

JOHN LORD

BEACON LIGHTS OF
HISTORY, VOLUME 01:
THE OLD PAGAN
CIVILIZATIONS

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01: The Old Pagan Civilizations**

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Lord J.

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PUBLISHERS' NOTE

In preparing a new edition of Dr. Lord's great work, the "Beacon Lights of History," it has been necessary to make some rearrangement of lectures and volumes. Dr. Lord began with his volume on classic "Antiquity," and not until he had completed five volumes did he return to the remoter times of "Old Pagan Civilizations" (reaching back to Assyria and Egypt) and the "Jewish Heroes and Prophets." These issued, he took up again the line of great men and movements, and brought it down to modern days.

The "Old Pagan Civilizations," of course, stretch thousands of years before the Hebrews, and the volume so entitled would naturally be the first. Then follows the volume on "Jewish Heroes and Prophets," ending with St. Paul and the Christian Era. After this volume, which in any position, dealing with the unique race of the Jews, must stand by itself, we return to the brilliant picture of the Pagan centuries, in "Ancient Achievements" and "Imperial Antiquity," the latter coming down to the Fall of Rome in the fourth century A.D., which ends the era of "Antiquity" and begins the "Middle Ages."

NEW YORK, September 15, 1902.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

It has been my object in these Lectures to give the substance of accepted knowledge pertaining to the leading events and characters of history; and in treating such a variety of subjects, extending over a period of more than six thousand years, each of which might fill a volume, I have sought to present what is true rather than what is new.

Although most of these Lectures have been delivered, in some form, during the last forty years, in most of the cities and in many of the literary institutions of this country, I have carefully revised them within the last few years, in order to avail myself of the latest light shed on the topics and times of which they treat.

The revived and wide-spread attention given to the study of the Bible, under the stimulus of recent Oriental travels and investigations, not only as a volume of religious guidance, but as an authentic record of most interesting and important events, has encouraged me to include a series of Lectures on some of the remarkable men identified with Jewish history.

Of course I have not aimed at an exhaustive criticism in these Biblical studies, since the topics cannot be exhausted even by the most learned scholars; but I have sought to interest intelligent Christians by a continuous narrative, interweaving with it the latest accessible knowledge bearing on the main subjects. If I have persisted in adhering to the truths that have been generally accepted for nearly two thousand years, I have not disregarded the light which has been recently shed on important points by the great critics of the progressive schools.

I have not aimed to be exhaustive, or to give minute criticism on comparatively unimportant points; but the passions and interests which have agitated nations, the ideas which great men have declared, and the institutions which have grown out of them, have not, I trust, been uncandidly described, nor deductions from them illogically made.

Inasmuch as the interest in the development of those great ideas and movements which we call Civilization centres in no slight degree in the men who were identified with them, I have endeavored to give a faithful picture of their lives in connection with the eras and institutions which they represent, whether they were philosophers, ecclesiastics, or men of action.

And that we may not lose sight of the precious boons which illustrious benefactors have been instrumental in bestowing upon mankind, it has been my chief object to present their services, whatever may have been their defects; since it is for *services* that most great men are ultimately judged, especially kings and rulers. These services, certainly, constitute the gist of history, and it is these which I have aspired to show.

JOHN LORD.

ANCIENT RELIGIONS:

EGYPTIAN, ASSYRIAN, BABYLONIAN, AND PERSIAN

It is my object in this book on the old Pagan civilizations to present the salient points only, since an exhaustive work is impossible within the limits of these volumes. The practical end which I have in view is to collate a sufficient number of acknowledged facts from which to draw sound inferences in reference to the progress of the human race, and the comparative welfare of nations in ancient and modern times.

The first inquiry we naturally make is in regard to the various religious systems which were accepted by the ancient nations, since religion, in some form or other, is the most universal of institutions, and has had the earliest and the greatest influence on the condition and life of peoples—that is to say, on their civilizations—in every period of the world. And, necessarily, considering what is the object in religion, when we undertake to examine any particular form of it which has obtained among any people or at any period of time, we must ask, How far did its priests and sages teach exalted ideas of Deity, of the soul, and of immortality? How far did they arrive at lofty and immutable principles of morality? How far did religion, such as was taught, practically affect the lives of those who professed it, and lead them to just and reasonable treatment of one another, or to holy contemplation, or noble deeds, or sublime repose in anticipation of a higher and endless life? And how did the various religions compare with what we believe to be the true religion—Christianity—in its pure and ennobling truths, its inspiring promises, and its quiet influence in changing and developing character?

I assume that there is no such thing as a progressive Christianity, except in so far as mankind grow in the realization of its lofty principles; that there has not been and will not be any improvement on the ethics and spiritual truths revealed by Jesus the Christ, but that they will remain forever the standard of faith and practice. I assume also that Christianity has elements which are not to be found in any other religion,—such as original teachings, divine revelations, and sublime truths. I know it is the fashion with many thinkers to maintain that improvements on the Christian system are both possible and probable, and that there is scarcely a truth which Christ and his apostles declared which cannot be found in some other ancient religion, when divested of the errors there incorporated with it. This notion I repudiate. I believe that systems of religion are perfect or imperfect, true or false, just so far as they agree or disagree with Christianity; and that to the end of time all systems are to be measured by the Christian standard, and not Christianity by any other system.

The oldest religion of which we have clear and authentic account is probably the pure monotheism held by the Jews. Some nations have claimed a higher antiquity for their religion—like the Egyptians and Chinese—than that which the sacred writings of the Hebrews show to have been communicated to Abraham, and to earlier men of God treated of in those Scriptures; but their claims are not entitled to our full credence. We are in doubt about them. The origin of religions is enshrouded in mystical darkness, and is a mere speculation. Authentic history does not go back far enough to settle this point. The primitive religion of mankind I believe to have been revealed to inspired men, who, like Shem, walked with God. Adam, in paradise, knew who God was, for he heard His voice; and so did Enoch and Noah, and, more clearly than all, Abraham. They believed in a personal God, maker of heaven and earth, infinite in power, supreme in goodness, without beginning and without end, who exercises a providential oversight of the world which he made.

It is certainly not unreasonable to claim the greatest purity and loftiness in the monotheistic faith of the Hebrew patriarchs, as handed down to his children by Abraham, over that of all other

founders of ancient religious systems, not only since that faith was, as we believe, supernaturally communicated, but since the fruit of that stock, especially in its Christian development, is superior to all others. This sublime monotheism was ever maintained by the Hebrew race, in all their wanderings, misfortunes, and triumphs, except on occasions when they partially adopted the gods of those nations with whom they came in contact, and by whom they were corrupted or enslaved.

But it is not my purpose to discuss the religion of the Jews in this connection, since it is treated in other volumes of this series, and since everybody has access to the Bible, the earlier portions of which give the true account not only of the Hebrews and their special progenitor Abraham, but of the origin of the earth and of mankind; and most intelligent persons are familiar with its details.

I begin my description of ancient religions with those systems with which the Jews were more or less familiar, and by which they were more or less influenced. And whether these religions were, as I think, themselves corrupted forms of the primitive revelation to primitive man, or, as is held by some philosophers of to-day, natural developments out of an original worship of the powers of Nature, of ghosts of ancestral heroes, of tutelar deities of household, family, tribe, nation, and so forth, it will not affect their relation to my plan of considering this background of history in its effects upon modern times, through Judaism and Christianity.

The first which naturally claims our attention is the religion of ancient Egypt. But I can show only the main features and characteristics of this form of paganism, avoiding the complications of their system and their perplexing names as much as possible. I wish to present what is ascertained and intelligible rather than what is ingenious and obscure.

The religion of Egypt is very old,—how old we cannot tell with certainty. We know that it existed before Abraham, and with but few changes, for at least two thousand years. Mariette places the era of the first Egyptian dynasty under Menes at 5004 B.C. It is supposed that the earliest form of the Egyptian religion was monotheistic, such as was known later, however, only to a few of the higher priesthood. What the esoteric wisdom really was we can only conjecture, since there are no sacred books or writings that have come down to us, like the Indian Vedas and the Persian Zend-Avesta. Herodotus affirms that he knew the mysteries, but he did not reveal them.

But monotheism was lost sight of in Egypt at an earlier period than the beginning of authentic history. It is the fate of all institutions to become corrupt, and this is particularly true of religious systems. The reason of this is not difficult to explain. The Bible and human experience fully exhibit the course of this degradation. Hence, before Abraham's visit to Egypt the religion of that land had degenerated into a gross and complicated polytheism, which it was apparently for the interest of the priesthood to perpetuate.

The Egyptian religion was the worship of the powers of Nature,—the sun, the moon, the planets, the air, the storm, light, fire, the clouds, the rivers, the lightning, all of which were supposed to exercise a mysterious influence over human destiny. There was doubtless an indefinite sense of awe in view of the wonders of the material universe, extending to a vague fear of some almighty supremacy over all that could be seen or known. To these powers of Nature the Egyptians gave names, and made them divinities.

The Egyptian polytheism was complex and even contradictory. What it lost in logical sequence it gained in variety. Wilkinson enumerates seventy-three principal divinities, and Birch sixty-three; but there were some hundreds of lesser gods, discharging peculiar functions and presiding over different localities. Every town had its guardian deity, to whom prayers or sacrifices were offered by the priests. The more complicated the religious rites the more firmly cemented was the power of the priestly caste, and the more indispensable were priestly services for the offerings and propitiations.

Of these Egyptian deities there were eight of the first rank; but the list of them differs according to different writers, since in the great cities different deities were worshipped. These were Ammon—the concealed god,—the sovereign over all (corresponding to the Jupiter of the Romans), whose sacred city was Thebes. At a later date this god was identified with Ammon Ra, the physical sun. Ra was the

sun-god, especially worshipped at Heliopolis,—the symbol of light and heat. Kneph was the spirit of God moving over the face of the waters, whose principal seat of worship was in Upper Egypt. Phtha was a sort of artisan god, who made the sun, moon, and the earth, "the father of beginnings;" his sign was the scarabaeus, or beetle, and his patron city was Memphis. Khem was the generative principle presiding over the vegetable world,—the giver of fertility and lord of the harvest. These deities are supposed to have represented spirit passing into matter and form,—a process of divine incarnation.

But the most popular deity was Osiris. His image is found standing on the oldest monument, a form of Ra, the light of the lower world, and king and judge of Hades. His worship was universal throughout Egypt, but his chief temples were at Abydos and Philae. He was regarded as mild, beneficent, and good. In opposition to him were Set, malignant and evil, and Bes, the god of death. Isis, the wife and sister of Osiris, was a sort of sun goddess, representing the productive power of Nature. Khons was the moon god. Maut, the consort of Ammon, represented Nature. Sati, the wife of Kneph, bore a resemblance to Juno. Nut was the goddess of the firmament; Ma was the goddess of truth; Horus was the mediator between creation and destruction.

But in spite of the multiplicity of deities, the Egyptian worship centred in some form upon heat or fire, generally the sun, the most powerful and brilliant of the forces of Nature. Among all the ancient pagan nations the sun, the moon, and the planets, under different names, whether impersonated or not, were the principal objects of worship for the people. To these temples were erected, statues raised, and sacrifices made.

