



A COMPARATIVE VIEW OF RELIGIONS

JOHANNES HENRICUS SCHOLTEN

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**BY
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INTRODUCTION

Translated from the Dutch of Prof. J. H. Scholten, by F.T. Washburn. This constitutes the first part of Prof. Scholten's History of Religion and Philosophy. (Geschiedenis der Godsdienst en Wijsbegeerte.) Third edition. Leyden, 1863. Of this work there is a translation in French by M. Albert Réville (Paris, 1861); but this translation, which was made from an earlier edition, is very defective in the first part, Prof. Scholten having added a great deal in his last edition. There is also a translation of it in German, by D.E.R. Redepenning (Elberfeld, 1868). This German translation has been revised and enlarged by Prof. Scholten, and is therefore superior in some respects to the original Dutch. The present translation has been revised upon it.

The conception of religion presupposes, *a*, God as object; *b*, man as subject; *c*, the mutual relation existing between them. According to the various stages of development which men have reached, religious belief manifests itself either in the form of a passive feeling of dependence, where the subject, not yet conscious of his independence, feels himself wholly overmastered by the deity, or the object of worship, as by a power outside of and opposed to himself; or, when the feeling of independence has awakened, in a one-sided elevation of the human, whereby man in worshipping a deity deifies himself. In the highest stage of religious development, the most entire feeling of dependence is united in religion with the strongest consciousness of personal independence. The first of these forms is exhibited in the fetich and nature-worship of the ancient nations; the second in Buddhism, and in the deification of the human, which reaches its full height among the Greeks. The true religion, prepared in Israel, is the Christian, in which man, grown conscious of his oneness with God, is ruled by the divine as an inner power of life, and acts spontaneously and freely while in the fullest dependence upon God. Since Christ, no more perfect religion has appeared. What is true and good in Islamism was borrowed from Israel and Christianity.

Although it is probable that every nation passed through different forms of religious belief before its religion reached its highest development, yet the earlier periods lie in great part beyond the reach of historical investigation. The history of religion, therefore, has for its task the review of the various

forms of religion with which we are historically acquainted, in the order of psychological development.

CHAPTER 1. FETICHISM. THE CHINESE. THE EGYPTIANS

1. FETICHISM.

The lowest stage of religious development is fetichism, as it is found among the savage tribes of the polar regions, and in Africa, America, and Australia. In this stage, man's needs are as yet very limited and exclusively confined to the material world. Still too little developed intellectually to worship the divine in nature and her powers, he thinks he sees the divinity which he seeks in every unknown object which strikes his senses, or which his imagination calls up. In this stage, religion has no higher character than that of caprice and of love of the mysterious and marvelous, mixed with fear and a slavish adoration of the divine. The worship and the priest's office (Shaman, Shamanism) consist here chiefly in the use of charms, to exorcise a dreaded power. From this savage fetichism the nature-worship found among the Aztecs in Mexico, and the worship of the sun in Peru, are distinguished by the greater definiteness and order of their religious conceptions and usages. In them the gods have names, and an ordained priesthood cares for the religious interests of the people. The highest form to which fetichism has attained is the worship of Manitou, the great spirit, which is found among the ancient tribes of North America.

2. THE CHINESE.

When man reaches a higher development, caprice and chance disappear from religion. Having outgrown fetichism, man begins, as is the case among the Chinese, to distinguish in the world around him an active and a passive principle, force and matter (Yang and Yn), heaven and earth (Kien and Kouen). We have here nature-worship in its beginnings. In this stage, even less than in fetichism, is there a definite idea of God, much less a conception of him as personal and spiritual lord. The Chinese, from the practical, empirical point of view peculiar to him, recognizes the spiritual only in man and chiefly in the state. His religion, therefore, is confined exclusively to the faithful keeping of the laws of the state (the Celestial Kingdom), in which he sees the reflection of heaven, to the recognition of the Emperor as the son

and representative of heaven, and to the worship of the forefathers, especially of the great men and departed emperors, to whose memory the Chinese temples, or pagodas, are dedicated. The origin of this religion dates, according to the tradition, from Fo-hi (2950 B.C.), the founder of the Chinese state. In the fifth century before Christ, Kong-tse, or Kong-fu-tse (Confucius), appeared as a reformer of the religion of his countrymen, and gathered the ancient records and traditions of his people into a sacred literature, which is known by the name of the "King" (the books), "Yo-King" (the book of nature), "Chu-King" (the book of history), "Chi-King" (the book of songs). The contents of the "King" became later with the Chinese sages Meng-tse (360 B.C.) and Tschu-tsche (1200 A.D.) an object of philosophical speculation. The doctrine of Lao-tse, the younger contemporary of Kong-tse, which lays down as the basis of the world, that is of the unreal or non-existent, a supreme principle, *Tao*, or *Being*, corresponds with the Brahma doctrine of the Indians, among whom he lived for a long time; but this doctrine never became popular in China.

3. THE EGYPTIANS.

The worship of nature, which is seen in its beginnings among the Chinese, exhibits itself among the Egyptians in a more developed form as theogony. Here also the reflecting mind rose to the recognition of two fundamental principles, the producing and the passive power of nature, Kneph and Neith, from which sprang successively the remaining powers of nature, time, air, earth, light and darkness, personified by the fantasy of the people into as many divinities. The Egyptian mythology also (none has as yet been discovered among the Chinese) exhibits a like character. Fruitfulness and drought, the results of the Nile's overflowing and receding, are imaged in the myth of *Osiris*, *Isis*, and *Typhon*. The visible form under which the divine was worshiped in Egypt was the sacred animal, the bull *Apis*, dedicated to *Osiris*, the cow, dedicated to *Isis*, as symbols of agriculture; the bird *Ibis*, the crocodile, the dog *Anubis*, and other animals, whose physical characteristics impressed the as yet childish man, who saw in them the symbol, either of the beneficent power of nature which moved him to thankfulness, or of a destructive power which he dreaded and whose anger he sought to avert. The religion of Egypt was not of a purely spiritual

character. To the man whose eye is not yet open to the manifestation of the spiritual around him and in him, the divine is not spirit, but as yet only nature. The animal, although in the form of the sphinx approaching the human, holds in Egyptian art a place above the human as symbol of the divine.

