ARTICLE III.

NATURAL RELIGION PROPHETIC OF REVELATION.

BY FREDERIC PERRY NOBLE, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS.

WHEN the present writer began the study of comparative theology, he had no other object than an intelligent knowledge of the faiths of man. But the witness of humanity to its unknown God unsealed his eyes to a remarkable prophetic element in it. No student, so far as he was aware, had specially investigated the pre-Christian "Christianity" of the natural religions. As this appeared to open a new vein, an unbiassed and painstaking study was begun, of which this sketch contains the substantial results.

The induction yielded by investigation is that there has been a Messianic prophecy among the Gentiles, and that, beyond question, there existed at history's dawn a lofty idea of God. The ethnic creeds all speak in their own tongues of his everlasting power and divinity. That which may be known of God is manifest in them, for God, despite human limitations and liabilities to error, manifested it unto them by the divine light placed in every soul. Does not Luke state that Zacharias, filled with the Holy Spirit, prophesied that God spake by the mouth of his holy prophets which have been since the world began? That the invisible things of Him since the creation are clearly seen, being perceived

Digitized by Google

free. He makes God in the image of ethical ideals, spiritual, and one. He feels himself made to know and love God, and to dwell with him. He has a sense of alienation, and ascribes it to a difference in his own character, generally regarding the unlikeness as moral and evil. God sympathizes with man, is propitiable, revealing his truth or will, sending prophets and messages, bestowing holy books, and granting inspirations. Man thinks of God as threefold, either in relations or in personality, as naturally as he ascribes height, length, and breadth to matter. He sees that man cannot save himself, but requires some divine provision. He stammers out that God can best approach man and secure his heart by bodily existence and especially by human indwelling; that only a divine redeemer can justify him with a divine judge, a god-man making sacrifice of his life for men, and that moral righteousness is accepted through regarding divine righteousness as now man's.

The bearing of these inductions upon materialistic theories of evolution is obvious and important. A new chapter in Christian evidences is unfolded. It makes no difference what the origin and contents and nature of religion in prehistoric ages. The fact remains that of equal date with the beginnings of history are spiritual views of God, and foreshadowings of the supernatural revelation with which Abraham and Moses, David and Isaiah, were inspired. The results powerfully confirm our Scriptures, since they demonstrate that the sacred writers have received a revelation so completely in harmony with that which nature has given. In every age

Digitized by Google

temples of Thebes. Perhaps a lonely thinker won the thought of One Person beyond all nature, while through three millenniums sage after sage spelt his attributes out one by one. Whatever the process, we can give the inner faith of early Egypt in its own speech:—

There is a single Being, who is pure Spirit, the only true, living God, self-existent from the beginning, before whom was nothing, Maker of all things, but himself not made, filling immensity and eternity. From everlasting he stands, to eternity he will be. The Father of beginnings is Life, and in his double being is Father and Mother of all creatures. As soul in body he dwelleth within the world-house which his hand hath fashioned. Although none else is nigh unto him, he is the Holy Spirit who begets Gods, and they issue forth from the word of their Father's mouth. He is perfect in every respect, all-wise, almighty, truth itself, living in truth, a Being of righteousness, terrible to evil-doers, but beneficent and merciful. His love is in the south, his grace is in the north, his beauty taketh possession of all hearts, his love maketh weak the arms. This most loving Lord of mercy, at whose coming men live, wipeth away tears from all eyes. Lord of wisdom, at his pleasure the Nile overfloweth his banks. God findeth his satisfaction in truth (or righteousness), whereby is he propitiated; his pleasure, in the most perfect purity, which he hath dearer than millions of gold and silver offerings. To obey meaneth to love God; not to obey, to hate God. He is not beheld by the eye, hath neither ministers nor offerings, is not adored in sanctuaries. Not graven in marble is he, nor is one shrine found with his painted figure; there is no building that can contain him whose spirit is hid in heaven, whose form earth conceals, and whose mystery the deep covereth. He is unnamable, and abhorreth to have his name pronounced, yet countless are the titles of this Mystery to his creatures. As Ammon he careth for the estate of the poor. Lord of all

