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FOR CONSULTATION ONLY

THE MYTHOLOGY



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OF

THE ARYAN NATIONS.

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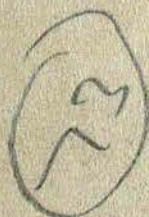
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IN TWO VOLUMES.

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PREFACE.

WITH a deep consciousness of its shortcomings, but with a confidence not less deep in the security of the foundations laid by the Science of Comparative Mythology, I submit to the judgment of all whose desire it is to ascertain the truth of facts in every field of inquiry a work on a subject as vast as it is important. The history of mythology is, in a sense far beyond that in which we may apply the words to the later developments of religious systems, the history of the human mind; and the analysis which lays bare the origin and nature of Iranian dualism, and traces the influence of that dualism on the thought and philosophy of other lands, must indefinitely affect our conclusions on many subjects which may not appear to be directly connected with it.

For myself I confess candidly, and with a feeling of gratitude which lapse of time certainly has not weakened, that Professor Max Müller's Essay on Comparative Mythology first opened to me thirteen years ago a path through a labyrinth which, up to that time, had seemed as repulsive as it was intricate. I well remember the feeling of delight awakened by his analysis of the myths examined in that essay, of which



it is but bare justice to say that by it the ground which it traversed was for the first time effectually broken for English scholars, and the fact established that the myths of a nation are as legitimate a subject for scientific investigation as any other phenomena. The delight which this investigation has never ceased to impart is strictly the satisfaction which the astronomer or the geologist feels in the ascertainment of new facts: and I have written throughout under a constant sense of the paramount duty of simply and plainly speaking the truth.

Of one fact, the importance of which if it be well ascertained can scarcely be exaggerated, I venture to claim the discovery. I am not aware that the great writers who have traced the wonderful parallelisms in the myths of the Aryan world have asserted that the epic poems of the Aryan nations are simply different versions of one and the same story, and that this story has its origin in the phenomena of the natural world, and the course of the day and the year. This position is, in my belief, established by an amount of evidence which not long hence will probably be regarded as excessive. At the least I have no fear that it will fail to carry conviction to all who will weigh the facts without prejudice or partiality, who will carefully survey the whole evidence produced before they form a definite judgment, and who will fairly estimate the cumulative proof of the fact that the mythology of the Vedic and Homeric poets contains the germs, and in most instances more than the germs, of almost all the stories of Teutonic, Scandinavian, and Celtic folk-lore. This common stock of materials, which supplements the



evidence of language for the ultimate affinity of all the Aryan nations, has been moulded into an infinite variety of shapes by the story-tellers of Greeks and Latins, of Persians and Englishmen, of the ancient and modern Hindus, of Germans and Norwegians, Icelanders, Danes, Frenchmen, and Spaniards. On this common foundation the epic poets of these scattered and long-separated children of one primitive family have raised their magnificent fabrics or their cumbrous structures. Nay, from this common source they have derived even the most subtle distinctions of feature and character for their portraits of the actors in the great drama which in some one or more of its many scenes is the theme of all Aryan national poetry.

Momentous as this conclusion must be, it is one which seems to me to be strictly involved in the facts registered by all comparative mythologists; and while I wish to claim for myself no more than the honesty which refuses to adopt the statements of others without testing their accuracy, I may feel a legitimate confidence in the assurance that in all important points I am supported by the authority of such writers as Grimm, Max Müller, Bréal, Kuhn, Preller, Welcker, H. H. Wilson, Cornewall Lewis, Grote, and Thirlwall.

If in the task of establishing the physical origin of Aryan myths the same facts have been in some instances adduced more than once, I must plead not merely the necessity of the case, but the reiterated assertions of writers who seem to regard the proclamation of their views as of itself conclusive. The broad statement, for example, that Hermes is primarily and strictly a god of commerce, and of the subtlety and



trickery which commerce is on this hypothesis supposed to require, makes it necessary at every step, and at the cost of repetitions which would otherwise be needless, to point out the true character of this divine harper.

In the wide field of inquiry on which I have entered in these volumes, I need scarcely say that I have very much more to learn, and that I shall receive with gratitude the suggestions of those who may wish to aid me in the task. Many portions of the subject are at present little more than sketched out: and of these I hope that I may be enabled to supply the details hereafter. The evidence thus far examined justifies the assurance that these details will not affect the main conclusions already arrived at.

Some of the pages in the First Book have appeared in articles contributed by me to the 'Edinburgh,' the 'Fortnightly,' and the 'Saturday' Reviews; and I have to thank the editors for the permission to make use of them.

The Greek names in this work are given as nearly as possible in their Greek forms. On this point I need only say that Mr. Gladstone, who, standing even then almost alone, retained in his earlier work on 'Homer and the Homeric Age' their Latin equivalents, has in his 'Juventus Mundi' adopted the method which may now be regarded as universally accepted.

I have retained the word Aryan as a name for the tribes or races akin to Greeks and Teutons in Europe and in Asia. Objections have been lately urged against its use, on the ground that only Hindus and Persians spoke of themselves as Aryas: and the tracing of this name to Ireland Mr. Peile regards as very un-



certain. To him the word appears also to mean not 'ploughmen,' but 'fitting, worthy, noble.' If it be so, the title becomes the more suitable as a designation for the peoples who certainly have never called themselves Indo-Germanic.

But however sure may be the foundations of the science of Comparative Mythology, and however sound its framework, the measure in which its conclusions are received must depend largely on the acceptance or rejection of its method in the philological works chiefly used in our schools and universities. Hence, in acknowledging thankfully the great improvement of the last over the previous editions of the Greek Lexicon of Dr. Liddell and Dr. Scott in the etymology of mythological names, I express a feeling shared doubtless by all who wish to see a wide and fertile field thoroughly explored. The recognition of the principle that Greek names must be interpreted either by cognate forms in kindred languages, or by reference to the common source from which all these forms spring, is the one condition without which it is useless to look for any real progress in this branch of philology; and this principle is here fully recognised. The student is now told that he must compare the Greek Charites with 'the Sanskrit Haritas, the coursers of the sun,' and that both received their name from a root *ghar*, to shine, or glisten. Zeus is referred to the Sanskrit Dyaus, the brilliant being, Ouranos to Varuṇa, and Erinyes to Saranyû. It is only to be regretted that the method has not been carried out more systematically. In all doubtful cases a Lexicographer is fully justified in keeping silence: but the affinity of *Arês* and the Latin



Mars with the Sanskrit Maruts, the Greek Moliôn, the Teutonic Miölnir, and of Athênê with the Sanskrit Ahanâ and Dahanâ and the Greek Daphnê, is as well established as that of Erinys and Saranyû, of Ouranos and Varuṇa. Yet under Arês we read that it is 'akin to ἄρην, ἄρην, as Lat. Mars to *mas*, perhaps also to ἦρας, Lat. *vir*;' under Athênê we are referred to ἀνθέω, where it is said that 'ανθ is the root of ἄνθος, perhaps also of Ἀθήνη and ἀνήμες.' But to the Comparative Mythologist the acceptance of his method will more than atone for the few blemishes still remaining in a great work, which must determine the character of English scholarship.

I have said that the task of analysing and comparing the myths of the Aryan nations has opened to me a source of unqualified delight. I feel bound to avow the conviction that it has done more. It has removed not a few perplexities; it has solved not a few difficulties which press hard on many thinkers. It has raised and strengthened my faith in the goodness of God; it has justified the wisdom which has chosen to educate mankind through impressions produced by the phenomena of the outward world.

March 8, 1870.



CONTENTS
OF
THE FIRST VOLUME.

BOOK I.

CHAPTER I.

*POPULAR THEORIES ON THE ORIGIN AND GROWTH
OF MYTHOLOGY.*

	PAGE
Method of Inquiry	1
The Nature of the Problem to be solved	2
Condition of Society in the Greek Heroic Age	2
Character of 'Homeric' mythology	3
Contrast between Mythological and Religious Belief	4
The Lyric and Tragic poets conscious of the Contrast	6
Historical Signification of Greek Mythology	7
Conflicting Views as to its Origin	8
Hypothesis of an Original Revelation	9
Extent of Original Revelation	10
Its alleged Perversion by the Greeks, as shown in the Attributes of their Gods	12
System of Secondaries	12
Inventive, as distinguished from traditive, Deities	13
Nature of the Doctrines perverted in Greek Mythology	14
Attributes of Athênê and Apollôn	15
Relations of will between Zeus and Athênê	17
Peculiar forms of Greek Mythology	17
Consequences involved in the Perversion of an original Revelation.	18
Comparison of the Homeric with the Vedic Mythology	20
Methods of determining the Extent of Primitive Revelation	22
Evidence of the Book of Genesis	22
Limits of this Evidence	24
Course of Revelation in the Old Testament	25
Necessity of accounting for the Character of Greek Mythology	25
Conditions of the Inquiry	26
Allegorical interpretation of Myths	27
Lord Bacon's Method	28
Its consequences	29
Unscientific character of such Interpretations	29



CHAPTER II.

THE RELATION OF MYTHOLOGY TO LANGUAGE.

	PAGE
Origin of abstract Words	31
Expansive power of sensuous Words	32
Origin of Language	33
Immobility of Savage Races	34
Historical Results of the Analysis of Language	36
Earliest Conditions of Thought	37

CHAPTER III.

THE SOURCE OF MYTHICAL SPEECH.

The Infancy of Mankind	39
Primary Myths	42
Secondary Myths	42
Polyonymy, as affecting the Growth of Mythology	43
Use of abstract and concrete Names	45
Myths arising from the Use of equivocal Words	47
Disintegration of Myths	49

CHAPTER IV.

THE DEVELOPEMENT OF MYTHS.

Elasticity of Mythical Speech	50
Results of Mythical Language	51
Evidence of this Developement furnished by the Rig-Veda	52
Relative Age of Greek Myths	53
Solar Myths	53
Changeful Action of the Sun	55
Repulsive Developements of solar Legends	56
Origin of these Developements	56
Tendency to localize Mythical Incidents	57
Vitality of the Mythopœic Faculty	58
Constant Demand for new Mythical Narratives	58
Groundwork of the Mythology of Northern Europe	60
Groundwork of the 'Homeric' Mythology	63
Comparison of Greek and Norse Mythology	66
Special Characteristics of Greek Mythology	68
Full Developement of Greek Mythology	69
Arrested Growth of Northern Mythology	70
Light thrown on both by the Vedic Hymns	71
Stages in the Growth of Mythical Systems	72



CHAPTER V.

