CONTENTS

OF

No. VI.

CONTENTS.

ERRATUM.

On page 263, in the middle, instead of *Part III.* read *Part IV*

ART. II. THE NATURE AND MORAL INFLUENCE OF HEATHENISM, ESPECIALLY AMONG THE GREEKS AND ROMANS, VIEWED IN THE LIGHT OF CHRISTIANITY.

By Prof. Tholuck of Halle. Translated by Prof. Emerson.

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PART III.

CHARACTER OF POLYTHEISM AND OF THE DEIFICATION OF NATURE IN GENERAL, AS ALSO OF THE GRECIAN AND ROMAN RELIGIONS IN PARTICULAR.

The grand defect in a polytheistic religion, is the want of *unity in the inward life.* Man, naked and exposed to the ten thousand assaults of enemies, as well in his own heart as in the world, surrounded by sin, error, and misery, needs a confidential, sympathizing heart to whom he can disclose all his pain, and deplore all his griefs. He needs an invisible hand, stronger than all visible ones, on which he can trust to sustain and elevate him in all the storms, in all the contests, of this multifariously changing life. Such a friendly confidential heart beyond the skies, such an invisible, almighty hand, the poor heathen did not know. When the billows of faithless fortune cast him on some lonely sandbank, or the storm of oppression shattered in pieces the vessel of his hope, to which of the hundreds of the heathen gods should he stretch forth his hands in prayer? Was that one to whom he cried, strong enough to defend him? Had he never in his life made this god his enemy by the omission of some sacrifice, while another might be favourable to him? Was the misery, from which he wished deliverance, such an one as had some particular god, who best understood how to deliver from it? Such and similar questions tormented still more the forlorn, disconsolate soul. Yet this was not all. Was there a heathen who earnestly strove and wrestled for sanctification and progressive perfection, and would seek in prayer the requisite aid of the gods,—whither should he turn? Every virtue had its own particular god.[65] Now he sighed to Minerva for wisdom; now he cried to Apollo to grant him

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[65] Tertullian relates from Varro, that the Romans enumerated three hundred Jupiters. Apologeticus, c. 14.

joy. A fixed and consistent inward life, a confidential intercourse with God, was not in this way possible.

Along with the unity, there must also have been wanting the *energy*, of the inward life. Since this inward life was not unwaveringly directed to one point; since the powers of the soul were divided up by this multiplied direction of them; the man, even if he wished it, could not deliver himself from a kind of spiritual dissipation. It must not here pass without notice, that in a similar manner, the worship of saints in the christian church has also become injurious to the genuine inward life of the Christian; because, in its corrupted form, it must occasion nearly the same appearances and effects as polytheism. The baleful influences of the latter were so much the greater, inasmuch as its many gods were not subordinate and holy beings, like the angels. These are all subject to one only supreme law, and make the will of the sovereign God the highest rule of their actions; nearly in the same manner as, at a later period, the New Platonists described the various divinities, and according to which description, Augustine not improperly compares them to the holy angels.[66] But the gods of the heathen were gods of nature, unequal in *power*, though alike in *claims* to dominion; who were therefore not only in rebellion against Jupiter, the supreme lord, but mutually hostile to, and at war with, each other. While the prayer of the monotheist may await its fulfilment with unwavering certainty, if in other respects it is holy and sincere, since the God to whom it ascends, is one God, to whom heaven and earth are subject; to the heathen, on the other hand, the hope and confidence with which he sent up his prayer to heaven, must have been fluctuating and doubtful, since he could never know what other heavenly power might interfere, to hinder or restrain. 'But he that wavereth here, is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed.'

Those gods, moreover, had arisen from the *deification of nature*. Of how much importance this point is, in respect to the religious life, has already been shown above. The chief object of religion, is, *to elevate man again to the higher region of the spiritual world*, from which he has torn himself loose through the impulse of his depraved will, acting in opposition to the divine

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[66] Augustinus de Civit. Dei, IX. 23. Epist. 21. 22. According to this representation, they are, as Lactantius calls them, Inst. I. 3. merely *satellites Dei*.

law. Man must not be satisfied, and feel at ease, on the breast of the whole world of nature; he must still have a longing desire, which shall raise him above all external things and objects. But no religion in which the visible world itself is an object of worship, can accomplish this. Such a religion tends rather to lay a ban upon the soul that aspires to surmount the boundaries of time, and condemn it forever to remain shut up within the dark narrow sphere of the world of sense. If now the man who feels more deeply, and to whom all this visible and changing scene is unsatisfying as a resting place for his soul, finds also in this religion no home for his longing heart, he must thus become the victim of despair. On the other hand, the man whose soul is already turned to earthly things and satisfied in them, instead of being drawn away to a higher spiritual life, will cling the more firmly to all the earthly enjoyments, to all the earthly occupations, which his gods particularly cherish, encourage, and protect. Every true religion aims at a life, such as does not appear in the present world; it strives to found upon earth a heavenly community, a kingdom of God, which may be a copy of that polity constituted by the blessed and pure spirits of heaven. On the other hand, a religion which deifies nature, pronounces life as it is, to be the highest and best; and imagines to itself nothing more perfect, which can satisfy its moral nature.[67] Hence

[67] This contrast between the worship of nature practised by the heathen, and the consequent physical character of their religion, on the one hand, and the moral tendency of Judaism and of Christianity, on the other, is often placed in a strong light by the defenders of the Christian faith. This is done particularly well, for example, by Julius Firmicus Maternus, (De Errore profanarum religionum. Magna Bibl. Patrum T. IV. P. I. c. 2.) where he contrasts the mourning and distress on account of moral objects, with the mourning over physical circumstances in the heathen mysteries and celebrations. "Do not lament, in the annual celebrations over the death of another," (that of Adonis, i. e. the vanishing of the sun,) "but prepare for yourselves, each year, that consolation which you will need at your own death. O wretched man! thou rejoicest to have found I know not what," (viz. the joy at the return of the sun,) "whilst thou, every year, in those festivals, dost lose thine own soul. Thou findest there nothing but an image which thou hast thyself set up. Seek rather the hope of salvation; seek the dawning of the light; seek what may commend thee to the supreme God, or lead thee back into his arms. And when thou hast

it came to pass, that the Orientals—receiving as they did this system of the deification of nature, although to their more profound tone of feeling, ordinary life with all its structure appeared too utterly superficial and worthless, while they still had no idea how a higher and holier spirit should be wrought into it,—totally withdrew themselves from external life, and sought to satisfy the desires and the profound longings of their souls by a constrained annihilation of it. They became, in short, quietists and omphalopsychites.*

We will now consider the character of the Grecian and Roman religions in particular. The glory and the exhaustless fullness of God, are manifested in the world in the vast variety of the fundamental archetypes of all existence, as well as also in the equally great variety of forms existing in one and the same archetype. Man, though always man in every climate, sustains nevertheless, in various regions of the earth, a great variety of character; and, according as the radical character of different nations varies, every thing which belongs to them, divine worship, customs, science, art, all wears a peculiar impression. Yet one nation is not of course for this reason more perfect than another, but each, in its peculiarity, can exhibit in its own way the glory of God; if in other respects its peculiar national impress has the sanction of the supreme law of God. What a difference in this respect, between the Oriental and the Occidental! As the Oriental, in the heat of the day, sinks down beneath the cool shade on the carpet of flowers, and, unfit for business, resigns himself to the train of mental images which passes before him; so there is manifested in every thing that proceeds from his mind, fervour, helplessness, and unfruitfulness in all that respects life. In the religion also of the Oriental,

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found the true way of salvation; when after genuine penitence thou art released and saved through the forgiveness of God; then cry with a loud voice: *εὑρήκαμεν, συγχαίρομεν*, we have found! we rejoice together!"

* Called also *umbilianimi* or *umbilicani*, a sect of *hesychasts* or quietists, which appeared among the monks of Mount Athos in the fourteenth century. They used to sit for a time every day in a solitary corner, with their eyes steadfastly fixed on the middle region of the belly, or navel; and boasted, that while in this posture, a divine light beamed forth from the soul, which diffused through their hearts inexpressible sensations of pleasure and delight.—Compare Rees' Cyclop. art. *Quietists*. EDITOR.

we perceive the same three peculiarities; the fervour of imagination, while every tradition becomes incorporated into their mythology, and every dogma becomes an article of faith; helplessness, because all the images are colossal and unwieldy, the ceremonies and precepts innumerable and of course impracticable; unfruitfulness, because it is not social life in connexion with other men that is kept in view, but only life within one's self; and besides, not the disposition and moral actions, but fancy and corporeal penance are the chief thing. Whilst, on the other hand, the Occidental, unrestrained in the free action and movement of his body, ranges through the lands which Providence has assigned him; whilst he examines and proves and thoroughly investigates every thing which creation presents to him; whilst more especially he also seeks in the works of creation the footsteps of the Eternal Creator; the quiet Oriental, who learns little of the world and nature, retires into the depths of his own inner consciousness, and seeks for God in the profoundest recesses of the human soul.

As now the religions of the East and the West are thus distinguished by a definite line of discrimination, so also are both the Grecian and the Roman life and manners marked by peculiar traits; which are likewise visible in their religious worship. The Greek, in his whole appearance, stands before us strictly as the representative of the *idea of worldliness*, i. e. of devotion to the external world. At an earlier period, the Grecian traditions may indeed have possessed a deeper meaning and vigour, so long as the scion from the East retained its life and sap in freshness; but this soon dried up, and with it expired all higher spirituality and power. By this earlier spiritual energy, we mean the moral sense and import of these traditions; (which was then at least the more predominant, although not the only element in them;) the greater clearness with which they expressed the original and higher knowledge, which still accompanied fallen man on his entrance upon the theatre of the world. That this was really the case, is shown by Creuzer, in his valuable researches into the nature of the Orphean doctrines. But the corruption of the religious system of the Greeks, proceeded especially from the circumstance, that their mythological fables, instead of being estimated according to their moral import, were prized chiefly for their relation to the fine arts; and thus religion itself degenerated at last into art. This direction of the Grecian taste to the arts, had, moreover, not barely the negative ill consequence, that

the objects of religion ceased to occupy the mind with reference to their moral aspect; but there was also combined with it this positive evil, viz. a most corrupting temptation to sensual enjoyment. The grossest sensuality was often connected with the contemplation of the images of the gods. The heathen themselves inform us, that individuals, burning with the wildest lust, practised impurity with the naked statues of the goddesses. So one with the statue of Venus at Cnidus,[68] and others with other images of the gods.[69] And how little purity of mind existed even in the artist Praxiteles himself, we learn from the notice of Pliny, who states that he used to sketch small paintings of a wanton and indecent nature for his *amusement!*[70] If, however, we even turn away our eyes from these gross aberrations, we must nevertheless still say, that *as error which is mingled with some truth, is always more dangerous than error alone*, because it then tends to hold a man longer in its chains; so it was here. Men, to whom such gross sensual pleasures were no longer acceptable, clung to the more refined external pleasures of art, and supposed themselves in this way to stand high above the inferior multitude; but still, even by this apparent elevation itself, they closed up against themselves the way to all exertions of a more serious and loftier moral nature.

