ORIENTAL RELIGIONS.

ORIENTAL RELIGIONS

AND THEIR

RELATION TO UNIVERSAL RELIGION

By SAMUEL JOHNSON

WITH AN INTRODUCTION

By O. B. FROTHINGHAM

PERSIA

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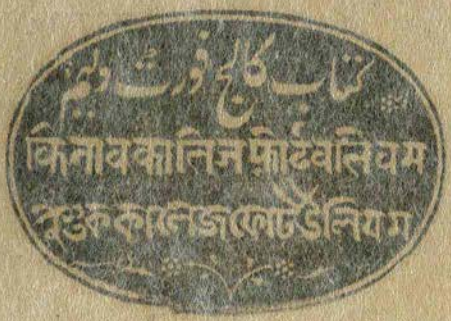

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INTRODUCTION.

THIS is the last volume of Mr. Johnson's projected work on "Oriental Religions." The first volume, "India," appeared in 1872. An intimate friend of the author of "The Light of Asia," one familiar with his thoughts, a fine scholar himself, a student, too, in this department, speaks of it thus: "His [Mr. Johnson's] sketch of Buddha and Buddhism is one of the profoundest, wisest, justest estimates yet given." The second volume, "China," was published in 1877. George Ripley reviewed it at length and heartily in the "Tribune," praising the writer's freedom from sectarian temper, and his devotion to the interests of truth. His friend, Samuel Longfellow, noticed the book in the "Atlantic," rendering it no more than justice. Professor E. J. Eitel, of Tübingen and Hong-Kong, writing in the "China Review" of April 21, 1882, says of Mr. Johnson, whose death he is commemorating: —

"His volume on the Religions of India, which appeared in 1872, has been highly praised by Orientalists of European fame; and I make bold to say that his great work on China will commend itself to all sinologists as a most exhaustive, lucid, and correct estimate of Chinese thought and life. If it is due to Edkins to say that he has established for China her true place in philology, it is due to Samuel Johnson to acknowledge that he has fixed China's place in the history of Uni-

versal Religion. . . . If I add that Samuel Johnson's method of inquiry was thoroughly scientific, that his sympathies were absolutely cosmopolitan, while essentially religious, and that he laid down the results of his most painstaking inquiries in a style which carries the reader right along, fascinating as it is by its vivacity and sparkling lucidity, while intensely suggestive and instructive, I can but wonder that his countrymen in the United States did not give him that place among the foremost writers, thinkers, and scholars of the present day which he so fully deserves."

The Notes for the "Persia" were begun in 1877. In February, 1878, he says in a letter: "This theme is largest of all. I should call it *Iran* rather than *Persia*, but shall not. I am back among the cuneiform tablets and the sources, as I find more and more, of the religious history of the world, and especially of the great 'historic faiths.'" In February, 1880, he writes: "I get on with my 'Persia' as well as I could expect, having this winter been wrestling with the obscure and impalpable relations of Manichæism and Gnosticism with the early Christian Church. Now I am on the pleasanter track of the *Shâh-Nâmeh*, and at the doors of Sufism, etc."

How early Mr. Johnson began his Oriental studies, it is difficult to tell with exactness. It could hardly have been later than the winter of 1852–53 that he gave in Salem the lectures that were the germ of these volumes, and nearly all of the time intervening was given to some aspect of the subject. He died in February, 1882, leaving the "Persia" unfinished, yet so nearly completed that a few weeks of diligent work spent in revising, writing out a chapter on Persian poetry, adding a paragraph here and there, arranging and paging, would have sufficed to perfect his labor. The chapters are precisely as he left them. Not a line has been added or taken away. So much only has been done as the necessities of publication required, and that was done with misgiving. The chapters on Zoroaster,

Mahomet, Alexander the Great; on Babylon, on Avestan Dualism; on Manichæism and Gnosticism; on the *Shâh-Nâmeh;* the episodes on Aristotle, Cyrus, the Seleucidæ,— will interest and charm all readers; for the style is elegant, the language glowing, the sentiment lofty, and the insight keen. It seems hardly to have been a toil, so much love was in it, so absorbing a consecration. This man certainly did not labor for money, for he was poorer for all he did; nor for fame, of which he got little or none; but for truth alone, or for humanity, which can live only by truth. "The future," he wrote, "must determine whether I was justified in undertaking so absorbing a charge. I should shudder when I think of its probable doom, did I not remember that at least I have *had my reward* in the pleasure of exploring the fields into which it has called me, and in watching the flow of universal laws through history. I certainly can expect no other reward; and on the whole am glad that I cannot." How far the future will justify him remains to be seen. The reward he desired cannot, at all events, be taken away. It is, however, to be hoped that the reputation he deserved will at last be granted to him; at least, that his unselfish devotion will come to honor in the world of scholarship, so that his personal friends will not be the only ones to revere his character or admire his genius.

There is an impression that Mr. Johnson's books are of little value because he was not an Orientalist, — that is, a student of Oriental languages, who obtained his knowledge at first hand, from original sources. The truth of the assertion is frankly admitted. The writer, though he knew something of Sanscrit, was quite unacquainted with the language of China or of Persia, and had never travelled in the East. For himself, he deemed this no disqualification for his task. "I mean," he said, "to be prepared for

the evil fame of attempting so much without knowledge of the forty thousand characters of the Chinese script. If I knew these, I should know nothing else. In the way of psychological interpretation, I should be simply nothing." And again: "I am after the *law*; give me that, and I will use it where I want it. But illustrative details, except in the *actual* world of facts,—*written* details,—bore me." If the impression mentioned had been made only on the mind of the general public, it would be unfortunate; when made on the minds of critics it is deplorable. Yet even so fair-minded a scholar as Max Müller can lend countenance to this accusation. Mr. Johnson's sincerity he cordially praises, as also his honesty and accuracy. In a letter to the "Index," after Mr. Johnson's death, he pays the following tribute to the deceased writer:—

"What I admire most in Samuel Johnson was his not being discouraged by the rubbish with which the religions of the East are overwhelmed, but his quietly looking for the *nuggets*. And has he not found them? And has he not found what is better than ever so many nuggets,—that great, golden dawn of truth, that there is *a religion behind all religions*, and that happy is the man who knows it in these days of materialism and atheism?"

This warm praise is gravely qualified by the preceding passage, which reads thus:—

"Samuel Johnson's knowledge of Oriental religions was at second-hand; and the little accidents that must happen to an historian or a philosopher who writes on Oriental religions at second-hand are just those that most exasperate Oriental scholars. . . . There are few things in his volume on the Religion of India for which, at all events, he could not give chapter and verse, though chapter and verse may not always come from the right book."

Now nobody who knew Mr. Johnson can doubt that he was acquainted with all the books there were, and with their relative value. He indeed took the greatest pains to verify

his authorities; he consulted the five or six best Orientalists in the world, who had tried their hand at translating the literature of the Avesta, and he still complained that the versions were so unsatisfactory; his note-books show that he was familiar with Harlez, Haug, Spiegel, Darmesteter, Lenormant, Sayce, Renouf, Legge, Williams, West, the "Records of the Past," the "Sacred Books of the East," not to mention the comparatively popular volumes of Rawlinson and Max Müller. That he could have added anything in their own field to the contributions of students like these, is not to be supposed. He was able to compare them one with another, and divine the true meaning of texts where they were at variance.