Digitized by Google

terrors and all choicest joys, he delivereth the timid from the violent and judgeth the oppressed. He spake words of creative power, saying of the sun: "Come unto us." The creating mind was Kneph or Num, literally meaning the Spirit. Moving over the face of the waters, he breatheth life into the world. He is the potter, forming on his wheel the divine limbs of Osiris. The *act* of creating or the creative hand, was Ptah the artist. He sprang from an egg (word?) from the mouth of Kneph. The divine Word of Wisdom was Thoth. Through him the Unknowable created from himself, and without him was nothing made. The revelation of Ammon, veiled in light, is through Thoth, who rests in truth. What flows from Thoth's heart works on. What he hath spoken stands for aye. By truth subsisteth every day the fellowship of the divinities (i. e. God's manifestations). Creation and Providence are the work both of the One Infinite Being and of several persons in the Godhead. The originating, really active Powers appear to be the Thought, the Word, the Act of Ammon as The Unknown God.

From the divine vision of the priest, we pass to the religion of the people. Its central fact is the myth of Osiris and his death. As elder son of the Father of Fathers, he was a manifestation or incarnation of the Infinite Spirit. When the world was made, he was appointed to reign over the gods before the face of the Supreme Lord. Although Lord of Life, no man being able to live without his will, his mother hath begotten him in the world. Osiris is his name in the bosom of the Spirit, Goodness (Unnefer) his name in the lower heaven, but his real name, God. His character is exactly described by the son of Israel who sang: "Mercy and truth are met; righteousness and peace have kissed." In the likeness of man he humanized the nations by sweetness of speech, proclaimed brotherhood among men and service to God, and removed all need of arms. He taught

Digitized by Google

his Egypt art, law, and religion. His brother Set (Typhon) hated him for his goodness and slew him before he was thirty years old. His soul returned to earth to bring up Horus (son of Osiris and Isis), who finally avenged the father by slaying Set. Osiris had thus died only to rise again, becoming "first-born of mummies," judge and king of the departed. Horus became mediator and saver of man, justifying the righteous dead before the tribunal of his sire.

The story of Isis and Osiris originated, possibly, in nature worship, and in the mouth of the masses retained vile features. But the priesthood placed it on lofty spiritual levels. It portrayed the conflict of good and evil in the natural world. It symbolized the sorrows, sin, and self-recovery of the soul. Typhon from a power of physical destruction grew in later belief into the embodiment of moral evil. The Ritual, or Book of the Soul's Transformations, repeatedly represents Osiris and Set as fighting for the welfare or the destruction of man's spirit. I am he, saith Osiris, who in the land of light killed for thee the sacrifice of the ram-of-sins. He came from Heaven as a special sin-offering. At the sound of his voice falleth the evil doer. Sanctifying is his name. Wounded by Set, now "his heart is in every wound," now he feels anew every suffering of humanity. He bears sin, for "when the Lord of Truth cleanses away defilement, evil unites itself to divinity that truth may expel this evil element. The God who chasteneth becomes the God who more abundantly comforts." This destruction of sin occurred at death, at the "Day of Account of Words," when the spirit came before the Holy One, his saver and judge,

Digitized by Google

Truth (or Justice), and the Director of the scales declared the balance satisfied. In later days, justification through faith in Osiris replaces salvation by works. One tablet pictures the deceased placing the gods on the altar as his sin-offering and pleading *their* merits. Wisdom (Thoth) registered the decision, and the virtuous attained his dying hope of union with Osiris, being even called his name. Into the purified body of the justified soul, Thoth would yet breathe new life; "the spirit is living for eternity [and] passes not through the second death." As he entered heaven he heard said: "No more sin is in thy nature;" and cried: "No more stain from my mother. I am delivered from sin." Eternal blessedness consists in spiritual life with Osiris, in whose likeness alone can the servant of the Hidden One attain perfection.

