

recognize unreason and fiction in other men's faiths and unconsciously run their heads against them in their own, he should firstly pay heed to the phenomena of inconsistency and self-contradiction which so abound in argumentative literature even where writers are not mastered by the special bias of a creed or prejudice or conservative sentiment, but are merely giving play to the different currents of sentiment set up in them by detached impressions which they do not seek or do not contrive to co-ordinate.

As showing how far such incoherence may go in the case of a writer of repute, and how far it may avail to confuse historical science, it may serve to compare two sets of mutually-annihilative dicta from the second and twelfth chapters of Mommsen's *History of Rome*, with the preliminary assurance that the chapters not only make no attempt at a synthesis of the contradictions, but exhibit no suspicion that they contain any contradictions at all. I quote from the 1868 edition of Dickson's translation:—

“But, on the other hand, the Latin religion sank into a singular insipidity and dulness, and early became shrivelled into an anxious and dreary round of ceremonies. The God of the Italian was, as we have already said, above all things an instrument for helping him to the attainment of very substantial earthly objects” (i. 193; ch. 12).

“But...the forms of the Roman faith remained at, or sank to, a singularly low level of conception and of insight” (i. 181).

“Of such notions, the products of outward abstraction—of the homeliest simplicity, sometimes venerable, sometimes ridiculous—Roman theology was in substance made up” (i. 184).

“It [Roman religion] was unable to excite that mysterious awe after which the human heart has always had a longing” (i. 184).

“At the very core of the Latin religion there lay that profound moral impulse which leads men to ring earthly guilt and earthly punishment into relation with the world of the Gods” (ch. 12; i. 192).

“The Latin religion, like every other, had its origin in the effort to fathom the abyss of thought; it is only to a superficial view, which is deceived as to the depth of the stream because it is clear, that its transparent spirit-world can appear to be shallow” (i. 197).

“This indifference to ideal elements in the Roman religion was accompanied by a practical and utilitarian tendency” (i. 185).

“The Latin worship was grounded mainly on man’s enjoyment of earthly pleasures. . . .” (i. 191).

“The language of the Roman Gods was wholly confined to Yea and Nay, or at the most to the making their will known by the method of casting lots. . . . The Romans made efforts, even at an early period, to treasure up such counsels [Greek oracles], and copies of the leaves of the. . . . Cumæan Sibyl were accordingly a highly-valued gift. . . . For the reading and interpretation of the fortune-telling book a special college. . . . was instituted in early times. . . . Romans in search of advice early betook themselves to the Delphic Apollo himself” (i. 198-9).

“Throughout the whole of nature he [the Roman] adored the spiritual and the universal” (i. 29; ch. 2).

“Comparatively slight traces are to be found among the Romans of belief in ghosts, fear of enchantments, or dealing in mysteries. Oracles and prophecy never acquired the importance in Italy which they obtained in Greece, and never were able to exercise a serious control over public or private life” (i. 193).

It is given to few, certainly, to dogmatize so chaotically as does Mommsen; but if he can contrive to think thus incoherently on a question on which he has no master-passion to blind him, as in his utterances on the Celtic races and on French civilization; if he can in different moods see spiritual profundity and mere mechanical externality in one and the same set of religious phenomena, it becomes at least much less surprising that men should see in such different lights phenomena which, though cognate and similar, are at least different in particulars and in their circumstances, as well as in degree of familiarity. The believing Christian who for the first time is told, however guardedly, that his creed is historically on all fours with those of its age, and that its prodigies are but myths and false marvels like those of Paganism, is sure to be sincerely scandalized. To him the two sets of phenomena are wholly disparate, because his feelings about them have always been so. And it finally depends on his intellectual qualities, his opportunities, his studies, and his interlocutors, whether he ever gets beyond framing arguments which merely follow the beck of his prejudice.

With the wrecks of such arguments the path of discussion has been more and more thickly strewn for the last two hundred years. But as many still see in the wrecks nothing but good building material, it may be well to scrutinize closely a few arguments which were earnestly or adroitly put together when Strauss fifty years ago gave a new reverberation to the doctrine that Christian supernaturalism is part of the subject-matter of mythology. As had been sought to be done last century in the case of miracles, men strove to show that what were called myths in the Gospels had nothing in common with the admitted myths of Paganism; and that on the other hand, despite its supernaturalism, the life of the Founder was as credible as that of Julius Cæsar.

On the first head the line of argument was very much that of Mr. Lang, only more industriously developed, and with of course more resort to the stock "bluffs" of Christian Evidence. One German inquirer put together a list of the Mohammedan myths about Jesus, and claimed to show that all had an extravagant or frivolous or ill-finished character that was totally absent from the Gospel narrative. In the Gospels, it is claimed, there are no "hyperbolic delineations." "There we find no miracle which is not duly called for by the circumstances—none that serves merely frivolous interests, or that violates the rules of propriety." "Where the supernatural does interpose, it presents itself in a manner so unconstrained, and so suitable to the aim of the whole, that *the only thing that would have created surprise would have been the absence of this element.*"¹

Place beside these typical assertions, of which even the last is only a delightful development of a common implication, a few of the actual Gospel miracles.

1. The wholesale² turning of water into wine at a feast at which a presumable sufficiency of wine had been already consumed.

¹ Part vii. of *Voices of the Church in Reply to Dr. Strauss*, 1845, pp. 355-9.

² The *quantity* of the wine greatly impressed Strauss, as it did previous German critics. It figures out at over a thousand imperial pints.

2. The miraculous draught of fishes.
3. The catching of the fish with the coin in its mouth to pay the tribute; taken in connection with the statement that Judas normally carried a stock of money for the group.
4. The story that 5,000 persons went into the wilderness with twelve (or more) baskets, containing only five (or seven) loaves and two (or a few) fishes, and that the Founder multiplied that food for the host till there was superfluity enough to fill exactly twelve baskets.
5. The instantaneous cure of a malady of long standing through a touch on the hem of the Messiah's garment.
6. The rebuking of the wind, its instant cessation, and the immediate "great calm" on a tempest-tossed sea.
7. The instantaneous removal of leprosy.
8. The instant restoration of maimed limbs.
9. The walking on the waves.
10. The rebuking and expulsion of the "devil" in epileptic patients.

Nothing save a prepossession approaching to hebetude can obscure the fact that these are just "irrational," that is, ignorant myths of the ordinary Oriental sort, devoid of "propriety;" for instructed people, in the completest degree. The so-called Mohammedan myths, which are really flotsam from early Christian lore, set reasonable and even touching thoughts alongside of absurd narratives: the Gospels do the same, yielding a much larger proportion of sane matter simply because they represent the literary travail of several generations and the selected thoughts of many more, all to some extent edited by men bent on making a Christist movement; whereas the Mohammedan myths about Jesus are mere random survivals. Yet if Christians had found in their Gospels the story that when the disciples complained of the smell of the dead dog, Jesus answered "Ah! how beautifully white are the dog's teeth," with the added explanation, they would have been well pleased;¹ and if they could without scandal accept it in

¹ Let the "apocryphal" story be but told in the archaic style of the English versions of the Gospels, and the effect will be tolerable enough. As thus:—"And as Jesus came from that city with his disciples there lay before

exchange for the inept story of the cursing of the fig-tree, many would promptly and gladly make the transaction.

Again, when the apologist claims it to be a specialty of Gospel narrative to contain simple and natural episodes, he does but exclude from his survey one-half of the literature of mythology.

“That the great Messiah sat down weary at Jacob’s well, that he was overcome with sleep in the boat on the lake, that in Gethsemane and on the cross he gave utterance to the deepest feelings of human weakness—all this would as little have appeared in a mytho-poetical picture of his life, as the honest and sober-minded *confessions of their own conduct* which the evangelists so artlessly embody in their narratives.”¹

Such are the devices of “foredeeming.” In not a single case does any Gospel attribute any act whatever to its own writer, or indicate who its writer was: the apologist has but adduced myth to defend myth. As for the picture of the God resting by the well, or sleeping in the boat, it can be paralleled on the side of artlessness in a dozen of the most familiar myths of Hellas, and in as many of Buddhism. Can the apologist ever have read of “outworn Dêmêtêr, searching for Persephone”? “By the wayside she sat her down, sore in heart, at the Maiden Well, where the town-folks drew their water, in the shadow where overhead grew a thicket of olives. In her guise she was like unto an aged woman who is bereft of child-bearing and the gifts of garland-loving Aphrodite.....They knew her not: the Gods are hard for men to discern.....”² This of Great Dêmêtêr, of the many temples and the glorious name.

Met thus at every turn by the challenged parallel, the customary apologist usually ends by insisting that the Gospels stand out from all other sacred histories in respect of their utter aloofness from the instinct of sex—that Jesus alone of the Gods of old is without the passion of the male for the female. But this again is a fallacious plea, for the

them on the way a dead dog. And the disciples were much offended with the smell thereof. And the Lord rebuked them and said, Nay, but see ye not the wondrous whiteness of the dog’s teeth? This spake he unto them that they should take heed to see the good in all the works of God, and that they should think not of the faults but of the righteous deeds of their brethren.”

¹ Vol. cited, p. 357.

² Homeridian Hymn to Dêmêtêr, Edgar’s trans. slightly altered.

entire literature of the early Christists is in the same way stamped with the character of an age in which Oriental asceticism has become the standard of sanctity; and the new God is but specialized as Virgin Goddesses had been before him.¹ Apollo himself is acclaimed as *hagnos*, the chaste God; and in Julian we see the now normally sophisticated consciousness of religious men, claiming sexlessness for the old Gods and turning the stories of their appetites to pure allegory. And the principle is dominant in Buddhism no less than in Christism.

Even as the determined believer will not see charm or sobriety in any myth of the heathen, so will he look in the very face of puerility in his own myths and vow that it is surpassingly divine, nay, that prodigy is but a proof of foreknowledge. Thus does no less a teacher than Neander, in an English translation, dispose of the miracle of the fish with the stater in its mouth:—

“He [Jesus] wrought no miracle in order to procure the necessary money, but told Peter to *have recourse to his usual calling*. Providence attached a peculiar blessing to his labours on this occasion; and he found in the *mouth* of the first fish which he caught a coin, which had probably been *swallowed* a short time before.² Christ’s *foreknowledge of the result* constitutes, as before observed, *the miraculous element* in the transaction.”

As if supererogatory absurdity were not enough, the theologian must needs glose the narrative, in which Jesus actually tells Peter in advance that he will find the coin in the mouth of the first fish. The narrative (Mt. xvii. 27) does not even tell further of the fulfilment. If then the miracle here consists simply in the foreknowledge, it does so in every case in which Jesus says anything before a miracle is consummated. The formula is naught.

But the extremity of Neander’s bias is best illustrated by his handling of the miracle of Cana. Here he does not

¹ I say nothing of the unpleasant problem raised by the wording of John xiii. 23.

² Cp. *Das Leben Jesu Christi*, 4te Aufl. 1845, p. 508. The passage is thus translated in *Voices of the Church*, as before cited, p. 427. The fourth edition of the original says in conclusion only: “Der zuerst gefangene Fisch sollte so viel einbringen, da ein von ihm verschlungener Stater in ihm gefunden wurde.”

employ the "foreknowledge" formula, but changes the venue:—

"If we are to regard the author of that [the fourth] Gospel as a man of Alexandrian culture, whose mind was imbued with the notions of the Gnostics, his selection, for the first miracle of Christ, of a transaction which from his peculiar point of view must have appeared utterly unworthy of the Saviour's dignity, is incomprehensible."¹

It would be hard to be more arbitrary. The theorem of Strauss² and others, that the fourth Gospel suggests Alexandrian or Greek culture and a Gnostic leaning, alleges its Gnosticism only so far forth as the Gospel can be shown to contain Gnostic thought. To reply that *the* Gnostic of Alexandria would have scouted the miracle of Cana is neither here nor there. Gnosticism had many mansions, and no modern is entitled to say that there were not thousands of the earlier Gnostics who would have accepted the miracle with reverence. Clement of Alexandria actually accepted and prized the name of Gnostic; and he never by a single word disparages the miracle. It is true that he never refers to it; while he revels in the doctrine of the Logos; and it might be argued on Neander's premiss that the water-and-wine story was an addition to the original perhaps made after Clement's time. But this view would of course be repudiated by Neander as reducing the miracle to myth once for all. His argument must remain that the story is to be held apostolic *because* it would scandalize an educated Alexandrian. How then came any educated Alexandrian ever to be an orthodox Christian; and how came Clement to let the miracle pass?

The special pathos of the defence lies in the perception it betrays that the story is a scandal to the educated *modern*; that the naïf phrases "manifested his glory," "and his disciples believed on him," reveal a notion of divinity and Messiahship which puts the narrative outside the pale of tolerable testimony for a critical reader. The modern apologist who felt that "in the Gospel miracles the only thing that would have created surprise would have

¹ *Das Leben Jesu Christi*, p. 273, note. *Voices of the Church*, pp. 428-9.

² *Leben Jesu*, 4te Ausg. i. Kap. vii. § 83, end.

been the absence" of the supernatural, was clearly at the true primeval point of view; but even he would have been hard put to it to show that the Christian tale is more dignified or more plausible than the repeatedly "attested" wine-miracle wrought annually in the Dionysian temple of Andros in solemn manifestation of the might of the God over his special element.¹ As for the rest of us, when we collate the two prodigies, what can we say, as reasoning men, but that the Gospel miracle is a parody of the Pagan?

At the next stage of the analysis there arises an issue that is equally set up by other episodes in the Gospels: the question, namely, as to how such a story came *first* to be told. In the Dionysiak miracle, it will probably be allowed, we have a systematic priestly imposture, actually repeated year by year. It may have been done in pursuance of some old tale of the God turning water into wine; or it may have been the priests' reduction to falsehood, *ad captandum vulgus*, of their subtler principle that the Sun-God turned water into wine in ripening the grape;² or the story may originally have been told by way of embodying that doctrine in a mythos. In any case, an esoteric idea presumably underlay the annual performance. In the Christian tale there is no such element left above ground; and we are driven to ask whether the first narrator of the Christian version was other than a wilful vendor of fiction. It is hard to see how we can answer favourably: certain as it is that any story once written down in an accepted Gospel was sure to be believed, there must have been a beginning in somebody's deceit. And if on this we are met with the old formula that a wilful fiction is not a myth, we can but answer that the formula will have to be recast. For we really know nothing of the precise manner of origin of, say, the myth of Isis and Osiris. We only know that *it was believed*; and as a belief it was for all practical purposes on all fours with the belief that Alexander was the son of

¹ See the treatise on *The Gospel Myths* in the present volume.

² This was actually Augustine's gloss of the Christian miracle, except that in his view the God was miraculous and dramatically repeating what he did annually in the course of nature. *In Joann.* tract. 8, cited by Strauss.

Jupiter Ammon, and the belief that Jesus turned so many firkins of water into wine by divine volition. They were all traditional forms of error; and the business of mythology is to trace as far as may be how they came to be started and conserved.

