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GIFT OF IRVING LEVY
THE LAMP OF BRAHMA

A NEW LIGHT
ON THE
LIFE AND REVELATION
OF
MOSES.

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THE LAMP OF BRAHMA.

THERE is a general feeling that religious subjects should be approached with reverence; that points of faith should be discussed in a frame of mind different from that in which we express our opinions upon scientific theories, or party politics.

Controversialists, however, too frequently limit this reverence to their own religion; sometimes even to the tenets of their own peculiar sect. Being fully convinced that their own creed is the only true faith, they reverence their own opinions; and find in "devotion to the truth," and "abhorrence of error," a ready excuse for vituperating those who differ from them.

But devotion to the truth exists with equal force in men of various religious creeds. From the naked worshipper of a Fetish, upwards, every man who believes in any religion at all, believes his own religion to be true; and men called heathen have been as devoted to their religion, and have as freely given up their lives for it, as the most devout of Christian martyrs.

The fact that so many men have at various times and places given up their lives rather than renounce opinions which others considered pestilent errors, shows how strong a hold a man's religion may have upon his nature. It shows also how steadfast and confident people may be in upholding false doctrines; for either the martyr slain, or those who slay him, must be in the wrong; and there is always a large

world outside both, in which it is believed that neither the persecutor nor the victim were in the right.

What religious zealots fight for, and what martyrs die for, is, however, something more than a mere opinion. An idea incorporated into a religious creed may become, to those who believe in it, a living power, an overruling mental force, unapproachable by reason, and superior even to the natural ties of flesh and blood. Hence a religion, whether it be true or false, becomes a great moral force, swaying multitudes; a force which kings and governments rarely venture to ignore; a force which, for good or for evil, makes itself felt through all the ramifications of human society—from the top of the tree to the rootlets in the soil.

Setting aside all prejudice, therefore, and forbearing a while from all special reverence for our own particular creed, is it not a worthy object of inquiry to find out, if we can, what religion is, independent of its outward and varying forms? what is, and whence comes, that element which gives it, in its crudest developments, so strong a hold upon the intellect, the heart, and the conduct of mankind? which makes it a bond of brotherhood among those who agree, but a fruitful seed of discord amongst those who differ—bringing forth prolific crops of bloodshed, persecution, and war; setting nation against nation, neighbour against neighbour, friend against friend, and even parent against child.

There is some good in all religions, even in the most benighted. There is none which does not afford to its believers some mite of spiritual aid in grappling with the troubles, the difficulties, and the anxieties of mortal existence; very few which do not indicate some preparation for that future life, a belief in which was one of the earliest products of those mental powers and emotions which are common to the whole human race.

But although there is some good in all religions, the seeds of internal discord and external evil-doing are abundant in the best. Our religions come to us ready-made, and our ideas are not likely to be expanded by the prevalent religious discussions, which refer infinitely more to obscure tenets of particular creeds than to any view of religion as a great phenomenon of human life in general. This contraction of

discussion is almost a necessary consequence of the belief that there can only be one true religion,—that ours is the true one,—and that anything in any other, conflicting with our own doctrines, is tainted with the leprosy of a corrupt origin; and, however fair to the distant view, must not be approached, either to be adopted or admired. There is an admirably soothing self-complacency in thus appropriating to one's own creed the sole possession of the truth; but the idea is as presumptuous as it is narrow. It ignores the possibility that the same Power which developed the most sublime of material phenomena through occult forces operating upon material elements, may also have developed the most important of moral truths through the mental faculties implanted in human nature.

Truth, although everywhere fundamentally the same, may be developed with equal efficacy in different forms. Christianity may be best for us, yet Buddhism, which has been for two thousand years the religion of one-fourth of the population of the world, may be well adapted to the nature of Eastern peoples, and may have as powerful an influence in promoting peace and good-will amongst them as Christianity has in Europe.

The Brahmins are a proud and a peculiarly exclusive people, yet they exhibited an innate modesty and a broadly charitable spirit when, in answer to a government inquiry, they wrote: "Contrarieties of belief and diversities of religion are part of the scheme of Providence; for as a painter gives beauty to a picture by a variety of colours, or as a gardener embellishes his garden with flowers of every hue, so God has appointed to every tribe its own faith, and every sect its own religion, that man might glorify Him in divers modes, all having the same end, and being equally acceptable in His sight."

Natural Religion.

The elementary rudiments of religious worship are *prayers*, *praises*, and *sacrifices*, or offerings (of food, drink, incense, etc.) to the deities; faith in the existence and power of the object worshipped being implied in the performance of devotional acts.

The objects to which religious worship has, at various times and places, been addressed, are innumerable; but there is one feature common to all religions, that of a belief in the existence of invisible spiritual beings, having the power to influence, for good or for evil, the affairs of human life.

Some tribes address themselves to good or evil spirits, supposed to be floating about; some suppose spirits to exist in natural objects, trees, shrubs, etc.; others, that a great spirit has his abode in a certain mountain, river, or big rock. In a more advanced stage people worship images which have been consecrated and are supposed to be imbued with a portion of some great spirit, endowing the idol with intelligence, in the same way that a man's soul animates his body. Sometimes an object is placed before the eye, not to be worshipped, but as an emblem adopted for the purpose of concentrating the mind upon the act of prayer. The most ignorant idolater does not believe that there is sense or power in the mere wood or stone of which the image is composed, any more than there would be in his own body if he were dead. Neither the natural object, nor the image, nor the spirit, can consume human food; but when the worshipper presents an offering of food, or pours out a libation, he believes that the spirit imbibes and enjoys the spiritual essence of it. To reach spirits residing in the clouds, or in regions beyond them, the offerings are generally burnt; the essence being wafted by the sacred fire to the abode of the god, his presence is invoked to hear and answer the prayers of the worshippers.

Some negroes have an indirect method of praying. If they want rain, they place an empty vessel before their fetish; if they want fish or meat, bare bones are laid down, and so on. If events turn out so that they consider their prayers to have been answered, they are thankful in proportion to the amount of blessings received, and praise the good spirit accordingly; but if not, they think they have incurred its anger, and try to appease it.

When man once began to believe in the existence of spiritual powers, it would be natural enough that he should wish to conciliate them, and seek their aid; but the question arises, how could an ignorant and uncivilized man arrive at

the idea of an invisible spirit, either within himself or residing in any other object? How did the savage learn that he had a soul?

The solitary traveller is sometimes startled by his own shadow, or the shadows of other things, especially at eventide, or when the moonbeams are fitfully obscured by passing clouds; it has been propounded that man might have been assisted into a belief in spirits, shades, and invisible supernatural agencies, by the effect which shadows and other (to them) mysterious natural phenomena have upon the minds of timorous and ignorant people. But it is not difficult to perceive how, without fear or mystery, a man, even in a very low stage of intellectual development, might arrive at the idea of a dual nature in himself.

He sees a bird in a tree, or a fish in a brook; he *wishes* for it, and he *wills* to lay hold of it: but his wish and his will do not lay hold of the object. To do that his body must be put in motion, and he must use caution and skill in directing the movements of his body. Neither learning nor logic are required to distinguish a *will* from an *act*. The difference is as obvious as that between the hand which throws and the spear which is thrown. Learning, indeed, might lead to a different conclusion. The materialistic philosopher might teach that the *wish*, the *will*, and the *act* are simply a series of molecular movements of stomach, brain, nerve, and muscle; but the poor savage has no capacity for such speculations; he knows that the wish and the will to do something are strong within him at times when he has not the power, or has not the opportunity, to act; and if he think at all about the matter, he comes to the most simple and natural conclusion,—that there is within him, and somehow distinct from his outer self, a power which can control the actions of his body, which can advise his outer self when to act and when to refrain, what to do, and how to do it. This inner self he calls his spirit.

It is not every man, either savage or civilized, who would originate in his own mind this idea of a spirit or soul; but it is an idea which might easily and naturally occur in a reflective moment to a mind of the most childlike simplicity; it is an idea easily communicated, and so consistent with

everyone's experience, that when once propagated it would not be likely to perish.

The idea being once accepted, it became an easy process for a simple mind to transfer it to other objects having life or motion. The dog which barks, the tree which grows, the river which flows, even the wind which blows, might be imagined to have a spirit as well as a body. And we find it to be an actual fact that such ideas did arise.

Some Indians of the Missouri, whose supreme object of worship is the sun, believe that everything in nature, not only man, but the moon and stars, all animals and vegetables, and even inanimate objects, rivers, lakes, hills, indeed all things which can be considered as having an independent being, have spirits which are more or less worthy of respect. The same idea prevails in some parts of Africa, and there it is carried out in a more practical form.

Fetishism.

The negro adopts a bush or other object as his *fetish*; he believes that a spirit residing in it has a power for good and evil over his person and fortunes; he believes that it can favour him when it pleases; that it may be angry with him if he neglect or offend it; and that when angry it may be propitiated by prayers and offerings. It becomes his deity, the depository of the hopes and fears of his daily life.

A fetish might be a small object, the peculiar of an individual; or it might be a mountain, or a river, worshipped by a tribe. At Cape Coast Castle, a large rock projecting into the sea was believed by the fishermen to be the residence of a guardian fetish. Yearly sacrifices were offered to it, with great ceremony and many strange gestures, by the priests, who professed to receive verbal answers as to the times and seasons which would be propitious for fishing. Mount Sinai was a fetish of the neighbouring shepherds, who believed it to be the residence of the god Sin. Baal-Peor was the lord or god of Mount Peor, Baal-Hermon the god of Mount Hermon, etc.

And here, in the most elementary form of religion, we find ourselves outside the region of ascertainable truth, and also in contact with a plain and obvious fact. We do not believe

in the spirit in the bush, but we cannot disprove the existence of it; and we would find it very difficult to produce arguments sufficiently strong to destroy the faith of the negro in his fetish. The obvious fact is that it is not the spirit worshipped, but the faith of the worshipper, his belief in its existence and power, which constitutes the potential force operating in his mind. The spirit may be a mere illusion, but the man's religion remains with him all the same, so long as his faith in it remains. And the man may derive both strength and comfort from his faith, although it be false. There are religions without morality, without hope, without charity, without love; but there can be no religion without faith in the object worshipped; and the very ignorance and childish nature of the savage tend to preclude those doubts which sometimes beset more enlightened minds. There are times when the mind of the most enlightened believer falters, and he feels it necessary to pray for more faith before he can ask with confidence for any other blessing.

The naked savage, with implements but little better than the sticks and stones used by monkeys, and with a habitation which is only a slight improvement upon that built by the chimpanzee, is liable to many dangers and disappointments. The idea of favour and assistance from his *fetish* stimulates his courage, strengthens his endurance, and enhances his pleasure in times of success; on the other hand, the idea of its anger, while embittering his failures, brings home to his mind a sense of his own dependence, and incites a hope that by propitiating its favour his future efforts may be better rewarded.

Thus we have, in this simple superstition, the crude rudiments of that faith in, and reliance upon, a superior power, which under a brighter light expands into the hopes and fears, the joys and sorrows, of a higher religious life.

In order fully to appreciate the simple and natural origin of fetishism and some others of the lower forms of religion, we must fancy ourselves to be in our childhood. Sir John Lubbock says: "Savages have the character of children, with the strength and passions of men." A recent traveller, Mr. Hingston, says: "The Maori, with the form and strength of an athletic man, has the mind of a child;" and all travellers

agree in representing savages as having the mental characteristics of little children.

It is characteristic of childhood to be credulous, imaginative, easily believing in the existence of mysterious beings. And although bogie never comes down the chimney, and neither the naughty black man nor the beautiful fairy ever put in their appearance, a belief in their existence has a powerful influence upon the mind of the child—an influence which advanced intelligence alone can eradicate. Children are apt to attribute sensation and will to inanimate objects. If a child hurt itself by running against a chair or a table, you cannot more readily pacify it than by beating the naughty chair or table which did the mischief. A little girl feeds her doll, and the little boy hangs a nosebag with food in it before the mouth of his wooden horse, both believing that the toy is *pleased*, although none of the food is consumed.

It is not difficult to see how, among a people with characteristics like these (aided, perhaps, by dreams, which many savages believe to be real visitations of the spirits of the objects which they see), fetishism may have been readily adopted. And, indeed, we may trace something at the root of it nearly allied to that poetic temperament which enables both children and adults among people of high intellectual culture to find pleasure in those simple efforts of the muse which attribute life and emotion to the flowers of the field and the stars in the sky. Both John Wesley and Dr. Erasmus Darwin (the grandfather of Charles Darwin), as well as many others of less note, believed that trees and flowers could feel joy and sorrow, pleasure and pain. According to the Hindu Vedas, trees are conscious, a living soul dwelling in them. Such ideas may appear puerile to the philosopher, but they are ideas to which the human mind in its imaginative moods gives easy access; and whether or no there be any truth, there is at least a grace and lovingness in them which brightens the eye as we look abroad upon nature, and makes us feel more nearly akin to the many beautiful things we behold there.

