

he must take his information at second-hand? Second-hand, we say, not with regard to the divine element in the Old Testament, but with regard to everything human.

Finally, a word concerning Prof. Cheyne's alternative; if, indeed, there really is the alternative between reform in the teaching of the Old Testament and a loss of it for the Christian people, we would say that the true reform consists in bringing the Old Testament more widely before our Christian community, not as subject to the principles of psychologic criticism, but as the living word of God; for we know from the lips of God himself: "Heaven and earth shall pass, but my words shall not pass away" (Matth. 24, 35).

THE TRADITION OF THE GENTILES.

IT frequently occurs that intelligent unbelievers cite, in evidence of the semi-pagan character of the Catholic Church, the fact that her doctrines and forms are, in many instances, very similar to the ideas and practices of heathen nations. That striking similarities do exist all scholars now admit, and even the direct historic connection of certain Christian ceremonies with their pagan counterparts has been clearly established. There are otherwise well-instructed Catholics who sometimes tremble as such evidences are forced upon their minds, and who would be utterly at a loss to repel a vigorous attack from this quarter by a thoroughly trained antagonist. In such cases it is one false idea, common to both, which furnishes a weapon to the assailant of Christian doctrine, and renders vulnerable the armor of its champion. This has been an element in every dogmatic form of heresy, and, though not itself heretical, is so essentially un-Catholic that it cannot co-exist in a single mind with any proper conception of the true dignity of the Church of God, or its real nature and mission. The error is briefly this: that Christianity claims to be the exclusive possessor of divine truth, which was revealed from heaven for the first time to the writers of the Bible or to the twelve Apostles, and considers all other systems as utterly false, and their practices, as such, reprehensible. If the Church made this claim it would be unable to maintain its position. Many of the teachings of our Lord are but repetitions of the maxims of much more ancient oriental sages;

and there is scarcely an element in the Catholic doctrine or ritual which cannot be found in some of the philosophies or religions of the Gentile world.

When this fact is once apparent, the same process of reasoning which Christian sectarians use against the Catholic Church makes it equally serviceable to those who argue that all religions are merely ingenious theories by which our early progenitors sought to account for the phenomena of nature, and which, with the growing light of science, are banished farther and farther from the region cognizable by the senses and the intellect, until at last compelled to take refuge beyond the confines of the universe in the realm of the forever unknowable; or that they are systems devised and maintained by a few crafty men who turn to their own advantage the ignorant fears aroused in the multitude by the tempest, the earthquake, the innumerable forms of disease, and the awful imminency of death.¹

The alternative of this terrible conclusion is to be found in the dictum of St. Augustine: "What is now called the Christian religion has existed among the ancients, and was not absent from the beginning of the human race until Christ came in the flesh; from which time the true religion, which existed already, began to be called Christian."² This view may be expressed in other words as follows: The first parents of the race received from God a revelation which, though pictured in dimmer outline, coincided very nearly with the truths of which the Catholic Church is to-day the guardian; and it is this revelation, the true Catholic faith, which underlies every system of the world.

The present chaos of discordant and often horrible beliefs and practices are the result of the varying kinds and degrees of corruption which this sacred deposit underwent when left to the unaided reason and memory of fallen man. As Catholic savants have always more or less explicitly recognized this truth, it will not here be necessary to cite authorities. The subject has never been thoroughly studied on account of the inaccessibility of the most important materials and the lack of Catholic thinkers inclined to devote themselves to it; but the first of these difficulties, thanks to the indefatigable labors of modern orientalists, has been removed, and the time seems to be near when, by the comprehensive study of the religious systems of the world from the standpoint of revealed truth, a new science of *hierology* will be developed, which will result, as all scientific investigation must sooner or later do, in the triumphant vindication of the universal religion. The present article has the aim simply to call popular attention to the polemic

¹ See Tylor's *Primitive Culture*.

² St. Augustine, *Retractations*, I., 13.

importance of the Augustinian view, answering, at the same time, some possible objections, and taking a glance at a few of the evidences which may be cited in its support.

The theory of the descent of all religions from an original perfect and divinely revealed system implies, in opposition to a large school of modern anthropologists, a tendency towards degeneration in the whole human race. To the objection of evolutionists that there is no reason to exempt man alone from the operation of the universal law of progressive development by which other species are governed, it may be replied that in the fall the upward current was broken by the intervention of the obstacle of human freedom between the divine force which had hitherto throbbed unimpeded through every vein of nature, and the human activities which were destined to be the very flowering of creative energy. This view of the fall would leave our theory of social degeneracy intact, even though the descent of the human body from a progressive series of animal progenitors should be admitted. Let it be noted, however, that the structural affinities between the lower races of man and the anthropoid apes, which are chiefly relied upon as proof of his simian descent, may be accounted for with equal facility by the operation of the laws of adaptation to environment and of correlation of structure upon those degraded races who, at the dawn of the human epoch, had obscured in the ashes of animalism the lights of intuition and of historic revelation.