No ancient nation was more devout, or more constant to the service of its gods, than were the Egyptians; and hence, being superstitious, they were pre-eminently under the control of priests, as the people were in India. We see, chiefly in India and Egypt, the power of caste,—tyrannical, exclusive, and pretentious,—and powerful in proportion to the belief in a future state. Take away the belief in future existence and future rewards and punishments, and there is not much religion left. There may be philosophy and morality, but not religion, which is based on the fear and love of God, and the destiny of the soul after death. Saint Augustine, in his "City of God," his greatest work, ridicules all gods who are not able to save the soul, and all religions where future existence is not recognized as the most important thing which can occupy the mind of man.

We cannot then utterly despise the religion of Egypt, in spite of the absurdities mingled with it,—the multiplicity of gods and the doctrine of metempsychosis,—since it included a distinct recognition of a future state of rewards and punishments "according to the deeds done in the body." On this belief rested the power of the priests, who were supposed to intercede with the deities, and who alone were appointed to offer to them sacrifices, in order to gain their favor or deprecate their wrath. The idea of death and judgment was ever present to the thoughts of the Egyptians, from the highest to the lowest, and must have modified their conduct, stimulating them to virtue, and restraining them from vice; for virtue and vice are not revelations,—they are instincts implanted in the soul. No ancient teacher enjoined the duties based on an immutable morality with more force than Confucius, Buddha, and Epictetus. Who in any land or age has ignored the duties of filial obedience, respect to rulers, kindness to the miserable, protection to the weak, honesty, benevolence, sincerity, and truthfulness? With the discharge of these duties, written on the heart, have been associated the favor of the gods, and happiness in the future world, whatever errors may have crept into theological dogmas and speculations.

Believing then in a future state, where sin would be punished and virtue rewarded, and believing in it firmly and piously, the ancient Egyptians were a peaceful and comparatively moral people. All writers admit their industry, their simplicity of life, their respect for law, their loyalty to priests and rulers. Hence there was permanence to their institutions, for rapine, violence, and revolution were rare. They were not warlike, although often engaged in war by the command of ambitious kings. Generally the policy of their government was conservative and pacific. Military ambition and thirst for foreign conquest were not the peculiar sins of Egyptian kings; they sought rather to develop national

industries and resources. The occupation of the people was in agriculture and the useful arts, which last they carried to considerable perfection, especially in the working of metals, textile fabrics, and ornamental jewelry. Their grand monuments were not triumphal arches, but temples and mausoleums. Even the pyramids may have been built to preserve the bodies of kings until the soul should be acquitted or condemned, and therefore more religious in their uses than as mere emblems of pride and power; and when monuments were erected to perpetuate the fame of princes, their supreme design was to receive the engraven memorials of the virtuous deeds of kings as fathers of the people.

The priests, whose business it was to perform religious rites and ceremonies to the various gods of the Egyptians, were extremely numerous. They held the highest social rank, and were exempt from taxes. They were clothed in white linen, which was kept scrupulously clean. They washed their whole bodies twice a day; they shaved the head, and wore no beard. They practised circumcision, which rite was of extreme antiquity, existing in Egypt two thousand four hundred years before Christ, and at least four hundred years before Abraham, and has been found among primitive peoples all over the world. They did not make a show of sanctity, nor were they ascetic like the Brahmins. They were married, and were allowed to drink wine and to eat meat, but not fish nor beans, which disturbed digestion. The son of a priest was generally a priest also. There were grades of rank among the priesthood; but not more so than in the Roman Catholic Church. The high-priest was a great dignitary, and generally belonged to the royal family. The king himself was a priest.

The Egyptian ritual of worship was the most complicated of all rituals, and their literature and philosophy were only branches of theology. "Religious observances," says Freeman Clarke, "were so numerous and so imperative that the most common labors of daily life could not be performed without a perpetual reference to some priestly regulation." There were more religious festivals than among any other ancient nation. The land was covered with temples; and every temple consecrated to a single divinity, to whom some animal was sacred, supported a large body of priests. The authorities on Egyptian history, especially Wilkinson, speak highly, on the whole, of the morals of the priesthood, and of their arduous and gloomy life of superintending ceremonies, sacrifices, processions, and funerals. Their life was so full of minute duties and restrictions that they rarely appeared in public, and their aspect as well as influence was austere and sacerdotal.

One of the most distinctive features of the Egyptian religion was the idea of the transmigration of souls,—that when men die; their souls reappear on earth in various animals, in expiation of their sins. Osiris was the god before whose tribunal all departed spirits appeared to be judged. If evil preponderated in their lives, their souls passed into a long series of animals until their sins were expiated, when the purified souls, after thousands of years perhaps, passed into their old bodies. Hence it was the great object of the Egyptians to preserve their mortal bodies after death, and thus arose the custom of embalming them. It is difficult to compute the number of mummies that have been found in Egypt. If a man was wealthy, it cost his family as much as one thousand dollars to embalm his body suitably to his rank. The embalmed bodies of kings were preserved in marble sarcophagi, and hidden in gigantic monuments.

The most repulsive thing in the Egyptian religion was animal-worship. To each deity some animal was sacred. Thus Apis, the sacred bull of Memphis, was the representative of Osiris; the cow was sacred to Isis, and to Athor her mother. Sheep were sacred to Kneph, as well as the asp. Hawks were sacred to Ra; lions were emblems of Horus, wolves of Anubis, hippopotami of Set. Each town was jealous of the honor of its special favorites among the gods.

"The worst form of this animal worship," says Rawlinson, "was the belief that a deity absolutely became incarnate in an individual animal, and so remained until the animal's death. Such were the Apis bulls, of which a succession was maintained at Memphis in the temple of Phtha, or, according to others, of Osiris. These beasts, maintained at the cost of the priestly communities in the great temples of their respective cities, were perpetually adored and prayed to by thousands during their

lives, and at their deaths were entombed with the utmost care in huge sarcophagi, while all Egypt went into mourning on their decease."

Such was the religion of Egypt as known to the Jews,—a complicated polytheism, embracing the worship of animals as well as the powers of Nature; the belief in the transmigration of souls, and a sacerdotalism which carried ritualistic ceremonies to the greatest extent known to antiquity, combined with the exaltation of the priesthood to such a degree as to make priests the real rulers of the land, reminding us of the spiritual despotism of the Middle Ages. The priests of Egypt ruled by appealing to the fears of men, thus favoring a degrading superstition. How far they taught that the various objects of worship were symbols merely of a supreme power, which they themselves perhaps accepted in their esoteric schools, we do not know. But the priests believed in a future state of rewards and punishments, and thus recognized the soul to be of more importance than the material body, and made its welfare paramount over all other interests. This recognition doubtless contributed to elevate the morals of the people, and to make them religious, despite their false and degraded views of God, and their disgusting superstitions.

The Jews could not have lived in Egypt four hundred years without being influenced by the popular belief. Hence in the wilderness, and in the days of kingly rule, the tendency to animal worship in the shape of the golden calves, their love of ritualistic observances, and their easy submission to the rule of priests. In one very important thing, however, the Jews escaped a degrading superstition,—that of the transmigration of souls; and it was perhaps the abhorrence by Moses of this belief that made him so remarkably silent as to a future state. It is seemingly ignored in the Old Testament, and hence many have been led to suppose that the Jews did not believe in it. Certainly the most cultivated and aristocratic sect—the Sadducees—repudiated it altogether; while the Pharisees held to it. They, however, were products of a later age, and had learned many things—good and bad—from surrounding nations or in their captivities, which Moses did not attempt to teach the simple souls that escaped from Egypt.

Of the other religions with which the Jews came in contact, and which more or less were in conflict with their own monotheistic belief, very little is definitely known, since their sacred books, if they had any, have not come down to us. Our knowledge is mostly confined to monuments, on which the names of their deities are inscribed, the animals which they worshipped, symbolic of the powers of Nature, and the kings and priests who officiated in religious ceremonies. From these we learn or infer that among the Assyrians, Babylonians, and Phoenicians religion was polytheistic, but without so complicated or highly organized a system as prevailed in Egypt. Only about twenty deities are alluded to in the monumental records of either nation, and they are supposed to have represented the sun, the moon, the stars, and various other powers, to which were delegated by the unseen and occult supreme deity the oversight of this world. They presided over cities and the elements of Nature, like the rain, the thunder, the winds, the air, the water. Some abode in heaven, some on the earth, and some in the waters under the earth. Of all these graven images existed, carved by men's hands,—some in the form of animals, like the winged bulls of Nineveh. In the very earliest times, before history was written, it is supposed that the religion of all these nations was monotheistic, and that polytheism was a development as men became wicked and sensual. The knowledge of the one God was gradually lost, although an indefinite belief remained that there was a supreme power over all the other gods, at least a deity of higher rank than the gods of the people, who reigned over them as Lord of lords.

This deity in Assyria was Asshur. He is recognized by most authorities as Asshur, a son of Shem and grandson of Noah, who was probably the hero and leader of one of the early migrations, and, as founder of the Assyrian Empire, gave it its name,—his own being magnified and deified by his warlike descendants. Assyria was the oldest of the great empires, occupying Mesopotamia,—the vast plain watered by the Tigris and Euphrates rivers,—with adjacent countries to the north, west, and east. Its seat was in the northern portion of this region, while that of Babylonia or Chaldaea, its rival, was in the southern part; and although after many wars freed from the subjection of Assyria, the

institutions of Babylonia, and especially its religion, were very much the same as those of the elder empire. In Babylonia the chief god was called El, or Il. In Babylon, although Bab-el, their tutelary god, was at the head of the pantheon, his form was not represented, nor had he any special temple for his worship. The Assyrian Asshur placed kings upon their thrones, protected their armies, and directed their expeditions. In speaking of him it was "Asshur, my Lord." He was also called "King of kings," reigning supreme over the gods; and sometimes he was called the "Father of the gods." His position in the celestial hierarchy corresponds with the Zeus of the Greeks, and with the Jupiter of the Romans. He was represented as a man with a horned cap, carrying a bow and issuing from a winged circle, which circle was the emblem of ubiquity and eternity. This emblem was also the accompaniment of Assyrian royalty.

These Assyrian and Babylonian deities had a direct influence on the Jews in later centuries, because traders on the Tigris pushed their adventurous expeditions from the head of the Persian Gulf, either around the great peninsula of Arabia, or by land across the deserts, and settled in Canaan, calling themselves Phoenicians; and it was from the descendants of these enterprising but morally debased people that the children of Israel, returning from Egypt, received the most pertinacious influences of idolatrous corruption. In Phoenicia the chief deity was also called Bel, or Baal, meaning "Lord," the epithet of the one divine being who rules the world, or the Lord of heaven. The deity of the Egyptian pantheon, with whom Baal most nearly corresponds, was Ammon, addressed as the supreme God.