Several implications of this religion require fuller statement on account of their theological importance. De Rougé declares that it is more than five thousand years since the beginning of Egypt's hymn to the unity of God and to the immortality of the soul, those being the primitive notions. Renouf considers it "incontestably true that the sublimer portions are not the comparatively late result of development, or of elimination from the grosser, but are demonstrably ancient." The Ritual, or Book of the Dead, is the oldest of law-books, and its insistence on moral law demonstrates that the moral bearings of myths were applied to life. Law, "that unfailing order which rules the universe," was personified as daughter of Ammon, parent of thought

Digitized by Google

are three gods in one. One of the names of God was NUK PU NUK, which Brugsch translates as "The I am that I am," maintaining that they were written in the burial papyrus instead of the true but unspoken name. A goddess of the people bore a name signifying "The I came from myself," while on the temple of Isis stood the inscription: "*I am he that was and is and is to be.*" Plutarch points out that the Egyptians considered their good god to have made himself threefold. A soul of Osiris was believed to dwell on earth incarnate in the sacred bull, and the conception of the human incarnation of deity was so familiar that the Pharaoh was held to be a god-son.

II.

The Babylonian religion is said to run its tap-roots into the subsoil of human story, Hommel and Oppert dating the origin of "Accadian" civilization at B. C. 5000, but it is safer to take B. C. 2800 as our starting-point and to accept the religion as we find it *then*. In the primitive Shamanism, Zi-Ana, Spirit of Heaven, Ea, Spirit of Earth, and Mul-Ge, Lord of the Abyss, formed a triad. Ea is especially appealed to as an unfailing refuge. He possessed all knowledge and wisdom, using them solely to benefit and protect humanity. But he was too great and high to be lightly approached. There was a beneficent spirit, Mirri-Dugga, son of Ea, whose only function was to mediate between his father and man the sufferer. He makes known the need and reveals the healing. Ea says: What I know thou also knowest. Although the dead are not supposed to become nothing, the future life is cheerless. There is no idea of its happiness or misery depending on virtue or wickedness here. But from 2800 on, we find in the "Penitential Psalms" what the incantations lack,—moral perception. These hymns and prayers reveal a sense of God, of sin, and of the bearing of character upon destiny. One hymn addresses the God of Ur as "Lord and

Digitized by Google

prince of gods, who in heaven and earth alone is supreme;" "Father, begetter of gods and men and the universe;" "*Merciful one*," "*long-suffering and full of forgiveness*, whose hand upholdeth the life of all mankind;" "First-born, omnipotent," "Ordainer of the laws of heaven and earth, whose command may not be broken;" "Defender of all living things, there is no god who at any time hath discovered thy fulness." "King of kings, whose divinity no god resembleth, look with favor on this thy city." The Sun-god is thus invoked: "Lord, at thy command will his sins be atoned, his transgressions be removed. . . . Thou makest lies to vanish; . . . . thou turnest wicked plots . . . to a happy issue. The supreme judge in heaven and earth knows lie from truth, knows the truth in the soul of man, is the fount of justice." Retribution is predicted: "If evil thou dost, to the eternal sea thou shalt surely go." Possibly the following prayer may indicate a belief in original sin: "Against the evil spirit we pray, disturber of his body, whether it be the sin of father . . . mother . . . elder brother . . . or some one unknown." The psalm entitled "The Complaints of the Repentant Heart" is worthy of David: "My Lord, may the anger of his heart be allayed. May the fool attain understanding. The god (the goddess) who knows the unknown, may he (she) be conciliated. I eat the food of wrath and drink the waters of anguish. O my God, my transgressions are very great; very great my sins. I transgress—and know it not. I sin—and know it not. I feed on my transgressions—and know it not. I wander in wrong paths—and know it not. The Lord in the wrath of his heart hath overwhelmed me with confusion. I lie on the ground—none reaches a hand to me. I am silent and in tears—none take me by the hand. I cry out—and there is none who hears me. I am exhausted and oppressed—none releases me. . . . . My god (my goddess) be merciful. How long? Lord, thou wilt not repulse thy servant. Amidst

Digitized by Google

the stormy waters come to my assistance. Take me by the hand. I commit sins—turn them into blessedness. I commit transgressions—let the wind sweep them away. My blasphemies are very many—rend them like a garment. God who knowest I knew not,—my sins are seven times seven—forgive my sins." In still another confession the penitent cries: "I, thy servant, call to thee. Whoever is beset with sins, his ardent supplications thou acceptest. If thou lookest on a man with pity, that man liveth. . . . Merciful one, to whom it is good to turn, who dost receive sighs. . . . . Besides thee is no deity to lead in righteousness. Look kindly on me. . . Speak. How long? Let thine heart be appeased. . . Even like doves I moan."

