

## ARTICLE VIII.

THE THEOPHANIES OF HOMER AND THE BIBLE.<sup>1</sup>

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THE thoughtful mind never comes from the study of Homer without a feeling of wonder. In the poet's panorama of heroes and peoples there is mirrored a life that seems to belong both to the youth of the race and to its maturer present. The procession, also, of gods and goddesses appears under the rude forms of polytheism, yet their acts and the conceptions of their followers are continually revealing those grand, general principles of the divine nature and the divine relations that belong to a living theology rather than to a dead mythology. Some of our recent scholars, indeed, afflicted with what Ewald calls "the weak preference for heathenism," have seen in Homer, as well as in the earliest books of the Bible, only traces of a rude savagism; but others, as Mr. Gladstone, Professor Tyler, Professor Blackie, Tayler Lewis, and Nägelsbach, have delighted to point out in Homer those great truths of the doctrine of deity that have made it in some sense, like the Bible, a book for all ages and races. They have wondered to see, in the attributes of the gods of this "Greek Bible," in their sovereignty and providence in the affairs of men, and in their punishment of sin, so much of the one God. In no point, however, do Homer and the Bible compare so remarkably as in their representations of the

<sup>1</sup> Homer and the Homeric Age—Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone, 1861. *Homerische Theologie*—Zweite Auflage, Naegelsbach, Nuernberg, 1861. *The Theology of the Greek Poets*—Professor W. S. Tyler, Boston, 1867. *Hibbert Lectures, 1878*—Max Mueller, London. *Outlines of the History of the Ancient Religions*—C. P. Tiele; Translated by Carpenter, Trubner & Co., London. *Horae Hellenicae*—Professor J. S. Blackie; MacMillan & Co., London, 1874.

*manner* of the divine manifestation and revelation to man. The poet makes these divine appearances on their face so like those accepted by Christians as peculiar to the true God, and betrays so full and clear a conception of the closest and highest personal and spiritual relations of God to man known to the Bible, as to awaken at once the greatest interest and to require an earnest attempt at their explanation. To see how striking is this similarity, we will put side by side some of the accounts of divine manifestation in each, though, in this comparison of the *manner* of revelation, the wide differences in the nature of the deity and in the character of the divine message are not to be forgotten.

#### THE PARALLELISM.

In the Bible we are told that God himself has appeared to men. The form may vary in appearance, yet the form is recognized as the Deity himself. God came to Abraham on this wise :—

And the Lord appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre : and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day : and he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him : and when he saw *them*, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground—[Gen. xviii. 1, 2].

One of these, Abraham knows as the Lord and intercedes with him as such for Sodom and Gomorrah.

And the men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom ; but Abraham stood yet before the Lord. . . . And the Lord went his way, as soon as he had left communing with Abraham : and Abraham returned unto his place—[Gen. xviii. 22, 33].

On another occasion (Gen. xvii. 1, 22), “the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I *am* the Almighty God ;” and then when he left off talking with him, “God went up from Abraham.” In Gen. xxxii. 30, Jacob says, “I have seen God face to face,” and Ex. xxxiii. 11 affirms that “the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend.”

Homer thus describes this form of divine appearance in Il. xv. 243 :—

Then far-darting Apollo stood near him and spake to him : “Hector, son of Priam, why dost thou sit fainting apart from others? Is it perchance that some trouble cometh upon thee?” Then with faint breath answered Hector of the glancing helm :

"Nay, but who art thou but of the gods who inquirest of me face to face?" . . . Then Prince Apollo, the far-darter, answered him again: "Take courage now, so great an ally hath the son of Kronos sent thee out of Ida, to stand by thee and defend thee, even Phoebus Apollo of the golden sword, me, who of old defend thee, thyself, and the steep citadel."<sup>2</sup>

In Il. xxiv. 223, Priam, in recounting to his doubting wife the coming of Iris to himself, says:—

But now since I have heard the voice of the goddess myself, and looked upon her face, I will go forth and her word shall not be void.

Od. xvii. 485 makes one of the suitors say to the others:—

Yea, even the gods, in the likeness of strangers from far countries, put on all manner of shapes and wander thro' the cities to watch the violence and righteousness of men. Over fifty appearances of the gods to men, either as Deity or in the likeness of men, are recorded in the Iliad and the Odyssey.

Another mode of divine manifestation in the Bible, and one that seems even more deeply marked with divinity, is that in which the divine Being, or his messengers, are seen and even heard by one, but are unseen and unheard by others present. Such an angelic appearance to Balaam is thus described in Num. xxii.:—

And God's anger was kindled because he went: and the angel of the Lord stood in the way for an adversary against him. Now he was riding upon his ass, and his two servants *were* with him. And the ass saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand: and the ass turned aside out of the way, and went into the field: and Balaam smote the ass, to turn her into the way.

After the ass had been confronted again by the angel, and had crushed Balaam's foot against the wall and, at a third encounter, had fallen down under him,

then the Lord opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand. . . . And the angel of the Lord said unto him.

Evidently Balaam's two servants did not see the first two appearances of the angel, and in all probability their eyes were not opened to the last, nor their ears to the words of the angel. Daniel also, by the river Hiddekel, saw one of glori-

<sup>2</sup> All the renderings of the Iliad and the Odyssey are from the English prose translations of Butcher, Lang, and two other English scholars, issued by MacMillan and Company, of London, 1883 and 1879. I have used these renderings because of their remarkable fidelity to the original, and because I would escape any charge of personal bias from making my own renderings, or from selecting from several differing translations.

ous appearance, and the voice of his words was like the voice of a multitude.

And I, Daniel, alone saw the vision; for the men that were with me saw not the vision; but a great quaking fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves— [Dan. x. 7].

So Saul, in the New Testament era of miracles, heard and saw the Lord. (Acts ix. 1 Cor. xv. 8.) Peter, also, was once "sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains; and the keepers before the door kept the prison." And "the angel of the Lord came upon *him*, and a light shined in the prison; and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, 'Arise up quickly.' And his chains fell off from *his* hands." Both went out, the outer iron gate opened of its own accord and Peter left the city. Yet "now as soon as it was day there was no small stir among the soldiers, what was become of Peter" (Acts xii.).

In like manner, Athene coming from heaven appears to Achilles:—

She stood behind Peleus' son and caught him by his golden hair, to him only visible, and of the rest no man beheld her. Then Achilles marvelled and turned him about and straightway knew Pallas Athene, and terribly shone her eyes. He spoke to her winged words and said—[Il. i. 197].

Hermes (Il. xxiv. 440) conducts Priam and his chariot by the Grecian sentinels to Achilles' tent, and the hero says:—

I know, O Priam, nor am unaware that some god it is that hath guided thee to the swift ships of the Achaians.