Such too would seem to be the course which many, even in the present age, are led to pursue. The distress of the past years* and the great revolution in religious life and feeling, have affected many, who had thus far lived carelessly on in grossly sensual tranquillity. Higher wants were awakened within them. But, instead of satisfying these wants at the true source, instead of striving for a moral transformation of their life, instead of choosing to bear the cross and in the midst of reproaches to become the followers of Christ, they resigned themselves to a refined external enjoyment of art, and to efforts of taste colour-

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[68] Plinii Hist. Nat. XXXVI. 5.

[69] Athenaei Deipnos. XIII. 84. Luciani Amores, c. 15.

[70] Plinii Hist. Nat. XXXV. c. 10.

* This treatise was published in 1822, and the allusion in the text is doubtless to the distress inflicted on Germany while it was the theatre of Bonaparte's wars. It is cheering in this connection, to meet with the subsequent allusion to the revival of a more active and evangelical spirit in that land of mingled light and darkness. TRANS.

ed with the hue of christianity, which deck the wound with purple instead of healing it, and sweep and garnish the house for the demon, who, finding no rest in the desert, returns and brings with him seven other unclean spirits. Such persons, however, who thus deceive themselves concerning their real wants, are far more unhappy than those, to whom the discord of the inner man has not been made manifest. The sting of tormenting conscience is ever reminding them afresh of their nakedness; and the inward tongue of their soul proclaims aloud that their deeds are evil. But they restrain this voice of God that cries within them; they kick against the pricks; and in this terrible contest, the marrow of their bones is dried up.

Yet among the Greeks, there was not only this disadvantage, that the minds of men were generally turned away from what is holy; there was also another source of corruption, viz. that since ungodly-minded artists used religion as a material for the exercise of their art, and since even this religion itself presented objects and excitements of sin, sin itself was rendered attractive by means of art, and thus came even to be pronounced holy. This very point did not escape the notice of Plato. He says:[71] "Since the common people have the right of deciding the victory at the public contests, they assign it to those poets who write in accordance with the worthless opinions of the great multitude. Spectators should ever hear better manners than their own described; but now, at the theatres, they are confirmed in the worst." Thus when, among the cultivated classes, religion lost, by the poetic mode of treating it, the seriousness which commands and remodels life, and also that dignity which compels respect; the disadvantage to the uneducated was still greater, through the false and sinful views of divine things which were thus received by them as truth. And here, the arts of painting and sculpture could produce an effect, not less than poetry. If these arts, among the more cultivated, occasioned those disadvantages which have just been mentioned and which indeed may generally result from art, the same arts were not less capable than poetry of infusing into, and impressing deeply upon, the minds of the common people corrupt ideas, if they were employed upon indecent productions. For if indeed, on the one hand, the sovereign of Olympus at Elis* suggested the idea

[71] Plato de Legib. II. p. 245. ed. Bekker.

* This statue of Jupiter Olympius, which Phidias made for the

of a majesty that rules the world; yet, on the other hand, the father of the gods, with the neck of a swan in the bosom of Leda, could excite only animal appetites and ideas. Hence the reflections are very fine and spirited which Dio Chrysostom, the heathen rhetorician, puts into the mouth of Phidias, in relation to the importance of his attempt to represent the Olympic sovereign in such a form or statue, as should serve to all Greece as a model for the representations of the father of the gods. Dio addresses Phidias thus :[72] "O Phidias, thou hast loaded thyself with a great responsibility. For heretofore, so long as we knew nothing distinctly of God, we sketched to ourselves no definite image of him, because every one painted in imagination for himself a representation after his own pleasure; and when we saw images of the gods, we reposed no special confidence in them. But thou hast constructed this statue so majestically, that all Greece and every one who beholds it, can make for themselves no other representation of God. Hast thou then indeed thus represented the divine nature worthily enough?"

There was, however, this to praise in the Grecian representations of the gods, viz. that they exhibited the gods under no other than the human form, although indeed they often so degraded this form, or exhibited it with such attributes, that it appeared but little better than a beast. Far more abominable, on the other hand, were the representations of the gods among the Egyptians; and likewise those now existing among the people of India, who give to the gods the forms of brutes. On this subject, the heathen Philostratus well remarks :[73] "It were better, instead of such figures, to make none at all; for the human mind is capable of imagining something more excellent than any art. But by such images, the capacity is destroyed of contemplating the beautiful, and even of conceiving any thing higher and better, under these external helps." For if the worship of the personified powers of nature, degrades the Deity to the limits of poor human nature, and confines him to those limits; the worship and the sculpture of brutes, places God even below man. The human form, in its erect position, with the intelligent, soul-speaking countenance, reveals truly something of a higher na-

people of Elis, was deemed the master piece of Grecian art and one of the wonders of the world. TRANS.

[72] Dionis Orationes, ed. Reiske. T. I. p. 401. 399.

[73] Philostratus, Vita Apollonii, IV. 19.

ture, which is wanting in the form of brutes. While, in the latter, the whole species has but a single archetype in which the fundamental idea of it is expressed, there appears in the race of man, even in its various divisions, such a variety of life and of individual forms of life, that these are rendered perceptible even in their external costume. For this reason, if any representation of the Divine Being could be permitted, it can be expressed only by means of the human form; which has also been consecrated to this purpose by the appearance in it of the Son of God.

Since now the Greek, as we have seen, did not love and seek in this life that which exists above it, and which should govern it; but sought and loved this life itself; it is no wonder, that in the same degree in which the love and attachment to earthly life increased, the recollection of the elysian fields and the dark waves of Styx, grew fainter. The cultivated Greek believed in no future state; as we saw, for example, in Polybius, and also in Pausanias;[74] and not less in Simonides, who sings:[75] "Silence reigns in death; darkness veils the eyes. All things come at last into the one terrific whirlpool." But all, the educated as well as the uneducated,* were tormented in the utmost degree by the fear of death; because they had their all in this life, and, beyond it, knew no heaven, no Saviour, no triumphant community of departed spirits. So Anacreon sings:[76] "Gray are my temples, and my head white. Gone is the loveliness of youth. Of pleasant life, little more remains: therefore I often sigh, in dread of Tartarus; for that is the frightful den of Hades. Horrible is the descent; and whoever once goes down, never returns."—Lycophron also complains:[77] "When death is yet far off, the wretched perhaps wish life to end; but when the last wave rolls near, then we cling to life; for we can never satiate ourselves with it." Just so sang Homer long before:[78] "I would rather serve with the poorest man, than be king over all the shades."

[74] Pausanias, Descriptio Graeciae, II. 5.

[75] Stobaei Sermones, Sermo 117. ed. Aureliae Allobrog. 1609.

* Such sweeping declarations as these cannot be true in their full import; nor are they probably intended to include such men as Socrates, who surely believed in a future state, and likewise awaited death with calmness. Trans.

[76] Ap. Stobaeum, lib. I. [77] Apud eundem. [78] Odyssea, XI.

Of far different import, on the other hand, were the expressions of the first christian martyrs, who indeed could appear to the heathen, in that state of mind, in no other light than as enthusiasts. But the greater the anxiety of the Greeks in reference to death, the more firmly did they attach themselves to the things of this life,—the more deeply did they wish to drain the cup of their pleasures, and empty it to the last dregs.

The heathenism of Rome presents to us a different character from that of Greece. The Roman mythology, in accordance with its original elements, retained more of the oriental spirit than the Greek. It was formed, in a great measure, from the Etruscan. But this latter was distinguished by a genuine superstitious terror, a *dread* of the gods, a character of gloom.[79] The supreme god of the Etruscans, *Tina*, is Fate; under whose dark dominion, stands the human race. The world was six thousand years in being created; it stands six thousand years; in the sixth cycle of a thousand years, its end approaches; and that is the great year.[80] So also the times are appointed to all

[79] Arnobius adv. Gentes VII. 26. "Genetrix et mater superstitionis Hetruria."

[80] In the Indian system, also we find the course of the universe limited to twelve thousand years of the gods; and likewise among the Persians. Even the northern religious system speaks of a twilight of the gods.

[The transiator here takes the liberty to refer the curious reader to a series of letters on the Tamul religion, by Mr Winslow of the Ceylon mission, published in the Missionary Herald, Vol. XXVII. The extravagant Indian system just alluded to above, is much more fully developed by Mr Winslow, (p. 107,) though with some variations from this brief statement. Much valuable information has already been communicated by our missionaries, on the present and past condition of heathenism among the various nations and tribes where they are labouring. As they are men of education, and reside permanently among the people whose customs and views they describe, and as they have the greatest inducements to make themselves perfectly acquainted with the religions which they would subvert, they will probably do more than all other men to correct and extend our information respecting heathen nations. And in doing this, they will decidedly promote the main object of their lives, by exciting the christian world to a performance of its long neglected duty. The Missionary Herald has already become a valuable repository of facts to the scholar, who would become thoroughly acquainted with the existing state of the world. TRANS.

nations; and after ten times or periods, the Etruscan state must end. Man, existing under the dominion of Fate, has also his destiny fixed by it in all things. Hence the importance of knowing the secret principles of nature and its external phenomena. Hence the art of discerning the will of the gods or futurity, from the flight of birds, from entrails, or from thunder, is a profound and complete science;[81] for the signs in heaven and on earth, are indications of the wrath of the divinity, which must be appeased by bloodless or also bloody offerings, yea even by human sacrifices. Two genii, moreover, accompany man on the journey of life; the one as his protector and defender; the other, savage and gloomy, and even seeking to injure him. It is these who more immediately guide his destiny.

All this indicates a more earnest and severe character of the Etruscan system; and all this passed more or less into the Roman religion, and is particularly apparent in their many *supplicationes, averruncationes, devotiones.*

Along with all these, Numa Pompilius exerted also a great influence in the formation of the religious and political life of the Roman people. He is said to have derived the better portions of his knowledge from the Pythagoreans; but, on this point, it remains still undetermined, how much of this knowledge is to be ascribed to the ancient Italian doctrines then extant. The effects of his institutions and regulations, are apparent to a very late period. He professedly derived, as is well known, his institutions from immediate inspiration; although it cannot now be determined, whether, according to the rational view which very many heathen give of such declarations of various lawgivers, he only feigned this inspiration for the attainment of political objects, and to turn the popular credulity to good account; or whether he really believed himself to participate in a higher influence, as suggested by Plutarch; who remarks in regard to this intercourse of Numa with the divinity, that "there is nothing at all

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[81] Diodorus Siculus (Biblioth. V. 40.) mentions expressly, that the ancient Etruscans had distinguished themselves by extensive study of natural philosophy and mythology, as also of the science of thunder.