We do not require, therefore, either "the slumbering embers of a lost revelation," nor any high philosophic

thought, such as "a concept of the infinite," to explain how the first crude forms of religion entered the world. Among savages, as amongst children, there are individuals much more acute and more inquisitive than others; and we only require a savage a little more reflective than his neighbours to discover that he has a *mind* which can *wish* and *will* and *contrive*, as well as a *body* which can move and act. The natural faculties and tendencies of the human mind will then amply account for the origin of fetishism.

Gradual Development in Nature and Religion.

We find in nature the most simple forms of vegetable and animal life coexisting with the most highly developed organisations. From protoplasm to man, every link in the vast chain of creation remains, exhibiting a process of gradual evolution, expanding in various directions, and assuming a variety of more or less permanent types.

A similar coexistence of the most elementary forms with the highest developments is found in religion. We even find what may be termed unorganised spiritual protoplasm; for savages have been discovered among whom a vague idea of spirit or deity exists, but has not taken any definite form of religious faith or worship; has not been developed even into fetishism. In Western Australia there are nations who believe in the existence of spirits, both good and bad, but who do not worship any kind of deity. They believe the world was made by a very tall, wise, and powerful man of their own country, who died a long time ago.

Fossil remains teach us that in nature the lower organisations preceded the higher in their appearance upon the earth. We have no perfect analogy to that in the case of religion; there are remnants of fetishism or idolatry in every existing religion, yet neither history nor tradition go back far enough to inform us whether, in all countries, fetishism preceded the more highly developed modes of faith. In many countries, within historic times, one religion has superseded another; sometimes by the force of intelligence, sometimes through the efforts of enthusiasts or missionaries, sometimes by the force of arms; but it would be difficult to find a clear case

of one species of religion having been gradually developed out of another. The native religions of savages or semi-civilized peoples vary according to the intellectual and moral condition of the races. Amongst people of mild and gentle natures the deities are mild and placable; where the people are fierce and brutal, their gods are of like nature. This is what might be expected; their religions, being creations of the human mind, naturally follow the characteristics of the minds out of which they are evolved. And in this point of view, the development of heathen religions is only a special phase of the general development of the mental powers of the human race.

Wherever man is found, some nascent element of poetry, music, imitative art, or ornamentation is also found. A tendency towards the development of those arts is inherent in the mental faculties common to all mankind, although the extent of that development is greatly influenced by external conditions and individual temperament. Religion has a like foundation, but a deeper root and a wider spread; being grounded, not upon fancy or pleasure, but upon the hard necessities incident to all savage life. Its first aspirations are everywhere towards spiritual aid in supplying the requirements and avoiding the dangers incident to physical existence. Daily bread, success, and protection from enemies are the first petitions of the savage, and they never disappear from the prayers of the most civilized. Gratitude and self-interest alike prompt that part of what is gained by the supposed aid of the spirit worshipped, should be offered to it as a gift; and the belief that the deity is pleased and conciliated by the offering is the only spiritual comfort which the savage looks for or is capable of enjoying.

The Ancient Hindu Religion.

At least 4000 years ago, there must have been, amongst the Brahmans, men in a considerably advanced state of mental cultivation. They had a sublime metaphysical philosophy, and, in accordance with it, a monotheistic religion. They did not, however, disseminate a knowledge either of their philosophy or their religion generally amongst the people, who continue to this day to worship many gods.

All who could afford it, except those of the lowest caste, had access to teachers, through whom they might attain a knowledge of the higher mysteries, but the method of teaching (learning the pupil to repeat the sacred books by rote) was exceedingly tedious. The principal book, the *Rig Veda*, a collection of 17,020 hymns averaging ten verses each, occupied a student from seven to ten years; and the higher thoughts were so sparsely scattered amidst a mass of "vain repetitions" and polytheistic trivialities, that considerable mental effort must have been required to lay hold of them.

Many of the lower orders of the Brahmans themselves appear to have been as ignorant of the higher mysteries as the people at large; their only qualification being the ability to repeat the hymns appropriate for the sacrifices at which they were called upon to assist.

BRAHM is the one eternal mind, the self-existent incomprehensible spirit—the sole entity, created or uncreated—whose ONENESS is so absolute that it not only excludes the possibility of any other god, but also excludes the possibility of aught else, human or angelic, material or immaterial. All existing things, natural or supernatural, exist only in him, as portions of his eternal will.

Awaking from a state of blissful repose, BRAHM willed to create the world; and he drew forth from himself three hypostases, to which were given the names of *Brahmā*, *Vishnu*, and *Siva*, the Hindu Trinity, of whom the sacred books declare: "They were originally united in one essence, and from one essence were derived, and the great ONE became distinctly known as three gods, being one person in three gods."

BRAHMĀ is styled the *self-existent*, the *Great Father*, the *Lord of Creation*, the *CREATOR*.

VISHNU is the *Preserver*, the *Protector*.

SIVA is the *Destroyer*, or more properly the *changer* or *renewer*; for although he is continually destroying existing forms, that destruction is only a change from one form into some other.

Brahmā, *Vishnu*, and *Siva*, are personal deities, and amongst the modern Hindus are represented by images. Brahma, the creator, is seldom worshipped, being supposed

to have completed his work and to be resting in ^{peace}. The word *Brahma* is often used to denote the all-pervading mind; but when so used it is in the neuter gender, as if applying to something impersonal; yet it is used in a personal sense as the embodiment of all the gods, the mysterious *Om*, the universal *âtma*, or soul. Although this *one* had no place in religious worship except as an object of contemplation, the religion is essentially monotheistic. The sacred books distinctly state this in many places. "All the gods are but parts of one *âtma*, or soul, subservient to the diversification of his praises through the immensity and variety of his attributes." "He from whom the universal world proceeds, who is the Lord of the universe, and whose work is the universe, is the Supreme Being." He is represented as being "infinitely wise, infinitely benign, and infinitely powerful, expanded through the universe."

At what period these ideas were first propounded, there is no record. The philosophic idea of the one all-pervading spirit must have been of very ancient date, for upon it is founded the great mystery of the preparation for the highest state of spiritual bliss, the becoming one with God, which has been a dogma of the Hindu religion for an unknown time. The idea may have existed, and may have begun to be mingled with the ancient fables and allegories of the Hindus, before the art of writing was invented. It is probable that the most learned and pious of the Brahmins never committed the higher thoughts of their religion to writing. Even to this day, among some of them, the words of the oldest of their sacred books continue to be transmitted orally from teacher to pupil, although printed copies have long been in circulation.

That a knowledge of the highest mysteries was not taught to the lower orders of the priesthood, nor disseminated among the people, is not strange. It was usual in ancient schools, both of philosophy and religion, to teach the majority so much only as it was considered necessary for them to know, reserving an initiation into the more abstruse doctrines, and the deeper mysteries, for a select few. There was a pride in the possession of superior knowledge; and there was a danger that lofty thoughts, half comprehended, might

be perverted into absurdities ; a danger amply verified in the Hindu theological writings ; and probably it was the idea of a similar danger which actuated the Romish Priests when they forbade the reading of the Holy Scriptures by the people.

There seems to be a natural tendency in the human mind towards polytheism. The Maoris think it absurd to have only one God to make everything ; the Jews, in possession of the promised land, could never, for very long, remain satisfied with the one God who had given it to them ; amongst the most highly cultivated peoples of the ancient world both in Asia and Europe, amongst the Greeks and Romans in the height of their intellectual and artistic glory, the sun, the moon, the firmament, the clouds, the winds, the dawn of day, and many other lesser objects and phenomena of nature, were personified and worshipped as deities, under a variety of names and forms.

It is easy to understand how such worship might have preceded and might have continued to exist by the side of the Brahmanical philosophy. The philosophy taught that every object in Nature was identified with the Supreme Spirit, as part of His all-pervading existence and power ; all creation was a unity, " whose body Nature is, and God the soul ; " and it was not at all absurdly inconsistent with that creed to believe, that if sunshine or rain were required, prayers to the sun or the clouds, the visible agents of Divine power, and the immediate distributors of the desired gifts to mankind, might be as acceptable and as efficacious as if addressed to one of the triad of gods, concerning whose being and mode of existence the unlearned worshipper was incompetent to form any conception. It has been propounded by Hindu and other writers, that a devotional frame of mind is pleasing to the Supreme Deity, and conducive to spiritual improvement, towards whatever portion of His works the adoration may be directed.

The hymns of the *Rig Veda* were accepted by the Brahmans, as well as by the people, as sacred and inspired. They were said to have been *seen* by the authors of them as a prophet or seer sees a vision. After being handed down orally through an unknown time, they were collected together, and formed into a written book one thousand or more years B.C. The

hymns give no formal exposition of faith or doctrines, but may be gathered from them that the Vedaic religion comprised a belief in a future state of rewards and punishments. Punctual performance of religious rites, with due attention to moral conduct, and entire belief in the holiness of the Vedas, secured for the soul after death a period of enjoyment, proportioned to the religious and moral merits of the deceased, in the heaven of *Indra*, an elysium in the upper regions. A contrary life incurred punishment, for a time proportionate to the crimes committed, in hell or Tartarus. At the expiration of that time the soul returns to earth, and is born again, according to merits or demerits, as a reptile, a fish, a bird, a beast, a man of higher caste, a spirit, etc. Men of peculiar sanctity may become as deities, and dwell among the gods.

This doctrine of the transmigration of souls is believed in by all Brahmans and Buddhists, it was believed in by the ancient Egyptians, and is held at the present day in Burmah, China, Tartary, Thibet, and India, by at least six hundred or seven hundred millions of mankind. It is also believed in by some tribes of American Indians, but not precisely in the same sense. With them the soul does not pass into the body of a man; it may pass into some kind of animal, or for a time into an inanimate object.

CASTE existed, but not as it does at present. Its institution is thus described: "Brahma appointed those who were robust and vigorous to be *Kshetriyas*, to protect the rest; those who were pure and pious he made *Brahmans*; those who were of less power, but industrious and addicted to cultivate the ground, he made *Varsyas*; whilst the feeble and poor of spirit were constituted *Sudras*; and he assigned them their several occupations, to prevent that interference with one another which had occurred as long as they recognised no duties peculiar to castes."

A pious life might benefit the dead. "Those sons who fulfil the rites taught in the Veda, increase the fame and heavenly bliss of their ancestors; in this manner each succeeding generation increases the fame and heavenly bliss of preceding ones." On the other hand, the sons and grandsons of men who had neglected religious rites, or had committed

heinous offences, must undergo certain penances before they could be admitted to the highest religious privileges.

Worship in temples is denounced, and there is no mention of ordinary public worship, nor of images ; those institutions had no place in the ancient Hindu religion.

The deities are principally the personified elements. One half of the hymns in the Rig Veda are addressed to *Agni* and *Indra*.

To *Agni*, as fire in its three phases ; in the heavens as light, the sun, the dawn, and planetary bodies ; in mid air, as lightning and meteoric phenomena ; and on earth as ordinary fire, also as the warmth of digestion and animal life, and the vivifying principle of vegetation : *Agni*, also, as sacrificial fire, is the bearer of offerings and oblations to all the gods.

To *Indra*, as the atmosphere, including clouds, the givers of rain, and the winds, the friends and followers of *Indra*.

Soma occupies a conspicuous place. Although the moon appears to be occasionally intended under that name, when spoken of as scattering darkness, yet the adoration is, in a much less equivocal manner, applied to the soma or moon-plant—the acid *asclepias*, the juice of which ferments into an exhilarating or mildly intoxicating liquor, efficacious in dispelling gloom from the mind. It is praised as the giver of strength and courage both to gods and men. One set of hymns is addressed to the deified personification of the plant, and libations of the unfermented juice generally constituted a portion of the sacrifice to all the gods, a portion being poured upon the fire, or upon the sacred grass strewed round the altar, the remainder being drunk.

The other offerings were generally clarified butter, and cakes of barley, or other grain fried in butter. After small portions of the offerings had been burned upon the altar, with the proper invocation to the deity worshipped, the remainder became the perquisite of the priests.

On some great and special occasions, horses and other animals were sacrificed. Such sacrifices were conducted publicly in the open air, with great pomp and ceremony. A great number of priests, of various grades, were employed ; some to mark out the ground, some to slaughter the victims,

some to prepare the altar, and some to speak or chaunt the prayers. Singing was a conspicuous portion, a number of priests being set apart as a chorus.

For private worship amongst the wealthy, the sacred fire was lighted, and the ceremony conducted in the house of the worshipper, in a room set apart for the purpose ; the service being performed by a set of priests whose peculiar duty it was, and who were, literally, the servants of the altar, having no rank nor authority beyond that of masters of the ceremonies. Families of distinction had a priest attached to their household ; but, for the performance of a formal sacrifice, from six to sixteen others were required.