Then before dawn, and unknown to the watchful sentinels, the god returns Priam, and the bier bearing the dead Hector, to Troy. Athene (Od. xvi. 159) is seen by Odysseus and the dogs, but "Telemachus saw her not before him and did not mark her, for the gods in no wise appear visibly to all." Odysseus also is made to say, "Who may behold a god against his will, whether going to or fro?" (Od. x. 573.)

The divine manifestation has sometimes been simply an audible voice.

And when Moses was gone into the tabernacle of the congregation to speak with him [God], then he heard the voice of one speaking unto him from off the mercy seat that *was* upon the ark of testimony, from between the two cherubims—[Num. vii. 89]. The Lord spoke to little Samuel (1 Sam. iii. 4). A voice from heaven fell upon Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. iv. 31), and

“then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind” (Job xxxviii. 1).

Homer would have his gods manifest their presence in like manner :—

But Apollo looked down from Pergamos, and had indignation, and with a shout called to the Trojans—[Il. iv. 507]. Thus spoke he [Phœbus Apollo], and Hector again fell back into the crowd of men, for he was amazed when he heard the sound of a god's voice—[Il. xx. 379].

Beside these proper theophanic forms, deity is also frequently represented as making known his will through messengers. In the Bible there is either the divine “Son of man” or a lower order of beings called angels. They usually appear in the form of man, but by their message or some supernatural circumstance reveal their true office.

And there came two angels to Sodom at even ; and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom ; and Lot seeing *them*, rose up to meet them ; and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground—[Gen. xix. 1].

In verse 13 they say, “the Lord hath sent us.” An angel of the Lord appeared to Manoah and his wife, and was known as such to them by his ascending in the flame of the altar (Judges xiii.). David saw the angel of the Lord at the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite (1 Chron. xxi. 16). As Nebuchadnezzar gazed into his fiery furnace, he said :—

Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt ; and the fourth is like a son of the gods—[Dan. iii. 25, R. V.].

Mary saw in the Saviour's tomb “two angels in white,” who conversed with her (John xx. 12).

In Homer these divine messengers are the superior or the inferior deities, appearing usually in human form and personating some one well known by acquaintance or reputation. Their divine office is also usually shown by their message or by some peculiarity of their advent or departure.

But Poseidon that girdleth the world, the shaker of the earth, was urging on the Argives, and forth he came from the deep, salt sea, in form and voice like unto the Kalchas. First, he spake unto the two Aiantes—[Il. xiii. 43].

Then, as the god sped from them, Oileus' son recognizes him first and says to Aias :—

It is one of the gods who hold Olympus that, in the semblance of a seer, commands us now to fight beside the ships. Not Kalchas is he, the prophet and soothsayer

for easily I knew the tokens of his feet and knees as he turned away, and the gods are easy to discern—[Il. xiii. 68].

Apollo repeatedly comes to Hector with some message, taking on the form of one and another well-known friend. In like manner, Athene is continually directing Odysseus and his son, and Zeus sends Iris and Hermes here and there to carry his decrees.

In both the Bible and Homer, chosen men called prophets or seers are also the means of divine communication with men.

The Lord sent a prophet unto the children of Israel, which said unto them, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel—[Judges vi. 8].

And the Lord spake unto Gad, David's seer, saying, Go and tell David, saying, Thus saith the Lord—[1 Chron. xxi. 9, 10].

So were Moses, Nathan, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and others sent to God's people. Not so important is the prophetic office among the Greeks, yet it is as clearly known.

And there stood up before them Kalchas, son of Thestor, most excellent far of augurs, who knew both things that were and that should be and that had been before, and guided the ships of the Achaians to Ilios by his soothsaying that Phœbus Apollo bestowed on him—[Il. i. 68]. Now Helenus, Priam's dear son, understood in spirit their resolve that the gods in counsel had approved—[Il. vii. 44].

Cyclops says:—

There lived here a soothsayer, a noble man and a mighty, Telemus, son of Eury-mus, who surpassed all men in soothsaying and waxed old as a seer among the Cyclopes. He told me that all these things would come to pass in the afternoon, even that I should lose my eyesight at the hand of Odysseus—[Od. ix. 508].

Animals may also utter the divine message.

And the Lord opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam—[Num. xxii. 28]. Then the horse Xanthos, of glancing feet, made answer unto him [Achilles] from beneath the yoke: . . . for the white-armed Hera gave him speech—[Il. xix. 404].

The Bible and Homer also regard oracles, signs, omens, and lots as often of immediate divine origin and as frequently expressing the divine will. Eleazer the priest is to ask counsel for Joshua, "after the judgment of Urim before the Lord." (Num. xxvii. 21.) David also bade Abiathar bring him the ephod that he may inquire of the Lord by it (1 Sam. xxx. 7, 8). The Lord sends thunder and rain in the wheat harvest as a sign and directs the lots in the detection of Achan's sin (1 Sam. xiii. 18, and vii. 17). Odysseus represents himself as having gone to Dodona to hear the counsel of Zeus from the high, leafy oak-tree of the god (Od. xiv.

327). In answer to Odysseus' prayer to Zeus, "straightway he thundered from shining Olympus," "and goodly Odysseus was glad" (Od. xx. 103). Repeatedly lightning and the flight of an eagle upon the right are regarded as favorable omens, and upon the left as unfavorable.

The biblical and Homeric wonders and miracles by which the Deity manifests his presence or confirms his word, have many striking points of similarity. The pillar of cloud stood behind the Hebrews and between their camp and that of the Egyptians (Ex. xiv. 19). And "Ares drew around them a veil of night to aid the Trojans in battle" (Il. v. 506). The Lord looked "thro' the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians" (Ex. xiv. 24). And Athene, "clothing her in a gleaming cloud, entered the Achaian's host and roused each man thereof (Il. xvii. 551). As Moses looked, "behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush *was* not consumed" (Ex. iii. 2). "Cloven tongues like as of fire" sat upon each of the disciples on the day of Pentecost (Acts ii. 3). "And the charioteers were amazed when they saw the unwearying fire blaze fierce on the head of the great-hearted son of Peleus; for the bright-eyed goddess Athene made it blaze" (Il. xviii. 225). At the command of Joshua the sun and moon stood still, and at the cry of Isaiah the shadow went back ten degrees upon the dial of Ahaz (Josh. x. 12; 2 Kings xx. 11). Athene holds the night and delays the dawn for Odysseus and Penelope (Od. xxiii. 243). Moses' face shone as he came down from the mount and the people were afraid to come nigh him (Ex. xxxiv. 30). Athene shed on Telemachus a wondrous grace and all the people marvelled at him as he came (Od. ii. 12). As the Lord gave might to Samson, so Athene makes Laertes taller and mightier (Judg. xv. 14; Od. xxiv. 367). A pestilence is sent upon Israel for David's sin and upon the Greeks for Agamemnon's sin, and both are stayed by expiatory offerings. Apollo "caught Hector up very easily as a god may, and hid him in thick mist" (Il. xx. 443). "Behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire . . . and Elijah went up by

a whirlwind into heaven" (2 Kings ii. 11). So Enoch "was not, for God took him" (Gen. v. 24). But the most striking point of similarity between the wonders and miracles of Homer and the Bible, is that in both they are regarded as but the common and natural acts of deity. Nägelsbach remarks of those in Homer, "The wonderful things done by the gods are represented not as wonders, but as something perfectly natural and to be expected of the gods."<sup>3</sup>

Of the more subjective modes of divine manifestation and revelation, we notice first that of dreams and visions. This method is common in the Bible, but seems not to be limited to it.