Ranking after El in Babylon, Asshur in Assyria, and Baal in Phoenicia,—all shadows of the same supreme God,—we notice among these Mesopotamians a triad of the great gods, called Anu, Bel, and Hea. Anu, the primordial chaos; Hea, life and intelligence animating matter; and Bel, the organizing and creative spirit,—or, as Rawlinson thinks, "the original gods of the earth, the heavens, and the waters, corresponding in the main with the classical Pluto, Jupiter, and Neptune, who divided between them the dominion over the visible creation." The god Bel, in the pantheon of the Babylonians and Assyrians, is the God of gods, and Father of gods, who made the earth and heaven. His title expresses dominion.

In succession to the gods of this first trio,—Anu, Bel, and Hea,—was another trio, named Siu, Shamas, and Vul, representing the moon, the sun, and the atmosphere. "In Assyria and Babylon the moon-god took precedence of the sun-god, since night was more agreeable to the inhabitants of those hot countries than the day." Hence, Siu was the more popular deity; but Shamas, the sun, as having most direct reference to physical nature, "the lord of fire," "the ruler of the day," was the god of battles, going forth with the armies of the king triumphant over enemies. The worship of this deity was universal, and the kings regarded him as affording them especial help in war. Vul, the third of this trinity, was the god of the atmosphere, the god of tempests,—the god who caused the flood which the Assyrian legends recognize. He corresponds with the Jupiter Tonans of the Romans,—"the prince of the power of the air," destroyer of crops, the scatterer of the harvest, represented with a flaming sword; but as god of the atmosphere, the giver of rain, of abundance, "the lord of fecundity," he was beneficent as well as destructive.

All these gods had wives resembling the goddesses in the Greek mythology,—some beneficent, some cruel; rendering aid to men, or pursuing them with their anger. And here one cannot resist the impression that the earliest forms of the Greek mythology were derived from the Babylonians and Phoenicians, and that the Greek poets, availing themselves of the legends respecting them, created the popular religion of Greece. It is a mooted question whether the Greek civilization is chiefly derived from Egypt, or from Assyria and Phoenicia,—probably more from these old monarchies combined than from the original seat of the Aryan race east of the Caspian Sea. All these ancient monarchies had run out and were old when the Greeks began their settlements and conquests.

There was still another and inferior class of deities among the Assyrians and Babylonians who were objects of worship, and were supposed to have great influence on human affairs. These

deities were the planets under different names. The early study of astronomy among the dwellers on the plains of Babylon and in Mesopotamia gave an astral feature to their religion which was not prominent in Egypt. These astral deities were Nin, or Bar (the Saturn of the Romans); and Merodach (Jupiter), the august god, "the eldest son of Heaven," the Lord of battles. This was the favorite god of Nebuchadnezzar, and epithets of the highest honor were conferred upon him, as "King of heaven and earth," the "Lord of all beings," etc. Nergal (Mars) was a war god, his name signifying "the great Hero," "the King of battles." He goes before kings in their military expeditions, and lends them assistance in the chase. His emblem is the human-headed winged lion seen at the entrance of royal palaces. Ista (Venus) was the goddess of beauty, presiding over the loves of both men and animals, and was worshipped with unchaste rites. Nebo (Mercury) had the charge over learning and culture,—the god of wisdom, who "teaches and instructs."

There were other deities in the Assyrian and Babylonian pantheon whom I need not name, since they played a comparatively unimportant part in human affairs, like the inferior deities of the Romans, presiding over dreams, over feasts, over marriage, and the like.

The Phoenicians, like the Assyrians, had their goddesses. Astoreth, or Astarte, represented the great female productive principle, as Baal did the male. It was originally a name for the energy of God, on a par with Baal. In one of her aspects she represented the moon; but more commonly she was the representative of the female principle in Nature, and was connected more or less with voluptuous rites,—the equivalent of Aphrodite, or Venus. Tanith also was a noted female deity, and was worshipped at Carthage and Cyprus by the Phoenician settlers. The name is associated, according to Gesenius, with the Egyptian goddess Nut, and with the Grecian Artemis the huntress.

An important thing to be observed of these various deities is that they do not uniformly represent the same power. Thus Baal, the Phoenician sun-god, was made by the Greeks and Romans equivalent to Zeus, or Jupiter, the god of thunder and storms. Apollo, the sun-god of the Greeks, was not so powerful as Zeus, the god of the atmosphere; while in Assyria and Phoenicia the sun-god was the greater deity. In Babylonia, Shamas was a sun-god as well as Bel; and Bel again was the god of the heavens, like Zeus.

While Zeus was the supreme deity in the Greek mythology, rather than Apollo the sun, it seems that on the whole the sun was the prominent and the most commonly worshipped deity of all the Oriental nations, as being the most powerful force in Nature. Behind the sun, however, there was supposed to be an indefinite creative power, whose form was not represented, worshipped in no particular temple by the esoteric few who were his votaries, and called the "Father of all the gods," "the Ancient of days," reigning supreme over them all. This indefinite conception of the Jehovah of the Hebrews seems to me the last flickering light of the primitive revelation, shining in the souls of the most enlightened of the Pagan worshippers, including perhaps the greatest of the monarchs, who were priests as well as kings.

The most distinguishing feature in the worship of all the gods of antiquity, whether among Egyptians, or Assyrians, or Babylonians, or Phoenicians, or Greeks, or Romans, is that of oblations and sacrifices. It was even a peculiarity of the old Jewish religion, as well as that of China and India. These oblations and sacrifices were sometimes offered to the deity, whatever his form or name, as an expiation for sin, of which the soul is conscious in all ages and countries; sometimes to obtain divine favor, as in military expeditions, or to secure any object dearest to the heart, such as health, prosperity, or peace; sometimes to propitiate the deity in order to avert the calamities following his supposed wrath or vengeance. The oblations were usually in the form of wine, honey, or the fruits of the earth, which were supposed to be necessary for the nourishment of the gods, especially in Greece. The sacrifices were generally of oxen, sheep, and goats, the most valued and precious of human property in primitive times, for those old heathen never offered to their deities that which cost them nothing, but rather that which was dearest to them. Sometimes, especially in Phoenicia, human beings were offered in sacrifice, the most repulsive peculiarity of polytheism. But the instincts of

humanity generally kept men from rites so revolting. Christianity, as one of its distinguishing features, abolished all forms of outward sacrifice, as superstitious and useless. The sacrifices pleasing to God are a broken spirit, as revealed to David and Isaiah amid all the ceremonies and ritualism of Jewish worship, and still more to Paul and Peter when the new dispensation was fully declared. The only sacrifice which Christ enjoined was self-sacrifice, supreme devotion to a spiritual and unseen and supreme God, and to his children: as the Christ took upon himself the form of a man, suffering evil all his days, and finally even an ignominious death, in obedience to his Father's will, that the world might be saved by his own self-sacrifice.

With sacrifices as an essential feature of all the ancient religions, if we except that of Persia in the time of Zoroaster, there was need of an officiating priesthood. The priests in all countries sought to gain power and influence, and made themselves an exclusive caste, more or less powerful as circumstances favored their usurpations. The priestly caste became a terrible power in Egypt and India, where the people, it would seem, were most susceptible to religious impressions, were most docile and most ignorant, and had in constant view the future welfare of their souls. In China, where there was scarcely any religion at all, this priestly power was unknown; and it was especially weak among the Greeks, who had no fear of the future, and who worshipped beauty and grace rather than a spiritual god. Sacerdotalism entered into Christianity when it became corrupted by the lust of dominion and power, and with great force ruled the Christian world in times of ignorance and superstition. It is sad to think that the decline of sacerdotalism is associated with the growth of infidelity and religious indifference, showing how few worship God in spirit and in truth even in Christian countries. Yet even that reaction is humanly natural; and as it so surely follows upon epochs of priestcraft, it may be a part of the divine process of arousing men to the evils of superstition.

Among all nations where polytheism prevailed, idolatry became a natural sequence,—that is, the worship of animals and of graven images, at first as symbols of the deities that were worshipped, generally the sun, moon, and stars, and the elements of Nature, like fire, water, and air. But the symbols of divine power, as degeneracy increased and ignorance set in, were in succession worshipped as deities, as in India and Africa at the present day. This is the lowest form of religion, and the most repulsive and degraded which has prevailed in the world,—showing the enormous difference between the primitive faiths and the worship which succeeded, growing more and more hideous with the progress of ages, until the fulness of time arrived when God sent reformers among the debased people, more or less supernaturally inspired, to declare new truth, and even to revive the knowledge of the old in danger of being utterly lost.

It is a pleasant thing to remember that the religions thus far treated, as known to the Jews, and by which they were more or less contaminated, have all passed away with the fall of empires and the spread of divine truth; and they never again can be revived in the countries where they nourished. Mohammedanism, a monotheistic religion, has taken their place, and driven the ancient idols to the moles and the bats; and where Mohammedanism has failed to extirpate ancient idolatries, Christianity in some form has come in and dethroned them forever.

There was one form of religion with which the Jews came in contact which was comparatively pure; and this was the religion of Persia, the loftiest form of all Pagan beliefs.

The Persians were an important branch of the Iranian family. "The Iranians were the dominant race throughout the entire tract lying between the Suliman mountains and the Pamir steppe on the one hand, and the great Mesopotamian valley on the other." It was a region of great extremes of temperature,—the summers being hot, and the winters piercingly cold. A great part of this region is an arid and frightful desert; but the more favored portions are extremely fertile. In this country the Iranians settled at a very early period, probably 2500 B.C., about the time the Hindus emigrated from Central Asia to the banks of the Indus. Both Iranians and Hindus belonged to the great Aryan or Indo-European race, whose original settlements were on the high table-lands northeast of Samarkand, in the modern Bokhara, watered by the Oxus, or Amon River. From these rugged regions east of the

Caspian Sea, where the means of subsistence are difficult to be obtained, the Aryans emigrated to India on the southeast, to Iran on the southwest, to Europe on the west,—all speaking substantially the same language.

Of those who settled in Iran, the Persians were the most prominent,—a brave, hardy, and adventurous people, warlike in their habits, and moral in their conduct. They were a pastoral rather than a nomadic people, and gloried in their horses and cattle. They had great skill as archers and horsemen, and furnished the best cavalry among the ancients. They lived in fixed habitations, and their houses had windows and fireplaces; but they were doomed to a perpetual struggle with a severe and uncertain climate, and a soil which required ceaseless diligence. "The whole plateau of Iran," says Johnson, "was suggestive of the war of elements,—a country of great contrasts of fertility and desolation,—snowy ranges of mountains, salt deserts, and fields of beauty lying in close proximity."