§ 4. *The Problem of Non-Miraculous Myth.*

If the foregoing argument be substantially sound, it follows that the conception of "myth" should be allowed broadly to include not only stories of a supernatural cast told of divine personages, but many quasi-historical narratives which fall short of asserting downright miracle; and not only stories of that cast told about non-historical personages, but some told about historical personages. If, for instance, we find related of Julius Cæsar and William the Conqueror and other great captains the tale of a stumble on landing in a new country, and a prompt pretence to lay hold of the land by way of reassuring superstitious soldiers, we are reasonably entitled to say that, though the thing may have happened once, it did not happen repeatedly; just as we decide that the same witticism was not really uttered by Voltaire and Dr. Johnson and Talleyrand and Sidney Smith and Douglas Jerrold, though it has been ascribed to them all; and that there were not four Christian nurses who respectively alleged that they had witnessed the death-beds of Voltaire, Rousseau, Thomas Paine, and Mr. Blank, and would not again see a freethinker die for all the wealth of Indies. Knowing how the human mind manufactures these modern false coincidences, we rather count ourselves to have therein a sidelight on coincidences of a more sacrosanct sort in older times. When all is said, we have hardly any other way of divining how primeval men contrived to tell the same stories with innumerable variations of names and minor details.

But here we must reckon with a logical difficulty of obvious importance, which has been turned to very adroit

account by opponents of mythical interpretations of certain religious narratives. This difficulty is that there *are* very odd coincidences in history and literature: and that some perfectly attested modern biographies are found to chime in a queer way with certain myth-cycles of antiquity. The most familiar and the most striking of all such cases is the mock demonstration by Archbishop Whately that Napoleon = Apollo. Many a student must have been for a moment as much bewildered as entertained by the series of data—the birth in a Mediterranean island; the mother-name Laetitia = Leto = Latona; the three sisters = the Graces; the four brothers = the seasons; the surname Bonaparte; the hero's overrunning of Europe; the two wives = Moon and Earth;¹ the apparition in Egypt; the turning-point of the hero's career in the land of winter, which undermines his power; his defeat by the northern hosts; his twelve marshals = the signs of the zodiac; his passing away in the western hemisphere in the midst of the sea. It all seems at first sight uncommonly awkward for the solarists; and a German theologian, in a sufficiently German manner, undertook similarly to confute Strauss by a work supposed to be produced by a Mexican mythologist in the year 2836, *Das Leben Luther's kritisch bearbeitet*, wherein Luther is shown to be a myth.² Here the effect is much less striking; and the main hits are made over the mythical appearance of the name Wartburg, and the curious story that Luther was born while his mother was on a journey. In this case it begins to appear that the satire has come home to roost; for the mythical interpretation of the Gospel narrative does *not* rest on a theorem of the unreality of place-names; and the question as to Luther's birth is troublous rather for the Protestant than for the mythologist. The story is very ill vouched: how came it to be told? Is it that an element of myth really *did* get into the biography even of Luther?

Once started, the rebuttal is simple enough. To begin

¹ Or, as a later writer would be apt to put it, Dawn and Twilight.

² See it reproduced in *The Voices of the Church in reply to Dr. Strauss*.

with, the clever Archbishop's thesis proves far too much; for Apollo *is* even in his opinion a mythical person; and nine-tenths of the Napoleon data do not apply to Apollo at all; though the Archbishop might have improved his case by noting that the Greek spelling is Apollon, and the modern Greek pronunciation nearly Apoleon = the Apollyon of Bunyan's allegory. Further, Apollo had *not* three sisters and four brothers; and was *not* defeated by northern hosts; and had a great many wives and a great many sons; and never led any hosts, though Dionysos did; and never died, even to rise again. And for the rest, we need but ask the Archbishop and his German emulator, as did the late Professor Baden Powell in the *Essays and Reviews*, whether they mean to suggest that there is nothing more miraculous in the life of Jesus than in the lives of Luther and Napoleon? In fine, was not the Archbishop a little too clever for the safety of the creed?

We have but to restate the mythological argument in this connection to make clear its real strength. As thus: (1) Jesus is said to be born of a Virgin; but not in the original version of the First Gospel; and not in the Second; and not in any writing or by any mouth known to Paul. Here we see how a myth may be superimposed on a cult. As regards (2) the miracles, the Temptation, the Resurrection, the Ascension, they cannot possibly be solved by any record of a real career. (3) We come next to non-miraculous episodes which yet bear the mark of myth in that they are (a) duplicates of episodes in previous hero-myths, (b) not common to the four Gospels, (c) like the miracles, visibly unknown to Paul. Even Mr. Lang admits myth in the story of the exposure of the infant Moses. The Massacre of the Innocents falls by the same tests. (4) Finally comes the category of presumptively-fictitious utterances, of which there is a whole series, reducible to unreality on various grounds, as thus:—

a. All alike are unknown to Paul, and unemployed by the other epistle-writers.

b. The Sermon on the Mount is further demonstrably a

- collection of written sayings, and has none of the characteristics of a real discourse.
- c. The "Come unto me" formula has no congruity whatever with the main body of the narrative; and is intelligible only as a formula of the mysteries.
 - d. Many of the parables are similarly impossible as "teachings"; indeed, the Sermon on the Mount, though visibly a written compilation, is almost the only part of the Gospel that has any approach to fitness for popular purposes (cp. Mark iv. 11, 12; Luke viii. 10). The disciples themselves are represented as needing explanations of parables (cp. Matt. xiii. 15-36); and at times Jesus is said to blame them bitterly, at others to be in the habit of explaining to them privately what the multitude cannot understand (Mark ix. 34, etc.).
 - e. A multitude of absolute contradictions of narrative in the text prove unrestrained invention—*e.g.*, Matt. xiii. 54-58 and Luke iv. 31-44; Matt. x. 5, 6, and xxii. 43; Matt. xii. 30 and Luke ix. 30; Matt. xviii. 3 and xiii. 10-16; Matt. xviii. 17 and verse 22.¹
 - f. The decisive difference between the whole cast of the fourth Gospel and that of the Synoptics shows that invention was no less unrestrained as regards doctrine. Any man could set forth anything he would as the teaching of the Messiah.
 - g. Predictions such as those of the fall of Jerusalem are clearly written after the event. Other teachings were as easy to interpolate.

When any such body of reasons can be given for doubting a pagan narrative, it can to-day find no credence among instructed men. No scholar pretends to believe that all the speeches ostensibly reported in Livy and Thucydides were really delivered; but though it is not recorded that any reports of Jesuine sayings existed in any form in Paul's time we are asked to believe that a multitude of Jesuine

¹ See a number of other instances cited in the author's *Short History of Freethought*, pp. 146-7.

discourses delivered about the year 30 were accurately reproduced, without additions, forty or more years later; and that documents to which during a century anybody might add, in an age of habitual forgery, are valid evidence. Clearly this is the merest fanaticism. All that can rationally be claimed is that a teacher or teachers named Jesus, or several differently named teachers called Messiahs, may have Messianically uttered some of these teachings at various periods, presumably after the writing of the genuine Pauline epistles.¹ To make the whole mass the basis of a conception of a teaching Jesus before Paul, is to ignore all the usual principles of historical judgment.

To put the case broadly, at the end as at the beginning: Primary myth is but one of the primary modes in which men are collectively deceived; the habit of erroneous belief persists thus far in all stages of civilization; and wherever the result is a widespread hallucination, transmitted from age to age through channels of custom and emotional credulity, we are dealing with the same kind of psychological problem, and should apply to it the same kind of tests. The beliefs that Dêmêtêr wandered over the wide-wayed earth seeking for Persephone; that Isis searched mourning for the body of Osiris; that Apollo shot arrows of pestilence in punishment among the Greeks; that Athênê miraculously succoured her worshippers; that Perseus and Jesus and a hundred more were supernaturally conceived; that Jesus and Dionysos and Osiris gave men new knowledge and happiness in virtue of Godhood; that Tezcatlipoca and Yahweh were to be appeased by the eating, in reality or in symbol, of human flesh and blood; that Æsculapius and Jesus raised the dead; that Hercules and Dionysos and Jesus went down to Hades, and returned; that Jesus and Mithra were buried in rock tombs and rose again; and that the sacrifice of Jesus brought salvation to mankind as did the annual sacrifice of the God-victim of the Khonds—these beliefs were set up and cherished by the

¹ Cp. essay on "The Jesus Legend and the Myth of the Twelve Apostles," in the author's *Studies in Religious Fallacy*.

same faculties for fiction and fallacy as have conserved the beliefs about the Amazons, Arthur and the Round Table, the primacy of the Pope, witchcraft, fairies, the medicinal value of charms, the *couvade*, the efficacy of prayer for rain, Jenny Geddes and her stool, Bruce's Cave, Wallace's Tree, Julian's saying "Thou hast conquered, O Galilean," the liquefaction of the blood of St. Januarius, the miracles of Lourdes, the miracles of mediums, Boer outrages, the shooting of the apple on the head of his child by William Tell, and the consequent establishment of the Swiss Confederation.

The fortunes of the Tell myth may serve once for all to illustrate the fashion in which a fiction can even in a historical period find general acceptance; and the time and effort required to dispossess such a belief by means even of the plainest evidence. As early as 1598, a Swiss antiquary pronounced the story a fable; and in 1760 another, named Freudenberger, undertook to show its source, the episode being found in the Danish history of Saxo Grammaticus, written centuries before the date assigned to Tell's exploit. It is said that Freudenberger was condemned to be burned alive for his pains; but this looks like yet another myth. Periodically repeated by scholars, however, the exposure was obstinately resisted by learned Swiss historians on various untenable grounds down till the middle of the present century;¹ and when the pressure of criticism at last became irresistible by men of education and capacity, when it was shown past question that the Confederation had been formally established a good many years before the date assigned to Tell, and that no trace of the Gessler episode occurs for generations after the time to which it is ascribed, an accomplished scholar is found in all good faith to contend that, while the apple story is plainly myth and Tell a non-historical person, there is some reason to believe that *some* disturbance occurred about the time in question²—as if the reservation

¹ *E.g.*, Vieusseux, *History of Switzerland*, 1840, p. 47, note.

² Cp. the pamphlet of M. Bordier, *Le Grütli et Guillaume Tell*, Genève et Bâle, 1869.

of such a proposition counted for anything in such a connection.

It would be strange if a set of myths round which centre the popular religious beliefs of Christendom were to be rectified more easily than the Swiss belief in Tell. The great majority of the Swiss people, indeed, probably believe devoutly in the Tell story to this day, so little do the studies and conclusions of scholars represent popular opinion in any age; and those rationalists among ourselves who go about proclaiming that Christian supernaturalism, being detected, is "dead," do but proclaim their own immaturity. Do what we will, myriads of "educated" English people will continue for generations to believe that their deity is present in a consecrated wafer; and the faith of myriads more in their remoter myths will continue proportionally vigorous. It remains for those who do care about reason and critical knowledge to pursue these ends faithfully notwithstanding, leaving popular opinion to develop as social and economic conditions may determine. The science of these conditions is indeed the most vital of all; but such science none the less must be followed up for its own sake; and our general survey may fitly end in a consideration of one of the problems that arise for the mythologist on the borderline of the religious resistance, being broached in the name not of orthodoxy but of historical science.

§ 5. *The Problem of Priority.*

It lies on the face of the foregoing argument that any one religion may influence any other with which it comes in contact; that as Christism borrowed myths of all kinds from Paganism, so it may pass on myths to less developed systems. Hence a possibility of dispute as to whether a given heathen myth discovered in post-Christian times is or is not borrowed from Christianity. Dr. Tylor has shown reason for believing that a deluge-myth was set agoing in Mexico by the early Spanish priests. It may be, then,

that in earlier times Christianity was drawn upon here and there in the fashion formerly taken for granted by believers as regards *all* cases of coincidence between Christian and pagan narrative and practice.

Obviously such problems are to be solved, if at all, in terms of *a posteriori* evidence and *a priori* plausibility. If the historical data leave a given case in doubt, we have to ask ourselves which way the psychological probabilities lie. It is easy to see why the Christists adopted the belief in the Virgin Birth and the solar birthday; and, on the other hand, to see how savages could acquire from missionaries a belief in a punitive deluge. But there are less simple cases, in which a variety of tests must be put as to the relative likelihood of a given myth's passing from A to B or from B to A. And so great still is the effect of the so long unchallenged habit of treating Christianity as "absolute religion" that in the name even of scientific mythology there is a persistent tendency to look for imitations of Christianity in myths that had been held by independent scholarship to be prior to Christian propaganda. The theses of Professors Weber and Lorinser and others in regard to Krishnaism (discussed at length hereinafter) are typical. Putting these theses aside for detailed treatment, we may take up for illustration that maintained in recent years by H. Petersen, L. Wimmer, Professor Bugge, E. H. Meyer, and others, as to a Christian derivation of the Scandinavian myth of Balder. It is not necessary to ask here whether or not any one of these writers is influenced by a desire to buttress Christianity: it is quite conceivable that all alike may be indifferent to any such result. The point is that they are apparently influenced by the old habit of treating the Christian system as positively non-mythical, and that their theses are always apt to be turned to the account of orthodox belief.

There is a curious correspondence in the line of argument in the two cases mentioned. As concerning Krishna, so concerning Balder, we are told that "no certain traces are to be found of an actually existing cultus" of the God in early times; the only evidence for the *worship* being late,

though there is early evidence for the myth-name.¹ The position is, then, that a little-esteemed Scandinavian deity of old standing could be developed into a highly-esteemed one by grafting on his personality characteristics borrowed from Christism, and this in face of Christist opposition and propaganda. Professor Bugge's general argument is thus summarized²:—

“While the Balder myth includes in itself the most diverse elementsthe main element is Christian. Both in the Elder and the Younger Eddas the elements are Christian or partially Christian. . . .All this fairness and splendour [of Balder's complexion and character] in Professor Bugge's opinion is only a reflection of the Son of God, the White Christ as he has been named. . . .As Balder was depicted by an old Icelandic author as purest white in the colour of his body; so in. . . . legendary and medieval descriptions Christ is spoken of as fairest of body, and with golden yellow hair. . . .The blind Had [who threw at Balder the fatal mistletoe] is the blind Longinus who drove the spear into our Lord's side. . . .He concludes. . . .that the Balder myth has been influenced by these medieval Christian legends” [of Longinus slaying Christ, etc.]. Further, Professor Bugge suggests that Lucifer is the original of Loki; that the swearing of the trees and plants, excepting the mistletoe, not to injure Balder, is derived from the Jewish anti-Christian Gospel of the Middle Ages, the *Sepher Toldoth Jeschu*, where the trees and bushes swear not to bear Jesus if he be crucified, but where Judas makes a cabbage-stump serve the purpose. And so on.

Now, it is not disputed that Christian and classic ideas probably affected some of the later aspects of Scandinavian paganism. So long ago, indeed, as 1728, the antiquarian Keysler argued for Christian and scholarly influence in the *Völuspá* Saga;³ and the thesis was sustained by Von Schlözer in 1773, and by Adelung in 1797 and later. Such views were overborne for a time by the enthusiasm and nationalism aroused by the Brothers Grimm; but E. H. Meyer, an admirer of the latter, declares himself bound to confess that the earlier and less scholarly inquirers were right, and the learned Jacob Grimm wrong. Among recent students some amount of Christian contact before the

¹ H. Petersen, *Ueber den Gottesdienst des Nordens während der Heidenzeit*, Ger. trans. 1882, p. 84; E. H. Meyer, *Germanische Mythologie*, p. 262, cited by W. Nicolson, *Myth and Religion*, Helsingfors, 1892, p. 103.

² By Mr. Nicolson, as cited, p. 104.

