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tain, if I should for a moment suppose, that he would not sincerely rejoice in any candid discussion of what he has advanced in any part of his truly valuable Essay, whether the result should accord with his past views or not. He will see that my general results differ not at all from his, although I have come to them, in some respects, by means somewhat different from his own. If I am correct, no one will more candidly allow it than he ; if I am not, few are more able to detect my errors. I take it for granted that he will do this, if he finds me in error ; and he may be assured that I shall receive the correction with double thanks, as coming from the hand of so highly valued a friend.

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

By Augustus Tholuck, Professor of Theology in the University of Halle. Translated from the German by R. Emerson, D. D. Professor of Ecclesiastical History in the Theological Seminary, Andover.

#### PRELIMINARY REMARKS.

For a notice of the author of the following treatise, the reader is referred to the first volume of the *Biblical Repository*, p. 29.

As to the merits of the piece, it may not be improper to remark, that it ranks high in Germany. Gesenius, one of the most competent judges on such a subject, though differing widely from its author in religious views, pronounced it, in the hearing of the Editor of this work, to be the best performance that has appeared on the subject. It certainly exhibits great research, and is written in a style at once lively and candid. If some marks of youth are perceptible, they may well be pardoned, as the essay was first published in 1822, when Prof. Tholuck was about twenty three years of age. The strain of pious feeling which often appears in it, without producing any digression from the main subject, is truly delightful ; especially when we consider the prevalence of the opposite feeling in the land from which it comes. While the treatise will afford many facts and general views which cannot fail to be useful to the Christian and to the preacher, it will be an additional advantage of no small importance, should it serve to excite in this country the needful inter-

est in historical research as connected with religion and with the christian church. Perhaps in this branch only of professional education, are the clergy of New England inferior to those of our mother country. And in this, as well as in some other branches of clerical education, we are confessedly and greatly inferior to the Germans. It would be as easy to account for this evil, as for our superior attainments in some other branches to which special attention has been paid. It would also be easy to point out unhappy consequences of a practical nature, resulting from this comparative neglect ; but this is not the place.

That the first sentence may be intelligible, it is necessary to observe, that this was the first essay in a periodical work designed for the illustration of memorable facts and principles in the history and biography of the christian church, printed at Berlin and edited by the excellent Neander : *Denkwürdigkeiten aus der Geschichte des Christenthums und des christlichen Lebens.*

It may be proper to remark, that this essay consists of five parts ; of which only the two first are given in the present number, viz. on the origin of the heathen religion, and on the estimation in which it was held by the heathen themselves. The remaining three parts, on the character of polytheism, on the influence of heathenism upon life, and on the study of classical literature, will be given in the succeeding numbers of the present volume.

TRANSLATOR.

## THE NATURE AND MORAL INFLUENCE OF HEATHENISM.

### Introduction.

The following treatise is designed to shew, that heathenism was by no means capable of renovating man, but that rather, during its continuance, the faults and sufferings of the human race, were continually increasing. It precedes a course of essays, the object of which is to evince, that the invisible community of the Lord must be denominated the *heart* of the human race ; and that even under the coldest temperature, that heart has ever been capable of some pulsations, whose fresh vital power was widely felt. Whoever stands on a lofty mountain, should look not merely at the gold which the morning sun pours on the grass and flowers at his feet ; but he should sometimes also look behind him into the deep valley where the shadows still rest, that he

may more sensibly feel that that sun is indeed a sun ! Thus is it also salutary for the disciples of Christ, at times, from the kingdom of light to cast forth a glance over the dark stage where men play their part in lonely gloom, without a Saviour, without a God ! Hence, a treatise like the following stands here directly in its proper place.

This treatise, therefore, does not come to *bless* ; that is, its object cannot be to *praise*. It lies moreover not within its object—which is likewise reasonable—to show where God is manifested even in the midst of heathenism. Its object is to demonstrate, that heathenism, as such, did not restore, but profaned the image of God in man. No one will therefore accuse the author of injustice, if he does not place before the eyes of the reader every particle of divine seed, of which so many have occurred to his notice in heathenism. Yet, where the mention of good in heathenism is intimately connected with that of the bad, he will not suppress it ; for the mirror of Christianity has no occasion first to breathe on other mirrors with the poisoned breath of calumny, in order that itself may be esteemed clear.

One further preliminary objection, which may be raised against such a view as the one before us, demands attention here at the commencement, viz. that even a hasty glance into the history of Christendom,—to pass over in silence what would be known, could the walls of christian palaces and cloisters speak,—reveals no less of corruption than what is here depicted of heathenism. It may perhaps be asserted, that if one were to gather the booty from the Byzantine Historians and the French *Moniteur* of the close of the 18th century, or from the *Chronique Scandaleuse* of the Lewises and the *Annales Ecclesiastici* of Alexander VI. and Caesar Borgia, a still more glaring picture of human profligacy might be shown. And this, indeed, we do not deny. As the Lord hath said, ‘ that it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon than for Chorazin and Bethsaida,’ so say we.

But here, it is not the question, in what the Christian who is merely baptized with *water*, is better than the heathen, but the one who is baptized with the spirit and with fire. Nay, the question is not even, in what this or that Christian baptized with the spirit and with fire, is superior to this or that heathen ; but what the fire and the spirit which baptize them through Christ, and which are to be given them without measure, can effect, and from their own nature do effect ; and, on the other hand, what the spirit of heathenism from its own nature is calculated to produce, and does produce.

But when we enter the province of history, and undertake to trace the fruits of heathenism, we shall also show that these fruits might really spring from the germ of the popular religion. This by no means contradicts the position, that some *better* fruit may have proceeded from the same source ; but rather, in this way, the obviously corrupt fruit only is traced to the corrupt root, without attending *here* to the isolated parcels of finer fruit which may occur, as perhaps in Pythagoras, Pindar, Socrates, Plato, and Plutarch. Vain, on the other hand, would be the task of him who would prove, that the mass of weeds which have luxuriated within the pale of the christian church from the beginning, might have sprung from the root of the Spirit of Christ. Bitter and sweet flow not from the same fountain. ‘What have the chaff and wheat to do together? saith the Lord.’\* The darkness loved itself, and would not comprehend the light that shone into it ; hence came the weeds. Theophilus of Antioch compared the little christian church in the wide domains of heathenism, to verdant islands in a great raging ocean. Thus also, within the pale of Christianity, has the congregation of the regenerate always stood in relation to the children of the world. For, in every century, there have been only a few who, awakened by the deep inward alarm and call of the Spirit of God, arose, and girding up their loins and pouring oil into their lamps, acknowledged and embraced, as the great purpose of life, the annihilation of the man of sin even to the deepest abysses of the corrupt heart, the daily crucifixion of the lusts of the flesh and of the sense, the daily dying and daily resurrection with the Redeemer of their souls. But where there really stood, amid the darkness, such men taught of God, such sacerdotal spirits to whom He daily preaches of the hidden wisdom, there flowed a milder gleam on the dark clouds of night around them. The kingdom of God on earth, appears as the sun through clouds ; one sees indeed the light, but not the sun ; but when the clouds are gone, he sees both light and sun. Hence, therefore, even that Christianity which has not the spirit of Christ, is yet, nevertheless, not in *all* respects like heathenism. It receives more or less of imperceptible influences from the real children of God who walk within its pale. Indeed, more or less of this leavening spirit is infused even into public life, into political relations, and into science. Hence the merely external Christian is exceedingly ungrateful, who reviles those who are Christians in earnest ; since

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\* Jer. 23: 28.

it is these very persons who, calling down by their prayers the divine power and Spirit of God, become channels to diffuse blessings imperceptibly even on the enemies of God's kingdom.

In what has now been said, the point of view is also indicated in which we wish that to be regarded, which will hereafter be said respecting the blessing of Christianity which manifests itself in the public and external life of Christendom in general.

Finally, should any one still further object, that the number of Christians who are and have been spiritually planted in Christ, is so very small; that, by the appearing of the Son of Man upon earth, "by the second shaking of the earth," so little has been accomplished; it may be answered, in the first place, that all the thousands who have received only rays of the sun instead of his full splendour, are not to be counted for nothing. It was indeed to their great detriment, that they did not fully admit the sun; yet one ray of this sun, is warmer than the strongest candle-light. It is further to be noted, that the most divine fruits of Christianity, like those of the private Christian, blossom in secret. As nature is noisy only when she rends asunder, but is silent when she brings forth; so it is the abuse of divine power, which is more narrated in history; while none knows its blessed influences, except only the sufferer who is refreshed, and the angel who numbers his dried tears. And who is there that has ever sat by, as a curious spectator, at that exhibition which of all others is the greatest in the kingdom of God, when the heart falls into rebellion against itself, and flaming lust and smouldering rancor, amid infinite contests, are extinguished by the tears of an humility which lies low before God! There first, yea there, where not even the eye of the Christian brother may cast a glance, is the excellency and glory of him who is born of the Spirit. *There* smokes an incense more precious to the Lord than all the aloe of the most fragrant good works; since nothing is greater before God than the proud human heart, humbling itself and divesting itself of its hidden selfishness before his flaming eye.

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## PART I.

### ON THE ORIGIN OF HEATHENISM.

Let us first hear what the apostle Paul says of the origin of heathenism, that we may build our views thereon, whatever they may be, as on a safe foundation. He says, according to an ac-

curate translation of the passage :\* “The divine wrath will be manifested from heaven against all ungodliness and unholiness of men who, through unholiness, suppress the truth. For so much as can be known of God, is surely manifest to them ; God himself hath manifested it to them. For what in him is peculiarly invisible, his eternal power and divinity, even that appears, as it were, visible in his creatures since the creation of the world, as soon as we betake ourselves with our inward consciousness to this contemplation ; so that they (the heathen) have no excuse.<sup>1</sup> They knew God indeed, but they honoured him not as the most high God, and were not thankful to him as such ; but they became fools in their speculations, and their dull apprehension was deluded. They became fools, because they pretended to be the wise ; and substituted in the place of the glory of the imperishable God, the image of the form of perishable men, of birds, of four-footed beasts, and of creeping things. Therefore God also on his part hath given them up through the lusts of their sense to impurity, so that they have dishonoured their own bodies ;—they have changed the true nature of God for a false one, and have honoured and worshipped the creature more than the Creator, to whom be glory forever ! Amen. Therefore, I say, God hath given them up to debasing lusts, inasmuch as the women have changed the natural intercourse to the unnatural, and likewise the men in passing by the natural use of the women, have burnt in lust toward each other, as man practising shame with man, wherein they have prepared for themselves the recompense which is due to them for their apostasy. For, as thus they did not regard it worth their pains, to attain to the consciousness of God, so God also hath given them up to a debased mind, to commit indecency, being full of profaneness, whoredom, malice, avarice, baseness ; full of envy, murder, contention, mischief, fraud ; calumniators, slanderers, despisers of God, haughty, proud, boastful, mischief-makers, disobedient to parents, covenant-breakers, unkind, implacable, unmerciful ; who, although they well knew the moral law of God, namely,

\* Rom. 1: 18 seq.