The early Persians are represented as having oval faces, raised features, well-arched eyebrows, and large dark eyes, now soft as the gazelle's, now flashing with quick insight. Such a people were extremely receptive of modes and fashions,—the aptest learners as well as the boldest adventurers; not patient in study nor skilful to invent, but swift to seize and appropriate, terrible breakers-up of old religious spells. They dissolved the old material civilization of Cushite and Turanian origin. What passion for vast conquests! "These rugged tribes, devoted to their chiefs, led by Cyrus from their herds and hunting-grounds to startle the pampered Lydians with their spare diet and clothing of skins; living on what they could get, strangers to wine and wassail, schooled in manly exercises, cleanly even to superstition, loyal to age and filial duties; with a manly pride of personal independence that held a debt the next worst thing to a lie; their fondness for social graces, their feudal dignities, their chiefs giving counsel to the king even while submissive to his person, esteeming prowess before praying; their strong ambition, scorning those who scorned toil." Artaxerxes wore upon his person the worth of twelve thousand talents, yet shared the hardships of his army in the march, carrying quiver and shield, leading the way to the steepest places, and stimulating the hearts of his soldiers by walking twenty-five miles a day.

There was much that is interesting about the ancient Persians. All the old authorities, especially Herodotus, testify to the comparative purity of their lives, to their love of truth, to their heroism in war, to the simplicity of their habits, to their industry and thrift in battling sterility of soil and the elements of Nature, to their love of agricultural pursuits, to kindness towards women and slaves, and above all other things to a strong personality of character which implied a powerful will. The early Persians chose the bravest and most capable of their nobles for kings, and these kings were mild and merciful. Xenophon makes Cyrus the ideal of a king,—the incarnation of sweetness and light, conducting war with a magnanimity unknown to the ancient nations, dismissing prisoners, forgiving foes, freeing slaves, and winning all hearts by a true nobility of nature. He was a reformer of barbarous methods of war, and as pure in morals as he was powerful in war. In short, he had all those qualities which we admire in the chivalric heroes of the Middle Ages.

There was developed among this primitive and virtuous people a religion essentially different from that of Assyria and Egypt, with which is associated the name of Zoroaster, or Zarathushtra. Who this extraordinary personage was, and when he lived, it is not easy to determine. Some suppose that he did not live at all. It is most probable that he lived in Bactria from 1000 to 1500 B.C.; but all about him is involved in hopeless obscurity.

The Zend-Avesta, or the sacred books of the Persians, are mostly hymns, prayers, and invocations addressed to various deities, among whom Ormazd was regarded as supreme. These poems were first made known to European scholars by Anquetil du Perron, an enthusiastic traveller, a little more than one hundred years ago, and before the laws of Menu were translated by Sir William Jones. What we know about the religion of Persia is chiefly derived from the Zend-Avesta. *Zend* is the interpretation of the Avesta. The oldest part of these poems is called the Gâthâs, supposed to have been composed by Zoroaster about the time of Moses.

As all information about Zoroaster personally is unsatisfactory, I proceed to speak of the religion which he is supposed to have given to the Iranians, according to Dr. Martin Haug, the great authority on this subject.

Its peculiar feature was dualism,—two original uncreated principles; one good, the other evil. Both principles were real persons, possessed of will, intelligence, power, consciousness, engaged from all eternity in perpetual contest. The good power was called Ahura-Mazda, and the evil power was called Angro-Mainyus. Ahura-Mazda means the "Much-knowing spirit," or the All-wise, the All-bountiful, who stood at the head of all that is beneficent in the universe,—"the creator of life," who made the celestial bodies and the earth, and from whom came all good to man and everlasting happiness. Angro-Mainyus means the black or dark intelligence, the creator of all that is evil, both moral and physical. He had power to blast the earth with barrenness, to produce earthquakes and storms, to inflict disease and death, destroy flocks and the fruits of the earth, excite wars and tumults; in short, to send every form of evil on mankind. Ahura-Mazda had no control over this Power of evil; all he could do was to baffle him.

These two deities who divided the universe between them had each subordinate spirits or genii, who did their will, and assisted in the government of the universe,—corresponding to our idea of angels and demons.

Neither of these supreme deities was represented by the early Iranians under material forms; but in process of time corruption set in, and Magism, or the worship of the elements of Nature, became general. The elements which were worshipped were fire, air, earth, and water. Personal gods, temples, shrines, and images were rejected. But the most common form of worship was that of fire, in Mithra, the genius of light, early identified with the sun. Hence, practically, the supreme god of the Persians was the same that was worshipped in Assyria and Egypt and India,—the sun, under various names; with this difference, that in Persia there were no temples erected to him, nor were there graven images of him. With the sun was associated a supreme power that presided over the universe, benignant and eternal. Fire itself in its pure universality was more to the Iranians than any form. "From the sun," says the Avesta, "are all things sought that can be desired." To fire, the Persian kings addressed their prayers. Fire, or the sun, was in the early times a symbol of the supreme Power, rather than the Power itself, since the sun was created by Ahura-Mazda (Ormazd). It was to him that Zoroaster addressed his prayers, as recorded in the Gâthâs. "I worship," said he, "the Creator of all things, Ahura-Mazda, full of light.... Teach thou me, Ahura-Mazda, out of thyself, from heaven by thy mouth, whereby the world first arose." Again, from the Khorda-Avesta we read: "In the name of God, the giver, forgiver, rich in love, praise be to the name of Ormazd, who always was, always is, and always will be; from whom alone is derived rule." From these and other passages we infer that the religion of the Iranians was monotheistic. And yet the sun also was worshipped under the name of Mithra. Says Zoroaster: "I invoke Mithra, the lofty, the immortal, the pure, the sun, the ruler, the eye of Ormazd." It would seem from this that the sun was identified with the Supreme Being. There was no other power than the sun which was worshipped. There was no multitude of gods, nothing like polytheism, such as existed in Egypt. The Iranians believed in one supreme, eternal God, who created all things, beneficent and all-wise; yet this supreme power was worshipped under the symbol of the sun, although the sun was created by him. This confounding the sun with a supreme and intelligent being makes the Iranian religion indefinite, and hard to be comprehended; but compared with the polytheism of Egypt and Babylon, it is much higher and purer. We see in it no degrading rites, no offensive sacerdotalism, no caste, no worship of animals or images; all is spiritual and elevated, but little inferior to the religion of the Hebrews. In the Zend-Avesta we find no doctrines; but we do find prayers and praises and supplication to a Supreme Being. In the Vedas—the Hindu books—the powers of Nature are gods; in the Avesta they are spirits, or servants of the Supreme.

"The main difference between the Vedic and Avestan religions is that in the latter the Vedic worship of natural powers and phenomena is superseded by a more ethical and personal interest.

Ahura-Mazda (Ormazd), the living wisdom, replaces Indra, the lightning-god. In Iran there grew up, what India never saw, a consciousness of world-purpose, ethical and spiritual; a reference of the ideal to the future rather than the present; a promise of progress; and the idea that the law of the universe means the final deliverance of good from evil, and its eternal triumph." ¹

The loftiness which modern scholars like Haug, Lenormant, and Spiegel see in the Zend-Avesta pertains more directly to the earlier portions of these sacred writings, attributable to Zoroaster, called the Gâthâs. But in the course of time the Avesta was subjected to many additions and interpretations, called the Zend, which show degeneracy. A world of myth and legend is crowded into liturgical fragments. The old Bactrian tongue in which the Avesta was composed became practically a dead language. There entered into the Avesta old Chaldaean traditions. It would be strange if the pure faith of Zoroaster should not be corrupted after Persia had conquered Babylon, and even after its alliance with Media, where the Magi had great reputation for knowledge. And yet even with the corrupting influence of the superstitions of Babylon, to say nothing of Media, the Persian conquerors did not wholly forget the God of their fathers in their old Bactrian home. And it is probable that one reason why Cyrus and Darius treated the Jews with so much kindness and generosity was the sympathy they felt for the monotheism of the Jewish religion in contrast with the polytheism and idolatry of the conquered Babylonians. It is not unreasonable to suppose that both the Persians and Jews worshipped substantially the one God who made the heaven and the earth, notwithstanding the dualism which entered into the Persian religion, and the symbolic worship of fire which is the most powerful agent in Nature; and it is considered by many that from the Persians the Jews received, during their Captivity, their ideas concerning a personal Devil, or Power of Evil, of which no hint appears in the Law or the earlier Prophets. It would certainly seem to be due to that monotheism which modern scholars see behind the dualism of Persia, as an elemental principle of the old religion of Iran, that the Persians were the noblest people of Pagan antiquity, and practised the highest morality known in the ancient world. Virtue and heroism went hand in hand; and both virtue and heroism were the result of their religion. But when the Persians became intoxicated with the wealth and power they acquired on the fall of Babylon, then their degeneracy was rapid, and their faith became obscured. Had it been the will of Providence that the Greeks should have contended with the Persians under the leadership of Cyrus,—the greatest Oriental conqueror known in history,—rather than under Xerxes, then even an Alexander might have been baffled. The great mistake of the Persian monarchs in their degeneracy was in trusting to the magnitude of their armies rather than in their ancient discipline and national heroism. The consequence was a panic, which would not have taken place under Cyrus, whenever they met the Greeks in battle. It was a panic which dispersed the Persian hosts in the fatal battle of Arbela, and made Alexander the master of western Asia. But degenerate as the Persians became, they rallied under succeeding dynasties, and in Artaxerxes II. and Chosroes the Romans found, in their declining glories, their most formidable enemies.

Though the brightness of the old religion of Zoroaster ceased to shine after the Persian conquests, and religious rites fell into the hands of the Magi, yet it is the only Oriental religion which entered into Christianity after its magnificent triumph, unless we trace early monasticism to the priests of India. Christianity had a hard battle with Gnosticism and Manichaeism,—both of Persian origin,—and did not come out unscathed. No Grecian system of philosophy, except Platonism, entered into the Christian system so influentially as the disastrous Manichaean heresy, which Augustine combated. The splendid mythology of the Greeks, as well as the degrading polytheism of Egypt, Assyria, and Phoenicia, passed away before the power of the cross; but Persian speculations remained. Even Origen, the greatest scholar of Christian antiquity, was tainted with them. And the mighty myths of the origin of evil, which perplexed Zoroaster, still remain unsolved; but the belief of the final triumph of good over evil is common to both Christians and the disciples of the Bactrian sage.

¹ Samuel Johnson's Religion of Persia.

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RELIGIONS OF INDIA

BRAHMANISM AND BUDDHISM

That form of ancient religion which has of late excited the most interest is Buddhism. An inquiry into its characteristics is especially interesting, since so large a part of the human race—nearly five hundred millions out of the thirteen hundred millions—still profess to embrace the doctrines which were taught by Buddha, although his religion has become so corrupted that his original teachings are nearly lost sight of. The same may be said of the doctrines of Confucius. The religions of ancient Egypt, Assyria, and Greece have utterly passed away, and what we have had to say of these is chiefly a matter of historic interest, as revealing the forms assumed by the human search for a supernatural Ruler when moulded by human ambitions, powers, and indulgence in the "lust of the eye and the pride of life," rather than by aspirations toward the pure and the spiritual.

Buddha was the great reformer of the religious system of the Hindus, although he lived nearly fifteen hundred or two thousand years after the earliest Brahmanical ascendancy. But before we can appreciate his work and mission, we must examine the system he attempted to reform, even as it is impossible to present the Protestant Reformation without first considering mediaeval Catholicism before the time of Luther. It was the object of Buddha to break the yoke of the Brahmans, and to release his countrymen from the austerities, the sacrifices, and the rigid sacerdotalism which these ancient priests imposed, without essentially subverting ancient religious ideas. He was a moralist and reformer, rather than the founder of a religion.

