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A table of contents for *Journal of the Transactions of the Victoria Institute* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_jtvi-01.php

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ORDINARY MEETING, APRIL 20, 1885.

D. HOWARD, Esq., F.I.C., IN THE CHAIR.

The Minutes of the last Meeting were read and confirmed, and the following Elections were announced :—

ASSOCIATES :—The Rev. the Hon. C. Fielding, M.A., Shrewsbury ; W. G. P. Gilbert, Esq., Portsmouth.

Also the presentation to the Library of a work entitled—
“The Autobiography of a Crystal.” By Rev. C. D. Dunn.

*SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF PRIMITIVE
RELIGIONS.* By the Rev. R. COLLINS, M.A.

THE materialist's view of the growth of religion and ultimate belief, as now, in a God, perfect in holiness, knowledge, and power, has been concisely expressed by Mr. Herbert Spencer.* After stating his hypothesis, the “ghost-theory, that man first conceived the idea of the supernatural in his dreams” about the “double of the dead ;” and after imagining that “in course of time are formed the conceptions of the great ghosts, or gods,” which are, in the first instance, the “doubles of the more powerful men,” he says :—“With advancing civilisation the divergence of the supernatural being from the natural being becomes more decided. There is nothing to check the gradual de-materialisation of the ghost and of the god ; and this de-materialisation is insensibly furthered in the effort to reach consistent ideas of supernatural

* *Nineteenth Century*, No. 83, pp. 3 et seq.

action ; the god ceases to be tangible, and later he ceases to be visible or audible. Along with this differentiation of physical attributes from those of humanity, there goes on more slowly the differentiation of mental attributes. The gods of the savage, represented as having intelligence scarcely, if at all, greater than that of the living man, are deluded with ease. Even the gods of the semi-civilised are deceived, make mistakes, repent of their plans ; and only in course of time does there arise the conception of unlimited vision and universal knowledge. The emotional nature simultaneously undergoes a parallel transformation. The grosser passions, originally conspicuous and carefully ministered to by devotees, gradually fade, leaving only the passions less related to corporeal satisfactions ; and eventually these, too, become partially de-humanised.

"These ascribed characters of deities are continually adapted and re-adapted to the needs of the social state. During the militant phase of activity, the chief god is conceived as holding insubordination the greatest crime, as implacable in anger, as merciless in punishment ; and any alleged attributes of a milder kind occupy but small space in the social consciousness. But where militancy declines, and the harsh, despotic form of government appropriate to it is gradually qualified by the form appropriate to industrialism, the foreground of the religious consciousness is increasingly filled with those ascribed traits of the divine nature which are congruous with the ethics of peace ; divine love, divine forgiveness, divine mercy, are now the characteristics enlarged upon.

"To perceive clearly the effects of mental progress and changing social life thus stated in the abstract, we must glance at them in the concrete. If, without foregone conclusions, we contemplate the traditions, records, and monuments of the Egyptians, we see that out of their primitive ideas of gods, brute or human, there were evolved spiritualised ideas of gods, and, finally, of a god ; until the priesthoods of later times, repudiating the earlier ideas, described them as corruptions, being swayed by the universal tendency to regard the first state as the highest—a tendency traceable down to the theories of existing theologians and mythologists. Again, if, putting aside speculations, and not asking what historical value the *Iliad* may have, we take it simply as indicating the early Greek notion of Zeus, and compare this with the notion contained in the Platonic dialogues, we see that Greek civilisation had greatly modified (in the better minds, at least) the

purely anthropomorphic conception of him ; the lower human attributes being dropped and the higher ones transfigured. Similarly, if we contrast the Hebrew God described in primitive traditions, manlike in appearance, appetites, and emotions, with the Hebrew God as characterised by the prophets, then is shown a widening range of power along with a nature increasingly remote from that of man. And, on passing to the conceptions of him which are now entertained, we are made aware of a extreme transfiguration. By a convenient obliviousness, a Deity who in early times is represented as hardening men's hearts so that they may commit punishable acts, and as employing a lying spirit to deceive them, comes to be mostly thought of as an embodiment of virtues transcending the highest we can imagine.

"Thus, recognising the fact that in the primitive human mind there exists neither religious idea nor religious sentiment, we find that in the course of social evolution, and the evolution of intelligence accompanying it, there are generated both the ideas and sentiments which we distinguish as religious ; and that, through a process of causation clearly traceable, they traverse those stages which have brought them, among civilised races, to their present forms."

The quotation is long ; but it seems necessary, to emphasise the contrast that I venture to place against it.

Before, however, proceeding to my particular point, I would at once remark that Plato lived but a comparatively short time after a most remarkable wave of religious light had flashed across Asia and a great part of Europe, leaving in its trail such reformers as Gautama Buddha, Zoroaster, Confucius, Heraclitos of Ephesus, Pythagoras, and others, most of whom proclaimed, more or less distinctly, that they were only bringing back the purer faith of primitive men. They were trying to rekindle gleams of that "Golden Age" which ancient nations have uniformly placed in the past. To this renaissance Plato may have been more indebted than to the progress of what Mr. Spencer may understand by "Greek civilisation." The progress of civilisation has been nowhere uniform. The Zeus of the *Iliad* may represent the religious degradation of the time, compared with the religious teaching of Plato ; but was not that Zeus the descendant of Dyu, the "bright heavens," a conception, apparently, of what must have been a more enlightened age than, perhaps, even that of Plato ? And, with regard to the conception of the Hebrew and Christian God, it is an entire perversion of the truth to say that "we are aware of an extreme transfiguration,"

between the Book of Genesis and the Book of Revelation, "from the primitive traditions," which describe God as "manlike in appearance, appetites, and emotions." The Christian's God in Christ is, in one sense, still more anthropomorphic—he is "very man" as well as "very God"; but the Deity is ever the same, with Moses, David, Isaiah, St. Paul, St. John, though pictured in human thoughts, the almighty, omniscient, omnipotent Creator. And how otherwise could the attributes of the Deity be expressed to man, except by human pen? And how otherwise than by human thoughts, even be those thoughts inspired? Nor do the words of Moses as to the "hardening of Pharaoh's heart," nor those as to the permitting of a "lying spirit"—or, as it really is, "*the spirit*"—to influence Ahab, fasten upon those early times a less exalted idea of the "transcendent virtues" of the God of the Hebrews: they touch, indeed, upon the mystery of mysteries, the existence and power of evil; but they do but tell us that, in the words of the late Bishop Wordsworth, God at last "deals with wilful sinners according to their own devices." Pharaoh is recorded to have hardened his own heart seven times against God before it is said that God "hardened his heart," or, rather, "left his heart *bound* in its own already existing hardness;" Ahab had persistently hardened his heart also against the most evident and repeated warnings from God; and who shall say that it is not the very perfection of an all-wise government, or, it may be, the very necessity of perfect justice, thus ultimately to "deal with wilful sinners after their own devices?"

The special object of inquiry here, however, is as to the "fact recognised" by Mr. Herbert Spencer that, "in the primitive human mind there exists neither religious idea nor sentiment." Is it a "fact" really forcing itself upon our recognition? And, then, there is the further question, as to whether it is really a "fact" that both the ideas and sentiments, which we distinguish as religious, are generated as a result of "social evolution, and the evolution of intelligence accompanying it."

What are we to understand by "primitive man?" If he be the near descendant of the anthropoid ape, the "pithecid man," who is just developing a few shreds of intelligence, just dropping his hair, just widening his brow, just improving his features, just lengthening his thumbs, just shortening his tail, we can scarcely canvass his religious ideas and sentiments; probably they are non-existent, though he may, perhaps, dream dreams, and those even of "doubles" and "ghosts."

But, if by "primitive man" we are to understand "prehistoric" man, such a man as we could acknowledge to be a man, how are we to know that his intelligence, however he came by it, was such as necessarily to be devoid of both religious ideas and sentiments? It is very much in vogue to name the Fijian, the Karen, the Zulu, "primitive" men, a term that can only be correct on the assumption that they are true representatives, in their knowledge and habits, of the pre-historic man. But is this assumption correct? It certainly cannot be proved. There is nothing to prove that their remote ancestors were not more civilised than they. History teems with instances of decline in many phases of what is broadly called civilisation. Was there not, for instance, a decline, and that unto the death, in what may be called art-civilisation in England, between the times of the building of our ancient cathedrals and the building of the Peel churches? Was there a man in England at the beginning of the nineteenth century, who retained more than a tradition—and that, perhaps, a tradition that he did not care for—of the art-civilisation of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries? A thousand points of civilisation have, in like manner, been lost in the histories of nations. And this is equally true of religion; as witness the condition of the Coptic Church in Egypt, the Church of St. Thomas in South India, or others nearer home. We cannot, therefore, safely measure the state of pre-historic man by the present state of so-called uncivilised tribes. It may be that they have declined in religious sentiment and perception; and that many of the tendencies which Mr. Herbert Spencer has taken note of have been the causes which have rather degraded and polluted a once pure fountain of religious idea and practice, than marked the steps of their development.

History testifies in numberless instances to such change from the nobler to the more ignoble: thus reversing the materialist view of religion. Thus, to take an example already touched upon, Zeus, quoted by Mr. Spencer as contributing to his view of the matter, did not begin his history as a man in a chariot, with a thunderbolt instead of an assegai in his hand, but he was the Dyn, or Dyaus, of an earlier stage of human worship, the "bright heaven," or "light," that being a primitive name for the supreme God; a name which still, under the form *dev*, or *div*, expresses the idea of *deity* to all India, and remains with ourselves in our word *divine*. The anthropomorphism, therefore, of the Homeric Zeus was not a primitive conception, but a degradation of the primitive.

