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IN

RELIGIOUS HISTORY.

HISTORY OF THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL AND RELIGIONS OF ANTIQUITY.

BY

ERNEST T. RENAN.

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

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THE six studies embraced in this volume have been selected with the object of setting forth, in a comparatively small compass, the Author's views as to the origin of all religion, and of tracing, in particular, the modern religious idea from its most remote ascertainable beginnings, in myth and legend, down to its later manifestations as embodied in the creeds, dogmas and beliefs of the sectaries of Judaism, Islamism and Christianity. In the opinion of the Author, the religious idea must originally have been a primitive intuition, not a revelation; on which account there was no need of supernatural beings or of miracles, beyond those that the untutored intelligence and unrestrained imagination of a primitive and simple people were capable of furnishing for themselves.

Lo! the poor Indian whose untutored mind
Sees God in clouds, or hears him in the wind.

The form of the religious idea is, again, a question of race and of climate. There are races monotheistic just as there are races polytheistic, and this difference arises from an original diversity in the mode of looking upon nature. In the Arabic or Semitic conception, nature is not seen; the desert is monotheistic, sublime in its immense uniformity, it reveals from the first moment the idea of the infinite, but not that sentiment of fertile activity which an incessantly creative nature has inspired in that other great primitive branch of the human family, viz., the Indo-European race. That is why Arabia has always been the bulwark of monotheism. Nature plays no part in the Semitic religions. The Semitic mind sees nothing in the development of things but the accomplishment of the will of a superior being. There is a God; that God has made the world this is the whole of their philosophy. On the other hand, the

first religion of the Indo-European race appears to have been purely physical; ardent impressions, such as those of the wind in the trees, of running waters, of the ocean, etc., which took a definite shape in the imagination of those profane peoples. But men of the Indo-European race did not arrive so quickly as the Semites in separating themselves from the world. For a long time they adored their own sensations, and, up to the point where he Semitic religions initiated them into a more elevated conception of the deity, their worship was only an echo of nature. The outcome of the partial blending of the religious ideas of these two races has been, broadly speaking, Judaism, Islamism and Christianity, the two last being offshoots of the first. The history of the divisions of Islamism into Sunnites and Chiites, which took place soon after the death of the prophet, is discussed in M. Renan's happiest manner in the study entitled "The Zeaziehs of Persia." The selections given from two or three of these sacred dramas, apart altogether from their religious intention, cannot fail to evoke, if it were for nothing but their novelty, a very considerable degree of intelligent appreciation.

WM. M. THOMSON.

CONTENTS.

RELIGIONS OF ANTIQUITY.

OUR age has given birth to criticism, and it is the especial privilege of the highest criticism (all dogmatism and polemics apart) to discover the true importance of the study of religions. Whatever value attaches to manhood is due to the fact that man, by the exercise of his moral and intellectual faculties, has been able to rise above the commonplaces of life, and to attain to a world of lofty intentions and of unselfish enjoyments. Religion constitutes the ideal side of human life, and this life may be summed up in a word: "Man lives not by bread alone." I am aware, of course, that there is another force which pretends to embrace within itself the spiritual life of humanity, but it would be out of place to speak ill of it here. Yet, this is not to deny philosophy; it is simply to assign it its true place, the only place in which it can be great, powerful and unassailable; we mean, philosophy is not suited to the masses. Sublime, if considered as the Upper Room of the sages whose nourishment and maintenance it has been, but when regarded as a factor in the history of the human race, philosophy is all but imperceptible. It is no difficult task to compute the number of souls it has ennobled, and a few pages would suffice in which to tell the history of the small aristocracy which has grouped itself under this title; while, for the rest, victims to the frenzy of their

dreams, terrors and enchantments, they have rushed pell-mell into the hazardous grooves of instinct and pleasure, seeking for the sources of action and belief only in the whirligigs of their brain and the excited action of their heart.

The religion of a people, seeing that it is the most complete expression of its individuality, is in one sense more instructive than its history. In truth, the history of a people does not entirely belong to the latter; it embraces a fatuitous or fatal portion which does not depend on the particular nation, but, oftentimes, on the contrary, rather on its natural development, while the religious legend is, in very truth, the individual and exclusive work of the genius of each race. Take the case of India as an example. India has not left us a line of history, properly so-called. Scholars sometimes regret this, and would gladly pay its weight in gold for a chronicle or some list of kings. But, in reality, we are better as we are. We have its poems, its mythology, its sacred books; we have its soul. In a history, we might have discovered a few dry facts recorded, whose true character might, with great pains, have been seized by the scholar. On the other hand, fable gives us, like the imprint on a seal, a faithful image of its modes of feeling and thought; its moral picture painted by its own hand. This, which the eighteenth century regarded as a mass of superstitions and puerilities, has thus become, in the eyes of the most complete philosophy of history, the most curious collection of documents as touching this part of humanity. Studies which, at one time, appeared to be the appanage of frivolous minds, have been elevated to the level of the highest speculations, while a book devoted to the interpretations of the fables, which Bayle considered as only good for the amusement of children, has taken its place amongst the most serious works of our century.

In order to appreciate the full importance of this book—we here speak of the enormous mythological encyclopædia which one of the most worthy representatives of French scholarship has grouped around a recently completed translation of "Symbolic Forms," by F. Creuzer—it is necessary to go back to the epoch when the laudable work was undertaken of naturalising amongst us a series of studies which, up till then, had been much esteemed by our neighbours, but wholly neglected by us. When the first volume of the *Religions of Antiquity* appeared in 1825, it was associated with that movement, prompted wholly by curiosity, which agitated men's minds; but it soon led them to seek in history, now better understood, the solution of the problems which engaged the most enlightened section of public opinion.

It is rare that such works are accomplished in the midst of the movement which has seen them come into existence; but if the later volumes of the *Religions of Antiquity* have not been welcomed by the public with so much ardour and hope as the first, they have proved at least that there is nothing changed in the zeal of the scholar who, during a quarter of a century, has been the interpreter of one of the most important branches of German learning, and with whom nobody will contest the title of being the renovator of mythological studies in France.

The translator of the "Symbolic Forms" describes these studies as being degraded among us to the lowest pitch of mediocrity. That was the time when M. Petit-Radel was discoursing gravely upon the adventures of the cow Io, and was arranging in a memoir a synoptic picture of the loves of Helen, suited to an age in sympathy with those of *that princess*. Germany, on the other hand, initiated in the knowledge of antiquity by the great generation of Wolfs and Heynes, besides reaching out by its genius to some of the religious intuitions of the early ages, was already

rich in excellent writings upon the ancient mythologies and the manner of interpreting them. But what was of the highest importance, was the clearing of the arrears of more than half a century, and of rendering accessible the treasures of sound learning that Germany had accumulated; France all the time still holding by the superficial criticism of the eighteenth century. The "Symbolic Forms" of M. Creuzer, by its imposing proportions, its European reputation, its lofty views, the high philosophy and science which the author has displayed, sprung into notoriety all at once. M. Guigniaut understood, nevertheless, that the translation of a single work, already surpassed on several points of detail by more recent works, would attain but imperfectly the end he had in view. He resolved, therefore, to group round Creuzer's book the results of contemporary or later works; in a word, to make the text of the "Symbolic Forms" the woof of a vast synthesis embracing all the mythological studies of Germany. The opinion of learned Europe has long since pronounced itself as to the value of this plan, and as to the manner in which it has been worked out. France has recognised in it the model to be followed in the difficult work of introducing among ourselves the fruits of German science. Germany, on its part, has given the French edition the highest approbation, inasmuch as it appears itself to have adopted, in almost all important points, the modifications introduced by the translator. M. Guigniaut's book, courageously brought to a termination amid circumstances so diverse, and sometimes so adverse, has become the indispensable manual, not only of the antiquary and philologist, but also of all those enquiring minds who believe that the history of religions is one of the most essential elements in the history of the human mind, that is to say, of true philosophy.

I.

RELIGIONS cling so closely to the deepest fibres of human conscience, that their scientific interpretation, at a distance of time, becomes almost impossible. The efforts of the most subtle criticism could not correct the false position in which we find ourselves face to face with these primitive works. Full of life, of sense, of truth for the people whom they have awakened by their inspiration, they are in our eyes but a dead letter, or sealed hieroglyphics; created by the simultaneous effort of all the faculties acting together in the most perfect harmony, they are for us nothing except an object of curious analysis. To construct the history of a religion, it is no longer necessary to believe in it, yet, it is necessary to have believed in it; people can only comprehend that worship which has stirred within them the first aspiration towards the ideal. Who can be just towards Catholicism if he has not been cradled in that admirable superstition, if in the accents of its hymns, the vaults of its temples, and the symbols of its worship, he does not again feel the first sensations of his religious life? The most essential condition, then, for thoroughly appreciating the religions of antiquity fails us for ever; for it is necessary to have lived in the bosom of these religions, or at least to have felt spring up within one's self, the religious sentiment with a force, compared to which the most privileged historical genius is as nothing. Whatever effort we may make, we shall never sufficiently be able to renounce all our modern ideas to the extent as not to find it absurd, and the collection of legends which are seriously presented to us as the belief of Greece and of Rome unworthy of a serious man's attention. It is to persons little versed in the historical sciences a perpetual source of astonishment to see nations who are described as the highest representatives of human

genius, adoring drunken and adulterous gods, and including among their dogmas extravagant narratives of scandalous adventures. The simplest man believes himself to be acting rightly when he shrugs his shoulders at such prodigious and blind delusion. It is necessary to set out with this principle, that the human intellect is never willingly absurd, and that whenever the spontaneous operations of conscience seem to us as destitute of reason, it is because we do not understand them. When a race has risen to such a state of intelligence as to produce works like those that Greece has left us, to realise a political system which led Rome to universal dominion, would it not be very strange that it should remain in other points on the same level as nations given up to a grosser fetishism? Is it not probable that if we were really to place ourselves at the same point of view as the ancients, false extravagance would disappear, and that we should find that the legends, like all the products of human nature, have some reason in them? Good sense is all of a piece, and it would be inexplicable if nations who, in civil and political life, in art, poetry, and philosophy, have filled up the measure of attainment of which man is capable, should not have surpassed in religion those forms of worship, the absurdity of which, in our days, revolts the reason of a child.

This misapprehension, besides, is of very old date; and it is not only in modern times that paganism has begun to be the object of perpetual misconception. It is evident that antiquity itself had ceased to understand its own religion, and that old myths, hatched in the primitive imagination, very soon lost all meaning. The idea of making a chronological collection of those venerable fables, a sort of amusing and consistent history, does not date from Boccaccio or Demoustier; Ovid has realised it in a book a little less naughty than the *Letters to Emilia*. I do not

wish to ignore the fact that there is a charm in that endless garland of spiritual narratives and piquant metamorphoses; but what sacrilege, from a religious point of view, to sport thus with symbols consecrated by age, and in which men had enshrined their first views concerning the divine world! The design of Mascarille, to embody all Roman history in madrigals, was more rational than the attempt to travesty ancient theological doctrines in equivocal tales, which resemble the primitive myths as much as old paper flowers, yellow and smoked, resemble the flowers of the field.

Now, this was the manner of treating the religions of antiquity which had been adopted by all myth-writers, almost up to our own days. *Mythology* (that was the word by which they designated that compilation of grotesque and almost always indecent narratives) became a series of biographies in which, under consecrated rubrics, they narrated the unedifying life of Mercury, the free and easy adventures of Venus, and the domestic quarrels of Jupiter and Juno. So far from the discredit with which our age has regarded the old acceptance of these fables being regrettable, it is, if we must have something to astonish us, that so many fastidious minds of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries did not discover their insipidity.

When science began to occupy itself seriously with the interpretation of ancient symbols, its efforts, in France, at least, were scarcely more happy. France is not the country for mythological studies: the French mind lacks that flexibility, that facility of reproducing in itself the intuitions of former ages, both of which are so essential to the correct understanding of religions. The learned men of the old school—Jean Leclerc, Banier, Larcher, Clavier, Petit-Radel—could not rise above a brutal *Evhemerism*, or a system of allegorical explanations not less superficial: happy when, resisting the prejudices which

seduced Bochart, Huet, Bossuet, and all the theological school, they found in Greek mythology only an altered form of the traditions of the Bible.[1] Those critics who were inspired by the philosophy of the eighteenth century—Boulanger, Bailly, Dupuis—only gave up that method in order to make a trial of a symbolism less satisfactory still. Sainte-Croix brought to bear on the study of mysteries a more solid erudition, though a penetration as mediocre as that of his predecessors. It was left to Emeric David to display, in his "JUPITER," the crowning flower of French symbolism. His method is very simple: it is the most exclusive *allegorism*. "Mythology is a collection of enigmas designed to make known the nature of the gods and the dogmas of religion to those who are able to penetrate the secret." The verb, to divine, means religious dogma. Thus, when for the name of Apollo, they substitute the Sun, when for Amphitrite they use *The Sea*, all is said; for the verb to divine is always the same. In attempting afterwards to separate the religious dogmas hidden under the enigma, Emeric David found seven, which are a summary of the Greek theology. Theology is thus no more than a catechism in the form of a *rebus*: the fables have only been *invented* to disguise dogmas; and each has a very clear and consistent sense. How does that enigmatic form serve to make dogma more intelligible? How could the human intellect, in possession of a clear idea, hit upon the fancy of explaining it by an idea more obscure still? How has an entire race allowed itself to be carried away by that love of making riddles for their own sake? These questions it was unnecessary for Emeric David to ask. Had not Locke taught that the human mind acts in a simple or complex manner, that for the association of two ideas it is necessary, first, that each of

[1] It is known that Evhemerus only looked upon the *gods* as men *deified*.

these two ideas should have been formed separately? To pretend that in the human mind the notion of the thing signified did not precede that of the sign—that man spontaneously creates the symbol before knowing precisely what it represents—would be like speaking an unintelligible language at a time when people were convinced that the human mind had always acted in accordance with the laws laid down by the Abbé de Condillac.

Whilst France was seeking to interpret the religions of antiquity by means of its own superficial philosophy, Germany was penetrating it more by the analogy of its religious genius, than by the solidity of its erudition. Gœthe placed the centre of his poetic life in Olympus. Lessing and Winckelmann, even the Hebraist Herder, discovered in the ancient worship the religion of beauty. Gœrres discovered there, too, the foundations of his mysticism; Schelling did not believe he was making a diversion in his transcendental philosophical writings when he discoursed (with little felicity, nevertheless) upon the gods of Samothracia. A host of philologists and antiquaries were seeking to discover again, in the written and figured monuments of antiquity, the meaning of the grand enigma bequeathed to science by the primitive world. As a *résumé* of that mass of facts and systems, there appeared (from 1810 to 1812) the work in which was to concentrate the whole of the first movement as touching mythological studies—we mean, the "Symbolic Forms" of Dr. Frederic Creuzer. It was like a revelation, a grand lesson, to see, for the first time, united in a scientific *pantheon*, all the gods of humanity—Indian, Egyptian, Persian, Phœnician, Etruscan, Greek, Roman. The sustained elevation, the religious and profound tone, the perception of the higher destinies of humanity, which breathe throughout this book, announced that a great revolution had been accomplished,

and that to an irreligious age—because it was exclusively analytic—there was about to succeed a better school, reconciled by synthesis, with human nature in its entirety. The Neo-platonist spirit of Plotinus, of Porphyry and of Proclus seemed to revive in that grand and philosophic manner of explaining the ancient symbols, while the shade of Julian might start at hearing a doctor in Christian theology proclaim that *paganism* could supply the most profound needs of the mind, and to grant an amnesty to those intelligences which, at the last hour, sought to revive in their bosoms those deities which had almost fled from them.[1]

It is especially in the historical sciences that it can be said with truth that the good qualities in their style are also their defects, and that which constitutes the force and truth of a system is also that which constitutes its *error* and weakness. That mystical enthusiasm—the first outburst of the *philosophy of nature* then dawning in Germany—that sympathetic style which was tracing out a real progress in theological studies, if it be compared with the cold, unintelligible dissertations of the French School, was destined to have its own excesses, and in some sort its own fit of intoxication. M. Creuzer has all the defects of his masters of Alexandria: symbolic exaggeration, a too pronounced tendency to seek everywhere for the mysterious, sometimes for the most intemperate syncretism. Iamblicus alongside of Hesiod, Nonnus alongside of Homer, figure on the same page for the interpretation of the same myth. The Alexandrians are in his eyes the best exegetes, the true restorers of *paganism*, who have often, by intuition, brought back philosophy to the primitive meaning of its dogmas; the Orphics themselves, though suspected of charlatanism, had preserved the spirit of the primitive religion. M. Creuzer seems to have ignored

[1] See *Religions of Antiquity*, Book I. p. 3, and Book III. p. 830.

this epoch altogether. He sought too deep for his solutions, because he himself dwelt too high, because he had not the perception of that life,—simple, naive, childlike, wholly sensual, yet wholly divine—which was led by the primitive Indo-hellenic races. It required a soul steeped in poetry to comprehend the ravishing delight which the man of those races at once experienced in the face of nature and of himself. Habituated to search in everything for the reasonable, we have insisted on finding profound combinations where there was nothing but instinct and fancy; serious and positive, we exhaust our philosophy in following after the woof of the dreams of an infant.

Greek mythology, or, in a more general sense, the mythology of the Indo-European races, looked at in its first flight, is only the reflection of young and delicate organs, without anything dogmatic, without anything theological, without anything fixed. As well might we try to explain the sound of bells or shapes in the clouds as to find out a precise sense in the dreams of a golden age. Primeval man saw nature with the eyes of a child; but the child casts over everything whatever of the marvellous he finds in himself. That charming, semi-intoxication of life which makes him giddy, enables him to see the world through a pleasant-coloured atmosphere; casting upon everything a joyous and inquiring regard, he smiles on everything, and everything smiles on him. Disabused by experience, we no longer pay any attention to the very extraordinary, the infinite combinations of things; but the child does not know what is about to arise from the cast of the dice which turns up; he believes more in the possible, because he knows less of the real. Hence his joys and his terrors: he makes for himself a fantastical world which enchants and affrights him in turn. He affirms the reality of his dreams; he has not that harshness of analysis which, at the age of reflection, places us as cold observers

face to face with reality. Such was primitive man. Identified so closely with nature, he converses with it, it speaks to him and he listens to its voice; that great mother to whom he still clings by his life-blood, appears to him as living and animated. From a survey of the phenomena of the physical world, he tests his different impressions which, on receiving reality from his imagination, become his gods. He adored his sensations, or rather the vague and unknown object of his sensations; for as yet, not separating the object from the subject, the world was himself, and he himself was the world.

Looking at the sea, for example, with its lines of beauty, with its colours, dazzling and gloomy by turns, the sentiments of vagueness, of sorrowfulness, of infinity, of terror, and of beauty, which arose in his soul, revealed to him an entire cycle of melancholy gods, capricious, multiform, whose personality could not be grasped. Quite different were the impressions and divinities of mountains, quite different those of the earth, quite different those of fire and volcanoes, quite different those of the atmosphere and of the varied phenomena. The whole of nature was thus reflected in the conscience of primitive man as divinities, still unnamed.

"It appears," says M. Creuzer, "that they had intercourse not with men like us, but with essential spirits, endowed with a marvellous insight even into the nature of things, with a power of feeling all, and of comprehending all in some magnetic way." Thence we have those mysterious races of the Telchines of Rhodes, the Curetes of Crete, the Dactyles of Phrygia, the Carcines and Sintiens of Lemnos, the Cabires of Samothracia, races ecstatic and magical, like the *Trolls* of Scandinavia, in direct relationship with the forces of nature. All that impressed men, all that excited in his soul the impression of the divine, was god or the element of a god: a great river, a great mountain, a

star remarkable for its brightness or the peculiarities of its course, a thousand objects of which the symbolic sense has vanished so far as we are concerned. Examine the places that antiquity considered as sacred, and it will be impossible for you to discover the cause which made it possible to suppose that Divinity was more present there than elsewhere. These places, apart from the reminiscences which are associated with them, tell us very little of anything. The Capitol, considered simply as a hill, has little distinctiveness. Lake Avernus, which struck in such a lively way the imagination of the ancients, appears to us only as an object in a small graceful landscape.

One might as well try to retrace the track of a bird in the air as to pretend to seize the delicious woofs of these first religious intuitions, and to describe the capricious tracks of imagination in those delicate creations of the mind to which men and nature were furnishing their share, with their most serious judgment. An historic fact, a moral idea, a sketch of phenomena, atmospheric, geological, astronomical, a living sensation, a fear, is expressed by a myth. Language itself, as M. Creuzer says, is a fruitful mother of gods and heroes. The mark which appears to be characteristic of intelligence under its most threadbare form, the play of words—the pun—was one of the most familiar processes of the primitive theology. Several important myths of antiquity have no other foundation than fictitious etymologies, than alliterations, such as those with which the imagination of a child amuses itself. Witness the ivory shoulder of Pelops, Drepanus and the scythe of Ceres, Tarsus and the winged sandals of Perseus. At other times, these myths derived their origin from a false meaning. It is thus that the Nile vase,—the *Canopus*, surmounted with a human head, whose image struck the imagination of the first Greeks who travelled in Egypt,—by a long series of absurd stories,—became a Greek hero who assisted at the

siege of Troy. The hero Cantharus in the same way sprung from a Cantharus, or drinking-glass, and was at one and the same time the vase and the companion of Bacchus. Often at last the union of ideas, almost unintelligible, beautifully-proportioned lines, such as those which determine the contours of arabesque, presided at the formation of these strange fables. Why are Neptune and the horse, Venus and the sea, always associated? Perhaps it is not necessary to seek for a better reason than the infinite grace of the expanse of water, its undulations and contours, and the harmonious manner in which its flexible curves blend with the beautiful ideal of animated nature.

Impossible, it will be seen, is it to establish any classification whatever between these gods—come from the four winds of heaven. Indefiniteness of meaning under the most complete determination of form; such is the essential characteristic of an art like the Greek mythology. Mythology is a second language, born, like the first, of the echo of nature in the conscience, just as inexplicable as the first by analysis, but the mystery of which reveals itself to those who know how to comprehend the hidden forces of its spontaneity, the secret relationship between nature and the soul, a perpetual system of hieroglyphics on which is founded the expression of human ideas. Every god thus appears to us as a cycle accomplished, a region of ideas, a keynote of the harmony of things. It is not enough to say with the old allegorical school: *Minerva is prudence, and Venus is beauty.* Minerva and Venus represent feminine nature, looked at from two points of view: the one spiritualistic and sacred, the other æsthetic and voluptuous. If Mercury was only the god of thieves and Bacchus the god of wine, as children are taught, these would be fictions of a very insipid kind, such poor figures of rhetoric that it would be necessary to give them up for the epic of Boileau; but antiquity never adores gods so grossly puerile. Mercury is

nature viewed in its tastes and its industry, the youth, such as he was made in the school, noble-looking for his vigour and agility. On the contrary, all the ideas of youth, of pleasure, of voluptuousness, of adventures, of easy conquests, of terrible passions, group themselves around Bacchus. There is the brilliant side of life, there is the child nursed by the nymphs, always young, beautiful, fortunate, surrounded with caresses and kisses. His feeble languor, his less pure appearances, his stoutness, his feminine character, degenerate often with a kind of hermaphroditism, and disclose a less noble origin. Compared to the Greek god *par excellence*, Apollo, he is still a stranger who, in spite of a long sojourn in Greece, has not yet lost his Asiatic character; he is clothed with long Lydian robes of fox-skin, for he fears to go naked; his forehead is girt with an Oriental garland, for his hair does not satisfy him for a crown.

One of these myths which seems to me the best adapted to make us comprehend this extreme complication, its fleeting aspects, its innumerable contradictions of the fables of antiquity, is that of Glaucus[1]—although a humble myth, a myth regarding poor people, but having for that very reason better preserved its primitive and popular character. Those who have passed their childhood at the seaside know how many profound and prophetic associations of ideas are formed in presence of the animated spectacle which the seashore presents. Glaucus is the personification and epitome of these beliefs and impressions, a god created by sailors, in whom was summed up all the poetry of marine life, as it appeared to poor people. Weighed down by old age, a prey to despair, he threw himself into the sea and became a prophet; a prophet

[1] I the more willingly take this myth as an example, because it has been very well discussed by one of the collaborateurs of M. Guigniaut, M. Ernest Vinet in his *Annals of the Archæological Institute of Rome*, Book XV.

of misfortune, a sorrowful old man, whom people sometimes encountered, his body always wasted by the action of the waters, covered with shell-fish and marine plants. According to others, he threw himself into the waves because he could not prove to anyone his immortality. Since that time, he returns every year to visit the coasts and islands of Greece. When evening was announced by its breezes, Glaucus (that is to say, a wave of glauccous colour) raised itself to pronounce noisy oracles. Fishermen hid themselves at the bottom of their boats, and sought by fasts, and prayers, and incense, to avert the evils which these portended. Glaucus, in the meantime, seated on a rock, in Æolic language, prophesied evil against their fields and their flocks, and made lamentations about himself, because he had attained immortality. Thus is related his amours, his gloomy amours, which come to a close like a bad dream. He loved a beautiful nymph of the sea, called Scylla: one day, hoping to be near her, he brought some shell-fish and young halcyons without wings, to amuse her. She saw his tears and had pity on him, but Circe, out of jealousy, threw magic herbs into the well in which Scylla used to bathe, so that Scylla was changed into a monster, surrounded by barking dogs—the personification of that horror of nature which stirred up the storms and dangers of the Sicilian seas. From that moment, poor Glaucus became uncouth, wicked, a murmurer, and malevolent. He may be seen on his monuments, with his beard covered with seaweed, a fixed look and contracted eyebrows. His admirers made themselves merry at his expense; one did up his hair and another blew in his ear. Sometimes he was *Glaucé*, that is, a shade between the green and the blue which the sea assumes over its deep beds of white sand; the colour of the sea thus becomes a woman, just as the curling summit of the waves becomes the grey hair of the Grées (old wives) who were the terror of sailors.

Sometimes he was a shark who attracted and ensnared men by his allurements; at other times, a hawk who, in its ærial flights, pounced on its prey just like an insatiable syren, keeping hold of a young man by main force. Thus mingle together the conceptions of seafaring people; join the scattered threads of the dream of a sailor, and you have before you the myth of Glaucus; melancholy absence of mind, painful and distorted dreams, a lively sensation of all the phenomena to which the waves give birth, a perpetual restlessness, danger and enticements everywhere, the future uncertain, and an overpowering impression of some fatality. Glaucus is at one and the same time the colour and the roar of the sea, the foaming wave, the reflection of the sky on the waves, the evening wind which predicts to-morrow's storm, the motions of the river, the stunted form of the man of the sea, impotent desires, sad reminiscences of his solitary life, doubt, wrangling, despair, the long tiresomeness of a certainty wearying itself out against sophistic reasoning, and a miserable immortality which he can neither assure himself of possessing, nor even deliver himself from—a painful enigma, the echo of that melancholy sentiment which speaks to man of his unknown origin and of his divine destiny, a truth which, by reason of his misfortunes, he is unable to prove, for it surpasses the understanding, and man can neither prove it nor repress it.

One can see how these delicate perceptions—so difficult to grasp—those fragments of fugitive impressions still are, at a more advanced age of reflection, unintelligible. Often the ancients experienced, in spite of their mythology, the same perplexity which we ourselves experience, We like to discover reality in vague ideas—to give reality to dreams. Now, just such was the indefinite character of the ancient fables, which every one could convince himself of who chose to take the trouble. Some adopted the grossly impious

system of Evhemerus, who explained all those marvellous traditions by historic facts. Others, permeated by a more elevated philosophy, tried to find in the myths a symbolic interpretation of that philosophy. The gods of an artless antiquity, participating in the desires and pleasures of men, ate and drank. That means, says Proclus, that, by blending the finite and the infinite, they were for ever creating: ambrosia, their solid food, representing the finite; nectar, their liquid sustenance, representing the infinite. Uranus, Saturn and Jupiter are, according to Plotinus, the three principles of the intellectual world, *unity*, *intelligence* and *soul*. Jupiter begetting Venus, is the universal soul reproducing itself all around. Saturn devouring his children, is the intellect whose law is unceasingly striving to re-enter itself. Everything was thus allegorical and metaphorical. Flowers brought forth to the rising sun, the charming puerilities of the opening conscience became in the hands of a pedantic theology cold enigmas without gracefulness. If there is one myth which has preserved, in the most transparent way, independently of its anthropomorphic envelope, a trace of the primitive worship of nature, it is doubtless that of the nymphs. It is hardly necessary to change their names and their attributes in order to discover the springs and running waters in which these divinities, ever young, lively, delicate, skipping, laughing, sometimes visible, sometimes invisible; bounding out from the midst of rocks, singing and dancing like children, whose voice is sweet and mysterious, who never sleep, who spin wool tinged with the green of the sea, or weave purple stuffs among the rocks—compassionate goddesses, who heal diseases, and occasionally seduce and kill. It is therefore easy to see whence Porphyry, in his *Cave of Nymphs*, evolved a whole philosophy. The *nymphs* are the souls; their *veils* the bodies; their *cave* the world. The *interior* of the cave repre-

sents the tangible side, dark; the *exterior*, the intelligible side, luminous, etc.

The essential defect of M. Creuzer's system is, that he has looked too closely at paganism from its mystical and philosophical side. It is just as if one should attempt to reconstruct the theory of primitive Christianity from the works of the neo-Catholic. The real significance of the myth belonged to those ages when man believed that he was living in a divine world, without having any well-ascertained idea of the laws of nature. Now, for a long time before the close of paganism, that primitive simplicity had disappeared. The supernatural was nothing more than miracle—that is, an interruption brought about by the Deity in an established order of things, a conception radically different from that of primitive man, to whose mind there was no natural order, but a continuous display of living and free forces. In that ancient epoch there was nothing which could be called dogma, positive religion, or a sacred book. The child does not argue, he has no need of explanation, for he presents no problem to himself; to him everything is clear. The halo with which the world dazzles his eyes, the deified life, the poetic cry of his soul; these are his cult, a heavenly worship, including an act of adoration without acknowledgment, and free of all reflective subtlety.

It is, then, the gravest mistake to suppose that, in a remote age, humanity created symbols in which to embody dogmas, and with any distinct appreciation of dogma and symbol. All this simultaneously springs into life in an indivisible moment, like thought and speech, idea and its expression. Myth does not include two elements—a wrapper and a thing wrapped up—it is indivisible. This question:—Did primitive man comprehend or not the meaning of the myths he created? is put out of court, for, in myths, the

intention was not distinct from the thing itself. Men discerned the myth, without seeing anything behind it, as a simple thing and not two things. The abstract language which we are forced to employ to explain the old legends must not deceive us. Our analytical habit obliges us to separate the sign from the thing signified; but to spontaneous man, moral and religious thought present themselves bound up in myth, as it appears in nature. The primitive epoch was neither grossly fetish, for everything had its own signification; nor spiritually refined, for it conceived of nothing in an abstract manner, apart from its sensible wrapping; it was an age of confused unity in which man saw the one in the other, and explained the two worlds which lay before him by each other.

That there have been in antiquity, allegories properly so called, personifications of moral beings, such as Hygeia, Victory, Patrician modesty, the Fortune of woman, Sleep, etc.; that there have been myths invented, or at least developed by reflection, such as those of Psyche, is absolutely undeniable. But a profound line of demarcation exists between these clear, simple, and spiritual allegories, and the old riddles—true works of the Sphinx, in which idea and symbol are quite inseparable. M. Creuzer has readily seen that the meaning of the old symbols was lost at a remote period, that Homer is a very bad theologian, that his gods are nothing more than poetical personages on a level with man, leading a noble and joyous life, divided between pleasure and action, like the chiefs of the Hellenic tribes; that the most respectable myths became in their hands piquant stories, pretty themes for narratives painted in perfectly human colours. Was he nevertheless right in concluding that before the age of the epopée there had been a great theological period, during which Greece must have become a sacerdotal country with a pro-

found religion, venerated symbols, hierarchical institutions, and with a basis of monotheism derived from the last? We think not. Let men say as they will that the Hellenic period was a religious decline —a triumph of the hero and the poet over the priest —of a popular religion, concrete, facile, but often devoid of meaning; in a word, "*laic*," as regards the priestly mysteries; yet it does not follow that the Pelasgi had a fixed theology, a learned symbolism, and an organised priesthood. "People always start," says Ottfried Müller, "from this supposition, that a poet, a most ancient sage, should have with premeditation wrapped up certain ideas in symbols and allegorical myths, which later on would be taken for real facts, and developed under a historical form. But the age with which he is concerned, representing in itself all the relations of the deity, of nature and man, as so many separate persons, so many significant acts —what we call mistake or misapprehension, exists in principle in the heart of the myth itself, and does not come from the outside."

It would be an exaggeration, as contrary to the truth of history, as to correct ideas of human nature, to pretend that the Hellenic religion was completely unprovided with a sacredotal and dogmatic organisation. The oracles, that of Delphi in particular, were looked upon as a permanent revelation and were respected even by the political party which used them. What is the *Theogony* of Hesiod, if it be not a first rudiment of national theology, an attempt to organise the city and history of their gods as the tribes and cities of Greece tended of their own accord to organise themselves into a national body? The name of Orpheus serves, there can be no doubt, to cover an attempt of the same kind. Later on, the mysteries concentrated in their bosom the elements of the most developed religious life. It must, however, be confessed, that the destiny of Greece did not call it to

become a priestly country. All the great revolutions of Greece, the successive conquests of the Hellenes, the Heraclides, and the Dorians are so many triumphs of the laic mind, so many revolts of popular energy, against an imposed sacerdotal form. The priest, shut up within the temple, is henceforth of small importance; the poet has no longer anything in common with him. In Homer, the poet appears to us always to be exalted at the expense of the sacrificers and the augurs. That is the charm of the Homeric world; it is the awakening of profane life, liberty which expands under the mid-day sun, humanity going forth from *hypogées*, and shaking off its sleep to leap into the field of warlike activity, and to play its part in the thousand adventures of heroic life. The same revolution has taken place in art. Hieratic art, limited in its types, sacrificing the forms to the meaning, beauty to the mystical, gives place to a more disinterested art, whose object is to draw forth the sentiment of beauty and not that of holiness. India believed it could not do better in exalting its gods than to heap signs upon signs, symbols upon symbols; Greece, better inspired, fashioned them after its own image, as Helen, in order to honour the Minerva of Lindos, offered him a piece of yellow amber, modelled to represent her bosom.

No doubt symbolism lost something by this transformation. The chaste Venus of the primitive ages had a character more sacred than the deified courtesan, who sat enthroned over the altars, and Praxiteles shows in the graceful folds of her robe that air of reserve, which still revealed the goddess. Thus, it may be conceived that, through a sentiment very common at the epochs of religious decadence, the devotees of the later times of paganism were struck by a retrospective admiration for the rigid forms of the priestly art. Thus, in our days, the homelier art of the middle ages appeared to many the true form of religious art. No one could deny that

the Christian mystery, in so far as it was a mystery, was not better comprehended by Giotto and Perugino than by Leonardo da Vinci and Titian. M. Creuzer, however, exaggerates an idea, correct in some points of view, when he sees a decadence, a sacrilegious false sense, in that transformation by which the deities were despoiled of their superior physical attributes in order to make of them simply human personages. It would be easy to show that, even from the point of view of a religious life, there was in that a true progress. Phidias was not impious, as they would have us believe, because he sought for, in his own thoughts and in tradition, the type of Jupiter. Respectable witnesses, on the contrary, prove to us that that modification of art corresponds to a religious revival, and contributes to rekindle piety in the soul. They looked upon those as unfortunate who had not beheld the image of Olympian Jove, and they believed there was something wanting in their initiation into religion, because they had not contemplated the highest realisation of the ideal. Is not the human form more expressive than its symbols? Shall it be said that the *canopuses*, the *god-vases*, and the enamelled *dwarfs* of the Cabiric age were more significant than the gods evolved from the chisel of Praxiteles and Phidias? It is necessary to remember besides that Greece grasped among human forms and simple ideas a thousand analogies which escape us, and which, the sense of actual nature making them appear defective to us, were all transfigured in their eyes into living beings. The country which raised Philip of Crotona to the ranks of the demi-gods, because he was the finest looking of the Hellenes of his time, is the same, which, to express the idea of country fields, makes a representation of a faun; which, to signify a fountain, a shady place, moist and verdant, figures the head of a woman with fish about her hair, and which does not find a better epithet to give to a river than

that of χαλλιπάρθενος (to the beautiful virgins) in consequence of the whiteness of its waves, which, to their imagination, resolved themselves into young girls.

II.

THE principal error of M. Creuzer appears in the very title of his book. It is too *symbolic*. Always preoccupied with theology and sacerdotal institutions, unmindful of the natural and common side of antiquity, he seeks for abstract ideas and dogmas in frivolous creations, in which there is often nothing but the happy follies of childhood. Persuaded that the Greek religion ought to have, like others, a priestly age, and not finding that character in the spontaneous works of Greek genius, he falls back on the colonies and influences which came from the East. There are two reactions in the progress of mythological studies in Germany, which correspond to that twofold exaggeration; to the excess of symbolism there is opposed a school entirely negative and anti-symbolic, represented by Voss, G. Hermann and Löbeck; to the abuse of oriental influences there is opposed the purely Hellenic school of M. M. Ottfried Müller, Welcker and others.

J. H. Voss was without doubt the most fierce adversary who at first attacked the "Symbolic Forms." Protestant zeal and partisanship declared that it was rationalistic; it believed that it saw in the work of Dr Creuzer a dangerous tendency towards those mystical doctrines which were then springing up in Germany. That book which very timorous consciences in France looked upon as an intolerable piece of temerity, was considered in Germany in 1820 as a Catholic manifesto and apology for the priesthood and for a theocracy. Some conversions that made some little noise, in particular that of

Count Frederick de Stolberg, tend to increase Voss's alarms regarding the league which he supposed was being formed between the symbolic system and Roman proselytism. He believed that he saw in M. Creuzer a disguised agent of the Jesuits, and undertook a criticism of his book in seven consecutive numbers of the *Literary Gazette of Jena* (May 1821). The bitter tone of that *critique* raised the indignation of M. Creuzer's friends. The author of the "Symbolic Forms" replied to the diatribes of Voss in a little paper in which he indignantly refused to enter into discussion with an adversary incapable of conceiving the spirit of his theories, for the true understanding of which sentiment and poetic taste were as necessary as erudition and analysis. Voss returned to the charge, and published in 1824, at Stuttgart, his *Anti-symbolism*, a learned pamphlet full of the most wretched personalities. On all sides there was an outcry against such violent polemics; M. Creuzer thought he had better keep silence.

The "Symbolic Forms" found in M. Löbeck an adversary more measured in his language, but none the less exclusive.

His "Aglaophamus" (1829) is a complete negation of the system of M. Creuzer. Never did criticism run so rapidly from one pole to another; never did opposite qualities and defects establish between two men the most absolute discord. Misled by the Neoplatonic exegesis, M. Creuzer had supposed the highest antiquity much more mysterious than it really was; with a positive, analytical mind, convinced that the dread of mysticism was the beginning of wisdom, M. Löbeck seems to have taken pleasure in finding this to be very insignificant. Everywhere where M. Creuzer thought he found an honest and moral conception, holy and respectable rights, M. Löbeck sees nothing but obscene buffooneries and childishness. The ancient Pelasgian religion, in which M. Creuzer

believes he has discovered an emanation from Eastern symbolism, is, in the eyes of M. Löbeck, nothing but a foolish and grotesque fetishism; these mysteries, relics, which, according to M. Creuzer, belong to a pure and primitive worship, are nothing to M. Löbeck but jugglers' tricks, analogous to those of masonic lodges. Full of a holy indignation against what Voss called *allegorical filth* and the *falsehoods of Plato*, he haughtily repelled every interpretation of a religious nature. M. Creuzer, carried away by his lively imagination, always passed the bounds of legitimate knowledge. M. Löbeck is never more happy than when he can deny the theories of his predecessor, and can demonstrate that they have proved too much. There is no mythology which has equalled this in criticisms of original texts, not by any means to bring light out of it, but to make one set of ideas to rub against others, and to show that nothing remains but darkness. The conclusion of his book is that there is really nothing known about ancient religions, and that not even anything remains to make a conjecture about them. His attacks, besides, are not confined to the religions of antiquity. It was not only Eleusis and Samothracia that M. Löbeck denounced as irreverent. Every form of religion involving a hierarchy and mysteries, everything which nearly or distantly resembled Catholicism, was his antipathy. Pitiless in regard to popular superstitions, he was still more so in regard to those interpreters who tried to find in them an elevated idea. According to him, religion and philosophy had nothing in common; the Neo-platonists were simply forgers, who had managed to destroy the very physiognomy of the ancient religion, without adding anything more agreeable to it. What was the good of being only half absurd? What was the good of sweating blood and water to discover a meaning where there was none?

If M. Löbeck possessed, in an eminent degree, the faculties of a critic, it must be recognised that he failed in the power of interpreting mythology, and the doctrines of religion. We might truly say, as we read him, that humanity has invented religions, just as it has invented charades and riddles to amuse itself. M. Löbeck thinks that he triumphs by demonstrating that the ancient religion was nothing but a tissue of anachronisms and contradictions, in which one could not find two myths which are in agreement as to their dates, places and genealogies; but what does he really prove by that? One thing only, and that is, that mythology ought not to be treated like a reality, that contradiction is of its essence. Now, it is precisely on this account that criticism is to be blamed, when it demands from history what is not historical, and from reason what is not suggested as reasonable.

Certainly, it is well that there are some minds of the stamp of M. Löbeck; but what is more important to uphold is, that such a method cannot satisfy either philosophy or criticism. Men prove nothing by attacking a religion in a positive spirit, for religion is of another order. Religious sentiment carries within itself its own certainty, which reason can neither strengthen nor weaken. It is superfluous to reproach religions with the absurdities which they may present to the common sense point of view. That would be to argue with love, and to prove to passion that it is quite unreasonable. If the drama of Eleusis were acted before us, it would probably have the effect of a miserable parade. And wherefore should you doubt the truthfulness of the thousand witnesses who attest the comforting effects and the moral efficacy of those sacred ceremonies? Whether Pindar speaks seriously or not, when he says of the mysteries of Ceres: "Happy those who, having seen this spectacle, descend into the depths of the earth;

they know the end of life and its divine origin." And does Andocides jest in the face of the Athenians when, exhorting them to gravity and justice, he says to them: "Have you contemplated the sacred rites of the goddesses, so that you will punish impiety, and that you will know those who defend themselves against injustice?" The sincere Protestant only experiences in view of Catholic ceremonies a feeling of indifference or repulsion; and that although these rites are full of charm for those who have been accustomed to them from their infancy. That is why every slight and scornful expression is misplaced when it appertains to the practices of a religion. Nothing signifies anything by itself, and man does not find in the objects of his worship what he imparts into them. The altar upon which the patriarchs sacrificed to Jehovah, was materially nothing but a pile of stones, and yet, looked at in its religious signification, as a symbol of the abstract and formless god of the Semitic race, that pile of stones was as valuable as a Grecian Temple. One must not ask reason from a religious sentiment. The spirit bloweth where it listeth. If it please one to attach the ideal to this or to that, what have you to say?

Whilst the sceptical professor of Koenigsberg displays all the resourses of his erudition and critical ability to despoil the gods of their halo of glory, and to undervalue the secret of their mysteries, mythological science aspires more and more to establish itself upon the disinterested basis of history, at an equal distance from the slender mysteries of M. Creuzer and the anti-religious mysteries of M. Löbeck. Buttmann, Voelcker, Schwenck, by means of philology and the study of texts; Welcker, Gerhard, Panofka, by archæology and the study of manuscripts, tried to grasp, amidst their various occupations, the exact character of truth. All, or almost all, agree in recognising, in opposition to M. Creuzer,

the originality of the Greek mythology. All are agreed to reject as a blasphemy the proposition that Greece had ever been a province of Asia, that the Greek genius, so free, so bold, so limpid, owed anything to the obscure genius of the East.[1] Without doubt, the primitive populations of Greece and of Italy, like all the branches of the Indo-European family, preserved, in their religious ideas, as well as in their language, characteristics common to the race to which they belong, and that primitive relationship is again recognised in the striking similes they use; but that is not the question; for these very principles, which every one of that great race carries along with him, as provisions for his life journey, is equally found among the Germans, the Celts, the Slavs, who never dream of placing themselves under the guardianship of the East. What is of importance to maintain is the independence of the development of the Hellenic spirit in its essential parts; in that, except to the primary spark, and some secondary results therefrom, Greece owed nothing to the gods, to its sea, to its sky, to its mountains; it is because that privileged corner of the world, that divine mulberry leaf cast into the midst of the seas, is seen to emerge for the first time from the chrysalis of human conscience in its simple beauty. Hence the reason that Greece is holy ground for all that civilisation

[1] Some wonderful discoveries, founded chiefly on the Vedas, have caused to dawn on this matter a new and unexpected day. We are speaking of the works of Kuhn, Anfrecht, A. Weber, Roth, works hardly yet known in France, and to which should be added the ingenious perceptions of M. le baron Echstein. These excellent researches carried into the study of mythology a revolution analogous to that which the discovery of the method of comparison produced in the study of languages; I would call it the discovery of a *comparative mythology*, where religions would be classed by races and families, and where the transformation of the primitive myths would be left to be described by various organic processes, and where the *arbitrary* would have no part. See chiefly as a répertoire of these yet fragmentary labours, the *Journal of Comparative Philology* of MM. Kuhn and Anfrecht.

worships; hence the secret of its invincible charm which it has always exercised over men initiated into a life of mental liberty. Herein lie the true origins of human intellect; all the nobility of intelligence find here their native country.