The hymns recited at the sacrifice generally combined prayer and praise. The presence of the deity worshipped was invoked ; his power, his generosity, his goodness, and even his personal beauty, were lauded, and his bounties or his exploits rehearsed and glorified ; in requital for which praises, and for the offerings which he is solicited to accept, and in approval of the rite in his honour, he was implored to bestow the blessings enumerated in the prayer.

The blessings prayed for were almost entirely of a temporal and personal character : long life, wealth, posterity, cows and horses, protection against enemies, victory over them, and sometimes their destruction, particularly when they are people inimical to the celebration of religious rites. Protection from evil spirits is prayed for, but there is little reference to spiritual blessings ; although there is sometimes an expression of hatred of untruth, abhorrence of sin, and a hope that it may be repented or expiated ; sin meaning a transgression of Brahmanical laws, or a neglect of religious rites.

The rich man might be pious by proxy ; it was not considered necessary for him always to attend personally at the sacrifices offered in his own house ; and yet the poor were not left out in the cold. The gods were not supposed to despise simple offerings, when presented with a willing heart. A log of wood placed on the fire of the domestic hearth, an oblation poured out to the god, or alms given to the Brahmans, were acceptable. It is written in the *Rig Veda* : " The mortal who sacrifices to *Agni* with a log of wood, with an oblation, with a bundle of grass with a reverence, careful

in his performance, his horses shall pass on quickly, his fame will be the brightest ; nowhere will mischief, whether wrought by the gods or wrought by men, reach him." . . . " With this hymn of praise, O Agni, we bring thee a sacrifice that is fashioned by the heart ; may these be thy bulls, thy oxen, and thy cows."

Religious privileges were not extended to the Sudras, the servile caste. It was not allowable to teach them the Vedas. Their position in a future state depended upon their proper performance of their duties, and their submission to the law. If sufficiently meritorious, they might, upon their next appearance upon earth, be born as members of the next higher caste ; and thus be placed on the path towards higher spiritual promotion.

The Hindus were gentle and affectionate in their domestic relations ; but it does not appear that the females participated in religious exercises, except on particular occasions. They were not taught the Vedas ; and when it became necessary for them to take part in a religious ceremony, the words which they had to speak were dictated to them by the husband or the priest. Perhaps it was thought that they were less liable to transgress the law than men ; certainly they were not precluded from the hope of happiness in a future state. The immolation of the widow upon her husband's funeral pile was optional, and was in general only allowed to the first, the only legal and true wife. If she chose to live, she must ever after lead a secluded and abstemious life ; if she chose to die, it was an act of devotion, the merit of which not only insured her own happiness, but was sufficient to expiate the most heinous crimes the husband could have committed.

It is generally considered that the Levitical laws descend rather minutely into particulars concerning the customs and habits of the people ; but in that respect they come short of the Brahmanical. The distinctions between clean things and unclean were more fastidious than those of Moses ; and methods of purification, from sipping a little water and spitting it out again, up to bathing with the clothes on, were enjoined.

How a pupil must conduct himself in the presence of his teacher, and how the teacher must behave to his pupil ; the

different methods of salutation, on receiving a friend, a common acquaintance, or a stranger, and other social ceremonies, even the method of approaching a lady for the purpose of asking alms, are described with great precision.

From the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, and afterwards; in the most minute particulars, and in the most secret acts of a man's life, the law was with him, laying down methods of procedure. The penal laws are somewhat severe, and did not hold all men to be on an equality. If a member of one of the three higher castes committed adultery with the wife of a Sudra, he was banished; but if a Sudra committed adultery with the wife of a man of higher caste, the punishment was death. For murder, theft, or pillage, the *Sudra* forfeited his life; the *Brahman* was only deprived of his sight. The most heinous offence any man could commit, either in the sight of god or man, was the murder of a Brahman.

The moral virtues commended were, freedom from anger, from envy, from exultation, from grumbling, from covetousness, from perplexity, from hypocrisy; truthfulness, moderation in eating, silencing slander, self-denying liberality, avoiding to accept gifts, uprightness, affability, suppression of the passions, subjection of the senses, peace with all created beings, contentedness. Drinking spirituous liquors was a crime, classed along with murder, though not punishable in the same way. It was considered akin to suicide.

Filial piety, paternal tenderness, kindness to inferiors, and obedience to rulers are also enjoined and commended.* Forgiveness of enemies, and returning good for evil, are thus quaintly enforced:—"The tree withholds not its shade from the woodman who is cutting it down;" "The sandal tree

* The following is extracted from instructions to a young man entering the world:—"Let him not pass idly any part of the day, morning, midday, or evening; but according to his ability he shall make each useful by the acquisition of spiritual merit, or of wealth, and by taking his pleasure. But among these three aims of human life he shall chiefly attend to the acquisition of spiritual merit. . . . He shall perform whatever aged Brahmans of subdued senses, who have been properly obedient (to their teachers), who are free from deceit, covetousness, and error, and who know the Vedas, declare to be right. . . . He shall always speak the truth,—he shall conduct

communicates its fragrance to the hatchet that levels it with the ground."

The ancient Hindus are described as having been, for the most part, a temperate, chaste, docile, and law-abiding people, living peaceably in villages, or communes, superintended by an administrator of the law.

The four castes lived together in harmony; each being deemed honourable, so long as the individual honourably acted his part. A man of any higher caste might marry a Sudra woman, but there the pride of pure blood stepped in; the unfortunate children were of no caste, not even Sudras. According to more recent authorities, however, a man of higher caste degraded himself by contact with a Sudra woman.

The ancient Hindu worship appears to have been practically among the people little more than an exalted species of the fetishism out of which it probably sprung. That the progress of the human intellect has been one of gradual development is as certain as that flint implements preceded by many centuries the use of iron; and that the use of rude iron tools preceded, by an equally lengthened period, the manufacture of iron machines driven by water or steam. In the gradual advance of intelligence there would come a time when it would become impossible for thinking men to continue their faith in the fetish tree or rock, either as having a powerful spirit of its own, or as being the permanent abode of a powerful spirit; and when they first stretched their thoughts upwards in search of some higher deity, their ideas would naturally rest upon the sun, the moon, the starry firmament, and the floating clouds, the diffusers of the heat and light and rain, which were the primary necessities of all animated existence.

Looking still higher, beyond these elemental objects, the

himself as becomes an Aryan. He shall follow the rules of purification taught in the sacred books. He shall take pleasure in the study of the Veda. He shall never hurt (any being). He shall be gentle, yet firm, ever restrain his senses, and be liberal. . . . One who conducts himself in this manner will liberate his parents, his ancestors, and descendants from evil, and never fall from Brahma's heaven." —*Sacred Books of the East*, vol. ii., p. 216, *et seq.*

more intellectual among the Brahmans conceived the existence of a great spiritual power, the source and sustainer of all things; but the light of their intelligence shed only a feeble and glimmering ray abroad among the people; the Brahmans never intended that it should do more. Among them, as among the other castes, marriage and the increase of the population was held to be a religious duty. All the sons of the Brahmans were born priests, and their means of subsistence were almost entirely restricted to the exercise of their priestly functions; no wonder, therefore, that they should encourage such beliefs and observances as were advantageous to their own order. Like the makers of images in Athens, they had an interest in the multiplicity of gods.

The deities were given wives; they begat children, who also were deities; new personifications were also invented; and by the time that the hymns of the Rig Veda were collected into a book, the gods had become a multitude.

The priests did not fail to impress upon the minds of the people the value of their services. The child was indebted to his parents for his birth, and for certain worldly advantages, but through the teachings of the Brahman he was born again into a new life, which was better and of higher value than the first.

As regards the influence of the religion upon the character of the people, there was much in it tending to the good. The worship of a simple fetish is an elevation out of a mere animal life, although the elevation may be but small; and the introduction of a belief in a future state into the religion of the Hindus was a still greater advance, which could not fail to have an important moral influence. It was not until later times, when the population increased, and began to be crowded into cities, when the people began to thirst after excitement, and strange and sensuous doctrines began to be blended with the simple prayers and praises of the Veda, that the worship lapsed into those debasing rites and brutal orgies which polluted the more modern Hindu religion; and then it was not the religion which debased the people, it was the people and the lower order of priests who debased the religion.

In considering the moral or spiritual efficacy of any religion, we must not view its observances through the light of our own intelligence, nor in comparison with our own faith. We must bring our mind into sympathy with the mental condition of those who believed in it before we can conceive how their mind and character would be affected by it.

The worshipper would not become rich by presenting Soma to *Agni*; the clouds would not pour down rain because of his calling upon *Indra*; nor the fruits of the earth ripen the quicker because of his prayers to the *sun*; but his own mind would be favourably influenced. The idea that his offerings were accepted by the deities would infuse that hope for success which is the best stimulus to exertion; if rain were needed, the prayer for it, by inspiring a confidence that it would come, relieved his mental anxiety while waiting for it; and when an abundance of corn ripened in the fields, his pleasure at the sight was enhanced by a feeling of thankfulness towards the glorious luminary by whose immediate influence the happy result was produced.

The plurality of gods also brought religion nearer home. There were lesser gods for small occasions, giving the worshipper a special resource in every emergency of his daily life, and bringing his mind into immediate contact with the supposed sources of comfort or aid. Just as consolation and hope have been received through prayers before an image of the Virgin by many a simple soul who could not have stretched a thought half-way to God the Father or the Holy Ghost the Comforter. Prayers to images and to natural objects appear absurd, but they bring spiritual comfort to those who have never been taught to seek it in a better way. Faith brings hope and hope brings consolation.

There was little enthusiasm in the devotional exercises of the Rig Veda,—no longing after spiritual gifts; no transports of love to, nor any seeking after inward communion with, the gods; none of the ecstasies and wild fits of fanaticism which pervaded the religious life of the more modern Hindus. The services were not intended to excite such emotions. They were composed for men engaged in the ordinary business of life, and were calculated to excite no higher devotional emotions than were consistent with a peculiarly calm and

ceremonious social system, the belief of the Brahmans being that the attainment of perfect knowledge in divine mysteries was not compatible with worldly occupations or social ties, that the soul could not be completely purified from earthly thoughts and desires whilst surrounded by the associations which gave them birth. Hence it was considered necessary that those who would attain the highest condition of religious exaltation on earth, and the most perfect state of bliss in the future life, should, some years before death, retire from the world and devote themselves to spiritual exercises and to a severely ascetic life.

The Ascetic Life and the Highest Knowledge.

Leaving home, and wife, and family, and friends, the ascetic must live without a fire, without a house, without pleasure, without protection. "Begging so much food only in the village as will sustain his life, he shall wander about neither caring for this world nor for heaven." "Abandoning truth and falsehood, pleasure and pain, the Vedas, this world and the next, he shall seek the universal soul."

The object of this retirement into an ascetic life was to attain the highest knowledge, as a means of final liberation from those vicissitudes of corporeal existence to which mankind were liable through the transmigrations of the soul. This could only be accomplished in solitude, through profound meditation and an entire abstraction from all worldly ties.

This state of highest knowledge implied a clear appreciation of the difference between soul and not soul, between *self* as connected with the illusions of corporeal existence, and *self* as that of which the body is only the temporary dwelling place, and the senses only the servants and instruments, *self* as a portion of the Divine essence, capable of being purified and becoming again absorbed in the great soul of the universe. It involved the abnegation of all other knowledge, even religious. For religious observances, although, in connection with a virtuous life, they might gain for the soul an admittance to heaven, did not prevent its return to earth, and did not avail for the attainment of that higher condition which required not only a cleansing from all

material dross, but a release also from all dependence upon the created deities. The soul might have been gathering spiritual strength by the punctual worship of inferior gods, but in this last great struggle to free itself for ever from the trammels of earthly existence, it had to depend upon itself; to work out its own redemption by its own efforts.

The existence of the ONE, the eternal mind, previous to the creation of the world, is thus described by a Hindu philosopher: "That ONE breathed, and lived; it enjoyed more than mere existence; yet its life was not dependent upon anything else, as our life depends upon the air we breathe. It breathed, breathless." In that ONE, the soul was prepared to merge, and to lose its own identity, when it had attained the knowledge of the highest *self*. Liberated for ever from individual existence, it would become one with God; as a drop of water, falling into the ocean, loses itself in the vast expanse.

When that knowledge was attained, past sin was annulled and future offence precluded. "As water wets not the leaf of the lotus, so sin troubles not him who knows god. As the floss upon the carding comb cast into the fire is consumed, so are his sins burnt away."

This knowledge was attainable in different degrees. For the most perfect, the liberation of the soul is absolute and final. It never returns from its absorption in the Divine essence to undergo individual existence or further transmigrations. Incomplete knowledge may conduct the soul to the *abode of Brahma*, and without qualifying it for absorption into the Divine essence, may exempt it from return to earth during the existence of the present creation; but, in some millions of years, when the present creation has passed away, and has been replaced by a new heaven and a new earth, those souls will again become subject to transmigration as before.