Brahmanism is one of the oldest religions of the world. It was flourishing in India at a period before history was written. It was coeval with the religion of Egypt in the time of Abraham, and perhaps at a still earlier date. But of its earliest form and extent we know nothing, except from the sacred poems of the Hindus called the Vedas, written in Sanskrit probably fifteen hundred years before Christ,—for even the date of the earliest of the Vedas is unknown. Fifty years ago we could not have understood the ancient religions of India. But Sir William Jones in the latter part of the last century, a man of immense erudition and genius for the acquisition of languages, at that time an English judge in India, prepared the way for the study of Sanskrit, the literary language of ancient India, by the translation and publication of the laws of Menu. He was followed in his labors by the Schlegels of Germany, and by numerous scholars and missionaries. Within fifty years this ancient and beautiful language has been so perseveringly studied that we know something of the people by whom it was once spoken,—even as Egyptologists have revealed something of ancient Egypt by interpreting the hieroglyphics; and Chaldaean investigators have found stores of knowledge in the Babylonian bricks.

The Sanskrit, as now interpreted, reveals to us the meaning of those poems called Vedas, by which we are enabled to understand the early laws and religion of the Hindus. It is poetry, not history, which makes this revelation, for the Hindus have no history farther back than five or six hundred years before Christ. It is from Homer and Hesiod that we get an idea of the gods of Greece, not from Herodotus or Xenophon.

From comparative philology, a new science, of which Prof. Max Müller is one of the greatest expounders, we learn that the roots of various European languages, as well as of the Latin and Greek, are substantially the same as those of the Sanskrit spoken by the Hindus thirty-five hundred years ago, from which it is inferred that the Hindus were a people of like remote origin with the Greeks, the Italic races (Romans, Italians, French), the Slavic races (Russian, Polish, Bohemian), the Teutonic races of England and the Continent, and the Keltic races. These are hence alike called the Indo-

European races; and as the same linguistic roots are found in their languages and in the Zend-Avesta, we infer that the ancient Persians, or inhabitants of Iran, belonged to the same great Aryan race.

The original seat of this race, it is supposed, was in the high table-lands of Central Asia, in or near Bactria, east of the Caspian Sea, and north and west of the Himalaya Mountains. This country was so cold and sterile and unpropitious that winter predominated, and it was difficult to support life. But the people, inured to hardship and privation, were bold, hardy, adventurous, and enterprising.

It is a most interesting process, as described by the philologists, which has enabled them, by tracing the history of words through their various modifications in different living languages, to see how the lines of growth converge as they are followed back to the simple Aryan roots. And there, getting at the meanings of the things or thoughts the words originally expressed, we see revealed, in the reconstruction of a language that no longer exists, the material objects and habits of thought and life of a people who passed away before history began,—so imperishable are the unconscious embodiments of mind, even in the airy and unsubstantial forms of unwritten speech! By this process, then, we learn that the Aryans were a nomadic people, and had made some advance in civilization. They lived in houses which were roofed, which had windows and doors. Their common cereal was barley, the grain of cold climates. Their wealth was in cattle, and they had domesticated the cow, the sheep, the goat, the horse, and the dog. They used yokes, axes, and ploughs. They wrought in various metals; they spun and wove, navigated rivers in sailboats, and fought with bows, lances, and swords. They had clear perceptions of the rights of property, which were based on land. Their morals were simple and pure, and they had strong natural affections. Polygamy was unknown among them. They had no established sacerdotal priesthood. They worshipped the powers of Nature, especially fire, the source of light and heat, which they so much needed in their dreary land. Authorities differ as to their primeval religion, some supposing that it was monotheistic, and others polytheistic, and others again pantheistic.

Most of the ancient nations were controlled more or less by priests, who, as their power increased, instituted a caste to perpetuate their influence. Whether or not we hold the primitive religion of mankind to have been a pure theism, directly revealed by God,—which is my own conviction,—it is equally clear that the form of religion recorded in the earliest written records of poetry or legend was a worship of the sun and moon and planets. I believe this to have been a corruption of original theism; many think it to have been a stage of upward growth in the religious sense of primitive man. In all the ancient nations the sun-god was a prominent deity, as the giver of heat and light, and hence of fertility to the earth. The emblem of the sun was fire, and hence fire was deified, especially among the Hindus, under the name of Agni,—the Latin *ignis*.

Fire, caloric, or heat in some form was, among the ancient nations, supposed to be the *animus mundi*. In Egypt, as we have seen, Osiris, the principal deity, was a form of Ra, the sun-god. In Assyria, Asshur, the substitute for Ra, was the supreme deity. In India we find Mitra, and in Persia Mithra, the sun-god, among the prominent deities, as Helios was among the Greeks, and Phoebus Apollo among the Romans. The sun was not always the supreme divinity, but invariably held one of the highest places in the Pagan pantheon.

It is probable that the religion of the common progenitors of the Hindus, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Kelts, Teutons, and Slavs, in their hard and sterile home in Central Asia, was a worship of the powers of Nature verging toward pantheism, although the earliest of the Vedas representing the ancient faith seem to recognize a supreme power and intelligence—God—as the common father of the race, to whom prayers and sacrifices were devoutly offered. Freeman Clarke quotes from Müller's "Ancient Sanskrit Literature" one of the hymns in which the unity of God is most distinctly recognized:—

"In the beginning there arose the Source of golden light. He was the only Lord of all that is. He established the earth and sky. Who is the God to whom we shall offer our sacrifices? It is he

who giveth life, who giveth strength, who governeth all men; through whom heaven was established, and the earth created."

But if the Supreme God whom we adore was recognized by this ancient people, he was soon lost sight of in the multiplied manifestations of his power, so that Rawlinson thinks² that when the Aryan race separated in their various migrations, which resulted in what we call the Indo-European group of races, there was no conception of a single supreme power, from whom man and nature have alike their origin, but Nature-worship, ending in an extensive polytheism,—as among the Assyrians and Egyptians.

As to these Aryan migrations, we do not know when a large body crossed the Himalaya Mountains, and settled on the banks of the Indus, but probably it was at least two thousand years before Christ. Northern India had great attractions to those hardy nomadic people, who found it so difficult to get a living during the long winters of their primeval home. India was a country of fruits and flowers, with an inexhaustible soil, favorable to all kinds of production, where but little manual labor was required,—a country abounding in every kind of animals, and every kind of birds; a land of precious stones and minerals, of hills and valleys, of majestic rivers and mountains, with a beautiful climate and a sunny sky. These Aryan conquerors drove before them the aboriginal inhabitants, who were chiefly Mongolians, or reduced them to a degrading vassalage. The conquering race was white, the conquered was dark, though not black; and this difference of color was one of the original causes of Indian caste.

It was some time after the settlement of the Aryans on the banks of the Indus and the Ganges before the Vedas were composed by the poets, who as usual gave form to religious belief, as they did in Persia and Greece. These poems, or hymns, are pantheistic. "There is no recognition," says Monier Williams, "of a Supreme God disconnected with the worship of Nature." There was a vague and indefinite worship of the Infinite under various names, such as the sun, the sky, the air, the dawn, the winds, the storms, the waters, the rivers, which alike charmed and terrified, and seemed to be instinct with life and power. God was in all things, and all things in God; but there was no idea of providential agency or of personality.

In the Vedic hymns the number of gods is not numerous, only thirty-three. The chief of these were Varuna, the sky; Mitra, the sun; and Indra, the storm: after these, Agni, fire; and Soma, the moon. The worship of these divinities was originally simple, consisting of prayer, praise, and offerings. There were no temples and no imposing sacerdotalism, although the priests were numerous. "The prayers and praises describe the wisdom, power, and goodness of the deity addressed,"³ and when the customary offerings had been made, the worshipper prayed for food, life, health, posterity, wealth, protection, happiness, whatever the object was,—generally for outward prosperity rather than for improvement in character, or for forgiveness of sin, peace of mind, or power to resist temptation. The offerings to the gods were propitiatory, in the form of victims, or libations of some juice. Nor did these early Hindus take much thought of a future life. There is nothing in the Rig-Veda of a belief in the transmigration of souls⁴, although the Vedic bards seem to have had some hope of immortality. "He who gives alms," says one poet, "goes to the highest place in heaven: he goes to the gods⁵.... Where there is eternal light, in the world where the sun is placed,—in that immortal, imperishable world, place me, O Soma! ... Where there is happiness and delight, where joy and pleasures reside, where the desires of our heart are attained, there make me immortal."

² Religions of the Ancient World, p. 105.

³ Rawlinson, p. 121.

⁴ Wilson: Rig-Veda, vol. iii. p. 170.

⁵ Müller: Chips from a German Workshop, vol. i. p. 46.

In the oldest Vedic poems there were great simplicity and joyousness, without allusion to those rites, ceremonies, and sacrifices which formed so prominent a part of the religion of India at a later period.

Four hundred years after the Rig-Veda was composed we come to the Brahmanic age, when the laws of Menu were written, when the Aryans were living in the valley of the Ganges, and the caste system had become national. The supreme deity is no longer one of the powers of Nature, like Mitra or Indra, but according to Menu he is Brahm, or Brahma,—“an eternal, unchangeable, absolute being, the soul of all beings, who, having willed to produce various beings from his own divine substance, created the waters and placed in them a productive seed. The seed became an egg, and in that egg he was born, but sat inactive for a year, when he caused the egg to divide itself; and from its two divisions he framed the heaven above, and the earth beneath. From the supreme soul Brahma drew forth mind, existing substantially, though unperceived by the senses; and before mind, the reasoning power, he produced consciousness, the internal monitor; and before them both he produced the great principle of the soul.... The soul is, in its substance, from Brahma himself, and is destined finally to be resolved into him. The soul, then, is simply an emanation from Brahma; but it will not return unto him at death necessarily, but must migrate from body to body, until it is purified by profound abstraction and emancipated from all desires.”

This is the substance of the Hindu pantheism as taught by the laws of Menu. It accepts God, but without personality or interference with the world's affairs,—not a God to be loved, scarcely to be feared, but a mere abstraction of the mind.

The theology which is thus taught in the Brahmanical Vedas, it would seem, is the result of lofty questionings and profound meditation on the part of the Indian sages or priests, rather than the creation of poets.