Indeed, as Professor Max Müller points out,* Zeus was originally the supreme God, even to the Greeks; the ancient song of the Peleiades, at Dodona, was, "Zeus was, Zeus is, Zeus will be,"—a sentiment that expresses an idea utterly beyond anthropomorphism, and traceable to an earlier existence in the human mind than the anthropomorphic idea. As far back as we can go in the records of human thought, Dyaus is called, in the *Rig-Veda* (iv. 1, 10), "the Father, the Creator." Zeus, then, was originally "Light"; a religious idea which is not advanced upon by even St. John's "God is Light," nor by the Christian creed of to-day, that Christ is "Light of Light."

The Hindus are said to have some millions of gods. Their pantheon is so expansive as to be ready to accept a fresh candidate every day. Even the ghost of a dreaded Englishman has claimed a niche in the temple of the gods. Anthropomorphism to-day in India everywhere rules supreme. But that it was not so originally among the remote ancestors of the Hindu race we have very suggestive evidence. The early religious notions were not of "ghosts" and "doubles" of heroes. There is every evidence that the anthropomorphic idea grew out of the imperfections of human language, and the decay of religious integrity. The further back we go, the more evident becomes the fact, as just illustrated in the case of Zeus, that attributes, which modern thought has not improved upon, are predicated of the Deity.

Already in the time of the Vedic poets the religion of the Hindu was in one sense polytheistic; but the polytheism of the Hindu was very different from the later polytheism of the Greeks and Romans. The Vedic gods are not first ghosts and heroes, and then gods; but they are personifications of abstract ideas and powers of Nature; and are, perhaps, often wrongly interpreted by us on account of our previous education in Greek and Roman polytheistic thought. In many passages, where it might appear to us that different gods are named, it may be originally only that the appellation is different, as we ourselves call God the Infinite, the Almighty, the Creator, the Father, and even the "Heaven." †. The heroic period of Hindu religious cult was long subsequent to the Vedic era. The materialist might, no doubt, say that the personification of Nature's powers and phenomena is a later development of ghost-worship; but against this we

* *Lectures on the Science of Language*, vol. ii. p. 481.

† St. Luke xv. 21.

place history, the fact of the later development in India of heroic worship, the absence of anthropomorphism from the highest thoughts of the Vedic era, and the early grasp of the most exalted ideas of creation, supreme sovereignty of the Deity, infinitude, omniscience, omnipotence, justice, righteousness, and so forth. There is a very instructive passage in Professor Max Müller's *India, what can it teach us?* (pp. 199–201): speaking of the “large number of the so-called Devas, bright and sunny beings, or gods,” he notices how “every act of nature, whether on the earth, or in the air, or in the highest heaven, is ascribed to their agency.” “When we say *it* thunders, they said Indra thunders; when we say *it* rains, they said Parganya pours out his buckets; when we say *it* dawns, they said the beautiful Ushas appears like a dancer, displaying her splendour; when we say *it* grows dark, they said Sūrya unharnesses his steeds. The whole of nature was alive to the poets of the Veda, the presence of the gods was felt everywhere, and in that sentiment of the presence of the gods there was a germ of religious morality, sufficiently strong, it would seem, to restrain people from committing, as it were before the eyes of their gods, what they were ashamed to commit before the eyes of men. When speaking of Varuna, the old god of the sky, one poet says,* ‘Varuna, the great lord of these worlds, sees as if he were here,’ &c. This is a point worth careful study. “We know that there never was such a Deva, or god, or such a thing as Varunā. We know it is a mere name, meaning originally ‘covering or all-embracing,’ which was applied to the visible starry sky, and afterwards, by a process perfectly intelligible, developed into the name of a Being endowed with human and super-human qualities.” “Only,” Professor Max Müller goes on to say, “let us be careful in the use of that phrase, ‘It is a mere name.’ No name is a mere name. Every name was originally meant for something; only it often failed to express what it was meant to express, and thus became a weak or an empty name, or what we call ‘a mere name.’ So it was with these names of the Vedic gods. They were all meant to express the *Beyond*, the Invisible behind the Visible, the Infinite within the Finite, the Supernatural above the Natural, the Divine, omnipresent, and omnipotent. They failed in expressing what, by its very nature, must always remain inexpressible. But that Inexpressible itself remained, and, in spite of all these failures, it never succumbed, or

* *Atharva-Veda*, iv. 16.

vanished from the mind of the ancient thinkers and poets, but always called for new and better names—nay, calls for them even now, and will call for them to the very end of man's existence upon earth."

I do not quote this because I wish to endorse its every word; for instance, I fail to see that the moral relation of man to the Deity is at all sufficiently accounted for. Nor do I see that the *Beyond* was altogether so "inexpressible" as Max Müller would seem to imply; for, as we shall see, the Vedic poets did express its character in very marked terms. But I quote it, because I believe it most graphically describes the fact, that the early names of so-called Hindu polytheism were originally such attempts to describe the Deity in human speech as we use to this day. And how could they describe the Deity without previous knowledge of his character? Mere intuitions, or suspicions, from what they saw and experienced in nature are not sufficient explanations. What we notice is that the "Divine, omnipresent, omnipotent *Beyond*," whether realised as Aditi, Dyaus, Varuna, or Indra, has all the attributes belonging to the highest conception of the Deity.

One very old name for Deity is Aditi, the Infinite. On this name Max Müller has the following note*: "Aditi, an ancient god or goddess, is in reality the earliest name invented to express the Infinite; not the Infinite as the result of a long process of abstract reasoning, but the visible Infinite, visible by the naked eye, the endless expanse beyond the earth, beyond the clouds, beyond the sky. This was called A-diti, the un-bound, the un-bounded; one might almost say, but for fear of misunderstandings, the Absolute, for it is derived from *diti*, bond, and the negative particle, and meant, therefore, originally what is free from bonds of any kind, whether of space or time, free from physical weakness, free from moral guilt. Such a conception became of necessity [why necessity?] a being, a person, a god. To us such a name and such a conception seems decidedly modern, and to find in the Veda Aditi, the Infinite, as the mother of the principal gods, is certainly, at first sight, startling." To revert to the doctrine of Mr. Herbert Spencer; of course, a man whose intelligence could speculate about dream-ghosts, could speculate about space and dimensions; yet, at that supposed stage of development at which he could only reach the supernatural by attributing existence to the ghosts of

* *Rig-Veda-Sanhita*, vol. i. p. 230.

heroes, he could hardly argue up to the idea of the Infinite, much less make that idea a god. Indeed, even to take Max Müller's standpoint, the "visible" could hardly suggest to untutored man the Infinite; the "endless expanse" beyond the sky is not visibly so, but only reasonably so; to "vision" the sky does not suggest boundlessness, but only a dome of comparatively small dimensions. And yet the oldest known name for Deity is "The Infinite." This may be a "startling" discovery; but, however the idea arose, the striking fact is that in that aspect of Deity the early men of North India, or Central Asia, had as exalted a notion of the Deity as we have, and perhaps can have, ourselves.

It would be impossible to follow at length the history of Aditi in this paper, and it must suffice here to add that:—(1) Worship is offered to Aditi, the Infinite: "I invoke the divine Aditi early in the morning, at noon, and at the setting of the sun" (*Rig-Veda*, v. 69, 3). (2) Aditi is named as the source and end of being: "Who will give us back to the great Aditi, that I may see father and mother." (3) Aditi is invoked as supreme in the moral world: "May Aditi protect us from all sin" (*Rig-Veda*, x. 36, 3); "May Aditi give us sinlessness" (*Rig-Veda*, i. 162, 22); "May we, guiltless before Aditi, and in the keeping of the god Savitar, obtain all goods" (*Rig-Veda*, v. 82, 6). Under this aspect Aditi becomes the base of what Professor Max Müller translates by Aditi-hood: "May we obtain the new favour of the Ādityas (gods who are said to be the offspring of Aditi), their best protection; may the quick Marnts (the storm gods) listen and place this sacrifice in guiltlessness and Aditi-hood" (*Rig-Veda*, v. 51, 1). On this passage Max Müller says:—"I have translated the last words literally, in order to make their meaning quite clear. Āgas has the same meaning as the Greek *ἀγος*, guilt, abomination; an-āgās-tvá, therefore, as applied to a sacrifice or to a man who makes it, means guiltlessness, purity. Aditi - tvá, Aditi - hood, has a similar meaning; it means freedom from bonds, from anything that hinders the proper performance of a religious act; it may come to mean perfection or holiness."*

Professor Max Müller appears to think that the moral character of Aditi is a subsequent development of the primary abstract idea of the Infinite; but how would he account for the idea of sin, as something against the Deity, arising so early in connexion with thoughts of the Infinite, even though that

* *Rig-Veda-Sanhita*, vol. i. p. 245.

Infinite be personified ? Is it not equally possible, and much more probable, that the moral aspect of Aditi is the original one ? that still in the Rig-Veda epoch there remain echoes of a primary doctrine of the Deity, under the name of the Infinite, as the Creator, Sovereign, and Judge of all men ; the Aditi-hood (*Aditi-tvá*) being synonymous with our "godliness" ? Else it is difficult to see how moral guilt could be confessed to Aditi. For how should the idea of moral guilt have arisen ? It is impossible that it could have been developed from the mere consciousness of the mysterious in nature. A consciousness of moral guilt, as a matter between man and the Deity can only arise, surely, from a knowledge of the holiness of the Deity, a knowledge that could not grow from the mere contemplation of the mysterious Infinite.

