River, examined and pronounced exclusively of this origin by Sir Charles Lyell,[29] which is about this height, and covers ten acres of ground? Those who, like myself, have tramped over many a ploughed field in search of arrow-heads must have sometimes been amazed at the numbers which are sown over the face of our country, betokening a most prolonged possession of the soil by their makers. For a hunting population is always sparse, and the collector finds only those arrow-heads which lie upon the surface.

Still more forcibly does nature herself bear witness to this antiquity of possession. Botanists declare that a very lengthy course of cultivation is required so to alter the form of a plant that it can no longer be identified with the wild species; and still more protracted must be the artificial propagation for it to lose its power of independent life, and to rely wholly on man to preserve it from

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[27] *Comptes Rendus*, vol. xxi. p. 1368 sqq.

[28] The two best authorities are Daniel Wilson, *The American Cranial Type*, in *Ann. Rep. of the Smithson. Inst.*, 1862, p. 240, and J. A. Meigs, *Cranial Forms of the Amer. Aborigs.*: Phila. 1866. They accord in the views expressed in the text and in the rejection of those advocated by Dr. S. G. Morton in the Crania Americana.

[29] *Second Visit to the United States*, i. p. 252.

extinction. Now this is precisely the condition of the maize, tobacco, cotton, quinoa, and mandioca plants, and of that species of palm called by botanists the *Gulielma speciosa*; all have been cultivated from immemorial time by the aborigines of America, and, except cotton, by no other race; all no longer are to be identified with any known wild species; several are sure to perish unless fostered by human care.[30] What numberless ages does this suggest? How many centuries elapsed ere man thought of cultivating Indian corn? How many more ere it had spread over nearly a hundred degrees of latitude, and lost all semblance to its original form? Who has the temerity to answer these questions? The judicious thinker will perceive in them satisfactory reasons for dropping once for all the vexed inquiry, "how America was peopled," and will smile at its imaginary solutions, whether they suggest Jews, Japanese, or, as the latest theory is, Egyptians.

While these and other considerations testify forcibly to that isolation I have already mentioned, they are almost equally positive for an extensive intercourse in very distant ages between the great families of the race, and for a prevalent unity of mental type, or perhaps they hint at a still visible oneness of descent. In their stage of culture, the maize, cotton, and tobacco could hardly have spread so widely by commerce alone. Then there are verbal similarities running through wide families of languages which, in the words of Professor Buschmann, are "calculated to fill us with bewildering amazement,"[31] some of which will hereafter be pointed out; and lastly, passing to the psychological constitution of the race, we may quote the words of a sharp-sighted naturalist, whose monograph on one of its tribes is unsurpassed for profound reflections: "Not only do all the primitive inhabitants of America stand on one scale of related culture, but that mental condition of all in which humanity chiefly mirrors itself, to wit, their religious and moral consciousness, this source of all other inner and outer conditions, is one with all, however diverse the natural influences under which they live."[32]

Penetrated with the truth of these views, all artificial divisions into tropical or temperate, civilized or barbarous, will in the present work, so far as possible, be avoided, and the race will be studied as a unit, its religion as the development of ideas common to all its members, and its myths as the garb thrown around these ideas by imaginations more or less fertile, but seeking everywhere to embody the same notions.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

As the subject of American mythology is a new one to most readers, and as in its discussion everything depends on a careful selection of authorities, it is well at the outset to review very briefly what has already been written upon it, and to assign the relative amount of weight that in the following pages will be given to the works most frequently quoted. The conclusions I have arrived at are so different from those who have previously touched upon the topic that such a step seems doubly advisable.

The first who undertook a philosophical survey of American religions was Dr. Samuel Farmer Jarvis, in 1819 (A Discourse on the Religion of the Indian Tribes of North America, Collections of the New York Historical Society, vol. iii., New York, 1821). He confined himself to the tribes north of Mexico, a difficult portion of the field, and at that time not very well known. The notion of a state of primitive civilization prevented Dr. Jarvis from forming any correct estimate of the native religions, as it led him to look upon them as deteriorations from purer faiths instead of developments. Thus he speaks of them as having "departed less than among any

[30] Martius, *Von dem Rechtzustande unter den Ureinwohnern Brasiliens*, p. 80: Muenchen, 1832; recently republished in his *Beiträge zur Ethnographie und Sprachenkunde Amerika's*: Leipzig, 1867.

[31] *Athapaskische Sprachstamm*, p. 164: Berlin, 1856.

[32] Martius, *Von dem Rechtzustande unter den Ureinwohnern Brasiliens*, p. 77.

other nation from the form of primeval truth," and also mentions their "wonderful uniformity" (pp. 219, 221).

The well-known American ethnologist, Mr. E. G. Squier, has also published a work on the subject, of wider scope than its title indicates (The Serpent Symbol in America, New York, 1851). Though written in a much more liberal spirit than the preceding, it is wholly in the interests of one school of mythology, and it the rather shallow physical one, so fashionable in Europe half a century ago. Thus, with a sweeping generalization, he says, "The religions or superstitions of the American nations, however different they may appear to the superficial glance, are rudimentally the same, and are only modifications of that primitive system which under its physical aspect has been denominated Sun or Fire worship" (p. 111). With this he combines the favorite and (may I add?) characteristic French doctrine, that the chief topic of mythology is the adoration of the generative power, and to rescue such views from their materializing tendencies, imagines to counterbalance them a clear, universal monotheism. "We claim to have shown," he says (p. 154), "that the grand conception of a Supreme Unity and the doctrine of the reciprocal principles existed in America in a well defined and clearly recognized form;" and elsewhere that "the monotheistic idea stands out clearly in *all* the religions of America" (p. 151).

If with a hope of other views we turn to our magnificent national work on the Indians (History, Conditions, and Prospects of the Indian Tribes of the United States: Washington, 1851-9), a great disappointment awaits us. That work was unfortunate in its editor. It is a monument of American extravagance and superficiality. Mr. Schoolcraft was a man of deficient education and narrow prejudices, pompous in style, and inaccurate in statements. The information from original observers it contains is often of real value, but the general views on aboriginal history and religion are shallow and untrustworthy in the extreme.

A German professor, Dr. J. G. Müller, has written quite a voluminous work on American Primitive Religions (*Geschichte der Amerikanischen Ur-religionen*, pp. 707: Basel, 1855). His theory is that "at the south a worship of nature with the adoration of the sun as its centre, at the north a fear of spirits combined with fetichism, made up the two fundamental divisions of the religion of the red race" (pp. 89, 90). This imaginary antithesis he traces out between the Algonkin and Apalachian tribes, and between the Toltecs of Guatemala and the Aztecs of Mexico. His quotations are nearly all at second hand, and so little does he criticize his facts as to confuse the Vaudoux worship of the Haitian negroes with that of Votan in Chiapa. His work can in no sense be considered an authority.

Very much better is the Anthropology of the late Dr. Theodore Waitz (*Anthropologie der Naturvælker*: Leipzig, 1862-66). No more comprehensive, sound, and critical work on the indigenes of America has ever been written. But on their religions the author is unfortunately defective, being led astray by the hasty and groundless generalizations of others. His great anxiety, moreover, to subject all moral sciences to a realistic philosophy, was peculiarly fatal to any correct appreciation of religious growth, and his views are neither new nor tenable.

For a different reason I must condemn in the most unqualified manner the attempt recently made by the enthusiastic and meritorious antiquary, the Abbé E. Charles Brasseur (de Bourbourg), to explain American mythology after the example of Euhemerus, of Thessaly, as the apotheosis of history. This theory, which has been repeatedly applied to other mythologies with invariable failure, is now disowned

by every distinguished student of European and Oriental antiquity; and to seek to introduce it into American religions is simply to render them still more obscure and unattractive, and to deprive them of the only general interest they now have, that of illustrating the gradual development of the religious ideas of humanity.

But while thus regretting the use he has made of them, all interested in American antiquity cannot too much thank this indefatigable explorer for the priceless materials he has unearthed in the neglected libraries of Spain and Central America, and laid before the public. For the present purpose the most significant of these is the Sacred National Book of the Quiches, a tribe of Guatemala. This contains their legends, written in the original tongue, and transcribed by Father Francisco Ximenes about 1725. The manuscripts of this missionary were used early in the present century, by Don Felix Cabrera, but were supposed to be entirely lost even by the Abbé Brasseur himself in 1850 (*Lettre à M. le Duc de Valmy*, Mexique, Oct. 15, 1850). Made aware of their importance by the expressions of regret used in the Abbé's letters, Dr. C. Sherzer, in 1854, was fortunate enough to discover them in the library of the University of San Carlos in the city of Guatemala. The legends were in Quiche with a Spanish translation and scholia. The Spanish was copied by Dr. Scherzer and published in Vienna, in 1856, under the title *Las Historias del Origen de los Indios de Guatemala, por el R. P. F. Francisco Ximenes.* In 1855 the Abbé Brasseur took a copy of the original which he brought out at Paris in 1861, with a translation of his own, under the title *Vuh Popol: Le Livre Sacré des Quichés et les Mythes de l'Antiquité Américaine*. Internal evidence proves that these legends were written down by a converted native some time in the seventeenth century. They carry the national history back about two centuries, beyond which all is professedly mythical. Although both translations are colored by the peculiar views of their makers, this is incomparably the most complete and valuable work on American mythology extant.