At the head of that exclusively Hellenic[1] school stands that extraordinary man whom the star of Delphi has raised so high in science, and who, in a life of forty years, was able to point out and resolve with marvellous sagacity the most delicate problems of the history of the Hellenic race; I mean Ottfried Müller. Whilst all admit, as does M. Creuzer, that there was a mysterious cult among the most ancient populations of Greece, M. Müller separates himself entirely from the chief of the symbolic school by rejecting the antiquated hypothesis of oriental colonies, and by denying the priestly and theological character of these primitive cults. The religion of the Pelasgi was the religion of nature, entirely embraced by sense and imagination. The *Earth-mother* (*Da-Mater*), and the Cathonian divinities, such as Persephone, Hades, Hermes, Hecate, the worship of which was continued in those mysteries, were the gods of the Thracian and Pelasgian tribes, to whom the Greeks owed their mythological beliefs by transforming them, according as they conceived them more moral and less worldly. These cults were neither a primitive revelation nor an institution imported, but really the expression of the genius, of the manners, of the primitive life of each one of the peoples of Greece. The distinction of races became thus in the hands of Ottfried Müller the basis of mythological exposition. Hence those excellent

[1] We might even now say *too exclusively Hellenic.* For Ottfried Müller, rejecting oriental influences in the vague sense which M. Creuzer gives to that word,—thus ignoring those undoubted bonds which primarily attach the religious traditions of Greece to those of the peoples of Asia, who belong to the Indo-European stock. It is true that these facts, the relation of which we have placed in evidence, were scarcely known at the time of Ottfried Müller.

monographs of the *Dorians*, the *Minyans*, the *Etruscans*, those delicate researches upon the nationality of the gods and their successive conquests. The struggle between Hermes and Apollo is the contest waged by the ancient rustic divinities of Arcadia against the more noble and victorious gods; the inferiority of these races showed itself in the subaltern ranks of their gods; admitted by favour into the Hellenic Olympus, they never could rise to any height, but they only came to be the heralds and messengers of the others. What is Apollo really, if he is not the incarnation of the Dorian genius? There is nothing of the mystical in his religion, no orgies, nothing of that savage enthusiasm which characterises the Phrygian religions. The enemy of the industrial and agricultural god of the Pelasgians—that ideal Dorian type—had no mission on earth other than that of fighting, revenging and protecting itself, and punishing; this work was beneath him. Who was Artemis, on her part, if she was not the female personification of the same spirit, a Dorian virgin whom a masculine education had made almost the equal of man; chaste, proud, mistress of herself, having need of no protector or master? What a distance we are from those Pelasgian gods, barely distinguishable from the great universe, covered as they are with soot and smoke, just as they are about to enter the workshops of nature, shamelessly exposing their natural obscenity! Here are the immaculate gods exempt from efforts and troubles; physical phenomena form no longer a canvas for divine myths; humanity is decidedly far above them.

Gifted with an admirable historic intuition, with a true and refined intelligence, Ottfried Müller has traced the way towards a true scientific mythology, and we may believe, if it had not been for the deplorable calamity which removed him so young from

science,[1] he would have corrected even what he had done with too decided a manner in his first attempt. Such is the thin and illogical nature of the ancient myths, that there is no absolute system applicable to them, that it will not permit a declaration on so delicate a matter, without making it subject to innumerable strictures which all the more retire into the background seeing they have been positively affirmed at first. Just as if it was said, for example: —Apollo is a Dorian Deity, Apollo does not at once present any characteristic of a sun-god — nothing would be better, if it were not also announced that he possessed hardly any characteristic of a race. Or again, M. Creuzer will show you that the identity of *Helios* and Apollo, because it was not at first apparent, simply because it was slower of development, had no existence except in the depths of Greek ideas, and that the arrows of the divine archer were simply the rays of the star which darts forth life and death. Alas! that the unfortunate Ottfried should have experienced this fatal influence! "That unfortunate," writes M. Welcker to the translator of the "Symbolic Forms," "had always ignored the solar-divinity of Apollo; it was necessary that the god should avenge himself by making *him* feel how terrible were his attributes *for* any who dared to defy him."

M. Preller, in some respects, may be considered as continuing Ottfried Müller's method. In his view, also, the mystic element of the Greek religion belongs to the Thracians and Pelasgians. The fundamental idea of Pelasgian worship was the adoration of nature looked upon as living and divine, of the earth and, above all, the Cathonian deities. In opposition to the naturalism of the Pelasgians, M. Preller places the anthropomorphism of the Greeks, represented by the Homeric age, where the national and popular

[1] He died at Athens in 1849, in consequence of a sunstroke which he received in visiting the ruins of Delphi.

mythology is founded in a definite manner; but when the torrent of this warlike epoch had rolled by, in the age of Solon and Pisistratus, there was, as it were, a reaction in favour of the old religion which expressed itself in two forms, *Orphism* and the *Mysteries*, both modern enough, both mixed up with an amount of charlatanism—both taken up later on enthusiastically by the Neo-platonists.

The distinction between the ages is thus the basis of M. Preller's studies. The gods have their chronology like their nationality. Generally, antiquity soon wearies of its symbols; a cult lasts seldom more than a hundred years; the fashion, as in our days, went for much in devotion. Religion, being one of the living products of humanity, ought to live, that is, change with it. Are the saints of the oldest period, and of the better standard, those who in our churches enjoy the most favours and receive the largest number of vows and prayers? Greece, in that respect, had a distinguished career, and very often treated its gods, not according to their merits or antiquity, but according to their youth and good graces. The lesser god, coming from the foreigner, was sure to come into vogue sooner than those who had been in possession for a long time. It was thus that the Cabires, deformed dwarfs from Samothracia, were relegated to their forges and their bellows. Nearly all the Pelasgian divinities were subjected to affronts of that description. Old Pan, with difficulty, entered in the *cortége* of a young god much in fashion, Dionysius. Hermes, the great Pelasgian god, was reduced to protect the corners of the streets, and to show the way to travellers, shut up in his case. Honest Vulcan, this conscientious worker, never ascended into Olympus without enduring the kicks of Jupiter's foot, the rebuffs of Venus, so servile and laborious was he. All these ancient divinities of an industrious people —smith-gods, agricultural-gods, shepherd-gods, sad,

serious, useful, little favoured by the Graces—became half-gods, satellites or servants. In general, the hero represented foreign gods *who* were not allowed to take rank among the national divinities, or the dethroned divinities who lived now only in popular superstition. Rarely, indeed, were the dethroned gods without compensation. The new cults did not destroy the ancient forms of worships, but threw them into the shade; more frequently they grew like them, by becoming, as it were, the vast crucibles in which the myths and the attributes of the more ancient gods instituted themselves under a new name. Thus, the myths of Ceres and of Proserpine absorbed nearly all the others; thus, the Sabazian mysteries of Phrygia were fortunate by grafting themselves upon those of Bacchus.

This was especially so, from the invasion of the Sabazian mysteries, towards the seventh century before our era. Thus, there was manifested amongst the Greeks that remarkable curiosity in regard to foreign rites, which St Paul—an excellent observer[1]—gives as one of the features of their character. The cults of Attis, Cybele, Adonis, with their riotous orgies, their shouts, their savage and licentious spirit, surprised the pure taste of Greece. There was above all a dead god, Zagreus, who made all at once a prodigious success. This was Dionysius himself, the perennially young god whom they imagined, struck down *in his flower*, like Adonis, and whom they honoured with a *bloody* worship. Repulsed with disgust by people of culture and men of honour, these cults were made use of by the grossest charlatans *(Mystes, Metragyrtes Orpheotelestes, Theophorites)*, imitators of the scandalous depravities of the Phrygian priests, who frequented the streets and public resorts, and made their dupes among the credulous crowd. They remitted sins for a little money, they trafficked in indulgences, composed

[1] Acts of the Apostles xvii. 22.

philtres and healed diseases. "After the orgies of the mother of the gods," said an interlocutor of the *Banquet* of Athene, "by Jupiter, this is the most detestable brood I have ever known."

Thus the oriental influence, which M. Creuzer has very much exaggerated, is found reduced to its real value. If we make an abstract of the origin of cults, we find that influence only exerting itself at a comparatively modern date, and it marks out a degradation much more than the progress of the Hellenic cults. The barbaric element made little impression except by assuming the appearance and colour of Greek myth. Later, the foreign cults would not give themselves further trouble to change their dress. Isis, Serapis, Mithra would lord it over all Greece, under their exotic accoutrement, so as to prelude those monstrous amalgamations in which the superstitions of the East and those of the West, the excesses of religious sentiment and those of philosophic thought, astrology and magic, theurgy and Neo-platonic ecstasy appeared to assist.

All the progress in mythological studies, since M. Creuzer's time, has been confined, it is seen, to distinguish those times, the places and the races which the illustrious author of the "Symbolic Forms" has too often confused. M. Creuzer constructed the history of paganism in the same way that the ancient school constructed the history of Christianity—that is to say, as it were a body of doctrines, always remaining identical, and crossing the centuries without any vicissitudes but those which sprung from exterior circumstances. Now, if modern criticism has revealed anything to us, it is that, in the infinite variety of times and places, there is nothing so stable as to be thus held fixedly with the same aspect, and that the history of human intelligence, to be sincere, ought to exhibit the picture of eternal mobility.

III.

It was in presence of so rich a progression of studies that the whole method of Guigniaut was worked out. The learned academician was able to add one system more to those which Germany had created; he preferred to place himself outside of hypotheses, and to reserve himself for the more delicate task of discussing them, not for the purpose of a paltry refutation, but with the intention of exercising a high impartiality and intelligent conciliation. In doing so, he only followed the line imposed on all serious intellects in France in the nineteenth century. The characteristic of the nineteenth century is criticism. That systems have formerly proved useful and necessary, and that as a great development of ideas in a given sense is not ordinarily produced, but by the struggles of rival schools, there is history to prove; but a survey of the human intelligence of one day establishes, in a no less evident manner, that the time of systems has passed, the masters not having sufficient authority to form a school, and the pupils not sufficient docility to accept an exclusive direction. Eclecticism is in this sense the necessary method of one century, and of France in particular. The intellectual temperament is a medium between opposite qualities, a compromise between extremes, something clear, simple, moderate. We do not complain of it; for it is, perhaps, after all, the combination of intellectual faculties which comes closest to truth. Schools are in science what parties are in politics; every one has a reason to serve his turn, and it is impossible for an enlightened man to enclose himself in one of those so exclusively as to shut his eyes to what is reasonable in the others.

It is, above all, towards the questions relating to cults and to the mysteries that M. Guigniaut has

thought himself compelled to direct the efforts of this criticism. These questions really are, from a certain side, much more important than those which concern myths. The purely mythological part of ancient religions had not, even for antiquity, anything dogmatic or definite. The same myth is never presented by two authors exactly in the same manner; every one reserves in that respect the liberty to embellish after his own taste, and very soon the myths become no more than romantic themes, which the artist trimmed and adjusted according to his own pleasure. The mysteries, on the contrary, appear to have been the really serious part of the ancient religions. What are, then, those mysteries around which the imagination, the spirit of system and false scholarship have been pleased to gather clouds? What is there in the Eleusinian Mysteries or the majesty and sacredness of which antiquity has but one voice?

A doubt on that subject is not permissible at the present day; we are almost as well able as one of the initiated to describe the different scenes of that which Clement of Alexandria calls *The Mystic Drama of Elusis*. Let us recall to mind first that the name of *Mystery* has been borrowed by the church from a pagan language, and we shall not fear, in order to explain the former sense, to recur to the mode in which the church has used it; we shall not even fear to commit an anachronism in dreaming of the Mysteries of the middle ages. Let us represent to ourselves the primitive Christian mystery, the prototype of the mass; what do we find in it? A great symbolic act, accompanied by significant ceremonies. Let us take the Christian religion at a more advanced epoch of its development, let us follow the ceremonies of Holy Week in a cathedral of the middle ages; what do we see there? A mystic drama, of rites commemorative of a historic fact, or one supposed to be so, alternations of joy and grief continued through

several days, a complicated symbolism, an imitation of events which is enacted in order to recall them—even of scenic representations more or less vivid, in which the divine story is made sensible to the eyes of the spectators.

Apart from the immense superiority of Christian doctrine, apart from the spirit of high morality which penetrates its story, and to which nothing in antiquity can be compared, perhaps, if we had an opportunity of assisting at an ancient mystery we should see in it quite a different thing; symbolic spectacles in which the mystic was actor and spectator at one and the same time; a body of representations traced out from a pious fable, and recitals almost always about the descent of a god on earth, his passion, his descent into hell, his return to life. Such was the death of Adonis, such the mutilation of Atys, such the murder of Zagreus or of Sabazius. One legend above all contributed marvellously to the commemorative representations; it was that of Ceres and Proserpine. All the circumstances of that myth, all the incidents of the search of Proserpine for her mother, gave place to a picturesque symbolism which powerfully captivated the imagination. People imitated the acts of the goddess, they maintained in themselves the sentiments of joy and of grief which must have successively animated her. There was at first a long procession, intermingled with burlesque scenes, purifications, watchings, fasts followed by rejoicings, processions at night with flambeaux, representing the searches for the mother, circuitous routes in darkness, terrors, anxieties, then all at once splendid brightness. The gates of the temple were opened; the mystics were received in places set out with delicacies, where they listened. The different changes presented to the sight by the theatrical mechanism added to the illusion; recitations (of which we have the type in the Homeric hymn to Ceres) were heard

through the whole cycle of the representations. Every day had its name, its exercises, its games, its stations, which the mystics fulfilled in company. One day there was a little war, or lithobolic, in which they attacked one another with stones; on another day they rendered homage to the *Mater Doloroso* (*Da-Mater Achæa*), probably a statue representing the adoration of Ceres, a true *Piety*. One day they drank *cyceon;* they imitated the pleasantries with which the ancient *Iambe* used to cheer the mournful goddess; they made processions to places in the neighbourhood of Eleusis, to the sacred fig-tree, to the sea; they ate of prescribed dishes; they practised mysterious rites, of which the sense was almost always lost by those who performed them. It was mixed with orgies, dances, nocturnal fêtes, with symbolic instruments. On their return, they gave free scope to joy; burlesque again took its place in the *gephyrissmo* or *bridge jests*. As soon as the initiated had arrived at the bridge of Cephisus, the inhabitants of the neighbourhood, hastening from all parts to see the procession, broke forth on the sacred troop in sarcasms and licentious pleasantries, to which the initiated replied with equal licence. No one doubts that there was not associated with all those comically grotesque scenes a species of masquerades of which the influence on the first rough drafts of the dramatic art can easily be perceived. Ceremonies which included a symbolism so vague under a realism so gross had for the ancients a great charm, and left upon them a profound impression; they united that which man loves most in works of imagination; a form very determined, but a meaning very little fixed. Their credit depended greatly on the manner in which they were executed, and it was by a magnificence quite exceptional that the Eleusinian mysteries eclipsed all others, and excited the envy of the whole world.

Such then were the mysteries. It can hardly be

said that they were quite entirely mystical, in the acceptation of that term as adopted by M. Creuzer, nor entirely devoid of meaning, as M. Löbeck would wish to make out. There was neither found in them a superior revelation, nor a high moral teaching, nor a profound philosophy. Symbolism was in it an end proper to itself. Is it to be believed that the women who celebrated the *Adonia*, thought much about the mysterious means of the acts which they accomplished? All is explained when it is said that *Adonis* is the sun, traversing for six months the higher signs of the zodiac, and for the remaining six months the lower signs; that the wild boar who killed him was winter; that he himself, from another point of view, is the annual vegetation, with its seasons of spring and autumn, etc. It may be doubted whether these abstract considerations had any charms for the women of Greece. What then was it that led them to run in a crowd to weep for Adonis? The desire to mourn a youthful god who had expanded into blossom which had been nipped too soon out,—his languishing head hanging down, and wreathed with oranges and early springing plants which he had seen blossom and die,—of burying him with their own hands,—of cutting off their hair to adorn his tomb, of lamenting and rejoicing by turns, of having the sensation, in one word, of all the ephemeral joys, and returning sorrows grouped around the myth of Adonis.

Thus, so far from the cult being always the consequence of a mystical legend accepted as a dogma, it was very often the myth, which was subordinated to the instincts of the multitude and furnished a pretext for it. It is necessary besides to call to mind, that the word *faith* attained no meaning until the time of Christianity, and that in questions of religious symbolism, it was almost indifferent whether people understood it or not. The impression that arises is that of the whole, and not of each particularity. One follows

with pleasure those dramas which speak to the eyes, without disturbing oneself about their metaphysical meaning; everything is significant in them, it is true, but not directly. Among the peasants who assist at a midnight mass, how many of them are there who think about the mystery of the incarnation? "Aristotle," says Synesius, "was of opinion that the initiated did not learn anything precisely, but that they received impressions, that they were put into a certain disposition of soul." The teaching of the mysteries was therefore a sort of indirect teaching, analogous to that which an uneducated man receives, when he assists at the offices of the church without knowing Latin and without penetrating the meaning of all he sees. It was like a sacrament acting by its own virtue, a pledge of salvation conferred by sensible signs, and by sacred formula. Baptism in the first centuries of the Church, although it was open to all, preserved nevertheless the characteristics of an initiation. M. Löbeck, however, has very well shown that the conditions imposed upon the initiated were so vague and illusory that the mysteries had no longer any privilege or secret attached to them. It was a regular pell-mell. To be admitted to them, it was sufficient to be an Athenian, or to have a sponsor at Athens. Later on, both bars of the door were opened, and all who could make the journey were initiated.

Without exaggerating the moral and philosophical side of the mysteries, about which it must be acknowledged people have thought very little; without dwelling longer on what these practices may have in our view, insignificant and dull, it cannot be denied that they have powerfully contributed to maintain the religious and moral traditions of humanity. "For a long period," says M. Guigniaut, "the mysteries pacified souls by their august ceremonies, which revealed the destiny of man in the transparent histories of the great goddess of the 'initiation,' and which

rendered them worthy, by purifying them, to live under their sway and to share their immortality. . . It is certain that the Eleusinian mysteries in particular had such a moral and religious influence as to solace the present life, teaching, in a way, the life to come, that they promised recompenses to the initiated, under certain conditions, not only of purity and piety, but also of justice, and that if they did not equally teach monotheism, which was the negation of paganism itself, they at least approached as near to that as paganism could be approached. It maintained and nourished souls in virtue even of mystery, of a pure worship of nature, the sentiment of the infinite, of a god after all, who resided at the bottom of popular belief, but whom mythological anthropomorphism tended continually to efface."

It is yet on another ground, I mean their having served as the transition between paganism and the more sacred religion which has replaced it, that the mysteries are above all worthy of fixing the attention of philosophy and criticism. Deep researches would show that everything in Christianity which does exalt the gospel, is only baggage, imported from the mysteries of paganism into the enemy's camp.[1] The primitive Christian cult was only a mystery. All the interior policy of the church, its grades of initiation, a crowd of particularities of the ecclesiastical language, have no other origin.[2] The revolution which has destroyed paganism appears, at first sight, a harsh rupture, a breaking off, absolute as to the past, and it was such, practically, if it was looked at only as the dogmatic inflexibility and spirit of severe morality which characterised the new religion; but under the analogy of worship and of exterior habits, the change

[1] See the work of M. Creuzer, t. iii. p. 774, and the note of M. Guigniaut, p. 1205.

[2] The word *mystery* is found in St Paul's writings; that of *epopte* is found in the second epistle ascribed to St. Peter.

operated by an insensible decline, and the popular faith, in this shipwreck, the best known symbols. Christianity brought at first so little change in the habits of the inner and the social life, that by a crowd of men of some standing in the fourth and fifth centuries, it remained uncertain whether they were pagans or Christians; several appeared even to have followed an undecided line between the two cults. Art, on its side, which formed an essential part of the ancient religion, did not require to break with any of its traditions.[1] Primitive Christian art is really nothing but pagan art in decadence, or looked upon only in its lower departments. The good pastor of the catacombs of Rome, copied from Aristeuus or Apollo Nomios, who figured in the same attitude on the *pagan sarcophagi*, still carrying the flute of Pan, in the midst of four half-naked Seasons. Upon the Christian tombs of the cemetery of St Calixte, Orpheus still charms the animals; on others, Christ as Jupiter-Pluto, Mary as Proserpine, received the souls who were brought to them in presence of the three Fates. Mercury, dressed up with a broad-brimmed hat, and carrying in his hand the rod of *Psychopomp*. Pegasus, the symbol of Apotheosis; Psyche, symbol of the immortal soul; Heaven personified by an old man, the river Jordan and Victory figure upon a multitude of Christian monuments. Who has regarded without emotion those churches in Rome, composed of the *débris* of ancient temples, like the Centos of Proba Falconia with the verses of Virgil? Thus humanity acts; by gathering together old broken fragments reduced to powder, it constructs a new edifice, full of originality. For humanity, the mind is everything—the materials are of little moment.

We must then regard the mysteries as a great

[1] This is what results from the collection of figured monuments by which M. Guigniaut has tried to show the transition from pagan symbolism to Christian symbolism (t. iv., fig. 908 and *sq.*)

transformation which the religions of antiquity underwent at the moment when (in fact, the infantile imaginations of the first ages could not satisfy the new demands of conscience) the human spirit demanded a religion more dogmatic and serious. Primitive polytheism, vague, undecided, given up to individual interpretation, no longer sufficed for an age of reflection. Epicurean incredulity on the one hand made great way against those innocent divinities; on the other hand, certain religious sentiments, more educated and delicate, brought in light at the expense of antique simplicity. Aspirations, towards monotheism and a moral religion, aspirations, of which Christianity was the highest expression gained in all points of view, paganism itself could not restrain it. I do not admire, except to a small extent, the tentative for which Julian is responsible in the eyes of history. As much as the primitive theology appears to me beautiful and estimable in its freshness, so much does this neo-paganism, this religion of Archæologists and Sophists appear disgusting and insignificant. The sense of beauty which forms the basis of the Hellenic religion appears to be lost. The monstrous gods of the East, conceived out of all proportion, replace the harmonious creations of Greece. A *deus magnus Panthues*, a god hidden and without a name, threatened to invade everything. The worship bordered upon a bloody sacrifice of a bull made to Cybele; religious sentiment took refuge in the scenes of the slaughter house. Many had recourse to blood to appease the jealous and irritated gods. A profound terror appeared to dictate all the vows which have been transmitted to us by the inscription.[1] In the midst of all this was the absolute impossibility of finding a moral teaching which less or more resembled the Christian homily.

[1] See the *Journal des Savants*—January, 1850. Art. by M. D. Hase.

It is by not having regarded the ancient religion, except at that epoch of decadence, that people have in general formed such erroneous judgments. It must be confessed that in the age of Constantine or of Julian, paganism was a very mediocre religion, and the attempts which had been made to reform it ended in nothing but dissatisfaction. Criticism sometimes is unable to adopt without restriction the sentence by which the old religion was struck. If it accepts the basis of the judgment it cannot but cry out against the partiality of those considering it. The polemic under which paganism succumbed was heavy, violent and dishonest, like all polemics. Strange thing! nothing resembles more the attack by which the eighteenth century believed it could put an end to Christianity. No dogma could hold up against such assaults. Read the *Persiflage* of Herimas, the writings of Tatian and Athenagora against paganism, and one could believe they heard Voltaire amusing his readers at the expense of the innocence of the Scriptures. Controversialists, in general, not dreaming but to find their adversary in the wrong, yield too often to the temptations to present as ridiculous the doctrine which they combat, so as to give themselves the advantage of discovering the absurdity which they have imported into it; a convenient proceeding, for there is nothing which cannot be laid hold of by its ridiculous side; yet a dangerous proceeding, for it invariably is returned upon those who use it! Some fathers of the Church employed it in the most lavish manner. The greater number, possessing themselves of the Evhemerist system, secured a weapon against the paganism of badly interpreted paganism. They attacked, hand to hand, the gods which had sprung out of their own imagination, and triumphed in this easy conflict with shadows. Others embraced a still grosser system, the demonologist hypothesis; the gods were nothing

more than demons; it was the demons who spoke the oracles. "The demons," said Tertullian, "take the place of the gods. They are introduced into the statues, breath the incense, and drink the blood of the victims." Others again, bravely joining hands with Lucretius and Epicurus, declared that the myths were only frivolous tales invented to please without purpose and without meaning. It is remarkable everywhere (and this ingenious observation has not escaped M. Creuzer) that the fathers, born in the East, brought up often to respect paganism, or in the schools of philosophy, preserved something of the delicate sentiment of Greece. This work of demolition by calumny and nonsense wounded them deeply, and they shewed themselves nearly as severe against Evhemerus as the honest pagans themselves. Origen and St Gregory of Nazianza often estimate paganism with a remarkable partiality, and have anticipated on many points the most delicate ideas of modern criticism.

Assuredly we cannot believe that many of the reproaches addressed by the fathers of the church to paganism, and particularly regarding the mysteries, were not without foundation, but was it just to take as paganism that which was in its lowest regions, in its popular interpretation? The most educated religious ideas in the hands of sensual people degenerate perforce into sensualism and superstition. It is as if one were to judge of Catholicism by what is found under our eyes at Naples or Lorette. The picture of the Thesmophories and the Adonies, such as we find them in Aristophanes and Theocritus, present nothing at all immoral, but only something light and having no solidity. Drunkenness is the gravest of the abuses which have been pointed out there, but who has witnessed at certain hours a *pardon* of the pious Breton, without believing that the principal object of the gathering was to drink. The festival

of the martyrs in the primitive church gave occasion to scenes just as little edifying as those against which the fathers inveighed so energetically. As to the symbols adopted by paganism, and which in our eyes are of the grossest obscenity, we must say with M. Creuzer: "That which civilised men conceals with shame and hides carefully from sight, the simple and untutored natural man has made in name and figure a religious symbol consecrated by the public worship. With that faith which sees God in nature, with the freer manners of Southern nations, above all, of the Greeks, all those distinctions of decent or indecent, worthy or unworthy of the divine majesty, could not make themselves. Hence it came about that those peoples, with an innocence which had become strange to the Romans, of the time of the Empire, as to modern Europe, admitted into their religions those sacred legends which we look upon as scandalous, those emblems which we charge with obscenity." We must believe, in fact, that those emblems revealed amongst the ancients ideas quite different from those which they inspire in us, since they did not excite in them aught but sentiments of holiness and respect for religion. What can be more revolting than to find at each crossing, and at the corner of the roads, an obscene landmark? And yet that so little shocked the ancients that we see Hipparchus causing moral sentences, for the edification of passers-by, to be engraved upon the Hermes.

There cannot be so much said of the ridiculous which had such a large place in the Hellenic paganism. Religions ought to represent in the most entire manner all the aspects of the human mind, and burlesque being one of those aspects under which we conceive life, burlesque is an essential element in all religions. Witness the epochs and countries of religion *par excellence*, the middle ages—Italy and Spain. What irreverence, what a deluge of fables

concerning the Virgin, the Saints, and God himself! Those who have examined closely Italian worship know how indefinite is the limit which separates the serious from the comic, and by what an insensible transition devotion there borders upon jocularity. We are not astonished to see on the monuments of the grave Etruria the most respectable scenes turned into caricature; we do not understand how the people who condemned Socrates on a suspicion of impiety should allow Aristophanes to give the stirrup leathers to Bacchus on the stage, and to transform Hercules into a scullion. The Southern people, more familiar with the gods than the reflective people of the North, have shown, time after time, the necessity of laughing with them. The unrestraint of the Neapolitans towards St Januarius has nothing in it which ought to surprise us. Eighteen hundred years ago the people of Pompeii, when they wished to obtain anything from their gods, stipulated the conditions in writing, and for greater efficacy threatened them with blows of the stick.

Monotheism has become an element so essential to our intellecual constitution that all our efforts to understand the polytheism of antiquity would be almost useless. Arrived at a certain degree in its development, the human mind becomes necessarily monotheistic, but it is not necessary that this conception of the deity should be discovered in the cradle of every race. There are races monotheistic, just as there are races polytheistic, and this difference arises from an original diversity in the mode of looking upon nature. In the Arabic or Semitic conception nature is not seen, the desert is monotheistic —sublime in its immense uniformity, it reveals from the first moment the idea of the infinite, but not that sentiment of fertile activity which an incessantly creative nature has inspired in the Indo-European race. That is why Arabia has always been the

bulwark of monotheism. Nature plays no part in the Semitic religions. They are of the head alone, entirely metaphysical and psychological. The extreme simplicity of the Semitic mind, without expansiveness, without diversity, without plastic arts, without philosophy, without mythology, without political life, without progress, has no other object; there is no variety in monotheism, properly speaking. Exclusively struck with the unity of government which shines in the world, the Semites have seen nothing in the development of things but the accomplishment of the will of a superior being. There is a God: God has made the world: that is all their philosophy. Such is not the conception of that other race destined to exhaust all the aspects of life which, from India to Greece, from Greece to the extremities of the North and the West, has everywhere animated and deified nature, from the living statue of Homer up to the living ship of the Scandinavians. For that race the distinction between God and no God has always remained undecided. Employed in the world, its gods ought to partake of its vicissitudes; they had a history, successive generations, dynasties, combats. Jupiter is in the meantime the king of gods and men; but his reign will not be more eternal than was that of Cronus; Prometheus bound has predicted that his art would be less strong than Time, and that one day it would be necessary to give way to Necessity.

The religion of antiquity was like ancient society, founded on exclusion; it was a national and liberal religion; it was neither framed for the slave nor for the foreigner. The first condition exacted for admission to the mysteries was a declaration that they were not barbarous. Ancient Greece showed itself much more exclusive. There, every promontory, every stream, every village, every mountain had its own legend. The cult prescribed for woman was not that for man,

the cult of the sailor was not that of the agriculturist, the cult of the agriculturist was not that of the soldier. Hercules and the Dioscuri were obliged to make themselves acceptable to the Athenians. Rome provided the great idea of *Catholicity:* all the gods became common to the civilised people; but the barbarian and the slave were still stricken with religious incapacity, and it was a singular novelty when St Paul made bold to say, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor master, neither male nor female; for you are all one in Jesus Christ."

It would be doing violence to our associations of ideas,[1] and those the most fixed, if we did not see in it a progress; but uniformity alone is purchased dearly, and we may imagine that the conservative party of the fourth and fifth centuries, composed of very eminent men, attached to the traditions of the past, were continually repeating: "Oh, how happy were our fathers! oh, how favoured were our fathers by the times in which they lived!"[1] The grand free life of the glorious epochs of antiquity where the slave was a being capable of religion and worth, become impossible for the present day (though blessed be the present day!). A god of Olympus was nothing but a free man, with not a wrinkle on his brow, not a ray of sadness; human nature taken in its nobility; no account made of its miseries. Now-a-days, those who mourn would have their gods mourn with them, and see, therefore, how, when there are so many miseries in the world, Christianity has its *raison d'être.* Such is the secret of the divine paradox: Blessed are those who weep!

Far be from us the thought of essaying here one of those parallels, where one is obliged to be unjust to the past, if we do not wish to be injurious to the present. Paganism, better understood, thanks to that

[1] See the fine work of M. Beugnot on the *Destruction of Paganism in the West.* Paris, 1837.

large mass of labours in which France and Germany have so happily united their efforts, should not be in our hands a weapon given up to polemics, nor simply nourishment offered to curiosity. That which, through an elevated intelligence, results from the spectacle of so long-continued aberrations, is neither disdain nor pity; it is the conviction of a great fact: humanity is religion, and the necessary form of all religion is symbolism. That symbolism may be, from its nature, insufficient and condemned to remain very much below the idea it represents; that the attempt to define the infinite and to make it plain to observation, implies an impossibility; that is so clear that there cannot be any merit in saying it. All expression is limited, and the only language which cannot be unworthy of divine things is silence. But human nature will not give itself up to that. If man reflects on the presence of the mystery of a supreme existence, he comes, in spite of himself, to propose the question: Would it not be better to give up figures, and to renounce the attempt to express the ineffable? It is at least certain that humanity, given up to its own instincts, does not stop at such a scruple; it loves better to speak imperfectly of God than to be silent, it loves better to trace for itself a fantastic picture of the divine world than to resist the invincible charm which carries it away to the unseen regions.

Thus the immense labour, the history of which we have tried to sketch, arrives at a conclusion at once consoling and religious; for if man by a spontaneous effort to seize the infinite cause is determined to surpass nature, is it not a great sign that, by his origin and destiny, he goes out of the straight limit of finite things? In view of that ever-renewed effort to scale heaven, one acquires an esteem for human nature, one becomes persuaded that that nature is noble, and that there is something in it to make us proud of it. Thus, then, can we strengthen ourselves against the

menaces of the future. It may be that all which we love, and which in our eyes constitutes the ornament of life, the liberal culture of the intellect, science, high art, may be destined to last no more than one age; but religion never dies. It will be the eternal protestation of the mind against systematic or brutal materialism, which would imprison man in the lower region of vulgar life. Civilisation has intermissions, religion has none.

HISTORY OF THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL.

IT is the special attribute of great things that they embrace within themselves very different points of view, and to expand with the human mind itself, in such manner that each man, according to the extent of his culture, and each age, according as it comprehends, more or less thoroughly, the past, find in them, though from different standpoints, something to admire. When critics of antiquity, as well as those of the seventeenth century, lay before us the beauties which they believe they have discovered in Homer, the puerility of their æsthetics astonishes us. We admire Homer as much as they do; but for quite other reasons. Bossuet and M. de Chauteaubriand imagine they are admiring the Bible in admiring false readings and nonsense.[1] Learned Germany has a right to laugh; and yet Herder's and Ewald's admiration of it, though better founded, is not less keen than

[1] "To realise the beauties of the Vulgate," says M. de Maistre, *make choice of a friend who is not a Hebraist*, and *you shall* see *how* a syllable, a word, *and the slightest accentuation given to a phrase*, shall reveal to your eyes beauties of the first order."—(*Soirées de Saint Petersbourg*, VII. entret.) This is surely *æsthetics* run mad and befitting a gentleman! If you wish to realise the beauties of Homer, make choice of a friend who is not a Hellenist, and you will discover in the translation of Mdme. Dacier a thousand beauties of the first order, of which Homer never dreamed.

theirs. The more we consider the world and the past, apart from preconceived notions and conventionalities, just as they are, the more real beauty shall we discover in them, and it is in this sense that it may be said that science is the first condition of serious admiration. Jerusalem stands out more brilliant and more beautiful from the apparently destructive labours of modern science. The pious recitals in which our infancy was cradled, by reason of a sounder interpretation, have become lofty truths, and it is our privilege to see Israel in its real beauty—it is of us critics, even of whom it may be truly said :—*Stantes erant pedes nostri in atriis tuis, Jerusalem!* [Our feet are standing within thy gates, O Jerusalem !]

If we look upon the development of the Hebrew mind as a whole, we are struck by that high character of absolute perfection which gives to its works the right to be regarded as *classics* in the same sense as the productions of Rome, Greece and the Latin races. Alone of all, except the races of the East, Israel has had the privilege of writing for the whole world. The poetry of the Vedas is certainly admirable, and yet this collection of the first songs of the race to which we belong will never replace, in the expression of our religious sentiments, the Psalms—the work of a race so different from our own. The literatures of the East cannot, in general, be read and appreciated except by scholars; Hebrew literature, on the contrary, is the Bible, the book, *par excellence*, the universal reader; millions of men know no other poetry. In this astonishing destiny it has doubtless formed a part of the religious revolutions which, since the sixteenth century especially, have caused the Hebrew books to be looked upon as the source of all revelation; but it may be affirmed that if these books had not contained something deeply universal they would never have attained to that position. Proportion, metre, taste, were, in the East, the exclusive privilege of the

Hebrew people. Israel had, like Greece, the gift of perfectly evolving its ideas, of expressing these ideas in a concise and finished form. Hence, it succeeded in giving to thought and sentiments a general form and one acceptable to the whole human race.

As a result of this universal adoption, no history is more popular than that of Israel, and yet no history has been more slowly comprehended. It is the lot of literatures which become the basis of a religious belief to restrict the rigidity of dogma, and to lose their real aspect by becoming a conventional symbolism, in which one searches for arguments to suit every case. From the history of the people most opposed to monarchy which had ever existed, Bossuet has been able to draw a justification of the polity of Louis XIV.; this one has deduced from it Theocracy while another sees in it a Republic. Germany, with that gift of historic intuition which appears specially bestowed upon her for the primitive ages, was the first to perceive this truth, and to make the history of the Jewish people a history like any other, arranged, not according to the advanced views of theologians, but according to the critical and grammatical study of the texts. The work of biblical exegesis, constructed, *stone by stone*, with such a marvellous sequence and incomparable tenacity of method is, incontrovertibly, the *chef-d'œuvre* of the German genius, and the most perfect model which can be cited amongst the other branches of theology. Many years before the Reformation, Germany had already made the science of Hebrew a sort of domain of its own, from which it has never since been dispossessed. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, criticism, arrested in France by the narrow spirit of the theologians,[1] or frightened

[1] This repression is much the more regrettable that the seventeenth century had a superior man, Richard Simon, of the Oratory, who, but for the obstacles which were raised against him, would have created in France this wholesome exegesis a century before Germany founded it.

by the unintelligibleness which characterises in history the school of Voltaire, made marvellous progress there, and after the generation of the Michaelises, the Eichhorns, the Rosenmüllers, the De Wettes, the Winers, and the Geseniuses, it might have been imagined that there was nothing more to do in the circle of Hebraic studies.

M. Ewald has, however, proved in these later years, in numerous writings, and, above all, in his excellent *Histoire du people d'Israel*,[1] that the *rôle* of deep criticism in this ever new field was far from being closed. By the boldness of his views, his acuteness of mind, his brilliant imagination, his marvellous perception of religious and poetic things, M. Ewald has far surpassed all those who, before him, have occupied themselves with the history and literature of the Hebrew people. Some blemishes, it is true, obscure those rare merits: the delicacy of his ideas degenerates with him sometimes into subtility; he does not always pause soon enough in his path of conjecture; the origin of the people of Israel, the patriarchal epoch, the primitive fables are treated in too arbritary a manner, by instituting hazardous comparisons with mythologies completely foreign to the Hebrew spirit. The picture of the later centuries of Jewish history—of those which preceded, and immediately prepared the way for Christianity—occasionally set forth the peculiar ideas of M. Ewald in the matter of religion and philosophy, ideas which cannot at least claim any peculiar originality, and in which their author believes he has been able to associate a kind of Christian fanaticism with a more avowed rationalism.[2] The excellent part of the work of M. Ewald is the narra-

[1] *Geschichte des Volkes Israel*, 4 v. in 8vo, 2d ed. Göttingen, 1854.

[2] There is in particular the *Jahrbücher der biblischen Wissenschaft*, an annual summary published by M. Ewald, and entirely filled with his own ideas, which it is necessary to read in order to picture to oneself the peculiar attitude which he has taken in regard to the political and religious questions of Germany. This attitude in which the savant

tive of the purely Hebraic period, from Samuel to the Maccabees. The history of David and of Solomon, of the diverse revolutions of the epoch of the kings, the times of captivity, the character of Hebrew poetry, and, above all, the Psalms, are marvellous expositions which it would be possible to rectify on many points, but not to surpass as a whole, in their general conception. Why does the learned professor of Göttingen commit the fault of mixing up so many beautiful and brilliant ideas with pages full of enthusiasm, a bitter polemic against persons whose opinions often do not differ, except by the merest shade, from his own? Why, in particular, does M. Ewald think himself obliged to depreciate a man like Gesenius, who could not in any way be compared to him for philosophy and æsthetic sentiment, but who has never been surpassed as a philologist and grammarian? M. Ewald, so superior to his rival in poetical intelligence and elevation of soul, had no need to deny him those substantial qualities in order to shine himself in the first rank among the critics and exegetes of our century.

I.

ONE preliminary question overshadows all problems relative to the people of Israel—how were those documents compiled which form the basis of the history of the Hebrews, and, above all, the five most ancient parts of their annals which we are accustomed to class together under the name of the Pentateuch? An hypothesis put forth in the last century as a daring paradox, and according to which the

and the historian are combined in the strangest fashion with the Protestant preacher and the sectary, would be an inexplicable phenomenon if one did not call to mind the strong impression the study of the prophets had made on the mind of M. Ewald, an impression which naïvely betrays itself in his conduct and writings.

Pentateuch had been formed from historical fragments drawn from different sources, is now adopted by all the enlightened critics of Germany.[1] The distinction between substance and form, a distinction so essential in the primitive literatures, applies especially to Hebraic literature, for it has never yet submitted to emendations. It may be affirmed, for example, that we find in the books of Exodus and Numbers information at once authentic and contemporaneous as to the condition and actions of the Israelites in the desert of the peninsula of Sinai; is it necessary to conclude thence that the books of Exodus and Numbers, such as we now possess, date from that epoch? Certainly not. The definitive compilation of the books which contain the ancient history of Israel, probably goes no further back than the eighth century before our era; side by side with ancient fragments, preserved in an almost verbatim manner, there are to be found many parts more modern, and to which there must be applied principles of criticism entirely different.

The acute and learned philologists of Germany, who have devoted themselves to the discussion of this curious problem, have clearly, in later times, perceived where it was necessary to look for the analogy of those rules which have regulated the successive transformations of the historical writings of the Hebrews—and that is in the historical writings of the Arabs. When we compare, in fact, the one with the other, the different classes of Mussul-

[1] This assertion, contrary to the ideas generally received in France, has need of developments which cannot find a place here, but which may be found in the work of M. Ewald, and in Lengerke, *Kenaan* pref.; De Wette, *Enleitung in das Alte Testament*, section 150, et suivi; Staehelin, *Kritische Untersuchungen über den Pentateuch*, 1843; Tuch, *Kommentar über die Genesis*, Halle, 1838. There may be consulted in French the *Palestine* of M. S. Munk (Paris, 1845, in the collection of the *Univers pittoresque* of Didot), p. 132, et suivi, in which the question is treated in an excellent criticism, in the sense we indicate.

mans, we find in their works the same foundation, of which the first edited collection is that of the *Chronicle* of Tabari. The work of Tabari is itself nothing but a collection of traditions, put into sequence one with another, without the least regard to critical detail, full of repetitions, of contradictions, of departures from the natural order of facts. In Ibn-al-Athir, who marked a more advanced stage of compilation, the recital is continued, the contradictions removed; the narrator chooses once for all the tradition which appeared to him the most probable, and passes the other over in silence; some more modern gossip is inserted here and there, but at bottom it is always the same history as in Tabari, with some variations and also with some false readings, when the second compiler has not perfectly understood the text which he had before him. In Ibn-Khaldoun, finally, the compilation has been passed, if I may say so, once more through a crucible. The author mixes up with his narrative his own personal views; one can discern in it his opinions, and the object he has in view. It is a history arranged, completed, viewed through the prism of the ideas of the author.

The Hebrew historical writings have passed through analogous gradations. Deuteronomy presents to us the history arrived at its last stage, history touched up for oratorical effect, in which the narrator proposes to himself not simply to relate, but to edify. The four preceding books enable us to see the insertions of more ancient fragments, reunited but not assimilated, in a consecutive text. We may differ upon the division of their parts, upon the number and character of successive editions, and it must be acknowledged that M. Ewald, in attempting on all these points, a strictness impossible to attain, has passed the bounds which even severe criticism would impose upon him; but we cannot any longer doubt

of the methods which brought the Pentateuch and the book of Joshua into its definitive condition. It is clear that a *Jehovistic* editor (that is one employing in his narrative the name of Jehovah) has given the final touches to this great historic work, by taking for his basis an *Elohistic* writing (that is to say one in which God is designated by the word *Elohim*), and of these we can even now reconstruct the essential portions.[1] As to the opinion which attributes the compilative of the Pentateuch to Moses, it is outside the pale of criticism, and we shall not discuss it; it moreover appears to be quite modern, and it is very certain that the Hebrews never thought of regarding their lawgiver as a historian.[2] The narratives of ancient times appeared to them as absolutely impersonal works to which they did not attach the name of an author.

Thus was formed the fundamental writing of the Hebraic annals, what M. Ewald calls *the book of origins*, following which come in successive groups the annals of the judges, of the kings, of the periods of captivity, on to Alexander. No people surely can boast of possessing a body of history so complete, nor of archives so accurately kept. What is of moment to maintain is, that the emendations of the form never seriously alter the foundation, so that the fragments, thus reunited, whether the contents be historic or legendary, possess the value of original documents. The Pentateuch includes, according to

[1] We ought to remark that this system, for a long time classical in Germany, has nothing in common with the unfortunate attempt of Dr Donaldson to re-establish the *Jaschar*, one of the books quoted in the oldest annals of Israel. It is surprising that in a recent article there has been presented as the "last word" of German exegesis, a similar work composed by a Doctor of the University of Cambridge, and universally discredited by the German critics.

[2] The opinion that Moses is the author of the Pentateuch scarcely appears to have been much insisted on before the Christian era. M. de Wette, indeed, believes that even in that age it was not universally accepted.

all appearances, accounts borrowed from the archives of the peoples who were neighbours to Israel; such as the narrative of the war of the Iranian kings against the kings of the Vale of Siddim, in which Abraham figures as a father—*Abraham, the Hebrew, who inhabited the Vale of Mamre, the Amorite;*— the Genealogy of the Edomites; the curious synchronism established between the founding of Hebron and that of Tanis in Egypt. Even the first pages dedicated to the antediluvian origins, wholly mythological although they seem, are certainly the documents which bring us nearest the origin of the human race.

It is impossible to understand Israel satisfactorily without connecting it with the group of nations of which it forms part; I mean the Semitic race, of which it is the highest and purest branch. The essential result of modern philology has been to show in the history of civilisation the action of a double stream produced by two races thoroughly distinct in manners, language, and mind; on the one hand, the Indo-European race, embracing the noble populations of India, Persia, the Caucasus, and all Europe; on the other hand, the race called by the very faulty name Semitic,[1] comprising the indigenous populations of western and southern Asia, from the Euphrates. To the Indo-European race pertain nearly all the great military, political and intellectual movements in the history of the world; to the Semitic race the religious movements. The Indo-European race, pre-occupied by the variety of the Universe, did not of itself attain to monotheism. The Semitic race, on the contrary, by its fixed and determinate views, unwrapped at one effort the veil from the deity, and, without reflection

[1] This name describes here not the nations given in Genesis as the issue of Shem, but the peoples who speak or have spoken the language called wrongly Semitic, that is, the Hebrew, Phœnician, Syrian, Arabic and Abyssinian.

or reasoning, reached the purest religious form which humanity has known. Monotheism, in the world, has been the work of the Semitic apostolate in this sense, that before the action, and outside of the action of Judaism, Christianity and Islamism, the worship of the one and supreme God, had not reached an exact formula for the masses. Now, these three great religious movements are three Semitic facts,—three branches of the same trunk,—three translations, unequally beautiful, of the same idea. It is but a few leagues from Jerusalem to Sinai, and from Sinai to Mecca.

When and how did the Semitic race arrive at that conception of the divine unity which the world has received upon the faith of its preaching? I believe that it was by a primitive intuition, and that from its earliest times. Monotheism was not invented; India, which has thought with so much originality and profundity, did not arrive at it in one day; all the force of the Greek spirit was not sufficient to lead humanity to this without the co-operation of the Semitic races. We can likewise avouch that they never would have conquered the dogma of the Divine Unity if they had not found it in the most exalted instincts of their mind and heart. The first religions of the Indo-European race would appear to have been purely physical. They were ardent impressions, such as those of the wind in the trees, or the reeds, those of running waters and those of the ocean, which took a body in the imagination of those infant peoples. Men of the Indo-European race did not arrive so quickly as the Semites in separating themselves from the world. For a long time they adored their own sensations, and up to the point where the Semitic religions initiated them into a more elevated conception of the deity, their worship was only an echo of nature. The Semitic race, on the contrary, manifestly arrived without any effort at the notion of the Supreme God. This great conquest was

not, for them, the effect of progress and philosophical reflection; it was a matter of first perceptions. Having detached its personality much earlier from the universe, that race concluded almost immediately the third term, God, Creator of the Universe. In place of a nature, animated and living in all its parts, it conceived, if I may say so, of a nature dry and without fertility. How far removed is this from the rigid and simple conception of a god separated from the world, and of a world fashioned like a vessel in the hands of a potter, from the Indo-European theogony, animating and deifying nature, looking upon life as a struggle, the Universe as a perpetual change, and transferring in some sort revolution and progress into the divine dynasties!