And he [Jacob] dreamed, and, behold, a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven. . . . And behold the Lord stood above it, and said—[Gen. xxviii. 12].

Pharaoh dreams, and Joseph says, "God hath shewed Pharaoh what he *is* about to do" (Gen. xli. 25). God made known to Nebuchadnezzar "what shall be in the latter days" by a dream of a great image, and reproduces the dream to Daniel, and gives the interpretation in a night vision (Dan ii. 19, 28). In Christ's day the "wise men of the East" are warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod (Matt. ii. 12). Homer makes Zeus send a baneful dream to Agamemnon.

So he stood over his head in seeming like unto the son of Neleus, even Nestor, who most of all the elders Agamemnon honored; in his likeness spake to him the heavenly dream—[Il. ii. 20].

A prophetic dream and its interpretation are both given to Penelope in sleep (Od. xix. 536). Achilles remarks to Atreus' son, "A dream, too, is of Zeus" (Il. i. 63).

The highest mode of divine revelation or manifestation is the inward or spiritual.

Then upon Jahaziel, the son of Zechariah, . . . came the Spirit of the Lord in the midst of the congregation; and he said, Hearken ye, all Judah. . . . Thus saith the Lord unto you—[2 Chron. xx. 14].

As Balaam saw Israel in his tents,

The spirit of God came upon him and he took up his parable and said—[Num. xxiv. 2].

Luke says of Simeon:—

<sup>3</sup>Homerische Theologie, p. 47.



It was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ—[Luke ii. 26].

Peter says :—

Holy men of God spake as *they were* moved by the Holy Ghost—[2 Pet. i. 21].

Christ tells his disciples :—

But when they deliver you up take no thought how or what ye shall speak; for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you—[Matt. x. 19, 20].

Homer's conception of this highest type of divine intercourse is not less clear and vivid, and so common that he has made use of it nearly thirty times.

But on the tenth day Achilles summoned the folk to assembly, for in his mind did goddess Hera of the white arms put the thought—[Il. i. 54].

Glaukos prayed and Phœbus Apollo heard him "and put courage into his heart" (Il. xvi. 529). Odysseus says :—

And Zeus, whose joy is in the thunder, sent an evil panic upon my company. . . . But as for me, Zeus himself put a thought into my heart—[Od. xiv. 268].

When the old nurse of Odysseus is about to reveal him to his wife, Homer says :—

But Penelope could not meet her eyes nor understand, for Athene had bent her thought to other things—[Od. xix. 478].

Helen says to Menelaus, who was in doubt about an omen :—

Hear me and I will prophesy as the immortals put it into my heart—[Od. xv. 172].

A still more remarkable passage is Od. iii. 26. Athene in the likeness of Mentor bids Telemachus go and inquire about his father of the old man Nestor. But Telemachus is young and shame-faced and fears to go. Then the goddess says to him :—

Telemachus, thou shalt bethink thee of somewhat in thine own breast and somewhat the god will give thee to say.

There has been no advance upon this form of divine revelation since Homer's time. Not even the Christian religion has produced a higher type, nor represented this form more clearly and fully. Nägelsbach, in speaking of the relation of the seer (*μυθῆς*) to deity, remarks :—

In this universal seeing which submits itself to us as the culminating point of the divine revelation to man, by virtue of the divine incoming, for the person of the seer the barrier between the divine and human knowledge is raised up. The decision of the Deity is his, not by an outward sign, but is his inwardly in his soul, but not as a dream through a medium, but immediately as in presentment, but not again as in this in rare moments as in the instant of death, but always and in every case of need. Man walks with the Deity in immediate intercourse, but not so that it comes down to him, but so that he is raised up to it.\*

\* Hom. Theo., p. 188.

He also adds, in regard to Helenus' reporting among the Trojans what Apollo and Athene said when they met by the beech-tree and planned Hector's combat (Il. vii. 44), "This case which is here outwardly represented as a hearing and understanding of what the gods speak with one another, must be received in the consciousness of the seer by inspiration as an inner act. Thus he often receives an immediate revelation."<sup>5</sup> In this connection he quotes Mezger, Pauly's Real. Ency. ii. p. 1117, who remarks, "In the Greek doctrine of inspiration, that extremity is shunned which permits an overpowering by the inspiring spirit wholly annulling the human freedom." It is certainly remarkable that such a statement about the Homeric mode of divine revelation can be made.

Our examination has led us to see that in Homer "the forms of the intercourse of the Deity with men run through all the steps of approach of the godlike nature to the human,"<sup>6</sup> and that the Homeric conception of this intercourse was as high and full as that of the Bible. There are spots and defects, as when Apollo and Athene appear in the likeness of vultures,<sup>7</sup> and Telemachus sneezes a blessing on his mother's words.<sup>8</sup> We must also say that these divine manifestations of Homer are but the appearances of fabulous beings, the occasion of their advent often unworthy, the attending phenomena sometimes trivial; and that the divine revelations of the poet have added nothing to the world's knowledge. Yet their resemblance in form to the biblical still appears to be, not that of a chiselled statue to the living man, but rather the likeness of one human form to another, both divinely shaped and breathed upon with life.

#### WHENCE DID HOMER GET THIS KNOWLEDGE?<sup>9</sup>

The poet himself does not tell us, nor does he seem to

<sup>5</sup> Hom. Theo., p. 189.

<sup>6</sup> Naegelsbach, Hom. Theo., p. 162.

<sup>7</sup> Il. vii. 59.

<sup>8</sup> Od. xvii. 545.

<sup>9</sup> I regard Homer as the author of the Iliad and the Odyssey. Naegelsbach and Professor Blackie have well remarked that one who studies the Deity as represented in both works can hardly doubt their single authorship. But whether one Homer or several wrote these books, the point under consideration would not be affected.

feel any obligation to do so. With him "the possibility of a personal intercourse between the divine and human world is never placed in doubt or questioned."<sup>10</sup> Nor seems he to have a thought but that "his song is only the common voice of his time."<sup>11</sup> If the poet may seem to have given any light, he has done so unconsciously. Nor have we any pre-Homeric Greek literature in which to trace the beginnings and growth of the poet's idea of the relations of the gods to men. The Homeric song, as has been said, seems to flow, as did once the Nile, from an undiscoverable source. The religious writings also of the peoples kindred to the Greeks, which claim to be contemporary with Homer or to precede him, give us no light. The Vedas and the Zend-Avesta consist of hymns, prayers, and endless ceremonies and rules.<sup>12</sup> They seem to know but the human side or part of religion. The divine is afar off. There is no habitual coming of deity to man in the forms of personal intercourse.