Another authority of inestimable value has been placed within the reach of scholars during the last few years. This is the *Relations de la Nouvelle France*, containing the annual reports of the Jesuit missionaries among the Iroquois and Algonkins from and after 1611. My references to this are always to the reprint at Quebec, 1858. Of not less excellence for another tribe, the Creeks, is the brief "Sketch of the Creek Country," by Col. Benjamin Hawkins, written about 1800, and first published in full by the Georgia Historical Society in 1848. Most of the other works to which I have referred are too well known to need any special examination here, or will be more particularly mentioned in the foot-notes when quoted.

CHAPTER II.
THE IDEA OF GOD

An intuition common to the species.—Words expressing it in American languages derived either from ideas of above in space, or of life manifested by breath.—Examples.—No conscious monotheism, and but little idea of immateriality discoverable.—Still less any moral dualism of deities, the Great Good Spirit and the Great Bad Spirit being alike terms and notions of foreign importation.

IF we accept the definition that mythology is the idea of God expressed in symbol, figure, and narrative, and always struggling toward a clearer utterance, it is well not only to trace this idea in its very earliest embodiment in language, but also, for the sake of comparison, to ask what is its latest and most approved expression. The reply to this is given us by Immanuel Kant. He has shown that our reason, dwelling on the facts of experience, constantly seeks the principles which connect them together, and only rests satisfied in the conviction that there is a highest and first principle which reconciles all their discrepancies and binds them into one. This he calls the Ideal of Reason. It must be true, for it is evolved from the laws of reason, our only test of truth. Furthermore, the sense of personality and the voice of conscience, analyzed to their sources, can only be explained by the assumption of an infinite personality and an absolute standard of right. Or, if to some all this appears but wire-drawn metaphysical subtlety, they are welcome to the definition of the realist, that the idea of God is the sum of those intelligent activities which the individual, reasoning from the analogy of his own actions, imagines to be behind and to bring about natural phenomena.[33] If either of these be correct, it were hard to conceive how any tribe or even any sane man could be without some notion of divinity.

Certainly in America no instance of its absence has been discovered. Obscure, grotesque, unworthy it often was, but everywhere man was oppressed with a *sensus numinis*, a feeling that invisible, powerful agencies were at work around him, who, as they willed, could help or hurt him. In every heart was an altar to the Unknown God. Not that it was customary to attach any idea of unity to these unseen powers. The supposition that in ancient times and in very unenlightened conditions, before mythology had grown, a monotheism prevailed, which afterwards at various times was revived by reformers, is a belief that should have passed away when the delights of savage life and the praises of a state of nature ceased to be the themes of philosophers. We are speaking of a people little capable of abstraction. The exhibitions of force in nature seemed to them the manifestations of that mysterious power felt by their self-consciousness; to combine these various manifestations and recognize them as the operations of one personality, was a step not easily taken. Yet He is not far from every one of us. “Whenever man thinks clearly, or feels deeply, he conceives God as self-conscious unity,” says Carriere, with admirable insight; and elsewhere, “we have monotheism, not in contrast to polytheism, not clear to the thought, but in living intuition in the religious sentiments.”[34]

Thus it was among the Indians. Therefore a word is usually found in their languages analogous to none in any European tongue, a word comprehending all manifestations of the unseen world, yet conveying no sense of personal unity. It has been rendered spirit, demon, God, devil, mystery,

[33] But there is no ground for the most positive of philosophers to reject the doctrine of innate ideas when put in a certain way. The instincts and habits of the lower animals by which they obtain food, migrate, and perpetuate their kind, are in obedience to particular congenital impressions, and correspond to definite anatomical and morphological relations. No one pretends their knowledge is experimental. Just so the human cerebrum has received, by descent or otherwise, various sensory impressions peculiar to man as a species, which are just as certain to guide his thoughts, actions, and destiny, as is the cerebrum of the insectivorous aye-aye to lead it to hunt successfully for larvæ.

[34] *Die Kunst im Zusammenhang der Culturentwickelung*, i. pp. 50, 252.

magic, but commonly and rather absurdly by the English and French, "medicine." In the Algonkin dialects this word is *manito* and *oki*, in Iroquois *oki* and *otkon*, the Dakota has *wakan*, the Aztec *teotl*, the Quichua *huaca*, and the Maya *ku*. They all express in its most general form the idea of the supernatural. And as in this word, supernatural, we see a transfer of a conception of place, and that it literally means that which is *above* the natural world, so in such as we can analyze of these vague and primitive terms the same trope appears discoverable. *Wakan* as an adverb means *above*, *oki* is but another orthography for *oghee*, and *otkon* seems allied to *hetken*, both of which have the same signification.[35]

The transfer is no mere figure of speech, but has its origin in the very texture of the human mind. The heavens, the upper regions, are in every religion the supposed abode of the divine. What is higher is always the stronger and the nobler; a *superior* is one who is better than we are, and therefore a chieftain in Algonkin is called *oghee-ma*, the higher one. There is, moreover, a naif and spontaneous instinct which leads man in his ecstasies of joy, and in his paroxysms of fear or pain, to lift his hands and eyes to the overhanging firmament. There the sun and bright stars sojourn, emblems of glory and stability. Its azure vault has a mysterious attraction which invites the eye to gaze longer and longer into its infinite depths.[36] Its color brings thoughts of serenity, peace, sunshine, and warmth. Even the rudest hunting tribes felt these sentiments, and as a metaphor in their speeches, and as a paint expressive of friendly design, blue was in wide use among them.[37]

So it came to pass that the idea of God was linked to the heavens long ere man asked himself, are the heavens material and God spiritual, is He one, or is He many? Numerous languages bear trace of this. The Latin Deus, the Greek Zeus, the Sanscrit Dyaus, the Chinese Tien, all originally meant the sky above, and our own word heaven is often employed synonymously with God. There is at first no personification in these expressions. They embrace all unseen agencies, they are void of personality, and yet to the illogical primitive man there is nothing contradictory in making them the object of his prayers. The Mayas had legions of gods; "*ku*," says their historian,[38] "does not signify any particular god; yet their prayers are sometimes addressed to *kue*," which is the same word in the vocative case.

As the Latins called their united divinities *Superi*, those above, so Captain John Smith found that the Powhatans of Virginia employed the word *oki*, above, in the same sense, and it even had passed into a definite personification among them in the shape of an "idol of wood evil-favoredly carved." In purer dialects of the Algonkin it is always indefinite, as in the terms *nipoon oki*, spirit of summer, *pipoon oki*, spirit of winter. Perhaps the word was introduced into Iroquois by the Hurons, neighbors and associates of the Algonkins. The Hurons applied it to that demoniac power "who rules the seasons of the year, who holds the winds and the waves in leash, who can give fortune to their undertakings, and relieve all their wants."[39] In another and far distant branch of the Iroquois, the Nottoways of southern Virginia, it reappears under, the curious form *quaker*, doubtless a corruption of the Powhatan *qui-oki*, lesser gods.[40] The proper Iroquois name of him to whom they prayed was

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[35] I offer these derivations with a certain degree of reserve, for such an extraordinary similarity in the sound of these words is discoverable in North and portions of South America, that one might almost be tempted to claim for them one original form. Thus in the Maya dialects it is *ku*, vocative *â kue*, in Natchez *kue-ya*, in the Uchee of West Florida *kauhwu*, in Otomi *okha*, in Mandan *okee*, Sioux *ogha*, *waughon*, *wakan*, in Quichua *waka*, *huaca*, in Iroquois *quaker*, *oki*, Algonkin *oki*, *okee*, Eskimo *aghatt*, which last has a singular likeness in sound to the German or Norse, *O Gott*, as some of the others have to the corresponding Finnish word *ukko*. *Ku* in the Carib tongue means *house*, especially a temple or house of the gods. The early Spanish explorers adopted the word with the orthography *cue*, and applied it to the sacred edifices of whatever nation they discovered. For instance, they speak of the great cemetery of Teotihuacan, near Tezcuco, as the *Llano de los Cues*.

[36] "As the high heavens, the far-off mountains look to us blue, so a blue superficies seems to recede from us. As we would fain pursue an attractive object that flees from us, so we like to gaze at the blue, not that it urges itself upon us, but that it draws us after it." Goethe, *Farbenlehre*, secs. 780, 781.

[37] Loskiel, *Geschichte der Mission der Evang. Brueder*, p. 63: Barby, 1789.

[38] Cogolludo, *Historia de Yucathan*, lib. iv. cap. vii.

[39] *Rel. de la Nouv. France.* An 1636, p. 107.

[40] This word is found in Gallatin's vocabularies (*Transactions of the Am. Antiq. Soc.*, vol. ii.), and may have partially induced that

garonhia, which again turns out on examination to be their common word for *sky*, and again in all probability from the verbal root *gar*, to be above.[41] In the legends of the Aztecs and Quiches such phrases as "Heart of the Sky," "Lord of the Sky," "Prince of the Azure Planisphere," "He above all," are of frequent occurrence, and by a still bolder metaphor, the Araucanians, according to Molina, entitled their greatest god "The Soul of the Sky."