The first men may have been characterized by the maximum of intellectual and intuitional power, and even been in possession of a lofty and perfect religious system, without possessing or speedily acquiring a high degree of material civilization, perhaps thinking it better to rise above vulgar wants than to endeavor, with the Baconians, to supply them; yet it seems more probable that, under such circumstances, many useful arts would have very soon been discovered, and the theory of the remote antiquity of civilization must therefore be esteemed as an important outpost of our position.

The evidence which has been collected by ethnologists of the school of Tylor and Lubbock in support of progressive development is counterbalanced by the numerous facts which have come to light bearing a contrary significance.¹ It is admitted, on all hands, that there have been fluctuations in the tide of progress; there have been ebbs and flows, and a thousand little eddies have broken the unity of the current and made it difficult to determine its direction. Here are a few problems which the progressionists

¹ Winchell, *Preadamites*, pp. 277-280. Tylor, *Early History of Mankind*, pp. 181-186.

would find it hard to solve. The Hottentots and Bushmen represent the very lowest stage of human existence; their physical resemblance to the gorilla is appalling.¹ Yet they are the only members of the negro race who have produced any enduring monuments of pictorial art;² and, though a dissection of their brains shows the speech centre to be in a singularly defective condition,³ they possess a comparatively complex and polished language which presents some resemblances to that of ancient Egypt.⁴ The most degraded races of the western continent likewise show some evidences of having sprung from a nobler stock.

We find in the prehistoric records of European man at least one remarkable example of deterioration. The men of the Reindeer Epoch possessed great artistic skill, and some of their carvings upon ivory are really beautiful;⁵ but their descendants, the lake dwellers, have left no evidences of any capacity for imitative art.⁶

The Crow Indians of the Rocky Mountains, and the Alto Peruvians of the Andes, from whom the other aborigines, Mr. Catlin says, claim descent, are distinguished above them all for the amplitude of their foreheads, caused by the development of the frontal lobe of the brain.⁷ Even the Man of Calaveras, whose fossilized remains are said to have been found in the Pliocene gravel, "under the solid basalt of Table Mountain," is shown by the measurements of his skull to have been of superior intelligence.⁸

Rev. Richard Taylor, F.G.S., who resided in New Zealand as a missionary for more than thirty years, states that the Maoris had degenerated exceedingly since the days of Captain Cook, notably in the arts of boat-building and weaving; and that they have traditions of the time when cannibalism was never heard of and war was unfrequent, and when a regal government yet existed among

¹ Winchell, *Preadamites*, pp. 171, 250, 253, 254.

² "The Bushmen are said to have painted the cliffs from the Cape of Good Hope to beyond the Orange River with figures of men and animals in red, bronze, white, and black colors, or etched them in light tints on a dark ground. These are said to have been done with great firmness of hand, and copies of them show a fidelity to nature equal to some of the Egyptian delineations."—Winchell, *Preadamites*, p. 256, note.

³ H. D. Rolliston, in describing the cerebral hemispheres of an adult male Australian, in the *Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, August, 1887, says: "The island of Reil is exposed on the left side; this exposure is a condition found in primitive brains; thus Marshall (*Phil. Trans.*, 1884) figures it in the brain of a Bushwoman and quotes other examples. The exposure of the island of Reil implies that the surrounding gyri are ill developed. Broca's convolution is thus shown to be defective."—*American Anthropologist*, January, 1888.

⁴ Winchell, *Preadamites*, p. 71; and Peschel, *Races of Men*, pp. 457, 458.

⁵ Rau, *Early Man in Europe*, pp. 59, 75, 78, 103-105.

⁶ *Id.*, p. 78.

⁷ Catlin, *Last Rambles*, p. 248.