CHAPTER 2. THE ARIAN NATIONS

1. THE EAST ARIANS. THE INDIANS.

In the development of religion among the Indians, the following periods may be distinguished:—

- a. The original Veda-religion.
 - b. The priestly religion of the Brahmins.
 - c. The philosophical speculation.
 - d. Buddhism.
 - e. The modified Brahminism after Buddha, in connection with the worship of Vishnu and Siva.
- a. *The original Veda-religion.*

The original religion of Arya originated in Bactria. From thence, before the time of Zoroaster, it was brought over, with the great migration of the people, to the land of the seven rivers, which they conquered, and which stretched from the Indus to the Hesidrus. It consisted, according to the oldest literature of the Veda, in a polytheistical worship of the divine, either as the beneficent or the baneful power of nature. The clear, blue sky, the light of the sun, the rosy dawn, the storm that spends itself in fruitful rain, the winds and gales which drive away the clouds, the rivers whose fruitful slime overspreads the fields,—these moved the inhabitants of India to the worship of the divine as the beneficent power of nature which blesses man. On the other hand, he changed under the impression of the harmful phenomena of nature, the dark and close-packed clouds which hold back the rain and intercept the sunshine, the parching heat of summer, which dries up the rivers and hinders growth and fruitfulness, and these also he erected into objects of awe and religious adoration. From this view of nature sprang the Indian mythology. The oldest divinity (Deva) of the Indians is Varuna, the all-embracing heaven, who marks out their courses for

the heavenly luminaries, who rules the day and the night, who is lord of life and death, whose protection is invoked, whose anger deprecated. After him, the great ruler of nature, there appear, in the Veda hymns, Indra, the blue sky, god of light and thunder, the warrior who in battle stands beside the combatants; Vayu, the god of the wind, the chief of the Maruts, or the winds; Rudra, the god of the hurricane; Vritra, the hostile god of the clouds; Ahi, the parching heat of summer. In the mythology of the people, Indra, god of light, aided by Vayu and Rudra, wages war with Vritra,—who, as god of the clouds, holds back the rain and the light,—and appears as opponent of the destructive Ahi. The other divinities also which appear in the Vedas are personified powers of nature,—the twin brothers Aswins (equites), or the first rays of the sun, Ushas the maiden, or the rosy dawn, Surya, Savitri, the god of the sun. Great significance is given in the Indian mythology to Agni, the god of fire, who burns the sacrifice in honor of the gods, who conveys the offerings and prayers of men to gods and their gifts to men, who gladdens the domestic hearth, lights up the darkness of night, drives away the evil spirits, the Ashuras and Rakshas, and purges of evil the souls of men. Religion, still wholly patriarchal in form, and free from hierarchical constraint and from the later dogmatic narrowness, bore in this earlier stage of its development the character of the still free and warlike life of a nomadic people living in the midst of a sublime nature, where everything, the clear sky, sunshine, and boisterous storm, mountains and rivers, disposed to worship. As yet the Indian knew no close priestly caste. Worship consisted in prayers and offerings, especially in the Soma-offering, which was offered as food to the gods. No fear of future torment after death as yet embittered the enjoyment of life and made dying fearful. Yama was the friendly guide of the souls of heroes to the heaven of Indra or Varuna, and not yet the inexorable prince of hell who tormented the souls of the ungodly in the kingdom of the dead. Of later barbarous usages also, such as the widow's sacrificing herself on the funeral pile of her departed husband, there was as yet no trace; and in the heroic poetry, as yet not disfigured by later Brahminical alterations and additions, the heroes Krishna and Rama appear as types of courage and self-sacrifice, and not, as later, as avatars, or human incarnations, of the deity.

b. Brahminism.

When the nomadic and warlike life of the nations of India in the land of the seven rivers, in connection with their removal to the conquered land of the Ganges (1300 B.C.), gave place to a more ordered social constitution, a priestly class formed itself, which began to represent the people before the deity, and from its chief function, *Brahma*, or prayer, took the name of *Brahmins*, *i.e.*, the praying. This *Brahma*, before whose power even the gods must yield, was gradually exalted by the Brahmins to the highest deity, to whom, under the name of *Brahma*, the old Veda divinities were subordinated. *Brahma* is no god of the people, but a god of the priests; not the lord of nature, but the abstract and impersonal *Being*, out of whom nature and her phenomena emanate. From *Brahma* the priest derives his authority; and the system of caste, by which the priesthood is raised to the first rank, its origin. The worship of *Brahma* consists in doing penance and in abstinence. *Yama*, once a celestial divinity, now becomes the god of the lower world, where he who disobeys *Brahma* is tormented after death. Immortality consists in returning to *Brahma*; but is the portion only of the perfectly godly Brahmin, while the rest of mankind can rise to this perfect state only after many painful new births. The Brahmin, in the exclusive possession of religious knowledge, reads and expounds the Vedas (knowledge), exalted to infallible scripture, and on them constructs his doctrine.

Thus the once vigorous, natural life of the Indians gave place to a conception of the world which repressed the soul, and annihilated man's personality. The many-sidedness of the earlier theology resolved itself into the abstract unity of an impersonal All, and thus the glory of nature passed by unmarked, as nought or non-existent, and lost its charm. At the same time, the old heroic sagas were displaced by legends of saints, and the heroic spirit of the olden epic by an asceticism which repressed the human, and before whose power even the gods stood in awe. With Brahminism the religion lost its original and natural character, and became characterized by a slavish submission to a priesthood, which abrogated the truly human.

c. The Speculative Systems.