[82] Strabo, Geographia XVI. 2. Diodorus Siculus, Bibl. I. 94. Varro ap. August. De civit. Dei, III. 4. Even the Jew Josephus, (contra Apion. II. 16.) admits Minos, Zamolxis, Zaleucus, and Moses, to have feigned a divine revelation for political purposes.

of absurdity in believing, that an extraordinary communication from God may have been imparted to persons so important as the founders of states, if they really sought it in a becoming manner." By thus referring his institutions back to immediate divine revelation, he no doubt secured for them stability and reverence. So Plutarch remarks of Lycurgus:[83] "What the Spartans would not have respected as νόμοι (laws), they revered as ῥήτραι (oracles); because Lycurgus often travelled to Delphi and derived his laws from the Delphic god." The institutions of Numa relating to divine worship, are distinguished especially by their ascetic moral tendency and spirit; they approach far nearer to the oriental spirit. He himself lived mostly in his citadel, busied with the rites of worship, instructing the priests, or active in their behalf in meditating upon some divine subject.[84] Peculiarly important is Numa's prohibition against making any image of God. The passage in Plutarch which informs us of this, is to the following purport:[85] "The laws of Numa also relating to the images of the gods, are entirely in accordance with the dogmas of Pythagoras; for as the latter assumed that the Original of all things is neither palpable nor capable of suffering, but invisible, unmixed, and spiritual; so Numa forbade the Romans to make to themselves images of God, in the likeness either of man or of beast. And in former times, there was among them neither picture nor statue of God. In the first hundred and seventy years of the state, they built indeed temples and sacred chapels, but always without statues; because it was considered profane to represent the Most High by any thing lower; and because men can approach the Deity only by their thoughts."[86]—Numa also forbade, as Plutarch tells us in the

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[83] Plutarchus, Vita Lycurgi.

[84] Plutarchus, Numa, c. 14.

[85] Plutarchus, Vita Numae, c. 8.

[86] On this remarkable account, Augustin properly places a peculiar stress. (De civit. Dei, IV. 31.) He quotes it from Varro; and this Roman writer adds these memorable words: "Quod, (viz. the custom of having no images of God,) si adhuc mansisset, castius Dei observarentur; qui enim primi simulacra Deorum populis posuerunt, ii civitatibus metum dempserunt, et errorem addiderunt." He appeals in this to the striking example of the *gens Judaea!*

same passage, bloody sacrifices, and commanded to offer flour, meal, and libations of wine, and in general the cheapest articles. —"In the solemn processions," Plutarch further relates,[87] "heralds went before through the city, proclaiming the solemnity and commanding rest from labour. For, as it is related of the Pythagoreans, that they did not permit the gods to be worshipped and adored merely as they were carried by, but commanded that all should go prepared for this purpose from their houses immediately to the temples; so Numa also believed, that his citizens ought to be permitted to see or hear nothing that is truly divine merely in passing; but rather should attend to it while resting from all other things, and thus be able to direct the mind simply to piety as to the most important object; while on account of these sacred occupations, the streets were kept clear and free from the bustle, hammering, crying, and whatever else is connected with the labour of artisans."[88]

In all these institutions, the serious and earnest character of Numa, speaks forth unequivocally, and with it, that of the ancient Romans. Numa forbade also, that sculpture should include the gods within its domain; the ancient Romans forbade to the poets their license in comedy; stage players could not enjoy civil honours, nor even be admitted into the tribes.[89] To this we may add the simple manner of life, which was led by the ancient inhabitants of Rome. The influence of this mode of life is thus placed in connection with their devoutness, by the learned Posidonius, the continuator of Polybius.[90] "The ancient Romans were, of old, distinguished for endurance, for a simple manner of life, and a plain, contented enjoyment of their goods; with all this moreover they exhibited a remarkable reverence towards the gods, strict justice, very great care not to injure other men, connected with the diligent prosecution of agriculture."—So says Valerius Maximus:[91] "The more simply the gods were at first honoured by the Romans, through the sacrifice of articles of food, the more efficacious was it." Hence al-

[87] De vita Numae, c. 14.

[88] Here we find exactly an ancient heathen Sunday!

[89] Scipio says, in Cicero de Republ. l. 4. "Nunquam comoedia, nisi consuetudo vitae pateretur, probare sua theatris flagitia potuissent." August. De civit. Dei, II. 9—13.

[90] Athenaei Deipnosophistes, VI. c. 107. p. 248. ed. Schweigh

[91] Hist. II. 5.

so the testimonies of the great temperance and morality of the old Romans; for example, in Sallust:[92] "In peace and war, they cultivated good morals. Great harmony prevailed; but no avarice. Right and duty were regarded, not so much on account of the laws, as from natural impulse. Discord or dissimulation found a place only against enemies; citizens strove with citizens only in virtue. Magnificence prevailed in the sacrifices to the gods, frugality in domestic affairs, fidelity towards friends."—Ammianus Marcellinus even calls ancient Rome "the home of all the virtues."[93] Even the Jews praised the morality, and particularly the fidelity, of the Romans before the Punic war.[94]

All this is sufficient to justify to us the opinions of Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Polybius formerly cited, who so decidedly award the preference to the Roman mythology above that of the Greeks. And so long as that serious faith in the gods prevailed in the Roman state, it enjoyed the greatest stability and quiet. But the decline of religion brought along with it also the decline of morals, as Dionysius of Halicarnassus often intimates.[95] Even the bravery of the Romans in war was con-

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[92] Sallustius, Bellum Catilinarium, IX.

[93] Ammiani Marc. Histor. XIV. 6. "Virtutum omnium domicilium."

[94] 1 Macc. 8: 1, 12.

[95] Dionysii Hal. Antiqq. Romm. II. 6, 11, 14, 24, 34, 74. III. 21. V. 60. VII. 35. VIII. 37. X. 17. Compare Creuzer's Symbolik, B. II. p. 996, of the new edition, where these passages of Dionysius are named. But no author among the ancients, has perhaps described so strongly what the fear of the gods was to the state, as the noble Plutarch, who surpassed all the other ancients in reverence for sacred things. He thus expresses himself in his work *Adversus Colotem*. c. 31. "The most important of all laws, are those which have respect to our belief in the gods; and which, for that reason, Lycurgus, Numa, Ion, and Deucalion taught to all their nations, while they infused into them by means of prayers, oaths, oracles, and responses of the gods, a vivid feeling of hope as well as of fear respecting the gods. Yea, shouldst thou wander through the earth, thou mayest find cities without walls, without a king, without houses, without coin, without theatre or gymnasium; but never wilt thou behold a city without a god, without prayer, without oracle, without sacrifice. Sooner might a city stand without ground, than

nected with their fear of the gods; of which ancient history is full of examples. Who is not here reminded of the Decii, devoting themselves to the gods? Livy says of one of these,[96] he was looked upon by both armies as a superhuman being, who was sent from heaven to turn the wrath of all the gods from his own to the hosts of the enemy. Such consecrations, says Cicero, were made by our ancestors only through the power of religion. The following account by Livy, is a memorable contribution to the history of superstition among this people:[97] "In the third watch of the night, Papirius silently arose and sent forth the soothsayer, who was accustomed to prophesy from the feeding of fowls, according as they ate, or refused to eat. There was no man in the whole camp, who did not long for battle. Superiors and inferiors were inflamed with the same passion; the general saw the desire of battle in the soldiers; the soldiers, in the general. The same desire was felt by those who were present at the divination. For although the fowls did not eat, yet the diviner ventured to make a false report to the consul, that they had eaten greedily, and thus the sign was propitious. The consul rejoiced in the lucky omen, and caused the signal for battle to be given. In the mean time, there arose a contest among the diviners, concerning the quality of the sign which the fowls had given. Some Roman knights heard this, and deemed it of sufficient importance to be reported to the son of Papirius. This young man, who was not born in *the present irreligious period*, investigated the affair and reported it to the consul. The latter exclaimed, Thanks to thy virtue and attention! Whereupon he placed the soothsayer in front of the standard; where, before the battle began, he was slain by an arrow discharged unintentionally."

Even down to the times of Caesar, the *religio* was of such powerful influence upon the Roman army, that, as Plutarch informs us,[98] the warlike counsels of Pompey were heard with coldness by the soldiers; but when Cato in his speech quoted the *deos patrios* as defenders and protectors of their

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a state sustain itself without a belief in the gods. This is the cement of all society, and the support of all legislation."

[96] Livii Hist. VIII. 9.

[97] Livii Hist. X. 40.

[98] Plutarchus, Vita Caesaris.

cause, the army became at once inflamed, and Caesar lost that battle.[99]

A distinguished memorial of the moral and religious earnestness of the Roman character, is found in the whole account of the abolition of the bacchanalia in Rome, by the consul Posthumius, which we will briefly extract from Livy.[100] "Under the consuls Spurius Posthumius and Marcius Philippus, a complaint was made against secret associations. These had been first introduced into Etruria, from a small beginning, by a Greek soothsayer of low extraction. In secret societies, which held out the appearance of purely religious associations, all kinds of debauchery and other vices were practised. Men and women, young and old, came together in the night, and gave themselves up to excess. Here also perjuries, poisonings, and other things of the like nature were prepared. At first, these societies in Rome remained entirely concealed, on account of the extent and magnitude of the city; but they were finally detected in the following manner. Publius Aebutius had left a son, who was brought up by his mother Duronia and his stepfather T. Sempronius. The mother was devoted to the stepfather; and since the latter knew not how to give a satisfactory account of the money of his ward, he determined either to put him out of the way, or in some manner closely to connect himself with him. One way to accomplish this would be to take him to the bacchanalia. The mother therefore said to the young man, that she had promised during a sickness of his, if he should recover, to initiate him into the bacchanalia. Ten days he must be abstemious; on the tenth she would take him into the sanctuary. In the neighbourhood of the young Aebutius, dwelt a courtezan, Fecenia, who had come to this mode of life only by her condition as a slave, and merited a better occupation. This woman was familiar with the youth, without any prejudice to his character; for she loved him without improper advances on his part; and since his family supported him very parsimoniously, she assisted him with money, and even made him her heir. To her he related with entire simplicity, what his mother was about to do with him. But on hearing this she exclaimed: 'Rather may we both die, than this take place. May God prevent it!' And then she

[99] On the influence of religion upon the common people, see Joh. von Müller's Fragments. Werke, B. XV. p. 429.

[100] Livius, Histor. XXXIX. 8—17.

invoked curses upon those who had counselled such a thing. But when the youth named his mother and his stepfather as the proposers of it, she replied: 'Will then your stepfather—for it would be sin to accuse your mother of it—thus destroy your chastity, your hopes, your reputation, and your whole life?' And as now the astonished youth inquired what she meant by all this, she gave him a description of the abominable debaucheries and corruptions which were perpetrated in those pretended sanctuaries; and did not suffer him to depart, until he had promised her, he would take no part in them. When he returned home and signified to his mother and stepfather his aversion to being initiated, they became enraged and drove him from the house. He took refuge with a female relative, who advised him to disclose the whole affair to the consul. This he did, and the consul first made sure of the courtezan Fecenia, as the informer, who as a slave had herself taken part in those abominable festivals; and then forthwith made a disclosure to the senate. The senate was thrown into the greatest consternation; and after the strictest measures had been adopted on their part, the consuls laid the whole matter before an assembly of the people. The customary prayer to the gods was first offered, which preceded every popular assembly, and then the consul began: 'O Romans! in no assembly of ours has this customary prayer to the gods ever been used with more propriety or even necessity, in order to remind you that those are the true gods, which your ancestors have bidden you revere and worship;—but not those which impel, as with thorns of wrath, the minds of such as are deluded by foreign religious customs, to all imaginable crime and licentiousness, etc."