As to the *right books*, scholars are not agreed. Different men will prefer different writings, according to their mental bias. Such a question is not to be decided by knowledge of a language so much as by intellectual perception, by the power to penetrate beneath the letter to the interior sense, and so to catch the genius of the people by a species of divination which discerns at a glance the real thought. This gift of insight, it is claimed, Mr. Johnson had, in extraordinary measure. As he read, — and he was an immense reader in English, French, German, — he pondered; and, in pondering, hit upon analogies that escaped more sapient breakers of stones on the road. In a letter dated May 26, 1878, he writes: "I am well along in Assyrian, Babylonian, and the rest of late Iranian discoveries. The interest of these cuneiform revelations in their bearing on Western religions, — which I find nobody, so far, among the investigators has any idea of, — is surpassing." His chief concern was to find the idea, the chain of connection; and he was never satisfied till he had found it, and fairly put his mind upon it. He may have been mistaken; but the mistake, if there was one, was intellectual rather than critical.

A more serious charge against Mr. Johnson is that of writing with a preconceived purpose to establish a certain theory about religious development and religious creeds, a fixed philosophical view, which must of necessity warp to some degree the mental and moral estimates of the systems he studies. How far the charge is just in any aspect cannot be determined. In the opinion of the present writer, it is not just to any harmful degree. The investigations were not prompted, in the first instance, by the desire to establish an opinion, but by an old interest in that class of learning. The theory was a result of the investigations; the reason, perhaps, why they were pursued as far as they were; an inspiration towards the making of these books; one explanation of the singular glow of the style that animates the pages. The theory was a cord on which the facts were strung like pearls, a connecting link between the thoughts; but it never dominated the facts themselves, or decided on the method of their selection, or put a rule on their interpretation. Occasionally the discovery of some point of view may have made him unduly enthusiastic, but the impression is sure to be corrected some pages further along, and a discerning reader can almost always make allowance for the incidental exaggeration.

Mr. Johnson's theory, — as it may as well be confessed that he had one, — at any rate was broad, large, elastic in its character. It was not sectarian, even in the widest sense of the term. There was no partisanship in it. It had the breadth of pure spirituality. The spirit of it was generous, not as being apologetic, but as being lofty and deep. The expositions are positive, and they are noble; they do not bind, but unbind; they emancipate texts, cause obscure passages to leap into light, win forth the hidden wisdom of sentences. They do not stumble or grope, they use wings and fly. There is a surprising

exhilaration in them; and although the reader may now and then demur at the rendering of a phrase, he can never accuse the author of distorting evidence, or of leaving statements out of sight.

Moreover, the charge of having a theory must rest on Ewald, Baur, Renan, the author of "Ten Great Religions;" in short on every writer who rises above the level of the commentator, exegetist, or word-monger. The historian always has a theory. Gibbon had one; Macaulay had one; Froude has one. An absolutely scientific account of anything complex is not to be looked for. Men with minds will use mind; and the use of mind cannot be had without some sort of tendency; and where there is tendency there is bias. If the theory is comprehensive enough to include all the facts, it answers every sane purpose; and if it is expansive enough to take in the foremost facts, it cannot soon be superseded. Mr. Johnson meets both conditions. He is both deep and high. To venture any estimate of his judgment of systems would be out of place here. The volumes are before the public: the critics will express their opinion of the contents as they may deem wise. But it may be safely said that not one of them will get beyond him, or will throw a dart further than he has launched his keen arrow. No living writer has reached the length of his conception, very few come near it. Even advanced thinkers are behind him. "It has cost me labor enough, that is certain," he writes to a friend; "yet it is a labor of real love, combined with an intense sense of a great demand from the side of spiritual culture and higher relations of sentiment and imagination, in the present condition of the races calling themselves 'Christian.' I hope I have done something to stimulate these forces, and help toward the grand interpretations of natural religion that are yet to come."

This volume, like the others, is saturated through and through with the religious spirit. It was written in the service of religion; not of religion as commonly apprehended, but as the best dream of the soul of Humanity of its possible attainment. It is all aglow with faith in God and with hope for man. His biographer tells us that Mr. Johnson's oration on the Class Day of 1842 "was poetic even to rhapsody;" the same language might be applied to these chapters. The writer deserves, as well as Spinoza, to be called a "god-intoxicated man." When he speaks of Law, Order, Harmony, Beauty, he rises to ecstasy. The thought enchants him; his sentences burn. This, in fact, constitutes the chief fault that is to be found in the book. Some will think the enthusiasm of faith excessive. They will quarrel a little perhaps over what seems to them an undue extravagance of eulogium in this place, and over an undue depreciation in that; over an unwarranted admiration of certain symbols, and an equally unwarranted criticism of others. But a fault of this kind is as noble as it is uncommon. And when the effect of it is to inspire one with reverence for high sentiments, it is easily pardoned. An error that enlarges the mind is very different from an error that enslaves it,— even granting that an error exists, of which we cannot be sure in this instance. Professor Eitel is of opinion that Mr. Johnson's estimate of Christianity was experimental and practical, which gave him a knowledge of its deficiencies; while his estimate of other religions, being literary, was favorable to their ideal side. Mr. Johnson's acquaintance with Eastern faiths was acquired certainly from books, but his opinion of Christianity was rather critical than experimental. At least his appreciation of its character and genius was derived quite as much from study as from observation.

Mr. Johnson was a teacher of the gospel of evolution.

I call it a gospel; for, as he received it, it was so. With materialism he had no sympathy. Such a doctrine was his abhorrence, the mark of his scorn and sarcasm. He says: —

"We who insist that there is no 'supernatural' in the nature of things, that miracle is an absurdity on its face, are called supernaturalists by men who can digest, without a sign of wonder, such irrational or preternatural notions as those of a world of phenomena without substance, of things seen and touched without a faculty beyond understanding to bridge the way from ideal to real, of a moral philosophy based solely on calculations or on observed causes and effects, and on developing the whole conception of duty out of a synthesis of consequences. . . . This contempt of reason as above understanding, of substance as against phenomena, this denial of direct or intuitive perception of realities even the most universal, is certainly the high road to materialism."

It will be seen that Mr. Johnson was a transcendentalist, and that he must have been able to reconcile transcendentalism with evolution, — two systems which are generally supposed to point in exactly opposite directions. He speaks in one of his letters of "the over-haste of science, physical and mechanical, to annihilate those sacred spaces and periods to which the personal virtues are more indebted than the times believe, for disciplines of faith, patience, and trust." To another friend he writes, in January of 1882: "You know I find no inconsistency between evolution and the original fundamental necessities of all thought, on which the transcendental philosophy is founded. . . . What do men mean to do with the *foundations* that all freedom must stand upon, — personality, progress, transcendental perception and law? These are all forgotten in petty 'crystallizations,' or else mentioned only to be abused."