The more common answer among students of Greek mythology and comparative religion as to the source of Homer's religious ideas is, that they are simply those which he gathered from the myths and fables of his day. In other words, they are the invention of men in the ages preceding Homer. Max Müller says: "After the separation of the Aryan and Semitic branches, and antecedent to Homer, there was a mythic period of fables and tales conflicting and confused."<sup>13</sup> He makes these myths the result of men's effort to find deity in the powers of nature. Tiele, in writing of the Greek religion, remarks: "The ancient nature deities are replaced more and more by gods endowed not only with the shape of man, but with real humanity, who continually rise in moral

<sup>10</sup> Naegelsbach, *Hom.Theo.*, p. 168.

<sup>11</sup> Naegelsbach, *Hom.Theo.*, p. 5.

<sup>12</sup> Goldwin Smith, in the *Contemporary Review*, Dec., 1883, 'p. 802, remarks: "Social and legal antiquities of the highest interest doubtless there are in these books; much too of the poetry of primitive nature worship, but of anything spiritual, universal, moral, hardly a trace."

<sup>13</sup> *Selected Essays*, Vol. I. p. 309.

dignity and grandeur, and to whom the Greeks transferred the divine element in man."<sup>14</sup> It is true that Homer's religious conceptions are with him historical and, as a necessary result in an age of unwritten history, they must come to him wrapped up in stories and tales. It is, moreover, true that most of these stories may be only fables of human invention, and that all of them may contain more or less of the fabulous. We can easily see that the stories of the wind-gods and the river-gods and nymphs in Homer are but the fairy tales of those forces at work in nature. We do not doubt that all the gods in Homer are fabled beings. Yet we do not therefore hasten to conclude that *all* the stories of Homer's gods are in warp and woof humanly devised fables, and that *all* the Homeric conceptions of deity are purely imaginative.

There are several reasons forbidding such a conclusion. It is difficult to see how the high and full conception of the near, bodily, and spiritual relations of deity to man which is found in Homer, could be entirely of human invention. We find no parallel to it, except in the Hebrew religion, and no trace of it in the pre-Homeric pagan religions, except a possible hint in the revelation to Zoroaster by Ahura-Mazda in Parseeism, and to King Wän in the Chinese religion. I know that Tiele says that the Greeks transferred to these nature deities the divine element in man. We may understand how a people may invent its gods and offer to them worship and prayer, from the universal feeling in man of a dependence upon a higher being. We may account for the high ethical precepts of a false religion, of which so much has been written, from the universal voice of conscience in man. We may even see how man may find out many of the true attributes of divinity from nature and the felt limitations of his own being. But what is there in the relations or communications of men with each other that should suggest those inner, spiritual relations of deity and man which Homer so clearly presents? Man might know the ways of man in intercourse, but how should he know the ways of God?

<sup>14</sup> Outlines of the History of the Ancient Religions, C. P. Tiele, p. 205.

Another fact affecting our conclusion is the anthropomorphous conceptions of deity in the stories and fables of Homer's time. This has often been noted, and has generally been considered the product of the peculiar genius and high type of the Greek mind. It has been said that Genesis makes God create man in his own image, while the Greek created deity in man's image. But the study of the modes of divine manifestation and revelation in these old fables of Homer seems to call for another source than simply the Greek mind. The relations of the gods to man in these theophanies are so connected with the divine anthropomorphism that either both or neither must be of human invention. Moreover, we find no such anthropomorphic representations of deity in the pagan religions contemporary with Homer, nor preceding him. The Egyptian gods took on the forms of animals, the Vedic were abstract personations of powers in nature, and Parseeism represented its deities as spirits. Homer seems to know nothing of those later and grosser stories, which represented Zeus as taking on the form of a bull or a swan. We can understand how the ancient Greeks, if they had once apprehended this anthropomorphic conception of deity, might weave this notion into their representations of inferior and fabled gods; but how did they first come to this conception? and how was it that they alone so clearly and so early grasped it? History declares that human nature has always been making its deities something different from itself. It is therefore both the grandest truth of divine revelation and often one of the most difficult for men to conceive, that man has been made in the image of his Maker. What shall we say, then, of the probability of the prehistoric Greek's creating his deity in his own image, with all the intimate divine relations to himself that belong to the one, only God?

Another reason forbidding the conclusion that the Greek doctrine of the gods before the time of Homer was but a primitive system of invented nature deities, is found in the facts that some of the highest old Greek deities have no connection in origin or office with nature forces, as Athene,

Here, Apollo, and Latona; that deities whose functions pertain to elemental forces are represented not as the powers of nature, but as ruling them; and that so many and so different offices are given to one god. Prof. W. S. Tyler, of Amherst College, says on this point: "The attributes ascribed to Apollo and Athene cannot be explained as the spontaneous development of nature worship, or hero worship, in the mind of the Greeks, still less as the offspring of pure invention."<sup>15</sup> He quotes also from Mr. Gladstone: "They are such as to bring about cross-divisions and cross-purposes, which the Greek force of imagination and the Greek love of symmetry would have especially eschewed. How could invention have set up Pallas as the goddess at once of peace and its industries, of wisdom, of war? How again could it have combined in Apollo the offices of destruction, music, poetry, prophecy, archery, and medicine? Again, if he is the god of medicine, why have we Paean? If of poetry, why have we the Muses?"<sup>16</sup> Still further, it may be a question whether these ancient fables and myths are ever entirely of human invention, whether they are the primitive sources of man's religious belief, any more than the coal formations of geology are primitive rock. May they not rather belong to the products of a secondary age, through whose preserved but changed fauna and flora we are to read into an earlier geological age of religious thought and belief? The Catholic legends of to-day are an after product of an earlier and purer religion. We may at least affirm, with Mr. Gladstone, that there is much in the theo-mythology of Homer which, if it had been a system founded upon fable, could not have appeared there,<sup>17</sup> though we may not be able to follow the illustrious author of the "Juventus Mundi" in the many fancied resemblances which he finds between the Homeric and the Old Testament ideas of deity.

Another common view is that the genius of Homer him-

<sup>15</sup> *Theology of the Greek Poets*, p. 172.