If thus in the commencement of the Roman state and the Roman religion, the latter exhibited, in a peculiar manner, a sacerdotal and more oriental character, yet, with the growth of the kingdom and the predominance of corruption, it was by degrees changed to a more political one. Still stronger than among the Greeks, the love of country prevailed among the Romans; and for this reason, indeed, because the Roman state possessed a far greater unity. Yet of this result there existed also in their religion one peculiarly efficient element, in the doctrine of the *Lares and Penates*. The love of home, yea the love of one's own possessions, was thus deified; and these became the objects of worship under the names of *Lares* and *Penates*. And since now, according to the ancient religious view, the progress of the Roman con-

quests, for which they prayed regularly to the gods, was regarded as the work of gods peculiarly propitious to the Roman state; and since too the subsequent calamities of the state were also ascribed to the predominance of Christianity, and to the consequent hostility of the gods; it would naturally follow, that their religion should thus have become continually more and more closely connected and combined with their love of country. And we may indeed say, that AS AMONG THE GREEKS RELIGION DEGENERATED INTO A TASTE FOR THE ARTS, SO AMONG THE ROMANS IT SUNK INTO PATRIOTISM.

PART III.

ON THE INFLUENCE OF HEATHENISM UPON LIFE, PARTICULARLY AMONG THE GREEKS AND ROMANS.

SECTION I.

On Superstition and Unbelief, especially about the time of Christ.

We have hitherto endeavoured to learn the general character of heathenism, and especially that of the Grecian and Roman religions. We come now to consider the effects of heathenism as manifested in particulars.

We must here first consider those two excrescences of religious life, *superstition* and *unbelief*, which always appear wherever vital piety vanishes. One reads in Göthe, what one would hardly expect to find in him :[101] "In the history of the world and of man, the deepest and, strictly speaking, the sole theme, to which all others are subordinate, is the conflict of unbelief and superstition." This declaration is one of the truest—truer than perhaps it was felt to be by him who uttered it. The centre, around which moves the whole spiritual life of the man who reflects and feels, is faith. So much the more dangerous, therefore, and of so much the greater consequence, are the two devious paths of superstition and unbelief. They must necessarily arise, where the necessities of the human heart are not sufficiently supplied through the existing systems; where no true means of union with God and his holy and heavenly kingdom, are presented to the soul that longs for such an elevation and

[101] Göthe's Westöstlicher Divan, p. 424.—['Göthe is the greatest modern poet of Germany.—New Platonism is the ground work of his strange religious system.' ENCYC. AM.]

such bliss. Now the true means of that union are, THE PROPER KNOWLEDGE OF HUMAN WRETCHEDNESS, AND THE CONSEQUENT STRUGGLE TO RESTORE THE IMAGE OF GOD WITHIN US.

When now this knowledge and this endeavour do not yet exist in a man, and his religious system is not adapted to excite the effort; if he is swayed rather by cold intellect than warm feeling, he will become indifferent to the whole fabric of religion, and set it aside as worthless; or if he is of a warmer temperament, since there dwells in most minds a dark apprehension of the separating wall between sinful man and the holy God, he will make every effort by *external* contrivances to demolish this wall of partition, and to unite himself again with the world of spirits. Thus then we behold the source of superstition and of unbelief. Now the heathenism of Greece and Rome did not point to this inward union of fallen man with God, at least in its public doctrines; it did not even excite in man the consciousness of his moral wretchedness. As, therefore, it could neither excite nor satisfy a feeling of want in the human heart, it thus far, on the one hand, promoted unbelief. But on the other hand, as we said, there is throughout the whole of heathenism an obscure apprehension of a separating wall, of a disunion between a holy God and man who is prone to sin, of a lapse into sin; (only that, after the gradual depravation of views, the same was not always apprehended in a purely moral light;) and sacrifices, expiations, lustrations, and corporeal penances are everywhere evidences of this fact; as are also the names *Jupiter Aphesios*, the pardoner, *Alexicacos*, the deliverer from evil, *Meilichios*, the placable; and *Dii averruncі*. And this anticipation of the chief doctrine of Christianity among all nations before the christian era, ought not to excite our wonder; since we know, on the one hand, that various traditions were propagated among men from a primeval revelation; while on the other hand, every man is *predestined* for just such a system as is adapted to the whole human race; SINCE EVERY MAN, AS MAN, HAS NEED TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN.

If now the heathen of deeper feelings was only, as it were, breathed upon by this apprehension; if this sense of hostility between him and a holy God, did but dimly rise before him; if moreover, by the influence of his religion, he was continually drawn less into connexion with the moral than with the physical world; it was natural, that, instead of recognising *sin* as the separating wall between him and his God (Isaiah 59: 2), and

seeking to approach him through purification of the heart, he should, in the distress of his heart and the error of his knowledge, lay hold on external means and seek in some external mode a union with the spiritual world. It is therefore a very correct remark of Plutarch, that the *gentler* souls are more inclined to superstition; the *stronger*, to unbelief; or, as he expresses it in another passage, ignorance of the true knowledge produces in the hard and stony mental soil, unbelief; on the moist and softer soil, superstition;—although indeed this position has its exceptions.

Plutarch indeed, who is altogether the profoundest judge of the human heart in all its good and its evil propensities, is also the individual among the ancients who has spoken of belief, unbelief, and superstition, with the greatest wisdom and the deepest knowledge of mankind. Many of his so called moral writings, contain invaluable remarks on these subjects, and are written with animation and with a glow of feeling for the true knowledge of the Deity; particularly his work *περὶ δεισιδαιμονίας*, "On superstition;" and his "Proof that man cannot live happily by the rules of Epicurus." In the former, he illustrates these ideas: "Superstition is far more corrupting and painful to the soul itself that is encompassed with it, than unbelief; although, as it presupposes some participation in the Deity, and some reference to him, a return from it to the true and sober fear of God is sooner possible than in the case of unbelief. This latter is an error, a delusion without passion; but superstition is an error with passion, and therefore as it were a flaming error. While the unbeliever is ever in a state of indifference, there is nothing in heaven or upon earth before which the superstitious does not tremble. Nor is it merely in the day time that he endures this anxiety; even in sleep he is terrified by frightful images, and awakes in horror; but instead of rejoicing to find that these were only delusive shadows, he hastens away to jugglers and conjurers. Since the gods have granted us sleep as the sweet oblivion of all sorrows, O! why dost thou thus rob thyself of this gift? since there is no other sleep which can cause thee to forget these thy dreams. Heraclitus says, all those who are awake, have one and the same world; but of those asleep, each one has his own world. But the superstitious man has *no* world in common with others; for when awake, he employs not his understanding; and when asleep, he is not free from terrors; his reason dreams, but his fear is continually awake. Polycrates in

Samos and Periander in Corinth were horrid tyrants; but no one feared them when he removed to another city. But for one who regards the dominion of the gods as tyrannical and cruel, where can a land or a sea be found without gods, whither he may flee? Even oppressed slaves can demand a sale according to law, and thus obtain a kinder master; but the superstitious man can never exchange the gods before whom he trembles. The unbeliever is as much more happy than the superstitious man, as Tiresias, who could see neither his children nor his friends, was happier than Athamas and Agave, who could see them only as lions and elephants. When the unbeliever is taken sick, he recollects his intemperance as the cause; when fallen into disgrace, he inquires what he has omitted; but when the superstitious man suffers the loss of goods, the death of children, adversity in business, he regards all as the stroke of an angry god, and will not strive against his misfortunes through fear of resisting the gods. The physician is driven from the sick, the consoling friend from the afflicted.* He exclaims: 'O let me suffer my punishment, accursed and hateful as I am to gods and demons.' The man who believes not on God, when misfortune befalls him, can still dry a tear, can shave his head, and lay aside his garment. But how shall one speak to the superstitious man? how help him? There he sits before the door, wrapped in sackcloth, or his loins girded with dirty rags; often he rolls himself naked in the dirt, and proclaims aloud whatever sins and faults he may chance to have committed—he has eaten such and such things, he has gone this or that way, which the demon did not approve. Even in the joyful occupation of divine worship, the superstitious man feels unhappy. What men love most, are the festivals, the sacerdotal meals, the consecrations, the prayers to the gods. You will there see the unbeliever laugh fearfully and with Sardonic irony, and perhaps also whisper in the ear of his friend: 'How blind are these fools!' but this is all. The superstitious man, on the other hand, will indeed partake, but he cannot rejoice; with him the notes of the paean are mingled with sighs. Crowned with the wreath, he grows pale; he makes his offering, and trembles; he prays with a wavering voice, and strews incense with faltering hands. In all this, the fine sentiment uttered by Pythagoras,

* Just so now among the heathen. Then let us send them the gospel, if we have even any regard for their temporal good. TRANS.

does not hold true: 'We are happiest when we go to the habitations of the gods.' The superstitious man goes thither, as into the dragon's den. He also sins against the gods, even more than the unbeliever; for it is better to say, they do not exist, than to hold every abominable thing as true concerning them. It is better for the Scythians to have absolutely no god, than for the Carthaginians to admit a god, but regard him as blood-thirsty, and sacrifice their children to him. Finally, (c. 12,) unbelief never gives occasion for superstition, while the latter does not unfrequently occasion the former; for when we teach perverted views in respect to divine things, we hold out occasion for total skepticism. In the mean time, let every one be well on his guard, that in order to escape robbers, he do not plunge into an impassable chasm; that while escaping from superstition, he do not fall into the power of unbelief, by leaping over that which lies between them, viz. true piety."

Plutarch here strikingly delineates the wretchedness of those who seek peace with God by outward means; and much of what is above quoted, applies to that external ascetic worship of the Romish church, by which man seeks to obtain the friendship of God by his own efforts, just as if there were no Redeemer.

In an equally striking manner does the same Plutarch describe the wretchedness of the unbeliever, in the other work already named: "Proof, that man cannot live happily by the rules of Epicurus." He there first exhibits the melancholy feeling of the unbeliever, who cannot believe in the gods and their influences; and who hypocritically takes part in the services of divine worship from fear of the multitude; in the same manner as we have seen in the preceding quotation. Now this appears indeed to oppose what has just been said by Plutarch, when he relates how the unbeliever witnesses the sacred services with merely a Sardonic laugh; but both may in reality well agree. The unbeliever, in all this, may well feel that fear of the common people which leads him to hypocrisy; and also that painful uneasiness, which even in our day the worldling continually feels by the side of one who has turned to the Lord. Besides, we must also reflect, that the unbeliever is more miserable than he is himself aware of; because he knows not the happiness of true piety, having never felt it; and, as Plutarch says in another place, "he is even so much the more unhappy on account of this ignorance; just as the insane are regarded as the most unhap-

py of all men, because they laugh, while others weep, over their own condition." On the other hand, Plutarch, (in c. 26,) paints in simple but splendid colours, the happiness of him who lives in an intelligent belief and cordial love of the Deity; and concludes this description with the glowing language of Hermogenes: "So greatly are the omniscient and omnipotent gods my friends, so constantly do they care for me, that I am not hidden nor forgotten before them by night or by day, wherever I go or whatever I purpose to do. But since they foreknow what will be the issue of all my undertakings, they signify it by sending to me messengers, voices, dreams, and birds."

Plutarch then combats with animation those who deny the immortality of the soul. He says:[102] "There are three classes of men, the totally corrupt, the ordinary, and the more cultivated. As for the totally corrupt, it is certainly better for them, before they become totally corrupt, to believe in Hades and to suffer themselves to be thereby deterred from evil deeds, than for them first to commit evil deeds, and afterwards, as Epicurus will have it, to find their punishment in the fear of being detected.

