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PAGAN CHRISTS

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A SHORT HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY.
LETTERS ON REASONING.
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PAGAN CHRISTS

STUDIES IN COMPARATIVE HIEROLOGY

BY

JOHN M. ROBERTSON

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ADDENDA AND CORRIGENDA

- P. 27, line 21. *After* " [i.e., myths]" *read* " were embodied were not," etc.
- P. 42, line 17. *After* " plant " *read* " or stone."
- P. 45, note 1. *Add* : " And see Winckler, *Geschichte Israels*, ii, 20-49, 56-60, 70, 75-77, as to the originally divine status of Abraham and Isaac, Jacob and Joseph."
- P. 46, note 1. *For* Giraud *read* Girard.
- P. 96, line 19. *For* sons *read* children.
- P. 138, note 2. *Add* : " Pp. 529-30. Cp. Sayce, *Hibbert Lectures*, p. 232."
- P. 147, line 24. *After* " animal " *read* " though it was not strictly necessary," etc., and in next line, *after* " narcotics," *read* " there would be a tendency to copy old practice."
- P. 148, note 5, at end. *After* " i," insert " 105."
- P. 164, note 1. *Add* : " Koeppen, *Die Religion des Buddha*, 1854, i, 563-4; ii, 307."
- P. 181, note 4. *Add* : " Cp. Pietschmann, *Geschichte der Phönizier*, 1889, pp. 205, 214."
- P. 211, note 3. *For* " Id." *read* Diodorus.

PREAMBLE

My purpose in grouping the four ensuing studies is to complement and complete the undertaking of the previous volume, entitled *Christianity and Mythology*. That was substantially a mythological analysis of the Christian system, introduced by a discussion of mythological principles in that particular connection and in general. The bulk of the present volume is substantially a synthesis of Christian origins, introduced by a discussion of the principles of hierology. Such discussion is still forced on sociology by the special pleaders of the prevailing religion. But the central matter of the book is its attempt to trace and synthesise the real lines of growth of the Christian cultus; and it challenges criticism above all by its theses—(1) that the Gospel story of the Last Supper, Passion, Betrayal, Trial, Crucifixion, and Resurrection, is visibly a transcript of a Mystery Drama, and not originally a narrative; and (2) that that drama is demonstrably (as historic demonstration goes) a symbolic modification of an original rite of human sacrifice, of which it preserves certain verifiable details.

That the exact point of historic connection between the early eucharistic rite and the late drama-story has still to be traced, it is needless to remark. Had direct evidence on this head been forthcoming, the problem could not so long have been ignored. But it is here contended that the lines of evolution are established by the details of the record and the institution, in the light of the data of anthropology; and that we have thus at last a scientific basis for a history of Christianity. As was explained in the preface to *Christianity*

and *Mythology*, these studies originated some eighteen years back in an attempt to realise and explain "The Rise of Christianity Sociologically Considered"; and it is as a beginning of such an exposition that the two books are meant to be taken. In *A Short History of Christianity* the general historic conception is outlined; and the present volume offers the detailed justification of the views there summarily put as to Christian origins, insofar as they were not fully developed in the earlier volume. On one point, the origins of Manichæism, the present work departs from the ordinary historic view, which was accepted in the *Short History*; the proposed rectification here being a result of the main investigation. In this connection it may be noted that Schwegler had already denied the historicity of Montanus—a thesis which I have not sought to incorporate, though I incline to accept it.

Whether or not I am able to carry out the original scheme in full, I venture to hope that these inquiries will be of some small use towards meeting the need which motivated them. *Mythology* has permanently interested me only as throwing light on hierology; and hierology has permanently interested me only as throwing light on sociology. The third and fourth sections of this book, accordingly, are so placed with a view to the comparative elucidation of the growth of Christianity. If it be objected that they are thus "tendency" writings, the answer is that they were independently done, and are as complete as I could make them in the space. Both are revisions and expansions of lectures formerly published in "The Religious Systems of the World," that on Mithraism being now nearly thrice its original length. Undertaken and expanded without the aid of Professor Cumont's great work, *Textes et Monuments Figurés relatifs aux Mystères de Mithra* (1896-9), it has been revised in the welcome light of that magistral performance. To M. Cumont I owe much fresh knowledge, and the correction of some errors, as well as the confirmation of several of my conclusions; and if I have ventured here and there to dissent from him, and above all to maintain a thesis not recognised by him—that Mithra in

the legend made a "Descent into Hell"—I do so only after due hesitation.

The non-appearance of any other study of Mithraism in English may serve as my excuse for having carried my paper into some detail, especially by way of showing how much the dead cult had in common with the living. Christian origins cannot be understood without making this comparison. It is significant, however, of our British avoidance of comparative hierology wherever it bears on current beliefs, that while Germany has contributed to the study of Mithraism, among many others, the learned treatise of Windischmann and that in Roscher's *Lexikon*, France the zealous researches of Lajard, and Belgium the encyclopædic and decisive work of Professor Cumont, England has produced not a single book on the subject. In compensation for such neglect, we have developed a signal devotion to Folklore. If some of the favour shown to that expansive study be turned on serious attempts to understand the actual process of growth of world-religions, the present line of research may be extended to advantage.

The lecture on the religions of Ancient America has in turn been carefully revised and much enlarged, not because this subject is equally ignored among us—for there is a sufficiency of information upon it in English, notably in one of the too-little utilised collections of "Descriptive Sociology" compiled for Mr. Spencer—but because again the comparative bearing of the study of the dead cults on that of the living has not been duly considered. In particular I have entered into some detail tending to support the theory—not yet to be put otherwise than as a disputed hypothesis—that certain forms and cults of human sacrifice, first evolved anciently in Central Asia, passed to America on the east, and to the Semitic peoples on the west, resulting in the latter case in the central "mystery" of Christianity, and in the former in the Mexican system of human sacrifices. But the psychological importance of the study does not, I trust, solely stand or fall with that theory. On the general sociological problem, I may say, a closer study of the Mexican civilisation has dissolved an opinion I formerly

held—that it might have evolved from within past the stage of human sacrifice had it been left to itself.

Whatever view be taken of the scope of religious heredity, there will remain in the established historic facts sufficient justification for the general title of “Pagan Christs,” which best indicates in one phrase the kinship of all cults of human sacrifice and theophagous sacrament, as well as of all cults of which the founder figures as an inspired teacher. That principle has already been broadly made good on the first side by the incomparable research of Mr. J. G. Frazer, to whose “Golden Bough” I owe both theoretic light and detail knowledge. I ask, therefore, that when I make bold to reject Mr. Frazer’s suggested solution (ed. 1900) of the historic problem raised by the parallel between certain Christian and non-Christian *sacra*, I shall not be supposed to undervalue his great treasury of ordered knowledge. What I claim for my own solution is that it best satisfies the ruling principles of his own hierology.

In this connection, however, I feel it a duty to avow that the right direction had previously been pointed out by the late Mr. Grant Allen in his *Evolution of the Idea of God* (1897), though at the outset of his work he obscured it for many of us by insisting on the absolute historicity of Jesus, a position which later on he in effect abandons. It is after ostensibly setting out with the actuality of “Jesus the son of the carpenter” as an “unassailable Rock of solid historical fact” (p. 16), that he incidentally (p. 285) pronounces “the Christian legend to have been mainly constructed out of the details of such early god-making sacrifices” as that practised by the Khonds. Finally (p. 391) he writes that “at the outset of our inquiry we had to accept crudely the bare fact” that the *cult* arose at a certain period, and that “we can now see that it was but one more example of a universal god-making tendency in human nature.” Returning to Mr. Allen’s book after having independently worked out in detail precisely such a derivation and such a theory, I was surprised to find that where he had thus thrown out the clue I had not on a first reading been at all impressed by

it. The reason probably was that for me the problem had been primarily one of historical derivation, and that Mr. Allen offered no historical solution, being satisfied to indicate analogies. And it was probably the still completer disregard of historical difficulties that brought oblivion upon the essay of Herr Kulischer, *Das Leben Jesu eine Sage von dem Schicksale und Erlebnissen der Bodenfrucht, insbesondere der sogenannten palästinensischen Erstlingsgarbe, die am Passahfeste im Tempel dargebracht wurde* (Leipzig, 1876), in which Mr. Frazer's thesis of the vegetal character of the typical slain and rearing deity is put forth without evidence, but with entire confidence.

Kulischer had simply posited the analogy of the Vegetation-God and the vegetation-cult as previous students had done that of the Sun-God and the sun-myth, not only without tracing any process of transmutation, but with a far more arbitrary interpretation of symbols than they had ventured on. His essay thus remains only a remarkable piece of pioneering, which went broadly in the right direction, but missed the true path.

It is not indeed to be assumed that if he had made out a clear historical case it would have been listened to by his generation. The generation before him had paid little heed to the massive and learned treatise of Ghillany, *Die Menschenopfer der alten Hebräer* (1842), wherein the derivation of the Passover from a rite of human sacrifice is well made out, and that of the Christian eucharist from a modified Jewish sacrament of theophagy is at least strikingly argued for. Ghillany had further noted some of the decisive analogies of sacrificial ritual and gospel narrative which are founded on in the following pages; and was substantially on the right historic track, though he missed some of the archæological proofs of the prevalence of human sacrifice in pre-exilic Judaism. Daumer, too, went far towards a right historical solution in his work *Der Feuer und Molochdienst der alten Hebräer*, which was synchronous with that of his friend Ghillany, and again in his treatise *Die Geheimnisse des christlichen Alterthums* (1847). His later proclamation of *Meine Conversion* (1859) would naturally discredit his

earlier theses; but the disregard of the whole argument in the hierology of that day is probably to be explained as due to the fact that the conception of a "science of religions"—specified by Vinet in 1856 as beginning to grow up alongside of theology—had not then been constituted for educated men. The works of Ghillany and Daumer have been so far forgotten that not till my own research had been independently made and elaborated did I meet with them.

To-day, the conditions of hierological research are very different. A generation of students is now steeped in the anthropological lore of which Ghillany, failing to profit by the lead of Constant, noted only the details preserved in the classics and European histories; and the scientific significance of his and Daumer's and Kulischer's theories is clear in the light of the studies of Tylor, Spencer, and Frazer. Mr. Allen, with the ample materials of recent anthropology to draw upon, made a vital advance by connecting the central Christian legend with the whole process of religious evolution, in terms not of *à priori* theology, but of anthropological fact. If, however, the lack of historical demonstration, and the uncorrected premiss of a conventional historical view, made his theory at first lack significance for a reader like myself, it has probably caused it to miss its mark with others. That is no deduction from its scientific merit; but it may be that the historical method will assist to its appreciation. It was by way of concrete recognition of structural parallelism that I reached the theory, having entirely forgotten, if I had ever noted, Mr. Allen's passing mention of one of the vital details in question—that of the breaking of the legs of victims in primitive human sacrifice. In 1842 Ghillany had laid similar stress on the detail of the lance-thrust in the fourth gospel, to which he adduced the classic parallel noted hereinafter. And when independent researches thus yield a variety of particular corroborations of a theory reached otherwise by a broad generalisation, the reciprocal confirmation is, I think, tolerably strong. The recognition of the Gospel Mystery-Play, it is here submitted, is the final historical validation of the whole thesis, which might otherwise fail to escape

the fate of disregard which has thus far befallen the most brilliant speculation of the à priori mythologists in regard to the Christian legend, from the once famous works of Dupuis and Volney down to the little noticed *Letture sopra la mitologia vedica* of Professor de Gubernatis.

However that may be, Mr. Allen's service in the matter is now from my point of view unquestionable. Of less importance, but still noteworthy, is Professor Huxley's sketch of "The Evolution of Theology," with which, while demurring to some of what I regard as its uncritical assumptions (accepted, I regret to say, by Mr. Allen, in his otherwise scientific ninth chapter), I find myself in considerable agreement on Judaic origins. Professor Huxley's essay points to the need for a combination of the studies of hierology and anthropology in the name of sociology, and on that side it would be unpardonable to omit acknowledgment of the great work that has actually been done for sociological synthesis. I am specially bound to make it in view of my occasional dissent on anthropological matters from Mr. Spencer. Such dissent is apt to suggest difference of principle in a disproportionate degree; and Mr. Spencer's own iconoclasm has latterly evoked a kind of criticism that is little concerned to avow his services. It is the more fitting that such a treatise as the present should be accompanied by a tribute to them. However his anthropology may have to be modified in detail, it remains clear to some of us, whom it has enlightened, that his elucidations are of fundamental importance, all later attempts being related to them, and that his main method is permanently valid.

In regard to matters less habitually contested, it is perhaps needless to add that I am as little lacking in gratitude for the great scholarly services rendered to all students of hierology by Professor Rhys Davids, when I venture to withstand his weighty opinion on Buddhist origins. My contrary view would be ill-accredited indeed if I were not able to support it with much evidence yielded by his scholarship and his candour. And it is perhaps not unfitting that, by way of final word of preface to a treatise

which sets out with a systematic opposition to the general doctrine of Mr. F. B. Jevons, I acknowledge that I have profited by his survey of the field, and even by the suggestiveness of some of his arguments that seem to me to go far astray.

PAGAN CHRISTS

PART I.

THE RATIONALE OF RELIGION

CHAPTER I.—THE NATURALNESS OF ALL BELIEF

§ 1.

IT seems probable, despite theological cavils, that Petronius was right in his signal saying, *Fear first made the Gods*. In the words of a recent hierologist, “we may be sure that primitive man took to himself the credit of his successful attempts to work the mechanism of nature for his own advantage, but when the machinery did not work he ascribed the fault to some over-ruling *supernatural* power.It was the violation of [previously exploited] sequences, and the frustration of his expectations by which the belief in supernatural power was, not created, but first called forth.”¹

The fact that this writer proceeds to repudiate his own doctrine² is no reason why we should, save to the extent of noting the temerity of his use of the term “supernatural.” But in saying that fear first made the Gods, or made the first Gods, we imply that other God-making forces came

¹ F. B. Jevons, *Introduction to the History of Religion*, 1896, p. 19 ; cp. p. 23, p. 137, and p. 177.

² *Ib.*, pp. 106, 233, 410. Exactly the same self-contradiction is committed by Professor Robertson Smith, on the same provocation of the phrase, *Primus in orbe deos fecit timor*. See his *Religion of the Semites*, pp. 27, 35, 55, 88, 129.

into play later; and no dispute arises when this is affirmed of the process of making the Gods of the higher religions. There is, indeed, no generic severance between the Gods of fear and the Gods of love, most deities having both aspects: nevertheless, certain specified deities are so largely shaped by men's affections that they might recognisably be termed the Beloved Gods.

It will on the whole be helpful to an understanding of the subject if we name such Gods, in terms of current conceptions, the Christs of the world's pantheon. That title, indeed, no less fitly includes figures which do not strictly rank as Gods; but in thus widely relating it we shall be rather elucidating than obscuring religious history. Only by some such collocation of ideas can the inquirer surmount his presuppositions and take the decisive step towards seeing the religions of mankind as alike man-made. On the other hand, he is not thereby committed to any one view in the field of history proper; he is left free to argue for a historical Christ as for a historical Buddha.

Even on the ground of the concept of evolution, however, scientific agreement is still hindered by persistence in the old classifications. The trouble meets us on one line in arbitrary fundamental separations between mythology and religion, early religion and early ethics, religion and magic, genuine myths and non-genuine myths.¹ On another line it meets us in the shape of a sudden and local reopening of the problem of theistic intervention in a quasi-philosophical form, or a wilful repudiation of naturalistic method when the inquiry reaches current beliefs. Thus results which were reached by disinterested scholarship a generation ago are sought to be subverted, not by a more thorough scholarship, but by keeping away from the scholarly problem and suggesting a new standard of values, open to no rational tests. It may be well, therefore, to clear the ground so far as may be of such dispute at the outset by stating and vindicating the naturalistic position in regard to it.

¹ Cp. the author's *Christianity and Mythology*, p. 2.

§ 2.

In the midst of much dispute, moral science approaches agreement on the proposition that all primitive beliefs and usages, however strange or absurd, are to be understood as primarily products of judgment, representing theories of causation or guesses at the order of things. To such agreement, however, hindrance is set up by the reversion of some inquirers to the old view that certain savage notions are "irrational" in the strict sense. Thus Mr. F. B. Jevons decides that "there is no rational principle of action in taboo: it is mechanical; arbitrary, because its sole *basis* is the *arbitrary association of ideas*; irrational, because its principle is [in the words of Mr. Lang] 'that causal connection in thought is equivalent to causative connection in fact.'"¹ Again, Mr. Jevons lays it down² that "Taboo.....is the conviction that there are certain things which must—absolutely must, and not on grounds of experience of 'unconscious utility'—be avoided."

It is significant that in both of these passages the proposition runs into verbal insignificance or counter-sense. In the first cited we are told (1) that a certain association of ideas is arbitrary *because* its *basis* is an arbitrary association of ideas, and (2) that it is all the while a "causal" (*i.e.*, a non-arbitrary) connection in thought. In the last we are in effect told that the tabooer is conscious that he is not proceeding on an ancestral experience when he is merely not conscious of doing so. When instructed men thus repeatedly lapse into mere nullities of formula, there is presumably something wrong with their theory. Now, the whole subject of taboo is put outside science by the assumption that the practice is *in origin* "irrational" and "absolute" and "arbitrary" and independent of all experience of utility. As Mr. Jevons himself declares in another connection, the savage's thought is subject to mental laws as much as is civilised man's.

¹ Jevons, *Introduction* cited, p. 91; Lang, *Myth, Ritual, and Religion*, 1st ed., i. 35.

² As cited, pp. 11-12. Cp. p. 68, where the question is begged with much simplicity.

How, then, is this dictum to be reconciled with that? What is the "law" of the savage's "arbitrariness"?

Conceivably it lies before us in Mr. Jevons's page of denial. The very illustration first given by him for the proposition last cited from him is that "the mourner is as dangerous as the corpse he has touched," "the mourner is as dangerous to those he loves as to those he hates." Here, one would suppose, was a pretty obvious clue to an intelligible causation. Is it to be "arbitrarily" decided that primitive men never observed the phenomena of contagion from corpse to mourners, and from mourners to their families; or, observing it, never sought to act on the experience?