GREEK CONCEPTIONS OF MYTHICAL TRADITION.

	PAGE
Gradual Assignment of an historical Character to Mythical Beings	76
Each Clan or Tribe regarded its own Traditions as distinct from any other	77
This Belief wholly without Foundation	77
Connection between the legends of Argos, Thebes, and Athens	78
The Imagery of these Legends	81
Significance of the Names employed in Greek Legends	82
Opinions of Greek Writers, and their Value	83

CHAPTER VI.

GREEK NOTIONS RESPECTING THE MORAL ASPECT OF MYTHOLOGY.

Coarse Developement of certain Mythical Phrases	84
Protests of Greek Writers	84
Limits of their Knowledge	85
Explanations of the seeming Immorality of Aryan Mythology	86
The Morality of the Hesiodic Poems	88

CHAPTER VII.

THEORY OF GREEK MYTHOLOGY AS AN ECLECTIC SYSTEM.

Reproduction of the same Myth under different Forms	90
No historical Conclusions to be drawn from the Complications so caused	91
Conclusions drawn from a Comparison of Greek with Teutonic Legends	93
Theory of Dr. Döllinger on the Origin of Greek Mythology	94
This Theory starts on an Assumption for which there is no Evidence	96
Historical Speculations of Dr. Döllinger	98
They leave the real Difficulties of Greek Mythology unexplained	98

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DIFFUSION OF MYTHS.

The common Element in Aryan Mythology	99
The Greek Mythology of itself explains this common Element	101
The Teutonic Mythology points in precisely the same direction	102
The missing Link supplied in the older Vedic Poems	102
The Key to all Aryan Mythology	103
Germes of mythical Tales	105
Groundwork of Aryan Mythology	106
Greek dynastic Legends	108
Growth of popular Traditions	108



	PAGE
Legends not resolvable into Phrases relating to physical Phenomena	110
The Brahman and the Goat	111
The Master Thief	111
The Legend of Rhampsinitos	112
The Story of the Poor Mason	115
The Story of Karpapa and Gata	115
The Story of Trophonios and Agamedes	116
The Shifty Lad	116
Point and Drift of these Stories	118
The Hellenic Master Thief	119
The Origin of the Story	120
Limits to the Hypothesis of Conscious Borrowing	121
Framework of Popular Stories	123
The Dog and the Sparrow	124
The Nautch Girl and the Parrot	125
Origin and Growth of these Stories	128
The Stories of Vicram and Hermotimos	129
The Table, the Ass, and the Stick	131
The Brahman, the Jackal, and the Barber	133
The Lad who went to the North Wind	135
The Story of Punchkin	135
The Giant who had no Heart in His Body	138
Mythical Repetitions and Combinations	140
Agency of Beasts in these Stories	140
The Two Brothers	142
Influence of written Literature on Folk-lore	142
The Stories of King Putraka and the Three Princesses of Whiteland	144
Faithful John	145
Rama and Luxman	148
Mythical Imagery of these Stories	149
The Pilgrim of Love	151
The Spell of Mid-day	153
The Sleep or Death of Summer	154
Origin of all Myths relating to the Charmed Sleep of beautiful Maidens	156
Charms and Spells in the Odyssey and in Hindu Stories	158
The Snake Leaves	160
Myths of the Night, the Moon, and the Stars	164
The Battle of Light and Darkness	165
Character of Aryan Folk-lore	166
Historical Value of Aryan popular Traditions	168

CHAPTER IX.

MODERN EUEMERISM.

The Method of Euëmeros	170
Its Antagonism with the Science of Language	171
The Science of Language in its Bearing on History	174
The Wolfian Theory	174
The real Question at Issue	175



	PAGE
Residuum of historical Fact in the Iliad	176
The Test of Homeric Credibility	177
Laws of Evidence	178
Their Application in English Courts of Justice	179
Application to Homeric History	180
Value of the historical Residuum in the Iliad	182
Difficulties involved in the traditional View	182
Euemeristic Methods of Dealing with the Homeric Narratives	185
Their irreconcilable Results	185
Value of traditional Impressions	186
The Legend of Roland and the Nibelungenlied	188
Principles of Evidence	191
The Homeric Controversy	194
The Return of the Herakleids	199
The Herakleid Conquests not historical	200
The Origin of the Traditions of the Herakleid Conquests	203
Materials of Epical Tradition	207
Materials of the Poems commonly called Homeric	208
Attempted Distinction between the Sciences of Language and Mythology	209
Assumed early Popularity of our Iliad and Odyssey	212
The Evidence of the Case	213
The Homer of the Greek Tragic Poets	216
Results of the Inquiry	217

CHAPTER X.

*THE CHARACTER OF GREEK DYNASTIC AND POPULAR LEGENDS
IN RELATION TO TRIBAL AND NATIONAL NAMES.*

Fertility of mythical Phrases	219
Legends of rival Greek Cities	220
The Argive Story	220
The Theban Story	221
The Megarian Story	223
The Athenian Story	224
The Story of the Pelopids	224
Connexion of these Stories with the Tribal or National Names	226
The Athenians	227
Ionians and Phenicians	229
Argives and Arkadians	230
Delians and Lykians	232
Ethiopians	234
Danaans and Achaïans	234
Hellènes and Aioliens	236
Greeks and Hesperians	237
Italian and Teutonic tribal Names	238
Ethnological Inferences	240



CHAPTER XI.

*MYTHICAL PHRASES FURNISHING THE MATERIALS OF THE
HOMERIC POEMS.*

	PAGE
Extent of the old Homeric Literature	241
Extent of Homeric Mythology	242
The Tale of the Achilléis	245
The Close of the Achilléis	252
The whole Achilléis a Solar Epic	253
The Trojan War only one Scene of a long Drama	254
The Ilias as contrasted with the Achilléis	254
Groundwork of the Odyssey	256
How much of the Iliad or the Odyssey belongs to the Invention of the Poet	258
The Portraits of the greater Chieftains and Heroes not true to national Character	261
The Character of Odysseus	264
How far was the Character of Odysseus a Creation of the Homeric Poet	266
The Character of Odysseus not Achaian	271

CHAPTER XII.

*MYTHICAL PHRASES FURNISHING MATERIALS FOR THE TEU-
TONIC EPIC POEMS, AND THE LEGENDS OF ARTHUR AND
ROLAND.*

Points of likeness between the Greek and Teutonic Epics	272
The Volsung Tale	273
The Story of Sigurd	276
The Story of Gudrun	283
Helgi Sagas	285
The first Helgi	286
The second Helgi	286
The third Helgi	287
Sigurd, Siegfried, and Baldur	291
The Story of Hagen	295
The Vengeance of Kriemhild	297
Historical Element in the Nibelungenlied	301
The Story of Walthar of Aquitaine	302
Dietrich of Bern	305
The Great Rose Garden	307
The Romance of Roland	307
The Story of King Arthur	308
The Birth and Youth of Arthur	309
The Round Table and the San Greal	311
Arthur's Knights	312
Lancelot and Guinevere	314
The Death of Arthur	315



THE FIRST VOLUME.

xvii

	PAGE
Guinevere and Diarmaid	316
Later Mediæval Epics and Romances	316
Saga Literature of Europe	318
The Grettir Saga	319
The Character of Grettir	320
Materials of the Saga	321
Grettir and Boots	322
Parallelisms between the Grettir Saga and other Myths	322
The Avenging of Grettir	325

BOOK II.

CHAPTER I.

THE ETHEREAL HEAVENS.

SECTION I.—DYAUS.

Ideas of Heaven	326
The glistening Ether	327
Dyaus and Prithivi	328
Ideas denoted by the name Dyu	328

SECTION II.—VARUṆA AND MITRA.

The solid Heaven	330
Moral Aspects of Varuṇa	331
Aryan Monotheism	332
Aditi and the Âdityas	333
The physical and spiritual Varuṇa	334

SECTION III.—INDRA.

The primary Conception of Indra purely physical	336
Action of the Vedic and Achaian Deities	337
Indra a God of the bright Heaven	338
Meaning of the Name	339
The Might and Majesty of Indra	339
Indra the Rain-bringer	340
Physical Conflict between Light and Darkness	341
The Wife of Indra	342

SECTION IV.—BRAHMA.

Place of Brahma in the Hindu Theogony	344
Prajâpati	346
Visvakarman	346



SECTION V.—ZEUS.

	PAGE
The Dwelling of Zeus in Ether	347
The unchanging Light	347
The Idea of Zeus suggested by physical Phenomena	348
The Latin Jupiter	349
Zeus Ouranion	349
The mythical and spiritual Zeus	349
The Zeus of the Tragic Poets	352
The name Zeus, and its Transformations	353
The Zeus of local Traditions	355
The Birth of Zeus	356
The Iniquities of Kronos	357
The War of the Titans	358
Other Forms of this Struggle	359
The Loves of Zeus	359
The twelve Olympian Deities	360
The Cretan and Arkadian Zeus	361
Lykosoura and Lykâôn	363
The Dodonaian and Olympian Zeus	364
Limits to the Power of Zeus	364
The Messengers of Zeus	366
Zeus the Judge	367

SECTION VI.—ODIN, WODEN, WUOTAN.

Characteristics of Teutonic Mythology	368
Teutonic Theogonies	370
Genealogy of Odin	371
Odin as the Creator of Man	372
The End of the Asas or Æsir	372
The Name Wuotan	373
The one-eyed Wuotan	376
Odin the Rain-giver	376
Odin the All-father	377
Tyr and Odin	377

SECTION VII.—THUNDER, DONAR, THOR.

The Name Donar	378
Thor the All-father	378
His triple Functions	379

SECTION VIII.—FRO.

Relations of Fro to Freya	381
-------------------------------------	-----

SECTION IX.—HEIMDALL, BRAGI, AND OEGIR.

The Lord of Himinbiorg	381
Bragi, the Lord of Day	382
Oegir the Sea-god	382



CHAPTER II.

THE LIGHT.

SECTION I.—SŪRYA AND SAVITAR.

	PAGE
Sūrya, the pervading irresistible luminary	384
The one-handed Savitar	385
The Power of Savitar	385

SECTION II.—SOMA.

The physical and spiritual Soma	386
Powers of Soma	389

SECTION III.—CORRELATIVE DEITIES.

Complementary Deities	389
The Dualism of Nature	389
Functions of the Asvins	390
Parentage of the Asvins	391
The Twins	391
Soma and Sūryā	393

SECTION IV.—THE DAWN.