³ See E. H. Meyer, *Völuspá: Eine Untersuchung*, 1889, pp. 1–8. Cp. H. Petersen, as cited, p. 114.

composition of the *Völuspa* and other sagas is generally conceded. Thus Professor Rhys holds that the "prophetic" form in which part of the story is preserved is "due to Christian and Biblical influence."¹ As regards the theological conceptions associated with Odin, again, Professor Müller suggested Christian influence a generation ago;² and Dr. Rydberg has shown that certain of the migration myths of the *Heimskringla* and the *Younger Edda* belong to the Christian period, and are the work of Latin scholars of the Middle Ages.³ Dr. Vigfusson, again, sees a marked Christian colouring in the entire myth.⁴ But that the main episode in the *Balder* saga should be an adaptation from an apocryphal Christian legend, and that *Balder* himself is an adaptation from the *White Christ*—this is a hypothesis too unpalatable to pass without clear evidence. And the more Professor Bugge's theory is examined, the weaker do his evidences seem. Among his incidental conclusions are these: that the funeral pile of *Balder* is taken from that of *Patroklos*, in *Homer*; and that the picture given of the God in *Saxo-Grammaticus*, which is older than that in the *Edda*, is derived from *Achilles*, as regards the item of *Balder's* consuming passion for *Nanna*. Thus we are to suppose that *Balder* was first shaped after a classical model, and later after a Christian; and this on the score of some very remote or very normal parallels.

In the hands of Professor Bugge's adherents, the theory is pushed still further. After being vigorously attacked by the German archæologist *Müllenhoff*,⁵ as by the Anglo-Scandinavian Professor *George Stephens*,⁶ and with less emphasis by Dr. Rydberg, it was embraced by *E. H. Meyer*, *Müllenhoff's* most distinguished pupil, who contends in his elaborate treatise on the *Völuspa* that the *Saga* is a literary adaptation from some current *Summa* of Christian theology.

¹ *Hibbert Lectures on Celtic Heathendom*, 1888, p. 535.

² *Chips from a German Workshop*, 1867, ii. 195-6.

³ *Teutonic Mythology*, Eng. tr. 1889, i. 39, 65, etc.

⁴ *Corpus Poeticum Boreale*, 1883, ii. 466.

⁵ *Deutsche Altertumskunde*, Bd. v. 1883.

⁶ *Professor Bugge's Studies in Northern Mythology shortly examined*, 1883, pp. 326-345.

Whereas Bugge had argued with comparative diffidence that the Balder and Loki story in the *Völuspá* Saga, heathen in basis, was worked up by a heathen poet, who had heard Christian and classical legends, gathered by the Vikings, E. H. Meyer decides confidently that the poem is rather the work of a Christian priest of the twelfth century belonging to one of the four theological schools set up in Iceland after its Christianization; and that the whole is a literary mystification,¹ not a genuine reproduction of native myths at all.

It must be said that such a proposition raises acute sociological difficulties. Unless the priest-poet of the twelfth century were a highly-evolved sceptic, he must have been either a Christian or a Pagan. Now, the existence of an impartial artistic scepticism, as distinct from simple unbelief, in such an environment at that period, is a greater improbability than that any of the aspects of the saga should be pagan work. Assume then that he was a believing Christian priest: was ever such a one known to lend new literary attractions to the story of a heathen God, and so to give heathenism the greater glory? The thesis is really exorbitant: Dr. Meyer's conception of such a "mystification," such a "Rätselgedicht," on the part of a medieval Icelandic priest, is but a substitution of a great difficulty for a small. It is one thing to grant that the slain and beloved Balder of the poetic Edda is a marked æsthetic advance on the Balder of Saxo's "history": it is another thing to explain the literary development in the fashion under notice.

And here, once more, there is to be charged on the innovating theorists a lack of comprehensiveness of survey. With all his learning, Dr. Meyer takes no account of the Celtic parallels to the Balder myth. Now, as Professor Rhys has shown, just as there is a plausible mythic equation, Gwydion = Woden = Indra,² there is a whole group of

¹ Mr. Nicolson (as cited, p. 130) so summarizes Meyer as to make him seem to hold that the saga-poet had a Christian purpose. Meyer really contends that the poem is not a "tendency" writing at all, being unfitted by its Christian ideas to serve Paganism, and by its pagan terminology to serve Christianity (*Völuspá*, p. 267. Cp. p. 294). Still he speaks of the "entirely Christianized (*ganz verchristlichten*) Balder and Hoder" (p. 220), and finally designates the poem a *Summa Christlicher Theologie* (end).

² *Celtic Heathendom*, as cited, pp. 282-304.

parallels between the Celtic Cuchulainn and Balder, besides a number of possible Celtic originals or parallels for the name and character of Loki.¹ In Professor Rhys's opinion such parallels, so far as they may indicate identities, stand for the body of myth common to the Aryan peoples before their divergence. But against this view there stands the difficulty that Balder does not figure at all prominently in the old Scandinavian worship.² So far as names of persons and places show, the chief God of Scandinavian paganism was Thor;³ Odin's supremacy and Balder's prestige being alike apparently late literary developments.⁴ Freyr, too, seems to have been the Sun-God alongside of Thor;⁵ and, again, Heimdal in the Edda has many of Balder's characteristics;⁶ just as, by the common consent of Holtzmann, Bergmann, and Rydberg, the figure of Harbard in the sagas is identical with that of Loki.⁷ For Dr. Meyer, the solution in every case is imitation of Christianity: that is to say, the saga-poet or poets created a whole series of new imaginary figures, duplicating one or two figures in the Christian system. Here again we have blank unverisimilitude. As hitherto understood, myths were never made in that fashion. Far less unlikely is the assumption that, to begin with, there were pagan mythical personages with some of the characteristics under notice, and that these were poetically developed.

So far as such a problem can be speculated upon from the outside, the solution seems to lie obviously through the theory of Professors Vigfusson and Powell as to the general development of Icelandic literature.⁸ That theory is that the germinal force which wrought the remarkable poetic

¹ *Id.* pp. 538-542.

² H. Petersen, as cited, p. 84.

³ *Id.* pp. 21-71, 76, 83, 87, 90, 94, 111, etc.

⁴ As to the original cast of Odin, see a very careful essay *The Cult of Othin*, by H. M. Chadwick (Clay & Sons, 1899).

⁵ Petersen, pp. 74-5. Professor Stephens writes: "Even as to Frigg herself, it is certain not only that Frigg and Froya were originally one deity, but also that this Goddess was at first one and the same with the God Froy or Frey, the English Frea" (*Professor Bugge's Studies Examined*, p. 314).

⁶ Cp. Rydberg, *Teutonic Mythology*, Eng. tr. pp. 90-97; 402-7.

⁷ *Id.* p. 652.

⁸ See the article on Icelandic Literature in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

evolution in Iceland was contact with the Celtic¹ literary culture of Western Britain and Ireland—a culture resulting from the long-standing Celtic institution of bardism, originally lacking or left rudimentary in Scandinavia. Such a contact could account for many of the mythic parallels noted by Professor Rhys.² Not that the negative evidence against the Balder cultus is conclusive. A Balder myth may conceivably have flourished among a stratum of the northern population that had been conquered by the Thor worshippers; for though Balder names are scarce in Scandinavia they appear to survive in Germany.³ And when such parallels exist as Rydberg has shown between the northern mythology and that of the Vedas, we are not entitled to disallow a single figure in the former as a medieval copy from Christianity. But inasmuch as the æsthetic refinement of the Balder story is one of the main grounds of the latter theory,⁴ the play of the Celtic literary influence is an adequate explanation, whereas the theory of a literary mystification, a *Rätselgedicht*, is a flout to all psychological probability.

The Celtic influence, doubtless, might carry with it concrete Christian elements. But against the whole theory of Christian imitation there stands the difficulty that the alleged coincidences are so remote. Dr. Meyer's phrase, "Summa of Christian theology," is a plain misnomer: what his evidence really suggests is an imitation not of the Christian theology but of the mythology. The theology is never once present. There is no sacrifice, as there is no cross. Balder's death is not the salvation of men but a sad catastrophe among the Gods; and the sorrow that prevails until his return connects far more obviously with the mourning cults of the pre-Christian Southern world than with the Christist. Read as a sun-myth, the story is

¹ As to *Slavonic* influence on Scandinavian mythology, see Bergmann, *Le Message de Skirnir et les Dits de Grimnir*, Introd.

² A Celtic derivation of the Balder myth is suggested by N. M. Petersen, *Nordisk Mythologi*, pp. 271–282, cited by Nicolson, p. 101.

³ Grimm, *Teutonic Mythology*, Eng. tr. ch. xi. On the possible significations of the name see also Simrock, *Handbuch der deutschen Mythologie*, 6te Aufl. 1887, § 36, p. 89 ff. Cp. Meyer as cited by Nicolson, pp. 133–4.

⁴ Cp. Nicolson, as cited, p. 139.

transparent; as an imitation of Christian theology it is truly a *Rätselgedicht*. As Professor Rhys has pointed out, the detail that Balder cannot return until all nature weeps for his loss is a very close notation of the fact that the sun "returns" in strength only when the winter frosts thaw in the spring, bedewing the whole earth. As regards the "descent into hell," which Professor Bugge thinks must be of Christian derivation, it is part of the normal sun myth,¹ and is obscurely present even in that of Apollo. Now, Professor Bugge thinks that the South-Teutonic God-name Fol, which Dr. Rydberg connects with Falr and Balder, is taken from the name Apollo:² why then should not classic sun-myths also have reached the North,³ supposing them not to have been primary?

Such an item as Balder's funeral pyre, we have seen, Professor Bugge holds to have been suggested by the transmitted story of Patroklos and Achilles, this though the pyre is specifically northern. But what of the pyre of the Sun-God Herakles;⁴ and what of the primary phenomenon of sunset, which probably gave the motive? Bugge's theory is that the Christian matter in the myth came through the wandering Vikings. Before even the Vikings, however, Teutons had reached the Græco-Roman world; and thereby hangs the question whether northern myths may not thus at different times have had an entrance into the lore of the south. All the while, Professor Bugge has never asked the obvious questions, Whence came the late cabbage-stalk story in the *Sepher Toldoth Jeschu*? and How came the myth of the blind Longinus into Christian lore? Parts of the *Sepher* are in all probability of late medieval origin. As regards the other myth, the name Longinus may very well be evolved from the spear,

¹ See hereinafter, *Christ and Krishna*, Sec. xvi.; *Mithraism*, § 6.

² Citations by Nicolson, pp. 120-1. Cp. Rydberg, p. 464.

³ In the ancient description of the temple of Upsala by Adam of Bremen the figure of the God Freyr is said to be represented *cum ingenti priapo*. This, like the other statues, suggests an image imported from the south. Cp. H. Petersen, as cited, p. 82, and Grimm, *Teutonic Mythology*, Eng. tr. 1882, i. 104-119.

⁴ Robertson Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, p. 353; and O. Müller, as there cited.

longche, of John xix. 34; but the soldier does not become blind in any legend before the ninth century.¹ How did *that* myth originate? It is quite conceivable that the medieval Christians should *adopt* the idea that the soldier who thrust the spear was blind, and had to be guided to the act by others; but on this view the hint had to be given them. Now, though Dr. Rydberg holds that Had or Hoder in the primary form of the Scandinavian myth had not been blind,² it is very credible, on mythological grounds, that the Sun-God should be slain by a blind brother = the Darkness or the Winter; and as the northern story turns in the later form upon the magical character of the mistletoe, we are almost driven to conclude that there was a sun-slaying myth of some sort to start with. Why else should the mistletoe have been introduced?³ It does not follow that the Christians got their idea from the Balder story as we now have it; but the obvious presumption is that a pagan myth preceded theirs; and such a myth may have been current among the Irish Celts, who had contacts alike with northern paganism and southern Christianity. In this way, too, might be explained the entrance of the mistletoe into the northern myth. In its earlier form, the death-dealing weapon is the sword *Mistiltein*.⁴ This would at once suggest the mistletoe; but then the mistletoe is unknown in Iceland and in Sweden.⁵ A Celto-Britannic origin would seem to be the only solution.

Again, when Professor Bugge seeks a Christian origin for the weeping of the Mother-Goddess Frigg over the slain Balder, he gives a fair mark for the derision of Professor Stephens.⁶ But, common sense apart, it should be noted that in the pre-Christian cults of Attis, Adonis, and Osiris there are similar phenomena, which *do* account for the Christian narrative. So, finally, with the idea that Christ

¹ Cp. Professor G. Stephens, *Bugge's Studies on Northern Mythology*, 1883, as cited, and Nicolson, p. 105.

² *Teutonic Mythology*, Eng. tr. i. 653, note.

³ Cp. Rydberg, p. 655, as to the reasoning involved.

⁴ Müllenhoff, *Deutsche Altertumskunde*, v. i. 56-7.

⁵ Nicolson, as cited, p. 125. But cp. Rydberg, p. 656, as to veneration of the mistletoe among the more southerly Teutons.

⁶ Stephens, as cited, p. 339.

was fair-haired. Whence came it? Conceivably from golden-haired Apollo; but then why should not the hyperborean Balder be as fair as the Greek Sun-God Apollo, whose cult was fabled to have come from the hyperboreans?¹ Agni in the Rig-Veda is white, and drives white horses; and Professor Rydberg finds his traits reproduced in Heimdal.² Why then seek a later source for the whiteness of Balder? And if *Balder* is an Anglo-Saxon word meaning *Lord*,³ why are we to assume that it was never applied to a Teutonic God before Jesus, when we know that the title *Lord* was given to many pre-Christian Gods, and that it is the probable original meaning of the Scandinavian God-name Freyr?⁴ Above all, why should the consuming love of the Sun-God for Nanna be held to need any literary derivation at a late period from Oenone?

When all is said, the problem of priorities doubtless remains obscure; but enough has been said to show that the confident inference of Christian sources for northern myths which only remotely and in externals compare with the Christian, is thus far a very ill-established and recalcitrant hypothesis. And as the whole Christian legend, in its present terminology, is demonstrably an adaptation of a mass of previous pagan myths, there is in all cases a special ground for doubt as to its being an original for a myth found among a semi-civilized people. The complete justification for such doubt, however, is best to be gathered from a detailed examination of the claim made, as already mentioned, in regard to the myth of Krishna, studied hereinafter.