The only fair objection to accepting such a basis for one species of taboo is that for other species no such explanation is available. But what science looks for in such a matter is not a direct explanation for every instance: it suffices that we find an explanation or explanations for such a principle or conception as taboo, and then recognise that, once set up, it may be turned to really "arbitrary" account.

"Arbitrary" has two significations, in two references: it means "illogical" in reference to reason, or "representative of one will as against the general will." In the first sense, it is here irrelevant, for no one pretends that taboo is right; but it may apply in the other in a way not intended by Mr. Jevons. For nothing can be more obvious than the adaptability of the idea of taboo, once crystallised or conventionalised in a code, to purposes of individual malice, and to all such procedure as men indicate by the term "priestcraft." Mr. Jevons, in his zeal to prove, what no one ever seriously disputed, that priests did not and could not create the religious or superstitious instinct, leaves entirely out of his exposition, and even by implication denies, the vitally relevant truth that they exploit it. And in overlooking this he sadly burdens, if he does not wreck, his own unduly biassed theory of the religious instinct as something relatively "deep," and as proceeding in terms of an abnormal consciousness of contact with the

divine. For if those relatively "arbitrary" and "irrational" forms of taboo do not come from the priest—that is, from the religion-maker or -monger, whether official or not—they must, on Mr. Jevons's own showing, come from "religion."

It may be that he would not at once reject such a conclusion; for the apparent motive of much of his treatment of taboo is the sanctification of it as an element in the ancestry of the Christian religion. For this purpose he is ready to go to notable lengths, as when¹ he allows cannibalism to be sometimes "religious in intention." But while insisting at one point on the absolute unreasonedness and immediate certitude of the notion of taboo, apparently in order to place it on all fours with the "direct consciousness" which for him is the mark of a religious belief, he admits in so many words, as we have seen, that it is arbitrary and "irrational," which is scarcely a way of accrediting it as a religious phenomenon. Rather the purpose of that aspersion seems to be to open the way for another aggrandisement of religion as having *suppressed* irrational taboo. On the one hand we are told² that the savage's fallacious belief in the transmissibility of taboo was "the sheath which enclosed and protected a conception that was to blossom and bear a priceless fruit—the conception of Social Obligation." On the other we read³ that "it was only among the minority of mankind, and there only under exceptional circumstances, that the institution bore its best fruit.....Indeed, in many respects the evolution of taboo has been fatal to the progress of humanity." And again:—

"In religion the institution also had a baneful effect: the irrational restrictions, touch not, taste not, handle not, which constitute formalism, are essentially taboos—essential to the education of man at one period of his development, but a bar to his progress later."

But now is introduced⁴ the theorem of the process by

¹ P. 201.

² P. 87.

³ P. 88.

⁴ P. 89.

which taboo has been *converted into* an element of civilisation: it is this:—

“From the fallacy of magic man was delivered by religion; and there are reasons.....for believing that it was by the same aid he escaped from the irrational restrictions of taboo.”¹ “In the higher forms of religion.....the trivial and absurd restrictions are cast off, and those alone retained which are essential to morality and religion.”²

We shall have to deal later with the direct propositions here put; but for the moment it specially concerns us to note that the *denoûment* does not hold scientifically or logically good. The fact remains that irrational taboo as such was, in the terms of the argument, strictly religious: that religion in this aspect had “no sense in it,” inasmuch as taboo had passed from a primitive precaution to a priest-made convention; and that what religion is alleged to deliver man from is just religion. Thus alternately does religion figure for the apologist as a rational tendency correcting an irrational, and as an irrational tendency doing good which a rational one cannot. And the further we follow his teaching the more frequently does such a contradiction emerge.

§ 3

At the close of his work, apparently forgetting the propositions of his first chapter as to the priority of the sense of obstacle in the primitive man's notion of supernatural forces, Mr. Jevons affirms that the “earliest attempt” towards harmonising the facts of the “external and inner consciousness”—by which is meant observation and reflection—

“took the form of ascribing the external prosperity which befell a man to the action of the divine love of which he was conscious within himself; and the misfortunes which befell him to the wrath of the justly offended divine will.”³

Here we have either a contradiction of the thesis before

¹ P. 91.

² P. 93.

³ Work cited, p. 410.

cited, or a resort to the extremely arbitrary assumption that in taking credit to himself for successful management of things, and imputing his miscarriages to a superior power, the primitive man is not trying to "harmonise the facts of his experience." Such an argument would be on every ground untenable; but it appears to be all that can stand between Mr. Jevons and self-contradiction. The way to a sound position is by settling impartially the definition of the term "religion." How Mr. Jevons misses this may be gathered from the continuation of the passage under notice:—

"Man, being by nature religious, began by a religious explanation of nature. To assume, as is often done, that man had no religious consciousness to begin with, and that the misfortunes which befell him inspired him with fear, and fear led him to propitiate the malignant beings whom he imagined to be the causes of his suffering, fails to account for the very thing it is intended to explain—namely, the existence of religion. It might account for superstitious dread of malignant beings: it does not account for the grateful worship of benignant beings, nor for the universal satisfaction which man finds in that worship."

As we have seen, Mr. Jevons himself had at the outset plainly posited what he now describes as a fallacious assumption. On his prior showing, man's experience of apparent hostility in Nature "first called forth" his belief in supernatural power. The interposed phrase, "was not created but," looks like an after attempt to reconcile the earlier proposition with the later. But there is no real reconciliation, for Mr. Jevons thus sets up only the stultifying suggestion that the primitive man was from the first conscious of the existence of good supernatural powers but did not think they did *him* any good—another collapse in countersense—or else the equally unmanageable notion that primitive man recognised helpful supernatural beings, but was not grateful to them for their help.

That the argument has not been scientifically conducted is further clear from the use now of the expression "super-

stitious dread" as the equivalent of "fear," while "grateful worship" stands for "satisfaction." Why "superstitious dread" and not "superstitious gratitude"? A scientific inquiry will treat the phenomena on a moral par, and will at this stage simply put aside the term "superstition." It is relevant only as imputing a superior degree of gratuitousness of belief (whether by way of fear or of satisfaction) at a comparatively advanced state of culture. To call a savage superstitious when he fears a God, and religious when he thanks one, is not only to warp the "science of religion" at the start, but to block even the purpose in view, for, as we have seen, Mr. Jevons is constrained by his own motive of edification to assume that the benignant God ought by rights to be sometimes feared.

§ 4.

Putting aside as unscientific all such prejudgments, and leaving the professed religionist his personal remedy of discriminating finally between "true" and "false" religion, let us begin at the beginning by noting that "religious consciousness" can intelligibly mean only a given *direction* of consciousness. And if we are to make any consistent specification of the point at which consciousness *begins* to be religious, we shall put it impartially in simple animism—the spontaneous surmise, seen to be dimly made or makable even by animals, "that not only animals and plants, but inanimate things, may possess life." Mr. Jevons rightly points out¹ that this primary notion "neither proceeds from nor implies nor accounts for belief in the *supernatural*"; and he goes on to show (developing here the doctrine which he ultimately repudiates) how the latter notion would arise through man's connecting with certain agencies or "spirits" the frustrative or molestive power "which he had already found to exercise an unexpected and irresistible control over his destiny." "In this way," continues Mr. Jevons, suddenly granting much more than he need or ought, "the notion of supernatural power, which

¹ P. 22.

originally was purely negative and manifested itself merely in suspending or counteracting the uniformity of nature, came to have a positive content." From this point, as might have been divined, the argument becomes confused to the last degree. We have been brought to the supernatural as a primitive product of (a) the recognition of irregular and frustrative forces *in* nature, and (b) the identification of them as personalities or spirits like man. But immediately, in the interests of another preconception, the theorist proceeds in effect to cancel this by arguing that when men resort to magic, the idea of the supernatural has disappeared. His proposition is that "the belief in the supernatural was prior to the belief in magic, and that the latter, whenever it sprang up, was a degradation or relapse in the evolution of religion,"¹ inasmuch as it assumed man's power to control the forces of Nature by certain stratagems. And as he argues at the same time that "religion and magic had different origins, and were always essentially distinct from one another," it is implied that religion began in that belief in a (frustrative) supernatural which is asserted to have preceded magic. That is to say, religion began in the recognition of hostile or dangerous powers.

Now, a logically vigilant investigator would either not have said that belief in a supernatural was constituted by the recognition of hostile personal forces in Nature, or, having said it, would have granted that magic was an effort to circumvent supernatural forces. Mr. Jevons first credits the early savage with a conception of supernatural power which excluded the idea of man's opposition, and then with the power so to transform his first notion as to see in the so-called supernatural merely forms of Nature. An intellectual process achieved in the civilised world only as a long and arduous upward evolution on scientific lines is thus supposed to have been more or less suddenly effected as a mere matter either of ignorant downward drift or of perverse experiment by primeval man, or at least by savage

¹ P. 25.

man. It is not easy to be more arbitrary in the way of hypothesis.

Combating the contrary view, which makes magic prior to religion, Mr. Jevons writes:—

“To read some writers, who derive the powers of priests (and even of the gods) from those of the magician, and who consider apparently that magic requires no explanation, one would imagine that the savage, surrounded by supernatural powers and a prey to supernatural terrors, one day conceived the happy idea that he too would himself exercise supernatural power—and the thing was done: sorcery was invented, and the rest of the evolution of religion follows without difficulty.”¹

It is difficult to estimate the relevance of this criticism without knowing the precise expressions which provoked it; but as regards any prevailing view of evolution it is somewhat pointless. “One day” is not the formula of evolutionary conceptions. But Mr. Jevons’s own doctrine, which is to the effect that magical rites arose by way of parody of worship-rites after the latter had for ages been in undisputed possession, suggests just such a catastrophic conception as he imputes. Rejecting the obvious evolutionary hypothesis that magic and religion so-called arose confusedly together—that magic employs early religious machinery because it is but a contemporary expression of the state of mind in which religion rises and roots—he insists that magic cannot have been tried save by way of late “parody,” in an intellectual atmosphere which, nevertheless, he declares to be extremely conservative,² and which is therefore extremely unlikely to develop such parodies.

Mr. Jevons’s doctrinal motive, it is pretty clear, is his wish to relieve “religion” of the discredit of “magic,”³ even as he finally and remorsefully seeks to relieve it of

¹ Pp. 35, 36.

² P. 36.

³ A more scientific temper is shown by a theologian, Professor T. W. Davies, in whose doctoral thesis on *Magic, Divination, and Demonology*—a performance both learned and judicious—it is argued that “all magic is a sort of religion” (pp. 1, 3).

the discredit of originating in "fear." Having no such axe to grind, the scientific inquirer might here offer to let "religion" mean anything Mr. Jevons likes, if he will stick to his definition. But science must stipulate for *some* term to designate a series of psychological processes which originate in the same order of cognitions and conceptions, on the same plane of knowledge, and have strictly correlative results in action.¹ And as such a term would certainly have to be applied sooner or later to much of what Mr. Jevons wants to call "religion," we may just as well thrash out the issue over that long-established term.

§ 5.

The need for an understanding becomes pressing when we compare with the conceptions of Mr. Jevons those of Mr. J. G. Frazer, as set forth in the revised edition of his great work, *The Golden Bough*. Having before the issue of his first edition "failed, perhaps inexcusably," he modestly avows, "to define even to myself my notion of religion," he was then "disposed to class magic loosely under it as one of its lower forms." Now he has "come to agree with Sir A. C. Lyall and Mr. F. B. Jevons in recognising a fundamental distinction and even opposition of principle between magic and religion."² On this view he defines religion as "a propitiation or conciliation of powers superior to man which are believed to direct and control

¹ Since this was written there has appeared the essay *Sur le totemisme* of M. Durkheim (*L'Année Sociologique*, 5e année, 1902), who may be supposed to speak for scientific sociology if any one does. In that essay he deals incidentally with the view of Mr. Frazer that the Australian Aruntas (described by Messrs. Spencer and Gillen in their *Native Tribes of Central Australia*, 1899) are at the stage of pure magic, not having yet reached religion. Mr. Jevons, on the contrary, would regard them as truly religious in respect of their totem sacrament. M. Durkheim, applying the inductive method, notes indeed (p. 87) that the life of the Aruntas is "stamped with religiosity, and that this religiosity is in origin essentially totemic"; but he adds: "The territory is covered with sacred trees, and groves, and mysterious grottos, where are piously preserved the objects of the cult. None of those sacred places is approached without a religious terror." And he concludes: "What is essential is that the rites of the Aruntas are at all points comparable to those which are found in systems incontestably religious: then they proceed from *the same ideas and the same sentiments*; and it is arbitrary to refuse them the same title."

² *Golden Bough*, 2nd ed., pref., p. xvi., and i. 63, note.

the course of nature and of human life. In this sense," he adds, "it will readily be perceived that religion is opposed in principle both to magic and to science."¹

The first comment on such a proposition is that it all depends on what you mean by "principle." If religion means *only* the act of propitiation and conciliation of certain alleged powers, its "principle" may be placed either in the hope that such propitiation will succeed or in the feeling that it ought to be tried. In either case, the accuracy of the proposition is far from clear. But we must widen the issue. It will be seen that Mr. Frazer's formal definition of religion is as inadequate as that implied in the argument of Mr. Jevons, though his practical handling of the case is finally much the more scientific. On the above definition, *belief* is no part of religion;² and neither is gratitude; though fear may be held to be implied in propitiation. Further, religion has by this definition nothing to do with ethics; and even conduct shaped by way of simple obedience to a God's alleged commands is barely recognised under the head of "propitiation." Finally, a theist who has ever so reverently arrived at the idea of an All-wise Omnipotence which *needs not* to be propitiated or conciliated, has on Mr. Frazer's definition ceased to be religious. It will really not do.

I am not here pressing for a wider definition, as do some professed rationalists, by way of securing for my own philosophy or ethic the prestige of a highly respectable name; nor do I even endorse their claim as for themselves. I simply urge that as a matter of scientific convenience and consistency the word must be allowed to cover at least the bulk of the phenomena to which it has immemorially applied. Where Mr. Frazer by his definition makes religion "nearly unknown" to the Australian, because the Australian (mainly for lack of the wherewithal) does not

¹ *Golden Bough*, i. 63.

² A similar criticism, I find, is passed by Mr. Lang (*Magic and Religion*, 1901, pp. 48, 49, etc.), who seeks to turn Mr. Frazer's oversight to the account of his own theory of an occult primeval but non-primitive monotheism. It is doubly unfortunate that Mr. Frazer's error should thus be made to seem part of the rationalist case against traditionalism.

sacrifice,¹ Mr. Lang ascribes to them a higher or deeper religious feeling on that very account.² Such chaos of theory must be averted by a more comprehensive definition. Whether or not we oppose magic to religion, we cannot exclude from the term the whole process of non-propitiatory religious ethic, of thanksgiving ritual, and of cosmological doctrine. Later we shall have to deal with Mr. Jevons's attempt to withdraw the term from theistic philosophy and from mythology; but we may provisionally insist that emotional resignation to "the divine will" is in terms of all usage whatsoever a religious phenomenon.

It remains to consider the alleged severance between religion and magic. Mr. Frazer, while agreeing with Mr. Jevons that they are "opposed," differs from him in holding that magic preceded religion; and by an odd fatality Mr. Frazer contradicts himself as explicitly as does Mr. Jevons. After avowing the belief that "in the evolution of thought, magic, as representing a lower intellectual stratum, has probably everywhere preceded religion,"³ he also avows that the antagonism between the two

"seems to have made its appearance comparatively late in the history of religion. At an earlier stage the functions of priest and sorcerer were often combined, or, to speak perhaps more correctly, were not yet differentiated from each other. To serve his purpose, man wooed the good-will of gods or spirits by prayer and sacrifice, while *at the same time* he had recourse to ceremonies and forms of words which he hoped would of themselves bring about the desired result without the help of god or devil. In short, he performed religious and magical rites *simultaneously*; he uttered prayers and incantations almost in the same breath, knowing or recking little of the theoretical inconsistency of his behaviour, so long as by hook or crook he contrived to get what he wanted."⁴

Proceeding with his ostensible support of the thesis that magic *preceded* religion, Mr. Frazer, in his admirably

¹ *Golden Bough*, 2nd ed., i. 71.

² *The Making of Religion*: cp. *Magic and Religion*, *passim*.

³ Pref., p. xvii.; cp. i. 70.

⁴ i. 64-65.

learned way, gives us fresh illustrations of the “*same confusion of magic and religion*” in civilised and uncivilised peoples.¹ From Dr. Oldenberg he cites the observation that

“the ritual of the very sacrifices for which the metrical prayers were composed is described in the older Vedic texts as saturated from beginning to end with magical practices which were to be carried out by the sacrificial priests”; and that the Brahmanic rites of marriage initiation and king-anointing “are complete models of magic of every kind, and in every case the form of magic employed bears the stamp of the highest antiquity.”²

From M. Maspero he accepts the weighty reminder that in regard to ancient Egypt

“we ought not to attach to the word ‘magic’ the degrading idea which it almost inevitably calls up in the mind of a modern. Ancient magic was the very foundation of religion. The faithful who desired to obtain some favour from a god had no chance of succeeding except by laying hands on the deity; and this arrest could only be effected by means of a certain number of rites, sacrifices, prayers, and chants, *which the god himself had revealed*, and which obliged him to do what was demanded of him.”³

To all this, obviously, Mr. Jevons may reply that it does not prove the *priority* of magic to religion. Neither, however, does it give any basis for Mr. Jevons’s thesis of the *secondariness* of magic. It simply sets forth that in the earliest available records magic so-called and propitiatory religion so-called coexist and cohere. In Dr. Frazer’s own words, they were not yet differentiated from each other—differentiated, that is, in the moral estimate of priest and worshipper. But in the terms of the proposition, the

¹ See his previous instances, pp. 19, 33, 45.

² Oldenberg, *Die Religion des Veda*, pp. 59, 477. Ref. also to pp. 311, 369, 476, 522.