The lonely Wanderer	394
Development of the Myth	395
The Story of Urvasī	396
Germes of the Story of Penelopē	398
The Dawn and the Waters	399
Erôs and Psychê	402
The Search of the Dawn for the Sun	403
The Search of the Sun for the Dawn	404
Origin of these Myths	406
East of the Sun and West of the Moon	408
The Wanderers in the Forest	409
The Spell of Moonlight	410
The Seven Rishis	413
The Arkshas or Shiners	414
The Rishis and Manu	414

SECTION V.—DAWN GODDESSES.

Ushas and Eôs	415
Ushas the broad-spreading	417
Ahanā	418
Saramā	419
The Cows of Indra	420
The Fidelity of Saramā	421
Saranyū	422



	PAGE
Erinyes	423
The Harpies	423
Arjunî	424
The Horses of the Sun	425
Arushî	426
Snakes and Dragons	428
Sorcery and Witchcraft	428
The Story of Medeia	429
The Myth of Prokris	430
Eôs and Tithônos	431
Hêbê and Ganymêda	432
The Story of Dido and Anna	432
Hêrô and Leiandros	435
The Brides of the Sun	435
The Arkadian Augê	437
Eurôpê and the Bull	437
Althaia and the Burning Brand	438

SECTION VI.—ATHÊNÊ.

The original Idea of Athênê purely physical	439
Athênê Tritogeneia	440
Birth and Parentage of Athênê	441
Athênê Mother of Phoibos and Lychnos	442
Epithets of Athênê	443
Athênê the Guardian of Heroes	444
The Latin Minerva	445

APPENDICES.

I. The Antiquity of Written Poems	447
II. The historical Authority of Homer	449
III. The Myth of Oidipous	454
IV. Swan-maidens	456
V. The name Helenê	458
VI. Lykanthropy	459



THE MYTHOLOGY OF THE ARYAN NATIONS.

BOOK I.

CHAPTER I.

POPULAR THEORIES ON THE ORIGIN AND GROWTH OF MYTHOLOGY.

WE cannot examine the words by which we express our thoughts and our wants, or compare the stories which English children hear in their nurseries with the folk-talk of Germany and Norway, without speedily becoming aware that the inquiry on which we have entered must carry us back to the very infancy of mankind. We have undertaken the investigation of fact, and we must follow the track into which the search for facts has brought us. If we have been accustomed to think that the race of men started in their great career with matured powers and with a speech capable of expressing high spiritual conceptions, we cannot deny the gravity of the issue, when a science which professes to resolve this language into its ultimate elements, asserts that for a period of indefinite length human speech expressed mere bodily sensations, and that it was confined to such expressions, because no higher thoughts had yet been awakened in the mind. But unless we choose to take refuge in assumptions, we must regard the question as strictly and simply a matter of fact: and all that we have to do, is to examine

CHAP.
I.

Method of
inquiry.



BOOK

I.

The nature
of the
problem to
be solved.

impartially the conditions of the problem, with the determination of evading no conclusion to which the evidence of fact may lead us.

This problem is sufficiently startling, on whatever portion of the subject we may first fix our minds. The earliest literature, whether of the Hindu or the Greek, points in the direction to which the analysis of language seems to guide us. In both alike we find a genuine belief in a living Power, to whom men stand in the relation of children to a father; but in both, this faith struggles to find utterance in names denoting purely sensuous objects, and thus furnishing the germ of a sensuous mythology. Hence the developement of religious faith and of a true theology would go on side by side with the growth of an indiscriminate anthropomorphism, until the contrast became so violent as to call forth the indignant protests of men like Sokrates and Pindar, Euripides and Plato. Yet this contrast, as throwing us back upon the analysis of words, has enabled us to unlock the doors before which the most earnest seekers of ancient times groped in vain, and to trace almost from their very source all the streams of human thought.

Condition
of society
in the
Greek
heroic age

This antagonism reached its highest point among the Hellenic tribes. From this point therefore we may most reasonably work back to that indefinitely earlier condition of thought in which 'the first attempts only were being made at expressing the simplest conceptions by means of a language most simple, most sensuous, and most unwieldy.'¹ The Iliad and Odyssey exhibit a state of society which has long since emerged from mere brutishness and barbarism. It has its fixed order and its recognised gradations, a system of law with judges to administer it, and a public opinion which sets itself against some faults and vices not amenable to legal penalties. It brings before us men who, if they retain, in their occasional ferocity, treachery, and malice, characteristics which belong to the savage, yet recognise the majesty of law and submit themselves to its government—who are obedient, yet not servile—who care for other than mere brute forces, who recognise the value of wise words and

¹ Max Müller, *Chips from a German Workshop*, vol. i. p. 354.



prudent counsels, and in the right of uttering them give the earnest of a yet higher and more developed freedom.¹ It shows to us men who, if they regard all as enemies until by an outward covenant they have been made their friends, yet own the sanctity of an oath and acknowledge the duty of executing true judgment between man and man; who, if they are fierce in fight, yet abhor mutilation, torture, and unseemly insult, and are willing to recognise merit in an enemy not less readily than in a friend. Above all, it tells us of men who in their home life are honest and truthful, who make no pretension of despising human sympathy and setting lightly by kindness, gentleness, and love. If here and there we get glimpses of a charity which seeks a wider range,² yet the love of wife and children and brethren is the rule and not the exception; and everywhere, in striking contrast with Athenian society in the days of Perikles and Aspasia, we see men and women mingling together in equal and pure companionship, free alike from the arrogance and servility of Oriental empires, and from the horrible vices which, if even then in germ, were not matured till the so-called heroic ages had long passed away.³

But these epic poems tell us also of gods, some of whom at least had all the vices and few of the virtues of their worshippers. They tell us of a supreme ruler and father

Character
of 'Ho-
meric' my-
thology.

¹ It cannot, of course, be maintained that this freedom was more than in its germ. The king has his Boulê or Council, where he listens to the chieftains whose judgment nevertheless he can override. There is also the Agora, where the people hear the decisions of their rulers on questions of state, and in which justice is administered. The case of Thersites is barely consistent with an acknowledged right of opposition, while the complaints of the Hesiodic poet show that an unjust verdict could easily be obtained. But it was everything that a people should acknowledge Zeus to be the author of law—

δικασφόλοι . . . θέμιστας
πρὸς Διὸς εἰρύσασαι. *Il.* i. 238

and allow the superiority of mind over matter even in their chieftains. Mr. Grote has brought out the imperfections

of the Homeric society both in discussion and in the administration of justice (*History of Greece*, ii. 90-101). Mr. Gladstone presents the picture in a more favourable light (*Homer and the Homeric Age*, ii. 122, &c.).

² It is the praise of the wealthy Axylos (who is slain by Diomêdês) that

φίλος ἦν ἀνθρώποισιν
πάντας γὰρ φιλέσκειν ὁδῶ ἐπὶ οἰκίᾳ
ναίων. *Il.* vi. 14.

³ To this, more than to any other cause, were owing even the political disasters of later Greek history. It may, perhaps, be said with truth that the evil did not exist in the Homeric age, but the canker had eaten very deeply into the heart of society before the days of Thucydides and Sokrates. For its results see Thirlwall's *History of Greece*, viii. ch. lxi.



BOOK

I.

of gods and men who had not always sat upon his throne, of other gods deposed and smitten down to dark and desolate regions, of feuds and factions, of lying and perjury, of ferocious cruelty and unmeasured revenge. They tell us of gods who delight in sensual enjoyments and care for little more than the fat of rams and goats, of gods who own no check to their passions, and recognise no law against impurity and lust. And even those gods who rise to a far higher ideal exhibit characters the most variable and actions the most inconsistent. The same being is at different times, nay, almost at the same time, just and iniquitous, truthful and false, temperate and debauched.

Contrast
between
mythological
and
religious
belief.

As describing the origin and attributes of the gods, the whole series of Greek myths may be said to form a theology; and with the character of the people, this theology stands out in marked contrast. It is impossible for us to determine precisely the extent to which this mythical theology was believed, because it is not in our power to throw ourselves back wholly into their condition of thought; but if the absence of all doubt or reflection constitute faith, then their faith was given to the whole cycle of fables which make up the chronicles of their gods. But if we look to its influence on their thoughts at times when the human heart is stirred to its depths, we can scarcely say that this huge fabric of mythology challenged any belief at all: and thus we must draw a sharp line of severance between their theology and their religion, if we use religion in the sense attached to the word by Locke or Newton, Milton or Butler. If the poet recounts the loves of Zeus, the jealousies of Hêrê, the feuds and the factions in Olympus, it is equally certain that Achilles does not pray to a sensual and lying god who owns no law for himself and cannot be a law for man. The contrast is heightened if we turn to the poems known as the Hesiodic. If the poet narrates a theogony which incurred the detestation or disgust of Pindar and of Plato, he tells us also of a Divine King who is a perfectly upright judge, and loves those who are clear of hand and pure of heart.¹ If he

¹ The identity of authorship for the *Days* is very doubtful: but the question is immaterial. Both poems exhibit the



tells of horrible banquets to which the more fastidious faith of the lyric poet refuses to give credence,¹ he bids all to follow after justice, because the gods spend their time, not in feasting, but in watching the ways and works of men.² If Æschylos in one drama depicts the arrogant tyranny of Zeus as a usurper and an upstart, if the reiterated conviction of the prophetic Titan is that the new god shall fall, yet in others he looks up to the same Zeus (if indeed it be the same),³ as the avenger of successful wrong, the vindicator of a righteous law whose power and goodness are alike eternal. If for Sophokles the old mythology had not lost its charm, if he too might tell of the lawless loves and the wild licence of Zeus and other gods, yet his heart is fixed on higher realities, on that purity of word and deed which has its birth, not on earth, but in heaven, and of which the imperishable law is realised and consummated in a God as holy and everlasting.⁴

sentiment of the same age, or of times separated by no long interval; and in the latter poem the action of Zeus in the legend of Pandora, (which is also related in the *Theogony*) is utterly unlike that of the Zeus who figures in all the didactic portions of the work.

¹ ἐμοὶ δ' ἄπορα γαστήρια-
γον μακάρων τιν' εἰπεῖν· ἀφίσταμαι.
PINDAR, *Olymp.* i. 82.

Pindar's objection is a moral one; but Herodotos proceeded to reject on physical grounds the legend which told of the founding of the Dodonaian oracle, (ii. 57), as well as some of the exploits of Herakles (ii. 45.) It was, however, a moral reason which led him practically to disbelieve the whole story of Helen's sojourn at Troy, (ii. 120). See also Grote, *History of Greece*, part i. ch. xv.