This last expression leads to another train of thought. As the philosopher, pondering on the workings of self-consciousness, recognizes that various pathways lead up to God, so the primitive man, in forming his language, sometimes trod one, sometimes another. Whatever else sceptics have questioned, no one has yet presumed to doubt that if a God and a soul exist at all, they are of like essence. This firm belief has left its impress on language in the names devised to express the supernal, the spiritual world. If we seek hints from languages more familiar to us than the tongues of the Indians, and take for example this word *spiritual*; we find it is from the Latin *spirare*, to blow, to breathe. If in Latin again we look for the derivation of *animus*, the mind, *anima*, the soul, they point to the Greek *anemos*, wind, and *aémi*, to blow. In Greek the words for soul or spirit, *psuche*, *pneuma*, *thumos*, all are directly from verbal roots expressing the motion of the wind or the breath. The Hebrew word *ruah* is translated in the Old Testament sometimes by wind, sometimes by spirit, sometimes by breath. Etymologically, in fact, ghosts and gusts, breaths and breezes, the Great Spirit and the Great Wind, are one and the same. It is easy to guess the reason of this. The soul is the life, the life is the breath. Invisible, imponderable, quickening with vigorous motion, slackening in rest and sleep, passing quite away in death, it is the most obvious sign of life. All nations grasped the analogy and identified the one with the other. But the breath is nothing but wind. How easy, therefore, to look upon the wind that moves up and down and to and fro upon the earth, that carries the clouds, itself unseen, that calls forth the terrible tempests and the various seasons, as the breath, the spirit of God, as God himself? So in the Mosaic record of creation, it is said "a mighty wind" passed over the formless sea and brought forth the world, and when the Almighty gave to the clay a living soul, he is said to have breathed into it "the wind of lives."

Armed with these analogies, we turn to the primitive tongues of America, and find them there as distinct as in the Old World. In Dakota *niya* is literally breath, figuratively life; in Netela *piuts* is life, breath, and soul; *silla*, in Eskimo, means air, it means wind, but it is also the word that conveys the highest idea of the world as a whole, and the reasoning faculty. The supreme existence they call *Sillam Innua*, Owner of the Air, or of the All; or *Sillam Nelega*, Lord of the Air or Wind. In the Yakama tongue of Oregon *wkrisha* signifies there is wind, *wkrishwit*, life; with the Aztecs, *ehecatl* expressed both air, life, and the soul, and personified in their myths it was said to have been born of the breath of Tezcatlipoca, their highest divinity, who himself is often called Yoalliehecatl, the Wind of Night.[42]

The descent is, indeed, almost imperceptible which leads to the personification of the wind as God, which merges this manifestation of life and power in one with its unseen, unknown cause. Thus it was a worthy epithet which the Creeks applied to their supreme invisible ruler, when they addressed him as Esaugetuh Emissee, Master of Breath, and doubtless it was at first but a title of equivalent purport which the Cherokees, their neighbors, were wont to employ, Oonawleh unggi, Eldest of Winds, but rapidly leading to a complete identification of the divine with the natural phenomena of meteorology. This seems to have taken place in the same group of nations, for the original Choctaw word for Deity was Hushtoli, the Storm Wind.[43] The idea, indeed, was constantly being lost in the

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distinguished ethnologist to ascribe, as he does in more than one place, whatever notions the eastern tribes had of a Supreme Being to the teachings of the Quakers.

[41] Bruyas, *Radices Verborum Iroquæorum*, p. 84. This work is in Shea's Library of American Linguistics, and is a most valuable contribution to philology. The same etymology is given by Lafitau, *Mœurs des Sauvages*, etc., Germ. trans., p. 65.

[42] My authorities are Riggs, *Dict. of the Dakota*, Boscana, *Account of New California*, Richardson's and Egede's Eskimo Vocabularies, Pandosy, *Gram. and Dict. of the Yakama* (Shea's Lib. of Am. Linguistics), and the Abbé Brasseur for the Aztec.

[43] These terms are found in Gallatin's vocabularies. The last mentioned is not, as Adair thought, derived from *issto ulla* or *ishto*

symbol. In the legends of the Quiches, the mysterious creative power is Hurakan, a name of no signification in their language, one which their remote ancestors brought with them from the Antilles, which finds its meaning in the ancient tongue of Haiti, and which, under the forms of *hurricane*, *ouragan*, *orkan*, was adopted into European marine languages as the native name of the terrible tornado of the Caribbean Sea.[44] Mixcohuatl, the Cloud Serpent, chief divinity of several tribes in ancient Mexico, is to this day the correct term in their language for the tropical whirlwind, and the natives of Panama worshipped the same phenomenon under the name Tuyra.[45] To kiss the air was in Peru the commonest and simplest sign of adoration to the collective divinities.[46]

Many writers on mythology have commented on the prominence so frequently given to the winds. None have traced it to its true source. The facts of meteorology have been thought all sufficient for a solution. As if man ever did or ever could draw the idea of God from nature! In the identity of wind with breath, of breath with life, of life with soul, of soul with God, lies the far deeper and far truer reason, whose insensible development I have here traced, in outline indeed, but confirmed by the evidence of language itself.

Let none of these expressions, however, be construed to prove the distinct recognition of One Supreme Being. Of monotheism either as displayed in the one personal definite God of the Semitic races, or in the dim pantheistic sense of the Brahmins, there was not a single instance on the American continent. The missionaries found no word in any of their languages fit to interpret *Deus*, God. How could they expect it? The associations we attach to that name are the accumulated fruits of nigh two thousand years of Christianity. The phrases Good Spirit, Great Spirit, and similar ones, have occasioned endless discrepancies in the minds of travellers. In most instances they are entirely of modern origin, coined at the suggestion of missionaries, applied to the white man's God. Very rarely do they bring any conception of personality to the native mind, very rarely do they signify any object of worship, perhaps never did in the olden times. The Jesuit Relations state positively that there was no one immaterial god recognized by the Algonkin tribes, and that the title, the Great Manito, was introduced first by themselves in its personal sense.[47] The supreme Iroquois Deity Neo or Hawaneu, triumphantly adduced by many writers to show the monotheism underlying the native creeds, and upon whose name Mr. Schoolcraft has built some philological reveries, turns out on closer scrutiny to be the result of Christian instruction, and the words themselves to be but corruptions of the French *Dieu* and *le bon Dieu*![48]

Innumerable mysterious forces are in activity around the child of nature; he feels within him something that tells him they are not of his kind, and yet not altogether different from him; he sums them up in one word drawn from sensuous experience. Does he wish to express still more forcibly this sentiment, he doubles the word, or prefixes an adjective, or adds an affix, as the genius of his language may dictate. But it still remains to him but an unapplied abstraction, a mere category of thought, a frame for the All. It is never the object of veneration or sacrifice, no myth brings it down to his comprehension, it is not installed in his temples. Man cannot escape the belief that behind all

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hoollo, great man, for in Choctaw the adjective cannot precede the noun it qualifies. Its true sense is visible in the analogous Creek words *ishtali*, the storm wind, and *hustolah*, the windy season.

[44] Webster derives hurricane from the Latin *furio*. But Oviedo tells us in his description of Hispaniola that "Hurakan, in lingua di questa isola vuole dire propriamente fortuna tempestuosa molto eccessiva, perche en effetto non è altro que un grandissimo vento è pioggia insieme." *Historia dell' Indie*, lib. vi. cap. iii. It is a coincidence—perhaps something more—that in the Quichua language *huracan*, third person singular present indicative of the verbal noun *huraca*, means "a stream of water falls perpendicularly." (Markham, *Quichua Dictionary*, p. 132.)

[45] Oviedo, *Rel. de la Prov. de Cueba*, p. 141, ed. Ternaux-Compans.

[46] Garcia, *Origen de los Indios*, lib. iv. cap. xxii.

[47] See the *Rel. de la Nouv. France pour l'An 1637*, p. 49.

[48] Mr. Morgan, in his excellent work, *The League of the Iroquois*, has been led astray by an ignorance of the etymology of these terms. For Schoolcraft's views see his *Oneota*, p. 147. The matter is ably discussed in the *Etudes Philologiques sur Quelques Langues Sauvages de l'Amérique*, p. 14: Montreal, 1866; but comp. Shea, *Dict. Français-Onontagué*, preface.

form is one essence; but the moment he would seize and define it, it eludes his grasp, and by a sorcery more sadly ludicrous than that which blinded Titania, he worships not the Infinite he thinks but a base idol of his own making. As in the Zend Avesta behind the eternal struggle of Ormuzd and Ahriman looms up the undisturbed and infinite Zeruana Akerana, as in the pages of the Greek poets we here and there catch glimpses of a Zeus who is not he throned on Olympus, nor he who takes part in the wrangles of the gods, but stands far off and alone, one yet all, "who was, who is, who will be," so the belief in an Unseen Spirit, who asks neither supplication nor sacrifice, who, as the natives of Texas told Joutel in 1684, "does not concern himself about things here below,"[49] who has no name to call him by, and is never a figure in mythology, was doubtless occasionally present to their minds. It was present not more but far less distinctly and often not at all in the more savage tribes, and no assertion can be more contrary to the laws of religious progress than that which pretends that a purer and more monotheistic religion exists among nations devoid of mythology. There are only two instances on the American continent where the worship of an immaterial God was definitely instituted, and these as the highest conquests of American natural religions deserve especial mention.