³ Maspero, *Études de mythologie et d’archéologie égyptienne*, i. 106. Cp. Mr. Frazer’s further citations from Erman and Wiedemann, to the same effect; and see Budge, *Intr. to trans. of Book of the Dead*, p. cxlvii.; Davies, *Magic, Divination, and Demonology*, 1898, p. 2; and Hillebrandt, *Ritual-literatur*, 1897, p. 167 sq., there cited.

practice of propitiation *was there*; and there is nothing to show that it was a late variation on confident magic. And the documentary evidence, so far as it goes, is in favour of the priority of magic so-called. "The magical texts formed the earliest sacred literature of Chaldæa. This fact remains unshaken."¹

What, then, becomes of the argument that magic and religion so-called are "opposed" because they are logically inconsistent with each other? Like Mr. Jevons, Mr. Frazer makes a good deal of the theoretic analogy of magic with science, both being alleged to rest upon the assumption of the "uniformity of nature" and "the operation of immutable laws acting mechanically."² Now, while we need not hesitate to see in magic in particular, even as in religion in general, man's early gropings towards science, we must not let ourselves be by a mere verbalism confused as to what magic is. Obviously it does *not* assume the uniformity of nature: inasmuch as it assumes to control nature by different devices, framing new procedures where the old fail. It does not even invariably assume strict uniformity in the magical *processus* itself; but that is the one sort of uniformity of cause and effect that the magician as such approaches to conceiving. Now, this conception connects much less with that of what we may term the normal relation of man to nature than with that of his relation to the sets of forces apprehended by late thought as "spiritual," but by early thought merely as unseen. Early man, presumably, had a normal notion of the process of breaking a stone or killing a foe; and there if anywhere lay the beginnings of his science. But even as he thought

¹ Sayce, *Hibbert Lectures*, p. 237. Cp. Jastrow, *Religion of Babylonia and Assyria*, 1898, pp. 253-4.

² Mr. Frazer further writes (p. 61) that in both "the elements of caprice, of chance, and of accident are banished from the course of nature." This is a further and a gratuitous logical confusion. Magic certainly recognises "caprice" in its "nature"; and science certainly notes "chance" and "accident," which are not negations of, but aspects of, the uniformity of nature. Where could science place them, save in nature, if she recognises them; and if she does not recognise them, how can she name or banish them? As to the scientific force of the terms, cp. the author's *Letters on Reasoning*, vii.

the invisible or inferrible personalities could do many kinds of "great" things, so he thought that, by taking pains, *he* could; inasmuch as he never clearly differentiated them from himself in nature and capacity. Thus his magic was part of his way of thinking about what was for him the "occult" or inferred side of things, which way of thinking as a whole *was* his religion. To speak in terms of Mr. Jevons's primary position, he was as magician *interfering with* the sequences of nature as he supposed the occult personalities did.

On yet another ground, we are disallowed from charging inconsistency on primitive or ancient religious thought in respect of divergences from later conceptions. One of the more notable of those divergences is the idea that the Gods themselves are subject to the course of Nature, or the law of Fate: it is reached by contemporary redskins,¹ and it stands out from the religious speculation of ancient Greece.² In both stages it is compatible with propitiation; and yet it gives a quasi-logical basis for the resort to magic, regarded as a temporary circumvention of the law of things. So with the belief in opposed deities: even if none be regarded as evil, like Ahriman, there is nothing specially inconsistent in a magic which seeks to employ a power of which, in the terms of the case, no deity has a monopoly. In this way polytheism offers an easy way out of the indictment for inconsistency. When Porphyry asked Abammon, "Does not he who says he will burst the heavens, or reveal the secrets of Isis, or expose the arcanum in the adytum, or scatter the members of Osiris to Typhon—does not he who says this, by thus threatening what he knows not and cannot

¹ J. G. Müller, *Geschichte der Amerikanischen Urreligionen*, ed. 1867, p. 149.

² Herodotus, i, 91; Homer, *Iliad*, xiv, 434-442; Philemon ap. Stobaei *Serm.* lxii, 8; Aeschylus, *Prom. Vinct.* 908-927; Diogenes Laërt. vii, 74 (149); ix, 6 (7); Clemens Alexand. *Stromata*, v, 14; Plutarch, *De Exilio*, xi; *De Defectu Orac.* xxviii-xxix; *De Stoic. Repugnant.* xxxiv; *De Placitis Philos.* i, §7, 17; ii, 25-28; Aulus Gellius, vi, 1, 2; Seneca, *De Providentia*, v, 5-7; Cicero, *De Divinatione*, ii, 10. A history of the discussion on the subject seems wanting. Cp. Ueberweg, *Hist. of Philosophy*, i, 194-196. V. Fabricius, in his essay *De Jove et Fato in P. Vergili Aeneide* (1896, p. 21), sums up: "Nullo Vergili carminis loco Jovem fato subiectum esse plane ac clare dici nobis confitendum est. Sunt quidem nonnulla quibus Jovis potentia et fati vis simul dominari videntur."

do, prove himself grossly foolish?" The sage answers with confidence that such threats are used against not any of the celestial Gods but a lower order of powers, and that the theurgist commands these "as existing superior to them in the order of the Gods," and possessing power "through a union with the Gods" in virtue of his magic.¹

That is, of course, a late and sophisticated account of the matter: the earlier theologian simply did not realise that any charge of inconsistency could arise. In any case, the Old Testament abounds in cases of sympathetic magic; the sprinkling of the blood of the hallowed sacrifice upon the ears and thumbs and toes of the priests;² the holding up of the arms of Moses,³ in the attitude of the Sun-God and War-God Mithra,⁴ to sway the battle; the sending forth of the scape-goat;⁵ the blowing of the trumpets before the walls of Jericho;⁶ the raising of the widow's son by Elijah, "stretching himself upon the child three times"⁷—all these are acts neither of prayer nor of propitiation, but of sympathetic magic, "which is the germ of all magic," and the theorist may be defied to show that they stood for a "degradation or relapse in the evolution of religion."⁸ If, indeed, he could show it, he would be putting a rod in pickle for his theory of the super-excellence of Hebrew monotheism, which evolved itself with these accompaniments.

The early priest, then, is to be called inconsistent in his resort to magic only on the view that he had the definite modern conception of the *Omnipotence* of a supernatural power; and this he simply had not. It is, then, quite beside the case to argue, as does even Mr. Frazer,⁹ that "the fatal flaw of magic lies.....in its total misconception of the particular laws which govern" natural sequences. *That* is not a differentiation between magic and religion;

¹ Jamblichus, *De Mysteriis*, Ep. Porph. and vi, 5-7. It is noteworthy that according to Abammon the Chaldeans never use threats in their magic, but the Egyptians sometimes do.

² Ex. xxix, 19-21.

⁴ Zendavesta, *Mihir Yasht*, xxxi.

⁶ Josh. vi.

⁸ Jevons, *Introd.* pp. 25, 35.

³ Ex. xvii, 9-13.

⁵ Lev. xvi.

⁷ 1 Kings, xvii, 21.

⁹ *G. B.* i, 62.

for the "religious" conception that nature is to be affected by propitiating unseen powers is just as fatally wrong; and it arose in the same fashion by "association of ideas," men assuming that nature was ruled by a personality like themselves. Why, then, is the "flaw" dwelt upon? If it be to prepare for the view that at a certain stage a portion of mankind began to "abandon magic as a principle of faith and practice and to betake themselves to religion *instead*,"¹ the answer is that on Mr. Frazer's own showing men for whole ages practised both concurrently;² and that in the terms of the case they are as likely to have taken to magic because prayer failed as *vice versa*. Mr. Frazer, indeed, only diffidently suggests that "a tardy recognition of the inherent falsehood and barrenness of magic set the more thoughtful part of mankind to cast about for a truer theory of nature and a more fruitful method of turning her resources to account." But by his own showing he has no right to this hypothesis even on an avowal of diffidence. As well might the contrary theory of Mr. Jevons be supported by the suggestion that the inherent falsehood and barrenness of the theory of prayer and propitiation set the more resourceful part of mankind on a more effectual control of nature by way of magic.³ Had not men all along been trying both?

Equally untenable, surely, is the distinction drawn by Mr. Frazer⁴ between "the haughty self-sufficiency of the magician, his arrogant demeanour towards the higher powers, and his unabashed claim to exercise a sway like theirs," and the priest "with his awful sense of the divine majesty and his humble prostration in presence of it." Mr. Frazer can hardly mean to be ironical; but his words may very well serve to convey such a sense when applied

¹ *G. B.* i, 75.

² See for further instances in Babylonian practice, Sayce, Hibbert Lectures, pp. 316-319.

³ Cp. Ellis, *Polynesian Researches*, 2nd ed. iv, 294-5, where it is noted that the islanders try different priests and sorcerers as more civilised people try different doctors. "The sorcerers were a distinct class among the priests of the island; and their art appears to claim equal antiquity with the other parts of that cruel system of idolatry" etc. (Cp. i, 379; iii, 36-37.)

⁴ *G. B.* i, 64.

to the attitude of the priesthoods of all ages, Brahmanical¹ or Papal, Semitic or Aryan. It would be difficult to distinguish in the matter of modesty between Moses² and the magicians of Pharaoh, or Samuel and the Witch of Endor, or Elijah and the priests of Baal, or an excommunicating and flag-blessing bishop and an incantating wizard. All the while we have Mr. Frazer's own assurance that for long ages the priest *was* the magician.

The final condemnation of Mr. Frazer's definition, however, is, as we shall see cause later to say of that of Mr. Jevons, that in strictness it ignores the bulk of the religious life of mankind. He himself avows that only a part of mankind has ever abandoned magic and taken to "religion instead." In his own words, magic is a "universal faith," a "truly Catholic creed";³ and he might, without extending his ample anthropological learning, further establish this fact by reference to current religion. If religion is to mean only the ideas of "the more thoughtful part of mankind," we shall simply be led to a new inquiry as to who are the more thoughtful.

Are they the believers in the efficacy of prayer? Insofar as such believers profess belief in an Omnipotent and Unchanging Providence, they stultify their theistic creed as vitally as ever did the magician. Then religion, like magic, is fundamentally opposed to belief in an omnipotent deity! Where shall we stop? Mr. Frazer⁴ supposes the reader to ask, "How was it that intelligent men did not sooner detect the fallacy of magic?"; and he thoughtfully and rightly answers that before the age of science it was really not easy to detect. But he could hardly say as much of prayer, whereof the fallacy was detected alike by Hebrews and heathens thousands of years ago. Yet by his definition the contemporary believer in prayer is

¹ Cp. Mr. Frazer's own citations as to the Brahmans, *G. B.* i, 145-6.

² "And the Lord said unto Moses, See, I have made thee a God to Pharaoh," Exodus, vii, 1. Cp. xvii, 11; xviii, 15, etc. Steinthal's theory (*Essay on Prometheus*, Eng. tr. by R. Martineau in vol. with Goldziher, p. 392), that from the Yahwist point of view Moses must ultimately die for playing the heathen God in bringing water from the rock, will hardly consist with such passages.

³ *Id.* i, 74.

⁴ *Id.* i, 78.

religious and the ancient worshipper of Isis was not. On such principles there can be no science of religion whatever, any more than there is a science of orthodoxy. In order to classify the very phenomena with which Mr. Frazer mainly occupies himself, we should have to create a new set of terms for nine-tenths of them, recognising "religion" only as a certain procedure that chronically obtruded itself among them. And then would come Mr. Jevons to explain that this religion was not religion at all, inasmuch as it resulted from a process of reasoning!

Science, then, is driven to reject both apriorisms alike, and to proceed to find a definition by way of a loyal induction.

§ 6.

As thus. In terms of many observations, and of some of Mr. Jevons's admissions, we are led to realise that the idea of what we term "the supernatural" not only does not mean for primitive man a consistent distinction: it does not mean it for civilised men. And the logical burden of Mr. Jevons's as of Mr. Frazer's indictment against magic is simply that it is inconsistent¹ with the admission of the "superiority"—the "super"-ness of the "divine" to the human. For the purpose of his plea, he necessarily ignores the salient historical fact made clear by Mr. Frazer, that men have abundantly practised magic towards the very Gods to whom they prayed, and whose "supernaturalness" they not only avowed but believed in to the extent of holding them "immortal." Assyrian, Egyptian, and Indian religious literatures alike are full of cases of such practice. It may be argued that that is still an

¹ Mr. Jevons distinguishes between "sympathetic magic" (exemplified in "killing the God" and other devices to produce fertility, rain, etc.) and "art magic." The former, he says, "does not involve in itself the idea of the supernatural, but was simply the applied science of the savage." Art magic, he says, "is the exercise by man of powers which are supernatural—i.e., of powers which by their definition it is beyond man to exercise. Thus the very conception of magic is one which is essentially inconsistent with itself" (p. 35).

imperfect conception of "the supernatural": that the consistent conception requires the ascription of eternity, of omnipotence, of uncreatedness, of never-having-begun. But then men have also humbly prayed, without thought of magic, to Gods to whom they were grateful and whom they believed to be suffering sons of older Gods; and these attitudes of mind Mr. Jevons has fully certificated as "religious." What degree, then, of recognition of superiority is to be regarded as constituting recognition of "the" supernatural? One is moved to ask, What is the theorist's own conception of "the supernatural"? and, What does he mean by the term when he speaks of "supernatural terrors"?

When the critic is himself so far from a clear definition, it is very obviously a mere rhetorical device to say that *for the magic-monger* the conception of the supernatural "by definition" is inconsistent with his practice. He had never given any definition;¹ neither had the "religious man" who is alleged to have preceded him; and it was simply impossible that they should. The *à priori* argument against him is thus irrelevant from the start; no less than the *à posteriori*; and both are further negligible as being inferribly motivated by a non-scientific purpose. The right view is to be reached on another line.

Proceeding on the clear lines of human psychology, we can be absolutely certain of this, that a savage may alternately seek to propitiate and seek to coerce or circumvent a human enemy whom he regards as normally stronger than himself. As Mr. Jevons notes, savage hunters on killing a bear will use a ritual to propitiate the bear clan. As he is well aware, Brahmans and other priests have taught that an ascetic or a ritualist can by his practices

¹ In the Egyptian system, magic was normally operated through a God or goddess (usually Isis) who "delivers the sick and suffering from the gods and goddesses who afflict them" (Renouf, Hibbert Lectures, 2nd ed. p. 212). It was thus on the same moral plane with not only the religion of the Homeric Greeks but that of Catholic Christianity, in which the saints are separately invoked and the will of Mary is practically omnipotent. So with the virtue of the words of Thoth, and of the names of the Gods (Budge, *Introd.* pp. cxlviii-ix, clxv): similar beliefs were held by the Jews and by the Christian Father Origen.

gain power to coerce or command the highest Gods,¹ to whom ordinary men can but pray. Such a notion, he argues, is a negation of a supernatural in that it assumes the Gods to be subject to an order of causation which man can control. But, once more, is it not equally a negation of a supernatural to assume, as the highest religions have done and do, that man can *persuade* the God by prayer, or propitiate him by confession and sacrifices, or keep him friendly by professing esteem and gratitude? Is not every one of these acts an assumption that the God's moral and mental processes are on a par with those of men, and that he is merely stronger than they? So considered, in what sense is he supernatural? And is not the inconsistency gross when men at once practise prayer and ascribe to their deity fore-ordination of all things? It is not too much to say that the procedure by which Mr. Jevons classifies magic as anti-religious must logically end in so classing every historic religion, and leaving the title to the name vested solely in professed Agnostics and Atheists. Some reasoners have actually so allotted the term; but that conclusion will scarcely suit Mr. Jevons's book, so to speak.

In view of the whole facts, the terms "belief in the supernatural" must be recognised as signifying for practical purposes merely belief in a personal power that is *superhuman*, or rather extra-human, yet quasi-human. And such powers are the Gods alike of the earliest savage and the contemporary Christian, the humble offerer of prayer and the practiser of magic. This view of the case finally follows from another of Mr. Jevons's most definite positions; for he repeatedly describes the primitive "sacramental meal" as truly religious, in that it is a "higher" form of sacrifice than the mere gift-sacrifice, being a means of communion with the God, who actually joined in the meal. He does not deny it the title of "religion" even when it involves the conception that in the sacramental meal the God is actually eaten.² In each of these cases

¹ See Rhys Davids' *Buddhism*, 10th ed. p. 34, and American Lectures on Buddhism, p. 103; Frazer, as cited above; Granger, *The Worship of the Romans*, 1895, pp. 290-1; Sayce, Hibbert Lectures, p. 335.

² Pp. 224, 295.

the worshipper certainly believed he had acquired a force not before his own, even as does the practiser of magic; while the eating of the God is the *reductio ad absurdum* of his "superiority." Here, then, is even a more complete stultification of the logical idea of the supernatural than is committed by the magician, and it is actually made to validate the "religion" of the sacrificer as against the anti-religion of the magic-monger.

§ 7.

This contradiction naturally reiterates itself in Mr. Jevons's treatise at a hundred points: being fundamental, it strikes through the entire argument. While premising that religion is "universally human," and finally contending that man is "by nature religious," and therefore "began by a religious explanation of nature,"¹ he pronounces² that "four-fifths of mankind, probably, believe in sympathetic magic," which, he declares, not only "does not involve in itself the idea of the supernatural,"³ but is "hostile from the beginning"⁴ to religion, and is the "negation" thereof.⁵ While affirming that the belief in the supernatural (= religion) was prior to magic, he explains⁶ that it was man's "intellectual helplessness in grappling with the forces of nature which led him into the way of religion" (*i.e.*, the way in which he *began*, before he had tried his intellect), and, again, that religion led certain men out of magic, though at the same time they were converted by simply seeing that magic is inefficacious.

Again, reverting for one purpose to his original doctrine of the primacy of fear, Mr. Jevons writes:⁷—

"Magic is, in fact, a direct *relapse* into the state of things in which man found himself when he was surrounded by *supernatural beings*, none of which was bound to him by any tie of goodwill, with none of which had he any stated relations, but all were

¹ P. 410. Cp. pp. 7, 9.

² P. 33.

³ P. 35.

⁴ P. 38.

⁵ P. 178. "Fundamentally irreligious" is the expression in the Index.

⁶ P. 21.

⁷ P. 177.

uncertain, capricious, and caused in him unreasoning terror. *This reign of terror magic tends to re-establish, and does re-establish, wherever the belief in magic prevails.*"¹

A few chapters further on, discussing fire-festivals and water rites, without asking wherein they psychologically differ from sacramental meals, he writes:²—

"If we regard those fire-festivals and water rites as pieces of sympathetic magic, they are clear instances in which man imagines himself able to constrain the gods—in this case the god of vegetation—to subserve his own ends. Now, this vain imagination is not merely non-religious, but anti-religious; and it is difficult to see how religion could have been developed out of it. *It is inconsistent with the abject fear which the savage feels of the supernatural, and which is sometimes supposed to be the origin of religion; and it is inconsistent with that sense of man's dependence on a superior being which is a real element in religion.*"

The contradiction is absolute. For one purpose, magic is declared to restore the primary reign of terror; for another purpose it is declared to be incompatible with a reign of terror, which is now at once implied and denied to be the primary state. We are in fine told that the savage does and does not fear a "supernatural."