² *Works and Days*, 247-253.

³ *Zeus ὅστις ποτ' ἐστίν.*

Agamemnon, 160.

⁴ *Oid. Tyr.* 863-871. The objection that comparative mythology, while it explains the Greek myths, fails 'to explain the Greek religion, or to explain how the mythology and the religion got mixed up together,' turns on the meaning of words. In one sense, their mythology was at once their theology and their religion; but if we regard religion as a

rule of life based on a conscious submission to Divine Will and Law as being absolutely righteous, and if we ask how far the Greek had such a rule, we enter on a question of the gravest moment, which it is too much the practice of the present day summarily to dismiss. The acknowledged dislike which some felt for at least part of their theology, can be explained only by their knowledge of a higher law. But if it be maintained that the sense or the sentiment, which lay at the root of this dislike, is either some relic of earlier and purer knowledge—in other words, of an original common revelation—or else a wonderful exercise of man's own reflective power, we may reply that this is not the only alternative left open to us. When St. Paul speaks of Gentiles as being by nature a law to themselves, he uses the word *nature* in a sense which implicitly denies that they obtained a knowledge of this law by a mere exercise of their reflective powers, and which implies that God had in all countries and ages left a witness of himself in the hearts of men as well as in the outward world. Surely we who acknowledge that all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works proceed directly from God, may well believe that the religious sense which led Pindar to reject some mythical tales, and Sokrates



BOOK

I.

The lyric
and tragic
poets were
conscious
of this
contrast.

It would be difficult to discover a more marvellous combination of seemingly inexplicable contradictions, of belief in the history of gods utterly distinct from the faith which guided the practice of men, of an immoral and impure theology with a condition of society which it would be monstrous to regard as utterly and brutally depraved. Yet, in some way or other, this repulsive system, from which heathen poets and philosophers learnt gradually to shrink scarcely less than ourselves, had come into being, had been systematized into a scheme more or less coherent, and imposed upon the people as so much genuine history. What this origin and growth was, is (strange as it may appear) one of the most momentous questions which we can put to ourselves, for on its answer must depend our conclusions on the

to insist on a moral standard of which our common practice falls sadly short, was the direct work of the Spirit of God. Language is as much the gift of God, whether according to the popular notion man spoke articulately from the first, or, as the analysis of language seems to show, acquired the power of speech through a slow and painful discipline; nor would many venture to say that we learnt to walk or to judge by sight or touch through powers originally acquired by ourselves. If then, whatever of truth the Greek poets possessed came from God, that truth would continue to grow, even while they spoke of the Divine Being under a name which had originally signified the sky. If Comparative Mythology brings before us a time during which men appear at first to have little consciousness of a personal Maker of the Visible World, it may also show us how out of the darkness of their earlier thoughts they were led to feel that there was a Power—independent of all things, yet pervading all things—with which they had to do, and that this Power was righteous and good. But the Greek who like Xenophanes (Max Müller, *Chips from a German Workshop*, i. 366), had this feeling and was conscious of it, would still speak of that Power as Zeus; nor has Christianity itself banished from its language names which come from the myth-making ages. The Romance and Teutonic names for God remain what they were before the growth of Christianity; they

have merely acquired another connotation.

If, then, we wish to have a true idea of Greek religion in the highest sense of the word, we must patiently gather all the detached sentences bearing on the subject which are scattered throughout the wide field of their literature; but without going over the ground traversed by M. Maury, (*Les Religions de la Grèce antique*), the inquiry may practically be brought into a narrow compass. We have abundant evidence that the religion of the Greeks, like our own, was a trust 'in an all-wise, all-powerful, eternal Being, the Ruler of the world, whom we approach in prayer and meditation, to whom we commit all our cares, and whose presence we feel not only in the outward world, but also in the warning voice within our hearts.' It is in this sense that Augustine speaks of the Christian religion as existing among the ancients; but Professor Max Müller, who rightly lays great stress on this remark (*Chips from a German Workshop*, i. xi.), has also pointed out the little regard which Augustine paid to his own doctrine. 'Through the whole of St. Augustine's work, and through all the works of earlier Christian divines, as far as I can judge, there runs the same spirit of hostility, blinding them to all that may be good and true and sacred, and magnifying all that is bad, false, and corrupt in the ancient religions of mankind' (*Lectures on Language*, second series. x. 421.)



conditions of human life during the infancy of mankind. If the fragmentary narratives, which were gradually arranged into one gigantic system, were the work of a single age or of several generations who devoted themselves to their fabrication, then never has there been seen in the annals of mankind an impurity more loathsome, an appetite more thoroughly depraved, a moral sense more hopelessly blunted, than in those who framed the mythology of the Greek or the Hindu. Of the answers which have been given to this question, it can be no light matter to determine which furnishes the most adequate solution.

The method which Mr. Grote, in his 'History of Greece,'¹ has adopted for the examination of Greek legend, appears rather to avoid the difficulty than to grapple with it. There is unquestionably much personification in their mythology; there is also undoubtedly a good deal of allegory; but neither allegory nor personification will furnish a real explanation of the whole. It may be true to say that Ouranos, Nyx, Hypnos, and Oneiros are persons in the Hesiodic Theogony, although it is probably erroneous to say that they are just as much persons as Zeus or Apollôn; and the supposition is certainly inadmissible 'that these legends could all be traced by means of allegory into a coherent body of physical doctrine.'² But there are beyond doubt many things even in the Hesiodic Theogony which have at least no human personality;³ nor does the assertion of personality, whether of Zeus or Herakles or Apollôn, in the least degree account for the shape which the narrative of their deeds assumes, or for the contradictory aspects in which they are brought before us. It does not in any way explain why Zeus and Herakles should have so many earthly loves, and why in every land there should be those who claim descent from them, or why there should be so much of resemblance and of difference between Phoibos and Helios, Gaia and Dêmêtêr, Nereus and Poseidôn. But Mr. Grote was examining the mythology of Greece as an historian of outward facts, not as

Historical
significa-
tion of
Greek
mytho-
logy.

¹ Part i. ch. i. -xvi.

History of Christianity, i. 13, &c.

² Grote, *History of Greece*, part i. ch. i. See also Mure, *Critical History of Greek Literature*, i. 104; Milman,

³ For instance, οὐρεὰ μακρά.—*Theog.* 129

BOOK
I.

one who is tracing out the history of the human mind; and from this point of view he is justified in simply examining the legends, and then dismissing them as the picture 'of a past which never was present.' To this expression Professor Max Müller takes great exception, and especially protests against Mr. Grote's assertion of 'the uselessness of digging for a supposed basis of truth' in the myths of the Greek world.¹ But although it appears certain that the Greek mythology points to an actual and not an imaginary past, a past which must have for us a deep and abiding interest, it would yet seem that Professor Müller has misinterpreted the words of Mr. Grote, who by 'truth' means the verification of actual occurrences, and by a real past means a past of whose events we can give an authentic narrative.² In this sense, to assert the truth of the lives and adventures of Zeus and Herakles, after stripping away from them the clothing of the supernatural, is to fall back on the system of Euêmeros, and to raise a building without foundation. But it is obvious that this method leaves the origin of this theology and the question of its contradictions, and still more of its impurity and grossness, just where it found them. It carries us no further back than the legends themselves, while it fails to remove the reproach which heathen apologists and Christian controversialists alike assumed or admitted to be true.³

Conflicting
views as
to its
origin.

Two theories only appear to attempt a philosophical analysis of this vast system. While one repudiates the imputation of a deliberate fabrication of impurities, the other asserts as strongly the wilful moral corruption exhibited in the theogonic narratives of the Greeks. In the inconsistent

¹ 'Comparative Mythology,' *Chips from a German Workshop*, ii. 1, 67, 84.

² From this point of view it is impossible to deny the truth of Mr. Grote's statement, when, speaking of the Northern Eddas, he says that 'the more thoroughly this old Teutonic story has been traced and compared in its various transformations and accompaniments, the less can any well-established connection be made out for it with authentic historical names or events.' *History of Greece*, part i. ch. xviii. It is strange

that having thus swept away its historical character, he should not have seen that there *must* be some reason for that singular agreement between Teutonic and Greek mythology, which, at the least, he partially discerns, and that the 'remarkable analogy' presented by the *Völsunga Saga* 'with many points of Grecian mythical narrative' is a fact to be accounted for.

³ Grote, *History of Greece*, part i. ch. xvii.



and repulsive adventures of Zeus or Herakles, it sees the perversion of high and mysterious doctrines originally imparted to man, and discerns in the gradations of the Olympian hierarchy vestiges of the most mysterious doctrines embraced in the whole compass of Christian teaching. By this theory all that is contradictory, immoral, or disgusting in Greek mythology is the direct result of human sinfulness and rebellion, and resolves itself into the distortion of a divine revelation imparted to Adam immediately after the Fall.

There are few subjects on which it would be more rash to give or withhold assent to any statement without the clearest definition of terms. We may admit the truth of Bishop Butler's assertion that the analogy of nature furnishes no presumption against a revelation when man was first placed upon the earth;¹ but it is obvious that they who agree in asserting the fact of such a revelation may yet have widely different conceptions of its nature and extent. And although it is easy to see the place which Butler's statement holds in the general connection of his argument, it is not so easy to ascertain what on this point his own judgment may have been. Human feeling recoils instinctively from any notion that the Being who placed man in the world ever left him wholly to himself; but the repudiation of such an idea in no way determines the amount of knowledge imparted to him at the first. Nations have been found, and still exist, whose languages contain not a single word expressive of divinity, and into whose mind the idea of God or of any religion seems never to have entered.² If it be hard to measure the depth of degradation to which the Abipones, the Bushman, and the Australian may have fallen, it is impossible to believe that the struggles of men like Sokrates and Plato after truth had no connection with a guiding and controlling power. If in the former we discern the evidence

Hypothesis of an original revelation.

¹ *Analogy*, part ii. ch. ii. § 2.

² 'Penafiel, a Jesuit theologian, declared that there were many Indians, who, on being asked whether during the whole course of their lives they ever thought of God, replied *No, never*.' Max

Müller, *History of Sanskrit Literature*, 538. It is a miserable fact that this condition of thought finds a parallel among certain sections of Englishmen. See also Farrar, *Chapters on Language*, iv. 45.