<sup>16</sup> *Homer and the Homeric Age*, Vol. ii. p. 13.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

self is the source of the high religious conception of his poems. One form of this view has been recently expressed in a popular lecture upon the Greek religion in these words: "The great poets brought about this change, that whereas before their gods have been regarded as personifications or imaginative representations of the powers of nature, now they become persons with all the powers and attributes of man; *e. g.*, Kronos was originally *time*. He was born of Ouranos, or Heaven, because the heavenly bodies mark time. He is married to Rhea, which means *flowing*, because time flows; and he devours his children because time consumes, destroys, all things."<sup>18</sup> All this seems very beautiful and real until we read in so high an authority as Tiele, "Whatever be the meaning of the name Kronos, it is certain that he has nothing to do with *Chronos*, 'time,' and that the god who mutilates his father and eats his children is of genuinely North-Semitic origin."<sup>19</sup> Our popular hand-books of Greek Mythology are for the most part but the fanciful attempts of the authors to allegorize, each in his own way, the Greek divinities. This passion for allegorizing in the average mythologist far exceeds in strength and viciousness the spiritualizing habit of the old Bible commentators. George Smith also very truly says, "The early poems and stories of almost every nation are by some writers resolved into elaborate descriptions of natural phenomena, and in some cases, if this were true, the myth would have taken to create it a genius as great as that of the philosophers who explain it."<sup>20</sup> Some allegorical deities and representations of deity can be plainly traced in the later Greek mythology, and there are hints of such representations in Homer; but it is not safe, therefore, to conclude that all the Greek deities are only figurative creations, and that it was the poetical genius of Homer who fashioned them out of the clay of the rude past and breathed into them the breath of life. So far is this from the fact that

<sup>18</sup> St. Giles' Lectures: Faiths of the World, p. 196.

<sup>19</sup> Outlines of the History of Ancient Religions, p. 208.

<sup>20</sup> Hom. Theo., p. 151.

Nägelsbach says : "The Homeric man would declare, if he could be asked, his knowledge of the Deity to be purely historical, that which he had through the intercourse of the gods with the human world."<sup>21</sup> Moreover, the style of the poems does not bear the marks of a mind given to the lofty creations of poetical allegory. There is a simplicity, a directness, a subordination, even, of deity to other ends, an air of reality, that we must regard as alien to such a supposed type of mind. Such a view would also make Homer the originator of a new religion, or at least of a reformation of the old. But does the poet ever let fall a word or thought that shows the conscious or unconscious purpose of a reformer? Indeed, his whole treatment of the Greek religion seems purely incidental rather than principal.

Another modification of the view that Homer is the father of his "doctrine of the gods" is that, through his keen insight into the workings of the human mind, he elevated the rude deities of his time by ascribing to them the higher mental powers which he saw in himself, and by making them the cause or source of the mysterious phenomena of mind found more or less in all human experience. So is "Athene the substantial wisdom of Zeus," and the dreams, hallucinations, presentments, unbidden thoughts are but the gods sweeping near and speaking to men. We may even wonder if the traditional blindness of the poet did not favor this introspection and make real to him the inner life of thought and feeling. But this explanation implies a confusion in the poet's mind between these human experiences and the modes of divine revelation and action, and a failure to distinguish between them. But there is no such confusion. The poet knows these phenomena in their true character, as in the presentment of Theselymenus (Od. xix. 351) and the dream of Penelope (Od. xix. 562), and puts the sphere of divine action and access to man almost wholly outside of them. Such elevations of the idea of deity belong also to the age of philosophy in a people's history, and not to the age of poetry.

<sup>21</sup> Chaldean Genesis, p. 302.



Homer never shows the speculative mood. He appears to receive and give as a child. When his deities in their bodily manifestations annihilate time and space, and "are here without any further ado and have taken no time for the change,"<sup>22</sup> it does not seem to him to require any explanation or to be at all improbable. We must say of him, with Professor Blackie, that in his current theology and religious sentiment we have not the slightest authority for supposing that he invented anything at all, and what he gives is "the religious faith of an age and of a people, not the private speculations of a person."<sup>23</sup>

Here and there has been found a writer who has advocated that the source of much of Homer's conception of deity was the contemporaneous intercourse of the Greeks, either directly or indirectly, with the Jews. The Phœnicians are usually made the means of this intercourse. One statement of this view is as follows:—

We see in Homer two religious systems alongside of each other, the older Pelasgic, rude and peculiar to the landsmen—and according to which the gods were the powers of nature, fire and water, and a newer, more noble and foreign system. This may have come to the Greeks from the Jews through the Phœnicians. Ionia, the birth-place of Homer, was the old Javan of the Old Testament. What this "wise man" had heard in his wanderings among the Hebrew and Phœnician seamen and tradesmen, he used to educate silently his countrymen to higher views. He attempted to breathe into the old mythology a genuine religious spirit, but these seed corns of popular truth were finally choked by the popular superstitions.<sup>24</sup>

Others have found evidence of such intercourse in 2 Chron. ix. 23: "And all the kings of the earth sought the presence of Solomon to hear his wisdom that God had put into his heart."

This theory, though it would be a pleasing one to many, has not found general favor, from the fact that there are no traces or even hints in Homer of any intercourse with the Jews, and, what is more, of any knowledge of them. As has been already noticed, also, Homer's gods are to him historical beings, and the poet betrays no thought of any new doctrine

<sup>22</sup> Naegelsbach, *Hom. Theo.*, p. 159.

<sup>23</sup> *Horae Hellenicae*, pp. 3-4.

<sup>24</sup> Friedrich Kosta, *Am. Pres. Rev.*, Jan., 1865, p. 57.

concerning them. Still further, it is impossible to see how Homer himself should have gathered from the Jews the proper forms of divine manifestation and revelation, and not have assimilated some of the great truths of the divine revelation to the Israelites, and not have woven into his story some of the wonderful facts of their history.

The more common and earnest attempt, however, especially among Christian scholars, has been to find in the traditions of a primitive, divine revelation, the source of Homer's higher religious conceptions. Mr. Gladstone is the most zealous and successful advocate of this theory, and his rich Homeric learning qualifies him to speak with great authority. With much ingenuity he has traced shadows of a primitive, divine revelation in the triad of Zeus, Poseidon, and Aidoneus, in the supremacy of Zeus, in the office of Apollo as redeemer and deliverer and of Athene as the divine wisdom, in the high character and dignity of the last deities and their general oneness in thought and action with Zeus, in the rebellion of the Titans, and in the expulsion from Olympus of Até, the temptress, or evil one. He also adduces, as further proofs of the remains, among the Greeks, of a common, pristine, divine revelation, the similarity of the sacrificial rite among them and the patriarchal Jews, the great longevity of the early ages, and the clear conception of the intimate, personal relations of the Deity to man, which is common to Homer and the Hebrews. Upon some of these points, Mr Gladstone speaks as follows :—

The Homeric life was essentially patriarchal like the Jews. The immense longevity of the early generations favors the preservation of pristine traditions. Lamech the father of Noah was of mature age before Adam died, and Abraham before Noah died.<sup>25</sup>

He thus speaks of the mode in which Athene cares for Odysseus :—

It is a contact so close and intimate, a care so sleepless and tender, embracing all the course of events without and the state of mind within. . . . that as it is without anything like a parallel in the rude and meaner relations of men with the deities of invention, so it makes it own audible and legitimate claim to a higher origin. The principle at least of inward and sustained intercourse between

<sup>25</sup> Homer and the Homeric Age, Vol. ii. p. 4.