<sup>1</sup> Book of Wisdom, 13: 8, “Nevertheless they are not thereby excused. For if they have been able to perceive so much, as to esteem the creature, why have they not sooner found the Lord himself ?” Athanasius’ *Apology* p. 33, “As the great artist Phidias is known by the proportion and taste in his statues, so God from his great works.”

that they who do such things are worthy of death, still not only do the same, but also bestow applause on those who do them."

What the apostle would here say, we will endeavour more clearly to develope by a paraphrase. Paul would say this: "I am a preacher of the joyful message of a Redeemer to all men, for all men need such a Redeemer. This I will first of all show to you heathen. The wrath of God will one day reveal itself from heaven upon all those who, through unholiness, have suppressed the truth. And these are ye, the heathen. This truth in question consists in the right knowledge of God. But this, so far as it is universally accessible to men, has been revealed to you. No one can know abstractly what God is in himself; we can only learn his *attributes*, and, through them, his *nature*. These attributes of God are partly physical, partly moral, partly power (*δύναμις*), partly divinity (*θεϊότης*). Although in themselves invisible, they have become in a manner visible in the creation of God that lies before us. We cannot indeed derive from nature this idea of a being perfectly unlimited in a metaphysical and moral sense, unless we previously have it in us. But we need only to suffer the revelation which is in us, to be awakened by the external revelation (*νοούμενα καθοράται*). And this takes place thus. The unprejudiced man will feel himself impelled, by a survey of creation, to admit an infinite power which formed and limits all things, but is itself without limit.<sup>2</sup> And thus there arises to him the consciousness of a being, physically unlimited and absolute. But since he must regard this being as the limiter and author of his own moral nature, he cannot do otherwise—he *must* attribute also the highest degree of moral perfection to that unlimited Original. And in this way, if no ungodly impulse disturb this natural consciousness in man, there can develope itself, not indeed *from* a view of the universe, but still *by* a view of the universe, the consciousness of one single moral being, a God who limits all things. This simple perception did not develope itself in the heathen, although the germ of it lay in them; but the selfish impulse (*ἡ αἰδύλα*) suppressed it in the germ. Man *chose* to sin; he would not elevate his soul above the whole

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<sup>2</sup> Wisdom 13: 4, 5. "And as they wondered at the might and power, they should have understood from them how much mightier must he be who hath prepared all such things. For from the greatness and beauty of the works, the Creator of them is proportionally seen."



visible world. Hence the Greeks, in the speculations of their deluded reason, became fools, and sought for the Eternal within the limits of the perishable. This degeneracy in the knowledge of God, occasioned by the selfish ungodly impulse of the will, had this consequence, that the true measure for all that is more elevated, vanished,—that man lost sight of his own higher nature, and debased himself. God suffered this to take place as a righteous judgment, since it lies in the moral arrangement of the universe, that evil punishes itself, just as goodness rewards itself. As therefore man had degraded the being and nature of God down to the world of sense; so now also he degraded himself beneath the brutes, inasmuch as he was no longer guided by the light of a higher knowledge, but from the sinful inclinations of his own will. This continued until even in respect to knowledge also, the divine light continually faded more and more, so that (v. 32) in the end, man, being utterly sunken, could, with cool reflection, even approve of sin in and for itself. Hitherto, the better judgment had only been darkened in moments of sin; but now, when this had taken place, the lowest point of degradation had been reached.”

This view of the holy apostle concerning the origin of the heathen deities, is new and profound. Yet before we take a nearer survey of it, we subjoin to this decision, similar declarations of some distinguished men of the ancient church, which place the apostle’s doctrine in a yet clearer light, viz. of Theophilus, bishop of Antioch, about the year 170; of Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria, 350; and of Philastrius, bishop of Brixia, 350.

In answer to the question of the heathen,—Where then is his (the Christian’s) God? Theophilus gives the following reply.<sup>3</sup> “Do you, first of all, show whether the eyes of your soul see, and the ears of your heart hear. For as they, who see with the corporeal eye, can perceive the things of ordinary life, and distinguish every variety of each, light and shade, white and black, the well formed and the ill formed, the well fitted and the ill fitted, the symmetrical and the disproportioned or the redundant or the mutilated; and as the same holds true of the hearing, where we distinguish the sharp toned, the dull toned, and the well toned; so is it with the ears of the heart and the eyes of the soul. God is seen of those only who can see him, those namely who have opened the eyes of their

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<sup>3</sup> Theophilus ad Autolyc. I. 2.

soul. All have eyes, indeed ; but some have them clouded, so as not to see the light of the sun. Now because the blind see not the sun, still it does not therefore cease to be the sun ; but the blind must impute the fault to themselves and to their eyes. Thus, O man, are the eyes of thy soul obscured by thy sins and evil deeds ; for a man must preserve his soul pure as a burnished mirror. As when there is rust upon the mirror, the countenance of a man is not perceived in it, so likewise the man in whom sin reigns, cannot perceive God."

Athanasius describes the origin of idolatry in like manner in his *Apology*.<sup>4</sup> "Inasmuch as the soul, through devotion to sensual lusts, overspreads the mirror which it has as it were in itself, and by which alone it could discern the image of the Father, it now sees no more what the soul ought to see. It turns itself in every direction, and sees barely the objects of sense which come in contact with it. Now in this condition, filled with fleshly lusts and moved by carnal thoughts, nothing further remains but that it seek for itself the God whom it has forgot, in corporeal and earthly things, assigning the name of God to visible things, and imagining only that in regard to him which is pleasing to itself. *Thus moral corruption leads, as the prime cause, to idolatry.*"—Athanasius further says, p. 9, "As mankind imagined sin which is not real, so likewise gods which are not real. They resemble persons who have fallen into a deep well, and cannot rise on account of the pressure of the water ; they look on the bottom, and soon think that nothing any longer exists above in the light, because they hold that on the ground at the bottom to be the most important. Thus does one, who loses himself in the world of creation, forget the Creator !"

Just so Philastrius expresses himself.<sup>5</sup> "There is yet one heresy which affirms that heathenism was not introduced through the wickedness of men, nor even invented through the suggestion of the devil, in order to practise vice and sin, but was instituted by God himself. But if it was established by God, why is it condemned by God ? For that from the beginning of the world, a knowledge of God the almighty Father, of his Son, and of the Holy Ghost, was published, admits of no doubt ;

<sup>4</sup> Athanasii Opp. omnia ed. Parisiis 1727. p. 8.

<sup>5</sup> Philastrius, Liber de Hæresibus in Biblioth. Max. Patrum Vol. IV. Pars I. p. 30, in the 60th Heresy.

since we find it constantly in the book of Genesis : ‘ *And God said ; and God did ;—the Lord caused it to rain from the Lord out of heaven, Gen. 19: 24 ;—the Spirit brooded over the waters ;*’ and since Pharaoh says : ‘ *Who shall interpret this to us, who hath not the Spirit of God ?*’—and David says : ‘ *By the word of the Lord were the heavens founded, and all their host by the breath of his mouth.*’ But when afterwards the perverted will of man turned away from so lofty a knowledge of piety, when he made it his endeavour to serve false gods and vanities, and preferred to give himself up to the most infamous life, he became subject to the sentence of condemnation ; so that of old the prophets declared : ‘ *Whoever sacrifices to idols, shall be rooted out.*’ And again : ‘ *The gods that have not made the heavens, shall be rooted out.*’ Hence too the Lord thus announces his second coming : ‘ *I that spake by the prophets, behold ! I myself am here.*’ So likewise God no where commands to worship angels, nor the elements of the world, nor any creature, nor the idols which the debased will of man would rather invent, that they may have liberty to practise their infamous deeds and abominations, in order that through this worship they may venture to enjoy this unbounded licentiousness in sinning.”

The views of the origin of heathenism laid down in the declarations of Christians now quoted, proceed from the very first on the assumption, that the true worship of God existed earlier than the false ; and that, consequently, heathenism is not the serpent that lay already in the cradle of the human race and first beguiled man. This assumption, moreover, does not need to rest in our minds simply and solely on the authority of the divine declaration alone. Sound philosophy and history, which can distinguish the *disjecta membra poetæ*, afford for it a testimony sufficiently loud. As to history, compare what is said upon it in the Appendix.<sup>5</sup> As regards sound philosophy, it has always been of the opinion, that dialectics came first, and then sophistry ; the truth earlier than falsehood. But now, when the apostle says to the heathen, that they renounced their God *against their better knowledge, through lust of sin*, this view of the case is indeed new. This however ought not to surprise us ; since Christianity generally is rich in new views, because it ever looks down as from an eminence on spiritual things, and its glance too penetrates to the very depths.

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<sup>5</sup> At the end of this article, in the present Number.

Infinitely great and important is the truth which Christianity thus teaches man, viz. **THAT SIN IS THE MOTHER OF ALL FALSEHOOD AND ERROR.** And truly is it said by the Rabbins: "He is not wise, who first becomes wise and then discovers his sins; but he is wise, who first discovers his sins and then becomes wise." Every one may daily perceive in his own bosom, how sin repeats continually one and the same deceit on man; and this succeeds anew to her with every morning's dawn after thousands of years, with the wisest philosopher no less than with the deluded multitude. Desire and lust, this Tantalus chained in the heart of fallen man, allures and lays hold of; knowledge withstands; but desire then allures with more boldness and vehemence, and knowledge is deluded and seeks a pretext; and now lust conceives and brings forth sin. And the more frequently knowledge, this divine gift, suffers herself to be deluded by enticing lust, the more feebly does she resist, the more she becomes herself a deceptive light, and herself in turn brings forth sin; as the apostle also shews to the heathen.

If now the doctrine of the one true God was the original doctrine among the human race, we can most satisfactorily explain from that very delusion of sin, how the worship of many gods, and those indeed objects of nature, may have gradually arisen. As long as man remained in a living moral relation with God, the source of his life, he directed his view less to that life which pervades and rules all nature. He walked indeed on the earth, but his soul moved in the higher world of spirits, in which its inmost desires take root. In the mean time, the more the vital intercourse of the soul with God grew cold, and the more the mind of man lost the consciousness of the self-existent God who is above the world of sense, and of the kingdom of celestial holiness and bliss, so much the more his whole attention was directed to that natural life apparent in the visible world,—which certainly is not a moral life. When now, through the inclinations of his corrupt heart, man had become thus estranged more and more from intercourse with God, and gradually also from the thoughts of the holy God and the holy spiritual world; when he had thus suffered himself more and more to be drawn away from the Creator down to the creation; then the error lay almost directly in his path, viz. that the more sagacious, who renounced the knowledge of one holy, self-existent God above the world, should regard as God that collective vitality which appears in the visible world, and thus give origin to Pantheism; while,

on the other hand, the more dull of apprehension, who could not look away from what lay before their eyes, nor elevate their view to one great whole, should suppose they beheld a distinct God in each individual phenomenon, and in this manner give occasion to Polytheism.