They occurred, as we might expect, in the two most civilized nations, the Quichuas of Peru, and the Nahuas of Tezcuco. It is related that about the year 1440, at a grand religious council held at the consecration of the newly-built temple of the Sun at Cuzco, the Inca Yupanqui rose before the assembled multitude and spoke somewhat as follows:—

"Many say that the Sun is the Maker of all things. But he who makes should abide by what he has made. Now many things happen when the Sun is absent; therefore he cannot be the universal creator. And that he is alive at all is doubtful, for his trips do not tire him. Were he a living thing, he would grow weary like ourselves; were he free, he would visit other parts of the heavens. He is like a tethered beast who makes a daily round under the eye of a master; he is like an arrow, which must go whither it is sent, not whither it wishes. I tell you that he, our Father and Master the Sun, must have a lord and master more powerful than himself, who constrains him to his daily circuit without pause or rest."[50]

To express this greatest of all existences, a name was proclaimed, based upon that of the highest divinities known to the ancient Aymara race, Illatici Viracocha Pachacamac, literally, the thunder vase, the foam of the sea, animating the world, mysterious and symbolic names drawn from the deepest religious instincts of the soul, whose hidden meanings will be unravelled hereafter. A temple was constructed in a vale by the sea near Callao, wherein his worship was to be conducted without images or human sacrifices. The Inca was ahead of his age, however, and when the Spaniards visited the temple of Pachacamac in 1525, they found not only the walls adorned with hideous paintings, but an ugly idol of wood representing a man of colossal proportions set up therein, and receiving the prayers of the votaries.[51]

No better success attended the attempt of Nezahuatl, lord of Tezcuco, which took place about the same time. He had long prayed to the gods of his forefathers for a son to inherit his kingdom, and the altars had smoked vainly with the blood of slaughtered victims. At length, in indignation and despair, the prince exclaimed, "Verily, these gods that I am adoring, what are they but idols of stone without speech or feeling? They could not have made the beauty of the heaven, the sun, the moon, and the stars which adorn it, and which light the earth, with its countless streams, its fountains and waters, its trees and plants, and its various inhabitants. There must be some god, invisible and unknown, who is the universal creator. He alone can console me in my affliction and take away my sorrow." Strengthened in this conviction by a timely fulfilment of his heart's desire, he erected a temple nine

[49] "Qui ne prend aucun soin des choses icy bas." *Jour. Hist. d'un Voyage de l'Amérique*, p. 225: Paris, 1713.

[50] In attributing this speech to the Inca Yupanqui, I have followed Balboa, who expressly says this was the general opinion of the Indians (*Hist. du Pérou*, p. 62, ed. Ternaux-Compans). Others assign it to other Incas. See Garcilasso de la Vega, *Hist. des Incas*, lib. viii. chap. 8, and Acosta, *Nat. and Morall Hist. of the New World*, chap. 5. The fact and the approximate time are beyond question.

[51] Xeres, *Rel. de la Conq. du Pérou*, p. 151, ed. Ternaux-Compans.

stories high to represent the nine heavens, which he dedicated "to the Unknown God, the Cause of Causes." This temple, he ordained, should never be polluted by blood, nor should any graven image ever be set up within its precincts.[52]

In neither case, be it observed, was any attempt made to substitute another and purer religion for the popular one. The Inca continued to receive the homage of his subjects as a brother of the sun, and the regular services to that luminary were never interrupted. Nor did the prince of Tezcuco afterwards neglect the honors due his national gods, nor even refrain himself from plunging the knife into the breasts of captives on the altar of the god of war.[53] They were but expressions of that monotheism which is ever present, "not in contrast to polytheism, but in living intuition in the religious sentiments." If this subtle but true distinction be rightly understood, it will excite no surprise to find such epithets as "endless," "omnipotent," "invisible," "adorable," such appellations as "the Maker and Moulder of All," "the Mother and Father of Life," "the One God complete in perfection and unity," "the Creator of all that is," "the Soul of the World," in use and of undoubted indigenous origin not only among the civilized Aztecs, but even among the Haitians, the Araucanians, the Lenni Lenape, and others.[54] It will not seem contradictory to hear of them in a purely polytheistic worship; we shall be far from regarding them as familiar to the popular mind, and we shall never be led so far astray as to adduce them in evidence of a monotheism in either technical sense of that word. In point of fact they were not applied to any particular god even in the most enlightened nations, but were terms of laudation and magniloquence used by the priests and devotees of every several god to do him honor. They prove something in regard to a consciousness of divinity hedging us about, but nothing at all in favor of a recognition of one God; they exemplify how profound is the conviction of a highest and first principle, but they do not offer the least reason to surmise that this was a living reality in doctrine or practice.

The confusion of these distinct ideas has led to much misconception of the native creeds. But another and more fatal error was that which distorted them into a dualistic form, ranging on one hand the good spirit with his legions of angels, on the other the evil one with his swarms of fiends, representing the world as the scene of their unending conflict, man as the unlucky football who gets all the blows. This notion, which has its historical origin among the Parsees of ancient Iran, is unknown to savage nations. "The idea of the Devil," justly observes Jacob Grimm, "is foreign to all primitive religions." Yet Professor Mueller, in his voluminous work on those of America, after approvingly quoting this saying, complacently proceeds to classify the deities as good or bad spirits![55]

This view, which has obtained without question in every work on the native religions of America, has arisen partly from habits of thought difficult to break, partly from mistranslations of native words, partly from the foolish axiom of the early missionaries, "The gods of the gentiles are devils." Yet their own writings furnish conclusive proof that no such distinction existed out of their own fancies. The same word (*otkon*) which Father Bruyas employs to translate into Iroquois the term "devil," in the passage "the Devil took upon himself the figure of a serpent," he is obliged to use for

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[52] Prescott, *Conq. of Mexico*, i. pp. 192, 193, on the authority of Ixtlilxochitl.

[53] Brasseur, *Hist. du Mexique*, iii. p. 297, note.

[54] Of very many authorities that I have at hand, I shall only mention Heckewelder, *Acc. of the Inds.* p. 422, Duponceau, *Mém. sur les Langues de l'Amér. du Nord*, p. 310, Peter Martyr *De Rebus Oceanicis*, Dec. i., cap. 9, Molina, *Hist. of Chili*, ii. p. 75, Ximenes, *Origen de los Indios de Guatemala*, pp. 4, 5, Ixtlilxochitl, *Rel. des Conq. du Mexique*, p. 2. These terms bear the severest scrutiny. The Aztec appellation of the Supreme Being *Tloque nahuaque* is compounded of *tloc*, together, with, and *nahuac*, at, by, with, with possessive forms added, giving the signification, Lord of all existence and coexistence (alles Mitseyns und alles Beiseyns, bei welchem das Seyn aller Dinge ist. Buschmann, *Ueber die Aztekischen Ortsnamen*, p. 642). The Algonkin term *Kittanittowit* is derived from *kitta*, great, *manito*, spirit, *wit*, an adjective termination indicating a mode of existence, and means the Great Living Spirit (Duponceau, u. s.). Both these terms are undoubtedly of native origin. In the Quiche legends the Supreme Being is called *Bitol*, the substantive form of *bit*, to make pottery, to form, and *Tzakol*, substantive form of *tzak*, to build, the Creator, the Constructor. The Arowacks of Guyana applied the term *Aluberi* to their highest conception of a first cause, from the verbal form *alin*, he who makes (Martius, *Ethnographie und Sprachenkunde Amerika's*, i. p. 696).

[55] *Geschichte der Amerikanischen Urreligionen*, p. 403.

"spirit" in the phrase, "at the resurrection we shall be spirits,"[56] which is a rather amusing illustration how impossible it was by any native word to convey the idea of the spirit of evil. When, in 1570, Father Rogel commenced his labors among the tribes near the Savannah River, he told them that the deity they adored was a demon who loved all evil things, and they must hate him; whereupon his auditors replied, that so far from this being the case, whom he called a wicked being was the power that sent them all good things, and indignantly left the missionary to preach to the winds.[57]

A passage often quoted in support of this mistaken view is one in Winslow's "Good News from New England," written in 1622. The author says that the Indians worship a good power called Kiehtan, and another "who, as farre as wee can conceive, is the Devill," named Hobbamock, or Hobbamoqui. The former of these names is merely the word "great," in their dialect of Algonkin, with a final *n*, and is probably an abbreviation of Kittanitowit, the great manito, a vague term mentioned by Roger Williams and other early writers, not the appellation of any personified deity.[58] The latter, so far from corresponding to the power of evil, was, according to Winslow's own statement, the kindly god who cured diseases, aided them in the chase, and appeared to them in dreams as their protector. Therefore, with great justice, Dr. Jarvis has explained it to mean "the *oke* or tutelary deity which each Indian worships," as the word itself signifies.[59]

So in many instances it turns out that what has been reported to be the evil divinity of a nation, to whom they pray to the neglect of a better one, is in reality the highest power they recognize. Thus Juripari, worshipped by certain tribes of the Pampas of Buenos Ayres, and said to be their wicked spirit, is in fact the only name in their language for spiritual existence in general; and Aka-kanet, sometimes mentioned as the father of evil in the mythology of the Araucanians, is the benign power appealed to by their priests, who is throned in the Pleiades, who sends fruits and flowers to the earth, and is addressed as "grandfather."[60] The Çupay of the Peruvians never was, as Prescott would have us believe, "the shadowy embodiment of evil," but simply and solely their god of the dead, the Pluto of their pantheon, corresponding to the Mictla of the Mexicans.