⁸ See Winchell, *Preadamites*, pp. 427, 428.

them ; and he says of their language that " its fulness, its richness, showing a close affinity, not only in words but in grammar, with the Sanskrit, carries the mind back to a time when literature could not have been unknown.¹

Even among the Greeks there appear evidences of a prehistoric civilization higher in some respects than that of their historic period ; the geographical knowledge of Homer was greater than that of Herodotus or any later writer ;² and Pythagoras, who was pre-eminently the disciple of antiquity, possessed a scientific and general knowledge which far surpassed that of many of his contemporaries or successors, and which is being newly emphasized with every advance which inductive science is making among us.³

A leading element in the progressionist delusion is the custom of largely ignoring history and tradition, and assuming that the lowest degree of savagery manifested by contemporary races represents the most ancient phase of culture. It is then easy to read in the ascending series of intermediate conditions the history of civilization. Very many of the current scientific treatises on the subject are based exclusively upon this assumption, by reversing which they might, with equal propriety, be read backwards, and the gamut of progress run in the descending scale. The current ideas regarding the sequence of the palæolithic, neolithic, bronze, and iron ages, rest upon very narrow foundations, and probably will ere long be decently interred by the side of the innumerable corpses which fill the graveyards of scientific speculation.⁴

There are abundant evidences of the nature of the progress which has taken place in matters of religion. Changes of the most marked kind have occurred in the religions of Europe and Asia since the beginning of the historic period, and outside of the Catholic Church they have been always from better to worse. Even Max Müller admits a primitive theism of which polytheism was a corruption.⁵ The ancient oriental literatures all tell the same story regarding the original religions and social conditions of the countries nearest to the birthplace of the race.

The earliest monuments of Egypt represent a period when the soundest ethical principles were taught and practised, and when no degrading creature-worship had detracted from the honor due

¹ Taylor, *Te Ika a Mani, or New Zealand and its Inhabitants*, pp. 5, 6.

² See Sir Godfrey Higgins, *Celtic Druids*, 104.

³ For example, he recognized the real nature of the solar system, and taught the revolution of the earth around the sun. See *American Cyclopædia*, article Pythagoras.

⁴ See Dr. W. H. Dall, in *Contributions to North American Ethnology*, vol. i., pp. 47, 48 ; Lord Arundel, of Wardour, *Tradition*, pp. 289-297 ; and Thébaud, *Gentilism*, pp. 64-70.

⁵ Müller, *Chips*, vol. i., pp. 351-359.

to the one eternal deity, whom they called Amun, the Hidden One. The oldest hieroglyphic papyrus which has been yet discovered, a moral treatise by the high official, Pthah-Hotep, dated by some scholars from three to four thousand years B.C., has for its most striking feature "the simple and beautiful didactics of filial piety."¹ Not until the 18th dynasty (1703-1462 B.C.) had the insidious growth of pantheism so obscured in Egypt the primitive revelation as to allow the intrusion of idolatrous emblems into her temples and her sculptured records.² The writings of Hermes Trismegistus,³ though already tainted with pantheism, prove conclusively the high degree of religious enlightenment which existed among the early Egyptians.

Still more plainly does the patriarchal religion manifest itself in the Rig Veda (1500-1200 B.C.), and in the earliest portions of the Zend Avesta (about 1300 B.C.). The former work teaches explicitly in many places the unity of the godhead. For example, "They called him Indra, Mitra, Varuna, Agni; then he is the beautiful-winged heavenly Garutmat; that which is one, the wise call it, in divers manners; they call it Agni, Yama, Mâtarisnan."⁴ The holy Rishis or patriarchs who wrote the Veda loved to call upon God as Brahma, the Adorable One, and spoke of Him as a Christian of to-day might do. "What the sun and light are to this visible world, that is the supreme good and truth to the intellectual and invisible universe; and as our corporal eyes have a distinct perception of objects enlightened by the sun, thus our souls acquire sure knowledge by meditating on the light of truth which emanates from the Being of beings; this is the light by which alone our minds can be directed in the path of beatitude." "Without hand or foot He runs rapidly, and grasps firmly; without eyes He sees; without ears He hears all; He knows whatever can be known, and there is no one who knows Him; Him the wise call the great, supreme, pervading Spirit."⁵ The authors of the Rig Veda believed in the personal immortality of the soul and its eternal reward or punishment, in the resurrection of the body and the last judgment. They honored the Virgin of the Dawn, and in their worship of Mitra mingled recollections of the archangel Michael with the Messianic traditions which afterwards were expressed still more distinctly in the myth of Chrishna. Their moral codes resembled that of Moses, and they exalted the value of almsgiving. They considered the offering of sacrifices as necessary to

¹ See Johnson, *Oriental Religions, China*, p. 533.

² Thébaud, *Gentilism*, p. 252.

³ *Id.*, pp. 211-226.

⁴ Rig Veda, I., 164, 165.