Meantime, we have seen reason to insist, as regards every species of mythological problem, on a more comprehensive study of relations than is hitherto made by any one school. No single clue will lead us through the maze. Etymology, astronomy, solarism, the vegetation principle,

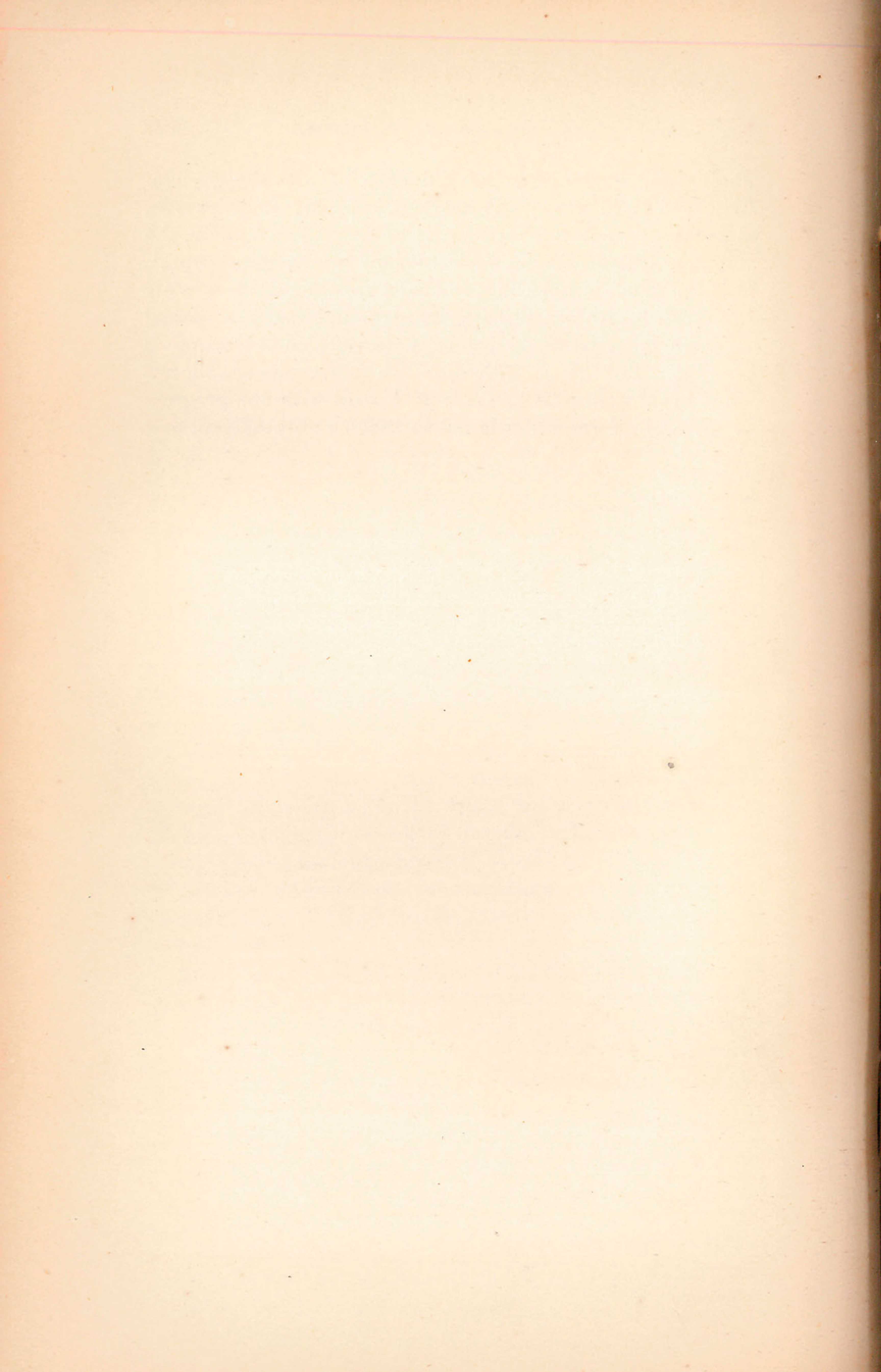
¹ Pausanias, x. 5. Compare the comments of Hermann Müller, *Das nordische Griechenthum und die urgeschichtliche Bedeutung des nordwestlichen Europas*, 1844, p. 447, ff.; and K. Ottfried Müller, *The Dorians*, bk. ii. c. 4.

² *Teutonic Mythology*, pp. 401-6.

³ Cp. Grimm, i. 220; and Simrock, as cited on p. 123.

⁴ Bergmann, *Le Message de Skirnir*, pp. 18-22.

phallicism, symbolism, the influence of art, the pseudo-historical influence of Evemerism, all play their part in elucidating what it concerns us to elucidate—namely, the religious systems of the world in their mythological aspect. It is too much to hope that so vast a growth can be speedily interpreted with scientific certainty; and many a special research must be made before a decisive co-ordination is possible. But at co-ordination we must aim; and the effort towards it must be made *pari passu* with the progress of research, if the latter is not to become unintelligent and sterile.



PART II.

CHRIST AND KRISHNA.

I. THE NATURE OF THE PROBLEM.

SOME recent English discussion¹ as to the historic relation of the Christ myth and the Krishna myth would seem to make desirable a judicial and yet popular² investigation of the subject, from the rationalist point of view. By the rationalist point of view is meant the attitude of disbelief in the supernatural claims of all religions alike—a point of view from which the question of the miraculous origin of Christianity is already disposed of, though of course liable at any time to be reopened. This point of view, however, in no way affects the logic of the following discussion, which lies outside the theological problems, ethical or

¹ The views of Professor Weber, hereinafter discussed, have naturally been welcomed and more or less fully endorsed by many Christian writers, missionary and other. See, for instance, Dr. J. M. Mitchell's *Hinduism, Past and Present*, 1885, pp. 79, 119; Major Jacobs' *Manual of Hindu Pantheism*, 1881, pp. 29–35; article on *Hindu Monism*, by Professor Richard Garbe, in *The Monist*, October, 1892, p. 66; J. Estlin Carpenter, art. on *The Obligations of the New Testament to Buddhism*, in *Nineteenth Century*, December, 1880, pp. 971–2. Mr. Carpenter's acceptance of the pro-Christian view on the historical question typifies the attitude of Christian scholarship. "It is the opinion of the best Indianists," he writes, "that the worship of Krishna did not arise until the fifth or sixth century of our era"; and this confessedly second-hand opinion he immediately erects into a certainty: "Christ can owe nothing to Krishna, because he *preceded him* by four or five centuries." Mr. Carpenter apparently regards Krishna as a historical character.

² No pretence is made of indicating the values of Sanskrit consonants, as is done in philological treatises. To the general reader these indications are useless, though vowel accents may not be altogether so. On this head it should be noted that the vowels in Indian names are to be pronounced in the Continental and not in the English manner. That is to say, the names Indra, Krishna, Gita, Veda, Purana, Siva, Rama, are to be pronounced Eendra, Kreeshna, Gheetah, Vehda, Poorahna, Seeva, Rahma. The "a," long or short, is always to be sounded as in "art" or "at," never as in "hate." The long sound is now commonly indicated by a circumflex.

philosophical. What is now in hand is a question of priority of myth forms. Some rationalists have, in my opinion, gone astray over the problem under notice, making errors of assumption and errors of inference in the course of an attempt to settle priority in a particular way; but the detection of these errors does not even settle the point of priority, much less affect the comparative principle.

And here I would point out that, while the Naturalist, like everybody else, is fallible, it is only he, of the two main disputants in this controversy, who can really be impartial, and so do critical service. Inasmuch as he is discussing, not the truth of any religion, but the question as to which religion first developed certain beliefs, he is free to reason justly on the historical data, and so *may* arrive at just conclusions.¹ Rationalists are thus far divided on the historical issue, partly because of the uncertainty of the evidence, partly because of differences or oversights of logical method. But in the case of the disputant who sets out with a belief in the truth of the Christian religion, miracles and all, impartiality is impossible. He holds his own religion to be supernatural and true, and every other to be merely human and false, in so far as it makes supernatural claims. Thus for him every question is as far as possible decided beforehand. He is overwhelmingly biassed to the view that any "myth" which resembles a Christian "record" is borrowed from that; and if, in some instances, he repels that conclusion, it is still for an *a priori* theological reason, as we shall see in the sequel, and not for simple historical reasons. Jesus having been *really* born of a virgin, and the New Testament teaching having been *really* inspired, any other story of a virgin-born demi-god is to be presumed posterior to Pontius Pilate, and any morality which coincides with the Christian is to be presumed an "echo" of that, because otherwise revelation would be cheapened. In the early days of the Church the Christian

¹ "There can be no true objective criticism until a man stands more or less indifferent to the result, and frees himself as far as possible from all subjective relations to the object of criticism." Baur, *Kritische Untersuchung über die kanonischen Evangelien*, 1847, p. 72.

saw, in myths which had confessedly *anticipated* his narratives, devices of the evil Spirit. To-day, the evil Spirit being partly disestablished, this explanation is not officially recognised, and the anticipatory myths of ancient paganism are simply kept out of sight; while as many other myths as possible are sought to be made out post-Christian and therefore borrowed. In this attitude the Christian Church is practically at one. Now, no sound critical result can ever be arrived at on these lines. No conclusion so reached can really strengthen the Christian position, because that position was one of the premises. Christianity remains to be proved all the same. The Naturalist, one says, *may* reason viciously, *may* reach the truth: the believing Christian *must* in such a matter reason viciously, and *can* only add commentary to dogma. But whereas the rationalist inquiry is in this connection logically free of presuppositions, any permanent results it attains are pure gain to human science; and must finally strengthen the Naturalist position if that position be really scientific.

II. THE QUESTION OF PRIORITY.

We wish to know, then, whether the Krishna myth or legend is in whole or in part borrowed from the Christ myth or Jesus legend, or *vice versâ*. The alternative terms myth or legend,¹ implying respectively the absence and the presence of some personal basis or nucleus for the legends of the Hindu and Christian Incarnations, leave us quite free in our treatment of the historic facts—free, that is, under the restrictions of scientific principle and logical law.

This special question of priority has long been before scholars. In Balfour's *Cyclopædia of India*, in the article "Krishna"—a somewhat rambling and ill-digested compilation—it is stated that "since the middle of the nineteenth century several learned men have formed the opinion that some of the legends relating to Krishna have been taken from the life of Jesus Christ. Major Cunningham

¹ See on this point of terminology Strauss, *Das Leben Jesu*, Einleit. § 10.

believes that the worship of Krishna is only a corrupt mixture of Buddhism and Christianity, and was a sort of compromise intended for the subversion of both religions in India," etc. In point of fact, the theory is much older than the middle of this century, as is pointed out by Professor Albrecht Weber in his exhaustive study of the Krishna Birth-Festival,¹ referred to in the Cyclopædia article. As early as 1762 Father Giorgi, in his *Alphabetum Tibetanum*,² discussed the question at length, founding even then on two previous writers, one Father Cassianus Maceratensis, the other the French orientalist, De Guignes (the elder). All three held that the name "Krisna" was only *nomen ipsum corruptum Christi Servatoris*, a corruption of the very name of the Saviour Christ, whose deeds had been impiously debased by inexpressibly wicked impostors. The narratives, Giorgi held, had been got from the *apocryphis libris de rebus Christi Jesu*, especially from the writings of the Manichæans. But his theory did not end there. The Indian epic-names Ayodhya, Yudhishtira, Yadava, he declared to be derived from the scriptural Judah; the geographical name Gomatî from Gethsemane; the name Arjuna from John, Durvasas from Peter, and so on.

But long before Giorgi, the English Orientalist Hyde,³ and long before Hyde, Postel⁴ (1552), had declared the name of Brahma to be a corruption of Abraham—a view which appears to have been common among Moham-medans;⁵ and Catholic missionaries early expounded this

¹ *Ueber die Krishnajanmâshtamî (Krishna's Geburtsfest)* in *Abhandlungen der Königlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin*, 1867. Translated piecemeal in *Indian Antiquary*, vols. iii. vi. (1874-7).

² Rome, 1762, pp. 253-263, cited by Weber, p. 311.

³ *Historia Religionis Veterum Persarum*, 1700, p. 31.

⁴ In his commentary on *Abrahami Patriarchæ liber Jesirah*, cited by Maurice, *Indian Antiquities*, 1793, etc. ii. 322 (should be 382—paging twice doubled).

⁵ Maurice, as cited, p. 323 (383). It may be, of course, that there is a very remote and secondary connection between the Abraham myth and the religion of India. It has been pointed out (*Bible Folk Lore*, 1884, pp. 25, 110) that Abraham's oak compares with Brahma's tree. The absurdity lies in the assumption that Brahmanism derives from the Hebrew Scriptures. On the problem of the origin and meaning of the name Brahma see Professor Müller's Gifford Lectures on *Psychological Religion*, 1893, p. 240, and citations by him.

discovery among the Hindus, adding that the name of the female deity Saraswati was only a corruption of Sarah.¹ Other propagandists, again, scandalized Sir William Jones by assuring the Hindus that they were "almost Christians, because their Brahma, Vishnu, and Mahesa were no other than the Christian Trinity";² and Sir William's shocked protest did not hinder his disciple, the Rev. Thomas Maurice, from speaking of the "almost Christian theology" of Brahmanism;³ Maurice's general contention being that the Indian and all other Triad systems were vestiges of an original pure revelation.⁴ Nor was this all. As early as 1672 the Dutch missionary and trader Balde (Baldæus)⁵ maintained a number of the propositions supported in our own generation by Professor Weber (who does not refer to him)—namely, the derivation of parts of the Krishna myth from the Christian stories of the birth of Jesus, the massacre of the innocents,⁶ etc.

Following this line of thought, Sir William Jones in 1788 suggested that "the spurious gospels which abounded in the first ages of Christianity had been brought to India, and the wildest part of them repeated to the Hindus, who ingrafted them on the old fable of Cesava, the Apollo of Greece";⁷ this after the statement: "That the name of Crishna, and the general outline of his story, were long anterior to the birth of our Saviour, and probably to the time of Homer, we know very certainly."⁸ And in the same treatise (*On the Gods of Greece, Italy, and India*) the scholar took occasion to announce that "the adamantine pillars of our Christian faith" could not be "moved by the

¹ Moor's *Hindu Pantheon*, 1810, p. 130. "Writers are found to identify Buddha with the prophet Daniel" (H. H. Wilson, *Works*, ii. 317).

² *On the Gods of Greece, Italy, and India*: in *Asiatic Researches*, i. 272.

³ *Indian Antiquities*, ii. 325.

⁴ *Id. ib.* and v. 785, 806, etc. The Rajputs, says the Portuguese historian De Faria y Sousa (17th cent.), "acknowledge one God in three persons, and worship the Blessed Virgin, a doctrine which they have preserved ever since the time of the apostles" (Kerr's *Collection of Voyages*, 1812, vi. 228).

⁵ An English translation of his work on Ceylon, etc., was published last century in Churchill's collection of travels, vol. iii.

⁶ Cited by Maurice, *History of Hindostan*, 1798, ii. 330, note.

⁷ *Asiatic Researches*, i. 274.

⁸ *Id.* p. 273.

result of any debates on the comparative antiquity of the Hindus and Egyptians, or of any inquiries into the Indian theology.”¹ Still later, the French Orientalist, Polier, “seeing in the Hebrew Scriptures the earliest of all religious lore, decided that the triumph of Krishna over the serpent Kaliya (whose head he is represented crushing under his foot, and which at times, on the other hand, is seen biting his heel) was “a travesty of the tradition of the serpent-tempter who introduced death into the world, and whose head the saviour of mankind was to crush.”² These writers had of course taken it for granted that all heathen resemblances to Jewish and Christian stories must be the result of imitation; but on equally *a priori* grounds other Christian writers argued that the “impure” cult of Krishna could never have been derived from Christianity; and the view spread that the Indian myths were of much greater antiquity than had been supposed; the Carmelite monk Paulinus³ (really Werdin or Wesdin) surmising that the legendary war, with which was connected the story of Vishnu’s incarnation in Krishna, was to be dated “a thousand and more years before the birth of Christ.”

Thus far both sides had simply proceeded on *a priori* principles, the view that Christianity could not give rise to anything bad being no more scientific than the view that all systems which resembled it must have borrowed from it. A comparatively scientific position was first taken up by the German Kleuker, who, discussing Paulinus’ polemic, observed that he “willingly believed that the [Krishna] fable did not first arise out of these [Apocryphal] Gospels,” but that nevertheless it might have derived “some matter” from them.⁴ According to Weber, the view that the Krishna story was the earlier became for a time the more general one. It is doubtful if this was so; but in 1810 we do find

¹ In the same spirit, Maurice constantly aims at repelling the criticisms of Volney and other sceptics, always begging the question, and resenting its being raised.