"For men of the ordinary stamp, Hades has no terrors; since they hope for a continued existence.* The love of life is our first and greatest love. It is far too sweet and delightful, not to overcome that childish fear. In consequence of this love of life, they prefer, under the loss of wives and children and friends, that these should exist somewhere even in some sad condition, rather than that they should wholly cease to be. They also prefer to use, concerning the dying, the expressions *μεθίστασθαι* and *μεταλλάττειν*, 'to go to another place, to change condition,' and generally such as indicate merely a change of the soul, and not annihilation or death. They hate all such poetic language as the following: 'He moulders now to dust beneath the forest-covered earth, remote from the delights of painting and of music, far from the sweet toned lyre and the softly breathing flute.' And also this: 'That the soul of man should return, is impossible. When it has once escaped from the inclosure of the teeth, it cannot again be seized and confined.'—And because they re-

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[102] Non posse suaviter vivi sec. Epic. c. 25—31.

* Not so the Epicurean herd against whom he is arguing. They believed in no future existence. "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die"—cease to be—was therefore their motto; and consistently enough with their belief, an apostle being judge. TRANS.

gard life in comparison with eternity as of little value, they despise it, and become dull in respect to virtue and activity. And when Epicurus will relieve us from the terrors of Hades by the doctrine of our dissolution into atoms, he ought to know, that this very dissolution is what our nature most of all dreads.* I believe, therefore, that all mankind, both men and women, would rather descend into Tartarus and suffer themselves to be bitten by Cerberus, than to be totally annihilated; though, as already said, there are not many who still hold this belief; and those who do stand thus in fear, seek to free themselves from it by lustrations. We see, therefore, that those who thus deny the immortality of man, destroy the sweetest and largest hopes of ordinary men.

"But why do we now believe, that nothing of evil awaits the just and holy in that place, but, on the contrary, the most glorious rewards? It is first to be considered, that champions do not receive the crown so long as they are engaged in the contest; but only after the combat has ceased and they have triumphed.[103] Now since men, in like manner, believe that the tokens of victory are first to be conferred after the present life, they become wonderfully excited in the pursuit of virtue, with reference to those hopes. And farther, whoever loves the truth and true existence, is not able to satisfy himself with what he witnesses of it here on earth; because his spirit, obscured by the body, must look dimly and confusedly through it as through a mist or cloud. Such a man can keep his soul in order and duly averted from earthly things, only while he recurs to the true wisdom as a preparation for death; and thus ever looks upward, like a bird, and longs to soar away out of the body, into the vast and splendid regions of immensity. Yea, I regard death as so great and so truly a perfect good, that I believe it is from that crisis, that the soul will first begin truly to live and be awake; but now it is more like a dream.—From the bad, for whom there exists a faint hope of amendment, the Epicureans

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* It will be remembered that Epicurus was a materialist, and believed that men die like the brutes. He held matter to be eternal; and explained the formation of all things, by the fortuitous concourse of its floating atoms; and the end of all things, by the dissolution again of these atoms. TRANS.

[103] The apostle Paul says: "No one is crowned unless he strive aright." 2Tim 2. 5.

take away this hope, by preaching annihilation to them; and from the righteous, they take away an abiding good, by which they are already rendered happy. And if it is to be regarded as so great a good, to be freed from the fear of eternal pains, how shall it not also be intolerable, to see ourselves robbed of eternal joys and even the hope of them?"

Here belongs also the following passage:[104] "Some employ holy symbols that are more obscure, and others those that are clearer; because it is not without danger, that they lead the mind to divine things; for some, missing totally the proper sense, fell into superstition; and others, fleeing from this as from a bog, precipitated themselves into the abyss of unbelief. We must therefore assume to our aid those doctrines in philosophy which conduct to holiness, that we may not misunderstand the excellent institutions of the laws concerning sacrifices."—Thus Plutarch knew how to point out the rocks presented by that mythic heathenism, which did not satisfy the deep wants of human nature.

But how then? some one may here inquire; was then in this way the consciousness of the moral discord of his own nature awakened in Plutarch himself? was he, after all, conducted by his religion, as he himself expresses it, to the right means of union with God? to sanctification and purification of heart?—There are souls which the Platonists denominated Apollonian, men of longing desire;[105] in whom from childhood there dwells an unutterable longing for some abiding good; to whom there is no full satisfaction on the bosom of the whole created world; in whose hearts, amid all the diversions of life, one great question remains, which they cannot answer; and who feel themselves alone among the whole multitude of those who are called men. Such souls would make a religion, if they did not find one existing; and into every religious system which they may find, they will incorporate the religion of their own hearts, thus inflamed with celestial desire. Such a man was Plutarch. He was animated,—together with that divine revelation which thus manifested itself in this longing of his heart, and as is the case with all persons of similar temperament,—by the strong desire of seeing also confirmed *out* of himself, that which he constant-

[104] De Iside and Osiride, c. 67.

[105] Amos Comenius calls them *viri desideriorum;* St. Martin, *hommes de désir.*

ly beheld *within* himself. On that account, he poured all his own full heart into the religion of his fathers, and then drew it forth again from that religion. Tones of accord, no doubt, there were in his religion, to all that he felt and longed for; but his soul alone could understand them, and his longing unite them to a complete harmony. How happy would he then have been, had he heard in a distinct voice, the declaration: I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE!—Besides all this, too, he was an adept in the knowledge of the Platonic philosophy. Though he here also adopted and inserted whatever his own mind bid him, yet he found many kindred ideas, by which he was able more clearly to develope what had dwelt darkly in his heart. But from him we can draw no conclusion in respect to other men; as we see alas! in history, where we find no second Plutarch. Who knows, however, whether a second Plutarch may not have lived in the soul of many a tailor, tanner, or shoemaker among the Greeks; who, unknown to his fellow men, bore away with him his longing desire for light, to the source where it could be satisfied?

Like all the other corrupt effects of heathenism, we find also unbelief and superstition no where appearing in such strength, as in the later times of that religion; when the continually increasing refinement and its concomitant laxness, drew forth from the corrupted race a development of every corruption, of which the seed existed in their religion; just as the earlier and more simple period appropriated to itself and developed whatever in their religion was more noble. If therefore we would learn how heathenism operates in the production of unbelief and superstition, we must examine it especially in this later period.

It might now be objected, that if we turn our eyes particularly on these times, we shall be unjust to heathenism. That period, it may be said, was universally enervated and lifeless, so that religion necessarily partook of the hue of the whole period; and therefore the origin of audacious disbelief or the most gloomy superstition, cannot be placed to the account of the heathen religion, but must be ascribed to the circumstances of the times. Or might not—so one may further ask—the fault-finding heathen, in return, impute to Christianity, what the fifteenth century had to shew of unbelief like that of Bembo,* on the one hand, and of monkish superstition on the other?

* The learned and classical, but profligate Cardinal Bembo, like his master and patron, pope Leo X. and many others in the Rom-

We answer, It is indeed true, that the religious maladies which the pestilential breath of the spirit of any age brings with it, cannot be imputed, as a matter of course, to the account of the prevailing religion itself; for who will censure the light, when the darkness refuses to receive it? But it is to be well considered, that the errors of that dark and heathenish period of religion in regard to unbelief and superstition, proceeded very naturally, as it may be fully shown, from the heathen religion itself. And the very circumstance, that the germs of those later abominable errors, are capable of being so manifestly pointed out in the very system in which they afterwards arose, justifies us in adducing those facts as characteristic of that religion. Consequently, we do but historically point out those seeds of corruption in heathenism, which we might have also shown and developed merely in idea, had such a religion never existed in practice. On the contrary, when Christianity sunk, during the dark ages, into infidelity and superstition, this did not take place because the germs it contained were developed, but because a wholly different sense was given to the gospel,—because it was misunderstood by human depravity. Besides, the internal, divine, and living power of Christianity, also manifests itself in this, that it was never destroyed, not even in the deepest corruption and darkness; but broke forth from them again in renovated purity and power of the Spirit. Every other religion, on the contrary, which is not founded on the continual superintendence of the glorified Redeemer and the continual influences of the Holy Ghost, never experiences such a renovation, but goes on continually waxing older and verging to its ruin.

We will first consider the errors of the age immediately subsequent to the birth of Christ, in relation to superstition and unbelief, as they are manifested in the *form* of the philosophy then existing. Philosophy exhibited, at this time, an entirely new appearance. The systems which the human mind is accustomed to set up concerning divine things and the foundation of all existence, had completed their circuit. Although the distresses of the times, the storms of political life, and the oppression of tyrannic rulers, might weaken in many the taste for reflection on higher subjects, and might draw them down to the impulses and disquietudes of ordinary life; yet there were also many who felt

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ish church at that time, was deeply tinctured with infidelity. He was born at Venice, 1470. See Mosheim, Vol. IV. p. 155. TRANS.

themselves directly impelled, by the peril and shattered condition of all civil existence, by the dissolution of the general state of society and by the loss of their possessions, to retire into solitude and to seek consolation and comfort in the pursuit of science and study. There were also many others among the heathen, who felt themselves called upon, by the continually increasing progress which Christianity was making, to investigate religious subjects, that they might obtain clearer views in respect to them. By far the greater part of those who were impelled to philosophy by the first class of motives, found complete relief in none of the existing systems. They saw dispersed in each system, only single and insulated truths; they therefore collected these together from all sources where they found them; and still not satisfied even with these, they appropriated to themselves, out of the existing religious traditions, not merely of their own but of all nations, and out of the mysteries and the doctrines of the priests, every thing which addressed their understanding or their hearts. The system which arose in this manner, is known under the name of *eclecticism*. This eclecticism, however, took an entirely peculiar and superstitious direction.

To man, who is always more inclined to conviction through *authority and experience* than through airy argumentation, Christianity announced a new doctrine; for whose credentials it appealed to the divine *authority* of him who proclaimed it, as also to the extraordinary events accompanying the annunciation; and at the same time referred man to his own heart, where he can find the *experience* of its divinity. Christianity also proclaimed, with victorious energy, the existence of a higher spiritual world, intimately connected with this present world; as likewise a reconciliation and union which have taken place between the sinful race of man and a holy God, in which every individual who feels his need of it, may participate. These ideas, so new to the heathen world, produced a great impression on all who heard them proclaimed. Wants which before had been hushed, were now excited among both the educated and the vulgar. An obscure longing for an extraordinary divine teaching, and for a more intimate connection and union with the Deity and the self-existing spiritual world, took possession of many minds. Those who did not beguile themselves concerning the corruption of their moral nature and its only true remedy, came to the christian community, and there received more than they had expected. But

there were also many others who, either from an indolent habit, or from a concealed aversion to true and humble repentance, did not bring those obscurely felt wants to a distinct consciousness; but soon sought to place them in alliance with heathenism. They sought, namely, to establish in heathenism a copy of those heavenly blessings which Christianity offered to men. And here it is clearly shown, how the most shocking monstrosities may arise, when the strong, proud, and selfish will of man, resisting the divine will, seeks to quiet the half-felt wants of the divine in man, by that which a deluded knowledge suggests to him,—how corrupt throughout are *all mere imitations of the truth.* Those who were led away by that effort, since they possessed no genuine ancient record of religion in the more spiritual sense, set up as such the false and spurious writings of Hermes Trismegistus, the spurious writings of Orpheus and other men of antiquity. Thus they created for themselves an ancient authority, to which they could appeal. The belief upon authority, is indeed by no means to be entirely rejected; since every man feels his need, in common with others, of having a divine conviction; if only self-activity is not thereby excluded. Since further, as we have seen, a deeper and more spiritual manner of interpreting the Grecian mythological traditions, had before been customary, so the eclectic philosophers of this period applied the same mode to the ancient poets of their nation who wrote without that deeper sense. They attributed to the words of Homer and Hesiod a speculative import, which, strictly taken, applies only to the fables adopted by them and interwoven in their works. And thus they had ancient national works full of wisdom, like those of which the Jews, and through them, the Christians, were boasting. And, finally, since they knew not that the cord which originally fastened man to heaven, is broken off not externally, but deep in recesses of the heart, they sought to unite it again externally.[106] Whatever the people, through an obscure feeling of the guilt that loads our race, had undertaken for the purposes of expiation, as offerings, purifications, ascetic penances; these the eclectics of later times reduced into systems, and sought to establish them philosophically. And because