The intolerance of the Semitic peoples is the necessary consequence of their monotheism. The Indo-European peoples, before their conversion to Semitic ideas (Jewish, Christian, or Mussulman), never having accepted their religion as the absolute truth, but as a part of the heritage of family or caste, remained strangers to intolerance and proselytism: that is why we do not find, except among those peoples, freedom of thought, the spirit of examination and individual research. The Semites, on the contrary, aspiring to realise a cult independent of provinces and countries, must declare all religions different from their own to be bad. In this sense, intolerance is really a factor of the Semitic race, and a portion of the good and bad legacy it has left the world. The extraordinary phenomenon of the Mussulman conquest was only possible amongst a race incapable, as it was, of laying hold of diversities, and whose whole symbolism may be summed up in one word, *God is God.* No doubt Indo-European tolerance springs from a loftier sentiment of human destiny, and from a greater breadth of mind; but who shall dare to say that by revealing the Divine Unity, and definitely suppressing local re-

ligions, the Semitic race has not laid the foundation stone of the unity and progress of humanity?

We understand now how that race, so eminently endowed for the creation and propagation of religion, should, in all profane paths, never rise above mediocrity. A race, incomplete by its very simplicity, having neither plastic arts, nor rational science, nor philosophy, nor political life, nor military organisation. The Semitic race has never comprehended civilisation in the sense we attach to that word. We do not find in its bosom either great organised empires, or public spirit, or anything which recalls the Greek city, the absolute monarchy of Egypt and Persia. Questions such as Aristocracy, Democracy and Feudalism, which contain the whole secret of the history of the Indo-European peoples, have no meaning for the Semites. The Semitic nobility is entirely patriarchal; it has not sprung from conquest; it has its source in the blood. As to the supreme power, the Jew, like the Arab, yields it strictly to God alone. The military inferiority of the Semites is owing to this incapacity for all discipline and organisation; to create armies, they were obliged to have recourse to mercenaries. Thus did David, the Phœnicians, the Carthagenians and the Caliphs. The Mussulman Conquest itself was accomplished without organisation and without tactics. The Caliph did not stand high as a sovereign or military chief—he was a *vice-prophet*. The most illustrious representative of the Semitic race in our days, Abd-el-kader, is a scholar, a man of religious meditation and strong passions, but in no wise a soldier. Thus history does not show us any great empire, founded by the Semitic peoples—Judaism, Christianity, Islamism—this is their work; a task always directed towards the same goal—to simplify the human mind, to banish polytheism, to write at the head of the book of Revelation that word which has rendered such a great service to human thought, by

effacing the mythological and cosmological complications, in which profane antiquity had lost itself: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."

II.

It is about 2000 years before our era that the attention of the historian may be fixed with some certainty on this predestined family. An emigration of nomadic Semites, with which the name of Thare or Terach is associated, quits the mountains of Armenia and advances towards the south. It must be supposed that there had been for a long time in the mountains of the north, a centre of monotheistic aristocracy which remained faithful to its patriarchal manners and exalted worship. Even in quitting this sanctuary, the emigrating tribes looked upon themselves as united to God by an alliance and special covenant; it is thus we see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob carrying on in Canaan and Egypt their noble occupation as shepherds, rich, proud chiefs of a numerous household, in possession of pure and simple ideas, passing through the different civilisations, without confounding themselves with them, and without accepting anything from them. Abraham, a definitely historical and real personage, leads the emigration into Palestine. He was not, however, the first of his race; for, independently of the Canaanites, he found there a Semitic and monotheistic chief like himself, Melchisedeck, with whom he made friends. Mesopotamia, however, remained a long time still the centre of the Terachite family, and it was thence that the aristocracy, faithful to the Semitic ideas regarding purity of blood, sent, even up to its entry into Egypt, to seek wives for its sons.

The life of Israel at that epoch was that of an Arab settler, with his prodigious development of individuality and poetry; yet, on the other hand, with his ab-

solute lack of political ideas, and of an intellectual culture at all refined. We hardly know what was the result of the first contact of the Israelitish tribes with Egypt and the inhabitants of Canaan. The keen antipathy which breathes through all Hebraic history against Canaan, is no reason for maintaining that it was impossible any influence could be exercised by Canaan on Israel. Has not the position taken up by Hebrews, of not recognising the Canaanites as their brethren, led them to exclude the Canaanites from the chosen race of Shem, by throwing them back into the infidel family of Ham, contrary to the evident testimony of language?[1] These hatreds among brethren have nowhere been stronger than with the Jewish race, the most despised and yet the most aristocratic of all races. Without admitting, like some *savants*, that the Hebrews and Canaanites had had for a long time a religion almost identical, we must recognise that it was only in a comparatively modern age that the chiefs arrived at that spirit of exclusion which characterises the Mosaic institutions. Several facts belonging to the Phœnician religion are to be found in the ancient Hebrew cult: in the patriarchal epoch, we see the Abrahamic family regarding as sacred the places and objects which the Canaanites held to be such,—trees, mountains, springs, *bétyles*, or *beth-el*.[2]

Impenetrable mystery conceals from us the first religious movements of Israel, of which Moses was the hierophant and hero. However, it would be contrary to sane criticism to carry back to those distant times the complicated organisation which we see described in the Pentateuch, an organisation of which we find no trace at the time of the Judges, nor even at the time of David and Solomon; similarly, it would

[1] The Phœnician language was almost pure Hebrew.

[2] This name designates sacred stones to which were attributed divine virtues.

be rash to deny that Israel, in retiring from Egypt, was obeying the orders of a great religious organiser. The descendants of Abraham appear to have preserved in Egypt all the original traits of their Semitic genius; in continual contact with the other Terachite tribes of *Arabia Petrea*, they could, under the impulse of a keen antipathy to Egyptian idolatry, conceive one of those monotheistic reactions so familiar amongst Semitic peoples, so fertile in their ideas. Every religion is compelled to quit its cradle: the movement of which we speak, which appeared to have had its principal home in the tribe of Levi, was followed by a sort of *hegira* or emigration, and this in a heroic epoch, which comprehended, in the imagination of more modern times, the proportions of an epic. Sinai, the holy mountain of all the region in which was enacted this drama, was the spot to which revelation attached itself. A sacred name of the Divinity, including the most elevated notion of monotheism, two tables on which were inscribed ten precepts of the highest morality, aphorisms which formed, with the ten commandments, the *law of Jehovah*, rites simple and accommodated to the life of a nomadic people—such as the ark, the tabernacle, the passover—were indeed the essential elements of that primary institution, which has since become so complicated, in like manner as the character of its founder has gone on increasing. M. Ewald proves in the most ingenious way that the glory of Moses underwent in Israel a long eclipse, that his name was almost unknown under the Judges and during the first ages of the Kings, and that the original founder does not rise from his tomb with that extraordinary glory which now surrounds his forehead, until one or two centuries before the fall of the kingdom of Judah.[1]

Arab life in all its perfection, is in effect the spectacle which Israel still presents during all the time of the

[1] Vol. II. p. 44, *et seq.*

Judges, and before its organisation into a monarchy: tribes without any other bond than the remembrance of their fraternity, and the supremacy of the one over the others; the most simple religion which had ever existed; a living poetry, young and rude, the echo of which has come down to our day, in the wild and admirable song of Deborah; no institution, save that of a temporary chief (iudge or *suffète*) and the still less defined power of the prophet or seer, who was believed to be in communication with the deity; lastly, the priesthood, looked upon as the exclusive appanage of the tribe of Levi, and to such a degree that those of them who allowed themselves to be drawn into idolatry believed that they were obliged to take as their security a Levite for the service of their idol. Nothing yet marked Israel as a predestined people. It might be that, among the neighbouring tribes of Palestine, there were people then as advanced, and the curious episode of Balaam proves to us that prophecy, religion, and poetry had among those tribes the same organisation as in Israel.

It is about the time of Eli and Samuel (about 1100 years before the Christian era) that the seal of Divine election is all at once stamped upon Israel. This is the moment when the Israelitic nation reaches the reflective stage, and passes from the condition of a tribe—poor, simple, ignorant of the idea of majesty—to the condition of a kingdom, with a constituted power aspiring to become hereditary. Up to this point Israel had lived in this patriarchal anarchy, excluding all regular government and only moderated by the solidarity of the members of the family, which is the habitual condition of the Arab tribes. Such an order of things could not be maintained in presence of the developments which characterise social life in the East. The people loudly demanded a king such as the other nations had. Everything, in fact, shows us that this revolution took place in imitation of the

foreigners, perhaps the Philistines or Phœnicians, and contrary to the desire of the Conservative party, whose traditions represented it as a sort of infidelity towards Jehovah. The account which is given[1] us is evidently the work of an opponent; the kingdom is represented there under the worst light, and hardly coming under the ancient patriarchal forms. It is not impossible that the account came from Samuel's own hands. The chapters of the book which bear his name, where his political status is set forth, have a character so personal that one is tempted to believe that he is himself their author. What is certain is, that Samuel, drawing back with one hand what he had given with the other, never ceases inveighing against that royalty which he had reluctantly inaugurated, only yielding to the demands of the multitude. Monarchy, untried and destitute of any tradition, was from the first the scourge he used. At last the man destined to satisfy so many contrary cravings and to form the needed link in the history of the Hebrew people, by the re-union in his person of the priesthood, the prophetical office, and that of royalty, appeared, and became the representative of the poetical, religious, intellectual, and political idea of Israel. That man was David.

Several curious contrasts strike, at first glance, the reader who tries to seek an explanation for the character of David, according to the pure ideas of morality which we now hold. How could the man, whom we find by turns, in the different stages of his exciting career, serving the foreigner against his own country, associated with brigands, branded with domestic crimes, cruel and vindictive even to ferocity, pass in the traditions of Israel for a king according to God's own heart, and prove himself an admirable political and religious organiser, the author of those psalms in which the most delicate sentiments of the

[1] 1 Sam. vii.

heart have attained such a fine expression? How could the morals of a *condottiere* be united to true greatness of soul, to the most exquisite piety? How could this man sacrifice to an adulterous caprice his most faithful servant, persuade himself in all good faith that Jehovah was his special protector, obliged to bring him success, and to avenge him upon his enemies, as if God existed for him alone? All these traits would be inexplicable if we did not connect them with the Semitic character, the finished type of which is David in his good as in his bad points. Essentially egotistic, the Semite can hardly be brought to recognise rights which are opposed to his own; to pursue his vengeance, to vindicate what he believes to be right, is in his eyes a sort of moral obligation. Religion is to him but a bond, yet quite different from the morality of all ages. Hence those strange characters in Biblical history, who provoke antagonism, and concerning whom apology is as much out of place as disparagement. Some of the least scrupulous of political acts did not prevent Solomon from being regarded as the wisest of kings. The odd mixture of sincerity and lying, of religious exaltation and egotism, which strike us in Mahomet—the facility with which the Mussulmans confess that in many circumstances the prophet followed his passion rather than his duty—cannot be explained except by the kind of laxity which renders Orientals profoundly indifferent as to the selection of means, when they can be persuaded that the end to be attained is the will of God. Our disinterested and, so to speak, abstract manner of judging things was unknown to them.

It would be, therefore, contrary to sound criticism to discuss with malevolence, as Bayle and the pragmatic Wolfendbüttel have done, or with a jest, as Voltaire has done, such acts in the life of David as good morality cannot justify. His conduct towards Saul is certainly equivocal enough. After the death

of Saul, the throne belonged to the latter's son, Ishbosheth; all the tribes, with the exception of Judah, grouped themselves around him; treason and assassination soon delivered David from this rival. Thanks to the priestly favour and to the strong military institutions he appears to have borrowed from the Philistines, among whom he made a long residence—perhaps, also, by means of subsidised foreign troops,[1] the new king realised his dominant idea—the supremacy of the tribe of Judah, a strong monarchy, hereditary as to family, and having its centre in Jerusalem. The future capital of the religious world had been, up till then, merely a fortified town; David made it "a city whose houses touched each other." At his death, the old king had crushed all his adversaries, realised all his projects, and was able to repeat with pride this war song of his youthful days, a song which astonishes us by its fierce and brutal energy:—

"Jehovah said to my lord; Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies a stool for thy feet.

"Jehovah shall stretch out from Zion the sceptre of thy power; rule thou in the midst of thy enemies.

"Thy people have come at thy call in the splendour of holy garments; the youth which surrounds thee is like the dew from the bosom of the morning.

"Jehovah has sworn it, and he will not repent; thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedeck.

"The Lord is at thy right hand: in the days of his wrath, he breaks to pieces the kings.

"He shall reign over the nations, he shall fill them all with corpses, he shall bruise the heads of those in many lands.

"He shall give refreshing in his course like the

[1] This is at least the explanation which is given of the name of *Cari* (Carians?) and of Crethi-plethi (Cretois-Philistines?) who formed David's body-guard. The Carians held, throughout the whole ancient world, the position of mercenaries, and the Philistines, according to a very probable hypothesis, came from Crete.

water of a torrent, thereby he shall restore thy head."

This profane royalty, contrary in many respects to the true destiny of Israel, continued during all the reign of Solomon. The throne of David, according to strict hereditary laws, belonged to Adonijah. Solomon, however, had the advantage; thanks to a preference of his father's, and to a *harem* intrigue, arranged by his mother Bathsheba, who was always David's favourite spouse. That business was settled by David's *braves*—a little troop of war-worn soldiers who had the nerve of the preceding reign. The will of David was preponderant, so much had Israel been accustomed to obey him. The wisest of kings inaugurated his reign, after the custom of the East, by slaying Adonijah and his followers. Adonijah, if it had been desired, would, without doubt, have treated with the party of Solomon. Be that as it may, these perturbations, belonging to hereditary descent, produced serious consequences, and dealt to legitimacy in Israel a blow from which it never recovered.

If the idea of a conquering monarchy crossed for a moment the mind of David, accustomed to live among his warriors and the Philistines, it was an idea impossible to realise, and was soon abandoned. The Hebrew people were incapable of a great military organisation, and, as a matter of fact, under Solomon all the grand apparel of war was turned to peace. The reign of Solomon constituted the profane ideal of Israel. His alliances with the whole East, without regard to difference of religion, his superb seraglio, in which were shut up seven hundred queens and three hundred concubines, the order and beauty of the services of his palace, the industrial and commercial prosperity of his time, awakened in people's imaginations that taste for comfort and worldly pleasures to which Israel has always abandoned itself whenever the spur of affliction has not goaded her

on to high destinies. The Song of Songs is the charming expression of the gay, happy, refined, sensual life of Israel in one of those moments when, allowing the divine thought to slumber, it has given itself up to pleasure. A profane literature, in part common to the neighbouring peoples of Palestine, overtopped the grand poetry of the Psalmists and Seers. Solomon himself cultivated that worldly wisdom, which is almost foreign to the worship of Jehovah, and which is little more than the art of succeeding here below. Works are attributed to him, and it is certain that he was an author. Less of a poet than his father, and not being endowed like him with the true sentiment of the vocation of Israel, he set about describing created things, "from the cedar to the hyssop;"[1] then, if we must believe the legend, he fell into infidelity, became disgusted with everything, and took refuge in a despairing wisdom: "Vanity of vanities! Nothing new under the sun. To increase knowledge is to increase sorrow. I have desired to search out what passes under the sun, and I have seen that it is nothing but vexation of spirit."

We feel how far we are here from the pure ideal of Israel. The vocation of Israel was neither philosophy, nor science, nor art (music excepted), nor industry, nor commerce. In entering on these profane paths, Solomon caused his people to deviate, in one sense, from their whole religious destiny. It would, indeed, have been the act of the true God if such tendencies had prevailed. Christianity and the conversion of the world to monotheism being the essential work of

[1] M. Ewald means by this expression a cosmography in the style of that of the Arabic naturalist Kazwini, or a description of all the creatures, beginning with the largest and closing with the smallest. I incline rather to believe that he is concerned with moralities drawn from animals and plants, analogous to those which we read in Proverbs (ch. xxx.) or in those of the *Phisiologies*, and of the *Bestiaires*, which were so popular in the Middle Ages. The idea of a science descriptive of nature remained foreign to the Semitic peoples until their contact with the Greek mind.

Israel to which all else was related everything that has turned it aside from that lofty goal, has only been a frivolous and dangerous distraction in its history. Now, far from having advanced this great work, it may be said that Solomon did everything to compromise it. If he had succeeded, Israel would have ceased to be the people of God, and would have become a worldly nation, like Tyre and Sidon. The prophets under him possessed little influence. Entangled by his relations with the most various peoples, and by the desire to please his Egyptian, Sidonian and Moabite wives, he came to tolerate in a way foreign cults. While the successor of David passed his time in playing at riddles with the infidel Queen of Sheba, altars to Moloch and Astart were being erected on the Mount of Olives. What could be more opposed to the first duty of Israel? The guardian of an idea around which the world was to rally, charged with substituting in men's conscience for the worship of the supreme God, that of the national divinities, Israel ought to have been intolerant, and to have affirmed boldly that all worships outside of Jehovah were false and valueless. The reign of Solomon was thus, from many points of view, an interval in the sacred career of Israel. The intellectual and commercial development which he had inaugurated was not in keeping with it. At the end of his life, the prophets, whom he had reduced to silence, attacked him again, and opposed him actively. His works, now considered as profane, were in the main ruinous to him; his memory, now regarded with doubt, while the worth of the ideas he had inaugurated, but for a moment left in Israel a vague though brilliant remembrance.

We see manifested here the great law of the history of the Hebrew people; the struggle of two opposing necessities which seem to have always led in contrary directions this intelligent and passionate race; on one side, greatness of mind, aspiring to comprehend the

world, imitating other peoples, departing from the narrow limits within which the Mosaic institutions enclosed Israel; on the other, the conservative idea with which the salvation of the human race was bound up. The prophets are the representatives of the exclusive tendency; the kings, of a conception more open to ideas from without. The prophetic office, much better suited to the genius and vocation of the Hebrew people, must necessarily triumph, and prevent the laic royalty from ever taking deep root in Israel.

It is here important to remark, that the prophetic authority, if hostile to royalty, is not the least so to the priesthood. The prophet[1] did not proceed from the tribe of Levi; he did not teach in the Temple, but in the open spaces in the streets and market places. Far from enjoining observances according to the priestly habitudes, he preached a pure worship and indifference to external practices, when these were not united with adoration of the heart. The prophet held his mission from God alone, and represented the popular interests against kings and priests, which latter were often allied with the kings. Hence arose a kind of power, which has no analogue in the history of any people, a sort of inspired tribunal devoted to the preservation of the ancient ideas and rights. It cannot be denied that the general policy of the prophets is not presented to us as narrow and opposed to progress; but that was the true policy of Israel. It would appear at first unsuitable—that austere and monotonous voice, always foretelling ruin, anathematising the instincts which drew primitive man towards the worship of nature. Often, in this long struggle between the kings and the prophets, it is the side of the kings that we are tempted to take. The op-

[1] We regret that we must employ the word *prophet*, which dates only from the Greek translators of the Bible, and which would make it seem that foretelling the future was the essential function of these inspired men. It would be preferable, at least as regards the ancient periods, to call them seers, or to retain the Semitic name *nabi*.

position of Samuel to Saul is ordinarily little understood, and if the prophets sometimes addressed to David very just admonitions, when they recall that great king to morality, which he was too prone to forget, it cannot be denied that these reproaches reveal a very simple policy—for example, when they represent, as a capital crime, the numbering ordered by David, and when they wish to make him regard the calamities which follow as a punishment for that very popular proceeding. Several of the kings represented by the severe authors of the books of the Kings and Chronicles as wicked, were perhaps reasonable and tolerant princes, partisans of necessary alliances with the stranger, bowing to the necessities of their time, and to a certain liking for luxury and industry. The prophets, full of the old Semitic spirit, ardent enemies of the plastic arts, mad iconoclasts, hostile to everything that would draw Israel towards the rest of the world, demanded from the kings persecutions against the religions which were foreign to monotheism, and reproached them with those sensible alliances which they contracted with foreigners, as if they had been crimes. Never was opposition more bitter, violent and anarchical, yet at bottom the opposition was reasonable. They went on the principle that Israel had but one vocation—the preservation of monotheism, while the direction of its movement pertained by right to the prophets. Israel could not rally humanity around a faith which scrupulously shut out all foreign influences; the preservation of monotheism demanded neither largeness nor variety of mind, but an unyielding tenacity.

III.

DAVID and Solomon represented for sixty years (about ten centuries before the Christian era) the

highest degree of glory and temporal prosperity which the Hebrews had ever attained. Thenceforth all their dreams of happiness were directed to an ideal composed of David and Solomon—a king powerful and pacific—who should reign from one sea to the other, and to whom all kings should be tributary. At what moment did this fertile thought, from which proceeded the Messiah, make its appearance in Israel? Criticism cannot say. These ideas, rooted in the conscience of a nation, had no special beginning; like all the deep works of nature, their origin is hidden in a mysterious darkness. Was the idea of the empire of the world born in Rome at a given moment? No; it is as ancient as Rome itself, and was in some sense stamped in the first stone of the capital. Faith in the Messiah, vague, obscure, intermingled with eclipses and forgetfulness, reposed in like manner in the most ancient strata of Israel.

The unfitness of the Hebrews to play a great political part discovered itself more and more. From the time of Rehoboam, they continued nearly always in vassalage, first under Egypt, then under Assyria, then under Persia, then under the Greeks, then under the Romans. A special cause accelerated the ruin of their temporal power. The tribe of Judah, having obtained the ascendant through the victories of David, never succeeded in stifling the individuality of the other tribes and in founding the unity of the nation. The tribes in the north of Palestine, grouped around that of Ephraim, aspired to separation, and only endured with impatience the religious *dependence* in which Jerusalem held them. The great expenses of Solomon, which fell heavily on the provinces and were only of advantage to the capital, succeeded in separating the interests of north and south. Ephraim, with its Mount Gerizim, the rival of Zion, its sacred town Bethel, its numerous relics of the patriarchal age, was without doubt the most prominent of the individualities

which struggled against the absorbing policy of Judah. The rivalry of these two chief families of the Israelites dates from the most remote epochs of their history. In the time of the judges, Ephraim, by the sojourn of the ark at Shiloh and by its territorial importance, actually held the supremacy of the nation. The idea of an Israelite monarchy was for a moment nearly being realised by Ephraim.[1] After the death of Saul, we see this tribe grouping around it all the tribes of the north, to oppose unsuccessfully Ishbosheth to David, the skilful and fortunate champion of the pretensions of Judah; finally, after the death of Solomon, it caused the triumph of its separatist tendencies by the schism of the kingdom of Israel and the advent of an Ephraimite dynasty. Among the chief of the artificers whom Solomon employed in the construction of the terrace between Zion and Moriah, he observed a robust young Ephraimite, whose intelligent air impressed him, and to whom he gave an important office in his administration. This was the man destined to inflict a mortal blow on the house of David. Jeroboam, even in the lifetime of Solomon, raised the standard of revolt; the financial embarrassments which followed the death of the great king furnished him with an excellent opportunity to consummate a separation which had become inevitable.

It cannot be said that the schism of the ten tribes had been, from the point of view of the general destiny of the Hebrew people, a serious misfortune. Judah, reduced to an area of twenty leagues long by fifteen broad, left to itself, purifies and elevates itself; its religious ideas develop and become complicated. The north, on the contrary, given over to brutal dynasties and a prey to constant revolutions, was in due time destroyed, and religious traditions there became weak. Hard pressed by the haughty Jews of Jerusalem, when they wished after the captivity to assist them in re-

[1] See the narrative of the attempt of Abimelech (Judges ix).

building the Temple, the Samaritans scarcely did anything except copy from a distance the institutions of Judah. They took their revenge in Christianity. Christ found his most numerous disciples in the despised provinces of bad report for orthodoxy amongst the ancient kingdoms of the north ; and in that sense it may be asserted that Samaria has had as much share as Jerusalem in the grandest work of Israel. That ancient division of the Hebrew people, which, if it did not have the brilliant destiny of Judah, has nearly equalled it in its perseverance and faith, is in our day on the point of being extinguished, and presents to the world, the remarkable spectacle of a religion about to give up the ghost. The persecutions, the misery and the proselytism of the most active sects, above all, Protestant missions, threaten every moment its feeble existence. In 1820, the Samaritans were still about 500 in number. Robinson, who visited Naplous (the ancient Schechem) in 1838, did not find more than 150. In a petition which they addressed to the French Government in 1842, they own that they are reduced to forty families. Their old priest, Salamé, son of Tobias, who corresponded with Bishop Gregory and M. de Sacy,[1] is still alive; but it does not seem that, after him, the knowledge of the Samaritan language and tradition would survive. In our days, when everybody seeks in the East for somebody to protect, who will think of these poor Samaritans ?

It is remarkable, besides, that the prophetic element in the northern kingdom was at first an element of political disturbance, even more grave than in the south, and rendered impossible there all law of heredity, while at Jerusalem the *prestige* of the House of David and the undoubted privileges of the Levites maintained a sort of divine right of succession to the throne and the priesthood. Elijah and his school re-

[1] See the work of M. l'Abbé Bargès, entitled "The Samaritans at Naplous."

present to us at this moment prophetic omnipotence, making and unmaking dynasties, governing in reality under the name of king in tutelage. The finest pages of M. Ewald's work are those in which he sets forth the character and *rôle* of Elijah. This giant of the prophets, by his anchorite life, by the peculiar dress he wore, by his mysterious retreat into the mountains whence he never returned, his supernatural aspect, giving forth threatenings, disappeared immediately, and who, after all this, contrasts strongly with the more simple aspect of the ancient prophets and the less ascetic school of the lettered prophets. A great revolution, in short, was not slow in working upon the form of the prophetic system. The prophets of the school of Elijah and Elisha did not write. To the old prophet—the man of action—succeeded the scribe prophet, seeking only to control by the beauties of speech. These wonderful men enriched the Hebrew Scriptures, which, up to that point, had been limited to historical narrative, song and parable, with a new style, a sort of political literature, nourished by the emergencies of the day, and with which the press and the tribune of modern times can alone be compared.

In proportion as the profane future of Israel appeared destroyed beyond recovery, so its religious destinies increased. The last age of the kingdom of Judah presents one of the most astonishing religious movements of history. The first seeds of Christianity are there. The old Hebrew religion, simple, severe, without subtle theology, is become little else than a negation. About the time of which we speak, a lofty pietism, which resembled the reforms of Hezekiah, and especially of Josiah, introduced some new elements to Mosaism. Worship centred itself more and more in Jerusalem; prayer had then its beginning. The word devotion, which corresponds to nothing in the ancient patriarchal religion, began to have some meaning. New editions of the Mosaic

code, conceived in the style of preaching, and whose authority was supported by certain pious artifices, were propagated;[1] some canticles, composed by the lettered, and marked by some rhetoric, rekindled in men's souls the zeal for Mosaism. A lax, prolix style, yet full of unction, whose type we find in the work of Jeremiah, characterises these productions. It is useless to add that each recrudescence of piety was accompanied by a recrudescence of intolerance and persecution against everything at variance with the purest monotheism.

A striking modification was manifested at the same time in the manner of feeling. A spirit of gentleness, a delicate sentiment of compassion for the weak, love for the poor and oppressed, with their inexpressible antique shades, are to be seen everywhere. The prophecy of Jeremiah and Deuteronomy have already become, according to this view, virtually Christian books. Love and charity were born into the world. At the same time, the cherished idea of Israel grew—the coming of a model king, who would make God reign in Jerusalem and realise the ancient oracles. It was believed for a long time that this perfect king would come; but when Josias was seen *nearly to realise* the ideal of the sovereign theocracy and yet to perish miserably, the hope vanished. The very simple system on which the social edifice of Israel rested, the covenant between God and the nation, in virtue of which, as long as the nation remained faithful to Jehovah, it would be fortunate and victorious; this system, I say, could not escape the rudest disappointment. The prophets, charged with the application of this strange principle, had a severer struggle to maintain against reality. Often the epochs in which piety was most active were the most unfortunate, and it may be said that the final catastrophe surprised Israel in the midst of a period of

[1] See 2 Kings (IV. Kings according to the Vulgate), xxii.-xxxiii.

such great fervour. Hardened against deception, accustomed to hope against hope, Israel appealed from the letter to the spirit. The idea of a spiritual kingdom of God and of a law written not upon stone, but upon the heart, appeared to it like the dawn of a new future.

While these delicate questions were being discussed in the bosom of Jerusalem, on which the religious future of the world depended, certain great and all-powerful monarchies had been established in the East, to which the destruction of the kingdom of Judah *would hardly* cost an effort. The Hebrews, with such simple ideas of military and political organisation, experienced a feeling of astonishment and terror when they found themselves for the first time in presence of that irresistible organisation of strength, that impious and brutal materialism, that despotism in which the king usurped the place of God. The prophets, blind according to the flesh, seers according to the spirit, never ceased in denouncing the only policy which could save Israel, fighting with the monarchy, or exciting, by their threats and puritanism, internal commotions.[1] We witness them amid the ruins of Jerusalem maintaining their obstinacy and triumphing over the disasters which realised their predictions. A vulgar policy condemned them and rendered them in great degree responsible for the misfortunes of their country: but the religious *rôle* of the Jewish people was ever bound to be fatal to its political action. Israel must reap the fate of a people devoted to one idea, displaying its martyrdom in the face of the world's scoffs, awaiting the time when the world should come and entreat for a place within Jerusalem.

[1] See, for example, Jeremiah xxxvi.

IV.

THE captivity only affected a small number of the inhabitants of Palestine; but it struck the head of the nation and the entire class in which the religious tradition resided, so that the whole mind of Judea was really carried away to Babylon. To this fact must be attributed the finest productions of Hebrew genius, and generated on the shores of the Euphrates, those touching psalms which reach the soul, enchanting and penetrating it with sadness and hope—those incomparable prophetic odes which were added to the works of Isaiah.[1] It formed itself thenceforth at Babylon, or rather in the little towns grouped around the great city, like a second capital of Judaism. The restorers of the institutions and ancient practices of Judea, such as Ezra and Nehemiah, came thence, and were indignant, in their arrival, at the ignorance and corruption of language which they found in their co-religionists in Palestine. After the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, Babylon became anew the principal centre of the intellectual culture of Israel, so, we may say, that the continuation of the Jewish tradition was twice brought about in that city in consequence of the two great catastrophes which seven centuries apart brought complete ruin to Judaism in Jerusalem.

I do not know whether there is in the history of the human mind a stranger spectacle than that which Babylon witnessed in the sixth century before the Christian era. This little group of exiles, lost in the midst of a profane crowd, feeling at once its material weakness and its intellectual superiority, and seeing around it the brutal reign of force and pride, was thus exalted to heaven. From such divine oracles as were not yet accomplished, that accumulation of deferred

[1] Ch. xl.-lxvi. The strongest proofs have established that those pieces are not by Isaiah, but rather date from the time of the captivity.

hopes, that struggle of faith and imagination against reality, were definitively born the Messiah. In presence of triumphant iniquity, Israel appealed to the *great day of Jehovah* and resolutely threw itself into the future.

Who was the unnamed prophet,[1] who at this decisive moment was the interpreter of Israel's thought? Even the dreams of the sick man, who in the attacks of fever, sees another world unrolled before him, and the shining of another sun, could never have equal conceptions. We shall only indicate the strain of those divine hymns, by which the illustrious unknown saluted the new Jerusalem:—"Raise thyself, shine forth, O Jerusalem!" "A voice which cries in the desert, 'Prepare the ways of Jehovah, make his paths plain!'" "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that publisheth salvation!" "Ye heavens shed down your dew, and let the skies send down justice." "Who is this that cometh from Edom, who arrives from Bozrah with his garments dyed with blood?" Then, in an obscure and mysterious vision, comes this mysterious apotheosis of the *Man of Sorrows*, the *first* hymn dedicated to suffering, and to which the world has never ceased to listen. Nowhere better than in the inspired pages of which we speak has there been set forth the special gift of Israel—*faith*, a consciousness of its capacity to survive all defeats, the certainty of the future which can give to a handful of captives the assurance to affirm that the world shall belong to them one day. "Lift your eyes around, and look, O Jerusalem! at the crowds which approach and assemble round thee. Sons are brought thee from distant lands, and daughters are pressed to thy bosom. A multitude of camels and dromedaries of Media and of Ephah shall be brought unto thee; men shall come from Sheba, bringing gold and silver, and giving praise to Jehovah.

[1] He whose works have been placed as a sequel to Isaiah's collection.

The flocks of Kedar shall run towards thee, the rams of the Nabatheans shall come and offer themselves for thy sacrifices. Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as doves to their cot? The isles of the sea wait for thee. The vessels of Tarshish are prepared to bring thy sons unto thee. Strangers shall offer to build thy walls. Kings shall become thy servants. Thy gates shall be open night and day, that the chosen among the nations may enter, and that the kings may do thee homage. The sons of those who have humbled thee shall come bending unto thee, those who have despised thee shall kiss the steps of thy feet, and shall call thee city of God, the holy Zion of Israel. Thou shall suck the milk of nations, and shall be nourished by the breasts of kings. No more shall iniquities be spoken of in thy land, nor disasters within thy frontiers. Peace shall reign within thy walls, and glory shall be seated at thy gates. Thou shalt need neither the sun to lighten thy days, nor the moon to illuminate thy nights. Thy sun shall never go down, and thy moon shall know no declination, for Jehovah shall be thy eternal light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended for ever."

From this point Israel appears to us to be exclusively possessed by its religious idea. None of the profane distractions by which it was at times delayed can henceforth trouble it. No longer a doubt, no longer any revolt, nor a temptation to idolatry; paganism inspires it with nothing now, save bitter and scoffing derisions of the *Book of Wisdom*. Judaism goes forth, contracting itself and fortifying itself more and more. The liberty, the simplicity, of the ancient Hebrew genius, so foreign to every scruple and casuistry, give place to the littlenesses of Rabbinism. The scribe succeeds the prophet. A strongly organised priesthood stifles all profane life: the *synagogue* becomes what in later ages is to be the *church;* a sort of constituted authority against which all independent

thought hurls itself. Pietism develops and produces a weak enough literature, if we compare it with the productions of the classical age, but still a something full of charm; some tender and touching psalms, the everlasting nourishment of pious souls and the pretty romance of Tobit and of Judith are of this period. Let any one compare honest Tobit with Job, stricken like him with undeserved griefs,—a world separates them. Here, patience, virtue recompensed, sweet and consoling pictures; there, rebellion, obstinacy, despotism, and the proud feeling of the Arab who says in misfortune, "God is great;" a sentiment which has nothing in common with the purely Christian virtue of resignation.

A great indifference to political life was the consequence of the narrow and severe zeal which characterised the period of which we speak. Israel was not charged to teach the world liberty; hence, after the captivity, we see them accommodating themselves voluntarily to a subordinate position, and cultivating the advantages which this position offered them, without appearing to feel anything disgraceful in it. While Greece, with resources very little superior to those of Palestine, bestowed its first victory on Liberty, Israel resigned itself to being only a province of the *great king*, and found it well enough. Here we have, it must be confessed, the bad side of Jewish history, being only jealous for their religious liberty, the Jews submitted themselves without much regret to the governments which showed some tolerance for their worship, and gave to all despotisms, servants so much the more devoted, in that they were not restrained by any responsibility towards the nation. The Chaldean Empire, it is true, was hateful to them, and they hailed its ruin with cries of joy, because, no doubt, that military and wholly profane empire had nothing which responded to their nature. They accepted, on the contrary, as an advantage, the domination of the

Persians, whose religion was the least pagan of the pagan world, and presented by its gravity, its tendency to monotheism, its horror for figured representations, something analogous to the Mosaic worship. Cyrus was received by them as a messenger from Jehovah, and introduced with full favour into the elect family of the people of God.

It cannot be denied that the Persians showed themselves just as liberal towards Israel. Zerubbabel, whom they re-established at the head of the nation, was of the House of David, and any other than Jews would have reconstituted through him their national dynasty; but such was their political indifference, that, after Zerubbabel, they allowed his line to merge in obscurity, and did not recognise any other power than that of the high priesthood which became hereditary. Israel pursued its destiny more and more; its history is no longer that of a State, but of a Religion. It is the lot of nations which have to fill an intellectual or religious mission towards other peoples, to sacrifice their nationality for this brilliant and perilous vocation. The Greek genius alone has acted powerfully upon the world at an age when Greece had no longer a political *rôle*. It has been clearly shown that the first cause of Italy's ruin was the universal tendency of Italy, that *primato* which they have so long in fact exercised, and which has acted in this way, that, wishing to be mistress everywhere, she has been nothing at home. Who can tell if one day French ideas will not fill the world when France itself shall be no longer. The nationalities which hold firmly to their own soil, who are not concerned to make their ideas prevail beyond their borders, are in their own countries powerful to resist, but they have little part in the general movements of the world. To act in the world, it is needful to die to oneself; the people who make themselves the missionaries of a religious idea have no other country than

this idea, and it is in this sense that too much religion kills a people, and thwarts a purely national establishment. The Maccabees were admirable heroes, but their heroism does not fill us with the same impressions as Greek and Roman patriotism. Miltiades fought for Athens without any afterthought of theology or creed; Judas Maccabæus fought for a faith, and not for a country, or at least the country was in him subordinated to the faith. That is so true that, since the captivity, the soil of Palestine has become almost indifferent to the Jews. Their most flourishing, enlightened, and pious communities are found in regions which are at the greatest distance from the East.

A final trial, meanwhile, awaited Israel, perhaps the most dangerous of all; I mean, the contagion of the civilisation, which, setting out from Alexandria, overran all Asia. The first duty of the Jewish people was isolation. That duty it had been able to fulfil without much trouble in presence of Egypt, of Phœnicia, and of Assyria: Persia had exercised upon its peculiar imagination a very strong influence, but, thanks to a singular analogy of institutions and of genius, that influence, freely accepted, was not an infidelity. The temptation was much more grave before that inconquerable prestige which was bound to bring into submission to the Greek genius, the noblest part of the human race. Israel was at first very deeply affected. The Jewish colonies established in Israel gave themselves up to the seductions of Hellenism, broke up their intercourse with Jerusalem, and almost entirely went forth from the Israelite family.[1] Palestine itself submitted at first to the action of the Selucidæ: there was seen at Jerusalem a stage and gymnasiums;

[1] It is very remarkable that the Jews of Egypt have not left any trace in the vast depositary of doctrines embraced in the Talmud: now-a-days, again, the true Jews hardly regard these as bearing any relation o their own religion.

a powerful party, which included in its ranks almost all the youth who favoured these novelties, and, fascinated by the *éclat* of Greek institutions, took already compassion on the worship and austere habits of their ancestors. But at that time a conservative spirit prevailed: and some determined people of the old school, and a family of heroes, saved the tradition around which the world was very soon to rally.

We can estimate danger by measuring a hatred. Unfortunate are those who try to oppose themselves to the free development of the religious wants of humanity! The historic memoirs which are the most detested, are those of the sovereigns who, not having been able to divine the future, or having foolishly attempted to arrest it, have made themselves the persecutors of religious movements which are destined to triumph; such were Antiochus, Herod, Diocletian, Julian, all great princes as far as worldly matters are concerned, but whom the popular conscience has condemned without pity. This Antiochus Epiphanes, whose name is irrevocably associated with that of Nero, was a humane and enlightened prince,[1] who, without doubt, wished nothing but the progress of civilisation and the arts of Greece. The rude means which he employed were those which the Greeks and Romans constantly employed everywhere in order to bend before them civilisations different from their own. Having long remained at Rome as a hostage, Antiochus returned to Syria with his head full of ideas about Roman politics, and dreaming of an Eastern empire founded like that of Rome upon the assimilation of nationalities and the extinction of provincial varieties. Judea was the first obstacle which it was necessary to encounter in the execution of that project. The priesthood was at that moment much enfeebled; the High-priest Jesus, who, to follow the fashion had himself called Jason, neglected his

[1] See the testimony of the Book of Maccabees even, I. vi. 11.

affairs so far as to carry one of his mad theories to the Herculean games at Tyre; the temple was pillaged; Jupiter Olympus had now there his altar, and the bacchanals coursed through the streets of Jerusalem. Then commenced that heroic resistance which has given to religion its first martyrs. The priests and a great part of the population of Jerusalem had given in; but it was the privilege and the secret of the strength of the Jewish people to maintain its faith independent of the priest, in making it reside solely in the conscience of a small number of heads of families attached to very simple ideas, and who governed by the invincible conviction of their superiority, the destiny of humanity was worked out there through the firmness of some families. In consequence of that firmness the Greek spirit was reduced to impotence in Palestine, and deprived of really fruitful co-operation at the first dawn of Christianity.

One influence much more efficacious, but exercised without violence and by the effect of the moral conformity of two peoples, was that of Persia. Persia is the only country which has exercised on the Jewish people a truly deep religious impression. One of the most important results of oriental studies in these later days has been to show the principal part which the institutions of the Avesta have played in all Western Asia during the centuries which preceded and those which immediately followed the Christian era; it is Persia we must thank for such new elements as we find in Christianity as compared with Mosaism—elements which a superficial examination had at first referred to Greece. Babylon, which continued to be one of the principal centres of Judaism, was the theatre of that combination which was destined to be followed by so grave results in the history of the human spirit, and the first of which results was for the Jews a more complicated theory of angels and

demons, a refined spiritualism, if it is compared with the ancient Hebrew realism, a taste for symbolism which is almost wholly confined to the caballa and gnosticism, ideas about the terrestrial manifestations of the Divinity entirely strange to the Semitic peoples. Faith in immortality and the resurrection of the body took more decided forms; the Hebrews had never attained on this point to anything very determinate; the immortality in which Israel believed, more than any other people, was that of its race and of its work, not that of the individual. At last the Messianic formula assumed much more precision, and attached itself to a belief that the end of the world was at hand, and would be accompanied by a renovation of all things.[1] A series of critical compositions under the form of apocalyptic visions, and which M. Ewald looks upon, with justice, as a renaissance of the works of prophecy, such books as Daniel, Enoch, the fourth book of Esdras, the sibylline verses,[2] were the fruit of the new taste, which, if it is compared to the style of the poets of the good age, represents a kind of romanticism. On looking only at the form, there are in it the indications of entire decadence, whilst we sometimes encounter a singular vigour of thought. The book of Daniel in particular may be considered as the most ancient essay of the philosophy of history. The revolutions which spread over the East, the cosmopolitan habits of the Jewish people, and, above all, the intuitions which that people have always had of the future, give those under its influence an immense advantage over Greece. Whilst

[1] See an excellent work upon the origin and formation of Apocalyptic beliefs among the Jews, recently published in the *Revue de Théologie* of M. Colani (Oct. 1855), by M. Michel Nicolas, professor at the faculty of Theology of Montauban. There is found there the demonstration of what I am only able to indicate here.

[2] No doubt is possible about the relatively modern date of the book of Daniel. See the special works of M. M. Lengerke, Hitzig, Lücke, and Ewald. A part of the sybilline verses is of Jewish origin.

political history—I mean the internal struggles of the city—have found in Greece and Italy its most excellent interpreters, Israel has had the glory of first considering humanity in its entirety in the succession of empires, one after another, something more than a fortuitous succession, and of reducing to a formula the development of human affairs. However incomplete it may be, that system of the philosophy of history is at least that which has lived longest: it has endured from the times of the Maccabees almost to our own day, St Augustine, in the *Cité de Dieu*, and Bossuet, in the *Histoire Universelle*, have hardly added anything essential to it.

One new feature in Israel marks the fruitful century which preceded the birth of Christ: numerous sects sprung up assuming a refinement of theological pretensions unknown until that time. At the same time, the practice of particular devotion, which had for the ancient Hebrews little attraction, spread, and, following the eternal law of religions, always bound to develop themselves by accessory means, obliterated the ancient foundation. The synagogues, or places of religious meeting, of which we find no trace before the captivity, and of which the institution is only to a small extent in harmony with the Mosaic spirit, assumed a great importance, and extended on all sides. The influence of Higher Asia made itself to be more and more felt, but exposed on its eastern side, Jerusalem remained shut on the side of Greece, and rebutted obstinately all action of the Oriental philosophy. A less numerous party of enlightened men, too reasonable to be successful, the Sadducees, tried hard to constitute a sort of rational Mosaism. The infidel Herod caused the temple to be rebuilt in the Greek style, and opposed to fanaticism a system of politics entirely worldly, founded on the separation of the Church and State, and the equal tolerance of the different sects. These timid remedies were of no

effect against the mysterious evil under which Israel laboured. The Pharisees seized upon it: but who were the Pharisees? The continuators of the true tradition, the sons of those who resisted during the captivity, who resisted under the Maccabees the ancestors of the Talmudists, and of those who ascended the funeral pile of the middle ages, the natural enemies of all those who aspired to enlarge the bosom of Abraham.

Although there was maintained up to the end the great law which dominated the history of Israel, the struggle between the liberal tendency and the conservative tendency, a struggle in which, for the welfare of mankind, the conservative idea had always the upper hand, he who studies that history according to our modern ideas, reflected from the ideas of Greece and Rome, is scandalised at every step: he must be for Saul against Samuel, for Ishbosheth against David, for the kings against the prophets, for the Samaritans against the Jews, for the Hellenistic party against the Maccabees, for the Sadducees against the Pharisees. And yet, if Saul and Ishbosheth had gained their point, Israel had not been but a small state, forgotten by the East, something like Moab or Idumea. If the kings had succeeded in suppressing the prophetical office, perhaps Israel would have equalled, in the profane order of things, Tyre or Sidon, but all its religious importance would have been suppressed. If the Maccabees had not come to resist the Selucidæ, Judea would have been a country like Bithynia or Cappadocia, absorbed at first by Greece, afterwards by Rome. There were no doubt some minds narrow and behind the times, such as those obstinate Jews of Modin, minds closed against every idea of progress, in no way endowed with the inspirations of art, incapable of comprehending anything of the brilliant civilisation of Greece. It cannot thus be denied that the Sadducees do not appear to

us in many things superior to the Pharisees. The whole history of Israel proves, by a striking example, that victory does not belong here below to those causes which appear the most reasonable and liberal; it is to those which Jehovah has chosen for the guidance of man towards the unknown lands which the oracles have promised him.

The moment had arrived when free thought and narrow thought were about to engage in a final contest, and when the two contrary tendencies agitated in Israel were about to come to a rupture. On the one hand, in fact, the Jewish people had an essentially conservative mission; on the other, it hardly took any account of the future. The day when that future opened, it was easy to foresee that the synagogue would obey its eternal maxim: to hope always and always to resist. Hence the false position of Israel in presence of Christianity and the origin of that irreconcilable hatred which eighteen centuries have hardly assuaged. Driven from its mother's bosom, this child was bound to grow up against her and to march without her into the midst of the destinies which awaited it. Saint Paul has expressed, with all the energy of his animated genius, that situation, the most extraordinary which the religious history of the world has presented.

