

Spin.  
Ethices,  
Part II.

Idem. iv.  
Prop. xx.

man's existence. There is no pre-eminence on His part, nor is there inferiority in His creature, if we may call man such. Spinoza says: "Hence it follows that the human mind is part of the infinite intelligence of God: and, forsooth, when we say that the mind of man perceives this or that, we only say no more than that God, not as He is infinite but as far as He is unfolded by the nature of man, or as far as He constitutes the essence of the human mind, has this or that idea." "Accordingly in the human mind there is no absolute or free will. The mind is a sure and determined method of thinking, and therefore cannot possibly be the free cause of its own actions." The only sin the system allows is imperfection on its way to perfectness: it is the loss of that which is the only good, that is, of being. In the evolution of God there is a struggle, and the transient survival of the fittest. "By how much the more anyone can preserve his share of being the greater is the virtue with which he is endowed; conversely, so far as anyone neglects to conserve his being he is impotent." Spinoza, like many other devout Pantheists, had exalted notions of the deification of man in God as His transient representative in the process of His eternal incarnation. But at the point of his highest elevation into union with the Deity, finite man is in this system lost in the infinite. There is no Christian glorification of the creature in God, but only reabsorption into the source whence his fleeting personality came. This is pure Pantheism, creationless, and therefore without a Creator. Man has no distinct existence for ever, because he and his home, and all that is his, must be drawn back again into the ocean that other similar waves of existence may follow. Ancient Hinduism went near to this; but it may be doubted whether it ever went so far. "I am Brahman," was the language that expressed in it the highest consummation of unity with Real Being; but still the I remained. Pantheism proper has no I, either for God or for man.

Systems  
not  
directly  
Pan-  
theistic.

#### SUB-PANTHEISTIC SYSTEMS.

It cannot be said that all the errors of mankind as to the created universe in its relation to the Creator may be summed up as Pantheism and Materialism. These are the extreme poles, but

there are zones between of great importance in which we find the most abundant development of human speculation and practice. These can only be alluded to here, and that for two reasons: first, they do not enter into theology proper; and, secondly, they are not now predominant errors against which theology as such has to contend.

## POLYTHEISM.

Poly-  
theism.

Holy Scripture, which is the revelation of the absolute religion, does not trace the history of man's descent from the worship of one God to the worship of gods many; nor does it shed much light upon the various forms which Polytheistic idolatry has gradually assumed. But there is nothing in the Word of God inconsistent with the following two truths: that Polytheism sprang out of a Pantheistic perversion of the feeling of mankind after one Supreme in nature and yet over nature; that it has always coexisted with a more or less indefinite sense of one Deity; and has in its best forms worked towards the absolute supremacy of the only and true one God.

I. The modern Science of Religion aims to trace the development of the instinct or faculty in man for the infinite and eternal through all the records of the races: starting generally from the principle that began by investing the visible and invisible forces of nature with supernatural attributes, and then, as that religion became more dialectic, gradually emerging into Monotheism or Pantheism, in many cases drifting into Atheism by the way. Some of these teachers of Comparative Theology proceed on the theory of evolution. Taking man from the hands of the physical evolutionist, as having been slowly developed into a sentient, moral, and even religious creature, they then carry onward the principle into all the phenomena of what may be called the spiritual history of mankind. Others take up the theory without its tremendous preliminary assumptions.

Origin of  
Poly-  
theism.

1. The testimony of Scripture is explicit here. We might infer from its early records that the successive heads of mankind, and founders of the nations, carried everywhere with them the knowledge or tradition of one Creator; and the tendency of the whole of the record supports that inference. But the New Testament,

Scriptural

which in the fullness of time clears up the mysteries of earlier revelation, gives us a clear account of the origin of Polytheism and idolatry. St. Paul, directly dealing with this subject, speaks of the heathen as of *men who hold the truth in unrighteousness*. He expressly says, that the created universe carried with it to the mind of man a revelation of its one Creator; that their heart was darkened and they became fools; their folly being their idolatry: *they changed the glory of the incorruptible God to an image like unto corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things*. Here we have a kind of programme in brief of all the Polytheistic systems of antiquity. Returning from the moral corruption of the Gentiles to their idolatry, the Apostle says that *they changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, Who is blessed for ever. Amen*. Every word here is significant. They changed,—for this was their own and their fathers' act—the truth of God, the reality of the One God, or the true revelation He had given of Himself, into the Lie, the one lie of Polytheism, and worshipped in their perverted sentiments, and served in their outward idolatry, the creature besides, or above, or instead of the Creator: *παρὰ τὸν Κτίσαντα*. It may be insisted on that this *παρά*, interpreted by the context, shuts out the service of the Creator altogether; but the sacred writer would have found a more forcible way of asserting that. The essence of idolatry throughout Scripture is not the absolute exclusion of the thought of one Supreme; but the giving imaginary representatives of Him the glory due to His one name. That was the idolatry charged against the covenant people themselves; and that, in principle at least, is the idolatry of which superstitious Christendom is found guilty. It is that identification of the Creator with the creature which is the soul of Pantheism. The Holy God does not count His created universe sinful in itself; but in His holiness He is eternally separate from the creature, and will be honoured as such. Hence the Scripture warrants our introduction of this subject into the relations between God and the creature.