The religion of Nature meant much more to him than it does to other men. "There is a spiritual 'Religion of

Nature' as well as an unspiritual. . . . There is a *vital* gladness fed by the healthful perception of the glory and beauty of God's works, and of those inner motions that shape all ways to good." The glory and beauty of these works he was never tired of exploring and interpreting. He delighted to think that mind itself, divinely as he estimated its endowment, "is evolved, not out of mere inorganic matter, but from the universe as a whole. This whole, however, is infinite, and involves inscrutable Substance, which, as recognizable only by mind, is therefore of one nature therewith. The lowest physical beginnings are thus, in virtue of the cosmic force by which they exist, actual mentalities or mental germs." This conception is at the foundation of these chapters on the ancient Iranian faith. The design of the volume, in so far as it has a design apart from the endeavor to represent things as they actually were, is to celebrate the dignity and scope of this idea, to illustrate the advent of living mind into the universe, to set forth the potentialities of the cosmos, so far as this can be done on the field of history.

Mr. Johnson's conception of Deity was peculiar, if not unique. He was not an agnostic, although he did not presume to dogmatize about the divine nature. He did not remand the thought of God to the region of the "unknowable," and then devote himself to the task of investigating the appearances of the world. On the contrary, he began with Supreme Mind, and saw evidences of its working in all visible manifestations. He was rather pantheistic, decidedly more pantheistic than theistic; but his pantheism had a human cast that brought it close to men's sympathies. The adherence to pantheism is frankly avowed. In a passage quoted from Edgar Quinet, pantheism is heartily accepted as the hope of the intellectual world; as being both vital and progressive, at once emancipating the human mind

from mental prejudice, and opening before it a boundless prospect of advance. But when charged with identifying God with man because he could not separate the two as essentially distinct existences, he pronounced the interpretation "preposterous," and maintained that as *polarities* within the divine life, man being the finite and God the infinite term, there was *eternal*, though not *essential*, distinction between them. He continues: —

"God going out of man ends man, ends God also. For what would infinite love be, so drained of its natural object? Infinite selfishness is not God. What is left for the bridge to start from, and what should it lead over to? But what if God be here already, in the nature itself that hopes, remembers, loves; that even grows by the inevitable lessons of folly, weakness, vices, crimes? By what mysterious, unfathomable energy do we live and move? The ever-flowing tides that sweep through human life, calm or terrible as character shall make them, the mysteries of good or evil, — what but these are the deeps man watches and explores, till he finds within them that transcendent purpose and eternal love which he inwardly means by the word God?"

And again: —

"The love we feel, the truth we pursue, the honor we cherish, the moral beauty we revere, blend in with the eternity of the principles they flow from; and then, glad as in the baptism of a harvest morning, expanding towards human need and the universal life of man, our souls walk free, breathing immortal air. That is God, — not an object, but an experience. Words are but symbols; they do not define. We say 'Him.' 'It' were as well, if thereby we mean life, wisdom, love. All words are but approximations; the fact, the experience, remains the same. . . . The transcendental law becomes impulse and aspiration. Stirred by its ceaseless presence, men listen to the native affirmations of Mind: I am knowledge, and the medium of knowledge; I am inspiration as well as tradition; the instant fire as well as the inherited fuel of thought; primal as well as resultant; infinite as well as finite."

This language makes Mr. Johnson's meaning clear to discerning minds. Deity, in his view, is another name for Substance, Unity, Law, Cause. The ordinary intelligence may not take in the conception, but with him it was vital, and meant a good deal more than the current theism implies. The idea exalted God as well as man; for it stripped away those accessories of personality, — or as some will say, of individuality, — which render so difficult of ideal comprehension the thought of the Absolute Being.

It would be a great mistake to suppose that this faith chilled in the smallest degree his human sympathies. On the contrary, it quickened them all, making them intense as well as spiritual. His zeal, patience, breadth, fortitude, hopefulness were in large measure due to it. The following extracts from letters to friends in bereavement show how warm it kept his heart: —

"I wish I could tell you how firmly I believe that feelings like these, so often treated as illusion, are *true*, are of God's own tender giving; that in them is the very heart of his teaching through the mystery that we call death. Our affections are *forbidden by their Maker* to doubt their own immortality. What protest they make against the destruction of what is still intensest reality to them, when all that the senses could hold by is gone forever!"

"This loving care that folds in our little lives, how near it comes when we need it most! I feel as if it held you now in a tenderness such as none of us can know, and none know how to ask for! 'The night will be light about you,' calling you to what trust-like sleep, bringing out holy eternal stars! . . . This life that has been with you so long, close within your own, must still be yours. . . . Soon may the infinite motherly love make the heavens open where they are most darkened now, and the angels descend on your saddened home!"

"I know how much your sister has been to you. . . . And now it will all be spiritualized and made part of your *eternal* life. And you will know how to reap its still, ripe harvests, and to make them cheer and refresh a world that needs nothing so much as spiritual faith."

"I learn that the gentle sufferer who has so long been made happy

by your devoted care has been called into those interior spheres where indeed the calmness and sweetness of her spirit have already seemed to you to be dwelling as in its constant home. Out of your mortal sight, but still in the arms of your unchangeable trust and love. There, too, her home."

And such as these were his meditations: —

"Through all the mysteries of our earthly lot, we would ever feel ourselves embosomed in the Infinite Strength and Peace, that with fatherly wisdom and motherly tenderness upholds and guides us, like stars in the sky, through our changes of night and day, of sunshine and storm."

"We would strive ever to commit ourselves to the serene and perfect laws that guide our human destiny, assured that what our nature appoints must be better for us than aught else we can desire or dream."

"Whether we walk in the morning light or in the night shadows, — over, around, and beneath us are spread these Everlasting Arms. . . . How real becomes the unseen world, no longer unfamiliar, but warm with the treasures and light of home! How we look through the half-opened gates into its glory and its peace, where the innocence and beauty of childhood must dwell in the life of which they are the image; and the ties that have been broken must be preserved in the love that made them ours; and the powers we would have trained here must be unfolded in the same care that inspired our striving, and will not let it be in vain!"

Now one can understand how this worshipper of the universe could write the hymn beginning, —

> "Father, in thy mysterious presence kneeling,
> Fain would our souls feel all thy kindling love."

There was no distance between belief and feeling, no opposition of heart and head. This volume has herein a deeply spiritual purpose.

M. Renan, — the sceptic, — in his "Souvenirs," says: "Il se trouve que les plus beaux rêves transportés dans le

domaine des faits, avaient été funestes, et que les choses humaines ne commencèrent à mieux aller que quand les idéologues cessèrent de s'en occuper. Je m'habituais dès lors à suivre une règle singulière, c'est de prendre pour mes jugements pratiques le contre-pieds exact de mes jugements théoriques, de ne regarder comme possible que ce que contredisait mes aspirations." A singular rule indeed! Proper for a man without convictions. Samuel Johnson pursued exactly the opposite method. Nothing, in his judgment, was so practical as what was most ideal. He believed in his finest dream, and tried to enact it; being persuaded that the shortcomings of conduct were due to the absence of loftiness in the idea. The true fact was aspiration. All men, as he thought, responded to what was highest; and it was only because the highest was not presented that they were cruel, mean, and base in their lives. It was the aim of his existence to lift them up by revealing the divinity that was in them; and this he felt he could do only by proclaiming the best he saw; and this he did always, the more persistently the older he grew.