[106] Lucian, in *Philopseudes* c. 8, ridicules one who would heal an *internal* disease by an *external* amulet. Just as ridiculous is he who seeks, by those external connections with God, to reunite the bond which is severed within the human heart.

also the want or longing after a more intimate knowledge and contemplation of divine subjects, was to be satisfied, they either resigned themselves up, like the earlier New-Platonists, to a *mystic contemplation* of the infinite, which was concealed in their own being and nature; or, like the later New-Platonists, they brought *magic* and *theurgy** to a system, and taught the art of causing gods and demons to come down to men, or of compelling departed spirits to return and proclaim the secrets of the other world. To confirm what has been said, let us hear a few traits from the life of Proclus, the New-Platonist, who was one of the best representatives of the tendency above described. His biographer, Marinus, relates of him the following:[107] "He studied especially the writings of Orpheus and Hermes. According to the custom of the ascetic orientals, he never ate animal food, or, if compelled to it for the sake of health, he took but very little. He performed the purifications on the monthly festivals of the Phrygian mother of the gods, and observed the sacred days of the Egyptians more strictly than was customary even in Egypt. He also celebrated the new-moons with great splendour and devotion. He observed the festivals and religious acts of almost all nations; but he did not thereby take occasion for indolence and excess. How diligent he must have been in prayer and the composition of hymns, is shown by his songs of praise, not merely in honour of the Grecian gods, but of tutelary deities entirely foreign, as Marnos of Gaza, Esculapius of Ascalon, Thyandrites of Arabia. For he said: *It is fitting that a philosopher be, not the priest of some particular city or country, but hierophant of the whole earth.*—Very early in the morning, he was commonly occupied in the composition of hymns;

* "The art of so purging and refining that faculty of the mind which receives the images of things, as to render it capable of perceiving the demons, and of performing many marvellous things by their assistance." Mosheim's Ec. Hist. This art was taught by the famous Ammonius Saccas, who flourished in Egypt at the commencement of the second century, and who, though born and educated as a Christian, is regarded as the founder of the New-Platonic system. This art was taught to the more thoroughly initiated in the schools of his followers.—Some may have the curiosity to inquire, to what extent the like art has been claimed in modern days, by Emanuel Swedenborg and his disciples. TRANS.

[107] Marinus, Vita Procli, ed. Boissonade, Leips. 1814. c. 19, 22, 23, 24, 32.

and even when he awoke in the night, he prayed to the gods. Also, he never omitted to pray at sun-rise, at noon, nor at sun-set. Hence he often enjoyed divine manifestations and significant dreams; there appeared to him Pallas, Esculapius, and even foreign gods. When he gave instruction, he became completely resplendent. As Rufinus, a respectable man, once came to him and heard him teach, he perceived a flame on his head during his expositions. When Proclus had ended, Rufinus therefore ran up to him and adored him as a god. And by his prayers and conjurations, he could even bring rain, appease earthquakes, etc."—In the life of Jamblicus written by Eunapius, we may likewise read as much that is excellent, and also as many absurd stories. Jamblicus during his prayers was raised ten feet above the surface of the earth; Maximus, the tutor of the emperor Julian, raised spirits; around Heraiscus[108] hovered still those gods with whom his soul had just had intercourse. Such perversities as these, could the greater part of the philosophers of that time publish as divine truth.

On the other hand, we find in most of those among the philosophers, who did not adhere to that superstition, the greatest unbelief. Already, from about the time of the birth of Christ, the Epicureans had begun to spread themselves abroad through the Roman empire. Cicero complains, that of all sects of philosophers, this made the most remarkable progress and gained the most adherents.[109] But even Cicero himself not only so closes his book *De natura Deorum*, as barely to predicate the probability of the existence of the gods; but in his book *De Inventione*,[110] he says directly, that philosophy can reckon a future state of rewards and punishments only among the *probabilia*.

Along with the Epicureans, there arose at that time, what very naturally followed from the condition of that period, the *cynics*, and spread themselves every where abroad. Cynicism, especially in the form under which it then appeared, must have completely destroyed all the remains of piety and morality, which might still be found among the common people. It proceeded from arrogance and selfishness in their very lowest forms. The cynic of that period clearly perceived the vanity of all the high-

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[108] Suidas Lex. Art. Ἡραΐσκος.

[109] Cicero de Finibus bonor et malor. I. 7. II. 14. Tuscul. V. 10.

[110] Cicero de Inventione, I. 29.

ly-praised relations of human life, and observed that misery and wretchedness every where followed from them, and even embittered domestic life. But, instead of manfully struggling against this state of life; instead of introducing a better spirit into these existing relations; instead of kindly alleviating the wants and deficiencies of life and charitably aiding the distressed; he arrogantly withdrew himself from all the established forms of society; gave up all human relations towards mankind; contemned his country, his kindred, and the joys of wedded love; and sought his consolation in a self-complacent beastliness. One might see these beastly men half naked, moving about everywhere, with a great cudgel and a bread-bag, performing the animal necessities of their nature before the eyes of all,[111] thrusting themselves with extreme rudeness among the multitudes, and there stepping forward as teachers of wisdom, not in a regular discourse, but in the abrupt and broken language of vulgar sport and derision, at which the rabble would roar with laughter, but none could be improved. By the most vulgar and abusive language, with which they made their way to the great, in the capacity of a species of jesters, they often also forced presents from them; and when, by such means, they had made themselves rich, they wholly abandoned this mode of life.[112] For this reason, mechanics, tanners, dealers in ointments, and others, often joined themselves to these people, that so they might make their fortune in an easy manner; as Lucian expressly remarks.

Now as superstition and unbelief every where border close on each other, so we may here remark, how cynicism, which discarded magic and all religious knowledge of the deeper kind, and was especially hostile to New-Platonism, nevertheless found a point of contact with this system. The total contempt of the existing relations of life which the cynic exhibited, appeared to these Platonic theosophists as something so great and noble,—they even thought they had found in it a course of oriental ascetic discipline so preparatory to contemplation, although the ten-

[111] Augustin gives some shocking examples of the beastliness of these men. De Civit. Dei. XIV. 20.

[112] Lucian gives us in the best manner the traits for this picture of the worthless cynic. Lucian Fugit. ed. Reitz. III. p. 371—383. Vit. Auct. I. p. 351. Julian likewise speaks against them, and presents us the picture of a true cynic. Orat. VI. et VII. adv. Pseudo-Cynism

dency of cynicism was widely different,—that this party also of philosophers greatly revered cynicism, and represented Diogenes as a god-like man.[113]

Along with these cynics and Epicureans on the one hand, and the New-Platonists on the other, a small number of *stoics* also continually maintained their ground. There were not many however; partly because the age was too indolent and lax for them; and partly too because stoicism, on account of the energy which it imparted, was regarded by the effeminate courtiers as dangerous to the state. Hence stoicism was considered as constituting, among others, a ground of accusation.[114] The stoics could certainly better spread abroad some interest for religion; for the question here is not concerning the value of their philosophy; but although they cherished a greater regard for the gods, (which indeed were to them only the machines of fate,) yet the disconsolateness of their belief concerning the life beyond the grave, was the more terrific. This disconsolateness is confessed by Seneca, when he says:[115] "I once flattered myself with the expectation of a future state, because I believed others. At that time I longed for death, *quum subito experrectus sum et tam bellum somnium perdidi!*"

If now, as we have seen, the dominions of philosophy were pervaded through and through by superstition and unbelief, how much more must these two foes of true knowledge, have subjugated to their sway the populace and the unlearned in general![116]

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[113] Julianus Opp. Or. 7. p. 212.ed.Spanh. Maximus Tyrus Dissertationes, ed. Reiske. T. II. Diss. XXXVI. Some of the cynics may not indeed have been destitute of some participation in the oriental cast of mind, since in fact the life of the cynics, if we abstract its Grecian character, does not differ from that of the Indian Joghis or the Persian Fakeers. To this kind of cynics Demonax is to be reckoned, whose life is described by Lucian. Thus Lucian quotes from him, (p. 32,) that to the question, whether his soul was immortal, he returned for answer: "Yes, like EVERY THING."

[114] Tacitus Annal. XIV. 57. XVI. 22.

[115] Seneca Ep. 102.

[116] A very fine remark of Aelian is here to be noted. (Aelianus Histor. Var. II. 31.) "Who would not praise the wisdom of the barbarians? Never has one of them doubted of the existence of God or of his providence toward the human race, like many of the Greek philosophers. They have ever honoured the gods in simplici-

Already before the birth of Christ, the belief in a future life appears to have been lost among the more cultivated Romans. Cato and Caesar confessed in the senate, that the belief in a future existence is fabulous, and that beyond the grave, neither joy nor sorrow are to be expected.[117] Caesar declared: "*Ultra nec curae neque gaudio locum esse.*" Cato highly approved of these words; for he says: "Caius Caesar has just spoken in this assembly, well and strikingly concerning life and death, declaring those things to be false, as I also think them, which are related of the infernal world, namely, that the wicked are separated from the virtuous, and inhabit terrific, loathsome, shocking, uncultivated places."—An excellent and very memorable expression of Livy, which strikingly marks the infidelity of his time, and which might be applied to so many other periods, is that which he makes in his relation of the contests about the *lex Terentilli*, and which were put to rest by the influence of religion.[118] "But at that time, that indifference towards the gods had not yet broken in upon us, which prevails in the present age; nor did each individual so interpret oaths and laws as to suit himself; but rather accommodated his own morals to them."

And here, the evidence of Philo the Jew, (A. D. 40,) is appropriate, who complains of the many atheists and pantheists of his time, and attacks them.[119]

How mournful is the confession of such a man as the elder Pliny, which he makes of his infidelity in his Natural History.[120] "It

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ty; they offer sacrifices; they perform purifications; they have their mysteries; so that it is evident, that they have not the least doubt respecting the gods."

[117] Sallust. Bell. Catilin. c. 51. 52.

[118] Livii Hist. III. 20.

[119] Philo, ed. Pfeiffer. T. I. lib. 3. Allegoriar. p. 263.