The doctrine of the Brahmins occasioned the rise of various theological and philosophical systems. To these belong, first, the "Vedanta," (end of the

Veda) or the dogmatic-apologetic exposition of the Veda. This contains (1) the establishment of the authority of the Veda as holy scripture revealed by Brahma, and also of the relation in which it stands to tradition; (2) the proof that everything in the Veda has reference to Brahma; (3) the ascetic system, or the discipline. To explain contradictory statements in the older and later parts of the Veda, Brahminical learning makes use of the subtleties of an harmonistical method of interpretation. Second, the "Mimansa" (inquiry), devoted to the solution of the problem, How can the material world spring from Brahma, or the immaterial? According to this system, there is only one Supreme Being, Paramatma, a name by which Brahma himself had been already distinguished in Manu's book of law. Outside of this highest *Being*, there is nothing real. The world of sense, or nature, (*Maya*, the female side of Brahma), is mere seeming and illusion of the senses. The human spirit is a part of Brahma, but perverted, misled by this same illusion to the conceit that he is individual. This illusion is done away with by a deeper insight, by means of which the dualism vanishes from the wise man's view, and the conceit gives place to the true knowledge that Brahma alone really exists, that nature, on the contrary, is nought, and the human spirit nothing else than Brahma himself. Third, the "Sankya" (criticism) originating with Kapila, in which, in opposition to the "Mimansa," the individual being and the real existence of nature, in opposition to spirit, is laid down as the starting-point, and the result reached is the doctrine of two original forces, spirit and nature, from whose reciprocal action and reaction upon each other the union of soul and body is to be explained. Is this union unnatural, then the effort of the wise man should be to free himself, through the perception that the soul is not bound to the body, from the dominion of matter. In this system, there is no room for an infinite being, for, if a material world exist, then must God be limited by its existence, and therefore cease to be infinite, that is God. The Sankya philosophy here came in conflict with the orthodox doctrine of the Brahmins, and prepared the way for Buddhism.

d. Buddhism.

Against Brahminism Buddhism arose as a reaction. Siddharta, son of Suddhodana, the King of Kapilavastu, of the family of the Sakya, (about 450 B.C.) moved by the misery of his fellow-countrymen, determined to examine

into the causes of it, and, if possible, to find means of remedying it. Initiated into the wisdom of the Brahmins, but not satisfied with that, after years of solitary retirement and quiet meditation, penetrated with the principles of the Sankya, he traversed the land as pilgrim (Sakya-muni, Sramana, Gautama) and opened to the people of India a new religious epoch. The tendency of the new doctrine was to break up the system of caste, and free the people from the galling yoke of the Brahminical hierarchy and dogmas. While in Brahminism man was deprived of his individuality, and regarded only as an effluence from Brahma, and tormented by the fear of hell, and by the thought of a ceaseless process of countless new births awaiting him after death, whence the necessity of the most painful penances and chastisements, Sakya-muni began with man as an individual, and in morals put purity, abstinence, patience, brotherly love, and repentance for sins committed above sacrifice and bodily mortification, and opened to his followers the prospect, after this weary life, no more to be exposed to the ever-recurring pains of new birth, but released from all suffering to return to Nirvana, or nothingness. While Brahminism drew a distinction between man and man, and with hierarchical pride took no thought of the Sudra or lower class of the people, and limited wisdom to the priestly caste, Sakya-muni preached the equality of all men, came forward as a preacher to the people, used the people's language, and chose his followers out of all classes, even from among women. Both of these opposed systems are one-sided. In Brahminism, God is all, and man, as personal being, nothing; in Buddhism, man is recognized as an individual, but apart from God, while in both systems, the highest endeavor is to be delivered from, according to Brahminism a seeming, according to Sakya-muni a really existing individuality, the source of all human woe, and to lose one's self either in Brahma or in the Nirvana.

Less on account of his doctrine, in which there is found neither a God nor a personal immortality, than on account of the universal character of his words and of his life, Sakya-muni continued in honor after his death, as the benefactor of the people and as the Buddha, the wise, pre-eminently; and afterwards was deified, and took his place in the ranks of the recognized gods as their superior. Thus there arose in Buddhism, by a departure from the doctrine of the master, a new polytheism. This was afterwards, through

the influence of the Brahminical priestly caste, suppressed in India, but spread over other parts of Asia, to the islands of the Indian Archipelago, and also to China.

e. Later modification of Brahminism in connection with the worship of Siva and Vishnu.

While Brahminism saw itself menaced by the steadily increasing influence of Buddhism, the former nature-religion, dispossessed by the Brahmins, asserted its rights in the worship of Siva in the valleys of the Himalaya Mountains, and in that of Vishnu on the banks of the Ganges. Siva is the Rudra of the Veda, the boisterous god of storms, the giver of rain and growth. Vishnu is the same divinity among other races, conceived under the influence of a softer climate in a modified form as the blue sky. Both divinities, originally belonging to different parts of India, were afterwards taken, first Vishnu, and then also Siva, into the theological system of the Brahmins, and formed with Brahma, but not until the fourth century after Christ, the trimurti, according to which the one supreme being Parabrama is worshiped in the threefold form of Brahma the creating, Vishnu the sustaining, and Siva the destroying power of nature. To this later period of Brahminism belongs also the alteration of the old epics, the Ramayana and Mahabharata, by which the heroes Rama and Krishna are represented as avatars, that is incarnations or human impersonations, of Vishnu. In this also there is evidently an effort to bring the deity, conceived as the abstract One, into closer union with man, an effort which is likewise visible in the later Yoga system of the Brahmins, in which, by the admission of Buddhistic elements, the visible world is recognized as real, the old rigid asceticism mitigated, Vishnu represented as the soul of the world, and immortality taught as a return of the individual soul to Brahma.

2. THE WEST ARIANS, IRANIANS.

[THE BACTRIANS, MEDES, PERSIANS.]

The ancient religion of the Bactrians in the period before Zoroaster was patriarchal, and consisted in the worship of fire, as the beneficent power of nature, and of Mithras, the god of the sun, combined with that of the good spirits (Ahuras), among which were Geus-Urva (the spirit of the earth),

Cpento-mainyus (the white spirit), Armaiti (the earth, or also the spirit of piety), and of the hero-spirits Sraosha, Traetona, which as light and darkness are distinguished from Angro (the black spirit).