Let us pause before the mysterious appearance in which the whole of life is summed up. Religions neither die nor abdicate, and Judaism, after having produced its fruit, must continue throughout the ages its long and tenacious existence. The spirit of life, however, has henceforth left it; its history is beautiful and curious still, but it is the history of a sect, it is no longer, *par excellence*, the history of religion. What, if in closing we should put to ourselves this question: Has Israel fulfilled its vocation? Has it protected in the grand conflict of the nations, the position which was primarily confided to it? Yes, we

reply without hesitation. Israel has been the trunk upon which the faith of the human race has been engrafted. No people has taken its destiny so seriously, none has felt so keenly its national joys and sorrows. None has lived more for an idea. Israel has conquered time, and worn out all its oppressors. On the day on which false news occasioned the taking of Sebastopol to be celebrated a year too soon, an old Polish Jew who passes his days in the Imperial Library, deeply versed in the reading of the dusty manuscripts of his nation, came up to me quoting this passage from Isaiah, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen." The victory of the allies was nothing in his eyes, but the chastisement for violence exercised upon his co-religionists by him whom he termed the Nebuchadnezzar and Antiochus of our time. I believed I saw before me, in that gloomy old man, the living genius of this indestructible people.

It has wrung its hands over all its ruins; persecuted by all, it has avenged all, and there has been needed for this only one thing, but a thing which man cannot give himself, and which must endure. That is how it has realised the boldest predictions of its prophets; the world which has despised it has come to it; Jerusalem is really at the present hour a "House of Prayer for all nations." Equally reverenced by Jew, Christian and Mussulman, it is the holy city of four hundred millions of men, and the prophecy of Zachariah has been fulfilled to the letter. "In that day ten men shall lay hold of the skirt of a Jew, saying to him, we will go with you, for we have heard it said the Lord is with you."

PAGANISM.

M. ALFRED MAURY,[1] who is already known by some excellent works in which profound erudition is illumined by sound criticism, has undertaken the task of writing a complete history of the religions which are usually embraced under the name of Paganism. As a collaborator of M. Guigniaut in the vast repertoire of mythology which that learned academician has given to France, M. Maury was better fitted than anyone to undertake a work which might have daunted a courage less than his. The volume which he now publishes contains, epoch by epoch, pictures of the religious revolutions of Greece, from primitive times down to the time of Alexander. It realises every hope that the friends of earnest study may have conceived. This book, when completed, will take a place amongst writings which have most contributed to found the great science of our century; I mean, the philosophical history of the human mind.

The Greek religion, amongst all the religions that have been practised by civilised peoples, is at once the least precise and the least determined. The Pelasgan cults generally appear to have been barbarous and gross. It is surprising that the people amongst whom was first realised the complete type of civilisation should have long remained, in regard

[1] *History of the Ancient Religions of Greece*, by Alfred Maury.

to religion, so very far below, not only the Semitic nations, who were, in ancient times, superior in religion to the Indo-European peoples, but also to several branches of the Indo-European family, such as India, Persia, and Phrygia. The extreme difficulty of the study of Greek mythology is precisely due to this character of dogmatic imperfection. The ancient Greeks, not having had a fixed rule of faith, their religion, otherwise as charming as their poetry, is, according to our theological ideas, but a mass of contradictory fables, the true sense of which is most difficult to unravel. The new school very properly interdicts itself from seeking here anything which resembles profound mysteries or lofty symbolisms. These consist of confused recollections of an ancient worship of nature, traces of primitive sensations, which took a bodily form, representing personages to whom, by means of a play upon words, and I might even say cock-and-bull stories similar to those which enchain the imagination of a child, were attributed adventures. A lively, active, and forgetful people constituted the exquisite framework of these fables, which, embellished by poetry and art, became a sort of mythology common to all the peoples of the Græco-Roman world. Greece never had a sacred book, nor symbols, nor councils, nor a sacerdotalism organised for the conservation of dogmas. The poets and artists were her true theologians; the notion of the various divinities was most often left to the arbitrary conception of the individual. Hence that marvellous freedom which enabled the Greek mind to move spontaneously in every direction, without ever encountering on any side the constraint of a revealed text; hence, also, art being freed from theological control, and having the liberty to create, according to its own fancy, types of the divine world, had incomparable facilities; but yet, again, for a religion itself, a vexatious uncertainty which allows its

worship to drift with every current, opens an unlimited scope to the fancies of individual devotion, and ends by rushing into an incredible inundation of follies and nonsense. In this chaos of contradictory fables, there is nothing more difficult than to seize on the real essence of the Hellenic religion; I mean, the aliment that it furnished to the craving for a belief. This is what M. Maury has tried to discover. The interpretation of particular myths has engrossed him less than questions relating to worship, morals, and the forms under which the sentiment of piety manifested itself in paganism. Religions present themselves to the observer under so many different guises, that their history, to be complete, has to be written from very different points of view. One could write an extended history of Christian theology, without touching on the history of Christianity as a great social fact; one could exhaust the social history of Christianity without saying a word as to the history of Christian devotion. And the same thing may be said of paganism. Leaving to others the task of extracting the poetical element contained in the ancient fables, M. Maury seeks out especially the sentiments on which they are based, and the fund of positive religion which is concealed in them.

In the two first chapters of his book, M. Maury has attempted to unravel the network of the populations of Greece, and to trace the origin of the Hellenic religion. These two chapters, if they are not the ones in which the author has the most discovered his personal views, are, at any rate, the ones which contain the greatest number of new ideas to French readers. In them M. Maury has grouped together, with knowledge and discernment, all the results which comparative philology has achieved in these last years in Germany, as regards the primitive unity of Indo-European religions. These results, scattered through numerous scientific journals, and particularly

in the *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Sprachforschung* of M. Kuhn, the finest philological magazine published at the present day, are of the highest importance to history and philosophy. Is there, in fact, a more striking phenomenon than to find, in the religions of the ancient races, who have founded civilisation from the island of Ceylon to Iceland, the same resemblance as in their languages? If there is to-day a single demonstrated proposition, it is that the peoples, the most diverse of this great race, the Hindoos, the Persians, the Armenians, the Phrygians, the Greeks, the Italians, the Germanic peoples, Slav, and even Celtic, had primitively the same worship, consisting in the adoration of the forces of nature, which were recognised as free agents. The systems which sought to explain the Greek mythology as facts borrowed from Egypt, Judea, or Phœnicia, or from a learned symbolism, or by an alteration of revealed truths, all those systems, I say, have had to be abandoned.[1] Greek mythology is one of the forms which have clothed, in course of time, and under the empire of local circumstances, that naturalism, the purest and most ancient type of which is presented to us by the Vedas. No doubt the common religious heritage of the whole of the Indo-European peoples was inconsiderable, if we take into account only the number and philosophic value of the ideas which they embrace; no doubt each branch of the great race has developed this ground-work in its own way and appropriated it; and Greece, in particular, has transformed it according to its plastic genius and its delicate taste; but the basis remains everywhere the same; everywhere where the Indo-European race has preserved any recollection of its ancient religious state, we find an echo,

[1] No doubt, progressive studies lead us to prize at a high value the indebtedness of Greece to Phœnicia for mythological facts; but the primitive Aryan kernel has none the less, in the *ensemble* of the Greek religion, preserved its primitive and generative importance.

more or less faint, of the sensations which revealed to man a divine world concealed behind nature.

How is it that the human mind has extracted a vast collection of fables, in appearance so simple, from that naturalism? How has it transformed the material elements into personages, and the myths concerning them into adventures—the link between which and the original signification of the myths is often unrecognisable? It is this which modern criticism has often ingeniously detected. Sometimes the reason of these metamorphoses appeared to blossom from the soil: for example, when the fire of the domestic hearth (*hesta* or *vesta*) and the subterranean fire (*vulcanus*) became two divinities,—the first, chaste and venerable; the second, sad and toilsome. At other times, the freaks of popular imagination, and the impossibility of succeeding generations retaining for a long time the sense of a legend, were the cause of singular deviations. Products of an antique age, when man and nature, scarcely distinct the one from the other, had, so to speak, but one consciousness, the artless dogmas of primitive religion soon ceased to be understood, and descended to the level of anecdotes and romances.

I shall cite only one example. The serene and refreshing impression awakened by the first showers of spring, inspired the ancestors of the Indo-European race with an idea which is to be discovered in the mythologies of almost all their descendants. The dew, fertilising the soil, was conceived as the mysterious union of the two divinities, Heaven and Earth. "The pure heaven," says Æschylus—excellent interpreter of the old fables—"loves to penetrate the earth. The earth, in turn, aspires to the hymen: the rain falling from the amorous sky fecundates the earth, and the latter brings forth for mortals, pasture for the flocks, and the gifts of Ceres." As the imagination of primitive peoples invariably confounded a

sensation with the circumstances which accompanied it, so the cuckoo (the bird whose song mingles with the genial showers of spring) is found to be involved in the myth, and its melodious and melancholy cry hence represented to the simple men of early ages the amorous sighs of the divine couple. Now, would you like to know what this myth became, as interpreted by a less delicate age—this myth at once so charming and so sublime? An equivocal story, over which Aristophanes made merry, to which the people added ridiculous details, and which gave rise to gross practices. It is told that Juno, one day when it was very cold, being on Mount Thornax, a benumbed cuckoo came and sought refuge in her bosom. The goddess took pity on the bird; but she had hardly given it shelter, when Jupiter reappeared to her in his natural form. It is added that the goddess resisted his overtures, and he was compelled, in the end, to promise her marriage.

It is difficult to imagine to what extent transformations of this kind were carried in antiquity. From beginning to end, Greek mythology is but one vast misinterpretation, by which the divinities—judged from the standpoint of the man of ancient times, who was intoxicated by the sight of nature—were transformed into individuals. The same thing has happened in India, and continues still to happen there in our days. Smallpox and cholera are there personified. So with the legends which still subsist there; every day, if not added to, they are at least modified in form. And yet, nowhere are there to be found so many traces of the primitive worship of nature as in the Brahminic religion. It is to fire, considered as an element (*agni, inguis*), that the hymns of the Veda are addressed. The *divas* themselves (*divi, dii*) were not the creatures of a metaphysical reasoning, analogous to those by which monotheism deduces the necessity of a supreme cause. They belong to one of those

classes of aëriel beings with which the imagination of the primitive Aryan peopled nature, being conceived in many respects as inferior to man.

It was in the worship of heroes, especially, that the religious sentiment found the occasion to manifest itself, and this led to singular results. Heroes are not, as people for long believed, deified men; their origin is the same as that of the gods. Almost always a god and a hero are found to answer to the same allegory, and to represent, under two distinct figures, the same phenomenon, the same star, the same meteor. The hero is thus the double of a divinity, the pale reflection and a kind of parhelion of the effulgence of a great god. True it is, that in comparing the divine legend with heroic legend, we usually find the latter much the richer. But the origin of this difference is quite simple. The hero, being considered as a man, and having, according to the vulgar notion, left traces of himself on this earth, has necessarily acquired more vogue, and expresses more closely the sentiments of the multitude. Hence it is that saints, in the less enlightened Christian regions, occupy a higher plane than God himself; for the single reason that they, being inferior, are not separated from mortals by such an insuperable interval.

This was especially manifest at the epoch when people affected to draw from the pagan religion a moral teaching, and, during which, that heroes gained in importance and popularity. Nor is it to be gainsaid that the latter did, indeed, lend themselves much better to this kind of teaching than did the gods. On the occasions when their virtues, after being put to a severe test, have been seen to succumb at moments, only to rise again immediately, were suggested by the poets as models of resignation and courage. Hercules, especially, was much made use of in this way by those whom

we are accustomed to recognise as preachers of paganism. Hercules, according to a very probable hypothesis, which the demonstrations of M. Maury elevate to the standard of a certitude, was an ancient divinity of the air (*Hera-cles*), whose worship among the warlike Dorian race took a wholly heroic colour, and was transformed, by the influence of poets and philosophers, into a pure moral allegory. This demi-god, proceeding in the first instance, like all the other divine Hellenic types, from the personification of natural elements, but singularly enhanced by its being confounded with Tyrian Milkareth, ended by becoming the ideal of human perfection, a species of saint, of whom learned biographies were written, and in regard to whom it was attempted to awaken in the souls of men the sentiment of duty. This may appear incredible; but India furnishes us with many examples of analogous transformations. Vishnu, who plays in Hindoo mythology a part similar to that of Hercules, represents only the principle of a personification of the air—an image of the celestial vault lighted by the sun. The success following their labours was attributed to him, for the most part drawn from the blessings derived from the sun; and he was made into a sort of redeemer, devoting himself to the salvation of the human species.

How is it that such simple intuitions, corresponding in principle to nothing either philosophical or moral, were able to satisfy, during so many centuries and down to a period of brilliant civilisation, the religious wants of the most polished races? How, at the present day, does a country like India, blighted, it is true, by secular decadence, but where the human mind is characterised by so much power and originality, cling so obstinately, in spite of Christian and Mussulman preaching, to a religious system which, it would seem, could not have survived the early ages of mankind? Habitude, the

influence of which is peculiarly decisive when it is a matter pertaining to things religious, can alone explain so singular a phenomenon. These fables, in spite of their absurdity, being transmitted by tradition, spoke to the imagination and the heart, simply because they were old. Religious sentiment seeks always to attach itself to some ancient dogma, even though it sees that dogma vanquished and refuted. Close to a little town in Brittany, where I spent my infancy, there was a chapel dedicated to the Virgin, which contained a much venerated Madonna. One night the chapel took fire, and left only the shapeless and calcined trunk of the statue. The alms of the faithful were soon forthcoming to rebuild the little sanctuary: a new statue took the place of the old one on the altar, and the old image, though not destroyed, was put away in a corner. This was a sore trial for the simple faith of the peasants of the whole neighbourhood. The new Virgin, in spite of her rich veil and her brilliant colours, could not command prayers; everybody carried their vows to the charred image which had been stripped of its honours. This old, mutilated statue had formerly hearkened to and received the confidences of their troubles: to have gone to another Virgin, because she was new and possessed more beautiful surroundings, would have been, in their eyes, infidelity.

The first duty of criticism, if it would seek to comprehend the beliefs of the past, is, then, to place itself in the position of the past. The physical sciences, in excluding, on the one hand, from nature everything which has the semblance of free agency and monotheism; on the other, in representing the world as a sort of machine, having no other life than that conferred on it by the supreme worker, have made it very difficult to understand a religion, the starting point of which was nature conceived as animated.

But how many other appearances are there in religious history, the causes of which escape vulgar commonsense, which, nevertheless, have led away whole sections of the human race! When people, who are little familiar with things outside of Europe, are told that Buddhism is a religion without a God, or, at least, a religion in which the gods (*devas*) are beings of so little consequence that, in order to arrive at a state of final perfection, they are obliged to become men and to owe their salvation to a man, the thing appears to them inconceivable; nevertheless, the statement is true to the letter, and the religion of which we speak counts, at the present moment, the greatest number of adherents of any in the world. Speaking generally, there is no man who can form anything like a definite notion of the different objects of which the human mind is capable of deflecting. A comparative study of languages, literatures and religions can alone, by enlarging the circle of accepted ideas, enable us to comprehend under how many various aspects the world has been and can be considered.

One thing is certain — that antiquity, outside of its schools of philosophy, lacked, as we are accustomed to judge, one of the elements which we regard as essential to sound reasoning; I mean, a clear conception of nature and its determinate laws. During brilliant epochs, this was no inconvenience; on the contrary, the scientific spirit, which it is to the eternal glory of Greece to have introduced into the world, owes, in one sense, its original polytheism. Yet it is most remarkable that the nomad Semitic peoples, who from the beginning appear to have been more or less carried towards monotheism, have never had an indigenous science or philosophy. Islamism, which is the purest product of the Semitic genius and which may be regarded as the ideal of monotheism, extinguished among the various peoples

brought under its sway, all curiosity, all investigation into just causes. "God is great!" "God knows!" Such is the response of the Arab to narratives the most calculated to excite his surprise. The Jewish people, so superior in the matter of religion to all the other peoples of antiquity, presents not even a trace of any scientific movement before it began to have relations with the Greeks. "From the earliest ages," as has been well said by Ravaissen,[1] "the Hebrew religion, in order to account for nature and man, had invoked the holy and all-powerful God, the Eternal, anterior and superior to the world, the sole author and sovereign legislator of all things. The countless divinities of other religions, on the other hand, notably the Hellenic religions, were only individual powers, limited the one by the other, similiar to things in nature, subject nearly to the same imperfections and to the same vicissitudes. It hence resulted that, observing in the universe, in its successive phenomena and diverse parts, a unity, an order, a harmony, which neither the discordant wills of the gods, nor the accidents of their adventures could at all explain, people at a very remote period sought to discover, by means of reason, the universal reason of the things regarding which mythology was silent. Such was, as it seems to me, the origin of philosophy amongst the Greeks."

Thus it was that the absence of any religious rule, during the period that the Greek mind retained its vigour and originality, had its advantages. But when intellectual culture was relaxed, superstition, to which polytheism opposed too few barriers, spread over the world and affected even the best minds. In this connection, I know nothing more sad than the spectacle presented by philosophy beginning

[1] *Memoirs of the Academy of Inscriptions and Belle Lettres*, vol. xxx. Part I. p. 1, *et seq.*

with the third century of our era. What shall we say of men like Ammonius, Plotinus, Proclus, Isidorus? What elevation of heart and of soul? Where shall we find a martyr, by her austere magnanimity, to compare with Hypatia? More than all, what a man was Porphyrus, the only scholar, perhaps, of antiquity who possessed exactitude and the true critical spirit, as Niebuhr and M. Letronne have very clearly shown. And yet what ineffaceable blots do we find in the biographies of these great men? What aberrations in everything that concerns ghosts, familiar demons, theurgy? Porphyrus, an excellent critic in every other respect, admits, as touching metempsychosis and ghosts, so many absurd things, insomuch that table-turning and spirit-rapping are only a little more ridiculous. Some time ago I set about reading up the lives of these great men, men admirable in many respects, with a view to representing them as the saints of philosophy; and all said and done they, by their high character, their lofty morality, their conscious pride, often also by the legends attaching to their names, are worthy to be placed side by side with the most revered Christian ascetics. But their credulity in what concerns spirits, went to my heart and prevented me from feeling any admiration for the better sides of their lives. In this likewise is to be traced the poison which taints the character, otherwise most attractive, of Julian. If the re-establishment of paganism served no other purpose than to relieve the gross superstitions with which we see that emperor constantly occupied, we would have but a faint comprehension of a man endowed with so much mind who, by reason of such follies, has earned for himself the evil renown of Apostate.

But I am here anticipating the order of events. I have been speaking of the decadence of paganism, and, so far, M. Maury has only treated of the epoch

in which myths still preserved their freshness and their living force. In the next volume he is to set forth the religious institutions of Greece, all that relates to the mysteries, oracles, festivals, sacerdotalism, and devotional practices. It is here especially that the erudition and the criticism of M. Maury promises us interesting results. At the present day M. Maury is the scholar who is the best acquainted with the organisation, and, if I may be allowed the word, the *sacristy* details of ancient worship. What interest will not attach to a book in which one will see unfolded the whole history of Greek polytheism in its gradual transformation, in its alliance with the religions of the Romans, in its struggle with Christianity, in its agony, prolonged through the superstition of the Middle Ages down almost to our own days.

MAHOMET AND THE ORIGIN OF ISLAMISM.

All origins are obscure—religious origins still more so than others. Produced by the spontaneous instincts of human nature, religions no longer recall to mind their infancy any more than the adult recalls to mind the history of his early years, and the successive phases of the development of his conscience; mysterious chrysalis—they only appear in the full light, save in the perfect maturity of their forms. It is with the origin of religions, as with the origin of humanity. Science demonstrates that upon a certain day, in virtue of the natural laws which, up till then, had ruled in the development of affairs without exception or exterior intervention, the thinking being has appeared endowed with all his faculties, and perfect as to his essential elements; and yet to wish to explain the appearance of man upon the earth by the rules which have regulated the economy of our globe since nature ceased to create it, would be to open the door to such extravagant imaginations that no serious mind would wish to remain there for a moment. It is yet undoubted that on a certain day, by the natural and spontaneous expansion of his faculties, man improvised language; and yet any image borrowed by the actual condition of the human mind cannot aid us in conceiving of this

strange fact, which has become entirely impossible in our reflective state. It is necessary, besides, to give up any attempt to explain, by procedure accessible to experience, the primitive facts of religions—facts which have nothing analogous now since humanity has lost its religious fertility. In face of the powerlessness of reflective reason to lay the foundation of belief and to discipline it, how can we fail to recognise the concealed force which at certain moments penetrates and vivifies the bowels of humanity? The supernaturalist hypothesis, perhaps, presents less difficulties than the frivolous solutions of those who handle the problems of religious origins without having penetrated the mysteries of the spontaneous conscience; and if by retaining their hypotheses, he must have arrived at a rational opinion upon so many facts truly divine, very few men would have the right not to believe in the supernatural.

Yet, why should it be that science ought to renounce any attempt to explain the formation of the globe, because the phenomena which have led to the condition in which we see it no longer reproduces itself in our days upon such a great scale, that it ought to renounce explaining the appearance of life and living species because the contemporaneous period has ceased to be creative? To explain the origin of language because it no longer creates tongues; the origin of religion, because it no longer creates religion? Assuredly not. It is the work of science, a work infinitely delicate, and often perilous to divine the primitive by the feeble traces which it has left of itself. Reflection has not removed us so far from the Creator age, that we cannot reproduce in ourselves the sentiment of spontaneous life. History, so miserly as it may be for the non-conscious epochs, is not yet entirely silent; it permits us, except in handling directly the questions of origin, at least, to confine them without. Then, as

nothing is absolute in human affairs, and as there are not two facts in the past which strictly enter into the same category, we have intermediary shades to represent to us the phenomena inaccessible to immediate study. Geology finds in the tardy degradations of the present condition of the globe certain data to explain the former revolutions. The linguist, in assisting at the phenomena of the development of languages which continues under our own eyes, is led to discover the laws which have ruled in the formation of language. The historian, in spite of the primitive facts which have marked religious appearances, can study degenerations, abortive tentatives, half religions, if I may so speak, presenting for discovery, although in most reduced proportions, the processes by which the great works of the thoughtless epochs of religion have been formed. The birth of Islamism is in this connection a unique and truly inappreciable fact. Islamism has been the last religious creation of humanity, and in many points of view, the least original. In place of this mystery under which the other religions envelop their cradle, this is born in the light of history, its roots are even with the ground. The life of its founder is not so well known as that of the Reformers of the sixteenth century. We cannot follow year by year the fluctuations of his thought, his contradictions, his weaknesses. Besides, the religious origins are lost in the dream; the most cunning work of criticism barely suffices to discern the real under the deceitful appearances of myth and legend. Islamism, on the contrary, appearing in a time of very advanced reflection is absolutely wanting in the supernatural. Mahomet, Omar, and Ali are neither seers nor illuminated persons, nor thaumaturgists. Each of them knew very well what he did, none of them was his own dupe. Each presents himself for

analysis nakedly, and with all the weakness of humanity.

Thanks to the excellent works of M. M. Weil[1] and Caussin de Perceval,[2] one can say that the problem of the origins of Islamism has reached in our days a solution very nearly complete. M. Caussin de Perceval has introduced into the question a fundamental element, by the new information which he has furnished regarding the antecedents and the forerunners of Mahomet, a delicate subject which has hardly ever been perceived before him. His excellent work will remain as a model of that exact, solid erudition far removed from all conjecture, which forms the character of the French school. M. Weil's delicacy and penetration have gained for his works upon Islamism a distinguished rank. In the matter of choice, and the wealth of its sources, his work is yet inferior to that of our compatriot scholar, and he may be reproached for yielding too much trust to Turkish and Persian authorities, who have in the present question but little value. America and England have also occupied themselves with Mahomet. A well known novelist, M. Washington Irving,[3] has related his life most interestingly, but without giving signs of a very exalted historic feeling. His book, nevertheless, proves a true progress when we think that in 1829, M. Charles Foster published two thick volumes, very tasteful to clergymen,[4] to establish

[1] *Mohammed der Prophet, sein Leben und Seine Lehre*, Stuttgard, 1843; *Historische Kritische Einleitung in den Koran*, Bielefeld, 1844; *Biblische Legenden der Muselmänner*, Frankfort, 1845; *Geschichte der Chalifen*, Mannheim, I. 1846; II. 1848; III. 1851.

[2] *Essai sur l'histoire des Arabes avant l'Islamism, pendant l'époque de Mahomet et jusque à la reduction de toutes les tribus sous la loi Musulmane*, Paris, 1848, 3 vols.

[3] *Lives of Mahomet and his Successors*, New York, 1850.

[4] *Mahometism Unveiled; An enquiry in which that Archheresy, its diffusion and continuance are examined on a new principle, tending to confirm the evidences, and aid the propagation of the Christian Faith.*

that Mahomet was nothing less than "the little horn of the goat, who figures in the eighth chapter of Daniel, and that the Pope was the great horn." M. Foster founded on this ingenious parallel a whole philosophy of history, according to which the Pope represented the Western corruption of Christianity, and Mahomet the Eastern corruption; hence the striking resemblances between Mahometism and the Papacy.

It would be a curious history to write—that of the ideas which the Christian nations have formed of Mahomet since the narratives of the false Turpin upon the golden idol *Mahom* worshipped at Cadiz, and which Charlemagne did not dare to destroy, fearing a legion of devils which were enclosed in it, up to the day when criticism has given, in the most real sense, his title of prophet to the father of Islamism. The virgin faith of the first half of the Middle Ages, which had not, as to faiths foreign to Christianity, aught but the vaguest notions, figured to itself *Maphomet, Baphomet, Baphoum*,[1] as a false god, to whom human sacrifices were offered. It was in the twelfth century that Mahomet began to pass for a false prophet, and that men seriously thought of unveiling his imposture. The translation of the Koran, executed by the order of Peter the Venerable, the polemical works of the Dominicans, and of Raymond Lullei, the descriptions furnished by William of Tyr and Matthew Paris, contributed to spread more healthy ideas as to Islamism and its founder. To the idol *Mahom* succeeded the heresiarch *Mahomet*, placed by Dante in such an honourable region of his hell (xxviii. 31) among the sowers of discord with Fra Dolcino and Ber-

This is the same M. Charles Foster who is the author of a mystification on the Sinaitic inscriptions, in which he pretends to discover the primitive language and writing, the primitive text of Exodus, etc.

[1] Hence Bahumerie, Mahomerie, Momerie, to designate all superstitious and impure worships.

trand de Born. It was already the sign of a revolution wrought in men's consciences. In periods of faith truly fresh, either the faithful ignores that there exist different religions from his own, or if he knows of the existence of other religions, these religions appear to him so impure and so ridiculous that their holders cannot be, in his eyes, anything but insane or perverse. What an enlightenment for consciences will that day be in which it will be recognised that by the side of dogma, which they believed unique, there are others also which pretend to come from heaven. The phrase, the *Three Impostors*, which preoccupied so strongly the whole thirteenth century, and as to which the popular imagination made up a book, is the summing up of this first incredulity, proceeding from the study of its Arabian philosophy, and from a pretty exact knowledge of Islamism.[1] The name of Mahomet becomes thus nearly synonymous with profanity, and when Orcagna, in the Hell of the Campo Santo of Pisa, wished to represent by the side of the heretics the despisers of all religions, the three persons whom he chose were Mahomet, Averrhoes, and Antichrist. The middle ages did not stop half way in its wrath. Mahomet was at once a sorcerer, an infamous debauchee, a stealer of camels, a cardinal, who, not having been able to succeed in being made Pope, invented a new religion to revenge himself upon his colleagues. His biographies became the repertory of every imaginable crime, to such a point that the histories of *Baphomet* were, like those of Pilate, a subject of obscene anecdotes.[2] The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries did not show more justice. Bibliander, Hottinger, and Mar-

[1] I have exposed this at length in my Essay upon Averrhoes and Averrhoism, p. 222, *et seq.*

[2] See the *Roman de Mahomet*, published by M. M. Reinaud and Fr. Michel (Paris 1831), and Edel du Méril, *Poésies populaires latines du moyen âge* (1847), p. 367.

acci dared still to occupy themselves with the Koran, only to refute it.[1]

Prideaux and Bayle at length looked upon Mahomet as historians and not as controversialists, but the want of authentic documents retained them in the discussion of puerile fables, which up till then had supplied curiosity for the people and anger for the theologians. The honour of the first attempt of a biography of Mahomet from oriental sources belongs to Gagnier. That scholar was led to ask explanations from Abulfeda, and this was fortunate. We cannot doubt that criticism had been in the 18th century clever enough to seize the difference which must be held as to historic value between the narratives of Arabian historians and legends hatched by Persian imagination. This fundamental element which M. Caussin de Perceval alone has well observed is, to speak truly, the knot of all the problems relative to the origins of Islamism. Composed from Arabic sources, such as the biographies of Ibn-Hischam and Abulfeda, the life of Mahomet is simple and natural, almost without miracles; composed according to the Turkish and Persian authors, the same legend appears like a mass of absurd fables of the worst kind. Although the traditions relative to the life of Mahomet only commenced under the Abbasides, the editors of that age rested themselves alone upon written sources, the authors of which in quoting their authority went back even to the companions of the prophet. Around the mosque contiguous to the house of Mahomet there was a bench placed,

[1] We shall judge of the force of their arguments by this passage which I borrow from the celebrated *Génebrard:* "Why is it, O Mahomet! that thou dost not write thy law, or thine Alcoran, in Latin, or Greek, or Hebrew, seeing that those are the tongues known through all the Roman Empire and by all the learned? He replies, but so coldly and after the manner of the Hugenots, that the Alcoran or Institution is not for the Romans, nor for the learned, because they would not be converted, but that is not the reason, but because he is a beast, and knows neither Hebrew, Greek, nor Latin!"

upon which some men without family or dwellings had chosen to live, who subsisted on the generosity of the prophet, and often ate with him. These men whom they called *the people of the Bench, Ahl-el-soffa,* were thought to know many particulars as to the life of Mahomet, and their remembrances became the origin of innumerable sayings or *hadith.* The Mussulman faith itself was startled by the multitude of documents thus obtained: six legitimate sources were alone recognised in the tradition, and the indefatigable Bokhari confesses, that as to the 200,000 hadith which he had collected, 7225 only appeared to him of incontestable authenticity. European criticism certainly might, without running any reproach of rashness, proceed to a still more severe elimination. Certainly, it cannot be denied that these first narratives present us with many features of the real physiognomy of the prophet, and are distinguished in quite a decisive manner from the collections of pious legends, conceived only for the edification of the readers, the true monument of the primitive history of Islamism; besides the Koran remains absolutely unimpeachable, and this monument will suffice by itself alone to reveal Mahomet to us.

I do not see in any literature a process of composition which could give an exact idea of the editing of the Koran. It is neither a book written with sequence, nor the vague and indefinite text arriving, little by little at a definite lesson, nor the editing of the instructions of the master made according to the recollection of his disciples; it is the collection of the sermons, and, if I may say so, of the orders of the day of Mahomet, bearing still the date of the place where they appeared, and the trace of the circumstances which called them forth. Each one of those compositions was written, at the dictation of the prophet,[1]

[1] The word Koran seems to mean Recitation, and does not reveal any idea analogous to that of *book* (Kitab) of the Jews and Christians.

upon skins, upon the shoulder-blades of sheep, upon the bones of camels, upon polished stones, upon palm leaves, or preserved in memory by the chief disciples, who were called bearers of the Koran. It was only under the Khalifate of Abu-Bekr, after the battle of Yemâma, in which a great number of old Mussulmans perished, that it was thought to bind the Koran between two boards, and to place together those fragments which were detached and often contradictory. It is unquestionable that this compilation, over which Zeyd-ben-Thabet presided,—the most authoritative of Mahomet's secretaries,—was carried out with perfect good faith. No work of co-ordination or reconciliation was attempted. They placed the longest portions at the head. They placed at the end the shortest *surates*, which only contained a few lines, and the principal copy was confided to the care of Hafsa, daughter of Omar, one of the widows of Mahomet. A second edition was made under the Khalifate of Othman. Some variations in orthography and dialects were introduced into the copies of the different provinces; Othman named a Commission, always presided over by Zeyd, to constitute definitely the text according to the dialect of Mecca; then by a process very characteristic of oriental criticism, he caused all the other copies to be collected and burned so as to cut short discussions.

It is thus that the Koran has come down to us without any essential variations. Certainly such a mode of composition inspires certain scruples. The integrity of a work, for a long time entrusted to the memory, does not appear to me to be well protected. Have alterations and interpolations not been allowed to slip into the successive versions? Some Mussulman heretics have become on this point the subjects of modern criticism. M. Weil, in our days, has maintained that Othman's edition was not purely gramma-

[1] This is the Arabic name of the chapters of the Koran.

tical, as the Arabs wished it to be, and that politics had its part there, especially with a view to defeat the pretensions of Ali. In any case, the Koran is presented to us with so little arrangement, in a disorder so complete, and with contradictions so flagrant; each of the pieces which compose it bears a physiognomy so decided, that no one can think, in a general sense, of attacking its authenticity. We have, therefore, for Islamism the immense advantage of having the very portions of its origin—portions, doubtless, much respected, and expressing much less the truth of facts than the needs of the moment, but in that, even, precious to the eyes of the criticism which knows how to interpret it. It is upon this strange spectacle, of a religion born in the light of day, with a full knowledge of itself, to which I wish to call for a moment the attention of thinkers.

I.

CRITICISM in general ought to repudiate knowing anything certain as to the character and biography of the founders of religions. For them the tissue of the legend has entirely covered that of the history. Were they handsome or ugly, vulgar or sublime? Nothing is known as to this. The books which are attributed to them, the discourses which are claimed for them, are usually nothing but compositions more modern, and they tell us much less what they were than the manner in which their disciples conceived the ideal. The very beauty of their character is nothing to them; it belongs to humanity, which made them in its own image. Transformed by this incessantly creative force, the most ugly caterpillar becomes the most beautiful butterfly.

It is not thus with Mahomet. The work of legend which clings around him is weak and without originality. Mahomet is really a historical personage; we

touch him at every point. The book which remains to us under his name represents, nearly word for word, the discourses which he made. His life has remained a biography like another, without prodigies, without exaggerations. Ibn-Hischam, and in general, the most ancient of his historians, are intelligent writers. He has very nearly the tone of the Lives of the Saints, written in a style devotional, reasonable; and yet we could quote twenty legends of saints, like that of Francis D'Assisi, which have become infinitely more mythical than that of the founder of Islamism.

Mahomet did not wish to be a thaumaturgus. He wished only to be a prophet, and a prophet without miracles. He repeats without ceasing, that he is a man like another, mortal like another, subject to sin, and having need, like another, of the mercy of God. In his last days, wishing to set his conscience in order, he mounted a chair—"Mussulmans," said he, "if I have struck any one of you, there is my back, let him strike me. If any one has been outraged by me, let him render injury for injury. If I have taken his goods from any one, all that I possess is at his disposal." A man rose and claimed a debt of three drachms—"better stand the shame in this world than the next,"—and he paid him at once. This extreme measure, this truly exquisite good taste with which Mahomet conceived his position as a prophet, was imposed upon him by the spirit of his nation. Nothing would be more inexact than to represent the Arabs before Islamism as a gross, ignorant, or superstitious nation; it must be called, on the contrary—a nation, keen, sceptical, incredulous. Witness a curious episode in the first period of Mahomet's mission which makes us readily understand the icy indifference which he met around him, and the extreme reserve which was demanded of him in the employment of the marvellous. He was seated in the vestibule of the

Caaba, at a little distance from a circle formed by several Koreischite chiefs, all opposed to his doctrines. Otba, son of Rebia, one of these, approached him, took his place at his side, and speaking in name of the others: "Son of my soul," said he, "thou art a man distinguished by thy qualities and thy birth. Although thou stirrest up commotions in thy country and causest division in its families, although thou outragest our gods, though thou taxest with impiety and error our ancestors and our sages, we wish to deal respectfully with thee. Hear the propositions which I have to make to thee, and reflect whether it is not right for thee to accept them every one." "Speak," said Mahomet, "I hear thee." "Son of my soul," replied Otba, "if the purpose of thy conduct is to acquire riches, we shall all unite together to make thee a greater fortune than that of any Koreischite. If thou lookest for honours, we shall create thee our chief, and we shall not take any resolution without thy advice. If the spirit which appears to attach itself to thee and to dominate over thee, so that thou are unable to keep thyself from its influence, we shall find potent medicines, and we shall guarantee that they shall cure thee." "I am not greedy of goods, nor ambitious of dignities, nor do I possess an evil spirit," replied Mahomet. "I am sent by Allah, who has revealed to me a Book and has ordained me to announce to you the rewards and punishments which await you." "Very well, Mahomet," said the Koreischite to him, "since thou dost not agree to our propositions, and since thou pretendest to be sent by Allah, give us evident proof of thy title. Our valley is narrow and sterile; obtain from Allah that he may enlarge it, and that he may remove to a distance the chain of mountains which lock it in; that he may make the rivers flow like the rivers of Syria and of Irak, or, indeed, that he may cause to rise from the tomb some of our

ancestors, and among these Cossay, son of Kilâb, that man whose word has so much authority; that these illustrious dead, resuscitated, may recognise thee as a prophet, and we shall then recognise thee also." "God," replied Mahomet, "has not sent me to you for that purpose; he has sent me only to preach his law." "At least," replied the Koreischite, "demand of the Master that he may cause to appear to us one of his angels to bear witness of thy truth, and to ordain us to believe thee. Demand from him also that he will show us ostensibly the choice which he has made of thy person, by exempting thee from the necessity of seeking thy daily subsistence in the markets like the least of thy compatriots." "No," said Mahomet, "I shall not address to him these demands; my duty is only to preach to you." "Very well, thy Master may cause the heavens to fall upon us, as thou pretendest he is able to do, for we shall not believe thee."

We see that a Buddha, a son of God, a thaumatagurus of high pretension, was above the temperament of that people. The extreme refinement of the Arabian spirit, the free and exact manner in which it shows itself in the actual, the libertinism of manners and beliefs, which prevailed at the epoch of Islamism, prohibited the new prophet from assuming lofty airs. Arabic was completely wanting in the element which engenders mysticism[1] and mythology. The Semitic nations, those at least who have remained faithful to the patriarchal life and the ancient spirit, have never comprehended in God variation, plurality, sex. The word goddess would

[1] If there is objected to me the general tendency of oriental philosophy towards mysticism, I shall observe that it is only in error that the name of *Arabic philosophy* is applied to a philosophy which has never had root in the Arabian peninsula, and of which the appearance has been a reaction of the Persian against the Arabic genius. That philosophy has been written in Arabic, that is all; it is not Arabian either in tendency or spirit.

be in Hebrew the most horrible barbarism. On account of this trait, so characteristic, they have never had either mythology or epopee. The plain and simple way in which they conceive of God as separated from the world, not begetting, not being begotten, not having any fellow, excludes those grand embellishments, those divine poems in which India, Persia, Greece, have developed their imagination. The mythology representing pantheism in religion is not possible, but in the imagination of a people who waver in indecisive notions about the limits of God, of humanity, and of the universe, how the spirit furthest removed from pantheism is assured by the Semitic spirit. Arabia, in particular, has lost, or perhaps has never had, the gift of a supernatural invention. Hardly will there be found in all the Moallakât[1] and in the vast repertory of ante-Islamic poetry any religious thought. This people have not the perception of sacred things, but in return it has a very lively perception of finite things, and of the passions of the human heart.

See, then, how the Mussulman legend, outside of the Persian, has remained so poor, and why the mythical element is absolutely *nil*. Without doubt the life of Mahomet, as that of all great founders, is surrounded with fables; but those fables have not received any sanction except from the Schiites, influenced by the turn of the Persian imagination. Far from these being at the foundation of Islamism, they ought not to be looked upon but as accessory dross, tolerated rather than consecrated, and very analogous to the mythology of the lowest stage of the apocryphal books, that the church has never freely adopted them, nor severely outlawed them.

[1] We call *moallakât* or *suspendues*, those pieces of verse which have gained the prize in the poetic tourneys, and were suspended by nails of gold at the door of the Caaba. There remain seven of them, to which they usually add two or three other poems of the same character.

How has the popular imagination not surrounded with prodigies so extraordinary an existence? How has infancy, above all, a theme so advantageous for legends, not made an attempt to produce its outlines? To understand these things, that night on which the prophet was born the palace of Chosroès was shaken by an earthquake, the sacred fire of the Magi was extinguished, the lake of Sâwa was dried up, the Tigris overflowed its banks, and all the idols in the world fell on their faces on the earth. These traditions, nevertheless, never raised themselves to the height of a consecrated legend, and, in short, the narratives of the life of Mahomet, in spite of some blemishes, have continued a charming collection of grace and naturalness.[1] To enable us to appreciate better this moderation, I will give here an example of the manner in which India is accustomed to celebrate the birth of its heroes.

When the creatures learnt that Buddha was about to be born, all the birds of the Himalayas flew to the palace of Kapila, and alighted, surging and beating their wings on the terraces, balustrades, arches, galleries, and roof of the palace; the ponds were covered with the lotus; in the houses, butter, oil, honey, sugar, although they were used in abundance, seem never to go done; drums, harps, teorbes, cymbals gave forth, without being touched, melodious sounds. Gods and hermits rushed from every part of the ten horizons to accompany the Buddha. The Buddha descended, accompanied by hundreds of millions of divinities. At the moment when he descended the vast three thousand thousand regions of the world were illuminated with an immense splendour, eclipsing that of the gods. There was no being who did not experience terror and pain. All were aware of the presence of an infinite good being, and had only affectionate and tender thoughts. Hundreds

[1] See M. Caussin, t. I. p. 286, *et seq.*

of millions of gods, with their hands, with their shoulders, with their heads, supported and carried the car of Buddha. A hundred thousand *apsaras* conducted choirs of music in advance, in the rear, on the right, and on the left, and sung the praises of Buddha. At the moment at which he was about to leave the womb of his mother, all the flowers opened their cups, all the young trees raised themselves from the ground and opened out their buds; rivers of perfume flowed from all directions. From the sides of the Himalayas the young lions ran quite joyously to the town of Kapila, and waited there at its gates without doing harm to any one. Five hundred white young elephants came to touch with their trunks the feet of the king, the father of Buddha; the children of the gods, adorned with girdles, appeared in the women's apartment, going from one side to the other; the wives of the Nagas, allowing half of their bodies to be seen, appeared moving in the air. Ten thousand daughters of the gods, holding in their hands fans of peacocks' feathers, appeared upon the azure of the sky. Ten thousand full urns appeared, going round the great city of Kapila; a hundred thousand daughters of the gods, carrying conches, drums, and timbrels suspended from their necks, appeared motionless; all the winds kept back their breath; all the rivers and brooks ceased to flow; the sun, the moon, and the stars ceased to move. A light of a hundred thousand colours, producing comforts to the body and mind, spread out in all directions. The fire did not burn in the galleries, in the palaces, in the terraces; in the arches of the gates appeared suspended pearls and precious stones. The rooks, the vultures, the wolves, the jackals ceased their cries. Nothing was heard but sounds that were sweet and agreeable. All the wooden gods of Salas, the foliage coming from their bodies, appeared motionless and bent. Some small and large parasols

opened themselves on all sides in the air. Meanwhile the queen advanced into the garden of Loumbeni. A tree bent forward to salute her. The queen seized a branch of it, and, looking up to heaven with thankfulness, gave a yawn, and remained motionless. Buddha rushes forth from her right side without hurting her. A white lotus pierced the earth, and opened to receive him. A parasol descended from heaven to cover him. A river of cold water and a river of warm water flowed forth to bath him, etc.[1]

This is what is called broaching legend boldly and not bantering with miracle. Arabia had arrived at too great intellectual refinement to be able to form a supernatural legend in this style. The only time when Mahomet wished to permit himself an imitation of the transcendent fancies of other religions, in his noctural journey to Jerusalem upon a fantastic animal, the thing turned out for the very worst. This miracle was met by a storm of pleasantries, many of his disciples deserted, and the prophet hastened to withdraw his unfortunate conception by declaring that this marvellous voyage, announced at first as real, was only a dream. All the Arabic legend of Mahomet, such as it appears in Abulfedo, for example,[2] is confined to some narratives very soberly conceived. It has been sought to place him in connection with the illustrious men of his time and the preceding generation, and to assert that his mission was prophesied by venerated personages. When he walked the neighbouring solititudes of Mecca full of his thought, he heard voices saying to him, Hail! apostle of God, he turned about and saw nothing but trees and rocks. On his flight from Mecca, he took

[1] We take these descriptions, among a thousand, in the *Lalita Vistara*, a Legend of Buddha. Tr. by M. F. Edouard Foucaux. Paris, 1848.

[2] See the translation which is given by M. Noël Desvergers. Paris 1837.

refuge in a cave; his enemies went to enter it, when they observed a nest in which a dove had placed its eggs, and a spider's web which covered the entrance. His camel was inspired, and when the chiefs of the town came to take hold of the bridle of the animal to offer him hospitality, he said, "Allow her to walk on; it is the hand of God which guides her." His sabre also wrought some miracles. On the issue of one battle he was seated apart at the foot of a tree, having on his knees the weapon, whose handle was of silver. A hostile Bedouin saw him; he approached, and, feigning to be drawn by a simple motive of curiosity: "Permit me to examine your sabre," said he. Mahomet presented it to him without mistrust. The Arab took it, drew it from its sheath, and made to strike him, but the sabre refused to obey. All the prodigies of this life are as transparent. He himself could not invent anything new in this style. The angel Gabriel carried out all his miracles. He appeared to know no other vehicle. The battle of Bedr alone furnished some examples of the great creation of a marvellous kind improvised on the spot. A legion of angels fought for the Mussulmans. An Arab, who was posted on the neighbouring mountains, saw a cloud approach him, and from the bosom of this cloud he heard come forth the neighings of horses, and a voice which said, "Forward, Hayzoum" (that is the name of the angel Gabriel's horse). A Mussulman narrated that, pursuing an inhabitant of Mecca, sword in hand, he had seen the head of the fleeing man fall to the ground before his sabre touched him. He concluded from that that the hand of a heavenly messenger had prevented his own. Others say they clearly distinguished angels by their white turbans, from which the end floated over the shoulder, while Gabriel, their chief, had his forehead bound by a yellow turban. When we know the state of excite-

ment into which the Arabs were thrown before and during the battle, and when we remember that this day was the first flash of Mussulman enthusiasm, far from being astonished that such narratives found credence, we are surprised that the brains of the combatants of Bedr gave birth to such sober marvels.