The evidence on the point is indeed conclusive. The Jesuit missionaries very rarely distinguish between good and evil deities when speaking of the religion of the northern tribes; and the Moravian Brethren among the Algonkins and Iroquois place on record their unanimous testimony that "the idea of a devil, a prince of darkness, they first received in later times through the Europeans."[61] So the Cherokees, remarks an intelligent observer, "know nothing of the Evil One and his domains, except what they have learned from white men."[62] The term Great Spirit conveys, for instance, to the Chipeway just as much the idea of a bad as of a good spirit; he is unaware of any distinction until it is explained to him.[63] "I have never been able to discover from the Dakotas themselves," remarks the Rev. G. H. Pond, who had lived among them as a missionary for eighteen years,[64] "the least degree of evidence that they divide the gods into classes of good and evil, and am persuaded that those persons who represent them as doing so, do it inconsiderately, and because it is so natural to subscribe to a long cherished popular opinion."

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[56] Bruyas, *Rad. Verb. Iroquæorum*, p. 38.

[57] Alcazar, *Chrono-historia de la Prov. de Toledo*, Dec. iii., Año viii., cap. iv: Madrid, 1710. This rare work contains the only faithful copies of Father Rogel's letters extant. Mr. Shea, in his History of Catholic Missions, calls him erroneously Roger.

[58] It is fully analyzed by Duponceau, *Langues de l'Amérique du Nord*, p. 309.

[59] *Discourse on the Religion of the Ind. Tribes of N. Am.*, p. 252 in the Trans. N. Y. Hist. Soc.

[60] Mueller, *Amer. Urreligionen*, pp. 265, 272, 274. Well may he remark: "The dualism is not very striking among these tribes;" as a few pages previous he says of the Caribs, "The dualism of gods is anything but rigidly observed. The good gods do more evil than good. Fear is the ruling religious sentiment." To such a lame conclusion do these venerable prepossessions lead. "*Grau ist alle Theorie*."

[61] Loskiel, *Ges. der Miss. der evang. Brueder*, p. 46.

[62] Whipple, *Report on the Ind. Tribes*, p. 33: Washington, 1855. Pacific Railroad Docs.

[63] Schoolcraft, *Indian Tribes*, i. p. 359.

[64] In Schoolcraft, *Ibid.*, iv. p. 642.

Very soon after coming in contact with the whites, the Indians caught the notion of a bad and good spirit, pitted one against the other in eternal warfare, and engrafted it on their ancient traditions. Writers anxious to discover Jewish or Christian analogies, forcibly construed myths to suit their pet theories, and for indolent observers it was convenient to catalogue their gods in antithetical classes. In Mexican and Peruvian mythology this is so plainly false that historians no longer insist upon it, but as a popular error it still holds its ground with reference to the more barbarous and less known tribes.

Perhaps no myth has been so often quoted in its confirmation as that of the ancient Iroquois, which narrates the conflict between the first two brothers of our race. It is of undoubted native origin and venerable antiquity. The version given by the Tuscarora chief Cusic in 1825, relates that in the beginning of things there were two brothers, Enigorio and Enigohahetgea, names literally meaning the Good Mind and the Bad Mind.[65] The former went about the world furnishing it with gentle streams, fertile plains, and plenteous fruits, while the latter maliciously followed him creating rapids, thorns, and deserts. At length the Good Mind turned upon his brother in anger, and crushed him into the earth. He sank out of sight in its depths, but not to perish, for in the dark realms of the underworld he still lives, receiving the souls of the dead and being the author of all evil. Now when we compare this with the version of the same legend given by Father Brebeuf, missionary to the Hurons in 1636, we find its whole complexion altered; the moral dualism vanishes; the names Good Mind and Bad Mind do not appear; it is the struggle of Ioskeha, the White one, with his brother Tawiscara, the Dark one, and we at once perceive that Christian influence in the course of two centuries had given the tale a meaning foreign to its original intent.

So it is with the story the Algonkins tell of their hero Manibozho, who, in the opinion of a well-known writer, "is always placed in antagonism to a great serpent, a spirit of evil."[66] It is to the effect that after conquering many animals, this famous magician tried his arts on the prince of serpents. After a prolonged struggle, which brought on the general deluge and the destruction of the world, he won the victory. The first authority we have for this narrative is even later than Cusic; it is Mr. Schoolcraft in our own day; the legendary cause of the deluge as related by Father Le Jeune, in 1634, is quite dissimilar, and makes no mention of a serpent; and as we shall hereafter see, neither among the Algonkins nor any other Indians, was the serpent usually a type of evil, but quite the reverse.[67]

The comparatively late introduction of such views into the native legends finds a remarkable proof in the myths of the Quiches, which were committed to writing in the seventeenth century. They narrate the struggles between the rulers of the upper and the nether world, the descent of the former into Xibalba, the Realm of Phantoms, and their victory over its lords, One Death and Seven Deaths. The writer adds of the latter, who clearly represent to his mind the Evil One and his adjutants, "in the old times they did not have much power; they were but annoyers and opposers of men, and in truth they were not regarded as gods. But when they appeared it was terrible. They were of evil, they were owls, fomenting trouble and discord." In this passage, which, be it said, seems to have impressed the translators very differently, the writer appears to compare the great power assigned by the Christian religion to Satan and his allies, with the very much less potency attributed to their analogues in heathendom, the rulers of the world of the dead.[68]

A little reflection will convince the most incredulous that any such dualism as has been fancied to exist in the native religions, could not have been of indigenous growth. The gods of the primitive man are beings of thoroughly human physiognomy, painted with colors furnished by intercourse with

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[65] Or more exactly, the Beautiful Spirit, the Ugly Spirit. In Onondaga the radicals are *onigonra*, spirit, *hio* beautiful, *ahetken* ugly. *Dictionnaire Français-Onontagué, édité par Jean-Marie Shea*: New York, 1859.

[66] Squier, *The Serpent Symbol in America*.

[67] Both these legends will be analyzed in a subsequent chapter, and an attempt made not only to restore them their primitive form, but to explain their meaning.

[68] Compare the translation and remarks of Ximenes, *Or. de los Indios de Guat.*, p. 76, with those of Brasseur, *Le Livre Sacré des Quichés*, p. 189.

his fellows. These are his enemies or his friends, as he conciliates or insults them. No mere man, least of all a savage, is kind and benevolent in spite of neglect and injury, nor is any man causelessly and ceaselessly malicious. Personal, family, or national feuds render some more inimical than others, but always from a desire to guard their own interests, never out of a delight in evil for its own sake. Thus the cruel gods of death, disease, and danger, were never of Satanic nature, while the kindliest divinities were disposed to punish, and that severely, any neglect of their ceremonies. Moral dualism can only arise in minds where the ideas of good and evil are not synonymous with those of pleasure and pain, for the conception of a wholly good or a wholly evil nature requires the use of these terms in their higher, ethical sense. The various deities of the Indians, it may safely be said in conclusion, present no stronger antithesis in this respect than those of ancient Greece and Rome.

CHAPTER III.
THE SACRED NUMBER, ITS ORIGIN AND APPLICATIONS

The number Four sacred in all American religions, and the key to their symbolism.—Derived from the Cardinal Points.—Appears constantly in government, arts, rites, and myths.—The Cardinal Points identified with the Four Winds, who in myths are the four ancestors of the human race, and the four celestial rivers watering the terrestrial Paradise.—Associations grouped around each Cardinal Point.—From the number four was derived the symbolic value of the number *Forty*, and the *Sign of the Cross*.

EVERY one familiar with the ancient religions of the world must have noticed the mystic power they attach to certain numbers, and how these numbers became the measures and formative quantities, as it were, of traditions and ceremonies, and had a symbolical meaning nowise connected with their arithmetical value. For instance, in many eastern religions, that of the Jews among the rest, *seven* was the most sacred number, and after it, *four* and *three*. The most cursory reader must have observed in how many connections the seven is used in the Hebrew Scriptures, occurring, in all, something over three hundred and sixty times, it is said. Why these numbers were chosen rather than others has not been clearly explained. Their sacred character dates beyond the earliest history, and must have been coeval with the first expressions of the religious sentiment. Only one of them, the FOUR, has any prominence in the religions of the red race, but this is so marked and so universal, that at a very early period in my studies I felt convinced that if the reason for its adoption could be discovered, much of the apparent confusion which reigns among them would be dispelled.

Such a reason must take its rise from some essential relation of man to nature, everywhere prominent, everywhere the same. It is found in the *adoration of the cardinal points*.