This transition from Monotheism to Pantheism, is confirmed to us by a consideration of the character of several legends of the ancient world of tradition. To this purpose, we may notice, that many traditions which had a moral character among the most ancient nations, have changed that character to a physical import in later times. Thus, for example, the doctrine of the transmigration of souls, had, among the ancient Indians and probably also among the Pythagoreans, a purely moral import, as a token of its identity with the doctrine of the fall of man. Menu, the lawgiver, taught among the Indians:<sup>6</sup> "Shrouded in thickest darkness, the reward of their deeds, conscious of an aim or end, all these are endowed with a sense of joy and sorrow. Towards this end they now advance, coming forth from God even down to the lowest plant, in this terrific world of being, which sinks continually down in ruin."—Widely different, on the other hand, do we find this doctrine among the later Indians, and in the religion of Buddha,\* where the doctrine of the transmigration of souls is only the dividing up and the self-renovation of the divine Being. And if, as to Plato, some have raised a doubt whether he attributed a moral import to the metempsychosis, so much at least is incontestible, that among the New-Platonists, along with the moral view of it, there existed also a physical one, or more properly, one implying fatalism. We likewise find in the Grecian fables of primeval discord still a moral point of view; but among the philosophers, on the contrary, as with Empedocles and Pythagoras in their precepts respecting love and strife, rectitude and perverseness, this vanishes.<sup>7</sup>

But in respect to the origin of Polytheism from the pantheistic *hylozoism* (the attributing of life to matter), the Pythagorean Perictyon thus mentions it as in itself very natural, when

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<sup>6</sup> Schlegel, über die Weisheit der Indier, p. 279.

\* Who flourished in India about A. C. 1000 where his religion once prevailed, and whence it spread into Japan, China, and Tibet, where, as well as in Ceylon, it exists at the present day. ENCYC. AMERICANA.

<sup>7</sup> Compare Plutarch de Iside et Osir. c. 48.

he says :<sup>8</sup> "Whoever is in a situation to resolve all the laws of things into one and the same fundamental power (*ἀρχή*), and out of this to replace and enumerate them together again, he seems to be the wisest and to have nearest approached the truth ; and he also seems to have found a watch-tower on which one can see God, and view all which pertains to him in its proper connexion and order, and arranged in its appropriate place." Just so was the import of polytheism described by the stoic school. These pantheistic materialists viewed God as the spiritual fire, with whom the visible world is connected in the most intimate union, as the substratum of activity. By virtue of this hylozoism, they were also very well able to connect themselves with the polytheism which prevailed among the multitude ; and they therefore interpreted the several gods to be *the fundamental powers of the universe*. Thus Zeno says :<sup>9</sup> "God is the author and, as it were, the father of all, as well in general, as in view of that part of him which pervades all ; and he is called by various names, according to the powers manifested. He is called *Dis*, because all things are through him ; *Zeus*, because all live through him (*ζῆν*) ; *Athene*, because his directing power is diffused in aether (*αἶθερ*) ; *Here*, because it is diffused in the air ;" etc. Just so the Pseudo-Plutarch speaks of the Stoics :<sup>10</sup> "The spirit, according to their doctrine, pervades the whole world ; but it receives various appellations derived from the universe of matter, according to the various parts of matter which are animated by it."<sup>11</sup> —As now there is universally no error in which some distorted truth may not lie at the bottom, so there certainly lay in this error the fact, that, every where in the world both of matter and of mind, man only sees the phenomena without comprehending their essence. Clemens Alexandrinus among the fathers of the christian church, was the most deeply engaged in endeavouring to extract the disguised truth out of every error. He gives us also here a fine hint, when he says :<sup>12</sup> "God, in the universal sense, is really to be designated by no name at all. Every name denotes only a part of his perfections. It is only when one takes

<sup>8</sup> In Stobaei Serm. I. ed. Aureliae Allobr. 1600.

<sup>9</sup> In Diogenes Laertius VII. 147.

<sup>10</sup> Plutarchus de placitis phil. I. 7.

<sup>11</sup> Compare Cicero de Nat. Deor. II. 40.—Seneca de Trenes. IV.

<sup>12</sup> Clemens Alex. Stromata, V. 12.

all the possible names of the Divinity together, that he is able to name God."

In this sketch, we have laid open the chief sources of heathen mythology, and especially of the gods of the natural world. There is, nevertheless, one other source not wholly to be passed over, viz. the deification of distinguished men and benefactors of the human race. From this especially does the author of the *Book of Wisdom* derive the origin of idolatry, Chap. 14: 17, 18, 19. "Whomsoever the people could not honour in presence, because of their distant abode, they caused the countenance of him to be delineated for them in distant lands, and made a goodly image of the king to be honoured, so that they might designedly flatter the absent as though present. Thus also the ambition of the artist excited the ignorant to still greater idolatry. For he, desiring to gratify the prince, exerted all his skill in order to produce a picture of the highest beauty." This view had already been presented by some of the Greeks, among whom the most conspicuous were Ephorus, the scholar of Isocrates, whose principles we find in the *Bibliotheca* of Diodorus of Sicily, and Euhemerus, in his celebrated work *Ἱερά Ἀναρχαή*. Also, for the most part, the defenders of the christian faith followed this view of mythology; and hence likewise Clemens Alexandrinus, in a striking manner, called the temples of the gods, *the tombs of the gods; just as the mausolea are the tombs of mortals*.<sup>13</sup> This derivation of the gods is not to be entirely rejected, as was done by the New-Platonists and the Eclectics, who contend violently against Euhemerus.<sup>14</sup> For the mythology of the ancients, like Corinthian brass, is compounded of many ingredients; and deified men are certainly found among the gods of the heathen; but still this shallower view has too often predominated in treating of mythology, because it is the easiest of comprehension.

We will now consider the origin of the statues and paintings of the gods. An ancient fabulous tradition places it in the age of Serug,<sup>15</sup> who is said to have made images of his ancestors out of reverence, and his posterity paid divine honours to them. This tradition has been repeated by many western historians, (for example, Cedrenus,) and also by some eastern ones, as

<sup>13</sup> Compare Eusebii Praep. Evang. II. 6.

<sup>14</sup> See Plut. de Iside and Osiride c. 24.

<sup>15</sup> See Suidas under Σερυγ.

**Mirchond.** The author of the *Book of Wisdom*<sup>16</sup> also derives the rise of images from the representations of men, Chap. 14: 15. But although perhaps such may have been the fact in some individual cases, yet it cannot be denied that a far greater and deeper feeling lay at the foundation of this whole custom. What this feeling was, is finely described by the heathen rhetorician *Dio Chrysostom*.<sup>17</sup> "Let no one say, on account of the imperfection of all our representations of God, that it were better to have even none, and rather barely to look up to heaven. The wise may indeed adore the gods as being far from us ; but there exists in all men AN EAGER LONGING TO ADORE AND WORSHIP THE GODS AS NIGH. For as children, torn from father and mother, feel a powerful and affectionate longing, often stretch out their hands after their absent parents, and often dream of them ; so the man, who heartily loves the gods for their benevolence towards us and their relationship with us, desires to be continually near them and to have intercourse with them ; so that many barbarians, ignorant of the arts, have called the very mountains and trees gods, that they might recognize them as nearer to themselves." This longing here described, had already been fulfilled for inquiring souls when *Dio* wrote these words. The Son of God had already appeared in the world ; the reflected splendour of the Father and of his glory, had already been seen of mortals ; and the flaming image of his majesty still impresses itself in the sanctified soul of every one who now hears of him.

Less in accordance with the feeling of the lower classes of men, but still very sensibly, *Porphyrus* says of the invention and import of images :<sup>18</sup> "God should be represented in the world of sense, by that which is in the greatest accordance with his spiritual nature." And in a fragment of a lost work,<sup>19</sup> he employs this comparison : "The image is related to the god, as the the written book to the thoughts inscribed in it. The fool may regard the book merely as bark and parchment ; but the wise man understands the sense." *Athanasius*,<sup>20</sup> who adduces the same comparison used by the heathen, goes on to add : "*But yet they*

<sup>16</sup> Just so several of the apologists ; for example, *Lactant. Inst. div. II. 2.*

<sup>17</sup> *Dio Chrysost. Orationes ed. Reiske Or. XII. p. 405.*

<sup>18</sup> *Euseb. Praep. III. 7.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Athan. Opp. T. I. p. 23.*



*should not value the signature of the great king higher than the king himself."* When we consider the character of human nature, we see that it is very dangerous to suffer man to seek from without, what he should seek only in the interior of his own breast ; and that, through the representations of the gods formed by art, he does but too easily come to suffer his mind to stop at the exterior, without duly attending to the revelation of Deity in a sanctified human soul. Moreover, Christians in later times justified their images of the Divine Being, on the ground that, among an ignorant common people who cannot read, the image stands in the place of the Holy Scriptures ; and that otherwise, if we would prevent all abuse, we must build no churches, lest the multitude should come to the conclusion, that God may dwell shut up within walls.<sup>21</sup>

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## PART II.

### ESTIMATION OF THE HEATHEN RELIGION BY THE HEATHEN THEMSELVES.

Before we take a view of the heathen religion from the highest point of observation, that of the Gospel, let us hear how it may have been judged of by its adherents themselves ; that we may thence perceive how so many became conscious to themselves, that their wants could not be satisfied by it. Of these, the more superficial then passed upon *all* religion the same sentence as upon their own ; while, on the contrary, those who thought more deeply, sought for themselves some compensation in a higher knowledge of their own creating. It might now be in the highest degree instructive, if we knew more accurately the religious wants of the common heathen ; but of the internal religious life of the heathen, as it had shaped itself among the multitude, we know little or nothing. We are therefore not in a situation to point out, how far a longing for something better was manifested among the uncultivated ranks. The common people, so called, have customarily a more lively susceptibility for true religious feeling ; because they have not philosophized away their feeling of religious want ; because no delusive and dazzling

<sup>21</sup> See Gregory the Great, in his Epistle to Serenus, and Walafrid Strabo.

wisdom has afforded to the longing of the God-related soul, an apparent relief, when once it has awaked out of its slumber of sin.<sup>22</sup> On this very ground, we must believe that there was many an individual even among the heathen, who mourned in silence that his desire after heavenly consolation was not satisfied, and that he had no higher spiritual *ideal* at which he might aim, amid the troubles of the world, as the most appropriate object of life.

Tertullian gives us a small specimen of the shaping and direction of pious feeling in the common people among the ancients, when he relates, that "in the deepest emotions of their minds they never direct their exclamations to their false gods; but employ the words: *By God! As truly as God lives! God help me!* Moreover, they do not thereby have their view directed to the capitol, but to heaven." Here, also, belongs the interesting remark of Aulus Gellius;<sup>23</sup> that the ancient Romans were not accustomed, during an earthquake, to pray to some one of the gods individually, but only to God in the *general*, as to the *Unknown*.<sup>24</sup> The notices concerning the sentiments of the common people are thus few, for this reason, because that portion of them who became writers, reckoned themselves among the higher and cultivated class, and regarded the mental and moral development of the lower class as wholly different from and inferior to their own. But whenever the more cultivated did still in some degree regard and express the sentiments of the uncultivated, there are exhibited to us many very pointed declarations concerning the gods, the defects of heathenism, and the true character of piety,—namely, in the Greek comic writers, of whom, alas, we have only broken fragments.<sup>25</sup> On the other hand, how different do we find the state of things at the beginning of the Reformation, the historians of which give us

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<sup>22</sup> The fine passage in Lactantius: "Nam vulgus interdum plus sapit, quia tantum quantum opus est sapit." Lact. Inst. III. 5.