Another series of contradictions is set up by the theorist's determination at certain points so to define "religion" as to secure a unique status for Judaism and Christianity—a breach of scientific method on all fours with his dichotomy of religion and magic. Dealing with the Egyptian conception of a future state, and noting how the first chapter of the Book of the Dead promises a future life which simply repeats the earthly, he declares that "no higher or more spiritual ideal entered *or could enter* into the composition of the Egyptian abode of bliss, *because its origin was essentially*

¹ On p. 290 Mr. Jevons notes how the Indians of Guiana *would* live in terror of wizards were it not for the protection of other wizards. Here things are balanced!

² P. 233.

non-religious."¹ Such being, however, the nature of the conception of the future life entertained by at least nine-tenths of the human race, savage and civilised, we are here again asked to associate the "universally human" influence with only a fraction of ostensible religious doctrine on one of the most specifically religious topics.

In the same fashion every modification of religious doctrine under the influence of political and religious thought is classed as non-religious. Thus, we are told² that "the eschatology of the Egyptian and Indian religions was not generated by the religious spirit, but was due to the incorporation of early philosophical speculations into those religions."

Similarly the idea of a Supreme God, at the head of a pantheon, "is scarcely a religious idea at all; it is not drawn from the spiritual depths of man's nature; it is a conception borrowed from politics;"³ and pantheism in turn "is a metaphysical speculation, not a fact of which the religious consciousness has direct intuition."⁴ The upshot is that only that idea is religious which "proceeds from an inner consciousness" of connection with or perception of deity: there must be no process of reasoning, no philosophy, no criticism. Mr. Frazer's view of religion as beginning in criticism of magic is ruled out as Mr. Frazer ruled out magic itself. And if it should be supposed that on this definition primary animism is clearly religious, Mr. Jevons has his veto ready: "In animism man projects his own personality on to external nature; in religion he is increasingly [why only increasingly?] impressed by the divine personality."⁵

Now, postponing for the moment the scientific answer—the answer of elementary and ultimate psychology—to Mr. Jevons, we have only to turn to the next chapter of his own treatise to find him nullifying this stage of his definition as he has nullified every other. First we are asked⁶ to "note that faith is not something peculiar or confined to religion, but is interwoven with every act of

¹ P. 309. ² P. 331. ³ P. 389. ⁴ Pp. 389-390. ⁵ P. 394. ⁶ P. 406.

reason," and that "the period of faith does not terminate when the pupil has come to have immediate consciousness of the facts which he could not see." Next, we are assured¹ that "the religious mind believes that all facts.....of which we have immediate consciousness can be reconciled with one another," and that "the religious faith which looks forward to the synthesis of all facts *in a manner satisfying to the reason*.....covers a much larger area than either science or moral philosophy." Either, then, the religious person becomes utterly irreligious when he thus reasons beyond the immediate "facts," so-called, of his consciousness, or Mr. Jevons's definition of religion is once more cancelled by himself.

If, again, we return to the chapter on "Taboo, Morality, and Religion," where it is argued that religion rationalised taboo, we read that "when the taboos which receive the sanction of religion are regarded as reasonable, as being the commands of a being possessing reason, then the other taboos *also* may be *brought to the test of reason*."² On the later view, this is an essentially irreligious process. It is true that Mr. Jevons hastens to say,³ "Taboo has indeed been rationalised, but not in all cases by reason," and to urge⁴ that the prophets and other religious reformers who discriminate between taboos "have usually considered themselves in so doing to be speaking, not their own words or thoughts, but those of their God." This, however, does not save his thesis from the reproach of having explicitly admitted the element of reason for a moment into the religious process. And the lapse recurs, again with a contradiction. In the closing chapter we have from Mr. Jevons successively these three propositions:—

"A belief is an inference, and as such is the work of the reason. The reason endeavours to anticipate the movement of facts."⁵

"It is an established fact of psychology that every act, mental or physical, requires the concurrence, not only of the *reason* and the will, but of emotion."⁶

"Indeed, the reason of primitive man was *ex*

¹ P. 407.

P. 92.

P. 93.

⁴ P. 94.⁵ P. 403.⁶ P. 409.

hypothesi undeveloped; and, *in any case*, religious belief is *not* an inference reached by reason, but is the *immediate consciousness* of certain facts."¹

These dicta are offered without apology or apparent misgiving as steps in a continuous process of argument. And just such another series occurs in the chapter in which Mr. Jevons undertakes to make out the characteristic thesis that "Mythology is not religion." In passing, and apart from the scientific rebuttal, it may be well to note that what Mr. Jevons calls "the extraordinary notion that mythology is religion,"² has never been propounded by any writer in the only sense in which it would be either false or extraordinary, that is, that "mythology is the whole of religion." That it is an element in religion and an aspect or function of "the religious consciousness" is affirmed by Mr. Jevons himself in the very act of denying it. As thus:—

"Mythology was primitive man's romance, as well as his history, his science, his philosophy."³

"The narratives in which primitive speculations" [*i.e.*, myths] "were not merely intellectual exercises, nor the work of the abstract imagination: they reflect or express *the mind of the author in its totality*, for they are the work of a human being, not of a creature possessing *reason and no morality*, or *imagination and no feeling*.....In the same way, then, as the moral tone and temper of the author and his age makes itself felt in these primitive speculations, *so will the religious spirit of the time*..... Mythology is one of the spheres of human activity in which religion may manifest itself: one of the departments of *human reason* which religion may *penetrate, suffuse, and inspire*."⁴

"Mythology is primitive science [*etcetera*], but it is *not* primitive religion. It is not *necessarily* or *usually* even religious. It is not the *proper* [!] or even the ordinary vehicle for the religious spirit. Prayer, meditation, devotional poetry, are the *chosen* vehicles in thought and word; ritual in outward deed and act. Myths originate in a *totally different psychological quarter*: they are the work of the *human reason*,

¹ P. 410.² P. 266.³ P. 263.⁴ P. 264.

acting in accordance with the laws of primitive logic; or are the outcome of *the imagination*, playing with the freedom of the poetic fancy. In neither case are they *primarily* the product of religious *feeling*: IT IS NOT THE FUNCTION OF FEELING TO DRAW INFERENCES."¹

It is here categorically asserted, first, that myths are *not* the work of any one side of the human personality—neither of reason without moral feeling nor of imagination without “feeling.” Finally, it is asserted that they *are* the work either of reason without feeling or of imagination without feeling. After the express denial that any human being can mythologise with one faculty only, and the necessary implication that religious feeling may “penetrate” the other faculties in the act of myth-making or myth-believing, we are told that myths originate in a “totally different psychological quarter” from the “religious spirit.”

As to the other italicised propositions, it may suffice at this point to note (1) that it is plainly wrong to say mythology *is* primitive science, history, etcetera, in the sense in which it is not (*i.e.*, is not the whole of) primitive religion; (2) that prayer and devotional poetry are normally *full of myths*; (3) that ritual is in many cases conceived by the worshipper as an imitation of an episode in the history of the God (*i.e.*, a myth); and (4) that by explicitly reducing religion to “feeling” Mr. Jevons, like Mr. Frazer, has eliminated *every belief as such* from religious consciousness. *Tantum religio!*

§ 8.

One sample more may suffice to complete the justification of our criticism that Mr. Jevons's treatise is flawed throughout by fatal contradiction. In discussing totemism, he certifies, first, the primitive belief of men in their descent from a totem animal as established or verified for them “in their inner experience—*i.e.*, in the filial reverence and affection which they felt towards him,”² thus salving as truly religious the grossest possible “projection

¹ Pp. 266-7.

² P. 108. Compare this with the decision that a political mode of thought has no part in religion.

of man's own personality" on Nature, while the spontaneous animism which early man shared with animals is denied the status of "direct consciousness." Then, taking the totemist's experience, thus highly classed, he writes:—

"Doubtless it was not all or most men who had this experience, or rather it was but few who attended to the feeling; but the *best* must have paid heed to it and have found satisfaction in dwelling on it, *else the conception of the deity would never have followed on the line on which as a matter of fact it was developed.*"¹

Turning to the chapter on "The Evolution of Belief" we have this flatly contrary deliverance:—

"The perpetuation of any variety" [of belief] "depends solely on the conditions under which it occurs: whatever varieties of belief are not favoured by the conditions, by their environment, will perish—the rest will survive (the surviving belief will not necessarily be that of the keenest-sighted man, but *that which accords with what the average sight can see of the facts.*")"²

In another chapter, yet again, we have still a third view of the process of survival, and one which excludes both of the preceding. In order to credit to the "truly" religious principle the rationalisation of taboo, Mr. Jevons, as we said, claimed that the rationalisers considered themselves to be propounding "not their own words or thoughts, but those of their God"; and he thereupon notes that "this belief has been shared by the community they addressed, otherwise the common man would not have gained the courage to break an ancient taboo. Certainly no mere appeal to reason would counterbalance that inveterate terror."³ On this view any dictum of any accredited priest would be decisive, irrespective of the "average sight"; and this despite of Mr. Jevons's refusal to recognise priestcraft as a factor in the creation of taboo in particular or religion in general.

A theory of religion which lands its framer in such a congeries of contradictions as these, I submit, is fully

¹ Pp. 108-109.

² P. 398.

³ Pp. 94-95.

convicted of vital fallacy. And certainly the fallacy is not the result either of imperfect knowledge of the ground or of speculative incompetence: it stands visibly for the misleading force of a false preconception or prejudice. On much of Mr. Jevons's book every student, I think, will put a very high estimate: it is studious, well-informed, suggestive, independent in method and in doctrine, and, though deeply prejudiced, nearly always temperate even when most fallacious. In places it reaches a really high level of scholarly and critical efficiency, notably in the chapter on "The Mysteries," where the tracing of the adoption and adaptation of the primary Eleusinian cult to the purposes of Athens and the cults of Demeter and Persephone is as satisfying as it is ingenious. Mr. Jevons is there thus successful, to my thinking, because he is on ground which he has surveyed dispassionately and scientifically, unaffected by his occultist predilections. It is when he has his eye on current religion and its line of descent that, omitting much of the due scholarly research and staking all on the vindication of his sympathies, he yields us a series of logical miscarriages fully as striking as his measure of success in his disinterested inquiry.

Howsoever this may be, his series of contradictions leaps to the eyes; and unless consistency is to be a burden only for the naturalists, unless the supernaturalist is to be let dogmatise in hierology as in religion on the basis of his mere "inner consciousness," his main argument must simply be removed from the scientific field.

§ 9.

n. The clear solution, as distinguished from the rebuttal, of all such contradictions is to recognise that, however we may grade religious conceptions and systems, they are all parts of one process, even as are political conceptions and systems. To say that magic is hostile to religion is like saying that either republicanism or monarchism is hostile to politics. For primitive man there are no conceptual divisions between religion and science, worship and art; and the distinction between art-magic and sympathetic-

magic—made after the express declaration that mere sympathetic magic was “the germ of all magic”—is an arbitrary stroke of pro-Christian classification, which, nonetheless, logically defeats its purpose. For the primitive sacramental meal was demonstrably on the plane of sympathetic magic inasmuch as, even when it did not kill the victim in a mimetic fashion, it was a making-friends with the God in the way of human fraternisation; and it is to this sacrament that Mr. Jevons, for obvious reasons, accords the special religious rank. It is worse than idle to seek to keep it on a plane apart by framing a formula of “direct consciousness” on the part of the worshippers that they were descended from an animal progenitor on the score that they felt filially towards him. The professed magic-monger’s consciousness was rather more direct than theirs. But the definitions themselves give up the case. “Applied science” is just “art,” and “art-magic” is thus just what Mr. Jevons calls sympathetic-magic. Moreover, the ritual of supplication and gratitude, which he declares to be strictly religious, is visibly framed in the same spirit of expectation of profit as is seen in the magic ritual. A study of the human-sacrifice ritual of the Khonds, cited hereinafter, will make clear both the congruity and the conjunction.

It is certainly true that the one ritual becomes hostile to the other when magic is practised by the sorcerer as an outsider, secretly competing with or undermining the priest.¹ But in that sense any one religious system is hostile to any other in the same field; and in the same sense heresy is hostile to orthodoxy, and dissent to the official cult, without ceasing to be a form of religion. On the separatist theory, the legend of Elijah’s calling down fire from heaven makes him an irreligious magician, in that he was not only acting irregularly and unofficially, but going through the procedure of a sorcerer with absolute confidence in his power to control the will of his God. His machinery of supererogatory watering of his sacrifice—which, as

¹ Cp. Tiele, *Egyptian Religion*, pp. 180-2; Budge, *Introd. to Book of the Dead*, p. cli; Ellis, *Polynesian Researches*, as cited above.

regards the coming rain, was sympathetic magic—was “religiously” gratuitous presumption; and he was staking the whole fortunes of his cult on the chance that his prayer would be miraculously answered. He was, in fact, coercing his God by making the God’s credit with his people depend upon the God’s obedience to his wishes. It will not avail to acquit Elijah on the score of faith when the faith of the magician in *his* means of controlling the Gods is made precisely his offence.

True it may be, again, that magic is at some points a lowering of the religious sentiment; though much of the quasi-scientific reflection on this head appears to be a mere echo of ecclesiastical declamation. If we were seriously to inquire which has done the more harm in the way of hindering civilisation, blocking science, obscuring the facts of Nature, and prompting human cruelty, it would probably be found that the organised cults which curse the magician have been by far the more pernicious.¹ The barbarisation wrought by the attempts of the courageously “superstitious” few to practise witchcraft is trifling beside that compassed by the no less superstitious many in putting supposed witches to death. And if this side of the problem be waived, the fact remains that the Christian religion, which Mr. Jevons and the rest rank as the highest and purest of religious systems, historically took its rise in the reversion from theistic faith to a form of sympathetic magic, the eucharist, and was practically rooted as a State cult throughout Europe by the assumption of magical functions on the part of the priest, not only in the administration of the eucharist itself, but in the claim to exercise “supernatural” powers of exorcism and to wield “supernatural” instruments in the form of holy relics. Such practices certainly represent an intellectual and moral declension from the ethic alike of all the leading Greek schools and of the nobler rabbins.

Granted, yet again, that dissenting magic, whether

¹ See below, Part iv, § 5, as to the intensification and perpetuation of both ordinary and sacramental cannibalism and human sacrifice by priesthoods in ancient Mexico, Fiji, and New Zealand.

beneficent or maleficent in intention, is logically inconsistent with the conceptions of deity normally professed by the magic-monger himself, it is here on all fours with the total structure of the official creed, whichever it be. The conception of sacrifice in all its forms is morally irreconcilable with the doctrine of divine justice and goodness, and was on that very ground repudiated by the greater Hebrew and pagan moralists; and with the doctrine of salvation by sacrifice falls the doctrine of salvation by faith. Press that one ethical principle, and the whole apparatus of official Christian ethic collapses, even as the apparatus of prayer and providentialism falls by the test of the principles of divine omniscience, beneficence, and foreordination. Mr. Jevons's principle of exclusion, in fact, finally makes *tabula rasa* of the whole field of religious institutions and religious life, and leaves us recognising only a factor which he has expressly excluded from his definition of the religious consciousness—to wit, philosophy.

Here, again, the theoretic separation is spurious. In terms of many parts of Mr. Jevons's exposition, early religion is just the effort to unify the cosmos through a conception of deity; and early philosophy was nothing else. To stamp as religious only those forms of thought in which the believer has "direct consciousness" of "the divine," excluding every process of meditation and inference as such, is to include in religion the phenomena of hallucination and even of insanity (to say nothing of the liberal expansion of the formula to include men's belief in their personal descent from an animal), and to bar out as non-religious the theism which stands on the thesis that "this scheme of things cannot be without a mind."

On the other hand, ordinary animism, which Mr. Jevons rules out, is certainly a belief in terms of almost though not quite unreflecting consciousness; and to proceed to disqualify it on the ground that it is a projection of man's personality into Nature is to evoke a fatal challenge; for if this is to be said of animism, it will certainly have to be said much more emphatically of theism. The "impression of the divine personality" of which Mr. Jevons speaks is

precisely the projection of the subject's personality into the unknown, and this by Mr. Jevons's own showing. To judge from his later argument, while he at times professes to waive the question of the veracity of the religious consciousness, he is much disposed to let it be its own verification.¹ This, however, he can scarcely venture on in the case of the primitive man's belief that he descended from a fox, a bear, or a serpent. It is one thing to pronounce such a belief "truly religious," by way of securing in advance the "true" heredity of the Christian eucharist; it is another to put such a "fact of consciousness" beside the Christian consciousness of direct divine intercourse and inner answer to prayer. On the latter step must follow the admission that the so-called religious form of "consciousness" is by far the more self-projecting, the less truly receptive, of the two, save indeed where it is merely the mouthpiece of the other. Otherwise, Mr. Jevons's undertaking ends in the edifying decree that the company of the truly religious includes every mahdi, every fakir, every sibyl, every savage seer, every spiritualist, every Corybantic worshipper of Cybele or Kali, every epileptic Salvationist, and not only repels alike a Thomas Aquinas, a Pascal, a Hegel, a Spinoza, a Martineau, but every similar thinker who in antiquity prepared the very doctrines which the "feelers" demonstrably took as the theme of their alleged consciousness.²

It can hardly be that in thus shaping his definition Mr. Jevons aimed at demonstrating subtly the sub-rationality of religion. He has, indeed, by his theorem of "direct consciousness," brought religion to precisely the position he assigned to taboo—that of an "irrational" and "arbitrary" association of ideas. He accepted from Mr. Lang, as we saw, the verdict that taboo is thus irrational because its principle is "that causal connection in thought is equivalent to causative connection in fact." Yet this is

¹ Pp. 389, 393-4, 397, 405.