Later, as it seems, the theology and worship of the neighboring nomadic Arya penetrated to these nations, and caused a religious conflict which ended with the migration of Arya to the south. At this period Zarathustra¹ (Zoroaster) came forward under the Bactrian priest and King Kava Vistaspa, as defender and reformer of the religion of the fathers against the encroachments of a strange doctrine. The Devas (Zend, Dews) or the gods of the Indian Veda appear with Zarathustra as evil spirits. Not Indra, but the hero Traetona, wages war with Ahi (Zend, Azhi), while the kavis, or priests, are attacked by him as deceivers and liars. From the belief in good spirits (Ahuras, *i.e.*, the living, and Mazdas, *i.e.*, the wise), the ancient genii of the country, Zarathustra developed the belief of one highest God, Ahura-Mazda (Ormuzd, Greek, [Greek: Osompzês]), a doctrine which he received by divine inspiration through the mediation of the spirit Srasa. Ahura-Mazda, surrounded by the Amesha-Spenta (Amshaspands), or the holy immortals, not until later reduced to seven, is the creator of light and life. The hurtful and evil, on the contrary, is non-existence (akem), and in the oldest parts of the Avesta, the Gathas, which go back to Zarathustra and his first followers, is not yet conceived as a personal being. First in the Vendidad, written after Zarathustra, does Angro-mainyus (Ahriman), or the evil one, with his Dews, although subordinated to Ahura-Mazda, gain a place in the Iranian conception of the universe, as the adversary of Ahura-Mazda, and as the cause of evil in the natural and spiritual world. From these conceptions there was developed in the later Parsism the system of the four periods of the world, each of three thousand years, in the book "Bundehesh." In the first period, Ahura-Mazda appears as creator of the world and as the source of good. The creation, completed by Ahura-Mazda in six days by means of the word (Honover), is in the second period destroyed by Angro-mainyus, who, appearing upon the earth in the form of a serpent, seduces the first human pair, created by Ahura-Mazda. In the

¹ According to Buusen 3000 or 2500 B.C., Haug 2000 B.C., Max Müller 1200 B.C., Max Duncker 1300 or 1250 B.C., and according to Rœth. I. p. 348, who still puts Vistaspa before Darius Hystaspes, between 589 and 512 B.C.

third period, which begins with the revelation given to Zarathustra, Ahura-mazda and Angro-mainyus strive together for man. After this follows, in the fourth period, the victory gained by Ahura-Mazda. Sosiosh (Saoshyas), the deliverer already foretold in the Vendidad, appears. The resurrection of the dead, not taught by Zarathustra or in the Vendidad, takes place. The judgment of the world begins; the good are received into paradise and the sinners banished to hell. At last, all is purified, and Angro-mainyus himself and his Dews submit themselves to Ahura-Mazda, whose victory is celebrated in heaven with songs of praise.

Thus among the Iranian races, out of the old patriarchal worship of fire and light, on the occasion of the religious struggle with the Indian Arya, and under the influence of Zarathustra, there was developed the doctrine of one supreme God,² who, surrounded by the good spirits of heaven, wages war against evil, whence arose later the moral opposition between Ahura-Mazda and Angro-mainyus resulting in the victory of the good principle over the bad. The old dualism of force and matter, beneficent and destructive powers of nature, light and darkness, becomes in Parsism moral. The deity, no longer identified with nature, becomes a personal, spiritual being, the creator of mankind; and the end of the world's development is conceived as the triumph of the good. Hence the high rank which the doctrine of Zarathustra and its further development holds in the history of religion.

3. THE GREEKS.

As man rises in spiritual development, nature becomes to him a revelation ever more and more manifold of the divine. To the Greek (Pelasgi, Hellenes) the whole of nature was living, and his imagination peopled her everywhere with divine beings, who in wood and field, in rivers and on mountains (Oreads, Dryads, Naiads, Sileni, &c.), hovered friendly round him. The Greek was indeed distinguished from other nations by this richer and more elevated view of nature; but he excelled them most of all in this, that the divine object which he worshiped was conceived both in form and character after the human. Zeus, Phoebus Apollo, Pallas Athene, Aphrodite, Ares, Hephaestus, Hestia, Hermes, Artemis, were originally powers of nature

² The doctrine of the *Zervana akarana* (infinite time) as the original One, from which the opposition between Ormuzd and Ahriman was held to spring, dates from a later period.

personified, as some epithets in Homer still indicate; but they became, sometimes under the same names, types of power and lordship, science and art, courage and sensuous beauty. While Dionysus, Demeter, Hades, and Persephone remained earthly, and Helios, Eos, Iris, and Hecate, heavenly divinities, and Oceanus, Poseidon, Amphitrite, Proteus, and Nereus ruled the waters, Zeus was conceived as the god of the sky and of thunder, who hurled the bolts, the great king and lawgiver, the father of men, and Hera, originally the air, became the protecting goddess of married life; Apollo, the god of light, who shot forth his arrows, not at first identified with Helios, became the god of divination and poetry, who led the choir of the muses; the goddess of light, Athene, became the contentious goddess of wisdom; Aphrodite, born of the foam of the sea, once the symbol of the fruitful power of nature, later, encircled by the Graces, became the type of womanly beauty and charm, to which the strength of man, personified in Ares, corresponds. In like manner in the later mythology, Hephaestus, the god of fire, appeared as the god of the forge, Hestia, the goddess of fire, as the protector of the household hearth, and Hermes, the god of the storm and of rain, as the messenger of the gods, the type of cunning and craftiness, while Artemis, the goddess of the moon, the fruitful mother of nature, took the character of the chaste maiden, the goddess of hunting, who with her nymphs and hounds nightly roamed the fields and woods. The monsters, the Sphinx, the Minotaur, the Cyclops, the Centaurs, symbols of a yet unhuman or half human power of nature, were overcome by the Greek heroes, Perseus, Hercules, Jason, Theseus, Ædipus, the types of human strength and valor. The religious festivals were enlivened by trials of men's strength and skill in games, and the historian and poet offered to the gods the products of human genius. In the religion of the Greeks, however, the moral element, although not passed over and in the Greek epic and tragedy not seldom expressed in grand characters, stood nevertheless too little in the foreground, so that the worship of the divine, as in the older nature-worship, especially in the feasts in honor of Dionysus and Aphrodite, was marked by immoral practices. The conception of a future life, which taken in connection with a future retribution has a moral tendency, had but little attraction for the Greek, who rejoiced in the glory of the earth, and saw in nature and in man the kingdom of the divine. The passage from the earlier

poetical nature-worship to the worship of the divine in human form seems to be indicated in the war which Olympian Zeus waged with Cronos and the Titans. The origin and development of the various elements and powers of nature, Chaos, Eros, Uranus, Gæa, the Giants, Styx, Erebus, Hemera, Æther, &c., became, with the poets and philosophers after Homer, matters of speculation, of which the theogonies of Hesiod, Orpheus, Pherecydes, and others furnish proof.