² *Mythologie des Indous*, i. 445, cited by Weber.

³ *Systema Brahmanicum*, Rome, 1791, pp. 147, 152; cited by Weber.

⁴ *Abhandlungen über die Geschichte und Alterthümer Asiens*, Riga, 1797, iv. 70; cited by Weber. (The work is a translation, by J. F. Fich, of papers from the *Asiatic Researches*, with notes and comments by Kleuker.)

the English Orientalist Moor, following Jones, declaring it to be "very certain" that Krishna's "name and the general outline of his story were long anterior to the birth of our Saviour, and probably to the time of Homer"¹—this while saying nothing to countenance the theory of borrowing from Christianity, but on the contrary throwing out some new heterodox suggestions. Later the German mythologist Creuzer, in his great work,² set aside the supposed Christian parallels, and pointed rather to the Egyptian myth of Osiris. It was impossible, however, that this view should be quietly acquiesced in by Anglo-Indian scholarship, partly bound up as it has been with "missionary enterprise," and subservient as it is to the anti-philosophical spirit which had prevailed in English archæology since the French Revolution. It has been one of the most serious drawbacks to our knowledge of Indian antiquities that not only are the missionaries to such a large extent in possession of the field of research, but the scruples of English pietism, especially during the present century, tend to keep back all data that could in any way disturb orthodoxy at home. Of this tendency we shall find examples as we proceed. How far important evidence has been absolutely suppressed it is of course impossible to say; but observed cases of partial suppression create strong suspicions; and it is certain that the bulk of Christian criticism of the evidences produced has been much biassed by creed.

III. AGE OF INDIAN DOCUMENTS.

On the other hand, however, the case in favour of the assumption of Christian priority has been in a general way strengthened by the precise investigation of Hindu literature, which has gone to show that much of it, as it stands, is of a far later redaction than had once been supposed. It has been truly said by Ritter that "in no literature are so many works to be found to which a remote origin has

¹ *Hindu Pantheon*, p. 200.

² *Symbolik*, 3te Aufl. i. 42, cited by Weber.

been assigned on insufficient grounds as in the Indian."¹ The measureless imagination of India, unparalleled in its disregard of fact and its range of exaggeration, has multiplied time in its traditions as wildly as it has multiplied action in its legends, with the result that its history is likely to remain one of the most uncertain of all that are based on documents. It was indeed admitted by the first capable Orientalists that there is, properly speaking, no history in Indian literature at all.² All early historical traditions are untrustworthy; but no other people ever approached the flights of fancy of the Hindu mind, which has measured the lives of its mythic heroes by millions of years, and assigned to the Institutes of Menu, certainly not 3,000 years old, an antiquity exceeding 4,320,000 years multiplied by six times seventy-one.³ Of this delirium of speculation, the true explanation, despite all cavils, is doubtless that of Buckle—the influence of overwhelming manifestations of nature in fostering imagination and stunning the sceptical reason.⁴ From even a moderate calculation of Indian antiquity, to say nothing of the fancies of the Brahmans, the step down to documentary facts is startling; and it was not unnatural that scepticism should in turn be carried to extremes.

When the documents are examined, it turns out that the oldest Indian inscriptions yet found are not three centuries earlier than the Christian era.⁵ Nor does there seem a probability of much older records being found, there being

¹ *History of Ancient Philosophy*, Eng. tr. 1838, i. 69. Ritter's whole argument, which was one of the first weighty criticisms of the early assumptions of Orientalists, is judicial and reasonable.

² See Colebrooke in *Asiatic Researches*, ix. 398–9.

³ Jones in *Asiatic Researches*, ii. 116. See a number of samples of this disease of imagination cited by Buckle, 3-vol. ed. i. 135–7.

⁴ Possibly, too, the partly entranced state of mind cultivated by Hindu sages may involve a repetitive brain process analogous to that seen in dreams, in which objects are multiplied and transformed, and the waking perception of time is superseded.

⁵ Those of king Asoka, about 250 B.C. Tiele, *Outlines of the History of Ancient Religions*, Eng. tr. p. 121. See them in *Asiatic Society's Journals*, viii. xii.; in Wheeler's *History of India*, vol. iii. Appendix i.; in Rhys Davids' *Buddhism*, pp. 220–8; and in the *Indian Antiquary*, June, 1877, vol. vi. Interesting extracts are given in Professor Müller's *Introduction to the Science of Religion*, ed. 1882, pp. 5, 6, 23.

reason to doubt whether the practice of writing in India dates many centuries earlier. Says Professor Max Müller :—

“There is no mention of writing materials, whether paper, bark, or skins, at the time when the Indian Diaskeuasts [say, editors] collected the songs of their Rishis [poets or seers]; nor is there any allusion to writing during the whole of the Brahmano period [*i.e.*, according to the Professor's division, down to about 600 or 800 B.C.] Nay, more than this, even during the Sutra period [600 to 200 B.C.] all the evidence we can get would lead us to suppose that even then, though the art of writing began to be known, the whole literature of India was preserved by oral tradition only.”¹

Professor Müller's division of Indian historical periods is somewhat unscientific; but Professor Teile, who complains of this, accepts his view as to the introduction of the art of writing :—

“Nearchus (325 B.C.)² and Megasthenes³ (300 B.C.) both state that the Indians did not write their laws; but the latter speaks of inscriptions upon mile-stones, and the former mentions letters written on cotton. From this it is evident that writing, probably of Phœnician origin, was known in India before the third century B.C., but was applied only rarely, if at all, to literature.”⁴

But all this, of course, is perfectly consistent with the oral transmission of a great body of very ancient utterance. All early compositions, poetic, religious, and historical, were transmissible in no other way; and the lack of letters did not at all necessarily involve loss. In all probability

¹ *History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature*, pp. 500–1. Cp. p. 244.

² One of the generals of Alexander the Great. Only fragments of his account of his voyage on the Indian coast are preserved.

³ Greek ambassador from Seleucus Nicator to the Indian king Sandracottus (Chandragupta) about 300 B.C. He wrote a work on India, of which, as of that of Nearchus, we have only the fragments preserved by later historians. See them all translated in the *Indian Antiquary*, vols. vi. and vii. (1877–8), from the collection of Schwanbeck.

⁴ *Outlines*, as cited. On the general question of the antiquity of writing it was long ago remarked by Jacob Bryant that “The Romans carried their pretensions to letters pretty high, and the Helladian Greeks still higher; yet the former marked their years by a nail driven into a post; and the latter for some ages simply wrote down the names of the Olympic victors from Coræbus, and registered the priestesses of Argos” (Holwell's *Mythological Dictionary*, condensed from Bryant's *Analysis of Ancient Mythology*, 1793, p. 259). The question as regards India, however, cannot be taken as settled. In view of the antiquity of literary habits in other parts of Asia, it may well turn out that the estimates above cited are too low. Tiele's “only rarely, if at all,” makes rather too little of the Greek testimony. The Phœnician origin of the Indian alphabets, too, though probable, is only one of many conflicting hypotheses. For a discussion of these see I. Taylor's valuable work on *The Alphabet*, 1883, ii. 304, ff.

ancient unwritten compositions were often as accurately transmitted as early written ones, just because in the former case there was a severe discipline of memory, whereas in the other the facility of transcription permitted of many errors, omissions, and accidental interpolations. And the practice of oral transmission has survived.

“Even at the present day, when MSS. are neither scarce nor expensive, the young Brahmans who learn the songs of the Vedas and the Brâhmanas and the Sutras, invariably learn them from oral tradition, and learn them by heart. They spend year after year under the guidance of their teacher, learning a little day after day, repeating what they have learnt as part of their daily devotion.....The ambition to master more than one subject is hardly known in India.In the Mahâbhârata we read, ‘Those who sell the Vedas, and even those who write them, those also who defile them, shall go to hell.’ Kumarila [800 c.E.] says : ‘That knowledge of the truth is worthless which has been acquired from the Veda, if.....it has been learnt from writing or been received from a Sûdra.’ How then was the Veda learnt? It was learnt by every Brahman during twelve years of his studentship or Bramacharyâ.”¹

IV. THE SPECIAL DOCUMENTS.

In point of fact, no one disputes that the Vedas are in the main of extremely ancient composition (the oldest portions being at least three thousand years old, and possibly much more) ;² and that a large part even of the

¹ Müller, work cited, pp. 501-3. Comp. Tiele, *Outlines*, p. 123. This description corresponds remarkably with Cæsar’s account of the educational practices of the Druids. He tells (*De Bello Gallico*, vi. 14) that many entered the Druid discipline, learning orally a great number of verses; some remaining in pupillage as much as twenty years; and this though writing was freely used for secular purposes. Cæsar offers as explanation the wish to keep sacred lore from the many, and the desire to strengthen the faculty of memory. We may add, in regard alike to Druids and Brahmans, the prestige of ancient custom, which in other religions made priests continue to use stone knives long after metal ones were invented. “Brahmanism...has kept to the last to its primitive tools, its penthouses of bamboo, its turf-clods and grass-blades, and a few vessels of wood” (Barth, *The Religions of India*, Eng. tr. p. 129). Modern European parallels will readily suggest themselves.

² Barth, p. 6.

literature of commentary upon them, as the Brâhmanas, treatises of ritual and theology, and the Upanishads, religio-philosophical treatises, originated at more or less distant periods before our era. We have seen that Professor Müller makes even the Sutra period—that of the composition of manuals for public and domestic guidance—begin about 600 B.C. But the religious history of India, as of every other country, is that of a process of development; and just as the system of the Vedas was superimposed on simpler forms of nature-worship,¹ so the elaborate system based on the Vedas by the Brahmans was innovated upon from different sides. Thus, four or five centuries before our era, there arose the great movement of Buddhism, in which comparatively new doctrine was bound up with modifications of ancient legends; while on the other hand deities formerly insignificant, or little known, gradually came to be widely popular. Such a development took place in a notable degree in the case of the cult of Krishna, now specially under notice.

At the present moment the worship of Krishna is the most popular of the many faiths of India; and it has unquestionably been so for many centuries. It is equally certain, however, that it is no part of the ancient Vedic system; and that the bulk of the literature in connection with it is not more than a thousand years old, if so much. Mention of Krishna certainly does occur in the earlier literature, but the advent of his worship as a preponderating religion in historic India is late. On the face of the matter, it would seem to have been accepted and endorsed by the Brahmans either because they could not help themselves, or by way of a weapon to resist some other cultus that pressed Brahmanism hard. Hence the peculiar difficulty of the question of origins as regards its details.

The chief documents in which Krishnaism is to be studied are (1) the Mahâbhârata, a great epic poem, of which the events are laid long anterior to our era, and of

¹ In the Veda, says M. Barth, "I recognize a literature that is pre-eminently sacerdotal, and in no sense a popular one" (*Religions of India*, pref. p. xiii.).

which much of the matter is probably pre-Buddhistic;¹ (2) the Bhagavat Gîtâ or "Song of the Most High"; (3) the Purânas, an immense body of legendary and theological literature, including eighteen separate works, of which the earliest written belong to our eighth or ninth century. It is in the latter, especially in the Bhagavat Purâna and Vishnu Purâna, that the great mass of mythic narrative concerning Krishna is to be found. The tenth book of Bhagavat Purâna consists wholly of the Krishna saga. The Gîtâ is a fine poetico-philosophical composition, one of the masterpieces of Indian literature in its kind, in every way superior to the Purânas; and it simply makes Krishna the voucher of its advanced pantheistic teaching, giving no legends as to his life.² Of this work the date is uncertain, and will have to be considered later. The Mahâbhârata, again, presents Krishna as a warrior demi-God,³ performing feats of valour, and so mixed up with quasi-historic events as to leave it an open question whether the story has grown up round the memory of an actual historic personage. But it is impossible to construct for that legendary history any certain chronology; and the obscurity of the subject gives to Christian writers the opportunity to argue that even in the epos Krishna is not an early but a late element—an interpolation arising out of the modern popularity of his cultus. We must then look to analysis and comparative research for light on the subject.

¹ See Professor Goldstücker's essay in the *Westminster Review*, April, 1868; or his *Literary Remains*, ii. 135, 142. The Mahâbhârata, says M. Barth, "which is in the main the most ancient source of our knowledge of these religions, is not even roughly dated; it has been of slow growth, extending through ages, and is besides of an essentially encyclopædic character" (*Religions of India*, p. 187; cp. Goldstücker, ii. 130).

² Owing to the Bhagavat Gîtâ and the Bhagavat Purâna being alike sometimes referred to as "the Bhagavat," there has occurred the mistake of referring to the Gîtâ as containing the legends of Krishna's life.

³ In one passage "all the heroes of the poem are represented as incarnations of Gods or demons" (Barth, *Religions of India*, p. 172 n.).

V. THE KRISHNA LEGEND.

The outlines of the Krishna saga are well known,¹ but for the convenience of readers I will transcribe the brief analysis given by M. Barth²:—

“As a character in the epic . . . and as accepted by Vishnuism, Krishna is a warlike prince, a hero, equally invincible in war and love, but above all very crafty, and of a singularly doubtful moral character, like all the figures, however, which retain in a marked way the mythic impress. The son of *Vasudeva* and *Devaki* . . . he was born at Mathurâ, on the *Yâmunâ*, between Delhi and Agra, among the race of the *Yâdavas*, a name which we meet with again at a later period in history as that of a powerful *Râjput* tribe. Like those of many solar heroes, his first appearances were beset with perils and obstructions of every kind. On the very night of his birth his parents had to remove him to a distance beyond the reach of his uncle, King *Kamsa*, who sought his life because he had been warned by a voice from heaven that the eighth son of *Devaki* would put him to death, and who consequently had his nephews the princes regularly made away with as soon as they saw the light . . . Conveyed to the opposite shore of the *Yamunâ*, and put under the care of the shepherd *Nanda* and his wife *Yaçodâ*, he was brought up as their son in the woods of *Vrindâvana*, with his brother *Balarâma*, ‘*Rama* the strong,’ who had been saved as he was from massacre,” and “who has for his mother at one time *Devaki* herself, at another time another wife of *Vasudeva*, *Rohinî* . . . The two brothers grew up in the midst of the shepherds, slaying monsters and demons bent on their destruction, and sporting with the *Gopîs*, the female cowherds of *Vrindâvana*. These scenes of their birth and infancy, these juvenile exploits, these erotic gambols with the *Gopîs*, this entire idyll of *Vrindâvana* . . . became in course of time the essential portion of the legend of Krishna, just as the places which were the scene of them remain to the present time the most celebrated centres of his worship. Arrived at adolescence, the two brothers put to death *Kamsa*, their persecutor, and Krishna became king of the *Yâdavas*. He continued to clear the land of monsters, waged successful wars against impious kings, and took a determined side in the great struggle of the sons of *Pându* against those of *Dhritarâshtra*, which forms the subject of the *Mahâbhârata*. In the interval he had transferred the seat of his dominion to the fabulous city of *Dvârakâ*, ‘the city of gates,’ the gates of the West, built on the bosom of the western sea, and the site of which has since been localized in the peninsula of *Gujarât*. It was there that he was overtaken, himself and his race, by the final catastrophe. After having been present at the death of his brother, and seen the *Yâdavas*, in fierce struggle, kill one another to the last man, he himself perished, wounded in the heel, like *Achilles*, by the arrow of a hunter.”

¹ See a detailed account in Sir George Cox's *Mythology of the Aryan Nations*, ed. 1882, pp. 367–371.

² *Religions of India*, pp. 172–4.