² For an emphatic contradiction of such a view see Mr. Lester Ward's *Outlines of Sociology*, 1898, pp. 27-29. I do not find, however, that Mr. Ward's doctrine here is in harmony with that laid down by him in *Dynamic Sociology*, i, 11. For a mediatory view see the end of this section.

exactly the principle which he vindicates on behalf of the religious consciousness. *Its* notion of causal connection is to be in very truth equivalent to causative connection in fact. It is not to reason; it is not to seek evidence or submit to tests; it is to bring all experience in submission to itself. And it is not only the belief in a Good Male God that is thus assured of its superiority in virtue of its arbitrariness; it is every hallucination of every savage, every vision of the Virgin by a neurasthenic Catholic, every epiphany of Isis or Cotytto or Aphrodite in the past—nay more, every dream of a devil! It seems a sinister service to latter-day religion thus to demonstrate that it is on all fours not with purified philosophy, but with the most unintelligible forms of taboo, and the darkest forms of "superstition."

Once more, however, the scientific course consists not in taking advantage of the logical suicide of those who conduct the other, but in setting forth the fundamental analogy of the psychological processes thus arbitrarily differentiated. The "direct consciousness" of the theist—sheer hallucination apart—is simply a reversion to the earlier man's confidence in his animistic conceptions, doubled with the conscious resistance to sceptical criticism seen in every dream-interpreter and ghost-seer of the country-side. The persistence is simply a matter of temperament and degree of enlightenment: there are men who can transcend this like other testimonies of their direct consciousness, in learning to see it as a kind of hallucination which may be predicted to arise in some cases in regard to any theistic conception which any thinker may contrive to set up. Where there are images of the Virgin, men and women will have visions of the Virgin; where there are images of animal-Gods, there will be visions of animal-Gods.

Between "impressions" and "projections" there is no such psychological gulf as Mr. Jevons assumes. If there were, the *political* influence on doctrine which he classes as non-religious would still be in terms of his other theorem truly religious, for the act of thinking of rule in heaven in terms of rule on earth is a sufficiently docile surrender to

an impression on consciousness, and would be made by multitudes with the possible minimum of reflection. But, in truth, a minimum of reflection there must needs be in every process of belief; and what Mr. Jevons at times describes as pure processes of direct consciousness are demonstrably not so. The man who says he is conscious of an inward answer to prayer is not conscious of it as he is of the sound of a voice; what he experiences is a sense of satisfaction, which (albeit only the result of a release of nervous tension) he *infers* to come as a direct communication from deity;¹ and such inference is merely a more casual and less meditated process of reasoning than those which Mr. Jevons dismisses as non-religious. It is thus less rational as being less "reasonable"; but it is not "irrational" save in the loose sense of "fallacious." It is more arbitrary, but only in the sense that it is less mindful of reason and more egotistic, more self-willed, than the process which appeals fraternally to other men's judgments. Arbitrary in Mr. Jevons's implied sense of having *no* basis it cannot be: so to define the term is to reduce it to insignificance. However vicious religious reasoning may be, it remains reasoning.

§ 10.

It is true that with the conscious resort to critical reason there begins potentially a process which may end in the negation of all the primary religious conceptions and propositions, even in their most purified philosophical form. When that end is reached, we may indeed well say that philosophy and religion are differentiated, even as science is differentiated from magical and precatory religion alike, at the point at which it either repudiates or abandons their premisses, and consciously proceeds on tested induction. But even this reaction is never instantaneously complete;

¹ I am not here reasoning *a priori*, but from a knowledge of concrete cases. It is to be wished that a scientific study should be made of the processes of the religious consciousness, familiar and other. But even without that, the crudity of Mr. Jevons's psychological apparatus is sufficiently evident.

witness the sociology of many physicists, and the meteorology of many sociologising historians; and, on the other hand, there is an aspect or function of religion in respect of which it is structurally continuous with systems of doctrine which either abandon or repudiate its premisses.

From the first, it belonged to his nature that man should connect his ethic with his cosmology, since the one like the other grew out of his instincts and perceptions and his effort to harmonise them. Precisely as he animised Nature, so did he moralise it; that is, he conceived of it in terms of what moral ideas he had. Thus it was that he could alternately resort to propitiation and to magic, and alternately feel fear and gratitude. Granting that his religious conceptions first crystallised on the lines of his fears, it was inevitable that they should ere long crystallise also in terms of his satisfactions; the one involved the other, and made it not only possible but probable that he should at times thank the very power he feared. Fear would involve propitiation, and propitiation was the door to gratitude. And thus it was that his Gods were ethically like unto himself, neither wholly beneficent nor wholly maleficent.

Such an evolution would seem inevitable, even if we do not posit as part of the process his direct deification of his own image in that of his ancestors. But that ancestor-worship is a factor in the growth of religion is proved both *à priori* and *à posteriori*. Once the ancestor was recognised as subsisting spirit-wise, he was only in degree, not in kind, distinguishable from the Gods; and there is evidence that in some cases he was conceived as the God *par excellence*.¹ The limitary theorem that all God-worship originated in ancestor-worship has evoked the counter-theorem that God-worship must in origin have preceded ancestor-worship;

¹ See the evidence (of which Mr. Jevons makes no account) collected by Mr. Spencer, *Principles of Sociology*, vol. i, chaps. xx and xxv; and cp. Frazer, *Golden Bough*, i, 72, *note*, citing the testimony of Mr. Fison in Australia: "The more I learn about savage tribes, the more I am convinced that among them the ancestors grow into gods." The same witness, again, tells of a great Fijian chief who "really believed himself to be a god—*i.e.*, a reincarnation of an ancestor who had grown into a god" (*Id.* i, 141, *note*). Cp. Hazlewood's testimony (same p.); also Mariner, *Tonga Islands*, ed. 1827, ii, 99-100; and Ellis, *Polynesian Researches*, i, 111 sq.

and Mr. Jevons so reasons. But again his predilection recoils on one of his own theses, for the ancestor is obviously likely to have been regarded as the friendly spirit;¹ and we are thus led back to Mr. Jevons's repudiated premiss that the religion of fear had preceded that of gratitude.

His final view of ancestor-worship is that it was assimilated to that of the Gods, but can never have preceded it. It may be true, he grants, that certain ancestors are somehow raised to the ranks of Gods, but it cannot be proved that they were originally ghosts. Then follows this singular theorem:—

“What then of these gods?.....If they are believed to be the ancestors of their worshippers, then they are *not believed to have been human*; the worshipper's pride is that his ancestor was a god and *no mere mortal*..... If, on the other hand, a god is not believed to be the ancestor of any of his worshippers, then to assert that he was really a ‘deified ancestor’ is to make a statement for which there is no evidence; it is an inference from an assumption—namely, that the only spirits which the savage originally knew were ghosts. That assumption, however, is not true; *the savage believes the forces and phenomena of nature to be personalities like himself*, he does not believe that they are ghosts or worked by ghosts.....The fact is that ancestors *known to be human were not worshipped as gods*, and that ancestors *worshipped as gods were not believed to have been human.*”²

We might add, using Mr. Jevons's own words concerning the theory he rejects, “Which is simplicity itself.” But though in a sense simple, it is unhappily not consistent. For if the savage believed the forces of nature to be “personalities like himself”; if, as Mr. Jevons insists, the magic-monger believed himself on a par with the supernatural in his power to control nature; and if, as Mr. Jevons has previously argued,³ it was precisely out of the notion of such personalities or “spirits” that he framed

¹ Cp. J. G. Müller, *Amerikanische Urreligionen*, p. 72.

² P. 197.

³ P. 23.

his idea of "supernatural" forces or Gods, then either there is in the terms of the case no contradiction whatever between his counting his ancestors "human" and counting them Gods, or there is no meaning whatever in the phrase "personalities like himself." Mr. Jevons really cannot have it both ways, even for the purpose of confuting Mr. Spencer. All the while he is but modifying Mr. Spencer's special theory that all God-ideas began in the idea of quasi-human "spirits," merely refusing to accept "ghosts" as the first form of spirit-idea.

Of course, if Mr. Jevons means that by *definition* the savage must be held to regard a God-ancestor as "not *merely* human"—that the savage cannot mean exactly the same thing by "God" and "man," else there would be no significance in the terms—he may claim our assent; for in that case he is asserting a mere truism. But by his own showing the question is whether or not in the opinion of the savage the man could *become* a God; and so far is this from being doubtful that we have many instances of savages regarding some of their contemporaries, and priests regarding *themselves*, as Gods;¹ to say nothing of the fact that for the early Hebrews the title "Gods" was certainly applicable to judges or chiefs. Thus Mr. Jevons is contradicted by the evidence as well as by his own earlier argument.

As usual, he has fallen into contradiction by reason of having an illicit doctrinal end to gain—this time, the discrediting of the ghost theory of religion. In order to destroy that, he has in effect committed himself to the proposition that the primitive savage clearly discriminated between ghosts and spirits. Now there is neither *à priori* nor *à posteriori* ground for this view; since all the evidence goes to show that the dead ancestor was originally believed to eat and drink, hunt and ride, like the living; and the same things were certainly believed of the Gods. It is one of Mr. Jevons's own reproaches against the creed of the Egyptians that it regarded the *ka* or soul in the next world

¹ See Mr. Spencer's *Sociology*, ch. xxv, §§ 195-197.

as eating and drinking exactly like the living man. There is really no pretext for believing that the early man ever thought the "spirits" were "not ghosts" or *vice versa*; it is Mr. Jevons who is here making an unproved assumption. This use of the word "ghost" as representing to early man exactly what it means to us is not only unwarrantable in itself; it is a misrepresentation of the so-called "ghost theory"; for that has regard, among other things, to visions *in dreams* of the dead as living. If the early savage did see a subjective "apparition" he would doubtless hold it for a "person"; but as regards dreams, peoples comparatively civilised have constantly taken the vision for a reality. Of such cases the Bible is full.

On the other hand, we have Mr. Jevons's express assurance first¹ that the totem animal becomes the totem ancestor, who is universally conceived to have been animal, not human, yet quasi-human, yet is made a God; next, that "in virtue of the kinship between the god and his worshippers, the killing of a fellow-clansman comes to be regarded in a totem-clan as the same thing as killing the totem-god";² and, further, that when totemism is no longer a living force, the mere altar-stone comes to be identified with the God, who is "conceived as the ancestor of the race."³ If, then, a whole community can be conceived as descending from one deified animal or from a stone, it surely might be conceived as descending from one man. As to his possible deification, we have Mr. Jevons's own admission that "*eventually.....the dead were.....on a level with the gods.*"⁴ That is to say, he credits men with superiority to such anthropomorphism at a time when they animised everything, and when, later, they could believe in divine animal ancestors or stone ancestors; and he dates ancestor-worship proper as a late practice arising in a state of comparatively advanced civilisation,⁵ on the ground that

¹ P. 104.

² P. 107.

³ P. 138.

⁴ P. 194. This seems to be an adoption of the theory of Prof. Max Müller, *Introd. to Science of Religion*, ed. 1882, p. 143.

⁵ P. 195.

"the family is a comparatively late institution in the history of society."

§ 11.

It is necessary to clear up the historic problem in order to reach a sound definition of religion. And to begin with, we find the historical evidence is all against Mr. Jevons's thesis. Not only have we the many cases in which contemporary savages, like ancient Gnostics, think of a God as an ancestor or of the first man as a God,¹ and the record in ancient Egypt of the process by which a deceased king became a God;² but we have the relatively late doctrine in Hesiod,³ according to which the men of the first age became just and beneficent daimons, passing invisibly over the earth dispensing rewards and retributions and good fortune.

There is a risk of confusion over this last conception, which, with others of a similar kind, is taken by Mr. Lang as a proof that "early men, contrary to Mr. Frazer's account, suppose *themselves* to be naturally immortal."⁴ Mr. Frazer's words were that, "lacking the idea of eternal duration, primitive man naturally supposes the gods to be mortal like himself."⁵ Here the verbal confusion is complete. In the very act of claiming that "far from lacking the idea of eternal duration of life, 'primitive man' has

¹ See Kranz, *Natur- und Kulturleben der Zulus*, 1880, pp. 109-110, and J. G. Müller, *Amerikanische Urreligionen*, 2te Aufl. pp. 133-136. Cp., however, p. 73.

² The argument does not require specification of such a process, but reference may be made to an ancient form of the Book of the Dead (cit. by Budge, *Introd.* p. cxiv, from the text of Unas) where it is told how the deceased king Unas "as a soul in the form of a god devours his fathers and mothers and mankind generally *and gods*. He hunts and entraps the gods in the plains of the next world," and kills, cooks, and eats them. "He eats the hearts carefully so that he may absorb the vital powers of the gods," etc. This text, which dates from B.C. 3333, chances to preserve for us a much earlier conception of deification. But Mr. Frazer notes further that an ancient king often was as such ranked as an actual God, as are many savage kings in our own day. (*Golden Bough*, i, 8, 130, 141, 145, etc.) So also with the early Hebrew judges. Cp. *Var. Bib.* at Ex. xxi, 6; xxii, 8, etc.

³ *Works and Days*, 121, 299. See Mariner, *Tonga Islands*, 3rd ed. ii, 103-4, 108-9; and compare the similar doctrine among the Khonds, given in Macpherson's *Memorials of Service in India*, p. 86; and cit. in note on p. 90 as to ancestral Gods in New Zealand.

⁴ *Magic and Religion*, p. 85.

⁵ *G. B.* ii, 1.

no other idea," Mr. Lang admits: "Not that he formulates his ideas in such a term as 'eternal.'"¹ But neither does he formulate it in such a phrase as "naturally immortal"; he has, in fact, no clear idea to formulate;² and Mr. Frazer of all men should have remembered as much.

What has happened is that men at a certain stage became capable of conceptually noting at once death and the apparent survival (in dreams) of men in some different fashion after death, without framing any theory. But chronic crises in their political or tribal history had the effect of singling out from the vague crowd of ancestral memories those of a particular group or generation who made or led some migration or conquest; and these became for a time "the" ancestors *par excellence*, early man being unable to construct the human past save by way of some definite beginning. At some point in the long vista he needed a "first man," or beast, or plant, or pair; and he had to make such out of some of his ancestral material, with whatever fanciful embellishments. In virtue of the same state of mind, we find tribes and even nations convinced of their special descent from one later man, who at one stage definitely ranks as a God, though another religious concept may ultimately undeify him, as in the cases of Abraham and Jacob.

As a result of all these tendencies, at a stage in which the primordial belief in the "spiritual" or occult survival of ancestors in general has begun to be definitely contradicted³ by the conceptual recognition of death, and by disbelief in the land beyond the grave, there emerges a vague compromise in the notion that either the first pair or the men of the first age were of a different order as regarded their liability to death; and this belief holds the ground until haply a general doctrine of resurrection or ghostly immortality pushes it in turn to the background. But though

¹ Last cit. p. 86.

² Thus in Gen. ii, 18, it is vaguely implied that man was "naturally immortal," and the whole myth is an attempt to account for the origin of death; yet in iii, 17, it is implied that only by eating of the tree of life could man "live for ever."

³ The contradictory beliefs, it must be remembered, survive side by side or at different levels of culture for an indefinite time.

the notion of the survival of ancestors has thus in a succession of forms subsisted from a very remote period, it clearly does not follow that early men conceived *themselves* to be immortal in the sense in which they were later held to be so by their descendants. The definite or conceptual belief is retrospective. It is, however, sufficiently general to dispose of Mr. Lang's argument that among the Australians Gods cannot be developed from ancestors. "No ghost of a man," he insists, "can grow into a god if his *name* is tabooed *and therefore forgotten*."¹ And again: "In Australia, where even the recent ghosts are unadored, is it likely that some remote ghost is remembered as founder of the ancient mysteries?"² It is after this contention that, conforming to the habit of self-contradiction so strangely common among our anthropologists, Mr. Lang triumphantly tells us that there is *Australian* as well as other evidence of the nearly universal vogue of the belief that the first men—*i.e.*, ancestors—were deathless.

Obviously the very habit of tabooing proper names might conduce to the deifying of ancestors under special epithets, since that resort is always open under tabooism.³ The tabooing of ancestors' names can hardly destroy the notion that ancestors have existed any more than the tabooing of God-names among Egyptians and Hebrews put the Gods in question out of recollection. Was not Yahweh scrupulously specified in many Hebrew rituals as Adonai, *the Lord*, and by Samaritans as Shema, *the Name*?⁴ But even when we admit the probability that Australian tribes have latterly⁵

¹ *Magic and Religion*, p. 70.

² *Id.* p. 31.

³ It is told of the Malagasy that they hold it a crime to mention the dead "by the names they had when living." Spencer, *Principles of Sociology*, i, 274 (§ 144), citing Drury. Cp. Frazer, *G. B.* i, 403-447, for a full view of taboos of names, which often apply to the living as well as to the dead, and therefore do not mean oblivion. Mr. Lang (*Magic and Religion*, p. 56) overlooks this, taking it for granted that when a dead man's proper name is tabooed he is forgotten.

⁴ Originally the Jews also read "ha-Shem" (J. W. Nutt, *Fragments of a Samaritan Targum*, 1874, Introd. pp. 38-39, ref. to Geiger, *Urschrift*, 262; Nicolas, *Des Doctrines religieuses des Juifs*, 1860, p. 167). It is possible that the Jews dropped the word Shem because that was known to be the name of a distinct God, once worshipped in Samaria, where however the Yahwists retained it for purposes of syncretism.

⁵ Mr. Lang supposes (*Magic and Religion*, p. 227) that "the Zulus once

ceased to deify ancestors, the fact remains that, as Mr. Lang admits, they think of remote ancestors as undying, even as they do of Gods.

Recognising, however, that the definite conception of ancestors as abnormal in point of deathlessness is retrospective, we must not on the other hand fall into the error of supposing that only in late ages, and by way of poetic retrospect, did men conceive of their deceased predecessors as exercising powers of the kind credited to whatever beings for the time answered to our general notion of "Gods."¹ The true solution is that in men's vague ideas the early "Gods" approximated much more to themselves; and that gradually "the Gods" as such were relatively raised, the process proceeding for ages without involving the absolute negation of ancestral spirits,² and, *à fortiori*, without necessarily removing from the order of fully-established Gods all who might have been ancestors to start with.