BOOK
I.Extent of
original
revelation.

of wilful corruption, we must recognise in the latter the vigorous growth of a mind and spirit which seeks to obey the law of its constitution.¹ In Bishop Butler's philosophy, the reason of man is the Divine Reason dwelling in him; the voice of his conscience is the word of God. That these gifts involved a revelation of divine truth, it is impossible to deny; but whether this is all that he meant by the assertion of an original revelation, the Analogy does not enable us to determine with precision. He does, however, assert that the question of the extent of that revelation is to be considered 'as a common question of fact;' and too great a stress cannot be laid on these words.²

No such charge of ambiguity can be brought against the view which Mr. Gladstone has maintained in his elaborate work on 'Homer and the Homeric Age.' In his judgment, all that is evil in Greek mythology is the result not of a natural and inevitable process, when words used originally in one sense came unconsciously to be employed in another, but of a systematic corruption of very sacred and very mysterious doctrines. These corruptions have, in his opinion, grown up not around what are generally called the first principles of natural religion, but around dogmas of which the images, so vouchsafed, were realised in a long subsequent dispensation. In the mythology of the Hellenic race he sees a vast fabric, wonderfully systematized, yet in some parts ill-cemented and incongruous, on the composition of which his theory seems to throw a full and unexpected light. In it he hears the key-note of a strain whose music had been long forgotten and misunderstood, but whose harmony would never of itself have entered into mortal mind. It could not be supplied by invention, for 'invention cannot absolutely create, it can only work on what it finds already provided to hand.'³ Rejecting altogether the position that 'the basis of the Greek mythology is laid in the deification of the powers of nature,'⁴ he holds that under corrupted forms it presents the old Theistic and Messianic traditions,⁵

¹ Butler, *Sermons*, ii. 'On Human Nature.'

² *Analogy*, part ii. ch. ii. § 2.

³ *Homer and the Homeric Age*, ii. 9.

⁴ *Ibid.* 10.

⁵ *Ibid.* 12.



that by a primitive tradition, if not by a direct command, it upheld the ordinance of sacrifice;¹ that its course was from light to darkness, from purity to uncleanness.² Its starting point was 'the idea of a Being infinite in power and intelligence, and though perfectly good, yet good by an unchangeable internal determination of character, and not by the constraint of an external law.'³ But the idea of goodness can be retained only by a sound moral sense; the notion of power is substituted when that sense is corrupted by sin.⁴ But sin has no such immediate action on the intellect. Hence the power and wisdom of the Homeric Gods is great and lofty, while their moral standard is indefinitely low.⁵ But the knowledge of the Divine Existence roused the desire to know also where He dwelt; and, in the mighty agencies and sublime objects of creation in which they fancied that they saw Him, Mr. Gladstone discerns the germs of that nature-worship which was ingrafted on the true religion originally imparted to mankind.⁶ This religion involved (i), the Unity and Supremacy of the Godhead; (ii), a combination with this Unity, of a Trinity in which the several persons are in some way of coequal honour; (iii), a Redeemer from the curse of death, invested with full humanity, who should finally establish the divine kingdom; (iv), a Wisdom, personal and divine, which founded and sustains the world; (v), the connection of the Redeemer with man by descent from the woman. With this was joined the revelation of the Evil One, as a tempting power among men, and the leader of rebellious angels who had for disobedience been hurled from their thrones in heaven.⁷

¹ *Homex and the Homeric Age*, ii. 15.

² *Ibid.* 17: 'The stream darkened more and more as it got further from the source.'

³ *Ibid.* 18. ⁴ *Ibid.* 19. ⁵ *Ibid.* 20.

⁶ *Ibid.* 31.

⁷ *Ibid.* 42. This theory, put forth ten years ago, has been received with no great favour; but nothing less than the repudiation of it by Mr. Gladstone himself could justify our passing it by in silence, when our purpose is to show that the problem can be solved only by the method of comparative mythology. But far from retracting this hypothesis, Mr.

Gladstone has propounded it again in his parting address to the University of Edinburgh (1865), and more recently with certain modifications in his volume entitled *Juventus Mundi* (1868). These modifications will be noticed in their several places; but as his last work is intended to embody the greater part of the results at which he arrived in his *Homeric Studies*, and as his theory of the origin of Greek mythology remains substantially what it was before, I have not thought it necessary to alter the text which was written long before the publication of *Juventus Mundi*. Indeed,



BOOK

I.

Its alleged
perversion
by the
Greeks,

Putting aside the question how far these ideas may reflect the thought of later ages, we must admit with Mr. Gladstone that from this shadowing forth of the great dogmas of the Trinity the next step might be into Polytheism, and from that of the Incarnation into anthropomorphism or the reflection of humanity upon the supernatural world.¹ This true theology, in the hands of the Greeks, was perverted into a Trinity of the three sons of Kronos: Zeus, Hades, and Poseidôn. The tradition of the Redeemer is represented by Apollôn; the Divine Wisdom is embodied in Athênê;² and Lêtô, their mother, stands in the place of the woman from whom the Deliverer was to descend. The traditions of the Evil One were still further obscured. Evil, as acting by violence, was represented most conspicuously in the Titans and giants—as tempting by deceit, in the Atê of Homer, while lastly, the covenant of the rainbow reappears in Iris.³

as shown
in the at-
tributes of
their Gods.

For these primitive traditions, which are delivered to us 'either in the ancient or the more recent books of the Bible,'⁴ Mr. Gladstone alleges the corroborative evidence furnished by the Jewish illustrative writings during or after the captivity in Babylon.⁵ These writings bear witness to the extraordinary elevation of the Messiah, and to the introduction of the female principle into Deity, which the Greeks adopted not as a metaphysical conception, but with a view to the family order among immortals.⁶ Thus in the Greek Athênê and Apollôn respectively he distinguishes the attributes assigned by the Jews to the Messiah and to Wisdom—the attributes of sonship and primogeniture, of light, of mediation, of miraculous operation, of conquest over the Evil One, and of the liberation of the dead from the power of hell, together with 'an assemblage of the most winning and endearing moral qualities.'⁷

System of
second-
aries.

This theory Mr. Gladstone has traced with great minuteness and ingenuity through the tangled skein of Greek mythology. The original idea he finds disintegrated, and a

the slightness of the modification which his theory has undergone, renders it perhaps even more necessary to exhibit clearly the dilemmas and difficulties involved in this theory, if carried out to

its logical results.

¹ *Homer and the Homeric Age*, p. 43.

² *Ibid.* 44. ³ *Ibid.* 45. ⁴ *Ibid.* 48.

⁵ *Ibid.* 50. ⁶ *Ibid.* 51. ⁷ *Ibid.* 63.



system of secondaries is the necessary consequence. Far above all are exalted Apollôn and Athênê, in their personal purity¹ yet more than in their power, in their immediate action,² in their harmony with the will of the Supreme King, and in the fact that they alone, among the deities of a second generation, are admitted to equal honour with the Kronid brothers, if not even to higher.³ But some of their attributes are transferred to other beings, who are simply embodiments of the attribute so transferred and of no other. Thus Athênê is attended by Hermes, Ares, Themis, and Hephaistos; Apollôn by Paiêôn and the Muses;⁴ as, similarly, we have in Gaia a weaker impersonation of Dêmêtêr, and Nereus as representing simply the watery realm of Poseidôn. In Lêtô, their mother, is shadowed forth the woman whose seed was to bruise the head of the serpent; for Lêtô herself has scarcely any definite office in the Homeric theology, and she remains, from any view except this one, an anomaly in mythological belief.⁵ But the traditions which relate to the under-world, which is the realm of Hades, are not less full than those which tell us of the heavenly order of Olympos. Amidst some little confusion, Mr. Gladstone discerns a substantial correspondence with divine revelation, and finds in the Homeric poems the place of bliss destined finally for the good, the place of torment inhabited by the Evil One and his comrades, and the intermediate abode for departed spirits, whether of the good or the evil.⁶ But while the prevalence of sacrifice attests the strength of primitive tradition, of the Sabbatical institution there is no trace.⁷ It was an ordinance 'too highly spiritual to survive the rude shocks and necessities of earthly life.'

Of the other deities some owe their existence to invention, which has been busy in depraving and debasing the idea even of those which are traditive.⁸ Thus Hêrê was invented because Zeus must not live alone, and Rhea because he must have a mother; and a whole mass of human adventure and of human passion without human recognition of law is

Inventive, as distinguished from traditive, deities.

¹ *Homer and the Homeric Age*, ii. 87-107.

⁴ *Ibid.* 62.

⁵ *Ibid.* 152.

⁶ *Ibid.* 170.

⁷ *Ibid.* 171, 172.

⁸ *Ibid.* 173.

² *Ibid.* 89-93. ³ *Ibid.* 57.

BOOK
I.

Nature of
the doc-
trines per-
verted in
Greek my-
thology.

heaped up round almost every deity (except the two who stand out unsullied in their purity and goodness), not, however, without occasional protests from the poet who had not yet become familiar with the deification of vicious passion.¹

Thus, on the hypothesis of Mr. Gladstone, Greek mythology is no distortion of primary truths which first dawn on the mind of a child or are imparted to it, and which, it might have been supposed, would form the substance of divine truth granted to man during the infancy of his race. It is the corruption of recondite and mysterious dogmas which were not to become facts for hundreds or thousands of years, of doctrines which the speculations of Jewish rabbis may have drawn into greater prominence, but which form the groundwork of Christian theology. Zeus, the licentious tyrant, the perjured deceiver, the fierce hater, the lover of revelry and banqueting, who boasts of his immunity from all restraint and law, is the representative of the Infinite and Eternal Father. He with Hades and Poseidôn represents the Christian Trinity; but Hades represents also the power of darkness, and Poseidôn shares the attributes of God with those of the devil,² while all are children of the dethroned Kronos, in whom again the evil power finds an impersonation.³ When we survey the whole mass of mythological legend, when we spread out before us the lives of Zeus and his attendant gods (scarcely excepting even Athênê and Apollôn), we stand aghast at the boldness of an impiety which has perhaps never had its parallel. The antediluvian records of the Old Testament bring before us a horrible picture of brute violence, resulting possibly from a deification of human will, which, it would seem, left no room for any theology whatever; but this is an astounding parody which would seem to be

¹ *Homer and the Homeric Age*, ii. 270.

² *Ibid.* 164; see also *National Review*, July 1858, 53, &c.