4. THE ROMANS.

In the religion of the Greeks, the æsthetic and moral character of the Grecian people was deified, and in the Romans also we see how that which men value most exerts an influence upon their worship of the divine. The primitive religion of the Romans, borrowed from the Sabines and Etruscans, bears everywhere, in distinction to that of the Greeks, the marks of the practical and political character of the Roman people. The oldest national divinities are, first, Jupiter or Jovis, the god of the heavens, Mars or Mavors, the god of the field and of war, Quirinus (Janus?) the protector of the Quirites, afterwards, together with Juno (Dione) and Minerva, worshiped in the Capitol, (Dii Capitolini); second, Vesta, and the gods of the house and family, the Lares and Penates; third, the rural divinities, Saturnus, Ops, Liber, Faunus, Silvanus, Terminus, Flora, Vertumnus, and Pomona; fourth and last, personifications, in part of the powers of nature, Sol, Luna, Tellus, Neptunus, Orcus, Proserpina, in part of moral and social qualities and states, such as Febris, Salus, Mens, Spes, Pudicitia, Pietas, Fides, Concordia, Virtus, Bellona, Victoria, Pax, Libertas, and others. Peculiarly Roman also is the conception of the *manes*, or shades of the departed, who hover as protecting genii about the living. Afterwards, along with the culture of the Greeks, their gods also were taken, although rather outwardly than inwardly, into the spirit of the people, and the original character of the gods of Latium was modified after the new mythology. Notwithstanding this, however, the worship of the Romans retained its political and practical character. The priests (sacerdotes) Flamines, Salii, Feciales, the Pontifices with the Pontifex Maximus at their head, the Augurs, were likewise officers of the state, and did not form a hierarchy apart from the state and alongside of it.

5. THE CELTS.

Among the Celtic tribes in Brittany, Ireland, and Gaul, and on both banks of the Rhine, out of an aboriginal life of nature characterized by wildness and license, religion developed itself in the form of the worship of two chief divinities, a male divinity, Hu, the begetting, and a female, Ceridwen, the bearing, power of nature. The priesthood busied itself with speculations about the divine, the origin of the world, and the continued existence of man after death, conceived in the form of the transmigration of souls. Nor did the people's faith lack the conception of good and evil spirits, fairies, dwarfs, elves, which to the still childish fancy are objects of fear or superstitious veneration. To the service of these divinities the priesthood, the Druids, were consecrated, and beside them the bards, or poets, held a more independent place.

6. THE GERMANS AND SCANDINAVIANS.

More developed intellectually is the nature-religion of the ancient Germans (Teutons) and Scandinavians, which betrays thereby the character of the Aryan race to which these nations, like the Celts, originally belonged. The highest god of the Germans is Wodan, called Odhin among the Norsemen, the god of the heavens, and of the sun, who protects the earth, and is the source of light and fruitfulness, the spirit of the world, and the All-father (Alfadir). From the union of heaven and earth, there springs the god Thunar or Donar among the Germans, Thor among the Norsemen, the bold god of thunder who wages war against the enemies of gods and men. Besides these there are the sons of Wodan, Fro (German), Freyx (Norse), the god of peace, Zio (German), Tyx (Norse), the god of war, Aki (German), Oegir (Norse), god of the sea, Vol (German), Ullr (Norse), god of hunting, and others, to whom are joined female divinities, such as Nerthus (German), Jördh (Norse), the fruitful goddess of the earth, Holda (German), Freiya (Norse), the goddess of love, Nehalennia, goddess of plenty, Frikka (German), Frigg (Norse), the wife of Wodan, mother of all the living, Hellia (German), Hel (Norse), the inexorable goddess of the lower world. Opposed to these divinities (Asen and Asinnen) stands Loko (German), Loki (Norse), enemy of the divine. In addition to these there appear in the Norse and German Sagas, besides the heroes, a multitude of spirits, good and hostile,

giants, elves, Elfen (German), Alfen (Norse), white spirits of light, and black dwarfs, house, forest, and water spirits. The worship was most simple, and, as was the case with the ancient Semites, the Indians of the Veda, and the Greeks, as yet independent of temple service and priestly constraint. The holy places of the Germans were woods, and hills, and fountains, and in the mysterious rustling of the leaves and in the murmuring of the waters the pious spirit caught the breathing of the deity. The father of the house is priest, and the recognition by these races more than elsewhere of worth in woman is apparent also in their religion. In the description of the kingdom of the dead in the German-Norse mythology, Walhalla is the abode of the heroes, hell the gathering place of the other dead. Notwithstanding these still childish conceptions, there was revealed in the moral character and heroic spirit of the German forefathers the germ of a higher development, which makes the nations of Germany and Northern class='center'Europe capable beyond others of a constantly higher conception and estimation of the Christian religion.³

³ Among the Roman writers who furnish us with information upon the religion of the Germans, Tacitus deserves mention, in his "Germania," as well as in his "Annales" *passim*. The chief source with regard to the Norse religion is the older Edda, under the title "Edda Sæmundar hin Froda."

CHAPTER 3. THE RELIGION OF THE SEMITES

I. THE PHCENICIANS, SYRIANS, BABYLONIANS, CARTHAGINIANS, AND ARABIANS.

In the Semitic races the religious spirit rose above nature-worship in the effort to separate God from nature, and to elevate him above nature as Lord, Baal (plural Baalim, either from the different places where he was worshiped, or the various names under which he was worshiped), Bel, El, Adon (Adonis). Thus Bel among the Babylonians, Baal among the Ammonites and Moabites, was the god of light, the lord of heaven, the creator of mankind, who had his throne above the clouds and was invoked on mountains. Also the title Molech and Baal Molech to designate the Supreme Being among the ancient Phoenicians and Carthaginians, and the nations nearest related to Israel, the Moabites and Ammonites, as well as the derived names Milcom (Kamos) [Chemosh, Eng. ver.], among the Ammonites, and Melkartht at Tyre and Carthage, indicate, like Baal, an original effort to conceive God as the ruler of nature. Agreeing with this conception of the Deity, there is manifest, as well in the worship of Baal as of Molech and the female Astarte (Melecheth) [Ashtaroth, Eng. ver.], worshiped with him, partly in the abstinence from marriage, partly in the human sacrifice, especially the sacrifice of the first-born, the aim, through abnegation of the life of sense, and through the sacrifice, even though unnatural, of what is dearest to man, to appease a divinity who as lord and governor rules and subjects to himself the power of nature and every propensity of sense.