In this mere outline there may be seen several features of the universal legend of a conquering and dying sun-God; and, though the identification of Krishna with the sun is as old as the written legend, it may be well at the outset to indicate the solar meanings that have been attributed to the story by various writers. The name of Krishna means "the black one" (or "blue-black one"),¹ and he thus in the first place comes into line with the black deities of other faiths, notably the Osiris² of Egypt, to say nothing of the black manifestations of Greek deities,³ and of the Christian Jesus.⁴ Why then is Krishna, in particular, black? It is, I think, fallacious to assume that any one cause can be fixed as the reason for the attribution of this colour to deities in ancient religions; primary mythological causes might be complicated by the fact that the smoke of sacrifices had from time immemorial blackened⁵ statues innumerable, and by the mere fact that, as in Egypt, black stone was very serviceable for purposes of statuary. At Megara there were three ebony statues of Apollo; and the mystic explanation of the choice of material seems to have been purely fanciful.⁶ But there are, all the same, primary mythological explanations, which, in view of many of the facts,⁷ must be pronounced necessary; and one is offered

¹ See Moor, *Hindu Pantheon*, p. 195, as to the epithet "blue-blooded."

² Plutarch, *On Isis and Osiris*, cc. 22, 33.

³ Pausanias, i. 48; ii. 2; viii. 6, 42; ix. 27.

⁴ For a list of black Christian statues of Mary and Jesus (= Isis and Horos) see Higgins's *Anacalypsis*, i. 138. Compare King's *Gnostics*, 2nd ed. p. 173.

⁵ Arnobius, *Adv. Gentes*, vi. 16; Baruch, vi. 21. Cp. Pausanias, i. 27, as to the grimy statues of Athênê, said to have been touched by fire when Xerxes took the city.

⁶ Pausanias, i. 42. Again, Pausanias asserts (viii. 23) that all River-Gods in Egypt *except* the Nile have white statues, Nilus being figured as black because it flows through Ethiopia!

⁷ The Black Demeter may reasonably be assumed to be so as representing the earth; the black-robed Isis is naturally the moon (Plutarch, *I. and O.* 52); and the blue-black robe of Leto (Hesiod, *Theogony*, 406) as Night-Goddess, is obviously significant; but Leto also, like Isis, was further represented as an Earth-Goddess (Macrobius, *Sat.* i. 17), and black in other cases seems to have a more indirect symbolical meaning. The bull Apis and the bull Mnevis, in the Egyptian cults, may be either solar or lunar (Aelian, *De Nat. Animal.*, says Mnevis was sacred to the sun, and Apis to the moon); and we know from Strabo (xvii. 1, § 27) that Mnevis was treated as a God in a temple of the sun at Heliopolis; but both are black. Apis, the "image of the soul of Osiris" (Plutarch, *I. and O.* 20, 29, 39; cp. Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, i. 21), was not only black himself (Strabo, xvii. 1, § 31; Herodotus, iii. 28) but put on black

by Professor Tiele in the present case. Krishna is "the hidden sun-god of the night,"¹ a character attaching more or less to many figures in the Hindu pantheon.

"That Parasau-Râma, the 'axe-Râma,' is a God of the solar fire, admits of no doubt. He springs from the Brâhman race of the Bhrigus (lightning); his father's name is Jamadagni, 'the burning fire.' Like all Gods of the solar fire, he is the nightly or hidden one, and accordingly he slays Arjuna, the bright God of day. . . . In the myth of Krishna, on the other hand, the two sun-Gods are friendly,² the old pair of deities Vishnu and Indra in a new shape."³

It should be also noted that Vishnu, of whom Krishna is an Incarnation, is represented as "dark blue,"⁴ as is Krishna himself in one statue,⁵ and as were at times Kneph⁶ and Osiris⁷ and Amun⁸ in Egypt.

The complications of solar and other mythology, however, are endless; and it is one thing to give a general account such as this, and another to trace with confidence the evolution of such a deity as Krishna from the beginning. Professor de Gubernatis, one of the most acute, if also one of the more speculative of modern mythologists, is convinced of the solar character of Krishna; but points out that in the Rig Veda he is merely a demon⁹—a natural character

robes (Plutarch, *I. and O.* 39, 43.) And Mnevis, said to be the sire of Apis, is black to begin with (*I. and O.* 33). Again, the statue of the later God Serapis, like Osiris, was blue or black, as containing many metallic ingredients (Clemens Alexandrinus, *Protrep.* iv.). The alternate ascription of the colour blue, as noted below, points to the Night-Sun theory.

¹ *Outlines*, p. 145. Cp. Plutarch, *Isis and Osiris*, c. 9.

² In Egypt, Typhon, who was red (*Is. and Os.* cc. 22, 30, 31, 33) and was declared to be solar (*Id.* 41), was the enemy of the "good" sun-God Osiris, who was black, and who was also declared to represent the lunar world (*Id. ib.* Contrast 51, 52). The transpositions are endless—a warning against rigid definitions in less known mythologies.

³ *Outlines*, p. 145. Arjuna is "himself a name and form of Indra" (Weber in *Indian Antiquary*, iv. 246).

⁴ Moor's *Hindu Pantheon*, pp. 26, 27. Goldstücker, *Remains*, i. 309. Compare Pausanias, x. 78, as to a blue-black demon.

⁵ Of blue marble, in which he figures as swimming on the water, in the great cistern of Khatmandu (Bähr, *Symbolik des Mosaischen Cultus*, i. 326, and refs.).

⁶ Eusebius, *Præparatio Evangelica*, iii. 1.

⁷ Cp. Clemens, *Protrep.* iv.; von Bohlen, *Das alte Indien*, i. 228; Kenrick i. 396.

⁸ Kenrick, *Ancient Egypt*, i. 370; Tiele, *Egyptian Religion*, Eng. tr. p. 160.

⁹ Compare Senart, *Essai sur la Légende du Buddha*, 2e éd. p. 322, n. In the early faiths the "dæmon" of mixed characteristics is a constant figure, he being often the deity of outsiders to begin with; while in any case the need to propitiate him would tend to raise his rank. Compare the habit,

of "the black one"; is the enemy of the Vedic God Indra, and only later becomes the God of the cows and cowherds.¹ He remains, however, "the God who is black during the night, but who becomes luminous in the morning among the cows of the dawning, or among the female cowherds."² A reasonable presumption is that he was a demon for the Aryan invaders, as being a God of the aborigines; and that for these he was a God of the sky and the rain, hence black, hence God of the night, hence associated with the Night-Sun, hence a Sun-God generally. Again, if Mr. Frazer be right as to the priority of the idea of a Vegetation-God in cults commonly associated with the Sun, Krishna may have been primarily such a God, and as thus associated with the earth may have been black—the explanation of Mr. Frazer for the blackness of Dêmêtêr and Osiris.³ Or he may have been black merely as a God of the black-skinned natives.⁴ In any case he was the rival of Indra,

common in rural Britain till recently, of "speaking the Devil fair," and calling him "the good man." He, being a survival of the genial Pan, exemplifies both of the tendencies to compromise. As to the gradual lowering of the status of dæmons, cp. Grote, *History*, ed. 1888, i. 66. Osiris and Isis, again, were held to be raised "from the rank of good dæmons to that of deities," while Typhon (Set) was discredited, but still propitiated. See Plutarch, l.c. 27, 30. Cp. 25–6, and Pleyte, *La Religion des Pré-Iraélites*, Leide, 1865, p. 131. It is thus possible that all three were primarily aboriginal Gods, accepted in different degrees by races of conquerors, though "from the most remote antiquity Set is one of the Osirian circle, and is thus a genuine Egyptian deity" (Tiele, *Egyptian Religion*, Eng. tr. p. 49). The difficulty is to conceive how otherwise Set came to be "in turn revered and hated, invoked and persecuted," till finally his very name was officially proscribed (*Id.* p. 49). Tiele's historical theory is interesting, though not conclusive (pp. 47–51. Cp. E. Meyer, *Geschichte des Alterthums*, i. 69, 71, 112). It is not clear whether Set was not confounded with the alien God Sutech, and thereby discredited (Meyer, p. 135 = § 111. See also his monograph *Set-Typhon*, 1875, pp. 55–62; and cp. Tiele, *Egyptian Religion*, p. 143 and p. 190).

¹ *Zoological Mythology*, 1872, i. 75.

² *Id.* p. 51. Cp. Goldziher, *Hebrew Mythology*, Eng. tr. p. 146 ff.

³ See Note at end of section.

⁴ The Greek Hermes, who is surmised (Renan, *Etudes d'Histoire Religieuse*, pp. 42, 46, following K. O. Müller) to have been a Pelasgic deity, who survived with the ancient race, has many of the characteristics of Krishna, and in particular makes himself black with ashes (Callimachus, *Hymn to Artemis*, 69) in one story. The theory of the commentators (Spanheim, cited in Ernesti's ed. *ad loc.*), that this was not the celestial but a terrestrial Hermes, recalls the formula that the *Iliad* was written not by Homer but by another poet of the same name. But the old discussions as to the four or five Mercuries, the celestial, the terrestrial, the infernal, and yet others (cp. Cicero, *De Natura Deorum*, iii. 22; Servius on the *Æneid*, iv. 577), point to a number

and so presumably had similar functions. And that original relation to Indra is perfectly borne out by the written legend, in which Krishna is represented as turning away worshippers from Indra,¹ whose cult his probably superseded, and who figures in the account of Krishna's death and ascension as a subordinate God² (obviously = the firmament, a character always more or less associated with him in the Vedas, where he is "the pluvial and thundering God"³), through whose region of space, Krishna passes on the way to heaven.⁴

But as against all such attempts to explain Krishnaism in terms of the observed mythic tendencies of ancient Aryan religion, there is maintained on the Christian side—not, as we shall see, by any important thinker—the proposition before mentioned, that the entire Krishna legend is a late fabrication, based on the Christian gospels. It is necessary, therefore, to examine that argument in detail before we form any conclusions.

NOTE ON THE BLACK OSIRIS.

That Osiris was either a Sun-God or the Nile-God in origin is the view most favoured by the evidence in Plutarch (*Isis and Osiris*, cc. 32, 33). Half a century ago, however, Kenrick (*Ancient Egypt*, 1850, i. 400) rejected the solar theory, and identified Osiris with the Earth and the principle of fertility; here anticipating Mr. J. G. Frazer, who in *The Golden Bough* (1890, i. 311, ff.) insists, as against Tiele and others, that Osiris was a God of Vegetation. The solution seems to lie in admitting that the later Osiris combined *all* the characteristics in question. To insist upon any one in particular is to obscure the psychological process of ancient dogmatics.

of syncretic adaptations, of which the result was that Hermes, though not clearly a sun-God to start with, in the end has the solar characteristics (cp. Eméric-David, *Introduction*, end).

¹ *Vishnu Purâna*, b. v. cc. 10, 11. Wilson's trans. 1840, pp. 522-7.

² He acknowledges himself vanquished by Krishna (*Id.* c. 30, p. 588) and honours him (*Id.* c. 12, p. 528). Similarly Krishna overthrows Varuna. Muir, *Sanskrit Texts*, iv. ch. ii. § 5.

³ Gubernatis, i. 403.

⁴ Maurice, *History of Hindostan*, ii. 473, professing to follow the Mahâ-bhârata.

The most obvious grounds for connecting Osiris with Vegetation are his associations with corn and trees (Frazer, i. 303-9). But it is not at all clear that these are the earliest characteristics of the Egyptian God. Rather the strictly historical evidence appears to show that Osiris was originally a Sun-God, whose cultus was latterly modified by foreign elements—that, in fact, the Vegetation-principle, regarded by Mr. Frazer as the root of the cult, was added in imitation of the Adonis cult of Byblos. See Meyer, *Geschichte des Alterthums*, i. 67-69 and refs. The arboreal character of Osiris is shared by him with Dionysos (see above, p. 84), who nevertheless assumed solar characteristics, and was represented as gold-coloured or red (Pausanias, ii. 2); and by Yahweh, who has no other characteristic of the Vegetation-God. If then Yahweh assumed it after having begun as a solar or thundering God, the Osiris cult may have done the same.

The case being thus complicated, it is hardly possible to settle it on the side of one hypothesis by ascribing the blackness of the God to his connection with the earth. As we have seen, there are many grounds on which deities may be represented as black. Osiris was held by some to be black as representing *water* (Plut. 33); while others associated him with sun and moon respectively (*Id.* 43, 51, 52). A similar blending occurs in the case of the Nile-God Sebak (Tiele, *Egyptian Religion*, Eng. tr., pp. 135-137). The water theory may be the most comprehensive solution (cp. Selden, *De Diis Syris*, Syntag. i. cap. 4, ed. 1680, p. 73). Mr. Frazer offers no explanation of Osiris as *blue*, though on his view he can explain him as black or as green (i. 403), which latter colour is said by Wilkinson (*Manners and Customs of Ancient Egyptians*, ed. 1878, iii. 81) to be very common in the Osiris monuments. But we have here to note (1) that Osiris might be green by the mere chance of the medium being green basalt (see Maspero, *Manual of Egyptian Archaeology*, Eng. tr. ed. 1895, p. 237); (2) that in the coloured monuments “*the blues have turned somewhat green or grey; but this is only on the surface*” (*Id.* p. 203); and (3) that “*water is always represented by a flat tint of blue, or by blue covered with zig-zag lines in black*” (*Id.* p. 204). So in Greece black bulls were sacrificed to Poseidon as representing the colour of the sea (Cornutus, *De nat. Deor.* c. 22). All things considered, it seems likely that in

Egypt, where the soil counted for so little without the Nile overflow, the latter rather than the former would figure as the greater or more worshipful thing.

In any case, Osiris cannot well have been merely an Earth-God or Plant-Spirit. It is not disputed that from the earliest times he is the consort of Isis; and Isis, as Mr. Frazer grants, is an Earth-Goddess and Corn-Goddess; approximating at several points to Dêmêtêr, like whom she is figured as black. But the Earth can hardly have been figured as at once God and Goddess, in a married couple, from time immemorial. If Isis be the Grain or Earth, Osiris might be either the fructifying Nile or the Sun, or both, but hardly Grain or Earth over again. It is true that there was an Earth-God Tellumon (Preller, *Röm. Myth.* p. 402), and that the Earth was described by the later Egyptians as male under the form of rock, and as female under the form of arable land (Seneca, *Quæst. nat.* iii. 14; cp. Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, iii. 8, as to the moon). But the rock would not symbolize the fructifying power of Osiris; and the idea was probably drawn late from the cult of Mithra, which rivalled the Osirian. It is true further that Osiris was held lord of all things fiery and spiritual, and Isis ruler of all things dry and moist (Diod. i. 11); and there is some evidence that fruit-bearing trees were called male, and others female; but these are visibly late theories or common fancies, not early God-ideas. Then the blackness of Osiris is not symbolical of the Earth, but of something else. Even the blackness of Isis, however, is not to be ascribed strictly and solely to her as symbolizing the Earth; she unquestionably was associated, whether first or last, with the Moon and the zodiacal Virgin, and would thus be black as Queen of the Night Sky, as was the black Aphrodite. (*Pausanias*, viii. 6; *Orphica*, ii. 1-2; Macrobius, last cit.)