<sup>23</sup> Noctes Atticae, I. 28.

<sup>24</sup> Lactantius, who dwells upon this more extensively, remarks, that it was in misfortune or danger, that they made use particularly of the appellation *Deus*: "postquam metus deseruit, and pericula recesserunt, tum vero alacres ad *deorum* templa concurrunt, his libant." De Inst. div. II. 1.

<sup>25</sup> See the important fragments of Philemon, Menander, Diphilus, in Clem. Alex. Strom. V. and in his book de Monarchia Dei.

innumerable and extremely affecting traits out of the spiritual life of the common people, who were longing for that religious revolution ; because these writers recognized, even in the lowest of the people, the one and the same Spirit of God which had awaked themselves to a holy life.<sup>26</sup>

If now, among the more cultivated Greeks and Romans, a lively feeling of the heart contributed less to make them see the vanity of their idol worship, (since they themselves sought to substitute in its place only abstract systems,) yet, on the other hand, their knowledge was so much the more clear, and they easily perceived theoretically the corruptness of such a system of religion. Among the most ancient of these witnesses for the truth, Xenophanes, the author of the Eleatic sect, deserves to be mentioned. This sagacious man closed his work on Nature with these striking words : "No man has discovered any certainty, nor will discover it, concerning the gods and what I say of the universe. For, if he uttered what is even most perfect, still he does not *know* it, but conjecture hangs over all."—All true, if only the guide of syllogistic reasoning is to lead men up to the highest Being. In this view, Xenophanes justly deserves the praise which Timon the misanthrope gave him, who called him the *thinker without conceitedness* ; only that in the above assertion, the acute philosopher was merely a destroyer, who could give man nothing in place of what he took away.

Xenophanes differed nevertheless from the other philosophers in this, that he frankly declared whatever was his conviction concerning the gods ; and although he might come out in the strongest contradiction to the popular opinions, still he really made it his object, to enlighten and cultivate the people. He taught thus :<sup>27</sup> "One God only is supreme among men and gods ; neither in external shape nor in spirit to be compared with man."—"But mortals think that the gods are begotten, are like themselves in mind, in voice, and body."—"But if cattle or lions had hands, so as to delineate with their hands, or to perform the business of man, then horses would represent the divinities like horses, the cattle like cattle, and lend them such bodies as themselves possess."<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> See the excellent remarks on the Reformation in George Müller's *Reliquien*, Leipzig 1806. B. III.

<sup>27</sup> See Sextus Empir. adv. Mathem. VII. 49.

<sup>28</sup> Clem. Alex. Strom. V. 14. Euseb. Praep. XIII. 13.

Theodoret gives, by way of extract, the continuation of these verses;<sup>29</sup> in which Xenophanes affirms, that the illusion as to the images of the gods, is even more manifest than the illusions of the stageplayer; inasmuch as the Ethiopians represent their gods as black, with flat noses like themselves; the Thracians, reddish, etc. Yet even from this error, we can discover the truth which lies at the foundation. It is indeed true, what Epicharmus says in a fragment,<sup>30</sup> that each race of beings regards its own original form as the most beautiful; but this springs from the fact, that no being can rise beyond the limits prescribed to him by the Creator. Every one sees God in the archetype of his own species; and perceives only through the fundamental ideal of his own being, the founder of all being. Nevertheless he perceives the same not the less truly on this account. This is the one great visage that is reflected in the mirrors of all the archetypes of the several species, and of every particular individual. From the smaller mirrors, it beams back in a more limited manner, from the larger more perfectly; but from all truly; as the doctrine of emanation in the cabalistic book *Sohar*, finely illustrates it by the same image. Now precisely in this also lies the deep import of anthropomorphism and anthropopathy, which ought by no means to be thrown away, but only to be used with wisdom.

But Xenophanes also attacks the representations of the gods which are found in the Greek poets, and which are not only unsuitable, but also contemptible and unworthy. He says: "Homer and Hesiod attribute to the gods all that is disgraceful and base among men, theft, adultery, and mutual fraud."<sup>31</sup> Hence Timon also calls him, 'the mocker of Homeric deceit,' '*Ὀμηροπαράτης ἐπικόπητης*.'—Heraclitus of Ephesus expresses himself even more severely than Xenophanes against the poets.<sup>32</sup> He says: "Homer should be thrown out of the contest and have his ears boxed, and Archilochus likewise."

Next after Xenophanes, that philosopher deserves to be quoted, who was both the greatest among the heathen and the nearest to Christianity, namely Socrates. Discarding the propensity to airy and fruitless speculation, so deeply founded in the character

<sup>29</sup> De affect. curat. disp. III. p. 780. ed. Hal.

<sup>30</sup> Diog. Laert. III. 16, in the Life of Plato.

<sup>31</sup> Sext. Emp. adv. Math. X. 193.

<sup>32</sup> Diog. Laert. IX. 1.

of his people, and opposed to every thing which does not directly influence the moral character of man, he introduced among the Grecian people, by his hints and by particular doctrines, a new sect ; which, though afterwards so greatly subjected to the Grecian form, was nevertheless, throughout six hundred years, the jewel of all those among the Greeks and Romans who had an earnest regard for that which is holy and divine. The ignorance of Socrates [in regard to true religion], was not mere *doctrine* but *feeling* ; between which, as Hamann remarks, there is a greater difference, than between a living animal and an anatomical skeleton. This conscious and deeply felt ignorance brought him down, with *self-denial*, to become the teacher of the common people, for which God had formed him. He followed his daemon or guardian spirit, so far as it did not dissuade him. But it dissuaded him from entirely taking away that world of gods from the people, on which depended all the morality that was then extant. It dissuaded him from undertaking what surpassed his powers ; for that it was not fear which caused him to keep silence on the subject, is at least shewn by the declaration which he makes in Plato (in Crito) ; “ We must therefore not care at all for what the multitude say, but for what the knower of right and wrong, the One and the truth itself declares.

He acted, accordingly, on that principle of wisdom which he had learnt from the Delphic Apollo—*οὐ λέγει, οὐδὲ κρύπτει, ἀλλὰ σημαίνει*, ‘ he does not declare nor conceal a thing, but he indicates it.’ His doctrine respecting the divinity, was this : The very appropriate and skilful structure of man, and of the inferior world, as also the judicious and wonderful arrangement of the whole universe, are a witness for the invisible Being, who, although he does not himself appear, is yet perceived by his operations, just as the soul by its activity. “ This,” says Socrates (in the remarkable passage, Memor. IV. 3) to Euthydemus, “ this”—namely, *that the gods imparted supernatural revelations to man*, in relation to which Euthydemus had before expressed the opinion that Socrates himself seemed to be in the highest degree worthy of such a revelation,—“ thou wilt also learn, O Euthydemus, if thou dost not wait until thou seest the shapes of the gods ; but if it is enough for thee, beholding their works, to worship and adore the gods.”<sup>33</sup>

<sup>33</sup> The Mohammedan Calif, Omar II. finely exhibits the same thought, namely, *that the sanctification of man is the way for him to attain to the knowledge of the Divine nature.* See Ghasali's

Socrates avoided every more minute explanation concerning the nature of God, as being unintelligible to man. "Consider," says he to Euthydemus, (l. c.) "that the sun, which is visible to all, nevertheless permits no man closely to inspect it, but if any one attempts to view it in an improper manner, it robs him of sight. Even the servants of the gods,<sup>34</sup> thunder and wind, are perceptible to men by their effects, but invisible in themselves."<sup>35</sup> To this prudent ignorance about the nature of God, Socrates added the explanation of the only right way to happiness for man; and through this, established the true knowledge of the nature of God, which he had given up on the dialectic plan. Socrates taught, that RESEMBLANCE TO GOD IS THE ONLY WAY TO THE TRUE HAPPINESS OF MAN; he execrated those who had first explained the *good* and the *useful* as two diverse things,<sup>36</sup> and he placed holiness and happiness as synonymous. And just this view of holiness is by all means requisite, if it is intended to be a true view. By this practical doctrine concerning God and divine things, seed was scattered abroad which, although Socrates himself did not attack heathenism, was yet received by many warm hearts, produced fruit even to the latest periods, and in various ways occasioned a reaction against the system of heathen mythology.

Among the immediate followers of Socrates, Xenophon is first

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book on the forty principles, Cod. Ms. Bibl. Reg. Berol. p. 6. Hariri relates, that, at a certain time, the prophet approached as they were conversing with each other on predestination, and chided them angrily: "What do I hear? Am I sent to you on account of this? Have I not an hundred times said, ye shall not dispute on this subject? Rather imitate Omar. When one asked him, What is predestination? he answered: A very deep sea. When the question was repeated, he said: A very dark path. But when he was asked yet again, he cried out: It is a secret which, since God has concealed, I shall not reveal. Whoever wishes to discover the secrets of kings, departs not from their gates, and zealously executes their commands. Do thou even thus, if thou wouldst learn to understand the secrets of God."

<sup>34</sup> Ps. 104: 4, Thou makest the winds thy servants, etc.

<sup>35</sup> The farce of Aristophanes, which he denominated the *Clouds*, was probably in derision of Socrates for guiding men from idols to a single God in heaven. Thus, from the same misunderstanding, Juvenal says of the Jews: Nil praeter nubes et coeli numen adorant.

<sup>36</sup> Cicero de Off. III. 3.

to be noticed. In a letter to to Aeschines, he says :<sup>37</sup> "For that divine things lie beyond our knowledge, is clear to all ; it is enough, therefore, to revere the power of God which is elevated above all things ; since it is neither easy to find him, nor right to speculate minutely concerning him. *Servants do not need to know the nature of their masters, since nothing belongs to them but obedience.*" In these remarkable words of this heathen, lies the ground why Christianity gave no revelation of metaphysical truths to man, but only of practical truths. It was not so much a matter of importance for us to learn the nature of God and the relations of the three persons in the Godhead, as to discover the will of God, and experience the blessed influences that go forth into the hearts of men from the Creator and Upholder, the Redeemer, and the Sanctifier.

We also find the same Socratic sentiment concerning the relation of God to man, in other voices of Greece, e. g. in the Tragedian who said :<sup>38</sup> "*If the gods themselves conceal it, then thou canst not discover the nature of Deity, even if thou goest about investigating all things ;*"<sup>39</sup> and in the comedian Philemon :<sup>40</sup> "Believe in one God and revere him ; but speculate not concerning him. Thou canst do nothing more, than barely to speculate. Do not strive to learn whether he is, or whether he is not. *Revere him continually as being, and as being nigh to thee. Whatever God is, THAT he himself wills not that thou shouldst learn.*"

Next to Xenophon, Plato is to be mentioned. In Plato, we see the practical mind of Socrates, which scarcely rose in any degree above the radical character of the Greek people as such, again become still more invested with the Greek form, and even

<sup>37</sup> Stobaei Serm. ed. Aureliae Allobrog. 1609. Sermo 78.

<sup>38</sup> Bothe Fragm. Soph. No. VI. out of Stobaeus.