Besides Aditi, who is sometimes, as we have seen, invoked in the Veda,—as what Professor Max Müller calls "the Beyond, as what is beyond the earth and the sky, and the sun and the dawn," and to which he adds, that it is "a most surprising conception in that early period of religious thought,"—we meet with, and that more frequently, "the *Ādityas*, literally the sons of Aditi, or gods beyond the visible sky,—in one sense the infinite gods. One of them is Varuna, others Mitra and Aryaman (*Bhaga, Daksha, Amsa*), most of them abstract names, though pointing to heaven and the solar light of heaven as their first, though almost forgotten, source" * (*i.e.* almost forgotten at the time the Vedic hymns were written). Hence, under another aspect, the Deity is regarded as Varuna, the sky or heaven† (a name perpetuated in the Greek *Ouranos*). Varuna is evidently, in origin, only another picture of, and so only another name for, that which is also called Aditi. The same characters are ascribed to both ; both are addressed in language belonging only to the supreme Deity. Thus, in a hymn,‡ of which I read Max Müller's translation, Varuna is addressed as absolute God :—

"Take from me my sin, like a fetter, and we shall increase, O Varuna, the spring of thy law. Let not the thread be cut while I weave my song ! Let not the form of the workman break before the time !

"Take far away from me this terror, O Varuna ! Thou, O righteous King, have mercy on me ! Like as a rope from a calf, remove from me my sin ; for away from thee I am not master even of the twinkling of an eye.

"Do not strike us, Varuna, with weapons which at thy will hurt the evil-doer. Let us not go when the light has vanished ! Scatter our enemies, that we may live.

* *India*, p. 196.

VOL. XIX.

† Cf. Luke xv. 21.

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‡ *Rig-Veda*, ii. 28.

"We did formerly, O Varuna, and do now, and shall in future also, sing praises to thee, O Mighty One ! For on thee, unconquerable hero, rest all statutes, immovable, as if established on a rock.

"Move far away from me all self-committed guilt, and may I not, O King, suffer for what others have committed ! Many dawns have not yet dawned ! grant us to live in them, O Varuna !"

The theology of this is very wonderful; if it were only generated by the conception by primitive man of the fact of infinity (I say "fact," because even to us infinity is but a negative term), by thoughts engendered by the contemplation of the sky and the light, and, we should not forget, aided by "dreams of ghosts."

Another passage relating to Varuna, of which Professor Max Müller says, "it is as beautiful, and in some respects as true as anything in the Psalms," is as follows :—"Varuna, the great lord of these worlds, sees as if he were near. If a man stands or walks or hides, if he goes to lie down or to get up, what two people sitting together whisper to each other, King Varuna knows it, he is there as the third. This earth, too, belongs to Varuna, the king, and this wide sky with its ends far apart. The two seas (the sky and the ocean) are Varuna's loins ; he is also contained in this small drop of water. He who should flee far beyond the sky, even he would not be rid of Varuna, the king. His spies proceed from heaven towards this world ; with thousand eyes they overlook this earth. King Varuna sees all this, what is between heaven and earth, and what is beyond. He has counted the twinklings of the eyes of men. As a player throws down the dice, he settles all things (irrevocably). May all thy fatal snares which stand spread out seven by seven and threefold catch the man who tells a lie; may they pass by him who speaks the truth."*

Varuna, then, is the supreme, omniscient, sovereign ; the source of law ; the king of righteousness ; the dispenser of human life ; the forgiver as well as the punisher of sin. He has, in short, the characters that the Christian Church attributes to Jehovah.

Under another aspect the Deity is Agni, fire—with special reference, I believe, to the sacrificial fire. He is the supreme god, the "progenitor and father of heaven and earth, and the maker of all that flies, or walks, or stands, or moves on earth." One of the Vedic poets says, "I place Agni, the source of all beings, the father of strength."† He is also the forgiver of

* *Atharva-Veda*, iv. 16, quoted by Max Müller, *India*, p. 199.

† *Rig-Veda*, iii. 27, 9.

sin : "O Agni, thou who hast been kindled with this adoration, greet Mitra, Varuna, and Indra. Whatever sin we have committed, do thou pardon it!" * The forgiveness of sin is not a prominent doctrine of later Hinduism ; and its existing in the early hymns of the *Rig-Veda* must point to an exalted conception of the moral character of the Deity amongst the forefathers of the Vedic poets.

Under still another aspect the Deity is Indra, the rain-giver. He has become the chief god of the Vedic period ; an illustration, perhaps, of how the more material and immediate has always had a tendency to override the more spiritual and profound in religion. He has still, however, all the attributes of the supreme god ; he is the creator, preserver, and up-holder of all things.

Now, what especially strikes us is that the same attributes of Deity are ascribed to all these gods, whether Aditi, Varuna, Agni, or Indra, as also to others not here mentioned. Why this unity, or identity, of character ? Had these gods been originally separate creations of the human mind, would they not have differed more in character as well as name ? There is an immense difference between these ancient gods and the later Krishna, Rama, Ganapathi, &c., who were deified men, and had their separate and distinct characters. We can only account for the unity of character in these Vedic gods by looking upon them as originally the same Deity under different names. This, moreover, is the view of some, at least, of the Rishis of the Vedic hymns themselves. One says, "That which is *one*, sages name it in various ways. They call it Agni, Yama, Matarisvan." † Another says, "The wise poets represent by their words Him who is *one* with beautiful wings, in many ways." ‡

There is still another term, under which the idea of Deity is expressed : it is Âtman. Âtman was never the name of a god, but is the Self of both God and man, and is used to describe the Deity. Thus, in *Rig-Veda*, i. 164, 4 :—"Who saw him when he was first born, when he who has no bones bore him who has bones ? Where was the breath, the blood, the *Self* of the world ? Who went to ask this from any that knew it ?" Professor Max Müller quotes an early authority, of not later, he believes, than the fifth century B.C., who says, "That there is, in reality, but one God, but he does not call him the Lord, or the Highest God, the Creator, Ruler,

* *Rig-Veda*, vii. 93, 7.

+ *Ibid.*, i. 164, 46.

‡ *Ibid.*, x. 114, 5, quoted by Max Müller, *India*, p. 144.

and Preserver of all things, but he calls him Âtman, THE SELF. The one Âtman or Self, he says, is praised in many ways owing to the greatness of the godhead. And he then goes on to say:—"The other gods are but so many members of the one Âtman, Self, and thus it has been said that the poets compose their praises according to the multiplicity of the natures of the beings whom they praise." Professor Max Müller appears always to translate Âtman by "Self," and his scholarship I am quite ready to bow before as one of the proudest monuments of this nineteenth century. But I cannot divest myself of the conviction, first conceived in India, that the earliest meaning of Âtman was *spirit* (does not the word still remain in the Greek *atmos, atme?*). It is the word that the pundits have, I believe, uniformly suggested for the translation of the Scripture "Spirit." If this be the original meaning of Âtman, what a remarkable parallel we have to "God is a Spirit," "The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." Âtman is, of course, the Self; but the word signifying spirit may well always have been used to express the real Ego. At all events, the conception of the Great Self, whether originally conceived as spirit or not, is a very exalted one, and can be traced back to the Vedas at least, furnishing a presumption that the word and idea existed long before.

This is the one particular word which survived, to a pre-eminent degree, in the later philosophical period of Hindu religion. Professor Max Müller regards the idea of the Âtman as the fruit of a development of thought, "advancing to perfect clearness and definition." He says:—"Here the development of religious thought, which took its beginning in the hymns, attains to its fulfilment; the circle becomes complete. Instead of comprehending the One by many names, the many names are now comprehended" (*i.e.*, in the period of the Vedânta philosophy) "to be The One. The old names are openly discarded; even such titles as Pragâpati, lord of creatures; Visvakarman, maker of all things; Dhâtri, creator, are put aside as inadequate. The name now used is an expression of nothing but the purest and highest subjectiveness,—it is Âtman, The Self, far more abstract than our Ego,—the Self of all things, the Self of all the old mythological gods,—for they were not *mere* names, but names intended for something; lastly, the Self in which each individual Self must find rest, must come to himself, must find his own true Self." But I think the true idea of the Âtman existed long before, as indeed we have evidence from the *Veda*; and I think the development of the Vedânta was a develop-

ment, upon this primitive idea, of a humanised, philosophical, metaphysical religion (quite in accordance with what we know of human nature elsewhere), overpowering the earlier and truer religion of worship. The *names* of more ancient custom were dropped, because they were of no more use for philosophical speculation ; they had been the offspring and aid of devotion, and when the spirit of devotion died, and so-called philosophy took its place, they died also.

There is no development in Hinduism, such as would be expected on Mr. Herbert Spencer's theory. There is, on the contrary, the degradation of religious ideas by a growing exclusiveness of attention to that which was once but the picture of the Deity ; by mistaking the symbol for the thing symbolised ; by human philosophy ; and by the introduction, as the ages rolled on, of the deified hero and the fetich. This is human nature. Exact parallels to all these downward steps can be traced in the modern history of the Christian Church. But bright in the earliest days of the religion of the Hindus are the eternity, the infinity, the omnipresence, the omnipotence, the holiness of God, who is One. Primitive man, then, so far as illustrated by the Hindu, seems to have started his religion with as high a conception of the Deity as that which marks the present thought of Christendom ; the traditions of which still remain in the *Rig-Veda*, though already shrouded by human inventions.

Nor is this only true of the Hindus. There are indications, more or less evident, in the histories of other religions to the same fact. Thus, for instance, to go to the religion of the Egyptians, who are well known to have made almost every living thing an object of worship, and thus might be taken at first sight as contributing evidence to Mr. Spencer's side of the question, we find that there are distinct traces of a fundamental belief, clearer the further we go back, and therefore we may conclude their earliest belief, in the unity of the Godhead. Thus in the hymn to Amen-Ra, which is supposed on good evidence to have been written in about the fourteenth century B.C. he is addressed as,—

“The good God beloved,
Giving life to all animated beings :

* * *

The Ancient of heaven : the Oldest of the earth :
Lord of all existences :

* * *

The ONE in his works, *single* among the gods :

* * *

Lord of truth, Father of the gods :
Maker of men, Creator of beasts,

* * *

In whose goodness the gods rejoice,
To whom adoration is paid in the great house.