the Deity and the soul of man, is perceptibly represented to us by the literature of Greece in a case like this and with the very partial and qualified exception of the *daimon* of Socrates in such a case alone.<sup>26</sup>

The Homeric religion seems to occupy a middle position between the Old Testament religion and the corruption and the atheism of the later Paganism, which seems to point to a higher source than mere human invention in the first place.<sup>27</sup>

The late Professor Tayler Lewis held much the same opinion. In an article on the "Ancient Oracles or the Primitive Greek Religion," he says:—

Even the more common epithets of Zeus in the Iliad and the Odyssey point to a purer ante-Homer theology. They were not then first invented. The poet adopts them just as he finds them in the older hymnic or oracular verse and strongly mingles them with gross and incongruous fables savoring of a later origin. . . . It is not an irrational supposition that these phrases coming down from an older thinking and from an older form of the language still held the relics of patriarchal conceptions, faded traces it may be of germinal ideas, such as were preserved in greatest strength and purity in the Jewish Scriptures. They were carried away by the sons of Javan from the Noachian home and treasured afterwards in the oracular seats of Dodona dedicated as it was to the one, supreme and once universally adored, ancestral deity.<sup>28</sup>

In a later article he adds:—

The earliest traceable link between the Greek mythology and the primitive, patriarchal monotheism must be looked for in the grove of Dodona, on the western coast, afterwards called Epirus. Long before the Trojan war a deity was worshipped there, of whom Homer seems to speak with awe as of one belonging to an antiquity transcending his day, and whose religion carried with it a more hoary sacredness. "O Dodonæan, Pelasgic Zeus, dwelling afar, dwelling on high."<sup>29</sup>

He also claims the great antiquity of Dodona from its traditional connection with the flood of Deucalion, which he regards as unmistakably the Greek mythological representation of the great cataclysm recorded in the Bible.<sup>30</sup> He connects the name Dodona with Dodanim of Gen. x. 4.

Many have remarked upon those passages in Homer in which the Deity is spoken of simply as God, without any mythological name, as significantly pointing to a vanishing higher idea of deity. Some of these read as follows, "If God himself should take on him to strip my years from me."<sup>31</sup> "With God's help."<sup>32</sup> "Whom God exalteth."<sup>33</sup> "And

<sup>26</sup> Homer and the Homeric Age, Vol. ii. p. 122.

<sup>27</sup> Gleanings of the Past, Vol. vii. p. 50.

<sup>28</sup> *Am. Pres. Rev.*, January, 1871.

<sup>29</sup> *Am. Pres. Rev.*, July, 1872, p. 429.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 434.

<sup>31</sup> Il. ix. 444.

<sup>32</sup> Il. xv. 403.

<sup>33</sup> Il. xvii. 99.

one thing God will give and another withhold."<sup>34</sup> "God forbid that this should ever be."<sup>35</sup> "In God's name are we come."<sup>36</sup> The attributes ascribed to deity by Homer have also had much attention. "And one thing God will give and another withhold even as he will, for with him all things are possible."<sup>37</sup> "Dear nurse, the gods have made thee distraught, the gods that can make foolish even the wisdom of the wise, and that stablish the simple in understanding."<sup>38</sup> "Now Athene would in no wise suffer the lordly wooers to abstain from biting scorn that the pain might sink yet the deeper into the heart of Odysseus, the son of Laertes."<sup>39</sup> This last passage, Mr. Gladstone remarks, may perhaps find a parallel only in the awful language of Holy Writ: "And the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart that he should not let the people go."<sup>40</sup>

It must be granted that these representations and conceptions of deity are remarkable, and that there are striking resemblances in them to those of the Jewish Scriptures. Professor Tayler Lewis has said very truly: "A thoughtful man, especially if conversant with the Bible, cannot read Homer without feeling that there is something very wonderful here."<sup>41</sup> It may even be accepted as probable that Homer gathered some of his knowledge from the altered and vanishing traditions of his age of a primitive revelation of the true God to the first generations of men. Nevertheless, grave difficulties at once arise when this theory is tried on with the expectation of its covering all of Homer's knowledge. If these ideas of God were a part of the common, early patrimony of the race, why do the Greeks alone of the Indo-European peoples possess them? And why do we find no

<sup>34</sup> Od. xiv. 444.

<sup>35</sup> Od. xv. 344.

<sup>36</sup> Il. ix. 49.

<sup>37</sup> Od. xiv. 444.

<sup>38</sup> Od. xxiii. 11.

<sup>39</sup> Od. xviii. 346.

<sup>40</sup> Homer and the Homeric Age, Vol. ii. p. 118.

<sup>41</sup> *Am. Pres. Rev.*, Jan., 1871, p. 28.

traces of them in the earlier Indian and Persian religions? How also should the Greek conception of the intercourse of the Divine with man be so rich and complete, and the great truths of the sacred revelation and the appellations of the true God be so utterly lost? If, again, these traditions are connected with the common beginning of the religious life of the race, why is it that in Homer and the Mosaic records there are no common root forms or stems in the terms expressing the common religious conceptions? Starting from a common fountain, we should expect that some of the common language forms of the appellatives, at least, would have filtered down along with the common ideas. But stranger still would be the idea that from the cradle of the race could be inherited so full a theophanic conception as that of Homer. Its unfolding among the Hebrews was a long and painful effort.

These difficulties and their peculiar nature have led me to the suggestion that possibly a source of Homer's conceptions of deity may have been a contact of the Greeks with the knowledge of the true God, so long before Homer's time that the fact of contact was forgotten, and so long after the beginning of the race and the great Indo-European dispersion; that they had a pretty well-defined system of pagan deities of their own. In other words, their condition was what we may suppose would have happened in some degree if the earliest Vedic religion, before the advent of Indra, Agni, and the later gods, had come in contact with a knowledge of the true God. Unless the contact was long, and the influence of the new ideas was strong enough to supersede the old, we should expect that the old system of deities would remain, and the new ideas would be absorbed by an elevation of the old deities and of the old religious terms. We see this result to-day upon the pagan religion in the work of Christian missions, as in the Brahmo Somaj of India and the present pagan movement in the Sandwich Islands. A most striking parallel to what must have occurred among the prehistoric Greeks is found to have taken place among the early Chaldees. In

the ancient tablets of this people exhumed and translated by the late George Smith and other Assyrian scholars, we have accounts of the creation, the fall of man, and the flood which most markedly agree with the Genesis records, except in the working Power. In the one, it is the "many strange gods" of a mature polytheism; in the other, the one God. In so substantial agreement <sup>42</sup> we conclude at once that the early Assyrians accommodated the Genesis story to their religious system, receiving it from some one who still kept "the lively oracles of God, and who lived, like Abraham, in "Ur of the Chaldees." Certainly these accounts appear as strange in the rude Assyrian polytheism as the higher ideas of Homer in the Greek.