One kind of liberation may take place during the life of the ascetic, enabling him to perform miracles; such as raising up the spirits of the dead, translation of himself into other bodies called into existence by the mere force of his will, instantaneous removal to any place at his pleasure, etc., etc.

The *abode of Brahma* is a place of higher and more durable

happiness than the heaven or "next world" attainable by those who have only sacrificed to the gods and done their duty as good citizens.

"As here on earth, whatever has been acquired by exertion perishes, so perishes whatever is acquired for the next world by sacrifices and other good actions performed on earth. Those who depart from hence without having discovered the Self and those true desires, for them is no freedom in all the worlds. But those who depart from hence, after having discovered the self and those true desires, for them there is freedom in all the worlds."

This freedom in all the worlds is explained as meaning that whatever the soul of a man desires comes to him. If he desire to enjoy the company of father, mother, brother, sister, or friends, or if he desire perfumes, garlands, food, drink, music, they will come to him. Whatever object he is attached to, whatever object he desires, by his mere will it comes to him; and having obtained it he is happy.

This abode of Brahma is described as separated by a bank, a boundary, "so that these worlds may not be confounded. Day and night do not pass that bank, nor old age, death, and grief, neither good nor evil deeds. All evil doers turn back from it, for the world of Brahma is free from all evil. Therefore he who has crossed that bank, if blind, ceases to be blind; if wounded, ceases to be wounded; if afflicted, ceases to be afflicted. Therefore when that bank has been crossed, night becomes day indeed, for the world of Brahma is lighted up once for all."

There is a strange, weird, mysterious, and awful sublimity in a religion which condemned the souls of myriads of mankind to wander through innumerable transmigrations, not only while the present creation shall endure, but to be renewed after all material things now existing on the earth, and in the infinite abyss of the starry firmament surrounding its orbit, shall have passed into nothingness, and a new fiat of creative power has again called forth from itself material elements, to garnish the immensity of space with new suns, and a new generation of revolving worlds and living things.

This seems a cruel code; yet final redemption, such as

it was, was open to all. There was no place in the Hindu creed for everlasting despair, although the individual might wander in darkness through a thousand transmigrations, with all the alternations of pleasure and pain incident to human or animal life, before he attained the knowledge, and the strength of will, necessary for working out his liberation. The poor Sudra, through good conduct, might enjoy a period of happiness in the heaven of Indra; he might then be born into the world again as a man with higher privileges, and, if fortunate in gaining higher instruction, might, in his next translation, find himself in the abode of Brahma, or might attain eternal requiescence in the great soul of the universe.

Contrast between Ancient and Modern Hindu Worship.

The ancient Hindus did not attach any saving merit to a mere belief in the existence and power of the gods. Superior merit was gained by attention to religious rites, by presenting to the deities such offerings and praises as were supposed to be pleasing to them, and by practising the moral virtues which were supposed to gain their approbation. Their sacrifices and praises were offered reverently, with pomp and ceremony by those who could afford it, and with quiet adoration by those of humbler means.

Some time before the commencement of the Christian era, the calm dignity of the ancient worship began to be superseded by excitement and fervour. Images and temples became common, and new ideas were imported into the religion, giving rise to endless controversies and varieties of opinion, and to the formation of numerous sects.

One new feature now prevalent was love, accompanied by fervent anxieties, hopes, fears, and longing desires of the soul after the deity, represented under the emblem of human passion. Another was "the absolute sufficiency of faith alone, wholly independent of conduct, to insure salvation. Entire dependence upon *Krishna*, or other deity, not only obviates the necessity of virtue, but it sanctifies vice; conduct is wholly immaterial. It matters not how atrocious a sinner a man may be, if he paints his face, his breast, his arms with

certain sectarian marks ; or which is better, if he brands his skin permanently with them with a hot iron stamp, if he is constantly chaunting hymns in honour of *Kishnu*, or if he spend hours in the simple reiteration of his name or names ; if he die with the word *Hari*, or *Rama*, or *Khrishna* on his lips, and the thought of him in his mind, he may have lived a monster of iniquity, he is certain of heaven.”—*Professor H. H. Wilson : Collected Works*, vol. ii., p. 75.

These extravagances are not approved by the more intelligent. Several sects have abandoned the use of idols, they deny the efficacy of faith, substitute a moral for a ceremonial code, and address their prayers to one only God. Others have altogether abandoned the supernatural, and consider the cultivation of the social virtues as the most worthy object of human devotion.

The Brahmanic Theory of the Creation.

Before the beginning of the present Creation, the ONE, the Eternal Spirit, existed alone. “That ONE breathed and lived ; it enjoyed more than mere existence ; yet its life was not dependent upon anything else, as our life depends upon the air we breathe. It breathed breathless.”

*From that ONE came Creation.**

In the Hindu religion the word mind is sometimes used as synonymous with spirit, the ONE being called the ETERNAL MIND. But in their philosophy there is a distinction. The *Eternal Spirit* is described as enjoying more than mere existence, but not as *thinking*. Becoming *mind*, or awaking into thought, is a step in the process of evolution through which matter and the material universe gradually come into existence.

* The ONE before the creation is thus described in the Rig Veda :—“There was then neither entity nor nonentity : there was no atmosphere nor sky above. . . . Death was not there : there was no distinction of day or night. That One breathed calmly, self-sustorted : there was nothing different from nor above it. . . . Desire first rose in IT, which was the primal germ of mind ; (and which) sages, searching with their intellect, have discovered in their heart to be the bond which unites entity with nonentity.” Nonentity is described as meaning that there was, as yet, no distinct manifestation of the ONE. Nothing existing but the ONE.

The following is the method of procession or evolution, the different stages being typified by the ancient elements—*Ether, Air, Fire, Water, Earth.*

Out of BRAHM, the ONE eternal and self-existent, came—

1. ETHER. MIND; the Eternal ONE passing into a state of "*desire*," a self-induced condition in which he willed to be or to do something, "to diversify himself," "to become many."
2. AIR. MIND, as a contemplative power revolving within itself, as if meditating what to do.
3. FIRE. MIND, in conscious activity, commencing the work of Creation.
4. WATER. MÁTRÁS, matter in an incipient or nebulous state, containing "*the invisible types of the visible atoms*" which compose the material elements of Creation.
5. EARTH. ATOMIC MATTER, as it exists in Nature, and by the various combinations of which the material universe has become what it is.

During this process, and for all time, material nature, amidst all its never-ceasing changes, never ceases to be a portion of the Eternal Spirit out of which it came,—into which all things are again resolvable, and will again be resolved, by the act of His will.

The present Creation, after it has existed a day of *Brahma*—that is, 4,320,000 years of our time—will pass away, and like ice melting in water, will gradually vanish. The dissolution will take place in the reverse order of Creation, material nature being first dissipated into *Earth*, or atomic chaos; then passing through the various stages typified as above by *Water, Fire, Air*, and *Ether*, will be resolved again into the ONE. After existing during another day of *Brahma* in a state of self-enjoying repose, the Eternal ONE will again wake into activity, and a new Creation will burst forth "to diversify his glory."





THE REVELATION TO MOSES.

THE LAMP OF BRAHMA was the light of Nature. Having seen how far that light could guide mankind in their search after a true religion, we have now to consider what further illumination was received through the revelation to Moses.

It is not only probable, but every Christian reader will accept it as certain, that the alleged Divine inspiration of the Hindu sacred writings was no other than such as influences secular poets and orators in the fervent effusions of their own genius.

There are in those writings many sublime utterances of praise and prayer; but the mass of trivial matter through which they are sparsely scattered, betrays undeniable evidences of human origin.

Moses was careful not to leave any room for conjecture as regards the nature of his revelation. When we are told that "the Lord spake unto Moses, face to face, as a man speaketh to his friend" (Exod. xxxiii. 11), and when Moses says that the Lord spake to him, commanding him to say so-and-so to the people, it is perfectly clear that he meant the people to accept the words which he communicated to them as words actually spoken by the great Being whom he was teaching them to worship as their God.*

Although both Jews and Christians admit the divine mission

* This is made still more clear in Numb. xii. 6: "Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak to him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so. With him I will speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold."

of Moses, it is evident that some of the Jews did not adopt the dogma of plenary inspiration as it has been adopted by Christians. Josephus (*Preface to Antiquities*) says that Moses "speaks some things wisely, but enigmatically, and under a decent allegory, but still explains such things as required a direct explication plainly and expressly." By which we might understand, for instance, that when Moses delivered to the people the ten commandments, he spake "plainly and expressly;" but when he informed them that those commandments had been written upon two tables of stone by the finger of God, he spake enigmatically, under a "decent allegory," with a view of enforcing more strongly upon their minds the Divine authority of his teachings. Josephus further speaks of the history of Moses involving "a very curious philosophical theory," which he promises to explain at some future time.

After describing the six days of Creation, not as if quoting Moses, but in the style of an independent authority narrating facts, Josephus says: "Moses, after the seventh day was over, begins to talk philosophically," meaning obviously that what follows in the second and third chapters of Genesis respecting the special and peculiar method adopted by God in creating Adam and Eve, the planting of the garden of Eden, the tree of knowledge, the serpent, etc., is not to be accepted as an historical narrative of facts, but as an allegory or parable intended to enforce a moral lesson. Accordingly, Josephus, in relating those events, does not relate them as accepted facts; he writes, "Moses says" so-and-so.

Josephus does not introduce Moses to his readers as an inspired prophet, but as a man of wisdom and experience, deliberately, of his own will, undertaking the establishment of a secular government upon a religious foundation. He says (*Preface to Antiquities*, sec. 4):—

"But because almost all our constitution depends on the wisdom of Moses, our legislator, I cannot avoid saying somewhat concerning him beforehand, although I shall do it briefly; I mean, because otherwise those that read my book may wonder how it comes to pass that my discourse, which promises an account of laws and historical facts, contains so much of philosophy. The reader is therefore to know, that Moses deemed it exceeding necessary that he who would conduct his own life well and give laws to others, in the first place should consider the Divine nature, and upon the contemplation of

God's operations should thereby imitate the best of all patterns, so far as it is possible for human nature to do, and to endeavour to follow after it. Neither could the legislator himself have a right mind without such a contemplation, nor would anything he should write tend to the promotion of virtue in his readers; I mean unless they be taught, first of all, that God is the Father and Lord of all things, and that thence He bestows a happy life upon those that follow Him; but plunges such as do not walk in the paths of virtue into inevitable miseries. Now when Moses was desirous to teach this lesson to his countrymen, he did not begin the establishment of his laws after the manner that other legislators did; I mean upon contracts and other rights between one man and another, but by raising their minds upwards to regard God and His creation of the world, and by persuading them that we men are the most excellent of the creatures of God upon earth. Now when once he had brought them to submit to religion, he easily persuaded them to submit in all other things."

Attempts have been made to reconcile the Mosaic account of Creation with the facts of science; also to explain some of the miraculous events described by Moses, such as the passage across the Red Sea and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, as having possibly occurred without any violation of natural laws. All such speculations are outside our present purpose, which is, to understand, so far as we can, the nature and attributes of the Deity as described in the Pentateuch, and the nature of the rites and ceremonies by which, according to the teachings of Moses, the people were to propitiate the favour of their God.

When, according to Moses, the Lord had placed Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, He appears to have held familiar intercourse with them, and also to have had an habitation there for Himself; for when they had eaten of the forbidden fruit, "and the eyes of both of them were opened" . . . "they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day," and being ashamed of their nakedness, they hid themselves among the trees. "And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said, Where art thou?" (Gen iii. 8, 9).

There is something very human in the idea of the Deity conveyed in this description; and the language which Moses attributes to the Lord when He discovers that Adam and Eve have eaten of the forbidden fruit, exhibits unmistakable

evidences of human passion. He curses the serpent, He curses Eve, and He curses the ground for Adam's sake. "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee, and thou shalt eat the herb of the field" (Gen. iii. 17, 18).

Moses represents God as being so far merciful that He made Adam and Eve coats of skins, and clothed them before sending them forth to till the ground which He had blighted for their offence. He then drove them out of Paradise, and placed "cherubims and a flaming sword, which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life," lest Adam or any of his progeny might return and eat of the fruit of that also, and become immortal.

This short narrative presents a vigorous demonstration of a lesson which runs through the whole teaching of Moses,—that the violation of any command of God renders the offender liable to prompt punishment in person or property.

In the episode of Cain and Abel, Moses inculcates a second lesson. Having shown the danger of disobeying God, he next exhibits the evil consequences which may follow from negligence or parsimony in acknowledging Him by sacrifices. "Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord; and Abel he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect to Abel and to his offering, but to Cain and to his offering He had not respect" (Gen. iv. 3).