The red man, as I have said, was a hunter; he was ever wandering through pathless forests, coursing over boundless prairies. It seems to the white race not a faculty, but an instinct that guides him so unerringly. He is never at a loss. Says a writer who has deeply studied his character: "The Indian ever has the points of the compass present to his mind, and expresses himself accordingly in words, although it shall be of matters in his own house."[69]

The assumption of precisely four cardinal points is not of chance; it is recognized in every language; it is rendered essential by the anatomical structure of the body; it is derived from the immutable laws of the universe. Whether we gaze at the sunset or the sunrise, or whether at night we look for guidance to the only star of the twinkling thousands that is constant to its place, the anterior and posterior planes of our bodies, our right hands and our left coincide with the parallels and meridians. Very early in his history did man take note of these four points, and recognizing in them his guides through the night and the wilderness, call them his gods. Long afterwards, when centuries of slow progress had taught him other secrets of nature—when he had discerned in the motions of the sun, the elements of matter, and the radicals of arithmetic a repetition of this number—they were to him further warrants of its sacredness. He adopted it as a regulating quantity in his institutions and his arts; he repeated it in its multiples and compounds; he imagined for it novel applications; he constantly magnified its mystic meaning; and finally, in his philosophical reveries, he called it the key to the secrets of the universe, "the source of ever-flowing nature."[70]

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[69] Buckingham Smith, *Gram. Notices of the Heve Language*, p. 26 (Shea's Lib. Am. Linguistics).

[70] I refer to the four "ultimate elementary particles" of Empedocles. The number was sacred to Hermes, and lay at the root of the

In primitive geography the figure of the earth is a square plain; in the legend of the Quiché's it is "shaped as a square, divided into four parts, marked with lines, measured with cords, and suspended from the heavens by a cord to its four corners and its four sides."[71] The earliest divisions of territory were in conformity to this view. Thus it was with ancient Egypt, Syria, Mesopotamia, and China;[72] and in the new world, the states of Peru, Araucania, the Muyscas, the Quichés, and Tlascala were tetrarchies divided in accordance with, and in the first two instances named after, the cardinal points. So their chief cities—Cuzco, Quito, Tezcuco, Mexico, Cholula—were quartered by streets running north, south, east, and west. It was a necessary result of such a division that the chief officers of the government were four in number, that the inhabitants of town and country, that the whole social organization acquired a quadruplicate form. The official title of the Incas was "Lord of the four quarters of the earth," and the venerable formality in taking possession of land, both in their domain and that of the Aztecs, was to throw a stone, to shoot an arrow, or to hurl a firebrand to each of the cardinal points.[73] They carried out the idea in their architecture, building their palaces in squares with doors opening, their tombs with their angles pointing, their great causeways running in these directions. These architectural principles repeat themselves all over the continent; they recur in the sacred structures of Yucatan, in the ancient cemetery of Teo-tihuacan near Mexico, where the tombs are arranged along avenues corresponding exactly to the parallels and meridians of the central tumuli of the sun and moon;[74] and however ignorant we are about the mound builders of the Mississippi valley, we know that they constructed their earthworks with a constant regard to the quarters of the compass.

Nothing can be more natural than to take into consideration the regions of the heavens in the construction of buildings; I presume that at any time no one plans an edifice of pretensions without doing so. Yet this is one of those apparently trifling transactions which in their origin and applications have exerted a controlling influence on the history of the human race.

When we reflect how indissolubly the mind of the primitive man is welded to his superstitions, it were incredible that his social life and his architecture could thus be as it were in subjection to one idea, and his rites and myths escape its sway. As one might expect, it reappears in these latter more vividly than anywhere else. If there is one formula more frequently mentioned by travellers than another as an indispensable preliminary to all serious business, it is that of smoking, and the prescribed and traditional rule was that the first puff should be to the sky, and then one to each of the corners of the earth, or the cardinal points.[75] These were the spirits who made and governed the earth, and under whatever difference of guise the uncultivated fancy portrayed them, they were the leading figures in the tales and ceremonies of nearly every tribe of the red race. These were the divine powers summoned by the Chipeway magicians when initiating neophytes into the mysteries of the meda craft. They were asked to a lodge of four poles, to four stones that lay before its fire, there to remain four days, and attend four feasts. At every step of the proceeding this number or its multiples were

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physical philosophy of Pythagoras. The quotation in the text is from the "Golden Verses," given in Passow's lexicon under the word τετρακτὺς: ναι μα τον ἀμετερᾳ ψυχᾳ παραδοντα τετρακτυν, παγαν αεναου φυσεως "The most sacred of all things," said this famous teacher, "is Number; and next to it, that which gives Names;" a truth that the lapse of three thousand years is just enabling us to appreciate.

[71] Ximenes, *Or. de los Indios*, etc., p. 5.

[72] See Sepp, *Heidenthum und dessen Bedeutung für das Christenthum*, i. p. 464 sqq., a work full of learning, but written in the wildest vein of Joseph de Maistre's school of Romanizing mythology.

[73] Brasseur, *Hist. du Mexique*, ii. p. 227, *Le Livre Sacré des Quichés*, introd. p. ccxlii. The four provinces of Peru were Anti, Cunti, Chincha, and Colla. The meaning of these names has been lost, but to repeat them, says La Vega, was the same as to use our words, east, west, north, and south (*Hist. des Incas*, lib. ii. cap. 11).

[74] Humboldt, *Polit. Essay on New Spain*, ii. p. 44.

[75] This custom has been often mentioned among the Iroquois. Algonkins, Dakotas, Creeks, Natchez, Araucanians, and other tribes. Nuttall points out its recurrence among the Tartars of Siberia also. (*Travels*, p. 175.)

repeated.[76] With their neighbors the Dakotas the number was also distinctly sacred; it was intimately inwoven in all their tales concerning the wakan power and the spirits of the air, and their religious rites. The artist Catlin has given a vivid description of the great annual festival of the Mandans, a Dakota tribe, and brings forward with emphasis the ceaseless reiteration of this number from first to last.[77] He did not detect its origin in the veneration of the cardinal points, but the information that has since been furnished of the myths of this stock leaves no doubt that such was the case.[78]

Proximity of place had no part in this similarity of rite. In the grand commemorative festival of the Creeks called the Busk, which wiped out the memory of all crimes but murder, which reconciled the proscribed criminal to his nation and atoned for his guilt, when the new fire was kindled and the green corn served up, every dance, every invocation, every ceremony, was shaped and ruled by the application of the number four and its multiples in every imaginable relation. So it was at that solemn probation which the youth must undergo to prove himself worthy of the dignities of manhood and to ascertain his guardian spirit; here again his fasts, his seclusions, his trials, were all laid down in fourfold arrangement.[79]

Not alone among these barbarous tribes were the cardinal points thus the foundation of the most solemn mysteries of religion. An excellent authority relates that the Aztecs of Micla, in Guatemala, celebrated their chief festival four times a year, and that four priests solemnized its rites. They commenced by invoking and offering incense to the sky and the four cardinal points; they conducted the human victim four times around the temple, then tore out his heart, and catching the blood in four vases scattered it in the same directions.[80] So also the Peruvians had four principal festivals annually, and at every new moon one of four days' duration. In fact the repetition of the number in all their religious ceremonies is so prominent that it has been a subject of comment by historians. They have attributed it to the knowledge of the solstices and equinoxes, but assuredly it is of more ancient date than this. The same explanation has been offered for its recurrence among the Nahuas of Mexico, whose whole lives were subjected to its operation. At birth the mother was held unclean for four days, a fire was kindled and kept burning for a like length of time, at the baptism of the child an arrow was shot to each of the cardinal points. Their prayers were offered four times a day, the greatest festivals were every fourth year, and their offerings of blood were to the four points of the compass. At death food was placed on the grave, as among the Eskimos, Creeks, and Algonkins, for four days (for all these nations supposed that the journey to the land of souls was accomplished in that time), and mourning for the dead was for four months or four years.[81]

It were fatiguing and unnecessary to extend the catalogue much further. Yet it is not nearly exhausted. From tribes of both continents and all stages of culture, the Muyscas of Columbia and the Natchez of Louisiana, the Quichés of Guatemala and the Caribs of the Orinoko, instance after instance might be marshalled to illustrate how universally a sacred character was attached to this number, and how uniformly it is traceable to a veneration of the cardinal points. It is sufficient that it be displayed in some of its more unusual applications.

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[76] Schoolcraft, *Indian Tribes*, v. pp. 424 et seq.

[77] *Letters on the North American Indians*, vol. i., Letter 22.

[78] Schoolcraft, *Indian Tribes*, iv. p. 643 sq. "Four is their sacred number," says Mr. Pond (p. 646). Their neighbors, the Pawnees, though not the most remote affinity can be detected between their languages, coincide with them in this sacred number, and distinctly identified it with the cardinal points. See De Smet, *Oregon Missions*, pp. 360, 361.

[79] Benj. Hawkins, *Sketch of the Creek Country*, pp. 75, 78: Savannah, 1848. The description he gives of the ceremonies of the Creeks was transcribed word for word and published in the first volume of the American Antiquarian Society's Transactions as of the Shawnees of Ohio. This literary theft has not before been noticed.

[80] Palacios, *Des. de la Prov. de Guatemala*, pp. 31, 32, ed. Ternaux-Compans.