Since this Turanio-Shemitic people believed the moral sense to be a deity dwelling in man who was "the son of his god," Ragozin regards this passionate contrition, this bitter consciousness of guilt, this confession and humiliation, as but the communion of self with conscience. If so, we must yet consider this acknowledgment of a power imagined to be not himself but Another, making for righteousness, as genuine religion and worship. Here are—

> ". . . . longings, yearnings, strivings
> For the good they comprehend not,
> [And] the feeble hands and helpless,
> Groping blindly in the darkness,
> Touch God's right hand in that darkness
> And are lifted up and strengthened."

Hear this prayer: "God, my Creator, stand by my side. Keep thou the door of my lips. My hands guard thou, O

Digitized by Google

and forms of the Supreme; their mates were but the one feminine principle of nature in its Protean shapes. There were several triads. In one, Sin, Shamash, and Raman manifested God in his nearness to man. In the supreme Trinity—Anu, Ea, and his son Bel—Anu is "Lord of the starry heavens, First-born, Eldest, Father of all gods." Ea is the "Divine Intelligence," "God of the pure life," "Lord of human kind, of man who is his own, having with his hands formed the race, to be subject to the gods." He is "the Merciful One, with whom life exists, who raises the dead to life." He, said Berossos, "wrote a book on the origins of things and the beginnings of civilization and gave it to man. . . . . There was a time when all was darkness and water." Bel, also called (previously) Marduk the Mediator, is the World-maker, the Benefactor and Rewarder, the Lord of battles, and the Combatant with the dragon and with evil. He shed his own blood, "and the other gods, after kneading earth with it, formed men who are therefore endowed with intelligence and share in the divine thought." His will is the sublime word with which he ruleth heaven and earth. He is the Saver, the Life-giver, to whom belong death, and life, and all that breathe. "Marduk, who blesseth all men praying in need, hath in goodness drawn nigh to [Cyrus], hath made strong his name, beholding with joy the deeds of his vicegerent who is righteous in hand and heart." Ea and Bel-Marduk appear to be one substance in two persons, while the outlines of Anu would seem to merge in theirs. Their common handiwork is man, who confesses that "from the days of his youth is he bound fast to the yoke of his sin," and adjures the dead to "prepare himself for the kingdom of the just." May the soul of the righteous be received into the holy hands of the Greatest of gods. "Like a bird, may it fly to a lofty place, to the holy hands of its god ascend." A prayer for a king beseeches that, "in the abode of blessedness may he dwell, a holy, eter-

Digitized by Google

nal life before the face of the gods." In Assyria, the national god, Assur, was originally the first, the one, the good. He had another name, Ilu (the sister word to the Hebrew El), but the father and king of gods was not always distinguished from his manifestations and offspring. His people are "servants of Assur, Lord of Hosts." His worshipper must pray without ceasing. As Sun-god he pierces the face of darkness. The archangels of the abyss gladly contemplate his countenance. He directeth the language of praise, which is *One* word. Once the God of Life Divine, according to the Assyrian account of the origin of earthly evil, in the midst of his heavenly chorus heard a shout of evil blasphemy, spoiling, confusing and confounding the hymns of praise. To the rebel ângels he stopped the service, sent them to the gods, his enemies, and prohibited return. In their place he created mankind. The first who received life dwelt along with him. He gave strength never to neglect his word, following the serpents his hand had made. He had seen the malice of those who deserted their allegiance to raise rebellion.

III.

The Chinese classics, two thousand five hundred years before Christ, recognize a divine person. There is one Supreme Being, omnipresent, an all-seeing Intelligence, wishing man to live in peace and brotherhood, commanding pure desires and righteous actions. The oldest writings teach that "Heaven penetrates to the bottom of our hearts like light into a dark chamber. We must conform ourselves to Heaven till we are like two instruments tuned to the same pitch. We must join ourselves with it, till we are like two tablets which appear but one. We must receive its gifts the very moment its hand is open to bestow. Our irregular passions shut the door of the soul against God." About B. C. 475 the Holy Master Koong revised these classics, solemnly dedi-