Of the influence of this faith on his personal character, I cannot trust myself to speak. Here is the language of his intimate friend Samuel Longfellow, who has written his memoir: —

"With us abides as a memory and an aspiration the genuine nobility of soul. With us remains, a sacred and secure possession, the profound and elevated thought; the absolute faith in God; the clear, spiritual sight of things divine, ideal, invisible, as the realities; the keen moral judgment of men and events, untinged with bitterness; the reverent sensibility to all truly sacred things, equalled only by the prompt rejection of all that only pretended to be sacred; the absolute sincerity and sturdy independence in thought, speech, and methods of action, which, while respecting the freedom of others, may not always have been able to do justice to methods different from his own; the devotion to liberty in all its forms; the unwearied search for truth, and

the steady-working industry under the burden of bodily infirmity, the sensitive love of beauty in Nature and in art; the kindly sympathies and warm attachments; the too modest estimate of himself and the cordial recognition of the good work and worth of others; the bright mirth that lightened out of his habitual seriousness, — all these things abide with us, now that the voice is stilled and the hand lifeless."

As much as this all his friends will testify. One can only wish that the praise had been justified to those who were not his friends, by a few personal examples such as Mr. Longfellow could have adduced, had his sense of delicacy permitted. The story of Charles Lamb's heroism would be paralleled by Samuel Johnson's, if all were known. Of course, some of these qualities, — the basis of them all perhaps, — were due to constitutional bias and temperament; but the superstructure was erected by his faith. Of this there can be no question, as they who knew the man will bear witness. These things are said here in order that the intention and true bearing of these books may not be misapprehended. The bearing of the faith on character was in this instance very fine.

The service rendered by such a man in this age of purely external literary activity is immense. Had he been a disciple of the current Christian philosophy, the moral conclusions from his theory might have been taken for granted; but as a teacher of the opposite school, it is important that the ethical results of his doctrine should be exhibited. His interpretation of the cosmic idea is so lofty, stimulating, inspiring; so full of encouragement to every high spiritual feeling; so elevating and kindling, — that one is glad to find him on that side. He lifts the whole exposition into a sphere of ideal faith. Although not technically he is really a believer, and an enthusiastic one. The literal transcendentalist who holds that certain

primal truths are planted, fully fashioned, in the nature of man, are corrected by this thinker, who declares: —

"Of course, the transcendentalist cannot mean that at all times and by all persons the truths now specified are seen in the same objective form, nor even that they are always *consciously* recognized in any form. He means that, being involved in the movement of intelligence, they indicate realities, whether well or ill conceived, and are apprehended in proportion as man becomes aware of his own mental processes."

"It is not easy to see how we can have intuitive certainty of the continuance of our present form of consciousness in a future life; still less of what awaits it in a future life. But it is certain that knowledge involves not only a sense of union with that which we know, but a real participation of the knowing faculty therein."

"By intuition of God we do not mean a theological dogma or a devout sentiment; we do not mean belief in 'a God,' Christian, or other, — but that presumption of the infinite as involved in our perception of the finite; of the whole as implied by the part; of substance behind all phenomena; and of thought as of one nature with its object, which the laws of mind require, and which can be detected in conscious or unconscious forms, through all epochs and stages of religious belief."

In the same essay on "Transcendentalism," Mr. Johnson, discussing the intuition of moral law, says: —

"How explain as a 'greatest happiness principle,' or an inherited product of observed consequences, that sovereign and eternal law of mind whose imperial edict lifts all calculations and measures into functions of an infinite meaning? And how vain to accredit or ascribe to revelation, institution, or redemption this necessary allegiance to the law of our own being, which is liberty and loyalty in one!

"The crude evolutionist who believes in the production of the highest by inherent force of the lowest, who thinks of the universe as fashioned from below upward, has a formidable opponent in the man who is persuaded that the world is fashioned from above downward; that all facts point heavenward; that what we can know is but the process of creative mind."

The ordinary rationalist who seems to be of opinion that criticism will eventually dethrone religion, is confronted by a scholar who is fairly abreast of the foremost students in this department, who reads all the books and hails literary discoveries with delight, yet who regards the work of criticism as provisional, as removing rubbish in order to reveal the walls of the "city that has foundations;" who pulls away incumbrances that the "house not made with hands" may be visible. The present volume abounds in conclusions which may startle casual readers, but which have no other intention than to bring the ultimate principles to light. They are passages, not chambers; avenues to the land of promise, that better country which is seen from afar.

The real value of books like these consists in their idea as well as in their knowledge. They are not content to vindicate ancient religions from aspersion, — that has been done already; it has even become the fashion to do it, among Orthodox people, too (witness the new volume called "The Faiths of the World"); nor do they admit the excellence of ancient religions in order that they may show how much more excellent Christianity is as the culmination of all antecedent faiths. The argument of Mr. Johnson is that the old religions are steps in the manifestation of *mind*, illustrations of the development of *consciousness* in man. The present volume, the masterpiece of the series, exhibits the evolution of the moral sentiment. The extensive affiliations of the Persian religion, its influence through Manicheism and Gnosticism on Christianity, its speculative ideas and social institutions, make it peculiarly interesting. No merely external study of dogmas and symbols, no critical knowledge of texts, is adequate to an appreciation of this. No partisanship, however generous, can do justice to it. The finest genius alone, fortified by competent learn-

ing, can feel its full significance. In this aspect, Mr. Johnson's account of Oriental Religions is unique in design and execution. That it has attracted no more attention is possibly owing to the circumstance of its entire originality. Neither the general public nor scholars are awake to the worth of ideas much beyond the line of accepted thinking. Mr. Johnson's absolute frankness, perhaps, repels more than it attracts; but the time may come when merit like his will be honored as it should be. Should that period arrive, these three volumes will be welcomed as not only among the best expositions of Oriental systems, but as the best and the first attempt at formulating the idea of intellectual and moral evolution, by far transcending in power any work now submitted to the thinking world.

O. B. F.

BOSTON, April 1, 1884.

TOPICAL ANALYSIS.

PERSIA.

I. ADVENT OF THE RELIGION OF PERSONAL WILL.—ITS ELEMENTS.

II. DEVELOPMENT.

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PERSIA.

ADVENT OF THE RELIGION OF PERSONAL WILL.

ITS ELEMENTS.

I.

SYMBOLISM.

ADVENT OF THE RELIGION OF PERSONAL WILL.

ITS ELEMENTS.

SYMBOLISM.