The truth is, there was no means by which any God or Goddess in antiquity, among nations with cognate or competing cults, could be prevented from gradually assimilating to any of the others with similar status. What happened later in the Christ cult, before the period of crystallization under Roman headship, happened perforce in the older cults. As Yahweh grew from the God of a tribe to a God of the nations, so every thriving deity tended to receive wider and wider functions. The process was economic as well as psychic. It was every priest's business to increase the vogue of his temple's divinities, unless he were expressly

hindered by the bestowal of a monopoly on a particular God by a particular king; and every worshipper, when smoothly handled, was naturally ready to aggrandize his favourite deity. That this historically took place in the case of Osiris we know from the monuments, which show him to have been assimilated to the Sun-God Ra (Tiele, p. 44. Cp. Diodorus Siculus, i. 25).

But this was only one of many such blendings. We know for instance that Ptah, who was "certainly not originally a Sun-God," is "distinctly called the sun-disc" (Chantepie de la Saussaye, *Manual of the Science of Religion*, Eng. tr. p. 425). Now, Ptah does seem to have been originally an Earth-God or Vegetation-God, and *he* was represented as green (Tiele, *Egyptian Religion*, Eng. tr. p. 160), though he had also "the blue beard and diadem of Amun, whose colour was blue." Amun in turn seems to have been a Nile-God and a Sun-God (Tiele, pp. 146, 148, 149). In short, a unification of *all* the Gods with the Sun-God was one of the most prevalent tendencies in Egyptian religion (noted by Frazer, i. 314), as again in the Mexican. "The Gods of the dead and the elemental Gods were almost all identified with the sun, for the purpose of blending them in a theistic unity" (Maspero, cited by Lang, *M. R. R.* 2nd ed. ii. 134). Compare E. Meyer, *Geschichte des alten Aegyptens*, in Oncken's series, K. iii. p. 249. As to the case of Cham, the Vegetation-God, who was blended with the Sun-God Horos, see Tiele, pp. 122-127. Such combinations may have been deliberately arranged among the priests, who at all times received an enormous revenue (Diodorus Siculus, i. 28, 81).

It is thus doubly unnecessary to resort for explanation of any junction of the solar and vegetal principles to the ingenious theory of Mr. Frazer (ii. 369) that the fire-sticks would be held to contain fire as a kind of sap. Kenrick (i. 403) readily acknowledged that the principle of fertility would involve alike the Sun and the Nile; and the historical data since collected amply bear him out.

VI. THE CHRISTIAN ARGUMENT.

Among modern statements of the Christian theory of Krishnaism, one of the most explicit and emphatic is that inserted by an anonymous Sanskritist in a criticism of the

first volume of Mr. J. Talboys Wheeler's *History of India*, in the *Athenæum* of August 10th, 1867. The criticism is hostile, pointing out that Mr. Wheeler "is not a Sanskrit scholar, nor has he very carefully examined the translations with which he works," so that "we are never sure, without referring to the original, what particulars [as to Hindu legends] are drawn from the great epic, and what are from the Purânas and other sources." It might have been added that the previous performance of Mr. Wheeler had shown him to be a somewhat biassed historian. He had produced a number of popular abridgments or manuals of Old and New Testament history, in one of which he does not scruple to assert that while "Matthew, who wrote for the Jews, traces the pedigree of Joseph through David to Abraham, Luke, who wrote for the Gentiles, traces the descent of Mary through David to Adam."¹ Such an apologist naturally does not flinch at alleging that Celsus and Porphyry "recognize" the gospels as the "genuine work of the apostles";² and for such a reasoner, it is readily intelligible, the "mythic theory" is disposed of by the argument that it would make out the history of Julius Cæsar to be a thorough myth. It will doubtless be comforting to many to learn that this soundly religious writer was made Professor of "Moral and Mental Philosophy and Logic" in the Presidency College of Madras, and that he has written an elaborate history of India with a considerable measure of acceptance.

But the critic of Mr. Wheeler's history in the *Athenæum* is hardly the person to take exception to intellectual tendencies such as these. His own philosophy of history includes the belief that "the history of Krishnah has been borrowed by the Brahmans from the Gospel"; and he proceeds to prove his case by the following account of the legend in the Bhagavat Purâna and Mahâbhârata—an

¹ *Abridgment of New Testament History*, 1854, p. 35. Cp. *Analysis and Summary of New Testament History*, 1859, by same author (p. 28), where it is explained that Luke went back to Adam because he was "desirous of proving [the Gentiles'] admission into the Gospel covenant"—the descent of David from Adam not being an established hypothesis.

² *Analysis*, as cited, p. xxviii.

account which is worth citing at length as indicating a number of the minor myth-resemblances in the Hindu and Christian narratives, and as unintentionally paving the way for a fresh historical investigation of the latter:—

“The recital [in the Purâna] commences with the announcement that to hear the story of Krishnah and believe it is all that is required for salvation; and throughout the narrative the theme of exhortation is faith. Next it is declared that, sin and impiety having spread over the whole world, the Deity resolved to become incarnate in the form of Krishnah. He determined to destroy a tyrant king, whose name signifies Lust, who ruled at Mathurá, and who murdered children. Krishnah is represented as born the nephew of this king, and therefore of royal descent. The name of his tribe is Yadu, which is almost the same as Yahudah in Hebrew. His real mother was Devakí, which signifies the Divine Lady, and his reputed mother Yasoda, or Yashoda. His father's name was Vasudev. In comparing this word with Yúsef, we must remember that Dev in Sanskrit signifies divine, and the *d* appears to have been inserted from that word. The resemblance of the name Krishnah itself to Christ is remarkable enough, but it becomes more so when we consider that the root ‘Krish’ means ‘to tinge,’ and *may well be taken to signify also ‘anoint.’* Preliminary to the birth of Krishna the four Vedas become incarnate, and the tyrant king is warned by a divine voice that a son is to be born in his house who will destroy him. Upon this he puts to death the infants that are born to the Divine Lady, and makes a great slaughter of the tribe of Yadu. Notwithstanding this, Krishnah is born and placed in a basket for winnowing corn; *in other words, a manger.* His father then carries him off to Gokula (or Goshen, the eastern side of Lower Egypt), which is represented as a country place near Mathurá. On finding that the child has escaped, the tyrant makes a slaughter of infant children. A variety of puerile fables suited to the Hindu taste follow, showing how Krishnah was subject to his reputed mother, and how he reproved her. Being now thought to be the son of a shepherd, Krishnah plays in the wilderness, and is assaulted by the various fiends, and overcomes them all. This temptation winds up with the overthrow of the great serpent, upon whose head, ‘assuming the weight of the three worlds, he treads.’ Even in the strange recital of Krishnah's sports with the cōwherdesses, threads of allusions to the Gospels are not wanting. Krishnah is continually manifesting his divinity, and yet disclaiming it. He goes to an Indian fig-tree and utters a sort of parable, saying, Blessed are those that bear pain themselves and show kindness to others. In another place he says that those who love him shall never suffer death. He proceeds to abolish the worship of Indra, the God of the air, and to invite his followers to worship a mountain. He directs those about him to close their eyes, and issues from the interior of the mountain with a ‘face like the moon and wearing a diadem.’ In this there seems to be an allusion to the Transfiguration. Then follows a scene suited to Hindu taste. Indra rains down a deluge, and Krishnah defends the inhabitants of Braj by supporting the

mountain on his finger, and he is then hailed as the God of Gods. Krishnah now resolves on returning from the country to the city of the tyrant king. He is followed by a multitude of women and by the cowherds. He enters the city in royal apparel. He is met by a deformed woman, who anoints him with sandalwood oil. On this Krishnah makes her straight and beautiful, and promises that his regard for her shall be perpetual; on which her good fortune is celebrated by all the people of the place. In the account of this miracle the narratives in Mark xiv. 3 and Luke xiii. 11 are blended. It may be as well to mention here another miracle, which is mentioned in the Mahá Bhárata. Krishnah is there said to have restored the son of a widow to life: 'And Krishnah laid hold of the dead man's hand and said, Arise, and by the will of the Almighty the dead man immediately arose.' A great army of barbarians is assembled by a distant king to destroy the holy city of Mathurá Krishnah then transports the city and his disciples to Dwarka, which is built in the sea. *This appears to be a distorted account of the siege of Jerusalem and the flight of the Christians.* Krishnah now returns to Mathurá and combats with the barbarians; flies from their chief, and is pursued into a cave of the White mountains, where there is a man sleeping, covered with a silken robe, apparently dead. This man arises from sleep and consumes the pursuer of Krishnah. In this account of the cave there are *evident allusions to the burial and resurrection of Christ*; and in a following chapter there is an account of the descent of Krishnah into Hades and his recovery of certain persons from the dead At the great sacrifice performed by Yudhishtira the task which devolves on Krishnah is that of washing the feet of those present. One person alone is said to have been dissatisfied, and that is Duryodhana, who is generally regarded as an incarnation of the Evil Spirit, and who, like Iscariot, here carries the bag, and acts as treasurer. . . . It must be admitted, then, that there are most remarkable coincidences between the history of Krishnah and that of Christ. This being the case, and there being proof positive that Christianity was introduced into Judea at an epoch when there is good reason to suppose the episodes which refer to Krishnah were inserted in the Mahá Bhárata, the obvious inference is that the Brahmans took from the Gospel such things as suited them, and so *added preëminent beauties to their national epic*, which otherwise would in no respect have risen above such poems as the Sháhnámah of the Persians."¹

As to the authorship of this criticism we can only speculate. In an allusion to the doctrine of the Bhagavat Gîtâ the writer expresses himself as "willing to admit" that "the Gîtâ is the most sublime poem that ever came from an uninspired pen"; thus taking up the position of ordinary orthodoxy, which presupposes the supernatural origin of the Christian system, and prejudices every such question as

¹ *Athenæum*, as cited, pp. 168-9.

we are now considering. This is the standing trouble with English scholarship. Even Professor Max Müller, who has produced an *Introduction to the Science of Religion*, is found writing to a correspondent in terms which seemingly imply at once belief in Christian supernaturalism and a fear that the discussion of certain questions in comparative mythology may damage the faith. "Even supposing," he writes, "some or many of the doctrines of Christianity were found in other religions also (and they certainly are), does that make them less true? Does a sailor trust his own compass less because it can be proved that the Chinese had a compass before we had it?" And again: "These questions regarding the similarities between the Christian and any other religions are very difficult to treat, and *unless they are handled carefully much harm may be done.*"¹ From scholarship of this kind (though, as it happens, Professor Müller finally opposes the theory of Christian derivation) one turns perforce to that of the continent, where, whatever be the value of the conclusions reached, we can at least as a rule trust the scholar to say candidly what he knows, and to look impartially for the truth.

Thus Professor Weber, who refers to the *Athenæum* critic's argument in his study on the "Geburtsfest," emphatically distinguishes between what he thinks plausible and what seems to him extravagant,² though the argument in question goes to support some of his own positions. The identifications of the names Yasoda, Yúsef, and Vasudev, Gokula and Goshen, he rightly derides as being "à la P. Giorgi"; and he mentions that the stories of the woman's oblation and forgiveness, and also that of the raising of the widow's dead son, are not from the Mahâbhârata at all, but from the Jaimini-Bhârata, a work of the Purâna order³—a point which, of course, would not essen-

¹ Letters to C. A. Elflein, printed at end of a pamphlet by the latter entitled *Buddha, Krishna, and Christ*.

² He puts a "sic!" after the spelling *Yashoda* in quoting this passage, and another after the word "inserted" in the phrase "appears to have been inserted from that word."

³ *Ueber die Krishnajanmâshtamî*, as cited, p. 315, n.

tially affect the argument. On the main question he sums up as follows :—

“ If we could so construe these words that they should harmonize with the view of Kleuker” [before quoted] “ we might contentedly accept them. If, however, they are to be understood as meaning that the history of Krishna in the lump (*überhaupt*) was first taken from the ‘ Gospel history’ (and indeed the author seems not disinclined to that view), then we cannot endorse them.”¹

That is to say, the theory of the Christian origin of the general Krishna legend is rejected by Weber, the most important supporter of the view that *some details* in that legend have so originated. And not only is this rejection overwhelmingly justified, as we shall see, by the whole mass of the evidence, earlier and later, but so far as I am aware no Sanskrit scholar of any eminence has ever put his name to the view maintained by the anonymous writer in the *Athenæum*. Even Mr. Talboys Wheeler, who believes all the Gospels “ and more,” does not go to these lengths. He is more guarded even where he suggests similar notions.

“ The account of Raja Kansa,” he observes, “ is supposed by many to have been borrowed from the Gospel account of King Herod. Whether this be the case or not, it is certain that most of the details are mythical, and inserted for the purpose of ennobling the birth of Krishna”²—

—it being Mr. Wheeler’s opinion that the story of Krishna as a whole has a personal and historic basis. He further holds that “ the grounds upon which Krishna seems to have forgiven the sins of the tailor” [who made clothes for his companions] “ seem to form a travestie of Christianity”;³ and, like the writer in the *Athenæum* and earlier pietists, he thinks that the Gospel stories of the bowed woman and the spikenard “ seem to have been thrown together in the legend of Kubja.”⁴ On the other hand, however, he conceives that the Hindus may have invented some things for themselves :—

“ Krishna’s triumph over the great serpent Kaliya was at one time supposed to be borrowed from the triumph of Christ over Satan. There

¹ *Id.* p. 316.

³ *Id.* p. 471, n.

² *History of India*, i. 464, note.

⁴ *Id.* p. 470, n.

appears, however, to be no allusion whatever to the bruising of the Serpent's head in the sense in which it is understood by Christian commentators." ¹

It may be surmised that Mr. Wheeler, being capable of this amount of prudence, would not be disposed to endorse the more original speculations of his critic in the *Athenæum*, a few of which I have put in italics. It may be noted, too, that he does not think fit to dwell much on the puerility which fits the details of the Krishna legend for the "Hindu taste" and the "Hindu mind," though his earlier writings betray no suspicion of puerility in the tales of the Gospels.

VII. THE CENTRAL DISPROOF.

Unsupported as are the Christian theories of the late origin of the Krishna legend, it is necessary to cite the evidence which repels them. The point, indeed, might be held as settled once for all by the evidence of Patanjali's Mahâbhâshya or "Great Commentary," a grammatical work based on previous ones, and dating from the second century B.C., but first made in part accessible to European scholars by the Benares edition of 1872. The evidence of the Mahâbhâshya is thus summed up by the learned Professor Bhandarkar of Bombay, after discussion of the passages on which he founds, as clearly proving:—

"1st. That the stories of the death of Kansa and the subjugation of Bali were popular and current in Patanjali's time.

"2nd. That Krishna or Vasudeva was mentioned in the story as having killed Kansa.

"3rd. That such stories formed the subjects of dramatic representations, as Purânic stories are still popularly represented on the Hindu stage.

"4th. That the event of Kansa's death at the hands of Krishna was in Patanjali's time believed to have occurred at a very remote time." ²

¹ *Id.* p. 465, n.

² Art. "Allusions to Krishna in Patanjali's Mahâbhâshya" in the *Indian Antiquary*, Bombay, vol. iii. (1874), p. 16.

Other passages, Professor Bhandarkar thinks, would appear "to be quoted from an existing poem on Krishna"; and, in his opinion, "Not only was the story of Krishna and Kansa current and popular in Patanjali's time, but it appears clearly that the former was worshipped as a God." And the Professor concludes that "If the stories of Krishna and Bali, and others which I shall notice hereafter, were current and popular in the second century B.C., some such works as the Harivansa and the Purânas must have existed then."