<sup>39</sup> Akin to this, is the sentiment of the Arabian Abul Hussein Nuri, in Jami's Garden of Spring, Cod. Ms. Book I. "When God hides himself from any one, no guide nor intelligence can conduct to him. When our beloved does not himself put forth his countenance from beneath the veil, no one is able to withdraw the veil from it. And again, were the whole world to become a veil, there is nothing to fear where he exhibits his beauty."—At the foundation of this there lies the truth, that God is found, not through voluntary running, but through the mercy of God.

<sup>40</sup> Stobaei Eclogae ed. Heeren, No. 5.

not unfrequently to be entirely swallowed up in it. We see in Plato the intuitive manner of perception united with the discursive, profundity with acuteness of mind, the Orient with the Occident, yet continually with a preponderance of the latter. This contest of the two diverse elements, shows itself in him also on the subject of religion. He wavers between the mythological and the purely speculative, instead of giving his convictions, like Socrates, in the simple form of familiar conversation. What Plato says in his *Politicus*, is completely true in itself: "It is difficult, in the exhibition of something more lofty, not to employ imagery (*παράδειγμα*)."<sup>41</sup> And thus has Plato himself applied it to religion; inasmuch as on the one hand he by no means disdains the religious mythology of his nation, but customarily elicits from it a refined and truly elevated sense; as, for example, in the fable of Saturn, who, in the golden age of the world, was the herdsman of the herd of men; or in the striking *mythos*, in his *Symposion*, of Poverty, which Love bore as a child along with Wealth, etc.

On the other hand the speculative delineations of God by Plato, though likewise parabolically presented, are the highest summit to which the human mind can attain. According to him, God, as the author of all being, is elevated above all visible being, and is not this being itself; *as the sun in the visible world is neither the organ of vision nor the object, so God is related to every object of thought*; he is the medium between the thinking mind and the object thought of.<sup>41</sup> How could it be otherwise, with the sublime views which that great mind had of the divine Being, but that he also perceived the unity of that Being? He does not indeed declare it without hesitation; but it is doubtless implied in his appellation of *τὸ αὐτὸ ἀγαθόν*, *the purely good*. With this correct perception of divine things, he was aware also of the mournful fact, that the popular belief followed at so great a distance; and uttered his indignation at the disgraceful fables invented by the poets respecting the gods, which least of all were fit to be put into the hands of children. In the second book of his *Republic* he makes the following remark: "Especially are the greater falsehoods of Homer and Hesiod to be censured; for it is the worst species of falsehood, when any one, in his discourse, represents the nature of the gods and heroes in an unworthy manner. This may be compared to the

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<sup>41</sup> De Republ. VI.



undertaking of the painter, who would paint a likeness, and yet paints nothing like. For first of all, he indeed has told the greatest lie and in the most important things, who says that Uranus did what Hesiod makes him do, and then also tells how Saturn punished him. But the deeds of Saturn and the deep disgrace received from his son, even if they were true, ought not, as it appears to me, to be so thoughtlessly related to the simple and the young, but much rather to be kept in silence. But were there an existing necessity for relating them, it should be in so secret a manner, that as few as possible might hear, and only such, indeed, as had offered not barely a swine, but some greater and more rare victim, so that it might be possible for only a very small number to witness it. Such traditions ought by no means to be divulged in our state; at least not before a young man; who, if he should in turn in any way chastise his father by whom he had been offended, might thus be led to think he had done nothing uncommon, but had only practised what was done by the greatest and best of the gods. It is also by no means either becoming or true, when it is said, that the gods make war upon the gods, lay snares for each other, and fight; that is, if we are to regard as most abominable a reciprocal hostility between those who are bound to guard the state;—and still less shall we dare to relate and chant the fables of the wars of the giants, and many and various other hostilities of the gods and heroes against their relatives and kindred. Much rather, indeed, when we are in a situation to persuade them that one citizen was never a foe to another, (and indeed this can by no means be right,) ought the grey headed, the matrons, and all adults to declare this at once to children as of paramount importance; but they ought also to compel the poets to sing in the same strain. On the other hand, how Juno was chained by her son; how Vulcan, when he would have come to the help of his mother, was hurled down from heaven by his father; and all those contests of the gods related by Homer; these we dare not receive into our state, whether they may have a hidden sense or not. For the youth is not in a condition to decide, what has a secret meaning and what has not; but whatever opinions he has once received in these years, are wont to be indestructible and indelible. On this account, we ought to take the utmost pains, that what they first hear may be such stories as are fitted to lead them to virtue.—But now, if any one were to ask, of what nature or kind such fables ought to be; what should we answer to the ques-

tion? Such descriptions must ever be given of God, as exhibit God truly as he is; whether one present him in epic, lyric, or tragic song. One truth will therefore serve as a guide as well for all orators as for all poets: *God is the author NOT OF ALL THINGS BUT ONLY OF THE GOOD.*"

Plato discloses the same sentiments in another passage,<sup>42</sup> and in Tinnæus,<sup>43</sup> where he mentions in ridicule the fables of the gods in the poets, in the following manner: "But as to the origin of the rest of the gods, this is too difficult a matter for me; we must, nevertheless, pay the tribute of belief to those who have spoken of old; who, as they themselves affirmed, are the *children of the gods*, and therefore are well acquainted with *their ancestors*. It is, consequently, not perhaps possible, not to believe the children of the gods, even when they speak without probable and convincing proofs. We who ourselves follow the law, must surely give credence to them, as being those who, as they say, speak only of family affairs. Their genealogical tables of the gods, are now the following."—

From the very same age, we have still one remarkable testimony against the then existing system of the gods from the orator Isocrates,<sup>44</sup> where, speaking against the sophist Polycrates, he says: "Thou hast not suffered thyself to adhere to the truth, but hast followed the blasphemies of the poets, who relate such abominable deeds and chastisements of the children of the immortals, as would scarcely be expected in the most abandoned of men. They even say such things of the gods as no man would dare to say of his enemy. For they disgrace them, not barely by attributing to them theft, adultery, and daily labour in the service of men, but by attributing to them the devouring of children, emasculation of fathers, incest with mothers, and other vices."

With these words of Isocrates, we connect the very sensible judgment which Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who lived about the time of the birth of Christ, passes concerning the religious system of the Romans compared with that of the Greeks<sup>45</sup>: "I admire this in Romulus, that he regarded, as the foundation of

<sup>42</sup> Eutyphron, c. 6.

<sup>43</sup> c. 40. p. 40. ed. Bekker.

<sup>44</sup> Isocrates in Busuridis Laudatione.

<sup>45</sup> Dion. Halicar. Antiqq. Romanæ, II. 67. So also Eusebii Præpar. Evangel. II. 8.

citizenship, something of which all stateunen speak, but which few seek to effect, viz. first of all *the good will of the gods*, which, where it is present, guides every thing for the best in respect to man.—Temples, chapels, altars, statutes of the gods, as also their forms, symbols and powers, the good deeds they have shewn to men, the festivals to be celebrated to each god or daemon, the sacrifices which they desire from men, the holy days and assemblies, the inviolability of persons destined for the service of the gods, all these he arranged exactly according to the best institutions of the kind among the Greeks. But the traditions handed down in relation to these subjects, in which are found calumnies and criminations, he regarded as disgraceful, useless, and shameless, and rejected them altogether as being not only unworthy of the gods but even of good men. On the other hand, he taught men to say and to think the best of the gods, and to attribute no desires to them which are unworthy of the gods. Thus the Romans relate neither that Uranus was dismembered by his children; nor that Saturn devoured his children because he feared their plots; nor that Jupiter hurled Saturn from his throne and shut up his own father in the prison of Tartarus. Also, one hears among them nothing of wars, wounds, chains, and job-work of the gods with men. Just as little do we find among them days of mourning and complaint, where women shriek and lament on account of the gods who have disappeared; as is done among the Greeks on account of the rape of Persephone and the death of Bacchus. Yea, though the morals are now doubtless corrupted, we never see the gods carried about for a show, those corybantian ravings, those bacchanalia and secret consecrations, those night watchings of men and women together in the temples of the gods, nor such like juggleries; but rather all their actions and speeches which have a reference to Deity, show a devoutness not found among Greeks nor Barbarians. And what I have especially admired, although an innumerable multitude of people have come into the city, who consider themselves bound to honour the gods of their native countries with their ancient and customary formalities, yet the city has publicly received none of those foreign religions, as is done by so many others; but if, by the decision of some oracle, any sacred institutions have been introduced from abroad, still she has adapted them to her own institutions, after removing from them all that was false and puerile. This is apparent, for instance, in the worship of the mother of the gods. The praetors annually

assign to her sacrifices and festal games, according to the Roman laws; but thereby both the priest and the priestess are Phrygians. These go through the city and ask alms for her every month, according to their custom, wearing a small image on the breast and beating the drum, while the multitude who follow after, chant the songs of the mother of the gods. But of the native Romans, no one begs the monthly alms, nor does he suffer them to sing behind him, nor does he wear the party-coloured mantle, nor honour the goddess with Phrygian rites; which neither the people nor the senate demand. Thus cautiously does the state demean itself in regard to foreign customs, and scorns every fable which is not proper and decorous."

Seneca also, when justifying the accumulation and possession of his great riches, expresses himself very freely concerning the unworthy representations of the gods which had come into circulation, especially through the poets. He says<sup>46</sup>: "You thereby injure me just as little, as they who overthrow the altars of the gods; but their wicked dispositions and wicked purpose thus show themselves, even where they cannot really inflict injury. I bear your injurious acts just as the great Jupiter does the follies of the poets, one of whom attributes to him wings; another, horns; again another, adultery and nocturnal revelling; one delineates him as fierce towards men; one, as the stealer of beautiful children, yea, as the seducer of his own relatives; while, finally, another describes him as a parricide, and the conquerer of a foreign kingdom belonging to his own father;—from which altogether, no other effect could possibly be produced, but that all shame on account of sin should be taken away from men, if they believed in such gods."

Finally, Plutarch also is to be quoted, who in many passages, not only of his *Morals*, but also of his *Lives*,<sup>47</sup> blames and often criminales sharply the faults of the poetical mythology. He helps himself out, however, by means of the ethical and physical explanation of these scandalous traditions; inasmuch as he confesses without hesitation<sup>48</sup>: "Were we to understand these literally, one must disdain and execrate the mouth that uttered such things."—In this respect, his truly golden book, "On the Study

<sup>46</sup> Seneca de Vita beata, c. 26. With him Pliny fully accords, *Histor. Nat.* II. 7.

<sup>47</sup> See Plut. *Vita Periclis*, c. 39.