Digitized by Google

cated them to heaven, and on his knees thanked God for letting him complete this work. Since he himself taught next to nothing about God and immortality, would Confucius answer Nay when the roll of believers in a personal God is called? He affirms that "he who offends against Heaven has none to whom he can pray." Here is the thought of prayer, which man never offers to an abstraction, of offence, and of alienation such that prayer ceases to avail. Confucius, although weak in the sense of the spiritual, possessed veneration in extraordinary measure, and regarded adoration as the crown of the moral nature. If (as Legge maintains) "Heaven" means "The Lofty One Who is on High," Confucius recognized a supreme moral person, his reverence veiling God by Heaven. Choo-tse (A. D. 1200) believed in an ultimate principle, eternal, immaterial, and cause of the universe. Its crowning creation is human nature, which as comprising charity, righteousness, fitness, sincerity, and wisdom, is perfect. Goodness consists in obeying this nature; but instinctive inward vision of the Highest constitutes the holy man, whose obedience is spontaneous and pure. Among the holy were the writers of the sacred books, whose intuition of the Eternal rendered "The Five King" infallible and authoritative. Confucius was the last holy man, and had declared that "in the West the true saint must be looked for and found." It is even claimed that Confucian writings contain Messianic predictions: "The Holy One will unite in himself all virtues of heaven and earth. By his justice the world will be re-established in the ways of righteousness. He will labor and suffer much. He must pass the great torrent whose waves shall enter his soul; but he alone can offer to the Lord a sacrifice worthy of him. We expect our King. When he comes he will deliver us from all misery. He will restore us to new life. . . . We expect this Divine Man and he is to come after three thousand years. . . The people long for his coming as dry grass for

Digitized by Google

the clouds and the rainbow." These expectations led to the acceptance of Lao-Kun, who promulgated new doctrines, had, it was said, existed from all eternity, descended to earth and was born of a virgin, and after fulfilling his benevolent mission ascended bodily into the celestial paradise. But how much of this folk tale is Buddhism; and how much Nestorian Christianity?

IV.

During the centuries from Abraham to Solomon (B. C. 1995–993) the Hindu faith is monotheism within unconscious pantheism. Universal God becomes apparent, first in one form of nature, then in another. Vedic hymns recognize a Supreme God, *the* Lord of the lords of nature. Men call him Varuna, Indra, Agni; that which is One, the wise call it many ways. They have high spiritual conceptions of the Divine. Texts speak of "One Supreme Spirit, Lord of the universe, whose work is the universe." From him all beings emanate. Although no clear distinction between Creator and creation is held fast; while different divinities in turn receive all his attributes—each simply expresses that One who is himself unnamable. He is omniscient, almighty, and infallibly just. The victim of misfortune feels that he has sinned against Varuna, confesses guilt, implores pity or forgiveness, knows that the smiting hand is the hand of punishment, and regards penalty as a debt to divine justice. We meet with the belief that the innocent victim is accepted in the stead of the offender: "One born in the beginning, Lord of the creation, offered himself a sacrifice for the benefit of deified mortals," and the gods sacrifice the primal

Digitized by Google

triad of Agni, Indra, and Surya. "To man comes Mitra down." Its litanies, substituting Jahveh or Lord for Varuna and Indra, would be in place at our Sabbath services. The good ascend directly to Heaven, to blessedness and re-union with their loved ones, and are glorified with a shining spiritual body like that of the gods.

Max Müller maintains that there is a Vedic monotheism preceding its polytheism, that we have no right to mark as *modern* all hymns in which the idea of One God breaks through the clouds of polytheistic phraseology, and that even in invocations to countless gods this remembrance of a God, one and infinite, shines out. As Haug dates the oldest Vedic hymns at B. C. 2400, the theological significance of Müller's position is enhanced. There is another remarkable religious idea in Hindoo belief, upon which Müller speaks. Sanskrit has a word (*rita*) that denotes not only the settled movements of nature, but also the right path for men. In Zend, righteousness (*asha*) was, first, the natural order, and then the correct walk and conversation of men. Müller thinks that "this thought of a world-system existed even when Hindoo Aryans dwelt in the tents of Iran. As part of the old Aryan religion it is older than the eldest of Vedic hymns and the most ancient Gatha. *For a true appreciation of their religion it is far more important than all the myths.* It was all the difference between a chaos and a cosmos; between the blind play of chance and a providence intelligible and therefore intelligent."