At a time much more modern, and under the influence of races foreign to Arabic, the legend of Mahomet is complicated, I know, by marvellous circumstances, which approach somewhat to the great mythologies of the far East. Persia, although governed by Islamism, does not bow under the action of the Semitic spirit. In spite of the language and the religion which had been imposed upon them, it could avenge its rights as an Indo-European nation, and create in the bosom of Islamism an epopee and a mythology. Open the *Hyat-ul-Kolub*, a collection of Schiite traditions, you will see there that on the night that Mahomet came into the world, seventy thousand palaces of rubies and seventy thousand palaces of pearls were built in Paradise, and were called the Palaces of the Birth. The prophet was born completely circumcised; midwives, of extraordinary beauty, were present without having been previously sent for. A luminary, of which the splendour shone through all Arabia, emerged with him from the womb of his mother. As soon as born, he cast himself on his knees, raised his eyes to heaven, and cried: "God alone is God, and I am His prophet!" God clothed his apostle with the white garment of divine contentment and the robe of sanctity, fastened by the girdle of the love of God. He bound on the sandals of reverential terror, encircled himself with the crown of precedence, and took in his hand the rod of religious authority. At three years old, two angels opened his side, took out his heart, pressing from it the black drops of sin, and putting into it the

prophetic light. Mahomet saw behind him as well as before him; his saliva rendered sea-water fresh; his drops of sweat were like pearls. His body threw no shadow either under the sun or the light of the moon; no insect approached his person. Nothing Arabian in these exaggerations, all marked by the Persian taste: it is completely to misunderstand the character of the legend of Mahomet to seek for it in such grotesque narratives, which no more prejudice the purity of the primitive Arabian tradition than the insipid amplifications of the apocryphal gospels prejudice the incomparable beauty of the canonical gospels.

The legendary elements born of Islamism always thus rest on a state of sporadic tradition, and without authority. Instead of a mysterious being, suspended between heaven and earth, without father or brothers here below, we have nothing but an Arab, tainted with all the defects of character of his nation. In place of that high and inaccessible rigour of supernaturalism, which makes the man-God say, "My mother and my brethren are those who hear the word of God, and practise it," we have here all the amiable weaknesses of the human heart. At the battle of Autas, a captive, whom some Mussulmans were carrying away with rudeness, cried, "Respect me, I am related to your chief!" They conducted her to Mahomet. "Prophet of God," said she, "I am thy foster-sister; I am Schaymâ, daughter of Halimâ, thy nurse, of the tribe of Benou-Sâd." "What proof canst thou give me of that?" demanded Mahomet. "A bite which thou gavest me on the shoulder one day when I was carrying thee on my back." And she showed him the scar. That sight, recalling to Mohamet the memory of his early infancy, and of the attentions he had received in a poor family of Bedouins, moved him with compassion. Some tears moistened his eyes. "Yes, thou

art my sister," said he to Schaymâ; and divesting himself of his mantle, he made her sit on it. Then he replied, "If thou wishest to remain henceforth near me, thou shalt live peaceful and honoured among my friends; if thou lovest better to return unto thy tribe, I will put thee in a condition to pass there thy days in ease." Schaymâ said she preferred to sojourn in the desert, and Mahomet sent her away, loaded with gifts.

Nothing is dissimulated regarding his weaknesses and his humble ways. He commences by being a *commercial traveller* in Syria, where he did good business. No extraordinary mark distinguished him; he has a surname like any other body; they called him *el-Amin*, the sure man. In his first youth he fought with the Koreischites against the Hawazin, and the Koreischites were almost cut to pieces by him. In a race, his camel was distanced by that of a Bedouin, and it proved to him a lively vexation. Arabia is not obliged, in order to exalt their prophet, to elevate him above humanity, and to abstract from him the affections of tribe, of family, and of other affairs still more humble. The Mussulman historians tell us that he loved his horse and his camel, that he dried their sweat with his sleeve. When his cat was hungry or thirsty, he rose to supply it himself, and he gave attentive care to an old cock which he kept beside him, to preserve him from the evil eye. Within his dwelling he appears to us as a most worthy father of a family. Often taking by the hand Hasan and Hoscin, born of the marriage of Ali with his daughter Fatima, he made them jump and dance, whilst he repeated to them infantine words which have been perverted.[1] When he saw

[1] I have no reason to point out that I am far from attaching to these narratives a historic value; I only insist upon the character which the Arabs have attributed to their prophet, and upon the general characteristics of his legend.

them, in the very middle of an oration, he went to embrace them, and placed them near his seat, and, after some words of apology regarding their innocence, he resumed his discourse. After the conversion of Témîm to Islamism, one of their principal chiefs, Cays, son of Acim, being at Medina, one day entered Mahomet's dwelling, and found him holding upon his knee a little girl, whom he was covering with kisses. "Who is that ewe whom thou art smelling?" demanded he. "It is my child," replied Mahomet. "By God!" replied Cays, "I have had several little daughters like that; I have had them all buried alive without smelling any one of them." "Unhappy wretch!" cried Mahomet, "it must be that God has deprived thy heart of all human feeling. Thou knowest not the sweetest joy which it has been given to man to experience."

His biographies take no more care than he does himself to conceal his dominant passion. "Two things in the world," said he, "have a charm for me—these are, women and perfumes; but I have found no true happiness but in prayer." That point was the only one on which he stooped to his own laws, and claimed his rights as prophet. Contrary to all his precepts, he had fifteen wives—others say twenty-five. The most embarrassing episodes could not fail to arise in such an establishment. A verse of the Koran expressly forbids his wives to marry again after his death. In his last illness he said to Aïscha, "Wouldst thou not be satisfied to die before me, and to know that it would be I who would wrap thee in thy shroud, who would pray for thee, and who would lay thee in the tomb!" "I would like that all very much," said Aïscha, "if I had no idea that when you returned to my burial-place to console yourself for my loss you would come with some other of your wives." This sally made the prophet laugh.

The episode of his marriage with Maria the Copt is one of the most singular. A Copt, a slave, a Christian, she saw herself preferred for several nights to the noble daughters of Abou-Bekr and of Omar, of the purest Koreischite blood. That choice provoked a regular sedition in the harem, *à propos* of which God revealed what follows: "Oh, Apostle of God, why, in order to please thy wives, should not thou abstain from that which God has permitted to thee? The Lord is good and merciful: He annuls ill-considered oaths. He is your Master, He has knowledge and wisdom." Thus authorised to punish the rebels, the prophet renounced them for a month, which he gave up entirely to Maria. It was only upon the most urgent remonstrances of Abou-Bekr and of Omar that he consented to take back their daughters, after having reproved them by this other verse: "If you oppose yourselves to the prophet, know that God declares Himself on his side. Nothing would prevent him from repudiating you all, and God would give him a thousand spouses instead of you, good Mussulmans, pious, submissive, devoted."

The scandal was still more grave when the marriage of Mahomet with Zeynab took place. She was already married to Zeyd, adopted son of the prophet. One day when he went to visit Zeyd, he found Zeynab clothed only with light vestments, which hardly concealed the beauty of her form. His emotion betrayed itself in the words, "God disposes men's hearts." Then he went out, but the meaning of that exclamation did not escape Zeynab, who reported it to Zeyd. The latter ran immediately to announce to Mahomet that he was ready to repudiate his wife. The prophet at first combated his design, but Zeyd insisted. Zeynab, said he, proud of her nobility, held towards him a tone of haughtiness, which marred the happiness of their union. In spite of the custom which forbade Arabs to marry

the wives of their adopted sons, Zeynab, a little more than a month after, was ranked among the wives of the prophet. Some verses of the Koran brought the murmurs of the austere Mussulmans to an end, and the complaisant Zeyd saw her name inscribed in the holy book.

To sum up, Mahomet appears to us a man gentle, sensible, faithful, and free from hatred. His affections were sincere; his character in general bent to benevolence. When one took him by the hand on meeting him, he replied heartily to the clasp, and never was he the first to withdraw his hand. He saluted little children, and showed a great tenderness of heart for women and the weak. "Paradise," said he, "is at the mother's feet." Neither the thoughts of ambition, nor religious enthusiasm, ever dried up within him the germ of individual sentiments. Nothing in the least resembling to that ambitious and heartless Machiavelianism which explains in unyielding Alexandrines his projects as to Zepyrus:—

> Je dois régir en dieu l'univers prévenu ;
> Mon empire est détroit, si l'homme est reconnu.
>
> [I ought to rule as God over the entire universe ;
> My empire is gone, if man is recognised.]

Man, on the contrary, is always plainly to be seen about him. He had preserved the sobriety of the Arab manners—no idea of majesty. His bed was a simple cloak, and his pillow a skin filled with date leaves. We see himself milk his cattle, and he seats himself on the ground to mend his garments and his sandals. All his conduct gives the lie to the enterprising, audacious character which has commonly been attributed to him. He shows himself habitually weak, irresolute, and little sure of himself. M. Weil goes as far as to treat him as a coward. It is certain that in general he advanced timidly, and re-

sisted nearly always the impulses of those who accompanied him. His precautions in battle were little worthy of a prophet. He covered himself with two hauberks, and wore on his head a helmet with a visor, which concealed his face. At the defeat of Ohod, his bearing could not be more unseemly for an ambassador of God. Tossed into a ditch, he only owes his life to the devotion of the Ansars, who covered him with their bodies, and raised him up all covered with blood and mud. His extreme circumspection is manifest at every step. He heard advice willingly, and gave much deference to it. Often, indeed, we see him yielding to the pressure of public opinion, and allowing it to draw him into lines which his prudence disapproved of. His disciples having an idea much more lofty than he of the prophetic gifts, and believing in him much more than he himself, could not understand these hesitations and cautions.

All the energy which was displayed in the founding of the new religion pertained to Omar. Omar is really the St Paul of Islamism, the sword which cuts and decides. We cannot doubt that the reserved character of Mahomet would have compromised the success of his work if he had not met with this impetuous disciple, always ready to draw the sabre against those who would not admit, without examination, the religion of which he had been the most ardent persecutor. The conversion of Omar was the decisive moment in the progress of Islamism. Till then, the Mussulmans had concealed the practice of their religion, and had not dared to profess their faith publicly. The audacity of Omar, his ostentation in avowing himself a Mussulman, and the terror which he inspired, gave them confidence to appear openly. It does not appear that Mahomet had seen anything beyond the horizon of Arabia, or that he had ever dreamt that his religion would be accepted

by others than Arabs. The conquering principle of Islamism, the thought that the world would become Mussulman, is Omar's conception. It is he who, after the death of Mahomet, governing really under the name of the weak Abou-Bekr, at the moment when the work of the prophet, scarcely outlined, was about to disappear, arrested the defection of the Arab tribes, and gave to the new religion its final character of fixedness. If the heat of an impetuous temperament, binding itself with frenzy to a dogma, can be called faith, Omar has really been the most energetic of believers. Never has one believed with so much fury; never has one exhibited so much wrath in the name of the Indubitable. We often see the need of hatred thus to draw to religion thoroughgoing and shadeless characters, for of all the pretexts for hatred religion is that to which men have yielded themselves with the most security.

The position of prophet has always its thorns, and in the face of compatriots also disposed to find defect in him, Mahomet could not fail having to encounter difficult moments. He escaped from them generally with much cleverness, avoiding any exaggeration of his part, and taking care never to venture too far. It may appear surprising that an ambassador of God should have sustained defeats, seen his predictions set aside, and obtained only half victories. In the great supernatural legends, things are managed very differently; all is sharply cut, absolute, and as it ought to be done when God is mixed up with it. It was too late to take matters with such a high tone as this. That is why in the life of this last of the prophets everything passes half or nearly so, and in a perfectly human and historical manner. He is beaten, he is deceived, he draws back, he corrects and contradicts himself. The Mussulmans recognise as many as two hundred and twenty-five contradictions in the Koran, that is to

say, two hundred and twenty-five passages which were abrogated later in view of another policy.

As to the features in the life of Mahomet which, to my eyes, are marked by unpardonable blemishes in regard to his morality, let us be careful not to apply a too strict criticism. It is evident that the greater proportion of his acts did not produce upon his contemporaries, and did not produce upon oriental historians, the same impression as upon us. Yet we cannot deny that, by the avowal of the Mussulmans, Mahomet, in many cases, acted wrongly with a full knowledge, and being thoroughly aware that he was obeying his own will and not the inspiration of God. He permitted brigandage, he ordered assassinations, he lied, and he allowed lying in war by stratagem. We can quote a multitude of circumstances in which he made a compact with morality in a political interest. One of the most singular, is that in which he promised beforehand to Othman, the pardon of all the sins he could commit up to his death, in compensation for a great pecuniary sacrifice. He was, above all, pitiless against jesters. The only woman to whom he showed himself severe at the taking of Mecca, was the musician Fertena, who sung constantly verses which had been composed against him. His conduct towards one of his secretaries is also very characteristic. This man who wrote the Koran to the dictation of the prophet, assisted too much at his inspiration for the reciprocal confidence to be very keen. Mahomet did not like him. He accused him of changing some words and of misrepresenting his thoughts so much, that the secretary, a prey to sinister presentiments, fled and abjured Islamism. After the taking of Mecca, he fell into the hands of the Mussulmans. Mahomet did not allow him to secure his pardon without infinite trouble, and when the apostate had retired, he expressed with some temper to the Mussulmans his discontent, that they had not

delivered him from that man. There would be also an injustice were we to judge quite strictly, and with our moral idea, the acts of Mahomet which in our days would be called frauds. We cannot represent to ourselves to what point among the Mussulmans, conviction and even nobility of character can be allied to a certain degree of impostors. Did not the chief of the sect of the Wahbabites, Abd-el-Wahbab, a thorough deist, the Socinian of Islamism, inspire in his soldiers the blindest confidence by giving before the battle a safe-conduct, signed in his own hand and addressed to the Treasurer of Paradise, that such a one might be admitted there at once and without any preceding interrogatory. All the founders of the Khouan or religious orders of Algeria,[1] unite the double character of ascetics and daring charlatans. Sidi-Aïssa, the most extraordinary of these modern prophets, Sidi-Aïssa, whose legend has nearly attained the proportions of that of Mahomet, was nothing but a juggler and a showman, who could cleverly cut out his part, and none of those who have travelled in Algeria believes that the *Aïssaoua* are dupes of their own tricks.

Certainly it would be bad taste to compare Mahomet to the impostors of such a low grade, yet it must be confessed that if the first condition of a prophet is to be himself a believer in the illusion, Mahomet does not deserve that title. All his life reveals a reflection, a combination, a policy which scarcely enters into the character of an enthusiast possessed of Divine visions. Never was a brain clearer than his, never was a man more master of his own thought. It would be to place the question in a strict and superficial style to ask if *Mahomet believed in his own mission*; for, in one sense, faith alone is capable of sustaining the innovator in this struggle which he carries on for the idea of his choice. On the other hand, it is abso-

[1] See the curious work of M. de Neveu on this subject, Paris, 1846.

lutely impossible to admit that a man with clear knowledge, could have believed that he had between his two shoulders the seal of prophecy, and to hold from the angel Gabriel the impression which he received from his passion and his premediated designs. M. Weil and M. Washington Irving suppose, not without reason, that, in the first phase of his life as a prophet, an enthusiasm really sacred filled his bosom, and that the politic period came to him only later on when the struggle and the feeling of difficulties to conquer had tarnished the first delicacy of his inspiration. The first Surates of the Koran, so resplendent with poetry, would be the expression of his fresh conviction, while the last Surates, charged with arguments, contradictions and curses, would be the work of his practical and reflective eye. We cannot deny that the first appearances of his prophetic genius are marked by a great character of holiness. We see this by looking at a prayer in the desert valleys in the neighbourhood of Mecca. Ali, the son of Abou-Talib, unknown to his father and uncles, accompanied him sometimes, and prayed with him, imitating his movements and attitudes. One day Abou-Talib surprised them in this occupation. "What are you doing," said he to them, "and what religion are you following?" "The religion of God and his angels and his prophets," replied Mahomet, "the religion of Abraham." How grand also are some of the first fruits of his apostleship! One evening, after having passed the day in preaching, he went home without having met a single individual, bond or free, who did not subject him to insults, and who had not repelled his exhortations with jeers. Stricken and discouraged, he wrapped his head in his mantle, and threw himself on a rug. It was then that Gabriel revealed to him the beautiful Surate,—Oh thou who art wrapt in a mantle, arise and preach. Nevertheless, this odour of sanctity only appeared at rare

intervals in his active life. Perhaps he felt that moral sentiment and purity of soul do not suffice in the struggle against passion and interests, and that religious thought, at the moment it aspires to proselytism, is obliged to regard the behaviour of its adversaries often very delicately. He appears, at least, to have believed, without any reserve, in his prophecy. He lost his spontaneous faith, and continued, nevertheless, to advance, guided by reflection and will,—less grandly than before,—very much as Joan of Arc became woman, when she had lost her first freshness. Man is too weak to bear for a long time the Divine mission, and those alone are immaculate whom God has soon disburdened of the weight of the apostleship.

A question stranger still, and which, perhaps, criticism is yet obliged to raise, is this: Up to what point did the disciples of Mahomet believe in the prophetic mission of their master? It may be strange to cast doubt upon the absolute conviction of men, whom the eagerness of their faith has drawn at the first leap even to the ends of the world. Some important distinctions are, nevertheless, necessary here. In the circle of the primitive faithful among the Mohadjirs and the Ausars,[1] faith was, it must be confessed, nearly absolute; but, if we go beyond this little group, which does not exceed some thousand men, we do not find around Mahomet, in all the rest of Arabia, aught but incredulity, little disguised. The antipathy of the people of Mecca for their fellow-countrymen was never completely overcome, the epicureanism which reigned among the wealthy Koreischites, the slight and libertine mind of the poets then in vogue, gave no place for

[1] The Mohadjirs were the people of Mecca who accompanied Mahomet in his *Hedjra*. The Ausars were the people of Medina who surrounded them, and constituted themselves his defenders against his own fellow-citizens.

any profound conviction. As to the other tribes, it is certain that they did not embrace Islamism, except formally, without inquiring as to the dogmas which it was necessary to believe, and without attaching any importance to them. They did not see how unsuitable it was to pronounce the formula of Islam only to forget it when the prophet should be no more. When Khalid appeared among the Djadlîma, by summoning them to adopt the faith of the prophet, these good people knew so little what the question was, that they believed that they were spoken to concerning Sabeanism, and so they threw up their arms, crying, "We are Sabeans." The proud Thakifs conceived of a singular plan to save themselves from the shame of their conversion; they consented to the new law on condition that they should preserve for three years their idol Lât. This condition having been rejected, they asked to retain Lât during a year, during six months, and then a month. Their pride wished for a concession. They at last desired an exemption from prayer. The conversion of the Teminites is not less curious. Their ambassadors presented themselves boldly, and, approaching the apartments of the prophet and his wives,—"Come forth, Mahomet," they cried to him; "we propose to you a glorious conflict.[1] We bring one poet and one orator." Mahomet came forth, and took his place beside the competitors. The orator Otarid and the poet Zibrican boasted, one in rhymed prose and the other in verse, the advantages of their tribe. Cays and Hassan, sons of Thabet, replying by improvised pieces with the same metre and rhyme, established with so much energy the superiority of the Mussulmans, that the Teminites confessed themselves con-

[1] Then called the conflict of glory or *Moufâkhara*, certain poetical contests, in which each tribe was represented by a poet charged to set forth its titles to pre-eminence. Victory remained with the tribe whose poet had found the strongest and happiest expressions.

quered. "Mahomet is truly a man favoured of heaven," they said to themselves. "His orator and his poet have conquered ours," and they became Mussulmans.

All the conversions were of this sort. People made their conditions. These were taken and allowed. The old Amir, son of Tophayl, having come to find Mahomet: "If I embrace Islamism," said he, "what shall be my rank?" "That of the other Mahometans," replied Mahomet. "Thou shalt have the same rights and the same duties as all the others." "This equality does not satisfy me. Proclaim me thy successor in the government of thy people, and I will adhere to thy beliefs." "It does not pertain to me to dispose of the government after me. God will give it to him whom it shall please Him to choose." "Ah, well, let us meanwhile share the power; reign over the towns, over the Arabs in their settled dwellings, and I will reign over the Bedouins." Mahomet, not being willing to consent to these conditions, Amir refused to become a Mussulman.

It is especially after the death of Mahomet that we are able to see how weak was the conviction which had united around him the different Arab tribes. A wholesale apostasy was a necessary result. Some said that if Mahomet had really been a messenger of God, he would not have died, others pretended that his religion ought not to last longer than his life. Scarcely had the news of his approaching death spread, than there appeared throughout the whole of Arabia a cloud of prophets. Each tribe wished to have its own, like the Koreischites—their example had been contagious. Nearly all these prophets were, besides, intriguing subalterns, entirely void of religious initiative. By addressing themselves to certain and much less refined tribes than the people of Mecca, they had at their service certain feats of sleight of hand, which they gave as a proof

of their divine mission. One of them, Moseilama, ran through the country showing a viol with a narrow neck, in which he had placed an egg by means of a process which he had learned from a Persian juggler. He recited, also, some rhymed phrases, which he represented as the verses of a second Koran. Who would believe it? This wretched impostor, for many years, held in check all the forces collected around Abou-Bekr, and held the fate of Mahomet in the balance. He found a redoubtable rival in the prophetess Sedjah, who had succeeded in grouping behind her a formidable army of Teminites. Moseilama, hurrying into Hadjr, saw no other means of disarming his fair rival than by proposing to her an interview, which was accepted willingly. The prophet and the prophetess came forth from it married. After three days given up to Hymen, Sedjah re-entered her camp, where the soldiers pressed around her to question her as to the results of her interview with Moseilama. "I have recognised in him," said she, "a true prophet, and I have married him." "Is Moseilama going to give us a marriage present?" asked the Teminites. "He has not spoken of that," replied Sedjah. "It would be a shame for thee and us," they replied, "that he should espouse our prophetess without giving us anything. Return to him and demand a present for us." Sedjah went to present herself at the gate of Hadjr, and, finding it barricaded, she called for her husband, who appeared on the wall. A herald announced to him the Teminites' demand. "Very well," replied Moseilama, "you shall be satisfied. I charge you to publish the following proclamation: Moseilama, prophet of God, yields exemption to the Benou-Temim from the first and the last prayers, which his brother Mahomet has imposed on them." The Teminites took this disposition seriously, and they claimed that since then they no longer make morning or evening prayer.

One can judge by these stories how little depth the religious movement had among the Arabs. This movement had absolutely nothing dogmatic outside a very reduced group. It is related that, after a victory, Omar ordered that each soldier should have his share of booty in proportion to the part of the Koran which he knew by heart. Now, when they came to the proof, he found that the bravest among the Bedouins could not recite correctly anything but the initial formula:—"In the name of God, gracious and merciful,"[1]—which made all his assistants laugh. These strong and simple natures paid no attention to mysticism. On the other hand, the Mussulman faith had found, in the rich and proud families of Mecca, a centre of resistance, over which it could not thoroughly triumph. Abou-Sofyan, the chief of this opposition, never took frankly to the conduct of a true believer. From his first interview with Mahomet, after the taking of Mecca,—"Ah well, Abou-Sofyan," said Mahomet to him, "wilt thou confess now that there is no other god than Allah?" "Yes," replied Abou-Sofyan. "Wilt thou confess, also, that I am the messenger of Allah?" "Pardon my sincerity," replied Abou-Sofyan, "but upon that point I cherish still some doubts." A great number of frequent anecdotes bear witness to the slightly sceptical and jesting tone which the same personage preserved towards the new faith. Now, a crowd of the people of Mecca shared these sentiments. There was at Mecca quite a party of men of mind and wealth, nourished upon the old Arab poetry, radically incredulous. These men had too much good taste and firmness to

[1] The undevotional character of the nomad Arab has struck every traveller. (See, in particular, M. D'Escayrac *De Lature, le Desert et le Soudan*, p. 340 ff.) Certain parts of Arabia had not become completely Mussulman until the commencement of this century, in consequence of the Wahhabite movement. Generally, religions conquer more easily at a distance from the country where they have their cradle.

make very lively opposition to a growing sect. They embraced Islamism, but they retained their profane habits. It was the party of the *Mounafikoum*, or pretended Mussulmans, which played such a great part in the Koran. At the battle of Honayn, where the Mussulmans were put to flight, these false brethren did not conceal their malignant joy. "By my faith," said Calada, "I believe that this time Mahomet is at the end of his magic." "Look at them!" said Abou-Sofyan,—"they are running until the sea shall stop them." Mahomet knew very well what sentiments they held; but, like a clever politician, he contented himself with an outside submission, and arranged so that, even in the division of the spoil, they should be more favoured than the believers of whom he was certain.

Islamism throughout the whole of the first century was nothing but a struggle between the two parties which the preaching of Mahomet had created. On the one hand, was the faithful group of the Mohadjirs and the Ausars; on the other hand, the opposing party represented by the family of the Omeyyades or of Abou-Sofyan. The party of sincere Mussulmans had all its strength in Omar; but after the assassination of the latter, that is to say, twelve years after the death of the prophet, the party of the opposition triumphed through the election of Othman, Abou-Sofyan's nephew, that is to say, the most dangerous enemy of Mahomet. The whole Khalifate of Othman was a reaction against the friends of the prophet, who lived apart from these questions, and were violently persecuted. From that time they never gained headway. The provinces would not suffer that the little aristocracy of the Mohadjirs and Ausars, grouped at Mecca and Medina, should arrogate to itself alone the right to elect a Kaliph. Ali, the true representative of the primitive tradition of Islamism, was, during his whole life, an impracticable man; his election was never looked upon seriously in the

provinces. On all sides hands were stretched forth to the Omeyyad family, become Syrian by habit and interest. Now the orthodoxy of the Omeyyades was strongly suspected. They drank wine, they practised pagan rites, they did not hold sacred tradition, Mussulman manners, nor the sacred character of Mahomet's friends. Thus is explained the astonishing spectacle which the first century of the Hegira presents, occupied entirely by the extermination of the primitive Mussulmans, the true fathers of Islamism. Ali, the holiest of men, the adopted son of the prophet; Ali, whom Mahomet had proclaimed his vicar, was pitilessly slain. Hosein and Hassan, his sons, whom Mahomet had taken on his knees and covered with his kisses, were slain. Iba-Zobeir, the firstborn of the Mohadjirs, who received as his first nourishment the saliva of God's prophet, was slain. The primitive faithful collected around the Caaba continued their Arab life, passing the day in talking in the "Parvis," and making processional turns around the black stone; but they had become completely powerless, and the Omeyyades did not respect them until the day in which they believed themselves capable of forcing themselves into their sanctuary. It was a strange scandal was this last siege of Mecca, where some Mussulmans of Syria were seen setting fire to the veils of the Caaba, and making it crumble under the strokes of their "balistas." It is said that, at the first stone thrown against the holy house, thunder was heard; the soldiers of Syria trembled. "Go along," said their chief, "I know the climate of this country. Storms are frequent in this season." At the same moment he seized the cords of the "balistas," and set them in motion himself.[1]

[1] For a picture of this curious epoch, there may be consulted the memoir of M. Quatremère on the 'Life of Ibn-Zobeir."—*Journal Asiatique*, 1832.

We come from all points of view to this singular result, that the Mussulman movement was produced almost without religious faith, and by setting apart a small number of faithful disciples,

Mahomet really acted but little from conviction in Arabia, and he really never succeeded in breaking down the opposition presented by the Omeyyad party. That is the party which, compressed in small compass by Osman's energy, definitely came forth after the death of that redoubtable believer, and caused Othman to be ejected. That is the party which opposed to Ali an unconquerable resistance, and finished by sacrificing him to its hatred. That is the party, in short, which triumphed by the advent of the Omeyyades, and went forth to slay, in the Caaba itself, all that remained of the primitive and pure generation. Hence also this indecision in which all the dogmas of the Mussulman faith floated until the twelfth century. Hence that bold philosophy proclaiming, without overturning the sovereign rights of reason. Hence those numerous sects, including sometimes the most avowed infidelity, Kalmathites, Fatimites, Ishmaelites, Druses, Haschischins, Zendiks, secret sects with double intentions, allying fanaticism to incredulity, licence to religious enthusiasm, the boldness of the freethinker to the superstition of the neophyte. It is really not until the twelfth century that Islamism triumphed over the undisciplined elements which raged in her bosom, and this by the advent of the Ascharite theology, more severe in its conduct, and by the violent extermination of philosophy. Since that age, never has a doubt been produced nor a protestation raised in the Mussulman world. The difficulty of religious creations resides entirely in the first generation of believers who furnish the point of support necessary to belief in the future. Faith is the work of time, and the cement of religious edifices hardens as it grows old.

II.

HUMAN nature in its totality, neither being entirely good nor entirely bad, neither entirely holy nor altogether profane, we transgress equally against criticism when we pretend to derive religious movements from humanity, whether by the play of the passions and of individual interests, or by the exclusive action of mobile superiors. A revolution so profound as Islamism cannot but be the fruit of some adroit combination, and Mahomet is no more explicable by imposture and trickery than by illuminism and enthusiasm. In the eyes of the logician, he who places himself at the point of view of abstraction, and opposes one to each other, truth and falsehood, as absolute categories, there is no middle term between the impostor and the prophet; but in the eyes of the critic who places himself in the fleeting and intangible circumstances of the reality, nothing is pure which proceeds from man; everything bears alongside the seal of beauty, its original taint. Who can tell the line which separates its own moral sensations, the lovable from the hateful, ugliness from beauty, angelic vision from Satanic vision, and even in a certain measure joy from grief? Religions being the most complete works of human nature, those which express it with the most unity share in the contradictions of that nature, and exclude simple and absolute judgments. To wish to apply with sharpness to those capricious phenomena the categories of scholasticism, to judge them with the self-possession of the casuist, drawing a deep line between wisdom and folly, is to misunderstand their nature. Everything succeeds another like a mirage in the heights of Walpurgis, in that grand "Sabbath" of all the passions and all the instincts. The holy and the infamous, the charming and the horrible, the apostle and the juggler, bearer and bell, give each other

their hands, take the visions of a troubled slumber, where all the images, hidden within the folds of fancy, appear one after each other.

I have insisted long upon the native weakness of Islamism; it would have been injustice not to add that no religion or institution would resist the trial to which we have subjected it. What prophet could stand against criticism, if criticism pursued it, as ours has done, into its recesses? Happy those who cover up mystery, and who fight entrenched behind the clouds! Perhaps also our century has abused the word spontaneity in the explanation of the phenomena which neither the experience of the present, nor the testimonies of history, can enable us to comprehend. By reaction against a school which had exaggerated the creative power of the irreflective faculties, and which had only wished to see in the language, religions and moral beliefs, and primitive poetry, nothing but deliberate inventions, we are too much drawn, it would seem, to believe that every idea of composition ought to be excluded from the primitive poems, and every idea of imposture from the formation of great legends. In place of saying that languages, religions, popular beliefs and poetry are self made, it would be more exact to say that we do not see them made. The spontaneous is perhaps only the obscure; for this is the only religion whose origins can be clear and historical, and in these origins we find much reflection, deliberation and combination. God forbid that I should wish, by whatever that may be, to attack the majesty of the past! When criticism applies itself for the first time to a fact or to a book which had gained the respect of many generations, we discover almost always that admiration had been falsely gained. We perceive a thousand artifices, a thousand retouchings, or nearly a thousand, which destroy the great impression of beauty or holiness which had drawn away the uncritical eyes. What a day in the good fortune of

Homer was that on which the unlucky "Scholia" of Venice succeeded in showing us the pencil marks of Zenodotus and Aristarchus, and introduced us in some degree into the society in which was elaborated the poem which up till then had appeared the most direct emission, the most limpid jet of personal genius! Is that to say that criticism has destroyed Homer? One might as well say that the progress of philosophy and æsthetics had destroyed antiquity, because they have demonstrated the non-existence of certain beauties long relished, and of which it was perfectly innocent. One might as well say that exegesis has destroyed the Bible, because in place of the contradictions of the Vulgate, it has revealed to us, a literature sparkling with originality.

Criticism displaces admiration, but it does not destroy it.[*] Admiration is essentially a synthetic act. It is not by dissecting a beautiful body that one discovers its beauty. It is not by examining with a magnifying-glass the events of history and the work of the human mind, that we recognise their lofty character. We can affirm that, if we saw the origin of the great things of the past as closely as the paltry agitations of the present, all prestige would fade away, and there would remain nothing to adore. But it is not in that lower region of fluctuations and deficiencies of the individual that it is proper to search for eternal beauty. Things are not beautiful except by what humanity sees in them, by the sentiments which it attaches to them, by the symbols which it draws from them. It is humanity which creates those absolute tones which never exist in reality. Reality is complex, mixed up of good and evil; at the same time admirable and criticisable, worthy of love and of hatred. On the contrary, what secures the homage of humanity is simple, without flaw, and quite admirable. Criticism, exclusively preoccupied with truth, strengthened, moreover, as to the conse-

quences, since it knows that the results of its researches do not penetrate into the regions in which illusions are necessary, has for its mission to replace the misconceptions as to which humanity scarcely disquiets itself. It does not exaggerate the importance of this mission. What matters it, indeed, that humanity commits in its admiration certain historic errors; that it makes more beautiful and purer than they were in reality the men whom it has adopted? Its homage, addressing itself to the beauty which it supposes them to have, and which it has attributed to them, is not less meritorious on that account. From the point of view of historic truth only, the scholar has the right to admire; but from the point of view of morality, the ideal belongs to every one. Sentiments have their value independently of the reality of the object which excites them; and we cannot doubt that humanity never shares the scruples of the erudite, who do not wish to admire except with certainty.

After having shown the portion of terrestrial clay in the founder of Islamism, I ought to show now in what that work was holy and legitimate—that is to say, in what it corresponds to the deepest instincts of human nature, and especially to the needs of Arabia in the seventh century.

Islamism would appear up to this point in history as a tentative, quite original, and without antecedents. It was almost a necessary formula to present Mahomet as the founder of civilisation, of monotheism, and even (this grave error has been indefinitely repeated) of the literature of the Arabs. Now, we can see that, far from beginning with Mahomet, the Arab genius found in him its latest expression. I do not know if there is in all the history of civilisation a picture more gracious, more lovable, more lively, than that of Arab life before Islamism, such as it appears to us in the *Moallakât*, and especially in that

admirable type of Antar: a liberty of the individual unlimited, a complete absence of law and power, an exalted sentiment of honour, a nomadic and chivalrous life; fancy, gaiety, malice; light and undevotional poetry, and the refinement of love. Now, this flower of delicacy in Arab life finished just at the advent of Islamism. The last poets of the great school disappeared, making the liveliest opposition to the growing religion. Twenty years after Mahomet, Arabia is humbled, surpassed by the conquered provinces. A hundred years after, the Arab genius is completely effaced, Persia triumphs through the advent of the Abbassides, Arabia disappears for ever from the theatre of the world, and while its language and its religion carry civilisation from the Malaisia to Morocco, from Timbuctoo to Samarcand, it, forgotten, buried in the deserts, becomes what it was in the time of Ishmael. There is thus in the life of races a first and rapid flush of knowledge, a divine moment in which, prepared by an interior revolution, they arrive at the light, producing their grand effort, then becoming effaced, as if that had exhausted their fertility.

Mahomet is no more the founder of monotheism than of the civilisation and literature of the Arabs. It results from numerous facts, shown for the first time by Caussin de Perceval, that Mahomet did nothing but follow the religious movement of his age, in place of preceding it. Monotheism, the worship of the *supreme Allah* (Allah taâla), appears to have always been the basis of the Arab religion. The Semitic race has never conceived of the government of the universe otherwise than as an absolute monarchy. Its theodocy has made no progress since the Book of Job; the greatnesses and the aberrations of polytheism have always remained foreign to it. Some superstitions, disfigured by idolatry, which varied, tribe by tribe had nevertheless affected, among the Arabs, the

purity of the patriarchal religion, and, in face of religions more strongly organised, all the clear minds of Arabia aspired to a better worship. A people scarcely arrives at a conception of the insufficiency of its own religious system except by its association with the foreigner, and the epochs of religious creation usually follow the epochs of mingling with other races. Now, in the sixth century, Arabia, having remained till then inaccessible, was opened up on all sides; Greeks, Syrians, Persians, and Abyssinians penetrated there at the same time. The Assyrians introduced writing there; the Abyssinians and the Persians rule, turn about, in Yeman and Bahren. Many tribes recognised the suzerainty of the Greek emperors, and received from them a *toparch*. Perhaps the most singular episode in anti-Islamic history is that of the poet, Prince Imroulcays, coming to seek a residence at Constantinople, being involved in a love intrigue with Justinian's daughter, singing to her in Arab verses, and dying, poisoned by the secret orders of the court of Byzantium. The diversity of religions involved also in Arabia a singular movement of ideas. Some entire tribes had embraced Judaism; Christianity counted an important church at Nedjran, in the kingdoms of Hiran and Ghassan. On all sides there were disputes as to religion. There remains to us a curious monument of these controversies in the dispute between Gregentius, Bishop of Zhephar, and the Jew, Herban. A sort of vague tolerance and syncretism of all the Semitic religions came to be established. The idea of the one God, paradise, the resurrection, prophets, and sacred books, stole in, little by little, even among the pagan tribes. The Caaba became the pantheon of all the religions when Mahomet chased the images from the holy house. In the number of the expelled gods was a Byzantian virgin painted on a column, holding a child in her arms.

This grand religious labour betrayed itself outside by asserting significant facts, which announced an approaching incubation. A multitude of men, discontented with the ancient religion, set out to travel in order to make a search for a better religion, to try one by one the different existing worships; and, despairing in their quest, created for themselves an individual religion in harmony with their moral needs. Every religious appearance is thus preceded by a sort of disquietude and vague expectancy, which manifests itself in some privileged souls by presentiments and desires. Islamism had its John Baptist and its aged Simeon.[1] Some years before the preaching of Mahomet, while the Koreischites were celebrating the feast of one of their idols, four men, more distinguished than the rest of their nation, withdrew from the crowd, and exchanged thoughts with one another. "Our fellow-countrymen walk," they said, "in a false path; they have gone astray from the religion of Abraham. What is this pretended deity, to whom they sacrifice victims, and around which they make solemn processions? Let us search for the truth, and to find it let us quit, if need be, our native land, and pass to foreign countries." The four personages who formed this project were Waraca, son of Naufal; Othman, son of Howayrith; Obeydallah, son of Djahsch; and Zeyd, son of Omar.

Waraca had received in his frequent relations with the Christians and the Jews an education superior to that of his fellow-citizens. Adopting a belief generally very wide-spread, he was persuaded that an ambassador from heaven would soon appear on the earth, and that this ambassador would proceed

[1] It was the same with Buddhism. At sight of the marvellous appearances which accompanied the birth of Buddha, an anchorite of the Himalayas, possessing the five transcendent sciences, went to Kapila, across the skies, took the infant in his arms, and recognised in him the thirty-two signs of the great man and the twenty-four marks of Buddha.

from the Arab nation. He had acquired an acquaintance with the Hebrew scriptures, and had read the holy books. Khadidjà, his cousin, having related the first vision of her husband, he declared that Mahomet was the prophet of the Arabs, and predicted the persecutions which he would endure. He died a little after, having seen only the morning of Islamism.

Othman, son Howayrith went off to travel, questioning all those from whom he hoped to draw light. Some Christian monks inspired him with a taste for the faith of Jesus Christ. He presented himself at the court of the Emperor at Constantinople, where he received baptism. Obeydallah, son of Djahsch, after useless efforts to arrive at the religion of Abraham, remained in his uncertainty and doubt up till the time when Mahomet commenced his preaching. He believed at first that he recognised in Islamism the true religion which he taught; but soon he renounced it in order to devote himself definitely to Christianity. As to Zeyd, son of Omar, he went every day to the Caaba and prayed to God to enlighten him. We see him with his back leaning against the wall of the Temple, giving himself up to pious meditations, after which he cried, "Lord, if I knew in what manner Thou wouldst be served and adored, I would obey Thy will, but I know it not." Then he would prostrate himself with his face to the earth. Adopting neither the ideas of the Jews nor those of the Christians, Zeyd made a separate religion, seeking to conform himself to what he believed to have been the religion followed by Abraham. He rendered homage to the unity of God, attacked publicly the false divinities, and declaimed with energy against superstitious practices. Persecuted by his fellow-citizens, he fled and went through Mesopotamia and Syria, consulting everywhere men who were devoted to religious studies, and in the hope of discovering the patriarchal religion. A learned Christian monk with whom he asso-

ciated, informed him, it is said, of the appearance of an Arabian prophet who preached the religion of Abraham at Mecca. Zeyd hastened at once to go forth to hear this apostle, but he was stopped on the way, and despoiled by a band of thieves, robbed, and put to death.

Thus, on all sides, a great religious renovation was apparent; on all sides it was said that the day of Arabia had come. *Prophetism* is the form which clothes all revolutions among the Semitic peoples, and it must be said that prophecy is only the necessary consequence of the monotheistic system. Primitive peoples, believing constantly in immediate communication with the Deity, and viewing the great events of physical and moral order as the effects of the direct action of superior beings, have only had two ways of conceiving of that influence of God in the government of the universe: either the Divine force is incarnated under a human form, which is the Indian Avatar, or God chooses as an organ some privileged mortal, who is the Nabi or Semitic prophet. It is, in fact, so far from God to man in the Semitic system that the communication between the one and the other cannot be carried out save by an interpreter remaining always perfectly distinct from him who inspires him. To say that Arabia was about to enter into the era of great things, is consequently to say that it was about to have a prophet like the other Semitic families. Many individuals, forestalling the fulness of the times, believed themselves, or pretended to be, the announced apostle. Mahomet grew in the midst of this movement. His voyages into Syria, his associations with the Christian monks, and, perhaps, the personal influence of his uncle Waraca, so versed in the Jewish and Christian scriptures, would soon initiate him into all the religious perplexities of his age. He could neither read nor write, but the biblical histories had reached him through recitals, which had vividly impressed him, and

which, remaining in his mind like vague memories, left complete liberty to his imagination. The reproach which has been made as to Mahomet having varied the biblical histories is altogether wrong. Mahomet took the narratives just as they were given to him, and the narrative part of the Koran is only the reproduction of the Rabbinical traditions and the Apocryphal gospels. The gospel of the infancy especially, which was very early translated into Arabic, and which has only been preserved in that language, had acquired an extreme importance among the Christians of the regions separated from the East, and had nearly effaced the canonical gospels. It is certain that the narratives of which we speak were one of Mahomet's most powerful means of action. Nadhr, son of Hârith, intervened some times to oppose him. He had lived in Persia, and knew the legends of the ancient kings of that country. When Mahomet, assembling around him a circle of auditors, and represented to them the features of the lives of the patriarchs and prophets, the examples of Divine vengeance which had fallen upon impious nations, Nadhr took speech after him and said,—"Listen now to the things which are more important than those with which Mahomet has entertained you." He recounted then the most astonishing facts in the heroic history of Persia, the marvellous exploits of the heroes Roustem and Isfendiâr; then he added,—"Are the stories of Mahomet as beautiful as mine? He tells you ancient stories which he has collected from the mouths of men more learned than himself, just as I have myself gathered in my travels, and placed in writing the narratives which I have told you."

Long before Islamism the Arabs had adopted, in order to explain their own origin, the traditions of the Jews and the Christians; they had often looked upon that legend by which the Arabs were connected with Ishmael as having a historic value, and furnishing

a powerful confirmation of the statements of the Bible. In the eyes of a severe criticism, this is inadmissible. We cannot doubt that the biblical reputations of Abraham, Job, David, and Solomon commenced among the Arabs about the fourth century. The Jews (the *people of the book*) had held till then the archives of the Semitic race, and the Arabs willingly recognised their superiority in scholarship. The Book of the Jews spoke of the Arabs, and attributed to them a genealogy. It needed no more than that to make them accept it with confidence; such is the prestige of written texts upon simple people always desirous to be connected with the origins of more civilised peoples. It is related that at the age at which Mahomet began to make his mark, the people of Mecca had the idea of sending deputies to Medina to consult the rabbis of that town as to what should be thought of the new prophet. The deputies described the person of Mahomet to the doctors, and showed them the nature of his discourses, and they added,—"You are scholars who read books, what do you think of this man." The doctors replied—"Ask him what particular young people of the past ages have had very marvellous adventures? Who is a personage who has reached the bounds of the earth, east and west? What is the soul? If he replies to these three questions in such and such a manner, he is really a prophet. If he replies otherwise, or if he cannot reply, he is a charlatan." Mahomet solved the first enigma by the history of the seven sleepers, popular throughout the whole of the east; the second by Dhoul-Carnayh, the fabulous conqueror, who is no other than the legendary Alexander of the *Pseudo-Calisthenes*. As to the third, he replied,—"Alas! all that one is at liberty to say is, the soul is a thing, knowledge as to which is reserved for God. It is given to man to possess only a very feeble gleam of knowledge."

The dogmatic part of Islamism supposes still less creation than the legendary part. Mahomet was entirely void of invention in this sense. A stranger to the refinements of mysticism, he could not found anything but a simple religion, limited in every part by common sense. Timid like everything which is born of reflection, strict as everything is which is governed by a feeling of reality, the symbol of Islamism, at least before the relatively modern invasion of theological subtleties, scarcely surpasses the simplest gifts of natural religion. No transcendent pretensions, none of the bold paradoxes of supernaturalism in which the fancy of races, infinitely endowed, exercise themselves with so much originality; no priesthood, no worship beyond prayer. All the ceremonies of the Caaba, the professional turnings, pilgrimages, the *omra*, the sacrifices in the valley of Mina, the inundation of Mount Ararat, were organised in all their details before Mahomet.

Pilgrimage especially had been from time immemorial an essential element of Arab life, as were the Olympian games for Greece, I mean the panegyrics of the nation at once religious, commercial, and poetical. The valley of Mecca thus became the central point in Arabia, and in spite of the division and the rivalry of the tribes, the hegemony of the family which guarded the Caaba was implicitly recognised. It was a great moment, and one which nearly made an era in the history of the Arabs, in which a lock was put upon the holy house, authority became attached to the keys of the Caaba. The Koreischite, Cossay, having made the Khaozïte, Abou-Ghobschan, guardian of the keys, drunk, bought them from him, says the legend, for a skin of wine, and thus founded the primatial authority of his tribe. From that moment began the grand organisation movement of the Arab people. Up till then they had only dared to erect their tents in the sacred

valley. Cossay, grouped around him the Koreischites, reconstructed the Caaba, and was the true founder of the city of Mecca. All the most important institutions date from Cossay. The *Nadwar*, or central councils sitting at Mecca, the *Lywar* as *Drapo* or curtain, the *Rifada*, or alms, to pay the expenses of the pilgrims, the *Sikaya*, or superintendents of the water, an important charge in such a country as the Hedjaz, the *Nasaa*, or intercalation of the complementary days in the calendar, the *Hidjaba*, or the guardianship of the keys of the Caaba. These functions, which summed up the whole political and religious institutions of Arabia, were exclusively reserved for the Koreischites. Thus, from the middle of the fifth century, the germ of the centralisation of Arabia was already laid, and the point from which the religious and political organisation of that country must proceed, is marked out beforehand. Cossay, in one sense, has founded much more than Mahomet. He was even regarded as a sort of prophet, and his will passed as an article of religion.