In spite of the effort to elevate the Deity as Lord and King above nature, most of the Semitic nations gradually sank back into the old nature-worship, and, uniting with the worship of the highest God, Baal and Bel, that of a female divinity under the names of Baaltis, Beltis, Aschera, Mylitta, they made religion to consist in the sacrifice of chastity to the will of the Deity, as the fruitful, productive power of nature, and thus fell into gross immorality.

Religion appears in another form among the Semites in the worship of the stars among the Babylonians and ancient Arabians. This astrolatry, originally a kind of fetichism, became nature-worship, and gradually rose to the worship of the intelligence manifested to our contemplation in the movement of the heavenly luminaries. Astrology arose, and religion no longer expressed itself in passive acquiescence, but was united with the effort to guide the life by the knowledge to be drawn, as men imagined, from the motion of the stars.

ISRAELITISH RELIGION.

a. Its origin. The patriarchal religion. Mosaism. Prophetism.

While most of the Semitic nations, in opposition to the effort to elevate God above nature as lord and governor, returned to the old nature-religion with its grossly sensual worship of the divine, and others got no farther than to the conception of a deity, who, like a consuming fire, stood opposed to nature, and was to be appeased and propitiated by human sacrifices, there was developed among the Israelitish people, gradually and in constantly higher measure, in connection with a higher moral and religious disposition, the worship of God as a being who, though distinct from nature, is yet not opposed to it, and thus no longer demands human sacrifices, but obedience and moral consecration.

The common origin of the religion of the Israelites and that of their Semitic relations, though hardly evident even in the oldest monuments of the Hebrew literature, appears from the following facts and particulars: firstly, the composition of Israelitish names not only with El, but also with Baal, such as Jerubbaal (adversary of Baal), (Gideon), Esbaal, Meribbaal, names which afterwards, on account of the aversion which the ever-increasing distance in religion between the Israelitish nation and the nations related to it must, from the nature of the case, have inspired against the name of Baal, are changed into Jerubboseth, Isboseth, and Mephiboseth, as also the interchanging of El and Baal, of Baal-jada and Eljada, seem to point to an ancient period when the name Baal (Lord) was used, like El, Elohim, El Eljon, El Schaddai, Adonai, even among the Israelites, to designate the Supreme Being. Secondly, the God of Abraham (Elohim), although he desires no

human sacrifices, nevertheless praises the willingness of the father to offer up his first-born, and sees in that the highest proof of devotedness and obedience. Thirdly, circumcision, already before Moses the bloody symbol of consecration to God, and also the right of Jahveh to the first-born, and the necessity of ransoming them from him, imply an earlier conception of the deity as a being, who, although on a higher development of the religion he is not indeed any longer thought to desire human sacrifice, nevertheless has a right to such a sacrifice, and thus demands indemnity for remitting it. Fourthly, the later conception, of Jahveh as a destroying fire, and the way in which the God of Israel is conceived in connection with fire, and as manifesting himself in fire, betray, even in the midst of a more advanced religious development, an original relationship with the like conceptions of the other Semites. Fifthly, even in the orthodox Jahveh-worship, some symbols, as the twelve oxen in the porch of the temple, the horns of the altar for burnt-offerings, perhaps also the in part oxlike form of the cherubim, point to an earlier worship of the deity under the form of an ox, the symbol of the highest might, especially among the Semitic races.

In confirmation of the supposition thus suggested of a community of origin in the religion of the Israelites and in that of the nations related to them, there is also to be remarked, firstly, the sympathy always felt among the people of Israel for the worship of Baal and Molech, in face of the strongest opposition on the part of the prophets; secondly, the statement of Amos, that even in the wilderness the Israelites worshiped Molech; thirdly, the fact that in the time of the Judges, Jephthah offered his daughter to Jahveh, and still later the feeling, not driven out even by Mosaism, that the wrath of Jahveh must be appeased by human blood, a necessity which David recognizes; fourthly, the ancient custom in Israel, as in the nations related to them, of worshiping the deity on mountains and heights, against which the priestly legislation strove in the interest of the pure worship of Jahveh; fifthly, the heterodox worship of Jahveh in the kingdom of the ten tribes under the form of a calf.

From all this it seems fair to conclude that the religion of the oldest forefathers of Israel had its root originally in one and the same soil with the religion of the other Semites. Out of an earlier nature-religion there

developed among the Semites the conception of Baal, the lord of nature, and of Molech with his inhuman worship. While, however, the other Semites remained in this lower stage, or rather sank back more and more into the immorality of the nature-religion,—an hypothesis suggested by a comparison of the religious state of the nations of Canaan in Abraham's time with their state at the time of the conquest of the land by Joshua and afterwards,—in the family of Abraham, religious consciousness rose to the recognition of a deity, who, although he had a right to human sacrifices, yet did not claim such sacrifices, but was satisfied with men's willingness to bring them to him. With this higher development of religion, the names of the Supreme Being, Baal and Molech, originally common to the whole race, came more and more into contempt, and were regarded as the expression of abominable idolatry, while even the worship of Jahveh under the form of a calf, originally permitted, was later branded by the prophets as heresy.

Though it was in the family of Abraham that even in Mesopotamia the beginning of this higher development of the Semitic religion showed itself, which, after his migration to Canaan became the heritage of his family, yet the patriarch of Israel did not stand alone in this respect among the Semites. The old Canaanitish chieftains also of the patriarchal period, Melchizedek and Abimelech, worship the same God as he, while on the other hand in his own family not all traces of polytheistic superstition have disappeared, and these traces are also visible still later in Israel.