Moses does not state that Cain had hitherto been a more sinful man, or that, personally, he was less acceptable in the sight of God, than Abel; but his offering was not what it should have been. As we afterwards learn through Moses, the firstlings of the flock and the fat of animals were peculiarly pleasing "as a sacrifice of a sweet smelling savour unto the Lord;" while grain and cakes, although acceptable from the poor, on small occasions, were not acceptable as sin offerings. When the Lord is reproving Cain for being wroth, He says, according to our translation, "Sin lieth at the door;" but according to learned authorities, including Dr. Adam Clarke, the proper translation is, "*A sin offering* lieth at thy door; an animal proper to be offered as an

atonement for sin, is now crouching at the door of thy fold."

As the human race increased in numbers, Moses informs us, they increased in wickedness. What the wickedness was we are not told, only that it increased, and about 1,550 years after the Mosaic creation it reached a climax. And we read, Genesis vi. 5-8:—

"And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart. And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them. But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord."

The vehemence of the vengeance imputed to God by Moses in this story of the deluge is too terrific for sober contemplation. Except one family of eight persons the whole population of the earth—not only the men and women, who might have been more or less wicked, but millions of innocent prattling children, millions of infants clinging to their mothers' breasts, and millions of babes unborn—are deliberately, of set purpose, swept off the face of the earth.

Could Moses have told us that God, when He made His arbitrary choice of Noah, gave some solemn warning to the rest of mankind, there would have been at least a show of mercy; and surely some few among the teeming multitudes who then populated the earth, might have sufficiently repented to be as worthy of being kept alive as the reptiles, the snakes, the wild beasts, and the noxious insects, which were saved to pester the new races of men who were afterwards to multiply and replenish the face of the devastated earth.

It was not until after the work of destruction was completed that Moses attributes any tenderness of feeling to his God; and then he does it in a way admirably adapted to enforce the efficacy of sacrifices (Gen. viii. 20, 21):—

"And Noah builded an altar unto the Lord, and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on

the altar. And the Lord smelled a sweet savour ; and the Lord said in His heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake ; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth ; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done."

God, after blessing Noah and his sons, uses the following words (Gen. ix. 5, 6) :—

"And surely your blood of your lives will I require ; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man ; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed ; for in the image of God made He man."

These words, placing so high a value upon a single human life, seem strange when spoken by One who had but just completed the destruction of the whole human race ; and afford an example of the variableness of temper and liability to outbursts of wrath and subsequent repentance, which throughout the whole of his history Moses attributes to the Deity.

About four hundred years after the Flood the Lord selects Abram as the recipient of especial favours, and as the founder of the Jewish nation (Gen. xii. 1-3) :—

"Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee ; and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great ; and thou shalt be a blessing. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee : and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."

As Abram was journeying forth in obedience to this call, there came a famine in the land, and Abram and his wife went down into Egypt. As they drew near to Egypt, Abram (Gen. xii. 11-13) says to his wife :—

"Behold now, I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon ; therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say, This is his wife : and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive. Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister : that it may be well with me for thy sake ; and my soul shall live because of thee."

The beauty of Sarah being strongly commended by the Egyptian princes, she was taken into Pharaoh's house (Gen. xii. 16-20) :—

"And he entreated Abram well for her sake ; and he had sheep and oxen, and he asses, and menservants, and maidservants, and asses, and camels. And the Lord plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues, because of Sarai Abram's wife. And Pharaoh called Abram, and said, What is this that thou hast done unto me? Why didst thou not tell me that she was thy wife? Why saidst thou, She is my sister? so I might have taken her to me to wife: now therefore behold thy wife, take her, and go thy way. And Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him: and they sent him away, and his wife, and all that he had."

A similar incident again occurs in the life of Abram (Gen. xx.); and his son Isaac, under a similar temptation, follows his father's example (Gen. xxvi.). The moral peculiarity of these two transactions of Abram is, that the two kings who had honestly and lawfully, according to the customs of the time, taken the woman into their house, were visited by the Lord with sore afflictions, not only in their own persons, but in their whole household ; while the husband who had basely placed his wife in a position to commit adultery, is rewarded with increase of wealth, and goes on his way rejoicing, "very rich in cattle, and silver and gold."

It is noticeable that these and other unsavoury incidents in the lives of the Patriarchs are related by Moses without a word of reprobation, or any record of their being repented of ; leaving us to conclude either that, in his opinion, they were not displeasing to God, or that God freely overlooked smaller errors on the part of His chosen people, so long as they offered sacrifices of a sweet savour, and refrained from worshipping strange gods.

Moses does not state in what particular form the Deity appeared when He spake with Adam and Cain and Noah, but we may assume that it was in human shape ; for in Gen. xviii. we read that the Lord, in company with two angels, all in human form, not only appeared to Abraham and talked with him, but partook of refreshments. "And he (Abraham) took butter, and milk, and the calf which he had dressed, and set it before them ; and he stood by them under the tree, and they did eat." After an interesting conversation, in which Abraham is promised that his wife Sarah, although aged and past the time of child-bearing, shall bear him a legitimate son and heir, the three visitors depart, Abraham

hospitably accompanying them, "to bring them on the way."

The Lord informs Abraham that the cry of the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah being very great, He has come down to "see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it which is come unto me; and if not, I will know." The two angels depart towards Sodom, leaving the Lord in conference with Abraham. After a conversation respecting the destruction of Sodom, "the Lord went His way," and "Abraham returned unto his place."

According to this narrative, it is evident that Moses did not believe in, or at all events did not teach, the doctrine either of the omniscience or omnipresence of the Deity. He represents that information concerning the wickedness of Sodom had been conveyed to God, presumably by angelic messengers similar to those who had accompanied Him on his visit to Abraham; and He had come down to investigate the matter, bringing two angels with Him, and empowering them to destroy the city if it were as wicked as it had been represented to be. The reception of the two angels in the city being sufficient to decide that point, they inform Lot that the Lord had sent them to destroy it; and they assist him to escape with his wife and daughters. But although God, "remembering Abraham," assisted Lot to escape, both God and the angels immediately forsook him. Deprived of his herds and his stores of wealth, he was obliged to take his abode in a cave; and his daughters, despairing of any future intercourse with mankind ("there is not a man in the earth to come in unto us after the manner of all the earth"), committed incest in order to raise up offspring to their father.

There is nothing in the writings of Moses to throw much further light upon his teachings until we come to his own times. He was a Jew by birth, but being adopted and treated as her own son by Pharaoh's daughter, he was reared and educated as an Egyptian prince. There is no authentic narrative of his life as an Egyptian; but from such incidental notices of him as exist he is believed to have held high positions both as a priest and a warrior. That "he was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians," and that "he was mighty both in words and in deeds" (Acts vii. 22),

is corroborated by such secular historians as refer to him at all.

When about forty years of age, he was obliged to flee from Egypt, on account of killing an Egyptian who was "smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren." One day, on his wanderings, he gallantly assisted the daughters of Jethro, a Midianitish priest, when they were annoyed by some shepherds while they were drawing water from a well for their father's sheep. Jethro sent for him, took him into his house, and gave him one of his daughters in marriage. There Moses continued forty years, tending the flocks of his father-in-law. A humble position for so great a man! Yet it was one which gave him abundance of time for meditation, and for working out in his mind plans for a future career.

The then reigning Pharaoh had oppressed the Jews more than his predecessors; and all those who sought the life of Moses for killing the Egyptian being dead, he could now safely return to Egypt.

Speculating in the light of human reason only, we might conjecture that Moses had, in the musings of his shepherd life, formed a determination to become the leader of his own people, and to free them from their bondage.* Moses himself, however, gives a very different account of the matter. Whether in that account he writes historically or allegorically, there are, and ever will be, differences of opinion.

In the district where Moses watched the flocks of his father-in-law was a *fetish*, a mountain supposed to be the habitation of a god. Other shepherds fearing to encroach upon the sacred ground, Moses found good pasturage for his flocks there, and relates the following strange event as having occurred to him (Exod. iii. 1-10):

"Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb. And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see

* A great idea and a noble enterprise, if only it could have been carried out without the Israelites inflicting infinitely greater injuries upon other peoples than the Egyptians had ever inflicted upon them.

great sight, why the bush is not burnt. And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I. And he said, Draw not nigh hither : put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face ; for he was afraid to look upon God. And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters ; for I know their sorrows ; and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey ; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites. Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me : and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.

In the remaining portion of the same chapter two things are noticeable :—1. God instructs Moses that in speaking to Pharaoh he shall use a subterfuge ; he is to say that the Jews wish to go a three days' journey into the wilderness to sacrifice to their God. 2. The Jewish women were to *borrow* from their neighbours jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment ; “and ye shall put them upon your sons and your daughters ; and ye shall spoil the Egyptians.” Commentators suggest that in this the Jews were only taking what might be due to them for their enforced labour ; but the apology is as immoral as the act ; for the parties to be *spoiled* were not those for whom they had been compelled to labour, but neighbours with whom they were living on friendly terms.

Moses narrates a long conference between God and himself, in which he represents himself as expressing great reluctance to undertake the mission, alleging amongst other reasons the impediment in his speech. At length his scruples are overcome, and his brother Aaron, who could speak well, was appointed to assist him.

As a means of proving his Divine mission, both to his own people and to Pharaoh, God instructs Moses how to perform three miracles : turning his rod into a serpent, causing and curing leprosy in his hand, and turning water into blood (Exod. iv. 1-9). As the Egyptian magicians

could perform the same miracles, it is not an extravagantly uncharitable conjecture that Moses might long before have learned the art of performing them in Egypt.

The miracles of Moses convinced the Jews, but did not convince Pharaoh ; for although the serpent produced from the staff of Moses, when thrown down by Aaron, swallowed up the serpents produced in the same way by the magicians, yet Pharaoh, if he saw it, seems to have seen nothing more in it than a token of superior skill. More energetic measures, therefore, became necessary, and we have the ten plagues of Egypt.

The greater number of these plagues were visitations to which the country was occasionally liable ; but Moses represents them to have occurred with miraculous vehemence, in miraculously rapid succession, and by a special interference of the Almighty.

First, the river and all the streams and ponds of water in Egypt are turned into blood ; then, in succession, frogs, lice, and flies, in supernatural swarms, inundate the houses, cover the ground, torment the inhabitants, and corrupt the land ; then murrain comes upon all the cattle,—“ upon the horses, upon the asses, upon the camels, upon the oxen, and upon the sheep,” but “ of the cattle of the children of Israel died not one ;”—then boils and blains burst forth upon man and upon beast, upon the magicians, and upon all the Egyptians ; next came hail, with fire running along the ground, smiting all that was in the field, both man and beast, and every herb of the field, and breaking every tree of the field ; next came locusts, covering the face of the earth, so that the land was darkened, and devouring every vestige of vegetation which the hail and the fire had left ; next came a thick darkness—the Egyptians “ saw not one another, neither rose any man from his place for three days ; but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.” Last of all, the Lord went out through Egypt at midnight, and destroyed every first-born, both of man and beast.

What are the characteristics of the Deity exhibited in this narrative ? During the continuance of each plague Pharaoh is represented as repenting, and as being willing to let the people of Israel go ; but so soon as he had induced Moses

and Aaron to stay the hand of the Lord, his heart was hardened and he withdrew his consent. After several of the plagues we are expressly told that God Himself hardened Pharaoh's heart ; * and according to the context we are left to infer that this was done that He might exhibit His power by inflicting still heavier punishments. " And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee (Pharaoh) up, for to show in thee my power, and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth " (Exod. ix. 16).

And these punishments did not so much fall upon Pharaoh, the real offender, as upon millions of his unoffending people, many of whom were living upon friendly terms with the Jews, upon herds of cattle, horses, camels, sheep, and other dumb animals, which perished miserably of the murrain, or were afflicted with boils and blains ; even the land was blighted, every tree being crushed and every green plant destroyed.

To the unassisted eye of reason this seems a strange, irrational, and savage method of enlightening the world. The Egyptians, as a people, were quiet, peaceable, and very religious, according to such light as Providence and their priests had accorded to them. The learned believed in one God, the Creator of all things ; the common people worshipped many, as they were taught to do, as millions among the surrounding nations did, and as many hundreds of millions of Eastern people continue to do to this day.

It does not appear that this fearful lesson produced any permanent effect, even upon the Hebrews themselves. It was the promised land, flowing with milk and honey, that

* Commentators explain this by saying that God only *permitted* Pharaoh's heart to be hardened, or allowed him to harden his own heart ; but the text will scarcely bear this construction, for sometimes we are told that Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and sometimes that Pharaoh hardened his own heart ; while in not less than twelve places it is distinctly stated that God Himself hardened Pharaoh's heart. See Exod. iv. 21 ; vii. 3-5, 13 ; ix. 12 ; x. 1-2, 20, 27 ; xi. 9, 10 ; xiv. 4, 8, 17, 18. For another instance of the Lord hardening the hearts of enemies, see Joshua xi. 20 : " For it was of the Lord to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that He might destroy them utterly, and that they might have no favour, but that He might destroy them, as the Lord commanded Moses."

nourished their faith, and not the punishment of the Egyptians to whom they speedily afterwards showed themselves anxious to return.