Brahmanism was spiritual pantheism. It held that evil exists in nature necessarily, that it consists of our finite limitations as creatures, and that our present suffering must be in punishment for previous guilt. The soul is put into this world to be purged of sin. How, then, should man deliver himself? "Know God, fellowship God, become God." Out of thy heart proceedeth sin. The highest of all virtues is unselfish goodness performed from love to God,

Digitized by Google

and based on knowledge of Scripture. So doing you approach the divine nature. The Vedas are the breath of God, pre-existing in his spirit eternally, and are infallible; their sanctifying influence is especially great. Works and the piety of ethical law have no merit in themselves, but from their helpful effects are means of divine grace. "If there be ignorance of the Supreme Spirit, complete death ensueth. For the establishment of righteousness is He born from time to time." Knowledge of the Divine was a mystic intuition, the gift of grace, choosing whom it will and revealing the real character of selfhood: "Let us meditate on the excellent glory of the divine Life-giver; may he enlighten our understanding." The Vedas had proclaimed that the Highest Being exists in the states of creation, destruction, and renewal; Brahmanism, to hold its own with Buddhism, accepted Siva and Vishnu, the gods of the people, and united them with Brahma as the triad of Brahma the Creator, Vishnu the Preserver, and Siva the Destroyer. Such a triad is three gods; a trinity is one god in three persons. Vishnu mediates, not between Creator and Destroyer, but between the gods and wicked men, or demons, whose piety, poles asunder from morality, shakes the heavenly thrones. To save the gods, not man, Vishnu undergoes nine incarnations, overcoming by force or fraud; in a tenth he shall conquer by moral power. When the world is sunken in wickedness and corruption, he shall come and establish a kingdom of righteousness and peace. Finally, mediæval Brahmanism, or Hinduism, trusted less to meritorious sanctity and sacrificial barter than to the free compassion of a divine helper, the hero Krishna, an incarnation of Vishnu. But these *avatars* are merely the descent of portions of the divine essence, Vishnu himself remaining in heaven. Barth, how-

Digitized by Google

V.

The faith of Iran is the Puritanism of antiquity. Zoroaster (B. C. 1400), first among wise men of the East, preached a God who in the world of the good is Lord and God alone.[1] He created the earthly and spiritual life, is Lord of the universe, and from his hand are all the creatures. He is purity, intellect, and light; possesses holiness, immortality, justice, and truth; and grants these gifts to the pious. Before creation the Word had existed, holy, swift-speeding Honover. Creation was his work also, and his self-revelation. Righteousness is the foundation of the universe: its purpose, the eternal reign of goodness. Ormazd created man innocent, destined for heaven, and free. Life is an irrepressible conflict between Ormazd and Ahriman, our souls the objects of their warfare. Ahriman, in serpent shape, entered our world, bringing death and all our woe. But the more evil he tried to do, the more he hastened the development of good. Afterwards he tempted the first man and woman, seeking to ruin their future. Eating his fruit they lost one hundred of their advantages, and only one remained. Man knew not now the eternal law, and was unable to distinguish between truth and lie. Ahriman besets him night and day, but Ormazd in pity and grace determined to unseal human vision, sending a prophet to lead men the path of salvation. The Avesta (Law) is the revelation of his will, Zoroaster receiving the Holy Word in personal converse. Purity is its keynote and kernel: "Who knoweth purity knoweth the Lord; to such is he father, brother, friend." Life after death is the outcome of earthly life. The quintessence of Zoroaster's "revelation" was that the Good Spirit shall ultimately tri-

Digitized by Google

would summon all his powers and break Ahriman forever. Universal judgment shall follow, Ormazd assigning due rewards to the good, and punishing the wicked. Ahriman and the doomed are cast into the abyss where he lies powerless evermore. Now begins the single and united kingdom of Ormazd on earth as in heaven. The faithful and pious live in fellowship with Ormazd and his angels forever. *Such are the views of Zoroaster in the language of his own Chants.*