<sup>48</sup> Plutarchus de Iside, c. 26.

of the Poets," is especially important. He proceeds upon this principle, that "poetry is like the land of Egypt, of which Homer sings: *ἔχει φάρμακα πολλὰ μὲν ἐσθλὰ πολλὰ δὲ λυγρὰ*, 'it produces many a good, but also many a noxious drug.' While the youth ought not to be entirely held back from it, on account of this danger, yet we must by all means 'tame the furious god by means of the sober one,' (an expression of Plato's, which means, wine by water,) so that the noxious qualities may be removed without at the same time taking away the beneficial. We must therefore come to the perusal of poetry with the presumption, that very much in it is false; much the poets may have invented with a view to ornament, or as a vehicle (*ὄχημα*) of truth, much also they may have represented falsely from their own erroneous views. Thus when Homer says: 'Now the father of the gods stretches forth the golden balance, places in the scales two gloomy death-lots, this for Achilles and that for the horseman Hector;'<sup>\*</sup> it is evident, the poet well knew the thing was not so, but he expressed it thus for the sake of rhetorical ornament. On the contrary, when Homer says: 'Jupiter, who, to men, is the director of contests,'—or when Aeschylus says: 'God gives to men an occasion, when he wishes totally to destroy a race,'—this may be thus written from an erroneous conviction of the poet. In these cases, we must either seek other declarations of the poets by which they confute themselves; as for example, when Euripides says: 'By various forms of craft the gods deceive us, since they are more knowing than ourselves'—we may answer with the verse: 'If the gods do evil, they are no gods;' or we must, without hesitation, make the youth attentive to the falsehood, and not be like those who admire and imitate every thing in revered objects,—in Plato even the crook of his neck, and in Aristotle the whisper of his voice."

Thus we see, that the better and the educated heathen well comprehended how the religious doctrines of the people were not only foolish, but corrupting and dangerous; how they must serve more to call forth sin than to subdue it. In reference to this insight, Augustine says, not unjustly: "Plato, who saw well the depravity of the Grecian gods, and has seriously censured them, better deserves to be called a god, than those ministers of sin."<sup>49</sup> But, nevertheless, the better and wiser among these people strove to uphold even these disfigured and corrupted forms of

<sup>49</sup> Augustinus de Civ. Dei, II. 14.

\* *Ilias* γ. 209

religion, inasmuch as they now had them. The motives for this were indeed various. Some pressed for supporting them from a kind of *genteel indolence*. Of this class, were men who knew no servid inspiration for what is holy, who were willing to live on together in the course of the world, but who yet could not disown an internal voice which pointed them to the need of a positive connexion with a higher government of the world. They were too indolent to force their way through the knowledge of the truth, by contest and restless research; hence they were afraid of the study of philosophy, which points out so many various courses, but which always appeared at strife with the standing religion. They regarded it therefore as the safest course, to uphold the latter, that they might use it in case of necessity. This is the same disposition which has often shown itself in many of the orthodox of various parties, especially among the Catholics; who rejected and strove to suppress all study and investigation merely on this account, that they might not suffer it to rob them of the false means of consolation which might be afforded them, in hours of inward or external calamity, by that religion concerning which they had felt no further anxiety, and were ignorant of its true nature. For Christianity at least is not intended merely for some particular hours of life; it comes neither for the purpose of imparting religious enjoyment now and then, nor to afford support barely in the hour of death, or under the loss of earthly goods; but it comes to him who receives it, **TO MAKE A NEW MAN OF HIM**, to destroy the consequences of the fall in every individual, and to re-produce in the darkened soul the original image of God.

This indolent disposition of the more cultivated heathen, Eusebius depicts in these words: "Every one must revere the religion of his fathers, and not desire to move that which is unmovable."<sup>50</sup> It is also plainly asserted by the heathen Caecilius, who thus expresses himself in Minutius Felix:<sup>51</sup> "Since now, either *chance* is certain, or *nature* is unfathomable, how much better and more reverential is it, to adopt the system of our ancestors as the umpire of truth, to revere the traditional religion, to worship the gods whom thy parents taught thee to fear, before we dive deeper into the knowledge of them,

<sup>50</sup> Eusebii Praep. Evang. IV. 3. *δῖον ἀρβειν ἕκαστον τὰ πάτρια, μηδὲ κινεῖν τὰ ἀκίνητα.*

<sup>51</sup> Minutii Octavius, c. 6. § 1.

and to utter no judgment concerning them, but to trust our progenitors, who, in an age yet rude and near the beginning of the world, were deemed worthy to have the gods for kings and friends!"—And in another passage, he says:<sup>52</sup> "Whatever is doubtful, one must leave as it is; and while so many and so great men are contending one way and another, one must not boldly and lightly pass a judgment on either side, that neither old wives' superstition may be introduced, nor all religion be overthrown."

Thus also, many an educated heathen, who through most of his life paid no heartfelt attention to religious subjects, afterwards, in hours of affliction or of approaching age, may not barely in this outward manner have sought consolation in his religion and bestowed attention on the traditions connected with it, but actually have busied himself with them from the heart. For, leaving out of view the doctrines of all philosophers, there is a system of divine and human things in the breast of every man, which is more in unison with the traditions even of the most corrupt religion, than with the positions of many philosophers. In this sense, perhaps, the aged Cephalus, in the beginning of the Republic of Plato, says: "Thou knowest well, that when one is old or sick, he believes more firmly in the traditions of the lower world." Thus Diogenes Laertius relates of the atheistic philosopher Bion, that, on his death bed, he changed his opinion and repented of the sins he had committed against God.\*

Plutarch describes more in detail the conversion of a heathen free thinker, in a narration in many respects memorable,<sup>53</sup> which we give in an extract, without determining what in it may be historical or what not. "Thespesius of Soli, an acquaintance and friend of the same Protogenes who is here with us, at first lived in great prodigality and debauchery; afterwards, when he had squandered his wealth, want induced him to have recourse to baseness. He avoided no vile action which only brought him money, and thus he accumulated again a fine fortune; but fell in this way into the reputation of the most detestable profligacy. What contributed most to bring him into evil repute, was a prophecy of Amphilochous. He had applied to the oracle with the question,—Whether he should live better the rest of his life? and had received for answer,—He would be better when

<sup>52</sup> Minutii Octavius, c. 6. § 1.

\* Lib. V. c. 54.

<sup>53</sup> Plut. de sera Numinis vindicta, c. 27.

he should die. And just this came in a manner to pass, not long after. He fell down from a height upon his neck ; and although not wounded, yet he died of the accident. On the third day, however, while in the act of being buried, he at once recovered his faculties and came to himself ; and now, there appeared a wonderful transformation in his life. Indeed the Cilicians know of no one in that period, who was more conscientious in his dealings, more devout towards the Deity, more annoying to his adversaries, more constant to his friends ; so that those who were conversant with him, wished to learn the cause of this transformation, while they rightly thought, that such a change of life to a disposition so excellent, could not come of itself. The matter then was thus ; as he himself related to Protogenes and other judicious friends. When his rational soul had left the body, he felt like a pilot who is plunged from his vessel into the depths of the sea. Then it rose up, and suddenly his whole *self* seemed to breathe, and to look in every direction around itself ; as if the soul had opened itself like one single eye. Of all former objects, he saw nothing ; but beheld immense stars, at a vast distance from each other, endowed with wonderful splendour and wonderful sounds ; and the soul glided gently and lightly, as in a calm, being borne along upon a stream of light in every direction. He omitted, in his narration, what he saw besides, and merely said, that he saw the souls of those just dead, who ascended from the sphere of earth. They resembled a kind of flaming bubble. When this burst, the soul came forth tranquilly from it, splendid and in human form. But all the souls did not move alike. Some soared upward with wonderful facility, and mounted, without impediment, to the regions above him. Others whirled around like spindles, now mounting upward, then sinking downward, and had a mixed and disturbed motion. Most of them, he knew not. Two or three, however, he recognized as his relatives. He resolved to go and speak to them, but they heard him not ; for they were not themselves, but unconscious ; and avoiding every look and touch, they first turned around in circles by themselves ; then, as those in the same situation came more in contact, they moved with these towards every side, while they uttered unintelligible sounds, like shouts of joy mingled with lamentations. Others, again, appeared above on high, shining brightly, and united to each other by love, but fleeing from the former who were thus unquiet. There too he saw the soul of one of his relatives, but not clearly ; for



the person had died while yet a child. Meanwhile it drew nigh to him and said : ' Welcome, Thespesius ! '—And when he answered, that he was not called ' Thespesius, but Aridaeus, it replied : ' Formerly, thou hadst indeed that name ; but henceforth, thou art called Thespesius. Thou art not yet dead, but by a peculiar destiny of the gods, thou, as to thy rational soul, hast come hither. Thy other soul, thou hast left behind as an anchor in the body. Now and in future, it may be a sign to thee to distinguish thyself from those who are really dead, that the souls of the departed no longer cast any shadow, and can look steadfastly without winking at the light above.' Thereupon, this soul conducted Thespesius through all parts of the other world, and explained to him the mysterious arrangements and leadings of divine justice, why many are punished in this life, and others not ; and showed him all the kinds of punishment which become the portion of the ungodly hereafter. He beheld all with sacred awe ; and after he had seen all this as a spectator, he fell at last, as he was about to retire, into extreme terror. For just as he was about to hasten away, there seized him a woman, of a strange appearance and size, and said : ' Come hither, that thou mayest the better remember all ! ' And at the same time she stretched forth a small red-hot wand, such as painters have ; when another woman prevented her and released him. But he, being wafted suddenly away as by a tempestuous wind, sunk at once back into the body and again looked up in the grave."

Another class of heathen believed themselves to be greatly elevated above the common people in respect to religion, by their education and understanding ; while yet they were not so dazzled as not to perceive, that the multitude, in whom the more refined vices of ambition and pride of conscious virtue could not suppress the ruder out-breakings of sin, can only be held in check by the positive doctrines of religion. They were therefore in favour of having a popular religion remain ; since such a religion, even in its most corrupted state, is yet more efficient than a cold abstract philosophy. This sentiment is advanced by Strabo,<sup>54</sup> who has in general extensively considered the influences of religion in the course of his reflections. He says : " Not only have the gods invented fables, but cities also did it even much earlier ; and so too have law-givers, on the ground of utility ;

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<sup>54</sup> Strabo, *Geographia*, I. 2.

having reference in this to a natural inclination or tendency of rational beings. Man is desirous of knowledge. The commencement of this desire arises from a longing after stories, with which there springs up in children that sympathy in narratives, which gradually ever becomes stronger and stronger. The ground of it is, that the fable tells of something unusual as well as new. Novelty, however, and what was before unknown to us, is welcome ; and all this, too, makes us still more eager for knowledge. If, besides, there is something wonderful and unheard of, this increases so much the more the pleasure ; which is the spur to all learning. In the commencement we must employ such allurements ; but must also guide, with advancing age, to the learning of realities, when the understanding is now strengthened and no longer needs allurements. In like manner every uncultivated and ignorant person is, in a certain sense, a child ; he is just as much attached to fables ; and it is also not less the case with one who is somewhat cultivated. His understanding is not yet strong, and he still retains the habit of childhood. As now the wonderful may not only be pleasing but also terrific, we must make use of both kinds among boys and such as have not yet grown to manhood. Thus we relate to boys pleasing fables, in order to allure ; frightful ones, in order to deter them. Such fables are the Lamiae, the Gorgons, Ephialtes, and Mormolyca. In this manner, also, the lower classes of citizens are incited by pleasing stories, when they hear the fabulous achievements related by the poets, as the contests of Hercules or of Theseus, or the honours awarded by the gods ; or when they see the images, statues, and works of art, which represent such fabulous events. On the other hand, they are deterred when they expect or imagine they shall have to endure from the gods chastisements, terrors, and threatenings, either by words or by frightful apparitions. For it is impossible for philosophy to bring the multitude of women and of the dregs of the people to a right understanding, and to guide them to piety, the fear of God, and conscientious feelings. That must be brought about through superstition ;<sup>55</sup> and this

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<sup>55</sup> Curtius expresses the same opinion of the power of superstition over the mind, though he does not, like Strabo and Polybius, comprehend under it the heathen mythology. Q. Curtii de Rebus Gestis Alexandri, IV. 10. "Nulla res efficacius multitudinem regit, quam superstitio, alioquin impotens, saeva, mutabilis, ubi vana religione capta est, melius vatibus quam ducibus suis paret."

cannot exist without fables and miraculous stories. For the thunderbolt, the aegis, the trident, the lamps, the dragons, the thyrsus of the gods, are fables, as is the whole of the old mythology. These have been adopted by the founders of states as bugbears for childish minds."