[81] All familiar with Mexican antiquity will recall many such examples. I may particularly refer to Kingsborough, *Antiqs. of Mexico*, v. p. 480, Ternaux-Compans' *Recueil de pièces rel. à la Conq. du Mexique*, pp. 307, 310, and Gama, *Des. de las dos Piedras que se hallaron en la plaza principal de Mexico*, ii. sec. 126 (Mexico, 1832), who gives numerous instances beyond those I have cited, and directs with emphasis the attention of the reader to this constant repetition.

It is well known that the calendar common to the Aztecs and Mayas divides the month into four weeks, each containing a like number of secular days; that their indiction is divided into four periods; and that they believed the world had passed through four cycles. It has not been sufficiently emphasized that in many of the picture writings these days of the week are placed respectively north, south, east, and west, and that in the Maya language the quarters of the indiction still bear the names of the cardinal points, hinting the reason of their adoption.[82] This cannot be fortuitous. Again, the division of the year into four seasons—a division as devoid of foundation in nature as that of the ancient Aryans into three, and unknown among many tribes, yet obtained in very early times among Algonkins, Cherokees, Choctaws, Creeks, Aztecs, Muyscas, Peruvians, and Araucanians. They were supposed to be produced by the unending struggles and varying fortunes of the four aerial giants who rule the winds.

We must seek in mythology the key to the monotonous repetition and the sanctity of this number; and furthermore, we must seek it in those natural modes of expression of the religious sentiment which are above the power of blood or circumstance to control. One of these modes, we have seen, was that which led to the identification of the divinity with the wind, and this it is that solves the enigma in the present instance. Universally the spirits of the cardinal points were imagined to be in the winds that blew from them. The names of these directions and of the corresponding winds are often the same, and when not, there exists an intimate connection between them. For example, take the languages of the Mayas, Huastecas, and Moscos of Central America; in all of them the word for *north* is synonymous with *north wind*, and so on for the other three points of the compass. Or again, that of the Dakotas, and the word *tate-ouye-toba*, translated "the four quarters of the heavens," means literally, "whence the four winds come."[83] It were not difficult to extend the list; but illustrations are all that is required. Let it be remembered how closely the motions of the air are associated in thought and language with the operations of the soul and the idea of God; let it further be considered what support this association receives from the power of the winds on the weather, bringing as they do the lightning and the storm, the zephyr that cools the brow, and the tornado that levels the forest; how they summon the rain to fertilize the seed and refresh the shrivelled leaves; how they aid the hunter to stalk the game, and usher in the varying seasons; how, indeed, in a hundred ways, they intimately concern his comfort and his life; and it will not seem strange that they almost occupied the place of all other gods in the mind of the child of nature. Especially as those who gave or withheld the rains were they objects of his anxious solicitation. "Ye who dwell at the four corners of the earth—at the north, at the south, at the east, and at the west," commenced the Aztec prayer to the Tlalocs, gods of the showers.[84] For they, as it were, hold the food, the life of man in their power, garnered up on high, to grant or deny, as they see fit. It was from them that the prophet of old was directed to call back the spirits of the dead to the dry bones of the valley. "Prophesy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, thus saith the Lord God, come forth from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." (Ezek. xxxvii. 9.)

In the same spirit the priests of the Eskimos prayed to *Sillam Innua*, the Owner of the Winds, as the highest existence; the abode of the dead they called *Sillam Aipane*, the House of the Winds; and in their incantations, when they would summon a new soul to the sick, or order back to its home some troublesome spirit, their invocations were ever addressed to the winds from the cardinal points —to Pauna the East and Sauna the West, to Kauna the South and Auna the North.[85]

As the rain-bringers, as the life-givers, it were no far-fetched metaphor to call them the fathers of our race. Hardly a nation on the continent but seems to have had some vague tradition of an origin

[82] Albert Gallatin, *Trans. Am. Ethnol. Soc.*, ii. p. 316, from the Codex Vaticanus, No. 3738.

[83] Riggs, *Gram. and Dict. of the Dakota Lang.*, s. v.

[84] Sahagun, *Hist. de la Nueva España*, in Kingsborough, v. p. 375.

[85] Egede, *Nachrichten von Grönland*, pp. 137, 173, 285. (Kopenhagen, 1790.)

from four brothers, to have at some time been led by four leaders or princes, or in some manner to have connected the appearance and action of four important personages with its earliest traditional history. Sometimes the myth defines clearly these fabled characters as the spirits of the winds, sometimes it clothes them in uncouth, grotesque metaphors, sometimes again it so weaves them into actual history that we are at a loss where to draw the line that divides fiction from truth.

I shall attempt to follow step by step the growth of this myth from its simplest expression, where the transparent drapery makes no pretence to conceal its true meaning, through the ever more elaborate narratives, the more strongly marked personifications of more cultivated nations, until it assumes the outlines of, and has palmed itself upon the world as actual history.

This simplest form is that which alone appears among the Algonkins and Dakotas. They both traced their lives back to four ancestors, personages concerned in various ways with the first things of time, not rightly distinguished as men or gods, but very positively identified with the four winds. Whether from one or all of these the world was peopled, whether by process of generation or some other more obscure way, the old people had not said, or saying, had not agreed.[86]

It is a shade more complex when we come to the Creeks. They told of four men who came from the four corners of the earth, who brought them the sacred fire, and pointed out the seven sacred plants. They were called the Hi-you-yul-gee. Having rendered them this service, the kindly visitors disappeared in a cloud, returning whence they came. When another and more ancient legend informs us that the Creeks were at first divided into four clans, and alleged a descent from four female ancestors, it will hardly be venturing too far to recognize in these four ancestors the four friendly patrons from the cardinal points.[87]

The ancient inhabitants of Haiti, when first discovered by the Spaniards, had a similar genealogical story, which Peter Martyr relates with various excuses for its silliness and exclamations at its absurdity. Perhaps the fault lay less in its lack of meaning than in his want of insight. It was to the effect that men lived in caves, and were destroyed by the parching rays of the sun, and were destitute of means to prolong their race, until they caught and subjected to their use four women who were swift of foot and slippery as eels. These were the mothers of the race of men. Or again, it was said that a certain king had a huge gourd which contained all the waters of the earth; four brothers, who coming into the world at one birth had cost their mother her life, ventured to the gourd to fish, picked it up, but frightened by the old king's approach, dropped it on the ground, broke it into fragments, and scattered the waters over the earth, forming the seas, lakes, and rivers, as they now are. These brothers in time became the fathers of a nation, and to them they traced their lineage.[88] With the previous examples before our eyes, it asks no vivid fancy to see in these quaternions once more the four winds, the bringers of rain, so swift and so slippery.

The Navajos are a rude tribe north of Mexico. Yet even they have an allegory to the effect that when the first man came up from the ground under the figure of the moth-worm, the four spirits of the cardinal points were already there, and hailed him with the exclamation, "Lo, he is of our race."[89] It is a poor and feeble effort to tell the same old story.

The Haitians were probably relatives of the Mayas of Yucatan. Certainly the latter shared their ancestral legends, for in an ancient manuscript found by Mr. Stephens during his travels, it appears they looked back to four parents or leaders called the Tutul Xiu. But, indeed, this was a trait of all the civilized nations of Central America and Mexico. An author who would be very unwilling to admit

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[86] Schoolcraft, *Algic Researches*, i. p. 139, and *Indian Tribes*, iv. p. 229.

[87] Hawkins, *Sketch of the Creek Country*, pp. 81, 82, and Blomes, *Acc. of his Majesty's Colonies*, p. 156, London, 1687, in Castiglioni, *Viaggi nelle Stati Uniti*, i. p. 294.

[88] Peter Martyr, *De Reb. Ocean.*, Dec. i. lib. ix. The story is also told more at length by the Brother Romain Pane, in the essay on the ancient histories of the natives he drew up by the order of Columbus. It has been reprinted with notes by the Abbé Brasseur, Paris, 1864, p. 438 sqq.

[89] Schoolcraft, *Ind. Tribes*, iv. p. 89.

any mythical interpretation of the coincidence, has adverted to it in tones of astonishment: "In all the Aztec and Toltec histories there are four characters who constantly reappear; either as priests or envoys of the gods, or of hidden and disguised majesty; or as guides and chieftains of tribes during their migrations; or as kings and rulers of monarchies after their foundation; and even to the time of the conquest, there are always four princes who compose the supreme government, whether in Guatemala, or in Mexico."[90] This fourfold division points not to a common history, but to a common nature. The ancient heroes and demigods, who, four in number, figure in all these antique traditions, were not men of flesh and blood, but the invisible currents of air who brought the fertilizing showers.

They corresponded to the four gods Bacab, who in the Yucatecan mythology were supposed to stand one at each corner of the world, supporting, like gigantic caryatides, the overhanging firmament. When at the general deluge all other gods and men were swallowed by the waters they alone escaped to people it anew. These four, known by the names of Kan, Muluc, Ix, and Cauac, represented respectively the east, north, west, and south, and as in Oriental symbolism, so here each quarter of the compass was distinguished by a color, the east by yellow, the south by red, the west by black, and the north by white. The names of these mysterious personages, employed somewhat as we do the Dominical letters, adjusted the calendar of the Mayas, and by their propitious or portentous combinations was arranged their system of judicial astrology. They were the gods of rain, and under the title Chac, the Red Ones, were the chief ministers of the highest power. As such they were represented in the religious ceremonies by four old men, constant attendants on the high priest in his official functions.[91] In this most civilized branch of the red race, as everywhere else, we thus find four mythological characters prominent beyond all others, giving a peculiar physiognomy to the national legends, arts, and sciences, and in them once more we recognize by signs infallible, personifications of the four cardinal points and the four winds.