History  
of Poly-  
theism.

2. The history of Polytheism confirms all this. Men early lost the supremacy of faith and were surrendered to sense. But the faith only lost its supremacy, and sense was not wholly sense.

They never lost that within them which verified three things, let modern philosophy say what it will: the reality of their own dependent existence; the reality of an outer universe not themselves; and the reality of an Infinite Something, Being or Person, beyond that. But the distinctness of these was lost. Their perfect confusion was pure Pantheism; which, however, was the growth of later ages. At first, the self was distinct; but God and the creature were blended. The One Being was everywhere felt and seen, but not as one being: His energies were distributed, and Naturism, or nature-worship, was the result: the term worship being here conventionally used. The two extremes lie before us in the history of mankind. There is Fetichism, a term invented in the last century to describe the abject superstition which attaches to an endless variety of objects a mysterious connection with supernatural powers, making them symbols of spiritual influences haunting all nature. This takes its most grotesque form in Western Africa, but has pervaded all ages and races, from the Teraphim of Mesopotamia to the Shamanism of Tartary. At the opposite pole is the dread magnificence of the Oriental Greek and Scandinavian Mythologies, where Fetichism is expanded, ethercalised, and developed into its grandest proportions. But everywhere, and in all its forms, it is the idolatry of the creature which loses the Creator: in multiplicity forgetting the unity, though the unity was never far off. From that mankind had wandered, and to that must they, after long wanderings, return.

Fetichism.

II. The history of the religious beliefs of mankind bears witness that there never was a national or tribal Polytheism which did not, more or less, consciously give the supremacy to one, and only one being.

Tending  
to one  
God.

1. The most wonderful, certainly the earliest system of mythology—if such a name may be allowed—is that of the primitive Aryans, whose strong religious feeling deified all the forces of nature. Every object in which they felt the presence of the invisible and the infinite was raised into something supernatural, into a Deva, bright being; Asura, a living thing; and Amartya, an immortal. By degrees, the multitude of gods approximated to a deification of universal nature; but by degrees also the strong tendency of the Indian religion was to find its refuge in a

Aryan.

kind of Atheism which was really a protest in favour of one God, or in aspirations after one God by name.

Aryan  
striving  
after  
Unity.

(1.) As the Aryan theology is the grandest outside of the Bible—how entirely outside of it we shall see—a few illustrations may be derived from it of the principle we are considering, that the One Creator has been always unconsciously groped for in every system. In the Indian religion we may see in epitome, though in a vast epitome, the entire evolution: so absolutely the entire evolution, that it may be selected to represent the whole. We cannot determine what thought concerning the Supreme was behind the earliest Vedic worship; it may have been that the early hymns to Aditi, the boundless or the infinite One, were remembrances of a primitive Monotheistic religion. But certainly in process of ages the whole tide of Hindoo thought and feeling set in towards One Highest God, in the noblest, if not the most beautiful, monarchical form of Polytheism. The supreme sway of the Unknown God, however, was of no avail, so long as He had crowds of representatives nearer than He. The time of reformation came; but it led to a philosophical Atheism, or to Buddhism and Pantheism. The only religion that India never knew until Christianity brought it near is Monotheism. To that there has always, however, been a steady tendency; though, neither in India, nor in any part of the world, will Polytheism give place to the worship of one God until that God is accepted in the Holy Trinity.

Hibbert  
Lect. p.  
260.

(2.) Professor Max Müller has invented a new word to express a certain peculiarity, as he deems it, in the evolution of Indian thought concerning God: his own description will be given, especially as it is almost applicable to all the more enlightened nations of heathenism. "If we must have a general name for the earliest form of religion among the Vedic Indians, it can be neither Monotheism, nor Polytheism, but only Henotheism, that is, a belief and worship of those single objects, whether semi-tangible or intangible, in which man first suspected the presence of the invisible and the infinite, each of which as we saw was raised into something more than finite, more than natural, more than conceivable." . . . "This is the peculiar character of the ancient Vedic religion which I have tried to characterise as