In the laws of Menu, intended to exalt the Brahmanical caste, we read, as translated by Sir William Jones:—

“To a man contaminated by sensuality, neither the Vedas, nor liberality, nor sacrifices, nor strict observances, nor pious austerities, ever procure felicity.... Let not a man be proud of his rigorous devotion; let him not, having sacrificed, utter a falsehood; having made a donation, let him never proclaim it.... By falsehood the sacrifice becomes vain; by pride the merit of devotion is lost.... Single is each man born, single he dies, single he receives the reward of the good, and single the punishment of his evil, deeds.... By forgiveness of injuries the learned are purified; by liberality, those who have neglected their duty; by pious meditation, those who have secret thoughts; by devout austerity, those who best know the Vedas.... Bodies are cleansed by water; the mind is purified by truth; the vital spirit, by theology and devotion; the understanding, by clear knowledge.... A faithful wife who wishes to attain in heaven the mansion of her husband, must do nothing unkind to him, be he living or dead; let her not, when her lord is deceased, even pronounce the name of another man; let her continue till death, forgiving all injuries, performing harsh duties, avoiding every sensual pleasure, and cheerfully practising the incomparable rules of virtue.... The soul itself is its own witness, the soul itself is its own refuge; offend not thy conscious soul, the supreme internal witness of man, ... O friend to virtue, the Supreme Spirit, which is the same as thyself, resides in thy bosom perpetually, and is an all-knowing inspector of thy goodness or wickedness.”

Such were the truths uttered on the banks of the Ganges one thousand years before Christ. But with these views there is an exaltation of the Brahmanical or sacerdotal life, hard to be distinguished from the recognition of divine qualities. “From his high birth,” says Menu, “a Brahman is an object of veneration, even to deities.” Hence, great things are expected of him; his food must be roots and fruit, his clothing of bark fibres; he must spend his time in reading the Vedas; he is to practise austerities by exposing himself to heat and cold; he is to beg food but once a day; he must be careful not to destroy the life of the smallest insect; he must not taste intoxicating liquors. A Brahman who has thus mortified his body by these modes is exalted into the divine essence. This was the early creed of the

Brahman before corruption set in. And in these things we see a striking resemblance to the doctrines of Buddha. Had there been no corruption of Brahmanism, there would have been no Buddhism; for the principles of Buddhism, were those of early Brahmanism.

But Brahmanism became corrupted. Like the Mosaic Law, under the sedulous care of the sacerdotal orders it ripened into a most burdensome ritualism. The Brahmanical caste became tyrannical, exacting, and oppressive. With the supposed sacredness of his person, and with the laws made in his favor, the Brahman became intolerable to the people, who were ground down by sacrifices, expiatory offerings, and wearisome and minute ceremonies of worship. Caste destroyed all ideas of human brotherhood; it robbed the soul of its affections and its aspirations. Like the Pharisees in the time of Jesus, the Brahmans became oppressors of the people. As in Pagan Egypt and in Christian mediaeval Europe, the priests held the keys of heaven and hell; their power was more than Druidical.

But the Brahman, when true to the laws of Menu, led in one sense a lofty life. Nor can we despise a religion which recognized the value and immortality of the soul, a state of future rewards and punishments, though its worship was encumbered by rites, ceremonies, and sacrifices. It was spiritual in its essential peculiarities, having reference to another world rather than to this, which is more than we can say of the religion of the Greeks; it was not worldly in its ends, seeking to save the soul rather than to pamper the body; it had aspirations after a higher life; it was profoundly reverential, recognizing a supreme intelligence and power, indefinitely indeed, but sincerely,—not an incarnated deity like the Zeus of the Greeks, but an infinite Spirit, pervading the universe. The pantheism of the Brahmans was better than the godless materialism of the Chinese. It aspired to rise to a knowledge of God as the supremest wisdom and grandest attainment of mortal man. It made too much of sacrifices; but sacrifices were common to all the ancient religions except the Persian.

"He who through knowledge or religious acts
Henceforth attains to immortality,
Shall first present his body, Death, to thee."

Whether human sacrifices were offered in India when the Vedas were composed we do not know, but it is believed to be probable. The oldest form of sacrifice was the offering of food to the deity. Dr. H. C. Trumbull, in his work on "The Blood Covenant," thinks that the origin of animal sacrifices was like that of circumcision,—a pouring out of blood (the universal, ancient symbol of *life*) as a sign of devotion to the deity; and the substitution of animals was a natural and necessary mode of making this act of consecration a frequent and continuing one. This presents a nobler view of the whole sacrificial system than the common one. Yet doubtless the latter soon prevailed; for following upon the devoted life-offerings to the Divine Friend, came propitiatory rites to appease divine anger or gain divine favor. Then came in the natural human self-seeking of the sacerdotal class, for the multiplication of sacrifices tended to exalt the priesthood, and thus to perpetuate caste.

Again, the Brahmans, if practising austerities to weaken sensual desires, like the monks of Syria and Upper Egypt, were meditative and intellectual; they evolved out of their brains whatever was lofty in their system of religion and philosophy. Constant and profound meditation on the soul, on God, and on immortality was not without its natural results. They explored the world of metaphysical speculation. There is scarcely an hypothesis advanced by philosophers in ancient or modern times, which may not be found in the Brahmanical writings. "We find in the writings of these Hindus materialism, atomism, pantheism, Pyrrhonism, idealism. They anticipated Plato, Kant, and Hegel. They could boast of their Spinozas and their Humes long before Alexander dreamed of crossing the Indus. From them the Pythagoreans borrowed a great part of their mystical philosophy, of their doctrine of transmigration of souls, and the unlawfulness of eating animal food. From them Aristotle learned the syllogism.... In India the human mind exhausted itself in attempting to detect the laws

which regulate its operation, before the philosophers of Greece were beginning to enter the precincts of metaphysical inquiry." This intellectual subtlety, acumen, and logical power the Brahmans never lost. To-day the Christian missionary finds them his superiors in the sports of logical tournaments, whenever the Brahman condescends to put forth his powers of reasoning.

Brahmanism carried idealism to the extent of denying any reality to sense or matter, declaring that sense is a delusion. It sought to leave the soul emancipated from desire, from a material body, in a state which according to Indian metaphysics is *being*, but not *existence*. Desire, anger, ignorance, evil thoughts are consumed by the fire of knowledge.

But I will not attempt to explain the ideal pantheism which Brahmanical philosophers substituted for the Nature-worship taught in the earlier Vedas. This proved too abstract for the people; and the Brahmans, in the true spirit of modern Jesuitism, wishing to accommodate their religion to the people,—who were in bondage to their tyranny, and who have ever been inclined to sensuous worship,—multiplied their sacrifices and sacerdotal rites, and even permitted a complicated polytheism. Gradually piety was divorced from morality. Siva and Vishnu became worshipped, as well as Brahma and a host of other gods unknown to the earlier Vedas.

In the sixth century before Christ, the corruption of society had become so flagrant under the teachings and government of the Brahmans, that a reform was imperatively needed. "The pride of race had put an impassable barrier between the Aryan-Hindus and the conquered aborigines, while the pride of both had built up an equally impassable barrier between the different classes among the Aryan people themselves." The old childlike joy in life, so manifest in the Vedas, had died away. A funereal gloom hung over the land; and the gloomiest people of all were the Brahmans themselves, devoted to a complicated ritual of ceremonial observances, to needless and cruel sacrifices, and a repulsive theology. The worship of Nature had degenerated into the worship of impure divinities. The priests were inflated with a puerile but sincere belief in their own divinity, and inculcated a sense of duty which was nothing else than a degrading slavery to their own caste.

Under these circumstances Buddhism arose as a protest against Brahmanism. But it was rather an ethical than a religious movement; it was an attempt to remove misery from the world, and to elevate ordinary life by a reform of morals. It was effected by a prince who goes by the name of Buddha,—the "Enlightened,"—who was supposed by his later followers to be an incarnation of Deity, miraculously conceived, and sent into the world to save men. He was nearly contemporary with Confucius, although the Buddhistic doctrines were not introduced into China until about two hundred years before the Christian era. He is supposed to have belonged to a warlike tribe called Sâkyas, of great reputed virtue, engaged in agricultural pursuits, who had entered northern India and made a permanent settlement several hundred years before. The name by which the reformer is generally known is Gautama, borrowed by the Sâkyas after their settlement in India from one of the ancient Vedic bard-families. The foundation of our knowledge of Sâkya Buddha is from a Life of him by Asvaghosha, in the first century of our era; and this life is again founded on a legendary history, not framed after any Indian model, but worked out among the nations in the north of India.

The Life of Buddha by Asvaghosha is a poetical romance of nearly ten thousand lines. It relates the miraculous conception of the Indian sage, by the descent of a spirit on his mother, Maya,—a woman of great purity of mind. The child was called Siddârtha, or "the perfection of all things." His father ruled a considerable territory, and was careful to conceal from the boy, as he grew up, all knowledge of the wickedness and misery of the world. He was therefore carefully educated within the walls of the palace, and surrounded with every luxury, but not allowed even to walk or drive in the royal gardens for fear he might see misery and sorrow. A beautiful girl was given to him in marriage, full of dignity and grace, with whom he lived in supreme happiness.

At length, as his mind developed and his curiosity increased to see and know things and people beyond the narrow circle to which he was confined, he obtained permission to see the gardens which surrounded the palace. His father took care to remove everything in his way which could suggest

misery and sorrow; but a *deva*, or angel, assumed the form of an aged man, and stood beside his path, apparently struggling for life, weak and oppressed. This was a new sight to the prince, who inquired of his charioteer what kind of a man it was. Forced to reply, the charioteer told him that this infirm old man had once been young, sportive, beautiful, and full of every enjoyment.

On hearing this, the prince sank into profound meditation, and returned to the palace sad and reflective; for he had learned that the common lot of man is sad,—that no matter how beautiful, strong, and sportive a boy is, the time will come, in the course of Nature, when this boy will be wrinkled, infirm, and helpless. He became so miserable and dejected on this discovery that his father, to divert his mind, arranged other excursions for him; but on each occasion a *deva* contrived to appear before him in the form of some disease or misery. At last he saw a dead man carried to his grave, which still more deeply agitated him, for he had not known that this calamity was the common lot of all men. The same painful impression was made on him by the death of animals, and by the hard labors and privations of poor people. The more he saw of life as it was, the more he was overcome by the sight of sorrow and hardship on every side. He became aware that youth, vigor, and strength of life in the end fulfilled the law of ultimate destruction. While meditating on this sad reality beneath a flowering Jambu tree, where he was seated in the profoundest contemplation, a *deva*, transformed into a religious ascetic, came to him and said, "I am a Shaman. Depressed and sad at the thought of age, disease, and death, I have left my home to seek some way of rescue; yet everywhere I find these evils,—all things hasten to decay. Therefore I seek that happiness which is only to be found in that which never perishes, that never knew a beginning, that looks with equal mind on enemy and friend, that heeds not wealth nor beauty,—the happiness to be found in solitude, in some dell free from molestation, all thought about the world destroyed."

This embodies the soul of Buddhism, its elemental principle,—to escape from a world of misery and death; to hide oneself in contemplation in some lonely spot, where indifference to passing events is gradually acquired, where life becomes one grand negation, and where the thoughts are fixed on what is eternal and imperishable, instead of on the mortal and transient.

The prince, who was now about thirty years of age, after this interview with the supposed ascetic, firmly resolved himself to become a hermit, and thus attain to a higher life, and rise above the misery which he saw around him on every hand. So he clandestinely and secretly escapes from his guarded palace; lays aside his princely habits and ornaments; dismisses all attendants, and even his horse; seeks the companionship of Brahmans, and learns all their penances and tortures. Finding a patient trial of this of no avail for his purpose, he leaves the Brahmans, and repairs to a quiet spot by the banks of a river, and for six years practises the most severe fasting and profound meditation. This was the form which piety had assumed in India from time immemorial, under the guidance of the Brahmans; for Siddârtha as yet is not the "enlightened,"—he is only an inquirer after that saving knowledge which will open the door of a divine felicity, and raise him above a world of disease and death.