* * *

Lord of Eternity, Maker everlasting :

* * *

Judging the poor, the poor and the oppressed :
Lord of wisdom, whose precepts are wise.”*

Though already there are *gods*, yet here remains the tradition of ONE ; and that ONE, the Creator, true, eternal, merciful, and wise ; the giver, too, of PRECEPTS. How should this last idea have arisen, except on a tradition of revelation ? We hardly come, as Mr. Spencer says, “finally to God” ; but we start from a God.

In a still more ancient fragment of an Accadian liturgy, translated by Mr. Sayce, and inserted in vol. ii. of *Records of the Past*, the antiquity of which is believed to “go back beyond the second millennium B.C.,” we find the distinct tradition of one Supreme God. This liturgy appears to be a war-song, or song of triumph, and no doubt marks an age, and a race, of fierce conflicts ; and to a certain extent it supports Mr. Spencer’s observation that, during the militant phase of activity, the chief god is conceived as holding insubordination the greatest crime, as implacable in anger, as merciless in punishment.” But this god, who speaks in the old Accadian liturgy, is not only a great and terrible god, his particular attributes, so far as they are described, are those which accord with an exalted conception of the Deity ; he speaks as one supreme ; and apostrophising the lightning, not merely as lightning, but as the symbol of his power, he claims for that power not only conquest, but the establishment of heaven and earth.

“I am Lord. The beetling mountains of the earth shake their head to the foundation.

* * * *

“The sun of fifty faces, the lofty weapon of my divinity, I bear.

* * * *

“The defender of conquests, the great sword, the falchion of my divinity, I bear.

* * * *

“The lightning of battle, my weapon of fifty heads (I bear).

* * * *

"That which maketh the light come forth like day, the god of the East, my burning power (I bear)."

* * * *

"The creator (or, establisher) of heaven and earth, the fire-god, who has not his rival (I bear)."

The analogy between the fire-disk with fifty faces and the flaming sword, that turned every way to guard the entrance to Paradise, has been suggested; but whether that tradition really exists here it would be difficult to say. It is, however, perhaps worthy of note that the very fact of these words being put into the mouth of the great god himself may be an indication of the tradition, or knowledge, that God had spoken. Nay, some of the words may be an actual transcript of words divine. "I am Lord." What could be more sublime? We inevitably think of what we believe to be the certain words of God, "I am the Lord thy God"; and of David's hymn of war-triumph, "Blessed be the Lord my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight. Bow thy heavens, O Lord, and come down; touch the mountains, and they shall smoke; cast forth thy lightnings, and scatter them; shoot out thine arrows, and destroy them."

In Assyrian hymns, too, though there are already gods many and lords many, there is still the echo of the fundamental thought of the supremacy of one; of that one in a moral aspect; and of creation. Thus:—

"O my Lord! my sins are many, my trespasses are great;
And the wrath of the gods has plagued me with disease;
And with sickness and sorrow.
I fainted; but no one stretched forth his hand!
I groaned, but no one drew nigh!
I cried aloud; but no one heard!
O Lord! do not abandon Thy servant!
In the waters of the great storm, seize his hand!
The sins which he has committed, turn Thou to righteousness!" *

With the exception of one word, which, after all, requires, perhaps, rather explanation than change, this prayer might have been offered up yesterday by some saint of God in the Christian Church.

This God is also the Creator:—

"The God my Creator, may he stand by my side!
Keep Thou the door of my lips! Guard thou my hands, O Lord
of light!

In heaven who is great ? Thou alone are great !
 On earth who is great ? Thou alone are great !
 When thy voice resounds in heaven, the gods fall prostrate !
 When thy voice resounds on earth, the genii kiss the dust !”*

It should not escape observation, how few are the remains we have of Assyrian, Babylonian, and Egyptian thought in remote times, compared with the literature of ancient India ; and how remarkable it is that, even from those fragments, we should have the evidence we have on these points.

Lastly, even amongst untutored, so-called savages, whose fetich-worship is supposed to point to the germs of primitive religion, there are existing traces of an original belief in one Supreme God ; a belief that we have no evidence whatever for attributing to the influence of the modern thought of more civilised nations. I have only space to quote a single example. The Yoruba tribe of West Africa, notwithstanding their fetich-worship, own a supreme god, whom they name Olorun, as to whom, for instance, they have a proverb, as ancient, no doubt, to them as their hills : “Leave the battle to God (Olorun), and rest your head upon your hand.”†

On another subject, on which very much has been written, it seems necessary to add a word here, though anything like a full discussion would be impossible. I mean the ancestral worship which prevails, and has prevailed, so widely. It is popularly regarded as one of the steps in the evolution of religion, an advancing phase, in short, of ghost-worship. I regard it as one of the steps which mark its degradation. These, briefly, are my reasons. In almost every instance, if, indeed, there be an exception, in which we find ancestral worship, we can look back and discern a primitive belief in the immortality of the soul. It is so with the Hindus. We cannot go further back in documentary evidence than the *Vedas*, and there we find such passages as this, quoted by Max Müller :—“We drank Soma, we became immortal, we went to the light, we found the gods.”‡ It is the same with the Assyrians ; as, for instance, in a prayer for the king :—

“After the life of these days,
 In the feasts of the silver mountain, the heavenly courts,
 The abode of blessedness :
 And in the light
 Of the happy fields

* *Records of the Past*, vol. iii. pp. 136, 137.

† Bishop Crowther’s *Yoruba Vocab.*, *Introd.*, p. 36.

‡ *Rig-Veda*, viii. 48, 12.

May he dwell a life
Eternal, holy,
In the presence
Of the gods," &c.*

On this subject of ancestral worship in India, Professor Max Müller has written at length and with great care and learning; but it is remarkable that he says, after all, "When we ask the simple question, What was the thought from whence all this outward ceremonial (*i.e.*, the performance of endless rites, all intended to honour the departed) sprang, and what was the natural craving of the human heart which it seemed to satisfy? we hardly get an intelligible answer anywhere."† He speaks, indeed, of the "human impulse" to the daily ancestral sacrifice as being "clear enough," since it was "connected with the daily meal;"‡ but why should the daily meal naturally suggest sacrifices to the Pitris or ancestors? It is difficult to find the impulse in anything human, and thought seems to reduce the "clearness" to opacity. On sacrifices, as connected with the daily meal, I shall have a word to say afterwards. Max Müller also says, with regard to the monthly ancestral sacrifice, that "it was at such moments as the waning of the moon that his thoughts would most naturally turn to those whose life had waned, whose bright faces were no longer visible on earth, his fathers or ancestors."§ But are we really "naturally" reminded of our ancestors by the waning, or reappearing, moon, any more than by a thousand other things that happen? Are not people "naturally" prone to bury their ancestors out of sight and out of mind? Is not the real explanation of these ancestral sacrifices very different, and, in fact, the very converse of that so industriously, and often eloquently, urged upon us? Is it not that the primitive men *began* their religion with the full doctrine of the immortality of the soul? and that the departed "went to the light" and presence of the Eternal? that, in short, they began their religion in the full blaze of what is now the brightest hope of the Christian, the "inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away?" The declension from the use of sacrifice, as a worship originally before the Deity alone, to a worship of ancestors, until in some cases the ancestral worship alone remained, is so much in accordance with what we know of human nature, that we have the exact parallel in the history of Christianity itself within absolutely historic observable periods.

* *Records of the Past*, vol. iii. p. 131, &c.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 230.

† *India*, p. 228.

§ *Ibid.*, p. 231.

In nations retaining no original religious documents, it is no wonder that ancestral worship alone remains. These matters, to be properly understood, need to be brought still more fully into the light of actual history, and cannot be solved by speculations. History will reverse the conclusion to which Professor Max Müller and many others have come ; as, for instance, that “a thoughtful look on nature led to the first perception of bright gods, and in the end of a god of light, as love of our parents was transfigured into piety and a belief in Immortality,” &c.* History will be seen to teach that God’s first name was light, but that He was forgotten in the symbol ; and that man’s first belief, as to himself, was in Immortality, but was degraded into ancestral and saint worship.

Another most interesting and suggestive study is that of the monuments and characteristic observances of religions, most, if not all, of which can be traced back to a unity in the far past, which must speak of a common purpose in their origin. We take, for instance, the sacrificial aspect of all ancient religions. It is the fashion to regard the sacrificial system as a mark of religious evolution from the first germ of ghost-worship that we have heard so much about ; fear of the Deity, which had at last grown out of this ghost, led men naturally to think of appeasing a god by offering him “the best” a man possessed—hence the first step is sacrifice of the first-born, as the best a man has to give, supposed to be illustrated in the offering of Isaac by Abraham ; the next is a “commutation” by animal sacrifices ; the next a supplanting of blood sacrifices altogether, and any idea of substitution, by self-sacrifice in almsgiving and moral obedience, as in the case of the Buddhists. This is the view taken by, amongst others, Mr. Moncure Conway, as in an article in the May number of the *Nineteenth Century* for 1880, on Shylock’s bond, the “Pound of Flesh.” He attributes the idea of sacrifice, and its whole history, to the struggle in all ages and races between “the principle of retaliation and that of forgiveness,” on purely human grounds. But, to say nothing of the difficulty of satisfactorily tracing through history the working of such principles, look at a question more immediately prominent on the face of sacrifice, the method of propitiation. What is there in human nature to suggest to man the idea of propitiating an angry, or mysterious, god by an offering in blood ? Men do not so propitiate each other ;

* Max Müller, *India*, p. 243.

there is nothing in human nature, surely, to suggest to a man to go into the presence of an earthly prince, when he would ask a favour, or avert disaster, whether that prince be dreaded or loved, with the bleeding corpse of his first-born ; or even with the corpse of an animal, unless, indeed, the animal were intended as a present useful to the prince ; and, then, why the offering of blood ? Of course, it may be said that by death only could the offering be supposed to reach, and therefore benefit, and so bribe, the god. But is this the primary idea of sacrifice ? It is to be remembered that the animal is supposed, on the theory of Mr. Conway, at least, to be only a substitute for the first-born—not to feed the god, though even that idea belongs to a later superstition—and the first-born but a substitute for the man himself. Thus Mr. Conway says, “ Since finite man is naturally assumed to be incapable of directly satisfying an infinite law ”—whence the idea to a primitive man of infinite law ?—“ all religions, based on the idea of a Divine Lawgiver ”—whence, also, this idea of a “ Divine Lawgiver ? ”—“ are employed in devising schemes by which commutations may be secured and vicarious satisfactions of Divine law obtained. No Deity inferred from the always relentless forces of nature has ever been supposed able to forgive the smallest sin until it was exactly atoned for. For this reason, the Divine mercifulness has generally become a separate personification. The story of the “ pound of flesh ” is one of the earliest fables concerning these conflicting principles (*i.e.* retaliation and forgiveness).