³ *Ibid.* 207. Writing some months before the publication of Mr. Gladstone's work on Homer, Professor Max Müller had remarked that 'among the lowest tribes of Africa and America we hardly find anything more hideous and revolting,' than the stories told of Kronos and his offspring. 'It seems blasphemy,' he adds, 'to consider these fables of the

heathen world as corrupted and misinterpreted fragments of a divine revelation once granted to the whole race of mankind.' 'Comparative Mythology,' *Chips from a German Workshop*, ii. 13. But the disposition so frequently shown at present to explain the growth of mythology by bold assumptions renders it necessary to examine arguments which might otherwise be passed by in silence.



founded not on dim foreshadowings of a true revelation, but on the dogmatic statements of the Athanasian Creed. That a theology thus wilfully falsified should be found with a people not utterly demoralised, but exhibiting on the whole a social condition of great promise and a moral standard rising constantly higher, is a phenomenon, if possible, still more astonishing. On the supposition that Greek mythology was a corrupted religious system, it must, to whatever extent, have supplied a rule of faith and practice, and the actions and character of the gods must have furnished a justification for the excesses of human passion. That no such justification is alleged, and that the whole system seems to exercise no influence either on their standard of morality or their common practice, are signs which might appear to warrant the presumption that this mythology was not the object of a moral belief. The whole question, viewed in this light, is so utterly perplexing, and apparently so much at variance with the conditions of Homeric society, that we are driven to examine more strictly the evidence on which the hypothesis rests. We remember that we are dealing not with a theme for philosophical speculation, but with a common question of fact,¹ and that Mr. Gladstone assumes not only that there was a primitive revelation, but that it set forth certain dogmas. With these assumptions the phenomena of mythology must be made to fit: a genuine historical method excludes all assumptions whatsoever.

If, however, hypothesis is to be admitted, then it must be granted that the attributes and functions of the Hellenic gods have seldom been analysed with greater force, clearness, and skill; nor can it be denied that Mr. Gladstone's hypothesis, as in the case of Lêtô, furnishes a plausible explanation of some things which appear anomalous.² But it introduces the necessity of interpreting mythology so as to square with a preconceived system, and involves a temptation to lessen

Attributes
of Athênâ
and
Apollôn.

¹ See p. 10.

² Mr. Gladstone (*Homer, &c.* ii. 155), dwells much on the indistinct colouring which is thrown over Lêtô, and which leaves her 'wholly functionless, wholly inactive,' and 'without a purpose,' except in so far as she is the mother of Phoibos.

But this is precisely the relation in which the mythical Night stood to the Day which was to be born of her. It was impossible that the original idea could be developed into a much more definite personality.

BOOK
I.

or to pass over difficulties which appear to militate against it. The Homeric legends are not so consistent as for such a purpose would seem desirable, and there are the gravest reasons for not inferring from the silence of the poet that he was ignorant of other versions than those which he has chosen to adopt.¹ On the supposition that Athênê and Apollôn represent severally the Divine Redeemer and the Divine Wisdom, their relation of will to the Supreme Father becomes a point of cardinal interest and importance. But when Mr. Gladstone asserts that, 'although Athênê goes all lengths in thwarting Jupiter' in the *Iliad*,² 'yet her aim is to give effect to a design so unequivocally approved in Olympus, that Jupiter himself has been constrained to give way to it,' he places too far in the background certain other Homeric incidents which imply a direct contrariety of will. No weaker term can rightly characterise that abortive conspiracy to bind Zeus, in which she is the accomplice of Hêrê and Poseidôn. In this plot, the deliverance comes not from Apollôn, whose office it is to be 'the defender and deliverer of heaven and the other immortals,' but from Thetis, the silver-footed nymph of the sea;³ and by her wise counsels Zeus wins the victory over one who is with himself a member of the traditive Trinity. The same legend qualifies another statement, that Athênê and Apollôn are never foiled, defeated,

¹ See Chapter IX. of this book.

² Gladstone's *Homer*, &c. ii. 70.

³ *Ibid.* 72. This conspiracy is mentioned more than once by Mr. Gladstone, (75, 182): but he mentions it, not as a drawback on the traditive character of Athênê, but as showing first that Zeus himself might be assailed, and secondly that his majesty remained nevertheless substantially unimpaired. Yet a reference to it, as bearing on the moral conception of Athênê, would seem to be indispensable; and this reference Mr. Gladstone has supplied in *Juventus Mundi*, p. 273. He here states that 'we have in the case of Apollo an uniform identity of will with the chief god, and in the case of Athênê only an exceptional departure from it.' The admission is important; and with it we must couple other traditions, to be noticed hereafter, which

we have not the slightest warrant for regarding as the growth of ages later than those in which our *Iliad* and *Odyssey* assumed their present form. In fact, the admission seems fatal to the theory; nor can it be said that 'the case of Apollo stands alone as an exhibition of entire unbroken harmony with the will of Zeus, which in all things he regards.'—P. 272. In the myths of Asklêpios and Admêtos he draws on himself the wrath and the vengeance of Zeus for slaying the Kyklôpes as a requital for the death of his son, the Healer; and we are fully justified in laying stress on this fact, until it can be proved that any one myth must necessarily be regarded as of earlier growth than another, merely because it happens to be found in our *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.



or outwitted by any other of the gods;¹ for Athênê here is foiled by Thetis. Elsewhere we have Apollôn,² like Poseidôn, cheated by Laomedôn whom he had served, and finding a more congenial master, but yet a master, in Admêtos;³ while the parentage of the three Kronid brothers⁴ and the double character of Poseidôn⁵ stand forth as the most astounding contradictions of all.

There are other legends which represent Athênê in a light inconsistent with the personification of the Divine Wisdom. In the tale of Pandora, at the instigation of Zeus she takes part in the plot which results in the increased wickedness and misery of man;⁶ in that of Prometheus, she aids in the theft of fire from heaven against the will of Zeus, while one version represents her as acting thus, not from feelings of friendship, but from the passion of love. These legends are not found in our Homer, but it is impossible to prove that the poet was unacquainted with them. He makes no reference to some myths, which are at once among the oldest and the most beautiful; and he certainly knew of the dethronement of Kronos, as well as of factions in the new dynasty of the gods.⁷

Relations
of will be-
tween Zeus
and
Athênê.

But if the theory of religious perversion, apart from its moral difficulties, involves some serious contradictions, it altogether fails to explain why the mythology of the Greeks assumed many of its peculiar and perhaps most striking features. It does not show us why some of the gods should

Peculiar
forms of
Greek my-
thology.

¹ Gladstone, *Homer*, §c., ii. 74.

² *Ibid.* 75.

³ *Ibid.* 81. If these legends are strictly developements from old mythical phrases, the meaning of which was only in part remembered, there remains no difficulty whatever in such statements. In these there is reflected upon Apollôn an idea derived from the toiling sun, which is brought out in its fulness in the adventures of Herakles and Bellerophôn. Mr. Gladstone lays stress on the relation of Apollôn and Artemis to Death (p. 103), and holds that here we are on very sacred ground (p. 104) the traces, namely, of One who, as an all-conquering King, was to be terrible and destructive to his enemies, but who was also, on behalf of mankind, to take away the sting from death, and to

change its iron band for a thread of silken slumber.' The question is further examined p. 123 etc.; but the myths developed from phrases which spoke originally of the beneficent and destructive power of the sun's rays and heat perfectly explain every such attribute, whether in Apollôn or Artemis.

⁴ Gladstone, *Homer*, ii. 162.

⁵ *Ibid.* 206.

⁶ Hesiod, *Theogon.*, 573; *Works and Days*, 63.

⁷ Similarly, the *Iliad* says nothing about the death of Achilles: yet the poet is aware that his life is to be short.

μητρ, ἐπεὶ μ' ἔτεκός γε μινυθόδιον περ
έοντα

is the frequent reproach of Achilles to his mother Thetis.



CSL

MYTHOLOGY OF THE ARYAN NATIONS.

BOOK
I.

be represented pure, others as in part or altogether immoral: it does not tell us why Zeus and Herakles should be coarse and sensual, rather than Athênê and Apollôn; it does not explain why Apollôn is made to serve Admêtos, why Herakles bears the yoke of Eurystheus, and Bellerophôn that of the Kilikian king. It fails to show why Herakles should appear as the type of self-restraint and sensuality, of labour and sluggishness, why names so similar in meaning as Lykâôn, Helios and Phaethôn, should be attached to beings whose mythical history is so different. If for these and other anomalies there is a method of interpretation which gives a clear and simple explanation, which shows how such anomalies crept into being, and why their growth was inevitable—if this method serves also as a key, not merely to the mythology of Greece, but to that of the whole Aryan race, nay, even to a wider system still, a presumption at least is furnished, that the simpler method may after all be the truest.

Consequences involved in the perversion of an original revelation.

Yet more, the hypothesis of a corrupted revelation involves some further consequences, which have a material bearing on the question. That which is so perverted cannot become clearer and more definite in the very process of corrupt developement. Not only must the positive truths, imparted at the first, undergo distortion, but the ideas involved in them must become weaker and weaker. If the Unity of God formed one of those primitive truths, then the personality and the power of Zeus would be more distinct and real in the earliest times than in the later. The ideas of the Trinity, of the Redeemer, and of the Divine Wisdom, would be more prominent in those first stages of belief in the case of a people who confessedly were not sustained by new or continued revelations. The personality of a Divine Wisdom is not a dogma which men in a thoroughly rude society could reason out for themselves; and if it formed part of an original revelation, the lapse of time would tend to weaken, not to strengthen it. If, again, this corrupting process had for its cause a moral corruption going on in the hearts and lives of men, then this corruption would be intensified in proportion to the degree in which the original revelation was overlaid.¹

¹ The same argument seems to be of revelation so extensive as that assumed force against the supposition that a by Mr. Gladstone preceded the age



In the Hellenic mythology, this process is reversed. Even as it appears in the poems which we call Homeric, it must have undergone a developement of centuries; but if it is impossible to measure, by any reference to an older Greek literature, the personality and attributes of each god as compared with the conceptions of a previous age, it is obvious that the general tone of feeling and action, and the popular standard of morality had not been debased with the growth of their mythology. Whether the Hesiodic poems belong to a later period than our *Iliad* and *Odyssey* is a question into which it is unnecessary here to enter: but it must be admitted that if their theology is more systematised, and their theogony more repulsive, their morality and philosophy is immeasurably higher and more true. The latter may not exhibit the same heroic strength, they may betray a querulous spirit not unlike that of the Jewish preacher; but they display a conviction of the perfect justice and equity of the Divine Being, and an appreciation of goodness, as being equally the duty and the interest of mankind,¹ which we could scarcely desire to have strengthened.² With the growth of a mythology and its more systematic arrangement the perception of moral truth has become more keen and intense; and the same age which listened to the book of the generations of Zeus, Kronos, and Aphrodité, learnt wisdom from the pensive precepts of the 'Works and Days.'

whose language gave birth to the later Aryan mythology. For a revelation so corrupted implies a gradual degeneration into coarseness, sensuality, even brutishness; but the mind of that early time, as exhibited to us in their language, is childish or infantile, but not brutish; and it is not easy to see how from a period in which they had sensualised and debased a high revelation men could emerge into a state of simple and childish wonder, altogether distinct from either idolatry or impurity, and in which their notions as to the life of nature were as indefinite and unformed as their ideas respecting their own personality.