Afterwards, the holiness of the spirit of Ormazd became regarded as having a kind of personal existence, as standing between God and man. He protects creation. He shows the way to heaven. Around the world he walks, teaching religion. A general resurrection is clearly indicated by the Scriptures (Avesta) which are almost coeval with the Chants. They mention a future Saver, Sosiosh the Increaser. At the end of time, three thousand years after Zoroaster, when Ahriman has been supreme, Sosiosh shall be conceived by the spirit of Zoroaster and born of a virgin. This divine deliverer shall convert mankind, overcome Ahriman, free the world from death and decay, awaken the dead bodies, and hold the last judgment. The world shall be burned, the doomed purified by fire, and even Ahriman with his demons restored to holiness and heaven. From the flames emerges a new earth, perfect, pure, eternal. Among the common folk the abstract, spiritual Ormazd was resolved into the triad of Ormazd, Ahriman, and Mithra the Restorer.[1]

[1] Pfleiderer shows that in Zoroastrianism, "since evil may be overcome by personal effort, [it] makes evil an occasion by which God works his will. To religion Persia contributed the resurrection. It is the earthly life elevated and new; the presence of the Ahura (Ormazd) will sanctify earth. We meet with retribution (not eternal punishment), redemption, atonement, and peace in immortality." "It has often been said that the Old Testament religion has

Digitized by Google

VI.

Buddhism bears marvellous testimony to God unknown. Gotama had denied the God-consciousness to reason, averring that "the existence of a God is not proved;" it returned in the eternal instincts of the soul. The orphaned masses refused to live long without deity, and reaction from no god to gods many was as unavoidable as the backward beat of the pendulum. Law, natural law in the moral sphere, had been Gotama's Supreme Power, love for humanity his God, and the knowledge that man was his own and only saviour the Buddha's gospel. Self passed from sight. "I go," he said, "to set rolling onward the royal chariot wheel of an universal kingdom of righteousness, give light to those enshrouded in darkness, and open the gate of immortality to all men. I now only live to be the prophet of perfect truth. Let all sins committed in the world fall on me that the world may be delivered. . . . Upon us, beloved disciples, is laid the great duty of gaining for men and angels this priceless blessing of salvation. Go ye now and preach the most excellent Law." After ages inscribed "God in the form of mercy" on his statue, held sacred the Tree of Knowledge. where he attained Nirwana, and spoke of "his mission [as] mercy seeking to save." There came a time when Buddhism affirmed pre-existence and miraculous incarnation for its Founder. The Hindu tendency to group sacred objects in triads led to worship of Gotama, the personified Law, and the Order (the "Church") as an ideal impersonation of the true disciples. Then Buddhism inculcated the aim of be-

Digitized by Google

forever. Presently arose mystic triads comprising the heavenly Buddha, the Buddha incarnate, and the Buddha-elect. One of the future Buddhas was Maitreya, who, said legend, Gotama had prophesied should come as saver of the world four thousand years afterwards, when the memory of Gotama's law would have perished. Finally northern Buddhism and Lamaism evolved a theory of the Buddha-spirit working within the "church," and became the Oriental double of Romanism; Chinese Buddhism created a Quan Yin, a saving god incarnate, afterward transformed into a "Queen of Heaven" or Cathayan Virgin Mary; and Japanese Buddhism taught a doctrine of justification by faith. Possibly the Chinese were influenced by Nestorianism, but the Japanese evolved a native product.

VII.

In the religion of Hellas and Rome, of Gaul and Scandinavia, we see not a few flashes of supernatural light. With Homer, Zeus is as genuinely God as the Lord who, in the childhood of Shemitic belief, came to see the Tower of Babel; Athene possesses the largest theistic endowments and is tirelessly active in the works of a living Providence; while Apollo is presented as the perfect man, helping and redeeming humanity but revealing Zeus. Aeschylus shows that for Prometheus some god must become a substitute, voluntarily entering *Hell;* and the saver of this natural man is the divinely ideal man, Hercules, son of Zeus and mortal mother,