THERE is an epoch in our experience when we become conscious of ourselves as individuals, distinct from the world of forces, natural and human, into which we were born. Before this beginning of our proper personality, we are more or less passive products, either of contemplation and imagination, or of traditional routine; in other words, we are either dreamers or plodders,—in the one case, drifting waves of abstract mind; in the other, atoms of a concrete mass. In neither have we become centres of special force. In neither have we learned that our estimate of the objective world depends upon what we personally know and feel and do, and, substantially, upon what we *are*. That

> "We receive but what we give,
> And in our life alone doth Nature live,"

is as true of the child as of the man, of the poor creature as of the hero or the saint. But the moral and spiritual possibilities involved in this constant law are realized only through the consciousness of ourselves as distinct from our surroundings, and, as it were, polar to them. This is the condition of progress,—that we know ourselves to be centres of productive force.

The organ of this conscious personality, the force which it brings into play for purposes of power and growth, is the *Will*. Strictly defined, Will is the concentration of

mind on the selection, from among the infinitude of objective forms, of that which suits the subjective desire, and the transforming of it from a thought to a thing in the shape of that desire, from an ideal to a real or actual image of it,—a transfer from brain to hand. And as one really worships that by which he is most deeply moved, so the ideal, the truly sovereign power for this stage of self-consciousness, is always a *personal Will*.

Beyond this stage there is a higher, in which the will, recognizing the eternal order of the universe, of which it is but a fragment, finds its ideal in conformity, not with personal ideals, but with this substantial order itself. And this step beyond the worship of personal will is foreshadowed in all the immature steps of experience, which point beyond themselves to its serene and perfect freedom,—although in individual life it is seldom reached.

Such is the order of individual growth. But it is not less the law of history, the course of humanity: the ages are its theatre, and the races are its material. In the oldest civilizations, even in their highest forms, we have found noticeable the absence of personal Will. Men are homogeneous. Classes, castes, tribal distinctions, family units, do not express essential individual differences, but at most only differences between certain *masses of similar persons*, or *relations*, and other masses equally uniform. The typical qualities of some races, such as the Hindu and Chinese, have kept them, as we have seen, on this imperfect stage, even down to the present moment, repressing that self-consciousness of which individual will is the exponent.[1] In their Southern expansion, the Indo-European race were subject to this repression, through climatic and institutional forces; but in their Northern and Western expansion, they entered at once on the epoch of self-conscious individuality. The Semites, starting from the other extremity of

[1] See the author's *China*, p. 946.

Iran, did the same, though with significant differences. The power of these combined energies to initiate the historic progress of the Western civilizations, has been fully shown in the historical survey already presented.[1] The central point of the whole movement is seen to be the evolution and worship of *personal Will.*

The earlier stages of Iranian development have been marked, not by any extended expression of individuality, but by a common veneration for great personal forces, wherever they appeared, and by a strong tendency in such appreciation to call them forth. This is itself a form of religious idealism. But we are now to enter on what may be called the typical religion of Iran. It may be well to begin with a review of the special elements which in men and nations accompany the advent of that epoch of experience which we have endeavored to describe, that we may see how faithfully these are actually represented in the Zarathustrian faith.

The most significant of these elements for the history of Religion is an *intenser play of symbolic expression.* I use the comparative degree, because symbolization is in some form a constant fact of mental life. Swedenborg's doctrine of "correspondences" was an imperfect adumbration of real spiritual dynamics, and rests upon the law that whatever a being is, must appear in what it knows or does; because self-manifestation is the inherent necessity of substance. "If the invisible things of God are to be understood from the things that are made," it is for the reason now stated. When the spiritual fact exists, the physical is made also, which represents it, just as surely as that one who is building a pile of stones in the morning light is building the shadow of the pile. The fact of "correspondence" is universal, the difficulty is in reading it; and the fault of the class of minds represented by Swedenborg is their over-

[1] See the author's *India* and *China*

assumption of final knowledge, and the fixedness of their formulas presented as a science of interpretation, — a fault not confined to any class of believers, but arising from the universal fact of personal limitations in the study of phenomena. It is, however, eminently the consequence of all positive religion, after its early or prophetic stage has passed into that of organization.

The substance of the universe is inscrutable. We know, indeed, that whatever we see must be symbolic of that which it manifests; yet we have no definite knowledge of the process of manifestation, save what we derive from the productive force of man. Personality is thus the basis of symbolic representation; and the more distinctly and energetically conscious we are of personality, as motive-power, the more freely do we use the elements of experience as signs of somewhat beyond themselves. As the centre of energy, it is personality that transforms our thoughts into things, our being into act, our mind into matter, our abstract into concrete; and every such process is the construction of a symbol or sign representative of ourselves. Here again we may recur to our threefold historical illustration. With the Hindu, who lacked power to seize and hold the one of these two poles of the process, — that of the concrete, — and the Chinese who failed to grasp the other, or abstract pole, all *symbolic construction* was in the main ill-defined and unconscious. On the other hand, the self-consciousness of the Aryan is concentrated on this very thing, the *constructive process itself*, by which the one force (internal) is transformed into the other (external). With the Aryan mind, natural symbolism becomes conscious, clear, significant, progressive, full of human relation and power. It is the natural activity of a mind that instinctively sees, not ideas alone, nor things alone, but the idea as producing the thing. Two conditions are requisite for every step in progress: first, to believe firmly that

there is an unseen and an unattained; and next, to believe as firmly that the actual materials of life can be made into its image.

This typical symbolism, however, simply brings to *ideal value and emphasis* the necessary processes of mental creation. We cannot think save in symbols. Language itself is a symbolic expression. We can express ourselves only in terms taken from the world of the senses, or in some way involving that world. So far we are all poets. We say "burning thoughts," "bright or dark moods." We speak of the "growth of character," the "branching out of plans," the "withering of hopes." We have all the seasons in our experience. We "revolve" like planets around a centre. We have "ups and downs," "corners and spaces" in our hearts; "heights and depths" in our reason; "hard and pliable characters." We unfold our powers, plume ourselves, shut ourselves up, pour ourselves out; have upright or downright, winding or backward, ways. We sigh and groan in spirit; leap and sing inwardly. Our souls bend in prayer; aspire, or breathe, after God. We have a great many general terms, which suggest no material image, yet are not without recognized meanings for the reflective or contemplative mind. But the moment we make active use of those meanings, clothe them with positive individual form and purpose, turning thought into thing, the process and result must both be expressed by physical images. Symbolism is mediation between inward and outward, person and performance, man and his environment.

Work is the image man makes of himself on the world in and through nature. Art, science, politics, trade, are just the outward shape of the human will; incarnation of the spirit; thought, dream, purpose, symbolized. The word, shaped by the organs of articulation in the air, represents the speaker, and somehow impresses the remotest orb with

his likeness. Am not I myself here on this sheet of paper, in my handwriting, every word penned an autograph — nay, photograph, made by the invisible sun of spiritual reflection? Do we not fling off impalpable aromas all the time, so that, as the hound scents his master, the nerves of finer organisms find us out by means of them, even when we have ourselves got a thousand miles away? Do not people construct our traits and habits and beliefs out of a lock of our hair, or a few strokes of a pencil, down to minutest shades of character, as Cuvier built up a mastodon out of a few bones? Every atom of blood, brain, nerve, that is in us — every stir of limb or feature — represents us. What is Phrenology, when the motion of your little finger betrays every secret of your inward behavior to the wise?