⁵ Cited by Thébaud, *Gentilism*, p. 138.

salvation, and found in the sacred banquet of Soma an earnest of the eternal enjoyment of the Divinity.¹

The great prophet Zoroaster planted himself so firmly on the rock of patriarchal tradition that all the usurpations of Magism and the inroads of various idolatrous systems have never succeeded in drawing away the religion which bears his name from the main truths of Revelation. Professing only to maintain the pure religion of old against growing corruptions, he recognized one God, Ahura-Mazda, the Bright Spirit, surrounded by angelic hosts, and having a council of six archangels, besides Mithra (St. Michael), the angel of the sun and the champion of divine truth, and Graosha (St. Gabriel), the messenger of divine revelations and the especial dispenser of heavenly blessings. Angro-mainyus, the Dark Spirit, the Great Serpent, was the leader of the fallen angels, and was destined to be overcome by Mithra, with whom he was continually at war. The fall and the curse, heaven and hell and purgatory, the judgment, and the resurrection of the body, all find their place in the Persian theology, while sacrifice, the Soma feast, and prayer for the dead, form part of the practical side of the same system.² In the Persian ethics, "truth, charity, purity, and industry were the virtues chiefly valued and inculcated. Evil was traced to its root in the heart of man, and it was distinctly taught that no virtue deserved the name but such as was co-extensive with the whole sphere of human activity, including the thought as well as the word and the deed. The purity required was inward as well as outward, mental as well as bodily."³

The path towards polytheism lay through the *via media* of pantheism, but the process was expedited by the gradual disintegration of peoples and of ideas, which caused local names of the Deity to be considered as representing separate beings, or gave distinct individuality to what were, at first, only His attributes or manifestations of His power. The Hebrews, as far as we know, never fell into the error of imagining that El Shaddai, Elohim, Adonai, and Yahveh were the names of different divinities; but this is exactly what happened in India with Dhaus, Varuna, Indra, and Brahma; and the same had occurred in Chaldea, where the religious degradation had been speedy and great. In the latter country, though God (El or Il) was still spoken of, He was considered too mysterious and distant a being for common intercourse; and those to whom divine honors were paid were partly deified men like Bil-Nipru (Nimrod) and Hoa (Noe), or angels like Ana (Lucifer), and partly personifications of divine works or attri-

¹ See Müller, *Chips*, vol. i., pp. 46, 47.

² Rawlinson, *Five Ancient Monarchies*, vol. iii., pp. 101, 114-117.

³ *Id.*, vol. iii., p. 113.

butes, as Sin, San, and Iva. After this process of segregation is well under way, the religion takes the form which Max Müller calls hathenatheism,¹ and each name, in turn, is invoked as representing the greatest of the gods, the ruler of heaven and earth, and the names are sometimes used interchangeably, though the people already understand them to represent distinct personalities. On this point Rawlinson said, several years ago, in speaking of the Chaldean mythology: "It may be suspected from such instances of connection and quasi-convertibility that an esoteric doctrine, known to the priests and communicated by them to the kings, taught the real identity of the several gods and goddesses, who may have been understood by the better instructed to represent, not distinct and separate beings, but the several phases of the Divine nature. Ancient polytheism had, it may be surmised, to a great extent this origin, the various names and titles of the Supreme, which designated His divine attributes or the different spheres of His operation, coming by degrees to be misunderstood and to pass, first with the vulgar, and at last with all but the most enlightened, for the appellations of a number of gods."² Later researches are said to have brought to light many new evidences that Chaldea possessed a monotheistic religion resembling, in numerous points, that of the Jews.

The religious history of Phœnicia is similar to that of Chaldea.

The monotheism of early Greece, both before and after the Ionian migration, comes down to us in the Orphic books, whose genuineness has been ably vindicated by Father Thébaud,³ and in the philosophies of Pythagoras and Plato, who were distinguished among the Greek thinkers by their reverence for tradition and their acknowledgment of indebtedness to it.⁴ The works of both the Greek and Latin poets, and pre-eminently those of Æschylus, preserved likewise many of the divine traditions of patriarchal days.⁵ The higher we ascend into Greek antiquity the more prominently stands out before us "the idea of God as the Supreme Being, the Father of the heavens and the Father of men"; and Zeus, the Glorious One, was worshipped with a simplicity and singleness of intention which we must, even to-day, regard with admiration.⁶ Father Formby has given a valuable contribution to this subject in his "Primitive Monotheism of Rome," from which it appears that Numa Pompilius possessed a knowledge of the true religion, and laid the foundations of Roman institutions deep in the abiding rock of divine truth.