Discussing the Mahâbhâshya on its publication (some years after his paper on the Birth-festival), Professor Weber had already¹ conceded that it pointed not only almost beyond doubt to a pre-existing poetic compilation of the Mahâbhârata Sagas, but to the ancient existence of the Kansa myth. Kansa, he pointed out, figured in regard to Bali, in the passages quoted in the Mahâbhâshya, as a *demon*, and his "enmity towards Krishna equally assumed a *mythical* character, into which also the different colours of their followers (the 'black ones' are then also those of Kansa? though Krishna himself signifies 'black'!) would seem to enter. Or," the Professor goes on, speculating at random, "could there be thereby signified some Indian battles between Aryans and the aborigines occupying India before them?" In another place,² alluding to the contention of Dr. Burnell³ that "much in the modern philosophical schools of India comes from some form of Christianity derived from Persia," Professor Weber pointed out that "quite recently, through the publication of the Mahâbhâshya, a much older existence is proved for the Krishna cultus than had previously seemed admissible." Finally, in commenting⁴ on the argument of Professor Bhandarkar, Professor Weber allows that the passages cited by the scholar from Patanjali are "quite conclusive and very

¹ *Indische Studien*, xiii. (1873), pp. 354-5, 357.

² Notice of vol. iv. of Muir's *Original Sanskrit Texts*, 1873, reprinted in Weber's *Indische Streifen*, iii. 190-1.

³ *Academy*, June 14th, 1873.

⁴ In the *Indian Antiquary*, August, 1875 = iv. 246.

welcome" as to an intermediate form of Krishna-worship; though he disputes the point as to the early existence of literature of the Purâna order—a point with which we are not here specially concerned—and goes on to contend that the passages in question "do not interfere at all with the opinion of those who maintain, on quite reasonable grounds," that the *later* development of Krishnaism "has been *influenced to a certain degree* by an acquaintance with the doctrines, legends, and symbols of the early Christians; or even with the opinion of those who are inclined to find in the Bhagavadgitâ traces of the Bible; for though I for my part am as yet not convinced at all in this respect, the *age* of the Bhagavadgitâ is still so uncertain that these speculations are at least not shackled by any chronological obstacles."

I know of no recent expert opinion which refuses to go at least as far as Weber does here. His persistent contention as to the presence of some Christian elements in the Krishna cult I will discuss later; but in the meantime it is settled that the most conservative Sanskrit scholarship on the continent not only admits but insists on the pre-Christian character of the Krishna mythus, and of such an important quasi-Christian element in it as the story of Kansa, which had so zealously been claimed (and that with Professor Weber's consent in former years) as an adaptation from the Herod story in the Christian Gospel.

VIII. ANTIQUITY OF KRISHNAISM.

The proof of the pre-Christian antiquity of the Krishna cult, however, does not rest merely on the text of the Mahâbhâshya, or the conclusions of scholars in regard to that. The extravagance of the orthodox Christian argument was apparent—it was rejected, we have seen, by Professor Weber—before the passages in the Mahâbhâshya were brought forward. There have long been known at least three inscriptions, in addition to at least one other literary

allusion, which prove Krishnaism to have flourished long before the period at which the Christians represent it to have been concocted from the Gospels.

1. The Bhitârî pillar inscription, transcribed and translated by Dr. W. H. Mill,¹ and dating from, probably, the second century of our era, proves Krishna to be then an important deity. The Krishna passage runs, in Dr. Mill's translation :—"May he who is like Krishna still obeying his mother Devakî, after his foes are vanquished, he of golden rays, with mercy protect this my design." This translation Lassen² corrects, reading thus :—"Like the conqueror of his enemies, Krishna encircled with golden rays, who honours Devakî, may he maintain his purpose"; and explaining that the words are to be attributed to the king named in the inscription (Kumârâgupta), and not to the artist who carved it, as Dr. Mill supposed. "As in the time to which this inscription belongs," Lassen further remarks, "human princes were compared with Gods, Krishna is here represented as a divine being, though not as one of the highest Gods." Dr. Mill, on the other hand, holds Krishna to be understood as "the supreme Bhagavat" referred to in other parts of the inscription. However this may be, the cultus is proved to have existed long before the arrival of Christian influences.

2. Two fragmentary inscriptions discovered in 1854 by Mr. E. C. Bayley,³ of the Indian Civil Service, equally point to the early deification of Krishna. One has the words "Krishnayasasa áráma" in Aryan Pali letters; the other "Krishnayasasya áráma médangisya." The first two words mean "The Garden of Krishnayasas," this name meaning "the glory of Krishna"; and Mr. Bayley thinks that "médangisya," = corpulent, is some wag's addition to the original inscription. As to the date, Mr. Bayley writes :—"The form of the Indian letters had already led me to assign them roughly to the first century

¹ In the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, January, 1837, pp. 1-17.

² *Indische Alterthumskunde*, ii. (1849), p. 1108, note.

³ *Journal of Asiatic Society*, xxiii. 57.

A.D.¹ On showing them, however, to Major A. Cunningham, he kindly pointed out that the foot strokes of the Aryan letters ally them to those on the coins of 'Pakores'; and he therefore would place them more accurately in the first half of the second century A.D.¹ at the earliest." Major Cunningham, it will be remembered, is one of those who see imitation of Christianity in the Krishna legends, so his dating is not likely to be over early. In any case, Mr. Bayley admits that the inscriptions "would seem to indicate the admission of Krishna into the Hindu Pantheon at the period" when they were cut. "If, however," he adds, "this be eventually established, it by no means follows that the name was applied to the same deity as at present, still less that he was worshipped in the same manner." It is not very clear what Mr. Bayley means by "the same deity"; or whether he would admit the God of the Jews to be the same deity as the Father of Jesus Christ, as worshipped by Archdeacon Farrar. But if he merely means to say that the Hindu conception of Krishna, like his ritual, might be modified after centuries, his proposition may readily be accepted.

3. The Buddal pillar inscription, translated by Wilkins,² to which I have observed no allusion in recent writers on Krishnaism, serves equally to prove the early existence of a legend of a divine Krishna born of Devakî and nursed by Yasoda. It contains the passage, alluding to a distinguished lady or princess:—"She, like another Devakî, bore unto him a son of high renown, who resembled the adopted of Yasodha and husband of Lakshmî"—the Goddess Lakshmî being here identified with Krishna's bride. This inscription was dated by Wilkins "shortly B.C.," and by Sir William Jones 67 C.E. I have not ascertained how it is placed by later scholars; but in any case it must long antedate the periods assigned by Professor Weber and the

¹ By "century A.D." Mr. Bayley means "century after Christ." "First century *anno domini*," a form constantly used by academic writers, is nonsense. In this paper I use "C.E." to signify "Christian era," as "B.C." signifies "before Christ." This, or the use of the form "A.C.," is surely the reasonable course.

² *Asiatic Researches*, i. 131.

Athenæum critic to the arrival of the Christian influences which are supposed to have affected later Krishnaism.

4. In the Khandogya Upanishad, a document admittedly older than our era, there occurs¹ this passage:—"Ghora Angirasa, after having communicated this (view of the sacrifice) to Krishna, the son of Devakî—and he never thirsted again (after other knowledge)—said," etc. On this passage I transcribe the comment appended by Professor Müller to his translation:—

"The curious coincidence between Krishna Devakîputra, here mentioned as a pupil of Ghora Angirasa, and the famous Krishna, the son of Devakî, was first pointed out by Colebrooke, *Miscell. Essays*, ii. 177. Whether it is more than a coincidence is difficult to say. Certainly we can build no other conclusions on it than those indicated by Colebrooke, that new fables may have been constructed, elevating this personage to the rank of a God. We know absolutely nothing of the old Krishna Devakîputra except his having been a pupil of Ghora Angirasa, nor does there seem to have been any attempt made by later Brahmans to connect their divine Krishna, the son of Vasudeva, with the Krishna Devakîputra of our Upanishad. This is all the more remarkable because the author of the Sandilya-sutras, for instance, who is very anxious to found a srauta authority for the worship of Krishna Vasudeva as the supreme deity, had to be satisfied with quoting....modern compilations....Professor Weber has treated these questions very fully, but it is not quite clear to me whether he wishes to go beyond Colebrooke, and to admit more than a similarity of name between the pupil of Ghora Angirasa and the friend of the Gopîs."

Professor Weber, I may mention in passing, *does* "admit more than a similarity of name"; in his treatise on the Birth Festival² he founds on the Upanishad reference as indicating one of the stages in the development of Krishnaism. And as Professor Müller does not dispute in the least the antiquity and authenticity of that reference, but only queries "coincidence," it may be taken as pretty certain that we have here one more trace of the existence of the Krishna legend long before the Christian era. There is nothing in the least remarkable in the fact of the passage not being cited by a writer who wanted texts on the status of Krishna as "the supreme deity," because the passage

¹ iii. 17, 6; Müller's trans., *Sacred Books of the East*, i. 52.

² As cited, p. 316.

clearly does not so present Krishna. But it is no part of our case to make out that Krishna was widely worshipped as "the supreme deity" before our era; on the contrary, the evidence mostly goes to show that he attained his eminence, or at least his Brahmanical status, later. The point is that his name and story were current in India long before the Christian legends, as such, were heard of; and the series of mutually supporting testimonies puts this beyond doubt.

IX. INVALID EVIDENCE.

It does not seem likely that the force of the foregoing evidence will be seriously disputed. At the same time, it is necessary to point out that some of the data relied on by some scholars, and in particular by Professor Lassen, to prove the early existence of Krishnaism will not by themselves support that conclusion. Lassen, who identifies Krishna with the Indian Hercules spoken of by Megasthenes, puts his case thus:—

"Megasthenes, whose account of ancient India is the weightiest because the oldest of all those left to us by foreigners, has...mentioned [the] connection of Krishna with the Pandavas, and his remarks deserve close attention...as giving a historical foothold in regard to the vogue of the worship of Krishna. His statement is as follows: He " [*i.e.*, the Indian Hercules] "excelled all men in strength of body and spirit; he had purged the whole earth and the sea of evil, and founded many cities; of his many wives was born only one daughter, Πανδαίη, Pandaia, but many sons, among whom he divided all India, making them kings, whose descendants reigned through many generations and did famous deeds; some of their kingdoms stood even to the time when Alexander invaded India. After his death, divine honours had been paid him. (Diodor. ii. 39. Arrian, *Ind.* 8.) That we are entitled to take this Hercules for Krishna appears from the fact that he was specially honoured by the people of Surasena. (*Ind.* viii. 5.)¹

"We may from this passage conclude with certainty that in the time of Megasthenes Krishna was honoured as one of the highest of the Gods, and precisely in the character of Vishnu, who incarnated himself when

¹ *Note by Lassen.* Besides Mathura, Megasthenes named another city of the Surasenes, Κλεισόβωρα, which Pliny (*Hist. Nat.* vi. 22) calls Carisobara or Cyrisoborea or Chrysobora, and which Von Bohlen (*Altes Indien*, i. 233) with apparent justice reads as *Krishna-Pura*, city of Krishna. Ptolemaios names Mathura the city of the Gods.

the transgressions of the world began to overflow, and wiped them out. When Megasthenes describes him as bearing a club, there becomes apparent that writer's exact acquaintance with Indian matters, for Vishnu also carries a club (hence his name of *Gadâdhara*). That he also, like Hercules, wore a lion's hide, does not correspond to Krishna, and might seem to impute an inclination to make out an identity between the Greek and the Indian hero. Probably Megasthenes was misled by the fact that in Sanskrit the word lion is used to indicate a pre-eminent excellence in men, and specially in warriors.¹ The account of Megasthenes further corresponds with the Indian Saga in respect that there many wives and sons are ascribed to Krishna (16,000 wives and 180,000 sons. See Vishnu Purâna, pp. 440, 591). Of cities founded by him, indeed, we know only Dvârakâ; and Palibothra had another founder. Clearly, however, Pandaia is exactly the name of Pandava, especially when we compare the form Pândavya; and in that connection my previous conclusion seems to be irrefragable, that Megasthenes has signified by the daughter of Krishna the sister, from whom the series of Pandava Kings are descended."²

Now, it is sufficiently plain on the face of this exposition that the identification of Krishna with the Indian Hercules of Megasthenes is imperfect. It leaves, says Professor Tiele, "much to be desired."³ The fashion in which the great Indianist founds on one or two details, and lets go by the board some serious discrepancies, is indeed somewhat characteristic of the scholars of his adopted nation. German scholarship has the defects of its great qualities: with an enormous mass of detail-knowledge it often combines a relatively infirm and erratic judgment. In the whole course of this inquiry the real light will, I think, be found forthcoming rather from France, Holland, India, and Italy, than from Germany; though the mere mass-weight of German scholarship commands attention.

In point of fact, a much more satisfactory identification of the Indian Hercules of Megasthenes lay ready to Lassen's hand in Wilson's introduction to his translation of the Vishnu Purâna. "The Hercules of the Greek

¹ Lassen here assumes that Megasthenes knew Sanscrit, which is not at all certain. More probably he needed interpreters, and in talk between these and the Brahmans the poetic epithet "lion" would hardly be used. It would appear from a remark of Arrian (*Exped. Alex.* vi. 30) that only one Macedonian in Alexander's train learned Persian, so little were the Greeks disposed to master foreign languages. In Alexander's expedition communications seem at times to have been filtered through three interpreters.

² *Indische Alterthumskunde*, i. (1847), 647-9.

³ *Outlines*, p. 148.

writers," says that sound scholar, "was indubitably the Bala Râma of the Hindus; and their notices of Mathura on the Jumna, and of the kingdom of the Suraseni and the Pandæan country, evidence the prior currency of the traditions which constitute the argument of the Mahâbhârata, and which are constantly repeated in the Purânas, relating to the Pandava and Yâdava races, to Krishna and his contemporary heroes, and to the dynasties of the solar and lunar heroes."¹ M. Barth, it is true, has tacitly accepted Lassen's view;² but does not do so with any emphasis, and points out that it has been contested by Weber,³ who, regarding Megasthenes' testimony as of uncertain value in any case, declines to accept the reading of Kleisobora as Krishnapura, and considers Wilson's theory of Bala Râma more reasonable. And M. Senart, whose masterly Essay on the Legend of Buddha has put him in the front rank of Indianists and mythologists, very emphatically combats Lassen's position:—

"In [Megasthenes'] Hercules M. Lassen finds Vishnu; it would be infinitely more *vraisemblable*, even in respect of the association with Krishna, to see in him Bala Râma, for whom his club would constitute, in the eyes of a Greek, an affinity, the more striking because it was exterior, with the son of Alcmena. It is necessary, I think, to accept the same synonymy for the Hercules spoken of by Megasthenes, who seems simply to have confounded under this one name legends appertaining to several of the avatars of Vishnu; it is, in my opinion, an error of over-precision to identify, as M. Lassen has done, that Hercules with Krishna."⁴

When we glance at the description of Bala Râma as he figures in Indian effigies, the view of Wilson and Senart seems sufficiently established:—

"Bala Râma....although a warrior, may from his attributes be esteemed a benefactor of mankind; for he bears a plough, and a pestle for beating rice; and he has epithets derived from the names of these implements—viz., Halayudha, meaning *plough-armed*, and Musali, as bearing the *musal*, or rice-beater. His name, Bala, means strength; and the beneficent attributes here noticed are by some called a ploughshare for hooking his enemies, and a club for destroying them; and *being*

¹ Trans. of Vishnu Purâna, 1840, pref. pp. vi. vii.

² *Religions of India*, p. 163.

³ *Indische Studien*, ii. 409 (1853).

⁴ *Essai sur la Légende du Buddha*, 2e éd. p. 339, n.