Hâschem, in the first half of the sixth century, completed Cossay's work, and extended in a surprising manner the commercial relations of his tribe. He established two caravans, the one in winter for Yeman, the other in the summer for Syria. Abd-el-Mottalib, son of Hâschem, and grandfather of Mahomet, continued the traditional work of the Koreischite oligarchy by the discovery of the fountains of Zemzem.[1] The fountains of Zemzem, independently of the traditions which attach to them, was in a narrow valley, and as much frequented as that of Mecca, a very important point, and assures the pre-eminence of the family which had appropriated them.

[1] This is the spring which, according to the Arabic legend, God caused to flow forth in the desert to refresh the Israelites.

The tribe of the Koreischites found itself thus exalted, like the tribe of Judah among the Hebrews, to the rank of the privileged tribe, destined to realise the unity of the nation. Mahomet therefore only crowned the work of his ancestors in politics as in religion; he invented nothing, but he realised energetically the aspirations of his age. It remains to inquire what help he found in the eternal instincts of human nature, and how he could give to his work the most impregnable foundation by supporting it on the weaknesses of the heart. Independently of all dogmatic belief, there are in man some religious needs which incredulity itself cannot restrain. We are astonished sometimes that a religion can live so long after the edifice of its dogmas has been undermined by criticism; but in reality a religion is neither founded nor overturned by arguments; it has its *raison d'être* in the most imperious needs of our nature, the need of loving, suffering, believing. That is why woman is the essential element in all religious foundations.[1] Islamism, which is not exactly a holy religion, but yet a natural, serious, and liberal religion, in a word, a religion for men has nothing, I confess, to compare with the admirable types of Magdalen and Theckla, yet this cold and reasonable religion has seductions enough to fascinate the devoted sex. Nothing is more inaccurate than the ideas which are generally spread in the West as to the condition designed for women by Islamism. The Arab woman at the time of Mahomet resembled in no way those stupid beings who people the harems of the Ottomans. Generally it is true the Arabs had a bad opinion of the moral qualities of woman, because the character of woman is exactly the opposite of that which the Arabs looked upon as

[1] See the ingenious remarks of M. St Mark Girardin on the part of women in the origin of Christianity in his "Essays on Literature and Morals." T. II.

the type of perfect man. We read in the Kitôb-el-Aghâni, that a chief of the tribe of Jaschkor, named Moschamradj, having, in an excursion against the Temimites, taken a young girl of noble family, the uncle of the young girl, Cays, son of Acim, went to demand her back from Moschamradj by offering him a ransom. Moschamradj having given the option to his captive to remain with him or to be given back to her family, the young girl, who was struck by her ravisher, preferred him to her parents. Cays returned so stupefied and indignant at the weakness of a sex capable of such a choice, that on arriving at his tribe, he caused to be buried alive two daughters under age whom he had, and swore that he would treat in the same fashion all the daughters that should be born to him in future. These simple and loyal natures could not understand the passion which raises woman beyond the exclusive affections of her tribe, and they necessarily therefore looked upon her as an inferior being, and possessed of an individuality. There have been women their own mistresses, having the enjoyment of their goods, choosing their husband, and having a right to send him away when it seemed good to them. Men distinguished themselves by their poetical talent and their literary tastes. Was not one woman, the beautiful El-Kanza, seen contesting with glory against the most celebrated poets of the great age? Others made their houses the rendezvous of lettered and witty persons.

Mahomet, by raising still more the conditions of the sex whose charms touched him so keenly, was not repaid by ingratitude. The sympathy of women contributed not a little to console him in the first days of his mission for affronts he received. They saw him persecuted and they loved him. The first century of Islamism presents many characters of most remarkable women. After Omar and Ali, the two principal figures of that great age are those of

two women, Aïscha and Fatima. A halo of holiness shines around Khadidja, and it is truly a very honourable testimony in favour of Mahomet, that, by a unique fact in the history of prophetism, his divine mission was first recognised by her who could know his weaknesses best. When, at the beginning of his preaching, accused of imposture, and made the butt of mockeries, he went to her, confiding all his sorrows. She consoled him with words of tenderness, and re-established his trembling faith. Khadidja was thus never confused in the eyes of Mahomet with the other wives who succeeded her. It was told of one of those, jealous of so much constancy, having one day asked the prophet if Allah had not given him something to forget the old Khadidja. "No," replied he, "when I was poor she enriched me; when the others accused me of lying, she believed in me. When I was cursed by nations she remained faithful to me, and the more I suffered, the more she loved me. Afterwards, when one of his wives wished to gain his good graces, she began by speaking praises of Khadidja.

The touchstone of a religion, after its women, are its martyrs. Persecution, in fact, is the first of religious pleasures; it is so sweet to the heart of man to suffer for his faith, that this sweetness has always been sufficient to make him believe it. The Christian conscience has more closely understood this by creating those admirable legends by which so many conversions are wrought by the charm of suffering. Islamism, although it may have remained a stranger to this depth of feeling, has also arrived at very exalted features in its stories of martyrs. The slave Belâl would not be out of place among the touching heroes of the *Golden Legend*. In the eyes of Mussulmans, the true martyrs are those who have perished fighting for the true religion, although there is in this a confusion of ideas to which we cannot lend

ourselves—the death of the soldier and that of the martyr correspond with us to sensations quite different. The Mussulman genius has succeeded in surrounding its dead with a lofty enough poetry. It is a great and beautiful scene, for example, to be seen in the funeral observance which followed the battle of Ohod. "Bury them without washing away their blood," cried Mahomet; "they will appear on the day of the resurrection with their bleeding wounds, which shall exhale the odour of musk, and I shall bear witness that they have perished as martyrs for the faith." The standard Djafir had both his hands cut off, and fell pierced by ninety wounds, all received in front. Mahomet went to carry the news to his widow. He took the young son of the martyr on his knees, and caressed his head in such a way that his mother knew everything. "His two hands have been cut off," he said, "but, in exchange, God has given him two wings of emerald, with which he now flies wherever he wishes among the angels in paradise."

The conversions are also generally disposed with much art. Nearly all resembled that of St Paul. The persecutor becomes an apostle; the victim, led by the paroxysm of his anger, receives the last blow, which extends his entire length to the feet, with triumphant grace. The legend of the conversion of Omar is, in this connection, an incomparable page of religious psychology. Omar had been the most rabid enemy of the Mussulmans. The fierceness of his character had made him the bugbear of the still timid faithful, and caused them to conceal themselves. One day, in a moment of excitement, he went out with the firm intention of killing Mahomet. He met on the way Noaym, one of his relatives, who, seeing him thus, sabre in hand, asked him where he was going, and what he intended to do. Omar told him his object. "Passion has carried you away," said Noaym to him; "should you not rather ad-

minister a correction to the members of your family who have abjured, unknown to you, the religion of their fathers." "And these members of my family," said Omar — "who are they?" "Your brother-in-law Said, and your sister Fatima." Omar flew to the house of his sister. Said and Fatima were at that moment receiving secret instructions from a disciple, who was reading to them a chapter of the Koran, written on a sheet of parchment. At the sound of Omar's steps the catechist concealed himself in an obscure corner. Fatima slipped the sheet under her dress. "What is this I heard you droning in a low voice?" said Omar as he entered. "It is nothing; you are deceived." "You were reading something, and I am told that you are connected with Mahomet's sect." Saying these words Omar threw himself on his brother-in-law. Fatima rushed to cover him with her body, and both cried together, "Yes, we are Mussulmans. We believe in God and his prophet. Kill us if you will." Omar, striking at random, delivered a blow, and grievously wounded his sister Fatima. At the sight of the blood of a woman running over his hand, the young man became suddenly mollified. "Show me the writing which you are reading from," said he, apparently calmed down. "I fear," responded Fatima, "that you will tear it up." Omar swore that he would return it to her intact. Hardly had he commenced to read the first few lines when he exclaimed, "How beautiful that is! how sublime! Tell me where the prophet is, and I will go this instant and submit myself to him."

At that time Mahomet chanced to be in a house situated on the hill of Safa, with about forty of his disciples, to whom he was explaining his doctrines. A knock was heard at the door. One of the Mussulmans looked out through the lattice. "It is Omar, with his sword hanging by his side," cried he, in great terror. The consternation became general.

Mahomet ordered the door to be opened. He then advanced towards Omar, took him by the mantle, and led him into the middle of the circle. "What is your object in coming here, son of Khattâb?" said he to him. "Do you mean to persist in your impiety until the chastisement falls on you?" "I come," responded Omar, "to declare that I believe in God and in his prophet." The whole assembly thereupon rendered thanks to heaven for this unexpected conversion. On quitting the faithful, Omar went straight to the house of one Djemil, who was looked upon as the greatest babbler in Mecca. "Djemil," said he to him, "I have news to impart to you; I have become Mussulman; I have adopted the religion of Mahomet."

Djemil hastily ran away in the direction of the hall of the Caaba, where the Koreischites were assembled together and holding conversation. He entered, crying at the top of his voice, "The son of Khattâb is perverted!" "Thou liest!" cried Omar, who had followed him up closely, "I am not perverted; I am Mussulman. I avow that there is no god beside Allah, and that Mahomet is a prophet."

His provocations ended in rendering the miscreants furious, who threw themselves on him. Omar sustained the shock, and scattered his assailants. "By God!" cried he, "even though the Mussulmans only number three hundred, we shall soon see who will be the masters of this temple." This is the same man who, later on, could not understand how anyone could make terms with the infidels, and who, rushing out from the tent in which he had seen Mahomet expire, sabre in hand, declared that he would cut the head off anyone who should dare to say that the prophet was dead.

In fact, Mahomet, by his marvellous knowledge of the esthetic Arab, created a means of action all-powerful on a people infinitely sensible to the charms

of the beauty of language. The Koran was the signal for a literary as well as a religious revolution; it signalised among the Arabs a departure from the versified style to that of prose, from poetry to eloquence, a moment most important in the intellectual life of a people. At the commencement of the seventh century, the great poetical generation of Arabia had passed away. Traces of slovenliness were everywhere manifest; ideas of literary criticism appeared as a sign of bad augury for the Antar genius, that Arab nature so unconstrained, so subdued, who commenced his *Moallakât* almost as would a poet of the decadence, with these words: *What subject is it that the poets have not sung?* A feeling of intense astonishment began to gather round Mahomet when he appeared in the midst of a decaying literature, with his bright and inciting *recitations*. The first time that Otba, son of Rebia, heard this energetic, sonorous, and highly rythmical language, although not versified, he returned to his house quite aghast! "What, then, has happened to you?" said some one to him. "In good truth," said he, "Mahomet has spoken to me in a language such as I never before heard." It is neither poetry nor prose, nor the language of magic, but it is something penetrating. Mahomet did not care for the refined prosody of the Arabic poetry; he made mistakes in quantities when he quoted lines, and God himself is engaged to make excuse for it in the Koran. "We have not learned the versification of our prophet." He repeats emphatically that he is neither a poet nor a magician. The common people, in fact, were never tired of confounding him with these two classes of men, though it is true that his rhymed and sententious style had some resemblance to that of the magicians. It is, of course, impossible for us of to-day to comprehend the charm that the Koran exercised when it made its appearance. The book seems to us declamatory, monotonous, tiresome; the reading of it

is almost insupportable. But we must remember that the Arab, having never had any notions of the plastic arts, nor of the great beauties of composition, made perfection exclusively to exist in the form of the details of style. In his eyes, language is something divine, the most precious gift that God has bestowed on the Arab race; the surest symbol of his pre-eminence, is the Arab language itself, with its learned grammar, its infinite resources, its delicate subtilty.[1] There can be no doubt that the principle successes achieved by Mahomet were due to the originality of his language, and to some new embellishments he added to Arab eloquence. The most important conversions, that of the poet Lebid, for example, were brought about by the effect produced by certain passages in the Koran; while to those who demand a *sign*[2] Mahomet opposed no other reply than the perfect purity of the Arabic that he spoke, and the fascination of that new style, the secret of which he possessed.

Thus Islamism sums up, with a unity of which it would be difficult to find another example, the moral, religious, and æsthetic ideas, in a word, the spiritual life of a great human family. We must not ask of it either that lofty spiritualism which India and Germany alone have revealed, or that measured and perfectly beautiful sentiment which Greece bequeathed to the Latin races, or that strange, mysterious, and truly divine fascination which has united, without destruction of grace, the whole civilised world, in a veneration of the same ideal, which had its birth in Judea. It would be

[1] The Arabs imagine that this language alone has a grammar, and that all other idioms are but gross *patois*. Sheik Rifaca, in the account of his journey to France, is at great pains to dissipate the prejudices of his countrymen on this point, and to make them understand that the French language also possesses rules, besides academic niceties of expression.

[2] The word *aiat*, which designates the verses of the Koran, means *sign* or *miracle*.

pressing æsthetic pantheism unduly to put all the products of human nature upon a footing of equality, and to measure by the said standard the beauty of the pagoda and that of the Greek temple, for the reason that both are the result of a conception, equally original and spontaneous.

Human nature, it is true, is always beautiful, but it is not always equally beautiful. Everywhere we find the same idea, the same consonances and disonances of terrestrial and divine instinct, but not the same plenitude or the same sonorousness. Islamism, it is plain, is the product of an inferior combination, and, so to speak, of mediocre human elements. This is the reason that its conquests have been confined to medium elements in human nature. Savage races have not been capable of attaining to it, while, on the other hand, it has failed to reach peoples who carry in themselves the germs of a higher civilisation. Persia is the only Indo-European country in which Islamism has attained absolute domination, and it, too, has only adopted it subject to very profound modifications, in order to accommodate its mystical and mythological tendencies. Its severe simplicity has everywhere been an obstacle to the fruitful development of science, the higher kinds of poetry, and a delicate morality.

But if it is asked, What is to be the destiny of Islamism, in face of a civilisation essentially encroaching, and destined, it would seem, to become universal, as far as the infinite diversity of the human species will permit? it must be answered that there is nothing at present that can aid us in forming any precise ideas on the point. On the one hand, it is certain, that if ever Islamism should—I do not say disappear, for religions do not die—lose the great intellectual and moral control of an important part of the universe, it will not succumb to the forces of another religion, but to the power of modern science, which will carry with it its habitudes of rationalism

and criticism. On the other hand, we must remember that Islamism—differing greatly as it does from those lofty towers which unflinchingly challenge the storms and fall with a crash—has within itself secret stores of flexibility and powers of resistance. Christian nations, in order to effect a religious reform, have been obliged to break away abruptly from former ties, and to constitute themselves in open revolt with the central authority. Islamism, which has neither pope nor councils, nor bishops of divine institution, nor a powerfully organised clergy, which has never sounded the redoubtable abyss of infallibility, has little to fear from a revival of rationalism. What, in fact, is there for criticism to attack? The legend of Mahomet? This legend has little more sanction than those pious beliefs which, in the bosom of Catholicism, may be rejected without one's being cast out as a heretic. Plainly, there is nothing here for Strauss to do. Could it be applied to dogma? Reduced to its primitive lines, Islamism has added nothing to religion except the *prophetism* of Mahomet and a kind of conception in regard to fatality, which is less an article of faith than a general mental conception, susceptible of being conveniently directed. Could it be applied to morals? One can make choice of four sects, equally orthodox, between which the moral sense can secure a considerable degree of liberty. As to worship—several accessory superstitions apart—in point of simplicity, it can only be compared to that of the purest Protestant sects. Was this not witnessed at the beginning of this century, in the country of Mahomet itself? A sectary who occasioned the vast movement of the Wahhabites, who proclaimed that the true worship of God was prostration before the idea of existence; that the making of intercessory invocations to him was an act of idolatry, and that the most meritorious service that could be rendered was to destroy the

tomb of the prophet and the mausoleums of the Imams!

Symptoms of a much more serious nature revealed themselves, I know, both in Egypt and Turkey. Their contact with the sciences and European manners produced a freedom of beliefs which at times there was no attempt to disguise. Sincere believers, who were conscious of the danger, did not conceal alarm, and denounced European books of science as containing errors fatal and subversive of all religious faith. I am, however, none the less of the opinion that, if the East could surmount its apathy and overstep limits which, so far, it has never been able to go beyond in matters of rationalistic speculations, Islamism would not oppose a very serious obstacle to the progress of the modern spirit. The lack of theological centralisation has always allowed to Mussulman speculation a certain kind of religious liberty. Whatever M. Forster may say, the Khalifate has never resembled the Papacy. The Khalifate only manifests its strength when it represents the first conquering idea of Islamism; when the temporal power of the *emir-al-omra*, and when the Khalifate has become nothing but a religious power. The idea of a purely spiritual power is too impalpable for the East; not any of the branches of Christianity itself has been able to attain this; the Greco-slave branch has never reached it; the Germanic family has shaken it off and outstripped it; only the Latin nations have fallen a prey to it. Now, experience has demonstrated that the simple faith of a people does not suffice to maintain a religion, without a constituted hierarchy and a spiritual head to protect it. Was it faith which the Anglo-Saxon people lacked, when the will of Henry VIII. passed off for it, without himself perceiving it, what was one day a schism and the next day a heresy? The orthodox Mussulman, not being under the protection of a permanent autonomous body,

which is self-recruiting and self-regulating, is, then, to some extent, vulnerable. It is superflous to add that if ever a reform movement made its appearance in Islamism, Europe could only influence it in the most general way. To seek to regulate the faith of others would come with a bad grace from her. In actively pursuing the propagation of its dogma, which is civilisation, she ought to leave to peoples themselves the exceedingly difficult task of accommodating their religious traditions to their new wants, to respect, as in the case of individuals, the most imprescriptible right of nations—namely, that of presiding itself, with the most perfect liberty, over the revolutions of conscience.

THE CRITICAL HISTORIANS OF JESUS.

It is said that Angelico Fiesole painted the heads of the Virgin and Christ on his knees. It were well if criticism should act thus, and did not openly disregard the rays which emanate from certain facts—facts before which centuries have bowed themselves, and in the end worshipped. Humanity's first duty is to attach itself to the grand choice of humanity, and to aid in the worship of moral goodness and beauty, such as are manifestated in all noble characters and lofty symbols. Its second is an unceasing search after the truth, accompanied by the firm conviction that if the sacrifice of our egotistical instincts are agreeable to the Deity, it is far otherwise with our scientific interests. That timid credulity which is afraid of seeing the object of its faith vanish, gives bodily form to every image, and is as opposed to the harmony and proper discipline of the human faculties, as is the purely negative criticism, which renounces the adoration of the ideal type, because it recognises that the ideal does not always conform to the reality. It is high time it should be understood that criticism, so far from excluding respect and implying, as timid people suppose of crime divine, as well as human treason, implies, on

the contrary, the purest act of worship. Its chief fear, perhaps, is that it would be held to be guilty of irreverence if it sought to bring forth from under its veil the real countenance of its sublime master, who said, "I am the Truth."

Such a profound instinct leads man to search for truth at the price of his dearest beliefs, and that instinct constitutes for lofty natures such an imperious duty that the criticisms of the origin of a religion is never the work of free-thinkers, but of the most enlightened votaries of that religion. The branch of Christianity which rests most essentially upon the Bible is exactly that which has created the rational interpretation of the Biblical texts; the boldest works upon the history of the founders of Christianity have proceeded from Christian theologians. When laic knowledge began to occupy itself with these difficult subjects, it was only to sum up from its point of view the works undertaken by sacred learning, and which theology alone, it must be said, had hitherto possessed the liberty of interpreting. If, in our days, the independent thinker scarcely dares to touch hard problems, what in the past would have been the lot of the historian who, without respect for the faith of eighteen centuries, would have allowed himself to quote on his side Him whose forehead appears to us surrounded by the halo of Divinity? It is not in its beginning that criticism can think of so bold an enterprise. The day when it lays its hand upon this last sanctuary, it does so only to carry out a long series of attempts against received opinions, and to plant its flag upon a place all whose outworks it has already destroyed.

In short, study, since the Renaissance, the march of modern criticism, and you will see it, following always the line of its inflexible progress, replace, one after the other, the superstitions of incomplete knowledge by truer images of the past. A regret seems to

be attached to each of the steps which have been taken in this fatal path; but in fact there is not one of the gods dethroned by criticism which does not also receive from criticism more legitimate titles to adoration. There is first the false Aristotle of the Arabs and of the commentators of the middle ages, who fall under the attacks of the Hellenists of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and give place to the authentic and original Aristotle. Then there is Plato, who raised for a moment against the scholastic Peripatetism preached at Florence as the gospel, and who found his true titles to glory by descending from the rank of revealer to that of philosopher; next there is Homer, the idol of the ancient philology, who one fine day has disappeared from his pedestal of three thousand years, and recovers his real beauty by becoming the impersonal expression of the genius of Greece; then there is primitive history accepted up to this point with a clumsy realism which comes to be the better comprehended, the more severely it is discussed. A bold advance from the letter to the spirit; a painful decipherment which substitutes for the legend a reality a thousand times more beautiful. Such is the law of modern criticism. Wolf has done more for the glory of Homer than generations of blind admirers, and I have always regretted that I do not see him figured in the beautiful picture of M. Ingres. Among those to whom the Iliad and the Odyssey owe the larger share of their immortality it was inevitable that criticism, in this impassioned search for origins, should encounter a collection of works—products more or less pure of the Hebrew genius, which, from Genesis to the Apocalypse, form, according to the point of view in which we place them, either the finest of the sacred books or the most curious of literatures. After so many admirable works, undertaken for the understanding of Greek, Latin, and even Oriental antiquity,

how has the Bible never been thought of? Why should we refuse to examine into the most precious monument which remains to us upon the most interesting of antiquities? To stop the human mind in this descent would have been a thing impossible. As orthodoxy was still the law of the outward life, and even of the greatest part of conscience, there were some believers who at first tried Biblical criticism, simple illusion, which proves at least the good faith of those who undertook this work, and more still the fatality which drew the human mind, engaged in the ways of rationalism, to break with the tradition which it at first resisted!

I.

CRITICISM has two ways in which it can attack a marvellous narrative (as to accepting it such as it is, it never thinks of that, because its essence is the denial of the supernatural[1]):—

1. To admit the basis of the narrative, but to explain it by taking account of the age and the persons who have transmitted it to us, as well as the received forms in such and such an age to accept the facts. 2. To cast doubt upon the narrative itself, and to take account of its form without yielding to it any historic value. On the first hypothesis we attempt to explain the matter of the story itself. We suppose,

[1] An explanation has become necessary regarding this word, since writers have fallen into the habit of describing by the word *supernatural* the idealistic moral element, moral life, in opposition to the materialistic and positive element. In this sense we cannot deny the supernatural without falling into a coarse sensualism, which is as far removed as possible from my thought; for I believe, on the contrary, that only intellectual and moral life has some value and a distinct reality. I mean, here, by supernatural, the miraculous, that is, a special act of the Deity inserting itself into the series of events in the physical and psychological world, and disarranging the course of facts in view of a special government of humanity.

consequently, the reality of that matter. On the second hypothesis, without pronouncing any opinion on this reality, we analyse the appearance of the narrative as a simple psychological fact; we regard it as a poem created in every portion by tradition, and not having, or being able to have, any other cause than the instincts of the spiritual nature of man. In biblical exegesis we give to those who follow the first method the name of *rationalists*[1] (because first they were only opposed to the supernaturalists), and we reserve for the partisans of the second the name of *mythologists*.

The first method of explanation, whose exclusive employment cannot fail to lead to singularly narrow views, was alone known by antiquity. Evhemerus has left his name with the system which, in the interpretation of myths, substitutes natural facts for marvellous traditions. Protestant exegesis was at first pure Evhemerism.[2] A man whose name does not occupy in the history of the human mind the place which it deserves, Eichhorn, was the first to apply to the Bible this system of interpretation. The progress of history and philosophy had led him to the alternative of admitting the divine intervention among all peoples in the primitive age or of denying it to all. Among all the ancient nations he observed what was unexpected and incomprehensible was connected with the Deity, the sages always lived in communication with superior beings. Outside of Hebrew history, no one is tempted to believe in

[1] It is necessary to remember that the name of *rationalists* is here taken in a sense purely conventional to describe the exegetes who first applied to the Bible the evhemeristic criticism. The true rationalists are not, in our eyes, the exegetes who were first honoured with this name, or the mythologists, but rather those who apply, or shall apply, to Jewish history and to Christian history a criticism separated from all dogmatic prepossession.

[2] The history of these first attempts has been thoroughly treated by Strauss's *Life of Jesus*, Introd. See also *L'Introduction à l'ancient et Nouv. Test.*, by M. L'Abbé Glare, t. I., 534, and ff.

the literal truth of such narratives. But, adds Eichhorn, evidently reason exacts that the Hebrew and the non-Hebrew shall be treated in the same way, so that it was necessary either to place all nations during their infancy under the action of superior beings, or not to believe that any one of them was under such an influence. To admit a primitive supernaturalism, common to all nations, is to create a world of fables. What it has to do, therefore, is to gain a conception of the ancient narratives according to the spirit of the age which has left them to us. No doubt, if they were written with the precision of our age, it would be necessary to see in them either a real intervention of the Deity or a lie invented to make such an intervention to be believed; but proceeding from an age which had no criticism, these simple documents are expressed without artifice and conformably to the received opinions of the time in which they were drawn up. The truth is, it is only necessary therefore to translate into our language the language of the ancients. Just as the human spirit had not yet penetrated the true cause of physical phenomena, so it derived everything from supernatural forces; the lofty thoughts, the grand resolutions, the useful inventions, and especially the dreams in living images came from a god. And it was not only the people who embraced those easy explanations, but superior men had themselves no doubt upon this point, and boasted with a full conviction of their relations to the Deity.

Under the marvellous recital of the Bible, it is necessary, then, says Eichhorn, to seek for natural and simple facts, expressed so as to suit the habits of peoples still in their infancy. Thus the smoke and fire of Sinai were nothing else than a fire which Moses lighted upon the mountain to excite the imagination of the people, and along with which there happened coincidently a violent storm; the luminous

column was a torch which was carried in front of the caravan; the shining appearance of the face of the legislator was the effect of his great excitement, and he himself, who was ignorant of the cause of it, saw in it, as well as the people, something divine.

It was an immense step to have subjected the body of Hebrew writings to the same method of interpretation as other works of the human mind, however defective that method of interpretation still was. It was necessary that we should become emboldened to treat in the same manner the writings of the New Testament, composed at an epoch much nearer our own, and objects of a very special veneration. Eichhorn, like all the reformers, stopped at the first step, and did not apply, except in a very timid manner, the rationalistic method to the evangelical facts. Scarcely did he venture to propose a natural sense for some writings of the history of the Apostles, such as the conversion of St Paul—the miracle of Pentecost—angelic appearances. It was in 1800 that Dr Paulus entered, with full sail, into that new sea, and laid the first foundations for a critical history of Jesus. Paulus distinguished with much delicacy between that which in a narrative is fact (objective element), and the judgment of the author (subjective element). The fact is, it is this that forms the foundation of the narrative; the judgment of the fact is the way in which the spectator or narrator sees it, the explanation which he gives of it to himself, the manner, in one word, in which the deed is reflected in his individuality. The gospels, according to Paulus, are *histories* written by credulous men, under the sway of a lively imagination. The evangelists are historians after the fashion of those naive witnesses who, in relating the most simple story, cannot refrain from presenting it with the additions of their master. In order to have real truth, it is necessary to place oneself at the point of view of the

epoch, and to separate the real fact from the embellishments which credulous faith and the taste for the marvellous have added to it. Paulus held firmly to the historical truth of the narratives; he strove to introduce into the gospel history a rigorous concatenation of dates and facts; but there is nothing in these facts which demands a supernatural intervention. For him, Jesus is not the Son of God in the sense of the Church, but he is a wise and virtuous man; they are not miracles which he accomplished; but they were sometimes acts of benevolence and philanthropy, sometimes of medical skill, sometimes of chance and of good luck.

Such examples lead us to comprehend how such an exegesis, though sometimes ingenious, is oftener subtle and forced. Take, in the first place, the narrative of the gospel about the birth of John the Baptist: that narrative includes two supernatural facts, and, consequently, not admissible, the apparition of the angel, and the sudden dumbness of Zachariah. The exegetes of whom we speak explain the apparition of the angel by the usual laws of "angel appearance"; to the one, it was a man who said to the father of John the Baptist what these attribute to a celestial messenger; for others, it was a flash which struck his imagination; for some, it was a dream; for others, an ecstasy or hallucination brought about by the mental state in which he was at the time, and by the religious function which he was accomplishing. The excited mind in the demi-obscurity of the sanctuary; he thought, in prayer, on the object of his most ardent desires; he hopes for a favourable answer to his prayers, and consequently is disposed to see a sign in everything which he can see. The smoke of the incense, illumined by the lamps, forms itself into figures; the priest imagines that he sees a celestial being, frightful at first, but from whose mouth he believes he will soon hear consoling pro-

mises. Scarcely has the slightest doubt begun to rise in his heart than the scrupulous Zachariah regards himself as guilty of incredulity and believes himself reprimanded by the envoy of God. As to the dumbness, a double explanation is possible: either perhaps a sudden apoplexy really paralysed the tongue of Zachariah, which he regarded as a punishment for his doubts; or perhaps Zachariah, through a Jewish superstition, forbade himself during some time from the use of speech, which he accused himself of having badly employed. All the incidents of the narrative are thus accepted as real, but explicable without supposing a miracle: the new exegetes never dream for a moment of asking themselves if the narrative in question was not a fiction conceived after the model of those events which the Old Testament places at the birth of all great men.

Let us then take, for example, the narrative of the gospel about the fast which Jesus suffered during forty days. In believing this, the rationalists say that forty was a round number signifying several days, or perhaps this abstinence was not complete, and did not exclude herbs and roots. One of them even made the observation, that it is indeed said that Jesus did not eat, but nowhere is it said that he did not drink. Now, adds he, an enthusiast has been known to sustain himself during forty-five days with water and tea, without any other aliment.

The other marvellous facts of the life of Jesus are explained in an analogous manner. The celestial light of the shepherds of Bethlehem was neither more nor less than a lantern which they carried to light their way. The star of the Magi was a comet, and if it is said that the star accompanied them in their journey, it ought to be understood of the torch which they carried before them during the night. When it is related that Jesus walked on the sea, that means that he reached his disciples by swimming, or walking no

the shore. Again, he calmed the tempest by seizing the helm with a firm hand. The multiplication of the loaves is explained, by secret magazines or by provisions which his hearers had in their pouches. The rich had brought too much, the poor too little or none at all: Jesus, out of true philanthropy, counselled that the provisions should be divided among all, so that there was enough for everybody. The angels of the resurrection were nothing else than the white shrouds which pious women took for celestial beings. The ascension was in the same way reduced to the proportions of a natural fact, by the hypothesis of mist, under cover of which Jesus adroitly slipped away, and escaped to the other side of the mountain.

That was certainly a narrow exegesis, very little calculated to preserve the dignity of the character of Jesus, an exegesis full of subtilties, founded by the mechanical employment of some processes (ecstasy, lightning, swimming, etc.), an exegesis otherwise incompetent in a theological point of view; for, if the sacred historians were untrustworthy as to the circumstances, why hold so strongly to their veracity upon the foundation of the narrative? Errors of detail are not more compatible than impostures with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It is easy to perceive the insufficiency of a method of interpretation so paltry. Eichhorn, himself the father of Biblical Evhemerism, recognises the necessity of a larger exegesis for some parts of the Book of the Old Testament, and particularly for the traditions relative to the creation and the fall of man. After having tried different natural explanations of these traditions, and maintained that it was unworthy of the Deity to have allowed a mythological fragment to be inserted in a book of revelation, he recognised the puerility of similar trials, and saw no more in the before cited, than the mythical translation of that

philosophical thought; the desire for a better state is the source of all the evil in the world.

II.

THE explanation called realistic had been able to satisfy the first necessity for boldness which the human mind felt, in taking possession of a position for long defended. But experience was bound soon to reveal its untenable defects, its barrenness, its grossness. Never was better realised the ingenious allegory of the daughters of Mineus, changed into bats, for having criticised as serious things, subjects of vulgar beliefs. There was as much simplicity and credulity, but much less poetry, to accept grossly the legend in its details, and to accept it once for all in its entirety. We properly treat as barbarous the hagiographers of the seventeenth century, who, in writing the *Lives of the Saints*, admit certain miracles, and reject others as too difficult to believe. It is clear on this principle, it was necessary to reject them all, and to a paltry criticism which does violence to texts, because they are only half reasonable; we prefer, from an æsthetic point of view, the style of *Sainte Elisabeth*, of M. de Montalembert, in which the fables are related, without distinction, in such a way that it is sometimes doubtful whether the author believes the whole, or whether he believes none. We are at least free to suppose that he has taken the side which he did not regard as difficult, and the book so composed possesses an undeniable merit as a work of art. Such was also the beautiful and poetic manner of Plato; such is the secret of the inimitable charm which the half believing, half sceptical use of popular myths gives to his philosophy.[1] But to accept one part of miraculous

[1] PHÆDRUS: Tell me, Socrates, was it not somewhere hereabouts, on the banks of the Ilisius, where Boreas carried off the young Arithya.

narratives, can only show a narrow spirit. Nothing can be less philosophical than to side with the impossible, and to apply a realistic criticism to narratives outside of all reality.

The study of comparative mythology was producing everywhere in Germany new ideas. Heyne, Wolf, Niebuhr, and soon afterwards Ottfried Müller, unveiled Greek and Latin antiquity: India was opening its treasures, and furnishing invaluable documents, without which history and the human mind would have been always incomplete. Heyne had proclaimed this fine principle: *A mythis omnis priscorum hominum cum historia tum philosophia procedit.*[1] Gabler, Bauer, Vater, and De Wette applied to their sacred history the principles of criticism so delicately recognised for the profane historian, and in 1802 Bauer published a *Hebrew Mythology of the Old and New Testaments.* The most ancient history of all peoples, said Bauer, is mythical; why should the history of the Hebrews be the only exception, when a single glance at the books of the Bible proves that they

Soc.: They say so. . . . But tell me, pray, do you then believe in that fabulous adventure? If I would doubt it, like the Savants, I should not be very embarrassed. I would be able to subtilise and say that the north wind made her fall from one of the neighbouring rocks, when she was sporting with Pharmaces, and that sort of death gave rise to the belief that she was carried off by Boreas. . . . For me, my dear Phædrus, I find these explanations very ingenious, but I declare that they demand too much labour and refinement, and that they place a man in a very sad predicament; for then it is necessary that he should resign himself to explain in the same manner the legend of the centaurs, that of Chimera, and I see others in prospect, the Pegasuses, the Gorgons, an innumerable crowd of other monsters more frightful one than the other, who, if one refuse to believe in them, and if one wishes to reclaim them to an appearance of probability, there is demanded of one subtilties almost as extravagant as themselves, and involving a great loss of time. I have not sufficient leisure for that. . . . I renounce then the study of all these histories, and limiting myself to believe that which ordinary people believe, I occupy myself, not with these indifferent things, but with myself.—(From transl. by M. Cousin, bk. vi., p. 7-9.)

[1] For the general theory of the excellent work of Ottfried Müller, *Prolegomena zu einer wissenschaftlichen Mythologie* (Göttingen, 1825).

contain legends like those of other nations? Here the new school has an easy triumph, for where do we find more characteristic mythological narratives than those of the temptation of Eve, Noah and his ark, Babel, etc.? From 1805, Wecklein, Professor of Theology at Munster, pointed out that the translation of Enoch and Elias had nothing more real about it than that of Ganymede; that the appearance of the angel to Hagar was of the same order as that of Apollo to Diomede; and that Jehovah helped Samson just as Jupiter did the Trojans. The new explanation soon became a complete theory. There were thus in the Bible, historical, poetical, and philosophical myths, and it was soon found that in the history of the Hebrews there were all the features of that primitive age, in which the human mind, without calculation or artifice, did not know how to express the truth, except under the form of a fable. How absurd, said the exegetes of the new school to the rationalists, to take, for example, the marvellous out of the Pentateuch, while it is quite evident that the writer, in a multitude of directions, believes that he was recording miracles! That is to desire to hear better than himself in his own words. Such narratives ought not to be treated as historical: they are legendary and traditional. "Tradition," says De Wette, "has no discernment; its tendency is not historical but poetical. The more beautiful the narratives are and the more honourable for the nation, the more marvellous they are, the better are they received, and if there are here and there hiatuses, imagination is quick to fill them up. An awkward thing it is, and which could not be understood, except in Germany, that such a system should be proposed by theologians as the only means of defending the Bible against the explanations of its enemies.

While the Evhemerist interpretation had been applied to the narratives of the Old Testament before

being applied to those of the New, so some time passed before the mythological exegetes allowed themselves to touch the holy of holies. But the descent was fatal. Bauer, without treating the gospel as a mythical history from one end to the other, found there already some isolated myths, and confessed that the narratives, for example, of the infancy of Jesus, could not be received on any other explanation. This arose from the natural inclination which gives rise to so many marvellous anecdotes regarding the youth of so many celebrated men, anecdotes which find in posterity a ready credence. The evangelists had not elsewhere any historic document as to these first years, since Jesus had not yet excited attention. Nearly all the exegetes admitted with simplicity that the narratives of the gospel did not deserve so much belief as those of the later years in the life of Jesus, and the more timorous limited themselves to regarding the chapters in Luke and Matthew, relative to the infancy, as being apocryphal interpretations. Thus the mythological explanations admitted at first, over the threshold of the Old Testament, was now upon the threshold of the New, but were very anxiously forbidden from going farther.

These barriers were not slow to fall. The last acts in the life of Jesus, the ascension especially, appear marked by the same character as those of the infancy, and appeared to call for the same explanation. Thus the edifice was attacked at its two extremities, and to follow the expression of one theologian, they entered into the gospel history by the triumphal gateway of myths, and they went out of it by a similar gateway, but for every intermediate space, it was necessary to content oneself with the tortuous and painful path of the natural explanation.

This did not content them for long. Gabler believed he saw myths in all the miraculous facts of the public life. "In fact," said he, "from the moment the

idea of the myth is introduced into the Gospel, no longer can any line of demarcation be traced, and from the beginning to the very end, the myth penetrates into the very heart of the gospel history. Why stop at the baptism of Jesus, when that scene itself is recounted in an evidently legendary manner? And if the Ascension is placed in the rank of myths, why is it not of the same character recognised in the resurrection, or the appearance at Gethsemane, etc.? Thus braving the limits which it has been wished to put to it, myth makes upon all points an invasion into the history of Jesus.

After the victory, the mythological, however, presents numerous varieties. Alongside the mythical explanation, many admitted still the Evhemerist!—mixed up, too, in varying proportions. They renounced the search for a history in the gospels. The wise declared that it was scarcely possible to distinguish what portion was symbol, and what was reality. No criticism had an instrument so trenchant as to isolate these two elements from each other. At the most, all they could arrive at was a sort of probability, and to say: Here there is more of historical reality, there poetry and the myth predominate.

Germany never stops on the path of speculation. It has gone to the farthest extent in the application of its theories. To the eclectic mythologists succeeded the absolute mythologists, who aspired to explain all the facts of the gospel by pure myths, and renounced the attempt of extracting even a historical residue. Dr Frederic David Strauss has made himself a European reputation by presenting this system with a vast clothing of science and argument in his celebrated book, the *Life of Jesus*.[1] "The ancient interpretation of the church," says he in the preface to his first

[1] *Life of Jesus; or a Critical Examination of his History*, by Dr F. D. Strauss. Translated by M. E. Littré, of the Academy of Inscription and Belles Lettres, 2d Ed., 2 vols. Paris: Ladgrange, 1853.

edition, "starts from two suppositions, the first that the gospels contain history, and the second that this history is supernatural. Rationalism rejecting the second of these propositions, only attaches itself more strongly to the former, namely, that there is to be found in these books of history but a natural history. Science does not know how to stop thus half-way. It was needful that it should allow to fall aside the other supposition. It was necessary to assert what and up to what point we are in the gospels, upon a historical soil. That is the natural march of things, and under this view the appearance of such a work as this is not only justified, but even necessary."

Strauss was here perfectly correct. It would be necessary that one should be profoundly ignorant of German theology, to heap up, as has been done, upon the name of a single man, the maledictions which have fallen on all the intellectual work in which he has summed it up. To declaim against those inevitable appearances, to be convinced of what they possess that is partial and incomplete, to deny those things which they have of the legitimate, is to attack the fatality of reason, and the necessary progress of the human mind. Strauss's is one of the annuaries of modern science. Wolf's prolegomena to Homer became necessary to lead to the *Life of Jesus*. Certainly, according to Wolf, the Homeric question, and, according to Strauss, the gospel question has made good progress, but the very errors into which these two great critics have allowed themselves to fall, ought to be held as suggestive, and should prepare for the discovery of the truth.

Of all the thinkers of Germany, Strauss is perhaps the worst appreciated in France. Most people only know him by the complaints of his enemies, and by having heard that an outrageous person of this name has denied the existence of Christ, for it is on terms quite as absurd that they have summed up the *Life of*

Jesus. From another side those who would look upon Strauss as free from all foreign prepossession towards science would mistake his true character. Strauss, it must be said, however surprising this double assertion may appear, is, at the same time, a theologian (to many, a timid theologian), and a philosopher of the school of Hegel. Yes, it must never be forgotten when we read the *Life of Jesus* that this book is a book of theology, a book of sacred exegesis, a book of the same order as are those of Michaelus, Eichhorn and Paulus, who pretend that they have not gone forth from the theological world. These are not the free and easy allurements of independent science. It is a system of hermeneutics which is opposed to another system, with a pedantic strictness. In France, where the schism between theology and profane science is much more marked, where each of those two classes of study lives apart and without association with the other, we cannot understand such a singular phenomenon. In Germany, Voltaire would have been a professor in the faculty of theology. The celebrated Gesenius, the boldest of rationalists, explained for some years at Hallē, Hebrew literature, amidst the plaudits of more than eight hundred listeners, all future ministers of the holy gospel. Strauss himself had been a professor of theology, and would have been able to set forth officially his system from a sacred chair. Let us hear him express on this point the scruple of his timorous conscience. "The author," says he in the preface, "knows that the internal essence of the Christian faith is completely independent of his critical researches. The supernatural birth of Christ, his miracles, his resurrection and ascension, remain eternal truths, to whatever doubt the reality of these things may be subject as historical facts. This certainty alone may give our criticism repose and dignity, and distinguish it from the natural explanations of preceding centuries, explanations which,

proposing to reverse religious truth along with historic fact, were necessarily stamped with a character of frivolty. . . . Yet some may feel weakened in their faith by researches of this character. If it were so with theologians, they would have in their science a remedy for such weakenings which could not be wanting to them from the moment they determined not to be behind in the development of our age. *As to the laity it is true that the matter is not so conveniently arranged for them.* Thus, the present work has been arranged in a manner to make lightly instructed laymen understand that it was not intended for them, and if, by an imprudent curiosity, or too much anti-heretical zeal, they would insist upon reading it, they would carry, as Schleiermacher said in similar circumstances, a sorrow into their conscience, for they could not escape the conviction that they could not understand that which they desired to speak well of."

Strauss, who has been represented in France as a sort of anti-christ, is thus a thorough theologian; let us add, at the risk of having to seek for a paradox, that this theologian is a disciple of Hegel. The *Life of Jesus* is at bottom nothing but the philosophy of the chief of the contemporaneous German school, applied to the gospel narratives. The Christology of the theologian is nothing but the symbolic translation of abstract philosophical theses. God is not an infinite, inaccessible one, who resides obstinately outside of, and above, the finite. He penetrates it so that finite nature, that is to say, the world and the human mind, are nothing but an alienation which he makes from himself, and from which he goes forth anew to re-enter his unity. Man has not the truth so much in anything as in the finite mind. God, on his side, has no reality so much as in his infinite mind, and as enclosed in his infinitude. The true and real existence of the spirit is therefore not God in himself, nor man

by himself, but it is the God-man. From the moment that humanity is ripe enough to make its religion out of its truth that God is man and that man is of the divine race, it is necessary that there should come forth an individual who is known to be the present God. This God-man, enclosing in one divine being the Divine essence and human personality, has truly the Divine mind for a human father and mother. A man of Divine essence, he is without sin and perfect. He rules nature, he works miracles, and yet, by his humanity, he is dependent upon nature, he is subject to sufferings and death. Distinguished from men who do not go beyond their finite nature, he must die violently by the hands of sinners: but he knows the means of going forth and retaking the path towards himself. The death of the God-man being nothing but the suppression of his alienation, is in fact an elevation and a return to God. Consequently his death is necessarily followed by the resurrection and the ascension.

This Christ, *à priori*, it may be well divined, is not indeed the historic Christ, he who bears the name of Jesus. It is the human mind, and the human mind only, which re-unites all the attributes of the Hegelian Christ. He does not exist as an individual formed by a unique privilege of the divine essence and the human essence, ruling nature, working miracles, and corporeally raised. There has not existed an individual more exclusively God who has ever been before him or shall be after him. Such is not the proceeding by which this idea is realised; it does not expend all its riches upon one single copy to be frugal towards the others. The unity of the divine and human nature, if people do not conceive in that humanity as an incarnation, is not really in an infinitely more elevated sense than if it had been limited to an individual. Is not a continued incarnation of God more true than an incarnation limited to a point

of time? Placed in an individual, the properties and functions of Christ contradict one another; they agree in the idea of the species. Humanity is the re-union of two natures, God made man—that is to say, the infinite spirit, which is itself alienated from the finite nature, and the finite spirit only reflects its infinity. It is the child of the visible mother, and of the invisible father, of spirit and of nature. It is that which works miracles; for, in the course of human history, the spirit subjects itself more and more into matter. It is the impeccable, for the progress of its development is above reproach; impurity never attaches itself but to the individual, it taints not the species and its history. It is this which dies, resuscitates, and mounts to heaven; for rejecting that terminus which bounds it as an individual, national and planet-like, it is united to the infinite spirit.