[120] "Irridendum vero agere curam illud, quidquid est summum. Anne tam tristi et multiplici ministerio pollui credamus dubitemusne? Vix prope est judicare, utrum magis conducat generi humano, quando aliis nullus est Deorum respectus, aliis pudendus. Invenit tamen inter has utrasque sententias medium sibi ipsa mortalitas numen, quo minus etiam plena de Deo conjectatio esset. Toto quippe mundo et locis omnibus omnibusque horis omnium vocibus fortuna invocatur.—Adeoque ut Sors ipsa pro Deo sit, quo Deus probatur incertus.—Quae singula improvidam mortalitatem involvunt, solum ut inter ista certum sit, nihil esse certi, nec miserius quicquam homine nec superbius. Caeteris quippe animantium sola

is ridiculous indeed to make that which is the highest of all, mingle in and take care of human affairs. Must we believe, or must we doubt, that this highest would be degraded by so sad and complex a ministry? It is hardly possible to judge, which may be of the most benefit to the human race; since on the one hand there is no respect for the gods; and on the other, a respect which men ought to be ashamed of. Between these two opinions, mankind have invented for themselves an intermediate divinity, that there may be less of conjecture about God. Throughout the whole world, in all places and at all hours, *fortune* is invoked by the voices of all.—And thus fortune herself stands for God; by which means God is proved to be uncertain.—Each of which things involves the improvidence and shortsightedness of mankind; so that only one thing can be certain, namely, that *there is no certainty;* and that nothing can be more miserable or more proud than man. For as to other animals, their only care is for food, in which the kindness of nature spontaneously suffices them; and one thing especially they have which is to be preferred to all possessions, namely, that they have no thought or care for glory, wealth, ambition, and, above all, for death. Still it is of use in human life, to believe that God takes care of human things; and that punishments, though sometimes late, (since God is so much occupied in his vast cares,) will never fail of being inflicted on crimes; and that man is not therefore the most nearly allied by birth to the Deity, in order that he should be next to the brutes in debasement. But it is the special consolation of imperfect human nature, that God cannot indeed do all things. For neither can he call death to his own relief, should he desire it,—a noble refuge which he

victus cura est, in qua sponte naturae benignitas sufficit, uno quidem vel praeferendo cunctis bonis, quod de gloria, de pecunia, ambitione, superque de morte non cogitent. Verum in his Deum agere curam rerum humanarum credi, ex usu vitae est: poenasque maleficiis aliquando seras occupato Deo in tanta mole, numquam autem irritas esse, nec ideo proximum illi genitum hominem, ut vilitate juxta belluas esset. Imperfectae vero in homine naturae praecipua solatia, ne Deum quidem omnia posse. Namque nec sibi potest mortem consciscere si velit, quod homini dedit optimum in tantis vitae poenis, nec mortales aeternitate donare etc. per quae declaratur haud dubie naturae potentia, idque esse quod Deum vocamus." Lib. II. c. 7.

has given to man in the midst of so many evils; nor can he endow man with immortality etc. by which things, the power of nature is doubtless declared, and that is what we call God."—This rancorous melancholy, (so to speak,) of one who possessed a noble longing of heart for a better faith, but who proudly suppressed it, would have borne a man of lower views and longings directly to cynicism, in order, at least so far as is permitted to man, to reduce himself back into the class of brutes.

We have already had occasion to become acquainted with the unbelief of such men as Strabo and Polybius. Pausanias also testifies of himself, in many passages, that although he quotes the traditions of his religion, he yields them no belief; and commonly no one attributes any credit to them, except merely because he has heard them related from his youth up.[121] Many Romans, in the time of the emperors, may also have been led into infidelity by a polite rhetorical education; for he whose taste and rhetorical powers merely are cultivated, commonly loses a spirit of deeper and more serious investigation, and superficially pronounces a skeptical decision on the highest subjects. So Arnobius delineates the unbelieving Romans of his time.[122] "Because you know how to inflect words properly, because you avoid barbarisms and solecisms, because you can compose or criticise a well-constructed discourse, you also think you know what is true and what is false; what can take place and what cannot; and what is the nature of heavenly and of earthly things."—Theodoret also complains,[123] that "so many half-learned among the heathen refuse to take an interest in the barbarian wisdom of Christianity; while in old times, the truly wise travelled through all lands in order to become still wiser."—This character of skeptical, superficial, tasteful sciolism, we learn partly from the pictures which Lucian drew in derision of it;[124] and partly from the lively picture we have of it in the emperor Adrian. This man, who on the one hand was extremely superstitious, (as Pausanias among others lays to his charge,[125]) and

[121] Pausaniae Descriptio Graeciae, I. 3. II. 57.

[122] Arnobius adv. Gentes, Paris 1605. ed Heraldi, II. p. 57.

[123] Theodoreti Opp. ed. Hal. T. IV. p. 696.

[124] E. g. Lucian's Lexophanes, and his Quomodo conscribenda sit historia.

[125] Pausaniae Graciae Descript. I. 3.

on the other, was a contemptible sciolist, affords a ridiculous and likewise mournful proof of his belles-lettres propensities, and his infidelity as connected with them, in the verses which he uttered at his death.[126]

It was impossible, but that the inferior multitude should become infected with unbelief from this quarter. Servius, in a note on Virgil's Aeneid,[127] remarks expressly, that "unbelief is equally spread among the high and the low." The lines of Juvenal are well known:[128]

> "Esse aliquos manes, et subterranea regna,
> Et catum, et Stygio ranas in gurgite nigras,
> Nec pueri credunt, nisi qui nondum aere lavantur."

So Seneca says:[129] "No one is any longer so much a child, that he must be shown that there is no Cerberus nor Tartarus." Lucian[130] introduces an Epicurean and a Stoic as disputing before the rabble about Providence. The multitude listened with pleasure, and inclined to the side of the Epicurean.

It need not, moreover, excite our wonder, that the common people, together with the fables of the infernal world, gave up also all belief in a future state; for it was only in this mythic dress that they could hold fast to that belief. We indeed also see, that even the heathen philosophers, so soon as they relinquished their belief in the infernal world, came barely to a pantheistic doctrine of future existence. Besides, at that time the sciences were also already taught to the common people. Quinctilian the orator remarks in one place:[131] "Even among our country people, there are but few who do not know or seek to learn something of the natural causes of things." How, therefore, would it have been possible to withhold from the common people, those results of unbelief which the philosophers presented?

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[126] Scriptores Historiae August. Parisiis, 1620. Vita Hadr. c. 23.

> "Animula vagula, blandula,
> Hospes comesque corporis,
> Quae nunc abibis in loca,
> Pallidula, rigida, nudula,
> Nec ut soles dabis jocos."

[127] Servius ad Aeneid. XI. 755.

[128] Juvenalis Satyr. II. 149.

[129] Seneca Ep. 24.

[130] Lucianus Jupiter Tragoedus, c. 17. T. II. ed. Reitz. p. 149.

[131] Quinctiliani Institut. II. 2.

An expression of Firmicus Maternus affords us another example, that, at that time, as in the so called period of the illumination of Germany, not only was the mass of superstition rejected by the skeptics, but also all belief. In the preface to his astronomical works, he says:[132] "There are some in our time who even question mathematical truth, and seek to prove its uncertainty from the confessions of mathematicians. The more vehemently these contend, the more do they establish the truth of astrology. For astrology could not even be true, if men did not assail it with such violent reasons. Yet this ought not to astonish us in the case of these people; since we know how universal among them are also doubts and difficulties concerning the gods."

While now, on the one hand, the educated and the uneducated suffered themselves to be thus deceived by the infidelity of their times, another and probably a larger portion of the people, cast themselves into the arms of the most unbounded superstition, as had already been done by the philosophers. The first effect of this superstition, was, that men were not content with their own and the Grecian gods, but brought to Rome the gods of all lands, and worshipped them; just as though, as Augustin expresses himself, the more the mass of the state increased, the more guardians it needed to keep the whole together.[133] They gloomily felt the incapacity of their own gods to satisfy them; they fancied they could supply the want by increasing the number; and the more foreign the deity, the more did their excited minds promise themselves from it. In this mania for foreign gods, the nobles and the emperors themselves set the most corrupting example. Germanicus and Agrippina devoted themselves especially to Egyptian gods.[134] So also Vespasian.[135]

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[132] Julius Firmicus Maternus, Astronomicon libri VIII. Basiliae 1533, p. 2.

[133] Hence Arnobius, (adv. Gentes, VI.) calls Rome *numinum cunctorum cultrix*. And as Athenaeus had called Rome an "epitome of the whole earth" (*ἐπιτόμη τῆς οἰκουμένης*), so Theodoret, aptly gave it the name of an "epitome of all superstition" (*ἐπιτόμη πασῆς δεισιδαιμονίας*). Such a mingling of the gods had also prevailed at an earlier period; but it had been suppressed by a decree of the senate. Livius Histor. XXV. 1.

[134] Tacit. Annal. II. 54, 59.

[135] Tacit. Hist. II. 78. IV. 82.

Nero scorned all gods with the exception of the *Dea Syra*. And with her too, he afterwards became so angry as even to pollute her with his urine.[136] Marcus Aurelius caused the priests of all foreign gods and nations to be assembled, in order to implore aid for the Roman empire against the incursion of the Marcomanni.[137] Commodus caused himself to be initiated into the mysteries of the Egyptian Isis and the Persian Mithras.[138] Severus worshipped especially the Egyptian Serapis;[139] Caracalla, chiefly the Egyptian Isis; and Heliogabalus, the Syrian deities; though he was also desirous of becoming a priest of the Jewish, Samaritan, and Christian religions.[140] Hence we may also account for the prevalence of Judaism at this period, to such a degree; so that Seneca says,[141] it has so increased, "that the vanquished may almost give laws to the victors."

To the unhappy heathen who were running, in the disquietude of their hearts, now to the heathen temples and now to the Jewish synagogues, an affecting address was made by Commodianus, a simple and uneducated Christian of Africa, who wrote a kind of an apology at the close of the third century:[142] "They must not, in the disquietude of their hearts, seek for rest there; the true and real peace of mind can be imparted to them only through Christ."

Since the number of the gods was in this manner continually increasing, it was natural too that the superstitious worship of them, and the multitude of their priests and temples and rites, should increase above all measure. In all the countries of Italy, the priests of the Dea Syra, of Isis, of Mithras, of Osiris, of Serapis, were wandering about, who practised especially the arts of soothsaying, and were everywhere ready to exhibit oracles. Thus in Lucian, Momus says to Jupiter;[143] "Thou Apollo, with

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[136] Sueton. Vita Neronis c. 56.

[137] Capitolinus, Vita M. Aurelii, c. 13.

[138] Lamprid. Vita Commodi, c. 9.

[139] Spartianus, Vita Severi, c. 17.

[140] Lamprid. Vita Heliogab. c. 3, 7.

[141] Seneca in a fragment of his book *de Superstitione*, in August. de Civit. Dei, VI. 11.

[142] Commodiani Instructiones adv. Gentium Deos, Tulli 1630. No. 24.

[143] Lucianus, ed. Reitz. Vol. III. p. 534, in Deorum Consilio.

thine oracles, art no longer alone celebrated; but every stone and every altar utters responses; every stone at least on which oil has been poured and which is crowned with a garland and has by it a juggler (γοήτης); of which there are now so many. The statue of the wrestler Polydamus heals, at Olympia, such as are sick of fever; as does also the statue of Theagenes in Thasus; at Ilium they sacrifice to Hector, and from the Chersonesus opposite, to Protesilaus. Since now our number is thus increased, perjury and sacrilege are so much the more prevalent; while we (the old gods) are totally despised."