We must search for another origin for this most remarkable, and, we need not hesitate to say, mysterious, observance of sacrifice found everywhere in the ancient nations of the world, and existing in nearly all unchristianised nations still, mysterious enough to cause Max Müller to write with regard to sacrifices offered to the Manes, “ What was the thought from whence all this outward ceremonial sprang ? and what was the natural craving of the human heart which it seemed to satisfy ? We hardly get an intelligible answer anywhere.”

The historical authority of the Bible is equal at least to that of any other historical record whatever. It is there that we have a full explanation of the meaning of the sacrifices, which were, according to that Book, appointed to be offered by the Israelites. The New Testament tells us they were a figure, for the time then being, of Christ. We can understand it. A great event was to take place in the history of the world of man — the Christian believes the greatest of great events—and the world must be educated for it from the earliest days of the human family. That education was based

on the meal, which must every day be taken. The meal was to be every day the lesson of God, the life of the world, both in a physical and spiritual sense. The shedding of the blood of the food-animal was to be a picture, through special religious rites, of the centre of all religion—the death of Jesus Christ, the Life of the world. These points could be greatly enlarged upon, were it possible in this paper; but we can only at once assume our own standpoint, that we have no clue whatever to the sacrificial system, or even the idea of sacrifice, except upon this statement—a statement which is a claim of history; a statement of that the nature of which we cannot argue up to from *à priori* principles, or hypotheses; but which we can test by the facts of history.

Accordingly, we find that such a pictorial system was preserved by all nations long after they had left their original home in Central Asia; as systems, and acts, and monuments always will survive, even though the origin and true meaning may have been long forgotten. It was, no doubt, because men forgot the original lesson of sacrifice, and Him who had appointed it, that the Mosaic Dispensation was a re-appointment of that system. The ancient features of such a system still live in India, and were there in the Vedic era; can be traced through the history of the human race; and are exactly what we should expect in such remains. It is not my office here to maintain the doctrine of a vicarious offering for the sins of the whole world. I have only to look now at certain historical facts; and the position I take is, that if an original revelation as to sacrifice, &c., were given similar in character and intention to that which we read in the Mosaic Dispensation, the remains of the sacrificial system, and other religious monuments and observances, are in exact accordance with it.

To take, first, the Scripture account of sacrifice as existing before the time of Moses. According to that account, sacrifices were not originated under the Mosaic Dispensation. Jethro, before the institutions of Mount Sinai, "took a burnt offering (*olah*) and sacrifices (*zebachim*) for God; and Aaron came, and all the elders of Israel, to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law *before God*."* These are the same words that are afterwards used for "offerings" and "sacrifices" of the Mosaic Dispensation; and here is, not an ordinary, but no doubt a sacrificial feast, the old-world sacrament, "*before God*." Again, Jacob, on the eve of his memorable parting with Laban, "offered sacrifice upon the mount, and called his

* Ex. xviii. 12.

brethren to eat bread." Was not the "eating bread" also the same sacrificial feast? Noah, also, on coming out of the ark, "builded an altar," and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl (*i.e.*, such as were eaten), and offered burnt offerings (the same word as above, *oloth*) on the altar." Melchizedek, also, perhaps one of the old Hittite race, was both priest (*i.e.*, sacrificer) and king. The offering itself of tithes was a part of the old sacrificial system—preserved both in India and among both Greeks and Romans; and the bringing forth of bread and wine may have had a sacramental aspect, though I would not insist upon it. Lastly, the history of Abel takes the custom of sacrifice into the first home, as we believe it to be, of the human family.

The history of the Hindu sacrificial system is a long subject; but it may be sufficient here to point out, that it preserves, from times no doubt antecedent to Moses, many of the salient features of such a system as that of the Hebrews. The sacred sacrificial fire is one of the most prominent marks of early Hinduism. The sacrifices were offered at marked seasons, some daily and in connexion with meals morning and evening; sacrificial observances were, and are, customary, even at the daily meal at home as well as in the temples; others are offered at full moon and new moon; others at times of harvest. A portion of the offering in the temples is placed on the altar-fire, the rest eaten, as in the case of the Hebrews. The idea of sacrifice is propitiation, and the forgiveness of sin in connexion with it still lingers, though the petitions are commonly for temporal, earthly blessings. The hymns of the *Rig-Veda* were composed for use at the sacrificial rites. The offering is, indeed, usually of the fruits of the ground, such as the *Minchah* offerings of Moses; but bloody sacrifices are not unknown, and those that still exist are of food-animals, though the ancient sacrifice of the horse, common to the Hindu and the European branch of the Aryan family, may be taken as an exception. The Soma libation, though long more or less of a mystery, is especially prominent, and seems analogous to the libations of wine appointed by Moses; the absence of wine from the Hindu sacrificial rites, as well as the predominance of the *Minchah* offerings, are, perhaps, to be explained from natural causes, India never having been, in any prominent sense, a grape-growing country, and the fruits of the earth most probably abounding greatly beyond the flocks and the herds; a fact that will, no doubt, account for the high value set upon the cow and her milk in early times, as well as for the vegetarian diet of the people of that country which still obtains.

Among the ancient Greeks and Romans, again, the sacrificial system was in equal force, and of similar character in its details to that of the Hebrews and the Hindus. The principal sacrifices were of food-animals. In the time of Homer it was the custom to burn only the legs, enclosed in fat, and certain parts of the intestines, while the remaining parts of the victim were consumed by men at a festival meal (cf. Lev. iii., &c.). Wine and incense were thrown upon the burning victim, and prayers were offered. The offering of fruit and cakes also was prominent, and they were often offered as tithes of the harvest, and as a token of gratitude to the god supposed to be propitiated. But further particulars need not be enlarged upon, which are known full well to every classical scholar.

Among the Phœnicians and Assyrians also there were most elaborate sacrificial rituals. Some most striking parallels between those systems and the Hebrew sacrifices are noted by Mr. Sayce in *Fresh Light from the Ancient Monuments*, the offerings being called among the Assyrians "peace-offerings," and "heave-offerings," and "sacrifices for sin"; the Phœnician ritual also speaking of "full-offerings," "prayer-offerings," "thank-offerings," and the sacrifices being those of bullocks, sheep, goats, lambs, kids, and birds, as well as meal-offerings and oil.*

Without quoting any further examples, we have sufficient evidence that all the sacrificial systems of the nations point to one type in the far past. The further we go back the more perfect, as it appears to me, is the resemblance of the system to that which we believe to have been of Divine appointment. The primitive man must have had a most elaborate sacrificial worship to enable his descendants in so many scattered families to preserve such relics as we find of the same character. For it is preposterous to suppose that each separate nation has worked out its own sacrificial system so as to hit the same identical customs as to libations, kinds of sacrifice, and endless minutiae, which are common to many, if not all, of these systems. And if primitive men worked out this system to the perfection indicated, while still existing as only one family in Central Asia, and gave it to the different members of their race before their migration to other lands, then we are entirely in the dark, with regard to natural causes, as to the processes by which it was arrived at; and the fragments of the system scattered over the earth, and now existing in India and else-

* *Fresh Light from the Ancient Monuments*, pp. 77 et seq.

where, cannot be clues to us in any degree as to the method of its initiation. The only rational explanation of this sacrificial system is that it was originally appointed by God himself, in the same manner and for the same purpose for which the Hebrew system was appointed.

I know that it may be said that the evolutionists claim the details of the Mosaic Dispensation as being only corroborations of their theory. But against this I may place the fact, that that Dispensation, in its later exponents at least, claims to have been a lesson to the old world of the coming sacrifice of Christ; and, if that sacrifice be not historical, we may as well shut up history altogether. Nay, the very sacrifice of Christ, or the belief in it, is also claimed by the evolutionists as the last illustration of their doctrine. On that aspect of the subject, however, we should join issue with them on altogether different grounds, and such as cannot be touched in the present paper.

Other monuments and observances of religion can also be traced back to a very great antiquity, thus confirming what has been said. The tracing back of the Sabbath to the times of the Accadians, a subject well understood in this room, and evidences, apparently unquestionable, of its observance in China in extremely remote times,* connected with its name as the "Day of the Sun," which comes to us from an antiquity we cannot at present fathom (except, indeed, by the word of Scripture), are a further indication of a unity in primitive religious teaching, and a beginning from the very principles to which some affirm we have been only gradually approaching by the light of nature.