The Hegelian Christianity always, in placing its ideal of Jesus, so far as a historic person, tries to give him the part of a Divine founder. At the head of all the great acts of humanity are found individuals endowed with lofty faculties, who are ordinarily designed by the title of geniuses, but who, when they are agitated by religious creations, merit a name more holy. Jesus was of that number. No man having had, and no man ever before having had a more likely feeling of his identity with the heavenly father, it will never be able to raise him above himself in the matter of religion, whatever progress has been made in the other branches of intellectual culture. Religious faith has been able, without doubt, to perfect itself according to him, by disembarrassing itself for good of the superstitions and the belief in the supernatural; but such progress cannot be compared to the gigantic steps of progress which Jesus has caused humanity to make during the course of his religious evolution. Never has the unity of God and man been manifested in the past, never will it be manifested in

the future, with a power of thus transfiguring an entire life. Setting aside, then, the notions of impeccability and of absolute perfection, to which no reality can give a satisfactory reason, we conceive of Christ, says Strauss, of that essence in the conscience, of which the unity of the divine and human is shown for the first time with energy, so far to have only a value infinitely small to contrary elements, and which, in that sense, is unique and without equal in the history of the world, although the religious idea conquered and promulgated by him had not been able in detail to exempt itself from the law of progressive development.[1] This is certainly strange language for our ears, and which is neither calculated to satisfy the theologian nor the critic. The misapprehensions to which the work of Strauss has given rise is thus explained, up to a certain point, by the defects of the author's method: it is not the very ridiculous accusation with which he has been charged, the negation of the existence of Jesus, which, although devoid of solid foundation, has been able to find some pretext in the invariable abstract tone of the *Life of Jesus*.[2] Wanting any sentiment of history and of fact, Strauss never went beyond questions of myth and symbol. One would say that for himself the primitive events of Christianity had passed outside of real existence and of nature. Strauss has very well seen that the tissue of the gospel exposes itself largely to criticism, and that all the narratives of the evangelists cannot be accepted as true (the contradictions of the four texts are an evident proof of this). Would a his-

[1] See, in the *Life of Jesus*, the final dissertation, and, above all, secs. cxlvii. and foll., Book ii. 2d part, p. 741 and foll. of the translation of M. Littré.

[2] This point has been fully cleared up by M. Colani in the *Revue et de Théologie et Philosophie chrétienne*, Jan. and March 1856 (Paris and Geneva, Cherbuliez). The two articles of M. Colani undoubtedly comprise the best appreciation of the book of Strauss which is to be found in France.

torian conclude from this that the evangelical narratives do not correspond to any reality? Certainly not. But Strauss, overruled by his philosophical and theological ideas, Strauss, exclusively preoccupied by the necessity of substituting one system of exegesis for another, took no reckoning of shades. The historic reality of some of the facts recorded by the evangelists being doubtful, all realistic exegesis is compromised in his eyes, and he thought it necessary to replace it by a theory which, without being subject to the same difficulties, applied itself with an inflexible rigour from one end of the sacred text to the other.

One sees now why Strauss's book, in spite of his, perhaps, exaggerated fame, remains isolated, and pleases no one. The historian finds it too devoid of facts; the critic, too uniform in its processes; the theologian, founded upon a hypothesis subversive of Christianity. Let us say this boldly: it is not to an exclusive system that it will be given to solve the very difficult problem of the origins of Christianity. A unique means does not suffice to explain the complex phenomena of the human spirit. All the primitive histories and legends present the ideal and the real mixed in different proportions, and if India has been able to shape out in pure mythology poems of two hundred thousand distiches, we would believe with difficulty that it has been the same in Judea. The Jewish people, in fact, always had a power of imagination very inferior to that of the Indo-European people, and, at the epoch of Christ, it was surrounded and, as it were, penetrated by the historic spirit. I persist in believing that, for the countries which are not altogether mythological, the marvellous is less often a pure creation of the human spirit than a fantastic manner of representing to itself real facts. A reflective mind sees things in the light of the great day of reason; credulous ignorance, on the contrary,

sees them in the rays of the moon, deformed by a deceitful and uncertain light. Timid credulity in this half-light changes natural objects into phantoms; but it is entirely an hallucination to create beings out of everything and without any exterior cause. So, nations only half open to rational culture have been formed very much oftener by undecided perception, by the vagueness of tradition, by hearsay magnifying, by the remoteness between the fact and the narrative, by the desire to glorify heroes, than by pure creation, as that has been able to form a foundation for almost the entire edifice of the Indo-European mythologies: or, to put it better, all the processes have contributed in indistinguishable proportions to the tissue of these marvellous embellishments, which put at fault all scientific categories, and at the formation of which the most imperceptible fantasies have presided. It is not, then, without many restrictions, that the denomination of myths can be employed, when it is used regarding evangelical narratives. That expression, which is used in its exact signification when applied to India and primitive Greece, which is yet incorrectly applied to the ancient traditions of the Hebrews, and of the Semitic people in general, does not represent the true colour of the phenomena for an epoch so advanced as that of Jesus, from a certain point of view. I would prefer, for my part, the names of *legends* and *legendary narratives*, which, by giving a large share of the work to opinion, leaves in their entirety the action and personal work of Jesus.

It would be unjust towards Strauss not to maintain that he wished to explain everything by myth, for alongside his *pure myths*, he recognised *historic myths, legends, additions by the writer*, and gives detailed rules for discerning the historic from the fabulous.[1] Nevertheless, the reaction against Ev-

[1] *Life of Jesus*, Introduction, section xiv. *bis* and xv.

hemerism has evidently carried it too far. The contradictions of the evangelists regarding the details of a narrative appeared to him an objection against the historic verity of that narrative. Now, there are some facts for which that divergence supposes on the contrary a foundation of reality, such are, for example, the three denials of St Peter, recorded by the four evangelists in a different manner, but always very characteristic.

A reproach, no less grave, which affects in its principle even Strauss's book, is that he very much ignored the importance of the personal work of Jesus. It appears in reading it that the religious revolution which carried the name of Christ, came to him without Christ. Certainly we do not know how to deny that the process by which he explained the formation of almost all the evangelical narratives, had not had, in fact, any specific importance, and that some of the characteristics of the life of Jesus do not owe their expression to reasonings analogous to these. The Messiah ought to be the Son of David: now Jesus is the Messiah, therefore Jesus is the Son of David; therefore there becomes necessary a genealogy by which he can be connected with the royal race. The Messiah ought to be born at Bethlehem. Now Jesus is the Messiah: there is necessary therefore to occur such circumstances that he, who passed almost all his life in Galilee and probably was born there, should be born at Bethlehem. The Messianic idea, in its principal features, was traced on the life and character of the prophets and great men of the ancient law; it was therefore inevitable that the life of Jesus should reproduce in many points these consecrated types.[1] Thus the birth of Samuel, related at the beginning of

[1] By this is explained the formula, so often repeated: "That the Scripture might be fulfilled." Grammar has been very gratuitously tortured to prove that "*ina* in this phrase ought to be translated *so that* with the indicative instead of *to the end that*."—(See the *Life of Jesus*, by Kuhn, translated by M. F. Nettement, pp. 292-294.)

the book of Kings; that of Samson, almost similar,[1] became the models of the births of all illustrious men: barrenness for a long time bewailed, then an angelic apparition or *annunciation*, some sacerdotal scene, a *song*, then the infant consecrated to God and reserved for great destinies: such was the picture, *de rigueur*. Hence the whole narrative of the third gospel as to the birth of John the Baptist, hence many of the circumstances which accompany that of Jesus, among others the Song of Mary, evidently imitated from that of Anne. Hence in the apocryphal gospels, which exaggerate in the most fastidious manner this slightly traced fact, a whole story analogous to the birth of Mary.[2]

But it would be very feebly to understand the wealth of the human mind, were the creation of the whole of the gospel legend to be explained by this means alone. Often, on the contrary, there were individual peculiarities of Jesus which modified the idea of the Messiah, several of the features which are given by the evangelists, and especially by St Matthew (chaps. i. and ii.), as Messianic features, far from belonging to an ideal, accepted by the Jews and sharply drawn, are nothing but artificial reconciliations, simple ornaments of style, which are explained by the arbitrary manner of quoting Scripture, of which the Talmud and St Paul present numerous examples. In the cases of which I speak, it is a veritable fact in the life of Jesus which has suggested the application of a Biblical test, in which had not, up till then, been seen any allusion to the Messiah. When, for example, a circumstance in the passion suggests to the evangelist the quotation of this verse from a psalm, "They have

[1] Judges xiii.

[2] See the *Gospel of the Nativity of St Mark*, ch. iii. This composition, more modern and deliberate, gives the moral reason of the legend. It is to show "that the infant that was born is a gift of God, and the fruit of a disordered passion." The name of Anne given to the mother of Mary is no doubt a reminiscence of Anne the mother of Samuel.

shared my garments among them, and they have cast the lot upon my tunic," shall it be said that there is a desire here to point out the accomplishment of a prophecy which has caused this circumstance to be invented? It is much more probable, on the contrary, that it was a real incident which drew forth the quotation. At the distance at which we are placed, and deprived of historic records, we must renounce seeking to distinguish sharply the action and the reciprocal reaction of the personal character of Jesus, and of the ideal portrait which was traced of him beforehand. Supposing even that all might have been done by the inconsiderate see-saw of those two syllogisms: The Messiah ought to do this: Now Jesus is the Messiah: therefore Jesus has done this:—Jesus has done this: Now Jesus is the Messiah: therefore the Messiah ought to do it. Syllogisms founded on the invariable *minor, Jesus is the Messiah,* this minor itself would none the less remain to be explained. "Douglas," says M. Colani, "has very well said, once the apostles have believed in the Messiahship of Jesus they were able to add to his real image some features borrowed from prophecy, but how did they come to believe in his Messiahship? Strauss has in no way explained this. What he allows to remain of the gospels is insufficient to account for the faith of the apostles, and there has been readily admitted among them a disposition to be contented with the *minimum* of proofs. It must be that these proofs were very strong in order to conquer the heartrending doubts caused by the death upon the cross. It must have been, in other words, that the person of Jesus singularly surpassed ordinary proportions—it must be that a large portion of the evangelical narratives is true."

Just as the apologists, by attributing to the first disciples of Jesus a degree of reflection and rational discussion which was not of their age, fail in the essential principles of criticism, so much has

Strauss himself shown himself to be a rather unphilosophical historian when he neglects to explain how Jesus arrived at, in the view of the society in which he lived, a sufficient realisation of the Messianic ideal. That this realisation was not positively explored, that many of the features in which are seen more slowly a demonstration of the identity of Jesus and the Messiah, would not yet be conceived as features of the Messiah, that the general credulity would leave an easy field for affirmation and miraculous narratives we admit, but it is a fact which could not be produced, except by the action of a powerful individuality; it is the appearance of a new doctrine, the enthusiasm which it drew forth, the spirit of sacrifice and devotion which it was able to inspire. We can affirm that if France, less gifted than Germany with a sentiment of practical life, and less prompted to substitute in history the action of ideas to the play of the passions and individual characteristics, had undertaken to write in a scientific manner the life of Christ, it would have done so with a more rigorous method, and that by avoiding the taking of the problem, as Strauss has done, into the domain of abstract speculation, it would have approached much nearer the truth.

III.

STRAUSS'S book was received in Germany with immense applause. Of numerous adversaries, Protestant and Catholic, among whom we must mention Hug, Neander, Tholuck, Ullman; they set themselves to defend, against the author of the *Life of Jesus*, the historic reality of the facts of the Gospel.[1]

[1] The history of this polemic has been very well related by M. Colani (*Revue de Théologie*, mars. 1856). I cannot do better than recall some of it to the reader. M. Colani did not think it necessary

All, or almost all, trying to prove, on the one hand, that myth was impossible at the epoch when Christianity appeared; on the other, that the work necessary for the formation of myth could find no place between the death of Jesus and the epoch in which his history was related. All thus attacked the truly fabulous points of Strauss's book. The use of the word *myth*, as we have said, lays itself open to grave objections. Moreover, the system of Strauss, as regards the date and composition of the Gospels, has always been uncertain and defective. This is a chief point, in fact, in its theory, that our four gospels are unable in their present form to go back further than the second century. The oldest witnesses of the second century only say that an apostle, or a man with apostolic endowments, had written a gospel,

to mention the work of Dr Sepp, partly translated by M. Ch. Ste Foi (Paris 1854). This work has, in fact, very little scientific value, but it is not without interest, so far as it shows us the kind of Christian cabal which the German apologists have thought ought to be opposed to the scrutiny of rational criticism. Never has the superannuated system, which pretends to recognise Christianity under all the Mythologies, been pushed to such an extraordinary extent. One thinks oneself in a dream when one sees a man, otherwise very spiritual, finding the reckoning of the coming of the Messiah in the direction of the magnetic needle and the laws of electricity, placing in the ganglionary system the seat of prophecy, finding what is called the *year of God* in the mysteries of chronologies, Indian, Chinese, Etruscan, Babylonian, and telling us seriously,—"Chronology is, take it all in all, like a lyre with many strings, of which, if we touch but one, we feel at the same time resounding in the chronological systems of other peoples, sympathetic tones, as if a single hand had raised them all up on the same principle. . . . The spirit which has constructed this vast edifice of numbers is the divine revelation of which the remains have been preserved in the sacerdotal tradition of different peoples, at least, that it is only said that these have instinctively learnt the science which reveals to us the whole of the solar system, and which also reveals to us the order of the spheres the planets traverse, those prophetic numbers which relate to the Messiah" (Bk. II. pp. 447, 473, etc.) Observe what M. Sepp calls mathematical and astronomical proofs which ought to convince the Jews, if they had not shut their eyes to the truth that Jesus is the Messiah, and notice what the book is which is presented to us as a battery under which rationalism was reduced to naught.

but does not establish that the primitive gospels were identical with those we now possess. It must be admitted, according to Strauss, that the legendary elements of the life of Jesus remained almost a century and a half in ebullition, and were not grouped together as a whole until the disciples, the oracular witnesses, had themselves disappeared. One can understand the latitude such an interval furnishes to the mythological school for the elaboration of an entire marvellous cycle.

The question of the precise age, and the system of re-editing the gospels, is so delicate,[1] that I wish to avoid treating of it here; but it suffices to say, the more I have reflected about it, the more I have been brought to believe that the four texts acknowledged as canonical bring us very nearly to the age of Christ, if not by their latter collation, at least by the documents of which they are composed. Products entirely of Palestinian Christianity, devoid of all Hellenic influence, full of the living and direct feelings of Jerusalem, the gospels are, in my opinion, a truly immediate echo of the sounds of the first Christian generation. The popular labour which brought them to light, brought about without any distinct consciousness and on several sides at once, could not have any great unity. Here there was one genealogy, there another; here one marvellous narrative, there another; the fundamental type alone preserved, amid all these contradictions, its identical physiognomy. The collation of these was still fluctuating, and as that was its place in all the epic and religious cycles, it had only a secondary importance. It was not until the end of the creative period, at the moment when it no longer exerted itself except to preserve its traditions, that we see it

[1] The most recent work on this point is that of M. Ewald, in the *Jahrbücher der biblischen Wissenschaft*, 1850-54. See also the observations of M. Bunsen, *Hippolytus and His Age*, I., pp. 35, 48 and 199, 2nd edit., in the meantime the most developed works which the same savant promises us regarding evangelical history.

collected in four perfectly determinate texts; to these texts there may from this moment be applied the considerations of authenticity and integrity, which had never before been done in a rigorous sense.

There, however, the working out of the legend does not cease. Every *creation* intended to gain the admiration or the faith of the human race goes through two distinct phases: the epoch truly fertile, where the great characteristics of poetry are traced to the foundations of the conscience of the masses; and the epoch of revising, of adjusting, of verbal amplification, where, the faculty of invention being lost, there only remains the development of the old stories, according to the usual processes. The earliest age, in the order of the traditions now in question, is the one in which the four canonical gospels were produced, all stamped with the same character of sobriety, simplicity, grandeur, and native truth. The second is that of the apocryphal gospels, artificial compositions, whose obscure style is maintained only through the medium of commonplaces and of forced amplifications—visions of angels, canticles, parodies on the Old Testament. Nothing could resemble more the machines of the artificial epopees invented in ages of decadence. The apocryphal gospels are to the canonical gospels what the *Ante-Homerica* and the *Post-Homerica* are to Homer, what the Puranas in Indian literature are to the more ancient mythological poems. It is a mode of dressing up primitive traditions by inserting all the features of the original text in a new narrative, adding whatever had a modern verisimilitude, developing the situation by means of *rapprochements*, and cooking up (if I may be allowed to use the term) the monography of each slender detail; and all this without genius and without ever departing from the accepted theme. In a word, the Apocrypha is a literal and imitative composition, founded on a naive and spontaneous work.

At bottom, these two periods in the history of legend corresponds to the two ages of all religions: the primitive age, in which the new beliefs emanate from the popular instincts, just as rays of light proceed from the sun,—an age of simple faith, without any after-thought, without opposition or refutation; a reflective age, in which objections and apologetics have no place, in which the agencies of reason begin to manifest themselves, in which the marvellous harmoniously reflects the pure, moral sentiments of humanity, becoming afterwards timid, suspicious, and sometimes immoral. There is in primitive supernaturalism something so powerful and so elevated that the most austere rationalism is made to feel its effects; but reflection has become too powerful, and imagination too calm, to ever permit again such magnificent aberrations. As to a timid compromise, which seeks to minimise the supernatural so as to reconcile it to an intellectual state, the principles of which embrace the negation of the miracle, it can only result in offending the most exalted instincts of scientific epochs, without, at the same time, reviving the marvellous old poetry, exclusively reserved for certain ages and for certain states of the human soul.

The history of religions presents some facts which, without being completely analogous to the preceding (in which Jesus is the unique personality, and with whom nothing else is to be compared), are yet calculated to throw a little light on the processes we have just been discussing. The legend of Buddha, Sakya-Mouni is that which resembles most, from the manner of its formation, that of Christ, as Buddhism is the religion which resembles most, by the law of its development, Christianity. Sakya-Mouni is a reformer whose real existence is not doubtful, although his life does not offer us more than the characteristics of an ideal perfection; Sakya-Mouni is conceived without stain, brought forth without pain at the foot of a tree,

acknowledged at his birth by holy personages; Sakya-Mouni retires from the world, is tempted by the demon, is surrounded by disciples, works innumerable miracles. His reform, almost exterminated in India, reaches out of that country to immense destinies. He wrote nothing himself, but three of his disciples recorded his doctrine and his legends.[1] Each remained, however, fluctuating, and capable of increase until the great council of Patalipoutra; that council did not prevent later labours, which were definitely brought to a close by a council held about 400 years after the death of the founder. The enthusiast Chaitanya, who, at the commencement of the sixteenth century of our era, incited, in certain parts of India, a great religious movement, has also achieved a marvellous biography, very much developed, and he is looked upon as an incarnation of Bhagavan.[2] The legend of Krischna, in fine, had stories not less striking in appearance than had that of the Messiah. His first days were threatened by a massacre quite like to that of Herod; his infancy, in the midst of shepherds, is nothing but a series of miracles; he dies nailed by an arrow to a fatal tree.[3]

But these are perhaps exterior resemblances rather than analogies of actual events.[4] It is certain that, compared with Bhagavata-Pourana, the gospel pre-

[1] See the *Introduction à l'histoire du Bouddhisme Indien*, of M. Eugène Burnouf, Bk. I. p. 195; and the *Lalitavistara*, or Life of Buddha, translated by M. Edouard Foucaux (Paris, 1848).

[2] See the *Chaitanya Chandrodaya*, published in the *Bibliotheca Indica* of the Society of Calcutta, Nos. 47, 48, 80, and the essay of Wilson on the religious sects of the Hindus, in the *Asiatic Researches* of the Society of Calcutta, vol. xvi. p. 409, and following.

[3] See the *Bhagavat dasam askand*, translated by M. Pavie (Paris, 1852).

[4] Let us add that a hypothesis proposed at the commencement of Indian studies, since abandoned, according to which the legend of Krischna embodied the borrowed facts of the *Evangile de l'Efance*, a gospel which has been so popular throughout all the East, and which, without doubt, was brought into India by the Manichean sects, seems to regain favour in the eyes of the ablest philologists of Germany.

sents us with a singular historical character, or, if you will, with very uniform proceedings. The miracles of the gospel are in general conceived according to natural analogies, and do not set at defiance too much the laws of physics, as the marvels of the Indo-European mythology do. Here creation is entirely moral; the invention of facts and circumstances was not of a very daring nature, and bordered on a timid copy of the common-places of the Old Testament. The only episode in the history of Christ, which has an epic character, the descent into Hell, was not mentioned in the canonical gospels. Indicated for the first time in one of the epistles of St Peter (1 ch. iii. v. 19-22) that circumstance has been very little developed, except in later compositions, especially in the Gospel of Nicodemus, a singular work which appears to owe its origin to the metaphors by which the fathers of the fourth century were pleased to express the triumph of Christ over death.

It is then the name of *legends* and not that of *myths* which it is proper to assign to the narratives of the first beginnings of Christianity; the evangelical idea was the result of a transfiguration and not of a creation. Will it be said that the Jewish people, having already run through all the degrees of a literary development, were not more in the intellectual condition which is suited to the appearance of legendary narratives? Strauss has replied, with good reason, that the Hebrew people never had, truly speaking, a distinct idea of positive history; that their most recent historical books, those of the Maccabees, those even of Joseph —the authors of which were initiated into the Hellenic culture—are not exempt from narratives of the marvellous; that the Mischna, posterior to the gospel, appears hardly to be a work of the human mind, so full is it of fables; that there is no history among them, inasmuch as they do not comprehend the non-reality of miracle. If rational education, which supposes a

clear view of that non-reality, is wanting in many men of our days, how could it be more rare at the epoch of Jesus in Palestine, and, in general, in the Roman empire, amongst the masses?[1] Religious excitement finds everything credible, and under the influence of a powerful enthusiam, sometimes a new creative faculty has been seen to arise among the most decayed peoples. Besides, humanity is not synchronous in its development. The sun, in the same season, is not visible to all places situated on the same meridian, at the same moment; the inhabitants of places near the summit of mountains see it sooner than those who dwell in the valleys; so, the epoch of reflection, of criticism, of history, does not rise upon all nations at the same hour. Our nineteenth century is most certainly less mythological; yet, even at this day, in some portions of humanity which still retain the spontaneous condition, myths are still produced, as in the ancient days. Napoleon is already, among the Arabs, the subject of a very fully developed fabulous legend. When we follow the footsteps of La Pérouse, we recognise that he has become for the vulgar the object of strange and fantastic traditions. I know no myths better characterised than those which still shine forth everywhere, by the effect of Christian preaching, among certain populations of the South of Africa.[2] It is not the number of a century which constitutes the intellectual state of humanity; it is the tradition of civilisation, it is the innumerable influences which everywhere lead in those centuries of interval and in different points of space, from points more or less analogous to those which have already gone by. This analogy, it is true, is never

[1] See the work of M. Alfred Maury, on the age of that gospel, in the 122nd vol. of the *Mémoirs de la Société des Antiquaires de France* (Paris, 1850).

[2] See the work of an English missionary, Robert Moffat, *Vingt-trois ans de séjour dans le sud de l'Afrique*, translated by H. Monod. (Paris, 1846), pp. 84, 157, 158.

perfect; and there is a real inconvenience here, for example, in applying the same name to the intellectual productions of the age of Jesus, and to that of the primitive epodes of Greece and India; but, once that we have remarked that such a denomination is inaccurate, we have a right to set forth the common features which, in all time, in spite of marked differences, have characterised the fresh work of the human mind.

At bottom, the hypothesis of Strauss, which at first presents itself as a tentative of the most sacred dogmas, allows a large part to mystery. The mythological school, quite denying miracles and the supernatural order, preserves a sort of psychological miracle. At least, God is not produced into the full light, but is, like the winged insect, under a robe, which conceals his lingering appearance. We know that nature alone has acted under this veil, but we have seen nothing of her acts; the imagination was free to surround with respect and admiration the cradle of the God-born. There was in that even something divine, as in the grand poems whose origin is unknown, and which, born in the depths of humanity, have only revealed themselves fully formed.

Strauss is an essentially moderate spirit (young Germany calls him timid).[1] When the newspapers of 1848 stated that the author of the *Life of Jesus*, called to play a political part, had attached himself to the reactionary Right, one asked one's self if there

[1] Notwithstanding, there must be distinguished, in this point of view, two periods in the life of Strauss; the one previous to the revolution of Zurich, 1839, during which he showed, in the midst of attacks often unjust and acrimonious, much moderation and good faith, yielding to objections with a perfect sincerity, and modifying his system according to what appeared to him the truth; the other after the vexatious scandal, of which he was the involuntary occasion, in which we can discover the counteraction of the violence and the declamation of his adversaries. The intention of his polemic is no longer dissimulated, and he takes back all the concessions which he has made, particularly on the point of the personal *rôle* of Jesus.

must be seen in this fact a conversion like those which radical revolutions always provoke. It was, in fact, the natural development of his character, Strauss is, in theology, a liberal of the extreme Left, and not a radical. On a certain day, men have burned Divine right with all revolutionary methods; but something is preserved which resembles it. Strauss ought then to be, as one has remarked, surpassed; he has been so. Some years have been sufficient to accumulate over him three or four strata of ultra-Hegelians, who have put paradox up to auction, and have treated the works of the author of the *Life of Jesus* as *timorous orthodoxy*, and he himself as one who appears even to believe in the Holy Ghost.

The great defect of the intellectual development of Germany is the abuse of reflection—I mean, of application, made of deliberate purpose, to the present condition of the human mind, of the laws which have been recognised in the past. The philosophy of history, in ascertaining the necessary march of systems, the laws according to which they succeed each other, and the manner in which they oscillate towards the truth when they follow their natural course, has placed in the full light a speculative truth of the first order; but which becomes very dangerous when we seek to draw from it the consequences of what passes under our own eyes. To admit, previous to complete examination, that such a light and superficial spirit as presents itself for collecting the inheritance of a man of genius is preferable to that which only comes after him, is to play too distinguished a part in mediocrity; but here we see the fault which Germany often commits. After the appearance of a great work of philosophy or of science, we are sure to find a whole swarm of critics hatched from it, who pretend to surpass him, and often only falsify him or make him say the reverse of what he intends.

Let us repeat it: the law of the progress of method

is only applicable when the production of the method is perfectly spontaneous, and when their authors, without dreaming of superseding each other, are only attentive to the study of truth itself. To neglect this important condition is to yield up the development of the human mind to chance or to the caprices of certain rash and presumptuous minds. Revelation, Strauss had said, is neither an inspiration from without nor an isolated act; it is only one and the same thing with the history of the human race. The appearance of Jesus Christ is no longer the implantation of a divine and new principle; it is an offshoot sent forth from the innermost marrow of divinely gifted humanity. The new school, on the contrary (if we can unite under this name the writings, very dissimilar, though connected by many common features, of Weisse, Wilke and Bruno-Bauer), claims that it explains the appearance of Christianity by simple and natural means, and relegates the formation of the legend of Jesus to the proportions of a very ordinary fact. Strauss had attributed everything to the slow and concealed action of a tradition unconscious of itself. The new school sees in the gospels an individual work, an invention of the evangelist Mark, carried out with reflection. "The hypothesis of Strauss,"[1] says M. Bruno-Bauer,[2] 'is mysterious, for it is tautological. To explain the evangelical history by tradition is to oblige oneself to explain tradition itself, and to discover for it an anterior basis. The method of Strauss, though orthodox, is embarrassing, and this it ought to be. Criticism has, in the work of Strauss, delivered its last stroke upon theology, while remaining entirely upon theological soil. Every time that the two ad-

[1] Strauss, *Die Christliche Glaubenslehre.* (Tübingen, 1840-41.) I. p. 68.

[2] *Kritik der Evangelischen Geschichte der Synoptiker und des Johannes.* Leipzig, t., I. and II, 1841; t., III., 1842.

versaries were thus in grips with each other, the conquered always caused the conqueror to bend a little.

Strauss had supposed that the New Testament is buttressed upon the old, and that the Jews at the time of Jesus had a complete Christology, a defined Messianic type, on which the character of Jesus would be traced feature by feature. M. Bauer maintains, on the contrary, that all the acts in which Jesus is shown to us accomplishing the Messianic ideal, and that ideal itself, are inventions of the first Christians.

The Jews, according to him, had no strictly formed ideal of the Christ at that age; the history of Jesus had not, therefore, been an ideal creation formed upon traditional types. The gospels, in a word, are Christian and not Jewish works, as Strauss would assert. It is not Judaism which has lent Christianity the Messianic ideal; it is, on the contrary, the appearance and the development of the Christian principle, the battle between the Church and the Synagogue, which have familiarised the Jews with the idea of the Messiah, and have made of that faith the basis of their religious system.

As to the historic Christ, who does not see, says M. Bauer, that everything related of him pertains to the ideal, and has nothing to do with the real world? If there is one man to whom we can attribute the extraordinary revolution which has shaken the world during eighteen centuries, it must at least be affirmed that he must not be enchained in the narrow forms of the gospel Christ. The gospel Christ, considered as a historical phenomenon, eludes us. . . . He was not born like an ordinary man, he did not live as a man, he did not die like a man. It is lost labour to make a criticism of or an apology for his actions; for, since he places himself outside of the conditions of humanity, he ought to have little care for the laws of human nature; still more, that nature ought to be

boldly denied by him. Hence this contrast of the human and the divine which forms the basis of the gospel morality, and whose track M. Bauer tries to follow, fatal though it be (according to him), in the whole history of Christian worship.

We should not desire to be parties to causing M. Bauer's work to be taken more seriously than it deserves. We should search there vainly for that great character of elevation and calm which forms the beauty of Strauss's book.[1] Blasphemy is understood, comprehends, and almost excuses in the ages when science, not being free, the thinker revenges himself upon the trammels to which he submits by an ironical respect and by secret wrath. But we believe that M. Bauer has suffered enough persecutions to have the right to be as declamatory here as he is everywhere.

Nay, the complete independence of criticism is the best remedy for such errors. When the historian of Jesus shall be as free in his appreciations as the historian of Buddha or Mahomet, he will no longer think of blaming those who do not think as he does. M. Eugéne Burnouf is never wrathful against the authors of the fabulous life of Sakya-Mouni, and none of the modern historians of Islamism have shown any violent dislike to Abulfeda and the Mussulman authors who have written as true believers the biography of their prophet.

IV.

HAS the Israelite tradition something to tell us about Jesus? Nothing authentic certainly, and that is not one of the less surprising peculiarities of this mysterious history than the absolute silence kept by contemporary documents, whether Jewish or profane,

[1] Ops. Cit., t. I. pp. 14-16.

upon an event which became colossal in the future. The appearance of Christianity appears to have been a fact scarcely felt in the bosom of Judaism. It had no echo, and provoked no reaction, and no remembrance of it remained. The Talmud, which sums up the whole intellectual movement of Judaism at the time of which we speak, does not include a certain appreciable trace of even the indirect influence of Christ.[2] But in the middle ages, when the Church places itself as a redoubtable foe in face of the synagogue, it was necessary to have an opposed system to this strange co-religionary, boasting of such incomparable destinies. Hence the appearance of an extraordinary legend, and one which, it may be understood, cannot be favourable.[3] If the Church thundered its anathemas against the innovators who, in face of her, dared to form religious societies even when those societies did not threaten her own existence, what ought the synagogue to have said of that which, to the crime of heresy, added the chief of persecutors?

When modern criticism was introduced among the Israelites, the enlightened men of Judaism ought to have been more curious than ever to make a historical theory as to the origins of Christianity and the personality of Jesus. On certain points they ought to have appeared better judges than the Christians; in regard to others, they were impeachable; and, in fact, if we accept the illustrious Moses Mendelssohn and some independent philosophers who belong more to the human mind in general than to a special sect, the

[1] The passages in the historian Josephus, relating to Jesus and the first Christians, are, in the opinion of the ablest critics, interpolated, or, at least, have been re-edited by a Christian hand.

[2] To understand what is singular in this fact, let one think of the profound action which the appearance of partisanship has exercised upon Catholicism; there is scarcely a Christian writer after the Reformation, on whom one is not conscious of the counter action of that great schism.

[3] See the *Bibliotheca Judaica Anti-Christiana* of Rossi (Parma, 1800), 8vo, p. 61; 4to, pp. 114, 121.

thinkers of the Jewish religion have been unable to defend themselves from some partiality, often, indeed, from a certain bad temper, against the founder of Christianity. Not only do they not commit themselves so easily as we do to anything that can be conceived as idealising Jesus, but too often they are satisfied with seeking out the isolated features of the gospel doctrine in the books of the Old Testament.[1] A criticism paltry enough, for they would show me in detail all the maxims of the gospels in Moses and the Prophets, while I would yet maintain that there is in the doctrine of Christ a new spirit, and an original stamp. If a religion consisted in a certain number of dogmatic propositions, and a morality in some aphorisms, it would perhaps be correct to say that Christianity is nothing but Judaism. But the fundamental principles of morality being for the most part simple, and belonging to all time, there has been nothing of discovery to make in this class of truths; originality is here reduced to a sentiment more or less delicate. Now, let them put before them the gospel and the language of the Rabbis who were contemporary with Jesus, collected in the Pirke-Avoth, and let them compare the impression which results from those two books! Success, besides, is here a decisive criterion; the gospel has converted the world, while it is very doubtful whether the "sentences" of the Rabbis would by themselves have had sufficient efficacy for that.

M. Salvador's book[2] is the most elevated expression of Jewish criticism regarding the life of Jesus. The subject is conceived more broadly, the form is freer, and more beautiful than in the writings of Strauss and the German exegetes. It is no longer a painful theological controversy; it is an attempt to explain

[1] See specially a work published in many successive numbers of the *Archives Israelites* (1849), by the learned M. Dukes, upon this question: What is it that Christianity has taken from Judaism?

[2] *Jesus Christ et sa Doctrine*, 2 vols. (Paris. 1838.)

the origin of Christianity like every other great fact connected with the human mind, from the point of view of disinterested science. Unfortunately the author, who deserves a distinguished rank as a philosopher and writer, leaves something to be desired in the connection between learning and historical criticism. M. Salvador has only fathomed Judaism and does not appear to have known the immense exegetical works of Germany upon the books of the Old and New Testament—works which have made such a complete revolution in the knowledge of Hebrew antiquities. If he knows the Bible, Philo and the Talmud well, he makes little use of the Jewish and Christian Apocryphal origins as well as of the first Christian writers.

When we pass from reading Strauss to M. Salvador, we are struck by the contrast between the German criticism — subtle and winged, always suspicious against reality—and that other too confident criticism which accepts without discussion all the narratives of the past. M. Salvador has no belief in the delicate laws which govern the formation of great legends—laws which it is necessary to have studied in their very different applications to understand them in their true light. The gospel is for him a history mixed up with some marvellous elements; he treats it very nearly as Rollin and the old school treated Titus Livius, discussing as real facts the circumstances of the birth of Jesus, the flight into Egypt, etc. The narrative of the Passion is the only one in which he admits an artificial arrangement, and in which he recognises the intention to represent the ideal sufferings which, according to the Messianic interpretation, have drawn forth the Lamentations of the Prophets. "This portion of gospel pictures," says he, "possesses much less of the character of history than of poetry and the drama, which neglects, according to its demands, the condition of time and space, and which sacrifices all secondary persons who may be either real or invented, accord-

ing to the dominant idea of the subject and its most important personage." But it shows how two of the principal actors in the Passion, Pilate and Barabbas, have had their character distorted through the necessities of legend.[1] M. Salvador has here closely followed the mythical explanation without being conscious of doing so, and has been guided besides by an interested view which he does not dissemble—that of cleansing his co-religionists from the less honourable *role* which the evangelists have made them play in the Passion. With that exception, M. Salvador regards himself always as a complete historian. If he believes that Jesus did not leave in his own hand documents regarding his life and doctrine (he would not, however, have been very much astonished had that been the case),[2] he admits at least an oral tradition from the first apostles having a rigorous validity. If Strauss doubts a great deal too much, it is certain that M. Salvador doubts a great deal too little. The primitive facts of the great religious apparitions all pass into the spontaneous region of the human mind, not leaving any trace. Religions do not, any more than the individual man, recall their infancy; conscience does not begin its living existence until it has already become adult and developed, that is to say, when the primitive facts have disappeared for ever.

As to the question of the *doctrinal* origins of Christianity, M. Salvador has treated that in a manner, in general, satisfactory. All the antecedents of Christianity are found, in his eyes, in Judaism, modified by the east since the captivity, and by Greece since Alexander. Judaism is like an egg in which the new religion was formed, and nourished at its commencement, before it showed itself in full daylight, and was living its real life. Greece has

[1] *Jesus-Christ et sa Doctrine*, t. II. ch. ix.
[2] *Ib.* t. I. p. 169.

not been able to exert any influence on Jesus, except by the indirect influence which it has exercised on Judaism, an influence which it is unnecessary to exaggerate as far as Palestinian Judaism is concerned. There is hardly any important element in primitive Christianity which is not found in Philo, in the essence or in the orthodox doctrine of the synagogue. The fundamental idea of the dawning race—to recapitulate in Abraham the whole race of Adam—an idea which contains the secret of Christian proselytism, and consequently the whole destiny of the Church, is found in the *Traité de la Noblesse*, where Philo develops as a philosopher and as a Christian of the early times this truth, that nobleness arises from individual virtue, and not from the blood of Abraham.

The question of the theurgic arts and of miracles in general, that of the miracle of the resurrection in particular, the *rôle* of Simon the Magician, and still other episodes, are treated by M. Salvador with much skill and judgment. His critique of the narrative of the passion is especially remarkable for the precision which the author displays in it, by the boldness of views therein set forth, and the peculiar controversy which is connected with it. In his work upon the *Institutions of Moses and of the Hebrew People*, M. Salvador has already essayed the apology of the Jewish council which condemned Jesus. If he is to be believed, the Sanhedrin should have only applied existing laws. Jesus himself had sought his death, and since they only looked upon him as a citizen (such was necessarily the point of view of the Jews), he deserved it. "The interest of the religious purity of history requires the repetition, under every kind of form—that the Christian school is by no means acceptable, when it has brought back the supreme council of the Jews, in this solemn conflict, to a question of base jealousy, to a matter of tribunal;

when it has crushed the Jewish nation, to which it owes its birth, and from which it has appropriated the most beautiful ornaments, under the pretext of the voluntary crime which its chiefs had committed in procuring the arrest of Jesus, a thing which he himself had announced and provoked beforehand by every theory he could devise as touching on the accomplishment of the Scriptures. In this the whole school of Nazarean or Galilean Christianity had given to the world an indelible proof that it bore the characteristic sign of a sect and of a party; it was the proof that its mission, even its most legitimate and happiest splendour, had not yet afforded but one speciality; it was the proof, in short, that the universal judgment of things and of men, the kingdom of the God of the prophets, of the God of truth, without iniquity, did not belong exclusively either to the period more or less lengthened, of its trials and of its domination, or to the foundation of its nature." [1]

The scandal which affected a few austere spirits when M. Cousin, in one of his most spiritual fantasies, dared to undertake the defence of the tribunal which condemned Socrates, to maintain that Anytus was a commendable citizen, the areopagus an equitable and moderate tribunal, and that if one could be astonished at anything, it was that Socrates was not sooner condemned, and that by a greater majority; this scandal, I say, was nothing in comparison of that which M. Salvador raised, by pleading for Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin, condemned so long ago by the Christian conscience. It was with the same object that M. Dupin, sen., undertook, in the *Gazette des Tribunaux*, the revision of the trial of Jesus.[2] Nothing was wanting to the pen of this liberal advocate in moving for an appeal on the question of judgment; insti-

[1] *Jesus Christ et sa Doctrine*, t. II. pp. 168, 169.
[2] *Jesus devant Caïphe et Pilate*. Paris, 1828.

gating agents, falsehood, an intoxicated mob, personal liberty violated without any warrant, sequestration of persons, a captious interrogatory, the embracing of the functions of the accuser and judge in the same person, and the encroaching of the executive power on the judicial power. For ourselves, God preserve us from emitting upon such a question any other opinion than that of Jesus himself: *It was necessary that the Son of Man should die!* Without that, it had not represented the ideal of the sage, odious alike to the superstitious and to politicians, and paying by his life for his moral excellence. A vulgar death to crown the life of Jesus! What blasphemy! . . . How vain and barren a question it is to try to discover what passed in the minds of those who condemned him, even though it should not be insoluble. Who knows whether it is worthy of love or of hate? Who can truly analyse what passes in the depths of the heart? He who would say with Caiaphas: "*It is expedient that one man should die for the people,*" was, no doubt, guilty of a detestable piece of policy; it was a miserable thing to say! Yet he was, perhaps, an honest man. More than once history has found a motive at the same time for both persecuted and persecutors, and, without doubt, in the life eternal, the persecuted give thanks to their persecutors for having procured for them, through suffering, the seal of perfection.

V.

If we, by renouncing those habits of mind which familiarise us with marvels, should now reflect upon the destiny of the persons whom the religious conscience has raised above humanity, we shall be struck with astonishment, and comprehend why the fanatical objects of both love and hatred obtain so slowly in

history their true place—that which they merit in the eyes of criticism. A thousand motives of respect and faint-heartedness hinder rational discussion from exercising itself freely on their account, and render at bottom their position before science more unfavourable than advantageous. They appear as sent for the curse of humanity, and the silence which they keep respecting themselves often causes an illusion regarding the importance of the part they played. A history of philosophy in which Plato should occupy a volume, ought, it appears, to devote two to Jesus: and still there is more than one history of philosophy in which the latter name is not once mentioned. Such is the lot of everything which has attained a religious consecration. How has the body of *Hebrew literature*, for example, suffered, in the eyes of science and of taste, in becoming the Bible! Be it ill-humour, be it a remnant of faith, scientific and literary criticism has some difficulty in facing the taking of a work out of a domain which has thus been sequestrated to theology. Can it be doubted that one day the author of that charming little poem, called the *Song of Songs*, will be drawn into the company of Anacreon by making him an inspired person who sang only of divine love? It is time that science accustomed itself to the laying hold of its property wherever it finds it. The old philosophy, which seems to concede to theologians that religious constitution is an order apart, with which science has no concern, has come to look upon them as hostile fortresses raised by a rival power. Being more daring, they will be more respectful: for how can reason be severe or disdainful regarding some one of the products of the human mind, at the same time that it is recognised in all its products without distinction or antithesis?

When critics shall have resolutely placed themselves in a proper point of view, Jesus, of all the problems of literary history, will appear as the most

extraordinary, and those men shall appear to them excusable who, struck with so much mystery, proclaimed him God: those, at least, who have conceived this, if they have not expressed it. Strange destiny, how fit to lay the finger on the marvels of the world of spirit, that that of an obscure man (orthodoxy itself does not forbid us to use this word), the author of the greatest revolution which has changed the aspect of humanity, become the joint of two leaves of history, loved to madness, attacked with madness, so much so that there is not a step of the moral ladder on which he has not placed himself! Sprung from a small canton, very exclusive as to its nationality, very provincial as to its spirit, he has become the universal idea: Athens and Rome adopted him, the barbarians fell at his feet, and even at this day rationalism does not dare to regard him with any degree of fervour, except on bended knees. Yes, whatever he may have been, his fortune has been still more astonishing than himself!

Let those who circumscribe the powers of the human mind within the narrow limits of good common sense; let those who do not conceive the proud originality of the spontaneous creations of conscience; let those take care of approaching a problem by which they are limited to apply to it the convenient solution of the supernatural. To understand Jesus, it is necessary to be seared with his miracles; it is necessary to raise ourselves above one age of reflection, and show analysis how to contemplate the faculties of the soul in that state of fruitful and unaffected liberty; where, disdaining our difficult complications, they attain their object without regarding them themselves. Then, it is the age of psychological miracles; to rush to a supernatural intervention to explain the facts which have become impossible in the actual state of the world, is only to prove that they ignore the hidden forces of spontaneity. The more we penetrate the

origins of the human spirit, the more shall we comprehend that, in all orders, miracle is only the unexplained; but to produce the phenomena of primitive humanity, there has been no necessity for a God always to interfere in the progress of things, seeing that the phenomena are the regular development of inimitable laws, like reason and perfection.

We must, of course, despair of ever attaining to the complete intelligence of surprising apparitions when documents are wanting, still more when their mysterious nature covers them from us by an eternal obscurity. In the solution of problems of so elevated an order, both the supernatural hypothesis and the very simple natural hypothesis (those of the eighteenth century, for example), where everything is reduced to the proportions of an ordinary fact of imposture or credulity, ought to be eqally repelled. If people were to propose to me a definite analysis of Jesus beyond the point where there would be nothing further to seek, I would challenge it; its clearness even would be the best proof of its insufficiency. What is essential here is not to explain everything, but to convince oneself that with more information all would be explicable.

Now, it is the comparative study of religions and literatures that demonstrates superabundantly by its initial spirit, the processes of criticism. The east has never known that purely intellectual grandeur, which has no need for miracles. A sage who is not a thaumaturgus is made very light of.[1] He has not attained perfect enlightenment of conscience;[2]

[1] When the Arabs had adopted Aristotle as the grand master of science, they made for him a miraculous legend, in which he appeared as a *prophet*. They pretended that he had been carried to heaven on a column of fire.

[2] China, endowed with an instinct so clear and so positive of the finite, ought always to be excepted, when the east is in question. That people is all the less supernaturalistic, and there is perhaps the secret to its mediocrity. It is good not to be always dreaming, like India, but to have dreamed in its infancy; there remains in it a perfume like a

he has always seen nature and history with the eyes of an infant. The infant mixes up instinctively its impressions and its stories; it does not understand how to isolate matters of judgment which it has brought to them, and the personal manner in which it has looked at them; it cannot segregate the facts; it can only view the imaginations which have arisen in its mind regarding these facts. All fable which smiles at its own caprice is accepted by the child; it improvises strange things about it, and then affirms them. Such was the state of the human mind at the epoch of the simple ages. Legend is self-born, and without premeditation; as soon as born, as soon as accepted, it goes on growing like a ball of snow; there is no criticism then to control it. It is important to remark, in fact, that miracle does not then present itself as supernatural, or rather there is neither in it laws nor nature for men foreign to our ideas of experimental science, who see everywhere the immediate action of free agents. The idea of the laws of nature is only seen very slowly, and is only accessible to cultivated intelligencies. To-day, the simple-minded still admit miracle with extreme facility. It is not then only in the first beginnings of the human mind that the imagination allows itself to be taken with the charms of the marvellous; the legendary fruitfulness remains until the advent of the scientific age, only diminished in power, dominated as it is more and more by the anxiety for reality.[1]

The application of these principles to Palestine can be easily foreseen. The Jewish people, especially since the captivity of Babylon, were possessed with the ideal of the Messiah, at first vague, undecided,

tradition of poetry, which amuses the age in which it is no longer thought of.

[1] See the fine analysis of belief in Miracles given by M. Littré in the preface to the second edition of the translation of the *Life of Jesus*, and the *Revue des deux Mondes*, 15th Feb. 1856.

disappearing occasionally, but reappearing more energetic and more characteristic, it discovers him at first as the Saviour who should recover the temple and his country as a model king, made up of the recollections of David and Solomon, and who should make Israel the centre of the world. Then, when cruel humiliations obliged this astonishing little people to recognise its material little weakness, the type of the liberator is mingled with that of the suffering prophet and victim. It is not only the perfect being surrounded by a halo of glory and wisdom; it is the man of sorrows dying and triumphing through his death.