It is easy to ignore the symbolism of ourselves, in which we have our being, weaving it about us by the unconscious organic motions of character. "Alp and torrent shall inherit our significance of will." Nature is a convenient cooking-stove to one, a private mint to another, an outflaming of ineffable beauty to a third.

> "To some she is the Goddess great;
> To some the milch cow of the field:
> Their wisdom is to calculate
> What butter she will yield."

But if we are poorly conscious of what we do with the world to which we are related as creators of symbols, still less common is it to recognize the law of *perception* on which all doing and creating must rest. We can have no cognizance whatever of the world without us, except in so far as our nature, its complex of individual and universal relations, affords a ground for conceiving it. In other words, it represents these personal or spiritual relations. Just as it is the participation of our human nature in truth that enables us to recognize truth in others, and its par-

ticipation in love that allows us to delight in their love, so it is with our perceptions of the Cosmos itself. I can behold space as infinite only because of the relations of *human* thought and feeling as such with infinity; and so the star-sown universe is a symbol of these human capacities, without whose activity within me no telescope could ever have suggested to me such an idea as boundlessness in numbers or space. Nature must either be void and meaningless, or it must represent to man that which he is, or does, or tends to do, by natural forces. The endless roll of waves upon the beach impresses us only as our mood touches it with our own sense of immeasurable task or yearning, of personal destiny or conscious power. We are the diamond refining in the dark; we the lightning that breaks from tilting clouds. What we see is what the brute sees not: it is ourselves. Man's aspirations burn before him in the stars: his passions grovel and snarl and rend their prey before him in the beasts that perish. He reads the character of another, ever so different from his own, by some subtile opening of his own qualities into a capability for traits which his conscious will or disciplined spirit would probably refuse to entertain. And whether we read the tornado, the pestilence, or the struggle for existence from a pessimistic or optimistic point of view, or as reverent hearers of Nature's incitements to duty and humanity; whether we interpret these destructive powers as curses upon fallen man, or as conditions of his ascension to the best, by natural evolution, — it is still the limit or the liberty *in us* that supplies the alphabetic signs, wherewith we read. All symbols represent humanity, either its actual or ideal values.

Ideal as well as actual, — for man finds images of God also in Nature, only because of his own essential personal relations with the ideal or infinite; and being so related, religious symbolism is natural and necessary mediation between

himself and his highest conception of being. Resting, then, on this universal law of personality, the choice of special symbols with the definite meaning given to the object chosen by the symbolizing faculty is not arbitrary. It is the product of positive relations, as organic as those of language; and though the individual mind becomes more and more clearly conscious of them, they are never so wholly unrecognized as not to be instinctively pursued. In this way we must explain the general uniformity of meaning ascribed by different ages and races to the same element or phenomenon in Nature.

In view of this universality in the most important element of religious construction, the supposed distinction between polytheist and monotheist, Pagan and Christian, Catholic and Protestant, which is conveyed by the use of the term *idolater* for the former of these classes, appears very superficial. In both classes the method is the same; the result is a symbol, — its meaning, as well as its choice, being determined by the laws and limits of human experience. Who, then, is an idolater, and what is an idol? We can only arrive at the idea that any people endowed with a degree of social consciousness have ever worshipped "stocks or stones" by abstracting from the object that symbolic significance which was the very ground of its selection and the substance of its meaning. It represented an ideal in the mind of the worshipper, as is evident enough from the fact that it was believed to enshrine and cover immeasurably more than it was, or could be, as stock or stone. It is not the fetichist only who confesses this when he breaks his image in pieces if it does not answer his desire, and finds another. The procedure does not differ essentially from that of the Christian, who venerates an image or picture so long as it represents the vision of his faith, or who takes an historical personage, around whom certain religious symbols have gathered, as the representa-

tive of God, or as God himself; and then, as his scientific, moral, social, spiritual stature enlarges, comes to demand larger symbols of his ideal life. Or, if we give to religion the broadest meaning, as simply the service one pays to his ideal, in whatever form that may stand for his thought, must it not necessarily be the worship of some object which represents symbolically the sum of his best inward desires? Does not money, or fame, or fashion, or culture, serve for the time the same purpose as the "idolater's" stock or stone? Religious symbolism does not vary in its method: it varies according to the quality of the personality of which it constructs the palpable ideal. To suppose that in one case it is the work of a perfect organ of vision, made to see objective truth, and in another the work of an organ which must see false images only, is entirely irrational. However superior as symbols the Jahveh of the later Jews and the "Father" of Jesus may have been to gods that dwelt in gold and silver statues in temples of Babylon, they were none the less products of symbolization, not objective realities, — imperfect types of the inscrutable substance, in which all men are contained. Just as the sun has been universally the symbol of deity in these and in all other forms of worship, just as light has been for all men in all ages the undying symbol of ideal good, by whatsoever name expressed, and yet both imperfect symbols of the reality to which they point, — so with the more distinctly anthropomorphic personal ideals in which men have centred their faith and hope. Both the Semite and the Iranian have found a loftier and purer meaning in religious terms, in proportion to the degree in which they represent the pure sense of personality. But that the really objective truth of deity should be given in any of these fragmentary forms, however beautiful, is impossible, — first, because deity is infinite; and second, because the symbolizer can only deal with such external beings or

phenomena as correspond to his inward ideal, which grows as he grows.

In other words, religious symbols are properly our human ideals taking external relation to us, that we may adore them unselfishly, not as our own, nor as ourselves at all, but as above ourselves. And men are the more able to make such use of symbolism, the more their emotion and their volition are expanded by social and moral communion. The history of man is a striving to generalize his experiences, to universalize his ideals; and his will, which is the energy that shapes these in its own likeness, is also the diviner power that seeks and strives to lose itself in that which it adores. Thus, in the first flush of self-conscious power, he makes his controlling experiences stand for creative and productive gods. Then, dramatizing nature and life in their interest, he constructs mythologies, which are as free as possible in their origin from selfish purpose, and so are in fact poetry and prophecy for all time. The believers who saw purity in the fire, might and calm in the ocean, imperishable guardianship in the stars, divine benignity in Nile and Ganges, feeling in their steady alternate rise and fall the pulsation of a mighty heart which forever deposited the rich loam of far mountains to receive the living sunbeams and seeds; and out of these symbols builded the fair humanities of old religions, so similar through remotest spaces, — simply did what we are doing when we fill heaven and earth with the signs and tokens of whatsoever we most sincerely believe in, at the same time showing its real counterpart in our human conduct. When we repeat after our fathers that God is one and omnipresent, and then, like them, proceed to ascribe qualities and purposes to His infinity which we know only through finite experiences, and worship these as His, what we have done is simply to lift these qualities out of man, that we may in all honesty adore them as above ourselves.