Digitized by Google

fice as expiation for the sin of all, the former viewing guilt as spiritual crime and entertaining the idea of vicarious substitution. Vergil expressed, as an inspired utterance of the Sibyl, the desire for a deliverer and regenerator. Plutarch believed that evil must originate from a special source. Seneca sighed: "Ah! if one might only have a guide to truth." Epictetus possessed the idea of sonship to God. Marcus Aurelius characterized the universe as "the dear city of Zeus." Caesar informs us that "the Druids teach that in no other way is reconciliation possible with the divine justice of the immortal gods than by ransoming man's life by the life of man." Other informants prove that Druidism believed in one God, existent as Belis the Creator, Taran the Preserver, and Esu the Renewer; in a fall; and in redemption. The Teuton and the Scandinavian believed that Loki, the adversary of the gods, had originally been their comrade and a bestower of blessings; that Odin, omnipotent and omniscient, chooses and leads souls; that Balder, the one holy god, made peace; that Loki caused his death and prevented his return from Hell, though man and nature mourned; that the universe shall be consumed and only All-Father survive. Then—restitution! A new heaven and a new earth arise. Loki and evil have ceased forever. The Aesir, born again and purified by fire, return, Balder rising from Hell. All-Father reigns supreme, his subjects the new mankind, and judges in righteousness and goodness. The wise men of these northern Goths had preached the coming of a "Mannu" who was to commence a new order of peace and morality; and lo! the consummation of the age.

VIII.

Muhammadan theology contains some dogmas, which, whether original or adopted, furnish remarkable illustrations of the view that the Christian doctrines on those subjects are in harmony with natural laws of thought, or needful for

Digitized by Google

satisfying the soul. Gabriel, it was held, had revealed to Muhammad a celestial text, whose earthly copy is the infallible Qu'ran. Moreover, the original was uncreate, having eternal and independent existence as God's own Word. Ssufi mysticism proclaimed that God is love, and man's end is to love him and merge our being in him. The heterodox Shi'ites even maintained that Ali was an incarnation of Godhead, and bestowed every attribute of the Christ upon Muhammad. According to divine predestination, and from love to a sinful world, *Hosein* had sacrificed his life for its salvation. Orthodoxy also possesses the idea of a Muhammadan Messiah, *El Mahdi*.

IX.

It would have been feasible to glean among the beliefs of Africa, America, and Australia. We should find other sheaves making obeisance to the sheaf of Christianity as it arises and stands upright. But it is enough to cite the testimony of the peoples in Asia and Europe who have marched in the van, or have shaped the lineaments of humanity with fingers of fate. They refute the objection that the ethnic religions are at bottom only a worship of different aspects and forces of nature; that "that religion which is now called the Christian was in existence with the ancients too, and was never wanting from the very beginning of human race;" and that Christianity is but a natural religion. For such theories as that of sun-myths fail to explain the larger and more important elements in religious myths—the personality, the spiritual attributes, of the divine powers. Again, though Odin, Zeus, Ormazd, and Varuna may have emerged from natural phenomena, in the actual Scriptures they are independent personages to the believers. Moreover, the

Digitized by Google

the Divine beyond the universe. Lastly, the closer the study of the likeness between our Faith and the human systems, the deeper does investigation prove their difference to be. Blot the sun from the sky and leave only six or seven of the most distant stars to pierce the midnight darkness; then you gain the true idea of what has been the spiritual ignorance and the moral helplessness, century after century, of the untold millions upon millions who saw not the Light of the World. For those who knew the sublime truths whispered by the ancient religions were but a handful to the weak and blind. But with Jesus something came into the world that was never here before and has never left us since. Christianity, in opposition to the religions where man seeks God, "is God seeking man." Of the Platonists, for example, Augustine remarked that "their pages contained not *this*. They aroused a warmth and enthusiasm, but none there sang, 'Of God cometh my salvation,' none there heard him calling, 'Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' It was one thing to see the land of peace, yet not find the way thither; and another, to keep the way, being guarded by the host of the heavenly Guide."

When the sons of Man, the son of God, looked in the West for the true saint; or awaited the *avatars* of Vishnu and of another Buddha; or expected Sosiosh, Bringer of Salvation; or looked back to Osiris in Egypt and to Hiawatha among the Indians; or in Mexico hoped for the return of Quetzalcoatl to restore righteousness; or through Cumæan sibyls prophesied a deliverer, and a golden age of holiness; or declared that Balder, sacrifice of Loki's sin,

Digitized by Google