**HENOTHEISM** or **KATHENOTHEISM**, a successive belief in single supreme gods, in order to keep it distinct from that phase of religious thought which we commonly call Polytheism, in which the many gods are already subordinated to one supreme God, and by which therefore the craving after the one without a second has been more fully satisfied. In the Veda one god after another is invoked. For the time being all that can be said of a divine being is ascribed to him. The poet, while addressing him, seems scarcely to know of any other gods. But in the same collection of hymns, sometimes even in the same hymn, other gods are mentioned, and they also are truly divine, truly independent, or, it may be, supreme. . . . But what interests us at present is how that intention was realised; by how many steps, by how many names, the infinite was grasped, the unknown named, and at last the Divine reached. Those beings who are called DEVAS in the Veda are in many places not yet even the same as the Greek θεοί; for the Greeks, even so early as the time of Homer, had begun to suspect that, whatever the number and nature of the so-called gods might be, there must be something supreme, whether a god or a fate, there must be at least ONE Father of gods and men. In some portions of the Veda, too, the same idea breaks through, and we imagine that as in Greece, Italy, Germany, and elsewhere, so in India also, the religious craving after the one would have been satisfied by a monarchical Polytheism. But the Indian mind soon went, and we shall see how in the end it was driven, to a denial of all the devas or gods, and a search for something higher than all the devas, Dyaus himself, or Varuna, or Indra, or Pragâpati not excluded. . . . The process which we have been watching in the case of the sun, we can watch, again and again, with regard to most of the Vedic deities. Not, however, with regard to all. The so-called semi-deities, the rivers, the mountains, the clouds, the sea, others also, such as the dawn, the night, the wind, or the storm, never rise to the rank of supreme deity; but of Agni, the fire, of Varuna, the covering sky, of Indra, Vishnu, Rudra, Soma, Parganya, and others, epithets are used, and whole descriptions given, which, to our mind, would be appropriate to a supreme Deity only."

Heno-  
theism.

(3.) There was another stage of development. "First of all, we

Denial  
Deities

find that several of these single deities, having sprung from one and the same source, have a tendency, after a very short career of their own, to run together. Dyaus was the sky as the ever-present light. Varuna was the sky as the all-embracing. Mitra was the sky as lighted up by the sun of the morning. Sûrya was the sun as shining in the sky. Savitri was the sun as bringing light and life. Vishnu was the sun as striding with three steps across the sky; Indra appeared in the sky as the giver of rain; Rudra and the Maruts passed along the sky in thunderstorms; Vâta and Vâyu were the winds of the air; Agni was fire and light, wherever it could be perceived, whether as rising out of darkness in the morning, or sinking in the darkness in the evening. The same applies to several of the minor deities. Hence it constantly happened that what was told of one deity could be told of another likewise; the same epithets are shared by many, the same stories are told of different gods." "Another expedient adopted by the ancient poets, and which seems quite peculiar to the Veda, is the formation of dual deities." "A third expedient was to comprehend all the gods by one common name, to call them VISVE Devas, the all-gods, and to address prayers and sacrifices to them in their collective capacity."

One  
Supreme  
God.

(4.) "Lastly, there was that other expedient, which to us seems the most natural of all, in order to bring the craving for one god into harmony with the existence of many gods, viz. the expedient, adopted by the Greeks and Romans, of making one of the gods supreme above all the rest: thus satisfying the desire for a supreme power, the *εἰς κοίπavος ἔστω*, and not breaking entirely with the traditions of the past, and the worship paid to individual manifestations of the divine in nature, such as were Apollon and Athena, or Poseidon and Hades, by the side of Zeus." . . . Here we have an almost universal phenomenon, and one that pays a deep homage to the truth of the Scriptures, and the revelation of the one only Creator: the peculiarity of the homage being that every such unconscious homage to the one Supreme was paid to Him as the Originator of all things. There was among the Vedic Aryans the same tendency to establish a supremacy among the gods, a one Creating God, as we find in the mythologies not only of Greece and of Rome, but of Germany and Scandinavia. "There are a few hymns addressed to Visvakarman, the creator, and

**Pragāpati**, the lord, in which there are but small traces left of the solar germ from whence they sprang. Some of them remind us of the language of the Psalms; and one imagines that a deity such as **Pragāpati** or **Visvakarman** would really have satisfied the monotheistic yearnings, and constituted the last goal in the growth of the religious sentiment of the ancient Aryans of **Indra**. But this, as we shall see, was not to be." This was not to be; because men having lost their faith in the one supreme Creator could not return to Him until they were taught to abandon their false gods, forsake their Pantheon, and give back to the True God the glory due to His name. Meanwhile, in evidence that Polytheism has always struggled unconsciously towards the truth, we may quote the Vedic hymn referred to: "He the One God, whose eyes are everywhere, whose mouth, whose arms, whose feet are everywhere; he, when producing heaven and earth, forges them together with his arms and with the wings." "Beyond the sky, beyond the earth, beyond the **Devas** and the **Asuras**, what was the first germ which the waters bore, wherein all gods were seen?" "You will never know him who created these things; something else stands between you and him. Enveloped in mist, and with faltering voice, the poets walk along rejoicing in life." There are a few such tributes to the creator dispersed in the **Rig-Veda**, which, notwithstanding that they are addressed to different beings, are proofs that the true God never left Himself without a witness. To quote **Max Müller** once more: "With such ideas as these springing up in the minds of the Vedic poets, we should have thought that the natural development of their old religion would have been towards Monotheism, towards the worship of one personal God, and that thus in **Indra** also the highest form would have been reached which man feels inclined to give to the Infinite, after all other forms and names have failed."