Indeed there is evidence, as we have seen, that in early stages of religion the Gods were actually conceived as destructible; and in the Vedas and Brâhmanas the Gods actually *acquire* immortality in different ways—by the help of Agni, by drinking the Soma, by continence and austerity, thus gradually raising themselves above the Asuras, with whom they were originally equal.³ This conception may

had an idea of a creative being" whom they "reduced" to a first man. This process is quite conceivable. But it is at least equally likely that in some cases the idea of a creator God has been evolved out of that of a first man. The ancestor theory includes the view that ancestors have been transformed into Gods and then lost sight of *as* ancestors. And when, as in the case of the Nicaraguan indigenes, the highest God and Goddess are described as the first parents of men, there is no good reason for going behind the doctrine of the worshippers (as does J. G. Müller, *Amerik. Urrelig.* p. 437) and assuming that the God and Goddess were *first* sun and moon in any sense which excluded their being ancestors.

¹ M. Girard, anticipating Mr. Jevons, speaks of the Hesiodic doctrine as "a sort of apotheosis which *raises* the first men to the rank of intermediaries between the earth and the Supreme God" (*Le sentiment religieux en Grèce*, 1869, p. 222). If it be implied that never before were men conceived as beneficent daimons, the assumption is illicit. Even if that doctrine came as a novelty to some recipients, the greater antiquity of the notion is anthropologically certain.

² Compare the universal worship of ancestors in China, and the Roman worship of Lares and Manes.

³ Muir, *Sanskrit Texts*, 3rd ed, v. 14-15.

be a reflex of the same doctrine as first framed for mortals ; but there the fact stands that the Gods were not definitely conceived as " necessarily immortal " to start with.

To see in the Hesiodic or modern-savage theory only a late or " eventual " raising of ancestors to a divine status would be to do violence to all anthropology. Rather it stands for a theological process of discrimination, by which the priesthoods of the Gods carefully reduced deified ancestors as such to a lower level of divinity, while still recognising their immortality and supernatural power. Such a process had demonstrably occurred in the Hebrew system, where the patriarchs and heroes of the Sacred Books have been actually identified as ancient Semitic deities ;¹ and it was just as likely to occur in those other developments of Semitic theology which can be shown to underlie the cosmology of Homer and Hesiod.² Reasoning à priori, again, we have not the faintest ground for supposing that primeval man discriminated between orders of spirits to the extent of conceiving his ancestors as dispensing supernatural favours and yet at the same time ranking far below Gods who did the same thing. How should men conceivably begin to deify confessed mortals as beside " great " Gods, having never ventured to deify them before the Gods had been so magnified ? On that line there is no solution. In the words of Professor Robertson Smith, the origins of all religion " go back to a stage of human thought in which the question of the nature of the Gods, as distinguished from other beings, did not even arise in any precise form, because no one series of existences was strictly differentiated from another."³ In the light of all the facts, in fine, we realise that the common process,

¹ See *Christianity and Mythology*, pp. 93, 329. Cp. Jeremiah, ii, 27, where the Jews are described as calling their idols their ancestors.

² Cp. Sayce, *Hibbert Lectures*, pp. 371-391 ; *Ancient Empires of the East*, pp. 157-8 ; Gruppe, *Die Griechische Culte und Mythen*, 1887, pp. 165, 577, 587, 589, 593 ; F. A. Paley, *The Epics of Hesiod*, 1883, Introd. pp. xvi-xvii ; W. Christ, *Gesch. der griech. Literatur*, 1889, p. 94 and notes ; E. Meyer, *Geschichte des Alterthums*, ii, § 117.

³ *Religion of the Semites*, p. 88. Cp. Frazer, *G. B.* i, 129-130, etc. Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, 3rd. ed, i, 428-436 ; Spencer, *Principles of Sociology*, vol. i, cc. viii, xvi.

seen among the historic Greeks,¹ of demi-deifying a hero, was merely prevented by the presence of fully-established cults from developing just as those cults had done earlier. It of course does not follow that they had all originated in that fashion; but that the ancestor cults as it were played into the solar and vegetal cults from time immemorial is on all grounds probable.

On the other line of reasoning under notice we end in a mere counter-sense as to the definition of "ancestor." You cannot have ancestor-worship, says Mr. Jevons at one point, till you have the family. Yet he himself has just been describing the totem of the early community as an "ancestor" worshipped as a God before the family was recognised. We seem to be left with the puzzle: "When is an ancestor not an ancestor?" as the sole fruit of a chapter of investigation. If by a sudden *petitio principii* ancestor-worship is to be defined as strictly a private or family-cult of the kind seen in historic times, then indeed the denial of the priority of ancestor-worship is justified; and it is justified again if it be meant that hostile Gods preceded friendly ones. But in terms of Mr. Jevons's own theory of the totemistic sacrament, the ancestor-God is the type of the first friendly-God, who on this view is later than the unfriendly Gods; and the friendly God is ancestral precisely because friendliness was associated with ancestors, who were certainly regarded as were "spirits."

The warranted inference, however, is merely that the ancestor-spirit was *one of* the types of friendly-God. Just as myths so-called can be seen, on a fair induction, to have originated in a dozen different modes of natural fallacy— inference from phenomena, misinterpretation of names and objects of art, constructions from analogy, misinterpretation of ritual, conjunctions of worships, and so forth²—so other religious beliefs so-called are to be inferred as originating in many lines of the animistic and explanatory instinct. The God-idea is simply the most typical myth.

¹ Cp. Giraud, *Le Sentiment religieux en Grèce, d'Homère à Eschyle*, 1869, pp. 227-240.

² See *Christianity and Mythology*, pp. 115-116, 126-127.

Adapting the popular rhyme, we may reasonably say that "there are nine-and-twenty modes of making tribal Gods, and every single one of them is"—natural.

There is really no conceptual limit to the primeval faculty of God-making. The Roman pantheon alone, wherein are Gods of diseases, of drains, of sneezing, of every bodily act, and of a hundred verbal abstractions, might have warned any theorist against denying that early man might deify his ancestors; and the record of the fortunes of many cults might equally warn us against denying that any one deity might attain the highest status. Osiris, on one theory, is like Hades a God made out of the abstraction of the *abode* of the departed; Dionysos is plausibly held to be the deified abstraction of mere wine, sacramentally regarded, as Agni is certainly the deified abstraction of the sacrificial fire; and Hathor, who ran Isis hard in divine honours in Egypt, is simply Hat-Hor, the dwelling of Horus, to wit, the Dawn and the Sunset;¹ as Venus is possibly a Roman deification of the term Benoth in the Carthaginian phrase Succoth Benoth,² the tents of prostitution. The Gods and Goddesses, in fact, are made out of man's needs and passions, his fancies and his blunders, his fears and his hopes; and it would be strange if he never made them, even the highest of them, from the nucleus of his reverent and affectionate retrospect on his own kind. Round his elders and his ancestors were formed his first and fundamental notions of right and duty and obedience. How then should he fail at times to bring his religious and his primary ethical ideals into combination?

Von Ihering indeed has argued that the offerings at the graves of the dead—at least among Aryans—are the products not of love, as commonly supposed, but of fear.³ It is characteristic of the mode of progression of the sciences that nobody appears to suppose they might be both, some

¹ Le Page Renouf, Hibbert Lectures, pref. p. ix, 2nd ed.

² Selden, *De Diis Syris*, Syntag. ii, c. 7. Cp. Preller, *Römische Mythologie*, pp. 382-5, as to the Phœnician connections of the cult.

³ *Evolution of the Aryan*—Eng. trans. of *Vorgeschichte der Europäer*—p. 38.

people fearing the dead, some loving them.¹ But even supposing them to have originated in fear of the importunities of the neglected ghost, it would not be unnatural that from the propitiated ghost there should be expected special favour. Doubtless the principle operated differently in different stages. The thesis of Fustel de Coulanges, that "what unites the members of the ancient family.....is the religion of the hearth and of ancestors" and that "the ancient family is a religious rather than a natural association,"² may be perfectly true (under his own reservation that religion of course did not *create* the family); and it would follow that ancestor-worship took on special features from the time that the family dwelt by or over the family tomb. But this does not dispose of the problem as to the religion of the nomads who have no fixed hearth and tomb,³ and of the peoples who either burned or exposed their dead.

Taking the nomadic period in general, and assuming that the horde preceded the family in order of evolution, we must admit that there were ideas of "ghosts" and other quasi-human "spirits" before the strict family-ancestor was evolved. But there is nothing to show that the idea of a general ancestor or ancestors was not elaborated in the horde-period, out of the normal idea of the ancestor-ghost as well as out of the idea of the non-ancestral spirit, those ideas being easily able to coalesce. A horde was likely to have a horde-ancestor-God; else why should the Greeks be found speaking of their family

¹ Von Ihering (p. 36) has a doctrine, inconsistent with his general principles of racial determination (pp. 70-73), that early Aryans were devoid of all save conjugal family affection, and that (*teste* the Fifth Commandment) Semites were particularly filial (p. 34). The latter view is no doubt broadly true; but Roman law is tolerably strong on the *patria potestas*, and rebellions of sons against fathers have always been familiar in the Semitic States, despite the standing precept. On the other hand female infanticide, which Von Ihering seems to hold specially Aryan, was prevalent among the Arabs before Mohammed. The myth of the dethronement of Uranus, again, which Von Ihering cites against the Aryans (p. 33), is clearly Semitic in origin. Finally, it is clear that the highly filial Chinese originally sacrificed abundantly at their parents' graves. Was *that* from love or from fear?

² *La Cité Antique*, pp. 40-41 (éd. Sième).

³ Fustel de Coulanges of course recognised that there were such nomads (pp. 62, 66), though Von Ihering (p. 47) seems to suppose that he did not.

Gods, Gods of their blood, paternal Gods, gentile Gods?¹ If the *theos* were previously conceived solely as a stupendous cosmocrator, how (once more) came men to make *theoi* of the household? If on the other hand the family and the tribe were roughly coeval, and the notion of a family ancestor be about as old as the notion of a tribe ancestor or First Man, we are still left facing ancestor-worship as one of the norms of the cult of a friendly God. Even in the Aryan horde, elders would make themselves respected, and lost fathers and mothers would be missed; and there was no way in which early man could conceive of a providential or punitive deity save in terms of the punitive and providential practices of elders towards juniors, or of chiefs or patriarchs towards groups; or in terms of the action of hostile groups or persons. That the abstraction of divine judges and lawgivers and avengers, thus reached, should be employed to sanction the codes or customs of the seniors or the patriarchs, was psychologically a matter of course; but that does not affect the fact of the *à posteriori* origination.

§ 12.

Tribal ethic, then, would progressively mould tribal religion and be moulded by it—that is to say, a moral step enforced by political circumstances would be reflected more or less clearly in religion, as in the case of the blood covenant with the God, or in the reduction of the pantheon to monarchic or familial order; while on the other hand the established ethical view of the God would prime the ethical view of the political system. It was not that man was primarily, as it were, incapable of moral ideas as such, or that his notion of mutual duty could arise only, as Mr. Jevons seems to suppose, in the sheath of the idea of taboo. Thus to credit men's ethic wholly to their religion while claiming for their religion a separate root in a separate order of consciousness, is merely to beg the question in the interests of occultism. What happened

¹ Refs. in Fustel de Coulanges, p. 37.

was a habitual interaction of the norms of conduct. Theism would help the king; and monarchy would help theism. The outcome was that the entire ethic of the community had as it were a religious shape,¹ from which rational criticism could only gradually deliver it. When, then, religious reformers arose whose end and aim was the moral life, they would carry into their ethic the psychology of their religion, were it only because that had been the matrix, so to speak, of the most serious reflection—this even if they did not state their moral doctrine in terms of a recasting of the current religious belief. For Mr. Jevons, such a recasting would be irreligious unless the reformer professed to have direct intercourse with deity;² but we have seen that line of distinction to be untenable, and we cannot consistently deny either religious spirit or religious form to the argument: “God must be good: how then could he have ordained a cruelty or an injustice?”

Inasmuch, however, as all such reforms of morals took effect in modifying the current code for action, the very conception of such a code is historically a religious growth;³ and while the concept of public law would quite early differentiate from that of morality as standing for What-is compared with What-ought-to-be, the idea of a code which had a superior moral authority as coming from a God through a Good Teacher remains so nearly homogeneous with that of a code framed by a new Teaching-God or a Good Teacher that they have far more in common than of incompatible. The essential structural continuity rests on the conception of spiritual authority, of “religious” obedience. Where that is present, the religious temper is substantially conserved even if the cosmological premisses of religion are disregarded or dismissed. Thus it is that such a system as that of Buddhism is not merely *à posteriori*

¹ Cp. Exodus xv, 16-23; Deut. i, 17.

² Cp. p. 94.

³ Cp. Exod. and Deut. as above cited; Ex. xxi, 6; xxii, 8, *Heb.*; Kuenen, *The Hexateuch*, Eng. tr. p. 272; Tiele, *Egypt. Relig.* Eng. tr. pp. 73, 93; *Hist. comparée*, p. 247; Letourneau, *Sociology*, Eng. tr. B. iv, c. viii, p. 545; Maine, *Ancient Law*, pp. 4-5; Pulszky, *Theory of Law and Civil Society*, § 38; Sayce, *Hibbert Lectures*, p. 368. And see below, Pt. II, ch. ii, § 1.

but *à priori* to be regarded as a religion. To refuse so to regard it is once more to embrace the anomaly of the decision that what serves for religion to half the human race is non-religion.

Where ethics decisively diverges from the religious norm is the point at which it is freed from the concept of external authority. Then, though some may still claim to apply to their independent philosophy of life the name of religion, on the score that it is at least as seriously framed and held as ever a religion was, the anthropologist may reasonably grant that a real force of differentiation has emerged. When every man consciously shapes his own "religion," the term is of no descriptive value; and when many do so and many more still cleave to religious cosmology and to the ethic of specified authority, the description as applied to the former is misleading. In any case, it is a historical fact that only slowly do ethical schools lose the religious cast. *Jurare in verba magistri* is their note in all save vigorously progressive periods; and the philosophical schools of the Middle Ages all strike it. That those of to-day have wholly abandoned it, perhaps few would considerately assert; but it is at least obvious that it belongs as essentially to Buddhism as to Christianity, whether or not the individual Buddhist accepts, as most do, a mass of religious beliefs alien to the alleged doctrine of the Master.

§ 13.

We may now circumspectly sum up the constructive argument, and in so doing we arrive at an inductive definition of religion.

1. Religion consists *primarily* in a surmise or conception, reached by way of simple animism, of the causation and control of Nature (including human life) in terms of inferred quasi-human personalities, whether or not defined as extra-Natural. On the belief proceed certain practices. Beginning on the side of fear, it necessarily expands soon to the side of gratitude; and expresses itself accordingly. But its magical or strategical and its simply precatory or

propitiatory forms proceed on the same premisses, and are in origin contemporary and correlative, being respectively the expression of the more and the less self-confident sides of men's nature¹ in the state of ignorance.

2. The primary surmise or conception involves itself in a multitude of beliefs, of which one of the most significant is that of kinship between animal and man (making possible totemism), and the animal descent of the latter. From animism in general and this belief in particular comes an endless diversity of mythic narratives, all of which must be regarded as part of religion.

3. On the basis of animism, and of primitive inference of causation in all coincidence, arise a multitude of special practices, as taboo, which are first and last religious, being invariably bound up with the religious ideas aforesaid.

4. In virtue of the inevitable correlation of moral with cosmological thought in early man through animism, religion thus becomes *secondarily* a rule for the human control of human life; and it remains structurally recognisable on this side when the primary aspect has partly faded away.

5. Philosophic, scientific, and ethical thought may be defined as specifically non-religious when, but not before, they have abandoned or repudiated the cosmological premisses of religion, found their guiding principle in tested induction, and, in the case of ethics, ceased to found the rule of life on either alleged supernatural revelation or the authority of an alleged supernormal teacher.

6. Even after conceptual thought has thus repudiated religion, however, what is termed "cosmic emotion" remains in the psychic line of religion.

W. B. | In fine, religion is the sum (a) of men's ideas of their relation to the imagined forces of the cosmos; (b) of their relation to each other as determined by their views of that,

¹ The point is not one to be settled by authority, but for a competent affirmation of this view see G. Roskoff, *Das Religionswesen der rohesten Naturvölker*, 1880, p. 144.

or by teachers who authoritatively recast those views; and (c) of the practices set up by those ideas.

Under this definition there is room for every religion ever historically so-called,¹ from fetishism to pantheism, and from Buddhism to Comtism, without implicit negation of any claim made for any one religion to any moral attribute, save of course that of objective truth or credibility.

¹ None of the current definitions, I think, are thus inclusive. Cp. the many cited by Chantepie de la Saussaye, *Manual of the Science of Religion*, Eng. tr. pp. 56-58, and those discussed in *Christianity and Mythology*, pp. 65-78. One of the most symmetrical is that of Professor A. Réville:—"La religion est la détermination de la vie humaine par le sentiment d'un lien unissant l'esprit humain à l'esprit mystérieux dont il reconnaît la domination sur le monde et sur lui-même, et auquel il aime à se sentir uni" (*Prolégomènes*, p. 34). But this is finally marked by theological particularism, and is thus not truly inductive. Constant's was more objective: "Nous avons défini le sentiment religieux, le besoin que l'homme éprouve de se mettre en communication avec la nature qui l'entoure, et les forces inconnues qui lui semblent animer cette nature" (*La Religion*, 1824, i, pt. ii, p. 1). But Constant extends his definition in practice to simple cosmic emotion. Citing from Byron's *Island* the passage beginning

"How often we forget all time, when lone,"

he writes: "On nous assure que certains hommes accusent Lord Byron d'athéisme et d'impiété. Il y a plus de religion dans ces douze vers que dans les écrits passés, présents et futurs de tous ces dénonciateurs mis ensemble" (pt. i, pp. 106-7).

§ 1.

THE main obstacle to a "science of religion," naturally, is the survival either of simple belief in a given religion or of sociological predilections set up by such a belief; and we have seen how a scholarly treatise may still be affected by one or the other. That an academic "Introduction to the History of Religion" should treat the whole vast drama of religious development up till the period of the Roman Empire as "the propaedeutic of the world to Christ"¹ is perhaps not to be wondered at in view of English culture-conditions in general; but it is none the less unfortunate. A view of the history of religion which merely ignores or discredits on the one hand the entire religious life of the non-Christian world, and on the other the entire monotheistic or unitarian evolution in the Christian world, has no pretension to remain scientific. The perorational statement that "of all the great religions of the world it is the Christian Church alone which is so far heir of all the ages as to fulfil the dumb, dim expectation of mankind," is but a sectarian shibboleth; and the claim, "In it alone the sacramental meal commemorates *by ordinance of its founder* the divine sacrifice which is a propitiation for the sins of all mankind," is an all-too-simple solution of the historic problem. We are being treated merely to a new adjustment of "Christian Evidence."