The same may be said of the character of another class of monuments, the temples built for the worship of Deity and for the due performance of various religious rites. Were a person of perfectly unbiassed mind to be asked why a building existing, probably, at least 2000 B.C., another known to have been constructed 1400 B.C., another known to have been built 1000 B.C., and others of unknown date, all of peculiar character, and known to be for the same purpose, namely, the worship of the Deity, happen to be of precisely similar construction, he would, no doubt, unhesitatingly say that they must all have been constructed upon some model which existed in the extreme past, at least as old as, and probably older than, the earliest known building of the kind, and that, therefore, the presumption is that they are, practi-

* See *The Primitive Sabbath*, by the Rev. James Johnston.

cally, to be traced back to some one architect who planned the original one. How is it, then, that the Temple of Sepharvaim, discovered by Mr. Rassam, the Tabernacle in the Wilderness, Solomon's Temple, the Hindu temples, the old Greek temples, are all constructed on one particular plan? Here, again, we are taken back to a single ideal in the remote past in connexion with the externals of religion. And the inference is, at the least, that religion began in times as remote as we can possibly at present reach, with as perfect a ritual as any we can find in existing documents. And if we believe that one of those temples was constructed on plans laid down by Jehovah Himself for His own worship, with a ritual of His own appointing, we can scarcely hesitate to believe that the first one of all was from the same hand.

Other illustrations of a similar kind are possible ; but these are, perhaps, sufficient to support my thesis.

We do not, then, seem to find the "primitive human mind"—if by that we mean the mind of the pre-historic man—altogether "without religious ideas or religious sentiments," though we can see him pretty clearly as he existed as a religious man at least 4,000 years ago. Nor do we find that, "in the course of social evolution and the evolution of intelligence accompanying it, there are generated both the ideas and sentiments which we distinguish as religious." On the contrary, we find that the man of 4,000 years ago had received from his ancestors conceptions of the Deity equal to those which we now possess. What we really do see, in tracing "the course of social evolution" (if I may still use the word, though with a slightly different meaning) "and the evolution of intelligence accompanying it," is that human nature has had a constant tendency to, and has constantly fallen in the direction of, what we may best term as materialism. Instead of, as Professor Max Müller says, discerning a "gradual advance from the material to the spiritual, from the sensuous to the super-sensuous, from the human to the super-human and the divine,"* we discern, as I firmly hold, on a candid examination of history, a constant tendency to retreat from the spiritual to the material, from the super-sensuous to the sensuous, from the super-human and the divine to the human.

If it be retorted that 4,000 years is nothing in man's history, and that ages previous to that he was working his way in Mr. Spencer's style, and that he may have reached by

* *India*, p. 159.

natural processes in certain directions the same conclusions as to the Deity that we have reached ourselves, and that the short space of 4,000 years is but a crumb in the balance, well, then, I must leave it to others, within whose province of study it more properly falls, to say how long man has existed as man on the earth.

THE CHAIRMAN (Mr. D. HOWARD, F.I.C.).—We have to thank the author of the paper for the interesting protest he has offered against the very common, and, as I believe, the very mistaken, idea which is entertained with regard to the earliest history of mankind. It certainly does seem strange that, after all the centuries of accurate science of which we boast, it should still be necessary to reiterate and insist upon the necessity of understanding the very first principle of inductive science—that, before an induction can be made, there must be an accurate collection and verification of facts, those facts being chosen from variants as different as possible, in order to avoid the liability of special circumstances detracting from their value, and then put together so as to form a whole. The very fact that, as a rule, the theories of religious development are based on the assumed condition of the lowest tribe of savages, may at once be met by the question Mr. Collins asks, What right have we to suppose that the Zulu, the fetish-worshipper, or the Tasmanian savage, is the true representative of the earliest state of mankind? No doubt, if we wanted to study English history, and were to get hold of a west-country peasant or a Cumberland dalesman, we might thus obtain a valuable illustration and an interesting example of the Englishman of the past; but surely one would expect to learn very little of the bygone characteristics of the English race by choosing a London *gamin* as a specimen whereby to illustrate a theory. Thus, even the most enthusiastic evolutionist is obliged to bring in the idea of degeneracy to account for a good many things he perceives in Nature; and we constantly find that the upholders of the evolution theory are compelled to introduce this element in order to explain a great deal they meet with in civilisation. Is it not, according to their own theory, most probable that the dominant races are those who have best adhered to, and have worked up, the best points of their civilisation, while those constitute the lowest races who have left the best side of their nature uncultivated? Therefore, we have a right to contend that the lowest type of the human race cannot be a fair specimen of our ancestors, and that, if our Norse progenitors had been shown a Tasmanian savage as being a fair representative of what their ancestors were, they would not have felt at all gratified by the comparison, while, surely, we may suppose that those old Norsemen had quite as good an idea of what their predecessors were as the modern savant can form, and they certainly did not look back upon their ancestors as a degenerate race; on the contrary, they always spoke of them as heroes who had done mighty deeds, and not as a

type of being much lower in the scale of humanity than themselves. This being so, surely Mr. Collins's method is a sound one, namely, that we should look back to the earliest historic books and records, and see what testimony they are able to afford. For my part, I think that the more one looks at those old records the more profoundly is one struck by the degeneracy of modern heathenism. (Hear, hear.) When I use the word "modern," I mean modern in a comparative sense ; because, after all, modern heathenism began when Abraham uttered his protest against it ; and yet, even in Abraham's days, what, we may ask, was the state of Egypt ? Is there a single idolatrous image in the interior of the great Pyramid ? The best judges say "no." There is the winged circle, which is supposed to be the emblem of the Deity, and that, I think, is the only thing of the kind there to be found. If we may accept the ancient records contained in the Bible as history,—and the man must be a bold sceptic who would deny their historical value,—it is interesting to find how the patriarchs appealed to the knowledge of the one Divine Being with perfect confidence, and the appeal was not refused. The God of Abraham was recognised as the one God, and in a way that is surprising if we say that the worship of the Egyptians in those days was the worship of the Egyptians in a later and more debased state. I believe it will be found that this was universally the case, whether in Egypt, in Assyria, or among any of the Aryan tribes, or even those of the Vedas and the Zendavesta—wherever we look among the most ancient records we find there was but one conception of the one God—God the Infinite—evidenced in the beginning of the history of their religion. We owe a good deal to the Greeks ; but we must remember that their conception of heathendom was the most perfectly sensuous of all the forms that heathendom has assumed. We know that Greek heathendom was the finest type of that condition of belief—at once the most artistic and the most sensuous, but by no means the highest. They had fallen very far below the nobler worship of their ancestors ; they had fallen very far below the savage Goths, who, in the strength of their old faith, came down upon and harried the civilised world, whose religion had become a snare and not a source of strength to them. We hear a good deal about what is termed the mere fetish-worshipper, who has no conception of a God. But does such a creature exist ? Bishop Crowther does not know him ; none of the missionaries have met with him. No doubt, he exists in the minds of those who refer to him, because he is required ; but, at any rate, he is very difficult to find. But let us see what this fetish conception is. It is not an original nor a primary conception in the fetish-worshipper's mind. It is merely a vain attempt on the part of an utterly gross intellect to grasp a conception which it knows exists but which is quite beyond its reach. The fetish-worshipper no more believes that the fetish is an actual God than the Greek, who never got beyond the use of the abacus, conceived that the balls on the string by which he was counting were the actual sum he was working. It was simply, in the case of both, a material representation of a

thing difficult to grasp ; and the fact, that the fetish-worshipper can hardly rise beyond his fetish, is only the result of his degraded nature, and not of anything remarkable in his religion. The fetish God of the fetish-worshipper is just as much, and just as little, a representation of something beyond as the Greek statue of Jupiter was the representation of the Zeus, who, after all, was the Dyaus of the old Aryans, whose name, curiously enough, is still to be found in out-of-the-way country parts of England, where the people swear "by Jove," without any reference to classical knowledge, but simply as another word for the sky, the old word having survived without those who use it being able to grasp its real meaning. I think that the more we study this subject the more convinced shall we be that Mr. Collins is right and the modern theories wrong. I say boldly, let us appeal to facts. (Hear, hear.) In these days of inductive science it is hardly fair to have what is generally regarded as theoretical treated as actual proof, and to be told, "If the facts are against us, so much the worse for the facts." (Applause.)

Mr. G. WISE.—I wish to point out that on the third page of the paper Herbert Spencer is quoted as saying, "In the primitive human mind there exists neither religious idea nor religious sentiment;" but it is somewhat remarkable that Professor Tyndall, in his *Belfast Address*, should have said :—

"There is also that deep-set feeling which since the earliest dawn of history, and probably for ages prior to all history, incorporated itself in the Religions of the world. . . . the immovable basis of the sentiment in the Nature of Man."—*Belfast Address*, p. 60.

A statement such as this from a man like Professor Tyndall, who, has been regarded as a Materialist, ought to carry some weight. Professor Tyndall also says, "Physical science cannot satisfy all the demands of man's nature;" while Professor Max Müller says, "Wherever we find man we also find worship and religion;" and in a very able book in the library of the Institute, written by a French anthropologist and entitled *The Human Species*, the author criticises very severely the conclusions of Sir John Lubbock concerning the non-universality of religion. The truth is, that in every part of the world, in some form or other, a knowledge of God is found, and I believe Mr. Collins's paper will be of great use to all the religious societies and lecturers who came in contact with those sceptics who were constantly endeavouring to influence the minds of young men by trying to prove that the religious sentiment is not universal, and that the grand propitiation of God was not the original conception of religion. I am pleased to see that a very able work has been written by Canon Rawlinson, entitled *The Religions of the Ancient World*, which in every way substantiates the concluding remarks of Mr. Collins's paper. It goes to show that the one great God was the conception of the early religions, just as the author of this paper has shown how marvellously the monotheistic idea has prevailed throughout the world. I think that with Mr. Collins's paper ought

to be classed one read before the Institute a long time ago by Bishop Titcomb, in reply to Sir John Lubbock's statement regarding monotheism. In that paper the author gave statement after statement, and proof after proof, that the original conception of God was the one great God of the Hebrew Scriptures.