Can we understand what action on the ardent faith of a people who lived no longer, save in the future, such a smouldering image must have exercised during the ages, summing up as it did all its aspirations? If it is true as ancient physiology believes that woman impresses on the infant whom she carries in her womb her own desires and thoughts, may there not be produced in the bosom of Israel an idea as complete? This long gestation of six or seven centuries ought to bring forth fruit, and, in fact, when the Roman domination had succeeded in putting the Roman nation into a state of excitement in which it produced extraordinary phenomena, the signs of the times showed themselves on all sides. We do not know how to represent, at least by having studied very closely, and in the original sources, the intellectual condition of the Jews at this period. The marvellous in the gospels is nothing but the soberest good sense, if we place it against the apocrypha of Jewish origin and the Talmud. Should it be surprising that in the midst of such a strange movement there should seem to reappear in some fashion the first ages of the human race, and one of these deep manifestations whose generation escapes the observer who does not rise above vulgar experience?

Let us draw a veil over these mysteries which even reason itself dare not fathom. It is not in a few pages that we could attempt the solution of the most obscure problem of history. The critical sense besides does not innoculate one in a single hour; he who has not cultivated it by long scientific and intellectual education, will find always some prejudicial arguments to oppose to the most delicate inductions. To raise and cultivate minds, to diffuse the grand results of the natural and philological sciences, such is the only means to make the new ideas of criticism to be understood and accepted. To those who have not the necessary preparation, these ideas appear to be nothing but false and dangerous subtleties.

Let me give an example: the four canonical gospels often report a single fact with variations considerable in the circumstances. That is explained in all the rationalist hypotheses; for it cannot be more difficult for the gospels than for the historical and legendary narratives of other religions, which often present contradictions much stronger still. But it is not thus explained in the supernatural hypothesis of inspiration. The Holy Spirit does not set forth the matter thus: a thing cannot be considered in two ways at the same time. In the eyes of independent criticism there is here a decisive objection, and yet it is not possible absolutely to reduce orthodoxy to one's liking. If the circumstances of the different narratives are not absolutely irreconcilable, orthodoxy will say that one of the texts has preserved certain details omitted by the other, and it will place upside down the different circumstances at the risk of making up a narrative totally incoherent. If the circumstances are decidedly contradictory, it will say that the fact recorded is double or triple, while, to the eyes of healthy criticism, the different narrators had evidently in view the same event. It is thus that the narratives of John and the Synoptics (we call by this collective

name, Matthew, Mark and Luke) upon the last entry of Jesus into Jerusalem being irreconcilable, the harmonists suppose that he entered thither thrice, on two occasions, one after the other, and with circumstances nearly identical. It is thus that the three denials of St Peter, told differently by the four evangelists, constitute, in the eyes of the orthodox, eight or nine different denials, while Jesus had only foretold three. The circumstances of the resurrection present analogous difficulties to which they oppose similar solutions. What can be said of such an exegesis? That it contains a metaphysical impossibility? No. We should try in vain to reduce to silence him who would maintain it, but whoever has the critical sense, however little developed, would repel it as contrary to the rules of interpretation to be followed for every other subject. We must appreciate at the same time the replies which the apologists make to the difficulties drawn from the silence which the gospels always preserve by the gospels, and particularly the fourth in regard to principal circumstances or entire episodes. There is in this, say they, only a *negative argument* from which we can conclude nothing.

But how could one reason thus in matters profane? And is it not one of those sort of arguments from which the true critic often draws the most solid inductions? [1]

[1] The conclusion, *non-recevoir*, that the theologians oppose to the negative arguments, is altogether characteristic of the academic and judicial habitudes; they substitute for subtility of mind the sole faculty which enables one to find the true in history. If it were wanted, for example, to establish, relatively, the modern age of institutions, or of the prescriptions, the great antiquity of which the theologian is obliged to maintain, as the critic draws a very solid induction from the silence of all historical documents anterior to a given epoch. "How do you know," answers the theologian, "that these institutions did not exist, although no mention has been made of them?" "No doubt; but what is there to prove that organised mysteries did not exist in the Homeric times, except that no mention is made of them in the Iliad or Odyssey? What is there to prove that a political and judicial institution did not exist under the Merovignians,

To demand of orthodoxy to apply to sacred books the same criticisms that is applied to profane books, is to ask what cannot be accorded; on the other hand, to challenge a combat on this ground, is to shirk discussion, and this is the reason why all controversy between people who believe in the *supernatural* and people who do not believe in it, is stricken with sterility. It has to be said of miracles what Schleiermacher said of the angels: One cannot prove an impossibility; nay, this whole conception is of the kind, that it could not be given birth to in our times: it belongs exclusively to the idea that antiquity had of the world. This is not an argument, but a grouping of the facts from which modern sciences obtain this immense result: there is no such thing as the supernatural.[1] Since there is such a thing as being, everything which has taken place in the world of phenomena has been the regular development of the laws of being, laws which constitute only a single order of government; I mean nature, whether physical or moral. Whatever speaks of something as being above or beyond nature in the order of facts, asserts a contradiction; we might as well speak of the *superdivine* in the order of substances. "In rejecting the miracle," as has been well expressed by M. Littre,[2] "the modern age has not acted with proper deliberation, for it has received the tradition with that of its ancestors (alway so dear and so precious) though without wishing or seeking for it, and through the single fact of the development of which it was the starting point. An experience which has never yet been contradicted, has taught that all that has been recorded of the miraculous had invariably its origin in the imagination where

except that the historians of the time make no mention of it?" And it is the same with all historical results put in the form of negation.

[1] I find it necessary here, in order to disclaim all evil intention, to recall the explanation I have given of this work, p. 174, *Note.*

[2] Preface of the second edition of the *Life of Jesus*, p. 5.

it remained, by reason of its comparison to credulity and its ignorance of natural laws. Whatever researches have been made, no miracle has ever been produced in conditions where it could be examined and received.

Human things obey laws more difficult to seize upon than those of inanimate nature—the notion of supernatural intervention shielding it with greater advantage. People will have long ceased to believe in a physical miracle when Jesus will still be a physiological miracle. We cannot understand why the contemporary of Hillel and of Schammaï was their brother according to the spirit. Why the same sap has produced side by side the Talmud and the Gospel, at once the most singular monument of intellectual aberration, and the highest creation of the moral sense. At bottom, however, it is explicable. An epoch which has a common, vulgar origin is capable of giving birth to phenomena the most contradictory.

Has not the same revolution, which has at once proclaimed the formula of civil rights, which seem destined to be the law of the future, shocked the world by its scenes of horror? One must expect this in all these great crises of the human mind. Epochs of calm and repose are only the necessary results of themselves. The appearance of the Christ would be inconceivable amongst a people, logical and regular: there is hence nothing unnatural in the strange tempest which swept over Judea at the time of which we speak. A more comprehensive view of the philosophy of history will thus enable us to understand why the true causes of Jesus ought not to be sought for outside of humanity, but in the bosom of the moral world: why the laws that have produced Jesus are not exceptional and transitory, but the permanent laws of the human conscience applied in one of the extraordinary circumstances in which appeared, simultaneously, sublimities and follies, almost similar to geology, which, for long was had recourse to

to explain the revolutions of the globe, together with the different causes which act to-day, returned to proclaim that the actual laws are sufficient to bring about these revolutions. Let the same circumstances return, and the same phenomena reappear, and in spite of the apparent obscurity of the creative forces of humanity, we shall again see a new spirit spring up spontaneously, without, perhaps, its being personified in so exclusive a manner in such or such an individual.

Strauss, then, only announces one of the most firmly established principles of the modern mind, when he declares as not historic, at least as to the letter, every record in which the laws of nature are set at defiance, and when he proclaims that the absolute cause never intervenes by exceptional acts in the chain of ultimate causes. Let us not seek for the dignity of Jesus in countries saturated with chimeras. "What!" said Strauss; "how can we undertake to work cures in Galilee of a higher interest than miracles in the moral life and in the history of the world, than the always increasing domination of man over nature, than the irresistible force of the idea being incessantly subjected to matter? What particular interest can then be attached to an isolated fact, which has no other value than of representing, symbolically, this eternal movement?" Yes, it is a strange thing that that which constitutes the grandeur of Jesus in the eyes of his contemporaries and his first worshippers, is a blemish in our ideal of him, a feature by which that ideal loses its universality in order to take the particular tint of the century in which he lived, and of his country.

Who is he that is not pained to see theurgy stalking side by side with the sublime moralist, to find in the gospels, side by side with the discourse on the mountain and the discourse at Cana, recitals of the possessed, which, if they appeared in our day, would only be received with a smile, or with credulity?

To separate rigorously the historic Christ from the Christ of the gospels, the real personage who has borne the name of Jesus from the ideal personage which resulted in the gospel, is a thing impossible; but when it is affirmed that Jesus passed his youth in Galilee, that he did not receive any Hellenic education, that he made a few trips to Jerusalem, where his imagination was ardently impressed, and where he entered into communion with the spirit of the nation; that he preaches a doctrine, little orthodox, in regard to the Judaism of the scribes, a doctrine borrowed, perhaps, from some provincial tendency (Galilee had an evil repute for orthodoxy as well as for the purity of its language); that the austere Jews energetically opposed him because of his elevated moral tendency, which disquieted and astonished them; that they succeeded in putting him to death in consequence of a semi-triumphal entrance which was accorded to him by his countrymen who had come with him to Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover. We have said nothing that the most severe historian is not obliged to accept. It is permissible to acknowledge that the life of Jesus was worked up into a legend, analogous to that which is contained in every poem, a work by means of which a real hero becomes a typical ideal, without denying, for all that, the distinguished personality of the sublime and truly divine founder of the Christian faith. Strauss himself acknowledges that there is history outside the legend; but he has not proclaimed it loud enough, because his theological habitudes pointed out to him an easier system of interpretation in the mythological hypotheses, taken in their most absolute sense.

Let us, then, without responding to the questions which we ought not to hinder the critic from putting, but which there can be no doubt we will never succeed in answering, up to what point were

the doctrine and the moral character which the gospel attributes to Christ historically the doctrine and the moral character of Jesus? Was Jesus really a man of celestial origin, or a Jewish sectary analogous to John the Baptist? Was he conscious of what he was, and of what he was to become? Does not Jesus seem to us to be freed from human frailties, simply because we only see him from a distance, and through a cloud of legend? Is it not because we lack critical data that he appears to us in history as the only irreproachable being? If we were to examine him as we would Socrates, would we not find also on the soles of his feet some specks of terrestrial slime? Here, as in all other religious creations, do not the admirable, the celestial, the divine, reappear as a law of humanity? I am aware that there is a kind of criticism which distrusts the individual, and is careful that he should not act a great part; it holds that it is the popular voice which creates almost always the beauty of men who are raised to the honours of apotheosis; it is afraid of compromising its admiration in questions touching persons, in regard to whom science can affirm nothing; it never loses sight of the fact that a great disproportion ordinarily makes itself felt as to the part played amongst real personages who hold to religious foundations and their destinies beyond the grave. Saint Peter, a Galilean fisherman, has reigned in the world a thousand years; Mary, a humble woman of Nazareth, has been exalted by the successive and ever-endearing hyperbole of generations to the bosom of the Trinity! Nevertheless, let us say boldly that it is never chance which has designed such an individual for idealisation. The portion of the Gospels which embraces most of the historical circumstances is that of the passion and the cross; yet this part is supereminently that in which Jesus appears with the greatest splendour; there is no one who, on reading those beautiful

pages, in which the world has found such high moral instruction, does not feel the immediate reflection of a great soul, and does not place the touching and august patient of Calvary amongst those whom death has consecrated. Doubtless, the woof with which humanity enshrines certain characters almost entirely dissimulates the primitive reality; but, on the other hand, it must not be denied that it is the works which speak louder than all the documents, and that, if history is obliged to measure the glory of individuals by the luminous or beneficent traces they have left behind them in the world, it ought not to find anything exaggerated in the incomparable *éclat* with which the religious conscience of the human race has encircled the brow of Jesus.

Philosophy, as well as theology, ought, then, to recognise two natures in Jesus, to separate the human from the divine, and not to confound in its adoration the real hero with the ideal hero. It must unhesitatingly adore *the* Christ—that is to say, the character resulting in the Gospels; for all that is sublime participates in the divine, and the evangelic Christ is the most beautiful incarnation of God in the most beautiful of all forms—we mean, the moral man; he is in reality the Son of God and the Son of Man, God in man. These great interpreters of Christianity did not deceive themselves in causing him to be born on this earth without a father; and by attributing his generation not to a natural commerce, but to a virgin womb and to a celestial operation; an admirable symbol, which conceals under its folds the veritable explanation of the ideal Christ! As to the man of Galilee, whom the reflection of divinity has almost hidden from our regards, what does it matter if he has escaped us? Assuredly it ought to be the wish of a historian to clear up such a problem, but at bottom of the religious and moral wants of man these are of little interest. Nay, what does it matter

to us what took place in Palestine eighteen hundred years ago? What does it matter to us whether Jesus was born in such or such a straggling village, that he had such and such ancestors, that he suffered on such and such a day in the sacred week? Let us leave those questions to the researches of the curious. Would the Homeric poems be any the more beautiful if it were proved that the facts which are sung therein were all veritable facts? Would the gospels be any more beautiful if it were true that in a certain point in space, and in a given time, some man had realised to the letter all the traits which they represent to us. The picture of a sublime character gains nothing by making it conform to a real hero. The truly admirable Jesus is sheltered from the historical critic; he is enthroned in the conscience; he can only be replaced by a superior ideal; he is a king still for a long time to come. What do I say? His beauty is eternal, his reign will have no end. The Church has been displaced, and it has displaced itself; the Christ has not been displaced. As long as a noble heart aspires to moral beauty, as long as an elevated soul thrills with joy before the realisation of the divine, so long shall Christ have worshippers through the truly immortal portion of his being. For let us not deceive ourselves, and let us not expand too far the limits of the imperishable. In the evangelic Christ himself, a part died; that was the local and natural order, it was the Jewish, it was the Galilean: but a part remained; this was the grand moral master, it was the just persecuted, it was that which said to men: You are sons of the same celestial father. The thaumaturgist and the prophet shall die, the man and the sage shall remain, or rather, eternal beauty shall live for ever in this sublime name, just as in all those whom humanity has chosen in order to call to mind that which is, and to enebriate itself with its own image. Behold the living God, behold him who is to be adored!

THE ZEAZIEHS OF PERSIA.

ASIA, though it is long since it was smitten with an irrevocable decree of decadence, is not in our days so sterile in literature as one might be led to suppose. The literature of Hindostan is, in the nineteenth century at least, as fruitful as it has ever been. Syria, and Beyrout, in particular, is to-day witnessing a healthy stem bud forth again from the apparently dessicated trunk of Arabian literature. The progress of study at Constantinople has, of late years, been lacking in the element of originality; nevertheless, it presents some phases that are in themselves curious enough. But it is chiefly Persia which, in spite of its sunken condition, presents the most remarkable symptoms of literary *renaissance*. To begin with, nowhere in Western and Southern Asia are the classic masterpieces read with more discernment and enthusiasm than in Persia. Next, there is, perhaps, no other Asiatic country where the ancient spirit of the nation has reached more nearly the point of breaking forth again. Thanks to a schism which detached her from the bosom of Islamism, Persia has preserved much better the *traits* of her primitive genius than the countries absorbed by that species of catholicity which Sunnism, with its Khalif Sultan, has endeavoured to realise. The astonishing religious experiment of the Bâbis has demonstrated the force of the old mystical and pantheistic leaven which the Arabian conquest was unable to stifle. Sûfism and dervishism are, in

their way, protestations against the dominant religion. Once more, the exaggerated sentiments which the Chiites professed for Ali, by furnishing a pretext for cursing the assassins of Ali—we mean the very pillars of official Islamism—opened a way of escape for their ideas outside the narrow walls within which the true Mussulman willingly shuts himself up.

It is from this perpetually living source that the Persian almost always extracts the whole of his motives for hatred or love; we mean, from the Chiitish passion, from the singular paradox of a patriotism held in abeyance, seeking for its arguments and incitements in an assassination which took place nearly thirteen hundred years before, and in a retrospective discussion of a question of succession, whence has emerged a group of literary compositions the most original that Asia has produced in our time. We know that the tragic deaths of Ali and of his two sons, Hassan and Hossein, are, to the Chiites, the analogue of what the Passion of Christ is to the Christians. The month of Moharran, consecrated to these sanguinary memories, is, like a holy week, filled with dismal images and scenes of sorrow. A traditional recital, based on this theme in the form of a dialogue, and read on the said anniversaries, brings up at once to our mind that which is practised in our churches on Palm Sunday. Europeans who have assisted at this recitation among the Metuali Chiites of Syria have assured me that nothing could be more beautiful or touching. Such a recitation by several persons is but a step from the *Mysteries*, in the sense of a scenic performance. This step, however, has only been attempted in our day. Yet it would be rash to affirm that, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Chiite enthusiasm did not sometimes transform the Passion scenes of Ali and of his two sons into dramatic representations, though, certainly, it is only in our days that similar represen-

tations have become a species of literature, and been developed into regular compositions possessing a well-defined form.

I.

It is to M. Alexander Chodzko and to M. Gobineau that we owe our knowledge of those curious compositions—compositions which owed their origin, as we see, to conditions exactly similar to those which manifested themselves in our middle age *Mysteries*. M. de Gobineau, in his volume entitled, *The Religions and the Philosophies of Central Asia*, Paris (1865), has accurately described their character, and translated with rare skill one of their most original pieces, *The Noces de Cassem* (Kassim's wedding festivities). M. Chodzko purchased at Teheran a manuscript which contained thirty-three dramas of the same kind. This manuscript has been acquired by the Bibliothèque Nationale. From amongst these numerous pieces M. Chodzko chose five, a translation of which he has just given us.[1] I do not know of any more instructive reading. This little volume will enchant all those who are interested in religious manifestations, and who regard these as the most perfect image of the genius of different peoples.

At the outset, we must picture to ourselves the scene, together with the more important circumstances attending the representation. This representation takes place sometimes in the *tekies*—large porticoes built expressly for that, sometimes in public squares, in caravanseries, in the courts of the mosques and the palaces. Some rich man, desirous of courting popularity or to bear Heaven witness of his gratitude, most often defrays all the expense of them. There could be no

[1] The Persian Theatre, selection of Zeaziehs or Dramas, translated for the first time from the Persian by M. Chodzko, assistant lecturer to the College of France (Paris, Ernest Leroux, 1878; Elzevir size).

more meritorious a work, while the indulgencies earned by it are, as is said by the Persians, "bricks baked on earth for constructing his palaces on high."

According to the season, large pieces of sail-cloth cover the site and protect the actors from the chilly atmosphere. The galleries and windows which give light to the stage are reserved for guests, whose numbers are always swelled by foreigners of distinction and members of the diplomatic body. The Persians have no scruples about admitting Christians to their sacred dramas. It is even remarkable that the Europeans (*Frengui*), owing to the opposition of the Turks and of the Arabs, almost always, in these dramas, play a part favourable to the pretensions of Ali. The Chiites are fond enough to lead the Christians nearer to the truth, while they are more compassionate and more humane than either the Arabs or the Sunnites. There is one of those dramas in which we see a European Ambassador actively supporting the rights of Imam to the Khalifate; in another, a French lady vouches for an extraordinary miracle, the intention being to reveal a previously unknown instance of the blackness of the assassins of Ali.

The women most often occupy a special compartment, where they sit on stools which they bring with them. The rest of the inclosure is filled with gentlemen who squat in Persian fashion. The *sekka* (water distributors) move to and fro with their leather bags slung over their shoulders, and a cup in their hands, offering the company water to drink, in commemoration of the thirst which consumed the *Alides*, who unexpectedly found themselves in the desert of Kerbela in the heart of summer. These offices are regarded as a most beneficent work; in almost every instance being the result of a vow. Should a child, for example, be sickly, a vow is made that if he attains a certain age, he will be made a *sekka*, in honour of Imam Hossein, during one or more seasons. Report

says that nothing could be more graceful than the deportment of these little water-carriers. Richly clad, their eyes and eyelashes painted deep blue, their hair falling in floating curls, while their heads are covered with a cashmere cap, resplendent with pearls and precious stones, they move about handing iced water, and sometimes sherbet, to the audience. Next, there are those who let pipes out on hire, dealers in pastilles, made of the earth of the desert of Kerbela, and perfumed with musk; and dealers in cakes and sweetmeats. Those who are accommodated in the galleries and windows indulge in black coffee and smoke narguilehs. *Ferraches*, armed with batons, walk about with a grave air and preserve order.

The space set apart for the actors is separated from the pit by a slim barrier, which the *ferraches* have great trouble in keeping intact. This reserved space is situated in the very centre of the inclosure, so that the actors are exposed to view on all sides. In the centre is a stage covered with a carpet, on which stands an arm-chair, in which is seated the rouzekhan, the reciter of traditions, who is surrounded by a chorus composed of half-a-dozen children. The *rôle* of rouzekhan is to prepare the spectator for dolorous impressions produced by the recital of sermons and legends, in both prose and verse. At a given moment he throws his turban on the ground, rends his vestment, smites himself on the breast, and pulls his beard. Nearly every one imitates him, uncover their shaven heads, inflict gashes in it with the point of their poignards, from which the blood trinkles down over their faces. The performance, properly speaking, now begins. There being no scenery or green-rooms, all the actors are upon the stage at one time. Each takes up speech in turn, and sits down while others are declaiming.

The style of these open-air dramas too often exhibit the effeminateness and prolixity from which, for cen-

turies, hardly any oriental work is free. The language contains nothing striking, nothing which rises above ths vulgar—the resources of an exuberant facility. What is astonishing is the variety of invention which is exhibited in the details. Nowhere can be seen to greater advantage the difference between the Persian and the Arabic genius. Persia has always had the epic, and she is now beginning to have the drama. But, in good truth, those forms of composition run into one another. Æschylus, indeed, knew that he was descended from Homer—the drama and the epic spring from a common source, viz., mythology and national spirit. It seems strange to speak of mythology in connection with Islam ; but, as we have said, Persia has only a veneer of Mussulman. It was by a sort of heterodox instinct that it attached itself so ardently to the cult of Ali, so as to take its revenge on the Arabs and on true Islamism. To those ardent imaginations Ali is no longer a historical personage ; he is a Vishnu, a Krishnu, a Christ. His legend has taken the form of an Indian Purana, an apocryphal evangel. It was on account of Ali and for Ali that God created the heavens and the earth. From pole to pole the world can only hope to be saved through Ali. Ali is the Key which unriddles all the riddles of humanity, the Nilometer of heaven and earth, the *Kibla* of the universe, the unique source of everything that exists ; the chief of the created world, of mortals and of spirits ; he who illuminates the sun and the moon; the giant who supports by himself the edifice of religion; the distributor of the water of Heaven and the fire of Hell. Hassan and Hossein are the jewels enchased in the throne of God ; when their names are spoken in the abode of the blessed, the seventh heaven thereupon bows respectfully. It is thus that nature always returns upon itself. Vanquished by Islam, Persia has been enabled to reconstruct for itself a mythology, and to appease her malignant

humour, by representing the founders of Islamism as wretches, all the Khalifs as usurpers, Omar as a despicable scamp, a stranger to all sentiment of pity.

The fecundity of imagination which the authors of Persian dramas have enlisted in the service of these ardent passions is indeed surprising. The Arab *Kasida*, without text or stage appliances, resembles a long, artistically-wrought arabesque; but it is lacking in fantasy; it is cold—a stranger to all emotion. Here, on the contrary, romanticism stands out distinctly. Shakespeare himself would have been charmed with those *mysteries*, and would have recognised his kindred by that profound, thrilling, sweeping something which overwhelms the poles of existence, and must strangely act upon the nerves.

M. de Gobineau has skilfully analysed one of the most singular of these religious dramas, entitled, *The Christian Lady*. This piece appears to have been composed posteriorly to the journey of M. Chodzko, if it is not, in fact, a very skilful re-adaptation of *The Monastery of the European Monks*, which is to be found in manuscript in the Bibliothèque Nationale. The prologue beats everything in its boldness. A European lady, crossing by accident the plain of Kerbela, orders her tent to be pitched. On the first picket being driven, a long jet of blood shoots out of the earth, veritable blood, crimson, which stains everything around, and excites a movement of horror amongst the onlookers. A second picket is driven, and blood again rushes upwards; a third, and blood spurts up in all directions. The European lady, overwhelmed with fear, runs away, and sinks into a swoon. Christ, her prophet, appears to her in a dream, informs her as to her whereabouts, recounts to her the whole history of the Kerbela, and reveals to her for the first time a monstrous act committed by a Bedouin, which outstrips even the limits of Arabian wickedness, such as it is conceived of by Persians.

The five pieces published by M. Chodzko form a species of chronological series, dating from the last days of Mahomet to the assassination of Ali and to the death of his son. The great defect of the historical Mahomet is of his being almost destitute of sentiment. The legendary Mahomet of the Chiites is melancholy and given to weeping. There is an ingenious gradation in the scene in which an Arab presses the inflexible and base spirit of his race to the point of exacting that the prophet, in dying, shall receive, in virtue of the law of retaliation, a cut from a whip on his bared shoulders. The presentiments which haunt the last days of Mahomet, the visions which poison the end of his life, by revealing to him that the Arabs will kill all the saints of his family, are very artistically shaded off. Especially touching is the piece entitled *The Garden of Fatima.* The prophet has just expired, and all good Mussulmans are wearing mourning. Ali remains at home engaged in prayers, and his rivals take advantage of the circumstance to intrigue. The election to the Khalifate, through a display of too much modesty and delicacy, is thus missed by Ali. The brutality of Omar bursts forth. "The reason of people," he exclaims, "is in their eyes." The Khalifate of Abou-Bekr can never be firmly established until Fatima is driven from her father's garden, where she passes her days in tears. Omar undertakes the exploit. He forces the gate, strikes Fatima, who is prematurely delivered. It is only through the intervention of foreigners and Christians, who seek out Abou-Bekr, and beseech him to put an end to the barbarities of Omar, that Ali's life is spared.

There is indeed true pathos in *The Martyrdom of Ali.* The utter distress of the little Kulsoum, the daughter of Ali, is natural and true. "Dear father, hast thou then forgotten thy poor Kulsoum? Who shall console me in thy absence? Do not abandon me to myself here. Confide me to the care of some one as

good as thou." The mystic serenity of Ali, his farewells to Gamber his servant, are very fine passages.

ALI.—Be calm; have patience, my poor Gamber. Do not give way to despairing thoughts. After me, thou shalt serve Hassan and Hossein, so as to merit eternal salvation, near the master of us all. Be not grieved, my friend; my two sons shall assure thy welfare, both on earth and in the most high.

GAMBER.—Body of the prophet, star of the seventh heaven, soul of the House of God, rose of flower, bed of religions and friend of Allah; ah! how delightful were those days when, mounted on Duldul,[1] thou didst blind the eyes of our enemies by the sun of the victories which glittered on the gold of thy stirrup. I followed thee everywhere, proud of the greatness of my master, while Gamber, tiny atom, bathed in the floods of the light of thy glory. Henceforward, how shall I be able to look on Zulfiekar,[2] O my king? With what eyes shall I contemplate Duldul? Speak, speak, O my master, speak! At the sight of thy glave and thy horse, orphans, like myself, of their master, what shall Gamber do, except to tear his beard and rend his garments?

ALI.—Duldul shall no more forget me than thou wilt, my old friend. Pardon me for all the hardships thou hast endured during these long years. [*Approaching Hassan and Hossein.*] I confide Gamber to your care. He has served me with devotion and loyalty. He has possessed my entire confidence. Take care of him, my children, and by your goodness make him forget that I live no more.

GAMBER.—I have a wish, a prayer to address to thee, my prince. Before quitting this world of anguish, I should like to see you mounted once more on the back of Duldul. Mount him, my own dear sovereign, and let me walk yet once by the side of thy stirrup. Let me gather the dust from the shoes of thy noble steed. I shall rub my eyes with it; it is an unguent of peerless price.

ALI.—It is not permitted to me even to think of mounting Duldul again. Death has already saddled his steed for me. I must mount him immediately, in order to ride across other fields. Go, Gamber, my brave equerry, cast a black mantle over my favourite horse. Tell him that he no longer has a master; that the accidents of fortune have borne him away.

GAMBER (*goes out, then returns, holding by the bridle the favourite horse*). — Come here, Duldul, while I deck thee out in black trappings. The miscreants, the infamous barbarians, have martyred our master. Thou art sad, thou art conscious, my friend Duldul, that thy rider, thy prince, is expiring in the

[1] The name of Ali's horse. [2] The name of Ali's sword.

streams of his own blood. No, do not forbid it; let me drape thee in mourning. Let me cover my head with the dust thou treadest on, and then expire at thy feet. Let me place my lips on these stirrups, on this saddle. Ali was the joy of all my joys, the source of all my wealth.

II.

THE most remarkable of the dramas published by M. Chodzko, is undoubtedly the one entitled *The Monastery of European Monks.*[1] The principal character of this piece is the head of the Imam Hossein. The army of Yezid has retired, carrying with it the heads of the martyrs; an alarm being raised, a body of the partisans of Ali appears to recover the heads, and the Arabs, finding themselves in the vicinity of a Christian convent, demand that they shall pass the night in it.

CHEMR.—Dwellers in this Christian monastery, you who obey the commands of Jesus, can you admit us within your walls for a single night? We shall enter as true friends.

THE PRIOR.—Who art thou, and whence come you with that army. Explain to us thy secret intentions. Chief of the warriors, what dost thou seek for amongst the monks? If thou hast business with one of us tell us his name.

CHEMR.—This army, composed of whites and blacks, that thou seest, marches under the banner of the Khalif Yezid. An Arab having had the mad ambition to become Khalif, our sovereign has charged us to make known to him what he thinks of it. He sent me with the whole of his army, and the point of my spear has decided the rest. Know then that the pretender, thanks to my valour, was made to bite the dust several days ago. We are carrying his head to Damascus to make a present of it to the Khalif. All the members of his family have fallen into our hands; behold them, loaded with chains. We return to Damascus joyous and triumphant. Overtaken by night in your oasis, we entreat hospitality under the roof of your monastery. Do not refuse shelter to our soldiers, fatigued after a long march.

THE PRIOR.—Our monastery is not spacious enough to receive such a multitude. The army ought to encamp without the walls of the convent; and if you entrust your prisoners to us we will

[1] "European," Ferngui is here synonymous with Christian.

take care of them. Consign to us also those heads—so resplendent with aureoles. The bare sight of them engenders in me an ardent longing for them.

CHEMR.—Be it so! Take these heads, valiant monk. They are the rebel heads of the family of the prophet Mahomet. Guard well these usurpers' skulls; above all, take care of the head of the so-called chief of their religion.

THE PRIOR (*lifting off the head of the Imam Hossein from the point of a lance*).—God! that head appears to me to resemble a newly opened tulip! The eyes of the terrestrial globe would become red with blood by weeping over it. Blessed Lord! whence comes this head besmirched with coagulated blood? To what zodiac does this star belong? From what skull has this royal pearl proceeded, blessed Lord?

THE HEAD OF IMAM HOSSEIN (*speaks in Arabic*).—Do not believe that God does not give any heed to the injustices committed by the wicked (Koran, xiv. 43).

THE PRIOR.—Oh, my God! do I hear aright? Whence proceeds this voice that consumes my bowels? Its melodious echo vibrates through earth and heaven. It has found a lodgment in my soul. Can it be a dream? But I am awake. . . . My God! what then can it be? Can it be the angel Asrafil sounding the trumpet of the resurrection morn?

The HEAD (*declaims*).—Those who are given over to iniquity shall one day behold the deplorable fate to which their conduct has led them (Koran, xxvi. 228).

THE PRIOR.—Convent brothers, draw near! Tell me, did you hear that voice? For the love of God vouchsafe to me whence this plaintive melody proceeds! It absorbs my brain, while the beating of my heart deserts me. One would say that these groanings reach us from on high.

A MONK.—Be persuaded, worthy Prior, that these sighings and groanings proceed from the mouth of that decapitated head. The lips open and close as they repeat verses of the Pentateuch; the head expounds to us the mysteries of the gospel. No! when I listen more attentively, how strange! The accents of that tongue —marvellous eloquence!—lisp piously the verses of two chapters of the Koran.

THE PRIOR.—Head! for the love of God, answer me! To what human soul hast thou belonged? Faded rose, in whose garden wert thou plucked? The light of eternal salvation beams from thy cheeks. Head! do tell me! At the banquet of what sovereign art thou the torch? Ah! would that Jesus Christ had left us in this world a son like unto thee! Soul of the universe, who art thou? Bleeding skull, answer my questions; thou knowest all things! From the midst of the garden of faith, call by its name the enchanter of my mind. Mightest thou then be

Moses or the miraculous breath of Jesus? Open thy mouth, whence wonders pour forth ; explain to me this prodigy?

THE HEAD.—I am the martyr of Kerbela; my name is Hossein ; my mission—extirpator of the enemies of God. A newly-blown rose in the flower-garden of true religion, I had Mahomet for my grandfather, Ali for my father, while the choicest of women sighed on my natal day. My birthplace was the city of Medina, my resting-place is in the sands of the desert of Kerbela.

THE PRIOR.—Fruit of the tree of the vineyard of Fatima ! lovely cypress, which the maternal hands of Fatima delighted to caress ! Eternally cursed be he who severed thee from thy body, thou who causedst the moist eyes of Fatima to sparkle for joy ! Monks, listen ; hasten all of you, and fetch hither musk and phials of rose water. To perfume these heads is a meritorious act. They shall all be embalmed by me, and, above all, that of the beloved of Fatima. Shed ambre, the perfume of flowers, over the tresses and brows of the family of Mahomet.

A MONK.—Monk, receive from our hands musk and water of roses. The adoration of these heads is a binding service on us. To-morrow, before God, they will intercede on our behalf, plunged to the neck though we be in the slime-pots of sin.

THE PRIOR.—That I might fall a victim for each lock of thy hair, O Imam Hossein, martyr of the path of God ! Let me serve as a ransom for your troubled soul ! Thanks to the light which illuminates thy head, O chosen of the two worlds ! Our little cell has become an object of jealousy for celestial palaces. Where, then, art thou, Fatima ? Come and deck the hair of thy dear son ; wash the locks which hang over his cheeks with thy maternal tears ! Where is thy illustrious grandfather, the sent of God ? Where is thy glorious master, Ali, prince of mortals?

Enter a Hatef or Public Crier.

HATEF.—Lend a close ear to the tales of affliction which are now to be unfolded before your eyes. Behold the spirit of the first man created by God. He alights at the monastery in order to offer his condolences to the head of Imam Hossein. The prophet Adam, with brimful eyes, has arrived.

ADAM.—Martyr of Kerbela, joy of the eyes of Mahomet, why is thy luminous head severed from thy body? I salute thee, glory of the two worlds, martyr, who hast fallen on the path which leads us to God. Glorious Imam, receive the homages of Adam, who will be proud to suffer as thy substitute. Radiant head, thou shalt henceforward shine in the bosom of eternal happiness. Thanks to thy martyrdom, elect of God, thou shalt appear before his throne resplendent in whiteness.

HATEF.—See, Abraham, the spirit of God, has also just arrived He comes here, both eyes filled with tears, to pay a visit of con-

dolence. He suppresses his sobs; he groans. Hasten to welcome the friend of God, and to do him honour. He descends from on high, and overcome by sobbings, he comes to present the tribute of his grief to the glorious memory of the deceased.

ABRAHAM.—I, the friend of God; I come to view the head of Imam Hossein. I, who erected the sanctuary of Caaba; who laid that corner stone towards which, night and day, is directed the regards of all—all hopes of the true believers, I salute thee, pride of the two worlds—victim of iniquity! I salute thee, joy of the breast of thy mother—the best of women. Radiant head, blood-bespattered trunk, to serve as ransom for thee, to die for thee would be true happiness to Abraham!

HATEF.—Monks, step back; give place to Jesus, who comes to shed tears over the illustrious scion of the race of prophets. He comes to pay a visit of condolence to the son of the prince of the universe. Behold him, the child of Mary, who, from the realms of the seventh heavens, descends here with Moses.

JESUS.—I am Jesus, the spirit of God; my eyes swollen with tears, I come here to acquit myself of the duty I owe to the head of Hossein. Rose of Ali's garden of flowers, light of his two eyes, I salute thee. Victim of iniquitous men, fallen upon a desert of misfortune, receive my homage! Noble head, oh may all the meritorious works through which Jesus, persecuted as thou hast been, has found favour in the eyes of God, serve as thy ransom! May I be sacrificed to thy haloed-crowned head; to thy immaculate brow! What faithless traitor has committed this unheard of sacrilege? How could one dare to raise a hand against that innocent head! Come hence, Orator of God,[1] draw near; contemplate the features of the king of religion. That ray which shed from the eyes of the pleader for mercy of the two worlds, that blessed existence has been extinguished.

MOSES.—Bleeding skull of Hossein, I salute thee! What demon has defiled himself with such a crime! A thousand maledictions on the impious being who laid low the palm-like grace of thy princely stature, O Hossein!

The scene attains its highest development of pathetic interest when there presents himself, successively, in order to salute the martyr — Mahomet, the grandfather; Ali, the father; and Hassan, the brother. Following, a procession of celebrated women defiles past.—

HATEF.—Stand to one side, for here is the mother of mortals. Eve comes, shedding tears, to pay a visit of condolence to the grandson of our prophet. The illustrious companion of Adam approaches, afflicted, in order to look upon the head of Hossein.

[1] Name of Moses with Mussulmans.

EVE.—Head of Hossein, dripping with blood, I salute thee That swan-like neck, the favourite resting-place for the head of the prophet, has been severed by the hate of barbarians. What murderer has raised a sacrilegious hand against that haloed-crowned brow? Oh tell me! Where are thy sisters Zeineb and Kulsoum? Why do I not see here thy two sad orphans, nor thy daughters? A single word from thee would thrill my heart.

HATEF.—Give place! The mother of Isaac, the victim of God, arrives, bathed in tears. Behold the noble Agar,[1] companion of the bed of Abraham, the friend of God. She comes to weep over the head of Hossein, king of demons and of men. Behold how she grieves, what sobs and lamentations swell her bosom!

AGAR.—I am Agar, a prey to the deepest affliction; my eyes rain drops of blood. Agar, separated from thee, martyr, can but give herself up to groans and lamentations. I salute thee, light of the eyes of Fatima, noble head of the protector of mortals. Since thy death the habitation of angels and of demons has become a scene of woe.

HATEF.—Rachel, the mother of Joseph, comes to mourn over the head of Hossein, the Imam of the century. She smites her breasts with her clenched fists, tears her hair, and overflows with tears, all to honour the obsequies of the chief of martyrs.

RACHEL.—I, the mother of Joseph, bring a heart deluged with sorrow, because of the sad end of Hossein, prince of the century. Head of Hossein, drenched with blood, I salute thee. My son Joseph is thy devoted servant. How I would sacrifice my life to reanimate thy visage, pale as the moon! Let the murderer be accursed who insulted thy mortal remains, O Hossein!

HATEF.—This woman who is drawing near, sad and mournful, is the daughter of Jethro. The grief which she experiences makes her feel that her heart resembles a mantle torn into shreds. See how she strikes her head with both hands, and sobs at the sight of the severed head of Hossein!

THE DAUGHTER OF JETHRO.—A thousand times, O Hossein, light of the eyes of the world, would I have sacrificed my soul for thee. I am the daughter of Jethro, Homage to thy radiant head, O Hossein! to that head whose brilliance is not extinguished by the blood which covers it. All the cherubim in Heaven suffer as I do. I have not the strength to contemplate thy severed head. How I would offer myself up as a burnt offering for one single look of thee!

HATEF.—I see coming the mother of Jesus. She is desolate; she sighs; she covers her floating hair with ashes. The nearer she approaches the head of Hossein, the more her lips drop ejaculations, her eyes to run with tears. She desires worthily to honour the demise of the descendant of Ali.

[1] There is here a confusion between Ishmael and Isaac.

MARY.—I, Mary, seized with affliction, desolate and beside myself, I cover myself with ashes because of thee. Ah! would to God I had been sacrificed instead of that dear head! Would to God that the whole earth had crumbled to atoms rather than it should have served as the theatre of a crime so atrocious. Poor Fatima! when she shall be told of what has happened to the light of her eyes, when she shall have discovered that Hossein has been massacred by a vile soldiery, poor mother! her cries will bring on this earth the day of the last judgment. Accept my salutations, O light of the two eyeballs of Fatima! Oh, seventh heaven! I raise my cries to thee, my curses. Oh God! root out the eyes of Mary, spare her the sight of the mutilated corpse of the most dear among Imams!

HATEF.—The mother of Moses arrives presently, in order to view the head of the chiefest of men and of genii. She is approaching Hossein's head, and is smiting her head and bosom.

THE MOTHER OF MOSES.—Thou head, fallen by the sword of the enemy, accept my homage. Tell me who has severed thee from thy handsome body? Who is the infamous traitor who has rendered himself guilty of such a crime? Beheaded corpse, abandoned to the wolves of the desert, I salute thee. God grant that this spectacle may blind me, and that I may never again witness the remains of the jewel of the universe!

Emotion has reached its highest pitch when Hadidja, grandmother of Hossein, and Fatima, his mother, enter upon the scene. The prior of the convent, overwhelmed at the sight of so many miracles becomes a Chiite.

THE PRIOR.—Hossein, a souvenir left to the mortals by the courageous Ali, my brain burns with the love which thou has inspired in me; martyr, fallen before the sword of the unjust, grant my humble prayer! I desire that thou mayest convert me to thy religion. Oh! Hossein, I renounce the stole of the Christian priest.

THE HEAD.—Repeat after me the formula of the profession of faith of Islam, to wit:—

"I confess that there is no other God than Allah; and that Mahomet is the messenger of Allah, and Ali the friend of Allah."

THE PRIOR.—O God, do not forget, on the day of the last judgment, the words I now pronounce:—

"I confess there is no other God than Allah."

Thus the mystic genius of Persia knew how to give to Islamism that in which it was lacking—the

tender and suffering ideal, motives for shedding tears, lamentations, the Passion. The latter is an absolute essential to all religions. From the Adonia to the Holy Week, recitals, scenes calculated to open the fountains of tears, have not been absent in any cult. It is so sweet to weep over a redeeming God, over a victim who has offered himself up for the salvation of the faithful, to chant the *planctus naturæ* "in the midst of that sink of iniquities which is called the world." This sentiment is almost foreign to Arabian Islamism, a purely masculine religion, conceived solely for men. In the legend of Jesus, according to Mussulman Sunnites, Jesus did not suffer, was not crucified. Nor is there anything in the life of Mahomet, as presented by the orthodox authors, which inspires tenderness and pity. The Chiites have created patient virtue in the person of Ali and of his sons, without imitating the Christian Passion, though founding it on similar sentiments. Expiation, of which there is not a trace in Sunnism, is the foundation of Chiism. The old Persian fate, the veritable God of Iran, is to be met with again in the dramas in question, embracing the same sad and grandiose character as we find in the *Schah-nameh*. Ali suffered because destiny willed it, as well as for his Chiite subjects, so that the merit of suffering might be placed to the credit of the Chiites, the acme of heroism! In order that the sacrifice should be efficacious, it was necessary that the victims should accept their martyrdom. A fine scene in the drama, entitled *The Messenger of God*, is the one in which Mahomet makes Ali and Fatima consent to the death of their sons.

FATIMA.—They, my two sons, to renounce life, to become martyrs, O good God! What have they done to merit such a frightful and dishonouring chastisement? Thou hast only acted towards thy peoples as a sovereign, full of solicitude for their welfare. Can they be such ingrates and criminals as to raise their hands against the princes of thy family?

THE PROPHET.—The martyrdom of my descendents does not prove any backsliding on their part. They would all live, if life were the recompense of merit. But it is only martyrdom which can assure the salvation of my followers and bear witness in their favour at the day of the resurrection. God himself has so decreed it. I, as well as thy husband, have acquiesced in the divine will: acquiesce thou, in thy turn, my daughter, and thus assure the eternal happiness of my peoples. Consent, and thou shalt be the dawn of their blessed eternity: thy assent will cover them with a breastplate to withstand the onslaughts of evil. God desires that this covenant of alliance should be stamped with thy seal. Upon one single word of yours depends the salvation of millions of believers.

FATIMA.—Since it is willed that true believers be saved at the cost of my misfortune, I consent to become the most unfortunate of mothers: I consent that this great calamity shall be accomplished.

These passages also produce transports of indignation in the multitude. And when Omar exclaims: "No lamentations, Ali. Recite the prayer of the dying; then kneel down so that I may strike off thy head at a single blow," and when Ali kneels before the upraised sword of Omar, while the latter is reciting the prayer of those who are about to die, loud sobs burst forth. The women who assist in the representation give the piece, in great part, its character. In striking contrast to the Sunnites, whose women have scarcely any religion, feminine piety is much developed among the Chiites. Almost all the *Zeaziehs* contain some neatly-turned compliments of gallantry addressed to the females who assist in the pieces.

HOSSEIN.—My mother, what wilt thou give to those of the women who shall honour the memory of my tragic death? Since, in that supreme moment of resurrection, when they shall lift their heads out of their tombs, they all will then, as they do to-day, hope to see me.

FATIMA.—Rest assured, light of my eyes, I adjure thee, by the unparalleled essence of the splendours of God, that at the moment when they shall reach the gates of Paradise, standing with bared heads, tears in their eyes, their hearts inflamed; in a word, just as I have seen them celebrating thy funeral rites on earth; I say, I swear that they shall find me there. I shall only call around me those who have wept for thee. After having

introduced them into the gardens of eternal delights, I sha then myself undertake to do them the necessary honours.

And elsewhere:

FATIMA.—Cast from thee all care, O joy of my eyes. As true as God is glorious and incomparable in his essence, I shall have no other female friends in the abode of the blessed than those women who have assisted at the celebrations of the mysteries in thy honour: I shall wait for them at the gates of Paradise, and I shall introduce them to my palace as soon as they arrive. They have only to present themselves as they appeared on the anniversary of thy martyrdom—heads uncovered, eyes filled with tears, and their souls on fire.

In my opinion, none of the mysteries of the middle ages have been written with such breadth of sentiment and such passion. Hatred is lacking in our *Mysteries*. Christianity is now in possession of the field. Odious personages, such as Herod, the Jews, the Pagans, move in such a dim and distant past, that indignation is extinguished as soon as it appears. In Persia, on the contrary, the rage against the Arabs and Sunnites is seldom allowed to sleep. An appeal to this feeling is always sure to succeed. M. Chodzko's volume must be read in its entirety in order to comprehend what is contained in this new species of literature, of originality and of power—a literature which has been born under our very eyes. It is only popular spirit that can produce a living work. It appears that Persians who know a little of Europe, are astonished at the interest the *Zeaziehs* possess for us. "What!" say they, "you who have such fine theatres, why do you seek out those works, the products of an art yet in its infancy?" It is because that in literature sincerity accounts for everything. The most imperfect expression of a deep sentiment outweighs the most skilful artifices designed to amuse a *blasé* audience

THE END.