That the Almighty God should, as a crowning act of vengeance, go through Egypt at midnight and personally intend the slaughter of every firstborn, both of man and beast (Exod. xii. 12, 23), seems incredible, and an act of monstrous cruelty. The answer of course is, that God can do anything; and that being both a just and a loving God, anything done by Him must, from some point of view, be both just and merciful. No doubt of that; but if it be open to us to believe that Moses wrote many things allegorically, it is equally open to us to believe that God did not perpetrate the cruelties attributed to Him. There are independent secular records of a pastoral people having been enslaved in Egypt, and having escaped thence, but there is no account of the miraculous plagues, except those derived from the writings of Moses; and it is highly improbable that such events should have occurred amongst a learned people like the Egyptians without being recorded.

The feast of the Passover, observed by the Jews in celebration of their escape out of Egypt, must have had its origin in some remarkable event. That the Jews held a general feast on the evening previous to their departure; that they borrowed vessels and ornaments and raiment for the occasion; that a number of the firstborn in the families of their taskmasters were smitten that night; and that the Jews made their escape during the panic created by these deaths,* are credible events; but by whom the firstborn were smitten must remain a matter of conjecture. The man who could conceive that his God would commit such an act wholesale throughout the land of Egypt could as easily con-

* Such were the peculiar susceptibilities of the ancient Egyptians that nothing could so certainly create a panic as a number of sudden deaths. When any relative died, the people ran out of the house beating themselves and howling frantically, as if demented. The sudden deaths of the firstborn, by murder or otherwise, would therefore raise such a panic as could not fail to afford a favourable opportunity both for escape and for plunder. If this suggestion be a slander upon the Jews, the account given by Moses is a much greater slander upon the Almighty.

ceive that he himself would be right in conspiring and arranging to have it committed on a sufficiently large scale to answer his purpose; and the deed was no worse, if so bad as others which Moses afterwards caused to be done under his alleged commission from the Deity.

The Israelites escaped with their plunder and with their flocks and their herds, even very much cattle; but the Lord again *hardened Pharaoh's heart*, and he followed them according to Moses, with 600 chariots and all the chariots of Egypt; and according to Josephus, with 600 chariots, 200,000 infantry, 50,000 cavalry. Moses informs us that after the Jewish host had been miraculously assisted across the Red Sea, he, at the command of God, stretched forth his hand "and the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them." Thus at one fell swoop more than 250,000 souls were sent to their last account, through the Lord hardening Pharaoh's heart.

A few weeks after their escape from Egypt the Jews were attacked by the Amalekites, descendants of Esau. Possibly the object of this attack might have been plunder; possibly it might have been to prevent their own country being invaded. Moses, having sent out Joshua with a body of armed men, goes up to the top of the hill, taking the "rod of God" in his hand (Exod. xvii. 10-16.)

"So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword. And the Lord said unto Moses: Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua: for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovah-nissi: for he said, Because the Lord hath sworn that the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation."

There can be no wrong in repulsing an attack, but the Go

of Moses cherishes revenge. He recurs again to the subject in Deut. xxv. 17, where, immediately after enforcing the moral duty of having a just weight and a just measure, he says:—

“Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way, when ye were come forth out of Egypt; how he met thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary; and he feared not God. Therefore it shall be, when the Lord thy God hath given thee rest from all thine enemies round about, in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance to possess it, that thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; thou shalt not forget it.”

The Amalekites were not destroyed in the time of Moses, but the spirit of vengeance was transmitted to his successors. In 1 Samuel xv., we read that Saul is sent out with 200,000 footmen and 10,000 men of Judah to smite Amalek, to “slay both man and women, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.” And because, after destroying the Amalekites, the warriors saved “the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings,” Saul is severely rebuked. When he endeavours to excuse himself on the plea that the animals were saved to sacrifice unto the Lord, Samuel enforces the necessity of strict and literal obedience by saying (1 Sam. xv. 22, 23):—

“And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, He hath also rejected thee from being king.”

Because Saul did not fully carry out the vengeance of the Lord upon the cattle of the Amalekites, the Lord repented that He had made Saul king; and although, for his contrition, he was allowed to reign during the remainder of his life, the kingdom was then removed from his house.*

We read in Numb. xxv. that some of the people having been seduced by the daughters of Moab into the worship of

* Saul had already been condemned to lose his kingdom for presuming, on a sudden emergency, to offer a burnt offering at a distance from the ark, and without a priest (1 Sam. xiii. 8, etc.)

Baal-peor, the Lord, in addition to ordering the offenders to be slain, afflicted the Israelites with a plague. While the congregation were weeping before the door of the tabernacle, an Israelite, a prince of a chief house among the Simeonites, brought home Cozbi, the daughter of a prince of Midian. Phinehas, a grandson of Aaron the priest, taking a javelin, and following them into the tent, "thrust both of them through," killing them on the spot. This act so pleased the Lord that He stayed the plague, and rewarded Phinehas with a covenant of an everlasting priesthood; at the same time commanding Moses to "vex the Midianites and smite them." Accordingly (Numb. xxxi.) the people were armed and warred against the Midianites, "as the Lord had commanded Moses; and they also slew all the males" (ver. 7). They also slew the five kings of Midian, and Balaam the priest (Numb. xxxi. 9-18):—

"And the children of Israel took all the women of Midian captives, and their little ones, and took the spoil of all their cattle, and all their flocks, and all their goods. And they burnt all their cities wherein they dwelt, and all their goodly castles, with fire. And they took all the spoil, and all the prey, both of men and of beasts. And they brought the captives, and the prey, and the spoil, unto Moses, and Eleazar the priest, and unto the congregation of the children of Israel, unto the camp at the plains of Moab, which are by Jordan near Jericho. And Moses, and Eleazar the priest, and all the princes of the congregation, went forth to meet them without the camp. And Moses was wroth with the officers of the host, with the captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, which came from the battle. And Moses said unto them, Have ye saved all the women alive? Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the Lord. Now therefore kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman that hath known man by lying with him. But all the women children, that have not known a man by lying with him, keep alive for yourselves."

The booty taken upon this occasion amounted to 675,000 sheep, 72,000 beeves, 61,000 asses, and 32,000 young maidens. Of this spoil, the Lord had 677 sheep, 72 beeves, 61 asses, and 32 maidens, which were handed over to Eleazar the priest; the Levites who kept the charge of the Tabernacle of the Lord had ten times that number of cattle and maidens; the remainder being equally divided between the soldiers and

the congregation. In addition to this plunder of cattle, the men of war had taken spoil, every man for himself; and the captains of thousands and captains of hundreds brought an offering of jewels of gold, chains, and bracelets, rings, earrings, and tablets, part of their spoil, as an atonement for their souls before the Lord; the amount thus given being 16,750 shekels—about £33,500.

All this slaughter and plunder being effected without the loss of a single man of the Jews, the scene must have been one of butchery rather than warfare; and what had the Midianites done? We have an answer from the mouth of the Lord Himself (Numb. xxv. 18):—

“For they vex you with their wives, wherewith they have beguiled you in the matter of Peor, and in the matter of Cozbi, the daughter of a prince of Midian, their sister, which was slain in the day of the plague for Peor’s sake.”

Thus, because a few of the Jews had chosen to go after strange women, and to worship a strange god, a whole nation of inoffensive people are swept off the face of the earth, and their country ravaged with fire and sword. And this instance is the more remarkable because Moses had been hospitably entertained in Midian during forty years, and was himself then living with a Midianitish wife.

Many other countries were devastated in a similar manner; the Jews “utterly destroying the men, women, and children of every city. But all the cattle, and the spoil of the cities we took for a prey to ourselves” (Deut. iii. 6, 7). For which Moses thus praises the Lord (ver. 24):—

“O Lord God, Thou hast begun to shew Thy servant Thy greatness, and Thy mighty hand: for what God is there in heaven or in earth that can do according to Thy works, and according to Thy might!”

In giving general instructions to Moses, the Lord says with respect to cities which are very far off, which are only to be made to pay tribute, and not to be possessed (Deut. xx. 10-14):—

“When thou comest nigh unto a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it. And it shall be, if it make thee answer of peace, and open unto thee, then it shall be, that all the people that is found therein shall be tributaries unto thee, and they shall serve thee. And

if it will make no peace with thee, but will make war against thee, then thou shalt besiege it : and when the Lord thy God hath delivered it into thine hands, thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword : but the women, and the little ones, and the cattle, and all that is in the city, even all the spoil thereof, shalt thou take unto thyself ; and thou shalt eat the spoil of thine enemies, which the Lord thy God hath given thee."

Concerning the cities which are to be taken possession of, He says (Deut. xx. 16) :—

"But of the cities of these people, which the Lord thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth."

And again, in Numb. xxxiii. 55, 56, He threatens His people with penalties if they fail to carry out these instructions :—

"But if ye will not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you ; then it shall come to pass, that those which ye let remain of them shall be pricks in your eyes, and thorns in your sides, and shall vex you in the land wherein ye dwell. Moreover it shall come to pass, that I shall do unto you, as I thought to do unto them."

Are we to accept these sanguinary edicts as the very words of Almighty God, and those savage raids as committed at His command, under His immediate eye ? Seeing that they are accepted as such, to this day, by Christian bishops, by Christian ministers, and by millions of Christian men and women, we cannot wonder that they were so accepted by the Jews ; nor that the Jewish soldiers were thereby urged on to deeds from which the souls of many of them must have recoiled with horror. For, setting aside the slaughter of beaten foes, what man with a spark of manliness within him could, without a shudder, have assisted in the murder of tens of thousands of helpless women and children, whose only crime was that they had been taught to worship another god than their own ; or perhaps only the same God, under a different name, and in another light ?

In describing the war policy of Moses, we have overstepped his personal history, to which, and to his laws and religion, we now return.

When Moses quitted Midian to return into Egypt, he took with him his wife and his two sons ; but some unpleasantness having occurred on the way, he sent them back.

The Israelites, about three months after their departure from Egypt, being encamped near Mount Horeb, Jethro visits Moses, bringing to him his wife and two sons. Jethro receives a hearty welcome both from Moses and the elders of Israel, and they worshipped God together (Exod. xviii. 12).

"And Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took a burnt offering and sacrifices for God: and Aaron came, and all the elders of Israel, to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law before God."

Jethro exhibits a penetrative mind and a practical knowledge of the art of governing.* Seeing that Moses was oppressed by the burden of deciding the numerous cases brought before him by the people, as their only magistrate and judge, he advises him to relieve himself of much of the labour (Exod. xviii. 19-22):

"Hearken now unto my voice, I will give thee counsel, and God shall be with thee: Be thou for the people to God-ward, that thou mayest bring the causes unto God: and thou shalt teach them ordinances and laws, and shalt shew them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do. Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens: and let them judge the people at all seasons: and it shall be, that every great matter they shall bring unto thee, but every small matter they shall judge: so shall it be easier for thyself, and they shall bear the burden with thee."

In this advice we have the fundamental principles of the government established by Moses. Small matters were to be decided by elders or secular judges; but God was to be the supreme ruler; and Moses was to bring all the more important matters before him for decision. For this purpose Moses was alleged to have free personal access to the Deity at all times, to speak with Him and to receive His commands—"to be for the people to God-ward."

* If it be allowable to hazard such a conjecture, one might guess that the conference which Moses represents himself to have held with the Lord immediately after the scene of the burning bush, was an epitome of conversations which he had held with Jethro. Having formed the idea of becoming the leader and deliverer of his people, nothing could be more natural than that he should consult his father-in-law concerning the means of carrying out his project.

Jethro having departed, Moses proceeds to commence the institution of his theocratic government (Exod. xix.), with most imposing and miraculous ceremonies; the inner arcana of which, however, the priests and the people were forbidden to approach, under the penalty of instant death.

As the public delivery of the ordinances follows immediately, indeed rather hurriedly, after the thunder and lightning, and fire and smoke, the voice of the trumpets, and the quaking of the mountain, we must either conclude, according to human reason, that Moses and his father-in-law had already prepared them, or believe that God, then and there, miraculously spake to the people by the mouth of Moses.

Commencing with the ten commandments, and some brief instructions respecting altars and sacrifices, Moses proceeds to deliver his civil code; and it is remarkable that he commences with regulations concerning bondage and slavery (Exod. xxi.)

A Hebrew man could only be bought for six years, and was then free unless he chose to remain. But the children of strangers, when bought, became a possession and an inheritance, which could be sold or transmitted to the owner's family after him (Lev. xxv. 45, 46).

A Hebrew maid might be bought with money, and utilized for life, either as a servant, a concubine, or a wife; if her master married her, or gave her to his son in marriage, she came under the protection of the law, as a wife; but while a servant, she was, like a man servant, subject to ill-usage* (Exod. xxi. 20, 21).

"And if a man smite his servant, or his maid, with a rod, and he die under his hand; he shall be surely punished. Notwithstanding, if he continue a day or two, he shall not be punished: for he is his money."