We are as truly symbolaters, or "idolaters," if that is the word for the heathen, as the heathen are; and we cannot help it, so long as we demand forms of language as material for religious intercourse. Love, Power, the Father, the Spirit, the Word, are symbolic expansions of the highest human powers and virtues. Races of men most marked by self-assertion have always made their religious ideal an Infinite Will. Or if, with the mystics of every faith, we reverently refrain from ascribing any finite or definable mode of existence to the Fulness of Being, we are still reaching forth towards that pure Essence, which is known to us only as implied in our own consciousness of existence. Finally, the Moral Order of the universe, which religious science substitutes for all forms of external will, can be recognized only through the conception of Law; and the uniformity, continuity, and fidelity of law are symbols of a moral and spiritual allegiance revealed only in the constitution of the soul. Thus the progress of religious symbolism, as related to the idea of God, is the reflex of the phases of ideal human will. As related to the conduct of man, the highest form it assumes is that of constructive work. And this, too, depends on the growth of the personal ideal out of passive conformity into the energies of liberty and love. Not more naturally does the inward discipline of the Quaker select silence as the symbolic medium of worship, or the sensuous dependence of the Catholic prefer the arts of pomp, than the broad free thought and open sympathies which are not bound to sect or form, find their adequate expression in ways of ennobling work; bearing its living symbols of universal truth and good as the tree its native fruit.

The universality of the symbolizing process indicates that the relations with which it is concerned are real and natural. In its great leading lines, therefore, its speech is not arbitrary, nor the choice of fancy, but the permanent

expression of steadfast harmonies between the soul and the outward world. The poet speaks to the common heart simply because he has immediate sense of these natural correspondences, which prove that the mirror in which men see themselves is one and the same for all. He has no license to alter or violate or ignore these relations. The poetry of all times and tribes speaks through these a common language, even of emotions; and alphabets are but vehicles for transporting a currency everywhere valid. Who, for example, could mistake the organic meaning, the momentous human interest, which in all mythologies has centred in the Tree? In the Babylonian sculptures, in the Bible legend of the Fall, in the story of the same in the Persian Bundehesh, in the Greek Garden of Hesperides, in the old Phœnician vase-paintings, in the beliefs of antiquity about the dragon-guarded gold-dust of the Scythian North, we find the same image of a Tree of Life, guarded or in some way controlled in its relations with the aspirations of man by mythical dragons, or serpents, typical of perils of the body or the soul. The terrors and splendors of fire are associated with it; and the penalty of the Promethean theft of fire for the benefit of mankind is but one symbol out of many of the awe of man before his momentous possession of an element which penetrates all nature and all thought with an omnipotent energy: and for this the early Aryan mind could find no better type than to call it the fruit of an all-containing Cosmic Tree, and no use less universal than to transmit the symbol in all the branches of the race. From first to last, *growth*, human and personal, has found no better symbol than this,[1] nor any that can refuse affinity with that old Norse Yggdrasil, whose ever-ascending top is in the unmeasured spaces, its roots

[1] This is the sum of meaning involved in the universal use of the tree in Oriental symbolism: the attempt of Lenormant and others to identify the Bible "tree of life" with the Persian *hzoma*, the Indian *soma*, and all other similar representations, is made in the interest of Bible revelation, and has no scientific value. *Contemporary Review*, September, 1879.

watered by the Fates of Time and the Well of Truth; while the squirrel runs up and down with incessant defiances between the eagle that watches in its boughs and the serpent that gnaws at its foot.

Nor can we admit that the older religions, as contrasted with Christianity and Judaism, are specially chargeable with worshipping the symbol in place of that which it signifies; in other words, with allowing the image to intercept and absorb the honor due to the ideal. Religious sentiment, of necessity, becomes absorbed in what represents its ideal. And is not this as true of the Christian symbolism of Trinity and Incarnation, as it was of the older worship of sun and stars? Is it not as true of Hebrew Talmudism, and Catholic Papism, or Mariolatry, and Protestant Bibliolatry, as it is of the Hindu's recitation of his Gâyatrî verses? When the symbol is embraced by sentiment, thought becomes identified with its object, and what represents its God practically becomes its God. In no case, however, is the fact disproved that there exists in all civilized thought a more or less distinct acknowledgment of some divine transcendence of the symbol abiding in the deeper experience. And while it is true of the cruder forms not of one but of every religion, that the symbol does intercept and hold the worshipper's interest, veiling the pure truth as more or less abstract and unreal, — even as the confessional shuts off the essential meanings of right and wrong, and as the religious custom or creed hides the Infinite Life it would limit and define, — yet it is equally true of the higher stages in all religions that their symbolism embodies the spirit of the Brâhman prayer: "Open, O world-sustaining Sun, the entrance to truth, hidden by thy vase of dazzling light. Soften thy splendors, that I may behold thy true being! From the unreal, lead me to the real!"[1]

[1] Brihad Upanishad, V. xiv.

There is, however, a real difference between ancient and modern symbolism. The more self-conscious religion becomes, the more strongly its symbolism tends to become distinctively personal. From natural phenomena it has passed over to purely human. It is, of course, in some points of view, in the interest of progress to represent the ideal by conscious forces, in place of outward physical types. But the integrity of the cosmos requires that thought should express itself by things; that man should find, or make, this very world in his own image. The health of character is in its stress to outward embodiment; and whatever divorces religious experience from this,—whatever prevents the natural escape from self-consciousness into living forms of action,—represses earnestness and narrows thought. The supreme Ideal, which we call God, is not limited to personality, to the individualism of conscious will. God is cosmical: whatever inscrutable substance that adjective may typify, is God. The phenomena of the universe, inclusive of human activities, interpreted by its laws of order, are the true symbolism of the Spirit. Materialism, as expressing the direct purpose and instant end of mind, is as just a term as it is unsatisfactory when used to define the origination of mind. Science restores this natural relation of man and the world, which the primal instincts of religion affirmed, but which theologies absorbed in self-consciousness have broken. To what has heretofore been called "matter," with little regard to its essential relations to spiritual substance, science secures its forgotten rights. As a consequence, the pure identity of thought with thing, of essence with manifestation, of substance with symbol, must come to full recognition, bringing withal that directness of relation between thought and action which the highest conscience commands in the name of integrity, and which ennobles human nature by due respect to the senses and the world. This directness of real symbolism

amounts, in its ideal, to nothing less instant than one's unconscious expression of his emotions through the features, or of his vitality through the lungs and the heart. And if, as yet, we are far from apprehending the nobler fruits of these ages of material science; if we are still inapt to find the higher meanings of this our unfathomed cosmos of inviolable laws, — doubtless it is for lack of those ideals in ourselves which would give such symbolic meanings to what we see and do. The world is waiting, not for our knowledge only, but for our worship and our love. Is it in itself the less capable of responding in living parable to the noblest aspirations of men, because as yet men do not demand such response; because we have been using it for merely mechanical and competitive purposes; because our hot haste to master its treasures has covered with whirling dust the meekness of the wind-flower and the patient-girded watch of the stars?