The patriarchal religion, which afterwards with the great majority fell into oblivion, was recalled afresh to men's minds by Moses, and the God of the fathers was preached by him under the name before unknown of Jahveh, to whom, with the exclusion of all other gods, religious worship is due. The Jahveh of Moses, like the El Eljon of the patriarchs, is the one only object of worship (Deus Unus), yet without excluding the possibility of other gods existing. Not until later did the more developed conception of Jahveh arise as the one only God (Deus unicus), who is throned in heaven, and like the Elohim of the patriarchs, encircled by celestial beings (Bene Elohim, Malakim, Angels), who execute his commands, yet are not objects of religious adoration.

The religious standpoint of Moses is the legal. Jehovah stands related to his people as the Holy, as lawgiver and judge; and the true moral consecration to God is symbolically expressed in the ritual, especially in the sacrifice, while the relation of the people to God is based upon the mediation of the priests. Along with this, and out of Mosaism, after the time of Samuel, prophetism was developed, in which independent religious conviction, outside the limits of the priesthood, and without distinction of rank or birth, awoke among the people. Prophetism, in the domain of religion, is the development of the religious spirit to individual independence and freedom. The prophet, rising above the legal standpoint and outward ceremonial, puts the essence of true worship in morality, but recognizes also along with the deepest feeling of dependence upon God, in the independence and spontaneity of the religious and moral life, the irresistible power of the divine spirit, by which the Most High, though apart from the world and throned in heaven, puts himself into the closest and most intimate communion with the true worshiper. Thus the gulf which divided Jahveh, as a God afar off, from the world and his worshipers, closed up more and more. With the conviction of the pureness and truth of her religion, Israel felt the calling to raise it to the religion of the world, and in the realization of this she saw the ideal of the future.

b. The Israelitish religion after the Captivity.

The free character which distinguished prophetism in the religion of Israel changed, after the return of the people from captivity, especially with the party of the Pharisees, to literalness and formalism. The prophets gave place to the synagogue, the living proclamation of the truth to scriptural erudition, the spirit of freedom to slavish subjection to Scripture and tradition. As the ancient productions of the Indian literature, originally the expression of the popular thought of India, were elevated by the Brahmins into Veda, holy, inspired scripture, so also the religious literature of Israel took on the character of a closed Canon, so that what was once the expression of religious life became now rule of faith. The standpoint of the law which prophetism had already overcome was again strongly maintained, the law enriched with a number of new ordinances, and the essence of religion made to consist partly in dogmatic speculation, partly in a merely

outward service, devoid of inner life. The Messianic prediction, or the expectation that the kingdom, divided in Rehoboam's reign, once more united under a prince of the house of David, should be exalted to new bloom and lustre,—which in the older prophets was the natural and historically explicable form in which the ideal of Israel's future presented itself to the seer, but which, under the influence of the changed political conditions, had already been replaced in the later prophecy by the more general conception of a future triumph of the true religion of which Israel was the bringer,—returned, yet not as the ideal of the prophetic spirit, but as a dogma, the product of scriptural interpretation. The pure monotheism, by which formerly a place in the Providence of God had been allotted to everything, even to moral evil, became corrupted, under the influence of Parsism, by the conception of two kingdoms, of God and of the Devil. The angels, originally the messengers of Providence, became under mythological names, Gabriel, Raphael, Michael, &c., so many middle beings who filled the space between the Deity, existing apart from the world, and the world. The lower world (sheol, [Greek: aidês]), formerly the general abode of the dead, of bad and good without distinction, was split into two parts, paradise and gehenna, and became a place of recompense, and, along with this, religion, once an end, became the means of warding off a dreaded punishment, or of gaining a future of bliss. The doctrine of immortality, as the continuation of man's moral development, which was formerly unknown in Israel, appeared, as in the later Parsism, in the form of a bodily resurrection of the dead, at first of the righteous only, but afterwards in the form of a general resurrection, by mediation of the Messiah, at whose appearing, which was expected just before the end of the present state of things, the great judgment of the world, of living and dead, was to be held, heaven and earth renewed, and the kingdom of God founded. Beside the learned party of the Pharisees stood the Sadducees, who subordinated religion to politics, rejected the Messianic idea and the authority of tradition, and, in denying immortality in the form of a bodily resurrection, failed to perceive the truth of immortality, for whose recognition the premises and germs existed in the religion of Israel, though not as yet developed. The third party, that of the Essenes, was marked by quiet piety, and in many respects also by excessive asceticism. In the midst of the Pharisaic formalism, the unbelief of the

Sadducees, and the pietism of the Essenes, there was yet in Israel a seed of true worshipers, who, though not above the dogmatic prejudices of their time, had heart and mind open for the true religion, and who set the true blessing to be looked for from the Messiah in the satisfying of their religious and moral needs.

3. THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

The Israelitish religion, which reached its highest stage of development in prophetism, but which among the later Jews after Ezra degenerated, with the Pharisees into formalism and worship of the letter, with the Essenes into mysticism and asceticism, and which with the Sadducees, along with the sacrifice of the prophetic ideal of the future, was subordinated to politics, developed in Christianity, but freed from once cherished national expectations and outward forms, into a purely spiritual knowledge and worship of God. Jesus fathomed the deep meaning of the religion of his people, and its original fitness to become, through higher development, the religion of the world. Jesus devoted himself to the end of forming the human race into one great society (the kingdom of heaven), of which religion should be the soul and life, and, convinced of his calling, proclaimed himself as the Son of man, who, as such, belonged not to Israel alone, but to mankind. Jesus combated both the formalism and exclusiveness of the Pharisees, and the unbelief of the Sadducees, and with word and deed preached a religion which, independent of all outward form, took hold of the human heart, and which, developing into an independent principle in man, was to find its commission, not in the authority of Scripture or tradition, not even in that of his name, but in its own power and truth. In him religion appeared as the power of self-sacrificing love, which fears not even death, and to which dying is not the losing of life, but the development of life. In distinction from other religions, in which either God and man are strangers to each other, and opposed to each other, or man's personality is, as it were, sunk in God, Christianity is the religion by which man, in the full enjoyment of individual development, and with the sense of his own strength, lives in the consciousness of the most entire dependence upon

God. Religion in its highest form, conceived as the oneness of man with God, is realized in Christianity.⁴

4. ISLAMISM.

The religion of the ancient nomadic tribes of the Arabian peninsula originally exhibited a polytheistical character, in the form of the worship, in part of sacred stones, in part of the powers of nature, especially of the stars, whose position and motion were thought to exert an influence, beneficent or baneful, upon the destinies of men. With these conceptions was combined a certain leaning toward monotheism, which manifested itself especially in the common worship of Allah taala (equivalent to El Eljon), which was afterwards quickened and strengthened by association with the Jewish tribes, with whom they held themselves to be related by descent from Abraham. The Parsee doctrine of demons, also, was not unknown in Arabia, after the conquest of the Persians in the fifth century. After the third, fourth, and fifth centuries, Christianity also, though in a corrupt form, or, definitely, in the form of Monophysitism and Nestorianism, which had been condemned by the church, became established in Arabia.