Mr. W. P. JAMES, F.L.S.—I have had great pleasure in reading the paper in the absence of the author, whose general conclusions I sympathise with, especially with the statement that the farther back we go in the examination of primitive religions the nearer do we get to primeval revelation. But I rather differ from the popular view in reference to the theories of Professor Max Müller, who is the representative of a school which believes in a science called that of "Comparative Religion." Now, I am one of those who profoundly disbelieve in this new science. I regard it as one of the impostures of the day, and I unhesitatingly say there is no such science. It is only a pseudo-science. It is supposed to be derived from the comparison of all forms of religion, including the Jewish, of which Christianity is the complement. But a true comparative science can only be founded when the things compared are of the same kind. Now, the religions of the world are not of the same kind. They are not homogeneous. There is an impassable gulf between the Jewish religion and the others, and any comparison between them is simply like one between animals and crystals, between which there are no points in common. The Jewish religion stands in a unique and isolated position, from the fact that it is the only religion through which runs the golden thread of inspiration. It is the only religion in which there is any revealed truth at all, except when borrowed from foreign sources. All comparisons consequently made between it and others seem to be utterly futile; and this supposed science has no postulates to start with. Of the precarious character of some of its conclusions I may say this: For the last twenty years Professor Max Müller has been telling us that Zeus means the bright sky. Now, the new school of German philologists do not agree with this derivation, but say it is an old word signifying God. A great deal of the old comparative romancing was entirely founded on that supposed derivation. This simply shows on what a precarious foundation Professor Max Müller is building up his imaginary science. I think the author of this paper might have given us a fuller treatment of the ancient Persian religion. The old Hindoo religion is very much of the same kind as that of the Old Greeks,—that is to say, it is a system of nature-worship, and, like all systems of nature-worship, it ultimately falls away to gross impurity. My own acquaintance with it is very slight; but still I may say that I do know what the Greek polytheism was, and it is hardly possible to describe plainly the conclusions to which their system of nature-worship eventually led them. The Semitic nations, such as the Assyrians, were, apparently, at one time not so prone to nature-worship as the Aryans, and would appear to have had to some extent higher and purer ideas. All through the history of the past, man has often risen

above his creed—has shown himself better than his mythology. As Tertullian said long ago, "The soul of man is naturally Christian." I could point to many unconscious utterances of heathen writers as proofs that man has risen to a higher level than that of his popular theology, and has instinctively formed and expressed a belief in the unity of the Deity. The subject, however, is one that I am so little prepared to speak on, that it is with great diffidence I make these remarks, and I hope that some one will follow who will favour us with a more coherent speech. (Applause.)

The CHAIRMAN.—It is only those who have tried to read a difficult essay at short notice who can fully appreciate how much we owe Mr. James for reading this paper. I can say that it is by no means an easy thing to do, for I have tried it. It was very kind on his part not only to read the paper to us, but also to favour us with his remarks upon it. I wish the author had been here, because, had he been, I am inclined to think he would have gone a long way in the direction Mr. James has indicated with regard to our not trusting too implicitly to Professor Max Müller's theories. (Hear, hear.) To a certain extent we may accept his evidence of fact, but I, for one, am certainly not prepared to accept his theories exactly as he has put them forward. Mr. James has referred to the desirability of studying the Persian religion, and has thus raised one of the most interesting points we could consider in relation to this subject; but it is too late for me to attempt to go into it now, and, moreover, it is a matter which requires to be dealt with by a specialist.* But I may say that at a very early period, before the date of the Vedas, there was a protest against the degeneracy of the old Aryan religion so strong that the *dev* or *div*, who is mentioned here as the Aryan God, was taken by the Persians to express what we express, with the same root, in the term "devil," the word being supposed to have been derived from the Persian mythology. It is assumed that they took the gods of the rival tribes to express their devils by, and a very simple process of thought shows how intensely strong their feeling was with regard to the corruption of the old religion that had taken place in India. I think that that very corruption of the original religion is a testimony against the notion that man was a fetish-worshipper, to begin with (Hear, hear.)

The meeting was then adjourned.

* A paper on the "Religion of Zoroaster," by R. Brown, Esq., Jun., F.S.A., will be found in vol. xiii. p. 246.—ED.

REMARKS ON THE FOREGOING PAPER ;

By The Reverend Canon SAUMAREZ SMITH, D.D., Principal of St. Aidan's College, Birkenhead.

The Honorary Secretary has kindly given me an opportunity of making some comments upon Mr. Collins's paper, as I was unable to be present at its discussion.

The time at my disposal will prevent me from saying much, but I am glad to express my sense of the value of Mr. Collins's line of thought, and to make a few remarks upon one or two of the points suggested for reflective argument. I quite agree with the main contentions of the paper, which is an interesting, thoughtful, and useful one. Mr. Collins argues that religions are not, when historically viewed, a development from ignorance so much as a degradation from knowledge ; and this argument is equivalent to the statement, that an "original revelation" is a more probable theory and more correspondent to facts than the theory of mere "natural evolution." The spiritual concept of God was rather an original *datum* than a result of philosophising effort. The moral idea, *i.e.*, the consciousness of responsibility, is never absent from the earliest religious utterances : and the prevalence of sacrificial observances points to a common origin.

Let me begin by referring to the way in which "anthropomorphism" is often used *in malam partem*, as a term intended to condemn the views of those to whom it is applied. Mr. Collins has rightly reminded us that some "anthropomorphic" language about God is indispensable. The idea of God must be expressed in terms of human existence for human beings, however far the actuality of God's being may transcend the symbolic range of human language. And we can certainly use terms about God's eyes, hands, feet, &c., without being "anthropomorphites," who think of God as having the shape and form of a man. ("The heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool," is an anthropomorphic expression, yet the idea is not degrading, but sublime.)

And it should be remembered that the most abstract idea of God is not the truest idea. The Duke of Argyll, in his important and very interesting book on *The Unity of Nature*, has some admirable remarks bearing upon this point. He shows that "anthropomorphism" (which he would prefer to call "anthropopsychism") is a phrase used opprobriously to condemn the conception which regards the being of God as to some extent analogous to man's reason, intelligence, and will. But this conception, so far from being absurd, is necessary and rational. We cannot describe the processes of nature without using "anthropopsychic" language. Darwin and Tyndall have used it ; and "those who struggle hardest to avoid the language of anthropopsychism in the interpretation of nature are compelled to use the analogies of our own mental impressions as the only possible exponents of

what we see." Anthropomorphism is, in fact, an ambiguous term. It may refer to *limitation* of God (as applied to the Greek mythology, which brings down the idea of divine beings to the level of human passion and sentiment, and so Mr. Collins applies the term in some of his remarks); or it may refer to the *expression in terms of human nature* of a super-human Being whose nature is conceived of as analogous to the highest part of that nature of our own of which we are conscious. To "de-humanise" God (if I may be allowed the expression with reference to language concerning the Divine Being) into a bare abstract "absolute," or abstract "infinite," so far from being a high view of Deity, is a very dim and unsatisfactory one, and a view which exhibits the divorce of intellectual from moral conceptions. The primitive view, *i.e.*, the personal view of God, is more true, and more complete, and therefore essentially more philosophical. All religions are based upon a sense of obligation felt towards a Personal Authority. This sense of dependence, which involves some sort of fear or reverence, is an essential and universal element of religion. Without it there could be no worship, no idea of priests or mediators, no sacrifice, no ascetic practices, no superstition, no idolatry. All these features of religions (and they are found wherever man has trod the earth) involve the idea of *personality*, *i.e.*, the moral idea of Being, as distinguished from, yet connected with, the metaphysical idea of cause and the physical idea of force. The very personification which characterises "nature-worship" points beyond the phenomena in nature towards supra-mundane BEING, and therefore to will, intelligence, purpose, which in one aspect may be termed "anthropomorphic," but in another view are naturally and necessarily regarded as "the Infinite" (*Aditi*), "the Boundless," "the Incomprehensible" (*Imensus*).

With this transcendent Being—*super-human*, but not *in-human*—men connect their ideas of personal responsibility and obligation—their sense of guilt—their fear of judgment—their prayers for deliverance.

What Max Müller has called *Kathenotheism*, in speaking of the Vedic religion, "the consciousness that all the deities are but different names of one and the same godhead," is an evidence of an underlying *monotheistic* idea which, as it may in one direction lead on to a pantheistic philosophy, so also seems to point back to a traditional revelation, or primary idea of God.

The spiritual basis of all early religions can be seen to be precedent to metaphysical theories, mythological stories, and polytheistic corruptions of worship.

Mr. Collins thinks that ancestral worship is due to "a primitive belief in the immortality of the soul." I hardly think that he is warranted in stating that men "began their religion in the full blaze of what is now the brightest hope of the Christian"; but that primitive man had a belief in the continuity of personal existence seems, independently of Revelation, to be a correlative to his belief in God. The reflex of God's eternal Being filled men's souls with at least an aspiration after life eternal, and some hope of it.

Another statement of Mr. Collins I should be disposed to question, viz., that "the primitive man must have had a most elaborate sacrificial worship"; but the subject of sacrifice is too large a one to enter upon here.