But while we recognize the tendency of the later stages and larger development of self-conscious personality to check in some ways, for a time, the direct contact of the ideal in man with pure nature through symbolic expression, we must again emphasize the fact that it was the earlier stages of the same self-conscious will that gave to symbolism its first powerful impulse; because in these stages man first learns to act as a force distinct from his surroundings, and so to use the world with clear knowledge that it does represent his own ideal. As we have found this personal element to be the special characteristic of the Iranian mind, we are prepared to find symbolism especially prominent in its religion; and in this we are nowise disappointed. The development of this tendency is here upon a scale that can be called no less than typical in the history of thought.

THE FIRE-SYMBOL.

THE common impression that the religion of Zoroaster is distinctively the religion which centres in the Fire-symbol, is erroneous. Pyrolatry is common to all religions. No other natural element so perfectly represents supreme force as the element of fire. As light, it is the universally recognized symbol of truth; as heat, of love; as cosmic vital energy, of conscious being; as astronomical centre, of unity; as all-producing and all-sustaining, of creative and providential care. Like personality and will, it mounts back to its source, and will not be cut off thence. Penetrating, stirring, and shaping all things, it is the image of every pure, perfect, irrepressible power. It is the first-born of creation: germ, seed, and atom, the children of its play. The soul itself is said to glance down from heaven as a beam of light, and as a beam to return whence it came. For all tribes from India to Peru, the fire burning on the altar, fed by the purest and most vigilant that it may never become extinct, is the type of security, immortality, and adequate care. Into this holy hearth-flame (*Hestia*), parent of the city, the homestead, the shrine, awful to gods and inviolable by men, no defiled thing shall enter. For the Greek, the solemnity of oaths sat there to rule Olympus itself; for the Roman, the guardianship of the State. The Vedic Aryan saw Agni rise from his primitive fire-churn, to bring down the blessings of the gods, the flame his living tongue, his leaping steed, swift as thought to make earth and heaven one. The Turanian Magi of Media adored the same element. How the Semite's passion played all its keys on this element of fire, — Assyrian, Phœnician, Hebrew, — in symbols of creation, preservation, destruction, in sexual and ascetic rage, in a self-abandonment which could find no fitter image than passing his children through the flame! His Jahveh seals covenants

with men by moving in a smoky flame between the parted offerings;[1] burns in Sinai, in the desert pillar, in the face of Moses, over the Ark. He is not only a fire that devours the sacrifice, but a blaze no man can see and live. To Christianity he descends in the shining cloud, the transfigured countenance, the judgment-fires, that attend its mythological Christ. Nor can Jesus find any symbol of the coming of "his kingdom" more suitable than the lightning's flash from east to west. With what ease and grace this type absorbs all others! "Allah," says the Koran, "is a flame burning like a star, as a lamp set in pure glass within a niche."[2] "Ibrahim," says El Masûdi, "having worshipped the stars and the sun, and grown to the higher worship of Allah, was thrown into flames by the giant Nimrod, but the flames refused to burn, and not a fire could be kindled anywhere on earth that day."[3] "Father and mother of all gods," says the Aztec hymn, "is the fire-god (lightning); a bird with gleaming wings in the centre of the world." The modern Kirghis Tartars so venerate fire that they will not spit into it.[4] The tribes of Kafiristan cast their offerings through flames.[5] From the simple faith of the Iroquois, that when the tribal fire went out the tribe would perish, to the refined myth of Prometheus, evolved from the primitive mystery of the generation of flame by rubbing two bits of wood, into clear and full expression of the pains and penalties under which social progress is won for man, — through the endless maze of tender and yearning superstitions associated with producing and preserving the element of fire, runs the consciousness of mankind that this element is the centre of social relations, the fountain of home, of art, of culture, of civilization. And so poetry and religion anticipated the crowning recognition by science that life and growth are

[1] Gen. xv. 17. [2] *Sura* xxiv. [3] *Meadows of Gold*, etc., p. 83.
[4] Hutton: *Central Asia*, p. 325. [5] *Central Asia*, p. 421.

but the extension of the solar fires. So continuous is man's organic *rapport* with fire, that it is difficult to draw the line where his direct, instinctive fear, awe, or love passes into conscious use of the symbol to express his feelings or thoughts; still harder to mark where the personal imagery reaches up into the sphere of pure imagination, and deals in essential relations and creative laws. But that this one visible symbol sweeps the whole compass of human experience in its plastic power, that fire is the very speech and garment of the spirit of man, is sure.

It should seem more practicable to distinguish the stage of growth in which fire as a mere element is the all-absorbing symbol, from that in which the religious sense is concentrated on its more distinct and dominant forms, especially such as the sun and stars. Solar mythology would thus mark a stage beyond the primitive forms of pyrolatry, as representing a distincter reference to personal meanings and an escape from the vagueness of unconscious instinct. The oldest Aryan fire-gods do in fact flow into each other, as if their common symbol merely expressed those transitions of feeling which in the rude man refuse to be held in prescribed or permanent conditions. Neither in Bactria, nor in Vedic India, more than in Turan, nor even afterwards in the Persia of Herodotus, do they take, like individuals, to dwelling in temples. Their simple altars rise on mountain-tops, in the open spaces of light, where sun and stars are but portions of the all-sufficient elemental life of fire. The sun, on the contrary, has always his shrine, usually his human image. In the terrible arrows of his beams, in the majesty of his rolling orb, and in his battle with the clouds and storms, he penetrates man's consciousness like a tremendous will: he must be received through some softening mediating image, in some walled space where his splendors shall be veiled. The moon and stars also require temples, images, and human mediators,

for the opposite reason that they seem so far away, while yet exercising a control whose grand, silent mystery man ever yearns to penetrate. Hence the mythology of nations like the Irano-Persian, Greek, and Hebrew, in whom the personal life has been developed, centres in the sun's course; and the adventures of their gods are even traceable through all the mazes of Protean names and dramatic situations, back to his all-embracing movement, the stages and strifes of his diurnal march, the alternation of day with night crowned with moon and stars. In this relation between astrolatry in its largest sense and the progress of man to distinct personal consciousness, it is perhaps possible to find historic vestiges of two distinct stages. Much ingenuity has been spent, and not without success, at least for the study of Semitic races, on proving that the moon and star cult is older than that of the sun, — representing the nomadic, as that does the more developed life of the agriculturist and townsman. To the wanderer of the steppes, night brings coolness and relief; to the settled laborer, the sun's bounty is more conspicuous; and it is argued in detail that the sun-myths are always myths of higher civilization than those of the moon and stars, with which they are historically in conflict, as the war of nomad and settled laborer is the standing strife of the early world.[1] That the real and historic order of progress is here caught sight of, is probably true.

But though solar myths may represent a social advance in comparison with lunar, especially among the Semitic races, we can hardly explain the star-worship of the western portion of Iran, as compared with the pure pyrolatry of the eastern, upon the same theory of advance in personal self-consciousness. In the valley of the Euphrates, where cities and cultures supervened upon the nomadic life, astrolatry was a natural tradition, passing on into those

[1] Goldziher: *Mythology among the Hebrews.*