They rarely lose altogether their true character. The Quiché legends tell us that the four men who were first created by the Heart of Heaven, Hurakan, the Air in Motion, were infinitely keen of eye and swift of foot, that "they measured and saw all that exists at the four corners and the four angles of the sky and the earth;" that they did not fulfil the design of their maker "to bring forth and produce when the season of harvest was near," until he blew into their eyes a cloud, "until their faces were obscured as when one breathes on a mirror." Then he gave them as wives the four mothers of our species, whose names were Falling Water, Beautiful Water, Water of Serpents, and Water of Birds.[92] Truly he who can see aught but a transparent myth in this recital, is a realist that would astonish Euhemerus himself.

There is in these Aztec legends a quaternion besides this of the first men, one that bears marks of a profound contemplation on the course of nature, one that answers to the former as the heavenly phase of the earthly conception. It is seen in the four personages, or perhaps we should say modes of action, that make up the one Supreme Cause of All, Hurakan, the breath, the wind, the Divine Spirit. They are He who creates, He who gives Form, He who gives Life, and He who reproduces.[93] This acute and extraordinary analysis of the origin and laws of organic life, clothed under the ancient

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[90] Brasseur, *Le Liv. Sac.*, Introd., p. cxvii.

[91] Diego de Landa, *Rel. de las Cosas de Yucatan*, pp. 160, 206, 208, ed. Brasseur. The learned editor, in a note to p. 208, states erroneously the disposition of the colors, as may be seen by comparing the document on p. 395. This dedication of colors to the cardinal points is universal in Central Asia. The geographical names of the Red Sea, the Black Sea, the Yellow Sea or Persian Gulf, and the White Sea or the Mediterranean, are derived from this association. The cities of China, many of them at least, have their gates which open toward the cardinal points painted of certain colors, and precisely these four, the white, the black, the red, and the yellow, are those which in Oriental myth the mountain in the centre of Paradise shows to the different cardinal points. (Sepp, *Heidenthum und Christenthum*, i. p. 177.) The coincidence furnishes food for reflection.

[92] *Le Livre Sacré des Quichés*, pp. 203-5, note.

[93] The analogy is remarkable between these and the "quatre actes de la puissance generatrice jusqu'à l'entier developpément des corps organisés," portrayed by four globes in the Mycenean bas-reliefs. See Guigniaut, *Religions de l'Antiquité*, i. p. 374. It were easy to multiply the instances of such parallelism in the growth of religious thought in the Old and New World, but I designedly refrain from doing so. They have already given rise to false theories enough, and moreover my purpose in this work is not "comparative mythology."

belief in the action of the winds, reveals a depth of thought for which we were hardly prepared, and is perhaps the single instance of anything like metaphysics among the red race. It is clearly visible in the earlier portions of the legends of the Quichés, and is the more surely of native origin as it has been quite lost on both their translators.

Go where we will, the same story meets us. The empire of the Incas was attributed in the sacred chants of the Amautas, the priests assigned to take charge of the records, to four brothers and their wives. These mythical civilizers are said to have emerged from a cave called *Pacari tampu*, which may mean "the House of Subsistence," reminding us of the four heroes who in Aztec legend set forth to people the world from Tonacatepec, the mountain of our subsistence; or again it may mean—for like many of these mythical names it seems to have been designedly chosen to bear a double construction—the Lodgings of the Dawn, recalling another Aztec legend which points for the birthplace of the race to Tula in the distant orient. The cave itself suggests to the classical reader that of Eolus, or may be paralleled with that in which the Iroquois fabled the winds were imprisoned by their lord.[94] These brothers were of no common kin. Their voices could shake the earth and their hands heap up mountains. Like the thunder god, they stood on the hills and hurled their sling-stones to the four corners of the earth. When one was overpowered he fled upward to the heaven or was turned into stone, and it was by their aid and counsel that the savages who possessed the land renounced their barbarous habits and commenced to till the soil. There can be no doubt but that this in turn is but another transformation of the Protean myth we have so long pursued.[95]

There are traces of the same legend among many other tribes of the continent, but the trustworthy reports we have of them are too scanty to permit analysis. Enough that they are mentioned in a note, for it is every way likely that could we resolve their meaning they too would carry us back to the four winds.[96]

Let no one suppose, however, that this was the only myth of the origin of man. Far from it. It was but one of many, for, as I shall hereafter attempt to show, the laws that governed the formations of such myths not only allowed but enjoined great divergence of form. Equally far was it from being the only image which the inventive fancy hit upon to express the action of the winds as the rain bringers. They too were many, but may all be included in a twofold division, either as the winds were supposed to flow in from the corners of the earth or outward from its central point. Thus they are spoken of under such figures as four tortoises at the angles of the earthly plane who vomit forth the rains,[97] or four gigantic caryatides who sustain the heavens and blow the winds from their capacious lungs,[98] or more frequently as four rivers flowing from the broken calabash on high, as the Haitians, draining the waters of the primitive world,[99] as four animals who bring from heaven the maize,[100] as

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[94] Müller, *Amer. Urreligionen*, p. 105, after Strahlheim, who is, however, no authority.

[95] Müller, *ubi supra*, pp. 308 sqq., gives a good résumé of the different versions of the myth of the four brothers in Peru.

[96] The Tupis of Brazil claim a descent from four brothers, three of whose names are given by Hans Staden, a prisoner among them about 1550, as Krimen, Hermittan, and Coem; the latter he explains to mean the morning, the east (*le matin*, printed by mistake *le mutin*, *Relation de Hans Staden de Homberg*, p. 274, ed. Ternaux-Compans, compare Dias, *Dicc. da Lingua Tupy*, p. 47). Their southern relatives, the Guaranis of Paraguay, also spoke of the four brothers and gave two of their names as Tupi and Guarani, respectively parents of the tribes called after them (Guevara, *Hist. del Paraguay*, lib. i. cap. ii., in Waitz). The fourfold division of the Muyscas of Bogota was traced back to four chieftains created by their hero god Nemqueteba (A. von Humboldt, *Vues des Cordillères*, p. 246). The Nahuas of Mexico much more frequently spoke of themselves as descendants of four or eight original families than of seven (Humboldt, *ibid.*, p. 317, and others in Waitz, *Anthropologie*, iv. pp. 36, 37). The Sacs or Sauks of the Upper Mississippi supposed that two men and two women were first created, and from these four sprang all men (Morse, *Rep. on Ind. Affairs*, App. p. 138). The Ottoes, Pawnees, "and other Indians," had a tradition that from eight ancestors all nations and races were descended (Id., p. 249). This duplication of the number probably arose from assigning the first four men four women as wives. The division into clans or totems which prevails in most northern tribes rests theoretically on descent from different ancestors. The Shawnees and Natchez were divided into four such clans, the Choctaws, Navajos, and Iroquois into eight, thus proving that in those tribes also the myth I have been discussing was recognized.

[97] Mandans in Catlin, *Letts. and Notes*, i. p. 181.

[98] The Mayas, Cogolludo, *Hist. de Yucathan*, lib. iv. cap. 8.

[99] The Navajos, Schoolcraft, *Ind. Tribes*, iv. p. 89.

[100] The Quichés, Ximenes, *Or. de los Indios*, p. 79.

four messengers whom the god of air sends forth, or under a coarser trope as the spittle he ejects toward the cardinal points which is straightway transformed into wild rice, tobacco, and maize.[101]

Constantly from the palace of the lord of the world, seated on the high hill of heaven, blow four winds, pour four streams, refreshing and fecundating the earth. Therefore, in the myths of ancient Iran there is mention of a celestial fountain, Arduisur, the virgin daughter of Ormuzd, whence four all nourishing rivers roll their waves toward the cardinal points; therefore the Thibetans believe that on the sacred mountain Himavata grows the tree of life Zampu, from whose foot once more flow the waters of life in four streams to the four quarters of the world; and therefore it is that the same tale is told by the Chinese of the mountain Kouantun, by the Brahmins of Mount Meru, and by the Parsees of Mount Albors in the Caucasus.[102] Each nation called their sacred mountain "the navel of the earth;" for not only was it the supposed centre of the habitable world, but through it, as the fœtus through the umbilical cord, the earth drew her increase. Beyond all other spots were they accounted fertile, scenes of joyous plaisance, of repose, and eternal youth; there rippled the waters of health, there blossomed the tree of life; they were fit trysting spots of gods and men. Hence came the tales of the terrestrial paradise, the rose garden of Feridun, the Eden gardens of the world. The name shows the origin, for paradise (in Sanscrit, *para desa*

[101] The Iroquois, Müller, *Amer. Urreligionen*, p. 109.

[102] For these myths see Sepp, *Das Heidenthum und dessen Bedeutung für das Christenthum*, i. p. 111 sqq. The interpretation is of course my own.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.