¹ Müller, *Chips*, vol. i., pp. 27, 29.

² Rawlinson, *Five Ancient Monarchies*, vol. iii., 460.

³ Thébaud, *Gentilism*, pp. 285, 306.

⁴ *Id.*, pp. 365-392.

⁵ *Id.*, pp. 393-435.

⁶ See Müller, *Chips*, vol. ii., pp. 15, 148, 152.

In the Eddas of the Scandinavians the Hebrew Adonai reappears as Odin, called Alfadur, the king of heaven and earth, whose son, Baldur the Fair, is the subject of some of the most beautiful Messianic traditions found out of the possession of the chosen people. Heaven and hell, the angels and the demons, the resurrection and the judgment, and all the doctrines of patriarchal Catholicity appear here; and if we interrogate the Druids we find the Celtic tribes in possession of the same body of truth.¹

Most of the Turanian and Negro peoples fell respectively into atheism and polytheism many thousand years ago, but even among them we find evidences of the universal religion. The ancient Chinese were worshippers of Tien or Shang-te, the God of Heaven, and the Messianic legend finds its embodiment in the story of "How-tseih, born of a pure virgin who has trodden in the foot-print of God after praying for a child, and whose delivery is without pains; exposed in a narrow place, where the oxen and sheep protect Him; in a forest where the woodmen find Him; in the ice where the birds cover Him and respond to His infant cries. Majestic even in babyhood; in childhood planting grain, raising pulse, wheat, and hemp, which He teaches the people to cultivate that they may bear them home for an offering."² The elevated tone of the Chinese ethical systems is well known.

It is not possible within the limits of a single article to follow out many of the details of Catholic doctrine revealed in the remains of every civilized nation of antiquity, or to even glance at the proofs of the fact that the ancestors of those nations now the most barbarous were once equally enlightened. If we should turn to the Aztecs and the Toltecs and the Mayas of the New World, we would find that they possessed many Catholic traditions before their first discovery by Europeans; and an analysis of the religious customs of the hunting tribes of America, as well as of the more degraded Polynesians and Africans, would reveal the traces of the truths which they have long since forgotten. The use of the egg and the boat in religious ceremonies, and the practice of burying the dead in a sitting posture, may be mentioned as instances of these fossilized ideas.³

The summing up of the whole subject is this: The Catholic Church of to-day is the representative, not only of the Christianity of Christ, but of the patriarchal religion which was once spread throughout the inhabited world. Everything good and true which exists between the poles is her rightful property; and no idea or practice which has its root deep in the needs and aspirations of

¹ See Sir Godfrey Higgins, *Celtic Druids*.

² From the Shi-King. See Johnson, *Oriental Religions, China*, p. 545.

³ Lord Arundel of Wardour, *Tradition*, pp. 306-309.

mankind can fail to find its place within her all-embracing care. The various cults of heathendom are, then, only older and more degenerate heresies; and the Catholic, from whatever nation or sect he may have sprung, may rest in the assurance that he is but maintaining the religion of his remotest ancestors; and, secure in his adherence to the universal traditions of the human race, he can afford to despise alike the narrowness of heresy, the provincialism of false religions, and the ignorance of the enemies of all religion, pointing the adherents of such systems to their own glorious past as the completest refutation of their errors.

RUSSIAN ORTHODOXY AND RUSSIAN SECTS.

I.

ONE of the most striking characteristics of Russian sects is the extreme simplicity of the doctrines to which they give special prominence and the clearness of the issue between them and the "Orthodox" creed. In this respect they stand out in strong contrast to the sects of the early Church. They are not the outcome of disputes on obscure questions of metaphysics or of speculative theology, for their founders were men of the people, with no pretensions to learning. They can boast of no Manes, of no Pelagius, of no Abelard. The soil of Russia was as little favorable to the growth of metaphysics as that of ancient India was propitious to history. The Church, however, does not appear to have suffered much from this circumstance, as philosophy has never been called upon to supply arms to the assailants or defenders of Russian Christianity. The schismatic creeds inherited the chief characteristics of the Church from which they sprang—a Church justly celebrated for strict fidelity to its ancient liturgy, and for the gorgeous pomp of its ceremonies, and which has always appealed with marked success to the senses, if not to the intellects, of the people. There is nothing, therefore, very strange in the circumstance that none of the sects which have issued from that Church have much to do with theology, while some of them have quite as little to do with Christianity.

The absence of the metaphysical element in the theology of Russian Churches is as natural as the absence of snow at the