¹ See especially the striking analogy of the broad and narrow ways leading respectively to ruin and happiness (*Works and Days*, 285-290). It is not pretended

that this morality, many of the precepts of which seem almost echoes from the Sermon on the Mount, was handed down from an original revelation. If then, in this respect, the course was from the lesser to the greater, the progress could be the work only of the Spirit of God; and the downward course of their mythology from a positive revelation appears therefore the more mysterious and perplexing.

² The Hesiodic *Works and Days* seem to exhibit, along with some decline of physical energy, a sensitiveness of temperament to which the idea of overbearing arrogance and wanton insult threw a dark colouring over the whole course of human life. With such a feeling the mind may easily pass into a morbid condition.

BOOK
I.Comparison of the
Homeric
with the
Vedic my-
thology.

It is perhaps difficult to determine how far the characters of Phoibos and Athênê have been drawn out and systematised by the genius and moral instinct of the poet himself. We have no evidence, in any extant literature, of the precise state in which he found the national mythology; but it seems unlikely that he had what may be termed a theological authority for every statement which he makes and every attribute which he assigns to the one or the other. It is certain that Athênê once conspired against the freedom of Zeus; ¹ but we cannot tell how far the poet himself intensified the general harmony of her will to that of the King of gods and men, nor can we forget that Ushas is as dear to gods and men as Athênê herself, and that Ushas is undeniably nothing but the morning. But language has furnished evidence, which it is impossible to resist, of the gradual process which imparted to these mythical deities both their personality and their attributes. The literature of another branch of the same Aryan race exhibits a mythology whose substantial identity with that of the Greeks it is impossible to dispute; but in that mythology beings, whose personality in the Homeric poems is sharply drawn and whose attributes are strictly defined, are still dim and shadowy. Even the great Olympian king has not received the passions and appetites, and certainly not the form of man. Nay, in that older mythology their persons and their attributes are alike interchangeable. That which among the Greeks we find as a highly developed and complicated system, is elsewhere a mere mass of floating legend, nay, almost of mere mythical phrases, without plan or cohesion. This difference, at first sight so perplexing, may itself enable us to discover the great secret of the origin and growth of all mythology: but the fact remains indisputable that in the Veda, to use the words of Professor Max Müller, 'the whole nature of these so-called gods is still transparent, their first conception in many cases clearly perceptible. There are as yet no genealogies, no settled marriages between gods and goddesses. The father is sometimes the son, the brother is the husband, and she who in one hymn is the mother is in another the wife. As the

¹ *Iliad*, i. 400.



conceptions of the poet vary, so varies the nature of these gods. Nowhere is the wide distance which separates the ancient poems of India from the most ancient literature of Greece more clearly felt than when we compare the growing myths of the Veda with the full-grown and decayed myths on which the poetry of Homer is founded.'¹ But the unformed mythology of the Veda followed in its own land a course analogous to that of the mythology of Greece. There was the same systematic developement, with this difference, that in India the process was urged on by a powerful sacerdotal order who found their interest in the expansion of the old belief. In the earlier Vedas there is no predominant priesthood, and only the faintest indications of caste; there are no temples, no public worship, and, as it would seem, no images of the gods; and (what is of immeasurably greater importance in reference to the mythological creed of the Homeric poets) there are, in the words of Horace Wilson, 'no indications of a triad, the creating, preserving, and destroying power. Brahma does not appear as a deity, and Vishnu, although named, has nothing in common with the Vishnu of the Puranas: no allusion occurs to his Avataras. . . . These differences are palpable, and so far from the Vedas being the

¹ 'Comparative Mythology,' *Clippings from a German Workshop*, ii. 75. This flexible nature of the earliest myths explains some apparent contradictions in the Homeric mythology. To my conclusion that some of the most striking features in the character of Paris are reproduced in Meleagros and Achilleus, Professor Max Müller has taken exception on the ground that 'if the germ of the *Iliad* is the battle between the solar and nocturnal powers, Paris surely belongs to the latter.'—*Lectures on Language*, second series, xi. I venture to think that in this instance Professor Max Müller has answered his own objection. As the seducer of Helen, Paris represents the treacherous night; but he is also the fated hero doomed to bring ruin on his kinsfolk, while he is further known as Alexandros, the helper of men. Hence in this aspect of his character, a number of images which describe the solar heroes have been grouped around his person, while the leading idea em-

bodied in him is that of the dark thief which steals away the twilight. It may be added that the very words which Professor Max Müller quotes to show that 'he whose destiny it is to kill Achilles in the *Western Gates* could hardly have been himself of solar or vernal lineage,' would also prove that Phoibos Apollôn belonged to the ranks of the powers of night, for the death of Achilleus is brought about by him no less than by Paris. Paris, however, is not of solar or vernal lineage. He is essentially the deceiver who draws away the golden-haired Helen to his dusky dwelling; and all that I would urge is that when the poet described him as a warrior, he naturally employed imagery with which the solar heroes had made him familiar, and wove into the tale the incidents which make up the myth of Oinônê and which recur in the stories of Sigurd and of Theseus, of Kephalos and of Herakles. The subject will be further treated in its proper place.

BOOK
I.Methods of
determin-
ing the
extent of
primitive
revelation.

basis of the existing system, they completely overturn it.¹ The comparison is scarcely less fatal to the mythological Trinity of the Greeks.

We come at length to the question of fact. What was the measure of divine truth imparted to man on his creation, or immediately after the fall, and under what forms was it conveyed? If, when stated thus, the question should be one which we cannot absolutely determine, we may yet ask, was it a revelation as explicit and extensive as Mr. Gladstone represents it to have been? To allege the rabbinical traditions and speculations of comparatively recent times² as evidence for the latent meaning of Greek mythology, is to treat the subject in a way which would simply make any solution of the problem impossible. The force of a current, when its stream has been divided, will not tell us much about the course or depth of kindred streams which have branched off in other directions. Accordingly, although later traditions appear to be blended in his idea of the primitive belief,³ Mr. Gladstone rightly insists that the Homeric mythology must, if his hypothesis be correct, show the vestiges of a traditional knowledge 'derived from the epoch when the covenant of God with man, and the promise of a Messiah, had not yet fallen within the contracted forms of Judaism for shelter,'⁴ and that these traditions must 'carry upon them the mark of belonging to the religion which the Book of Genesis represents as brought by our first parents from Paradise and as delivered by them to their immediate descendants in general.'⁵ Thus the era of the division of races is the latest limit to which we can bring down a common tradition for all mankind; and for that tradition we are confined to the first eleven chapters of the book of Genesis.

Evidence
of the
Book of
Genesis.

From these chapters we must derive our proof that our first parents and their immediate descendants possessed the idea of an Infinite Being whose perfect goodness arose, not

¹ Professor H. H. Wilson, in the *Edinburgh Review* for October 1860, No. CCXXVIII. p. 382; and Vishnu Purana, p. ii., where he emphatically denies that the old Vedic religion was idolatrous. His remarks on the general

character of the Vedic religion deserve the deepest attention. They seem entirely to subvert the hypothesis which Mr. Gladstone has maintained.

² Gladstone, *Homer*, &c. ii. 50.

³ *Ibid.* 48. ⁴ *Ibid.* 3. ⁵ *Ibid.* 4.



from external restraints, but from an unchangeable internal determination of character¹—of a Trinity of Co-equal Persons in the Divine Unity—of a Redeemer who should hereafter assume their nature and deliver from death and sin—of a Divine Wisdom which was with God from the beginning, and of an Evil One, who, having fallen from his throne in heaven, had now become an antagonistic power, tempting men to their destruction.²

Whether these early chapters may contain this theological scheme by just and legitimate inference, whether the words there written may contain the earnest and the warrant of the full Christian revelation, are questions with which we are not here concerned. It is not a question of doctrine or belief or theological analysis. It is a simple question of fact which must determine whether various races of mankind were or were not guilty of wilful perversion of high and mysterious doctrines. Here, if anywhere, that purification of the intellect would seem to be needed, the lack of which tends to a substitution of traditional teaching or association for an impartial sifting of evidence.³ There was a time when these early records formed the whole literature of the people; and, to adopt Mr. Gladstone's expression, it would not be 'safe to make any large assumption respecting a traditional knowledge of any parts of early revelation' beyond what those records actually contain.⁴ Taken wholly by themselves, and not interpreted by the light thrown on them by the thought and belief of later ages, these records tell us of man as being (in some sense not explicitly defined) made in the Divine image and likeness—of one positive prohibition, the violation of which was to be followed by immediate death—of a subtle beast which tempts the woman to disobey the command, and of a sense of shame which follows the transgression. They tell us of flight and hiding when the man hears the voice of God walking in the garden in the cool of the day—of an attempt to transfer the blame from the man to the woman,

Its character.

¹ Gladstone, *Homer*, §c. ii. 18.

² *Ibid.* 42.

³ The necessity of such a process in all questions of fact will scarcely be disputed, and the present would seem to

fall strictly under this class. See Grote, *History of Greece*, part ii. ch. lxviii. vol. viii. p. 617, &c.

⁴ Gladstone, *Homer*, §c. ii. 40.



BOOK
I.

from the woman to the serpent—of a sentence of humiliation passed upon the latter, with the warning that its head should be bruised by the woman's seed—of a life of toil and labour for the former, ending with a return to the dust from which he had been made. Besides this, they tell us briefly that after some generations men began to call upon the name of the Lord; that in the course of time they sank (with but one exception) into brute lust and violence; and that on the renovation of the earth men were made answerable for each other's blood, and received the token of the rainbow as a warrant for the future permanence of the course of nature. But of any revelation before the fall, beyond a command to till the garden and to abstain from the fruit of a particular tree, these records give not the slightest indication.

Limits of
that evi-
dence.