In a manner equally distinguished by pretension, but also equally politic, the circumspect and sagacious Polybius explains himself.<sup>56</sup> "The Roman state distinguishes itself to great advantage from others, by its belief in the gods. What is censured by other men, appears to me directly to constitute the basis of the Roman state, namely, their superstition. For whatever has reference to it, is as much cultivated and enters as deeply into public and private life, as is perhaps in any way possible. To many, this will appear singular. But to me, it appears that this is so arranged for the sake of the common multitude. Were we to form an empire of purely wise men, perhaps such a procedure would be not at all important. But as every common multitude is frivolous, and full of licentious desires, full of irrational anger and of violent rage, nothing else remains, but to hold them in check by invisible terrors and such like frightful stories. Hence it appears to me, that the ancients have by no means without reason, spread among the people the representations of the gods and the doctrine of the infernal world; and that they who now seek to remove these things, proceed much more frivolously and irrationally. For, to pass over other things, they who manage the public money among the Greeks, cannot possibly be honest, even when only a single talent is entrusted to them, although ten comptrollers and as many seals and also double witnesses may be present; while among the Romans, they to whom ever so great an amount is entrusted in offices or on embassies, preserve their fidelity simply in consequence of the oath. Among other nations, it is rare to find any one who does not embezzle the public money; but among the Romans, it is rare to detect one in such a deed."—To these passages, which certainly should be deeply considered by all servants of the state, we add yet one more from Polybius, of kindred import:<sup>57</sup> "So far as some writers aim to uphold the fear of God and piety among the people, we must put up with

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<sup>56</sup> *Reliquiae Hist.* VI. 56.

<sup>57</sup> *Polybii Histor. Reliq.* XVI. 12. 9.

it, although they relate what is strange and fabulous about such things; but we should not allow of excess in this point."

On the same ground of policy, even the frivolous Athenians themselves showed no toleration towards such as represented the existence of the gods as only doubtful. Thus Protagoras of Abdera, on account of his sceptical turn of mind, was banished from the city, and his books were burnt in a public assembly of the people.<sup>58</sup>

But upon more noble grounds also, there sprang up an attachment to the paternal system of religion among a third class. This class of men first formed itself in the midst of a predominant unbelief. For, in the centuries immediately before Christ and those immediately after, heathenism was continually sinking into greater decay; while superstition and infidelity, as we shall more minutely see further on, were continually supplanting the simple conviction of those truths which even yet gleamed forth from the disfigured religion of heathenism. Mental improvement was so far advanced, that the popular religion in its mythic dress, was no more received as certain truth. The intermingled error rendered uncertain even that which in itself was truly divine, although hidden and corrupted. Thus the time prepared by Providence was indeed come, when heathenism should give way to a new system and a new spiritual life. Those now, who, in the time of this general declension, did not know of the new and divine arrangement for salvation, or would not know it, but nevertheless felt in their hearts the undeniable need of a divine revelation, devoted themselves to a deeper investigation of what their own religion offered them. And as a greater part of the Grecian fables are barely symbols<sup>59</sup> which passed from the East—where all that is spiritual is represented in images to strike the senses—into the West, where the more thoughtless Greeks, without searching for their deeper sense, soon came to regard them merely as entertaining narratives; so the original import of them must soon have again disclosed itself to such serious, investigating men as these; especially since they

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<sup>58</sup> Cicero de Natura Deorum, I. 23.

<sup>59</sup> Thus Macrobius denominates the fable a *relatio vera per figmentum*; and he distinguishes here a twofold species, *contextio narrationis per indigna et turpia nominibus ac monstro similia*, like the Greek mythology; or *sub pio figmentorum velamine*. Macrobij Saturnalia, I. 2.

had already been shewn by Plato many examples and experiments, how a most important meaning may often be elicited from the simplest fable. In addition to this, the secret doctrines of the Greeks, which were made known only to the more advanced, had been made to include the explanation of many allegories and traditions, by which they appeared in a sublimer light. Thus it came to pass in that period, that men, urged on by that spiritual necessity, were led to search out, after the manner of these interpretations connected with the secret doctrines, and by the example of Plato, the moral and physical import of the fables of all nations. And since they were able to decipher the greater part of these fables truly and happily; and found in some of them a genuine and lofty wisdom, and in others what they imagined to be such, they were led to regard and to applaud the mythologies of antiquity as the treasury of all higher knowledge. Since, moreover, the traditions of all the nations of antiquity have one common root in the higher regions of Asia; since the mythologies of single nations are to be regarded only as branches of the same tree, and hence truly present a great resemblance to each other; so there was a foundation in the nature of the case, that those investigators should come to the result, that one and the same divine revelation is found among all nations, only under various symbols and forms; and that in this very way, the certainty of the religion of one's country is augmented;—surely a touching and spirit-stirring thought!

Thus Plutarch,<sup>60</sup> who is the first among the religious philosophers of the New Platonic school, says: "We do not believe that there are different gods among the different nations of men, the Grecian and the foreign, the southern and the northern; but, as sun and moon and heaven and earth and sea are common to all men, though differently denominated by different nations; so, in diverse countries, there are diverse kinds of worship and different appellations fixed by the laws, while one Intelligence orders all, and one Providence directs all, and subordinate powers are appointed over all."

How much these men felt the life-giving power of a positive divine worship performed in faith, the same Plutarch shows, while he paints the felicity of serving God:<sup>61</sup> "One must in-

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<sup>60</sup> Plut. de Iside and Osiride, c. 67.

<sup>61</sup> Non posse suaviter vivi sec. Epicur. c. 21.

deed remove superstition from his faith in the gods, as dust from the eyes. But if this should be impossible, yet one must take care and not at the same time pluck out or blind the eye of faith, by which most men adhere to the gods. This faith is not any thing terrific and gloomy, as the Epicureans represent it, that they may thereby calumniate Providence, as though it frightened us like children, or persecuted us like a destroying goddess of vengeance. There are probably very few among those who fear the Deity, to whom it were better if they did not fear him. For while they fear him as a sovereign who is kind to the good and hostile to the bad, they are far less disquieted than those who yield free course to their wickedness and give way to their audacity, but afterwards immediately fall into terror and remorse; for through this one fear, in consequence of which they do not need other terrors to warn them from the commission of evil, they keep the wicked disposition quiet in their bosoms, till, by degrees, it consumes itself. Meanwhile the disposition which most of the uncultivated, but not wholly abandoned, cherish towards the Deity, has certainly, together with veneration and awe, something also of a certain anxiety and fear which we commonly denominate superstition (*δεισιδαιμονία*); but a thousand fold greater and more influential are the joyousness and pleasing hope with which they implore and receive the reward of their piety, as depending on and proceeding forth from the gods. This is manifest from the clearest proofs. For no sojourn in the temples, no festal season, no deed, no sight, affords more joy, than what we ourselves see or do in reference to the gods; whether we attend the sports of Bacchus and the sacred dances, or are present at the sacrifices or the mysteries. The mind is not here melancholy and dejected, as though it were associating with tyrants and terrific chastisers, as it must be in such a case; but where it is convinced that the gods are especially present, there the mind, banishing sadness and fear and grief, resigns itself up to joy, even to intoxication, jesting, and laughter. In the feasts of love, as the poet says: 'Even the grey-headed man and the grey-headed woman, when they remember golden Venus, even their fond heart is moved with joy.' But at the festive processions and sacrifices, not merely the grey-headed men and women, not merely the poor and the common man, but also 'the thick-limbed maid that grinds at the mill;' yea, even the domestic slave and the day labourer are enlivened with a feeling of comfort and joy.

The rich and even kings attend in public the festal banquets. At the sacrifices, and when they believe themselves to come the nearest in contact with the Deity, they feel, during the worship, a peculiar delight and joy. But of this he knows nothing, who denies a Providence. For it is neither the fullness of wine nor the roasted flesh, which excites this joy on festival occasions, but rather the delightful hope and belief that God is propitiously present, and kindly receives the offering. Flute and garland may fail at all other feasts; but if God is not present at the sacrifice, all else, like the victim of the banquet, is forsaken of God, unfestive and uninspiring; yea, all is joyless and gloomy for the worshipper. Through fear of the multitude, he feigns prayers and adoration without feeling his wants; and utters words which stand in contradiction with his philosophy. When he sacrifices, he approaches the sacrificing priest as he would a cook; and when he has made the offering, he goes away, with the verse of Menander: I have sacrificed to gods who pay me no regard."

Plutarch has here very strikingly and comprehensively depicted the empty-mindedness of him who, without a belief in positive revelation from God, still moves in the ranks of such as possess such belief. He speaks very truly when he says, in another place,<sup>62</sup> that we must search out all the arguments to defend the pious paternal faith; but there is certainly a question, whether the means which these philosophers laid hold of, were the right ones to bring back again the heathen system into general repute. To Plutarch himself, the reason appears to have risen dimly to view, why heathenism, once so deeply sunken, was scarcely capable of renovation. He remarks, namely,<sup>63</sup> "that words are as precious as coin. In old time," he says, "there was much more of excitement among men. At that period, history, philosophy and religion, and the whole of life, was poetry. Hence also, from the exigencies of men, the gods imparted their oracles in highly poetical expressions. But now, in his time, man had become far more simple and prosaic. Hence the necessity of his age demanded simple, unadorned responses of the gods." This noble heathen knew not that, at that time, there had already come to man-

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<sup>62</sup> De defectu Oraculorum, c. 18.

<sup>63</sup> De Pythiae Oraculis, c. 24.

kind the most simple and intelligible revelation of God.\* Now that very poetry in the heathen religion, was in fact the thing which stood in the way of a reformation in the manner attempted by the Platonists. For when these men either pointed out or inserted, in the fables of that religion, a fine moral sense, still their teaching appeared to the people, on this very account, as nothing else than beautiful poetry. The people were too dull or too indolent to search out the moral kernel. This is also placed in a truly striking light by Dionysius of Halicarnassus. He says :<sup>64</sup> "I know, indeed, that many excuse the immoral fables of the Greeks, on the ground of their being allegorical. But though I know this as well as any man, I am nevertheless very cautious respecting them, and hold rather with the Roman mythology ; as I consider the good arising from the Grecian fables to be very small, and not capable of benefiting many, and indeed only those who have investigated the cause for which they were invented. But there are only a few who have become masters of this philosophy. On the other hand, the great and unphilosophic mass are accustomed to receive these narratives rather in their worst sense, and to learn one of these two things ; either to despise the gods as beings who wallow in the grossest licentiousness, or not to restrain themselves even from what is most abominable and abandoned, when they see that the gods also do the same."