2. These extracts have been given as illustrating the most interesting and affecting phenomenon in the history of the race: its struggles to return from its wanderings to God. On a smaller scale the same evolution has been going on, and, alas, is still going on, throughout the earth. And the science which makes this history the basis of some great generalisations is called the Science of Religion or Comparative Theology. The study is of great

Comparative Religion.

importance, and yields great advantage to the Christian Cause, though it is generally prosecuted in a spirit of opposition to the exclusive claims of Christianity.

Testi-  
mony to  
Man's  
universal  
sense of  
God.

(1.) It brings boundless evidence from every corner of the earth and from every tribe of humanity that it is of the very nature of man to inquire after the Creator of the world he lives in. The entire sphere of sensible objects around him, and of perceptible forces above him, have been deified only in the service of a higher and nobler desire to penetrate through all these to the One beyond : appealing to Him always as Creator, or at least thinking of Him and addressing Him as the Author and Disposer of all things. As the ancient Vedic poets perpetually uttered their protests against the Devic idolatry, so all the bards and prophets of every religion have shown their sense of something behind the crowded sphere of their lower divinities. Either as the Great Spirit of the far West, or the Aditi, the Infinite, of the far East, or the Moira, Destiny, of the Greeks, or the Jupiter Optimus Maximus of the Romans, there is in every religion or mythology some name that stands as a symbol of the One Supreme as yet unknown. There are thought to be a few exceptions : in the early religion of the Chinese and of the Germans it may be hard to trace these tendencies to Monotheism. But this is mainly because the archives are wanting to complete the evidence. And certain it is that the process of time and of reformation has brought out the latent tendency. This last point is of importance : almost every ancient form of religion has had its eras of reform ; and most of those reforms have been Monotheistic in the long run, if not immediately so. China might seem to deny this ; it was in the earliest ages more Pantheistic than any other nation, and, after receiving the reformation of Confucius, fell under the influence of Buddhism. But through all Chinese philosophy there runs the idea of the Primitive Force, Yang, and primitive matter, Ju. Ischuhi in due time rose above this dualism and regarded these as the two faces of one sole primitive being, Tai-Ky. This seems pure Pantheism ; but Pantheism, whether in East or West, has been the refuge of the minds of men from many gods in one Eternal Self of the universe, its one Cause if not its Creator.

(2.) The study tends greatly to serve the cause of the Christian

religion by showing the incomparable superiority of the records of revelation. The Bible is the sole book of the so-called sacred books of the world which contains one, and one only, and one consistent account of the origin of all things. The difference between that account and every other extant in literature is not simply one of degree: the degree cannot be estimated. In every other document, even the noblest fragments of the Veda not excepted, the hints are obscure and inconsistent, the tributes are paid to different beings, or to the same being under different names, and sometimes there are most incongruous associations introduced. But in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments there is one most heavenly hymn to the Creator which has no single discordant note from the first verse of Genesis *In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth* down to the last hymn of revelation: *Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power; for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they were and were created.*

Superiority of the Christian System.

Gen. i. 1.

Rev. iv. 11.

## DUALISM.

Dualism.

This generic word embraces all those systems of antiquity which strove to explain the contradictions manifest in the universe by tracing all things up to two irreconcilable principles: In respect to creation, it assigned to matter in some form an eternal independent existence, or, if not an existence independent, at least an existence as necessary to human thought as that of the Eternal Energy that moulds it. This is its differential element in relation to Pantheism. The one says that God IS in all things, or that all things are God; the other says that God MOVES in all things, either as their soul in their harmony or as their controller in their discords. Hence the distinction is a sound one that has termed Pantheism MONISM, and the system we now consider DUALISM. But we have many subdivisions of Dualism.

1. There is a sense in which the notion of a perpetual conflict pervaded all the religious ideas of antiquity. The sovereignty of one God not being firmly held, there was no settled theory either as to creation or as to the supremacy of one Being in the midst of its disharmonies. Even in the best philosophies the world was

In one sense Universal