A servant was only protected to the extent that, if a master should smite out an eye or a tooth of his man servant or his

* As an illustration of the conduct of men to women who were not slaves, see Numb. xii. 14. Moses, pleading with God on behalf of his sister Miriam, "the Lord said unto Moses, If her father had but spit in her face, should she not be ashamed seven days?" In Deut. xxi. 10, we read: "When thou goest forth to war against thine enemies, and the Lord thy God hath delivered them into thine hands, and thou hast taken them captive. And thou seest among the captives a beautiful woman, and hast a desire unto her, that thou wouldst have

maid, the servant was set free for the sake of the eye or the tooth. Thus, a man might, without being called to account for it, inflict any amount of punishment upon his servant or his maid short of absolutely destroying an eye, knocking out a tooth, or producing injuries which would cause death within a day or two.

Although so deficient in the protection of helpless servants and slaves, and although somewhat stringent in exacting an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, there was, in the moral precepts of Moses, much that was just and merciful and kind. But there was nothing new; nothing which had not been promulgated in the world before. Neither in the ten commandments, nor in any of his moral precepts, was there any idea, which we may not assume to have been already in the mind, either of Moses, as a man learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, or in that of Jethro, as a priest and prince of astute judgment and long experience.

The moral precepts of Moses occupy a very insignificant space in his books compared with that devoted to religious rites and ceremonies. It was upon these that he relied for the consolidation of his authority, and for the fulfilment of his hopes as the founder of a great Hebrew nation. Morality was desirable, but religion was a necessity. By interblending religious ceremonies with every custom of daily life; by associating with a divine command every impulse of kindly feeling, and every act of neighbourly help;* by connecting all earthly good and success with obedience to the divine will as delivered through himself; and by denouncing the worship of strange gods, the neglect of sacrifices, and the omission of

her to thy wife; then thou shalt bring her home to thine house; and she shall shave her head and pare her nails; and she shall put the raiment of her captivity from off her, and shall remain in thine house, and bewail her father and her mother a full month; and after that thou shalt go in unto her, and be her husband, and she shall be thy wife. And it shall be that if thou have no delight in her, then thou shalt let her go whither she will: but thou shalt not sell her at all for money, thou shalt not make merchandise of her, because thou hast humbled her."

* If there was any new moral principle in the teaching of Moses it was this:—Other teachers made piety to the gods one of the virtues: Moses made all virtue to consist in obedience to the commands of God as delivered through himself.

ceremonial rites, as the precursors of every possible evil, Moses sought to get the people under his control, feeling confident, according to his "curious philosophical theory," that if he could become to them God-ward, and secure their adoption of his religion, they would "submit in all other things."

For the perfecting of his religious rites, Moses again goes up into the mount. He took with him, a part of the way, Aaron, Nahab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, who were to worship afar off. "And Moses alone shall come near the Lord" (Exod. xxiv. 9-18).

"Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nahab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel: and they saw the God of Israel: and there was under His feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in His clearness. And upon the nobles of the children of Israel He laid not His hand: also they saw God, and did eat and drink. . . . And Moses went up into the mount, and a cloud covered the mount. And the glory of the Lord abode upon mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days: and the seventh day He called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud. And the sight of the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel. And Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and gat him up into the mount: and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights."

Although Moses had already proclaimed the ten commandments and his other laws, the Lord seems to ignore that fact, saying, "I will give thee tables of stone, and a law and commandments, which I have written; that thou mayest teach them." The Lord commences by demanding offerings. (Exod. xxv.)

"And this is the offering which ye shall take of them; gold, and silver, and brass, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' hair, and rams' skin dyed red, and badgers' skins, and shittim wood, oil for the light, spices for anointing oil, and for sweet incense, onyx stones, and stones to be set in the ephod, and in the breastplate. And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them."

The Lord then instructs Moses to construct an ark or chest, overlaid with pure gold, within and without; in which was to be kept "the testimony which I shall give thee." This ark was to be about fifty-four inches by thirty-two, and thirty-two inches in height. Over it was to be placed a seat

of pure gold, overshadowed by the wings of two cherubims of gold, of beaten work; which was to be the especial dwelling-place of God (Exod. xxv. 22).

"And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel."

In front of the mercy seat was to be a table overlaid with pure gold, with a "golden crown to the border thereof round about." Upon this table was to be placed a golden candlestick of six branches, constructed to hold seven lamps. Almond-shaped golden bowls and other sacred utensils were also to be placed upon the table, and near it a small altar overlaid with gold, on which incense was to be burnt night and morning before the Lord. The various robes and the clothing of the priests are described with minute precision. A tabernacle, or movable temple, is to be constructed, in a curtained compartment of which, the Holy of Holies, the ark and the table are to be placed.

The description given to Moses constitutes an elaborate specification, the details of which exhibit an intimate acquaintance with upholstery and carpenter's work, as well as a taste for splendour in dress and jewelry. Moses is also shown specimens of material and ornamentation, and is enjoined to make everything according to the patterns shown him in the mount.

Did Moses and his minister Joshua (who ascended the mount with him) remain there forty days, or did they drop down on the other side and visit Jethro; and with his assistance concoct the elaborate specification? It is, at all events, more easy to conjecture that they did, than to believe that the Creator of the Universe should spend forty days and forty nights in dictating the details of a movable temple, and exhibiting patterns of upholstery, and ornaments of beaten gold. Moses himself must have had some familiarity with such things; the Egyptians, at that time, being the leaders of the world in matters of taste.

The ark, with its rings, and its staves, and its seat overshadowed by winged cherubims, was a close imitation of a

structure used in Egyptian religious ceremonies.* The Holy of Holies, with the Urim and Thummim of the Priest, was an oracle, more or less closely resembling those which were resorted to in many heathen countries for the purposes of divination.

During the absence of Moses, the people, despairing of seeing him again, had collected earrings, and brought them to Aaron, who fashioned them into a golden calf. To this calf they built an altar, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, and "sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play;" singing and dancing—naked. Moses and Joshua returning in the midst of this pious revel, Moses, in his anger, cast down the two tables of stone, written by the finger of God, and brake them on the ground. He burned the golden calf, and ground it into powder which he made the people drink, mingled with water.

After rebuking Aaron, Moses gathered the Levites around him.

"And he said unto them, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour. And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men. For Moses had said, Consecrate yourselves to-day to the Lord, even every man upon his son, and upon his brother; that He may bestow upon you a blessing this day."†

* Drawings of these are given in Dr. Smith's Dictionary of the Bible. Speaking of Moses, he says, "His Egyptian education must, on the one hand, have supplied him with much of the ritual of the Israelitish worship. The coincidences between the arrangements of the priesthood, the dress, the sacrifices, the ark, in the two countries, are decisive. On the other hand, the proclamation of the unity of God, not merely as a doctrine confined to the priestly order, but communicated to the whole nation, implies a distinct antagonism, almost a conscious recoil against the Egyptian system."—*Art. "MOSES."* The proclamation of the unity of God by Moses may be stated thus:—*There is one God above all other gods; he is the God of the Israelites, and I am his prophet.*

† Moses makes his Deity as reckless of human life in religion as in war. In Lev. x. we read that Nahab and Abihu, sons of Aaron, having burned incense before the Lord with strange fire, "there went out fire from the Lord and devoured them;" and Aaron and his two remaining sons were forbidden to mourn for them.—Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, having originated a murmuring against Moses (Numb. xvi.),

At the intercession of Moses the Lord allows this act of idolatry to pass without further present punishment, but none of the Jews then living, except Joshua, were allowed to pass over Jordan into the promised land.

Moses is again called up into the mount. He takes with him two tables of stone, hewn like the first, and the Lord writes upon them another copy of the ten commandments. Upon this occasion, Moses remains on the mount forty days and forty nights, neither eating nor drinking. After receiving some further commands, and a renewal of God's promises to the children of Israel, he returns, bearing the two tables of stone; his face shining with so supernatural a lustre, that the people were afraid to come nigh to him.*

Moses now calls upon the people for their offerings towards building the tabernacle. This call was freely responded to, and the structure was completed. Including its porch it was about one hundred and eighty feet in length, ninety feet in breadth, and nine feet in height; and cost an enormous amount of treasure. The gold for the ark and the other appurtenances of the Holy of Holies was equivalent to about £175,460; the silver for the hooks, rings, and other fittings of the curtains, etc., about £40,240, beside all the brass, fine linen, and wood work, and the jewels for the robes of the priests, which were very costly.

The completion of the tabernacle was attended by miraculous appearances; "a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle." Its consecration and the consecration of the priests and their

the earth opens and swallows them up, with their wives and children and all belonging to them. A fire from the Lord consumed two hundred and fifty others of the leading murmurers, and a plague broke forth, destroying 14,700 of the people. The people having again murmured, "the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died" (Numb. xxi. 6).—In the matter of the daughters of Moab (Numb. xxv.), 24,000 Israelites were cut off by a plague, in addition to those hung up in the sun. Three hundred years after the time of Moses, 50,070 people were smitten by the Lord for looking into the ark (1 Sam. vi. 19).

* Josephus refers to these wonders of Mount Sinai rather doubtfully. He says, "Now, as to these matters, every one of my readers may think as he pleases; but I am under the necessity of relating this history as it is described in the sacred books."

robes were celebrated with elaborate ceremonies (Lev. viii.), ending with the sacrifice of the ram of consecration, part of the blood of which Moses put upon the tip of the right ear, upon the thumb of the right hand, and upon the great toe of the right foot, of Aaron and his sons.

The mercy seat being placed upon the ark, Moses represents the Lord as taking up His abode there.

Twelve cakes made of fine flour were set in two rows upon the golden table in front of the mercy seat, and were changed every Sabbath, those removed being eaten by the priests. The oil in the golden candlesticks was lighted every night and extinguished in the morning, incense being burned before the Lord on each occasion. A lamb was to be sacrificed every morning, and another in the evening. Two additional lambs were offered every Sabbath day. Wherever the ark was, thither must the people come to offer their sacrifices. God was not supposed to be present to receive them anywhere else.* Even when the tribes were widely dispersed through the land of Canaan, three times a year they must go up to Jerusalem, to present themselves before the tabernacle of the Lord, and there offer their sacrifices, enjoy their feasts, and keep their solemn fasts.

The sacrifices established by Moses were very numerous.

As a voluntary act of devotion, "to make a sweet savour unto the Lord," a man might at any time offer a bullock, a ram, a lamb, or a kid (Numb. xv.) With a lamb or kid there must be brought a tenth deal (about half a gallon) of flour mingled with the fourth part of a hin of oil (a hin being a gallon) for a meat offering, and the fourth part of a hin of wine for a drink offering. With a ram, two tenth deals of flour, with a third part of a hin of oil, and a third part of a hin of wine. With a bullock, three tenth deals of flour, with half a hin of oil, and half a hin of wine. As a general rule the same amount of meat offering and drink offering was to accompany each animal in all sacrifices. All offerings must be seasoned with salt, "neither shalt thou suffer the salt of the covenant of thy God to be lacking."

* As an instance of this, we may refer to the visit of the Virgin Mary to Jerusalem to offer the sacrifice of her purification (Luke ii. 24).

The general method of sacrificing an animal was this: the man brought his offering to the door of the tabernacle, he laid his hand upon its head, and cut its throat; the priest received the blood in a vessel, and first sprinkling a little upon the altar of burnt offerings,* poured the remainder out at the foot of the altar. The kidneys, with their fat, and the other internal fat, were taken out and burnt in a fire previously made with wood, upon the altar. "It is the food of the offering made by fire for a sweet savour: all the fat is the Lord's. It shall be a perpetual statute for your generations throughout all your dwellings, that ye eat neither fat nor blood" (Lev. iii. 16, 17).

The right shoulder was the perquisite of the officiating priest, and the breast also was the portion of the priests. The skin of the animal was also a perquisite of the priests. The remainder the offerer might appropriate to his own use, except in the case of a whole burnt offering, when the whole animal was burnt. Of the meat offering, a memorial, that is a small portion, of the flour and oil, and all the frankincense, were to be burnt upon the altar; the remainder was for the use of the priests.

To accommodate the poor, a turtle-dove or a young pigeon might be substituted for a more expensive animal. The priest took it to the altar, wrung off its head, and wrung out the blood at the side of the altar. He plucked away the crop and the feathers, and cast them aside "by the place of the ashes." He was then to cleave it without dividing it, and in some cases to burn it upon the altar as "a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the Lord;" in other cases it was to be eaten by the priests.

A stranger might offer sacrifices, the same as a Jew. There was no inconsistency in this. The stranger, when at home, worshipped the God who was considered most powerful in his own country; and when amongst the Jews, he might naturally wish to conciliate and have the protection of their God. Moses did not teach the Jews that the God of Israel was the only God. He taught them that their God was above all other

* A movable structure, nine feet square, the framework of wood, and covered with brass, having a grating in the centre to let through the ashes.

gods, and extremely jealous of an honour being paid to others. Yet the Jews, when they became friendly with their neighbours, generally showed themselves anxious to be on good terms with their gods also, for which they were on several occasions severely punished.