On the side of science, again, there is certainly a danger that the necessary effort to eliminate partisanship and predilection may somewhat sway the balances. Mr. Jevons justly argues² that religion is no more to be conceived or classified in terms of primeval superstition than science is

¹ Work cited, Index, *s.v.* Sacrifice, *end.* Cp. p. 415.

² Work cited, p. 9.

to be classified in terms of primeval animism and magic. But the very tactic of his own treatise, aiming as it does at certificating one set of developments on behalf of the special apparatus of the Christian Church, is a hindrance to the recognition of religion as an aspect of the process of civilisation. In terms of the analogy with science, religion ought to be to-day at a far higher level than it was in ancient Syria, or in the Græco-Roman decadence. But here the special-pleader reverts to the Newmanian thesis of "special genius," arbitrarily placing the highest genius for religion in antiquity, and implying (apparently) that whatever genius there has been since is joyfully subservient to that.

Now, genius is certainly a factor in every line of mental evolution, in the sense that all marked mental capacity is a "variation"; and insofar as religions have been moralised or rationalised, genius for righteousness or for reason has clearly been at work. But just as certain as the fact of genius is the fact that it is in large part wasted; and we shall utterly misread the history of mankind if we conceive the "religious consciousness" as readily susceptible of impulses from the moral or rational genius of the gifted few.¹ On the contrary, nothing is harder than even the partial imposition of the higher view on the religious multitude; and this precisely because the crowd supposes (with the countenance of Mr. Jevons) that it has "inner consciousness" of the veracity of its congenital beliefs. King Chuenaten of Egypt, presumably, had such consciousness of the truth of his monotheism; but even his autocratic power failed to annul the inner consciousness of the polytheists around him, or, for that matter, the "direct consciousness" of the priests that their bread was buttered on the polytheistic side.²

¹ Mr. Jevons, to be sure, has denied that the religious process is either moral or rational; but here we must try to save his thesis from himself. Otherwise it becomes a mere disguised assertion that all religious truth is revealed, that genius consists in getting the revelation, and that beliefs otherwise got are either not true or not religious. Of such a doctrine there can be no historical discussion.

² Cp. Tiele, *Egyptian Religion*, pp. 23, 179-185; Maspero, *Hist. ancienne des peuples de l'orient*, 4e édit. pp. 53-54, 285-6; Diodorus Siculus, i, 73.

There is, I think, no known case in history of a "going" priesthood reforming its own cult, in the sense of willingly making an important change on moral lines. Apart from the presumptive changes of view set up in Israel during the exile, it seems to have been always by *kings* that human sacrifices were suppressed in antiquity, never by the choice of priesthods. Thus King Eurypylus is associated with the abolition of the human sacrifice to Artemis Trielaria;¹ Cecrops with the substitution of cakes for living victims to Zeus Lycæus;² Iphicrates³ and Gelon⁴ with the attempted stoppage of human sacrifices at Carthage; King Diphilus with its cessation at Cyprus; Amosis with its abrogation at Heliopolis in Egypt.⁵ Similarly the abolition of human sacrifices in ancient China was effected only by the action of humane princes; and the attempt in earlier times seems to have involved insurrection and desperate war.⁶ The strongest characteristic of priesthods is their conservatism; and though moral and religious innovators have arisen among them, practical moral reforms have always to be forced on them from the outside.⁷

For every man of moral genius, probably, who has been able to modify for the better the form or course of a religion, there have been ten who were slain or silenced by its organisation. Indeed, if we reckon solely the ostensible historical cases of fortunate innovation on the direct appeal of genius, the balance is immeasurably the other way. What is more, the economic and social conditions in antiquity were such that the man who succeeded even indirectly in modifying a cult or creed for the better did so by some measure of fraud. Mr. Jevons lightly decides⁸ that such reformers "have usually considered themselves

¹ Pausanias, vii, 19.

² *Id.* viii, 2.

³ Porphyry, *De Abstinencia*, ii, 56.

⁴ Plutarch, *Regum et imper. apophtheg.*, Gelon, i.

⁵ Porphyry, last cit. ii, 55.

⁶ Cp. Kurz, *Mémoire sur l'état politique et religieux de la Chine 2300 ans avant notre ère*, from *Nouveau Journal Asiatique*, 1830 (?), pp. 74-82; and Miss Simcox, *Primitive Civilisations*, ii, 36-37.

⁷ See below, Part IV, § 5, as to the similar rule in the lower civilisations of Polynesia, and in ancient Mexico.

⁸ P. 94.

.....to be speaking, *not* their own words or thoughts, but those of their God." The full significance of the case will come out much better if we say that reformers found they stood the best chance of a hearing when they professed to be speaking the words of the God. What this meant in the way of demoralisation it is depressing to surmise.

It is, indeed, customary of late to substitute for the exaggerated notion of "pagan" priestcraft that used to be held by most Christians and by some freethinkers the much more arbitrary notion of an absolute rectitude in the pristine "religious consciousness"; but critical science can accept no such fantasy. There are evidences of conscious fraud on the surface of the most primitive-looking cults known to us;¹ and while there is reason to believe that early man and savage man have a less clear sense than we of the difference between truth and falsehood (in this respect partly approximating to the child-mind), there is really no reason for supposing them less capable of resort to wilful deception. On the contrary, they seem in religious matters to have been more prompt at fabrication, in the ratio of the greater credulity they met with. Unless, then, we proceed with Mr. Jevons to make gratuitous exceptions in favour of all cases on the line of evolution of our own creed, we must conclude that the ancient conditions often, if not always, drove reformers to make-believe.

§ 2.

The case may become clearer if we look for illustration to the phenomena of fictitious literature. It will hardly be suggested that the Semites and Greeks who wrote religious treatises or hymns and ascribed them to famous men of centuries before, were under a hallucination as to the source of their thoughts. They did but seek for them the passport of a name that challenged respect. Precisely, then, as the "prophetic" writer put his words in the mouth of a dead prophet (a common way of aiming at

¹ Cp. the author's *History of Freethought*, p. 16.

reforms), making *him* say, "Thus saith the Lord," so in some cases at least the living prophet must have been perfectly conscious that his spoken words were "not the Lord's, but his own." In fact, the saner the prophet, and the saner his counsel, the more likely was he to know how he came by it; though his feeling that he was on the side of the God would greatly relieve his scruples about professing to be the God's mouthpiece. The man who, on the other hand, was so far beside himself as to suppose that Omnipotence was speaking through him, was much less likely to have wise counsels to give. In any case, crazed or prudent, right or wrong, all alike ran the risk of being denounced by the others as "false prophets,"¹ and stoned accordingly. Thus reform was a matter either of persuading kings or of managing fellow-priests and fellow-worshippers; and genius for management would be fully as important as genius for righteousness.

In the case, for instance, of a substitution of animal for human sacrifices, or of dough-dolls for sacrificial animals or men or children, the reformer had to play at once upon the credulity and the self-interest of the worshippers. It is clear from the Hebrew books that for the early Hebrews as for the Phœnicians the first-born of man as well as of animals was at one time a customary sacrifice;² and the myth of Abraham and Isaac confesses the fact in the act of supplying a pretext for a change. Such story-telling was the natural device³ of the humane reformer, who was much more likely to be relatively a rationalist than to be abnormally subject to religious ecstasies or trances. Mohammed is indeed a case to the contrary, he being credited with opposing the practice of female infanticide; but the very fact that in the Koran no tale is framed to carry the point is a confirmation of our view. In an old cult, a bald command to forego or reverse an established rite

¹ Cp. Jeremiah, xxvi, 11; xxvii, 9-10; xxviii, 1-17, xxix, 8, 9, etc.

² Cp. Exod. xiii, 2; xxxiv, 20; Lev. xxvii, 28-29; Numb. iii, 41; xviii, 15.

³ Compare the myth (Apollodorus, iv, 3, § 2) of the kid substituted for the child Dionysos by Zeus to save him from Hêrê (a myth with a purpose) and that of the bull substituted for a man in sacrifice by the intervention of the Khond God Boora (Macpherson, *Memorials of Service in India*, 1865, p. 108).

would be bewildering to the worshippers, whereas a myth describing a process of commutation would find easy acceptance where such a commutation was already agreeable to normal feeling.

Normal feeling, on the other hand, was often the matrix of the reformatory idea. There was a natural tendency to relax human sacrifices in times of prosperity unless a zealous priesthood insisted on them;¹ and a long period of prosperity would make men loth to shed the blood of their own children. Thus either the political accident of a prolonged peace or the opening of a new era of government was the probable condition of the effectual arrest of child-sacrifice among the Hebrews; and the myth of Abraham and Isaac and the ram was in all likelihood framed at such a time. Its inclusion in a sacred book was some security against such a reversion to child-sacrifice as we know to have occurred among the Carthaginians in times of great distress or danger, after periods in which it was disused.² Nations, like men, are apt to be driven to worse courses by terror and disaster; and it is not only conceivable but probable that the Hebrews made their main steps towards religious betterment when they were temporarily razed from the list of the nations and set to cultivate their religious consciousness in a captivity which withheld them from political vicissitude without reducing them to slavery.³

¹ See Part IV, as to the Aztecs; and cp. Prof. Granger, *The Worship of the Romans*, 1895, p. 300.

² Diodorus Siculus, xx, 14; Plutarch, *De Superstitione*, end; *Regum et imper. apophthegmata*, Gelon, i; Porphyry, *De Abstinencia*, ii, 56; Plato, *Minos*, p. 315 C.; Justin, xvii, 6. Cp. Macpherson, *Memorials of Service in India*, pp. 113-115, as to special pressures. The many wars and straits of the Carthaginians is the reasonable explanation of their reversion to child-sacrifice at a time when it had been long disused in Tyre. See F. W. Newman (*Miscellanies*, 1869, p. 302) as to the case of Tyre (Quintus Curtius, iv, 3, § 38). Prof. Newman, in throwing doubt on the statement of Diodorus, does not note the testimony of Plato, Plutarch, and Porphyry; and in doubting Pliny's story (*Hist. Nat.* xxxvi, § 4, 26 [12]) of an annual sacrifice to Hercules he does not note Porphyry's account of the sacrifice at Rhodes. See below, Pt. II, ch. i, § 4.

³ Professor Huxley, in his much over-pitched account of the monotheism and the ethic of the Jews (discussed below), expressly ascribes the special development to "a vigorous minority among the Babylonian Jews." Cp. I. Sack, *Die altjüdische Religion im Uebergange vom Bibelthume zum Talmudismus*, 1889, pp. 25-27.

For the explanation of religious evolution, then, we must look not so much to genius for right thought as to genius for hitting the common taste or for outmanœuvring rival cults. By far the clearest case of cult or creed-shaping by a single genius is that of Mohammed;¹ and here, to the historical eye, it is the political expansion of Islam at a critical moment that makes the fortunes of the faith, not the rise of the faith that makes the fortune of the Moslems. Had not the Saracens at the moment of the successful emergence of Mohammed's movement found their chance to overrun great territories of the enfeebled Christian empire, that movement might never have been aught but an obscure tribal worship, or might indeed have been speedily overlaid by the surrounding polytheism. It was the sense of triumphant opposition to Christian tritheism and Mary-worship and to Persian fire-worship that sharply defined the Moslem dogma; and once a religion has its sacred book, its tradition of triumph, and its established worship, the conservatism of the religious instinct counts for much more in preserving it than the measure of genius that went to the making of its doctrine. Every religion, in fact, sees supreme genius, both literary and religious, in its own Bible simply because it is such. No Christian can have a devouter conviction of the splendour of his sacred books than the Moslem enjoys concerning the Koran, the Brahman over the Vedas, or the Buddhist in respect of the large literature of his system.

¹ Precisely here, nevertheless, Mr. Jevons refuses to recognise progress, though the establishment of monotheism is in terms of his own doctrine a great progressive achievement. "Polytheism *may* in some few civilised peoples rise towards pantheism, *but* in most cases degenerates into fetishism; monotheism passes in one case from Judaism into Christianity, *but* in another into Mohammedanism" (p. 395). This though Mohammedanism is by far the stricter monotheism of the two, and though Mohammedanism resisted magic and divination, which the Rabbis had maintained. (Cp. Davies, *Magic Divination and Demonology*, pp. 41 sq., 64, 74-89). Mr. Jevons is here in company with Prof. Robertson Smith, who argues that Mohammed's claim to have knowledge of a *past* historic episode "by direct revelation," a claim never made by "the Bible historians," is "to thinking minds one of the clearest proofs of Mohammed's imposture" (*The Old Testament in the Jewish Church*, 2nd. ed. p. 141, note). What the Professor thought of the Hebrew claim to have knowledge of *future* history by direct revelation is thus hard to divine. Cp. p. 283, and p. 161, note.

§ 3.

Broadly speaking, religious evolution is far from being a steady progress, and, such as it is, is determined in great measure by political and social change. It was certainly a political process, for instance, that established a nominal monotheism among the Hebrews in Palestine; even as it was a political process that established a systematic polytheism in other States.¹ Primarily, all tribes and cities tended to worship specially a single God, ancestral or otherwise, who was the "Luck" of the community and was at first nameless. Later comparison and competition evolved names; and any association of tribes meant as a matter of course a pantheon, the women of each taking their deities with them when they married into another clan. Ferocious myths and theological historiography in the Hebrew books tell amply of the anxiety of the priests of Yahweh at a comparatively late stage to resist this natural drift of things; and the history, down to the Captivity, avows their utter failure, in so far as they ever made the attempt.

Neither in the attempt nor in its failure is there anything out of the ordinary way of religious evolution. While some theorists credit Israel with a unique bias to monotheism, others, unable to see how Israel could be thus unique, infer an early debt to the higher monotheistic thought of Egypt. Both inferences are gratuitous. The story of Moses in Egypt is a flagrant fiction; and "Moab, Ammon, and Edom, Israel's nearest kinsfolk and neighbours, were monotheists in precisely the same sense in which Israel itself was"²—that is to say, they too had special tribal Gods whom their priests sought to aggrandise. There is no reason to doubt that such priests fought for their Baals as Yahwists did for Yahweh. The point of differentiation in Israel is not any specialty of consciousness, but the

¹ See below, §§ 4-7.

² Wellhausen, *Israel*, in vol. with tr. of *Prolegomena*, p. 440.

specialty of evolution ultimately set up in their case through the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus.

n. All the earlier Palestinian groups tended to be monotheistic and polytheistic in the same way. When tribes formally coalesced in a city or made a chief, a chief God was likely to be provided by the "paramount" tribe or cult,¹ unless he were framed out of the local fact of the city, or the mere principle of alliance.² In the case of the Hebrews, the cult of Yah, or Yahu, or Yahweh, was simply a local worship sometimes aggrandised by the King, and documentarily imposed on the fictitious history of the nation long afterwards.³ In the miscellaneous so-called prophecies ascribed to Jeremiah there is overwhelming testimony to the boundless polytheism of the people even in Jerusalem, the special seat of Yahweh, just before the Captivity. Either these documents preserve the historic facts or they were composed by Yahwists to terrorise yet a later generation of Hebrew polytheists. Not till a long series of political pressures and convulsions had eliminated the variant stocks and forces, and built up a special fanaticism for one cult, did an ostensible monotheism really hold the ground in the sacred city.⁴

n.B.

That this monotheism was "religious" in the arbitrary and unscientific sense of being neither ethical nor philosophical it might seem needless to deny; but the truth is that it represents the ethic of a priesthood seeking its own ends. The main thesis of the prophetic and historical books is simply the barbaric doctrine that Yahweh is the God of Israel, whom he sought to make

¹ Cp. Jevons, p. 391.

² E.g., "the covenant God" in Jud. ix, 46.

³ Cp. Joshua xxiv, 2, 14, 23, and the myth in Exodus vi, 3 (Heb.), where it is admitted that the early Israelites had worshipped El Shaddai. To speak of the "constant backslidings" of the people, as Mr. Jevons still does, is but to revive the hallucination set up by the pseudo-history. There never was, before the exile, any true national monotheism to backslide from.

⁴ "Had, then, the Mosaic law no sort of authority in the Kingdom of Judah—could it be transgressed with impunity? The answer is simple. It had force in so far as the king permitted it to have any. It had no authority independently of him. It was never either proclaimed or sworn to."—Kuenen, *Lecture on The Five Books of Moses*, Muir's trans. 1877, p. 22. And even the assumption that there was a "Mosaic law" is open to challenge.

“a people unto *him*”; that Israel’s sufferings are a punishment for worshipping the Gods of other peoples; and that Yahweh effects the punishment by employing as his instruments those other peoples, who, if Yahweh be the one true God, are just as guilty as Israel. There is here, obviously, no monotheism properly so-called, even when the rival Gods are called non-Gods.¹ Such an expression does not occur in the reputedly early writings; and when first employed it is but a form of bluster natural to warring communities at a certain stage of zealotry; it is known to have been employed by the Assyrians and Egyptians as spontaneously as by the Hebrews;² and it stands merely for the stress of cultivated fanaticism in priest-taught communities. The idea that Yahweh used other nations as the “rod of his anger” against Israel and Judah, without desiring to be worshipped by those other nations, is a mere verbal semblance of holding him for the only God; and arises by simple extension of the habit of seeing a chastisement from the tribe’s God in any trouble that came upon it.

Here we are listening to a lesson given by priests. On the other hand, the politic course of conciliating the Gods of the foe, practised by the senate-ruled Romans, tells of the grafting of the principle of sheer worldly or military prudence on that of general religious credulity in a community where priesthood as such was but slightly developed. Morally and rationally speaking, however, there is no difference of plane between the Roman and the Hebrew conceptions.³ Jeremiah, proclaiming that “the showers have been withheld” by “the Lord that giveth rain,”⁴ is

¹ *E.g.*, Jer. v, 7. As Kuenen notes (*Religion of Israel*, Eng. tr. i, 51-52), such passages are few in the prophetic books. In Hosea xiii, 4, there is no such implication; and the “non-God” passages are all presumptively late. The Aramaic verse, Jer. x, 11, is an interpolation; and the whole chapter is relatively late.

² Cp. Isa. x, 10-11; 2 Kings, xviii, 33-35; Sayce, Hibbert Lectures, p. 129; Tiele, *Histoire comparée des anciennes religions*, trad. Fr. pp. 243, 247.