Siddârtha's rigorous austerities, however, do not open this door of saving truth. His body is wasted, and his strength fails; he is near unto death. The conviction fastens on his lofty and inquiring mind that to arrive at the end he seeks he must enter by some other door than that of painful and useless austerities, and hence that the teachings of the Brahmans are fundamentally wrong. He discovers that no amount of austerities will extinguish desire, or produce ecstatic contemplation. In consequence of these reflections a great change comes over him, which is the turning-point of his history. He resolves to quit his self-inflicted torments as of no avail. He meets a shepherd's daughter, who offers him food out of compassion for his emaciated and miserable condition. The rich rice milk, sweet and perfumed, restores his strength. He renounces asceticism, and wanders to a spot more congenial to his changed views and condition.

Siddârtha's full enlightenment, however, has not yet come. Under the shade of the Bôdhi tree he devotes himself again to religious contemplation, and falls into rapt ecstasies. He remains a while

in peaceful quiet; the morning sunbeams, the dispersing mists, and lovely flowers seem to pay tribute to him. He passes through successive stages of ecstasy, and suddenly upon his opened mind bursts the knowledge of his previous births in different forms; of the causes of re-birth,—ignorance (the root of evil) and unsatisfied desires; and of the way to extinguish desires by right thinking, speaking, and living, not by outward observance of forms and ceremonies. He is emancipated from the thralldom of those austerities which have formed the basis of religious life for generations unknown, and he resolves to teach.

Buddha travels slowly to the sacred city of Benares, converting by the way even Brahmans themselves. He claims to have reached perfect wisdom. He is followed by disciples, for there was something attractive and extraordinary about him; his person was beautiful and commanding. While he shows that painful austerities will not produce wisdom, he also teaches that wisdom is not reached by self-indulgence; that there is a middle path between penance and pleasures, even *temperance*,—the use, but not abuse, of the good things of earth. In his first sermon he declares that sorrow is in self; therefore to get rid of sorrow is to get rid of self. The means to this end is to forget self in deeds of mercy and kindness to others; to crucify demoralizing desires; to live in the realm of devout contemplation.

The active life of Buddha now begins, and for fifty years he travels from place to place as a teacher, gathers around him disciples, frames rules for his society, and brings within his community both the rich and poor. He even allows women to enter it. He thus matures his system, which is destined to be embraced by so large a part of the human race, and finally dies at the age of eighty, surrounded by reverential followers, who see in him an incarnation of the Deity.

Thus Buddha devoted his life to the welfare of men, moved by an exceeding tenderness and pity for the objects of misery which he beheld on every side. He attempted to point out a higher life, by which sorrow would be forgotten. He could not prevent sorrow culminating in old age, disease, and death; but he hoped to make men ignore their miseries, and thus rise above them to a beatific state of devout contemplation and the practice of virtues, for which he laid down certain rules and regulations.

It is astonishing how the new doctrines spread,—from India to China, from China to Japan and Ceylon, until Eastern Asia was filled with pagodas, temples, and monasteries to attest his influence; some eighty-five thousand existed in China alone. Buddha probably had as many converts in China as Confucius himself. The Buddhists from time to time were subjected to great persecution from the emperors of China, in which their sacred books were destroyed; and in India the Brahmans at last regained their power, and expelled Buddhism from the country. In the year 845 A.D. two hundred and sixty thousand monks and nuns were made to return to secular life in China, being regarded as mere drones,—lazy and useless members of the community. But the policy of persecution was reversed by succeeding emperors. In the thirteenth century there were in China nearly fifty thousand Buddhist temples and two hundred and thirteen thousand monks; and these represented but a fraction of the professed adherents of the religion. Under the present dynasty the Buddhists are proscribed, but still they flourish.

Now, what has given to the religion of Buddha such an extraordinary attraction for the people of Eastern Asia?

Buddhism has a twofold aspect,—*practical* and *speculative*. In its most definite form it was a moral and philanthropic movement,—the reaction against Brahmanism, which had no humanity, and which was as repulsive and oppressive as Roman Catholicism was when loaded down with ritualism and sacerdotal rites, when Europe was governed by priests, when churches were damp, gloomy crypts, before the tall cathedrals arose in their artistic beauty.

From a religious and philosophical point of view, Buddhism at first did not materially differ from Brahmanism. The same dreamy pietism, the same belief in the transmigration of souls, the same pantheistic ideas of God and Nature, the same desire for rest and final absorption in the divine essence characterized both. In both there was a certain principle of faith, which was a feeling of

reverence rather than the recognition of the unity and personality and providence of God. The prayer of the Buddhist was a yearning for deliverance from sorrow, a hope of final rest; but this was not to be attained until desires and passions were utterly suppressed in the soul, which could be effected only by prayer, devout meditations, and a rigorous self-discipline. In order to be purified and fitted for Nirvana the soul, it was supposed, must pass through successive stages of existence in mortal forms, without conscious recollection,—innumerable births and deaths, with sorrow and disease. And the final state of supreme blessedness, the ending of the long and weary transmigration, would be attained only with the extinction of all desires, even the instinctive desire for existence.

Buddha had no definite ideas of the deity, and the worship of a personal God is nowhere to be found in his teachings, which exposed him to the charge of atheism. He even supposed that gods were subject to death, and must return to other forms of life before they obtained final rest in Nirvana. Nirvana means that state which admits of neither birth nor death, where there is no sorrow or disease,—an impassive state of existence, absorption in the Spirit of the Universe. In the Buddhist catechism Nirvana is defined as the "total cessation of changes; a perfect rest; the absence of desire, illusion, and sorrow; the total obliteration of everything that goes to make up the physical man." This theory of re-births, or transmigration of souls, is very strange and unnatural to our less imaginative and subtle Occidental minds; but to the speculative Orientals it is an attractive and reasonable belief. They make the "spirit" the immortal part of man, the "soul" being its emotional embodiment, its "spiritual body," whose unsatisfied desires cause its birth and re-birth into the fleshly form of the physical "body,"—a very brief and temporary incarnation. When by the progressive enlightenment of the spirit its longings and desires have been gradually conquered, it no longer needs or has embodiment either of soul or of body; so that, to quote Elliott Coues in Olcott's "Buddhist Catechism," "a spirit in a state of conscious formlessness, subject to no further modification by embodiment, yet in full knowledge of its experiences [during its various incarnations], is Nirvanic."

Buddhism, however, viewed in any aspect, must be regarded as a gloomy religion. It is hard enough to crucify all natural desires and lead a life of self-abnegation; but for the spirit, in order to be purified, to be obliged to enter into body after body, each subject to disease, misery, and death, and then after a long series of migrations to be virtually annihilated as the highest consummation of happiness, gives one but a poor conception of the efforts of the proudest unaided intellect to arrive at a knowledge of God and immortal bliss. It would thus seem that the true idea of God, or even that of immortality, is not an innate conception revealed by consciousness; for why should good and intellectual men, trained to study and reflection all their lives, gain no clearer or more inspiring notions of the Being of infinite love and power, or of the happiness which He is able and willing to impart? What a feeble conception of God is a being without the oversight of the worlds that he created, without volition or purpose or benevolence, or anything corresponding to our notion of personality! What a poor conception of supernal bliss, without love or action or thought or holy companionship,—only rest, unthinking repose, and absence from disease, misery, and death, a state of endless impassiveness! What is Nirvana but an escape from death and deliverance from mortal desires, where there are neither ideas nor the absence of ideas; no changes or hopes or fears, it is true, but also no joy, no aspiration, no growth, no life,—a state of nonentity, where even consciousness is practically extinguished, and individuality merged into absolute stillness and a dreamless rest? What a poor reward for ages of struggle and the final achievement of exalted virtue!

But if Buddhism failed to arrive at what we believe to be a true knowledge of God and the destiny of the soul,—the forgiveness and remission, or doing-away, of sin, and a joyful and active immortality, all which I take to be revelations rather than intuitions,—yet there were some great certitudes in its teachings which did appeal to consciousness,—certitudes recognized by the noblest teachers of all ages and nations. These were such realities as truthfulness, sincerity, purity, justice, mercy, benevolence, unselfishness, love. The human mind arrives at ethical truths, even when all speculation about God and immortality has failed. The idea of God may be lost, but not that of moral

obligation,—the mutual social duties of mankind. There is a sense of duty even among savages; in the lowest civilization there is true admiration of virtue. No sage that I ever read of enjoined immorality. No ignorance can prevent the sense of shame, of honor, or of duty. Everybody detests a liar and despises a thief. Thou shalt not bear false witness; thou shalt not commit adultery; thou shalt not kill,—these are laws written in human consciousness as well as in the code of Moses. Obedience and respect to parents are instincts as well as obligations.

Hence the prince Siddârtha, as soon as he had found the wisdom of inward motive and the folly of outward rite, shook off the yoke of the priests, and denounced caste and austerities and penances and sacrifices as of no avail in securing the welfare and peace of the soul or the favor of deity. In all this he showed an enlightened mind, governed by wisdom and truth, and even a bold and original genius,—like Abraham when he disowned the gods of his fathers. Having thus himself gained the security of the heights, Buddha longed to help others up, and turned his attention to the moral instruction of the people of India. He was emphatically a missionary of ethics, an apostle of righteousness, a reformer of abuses, as well as a tender and compassionate man, moved to tears in view of human sorrows and sufferings. He gave up metaphysical speculations for practical philanthropy. He wandered from city to city and village to village to relieve misery and teach duties rather than theological philosophies. He did not know that God is love, but he did know that peace and rest are the result of virtuous thoughts and acts.

"Let us then," said he, "live happily, not hating those who hate us; free from greed among the greedy.... Proclaim mercy freely to all men; it is as large as the spaces of heaven.... Whoever loves will feel the longing to save not himself alone, but all others." He compares himself to a father who rescues his children from a burning house, to a physician who cures the blind. He teaches the equality of the sexes as well as the injustice of castes. He enjoins kindness to servants and emancipation of slaves. "As a mother, as long as she lives, watches over her child, so among all beings," said Gautama, "let boundless good-will prevail.... Overcome evil with good, the avaricious with generosity, the false with truth.... Never forget thy own duty for the sake of another's.... If a man speaks or acts with evil thoughts pain follows, as the wheel the foot of him who draws the carriage.... He who lives seeking pleasure, and uncontrolled, the tempter will overcome.... The true sage dwells on earth, as the bee gathers sweetness with his mouth and wings.... One may conquer a thousand men in battle, but he who conquers himself alone is the greatest victor.... Let no man think lightly of sin, saying in his heart, 'It cannot overtake me.'... Let a man make himself what he preaches to others.... He who holds back rising anger as one might a rolling chariot, him, indeed, I call a driver; others may hold the reins.... A man who foolishly does me wrong, I will return to him the protection of my ungrudging love; the more evil comes from him, the more good shall go from me."