It is impossible to say just how or when this contact of the Greeks with the true God came about. It is not improbable that in their early home there arose among themselves those to whom God revealed himself in wonders and the spoken word, or through the inner revelations of the Spirit to the susceptible heart. Melchizedek, Job, and, later, "the wise men of the East," and Cornelius the centurion were his priests and recipients of his visitations, though outside the pale of the Jewish Church. We have no warrant for shutting God out of all the prehistoric nations except the Hebrews, as we are apt to do. The latter were his chosen people, but chosen after the others had failed to keep the knowledge of him in their hearts. The ancestors of the Greeks may have kept this knowledge longer than others except the Hebrews, and may have been longer blessed, therefore, with his presence. So Judah kept the old Jewish faith longer than Ephraim. The stronger probability, however, is that the Greeks, in their slow migration westward from their Asiatic home, made the acquaintance of some of the Jewish patriarchs, or of other Semitic worshippers of the true God, like Melchizedek and Job. Another Joseph or Daniel may have shown among them the wonders and wisdom of the Most High God. It has been God's way to put himself from time to time in the way of the nations of the earth, as in the case

<sup>42</sup> Chaldean Genesis, p. 303.

of the Egyptians, later Assyrians, and Persians. Why may we not suppose that he has done so with the Greeks, though there be no record of it in the Sacred Book? As the contact with the Greeks was earlier, so it was longer and more effective than with these later peoples. Much must be implied in the fact that Homer's higher ideas of the Deity were "the religious faith of an age and of a people."

We are not left to bare conjecture on this point. Mr. Gladstone has remarked that the Greek nation, in their ancestry in Asia, must have been in close relations in some points with the scenes of the earliest Mosaic records.<sup>43</sup> Professor Tayler Lewis has also said: "The descendant of Javan (the ancient Greeks) belonged to the Aryan branch, but their connection with the Shemitic, the Phœnician, the Hamitic, was ever closer than with India or the remote East."<sup>44</sup> Curtius bears similar testimony: "But at an early period Semitic tribes had migrated out of the over-peopled lowlands of Mesopotamia and turned westward towards the lands bordering the Mediterranean, among them the people of Revelation."<sup>45</sup> One of these took up its abode in the Lycian valley of the Xanthus in Asia Minor.<sup>46</sup> Lenormant declares that the origin of Greek art, vainly sought in Egypt, is found at Nineveh;<sup>47</sup> and that the connection of Asia Minor with Assyria began at a very early period.<sup>48</sup> C. P. Tiele, called one of the highest living authorities in comparative religion, makes much of the Semitic influence upon the Greeks while they were still in Asia. He says: "In the Greek religion we see the first fair fruits of the fusion of the Indo-Germanic and Aryan with the Semitic and Hamitic elements—the dawn of a new era."<sup>49</sup> He adds in a note in this connection: "What we have briefly designated Semitic is, strictly speaking, only North-Semitic after it had been modified by inter-

<sup>43</sup> *Homer and the Homeric Age*, Vol. ii. p. 7.

<sup>44</sup> *Am. Pres. Rev.*, July, 1872, p. 433.

<sup>45</sup> *Hist. of Greece*, Vol. i. p. 47.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>47</sup> *Am. Hist. of the East*, Preface, p. xii.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, Book v. p. 75.

<sup>49</sup> *Out. Hist. of An. Relig.*, p. 205.

course with the oldest inhabitants of Mesopotamia,"<sup>50</sup> and he says elsewhere: "The culminating point of the religion of the Northern Semites was reached in that of Israel."<sup>51</sup> These statements remind us at once that the seats also of the patriarchal nomads, the country of Laban, the uncle of Jacob, and the old home of Balaam, must have been in or near this same Mesopotamia. Tiele goes on to say still further: "The myths adopted by the Greeks from the Semites were as a rule Akkadian, but they reached the Greeks in the form given to them by the Northern Semites."<sup>52</sup> Professor Sayce makes very much the same statement.

The myths of Accad were rich and manifold and necessarily gained much by the Semitic conquest. Reference has already been made to some of them, and there are many that re-appear under more or less changed forms in Jewish and Greek literature. We have learned at last how great is the debt owed by Greek mythology to the poets of ancient Babylonia, whose legends found their way to the heart through the mouths of Phœnicians and Hittites.<sup>53</sup>

Whatever these myths were, it is enough that they show connection between these peoples. The god *Kronos* of the Greeks has already been made of North-Semitic origin, and Athene and Apollo by universal Greek tradition are of the East. Tiele, speaking of the time of the Lydian supremacy in Asia Minor, says:—

Then it was that the knightly people of the Lycians, kinsmen of the Greeks and their forerunners in civilization, after coming under the influence of the Semitic spirit, wrought out the noble figure of Apollo, the god of light, the son and prophet of the most high Zeus, saviour, purifier, and redeemer, whose cultus, lifted high above all nature worship, spread thence over all the lands of Greece, and exerted on the religious, moral, and social life of their inhabitants so profound and salutary an influence.<sup>54</sup>

Lenormant says that the Lydians were of Semitic race, and that the founder of the Heraclidæ dynasty was an exiled and fugitive Assyrian prince.<sup>55</sup> This prince and his company, or some other similarly exiled, may have been the friends and companions of Terah and Abraham in Ur, or in Haran. It would be enough of itself to establish a strong probability of an early contact of the Greek ancestry with the Semitic wor-

<sup>50</sup> Out. Hist. of An. Relig., p. 208.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 84.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 208.

<sup>53</sup> An. Empires of the East, 1884, p. 155.

<sup>54</sup> Out. Hist. An. Relig., p. 212.

<sup>55</sup> An. Hist. of the East, Book v. pp. 74 and 75.



shippers of the true God, that the ripe and lamented Assyrian scholar, George Smith, has said: "It is evident that in every way the classical nations of antiquity borrowed far more from the valley of the Euphrates than that of the Nile, and Chaldea rather than Egypt is the home even of the civilization of Europe."<sup>56</sup> Every year's fresh discoveries are pointing to the same conclusion. In a recent circular Professor Sayce speaks of the finding of new inscriptions in Asia Minor which establish conclusively the early presence of Semites in that region. With the present increasing interest and light in this field of research, the Christian believer may confidently hope soon to find many of the higher conceptions of Homer so answering to his own inner experience and the divine revelation in the Bible, showing conclusively the very hand of God in their origin.

WHAT BEARING HAS THE HOMERIC REPRESENTATION OF DIVINE INTERCOURSE WITH MAN UPON THE ORIGIN OF RELIGION, THE GREAT QUESTION OF MODERN THOUGHT ?

