

and the inability of comprehending the Divine Government, together with the glaring superstitious evils arising out of its misinterpretation, endangered the belief in it altogether.

Even the lights of Heaven, which, as "bright potentates of the sky," were formerly the vigilant directors of the economy of earth, now shine dim and distant, and Uriel no more descends upon a sunbeam. But the real change has been in the progressive ascent of man's own faculties, and not in the Divine Nature; as the Stars are no more distant now than when they were supposed to rest on the shoulders of Atlas. And yet a little sense of disappointment and humiliation attended the first awakening of the soul, when reason, looking upward toward the Deity, was impressed with a dizzy sense of having fallen.

But hope revives in despondency; and every nation that ever advanced beyond the most elementary conceptions, felt the necessity of an attempt to fill the chasm, real or imaginary, separating man from God. To do this was the great task of poetry, philosophy, and religion. Hence the personifications of God's attributes, developments, and manifestations, as "Powers," "Intelligences," "Angels," "Emanations," through which and the oracular faculty in himself, man could place himself in communion with God.

The various ranks and orders of mythical beings imagined by Persians, Indians, Egyptians, or Etrurians, to preside over the various departments of nature, had each his share in a scheme to

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bring man into closer approximation to the Deity; they eventually gave way only before an analogous though less picturesque symbolism; and the Deities and Demons of Greece and Rome were perpetuated with only a change of names, when their offices were transferred to Saints and Martyrs. The attempts by which reason had sometimes endeavored to span the unknown by a bridge of metaphysics, such as the idealistic systems of Zoroaster, Pythagoras, or Plato, were only a more refined form of the poetical illusions which satisfied the vulgar; and man still looked back with longing to the lost golden age, when his ancestors communed face to face with the Gods; and hoped that, by propitiating Heaven, he might accelerate the renewal of it in the islands of the Far West, under the sceptre of Kronos, or in a centralization of political power at Jerusalem. His eager hope overcame even the terrors of the grave; for the Divine power was as infinite as human expectation, and the Egyptian, duly ensepulchred in the Libyan Catacombs, was supposed to be already on his way to the Fortunate Abodes under the guidance of Hermes, there to obtain a perfect association and reunion with his God.

Remembering what we have already said elsewhere in regard to the old ideas concerning the Deity, and repeating it as little as possible, let us once more put ourselves in communion with the Ancient poetic and philosophic mind, and endeavor to learn of it what it thought, and how it solved the great problems that have ever tortured the human intellect.

The division of the First and Supreme Cause into two parts, one Active and the other Passive, the Indivisible Atom and Patient

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when reason arrogantly had claim to certainty what she possessed the elements only of belief. The pretensions of reason laboured from the outset under a peculiar prejudice or disqualification. In the theory of the Fall the progress of knowledge, apparently accompanying the sense of degradation, had been assumed to be the cause of that which preceded or accompanied it, and thus by a natural association of ideas the very development of mental power seemed to be rebellion or enmity against God, synonymous with the frolicsome of iniquity. Hesitating and discredited, reason resigned the larger portion of her office to imagination; tradition usurped the place which should have been taken by philosophy; the fancies of poets became the dogmas or inveterate prejudices of mankind, and the majesty of God was again, though in a different fashion, lowered to meet the presumptuous claims of his creatures. The notion of a second golden age now arose to supply the deficiency of the first. The Deity who had once been recognized as personally present among men, had now indeed either altogether withdrawn, or greatly reduced the frequency of his personal appearances; but he retained the power of occasional interference, or had deputed his terrestrial superintendence and correspondence to a class of inferior emissaries, imagined to people the atmosphere, to exercise a censorship over crime, to answer the spell of the magician, or to prompt the voice of prophets. After passing through many varieties of superstition, man at length discovered an oracular faculty within himself. The gifted genius was the herald of divinity, and the sacred class deemed necessary to maintain a becoming communication with Heaven often usurped the temporal authority of the sovereigns of Asia and of Egypt. The Syrians periodically commissioned an ambassador to Zalmoxis, and ever since the death of that traditionary ascetic, who as possessing the secrets of heaven was not unreasonably

* Dig. l. vii. 119. M. Antonin. v. 19.
* Plin. Hist. Nat. 29 (319). C. de Div. l. 41. Numb. xx. 16.
* Herod. iv. 94.

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entreated to have been himself a god, there was always at the Gothic coast an officer under the title of "Θαύς" (Θαύς), who acted as priest, counsellor and adviser of the monarch. The practice of oriental kings who sat secluded while business was transacted through an interpreter such as the Abyssinian "Kai Hatast," or "Word of the King," mentioned by Bruce, naturally suggested a similar form of communication between the human race and the universal monarch. The various ranks of mythical beings imagined by Persians, Egyptians, or Etrurians to preside over the various departments of nature, had each his share in a scheme to bring man into closer approximation to the Deity; they eventually gave way only before an analogous though less picturesque symbolism, and the deities and demons of Greece and Rome were perpetuated under different names when their offices were transferred to saints and martyrs. The attempts by which reason had sometimes endeavored to span the unknown by a bridge of metaphysics, such as the idealistic systems of Zoroaster, Pythagoras, or Plato, were more refined but almost as unsubstantial as the poetical illusions which satisfied the vulgar; and amidst all the frolics of fancy and subtleties of speculation, man still looked back with longing to the lost golden age, and hoped that by propitiating heaven he might accelerate the renewal of it in the islands of the far west under the sceptre of Kronos, or in a centralization of political power at Jerusalem. His eager hope overcame even the terrors of the grave, for the divine power was as infinite as human expectation, and the Egyptian duly ensepulchred in the Libyan catacombs was supposed to be already on his way to the fortunate abodes under the guidance of Hermes, where he would obtain a perfect association and reunion with his God.

* Senec. vii. 228.

EARLIEST TYPES OF MEDIATION. 7

§ 2.

EARLIEST TYPES OF MEDIATION.

All religion may be viewed as a scheme for reconciling man with God, with nature, and with himself. Religion is essentially mediation; an attempt to restore the lost harmony in the chain of being; to repair the seeming breach between the particular and universal; and while knowledge is perpetually striving to fence off a portion of the infinite within limits, religion overlaps the boundary, widening the horizon of the

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