The more abominable vice and licentiousness became, on the one hand, the more did men yield themselves up, on the other, to superstition, in order to quiet conscience and appease the gods. The most dissolute prodigals subjected themselves to painful penances, the disfiguration of their bodies, severe fastings, and costly sacrifices.[144] Juvenal graphically describes the various kinds of jugglers and superstitious practices among the females of rank at Rome:[145] "Then enters a company of effeminate priests of the Phrygian mother of the gods (Cybele). Their leader warns with a loud voice, against the pestiferous arrival of rough September, unless she propitiate the goddess with an hundred eggs, and give to himself as many garments from her wardrobe, as shall avert the evils of the whole year. Three times each morning is she to bathe her head in the stream of the Tiber, and on her chafed knees to creep around the Campus Martius. If the Egyptian Isis commands her in a dream, she is to hasten to Egypt and bring water from the Nile, and pour it out in the temple of the goddess. Yonder stalks nearer the priest of Isis, clothed in white, who implores of the goddess a pardon, in case the woman did not abstain from the marriage-bed during the sacred days of Isis; while a fat goose and a thin chicken are sent to the temple. As he departs, the Jew approaches and timidly whispers his beggar's petition in her ear, while he preaches the Jewish doctrine. Then, comes the Comagenian haruspex, who, from the lungs of a dove, yet warm, prophecies a rich inheri-

[144] Seneca, Fragm. ap. August. de Civit. Dei. VI. 10. "Ille viriles sibi partes amputat, ille lacertos secat.—Tantus est perturbatae mentis et sedibus suis pulsae furor, ut sic Dii placentur, quemadmodum ne homines quidem saeviunt. Se ipsi in templis contrucidant, vulneribus suis ac sanguine supplicant."

[145] Juvenalis Satyr. VI.

tance, or a tender lover. But a still greater confidence is placed in the Chaldeans, and in the prophets of Jupiter Ammon. But most of all, in the astrologers; of whom she inquires as to her husband's death, and why her jaundiced mother is so slow in dying. Does she wish to drive out a few steps? the book is consulted, [viz. by opening at a venture to any passage that presents itself in Virgil, or some other author.] Is there an itching in the corner of her eye that has been rubbed? the horoscope is set up, and according to that, the eye-salve is applied. Does she lie sick? there is no hour so proper for taking food, as the one pointed out by Petosiris, the great Egyptian astrologer. If she is without fortune, she hastens to the circus to draw lots, and to have her fortune told from an examination of her forehead and her hand. To the more wealthy, the Phrygian augur and the Etruscan interpreter of thunder, lay open a view of futurity. The arts of those who mingle poison serve to produce abortion and barrenness in females, and to reduce men to insanity or idiocy; or even to bring slow death upon them."

It is from the life too that Apuleius delineates the adventurous processions of Isis, the accompanying shouts of the people, and the initiation into the mysteries, with all the attendant rites and juggleries.[146] Theophrastus also gives us a striking picture of the superstitious customs of the earlier period in which he lived.[147]

But why should we wonder at the mass of superstition among the common people and in later ages, when such a man as Augustus, the Roman emperor, could fear to be alone in the night; when he was afraid of thunder and lightning, like a child, and carried about him magic remedies in order to avert these dangers; and when too he was frightened, whenever he happened in the morning, instead of his right shoe, to put on his left shoe first?[148]

Peculiarly pernicious was the influence of this enormous multitude of soothsayers, interpreters of signs and of lightning, astrologers, palmisters, and necromancers. These all ministered to the ungovernable passions of the populace, who, tormented by a thousand anxieties and cares for the consequences of their own vices or the wickedness of others, longed to penetrate the dark-

[146] Apulei Metamorphoses, XI.

[147] Theophrasti Characteres, c. 16.

[148] Suetonius Vita Augusti, c. 78, 90, 91, 92.

ness of futurity.[149] For this form of superstition, heathenism is particularly distinguished. The Indians, Persians, Egyptians, Gauls, and Germans, had their soothsayers; and among the Greeks and Romans, this art had been carried to such an extent, that Fabricius[150] enumerates towards a hundred different modes of divination. Among these people, there were early found base and avaricious men. Aristophanes ridicules them;[151] and Thucydides relates, how the land was full of prognosticators before the Peloponnesian war, who filled the minds of the people with disquiet and apprehension. But in this age, their influence was peculiarly corrupt and fatal; because they inflamed to an uncommon degree the vices of avarice, pride, and sensuality. We see from Petronius to what beastly passions they ministered; how they were the negotiators in the most despicable transactions, and by their promises were the first to kindle up the basest desires. If one wished to poison his father, or to cause the death of his wife, or to commit adultery, or to practice unnatural lusts, he applied to these people for counsel; and they naturally spurred him on to the commission of the crime, because it was their gain. The great kept astrologers and soothsayers continually by them in their palaces. Nero, at an immense expense, caused the magician Tiradates to come into Italy, that he might consult him about futurity; and because the shade of his mother whom he had murdered, continually tormented him, as he said, he caused even this shade also to be exorcised by the magicians.

We should now naturally suppose, that, among so great a multitude of gods, of religious actions, of solemn vows, etc. at least some deeper feeling of the heart must have been excited; that at least some truly pious sentiments would have been aroused. But when we consider the character of this superstition and the testimony of cotemporaries, such does not appear to have been the fact. Indeed, this is just the worst and most corrupt feature of superstition, that it has nothing in it but the

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[149] Tacitus says of them: (Taciti Hist. I. 21.) Genus hominum potentibus infidum, sperantibus fallax, quod in civitate nostra et vetabitur semper et retinebitur.

[150] Fabricii Biblioth. Antiquaria, p. 593.

[151] For example, in Aristophanis Aves.

[152] Plin. Hist. Nat. XXX. 2. Sueton. Vita Neronis, c. 34.

dark feeling—'thou art a sinner, thou art not reconciled with God, thou art in need of higher aid both within and without;' but this feeling has no value in itself, unless the understanding and the will are in harmony with it. For where religion consits in mere feeling, the most ungodly will and the most ungodly understanding may find place along with this better feeling. And thus indeed we see it even in men of this century. That dark and obscure feeling announced to them something of truth; but instead of their being led by it to a proper perception of their need, and thereby to a corresponding change in their volitions; their inclination, their propensity continued to be directed to the basest objects; their blinded perception exculpated their will; and that feeling now produced no other effect, but that of degrading religion itself to the attainment of those low and disgraceful desires of the will. The temples were frequented, splendid offerings were made, altars were crowned, and prayers were offered to the gods, in order that the gods might render—nights of unnatural lusts agreeable! that they might be favourable to acts of poisoning; that they might cause the robbery of widows and orphans to prosper.[153] In just indignation at all this, Seneca exclaims:[154] "How great is now the madness of men! They lisp the most abominable prayers in the ears of the gods. And if a man is found listening, they are silent. What a man ought not to hear, they do not blush to rehearse to God." And concerning the whole mass of superstitious idolaters in his time, Seneca thus expresses himself:[155] "If any one considers what they do, and to what things they subject themselves, instead of decency he will find indecency; instead of the liberal, the unworthy; instead of the rational, the insane; and all this to such a degree, that no one could doubt their being deprived of reason. But now, the great multitude of these insane insures to them the reputation of intelligence."

If now a heathen himself could thus decide concerning his superstitious fellow heathen,[156] how much more worthy of pity

[153] The historians of that time, especially Petronius, furnish the facts. They are given by Barbeyrac on Puffendorf de Jure Naturae et Gentium, § VI. p. 22.

[154] Seneca Epist. 10.

[155] Fragm. Senecae ap. Aug. de Civit. Dei. VI. 10.

[156] Tertullian (Apolog. c. 12) hence says to the heathen, that he, a Christian, says nothing worse of the gods than Seneca has already done.

must they have appeared to even the smallest among the Christians; at least so long as these, in the external church, represented also the inner church in a more living form. Thus, for example, we hear that uneducated and otherwise very weak man, the above named Commodianus the African, pitying the *hebetudo saeculi*,[157] and in his simplicity strikingly unveiling their delusion.

Wherever a genuine and life-giving faith on the Saviour prevailed at that time, in the hearts of Christians, it proved a continual guard against the irruption of superstition and infidelity. And so even now, that Christian, who has experienced the new birth in his heart, and has learnt the narrow and strict way of salvation, will remain guarded in the best manner by this inward faith, as well against a relapse into a spirit of doubt, as against a visionary turn of mind which grasps the form instead of the substance.

The attempt has indeed sometimes been made, to show that Christianity was at the time as strongly tinctured with superstition, as heathenism; and Meiners[158] places in this respect the life of St. Martin of Tours along with the description of the New-Platonic reveries. But we must well distinguish the fundamental trait of this heathenish superstition from the christian. That of heathenism had no inward root in the hearts of men; it did not fasten itself upon an inward life of the soul with God; and therefore it was the effect of a *relaxed* and *languid* state of the mind. The superstition of Christianity, on the other hand, had its foundation in a greater *excitement* of the spiritual powers. They had seen the extraordinary operations of the Spirit of God; and hence the expectation of yet greater revelations of the world of spirits, might easily precipitate men into fantastic delusions; just as we not unfrequently hear of convulsions, apparitions, and the like, in the case of the newly converted, who

[157] Commodiani Instructiones adv. Gentium Deos. Nos. 17, 22.

"Deludunt vos pauci scelerati vates inanes,
Extricare suam dum quaerunt vitam,
Subornant aliis esse sub mysteria falsum.—
Heu doleo cives sic vos hebetari de mundo,
Excurrit alius ad sortes, aves adspicit alter
Balantum cruore fuso, manus inspicit alter
Et cupit audire responsa vana credulus, etc."

[158] Ueber die Denkart der ersten Jahrhunderte nach Christi, Leipz. 1782.

are still full of the extraordinary experience they have had along with the first gracious feeling of the Saviour in their hearts. What is appropriately superstition, exists only where an immediate influence of the upper world is sought, without any reference to the disposition of the individual.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

ART. III. HINTS ON THE STUDY OF THE GREEK LANGUAGE.

By M. Stuart, Prof. of Sacred Literature in the Theol. Sem. at Andover.

The reader must not expect, from the title which he has just read, that I am going to defend the study of the Greek, in opposition to those who maintain that the classical study of ancient languages is superfluous, or at least of small importance. The contest on this subject has been warm, and often repeated; but the issue has never been doubtful, in the view of those who were best qualified to judge. The subject has recently been discussed in our country; and in some parts of it, the discussion seems to be still going on; even some of the higher schools and colleges have made arrangements, in accordance with which the study of Greek might be superseded; yet the result of all has been, or probably will be, the abandoning of such measures as intrench upon the study of the ancient classics, and the restoring of them, at least in theory, to the place which they have so long occupied in a system of liberal education.

Most sincerely do I rejoice in this result. As a Protestant and a preacher of the gospel, I deem the privilege of consulting the *original* Scriptures to be of inestimable value. At the same time, I do not aver that no man ought ever to preach the gospel, who cannot read the record of its doctrines in their original language. I do not believe that such a position is needful or proper for the church; and I am the more confirmed in this opinion, when I look at the conspicuous examples of some preachers, both as to doctrine and practice, who have no acquaintance with the Greek language. The church needs the aid of all the faithful labourers, who can be well employed in her service. But still, if it could be accomplished, it is desirable in itself that every instructor whom she employs, should be able to read the