³ Mr. Gladstone, it will be remembered, confessed that the ethic of the early Hebrews is below that of the Achæan Greeks. *Landmarks in Homeric Study*, p. 95.

⁴ Jer. iii, 3; v, 24.

on that side, indeed, at the intellectual level of any tribal medicine man; and if the writers of such doctrine could really have believed what their words at times implied, that the alleged one sole God desired the devotion of Israel alone, leaving all other peoples to the worship of chimæras, they would have been not above but below the intellectual and moral level of the professed polytheists around them.

On any view, indeed, they were morally lower in that they were potentially less sympathetic. So far as can be historically gathered, the early monotheistic idea, so called, arose by way of an angry refusal to say, what the earlier Yahwists *had* constantly said and believed, that other nations had their Gods like Israel. There is thus only a quibbling truth in the thesis that monotheism does not grow out of polytheism, but out of an "inchoate monotheism" which is the germ of polytheism and monotheism alike.¹ The "inchoate monotheism" in question, being simply the worship of one special tribal God, is itself actually evolved from a prior polytheism, for the very conception of a tribal God is relatively late, and emerges while men believe in many ungraded Gods. It is quite true that later polytheism rises by the collocation of tribal Gods; but there is absolutely no known case of a monotheism which did not emerge in a people who normally admitted the existence of a multitude of Gods. Even, then, if the first assertors of a Sole God were so in virtue of a special intuition, that intuition was certainly developed in a polytheistic life. And there is absolutely no reason to doubt, on the other hand, that in Israel as elsewhere there were men who reached monotheism by philosophic progression from polytheism.

The historic evolution of Jewish monotheism, however, was certainly not of this order. It was not even, as

¹ This argument of Mr. Jevons (pp. 386-7) is a revival of an old thesis. "Monotheism and polytheism," writes J. G. Müller (*Amerik. Urrelig.* p. 19), "diverge not through grade of culture but through difference of principle, through the primarily different relation to the Godhead. From polytheism nations emerged not by mounting on the same ladder, but by leaving it, by the inception of a new spiritual force (*Geistes schöpfung*)."

Robertson Smith with much candour of intention implied, "nothing more than a consequence of the alliance of religion with monarchy."¹ Monarchy in Mesopotamia and Egypt never induced monotheism; and most of the Jewish kings were on the face of the record polytheists. The development, as we shall see, was post-monarchic and hierocratic; and the immediate question is whether the spirit which promoted it was either morally or intellectually superior. The judicial answer must be that it was not. Insofar as it was a sincere fanaticism, a fixed idea that one God alone was to be recognised, though he devoted himself to one small group of men, it partook of the nature of monomania, since it utterly excluded any deep or scrupulous reflection on human problems; and insofar as it was not fanatical it was simply the sinister self-assertion of priests bent on establishing their monopoly.

The contrary view, that a belief in the existence of the Gods of other tribes than one's own is "obviously" a "lower form of faith than that of the man who worships only one god and believes that as for the gods of the heathen, they are but idols,"² must just be left to the strengthening moral sense of men. Such an assumption necessarily leads, in consistency, to the thesis that the man who believes his tribe has the One God all to itself does so in virtue of a unique "revelation"; and this is implied in the further description of true monotheism as proceeding on an "inner consciousness that the object of man's worship is one and indivisible, one and the same God always." On this basis, sheer stress of egoism is the measure of religiosity; and as the mere scientific reason cannot suppose such egoism to have been a monopoly of the Hebrews, it would follow, for ordinary minds, that revelation occurred in every separate cult in the world. It is indeed certain that even among polytheists a special absorption in the thought of one God is a common phenomenon.³ Thus there are as many revelations as there are

¹ *Religion of the Semites*, p. 74.

² Jevons, p. 387.

³ Cp. Max Müller, *Introduction to the Science of Religion*, ed. 1882, pp. 80-81; Tiele, *Egyptian Religion*, Eng. tr. pp. 33, 223; Sayce, *Hibbert Lectures*, pp. 89, 90, 96, 97, 100, 108, 109.

Gods and Goddesses, all alike being vouched for by the "spiritual depths of man's nature."

Unless rational thought is once more to be bridled by absolutism, such a line of reasoning must be classed with the pretensions of the medieval papacy. Men not already committed to dogma cannot conceive that a religion is to be appraised in utter disregard of its relation to universal morals, on a mere *à priori* principle as to the nobility of monotheism—especially when the principle is set up for one monotheism alone. It is merely a conventional result of the actual course of the evolution of the Christian system that quasi-monotheism as such should be assumed to be an advance on other forms of creed, with or without exception of the case of Islam. A certain intellectual gain may indeed arise where a cult dispenses with and denounces images; this, even if the variation arose, as is likely, not by way of positive reasoning on the subject, but by the simple chance of conservatism in a local cult which had subsisted long without images for sheer lack of handicraftsmen to make them.¹ But the gain is slight indeed when the anthropomorphic idea of the God's local residence is stressed exactly as his imaged presence is stressed elsewhere, and when in every other respect his worship and ethic are on the common anthropomorphic level.² In any case it is clear that such monotheism could not be made by mere asseveration, with or without "genius," to prevail against the polytheism of a population not politically selected on a monotheistic basis.

Even if it were, however, it would depend on further and special causes or circumstances whether the worshippers

¹ That Yahweh was, however, imaged in northern Israel as a young bull—a symbolic form common to him and Moloch—is beyond doubt. Cp. Kuenen, *Religion of Israel*, i, 235–6. Here the Yahwists probably adopted images made by more advanced races. Cp. on the other hand Goldziher's theory that the early Hebrews worshipped the night sky and the cloudy sky—objects not adaptable to images (*Mythology among the Hebrews*, Eng. tr. pp. 220–227).

² The barbarous Khonds, who till recently practised human sacrifice, rejected both images and temples as absurd; and the cults of the Maories were similarly imageless (Macpherson, *Memorials of Service in India*, p. 102). But the Khonds are without durable houses (*Id.* p. 61); and they and the Maories alike were of course backward in the arts.

underwent any new moral development.¹ The conventional view unfortunately excludes the recognition of this; hence we have the spectacle of a prolonged dispute² as to whether savage races can ever have the notion of a "Supreme Being" or "Creator" or "High God," or "All Father," with the assumption on both sides that if the affirmative can be formally made out the savages in question are at once invested with a higher intellectual and spiritual character—as if a man who chanced to call his God "High" and "Good" thereby became good and high-thinking.³ All the while Mr. Lang, the chief champion of the affirmative, avows that his Supreme-Being-worshipping savages in Australia would kill their wives if the latter overheard the "high" theistic and ethical doctrine of the mysteries.⁴ Even apart from such an avowal, it ought to be unnecessary to point out that terms of moral description translated from the language of savages to that of civilised men have a merely classifying force, and in themselves can justify no moral conclusion in terms of our own doctrines, any more than their use of terms like "Creator" can be held to imply a philosophical argument as to a "First Cause."

Two moral and intellectual tests at least must be applied to any doctrine or cult of "monotheism" before it can be graded above any form of polytheism: we must know whether it involves a common ethic for the community of the worshipper and other communities; and whether it sets up a common ethic of humanity within the community.

¹ Prof. A. Réville, a monotheist and semi-Christian, avows that "nous trouvons en plein paganisme une obscure et grossière tendance au monotheisme. On pressent que la divinité n'est, en réalité, ni masculine ni féminine, qu'elle possède les deux sexes ou n'en possède aucun. De là des symboles monstrueux, des mutilations, ou des impuretés indescriptibles" (*Préliminaires de l'histoire des religions*, 3e édit. p. 172).

² See it carried on in Mr. Lang's *Magic and Religion*, as against Dr. Taylor, who has latterly taken up the negative position. Mr. Lang's thesis is discussed in the author's *Studies in Religious Fallacy*, and in *Christianity and Mythology*, pp. 52-64. Like that of Mr. Jevons, Mr. Lang's view has much in common with the teaching of Prof. Max Müller, which is closely criticised by Mr. Spencer in App. B. to vol. i. of his *Principles of Sociology*. Some of Mr. Spencer's own arguments there are, however, open to rebuttal.

³ "Good" was one of the epithets of Assur. Sayce, p. 124.

⁴ *Magic and Religion*, p. 40.

11. B.

Either test may in a given case be partially satisfied while the other is wholly unsatisfied. Thus we have the pre-exilic Hebrews and (perhaps) some modern Australian aborigines¹ affirming a "One God" who is "Creator" of all, and yet treating all strangers as outside of the God's providence or law; while on the other hand we had till recently the Khonds, with their human sacrifices to the Goddess Tari and their doctrine of a Supreme God, proclaiming that the victim whom they liturgically tortured or tore to pieces was sacrificed for "the whole world," the responsibility for its welfare having been laid on their sect.² To set such "monotheism" or such Soterism above late Greek or Roman polytheism or Hindoo pantheism is possible only under an uncritical convention.³ We must try Hebrew religion by moral tests if we are to grade it in a moral scale with others; and by such tests it is found to be anti-moral in its very monotheism.

Genius, no doubt, did arise in the shape of an occasional monotheist with both literary gift and higher ethical and cosmical ideals than those of the majority; and though there is reason to surmise lateness as regards the "prophetic" teachings of that order,⁴ it is not to be disputed that such thinkers (whom Mr. Jevons would deny to be thinkers) may have existed early. But the broad historic fact remains that by the ostensibly latest prophet in the canon Yahweh is represented as complaining bitterly of the frauds committed on him in the matter of tithes and sacrifices. "Offer it now unto thy governor: will he be pleased with thee?" he is made to say concerning the damaged victims brought to his altar.⁵ And the very prophet of the Restoration lays down, or is made to lay down, the old doctrine of the tribal medicine-man very much in the language of a modern company-promoter:—

"And it shall come to pass that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem

¹ Lang, *Making of Religion*, pp. 190-8.

² Macpherson, *Memorials of Service in India*, pp. 98, 115, 116, 117, 122.

³ Cp. Tiele, *Hist. comp. des anciennes religions*, trad. Fr. pp. 502-3.

⁴ Cp. *A Short History of Freethought*, pp. 76-81.

⁵ Malachi, i, 8. Cp. i, 14; iii, 8-10.

shall go up from year to year, to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles" [more correctly *booths*].

"And it shall be that whoso of all the families of the earth goeth not up unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, *even upon them there shall be no rain.*

"And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, neither shall it be upon them; there shall be the plague" [or upon them shall be the plague] "wherewith the Lord will smite the nations that go not up to keep the feast of tabernacles."¹

If this were the whole or the principal historical clue to the motives of the Return, we should be moved to decide that that movement was simply a sacro-commercial venture, undertaken by men who had seen how much treasure was to be made by any shrine of fair repute for antiquity and sanctity. The other records, of course, enable us to realise that there entered into it the zeal of a zealous remnant, devoted to the nominal cult of their fathers' city and the memories of their race. But with such a document before us we are forced to recognise, what we might know from other details in sacerdotal history to be likely, that with the zealots there went the exploiters of zealotry. It is certain that the men of the Return were for the most part poor: a Hebrew saying preserves the fact that those who had done well in Babylon remained there;² and, on the other hand, it holds to reason that among the less prosperous there would be some adventurers, certainly not unbelievers, but believers in Mammon as well as in another God.

Such men had abundant reason to believe in Yahweh as a source of revenue. The prophetic and historic references to him as a rain-giver are so numerous as to give a broad support to Goldziher's theory that the God of the Hebrews had been a Rain-God first and a Sun-God only latterly;

¹ Zechariah, xiv, 16-18. Compare the less explicit utterances of deutero-Isaiah (Isa. ix, etc.), which, however, imply no higher conception of the relation of Judaism to the Gentiles.

² *Christianity and Mythology*, p. 92.

and in sun-scorched Syria a God of Rain was as sure an attraction as the Syrian Goddess herself, who in Lucian's day had such treasure-yielding prestige. But even if we ignore the economic motive, obvious as it is, the teaching of Zechariah remains undeniably tribalist and crassly unedifying. To such doctrine as this can be attributed neither the intellectual nor the moral advantages theoretically associated with monotheism in culture-history. It is historically certain that science never made in Jewry any such progress as the monotheistic conception has been supposed to promote; and whatever general elevation of moral thought may have taken place among the teachers of later Jewry is clearly to be ascribed not to a fortuitous upcrop of genius but to the chastening effect of disaster and frustration, forcing men to grave meditation and the gathering of the wisdom of sadness. And to this they may have been in a measure helped by the higher ethical teachings current among their polytheistic conquerors and neighbours.

§ 4.

We must indeed guard against throwing on the side of Assyria and Babylon the balance of prejudice which has so long been cast on the side of Jewry. There can have been no more of general ethical or rational elevation in the great polytheistic States than in the small. But it lies on the face of the history of religion alike in India, Mesopotamia, and Egypt, that in great and rich polytheistic priest-hoods there arose naturally a habit of pantheistic speculation¹ which at least laid the basis for a higher philosophy, science, and ethic; and it would be precisely the men of such enlarged views in the great Mesopotamian capitals who would most readily hold intercourse with the conquered or travelling Israelites. Certain it is that the cosmogony of Genesis is adapted directly from that preserved and partly developed in Mesopotamia from pre-Semitic times. Thus the so-called genius of the Hebrews for religion

¹ Cp. *Short History of Freethought*, pp. 28-30, 36-37, 44-45.

founded itself on the common Asiatic tradition of many thousands of years.¹

That the Hebrews should have learned anything worth learning from the Babylonians is a notion for which most people are still unprepared by education.² As it was put in the last generation by one apologist: "The moral chasm which separates us from heathens is so great that we can hardly realise their feelings."³ But when it is realised that the Hebrews adopted the mythic cosmology of their neighbours⁴ it should be easier to conceive that they got from them ideas of a more advanced order.⁵ And if the ethical tone of the "inchoate monotheism" of the Hebrew books be thoughtfully noted, it will be realised that only in the larger community was there any appreciable chance for the development of a relatively enlightened creed.

¹ Mr. Jevons does not hesitate to assert (p. 265) that the resemblances between the Babylonian and the Hebrew cosmological myths are "due to the human reason, which in different places working on the same material comes to similar inferences"—a sad perversion of historic fact. He adds that "The *difference* which distinguishes the Hebrew from all other primitive narratives testifies that the religious spirit was *dealt* in a larger measure to the Hebrews than to other peoples." It appears to be implied that reason is "dealt" in an absolutely equal degree to all peoples. Not a word in specification of the alleged "difference" is vouchsafed; but on the next page we read that the "primitive science of those early narratives was the work of the human reason, and proceeded from a *different source* from that whence the religious elements in them came." In terms of Mr. Jevons's own definition of religion we must suppose that the Hebrew peculiarity he has in view is simply monotheism, though the plural term Elohim gives the proof that for the Hebrews also polytheism was primordial. Other hierologists again, such as Prof. Hommel (*Die semitischen Völker und Sprachen*, 1881, i, 316) and Mr. Sayce (Hibbert Lectures, pp. 314, 317), argue that some religious developments short of monotheism can be explained only by the irruption of a new doctrine from the outside, the former writer looking to the Hebrews and the latter to Semites as against non-Semites. Both arguments are *à priori*, and lead back to supernaturalism and revelation as against the principle of evolution. Mr. Sayce, besides, is confuted by his own admissions, pp. 316, 320, 337, 339. H. Zimmern (*Babylonische Busspsalmen*, 1-2) reasonably suggests that national misfortunes altered the religious tone and temper. Cp. Sayce, p. 205, and Huxley's *Essays*, as cited below.

² As these pages are being printed, the truth is newly insisted on, with an awakening force, by Professor Delitzsch at Berlin. See the *Times* of Jan. 14th.

³ A. S. Farrar, *Critical History of Freethought in reference to the Christian Religion* (Bampton Lectures for 1862), p. 99.

⁴ Stade, *Geschichte des Volkes Israel*, pp. 416, 428, notes; Gunkel, *Schöpfung und Chaos*, 1895, p. 15; Zimmern, *The Babylonian and the Hebrew Genesis*, Eng. tr. *passim*; Tiele, *Hist. comparée*, tr. Fr. pp. 496-7.

⁵ Cp. Jastrow's *Religion of Babylonia and Assyria*, pp. 452-3, 560, 567, 611, 628, 642, 681, 696.

There had there arisen perforce a measure of tolerance in virtue of the very compulsion to polytheism. Early Assyria was as primitively tribal as early Israel: Assur was at least as loudly vaunted and as devotedly trusted as Yahweh; and his worshippers were presumptively not more but less ready to accept other Gods, precisely because they were so much more successful in their wars. Yet when by conquest city was added to city, and kingdom to kingdom, polytheism was as inevitable in Mesopotamia as in Egypt. There we see kings specially devoted to one God;¹ but when one king's zeal leads him to impose his cult on all, the outcome is the razing of his own name, as well as his God's, from the monuments² after his death. Whole populations could not be driven out of one worship into another; and as the sense of national unity arose, the priesthoods of the capitals would more and more readily accept the Gods of the outlying communities. The mere vicissitudes of warfare were always a reason, in military eyes, for desiring to widen the field of divine assistance; and no mere soldier or soldier-king could conceivably doubt the existence of the Gods of his enemies, however he might in battle affect to deride them. It was among the priests, or other thoughtful men of leisure, that there would arise the inference that all the God-names were but varying labels for one great non-tribal Spirit, who might be conceived either (as among the Brahmans and Egyptians) pantheistically, or on the lines of the relation of the earthly autocrat to the states he ruled. And it was only through some such monotheism as this that any moral or intellectual progress could be made; for only on this line could monotheism become international.³

It is part of the convention aforesaid to treat the preservation of the Hebrew creed as a gain to civilisation equal

¹ Tiele, *Hist. of Egyptian Religion*, Eng. tr. pp. 125, 143, 152-3.

² As to Chuenaten's attempt, cp. Tiele, pp. 161-5; Maspero, *Hist. anc. des peuples de l'orient*, 4e édit. pp. 209-212; Brugsch, *Hist. of Egypt under the Pharaohs*, Eng. tr. ed. 1891, ch. x.

³ "Unless a monotheistic conception of the universe is interpreted in an ethical sense, monotheism (or monolatry) has no great superiority, either religiously or philosophically, over polytheism" (Jastrow, p. 696).