These are some of the sayings of the Indian reformer, which I quote from extracts of his writings as translated by Sanskrit scholars. Some of these sayings rise to a height of moral beauty surpassed only by the precepts of the great Teacher, whom many are too fond of likening to Buddha himself. The religion of Buddha is founded on a correct and virtuous life, as the only way to avoid sorrow and reach Nirvana. Its essence, theologically, is "Quietism," without firm belief in anything reached by metaphysic speculation; yet morally and practically it inculcates ennobling, active duties.

Among the rules that Buddha laid down for his disciples were—to keep the body pure; not to enter upon affairs of trade; to have no lands and cattle, or houses, or money; to abhor all hypocrisy and dissimulation; to be kind to everything that lives; never to take the life of any living being; to control the passions; to eat food only to satisfy hunger; not to feel resentment from injuries; to be patient and forgiving; to avoid covetousness, and never to tire of self-reflection. His fundamental principles are purity of mind, chastity of life, truthfulness, temperance, abstention from the wanton destruction of animal life, from vain pleasures, from envy, hatred, and malice. He does not enjoin sacrifices, for he knows no god to whom they can be offered; but "he proclaimed the brotherhood of man, if he did not reveal the fatherhood of God." He insisted on the natural equality of all men,—thus giving to caste

a mortal wound, which offended the Brahmins, and finally led to the expulsion of his followers from India. He protested against all absolute authority, even that of the Vedas. Nor did he claim, any more than Confucius, originality of doctrines, only the revival of forgotten or neglected truths. He taught that Nirvana was not attained by Brahmanical rites, but by individual virtues; and that punishment is the inevitable result of evil deeds by the inexorable law of cause and effect.

Buddhism is essentially rationalistic and ethical, while Brahmanism is a pantheistic tendency to polytheism, and ritualistic even to the most offensive sacerdotalism. The Brahmin reminds me of a Dunstan,—the Buddhist of a Benedict; the former of the gloomy, spiritual despotism of the Middle Ages,—the latter of self-denying monasticism in its best ages. The Brahmin is like Thomas Aquinas with his dogmas and metaphysics; the Buddhist is more like a mediaeval freethinker, stigmatized as an atheist. The Brahmin was so absorbed with his theological speculation that he took no account of the sufferings of humanity; the Buddhist was so absorbed with the miseries of man that the greatest blessing seemed to be entire and endless rest, the cessation of existence itself,—since existence brought desire, desire sin, and sin misery. As a religion Buddhism is an absurdity; in fact, it is no religion at all, only a system of moral philosophy. Its weak points, practically, are the abuse of philanthropy, its system of organized idleness and mendicancy, the indifference to thrift and industry, the multiplication of lazy fraternities and useless retreats, reminding us of monastic institutions in the days of Chaucer and Luther. The Buddhist priest is a mendicant and a pauper, clothed in rags, begging his living from door to door, in which he sees no disgrace and no impropriety. Buddhism failed to ennoble the daily occupations of life, and produced drones and idlers and religious vagabonds. In its corruption it lent itself to idolatry, for the Buddhist temples are filled with hideous images of all sorts of repulsive deities, although Buddha himself did not hold to idol worship any more than to the belief in a personal God.

"Buddhism," says the author of its accepted catechism, "teaches goodness without a God, existence without a soul, immortality without life, happiness without a heaven, salvation without a saviour, redemption without a redeemer, and worship without rites." The failure of Buddhism, both as a philosophy and a religion, is a confirmation of the great historical fact, that in the ancient Pagan world no efforts of reason enabled man unaided to arrive at a true—that is, a helpful and practically elevating—knowledge of deity. Even Buddha, one of the most gifted and excellent of all the sages who have enlightened the world, despaired of solving the great mysteries of existence, and turned his attention to those practical duties of life which seemed to promise a way of escaping its miseries. He appealed to human consciousness; but lacking the inspiration and aid which come from a sense of personal divine influence, Buddhism has failed, on the large scale, to raise its votaries to higher planes of ethical accomplishment. And hence the necessity of that new revelation which Jesus declared amid the moral ruins of a crumbling world, by which alone can the debasing superstitions of India and the godless materialism of China be replaced with a vital spirituality,—even as the elaborate mythology of Greece and Rome gave way before the fervent earnestness of Christian apostles and martyrs.

It does not belong to my subject to present the condition of Buddhism as it exists to-day in Thibet, in Siam, in China, in Japan, in Burmah, in Ceylon, and in various other Eastern countries. It spread by reason of its sympathy with the poor and miserable, by virtue of its being a great system of philanthropy and morals which appealed to the consciousness of the lower classes. Though a proselyting religion it was never a persecuting one, and is still distinguished, in all its corruption, for its toleration.

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The chief authorities that I would recommend for this chapter are Max Müller's History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature; Rev. S. Seal's Buddhism in China; Buddhism, by T. W. Rhys-Davids; Monier Williams's Sākoontalā; I. Muir's Sanskrit Texts; Burnouf's Essai sur la Vêda; Sir William Jones's Works; Colebrook's Miscellaneous Essays; Joseph Muller's Religious Aspects of Hindu Philosophy; Manual of Buddhism, by R. Spence Hardy; Dr. H. Clay Trumbull's The Blood Covenant; Orthodox Buddhist Catechism, by H. S. Olcott, edited by Prof. Elliott C. Coues. I have derived some instruction from Samuel Johnson's bulky and diffuse books, but more from James Freeman Clarke's Ten Great Religions[^] and Rawlinson's Religions of the Ancient World.

RELIGION OF THE GREEKS AND ROMANS

CLASSIC MYTHOLOGY

Religion among the lively and imaginative Greeks took a different form from that of the Aryan race in India or Persia. However the ideas of their divinities originated in their relations to the thought and life of the people, their gods were neither abstractions nor symbols. They were simply men and women, immortal, yet having a beginning, with passions and appetites like ordinary mortals. They love, they hate, they eat, they drink, they have adventures and misfortunes like men,—only differing from men in the superiority of their gifts, in their miraculous endowments, in their stupendous feats, in their more than gigantic size, in their supernal beauty, in their intensified pleasures. It was not their aim "to raise mortals to the skies," but to enjoy themselves in feasting and love-making; not even to govern the world, but to protect their particular worshippers,—taking part and interest in human quarrels, without reference to justice or right, and without communicating any great truths for the guidance of mankind.

The religion of Greece consisted of a series of myths,—creations for the most part of the poets,—and therefore properly called a mythology. Yet in some respects the gods of Greece resembled those of Phoenicia and Egypt, being the powers of Nature, and named after the sun, moon, and planets. Their priests did not form a sacerdotal caste, as in India and Egypt; they were more like officers of the state, to perform certain functions or duties pertaining to rites, ceremonies, and sacrifices. They taught no moral or spiritual truths to the people, nor were they held in extraordinary reverence. They were not ascetics or enthusiasts; among them were no great reformers or prophets, as among the sacerdotal class of the Jews or the Hindus. They had even no sacred books, and claimed no esoteric knowledge. Nor was their office hereditary. They were appointed by the rulers of the state, or elected by the people themselves; they imposed no restraints on the conscience, and apparently cared little for morals, leaving the people to an unbounded freedom to act and think for themselves, so far as they did not interfere with prescribed usages and laws. The real objects of Greek worship were beauty, grace, and heroic strength. The people worshipped no supreme creator, no providential governor, no ultimate judge of human actions. They had no aspirations for heaven and no fear of hell. They did not feel accountable for their deeds or thoughts or words to an irresistible Power working for righteousness or truth. They had no religious sense, apart from wonder or admiration of the glories of Nature, or the good or evil which might result from the favor or hatred of the divinities they accepted.

These divinities, moreover, were not manifestations of supreme power and intelligence, but were creations of the fancy, as they came from popular legends, or the brains of poets, or the hands of artists, or the speculations of philosophers. And as everything in Greece was beautiful and radiant,—the sea, the sky, the mountains, and the valleys,—so was religion cheerful, seen in all the festivals which took the place of the Sabbaths and holy-days of more spiritually minded peoples. The worshippers of the gods danced and played and sported to the sounds of musical instruments, and revelled in joyous libations, in feasts and imposing processions,—in whatever would amuse the mind or intoxicate the senses. The gods were rather unseen companions in pleasures, in sports, in athletic contests and warlike enterprises, than beings to be adored for moral excellence or supernal knowledge. "Heaven was so near at hand that their own heroes climbed to it and became demigods." Every grove, every fountain, every river, every beautiful spot, had its presiding deity; while every wonder of Nature,—the sun, the moon, the stars, the tempest, the thunder, the lightning,—was impersonated as an awful power for good or evil. To them temples were erected, within which were their shrines and images

in human shape, glistening with gold and gems, and wrought in every form of grace or strength or beauty, and by artists of marvellous excellence.

This polytheism of Greece was exceedingly complicated, but was not so degrading as that of Egypt, since the gods were not represented by the forms of hideous animals, and the worship of them was not attended by revolting ceremonies; and yet it was divested of all spiritual aspirations, and had but little effect on personal struggles for truth or holiness. It was human and worldly, not lofty nor even reverential, except among the few who had deep religious wants. One of its characteristic features was the acknowledged impotence of the gods to secure future happiness. In fact, the future was generally ignored, and even immortality was but a dream of philosophers. Men lived not in view of future rewards and punishments, or future existence at all, but for the enjoyment of the present; and the gods themselves set the example of an immoral life. Even Zeus, "the Father of gods and men," to whom absolute supremacy was ascribed, the work of creation, and all majesty and serenity, took but little interest in human affairs, and lived on Olympian heights like a sovereign surrounded with the instruments of his will, freely indulging in those pleasures which all lofty moral codes have forbidden, and taking part in the quarrels, jealousies, and enmities of his divine associates.

Greek mythology had its source in the legends of a remote antiquity,—probably among the Pelasgians, the early inhabitants of Greece, which they brought with them in their migration from their original settlement, or perhaps from Egypt and Phoenicia. Herodotus—and he is not often wrong—ascribes a great part of the mythology which the Greek poets elaborated to a Phoenician or Egyptian source. The legends have also some similarity to the poetic creations of the ancient Persians, who delighted in fairies and genii and extravagant exploits, like the labors of Hercules. The faults and foibles of deified mortals were transmitted to posterity and incorporated with the attributes of the supreme divinity, and hence the mixture of the mighty and the mean which marks the characters of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. The Greeks adopted Oriental fables, and accommodated them to those heroes who figured in their own country in the earliest times. "The labors of Hercules originated in Egypt, and relate to the annual progress of the sun in the zodiac. The rape of Proserpine, the wanderings of Ceres, the Eleusinian mysteries, and the orgies of Bacchus were all imported from Egypt or Phoenicia, while the wars between the gods and the giants were celebrated in the romantic annals of Persia. The oracle of Dodona was copied from that of Ammon in Thebes, and the oracle of Apollo at Delphos has a similar source."

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