Amid such diverse elements, there was need of unity in the domain of religion, a need for which Mohammed, after the example of others of his family, sought to provide.

He was born at Mecca (571) of an honorable family, belonging to the Koreish tribe. Finding no satisfaction for his restless spirit in the trade to which after his parents' death he had at first devoted himself, he gave himself up, in solitary retirement, to quiet meditation, and became more and more convinced of his calling to put an end, by means of a better religion, to the confusion existing among his countrymen with regard to religion. The religious idea which overmastered him presented itself to his powerful Oriental imagination in the form of a vision as a revelation of Allah taala, made to him in the fortieth year of his life by mediation of the angel Gabriel. His conviction, thus acquired, was confirmed by revelations afterwards

⁴ The most original sources of the Christian religion are the Synoptic Gospels, in which, however, criticism must distinguish between the older and later portions. The fourth Gospel is marked by a more profound speculation upon the person and the work of Christ, by which the Christian mind freed itself entirely from the Jewish forms in which Jesus, as a popular teacher in Israel, had set forth his doctrine.

received; and, shared at first with a small circle of trusted friends, gradually spread wider, until at last Mohammed came forward in the ancient sanctuary, the Kaaba, at Mecca, as prophet of Allah. For this he was pursued by his countrymen, and fled from thence to Medina, in the year 622, the beginning of the Moslem era. The number of his followers increasing, he had recourse to arms. He conquered Mecca in 630, and made the Kaaba, after destroying the idols in it, the sanctuary of the new religion.

The doctrine of Mohammed (Islam, submission to God, whence his followers take the name of Moslems), is contained in the Koran. The various Suras, or divisions, originally the revelations received by the prophet at different periods of his life reduced to writing, were, soon after his death, united by Abu Bekr into one holy book, under the name of the Koran (al Kitab, the book), which, like the Bible among the later Jews and Christians, was clothed with divine authority. The central doctrine of Mohammed is the belief in one God, Allah, who, as the Creator and Lord of all things, in strictest isolation from the world, is throned in heaven. All that takes place upon the earth befalls according to the eternal decree of God, a conception in which, at least among the Orthodox Moslems, the Sunnites, who are distinguished in this respect, as in others, from the dissenting Shiites, there is no place left for human freedom. This God has from the earliest times revealed himself to some privileged men, Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus (Isa). To the last is due the honor of having been the reformer of degenerate Judaism. He is not, as the Christians of Mohammed's time taught, the Son of God in a metaphysical sense, much less God himself,—Allah is one, he neither begets nor is begotten,—but a prophet of human descent. The greatest and last prophet is Mohammed himself, in whom prophetism reached its fulfillment. Along with the doctrine regarding God and his relation to the world, prayer, hospitality, and benevolence occupy a prominent place in the teaching of Mohammed, looked at from its practical side, and also the belief in a future life, in the Jewish-Parsee form of the resurrection of the dead, the judgment of the world, future reward and punishment, paradise and hell. The truth of this divine revelation rests upon the very fact of its having been revealed, and, according to Mohammed, it no more needs scientific proof than confirmation by miracles, to which Islamism did not appeal until later.

The opinion which formerly prevailed among Christians that Mohammed was an impostor, a false prophet, was bound up with the conception that God, to the exclusion of other nations, had revealed himself immediately and supernaturally first to Israel, and afterwards through Christ to all mankind. Hence it followed that Christianity was not prized as the highest religion, existing along with less developed forms of religion, but was opposed as the only true religion to all others, which were regarded as the fruit of imposture and error, an opinion to which the religious and political struggles in which Islam and Christendom have been involved also richly contributed. Mohammed was seer and prophet, filled with fiery zeal for religion, and, while he stands indeed in this respect, both personally and with regard to the contents of his preaching and the means by which he sought to gain admission for his doctrine, below the seers of Israel, and far below the founder of Christianity, yet, on the other hand, his monotheism, abstract as it is, must be regarded as a wholesome reaction against the ever-increasing polytheistical superstition to which in his time the Christian church of the East especially had sunk. Islamism stands, however, below original Christianity, the religion of Jesus and the Apostles, in that, by separating God, as the abstract one Supreme Being, from the world, it leaves no place for the doctrine of God's immanence, or the indwelling of the Spirit of God in man. Hence in Islamism the divine revelation remains purely mechanical, with no natural point of connection in man, and therefore there is no possibility of an enduring prophetism, which is the fundamental principle of Christianity. From this separation of God and man, the Mohammedan doctrine of predestination, in distinction from the Christian, acquires its abstract and fatalistic character, whereby man, instead of being regarded as a being in whose free activity God's power and life are glorified, is conceived as a passive instrument of a higher power. To true moral independence, therefore, the Moslem does not attain. His religion is legal and external, and therefore intolerant and exclusive; and when Islamism, led by excited passion and a heated imagination, disregarded the sanctity of marriage, and held up as a reward before the faithful Moslem a paradise characterized by sensual enjoyment, it missed at once the deep moral and spiritual character of Christianity. To these defects must be ascribed the fact that Islamism, adapted to the need of the East, and

therefore spread over a large part of Asia and Africa, has not, with the exception of the empire of Turkey, and for a time also of Spain, penetrated Europe; and, overshadowed by a higher development of humanity, has reached its highest bloom, while Christianity, brought back to its original purity, remains the religion of the civilized world.

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