Thus it appeared then, in fact, that the efforts of those Platonists by no means reached to the multitude of the lower classes, who were abandoned to themselves. These remained, afterwards as before, given up to their obscure and erroneous ideas and wretched external ceremonies. But these exertions must nevertheless appear great and important to us—partly in themselves, as proceeding from holy minds, inflamed with desires for the *divine*,† and partly in respect to Christianity, which

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\* As Plutarch lived amid the spread and persecution of Christianity, till near the middle of the second century, it is hardly credible that such a scholar should remain wholly unacquainted with revelation, especially as he resided in Greece and Rome, and travelled extensively. TRANS.

<sup>64</sup> Dion. Hal. Antiq. Rom. II. 69.

† I prefer to give, as nearly as possible, a *verbatim* translation of such passages as may excite particular curiosity in regard to the views of the learned and pious author, on interesting topics. To



so abundantly satisfies all those wants felt by the Platonists, and particularly by Plutarch ; inasmuch as it not only placed before the moral capacities of man a sublime object of attainment, through the doctrine of a holy God and a holy kingdom, into which all the redeemed and purified shall be received ; but also bestowed on fallen man, through the atoning death of the divine Redeemer and the vital powers which emanate from him, the ability to enter into that heavenly economy and to participate in that happy life. Here too, it was not merely the *παιδευμένοι*, the educated, who should share in the promised glory ; but every member of the human race obtained the same right to the royal priesthood of the redeemed, to the same participation in the heavenly inheritance. For the greater or less degree of science and knowledge was no longer to be the measure of dignity for man, as was the customary error of even the best heathen, even of a Plato. Corporeal penance too, (to which every corporeal frame is not adapted,) was not to ensure the enjoyment of this dignity ; but the childlike reception in faith of the word of the cross, the following of the despised Jesus, amid scorn, reproach, and reviling, in self-denial, humility, and love.

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#### APPENDIX TO PART I. p. 89.

##### *On the primitive condition of Man.*

That a higher condition of the human race preceded its more degenerate state, is a truth which has been acknowledged in all ages by the more profound. As the child becomes a man only among men, so the man becomes a man only by living in human society. Hence we must admit, either the eternal existence of human society, in which one man has ever been formed by another *ad infinitum*, or else a particular period, when God himself introduced man as ready formed for society into his present relations of life. Now as the Scriptures inform us, that the first human pair fell from a holy life in God into an unholy life in

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express things in the most abstract and comprehensive manner, the Germans employ the adjective used as a noun much more frequently than we do. It is manifest from such passages as the above, that the author had a more favourable view of the extent of real piety among the heathen, than is commonly entertained, and more than the Bible and history appear to warrant.

TRANS.

selfishness ; so we must believe that man, thus fallen from his primitive purity, has yet brought with him, from that happy period into his sunken state, great capacities and powers. Were this not so, even the most important phenomena of primitive history would be inexplicable. Whence was that deep knowledge in Astronomy, in Geometry, in Natural Philosophy, in Architecture, which we find in ancient India, Chaldea, Egypt, and China ? Whence, especially, that lively interest in divine things and solemn reverence of them ? Whence comes it, if the first generations were savages and semi-brutes, that among them government, morals, science, art, all were founded on religion, and reverence for God was the centre of their whole intellectual life ? Heeren says respecting the influence of religion on politics :<sup>1</sup> “ It clearly appears from the history of politics, that religion maintains a higher political importance, the further we trace back history.”—“ What other sanction of law can there be among rude nations, where there is no conviction of the importance of obeying the law, but in religion, through which the law is regarded as the command of the gods ?”—And a distinguished natural philosopher thus speaks of the value and employment of natural philosophy in the primitive world :<sup>2</sup> “ A hasty glance teaches, that astronomy and the study of nature were not means for the attainment of an end, but a sacred occupation. Hence kings acted as high priests and astronomers, Osiris in Egypt, and Hoangti in China five thousand years before Christ,\* with his minister Yuchi, who ascertained the polar star and discovered the sphere.”

Thus the historian testifies to the founding of politics on religion in ancient times ; and the natural philosopher, to the connection of astronomy and physics with the same ; but that religion itself rests on immediate revelation, is asserted among others by Herder :<sup>3</sup> “ The footsteps of religion, various as may be its costume, are found even among the poorest and rudest nations. Whence came it to these nations ? Did every wretched wanderer, in some way, discover his system of worship as a kind

<sup>1</sup> Heeren's *Ideen über Politik und Verkehr der Völker der alten Welt*, Gött. 1805. B. I. p. 18. p. 22.

<sup>2</sup> Schuberth, *Nachtseite der Natur*, Dresd. 1818. p. 54.

\* According to the extravagant chronology of the Chinese. *TRANS.*

<sup>3</sup> Herder, *Ideen zur Geschichte der Philosophie der Menschheit*, B. II. p. 288.

of natural theology? These miserable men discover nothing; they follow in all things the tradition of their fathers. Tradition is the mother of their language, as of their religion.”—Hence the historian places at the head of all history, an original and higher state of cultivation in man, proceeding from God. Johannes von Müller expresses himself thus on this point:<sup>4</sup> “There is something very remarkable in the fact, that the most ancient nations, though entirely uncultivated in other things, had perfectly correct views and knowledge of God, of the world, of immortality, and even of the motions of the stars; while the arts which pertain to the conveniences of life, are much younger. Does it not seem, as though the breath of Divinity dwelling in us, our spirit, had acquired through the immediate teaching of a higher being, and for a long time retained, certain indispensable ideas and habits, to which it could not easily have attained of itself? Whatever, on the other hand, pertains to the employment of material capacities, was left for the exercise of our own mental powers.”—Later investigations and discoveries have shown, that also in these arts of life the most ancient people were greatly distinguished. With this intimation of Müller, F. Schlegel<sup>5</sup> should be compared, who strikingly shows the necessity of admitting an original teaching of the human race by the spirit of God. And especially are the words of the distinguished antiquary, Oüvarof, to be noted<sup>6</sup>: “The natural state of man is neither the savage state, nor a state of corruptness; but a simple and better state, approaching nearer the divinity; the savage and the corrupted man\* are equally removed from it.”

But we need not stop with these later investigators. The universal tradition of the ancient world, spoke of a higher illumination of man at the commencement of this earthly course. This is declared, first of all, by the general tradition of nations of a golden age of the world, of Paradise. Moreover also Plato follows this opinion, where Socrates in *Philebus* says<sup>7</sup>: “All that originated in art, originated in the following manner. There was once, as it seems to me, a gift of the gods, brought down to men

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<sup>4</sup> Joh. v. Müller, *Weltgeschichte*. Th. I. p. 4.

<sup>5</sup> Fr. Schlegel, *Ueber die Weisheit der Indier*, p. 89 seq. p. 105.

<sup>6</sup> Oüvarof, *Essais sur les Mystères d'Eleusis*. Paris. 1816. p. 10.

\* *l'Homme corrompu*.

<sup>7</sup> *Platonis Philebus*, p. 142. ed. Bekker.

from the gods by a certain Prometheus, at the same time with the light. Now the ancients, who were better than we, and who stood nearest to the gods, have handed down to us, that, etc." Plato also gives a hint to the same effect in the *mythus*, that once in the primeval period, Saturn himself became the herdsman of the herd of men. And thus Aristotle says<sup>8</sup>: "The tradition has been handed down in the form of fable from the ancients to later posterity, that the above-named are gods, and that Deity encircles all nature;—and that while, according to the various powers of men, every art and philosophy has been often discovered and again lost, these dogmas, as if remnants of their wisdom, have been transplanted to the present time."—In the same sense, the heathen Caecilius also says<sup>9</sup>: "I give credit to ancestors, who, in a yet uncultivated age at the beginning of the world, were counted worthy to have the gods as friends or kings.

If now there are sufficient grounds to assume, that a state of higher mental cultivation and higher knowledge remained to man on his departure from his primitive spiritual and holy life in God, so we must also presuppose that, in such a state, man had a more correct knowledge also of the divine Being. And so the Scriptures represent it to us, which depict the lapse into idolatry as the consequence of a progressive corruption after the fall. We are, besides, led to this supposition by the fact, that all traditions of a moral import, ever tended more and more to a physical interpretation, the further they were handed down among posterity. We have confirmed this in the text (p. 91) by some examples. These may be increased from many sources. Thus, for instance, the religion of Buddha—which, according to the most credible witnesses, emanated from Brahmanism at a later period, though it is found existing along with it in very high antiquity—appears to be only a more consistent and more physically apprehended form of Brahmanism.<sup>10</sup>—Thus too we find in the Chinese *Shuking*, the most ancient book of religion, as also in the philosophy *In-kia*, derived from it and founded on it, the doctrine of a supreme being *as father of all things*; but its followers,

<sup>8</sup> Aristotelis Metaphys. XI. 18.

<sup>9</sup> Minutii Octav. VI. 1.

<sup>10</sup> Compare especially the treatise of Mahony: The doctrines of Boodha from the books of the Sengalees. Asiatic Researches. T. VII. p. 32. and Buchanan on the religion and literature of Burmah. Asiat. Res. T. VI. p. 136.

the *In-kia*, also call the same being *Hoangtien*, or *lofty heavens*; and thus glide over into something more physical.\* The *Shuking* has also the doctrine of tutelar genii.<sup>11</sup> The *Yking*, on the contrary, is wholly in the strain of metaphysical pantheism. Hence Johannes von Müller strikingly says<sup>12</sup>: “Man entered the world with few but pure and satisfying ideas; and I think I see these inborn ideas shining forth here and there. But, made for labour, he lost himself in subtle speculation; of which the oldest fruit is the *Yking*.”—Especially does the truth in question appear to be established by Parseeism. *Servan-Akerene*, or illimitable time, which here stands above Ormuzd and Ahriman, is only a pantheistic primeval being, like the *Chronos* of the Greeks. How came this being now at the head of all things? Certainly only in later times, for the purpose of giving a substratum to those two persons. It therefore proceeded only from the speculation of after times, striving for unity. Many sects of the Persians have never received it.<sup>13</sup>

TO BE CONTINUED.

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\* The Chinese now use the word *Tien* to denote the supreme Being. A long and severe dispute was carried on at Rome in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, whether the Jesuit missionaries, always so ready to be content with barely baptizing the idolatry of a heathen people, should be allowed in continuing to call *Jehovah* by so ambiguous a term and one so fitted to cherish heathen views. The pope finally decided in their favour, on condition of their annexing to it the word *Tchu*. This removed the ambiguity; for *Tien Tchu* means *Lord of the heavens*. See Mosheim, Vol. V. p. 27. and Vol. VI. p. 3. First American edition.

TRANSLATOR.

<sup>11</sup> *Memoires de l'Academie des Inscriptions*, T. XXXVIII. p. 272 sq.

<sup>12</sup> *Johannes v. Müllers Werke*, B. XVI. p. 41.

<sup>13</sup> See Hyde de *Relig. veterum Persarum*. Isfraini, De *diversis Sectis*, Cod. MS. Arab. bibl. reg. Berol.