If the doctrines which, in Mr. Gladstone's belief, made up the primitive revelation, are contained in these chapters, it is, he admits, by a dim and feeble foreshadowing.¹ They tell us nothing of God in the perfection of His nature, or of a Unity of Three Persons in the Godhead. They tell us of a subtle serpent, not of a fallen angel, of the seed of the woman as bruising that serpent's head, not of a Divine Redeemer delivering from sin and spiritual death. Still less do they tell us of a Divine Wisdom, of an institution of sacrifice,² or of a spiritual communion in prayer as existing from the first between man and God. All these doctrines may be legitimate deductions; but if to us the record itself gives only mysterious glimpses of a future fuller revelation, if to us these inferences from its contents are the result of careful comparison with the later books of the Old Testament, if even to us their harmony with the belief of prophets and righteous men of later ages seems clear only because we have been taught to regard it as clear, then what evidence have we that in the time of which the third chapter of Genesis speaks to us, our parents had a full apprehension of what

¹ Gladstone, *Homer*, &c. ii. 39.

² The fact of offerings is obviously very different from an ordinance commanding such offerings. The former may exist without the latter. Nor is there the slightest intimation that the

offering of Cain was rejected because it was not one of blood; its rejection is made to depend, not on the quality of the oblation, but on the moral condition of him who brings it.



ALLEGED CORRUPTION OF REVELATION.

CHAP.
I

even to us apart from later associations would be faint and shadowy? For if on the revelation made to them the vast mass of Greek mythology grew up as a corrupt incrustation, they must have received these truths not in their germ but in full dogmatic statement. It is difficult to understand how such a statement would have been to them anything more than a dead unmeaning formula, waiting to be quickened into life by the breath of a later revelation or by the evidence of later facts.

If, again, there is any one lesson which may be drawn before others from the character of the Old Testament records, it is that ideas, dim and feeble at first, acquire gradually strength and consistency, that the clearness of revelation is increased as the stream widens, and that all positive belief is the result of years and generations of discipline. But in some mysterious way, while the course of the Jewish people was from the lesser to the greater, they in whose hands the Homeric theology was moulded started with a fulness of doctrinal knowledge which was not attained by the former until a long series of centuries had passed away.

Course of
revelation
in the Old
Testament.

If, further, an acceptance of the records of the book of Genesis involves no assumption of the previous existence of traditions or doctrines not mentioned in those records, it frees us not less from the necessity of supposing that in all but the Jewish world a process was going on directly contrary to that under which the Israelites were being trained. But while we assent to Mr. Gladstone's remark on the ease with which these foreshadowings of the Trinity and of Redemption might pass into polytheism and anthropomorphism, it would scarcely argue a spirit of irreverence if we asked why doctrinal statements should have been given which the receivers could not understand, and which under these conditions rendered such a transition not merely likely but inevitable.

Greek cor-
ruption of
revelation.

There is an instinctive reluctance to accept any theory which heightens human depravity and corruption, unless there are weighty reasons for doing so.¹ And, unquestion-

Necessity
of account-
ing for the
character
of Greek
mythology.

¹ For the mass of facts which seem to negative the hypothesis of degenera-

tion see Sir J. Lubbock's *Prehistoric Times*, second edition, 1869.



BOOK

I.

ably, on the hypothesis which has just been examined, the mythology of the Greeks exhibits an instance of wilful and profane perversion, to which perhaps we can find no parallel. But the character of that mythology still remains when we have rejected this supposition. We have still before us the chronicles or legends of gods who not merely eat and drink and sleep, but display the working of the vilest of human passions. Some process, therefore, either conscious or unconscious, must have brought about a result so perplexing; and if even for conscious invention there must have been some groundwork, much more must this be the case if we take up an alternative which even less admits the exercise of a creative faculty.

Conditions
of the
inquiry.

If then, apart from the controversies which have gathered round the documents which compose the book of Genesis, we gain from the earliest Jewish records no knowledge of the mode in which mythology was developed, it is clear that, if the question is ever to be answered, we must seek the evidence in the history of language and of ancient civilisation. If both alike seem to carry us back to a time in which the condition of man resembled most nearly that of an infant, we can but accept the evidence of facts, so far as those facts are ascertained and understood. The results of archaeological researches may not be flattering to human vanity. They may reveal a coarse brutality from which during a long series of ages man rose in the struggle for existence to some notion of order and law. They may disclose a state of society in which a hard apathy and a stupid terror seemed to render all intellectual growth impossible, and in which a religion of fear found its universal expression in human sacrifices.¹ Yet the

¹ If the theories which make language the necessary adjunct and outcome of thought must be abandoned as inconsistent with known facts, if we must face the conclusion that man speaks not because he thinks, but because he wishes to share his thoughts with others, and hence that words are wholly arbitrary and conventional signs without the slightest essential relation to the things signified, no reason for surprise remains if human ideas of God and of the service due to him should be found to exhibit

the same process of slow and painful developement from the first faint dawn of intelligence. The conclusion must, indeed, be proved; but its establishment no more calls into question the Divine Education of the world, than the slowness with which infants learn to walk proves that our powers of motion originate in ourselves; and certainly the evidence both of archæology and language, so far as it has gone, tends more and more to exhibit mankind in their primæval condition as passing



picture, if it be gloomy, introduces no new difficulties beside those with which philosophers or theologians have to contend already in their attempts to explain the phenomena of the material or moral world. The fact that there has been growth, the fact that out of such poor elements there has been developed a knowledge of the relations in which men stand to each other and of the consequences which flow from these relations, is of itself the evidence that at all times and in all places the Divine Spirit has been teaching and educating the children of men, that always and everywhere God has been doing the work of which we now see darkly but a very small part, and of which hereafter we shall better understand the nature and purpose.

If then the mythology of the Aryan nations is to be studied to good purpose, the process applied to their legends must be strictly scientific. In every Aryan land we have a vast mass of stories, some preserved in great epic poems, some in the pages of mythographers or historians, some in tragic, lyric, or comic poetry, and some again only in the oral tradition or folklore of the people. All these, it is clear, must be submitted to that method of comparison and differences by which inductive science has achieved its greatest triumphs. Not a step must be taken on mere conjecture: not a single result must be anticipated by ingenious hypothesis. For the reason of their existence we must search, not in our own moral convictions, or in those of ancient Greeks or Romans, but in the substance and materials of the myths themselves. We must deal with their incidents and their names. We must group the former according to their points of likeness and difference; we must seek to interpret the latter by the principles which have been established and accepted as the laws of philological analysis. It becomes therefore unnecessary to notice at

Allegorical
interpre-
tation of
myths.

through forms and stages of thought in which the adoption of human sacrifices universally would inevitably mark an important stage. This subject has been treated by Mr. E. B. Tylor in his *History of Early Civilisation*, with a vigour and impartiality which justify the hope that he may hereafter fill up the outlines of

his masterly sketch. The developement of the doctrine of sacrifice has been traced with singular clearness and force by Dr. Kalisch, *Historical and Critical Commentary on the Old Testament*, Leviticus, part i. See also the article 'Sacrifice' in the *Dictionary of Science, Literature and Art*.

BOOK
I.

length any of those hypotheses or assumptions which resolve the Aryan myths into allegories, or explain them as expressions of high truth in theology, morality, or art. It would scarcely be necessary to notice such theories at all, were it not that they are from time to time revived by writers who from their manifest earnestness and sincerity, and from the great good which they have done, may fairly claim to be heard. It may, however, be enough to take some of these theories, and to show that they are not true to the features of the myths which they profess to explain, and that interpretations which twist some of the incidents and names of a story and ignore others, while they treat each tale as standing by itself, cannot be regarded as trustworthy.

Lord
Bacon's
method.

In the opinion of Lord Bacon, the story of the Sphinx was 'an elegant and instructive fable,' 'invented to represent science, especially as joined with practice.' His reason for so thinking was that 'science may without absurdity be called a monster, being strangely gazed at and admired by the ignorant and unskilful.' The composite figure of the Sphinx indicates 'the vast variety of subjects that science considers'; the female countenance attributed to her denotes the 'gay appearance' of science and her 'volubility of speech.' Her wings show that 'the sciences and their inventions must fly about in a moment, for knowledge, like light communicated from one torch to another, is presently caught and copiously diffused.' Her sharp and hooked talons are 'the axioms and arguments of science,' which 'enter the mind, lay hold of it, fix it down, and keep it from moving and slipping away.' She is placed on a crag overlooking the Theban city, because 'all science seems placed on high, as it were on the tops of mountains that are hard to climb.' Like her, 'science is said to beset the highways, because, through all the journey and peregrination of human life, there is matter and occasion offered of contemplation.' If the riddles which the Sphinx receives from the Muses bring with them trouble and disaster, it is because 'practice urges and impels to action, choice, and determination,' and thus questions of science 'become torturing, severe, and trying, and unless solved and interpreted, strangely perplex



and harass the human mind, rend it every way, and perfectly tear it to pieces.' The fable, in Bacon's judgment, adds with the 'utmost elegance,' 'that, when Sphinx was conquered, her carcass was laid upon an ass; for there is nothing so subtle and abstruse but, after being once made plain, intelligible, and common, it may be received by the lowest capacity.' But he feels himself bound not to omit that 'Sphinx was conquered by a lame man and impotent in his feet, for men usually make too much haste to the solution of Sphinx's riddles; whence it happens that, she prevailing, their minds are rather racked and torn by disputes than invested with command by works and effects.'

Its consequences.

A large number of the Greek myths are made by Lord Bacon to yield 'wisdom' of this kind, and it is quite possible that the same process might be applied with equal success to all Greek, or even all Aryan myths. Such interpretations certainly tend to show how great our debt of gratitude must be to a set of mysterious philosophers, prophets, or politicians, who, living before there were any constitutions, alliances, confederacies, and diplomacy, furnished in the form of amusing stories a complete code for the guidance of kings, members of parliament, cabinet ministers, and ambassadors. It would be unfair to grudge to these interpretations the praise of cleverness and ingenuity; but the happy turns which they sometimes exhibit are more than counterbalanced by misrepresentations of the myths themselves. The comparison of the claws and talons of the Sphinx to the axioms and arguments of science may be both amusing and instructive; but the ass which carries her carcass is seemingly a creature of his own imagining, and Oidipous was neither lame nor impotent in his feet when he came to the final conflict. The reason, also, by which Bacon accounts for this fact, would be an argument for making Oidipous not the conqueror, but only another of the victims of the Sphinx.

But, ingenious as Bacon's interpretations may have been, they were emphatically unscientific. To him these Greek stories were isolated or detached fables, whose growth it was superfluous to trace, and to each of which he might attach

Such interpretations unscientific.