The burnt-offering was the usual mode of animal sacrifice then prevalent in the East. The expiatory form of laying the hand upon the head of the victim, in token of its bearing the guilt of a particular sin, or the sins in general of the offerer, was the customary practice in Egypt and elsewhere.

The meat-offering was similar to the ordinary sacrifices of the Hindus before and after the time of Moses, but with this difference—that the Hindus accompanied their sacrifices with praises and prayers. Even the simple Hottentot believed that the spirit in the bush could hear his prayer; but it was contrary to the policy of Moses to allow the people any communication with their God, except through himself or the priest. He taught them that his own intercourse with the Deity was personal and oral; God was to be spoken to mouth to mouth; and as it involved the penalty of instant death for any one but a priest to look through the veil which shrouded his habitation, or even to touch it, there was little danger that the monopoly of audience would be interfered with.

A *peace-offering* might be a thanksgiving, a vow, or a free-will offering. A *sin-offering* was to atone for sins committed in ignorance, but afterwards discovered. *Trespass-offerings* were offerings of various kinds for sins committed wittingly or unwittingly, such as swearing, touching the carcase of an unclean beast or other unclean thing, committing a trespass through ignorance in holy things of the Lord, lying, or dealing deceitfully with a neighbour, etc. All these required animals, from a bullock to a lamb, except in cases of extreme poverty, when in some cases a portion of flour and oil might be accepted. The trespass-offering was accompanied by a pecuniary fine, according to the means of the individual.

In the beginning of each month there was a public sacrifice of two young bullocks, one ram, seven lambs, and a kid. There were five annual sacrifices,—the *Passover*; the *Feast of Tabernacles*, or firstfruits; *Pentecost*; the *Feast of Trumpets*, or New Year's Day rejoicings; and the day of *Atonement*.

At the Feast of the Tabernacles, from the fifteenth to the twenty-first day of the seventh month, seventy bullocks, fourteen rams, ninety-eight lambs, and seven kids were sacrificed,—each animal, except the kids, which were for sin-offerings, being accompanied by its due proportion of meat-offering and drink-offering.

There were also special sacrifices,—*Childbirth* (Lev. xii.); *Leprosy* (Lev. xiii.); *Ceremonial Pollutions* (Lev. xv.); *Days of Separation* (Numb. vi.). These, in a population of two millions or upwards, must have involved the slaughter of a considerable number of animals daily. The births in the wilderness cannot be reckoned at an average of less than two hundred a day. The proper offering was a lamb for a burnt-offering, and a pigeon or dove for a sin-offering; or for a poor woman, a bird only for each sacrifice. These sacrifices alone must have imposed a heavy task upon the priests; and as every animal killed in the wilderness for domestic use must be killed at the door of the Tabernacle, and the blood received and poured at the foot of the altar by the priests, it seems surprising how the three of them managed to get through all their work.

The Feast of the *Passover* in the wilderness, taking the lowest calculation I have ever seen, would require eight thousand lambs, which must all be killed, and the blood received and poured out at the foot of the altar by the priests, in two hours, being at the rate of sixty-six per minute.

This continual public shedding of blood in connection with their religious feasts, and the most sacred of their religious rites, must have had a brutalizing influence upon the minds of the people, and no doubt assisted in preparing them to engage with less compunction in the slaughter of their fellow-creatures. The punishment of stoning to death, by the whole congregation, persons guilty of certain offences, such as breaking the Sabbath, adultery, and disobedience to parents, was also calculated to nourish cruel and brutal propensities.

The numerous sacrifices, and the support of the whole tribe of Levi by the other tribes, must have been excessively burthensome to the poorer classes of the people. A sacrifice, except when a voluntary act of devotion, was practically a pecuniary penalty for the remission of sins. It was the

method by which God, as the personal ruler of the Israelites, punished them for breaches of a complicated ceremonial law ; and seeing how exacting He was, even in respect of sins committed in ignorance, it is not surprising that they should have been so ready to adopt the more lenient gods of their neighbours.

There is not the slightest shadow of a reason for believing that the Jews under Moses offered their sacrifices in any higher sense, or with any higher meaning, than the Hindus or the Egyptians. Rather the contrary ; for even the poor among the Hindus and the Egyptians were taught to believe in a future state of rewards and punishments ; and although their prayers were, for the most part, for present good and earthly successes, some little breath of spirituality must have been infused into them by the consciousness of their own immortality, and the power of the deities in respect of their happiness or misery in the world to come.

Moses preached no such doctrine. His parable of the forbidden fruit clearly taught that man was cut off from immortality when driven out of Eden and denied access to the tree of life. Although educated in a higher faith, there is not a word in his writings to show any other belief than that man perished at death, like the beasts of the field ; and the recklessness of human life which he attributes to his Deity fully accords with that idea. The command to do no murder was a protection against the result of angry passions between individuals ; but it had no reference either to the dealings of Moses' God with the human race at large, nor with the conduct of the Jews toward other nations.

The perpetual recurrence of the words " of a sweet savour to the Lord " clearly indicate that, like the Fetish worshipper and the Hindu, the Jew was taught to believe in the spiritual assimilation of earthly food by the deities ; that the aroma of burning flesh, and of cakes, and oil, and wine, and incense were pleasing stimulants to spiritual powers. That the intent of the worshipper, the devotion shown by diligence in offering sacrifices, and by due attention to ceremonial laws, were also pleasing to the Deity, was no doubt as familiar to the Israelite as to the Hindu. But that the sacrifices were considered to have any typical significance in relation to

forms of worship thereafter to be established, was never propounded by Moses; nor is there any reason to assume that such an idea ever entered his mind.

The idea is propounded to us that God revealed His will and His purposes to mankind gradually; giving so much only as the world was prepared, from time to time, to receive. It is difficult to understand, however, that it could be more easy to initiate the Jews into the ceremonial law of Moses than to teach them that there is a Father in heaven who can hear the poor man's cry of "God be merciful to me a sinner." If the poor among the Hindus and the Egyptians could be taught that there is a future life in which piety and good conduct on earth would meet their reward, surely the Jews might have been taught the same.

The object of Moses was to fix the minds of the people upon earthly good, of which the possession of the promised land was to be the consummation. And no peaceful nor pure religion could have aided him in his expedition of rapine and plunder. His ambition was great, and to have full scope for action in such an enterprise as his, it must of necessity be unscrupulous. To drive out or exterminate the dwellers in the rich plains of Canaan required a policy which must be neither meek nor feeble-kneed; and the religion which he established was well adapted to his purpose.*

Moses styles himself the meekest of men; but under a smooth exterior he carried a heart of iron, which seldom knew pity for friend or foe, when his personal influence was in jeopardy. And yet he exhibits no desire for personal aggrandisement. Although he made his brother High Priest, and ennobled his own tribe, it nowhere appears that he sought

* In no other way than through the idea of religious duty could Moses have hardened the hearts of the Israelites sufficiently for his purpose of indiscriminate slaughter. Many black pages of history, both ancient and modern, show us that when men once allow themselves to be persuaded that they contribute to the honour and glory of God by destroying those who are alleged to be His enemies, there is no limit to the atrocities which they may be excited to commit. The supposed religious duty of maintaining intact the articles of a creed had, during long ages, in Christian Europe, the effect of rendering men utterly pitiless in the infliction of suffering and death upon their fellow creatures.

anything for himself. His ruling passion was the love of power—to be to the people God-ward—to be something more than man, and only a little less than God.

In his last days, Moses became eloquent, and uttered words which, in connection with a more exalted idea of the Deity, have brought edification and comfort to millions of Christian people; but although his words are eloquent, and dwell much upon God, his ideas never soar above the earth. His promises to those who adhere to his religion are magnificent, but they all relate to earthly treasures and the good things of this world; while his denunciations of those who depart from the Lord—probably the most terrific ever spoken or penned, are all likewise of the earth earthy. What thoughts might have lingered in his own mind, no one can tell; but he took not upon himself the mission of bringing life and immortality to light. He quenched, in his old age, the light of immortality which his Egyptian education had given him in his youth.

Moses died a disappointed man. The hand of death struck him on the borders of the promised land. A view, from the heights of Pisgah, of the fertile plains flowing with milk and honey, closed a career such as can never again be enacted on the earth, and leaving a name which will never die while man remains to read. Notwithstanding that, the sacrifices which he ordained have ceased, and his ceremonial law is practically a dead letter, even amongst those who continue to follow him as the founder of their faith.

Moses did not attempt to promulgate any new doctrine of faith or morals to the world at large. The mission which he undertook was not to convert the heathen, but to enrich the Jews; and his religion, as a means to that end, was for the Jews only. The work which he aspired to accomplish was not that of enlightening the worshippers of strange gods, but that of exterminating the nations whose lands and treasures he coveted as a possession for his own people.

It is not the name under which men worship God, nor their manner of doing it, but the ideas which they entertain concerning His nature, His attributes, and His will, which influence their minds, and give their religion a power, for good or for evil, over their lives. And it is the accordance

of those ideas with human nature and its spiritual requirements, which makes a religion acceptable to the world. In both these particulars the religion of Moses was at fault, and it never spread abroad among large masses of mankind, like the religion of Buddha or Mahomet.

It was through the adoption of his writings as sacred books by the Christians, and through the reverence paid to him by Mahomet, that the name of Moses has been spread abroad over the earth. The Mahometans have ignored him as a teacher, and the more closely the Christians of the future examine his books, the less will they admire all those of his doctrines which are specially his own. Of these his ideas concerning the Deity were the principal, and what were they?

The God of Moses was a *jealous* God. It was death for a Jew to worship any other God; and any one attempting to pervert the faith of a Jew, whether it was his own brother, his own son or his daughter, or the wife of his bosom, or "thy friend which is as thine own soul," must forthwith be denounced, and stoned to death by the congregation. If idolatry began to be practised in any city of the Jews, the inhabitants and every living thing must be slain, the city must be burned to the ground, and never rebuilt (Deut. xiii).

He was a God of *vengeance*, "visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation." We have already adverted to some stern acts of vengeance, but the character which Moses attributes to the Deity in this respect is more fully depicted in the fifty-three verses of curses commencing Deut. xxviii. 16.

He ordained slavery in its worst form; a man might thrust even his female slave within an inch of her life; if she survived "a day or two," say thirty-six hours, he was not liable to be punished; and if she then died, he was only considered to have destroyed that which was his own; he had bought her, or had inherited her as a chattel, and she was "his money."

He *repented* of things that He had done; from which we may infer, either that Moses considered his God to be *variable* in His opinions, that He could not foresee the result of His own acts, or that He had not the power to carry out His original intentions.

He hardened people's hearts in order that He might destroy them, and that the infliction of tortures and death might appear to be just punishments for their hardness of heart.

No language could be more plain and express than that in which Moses narrates instances of the display of these and other characteristics of passion and fallibility; and so far as the *teaching* of Moses is concerned, it amounts to the same thing whether we accept the narrative historically or allegorically; for it is obvious that he intended his words to be accepted by the Jews literally and categorically, as the very words of God.

But there is this difference to us. If we accept the words of Moses as historically true, we accept him as an inspired prophet, having daily intercourse with God, and recording the very words spoken to him by God. In that case we must accept the God of Moses as our God, whether the character attributed to Him by Moses accords with our own moral sentiments, or whether it does not. We can neither affirm that God has changed since the time of Moses, nor attribute to Moses any misconception of the communications which he received.

If, on the other hand, we believe Moses to have written allegorically; if we take it that when he used the words "the Lord said," he merely used these words expletively, as a method of more strongly enforcing his commands upon the people; then we may consider Moses as a clever, ambitious, yet patriotic man, who, acting upon "a very curious philosophical theory," with the advice and assistance of his astute father-in-law, set himself up as a prophet, and established a religion, in order that by inducing the people to accept his religion, he might lead them "to submit in all other things," like blind automatons reckless of right or wrong.

For the establishment of a religion, a deity to be worshipped was the first requisite. National deities and local deities were the fashion of the time; and the mysterious spirit dwelling on Mount Horeb being convenient, and not hitherto specially appropriated, was adopted for the purpose. All the subordinate paraphernalia of priesthood, sacrifices, and ceremonials, were already familiar to Moses and his father-in-law; and they adopted those which were already familiar to the Israelites from their residence in Egypt.

Gradually, in the course of ages, as the Jews became a more civilized and a more enlightened people, their ideas concerning the Deity became ameliorated, expanded, and spiritualized ; until at length, modified by the light of Christianity, they have been adopted by the most enlightened nations of the earth.

Philosophers might trace in the religious history of the Jews, from Moses to the present day, a gradual evolution from a barbaric fetishism up to the most simple and sublime form of religious faith extant. But as that idea involves the negation of Revelation, we must say, as Josephus said,—“As to these matters, every one of my readers may think as he pleases.”