Whatever bearing it has, touches the vital point of whether man began his religious life with a primeval, divine revelation, or merely with the revelation of deity in nature, which was to be wrought out by man in successive stages of evolutionary development from a primitive savagery or even animalism. The appearance and prominence at so early a period of the Homeric idea of an uninterrupted and living intercourse of the gods with men, bear strong witness to its meeting a felt, deep, and primitive want of man. From the beginning, as ever since, man must have looked upon the self-revelation and self-manifestation of God as his birthright. The study of Homer prompted Professor Tayler Lewis to say: "The earliest belief in deity was as pure, as holy, as rational as any that has followed it, and so, too, was the thought of revelation between the finite and infinite mind; this thought the human soul never has, it never will, it never can give up."<sup>57</sup> The study of the Bible has led Professor Ladd to express the same thought, "Not only the possibility, but also the neces-

<sup>56</sup> *Assyrian Discoveries*, p. 451.

<sup>57</sup> *Am. Pres. Rev.*, January, 1871, p. 10.

sity, of revelation in the highest sense is apparent when we consider the true ideas of God, of man, and of the personal relations of the two... Man created in the image of God, made a spiritual personality, was made for personal communion with God, by receiving the divine love and life, and by returning his free obedience and love."<sup>58</sup>

The origin of religion, to which the idea of a primitive revelation and of oral intercourse between God and man points, is something far different from that which makes man's religious life begin by the fears or hopes excited by dreams, the ghosts of ancestors, or with the personification and deification of the powers of nature, etc. With the first, man would be created with religious as with other desires, and would at once enjoy those holy desires as "he heard the voice of the Lord walking in the garden." The latter view would show us man created with these lofty desires and finding only "the east wind to feed upon," or would reveal him coming late to a religious life from some previous animal or savage state. If the first alternative be true, God was a mocker of man. If man began a savage, how did Homer's prehistoric Greeks attain so full and high a conception of divine providence and manifestation that three thousand years or more have made no advance upon it? Nägelsbach says, "Nothing is further from the Homeric man than to look upon himself as isolated and separated from the gods, or to look on the divine government as a dead system of laws and rules once for all implanted into the nature of things. The relation of men to the gods is rather to be looked on as an uninterrupted, living intercourse."<sup>59</sup> And yet this conception is one of the highest, deepest, and most difficult of religious thought to-day. Ewald says, "All the names for what we designate God's saying belong to the oldest of all lingual possessions which we are acquainted with."<sup>60</sup>

Max Müller has declared that the problem in mythology is to explain "the silly, senseless, and savage element," and

<sup>58</sup> The Doctrine of Sacred Scripture, Vol. ii, p. 309.

<sup>59</sup> Hom. Theo., p. 53.

<sup>60</sup> Revelation : its Nature and Record, p. 24.

with Andrew Lang and others has tried to show that these are the remains of man's original savage state.<sup>61</sup> But they only avoid Scylla to fall into Charybdis. It then becomes a greater problem for them to explain the high and wondrous things of theology in the earliest Greek and other mythologies, to say nothing of the ancient Hebrew religion. The early high ideals of divine intercourse with man, of the Divine Providence and attributes, of the human conscience, of right and wrong, must be accounted for, just as the Christian believer in an evolutionary Christianity must explain the *events* of the prophetic miracles, the incarnation, the resurrection and ascension of Christ, and of the whole body of divine truth in the New Testament. These earliest ideals are certainly not the crude attempts of men from savagism. Are they not rather *remains*? Did not Paul give a true history of the ancient religions, when he said of the heathen: "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things"<sup>62</sup> Professor George Rawlinson sums up his recent "History of the Ancient Religions" of the world in these words: "The only theory that accounts for all the facts, for the unity as well as the diversity of ancient religions, is that of a primeval revelation, variously corrupted through the manifold and multiform deterioration of human nature in different races and places."<sup>63</sup>

This probability of a primordial divine manifestation would also lead to a different interpretation of many of the facts of philology. When philology has shown that before Sanskrit, Greek, or Latin, deity was called "O yu-pater,"<sup>64</sup> "Heaven-father," the mythologist, instead of asserting that man began his religious experience with worshipping the visible heavens, might suggest more truly that man had already so far degraded the primal idea of deity as to worship the heavens, his supposed dwelling-place, as his visible manifestation, and thence

<sup>61</sup> Ency. Brit., 9th ed. Art. Mythology.

<sup>62</sup> Rom. i. 22-23.

<sup>63</sup> P. 244.

<sup>64</sup> Max Mueller, Hibbert Lectures, 1878, p. 216.

it was an easy step to the worship of the heavenly bodies, of a storm god and of the elements themselves. The most ancient Chinese records show the word used to represent the visible heavens also employed as we use Heaven when we intend the Ruling Power whose providence embraces all.<sup>65</sup> Dr. Curtius says that, among the ancient Pelasgi of Greece, "Zeus merely means the heavens, the æther, the luminous abode of the Invisible."<sup>66</sup>

WHAT EFFECT HAVE HOMER'S REPRESENTATIONS OF THE RELATIONS OF DEITY TO MAN HAD UPON CHRISTIANITY ?

Far greater than we have thought. First, the anthropomorphic conception of deity dignified and ennobled man. No civilization made so much of the interests and welfare of the individual as did the Greeks. The divine relationship laid before men lofty duties and grand possibilities. This conception also prepared the way for the reception and apprehension of the God-man by the world. The people of Lystra were ready to worship Paul and Barnabas as the gods come down to men. Nor was it anything strange that the Saviour of the world should be both divine and human. Secondly, the idea of a personal, intimate intercourse between man and deity, quickened and made intense the search of man after God. When the poet had taught such an intercourse in the past, and man saw his capability of it and felt its need in the present, he would not be denied. It was the end of Greek art, poetry, and philosophy. As Nægelsbach remarks, "The search after God was the living pulse in the whole religious development of antiquity." When heathenism had mounted for itself the highest possible in Socrates and Plato, there was an open door for the apostle to the Gentiles.

But, far more than all else, the Homeric conceptions of divine revelation for long ages kept the spiritual from utter decay, and preserved in man the channels of divine access and helpfulness, so that, like the old Roman aqueducts of to-day, they needed but to be cleared of their rubbish and filth and

<sup>65</sup> Dr. Legge, *Religions of China*, p. 8.

<sup>66</sup> *History of Greece*, Vol. I. p. 61.

filled with living waters to make them the very "River of Life" to untold millions. All the religious ideas of the past did not have to be wiped clean out of the Greek mind before he could receive Christianity. He had but to write in the new name of the only, living God, and immediately the old glowed with living fire as if freshly written with the very finger of the Almighty. Nägelsbach says, "While the supernatural methods of revelation verified in the being of the Christian's God, indeed already appear with the heathen, but as communications without sense, in Christianity these forms are first truly corresponding and substantial."<sup>87</sup> When, also, we consider that these important truths concerning man and God were placed at the very fountain-head of Greek literature, and thereby at the source of learning for all ages, we must ascribe to Homer a providential part in the preparation of the world for the gospel, second only to that of the authors of the Sacred Scripture. "Among the gods there is none like unto thee, O Lord, neither are there any works like unto thy works. All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord, and shall glorify thy name."

<sup>87</sup> Hom. Theo., p. 194.