I think, with Mr. Collins, that the historical survey and analysis of old religions prove that by the side of any generation of philosophy we must place the fact of degeneration in religion. To this law of degeneracy all religions have been subject. In the twelfth chapter of *Unity in Nature*, which specifies some of "the causes of religious corruption," it is pointed out that "the same law has afflicted Christianity, with this difference only that alone of all the historical religions of the world it has hitherto shown an unmistakable power of perennial revival and reform." This historical phenomenon of degeneration as characteristic of all religious institutions seems connected with the undeniable fact that human nature itself everywhere testifies to a perversion of, and a fall from, a high original ideal. The tendency of human philosophising, if it be viewed apart from the Christian Revelation—is either to a materialism which denies God, or to an empty sentimentalism which alternates God into an abstraction, and dissolves religion into an unsubstantial, poetic emotion. It is Christianity alone that collects the scattered fragments of truth which scintillate in the most erroneous systems, and shows man that there is a Divine Purpose through the ages, and a Divine Goal at the end.

THE AUTHOR'S REPLY.

I do not know that it is necessary for me to add much to the discussion that followed the reading of my paper, except to thank Mr. James for so kindly reading it for me in my unavoidable absence. That it is a very imperfect summary of the kind of evidence to which it refers there is no doubt: but a paper must have its limits; and within those limits I chose only such illustrations as seemed to me at the time of writing it most typical of that evidence, and suggestive of further study. I may, however, say, with regard to some remarks of Mr. James and the Chairman, that while I certainly do not endorse all Max Müller's theories,—indeed, I have expressed my dissent from some of them, so far as I understand them, in my paper,—yet I do think that Max Müller's connexion of

Zeus with *Dyans* and the Sanscrit root *Dyu* is based philologically on such ample facts, and by such close reasoning, that it is very difficult to escape his conclusion.

On another point I should hardly agree with Mr. James in his exact statement of the case, as between the Jewish and Christian religions and those of heathendom. Is it strictly correct to speak of an utter want of homogeneity between heathen systems of religion and that which we know through the inspired pages of the Holy Scripture? to say, that the "comparison between them is simply like one between animals and crystals between which there are no points in common"? Is it not just the comparison of what is homogeneous between them that has led us to the conviction, that that homogeneity is due to a divine origin in the remote past? I do not believe, any more than Mr. James does, in the "Science of Comparative Religion"; but I should explain my disbelief on somewhat different grounds, namely, that I am convinced that none of those laws of the development of the religious idea, which are expected to be discoverable in human nature, and on which only a true science must be based, can ever be discovered, simply because they are non-existent. The science, as it is already prematurely called, is only as yet in its nascent state of comparison and classification: and comparison is certainly possible; the real discovery by comparison appearing to be, that the heathen religions, so far from being developments of human reason, are degradations of what was once equally divine with the revelation of the Bible.

I have been much interested by, and am very grateful for Canon Saumarez Smith's remarks on my paper. He accepts the general drift of my essay, but takes exception to two points, on which I venture to add a word.

Canon Saumarez Smith hardly thinks I am warranted in stating that men "began their religion in the full blaze of what is now the brightest hope of the Christian." The reference is to "a primitive belief in the immortality of the soul," which I have described as being the basis of ancestral worship. My contention is against the theory that man has worked out his own religious convictions. Canon Saumarez Smith seems to regard man's early conviction of immortality as only "the reflex" in himself of his knowledge "of God's eternal Being"—in short, that he believed in the immortality of the soul only as an inference. He believed in God's eternal Being, and as a correlative to this, without any revelation on the subject, himself drew the conclusion of his own immortality. I am disposed to go much further than this, and to claim the knowledge of the immortality of the soul as part of God's first revelation to man.

In the first place, I believe it impossible that early man could have worked out the idea of an eternal, personal God, with a character and attributes, such as we find described in the earliest known records of man's history, and identical with those of the God we Christians worship. Such a God could only have been known by His own revelation of Himself. And next, if God did reveal Himself to the early families of man, it is difficult to believe that, notwithstanding His revelation of His own Divine Being and character, and

to take a particular point, His eternity, He could have left man in entire ignorance of human spiritual being, so that man should have been left only to infer, or hope for, his own immortality, as correlative merely in his reason to his knowledge of God's eternity. If we believe that man could have known God, as unquestionably in very remote times he did know Him, only by revelation, we must also believe that that revelation could only have been intelligible in reference to man's own spiritual constitution. A revelation of God as to His own nature and character seems, therefore, to imply a revelation as to man's immortality.

This, of course, is *a priori*: but as we trace our way through man's religious history these convictions seem forced upon us. As we travel backwards we seem to reach a time, when we have escaped and left behind us such strange doctrines as that of metempsychosis, the Buddhist idea of an immortal *Karma* in place of an immortal identity of person, and other, surely manifest, perversions of original truth, until we find a simple belief in man's immortality, as for instance in the *Rig-Veda*, and other ancient records, some of which I have quoted. We are forced to the conclusion that man began his religious history with many broad and true principles, as broad and true in many respects as the principles that we bow to now, and amongst them the immortality of the soul. We conclude that man must have begun well, from whatever cause. It is significant too that we can trace not a few of these primitive truths, and with them the doctrine of the immortality of the soul itself, through their subsequent decay and degradation under the manipulation of man's (so-called) philosophy. This alone would seem to stamp them with a noble origin. If that origin was in human nature, and not above it, then human nature has philosophised away many of its own grandest thoughts. It may no doubt be so, for men have destroyed the noble works of their ancestors many times in the world's history. But the doctrine of the immortality of the soul seems to claim an origin *above* man's mere intuition or reason. And I am the more confirmed in this view by the words of Moses. If we take the Pentateuch only as a very early expression of religious belief (and most will concede that it is at least that), we are at a loss to understand the intention of the writer in his description of the commission to Adam in the garden of Eden, and the nature of the doom pronounced upon him—we cannot connect together the "image of God," the "tree of life," the "living for ever," the death described as being the "return" of the body only "to the ground," except on the supposition of at least the writer's belief in the intrinsic immortality of man's soul. And, if the words describe the actual facts of an intercourse between God and the first man, the words addressed to that man could only have been intelligible to him, surely, in proportion to his apprehension of the nature of his own spiritual constitution, and its prospects. He must very early in his own history either have concluded from his own reason that his soul was immortal, a result implying in him already an intellectual perception which many of his descendants might not be capable of sharing; or he must have received that knowledge as part of God's revelation to him. If, as I believe, the latter be the true suppo-

sition, and if the knowledge of that revelation did not die with him, then we find, what we should expect, a more unclouded view of the immortality of the soul the further we go back in man's history, pointing to what we surely must reach at last (as in the well-known creed of Job, for whom we may claim at least some antiquity, we do reach it) namely, what I have ventured to call "the full blaze of what is now the brightest hope of the Christian." But I dare not trespass longer on this point, except to add, what perhaps is not unimportant in this connexion to the Christian student, that our Saviour's reply to the Sadducees (Matt. xxii. 29-32) must embrace the doctrine of the immortality of the soul as underlying the whole of the Pentateuch, and of God's revelation of Himself to Israel. So deeply buried a foundation must have been one of those things without which a revelation of God to man was impracticable, if not impossible. So that, in this light, we can hardly regard it as a matter left to man only to infer if he could.

On this belief in the immortality of the soul I have based ancestral worship. I believe strongly in the value of analogies in the study of man's history : and we have the analogue to *pitri*, or ancestral, worship, in the saint-worship of later times. The basis of the later worship is the fact that the immortal part of the good is after death in the presence of and communion with God : the *pitris* were disembodied spirits living still in the presence of Deity, to whom a portion of the sacrificial worship, originally due only to the Deity, was already transferred when the earliest of the hymns of the *Rig-Veda* were written. There is a very striking aphorism, and one that has impressed many minds, in one of Frederic Robertson's sermons ; it is the expression of the "principle, that no error has spread widely that was not an exaggeration, or perversion, of the truth." What was the truth, of which ancestral worship was the perversion ? Was it not the approachableness of God, according to the character of the first revelation of Himself to man ? Shall we say, it was the divinely-revealed anthropomorphic or "anthropopsychic" idea ? Arguing here according to the analogy of well-known facts in the modern history of man, when the "anthropopsychic" character of God—the only character under which the Divine could possibly be realised by man—was lost, or clouded, perhaps by teachings similar to those of Mr. Herbert Spencer, man's nature still needed the human in his worship—the sympathy, the kindness, the love ; and the approach to the Divine began to be, as in later times, through the human itself. Thus the sacrificial worship, due originally to the Deity, began to be transferred to the spirits of the departed. If this be the true account of the origin of ancestral worship—and it has at least a most striking analogy in its favour—it could only have arisen upon the knowledge, or conviction, of the immortality of the soul, and its more immediate communion with the Deity.

Canon Saumarez Smith is also disposed to question another statement, that "the primitive man must have had a most elaborate sacrificial worship." Briefly I conclude thus. When we trace back man's religious history, we become more and more conscious that we must be treading amid the débris of a once divinely-inspired religion ; nay, we can often, with the certainty

of the geologist in his study of the rocks, trace the very causes of the decay we see around us, from our knowledge of man as he is, just as we know how the "glacier-mills" at Lucerne were formed, from what we have seen in a modern river-bed. And this is more especially noticeable when we look at the externals of religious worship. Thus, in studying the sacrificial systems of the Hindus, Assyrians, Phoenicians, Greeks, Romans, and other nations, we cannot but be struck with the multiplicity of detail : and when each detail is examined it is found, almost without exception, to be either a more or less perfect, or a manifestly-degraded representative of some detail, the analogue of which we know in the divinely-given Mosaic Dispensation. So that, in fact, there are but few features in the sacrificial system of Moses that are not discernible, more or less complete, in the ancient sacrificial systems of the heathen world. I know no way of accounting for this but by supposing a truly elaborate system of sacrificial worship in the far past, of which these many details are the remains. Elaborate it must have been, or such varied detail could not be found in what we may call its fossil. Divinely given too it must, I think, have been, or its remains could not indicate an original, analogous in so great a degree to the sacrificial system described in the Old Testament.
